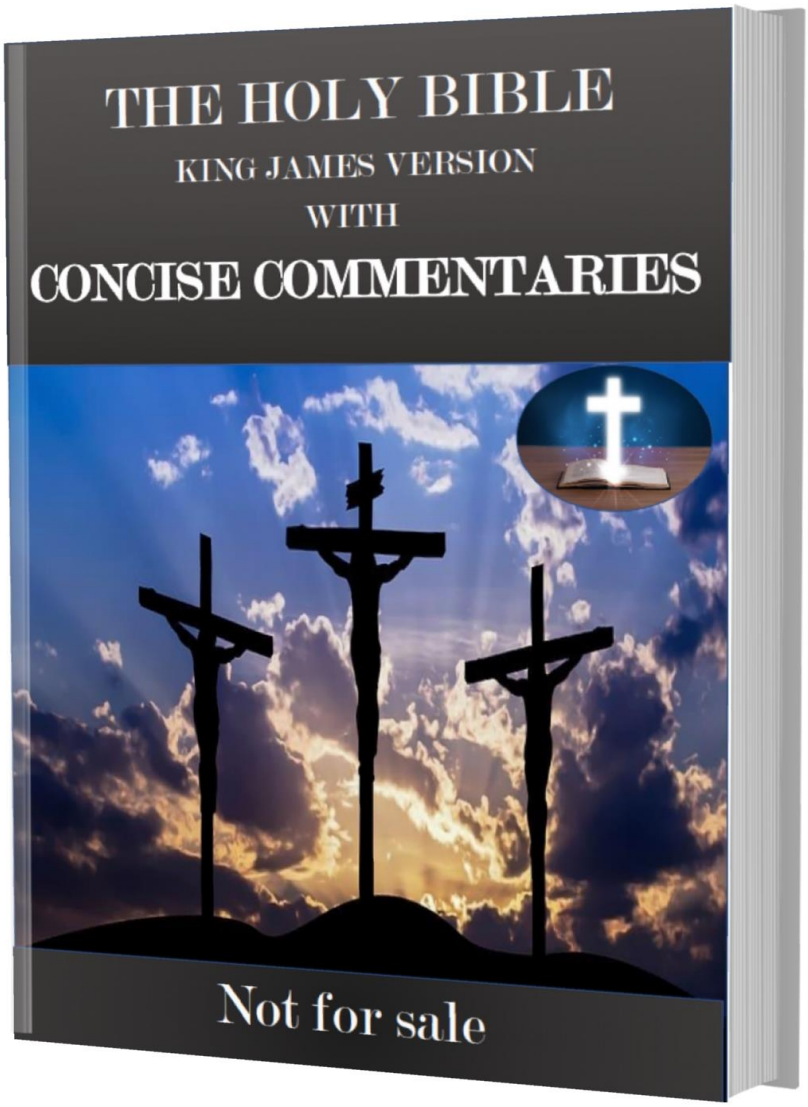
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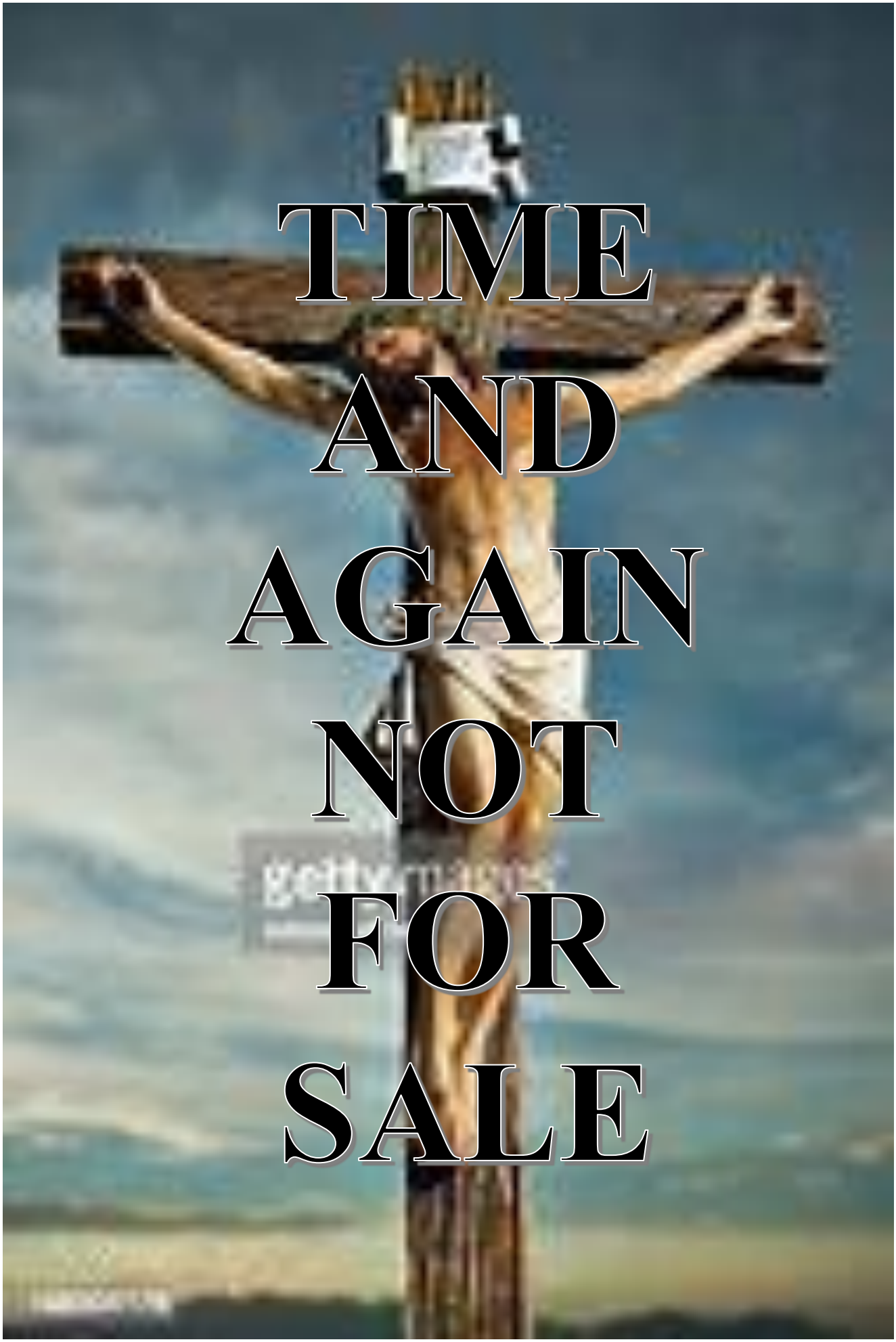
TIME
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FOREWORD

Then the spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot, and Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, how can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. Acts 8:29-31.

The man happened to have been reading one of the great prophecies about the coming of Christ and his suffering, and Philip had the privilege of telling the Ethiopian the good news about Jesus. When the Ethiopian in the chariot said, “How can I [understand Isaiah], unless someone explains it to me?” he displayed the curiosity and teach-ability that is essential for all followers of Jesus. In that moment, Philip was a kind of commentary for a man who simply needed help with the historical and linguistic meanings of the text of Isaiah.

A Bible commentary is a series of notes explaining the meaning of passages of scripture. A commentary may explain the language used in a section of text. Or it may discuss the historical background. Almost all commentaries attempt to explain the passage in terms of some system of theology. Since a Bible commentary is written by human authors, it will reflect the beliefs and perspective of those writers.

Through a personal narrative, Bible commentaries provide deeper understanding and insight into the Bible and can be used to assist both casual readers of the Bible and those who pursue serous study.

Commentaries are widely used in personal Bible study. The advantage of a Bible commentary is that one can quickly gain perspective on the text’s meaning, as understood by the commentary’s author. One caution concerning Bible commentaries is that they should not be used instead of personal study; rather, they are designed for use in addition to personal study. Since the commentary itself is not Scripture, it’s important for a reader to weigh what he reads against other sources, as well as his own Spirit-led analysis. As the products of fallible people, commentaries are not necessarily correct in every word.

When we read the Bible, we can have complete confidence that is God speaking and not man. The phrase “thus says the Lord” or “tell the people” appears over a thousand times in the Bible because it is God speaking through the authors of the Bible. Even when a prophet of God spoke, they never once spoke for themselves but only for God. The Apostle Paul knew that “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction,

and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3: 16-17). All scripture includes the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The Apostle Peter would agree with Paul's statement as he wrote that "no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever Produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20-21) peter considered Paul's writings as Scripture as peter wrote of Paul's letters or epistles, "there are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:16) so this shows clearly that, Scripture includes the New Testament too. We trust the Bible over anything that anyone else writes but what about study Bibles or Bible Commentaries? Can we trust them?

Bible commentaries are not inspired by God. They might be written by inspired men who have the spirit of God but that is never going to be equal to Scripture. It cannot override Scripture. It is only a man who writes and not God who inspires the words. Their comments might be inspiring but they are not inspired. These commentaries can be written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit but they are not God-breathed like the Bible itself is. Commentaries are never "thus says the Lord" in value. When you are not sure about a subject or need clarity or background on a verse or paragraph in a chapter, commentaries can be a great help in bringing understanding to the verses but their understanding can never contradict what the Scriptures say or you've got the wrong Bible commentary. If you're not sure about a Bible passage and you don't agree with or aren't sure about a commentators comments, then it's best to just wait, move on, or find a trusted Christian mentor, elder, deacon, teacher, or pastor. The reading, understanding, and application of biblical truth have always been functions of the Christian community. The words of the prophets and apostles were directed at God's people (plural) at the start, and must be a community endeavor now. That is why we do personal Bible study, but we engage with others in Bible studies in homes and office buildings and schools and churches.

It is advisable to have as many Bible commentaries as possible because it is so helpful to see how other men view certain passages and to see if anyone can learn something from them. They might have insight that he doesn't have. They might have read something in the passage that he missed. Like the proverb that says "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed" (Prov. 15:22) and in a similar manner, the wise counsel that is often found in study Bible's or commentaries can help us make better decisions when the Bible appears to be silent on a particular subject. It's a great idea for those who desire the office of a pastor, deacon, elder, or teacher to have as many Bible study resources as they can get like Bible atlas', Bible concordances, Bible dictionaries, Greek or Hebrew lexcons, but also a study Bible or Bible commentary. Some call them study Bibles but they are usually the same thing since they have footnotes and comments concerning different Bible verses. Some study Bible's or Bible commentaries might even include Scriptures to support the commentator's comments.

In general, there are four types of Bible commentaries, each useful for the intended purpose to aid in the study of Scripture.

1. Expository: expository commentaries are typically written by pastors and expository Bible teachers who teach verse by verse through the Bible. These commentaries usually include teaching notes, outlines, illustrations and practical applications of the authors' study and teaching on the books of the Bible.

2. Exegetical: exegetical commentaries are typically written by Bible scholars and theologians. They are more technical academic in nature, concentrating on the original languages, context or grammar of the text. These commentaries are written by some of the most knowledgeable theologians in church history.

3. Devotional: devotional commentaries are designed to enhance the readers' personal reflection and practical application of the Bible text. They are geared for times of soul-searching and listening for the voice and heart of God through the text.

4. Cultural: cultural commentaries are meant to help readers gain an understanding of the cultural background of the Bible text.

Bible commentaries usually come in massive volumes – one for each book of the Bible! The print version of all volumes of word Biblical Commentary series would take up seven feet on our bookshelf. This is probably one of the biggest reasons that most people are in love with electronic Bible resources.

When we're doing in-depth study of biblical passages, we should read two or three or more commentaries, making notes as we read. We will quickly see where the commentators agree on the meaning and the emphases of texts, and we will gather numerous details not obvious with the simple reading of the text. We collect, for instance, these concise commentaries from Mathew Henry's Complete Commentary (MHC), Albert Barnes' New Testament Notes, Expository Notes with Practical Observations on the New Testament by William Burkitt, Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and David Brown Bible Commentary (JFB), The People's New Testament (PNT), John Wesley's Notes on the Bible and others.

When it comes to choosing which specific commentaries to use, we note the type of commentary suited to our purpose (above). Then, we should note the theological assumptions of the commentators. Some scholars look at the Bible simply as one more human text, and they analyze it on purely linguistic and historical bases. On the other hand, scholars who believe in the divine inspiration and unique character of scripture will take

things like miracles and the resurrection of Christ as historical realities, and will look for the cohesive themes of the revelation of God in Holy Scripture.

Most commentators agree on many issues; but sometimes they might be even reproached for heresies. For example, Albert Barnes had been tried (but not convicted) for heresy in 1836, mostly due to the views he expressed in Notes on Romans (1834) of the imputation of the sin of Adam, original sin, and the atonement. Therefore, just as we would prayerfully evaluate a sermon, evaluate the contents of any resource we read.

FINALLY, NO MATTER WHICH VERSION OF STUDY BIBLE OR COMMENTARY WE USE TRUST ONLY THE WORD OF GOD. FOR VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS, ONE JOT OR ONE TITTLE SHALL IN NO WISE PASS FROM THE LAW, TILL ALL BE FULFILLED. WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL BREAK ONE OF THESE LEAST COMMANDMENTS, AND SHALL TEACH MEN SO, HE SHALL BE CALLED THE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL DO AND TEACH THEM, THE SAME SHALL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. MATH 5:18-19.

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THE WORD OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel According To St. Matthew

[Mat thew]

Matthew-1

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of
Abraham.
2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat
Judah and his brethren;
3 and Judah begat Pharez and Zerah of Tamar; and Pharez begat
Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram;
4 and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and
Nahshon begat Salmon;
5 and Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth;
and Obed begat Jesse;
6 and Jesse begat David the king.
And David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of
Uriah;
7 and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and
Abijah begat Asa;
8 and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram; and
Jehoram begat Uzziah;
9 and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat
Hezekiah;
10 and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and
Amon begat Josiah;
11 and Josiah begat Jeconiah and his brethren, about the time they were carried
away to Babylon.
12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begat Shealtiel;
and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel;
13 and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and
Eliakim begat Azor;
14 and Azor begat Zadok; and Zadok begat Achim; and Achim begat
Eliud;

15 and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

16 and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

1st division. 2nd division. 3rd divis. Abraham, David, Josias, Isaac, Solomon, Jechonias Jacob, Roboam, Salathiel, Judas, Abia, Zorobabel, Phares, Asa, Abiud, Esrom, Josaphat, Eliakim, Aram, Joram, Azor, Aminadab, Ozias, Sadoc, Naasson, Joatham, Achim, Salmon, Achaz Eliud, Booz, Ezekias, Eleazar, Obed, Manasses, Matthan, Jesse, Amon, Jacob, David. Josias. Joseph. --14 --14 --14.

All the generations, etc. This division of the names in their genealogy was doubtless adopted for the purpose of aiding the memory. It was common among the Jews; and other similar instances are preserved. They were destitute of other books beside the Old Testament, and had but few copies of that among them, and those chiefly in their synagogues. They would, therefore, naturally devise plans to keep up the remembrance of the principal facts in their history. One method of doing this was to divide the tables of genealogy into portions of equal length, to be committed to memory. This greatly facilitated the remembrance of the names. A man who wished to commit to memory the names of a regiment of soldiers, would naturally divide it into companies and platoons, and this would greatly facilitate his work. This was doubtless the reason in the case before us. And though it is not strictly accurate, yet it was the Jewish way of keeping their records, and answered their purpose. There were three leading persons and events that nearly, or quite, divided their history into equal portions--Abraham, David, and the Babylonish captivity. From one to the other was about fourteen generations, and, by omitting a few names, it was sufficiently accurate to be made a general guide or directory in remembering their history.

In counting these divisions, however, it will be seen that there is some difficulty in making out the number fourteen in each division. This may be explained in the following manner. In the first division, Abraham is the first, and David the last, making together fourteen In the second series, David would naturally be placed first, and the fourteen was completed in Josiah, about the time of the captivity, as sufficiently near for the purpose of convenient computation, 2 Chron xxxv. In the third division, Josiah would naturally be placed first, and the number was completed in Joseph. So that David and Josiah would be reckoned twice. This may be shown by the following table of the names:

Carrying away into Babylon. This refers to the captivity of Jerusalem, and the removal of the Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, 588 years before Christ. See 2 Chron xxxvi. Josiah was king when these calamities began to come upon the Jews; but the exact time of the seventy years of captivity did not commence until the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, or 32 years after the death of Josiah. Babylon was situated on the, Euphrates, and was encompassed with walls which were about 60 miles in circuit, 87 feet broad, and 350 feet high; and the city was entered by a hundred brazen gates, 25 on each side. It was the capital of a vast empire, and the Jews remained there for seventy years. Is 13:1 and following.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Betrothed, or engaged to be married. There was commonly an interval of ten or twelve months, among the Jews, between the contract of marriage and the celebration of the nuptials, see Gen

24:55; Jud 14:8, yet such was the nature of this engagement, that unfaithfulness to each other was deemed adultery. See De 22:25,28.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

Her husband. The word in the original does not imply that they were married. It means here the man to whom she was espoused.

A just man. Justice consists in rendering to every man his own. Yet this is evidently not the character intended to be given here of Joseph. It means that he was kind, tender, merciful; so attached to Mary, that he was not willing that she should be exposed to public shame. He sought, therefore, secretly to dissolve the connexion, and to restore her to her friends without the punishment commonly inflicted on adultery. The word just has not unfrequently this meaning of mildness, or mercy. See 1Jn 1:9.

A public example. To expose her to public shame or infamy. Adultery has always been considered a crime of a very heinous nature. In Egypt it was punished by cutting off the nose of the adulteress; in Persia the nose and ears were cut off; in Judea the punishment was death by stoning, Lev 20:10, Eze 16:38, 40, Jn 8:5. This punishment was also inflicted where the person was not married, but betrothed, De 22:23, 24. In this case, therefore, the regular punishment would have been death in this painful and ignominious manner. Yet Joseph was a religious man, mild and tender; and he was not willing to complain of her to the magistrate, and expose her to death, but sought to avoid the shame, and to put her away privately.

Put her away privily. The law of Moses gave the husband the power of divorce, De 24:1. It was customary, in a bill of divorce, to specify the causes for which the divorce was made, and witnesses were also present to testify to the divorce. But in this case, it seems, Joseph resolved to put her away without specifying the cause: for he was not willing to make her a public example. This is the meaning here of privately. Both to Joseph and Mary this must have been a great trial. Joseph was ardently attached to her, but her character was

likely to be ruined, and he deemed it proper to separate her from him. Mary was innocent, but Joseph was not yet satisfied of her innocence. Yet we may learn how to put our trust in God. He will defend the innocent. Mary was in danger of being exposed to shame. Had she been connected with a cruel, passionate, and violent man, she would have died in disgrace. But God had so ordered it, that she was connected with a man mild, amiable, and tender; and, in due time, Joseph was apprized of the truth in the case, and took his faithful and beloved wife to his bosom. Thus our only aim should be to preserve a conscience void of offence, and God will guard our reputation. We may be assailed, or circumstances may be against us; but in due time God will take care to vindicate our character, and save us from ruin.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

He thought on these things. He did not act hastily. He did not take the course which the law would have permitted him to do, if he had been hasty, violent, or unjust. It was a case deeply affecting his happiness, his character, and the reputation and character of his chosen companion. God will guide the thoughtful and the anxious. And when we have looked patiently at a perplexed subject, and know not what to do, then God, as in the case of Joseph, will interpose to lead us, and direct our way,

The angel of the Lord. The word angel literally means a messenger. It is applied chiefly in the Scriptures to those invisible holy beings who have not fallen into sin; who live in heaven, (1Timm 5:21, comp. Jude 1:6) and who are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, Heb 1:13, 14, Dan 9:21. The word is sometimes applied to men, as messengers, (Lk 7:24, 9:52, Jas 2:25) to the winds, (Ps 104:4); to the pestilence, (Ps 78:49); or to whatever is appointed to make known, or to execute the will of God. It is commonly applied, however, to the unfallen, happy spirits that are in heaven, whose only dignity and pleasure it is to do the will of

God. Various ways were employed by them in making known the will of God, by dreams, visions, assuming a human appearance, etc.

In a dream. This was a common way of making known the will of God to the ancient prophets and people of God, Gen 20:3, 31:10,11,24, 37:5; Gen 41:1, 1Kgs 3:5, Dan 7:1, Job 4:13-16. In what way it was ascertained that these dreams were from God, cannot now be told. It is sufficient for us to know that in this way many of the prophecies were communicated; and to remark, that now there is no evidence that we are to put reliance on our dreams. Dreams are wild, irregular movements of the mind, when it is unshackled by reason, and it is mere superstition to suppose that God now makes known his will in this way.

Fear not. Do not hesitate, or have fears about her virtue and purity. Do not fear that she will be unworthy of you, or will disgrace you.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

His name JESUS. The name Jesus is the same as Saviour. It is derived from the verb signifying to save. In Hebrew it is the same as Joshua. In two places in the New Testament it is used where it means Joshua, the leader of the News into Canaan, and in our translation the name Joshua should have been retained, Acts 7:45, Heb 4:8. It was a very common name among the Jews.

He shall save. This expresses the same as the name, and on this account the name was given to him. He saves men by having died to redeem them; by giving the Spirit to renew them, (Jn 16:7, 8) by his power in enabling them to overcome their spiritual enemies, in defending them from danger, in guiding them in the path of duty, in sustaining them in trials and in death; and he will raise them up at the last day, and exalt them to a world of purity and love.

His people. Those whom the Father has given to him. The Jews were called the people of God, because he had chosen them to himself, and regarded them as his peculiar and beloved people, separate from all the nations of the earth. Christians are called the people of Christ,

because it was the purpose of the Father to give them to him, (Is 53:11, Jn 6:37) and because in due time he came to redeem them to himself, Tit 2:14, 1Pet 1:2.

From their sins. This is the great business of Jesus in coming and dying. It is not to save men IN their sins, but FROM their sins. Sinners could not be happy in heaven. It would be a place of wretchedness to the guilty. The design of Jesus was, therefore, to save from sin;

1. by dying to make an atonement, (Tit 2:14); and,

2. by renewing the heart, and purifying the soul, and preparing his people for a pure and holy heaven. And from this we may learn,

(1.) that Jesus had a design in coming into the world--he came to save his people--and that design will surely be accomplished. It is impossible that in any part of it he should fail.

(2.) We have no evidence that we are his people, unless we are saved from the power and dominion of sin. A mere profession of being his people will not answer. Unless we give up our sins; unless we renounce the pride, pomp, and pleasure of the world, and all our lusts and crimes, we have no evidence that we are the children of God. It is impossible that we should be Christians if we indulge in sin, and live in the practice of any known iniquity.

(3.) That all professing Christians should feel that there is no salvation unless it is from sin, and that they can never be admitted to a holy heaven hereafter, unless they are made pure, by the blood of Jesus, here.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

The prophecy here quoted is recorded in Isa 7:14. It was delivered about 740 years before Christ, in the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. The land of Judea was threatened with an invasion by the united armies of Syria and Israel, under the command of Rezin and Pekah. Ahaz was alarmed, and seems to have contemplated calling in aid from Assyria to defend him. Isaiah was directed in his consternation to go to Ahaz, and tell him to ask a sign from God, (Is 7:10, 11); that is, to look to God rather than to Assyria for aid. This he refused to do. He had not confidence in God; but feared that the land would be overrun by the armies of Syria, (Isa 7:12) and relied only on the aid which he hoped to receive from Assyria. Isaiah answered that, in these circumstances, the Lord would himself give a sign, or a pledge, that the land should be delivered. The sign was, that a virgin should have a son, and before that son would arrive to years of discretion, the land would be forsaken by these hostile kings. The prophecy was, therefore, designed originally to denote to Ahaz that the land would certainly be delivered from its calamities and dangers, and that the deliverance would not be long delayed. The united land of Syria and Israel, united now in confederation, would be deprived of both their kings, and thus the land of Judah be freed from the threatening dangers. This appears to be the literal fulfillment of the passage in Isaiah.

Might be fulfilled. It is more difficult to know in what sense this could be said to be fulfilled in the birth of Christ. To understand this, it may be remarked that the word fulfilled is used in the Scriptures, and in other writings, in many senses, of which the following are some:

1st. When a thing is clearly predicted, and comes to pass: as the destruction of Babylon, foretold in Isa 13:19-22; and of Jerusalem, in Matthew 24.

2nd. When one thing is testified or shadowed forth by another, the type is said to be fulfilled. This was the case in regard to the types and sacrifices in the Old Testament, which were fulfilled by the coming of Christ. See Hebrews 9.

3rd. When prophecies of future events are expressed in language more elevated and full than the particular thing, at first denoted, demands. Or, when the language, though it may express one event, is also so full and rich as appropriately to express other events in similar circumstances, and of similar import. Thus, e.g., the last chapters of Isaiah, from the fortieth chapter, foretell the return of the Jews from Babylon; and every circumstance mentioned occurred in their return. But the language is more expanded and sublime than was necessary to express their return. It will also express appropriately a much more important and magnificent deliverance--that of the redeemed under the Messiah, and the return of the people of God to him, and the universal spread of the gospel; and therefore it may be said to be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, and the spread of the gospel. So, if there were any other magnificent and glorious events, still, in similar circumstances, and of like character, it might be said also that these prophecies were fulfilled in all of them. The language is so full and rich, and the promises so grand, that they appropriately express all these deliverances. This may be the sense in which the prophecy now under consideration may be said to have been fulfilled.

4th. Language is said to be fulfilled when though it was used to express one event, yet it may be used also to express another. Thus a fable may be said to be fulfilled when an event occurs similar to the one concerning which it was first spoken. A parable has its fulfillment in all the cases to which it is applicable; and so of a proverb, or a declaration respecting human nature. The declaration "there is none that doeth good," (Ps 14:3,) was at first spoken of a particular race of wicked men. Yet it is applicable to others, and in this sense may be said to have been fulfilled. See Rom 3:10. In this use of the word fulfilled, it means not that the passage was at first intended to apply to this particular thing, but that the words aptly or appropriately express the thing spoken of, and may be applied to it. We may say of this as was said of another thing, and thus the words express both, or are fulfilled. The writers of the New Testament seem occasionally to have used the word in this sense.

A virgin shall be with child. Matthew clearly understands this as applying literally to a virgin. Comp. Lk 1:34. It thus implies that the conception of Christ was entirely miraculous, or that the body of the Messiah was created directly by the power of God, agreeably to the declaration in Heb 10: 5, "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me."

Immanuel. This is a Hebrew word, and means, literally, God with us. Matthew doubtless understands this word as denoting that the Messiah was really "God with us," or that the Divine nature was united to the human. He does not affirm that this was its meaning when used in reference to the child to whom it was first applied; but this was its meaning as applicable to the Messiah. It was fitly expressive of his character; and in this sense it was fulfilled. When first used by Isaiah, it denoted simply that the birth--of the child was a sign that God was with the Jews, to deliver them. The Hebrews often used the name of Jehovah, or God, in their proper names. Thus, Isaiah means "the salvation of Jehovah "Eleazer, "help of God;" Eli, "my God," etc. But Matthew evidently intends more than was denoted by the simple use of such names. He had just given an account of his miraculous conception; of his being begotten by the Holy Ghost. God was therefore his Father. He was Divine as well as human. His appropriate name was "God with us." And though the mere use of such a name would not prove that he had a Divine nature, yet, as Matthew uses it, and meant evidently to apply it, it does prove that Jesus was more than a man; that he was God as well as man. And it is this which gives glory to the plan of redemption. It is this which is the wonder of angels. It is this which makes the plan so vast, so grand, so full of instruction and comfort to Christians. See Php 2:6-8. It is this which sheds such peace and joy into the sinner's heart; which gives him such security of salvation; and renders the condescension of God in redemption so great, and his character so lovely.

"Till God in human flesh I see,

My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three,
Are terror to my mind.

"But if IMMANUEL'S face appears,
My hope, my joy, begins;
His grace removes my slavish fears,
His blood removes my sins."

For a full examination of the passage, see Barnes "Is 7:14".

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
25 and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

Matthew-2

The Visit of the Wise Men

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

When Jesus was born. See the full account of his birth in Lk 2:1-20.

In Bethlehem of Judaea. Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ, was a small town about six miles south of Jerusalem. The word Bethlehem denotes "house of bread"---perhaps given to the place on account of its great fertility. It was also called Ephratah, a word supposed likewise to signify fertility, Gen 35:19, Ruth 4:11, Ps 132:6. It was called the city of David, (Lk 2:4) because it was the city of his nativity, 1Sam 16:1,18. It was called Bethlehem of Judea, to distinguish it from a town of the same name in Galilee, Josh 19:15. The soil of Bethlehem was noted for its fertility.

Ancient travellers frequently spoke of its productions. The town is situated on an eminence, in the midst of hills and vales. At present it contains about 200 houses, inhabited chiefly by Christians and Mohammedans, who live together in peace. About 200 paces east of Bethlehem, the place is still shown where our Saviour is supposed to have been born. There is a church and a convent there; and beneath the church a subterranean chapel, which is lighted by thirty-two lamps, which is said to be the place where was the stable in which Jesus was born. No reliance is, however, to be placed on this tradition.

Herod the king. Judea, where our Saviour was born, was a province of the Roman empire. It was taken about sixty-three years before, by Pompey, and placed under tribute. Herod received his appointment from the Romans, and had reigned, at the time, of the birth of Jesus thirty-four years. Though he was permitted to be called king, yet he was in all respects dependent on the Roman emperor. He was commonly called Herod the Great, because he had distinguished himself in the wars with Antigonus, and his other enemies, and because he had evinced great talents, as well as great cruelties and crimes, in governing and defending his country; in repairing the temple; and in building and ornamenting the cities of his kingdom. At this time Augustus was emperor of Rome. The world was at peace. All the known nations of the earth were united under the Roman emperor. Intercourse between different nations was easy and safe. Similar laws prevailed. The use of the Greek language was general throughout the world. All these circumstances combined to render this a favourable time to introduce the gospel, and to spread it through the earth; and the Providence of God was remarkable in fitting the nations in this manner for the easy and rapid spread of the Christian religion among all nations.

Wise men. The original word here is magoi from which comes our word magician, now used in a bad sense, but not so in the original. The persons here denoted were philosophers, priests, or astronomers. They dwelt chiefly in Persia and Arabia. They were

the learned men of the eastern nations, devoted to astronomy, to religion, and to medicine. They were held in high esteem by the Persian court, were admitted as counsellors, and followed the camps in war, to give advice.

From the east. It is unknown whether they came from Persia or Arabia. Both countries might be denoted by the word east--that is, east from Judea.

Jerusalem. The capital of Judea. As there is frequent reference in the New Testament to Jerusalem; as it was the place of the public worship of God; as it was the place where many important transactions in the life of the Saviour occurred, and the place where he died; and as no Sabbath-school teacher can intelligently explain the New Testament without some knowledge of that city, it seems desirable to present a brief description of it. A more full description may be seen in Calmet's Dictionary, and in the common works or Jewish Antiquities. Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, and was built on the line dividing this tribe from the tribe of Benjamin. It was once called Salem, (Gen 14:18, Ps 76:2) and, in the days of Abraham, was the abode of Melchizedek. When the Israelites took possession of the promised land, they found this stronghold in the possession of the Jebusites, by whom it was called Jehus or Jebusi, Josh 18:28. The name Jerusalem was compounded probably of the two, by changing a single letter, and calling it, for the sake of the sound, Jerusalem instead of Jebusalem. The ancient Salem was probably built on Mount Moriah or Acra--the eastern and western mountains on which Jerusalem was subsequently built. When the Jebusites became masters of the place, they erected a fortress in the southern quarter of the city, which was subsequently called Mount Zion, but which they called Jebus; and although the Israelites took possession of the adjacent territory, (Josh 18:28) the Jebusites still held this fortress or upper town until the time of David, who wrested it from them, (2Sam 5:7-9,) and then removed his court from Hebron to Jerusalem, which was thenceforward known as the city of David, 2Sam 6:12; 1Kgs 8:1. Jerusalem was built on several hills--Mount Zion on the south, Mount Moriah on

the east--on which the temple was subsequently built, (Mt 21:12) Mount Acra on the west, and Mount Betheza on the north. Mount Moriah and Mount Zion were separated by a valley called, by Josephus, the Valley of Cheesemongers, over which there was a bridge, or raised way, leading from the one to the other. On the south-east of Mount Moriah and between that and Mount Zion, there was a bluff or high rock, capable of strong fortification, called Ophel. The city was encompassed by hills. On the west there were hills which overlooked the city; on the south was the valley of Jehoshaphat, or the valley of Hinnom, (Mt 5:22) separating it from what is called the Mount of Corruption; on the east was the valley or the brook Kedron, dividing the city from the Mount of Olives; and on the north the country was more level--though it was a broken or rolling country. To the south-east, the valleys of the Kedron and Jehoshaphat united, and the waters flowed through the broken mountains in a south-east direction to the Dead Sea, some fifteen miles distant. The city of Jerusalem stands in 30° 50' north latitude, and 35° 20' east longitude from Greenwich. It is thirty-four miles south-easterly from Jaffa, the ancient Joppa, (which is its seaport,) and one hundred and twenty miles south-westerly from Damascus. The best view of the city of Jerusalem is from Mount Olivet on the east, (Mt 24:3) the mountains on the east being somewhat higher than those on the west. The city was anciently enclosed within walls, a part of which are still standing. The position of the walls has been at various times changed, as the city has been larger or smaller, or as it has extended in different directions. The wall on the south formerly included the whole of Mount Zion, though the modern wall runs over the summit, including about half of the mountain. In the time of the Saviour, the northern wall enclosed only Mounts Acra and Moriah north; though, after his death, Agrippa extended the wall so as to include Mount Bezetha on the north. About half of that is included in the present wall. The limits of the city on the east and the west, being more determined by the nature of the place, have been more fixed and permanent. The city was watered in part by the fountain of Siloam on the east, for a description of which Lk 13:4 Lk 13:4, Isa 7:3 and in part by the fountain of Gihon, on the west of the city, which flowed into the vale of Jehoshaphat; and in the time of

Solomon by an aqueduct, part of which is still remaining, by which water was brought from the vicinity of Bethlehem. The "pools of Solomon," three in number, one rising above another, and adapted to hold a large quantity of water, are still remaining in the vicinity of Bethlehem. The fountain of Siloam still flows freely, (Isa 7:3), though the fountain of Gihon is commonly dry. A reservoir or tank, however, remains at Gihon. Jerusalem had, perhaps, its highest splendour in the time of Solomon. About four hundred years after, it was wholly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. It lay utterly desolate during the seventy years of the Jewish captivity. Then it was rebuilt, and restored to some degree of its former magnificence, and remained about six hundred years, when it was utterly destroyed by Titus, A.D. 70. In the reign of Adrian, the city was partly rebuilt under the name of AElia. The monuments of pagan idolatry were erected in it; and it remained under pagan jurisdiction until Helena, the mother of Constantine, overthrew the memorials of idolatry, and erected a magnificent church over the spot which was supposed to be the place of the Redeemer's sufferings and burial. Julian, the apostate, attempting to destroy the credit of the prophecy of the Saviour that the temple should remain in ruins, (Matthew 25.) endeavoured to rebuild the temple.

His own historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, (see Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses,) says that the workmen were impeded by balls of fire coming from the earth, and that he was compelled to abandon the undertaking. Jerusalem continued in the power of the eastern emperors till the reign of the caliph Omar, the third in succession from Mohammed, who reduced it under his control about the year 640. The Saracens continued masters of Jerusalem until the year 1099, when it was taken by the crusaders under Godfrey of Bouillon. They founded a new kingdom, of which Jerusalem was the capital, which lasted eighty-eight years under nine kings. At last this kingdom was utterly ruined by Saladin; and though the Christians once more obtained possession of the city, yet they were obliged again to relinquish it. In 1217 the Saracens were expelled by the Turks, who have ever since continued in possession of it. Jerusalem has been taken and pilaged seventeen times, and millions of men have been slaughtered within its walls.

At present there is a splendid mosque--the mosque of Omar--on the site of the temple. It is a city containing a population variously estimated at from 15,000, to 50,000, (though probably not far from 20,000,) comprising Jews, Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, and Papists: The Jews have a number of synagogues. The Catholics have a convent, and have the control of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Greeks have twelve convents; the Armenians have three convents on Mount Zion, and one in the city; the Copts, Syrians, and Abyssinians have each of them one convent. The streets are narrow, and the houses are of stone, most of them low and irregular, with flat roofs or terraces, and with small windows only towards the street, usually protected by iron grates. The above description has been obtained from a great variety of sources, and it would be useless to refer to the works where the facts have been obtained. As a reference to Jerusalem often occurs in the New Testament, and as it is very important to possess a correct view of the site of the ancient and modern city, a view is annexed to the second vol. It is by Catherwood, and is probably the most exact view of the city that has been published.

2 saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Where is he, etc. There was, at this time, a prevalent expectation that some remarkable personage was about to appear in Judea. The Jews were anxiously looking for the coming of the Messiah. By computing the time mentioned by Daniel, (Dan 9:25-27,) they knew that the period was approaching when the Messiah should appear. This personage, they supposed, would be a temporal prince, and they were expecting that he would deliver them from Roman bondage. It was natural that this expectation should spread into other countries. Many Jews, at that time, dwelt in Eypt, in Rome, and in Greece; many, also, had gone to eastern countries, and in every place they carried their Scriptures, and diffused the expectation that some remarkable person was about to appear. Suetonius, a Roman historian, speaking of this rumour, says :--"An ancient and settled persuasion prevailed throughout the East, that the Fates had decreed some one to proceed from Judea, who should attain universal empire." Tacitus, another Roman historian, says:---

"Many were persuaded that it was contained in the ancient books of their priests, that at that very time the East should prevail, and that some one should proceed from Judea and possess the dominion."

Josephus also, and Philo, two Jewish historians, make mention of the same expectation. The fact that such a person was expected is clearly attested. Under this expectation these wise men came to do him homage, and inquired anxiously where he was born?

His star. Among the ancients, the appearance of a star or comet was regarded as an omen of some remarkable event. Many such appearances are recorded by the Roman historians at the birth or death of distinguished men. Thus, they say, that at the death of Julius Caesar a comet appeared in the heavens, and shone seven days. These wise men also considered this as an evidence that the long-expected Prince was born. It is possible that they had been led to this belief by the prophecy of Balaam, Nu 24:17, "There shall come a star out of Jacob," etc. What this star was, is not known. There have been many conjectures respecting it, but nothing is revealed concerning it. We are not to suppose that it was what we commonly mean by a star. The stars are vast bodies fixed in the heavens, and it is absurd to suppose that one of them was sent to guide the wise men. It is most probable that it was a luminous appearance, or meteor, such as we now see sometimes shoot from the sky, or such as appear stationary, which the wise men saw, and which directed them to Jerusalem. It is possible that the same thing is meant which is mentioned by Lk 2:9--"The glory of the Lord shone round about them," i.e., (Lk 2:9 on this place) a great light appeared shining around them. That light might have been visible from afar, and have been seen by the wise men in the East.

In the East. This does not mean that they had seen the star to the east of themselves, but that, when they were in the East, they had seen this star. As this star was in the direction of Jerusalem, it must have been west of them. It might be translated, "We, being in the East, have seen his star." It is called his star, because they supposed it to be intended to indicate the time and place of his birth.

To worship him. This does not mean that they had come to pay him religious homage, or to adore him. They regarded him as the King of the Jews. There is no evidence that they supposed he would be Divine. They came to honour him as a prince, or a king, not as God. The original word implies no more than this. It meant to prostrate one's self before another; to fall down and pay homage to another. This was the mode in which homage was paid to earthly kings; and this they wished to pay to the new-born King of the Jews. See the same meaning of the word in Mt 20:20, 18:26, Acts 10:25, Lk 14:10. The English word worship also meant, formerly, "to respect, to honour, to treat with civil reverence." (Webster.)

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

He was troubled. Herod had obtained the kingdom by great crimes, and by shedding much blood. He was, therefore, easily alarmed by any remarkable appearances; and the fact that this star appeared, and that it was regarded as proof that the King of the Jews was born, alarmed him. Besides, it was a common expectation that the Messiah was about to appear, and he feared that his reign was about to come to an end. He, therefore, began to inquire in what way he might secure his own safety, and the permanency of his government.

All Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem, and particularly the friends of Herod. There were many waiting for the consolation of Israel, to whom the coming of the Messiah would be a matter of joy; but all of Herod's friends would doubtless be alarmed at his coming.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

The Chief Priests. By the chief priests here are meant not only the high priest and his deputy, but also the heads or chiefs of the twenty-four classes into which David had divided the sacerdotal families, 1Chr 23:6, 24:1, 2Chr 8:14, 36:14; Ezr 8:24.

Scribes. By the scribes, in the New Testament, are meant learned men, men skilled in the law, and members of the great council. They were probably the learned men, or the lawyers of the nation. They kept the records of the court of justice, the registers of the synagogues, wrote their articles of contract and sale, their bills of divorce, &c. They were also called lawyers, Mt 22:35, and doctors of the law, Lk 5:17. They were called scribes from the fact of their writing the public records. They were not, however, a religious sect, but might be either Pharisees or Sadducees. By the chief priests and scribes here mentioned, is denoted the sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. This was composed of seventy-two men, who had the charge of the civil and religious affairs of the Jews. On this occasion, Herod, in alarm, called them together, professedly to make inquiry respecting the birth of the Messiah.

Demanded of them. Inquired, or asked of them. As they were the learned men of the nation, and as it was their business to study and explain the Old Testament, they were presumed to know what the prophecies had declared on that point. His object was to ascertain from prophecy where he was born, that he might strike an effectual blow. He seems not to have had any doubt about the time when he should be born. He was satisfied that the time had come.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

By the prophet. The sanhedrim answered without hesitation. It was settled by prophecy. This prophecy is found in Mic 5:2. In that prophecy, both the place of his birth and the character of the Messiah are so clearly set forth, that there was no room to doubt. It will be observed that there is a considerable difference between the passage as quoted by the sanhedrim, and as it stands in Micah The main point, however, is retained--the place of his birth. We are not concerned, therefore, in showing how these passages can be

reconciled. Matthew is not responsible for the correctness of the quotation. He affirms only that they gave this answer to Herod, and that Herod was satisfied. Admitting that they did not quote the passage correctly, it does not prove that Matthew has not reported their answer as they gave it; and this is all that he pretends to give.

Art not the least. In Micah, "though thou be little." Though a small place so far as population is concerned, yet it shall not be small, or least, in honour; for the Messiah shall be born there. His birth gave the place an honour which could not be conferred on the larger cities by all their numbers, their splendour, and their wealth. The birth of a distinguished personage was always supposed to give honour and importance to a city or country. Thus seven cities contended for the honour of giving birth to Homer; Stratford-upon-Avon is distinguished as the birth-place of Shakespeare; and Corsica as the birth-place of Napoleon.

A Governor. A Ruler. This is one of the characters of the Messiah, who is the King of his people, Jn 18:37. The word rule here means to rule as a shepherd does his flock, in faithfulness and tenderness. Comp. Jn 10:11, Is 40:10,11, 9:6.

6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor,
that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

Diligently. Accurately; exactly. He took pains to learn the precise time that the star appeared. He did this because he naturally concluded that the star appeared just at the time of his birth, and he wished to know precisely how old the child was.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him,* bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Go, and search diligently, etc. Herod took all possible means to obtain accurate information respecting the child, that he might be sure of destroying him. He not only ascertained the probable time of his birth, and the place where he would be born, but he sent the

wise men that they might actually see him, and bring him word. All this might have looked suspicious if he had not clothed it with the appearance of religion. He said to them, therefore, that he did it that he might go and worship him also. From this we may learn,

(1.) that wicked men often cloak their evil designs under the appearance of religion. They attempt to deceive those who are really good, and to make them suppose that they have the same design. But God cannot be deceived, and he will bring them to punishment.

(2.) Wicked men often make use of the pious to advance their evil purposes. Men like Herod will stop at nothing if they can carry their ends. They endeavour to deceive the simple, allure the unsuspecting, and to beguile the weak, to answer their purposes of wickedness.

(3.) The plans of wicked men are often well laid. They occupy a long time; they make diligent inquiry; and all of it has the appearance of religion. But God sees the design; and though men are deceived, yet God cannot be, Prov 15:3.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

The star--went before them. From this it appears that the star was a luminous meteor, perhaps at no great distance from the ground. It is not unlikely that they lost sight of the star after they had commenced their journey from the East. It is probable that it appeared to them first in the direction of Jerusalem. They concluded that the expected King had been born, and immediately commenced their journey to Jerusalem. When they arrived there, it was important that they should be directed to the very place where he was, and the star again appeared. It was for this reason that they rejoiced, They felt assured that they were under a heavenly guidance, and would be conducted to the new-born King of the Jews. And this shows,

(1.) that the birth of Jesus was an event of great moment, worthy of the Divine direction of these men to find the place of his nativity.

(2.) God will guide those who are disposed to find the Saviour. Even if for a time the light should be withdrawn, yet it will again appear, and direct us in the way to the Redeemer.

(3.) Direction to Christ should fill us with joy. He is the way, the truth, and the life; the Saviour, the Friend, the all in all; there is no other way of life, and there is no peace to the soul till he is found. When we are guided ta him, therefore, our hearts should overflow with joy and praise; and we should humbly and thankfully follow every direction that leads to the Son of God, Jn 12:35,36.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

They presented unto him gifts. These were presented to him as King of the Jews, because they supposed he was to be a distinguished prince and conqueror. It was customary at the birth of a prince to show respect for him by making him presents or offerings of this kind. This custom is still common in the East; and it is everywhere there unusual to approach a person of distinguished rank without a valuable present. See Gen 23:14, 43:11, 1Sam 10:27, 1Kgs 10:2, Ps 72:10-15.

Frankincense. This was a production of Arabia. It was a white resin or gum. It was obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark, and suffering the gum to flow out. It was highly odoriferous or fragrant when burned, and was, therefore, used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God. See Ex 30:8, Lev 16:12. It is produced, also, in the East Indies, but chiefly in Arabia; and hence it has been supposed probable that the wise men came from Arabia.

Myrrh. This was also a production of Arabia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. The name denotes bitterness, and was given to it on account of its great bitterness. It was used chiefly in embalming the dead, because it had the property of preserving them from putrefaction. Comp. Jn 19:39. It was much used in Egypt and in Judea. It was obtained from a thorny tree, which grows eight or nine feet high. It was at an early period an article of commerce, (Ge 37:25) and was an ingredient of the holy ointment, Ex 30:23. It was also used as an agreeable perfume, Est 2:12, Ps 45:8, Prov 7:17. It was, also, sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Saviour, when about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion, Mk 15:23. Comp. Mt 27:34. These offerings were made because they were the most valuable which their country produced. They were tokens of respect and homage which they paid to the new-born King of the Jews. They evinced their high regard for him, and their belief that he was to be an illustrious prince; and the fact that their deed is recorded with approbation, shows us that we should offer our most valuable possessions, our all, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Wise men came from far to do him homage, and bowed down and presented their best gifts and offerings. It is right that we give to him, also, our hearts, our property, our all.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Warned of God, etc. This was done, doubtless, because, if they had given Herod precise information where he was, it would have been easy for him to send forth and slay him. And from it we learn that God will watch over those whom he loves; that he knows how to foil the purposes of the wicked, and to deliver his own out of the hands of those who would destroy them.

The Slaying of the Infants

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

Flee into Egypt. Egypt is situated to the south-west of Judea, and is distant from Bethlehem perhaps about sixty miles. It was at this time a Roman province. The Greek language was spoken there. There were many Jews there, who had a temple and synagogues; and Joseph, therefore, would be among his own countrymen, and yet beyond the reach of Herod. The jurisdiction of Herod extended only to the river Sihon or river of Egypt, and of course, beyond that, Joseph was safe from his designs. For a description of Egypt, Isa 19:1. It is remarkable that this is the only time in which our Saviour was out of Palestine, and that this was in the land where the children of Israel had suffered so much and so long under the oppression of the Egyptian kings. The very land which was the land of bondage and groaning for the Jews, became now the land of refuge and safety for the new-born King of Judea. God can overturn nations and kingdoms, so that those whom he loves shall be safe anywhere.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

The death of Herod. Herod died in the thirty-seventh year of his reign. It is not certainly known in what year he began his reign, and hence it is impossible to determine the time that Joseph remained in Egypt. The best chronologers have supposed that he died somewhere between two and four years after the birth of Christ; but at what particular time cannot now be determined. Nor can it be determined at what age Jesus was taken into Egypt. It seems probable that he was supposed to be a year old, (Mt 2:16) and of course the time that he remained in Egypt was not long. Herod died of a most painful and loathsome disease in Jericho. Mt 2:16; also Josephus, Ant. xvii. 10.

That it might be fulfilled, etc. This language is recorded in Hos 11:1. It there evidently speaks of God's calling his people out of Egypt under Moses. See Ex 4:22,23. It might be said to be fulfilled in his calling Jesus from Egypt, because the words in Hosea aptly expressed this also. The same love which led him to deliver his

people Israel from the land of Egypt, now led him also to deliver his Son from that place. The words used by Hosea would express both events Mt 1:22. Perhaps, also, the place in Hosea became a proverb, to express any great deliverance from danger; and thus it could be said to be fulfilled in Christ, as other proverbs are in cases to which they are applicable. It cannot be supposed that the passage in Hosea was a prophecy of the Messiah, but was only used by Matthew appropriately to express the event.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Mocked of the wise men. When he saw that he had been deceived by them; that is, that they did not return as he had expected. It does not mean that they did it for the purpose of mocking or deriding him; but that he was disappointed in their not returning.

Exceeding wroth. Very angry. He had been disappointed and deceived. He expected to send an executioner and kill Jesus alone. But since he was disappointed in this, he thought he would accomplish the same thing, and be sure to destroy him, if he sent forth and put all the children in the place to death. This is an illustration of the power of anger. It stops at nothing. If it cannot accomplish just what it wishes, it does not hesitate to go much farther, and accomplish much more evil than it at first designed. He that has a wicked heart, and indulges in anger, knows not where it will end, and will commonly commit far more evil than he at first intended.

Slew all the children. That is, all the male children. This is implied in the original. The design of Herod was to cut off him that had been born King of the Jews. His purpose, therefore, did not require that he should slay all the female children; and though he was cruel, yet we have no right to think that he attempted here anything except what he thought to be for his own safety, and to secure himself from a rival.

In all the coasts thereof. The word coast is commonly applied now to the regions around the sea, as the sea coast. Here it means the adjacent places, the settlements or hamlets around Bethlehem--all that were in that neighbourhood. We do not know how large a place Bethlehem was; nor, of course, how many were slain. But it was not a large place, and the number could not be very great. It is not probable that it contained more than one or two thousand inhabitants; and in this case the number of children slain was not probably over twenty or thirty.

From two years old and under. Some writers have said that this does not mean, in the principal, that they had completed two years; but that they had entered in the second year, or had completed about one year, and entered on the second. But the meaning of the word is doubtful. It is quite probable that they would not be particular about the exact age, but slew all that were about that age.

According to the time, etc. He had endeavoured to ascertain of the wise men the exact time of his birth. He supposed he knew the age of Jesus. He slew, therefore, all that were of his age; that is, all that were born about the time when the star appeared, perhaps from six months old to two years. There is no reason to think that he would command those to be slain who had been born after the star appeared.

This destruction of the infants is not mentioned by Josephus, but for this omission three reasons may be given:

(1.) Josephus, a Jewish historian, and a Jew, would not be likely to record anything that would appear to confirm the truth of Christianity.

(2.) This act of Herod was really so small compared with his other crimes, that the historian might not think it worthy of record. Bethlehem was a small and obscure village, and the other crimes of Herod were so great and so public, that it is not to be wondered at that the Jewish historian has passed over this.

(3.) The order was probably given in secret, and might not have been known to Josephus. It pertained to the Christian history; and if the evangelists had not written, it might have been unknown or forgotten. Besides, no argument can be drawn from the silence of the Jewish historian. No reason can be given why Matthew should not be considered to be as fully entitled to credit as Josephus. Yet there is no improbability in the account given by Matthew. Herod was an odious and bloody tyrant, and the facts of his reign prove that he was abundantly capable or this wickedness. The following bloody deeds will show that the slaying of the infants was in perfect accordance with his character. The account is taken from Josephus, as arranged by Dr. Lardnet. Aristobulus, brother of his wife Marianne, was murdered by his direction at eighteen years of age, because the people of Jerusalem had shown some affection for his person. In the seventh year of his reign he put to death Hyreanus, grandfather of Mariamne, then eighty years of age, and who had formerly saved Herod's life; a man who had, ill every revolution of fortune, shown a mild and peaceable disposition. His beloved and beautiful wife, Mariamnne, had a public execution, and her mother Alexandra followed soon after. Alexander and Aristobulus, his two sons by Mariamne were strangled in prison by his orders upon groundless suspicions, as it seems, when they were at man's estate, were married, and had children. In his last sickness, a little before he died, he sent orders throughout Judea, requiring the presence of all the chief men of the nation at Jericho. His orders were obeyed, for they were enforced with no less penalty than that of death. When they were come to Jericho, he had them all shut up in the circus; and calling for his sister Salome, and her husband Alexis, he told them--" My life is now short. I know the Jewish people, and nothing will please them better than my death. You have them now in your custody. As soon as the breath is out of my body, and before my death can be known, do you let in the soldiers upon them, and kill them. All Judea, then, and every family, will, though unwillingly, mourn at my death." Nay, Josephus says, that with tears in his eyes he conjured them, by their love to him and their fidelity to God, not to fail of doing him this honour. What objection, after this account, can there be to the account of his murdering the

infants at Bethlehem? Surely there could be no cruelty, barbarity, and horrid crime, which such a man was not capable of perpetrating.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,
18 In Ramah was there a voice heard,
lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children,
and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Jeremy. Jeremiah. This quotation is taken from Jer 31:15. The word "fulfilled," here, is taken evidently in the sense that the words in Jeremiah aptly express the event which Matthew was recording. The original design of this prophecy was to describe the sorrowful departure of the people into captivity, after the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan. The captives were assembled at Rama, Jeremiah himself being in chains, and there the fate of those who had escaped in the destruction of the city was decided at the will of the conqueror, Jer 40:1 The nobles had been slain, and the eyes of their king put out after the murder of his sons before his sight, and the people were then gathered at Rama in chains, whence they were to start on their mournful journey, slaves to a cruel monarch, leaving behind them all that was dear in life. The sadness of such a scene is well expressed in the language of the prophet, and no less beautifully and fitly applies to the melancholy event which the evangelist records; and there could be no impropriety in his using it as a quotation.

Rama was a small town in the tribe of Benjamin, not far from Bethlehem. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, and was buried near to Bethlehem, Gen 35:16-19. Rama was about six miles north-west of Jerusalem, near Bethel. The name Rama signifies an eminence, and was given to the town because it was situated on a hill. Rama is commonly supposed to be the same as the Arimathea of the New Testament--the place where Joseph lived who begged the body of Jesus. See Mt 27:57. This is also the same place in which Samuel was born, where he resided, died, and was buried, and where he anointed Saul as king, 1Sam 1:1,19, 2:11, 8:4, 19:18 1Sam 25:1. Mr. King, an American missionary, was at Rama --now

called Romba--in 1824; and Mr. Whiting, another American missionary, was there in 1835. He says,

"The situation is exceedingly beautiful. It is about two hours distant from Jerusalem to the north-west, on an eminence commanding a view of a wide extent of beautiful diversified country. Hills, plains, and valleys, highly cultivated fields of wheat and barley, vineyards and oliveyards, are spread out before you as on a map; and numerous villages are scattered here and there over the whole view. To the west and north-west, beyond the hill-country, appears the vast plain of Sharon, and farther still you look out upon the great and wide sea. It occurred to me as not improbable, that in the days of David and Solomon, this place may have been a favourite retreat during the heat of summer; and that here the former may have often struck his sacred lyre. Some of the psalms, or at least one of them, (see Ps 104:25) seem to have been composed in some place which commanded a view of the Mediterranean; and this is the only place, I believe, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, that affords such a view."

Rama was once a strongly fortified city, but there is no city here at present. A half-ruined Mohammedan mosque, which was originally a Christian church, stands over the tomb of the prophet; besides which, a few miserable dwellings are the only buildings that remain on this once celebrated spot.

There is a town about thirty miles north-west of Jerusalem, on the road to Joppa, now called Ramla, or Ramle, which is described by many geographers, and some of the best maps, as the Rama of Samuel, and the Arimathea of Joseph. It commands a view of the whole valley of Sharon, from the mountains of Jerusalem to the sea, and from the foot of Carmel to the hills of Gaza.--Un. Bib. Die.

By a beautiful figure of speech, the prophet introduces the mother weeping over the tribe, her children, and with them weeping over the fallen destiny of Israel, and over the calamities about to come upon the land. Few images could be more striking than thus to introduce a mother, long dead, whose sepulchre was near, weeping

bitterly over the terrible calamities that befell her descendants. The language and the image aptly and beautifully expressed the sorrows of the mothers in Bethlehem, when Herod slew their infant children. Under the cruelty of the tyrant, almost every family was a family of tears; and well might there be lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning.

We may remark here, that the sacred writers were cautious of speaking of the characters of wicked men. Here was one of the worst men in the world, committing one of the most awful crimes, and yet there is not a single mark of exclamation; not a single reference to any other part of his conduct; nothing that could lead to the knowledge that his other conduct was not upright. There is no wanton and malignant dragging him into the narrative, that they might gratify malice, in making free with a very bad character. What was to their purpose, they record; what was not, they left to others. This is the nature of religion. It does not speak evil of others except when necessary, nor then does it take pleasure in it.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

Herod was dead. Mt 2:15. Herod left three sons, and the kingdom was at his death divided between them. To Archelaus was given Judea, Idumea, and Samaria; to Philip, Batanea, Trachonitis, etc.; to Antipas, Galllea and Perea. Each of these was also called Herod, and these are the individuals who are so frequently referred to in the New Testament during the ministry of the Saviour and the labours of the apostles. The following table will show at a glance the chief connexions of this family, as far as they are mentioned in the sacred history.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

He heard that Archelaus did reign. Archelaus possessed a cruel and tyrannical disposition similar to his father. At one of the passovers he caused three thousand of the people to be put to death in the temple and city. For his crimes, after he had reigned nine years, he was banished by Augustus, the Roman emperor, to Gaul, where he died. Knowing his character, and fearing that he would not be safe there, Joseph hesitated about going there, and was directed by God to go to Galilee, a place of safety.

The parts of Galilee. The country of Galilee. At this time the land of Palestine was divided into three parts: GALILEE, on the north; SAMARIA, in the middle; and Judea, on the south. Galilee was under the government of Herod Antipas, who was comparatively a mild prince; and in his dominions Joseph might find safety.

23 and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Matthew-3

The Preaching of John the Baptist

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

In those days. The days here referred to cannot be those mentioned in the preceding chapter, for John was but six months older than Christ. Perhaps Matthew intended to extend his narrative to the whole time that Jesus dwelt at Nazareth; and the meaning is, "in those days while Jesus still dwelt at Nazareth." John began to preach. It is not probable that John began to baptize or preach long before the Saviour entered on his ministry; and, consequently, from the time that is mentioned at the close of the second chapter, to that mentioned in the beginning of the third, an interval of twenty-five or more years elapsed.

John the Baptist. Or, John the baptizer--so called from his principal office, that of baptizing. Baptism, or the application of water, was

a rite well known to the Jews, and practised when they admitted proselytes to their religion from heathenism.--Lightfoot.

Preaching. The word rendered to preach, means, to proclaim in the manner of a public crier; to make proclamation. The discourses recorded in the New Testament are mostly brief, sometimes a single sentence. They were public proclamations of some great truth. Such appear to have been the discourses of John, calling men to repentance.

In the wilderness of Judea. This country was situated along the Jordan, and the Dead Sea, to the east of Jerusalem. The word translated wilderness does not denote, as with us, a place of boundless forests, entirely destitute of inhabitants; but a mountainous, rough, and thinly-settled country, covered, to some considerable extent, with forests and rocks, and better fitted for pasture than for tilling. There were inhabitants in those places, and even villages, but they were the comparatively unsettled portions of the country, 1Sam 25:1,2. In the time of Joshua there were six cities in what was then called a wilderness, Josh 15:61,62.

Repent ye. Repentance implies sorrow for past offences, (2Cor 7:10) a deep sense of the evil of sin as committed against God, (Ps 51:4) and a full purpose to turn from transgression and to lead a holy life. A true penitent has sorrow for sin, not only because it is ruinous to his soul, but chiefly because it is an offence against God, and is that abominable thing which he hates, Jer 44:4. It is produced by seeing the great danger and misery to which it exposes us; by seeing the justness and holiness of God, (Job 42:6) and by seeing that our sins have been committed against Christ, and were the cause of his death, Zech 12:10, Lk 22:61, 62. There are two words in the New Testament translated repentance-- one of which denotes a change of mind, or a reformation of life; and the other, sorrow or regret that sin has been committed. The word used here is the former; calling the Jews to a change of life, or a reformation of conduct. In the time of John, the nation had become extremely wicked and corrupt, perhaps more so than at any preceding period,

Hence both he and Christ began their ministry by calling to repentance.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. The phrases, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of Christ, and kingdom of God, are o frequent occurrence in the Bible. They all refer to the same thing. The expectation of such a kingdom was taken from the Old Testament, and especially from Daniel, Dan 7:13,14. The prophets had told of a successor to David that should sit on his throne, 1Kgs 2:4, 8:25, Jer 33:17. The Jews expected a great national deliverer. They supposed that when the Messiah should appear, all the dead would be raised; that the judgment would take place; and that the enemies of the Jews would be destroyed, and themselves advanced to great national dignity and honour.

The language in which they were accustomed to describe this event was retained by our Saviour and his apostles. Yet they early attempted to correct the common notions respecting his reign. This was one design, doubtless, of John in preaching repentance. Instead of summoning them to military exercises, and collecting an army, which would have been in accordance with their expectations, he called them to a change of life; to the doctrine of repentance--a state of things far more accordant with the approach of a kingdom of purity.

The phrases, kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven, have been supposed to have a considerable variety of meaning. Some have thought that they refer to the state of things in heaven; others, to the personal reign of Christ on earth; others, that they mean the church, or the reign of Christ in the hearts of his people. There can be no doubt that there is reference in the words to the condition of things in heaven, after this life. But the church of God is a preparatory state to that beyond the grave; a state in which Christ pre-eminently rules and reigns; and there is no doubt that it sometimes refers to the state of things in the church; and it means, therefore, the state of things which the Messiah was to set up-- his spiritual reign began in the church on earth, and completed in heaven.

The phrase would be best translated, "the reign of God draws near." We do not say commonly of a kingdom that it is moveable, or that it approaches. A reign may be said to be at hand; or the time when Christ should reign was at hand. In this sense it is meant that the time when Christ should reign, or set up his kingdom, or begin his dominion on earth, under the Christian economy, was about to commence. The phrase, then, should not be confined to any period of that reign, but includes his whole dominion over his people on earth and in heaven.

In the passage here it clearly means that the coming of the Messiah was near; or that the time of the reign of God, which the Jews had expected, was coming.

The word heaven, or heavens, as it is in the original, means sometimes the place, so called; and sometimes is, by a figure of speech, put for the Great Being whose residence is there; as in Dan 4:26, "the heavens do rule." See also Mk 11:30, Lk 15:18. As that kingdom was one of purity, it was proper that the people should prepare themselves for it by turning from their sins, and directing their minds to a suitable fitness for his reign.

2 and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

The prophet Esaias. The prophet Isaiah. Esias is the Greek mode of writing the name. This passage is taken from Isa 40:3. It is here said to have been spoken in reference to John, the forerunner of Christ. The language is such as was familiar to the Jews, and such as they would understand. It was spoken at first with reference to the return from the captivity at Babylon. Anciently, it was customary in the march of armies to send messengers, or pioneers, before them, to proclaim their approach; to provide for them; to remove obstructions; to make roads, level hills, fill up valleys, etc. Isaiah, describing the return from Babylon, uses language taken from that custom. A crier, or herald is introduced. In the vast deserts that lay

between Babylon and Judea, he is represented as lifting up his voice, and, with authority, commanding a public road to be made for the return of the captive Jews, with the Lord as their deliverer. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," says he; or, as Isaiah adds, Let the valleys be exalted, or filled up, and the hills be levelled, and a straight, level highway be prepared, that they may march with ease and safety. Isa 40:3.

As applied to John, it means, that he was sent to remove obstructions, and to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah; like a herald going before an army on the march, to make preparations for their coming.

4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

His raiment of camel's hair. His clothing. This is not the fine hair of the camel from which our elegant cloth is made, called eamlet; nor the more elegant stuff, brought from the East Indies, under the name of camel's hair; but the long, shaggy hair of the camel, from which a coarse, cheap cloth is made, still worn by the poorer classes in the East, and by monks. This dress of the camel's hair, and a leathern girdle, it seems, was the common dress of the prophets, 2Kgs 1:8, Zech 13:4.

His meat was locusts. His food. These constituted the food of the common people. Among the Greeks, the vilest of the people used to eat them; and the fact that John made his food of them is significant of his great poverty and humble life. The Jews were allowed to eat them, Lev 11:22. Locusts are flying insects, and are of various kinds. The green locusts are about two inches in length, and about the thickness of a man's finger. The common brown locust is about three inches long. The general form and appearance of the locust is not unlike the grasshopper They were one of the plagues of Egypt, Ex 10:1. In eastern countries they are very numerous. They appear in such quantities as to darken the sky, and devour in a short time every green thing. The whole earth is sometimes covered with them for many leagues, Joel 1:4, Isa 33:4.

Wild honey. This was probably the honey that he found in the rocks of the wilderness. Palestine was often called the land flowing with milk and honey, Ex 3:8,17, 13:5. Bees were kept with great care and great numbers of them abounded in the fissures of trees and the clefts of rocks. There is also a species of honey called wild-honey, or wood-honey 1Sam 14:27, or honey-dew, produced by certain little insects, and deposited on the leaves of trees, and flowing from them in great quantities to the ground. See 1Sam 14:24-27. This is said to be produced still in Arabia; and perhaps it was this which John lived upon.

In the preaching of John the Baptist, we are presented with an example of a faithful minister of God. Neither the wealth, dignity, nor power of his auditors, deterred him from fearlessly declaring the truth respecting their character. He called things by their right names. He did not apologize for their sin. He set it fairly before them, and denounced the appropriate curse. So should all ministers of the gospel. Rank, riches, and power, should have nothing to do in shaping and gauging their ministry. In respectful terms, but without shrinking, all the truths of the gospel must be spoken, or woe will follow the ambassador of Christ.

In John we have also an example of humility. Blessed with great success; attended by the great and noble, and with nothing but principle to keep him from turning it to his advantage, he still kept himself out of view, and pointed to a far greater personage at hand, So should every minister of Jesus, however successful, keep the Lamb of God in his eye, and be willing--nay, rejoice--to lay all his success and honours at his feet.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Pharisees and Sadducees. The Jews were divided into three great sects, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. In addition to

these, some smaller sects are mentioned in the New Testament, and by Josephus: the Herodians, probably political friends of Herod; the Galileans, a branch of the Pharisees; and the Therapeutae, a branch of the Essenes, but converts from the Greeks. The principal of these sects are supposed to have originated about 150 years before Christ, as they are mentioned by Josephus at about that time in his history. Of course nothing is said of them in the Old Testament, as that was finished about 400 years before the Christian era.

I The PHARISEES were the most numerous and wealthy sect of the Jews. They derived their name from the Hebrew word Pharash, which signifies to set apart, or to separate, because they separated themselves from the rest of their countrymen, and professedly devoted themselves to peculiar strictness in religion. Their leading tenets were the following:-- that the world was governed by fate, or by a fixed decree of God; that the souls of men were immortal, and were either eternally happy or miserable beyond the grave; that the dead would be raised; that there were angels, good and bad; that God was under obligation to bestow peculiar favour on the Jews; and that they were justified by the merits of Abraham, or by their own conformity to the law. They were proud, haughty, self-righteous, and held the common people in great disrespect, Jn 7:49. They sought the offices of the state, and affected great dignity. They were ostentatious in their religious worship, praying in the corners of the streets, and seeking publicity in the bestowment of alms. They sought principally external cleanliness; and dealt much in ceremonial ablutions and washing.

Some of the laws of Moses they maintained very strictly. In addition to the written laws, they held to a multitude which they maintained had come down from Moses by tradition. These they felt themselves as much bound to observe as the written law. Under the influence of these laws, they washed themselves before meals with great scrupulousness; they fasted twice a week--on Thursday, when they supposed Moses ascended Mount Sinai, and on Monday, when he descended; they wore broad phylacteries, and enlarged the fringe or borders of their garments; they loved the chief rooms at

feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues. They were in general a corrupt, hypocritical, office-seeking, haughty class of men. There are, however, some honourable exceptions recorded, Acts 5:34. Perhaps, also, Mk 15:43, Lk 2:25, 23:51, Jn 19:38.

II The SADDUCEES are supposed to have taken their name from Sadok, who flourished about 260 years before the Christian era. He was a pupil of Antigonus Sochaeus, president of the sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. He had taught the duty of serving God disinterestedly, without the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment Sadok, not properly understanding the doctrine of his master drew the inference that there was no future state of rewards or punishments and on this belief he founded the sect. The other notions which they held, all to be traced to this leading doctrine, were:--

1st. That there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, (Mt 22:23, Acts 23:8) and that the soul of man perishes with the body.

2nd. They rejected the doctrine of fate.

3rd. They rejected all traditions, and professed to receive only the books of the Old Testament.

They were far less numerous than the Pharisees, but their want of numbers was compensated, in some degree, by their wealth and standing in society. Though they did not generally seek office, yet several of them were advanced to the high-priesthood.

III. The ESSENES, a third sect of the Jews, are not mentioned in the New Testament. They differed from both the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were Jewish monks, or hermits, passing their time little in society, but mostly in places of obscurity and retirement. It is not probable, therefore, that our Saviour often, if ever, encountered them; and this, it is supposed, is the reason why they are not mentioned in the New Testament.

They were a contemplative sect, having little to do with the common business of life. The property which they possessed they held in common. They denied themselves generally of the usual comforts of life, and were exceedingly strict in the observance of the duties of religion. They were generally more pure than the rest of the Jews, and appear to have been an unambitious, a modest, and retiring sort of people. The two sexes were not in company, except on the Sabbath, when they partook of their coarse fare, bread and salt only, together. They practised dancing in their worship. Few of them were married; they were opposed to oaths; and asserted that slavery was repugnant to nature. In regard to doctrine, they did not differ materially from the Pharisees, except that they objected to the sacrifices of slain animals, and of course did not visit the temple, and were not, therefore, likely to come into public contact with the Saviour. They perpetuated their sect by proselytes, and by taking orphan children to train up.

The other sects of the Jews were too insignificant to demand any particular notice here. It may be said of the Jews generally, that they possessed little of the spirit of religion; that they had corrupted some of the most important doctrines of the Bible; and that they were an ignorant, proud, ambitious, and sensual people. There was great propriety, therefore, in John's proclaiming the necessity of repentance.

Generation of vipers. Vipers are a species of serpents. They are from two to five feet in length, and about an inch thick, with a flat head. They are of an ash or yellowish colour, speckled with long brown spots. There is no serpent that is more poisonous than their bite; and the person bitten swells up almost immediately, and falls down dead. See Acts 28:6. The word serpent, or viper, is used to denote both cunning and malignancy. In the phrase, be ye wise as serpents, it means, be prudent, or wise, referring to the account in Gen 3:1-6. Among the Jews the serpent was regarded as the symbol of cunning, circumspection, and prudence. He was so regarded in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. In the phrase "-generation of vipers," Mt 12:34, the viper is the symbol of wickedness, of envenomed

malice--a symbol drawn from the venom of the serpent. It is not quite certain in which of these senses the phrase is used in this place; probably to denote their malignancy and wickedness. See Mt 12:34, 23:33.

Wrath to come. John expresses his astonishment that sinners so hardened and so hypocritical as they were should have been induced to flee from coming wrath. The wrath to come means the Divine indignation, or the punishment that will come on the guilty. See 1Thes 1:10, 2:16.

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

meet for repentance—that is, such fruit as befits a true penitent. John now being gifted with a knowledge of the human heart, like a true minister of righteousness and lover of souls here directs them how to evidence and carry out their repentance, supposing it genuine; and in the following verses warns them of their danger in case it were not.

9 and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

And think not to say, etc. They regarded it, as sufficient righteousness that they were descended from so holy a man as Abraham. They deemed it as such an honour that it would go far to justify all his descendants, Jn 8:33-37, 53. John assured them that this was a matter of small consequence in the sight of God. Of the very stones of the Jordan he could raise up children to Abraham. The meaning seems to be this: God, from these stones, could more easily raise up those who should be worthy children of Abraham, or be like him, than simply because you are descendants of Abraham make you, who are proud and hypocritical, subjects of the Messiah's kingdom. Or, mere nativity, or the privileges of birth, avail nothing where there is not righteousness of life. Some have supposed, however, that by these stones he meant the Roman soldiers, or the heathen, who might also have attended on his ministry; and that God could of them raise up children to Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

The axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Laying the axe at the root of a tree is intended to denote that the tree is to be cut down. It was not merely to be trimmed, to be cut about the limbs, but the very tree itself was to be struck. That is, a searching, trying kind of preaching has been commenced. A kingdom of justice is to be set, up. Principles and conduct are to be investigated. No art, no dissimulations, are to be successful. Men are to be tried by their lives, not by birth, or profession. They who are not found to bear this test, are to be rejected. The very root shall feel the blow, and the fruitless tree shall fall. This is a beautiful and very striking figure of speech, and a very direct threatening of future wrath. John regarded them as making a fair and promising profession, as trees do in blossom. But he told them, also, that they should bear fruit as well as flowers. Their professions of repentance were not enough. They should show, by a holy life, that their profession was genuine.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:

Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. The word here translated shoes, has a signification different from what it has in our language. At first, in order to keep the feet from the sharp stones, or the burning sand, small pieces of wood were fastened to the soles of the feet, called sandals. Leather, or skins of beasts dressed, afterwards were used. The foot was not covered at all; but the sandal, or piece of leather or wood, was bound by thongs.

The wooden sandal is much worn in Arabia, Judea, and Egypt. It has a raised heel and toe, as represented in some of the preceding cuts; and, though often expensive and neat, it was usually a cheap, coarse, and very clumsy article.

The people put off these when they entered a house, and put them on when they left it. To loose and bind on sandals, on such occasions, was the business of the lowest servants; and their office was to loose and carry about their masters' sandals. The expression

here, then, was an expression of great humility; and John says that he was not worthy to be the servant of Him who should come after him.

Shall baptize you. Shall send upon you the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is frequently represented as being poured out upon his people, Provo 1:23, Is 44:3, Joel 2:28,29, Acts 2:17,18. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the same, therefore, as the sending of his influences to convert, purify, and guide the soul.

The Holy Ghost: The Third Person of the adorable Trinity, whose office it is to enlighten, renew, sanctify, and comfort the soul. He was promised by the Saviour to convince of sin, Jn 16:8. To enlighten or teach the disciples, Jn 14:26, 16:13. To comfort them in the absence of the Saviour, Jn 14:18, 16:7. To change the heart, Tit 3:5. To be baptized with the Holy Ghost means, that the Messiah would send upon the world a far more powerful and mighty influence than had attended the preaching of John. Many more would be converted. A mighty change would take place. His ministry would not affect the external life only, but the heart, the motives, the soul; and produce rapid and permanent changes in the lives of men. See Acts 2:17,18.

With fire. This expression has been very variously understood. Some have supposed that he refers to the afflictions and persecutions with which men would be tried under the gospel; others, that the word fire means judgment or wrath. A part of his hearers he would baptize with the Holy Ghost, but the wicked with fire and vengeance. Fire is a symbol of vengeance. See Is 5:24, 61:2, 66:24. If this be the meaning, as seems to be probable, then John says that the ministry of the Messiah would be far more powerful than his was. It would be more searching and trying; and they who were not fitted to abide the test, would be cast into eternal fire. Some have supposed, however, that by fire, here, he intends to denote that his ministry would be refining, powerful, purifying, as fire is sometimes an emblem of purity, Mal 3:2. It is difficult to ascertain the precise meaning, further than that his ministry would

be very trying, purifying, searching. Multitudes would be converted; and those who were not true penitents should not be able to abide the trial, and should be driven away.

12 whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

In these words the baptists compare Christ, the promised Messiah, to an husbandman, the Jewish church to a barnfloor. The office of the husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow his corn, separating it from the chaff: preserving the one and consuming the other. Learn hence,

1. That the church is Christ's floor.

2. That this floor Christ will purge and that thoroughly.

3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor.

The church is compared to a floor, upon the account of that mixture which is in the church; in a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed.

Thus in the church there is and will be a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere Christians. But this floor Christ will purge; purge it, but not break it up: purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its essence and its existence:

And the fan with which he will purge his floor is his word, accompanied with the wind of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wind dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both the floor is purged. His fan is in his hand, &c.

The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Here we have our Savior's solemn inauguration and public entrance upon this prophetic office, by baptism, or washing with water, according to the manner of the priests under the ceremonial law, Exod 29:4.

Where we have observable,

1. The circumstance of time: Then cometh Jesus: that is, after he had lain hid in Nazareth thirty years he comes abroad, and enters upon his public ministry.
Teaching us by his example, That when we are ripe and fit for public service, we should no less willingly leave our obscurity, than we took the benefit of it for our preparation.

2. The action itself, Christ is baptized now, as he was circumcised before; not because there was any impurity in him, either filth, or foreskin, which wanted either the circumcising knife, or the baptismal water; yet purity itself condescends to be washed, Christ to be baptized; for these reasons:

A. That by this symbol he might enter himself into the society of Christians, as by circumcision he had done into the society of Jews; as a king condescends sometimes to be made a free man of a city or corporation.

B. That he might by his own baptism sanctify the ordinance of baptism unto his church.

C. That thereby he might fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, when they entered upon their office as appears from Exod 29:4.

3. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John; Christ cometh to John, not John to Christ.

Behold! the Lord seeketh to his servant, Christ will be baptized of his messenger! Our Savior's design hereby no doubt was, to put honour upon the ministry of John.

Oh! how dare the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man being appointed by God, which Christ honoured in his own person, and graced with his own presence!

14 But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

1. The modesty of John's refusal: John forbade him, and refused to admit him. But why?

A. In regard of Christ, because he knew he needed it not: such was his majesty and greatness, that he was above it: and such was his purity and holiness, that he could not want it.

B. In respect of himself, he knew his own uncleanness: I have need to be baptized of thee, &c. He thought it unsuitable that a sinner should baptize and wash him that was no sinner.

C. With respect to the people; lest they seeing Christ baptized should apprehend him to be a sinner, and one that wanted the baptism of repentance as well as themselves.

D. As the modesty of John's refusal, so the reason he assigns for it: I have need to be baptized of thee; as if he had said, "Thou art purity, I am pollution; thou art spirit, I am flesh; humble apprehension has this holy man of himself.
Learn, That the more holy a person is, the more sensible he is of his unholiness; where there is most grace, there is the greatest sense of the want of grace.

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

All righteousness. There was no particular precept in the Old Testament requiring this, but he chose to give the sanction of his example to the baptism of John, as to a Divine ordinance. The

phrase "all righteousness," here, is the same as a righteous institution or appointment. Jesus had no sin. But he was about to enter on his great work. It was proper that he should be set apart by his forerunner, and show his connection with him, and give his approbation to what John had done. Also, he was baptized that occasion might be taken, at the commencement of his work, for God publicly to declare his approbation of him, and his solemn appointment to the office of Messiah.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Here we have the solemn inauguration of Christ into his prophetic office, accompanied with a threefold miracle.

1. The opening of the heavens.

2. The descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, like as a dove descends.

3. God the Father's voice concerning his son.

The heavens were opened to shew that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us, by Christ's undertaking for us. As the first Adam shuts us out of heaven, the second Adam lets us into it; he opened heaven, to us by his meritorious passion, and he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession.

Next, the Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Savior: here we have an evidence of the blessed Trinity; the Father speaks from Heaven, the Son comes out of the water,
Hence we gather, That the Holy Ghost is not a quality, or an operation, but a person, and a person really distinct from the Father and the Son.

The Spirit of God. See Mt 3:11. This was the Third Person of the Trinity, descending upon him in the form of a dove, Lk 3:22. The dove, among the Jews, was the symbol of purity or harmlessness,

(Mt 10:16) and of softness, (Ps 55:7.) The form chosen here was doubtless an emblem of the innocence, meekness, and tenderness of the Saviour. The gift of the Holy Spirit, in this manner, was the public approbation of Jesus, (Jn 1:33,) and a sign of his being set apart to the office of the Messiah. We are not to suppose that there was any change wrought in the moral character of Jesus, but only that he was publicly set apart to his work, and solemnly approved by God in the office to which he was appointed.

17 and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Last of all, We have the audible voice of God the Father pronouncing,

1. The nearness of Christ's relation to himself, This is my Son, not by adoption, but by eternal generation.

2. The endearedness of his person, This is my beloved Son.

3. The fruit and benefit of this near and dear relation unto us; In him I am well pleased.

Note,

A. That there is no possibility for any person to please God out of Christ; both our persons and our performances find acceptance only for his sake.

B. That in and through Christ, God is well pleased with all believers: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, &c.

Lord! what revivng news is this to thy church, to hear that her head and husband, her surety, mediator, and intercessor, is that only Son of God in whom his soul is delighted and ever well pleased! That Son who always pleased thee, and by and through whom thou art well pleased with, and reconciled to, thy offending creatures!

Matthew-4

The Temptation of Jesus

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Observe, 1. The great humiliation of the Son of God, how exceedingly was he humbled by the horrid temptations wherewith he was assaulted, than which nothing could be more grievous to his holy heart. What could be more burdensome to him that was brought up from eternity with God the Father, than to be shut up in a wilderness with the devil, there to be baited by him so many days, having his ears files, though not defiled, with horrid blasphemies spit upon the holy and reverend name of God! Oh deep abasement and wonderful humiliation of the Son of God!

Observe, 2. The time when Christ entered the lists with Satan, implied in the word then! that is first, immediately after his baptism; he is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation:

secondly, immediately after the Spirit descended upon, and the Father had by a voice from heaven, manifested his complacency and satisfaction in him: This is my beloved Son, &c.

Note thence, That great manifestations of love from God, are usually followed with great temptations from Satan.

Observe, 3. The place where this combat was fought, and that is, in the wilderness.

Learn thence, That no place can privilege us from temptation, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assualts: the solitary wilderness has a tempter in it, yea Satan sometimes makes use of men's solitariness, to further his temptations: a cell, a nunnery, or a cloister, are as open to Satan as the open fields, and the persons that live in the have a tempter without, and an inticer within as well as other men.

Observe, 4. The efficient cause of Christ's going into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan: He was led up of the Spirit, says St. Matthew: The Spirit drove him, says St. Mark: that is, the Holy Spirit of God, not Satan the unclean spirit, for the devil is seldom if ever called the spirit, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as the evil spirit, or the unclean spirit.

Christ was led by the Spirit; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God into the wilderness, to be tempted by Satan. The word to tempt, in the original, means to try, to endeavour, to attempt to do a thing; then, to try the nature of a thing, as metals by fire; then, to test moral qualities by trying them, to see how they will endure; then, to endeavour to draw men away from virtue by suggesting motives to evil. This is the meaning here, and this is now the established meaning of the word in the English language.

Learn hence, 1. That none of the children of God are assaulted, are ordered by divine and special dispensation. Satan could not assault our Saviour till he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for that end; and he shall not assault any of his members, but by divine permission.

The devil. This word originally means an adversary, or an accuser; thence any one opposed; thence an enemy of any kind. It is given in the Scriptures, by way of eminence, to the leader of evil angels--a being characterized as full of subtlety, envy, art, and hatred of mankind. He is known, also, by the name of Satan, Job 1:6-12, Mt 12:26; Beelzebub, Mt 12:24; the old Serpent, Rev 12:9; and the prince of the power of the air, Eph 2:2 The name is sometimes given to men and women. 2Ti 3:3 Truce-breakers, slanderers--in the original, devils. 1Timm 3:2: So must their wives be grave, not slanderers--in the original, devils.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward ahungered.

Forty days and forty nights. It has been questioned by some whether Christ abstained wholly from food, or only from bread and the food

to which he was accustomed. Luke says, (Lk 4:2,) that he ate nothing. This settles the question. Mark says, Mk 1:13, that angels came and ministered unto him. At first view, this would seem to imply that he did eat during that time. But Mark does not mention the time when the angels performed the office of kindness; and we are at liberty to suppose that he meant to say that it was done at the close of the forty days; and the rather as Matthew, after giving an account of the temptation, says the same thing, Mk 4:2. There are other instances of persons fasting forty days, recorded in the Scriptures. Thus Moses fasted forty days, Ex 34:28. Elijah also fasted the same length of time, 1Kgs 19:8. In these cases, they were no doubt miraculously supported.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Observe here,

1. The occasion of the temptation. The occasion was our Savior's hunger and want of bread.

2. The temptation itself. Learn thence, That when God suffers any of his dear children to fall into want, and to be straitened for outward things, Satan takes a mighty advantage thereupon, to tempt and assualt them.

But what doth he tempt our Savior to? To the sin of distrust, to question his sonship; If thou be the Son of God; and next to distrust his Father's providence and care. Command that these stones be made bread. As Satan had said, "How unlikely is it, that thou shouldst be highly favoured, and yet deserted? What! the Son of God; and yet ready to starve! Certainly if thou canst not supply thy necessities, thou art nothing akin to God.'

Learn hence, 1. That Satan's grand design is, first to tempt the children of God to doubt of their adoption; and next, to distrust God's fatherly care over them and provision for them; and last of all, to use unwarrantable means to help themselves.

Thus Satan dealt with Christ, and thus he deals with Christians: for for to work a miracle at Satan's direction was not a lawful means of providing food for himself.

If thou be the Son of God. If thou art the Messiah--if God's own Son--then thou hast power to work a miracle; and here is a fit opportunity to try thy power, and show that thou art truly his Son. Command that these stones, etc. The stones that were lying around him in the wilderness, No temptation could have been more plausible, or more likely to succeed, than this. He had just been declared to be the Son of God, (Mt 3:17) and here was an opportunity to show that he was really so. The circumstances were such as to make it appear plausible and proper to work this miracle. "Here you are," was the language of Satan, "hungry, cast out, alone, needy, poor, and yet the Son of God! If you have this power, how easy could you satisfy your wants! How foolish is it, then, for the Son of God, having all power, to be starving in this manner, when by a word he could show his power, and relieve his wants, and when in the thing itself there could be nothing wrong!"

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

But he answered and said, etc. In reply to this artful temptation, Christ answered by a quotation from the Old Testament. The place is found in De 8:3. Of all passages in Old Testament Scripture, none could have been pitched upon more apposite, perhaps not one so apposite, to our Lord's purpose. "The Lord . . . led thee (said Moses to Israel, at the close of their journeyings) these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only," &c., "Now, if Israel spent, not forty days, but forty years in a waste, howling wilderness, where there were no means of human subsistence, not starving, but divinely provided for, on purpose to prove to every age that human support depends not upon bread, but upon God's unfailing word of promise and pledge of all needful

providential care, am I, distrusting this word of God, and despairing of relief, to take the law into My own hand? True, the Son of God is able enough to turn stones into bread: but what the Son of God is able to do is not the present question, but what is man's duty under want of the necessaries of life. And as Israel's condition in the wilderness did not justify their unbelieving murmurings and frequent desperation, so neither would Mine warrant the exercise of the power of the Son of God in snatching despairingly at unwarranted relief. As man, therefore, I will await divine supply, nothing doubting that at the fitting time it will arrive."

In that place the discourse is respecting manna. Moses says that the Lord humbled the people, and fed them with manna, an unusual kind of food, that they might learn that man did not live by bread only, but that there were other things to support life, and that every thing which God had commanded was proper for this. The term "word," used in this place, means very often, in Hebrew, thing, and clearly in this place has that meaning. Neither Moses nor our Saviour had any reference to spiritual food, or to the doctrines necessary to support the faith of believers; but they simply meant that God could support life by other things than bread; that man was to live, not by that only, but by every other thing which proceeded out of his mouth; that is, which he chose to command men to eat. The substance of his answer, then, is:--"It is not so imperiously necessary that I should have bread, as to make a miracle proper to procure it. Life depends on the will of God. He can support it in other ways, as well as by bread. He has created other things to be eaten, and man may live by everything that his Maker has commanded." And from this temptation we may learn,

(1.) that Satan often takes advantage of our circumstances and wants to tempt us. The poor, and hungry, and naked, he often tempts to repine and complain, and to be dishonest in order to supply their necessities.

(2.) Satan's temptations are often the strongest immediately after we have been remarkably favoured. Jesus had just been called the

Son of God, and Satan took this opportunity to try him. He often attempts to fill us with pride and vain self-conceit, when we have been favoured with any peace of or any new view of God, and endeavours to urge us to do something which may bring us low, and lead us to sin.

(3.) His temptations are plausible. They often seem to be only urging us to do what is good and proper. They seem even to urge us to promote the glory of God, and to honour him. We are not to think, therefore, that because a thing may seem to be good in itself, that therefore it is to be done. Some of his most powerful temptations are when he seems to be urging us to do what shall be for the glory of God.

(4.) We are to meet the temptations of Satan, as the Saviour did, with the plain and positive declarations of Scripture. We are to inquire whether the thing is commanded, and whether, therefore, it is right to do it, and not trust to our own feelings, or even our wishes, in tho matter.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

Taketh him up. This does not mean that he bore him through the air, or that he compelled him to go against his will, or that he wrought a miracle, in any way, to place him there. There is no evidence that Satan had power to do any of these things; and the word translated taketh him up does not imply any such thing. It means, to conduct one; to lead one; to attend or accompany one; or to induce one to go. It is used in the following places in the same sense. Numb. xxiii. 14: "And he (Balak) brought him (Balaam) into the field of Zophim," etc.; that is, he led him, or induced him to go there. Mt 17:1: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James," etc.; i.e. led, or conducted them--not by any means implying that he bore them by force. Mt 20:17: "Jesus, going to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart," etc. See also Mt 26:37, 27:27, Mk 5:40. From these passages, and many more, it appears that all that is meant here is, that Satan conducted Jesus, or accompanied him; but not that this was done against the will of Jesus.

The holy city. Jerusalem--called holy because the temple was there, and it was the place of religious solemnities.

Setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. It is not perfectly certain to what part of the temple the sacred writer here refers. It has been supposed by some that he means the roof. But Josephus says that the roof was covered by spikes of gold, to prevent its being polluted by birds; and such a place would have been very inconvenient to stand upon. Others suppose that it was the top of the porch or entrance to the temple. But it is more than probable that the porch leading to the temple was not as high as the main building. It is more probable that he refers to a part of the sacred edifice sometimes called Solomon's porch. The temple was built on the top of Mount Moriah. The temple itself, together with the courts and porches, occupied a large space of ground. Mt 21:12. To secure a level spot sufficiently large, it was necessary to put up a high wall on the east. The temple was surrounded with porches or piazzas fifty-five feet broad, and seventy-five high. The porch on the south side was, however, sixty-seven feet broad, and one hundred and fifty high. From the top of this to the bottom of the valley below was more than seven hundred feet; and Josephus says that one could scarcely look down without dizziness. The word pinnacle does not quite express the force of the original. It is a word given usually to birds, and denotes wings, or anything in the form of wings, and was given to the roof of this porch because it resembled a bird dropping its wings. It was on this place, doubtless, that Christ was placed.

Satan proposed that he should cast himself down thence; and, if he was the Son of God, he said it could do no harm. There was a promise that he should be protected. This promise was taken from Ps 91:11,12.

To this passage of Scripture Christ replied With another, which forbade the act. This is taken from De 6:16, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." That is, thou shalt not try him; or, thou shalt not,

by throwing thyself into voluntary and uncommanded dangers, appeal to God for protection, or trifle with the promises made to those who are thrown into danger by his providence. It is true, indeed, that God aids those of his people who are placed by him in trial or danger; but it is not true that the promise was meant to extend to those who wantonly provoke him, and trifle with the promised help. Thus Satan, artfully using and perverting Scripture, was met and repelled by Scripture rightly applied.

6 and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:
for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:
and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Observe, 1. Here we have observable, first, the sin which Satan tempts Christ unto; and next, the argument which he tempts him from. The sin tempted to, is the sin of self-murder; Cast thyself down. Whence we learn, That self-murder is a sin which Christ himself was, and the best of saints may, by Satan, be tempted to the commission of.

But for as much as Satan tempted Christ to murder himself, but had not the power to do it himself,(do thou cast thyself down,) we learn, That though Satan may tempt, yet he cannot compel; he may entice, but cannot enforce any to sin, without their own consent.

Observe, 2. The argument which Satan uses; it is a scripture; argument; he quotes the promise of God. He shall give his angels charge over thee. What a marvel is here, to find Satan with a Bible under his arm, and a text of scripture in his mouth! Christ had alleged scripture before to Satan; here Satan retorts scripture back again to Christ: It is written, says Christ; It is written, says Satan. Learn thence, That it is no wonder to hear heretics and hypocrites quote scripture, when Satan himself durst recite it: he that had profanely touched the sacred body of Christ with his hand, sticks not presumptuously to handle the holy scripture of God with his tongue.

Yet observe, How wretchedly the devil wrests, perverts, and misapplies, the scripture. When God promises his angels shall keep us, it is in viis, non in praecipitiis; 'tis in all God's ways, not in any of our own crooked paths. Note here, That although the children of God have the promise of the guardianship of holy angels, yet then only may they expect their protection, when they are walking in the way of their duty, and using the means for their own preservation.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Though the devil had wrested and abused scripture, yet still Christ alleges scripture. The abuse of the holy scriptures by heretics and seducers is no argument against the use of them. We must not throw away our Bibles because the devil quotes scripture: but as Christ here compares scripture with scripture, so should we, in order to find out the true sense and meaning of it; for scripture is the best interpreter of itself; scripture is nost clearly expounded by scripture. This Satan knew full well, and therefore dares not make any further reply.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

The next sin, which Satan tempts our Saviour to, is the sin of idolatry, even to worship the devil himself. O thou impudent and foul spirit! To desire thy Creator to adore thee, an apostate creature! Surely there can be no sin so black and foul, so gross and monstrous, but that the christian may be tempted to it, when Christ himself was tempted to worship the tempter. St. Matthew reads the words, If thou wilt fall down and worship me: St. Luke, If thou wilt worship before me. Whence we may gather, says Dr. Lightfoot, That if to worship before the devil be to worship the devil, then to worship before an image is to worship the image.

The bait which Satan makes use of to allure our Saviour to the sin of idolatry; and that was, in representing to his eye and view all the glories of the world in the most inviting manner, and that in a moment of time; to the intent it might affect him the more and prevail the sooner. Learn thence, That the pomp and greatness, the glory and grandeur, of this world, is made use of by Satan, as a

dangerous snare to draw men to a compliance with him, in his temptations unto sin. When Satan sets thee upon a pinnacle, look to thyself.

An exceeding high mountain. It is not known what mountain this was. It was probably some elevated place in the vicinity of Jerusalem, on the top of which could be seen no small part of the land of Palestine. The Abbe Mariti speaks of a mountain on which he was, which answers to the description here. "This part of the mountain," says he, "overlooks the mountains of Arabia, the country of Gilead, the country of the Arnorites, the plains of Moab, the plains of Jericho, the river Jordan, and the whole extent of the Dead Sea." So Moses, before he died, went up into Mount Nebo, and from it God showed him "all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar," De 34:1-3. This shows that there were mountains from which no small part of the land of Canaan could be seen; and we must not suppose that there was any miracle when they were shown to the Saviour.

All the kingdoms of the world. It is not probable that anything more here is intended than the kingdoms of Palestine, or the land of Canaan, and those in the immediate vicinity. Judea was divided into three parts, and those parts were called kingdoms; and the sons of Herod, who presided over them, were called kings. The term world is often used in this limited scale to denote a part, or a large part of the world, particularly the land of Canaan. See Rom 4:13, where it means the land of Judah; also Lk 2:1, Lk 2:1.

The glory of them. The riches, splendour, towns, cities, mountains, etc., of this beautiful land.

9 and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

All these things, etc. All these kingdoms. All these dominions Satan claimed a right to bestow on whom he pleased, and with considerable justice. They were excessively wicked; and with no

small degree of plausibility, therefore, he asserted his claim to give them away. This temptation had much plausibility. Satan regarded Jesus as the King of the Jews. As the Messiah, he supposed he had come to take possession of all that country. He was poor, and unarmed, and without followers or armies. Satan proposed to put him in possession of it at once, without any difficulty, if he would acknowledge him as the proper lord and disposer of that country; if he would trust to him, rather than to God.

Worship me. Mt 2:2 The word here seems to mean, to acknowledge Satan as having a right to give these kingdoms to him; to acknowledge his dependence on him rather than God; that is, really to render religious homage. We may be surprised at his boldness. But he had been twice foiled. He supposed it was an object dear to the heart of the Messiah and he seemed not to be asking too much, if he gave them to Jesus, that Jesus should be willing to acknowledge the gift, and express gratitude for it. So plausible are Satan's temptations, even when blasphemous; and so artfully does he present his allurements to the mind.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Get thee hence. These temptations, and this one especially, our Saviour met with a decided rebuke. This was a bolder attack than any which had been offered. Others had been but an address to his necessities, and an offer of the protection of God in great danger; in both cases plausible, and in neither a direct violation of the law of God. Here was a higher attempt, a more decided and deadly thrust at the piety of the Saviour. It was a proposition that the Son of God should worship the devil, instead of honouring and adoring Him who made heaven and earth; that he should bow down before the prince of wickedness, and give him homage.

It is written. In De 6:13. Satan asked him to worship him. This was expressly forbidden. And Jesus therefore drove him from his presence.

Observe here, 1. With what zeal and indignation of spirit our blessed Saviour repels and beats back this temptation of Satan: Get thee hence. Note thence, That the greater the sins are which the devil tempts us to, the greater our zeal and indignation ought to be in opposing and resisting the temptation to them. A great temptation must be withstood with great resolution.

Observe, 2. The weapon with which he repels and beats back the fiery dart of Satan's temptation, and that is, with the shield of scripture: It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. Learn thence, That God is the sole object of religious worship: it is so peculiarly the Creator's due, that to give it to any creature is gross idolatry, and repugnant to the scriptures. No creature is to pay divine adoration to any but his Creator; hence it appears that Christ is not a creature, divine worship being given to him.

11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

The devil leaveth him. The devil left him for a time, Lk 4:13. He intended to return again to the temptation, and if possible to seduce him yet from God.

And, behold, angels came and ministered. See Mt 1:20. They came and supplied his wants, and comforted him. From the whole of this we may learn,

(1.) That no one is so holy as to be free from temptation; for the pure Son of God was sorely tempted by the devil.

(2.) That when God permits a temptation or trial to come upon us, he will, if we look to him, give us grace to resist and overcome it, 1Cor 10:3.

(3.) We see the art of the tempter. His temptations are adapted to times and circumstances. They are plausible. What could have been, more plausible than his suggestions to Christ? They were applicable to his circumstances. They had the appearance of much piety. They were backed by passages of Scripture--misapplied, but

still most artfully presented. He never comes boldly and tempts men to sin, telling them that they are committing sin. Such a mode would defeat his design. It would put people on their guard. He commences, therefore, artfully, plausibly, and the real purpose does not appear till he has prepared the mind for it. This is the way with all temptation. No wicked man would at once tempt another to be profane, to be drunk, to be an infidel, or to commit adultery.. The principles are first corrupted; the confidence is secured; the affections are won; and then the allurement is by little and little presented, till the victim fails. How should every one be on his guard at the very first appearance of evil, at the first suggestion that may possibly lead to evil.

(4.) One of the best ways of meeting temptation is by applying Scripture. So our Saviour did, and they will always best succeed who best wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Eph 6:17.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

We have here an account of Christ's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, for he came into the world to be a Preacher; the great salvation which he wrought out, he himself began to publish (Heb 2:3) to show how much his heart was upon it, and ours should be.

Several passages in the other gospels, especially in that of St. John, are supposed, in the order of the story of Christ's life, to intervene between his temptation and his preaching in Galilee. His first appearance after his temptation, was when John Baptist pointed to him, saying, Behold the Lamb of God, Joh 1:29. After that, he went up to Jerusalem, to the passover (Joh 2:12-25), discoursed with Nicodemus (Joh 3:1-21), with the woman of Samaria (Joh 4:1-42), and then returned into Galilee, and preached there. But Matthew, having had his residence in Galilee, begins his story of Christ's

public ministry with his preaching there, which here we have an account of. Observe,

The time; When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, then he went into Galilee, Mt 4:12. Note, The cry of the saints' sufferings comes up into the ears of the Lord Jesus. If John be cast into prison, Jesus hears it, takes cognizance of it, and steers his course accordingly: he remembers the bonds and afflictions that abide his people. Observe,

1. Christ did not go into the country, till he heard of John's imprisonment; for he must have time given him to prepare the way of the Lord, before the Lord himself appear. Providence wisely ordered it, that John should be eclipsed before Christ shone forth; otherwise the minds of people would have been distracted between the two; one would have said, I am of John, and another, I am of Jesus. John must be Christ's harbinger, but not his rival. The moon and stars are lost when the sun rises. John had done his work by the baptism of repentance, and then he was laid aside. The witnesses were slain when they had finished their testimony, and not before, Re 11:7.

2. He did go into the country as soon as he heard of John's imprisonment; not only to provide for his own safety, knowing that the Pharisees in Judea were as much enemies to him as Herod was to John, but to supply the want of John Baptist, and to build upon the good foundation he had laid. Note, God will not leave himself without witness, nor his church without guides; when he removes one useful instrument, he can raise up another, for he has the residue of the Spirit, and he will do it, if he has work to do. Moses my servant is dead, John is cast into prison; now, therefore, Joshua, arise; Jesus, arise.

13 and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali:

Leaving Nazareth. Because his townsmen cast him out, and rejected him. See Lk 4:14-30. The particular city he chose for his residence; not Nazareth, where he had been bred up; no, he left Nazareth;

particular notice is taken of that, Mt 4:13. And with good reason did he leave Nazareth; for the men of that city thrust him out from among them, Lu 4:29. He made them his first, and a very fair, offer of his service, but they rejected him and his doctrine, and were filled with indignation at him and it; and therefore he left Nazareth, and shook off the dust of his feet for a testimony against those there, who would not have him to teach them. Nazareth was the first place that refused Christ, and was therefore refused by him. Note, It is just with God, to take the gospel and the means of grace from those that slight them, and thrust them away. Christ will not stay long where he is not welcome. Unhappy Nazareth! If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, how well had it been for thee! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

Came and dwelt in Capernaum. This was a city on the north-west corner of the sea of Tiberias. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is repeatedly in the Gospels. Though it was once a city of renown, and the metropolis of all Galilee, the site it occupied is now uncertain. But he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which was a city of Galilee, but many miles distant from Nazareth, a great city and of much resort. It is said here to be on the sea coast, not the great sea, but the sea of Tiberias, an inland water, called also the lake of Gennesaret. Close by the falling of Jordan into the sea stood Capernaum, in the tribe of Naphtali, but bordering upon Zebulun; hither Christ came, and here he dwelt. Some think that his father Joseph had a habitation here, others that he took a house or lodgings at least; and some think it more than probable, that he dwelt in the house of Simon Peter; however, here he fixed not constantly, for he went about doing good; but this was for some time his head quarters: what little rest he had, was here; here he had a place, though not a place of his own, to lay his head on. And at Capernaum, it should seem, he was welcome, and met with better entertainment than he had at Nazareth. Note, If some reject Christ, yet others will receive him, and bid him welcome. Capernaum is glad of Nazareth's leavings. If Christ's own countrymen be not gathered, yet he will be glorious. "And thou, Capernaum, has now a day of it; thou art now lifted up to heaven; be wise for thyself, and know the time of thy visitation."When Mr. Fisk, an American missionary, travelled in

Syria in 1823, he found twenty or thirty uninhabited Arab huts, occupying what are supposed to be the ruins of the once exalted city of Capernaum.

In this place, and its neighbourhood, Jesus spent no small part of the three years of his public ministry. It is hence called his own city, Mt 9:1. Here he healed the nobleman's son, (Jn 4:47) Peter's wife's mother, (Mt 8:14) the centurion's servant, (Mt 8:5) and the ruler's daughter, (Mt 9:28-25.)

Upon the sea coast. The sea of Tiberius.

In the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim. These were two tribes of the children of Israel which were located in this part of the land of Canaan, and constituted, in the time of Christ, a part of Galilee. Comp. Gen 49:13, Josh 19:10,32. The word borders here means boundaries. Jesus came and dwelt in the boundaries or regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.

14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,
15 The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali,
by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

Galilee of the Gentiles. Galilee was divided into upper and lower Galilee. Upper Galilee was called Galilee of the Gentiles, because it was occupied chiefly by Gentiles. It was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, Sidon, etc. The word Gentiles includes, in the Scriptures, all who are not Jews. It means the same as nations, or, as we should say, the heathen nations.

The place in Galilee he comes to, Capernaum. Christ had three cities which he called his own; Nazareth, where he was bred; Bethlehem, where he was born; and Capernaum, where he dwelt: this was a sea-coast town in the bordes of Zabulon and Nephthali.

The people which sat in darkness. This is an expression denoting great ignorance. As in darkness or night we can see nothing, and know not where to go, so those who are ignorant of God, and their duty, are said to be in darkness. The instruction which removes this

ignorance is called light. See Jn 3:19, 1Pet 2:9, 1Jn 1:6; 1Jn 2:8. As ignorance is often connected with crime and vice, so darkness is sometimes used to denote sin, 1Thes 5:5, Eph 5:11, Lk 22:53.

Now, concerning the inhabitants of these places, observe, (1.) The posture they were in before the gospel came among them (Mt 4:16); they were in darkness. Note, Those that are without Christ, are in the dark, nay, they are darkness itself; as the darkness that was upon the face of the deep. Nay, they were in the region and shadow of death; which denotes not only great darkness, as the grave is a land of darkness, but great danger. A man that is desperately sick, and not likely to recover, is in the valley of the shadow of death, though not quite dead; so the poor people were on the borders of damnation, though not yet damned-dead in law. And, which is worst of all, they were sitting in this condition. Sitting in a continuing posture; where we sit, we mean to stay; they were in the dark, and likely to be so, despairing to find the way out. And it is a contented posture; they were in the dark, and they loved darkness, they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. Their condition was sad; it is still the condition of many great and mighty nations, which are to be thought of, and prayed for, with pity. But their condition is more sad, who sit in darkness in the midst of gospel-light. He that is in the dark because it is night, may be sure that the sun will shortly arise; but he that is in the dark because he is blind, will not so soon have his eyes opened. We have the light, but what will that avail us, if we be not the light in the Lord? (2.) The privilege they enjoyed, when Christ and his gospel came among them; it was as great a reviving as ever light was to a benighted traveller. Note, When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there, Joh 3:19,Lu 1:78,79. Light is discovering, it is directing; so is the gospel.

It is a great light; denoting the clearness and evidence of gospel-revelations; not like the light of a candle, but the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Great in comparison with the light of the law, the shadows of which were now done away. It is a great light, for it discovers great things and of vast consequence; it will

last long, and spread far. And it is a growing light, intimated in that word, It is sprung up. It was but spring of day with them; now the day dawned, which afterward shone more and more. The gospel-kingdom, like a grain of mustard-seed or the morning light, was small in its beginnings, gradual in its growth, but great in its perfection.

Observe, the light sprang up to them; they did not go to seek it, but were prevented with the blessings of this goodness. It came upon them ere they were aware, at the time appointed, by the disposal of him who commandeth the morning, and causes the day-spring to know its place, that it may take hold of the ends of the earth, Job 38:12,13.

The region and shadow of death. This is a forcible and beautiful image, designed also to denote ignorance and sin. It is often used in the Bible, and is very expressive. A shadow is caused by an object coming between us and the sun. So the Hebrews imaged death as standing between us and the sun, and casting a long, dark, and baleful shadow abroad on the face of the nations, denoting their great ignorance, sin, and woe. It denotes a dismal, gloomy, and dreadful shade, where death and sin reign, like the chill damps, and horrors of the dwelling-place of the dead. See Job 10:21, 16:16; 34:22, Ps 23:4, Jer 2:6. These expressions denote that the country of Galilee was peculiarly ignorant and blind. We know that the people were proverbially so. They were distinguished for a coarse, outlandish manner of speech, (Mk 14:70) and are represented as having been distinguished by a general profligacy of morals and manners. It shows the great compassion of the Saviour, that he went to preach to such poor and despised sinners.

Instead of seeking the so called learned in moral laws, he chose to minister to the needy, the ignorant, and the contemned. His office is to enlighten the ignorant; his delight to guide the wandering, and to raise up those that are in the shadow of death. In doing this, Jesus set an example for all his followers. It is their duty to seek out those who are sitting in the shadow of death, and to send the gospel to

them. No small part of the world is still lying in wickedness, as wicked and wretched as was the land of Zebulun and Naphtali in the time of Jesus. The Lord Jesus is able to enlighten them also. And every Christian should conceive it a privilege, as well as a duty, to imitate his Saviour in this, and to be permitted to send to them the light of life. See Mt 28:19.

Learn hence, 1. That a people destitute of the saving knowledge of the gospel are in great darkness, how great soever the light of their outward comforts may be. This people had natural light enough, and civil light enough; they might had an abundance of wealth and riches, peace and plenty; but they wanted the light of Christ and his gospel,and therefore are said to sit in darkness.

2. That wherever the gospel is preached amongst a people, it is a light springing up and shining forth among them; quickening and enlivening, reviving and cheering, the souls of those who entertain it, how great soever their outward darkness and distress may be. The people that sat in darkness saw great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up, &c.

16 the people which sat in darkness saw great light;
and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

The prophecy that was fulfilled is this, Mt 4:14-16. It is quoted from Isa 9:1,2, but with some variation. The prophet in that place is foretelling a greater darkness of affliction to befal the contemners of Immanuel, than befel the countries there mentioned, either in their first captivity under Benhadad, which was but light (1Ki 15:20), or in their second captivity under the Assyrian, which was much heavier, 2Ki 15:29. The punishment of the Jewish nation for rejecting the gospel should be sorer than either (see Isa 8:21,22); for those captivated places had some reviving in their bondage, and saw a great light again, Mt 9:2. This is Isaiah's sense; but the Scripture has many fulfillings; and the evangelist here takes only the latter clause, which speaks of the return of the light of liberty and prosperity to those countries that had been in the darkness of captivity, and applies it to the appearing of the gospel among them.

The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up—The prophetic strain to which these words belong commences with the seventh chapter of Isaiah, to which the sixth chapter is introductory, and goes down to the end of the twelfth chapter, which hymns the spirit of that whole strain of prophecy. It belongs to the reign of Ahaz and turns upon the combined efforts of the two neighboring kingdoms of Syria and Israel to crush Judah. In these critical circumstances Judah and her king were, by their ungodliness, provoking the Lord to sell them into the hands of their enemies. What, then, is the burden of this prophetic strain, on to the passage here quoted? First, Judah shall not, cannot perish, because IMMANUEL, the Virgin's Son, is to come forth from his loins. Next, one of the invaders shall soon perish, and the kingdoms of neither be enlarged. Further, while the Lord will be the Sanctuary of such as confide in these promises and await their fulfilment, He will drive to confusion, darkness, and despair the vast multitude of the nation who despised His oracles, and, in their anxiety and distress, betook themselves to the lying oracles of the heathen. This carries us down to the end of the eighth chapter. At the opening of the ninth chapter a sudden light is seen breaking in upon one particular part of the country, the part which was to suffer most in these wars and devastations—"the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee and the Gentiles." The rest of the prophecy stretches over both the Assyrian and the Chaldean captivities and terminates in the glorious Messianic prophecy of the eleventh chapter and the choral hymn of the twelfth chapter. Well, this is the point seized on by our Evangelist. By Messiah's taking up His abode in those very regions of Galilee, and shedding His glorious light upon them, this prediction, He says, of the Evangelical prophet was now fulfilled; and if it was not thus fulfilled, we may confidently affirm it was not fulfilled in any age of the Jewish ceremony, and has received no fulfilment at all. Even the most rationalistic critics have difficulty in explaining it in any other way.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

"for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Mt 3:2, 10:7 Here our Savior begins to enter upon his prophetic office, and by preaching to make known the will of God to mankind; and observe, the doctrine which he preached is the same that John the Baptist did preach, namely, the doctrine of repentance, Repent ye: and the argument is the same also, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: that is, now is the so much expected time of the appearing of the promised Messiah.

Learn hence, That the doctrine of Christ and his ambassadors is alike, and the same in substance: they both teach the doctrine of repentance to a lost world, as most suitable to the time and dispensation of the gospel.

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Our blessed Saviour, as he was the great prophet of his church, had power and authority to appoint teachers under him; and accordingly here he begins to call his apostles to that great work; and in his call we have several particulars very observable: as,

1. The meanness of the persons whom he calls, illiterate fishermen; not a Paul, that had long studied at the feet of Gamaliel, is first called; they were unlearned men, not bred up to books or literature as Moses was, who was conversant with all the learning of the Egyptians. Note, Christ sometimes chooses to endow those with the gifts of grace who have least to show of the gifts of nature. But Peter, who was a stranger to eloquence and human learning. Where they were called--by the sea of Galilee, where Jesus was walking, Capernaum being situated near that sea. Concerning this sea of Tiberias, the Jews have a saying, That of all the seven seas that God made, he made choice of none but the sea of Gennesaret; which is very applicable to Christ's choice of it, to honour it, as he often did, with his presence and his miracles. Here, on the banks of the sea,

Christ was walking for contemplation, as Isaac in the field; hither he went to call his disciples; not to Herod's court (for few mighty or noble are called), not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee; surely Christ sees not as man sees. Not but that the same power which effectually called Peter and Andrew would have wrought upon Annas and Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible; but, as in other things, so in his converse and attendance, he would humble himself, and show that God ha chosen the poor of this world. Galilee was a remote part of the nation, the inhabitants were less cultivated and refined, their very language was broad and uncouth to the curious, their speech betrayed them. They who were picked up at the sea of Galilee, had not the advantages and improvements, no, not of the more polished Galileans; yet thither Christ went, to call his apostles that were to be the prime ministers of state in his kingdom, for he chooses the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise. Hereby our Savior took effectual care that his gospel should be known to be the power of God, and not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instrument should not carry away the glory of the work.

2. How our Savior calls his apostles by couples, two and two, Peter and Andrew, James and John; to let us understand, that the work of the ministry requries the concurrence of all hands that are called to it; all the ministers of God should put their hands, join their hearts, and set their shoulders, as one man, to this great work; and all little enough to carry it on with advantage and success.

3. The work which they were called to, from being fishermen to being fishers of men. They catched fish before with the labor of their hands; they shall catch men now with the labour of their tongues. They were men of business, who had been bred up to labour. Note, diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to Christ, and no hindrance to a holy life. Moses was called from keeping sheep, and David from following the ewes, to eminent employments. Idle people lie more open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God.

4. Our Savior's command: first to follow him, before they are sent out by him: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. We must be Christ's disciples before we are his ministers; his followers before his ambassadors. We must learn Christ before we preach him; otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, for honour and applause, but not for souls; if we be not first inclosed ourselves in the net of the gospel, we can have but small hopes of bringing in others.

5. The promise which Christ gives the apostles for their encouragement:

A. To qualify them, I will make you fishers.

B. To succeed them, I will make you fishers of men.

Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour, is our part: but the blessing and success is Christ's. "Our labour is only in the cast, Christ's power is wholly in the draught. Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, and more wallow in the mud; and we shall labour all our days and catch nothing, if Christ doth not bring our fish to the net, and inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the throwing of it."--Bp Hall.

6. The apostles' ready compliance with our Savior's call, Straightway they followed him. Whom Christ calls, he calls persuasively and effectually; whom he calls, he draws, and works them to a willing compliance with their duty.

7. They were men that were accustomed to hardships and hazards; the fisher's trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in perils by waters. Note, Those who have learned to bear hardships, and run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.

Lastly observe, Upon their call to the ministry they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and their nets, and lie close to their ministerial employment.

Teaching us, that the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves to their work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs: nothing but an indispensable necessity in providing for a family can excuse a minister's entangling himself with worldly business.

20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

Straightway. Immediately--as all should do when the Lord Jesus calls them.

Left their nets. Their nets were the means of their living, perhaps all their property. By leaving them immediately, and following him, they gave every evidence of sincerity. They showed, what we should, that they were willing to forsake all fro the sake of Jesus, and to follow him wherever he should lead them. They went forth to persecution and death, for the sake of Jesus; but also to the honour of saving souls from death, and establishing a church that shall continue to the end of time. Little did they know what awaited them, when they left their unmended nets to rot on the beach, and followed the unknown and unhonoured Jesus of Nazareth. So we know not what awaits us, when we become his followers but we should cheerfully go, when our Saviour calls, willing to commit all into his hand--come honour or dishonour, sickness or health, riches or poverty, life or death. Be it ours to do our duty at once, and to commit the result to the great Redeemer who has call us. Comp. Mt 6:33, 8:21,22 Jn 21:21,22.

Followed him. This is an expression denoting that they became his disciples, 2Kgs 6:19.

21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

What they were doing. Peter and Andrew were then using their nets, they were fishing; and James and John were mending their nets, which was an instance of their industry and good husbandry.

They did not go to their father for money to buy new nets, but took pains to mend their old ones. It is commendable to make what we have go as far, and last as long, as may be. James and John were with their father Zebedee, ready to assist him, and make his business easy to him. Note, It is a happy and hopeful presage, to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful to them.

1. They were all employed, all very busy, and none idle. Note, When Christ comes, it is good to be found doing. "Am I in Christ?" is a very needful question for us to ask ourselves; and, next to that, "Am I in my calling?"

2. They were differently employed; two of them were fishing, and two of them mending their nets. Note, Ministers should be always employed, either in teaching or studying; they may always find themselves something to do, if it be not their own fault; and mending their nets, is, in its season, as necessary work as fishing.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Left their father. This showed how willing they were to follow Jesus. They left their father. They showed us what we ought to do. If necessary, we should leave father, and mother, and every friend, Lk 14:26. If they will go with us, and be Christians, it is well; if not, yet they should not hinder us. We should be the followers of Jesus. And while, in doing it, we should treat our friends tenderly and kindly, yet we ought at all hazards to obey God, and do our duty to him. We may add, that many, very many children, since Sabbath schools have commenced, have been the means of their parents' conversion. Many children have spoken to their parents, or read the Bible to them, or other books, and prayed for them, and God has blessed them and converted them. Every child in a Sunday school ought to be a Christian; and then should strive and pray that God would convert his parents, and make them Christians too.

We see here, too, what humble instruments God makes use of to convert men. He chose fishermen to convert the world. He chooses the foolish to confound the wise.

And it shows that religion is true, and is the power of God, when he makes use of such instruments to change the hearts of men, and save their souls. 1Cor 1:26 and following.

Jesus Ministers to a Great Multitude

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Synagogues. Places of worship, or places where the people assembled together to worship God. The origin of synagogues is involved in much obscurity. The sacrifices of the Jews were appointed to be held in one place, at Jerusalem. But there was nothing to forbid the other services of religion to be performed at any place. Accordingly, the praises of God were sung in the schools of the prophets; and those who chose were assembled by the seers on the Sabbath, and the new-moons, for religious worship, 2Kgs 4:23, 1Sam 10:5-11. The people would soon see the necessity of providing convenient places for their services, to shelter them from storms and heat; and this was probably the origin of synagogues. At what tinge they were commenced is unknown. They are mentioned by Josephus a considerable time before the coming of Christ; and in his time they were multiplied, not only in Judea, but wherever there were Jews. There were no less than 480 in Jerusalem alone, before it was taken by the Romans.

The synagogues were built in elevated places--in any place where ten men were found who were willing to associate for the purpose; and were the regular customary places of worship. In them the law, i.e., the Old Testament, divided into suitable portions, was read, prayers were offered, and the Scriptures were expounded. The law was so divided, that the five books of Moses, and portions of the prophets, could be read through each year. The Scriptures, after being read, were expounded. This was done, either by the officers of the synagogues, or by any person who might be invited to it by the officiating minister. Our Saviour and the apostles were in the

habit of attending at those places constantly, and of speaking to the people, Lk 4:15-27, Acts 13:14, 15.

The synagogues were built in imitation of the temple, with a centre building, supported by pillars, and a court surrounding it. Mt 21:12. In the centre building, or chapel, was a place prepared for the reading of the law. The law was kept in a chest, or ark, near to the pulpit. The uppermost seats, (Mt 23:6) were those nearest to the pulpit. The people sat round, facing the pulpit. When the law was read, the officiating person rose; when it was expounded, he was seated. Our Saviour imitated their example, and was commonly seated in addressing the people, Mt 5:1, 13:1.

Teaching. Instructing the people, or explaining the gospel.

The Gospel of the kingdom. The good news respecting the kingdom which he was about to set up; or the good news respecting the coming of the Messiah and the nature of his kingdom.

Preaching. See Mt 3:1.

Our blessed Savior, when he sent forth his apostles, went along with them, and laboured himself as much as any of them. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen who can set others to the drag, and care only to feed themselves with the fish, not willing to wet their hands with the net?

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

And his fame went throughout all Syria. It is not easy to fix the exact bounds of Syria in the time of our Saviour. It was, perhaps, the general name for the country lying between the Euphrates on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west; and between Mount Taurus on the north, and Arabia on the south. Through all this region his celebrity was spread by his power of working miracles;

and, as might be expected, the sick from every quarter were brought to him, in the hope that he would give relief.

Those possessed with devils. Much difficulty exists, and much has been written, respecting those in the New Testament said to be possessed with the devil. It has been maintained by many, that the sacred writers meant only by this expression to denote those who were melancholy or epileptic, or afflicted with some other grievous disease. This opinion has been supported by arguments too long to be repeated here. On the other hand, it has been supposed that the persons so described were under the influence of evil spirits, who had complete possession of the faculties, and who produced many symptoms of disease not unlike melancholy, and madness, and epilepsy. That such was the fact, will appear from the following considerations:

1st. That Christ and the apostles spoke to them, and of them as such; that they addressed them, and managed them, precisely as if they were so possessed, leaving their hearers to infer beyond a doubt that such was their real opinion.

2nd. They spake, conversed, asked questions, gave answers, and expressed their knowledge of Christ, and their fear of him--things that certainly could not be said of diseases, Mt 8:29, Lk 8:28.

3rd. They are represented as going out of the persons possessed, and entering the bodies of others, Mt 8:32.

4th. Jesus spoke to them, and asked their name, and they answered him. He threatened them, commanded them to be silent, to depart, and not to return, Mk 1:25, 5:8, 9:26.

5th. Those possessed are said to know Christ; to be acquainted with the Son of God, Lk 4:34, Mk 1:24. This could not be said of diseases.

6th. The early fathers of the church interpreted these passages in the same way. They derived their opinions probably from the apostles themselves, and their opinions are a fair interpretation of the apostles' sentiments.

7th. If it may be denied that Christ believed in such possessions, it does not appear why any other clear sentiment of his may not in the same way be disputed. There is, perhaps, no subject on which he expressed himself more clearly, or acted more uniformly, or which he left more clearly impressed on the minds of his disciples.

Nor is there any absurdity in the opinion that those persons were really under the influence of devils. For--

1st. It is no more absurd to suppose that an angel, or many angels, should have fallen and become wicked, than that so many men should.

2nd. It is no more absurd that Satan should have possession of the human faculties, or inflict diseases, than that men should do it--a thing which is done every day. What more frequent than for a wicked man to corrupt the morals of others, or by inducing them to become intemperate, to produce a state of body and mind quite as bad as to be possessed with the devil?

3rd. We still see a multitude of cases that no man can prove not to be produced by the presence of an evil spirit. Who would attempt to say that some evil being may not have much to do in the case of madmen?

4th. It afforded an opportunity for Christ to show his power over the enemies of himself and of man, and thus to evince himself qualified to meet every enemy of the race, and triumphantly to redeem his people. lie came to destroy the power of Satan, Acts 26:18, Rom 16:20.

Those which were lunatick. This name is given to the disease from the Latin name of the moon, (Luna.) It has the same origin in the Greek. It was given because it was formerly imagined that it was affected by the increase or the decrease of the moon. The name is still retained, although it is not certain that the moon has any effect on the disease. On this point physicians are not determined, but no harm arises from the use of the name. It is mentioned only in this place, and in Mt 17:15. It was probably the falling sickness, or the epilepsy, the same as the disease mentioned Mk 9:18-20; Lk 9:39,40.

And those that had the palsy. Many infirmities were included under the general name of palsy, in the New Testament.

1st. The paralytic shock, affecting the whole body.

2nd. The hemiplegy, affecting only one side of the body--the most frequent form of the disease.

3rd. The paraplegy, affecting all the system below the neck.

4th. The catalepsy. This is caused by a contraction of the muscles in the whole or a part of the body, and is very dangerous. The effects are very violent and fatal. For instance, if, when a person is struck, he happens to have his hand extended, he is unable to draw it back; if not extended, he is unable to stretch it out. It appears diminished in size, and dried up in appearance. Hence it was called the withered hand, Mt 12:10-13.

5th. The cramp. This, in eastern countries, is a fearful malady, and by no means unfrequent. It originates from chills in the night. The limbs, when seized with it, remain unmovable, and the person afflicted with it resembles one undergoing a torture. This was probably the disease of the servant of the centurion, Mt 8:6, Lk 7:2. Death follows from this disease in a few days.

The mercy of them. The miracles that Moses wrought, to prove his mission, were most of them plagues and judgments, to intimate the terror of that dispensation, though from God; but the miracles that Christ wrought, were most of them cures, and all of them (except the cursing of the barren fig tree) blessings and favours; for the gospel dispensation is founded, and built up in love, and grace, and sweetness; and the management is such as tends not to affright but to allure us to obedience. Christ designed by his cures to win upon people, and to ingratiate himself and his doctrine into their minds, and so to draw them with the bands of love, Ho 11:4. The miracle of them proved his doctrine a faithful saying, and convinced men's judgments; the mercy of them proved it worthy of all acceptation, and wrought upon their affections. They were not only great works, but good works, that he showed them from his Father (Joh 10:32); and this goodness was intended to lead men to repentance (Ro 2:4), as also to show that kindness, and beneficence, and doing good to all, to the utmost of our power and opportunity, are essential branches of that holy religion which Christ came into the world to establish.

25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, and *from* Jerusalem, and *from* Judea, and *from* beyond Jordan.

From Decapolis. Decapolis was the name of a region of country in the bounds of the half tribe of Manasseh, mainly on the east of Jordan. It was so called because it included ten cities--the meaning of the word Decapolis in Greek. Geographers generally agree that Scythopolis was the chief of these cities and was the only one of them west of the Jordan; that Hippo, (Hippos,) Gedara, Dion, (or Dios,) Pelea, (or Pella,) Gerasa, (or Gergesa,) Philadelphia and Raphana, (or Raphanae,) were seven of the remaining nine, and the other two were either Kanatha and Capitolias, or Damascus and Otopos. These cities were inhabited chiefly by foreigners (Greeks) in the days of our Saviour, and not by Jews. Hence the keeping of swine by the Gergesenes, (Mt 8:30-33,) which was forbidden by the Jewish law.

and from Jerusalem, and from beyond Jordan—meaning from Perea. Thus not only was all Palestine upheaved, but all the

adjacent regions. But the more immediate object for which this is here mentioned is, to give the reader some idea both of the vast concourse and of the varied complexion of eager attendants upon the great Preacher, to whom the astonishing discourse of the next three chapters was addressed. On the importance which our Lord Himself attached to this first preaching circuit, and the preparation which He made for it, see on Mr 1:35-39.

Matthew-5

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

The Beginning of the Sermon on the Mount

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

Seeing the multitudes The great numbers that came to attend on his ministry. The substance of this discourse is recorded in the sixth chapter of Luke. It is commonly called the sermon on the mount. It is not improbable that it was repeated, in substance, on different occasions, and to different people. At those times, parts of it might have been omitted, and Luke may have recorded it as it was pronounced on one of these occasions. Lk 6:17-20.

Went up into a mountain. This mountain, or hill, was somewhere in the vicinity of Capernaum, but where precisely is not mentioned. He ascended the hill, doubtless, because it was more convenient to address the multitude from an eminence, than on the same level with them. A hill or mountain is still shown a short distance to the northwest of the ancient site of Capernaum, which tradition reports to have been the place where this sermon was delivered, and which is called on the maps the Mount of Beatitudes. But there is no positive evidence that this is the place where this discourse was uttered.

And when he was set. This was the common mode of teaching among the Jews, Lk 4:20, 5:3, Jn 8:2, Acts 13:14, 16:13.

His disciples came. The word disciples means learners; those who are taught. Here it is put for those who attended on the ministry of Jesus, and does not imply that they were all Christians. See Jn 6:66.

2 and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Christ begins his sermon with blessings, for he came into the world to bless us (Ac 3:26), as the great High Priest of our profession; as the blessed Melchizedec; as He in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, Ge 12:3. He came not only to purchase blessings for us, but to pour out and pronounce blessings on us; and here he does it as one having authority, as one that can command the blessing, even life for evermore, and that is the blessing here again and again promised to the good; his pronouncing them happy makes them so; for those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. The Old Testament ended with a curse (Mal 4:6), the gospel begins with a blessing; for hereunto are we called, that we should inherit the blessing. Each of the blessings Christ here pronounces has a double intention: 1. To show who they are that are to be accounted truly happy, and what their characters are. 2. What that is wherein true happiness consists, in the promises made to persons of certain characters, the performance of which will make them happy. Now,

1. This is designed to rectify the ruinous mistakes of a blind and carnal world. Blessedness is the thing which men pretend to pursue; Who will make us to see good? Ps 4:6. But most mistake the end, and form a wrong notion of happiness; and then no wonder that they miss the way; they choose their own delusions, and court a shadow. The general opinion is, Blessed are they that are rich, and great, and honourable in the world; they spend their days in mirth, and their years in pleasure; they eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and carry all before them with a high hand, and have every sheaf bowing to their sheaf; happy the people that is in such a case; and their designs, aims, and purposes are accordingly; they bless the covetous (Ps 10:3); they will be rich. Now our Lord Jesus comes to correct this fundamental error, to advance a new hypothesis, and to give us quite another notion of blessedness and blessed people,

which, however paradoxical it may appear to those who are prejudiced, yet is in itself, and appears to be to all who are savingly enlightened, a rule and doctrine of eternal truth and certainty, by which we must shortly be judged. If this, therefore, be the beginning of Christ's doctrine, the beginning of a Christian's practice must be to take his measures of happiness from those maxims, and to direct his pursuits accordingly.

2. It is designed to remove the discouragements of the weak and poor who receive the gospel, by assuring them that his gospel did not make those only happy that were eminent in gifts, graces, comforts, and usefulness; but that even the least in the kingdom of heaven, whose heart was upright with God, was happy in the honours and privileges of that kingdom.

3. It is designed to invite souls to Christ, and to make way for his law into their hearts. Christ's pronouncing these blessings, not at the end of his sermon, to dismiss the people, but at the beginning of it, to prepare them for what he had further to say to them, may remind us of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, on which the blessings and cursings of the law were read, De 27:12, &c. There the curses are expressed, and the blessings only implied; here the blessings are expressed, and the curses implied: in both, life and death are set before us; but the law appeared more as a ministration of death, to deter us from sin; the gospel as a dispensation of life, to allure us to Christ, in whom alone all good is to be had. And those who had seen the gracious cures wrought by his hand (Mt 4:23,24), and now heard the gracious words proceeding out of his mouth, would say that he was all of a piece, made up of love and sweetness.

4. It is designed to settle and sum up the articles of agreement between God and man. The scope of the divine revelation is to let us know what God expects from us, and what we may then expect from him; and no where is this more fully set forth in a few words than here, nor with a more exact reference to each other; and this is that gospel which we are required to believe; for what is faith but a conformity to these characters, and a dependence upon these promises? The way to happiness is here opened, and made a highway (Isa 35:8); and this coming from the mouth of Jesus

Christ, it is intimated that from him, and by him, we are to receive both the seed and the fruit, both the grace required, and the glory promised. Nothing passes between God and fallen man, but through his hand. Some of the wiser heathen had notions of blessedness different from the rest of mankind, and looking toward this of our Saviour. Seneca, undertaking to describe a blessed man, makes it out, that it is only an honest, good man that is to be so called: De vita beata. cap. 4. Cui nullum bonum malumque sit, nisi bonus malusque animus--Quem nec extollant fortuita, nec frangant--Cui vera voluptas erit voluptatum comtemplio--Cui unum bonum honestas, unum malum turpitudo.--In whose estimation nothing is good or evil, but a good or evil heart--Whom no occurrences elate or deject--Whose true pleasure consists in a contempt of pleasure--To whom the only good is virtue, and the only evil vice.

The Beatitudes

3 Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. The word blessed means happy, referring to that which produces felicity, from whatever quarter it may come.

Poor in spirit. Luke says simply, blessed are THE poor. It has been disputed whether Christ meant the poor in reference to the things of this life, or the humble. The gospel is said to be preached to the poor, Lk 4:18, Mt 11:5. It was predicted that the Messiah should preach to the poor, Is 61:1. It is said that they have peculiar facilities for being saved, Mt 19:23, Lk 18:24. The state of such persons is therefore comparatively blessed, or happy. Riches produce care, anxiety, and dangers, and not the least is the danger of losing heaven by them. To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to be sensible that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God; to be willing to be where God places us, to bear what he lays on us, to go where he bids us, and to die when he commands; to be willing to be in his hands, and to feel that we

deserve no favour from him. It is opposed to pride, and vanity, and ambition. Such are happy:

(1.) Because there is more real enjoyment in thinking of ourselves as we are, than in being filled with pride and vanity.

(2.) Because such Jesus chooses to bless, and on them he confers his favours here.

(3.) Because theirs will be the kingdom of heaven hereafter. It is remarkable that Jesus began his ministry in this manner, so unlike all others. Other teachers had taught that happiness was to be found in honour, or riches, or splendour, or sensual pleasure. Jesus overlooked all those things, and fixed his eye on the poor, and the humble, and said that happiness was to be found in the lowly vale of poverty, more than in the pomp and splendours of life.

Blessed are the poor in spirit—All familiar with Old Testament phraseology know how frequently God's true people are styled "the poor" (the "oppressed," "afflicted," "miserable") or "the needy"—or both together (as in Ps 40:17; Isa 41:17). The explanation of this lies in the fact that it is generally "the poor of this world" who are "rich in faith" (Jas 2:5; compare 2Co 6:10; Re 2:9); while it is often "the ungodly" who "prosper in the world" (Ps 73:12). Accordingly, in Lu 6:20, 21, it seems to be this class—the literally "poor" and "hungry"—that are specially addressed. But since God's people are in so many places styled "the poor" and "the needy," with no evident reference to their temporal circumstances (as in Ps 68:10; 69:29-33; 132:15; Isa 61:1; 66:2), it is plainly a frame of mind which those terms are meant to express. Accordingly, our translators sometimes render such words "the humble" (Ps 10:12, 17), "the meek" (Ps 22:26), "the lowly" (Pr 3:34), as having no reference to outward circumstances. But here the explanatory words, "in spirit," fix the sense to "those who in their deepest consciousness realize their entire need" (compare the Greek of Lu 10:21; Joh 11:33; 13:21; Ac 20:22; Ro 12:11; 1Co 5:3; Php 3:3). This self-emptying conviction, that "before God we are void of

everything," lies at the foundation of all spiritual excellence, according to the teaching of Scripture. Without it we are inaccessible to the riches of Christ; with it we are in the fitting state for receiving all spiritual supplies (Re 3:17, 18; Mt 9:12, 13).

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—(See on Mt 3:2). The poor in spirit not only shall have—they already have—the kingdom. The very sense of their poverty is begun riches. While others "walk in a vain show"—"in a shadow," "an image"—in an unreal world, taking a false view of themselves and all around them—the poor in spirit are rich in the knowledge of their real case. Having courage to look this in the face, and own it guilelessly, they feel strong in the assurance that "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness" (Ps 112:4); and soon it breaks forth as the morning. God wants nothing from us as the price of His saving gifts; we have but to feel our universal destitution, and cast ourselves upon His compassion (Job 33:27, 28; 1Jo 1:9). So the poor in spirit are enriched with the fulness of Christ, which is the kingdom in substance; and when He shall say to them from His great white throne, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," He will invite them merely to the full enjoyment of an already possessed inheritance.

1. It is not said, blessed are the poor in estate, but blessed are the poor in spirit: it is not a poverty of purse and possession, but a poverty of spirit, that entitles us to the blessing.

2. It is not said, blessed are the spiritually poor, but blessed are the poor in spirit: he that is destitute of the grace and spirit of Christ, that has no sense of his spiritual wants, he is spiritualllly poor, but he is not poor in spirit.

3. It is not said, blessed are the poor-spirited, but the poor in spirit. Such an act below and beneath themselves as men and as

Christians, these are poor-spirited men; but these are not poor in spirit.

4. It is not said, blessed are they that make themselves poor by leaving their estates and callings, and turning beggars, as some do among the Papists; but blessed are they whom the gospel makes poor, by giving them a sight of their spiritual wants and necessities, and directing them to Christ that they may be made rich.

In sum, not those that are poor in estate, or those whom the world has made poor in possession, but those whom the gospel has made poor in spirit, that is, the truly humble, lowly spirits, have a right and title to the kingdom of heaven. Now, humility is called poverty of spirit, because it is the effect and fruit of God's Spirit.

Their's is the kingdom of heaven. That is, either they have peculiar facilities for entering the kingdom of heaven, and of becoming Christians here, or they shall enter heaven hereafter. Both these ideas are probably included. A state of poverty--a state where we are despised or unhonoured by men--is a state where men are most ready to seek the comforts of religion here, or a home in the heavens hereafter. Mt 2:2.

MHC:
The poor in spirit are happy, Mt 5:3. There is a poor-spiritedness that is so far from making men blessed that it is a sin and a snare--cowardice and base fear, and a willing subjection to the lusts of men. But this poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of soul, by which we are emptied of self, in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ. To be poor in spirit is, 1. To be contentedly poor, willing to be emptied of worldly wealth, if God orders that to be our lot; to bring our mind to our condition, when it is a low condition. Many are poor in the world, but high in spirit, poor and proud, murmuring and complaining, and blaming their lot, but we must accommodate ourselves to our poverty, must know how to be abased, Php 4:12. Acknowledging the wisdom of God in appointing us to poverty, we must be easy in it, patiently bear the inconveniences of it, be

thankful for what we have, and make the best of that which is. It is to sit loose to all worldly wealth, and not set our hearts upon it, but cheerfully to bear losses and disappointments which may befal us in the most prosperous state. It is not, in pride or pretence, to make ourselves poor, by throwing away what God has given us, especially as those in the church of Rome, who vow poverty, and yet engross the wealth of the nations; but if we be rich in the world we must be poor in spirit, that is, we must condescend to the poor and sympathize with them, as being touched with the feeling of their infirmities; we must expect and prepare for poverty; must not inordinately fear or shun it, but must bid it welcome, especially when it comes upon us for keeping a good conscience, Heb 10:34. Job was poor in spirit, when he blessed God in taking away, as well as giving. 2. It is to be humble and lowly in our own eyes. To be poor in spirit, is to think meanly of ourselves, of what we are, and have, and do; the poor are often taken in the Old Testament for the humble and self-denying, as opposed to those that are at ease, and the proud; it is to be as little children in our opinion of ourselves, weak, foolish, and insignificant, Mt 18:4,19:14. Laodicea was poor in spirituals, wretchedly and miserably poor, and yet rich in spirit, so well increased with goods, as to have need of nothing, Re 3:17. On the other hand, Paul was rich in spirituals, excelling most in gifts and graces, and yet poor in spirit, the least of the apostles, less than the least of all saints, and nothing in his own account. It is to look with a holy contempt upon ourselves, to value others and undervalue ourselves in comparison of them. It is to be willing to make ourselves cheap, and mean, and little, to do good; to become all things to all men. It is to acknowledge that God is great, and we are mean; that he is holy and we are sinful; that he is all and we are nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing; and to humble ourselves before him, and under his mighty hand. 3. It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength, that we may depend only upon the merit of Christ for our justification, and the spirit and grace of Christ for our sanctification. That broken and contrite spirit with which the publican cried for mercy to a poor sinner, is that poverty of spirit. We must call ourselves poor, because always in want of God's grace, always begging at God's door, always hanging on in his house.

Now, (1.) This poverty in spirit is put first among the Christian graces. The philosophers did not reckon humility among their moral virtues, but Christ puts it first. Self-denial is the first lesson to be learned in his school, and poverty of spirit entitled to the first beatitude. The foundation of all other graces is laid in humility. Those who would build high must begin low; and it is an excellent preparative for the entrance of gospel-grace into the soul; it fits the soil to receive the seed. Those who are weary and heavy laden, are the poor in spirit, and they shall find rest with Christ.

(2.) They are blessed. Now they are so, in this world. God looks graciously upon them. They are his little ones, and have their angels. To them he gives more grace; they live the most comfortable lives, and are easy to themselves and all about them, and nothing comes amiss to them; while high spirits are always uneasy.

(3.) Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of grace is composed of such; they only are fit to be members of Christ's church, which is called the congregation of the poor (Ps 74:19); the kingdom of glory is prepared for them. Those who thus humble themselves, and comply with God when he humbles them, shall be thus exalted. The great, high spirits go away with the glory of the kingdoms of the earth; but the humble, mild, and yielding souls obtain the glory of the kingdom of heaven. We are ready to think concerning those who are rich, and do good with their riches, that, no doubt, theirs is the kingdom of heaven; for they can thus lay up in store a good security for the time to come; but what shall the poor do, who have not wherewithal to do good? Why, the same happiness is promised to those who are contentedly poor, as to those who are usefully rich. If I am not able to spend cheerfully for his sake, if I can but want cheerfully for his sake, even that shall be recompensed. And do not we serve a good master then?

4 Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they that mourn. This is capable of two meanings: either that those are blessed who are afflicted with the loss of friends or possessions; or that they who mourn over sin are blessed. As Christ came to preach repentance, to induce men to mourn over their sins, and to forsake them, it is probable that he had the latter

particularly in view, 2Cor 7:10. At the same time, it is true that the gospel only can give true comfort to those in affliction, Is 61:1-3, Lk 4:18. Other sources of consolation do not reach the deep sorrows of the soul. They may blunt the sensibilities of the mind; they may produce a sullen and reluctant submission to what we cannot help; but they do not point to the true source of comfort. In the God of mercy only; in the Saviour; in the peace that flows from the hope of a better world, and there only, is there comfort, 2Cor 3:17,18, 5:1. Those that mourn thus shall be comforted. So those that grieve over sin; that sorrow that they have committed it, and are afflicted and wounded that they have offended God, shall find comfort in the gospel. Through the merciful Saviour those sins may be forgiven. In him the weary and heavy-laden soul shall find peace, (Mt 11:28-30;) and the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, shall sustain us here, (Jn 14:26,27) and in heaven all tears shall be wiped away, Rev 21:4.

They that mourn are happy (Mt 5:4); Blessed are they that mourn. This is another strange blessing, and fitly follows the former. The poor are accustomed to mourn, the graciously poor mourn graciously. We are apt to think, Blessed are the merry; but Christ, who was himself a great mourner, says, Blessed are the mourners. There is a sinful mourning, which is an enemy to blessedness--the sorrow of the world; despairing melancholy upon a spiritual account, and disconsolate grief upon a temporal account. There is a natural mourning, which may prove a friend to blessedness, by the grace of God working with it, and sanctifying the afflictions to us, for which we mourn. But there is a gracious mourning, which qualifies for blessedness, an habitual seriousness, the mind mortified to mirth, and an actual sorrow. 1. A penitential mourning for our own sins; this is godly sorrow, a sorrow according to God; sorrow for sin, with an eye to Christ, Zec 12:10. Those are God's mourners, who live a life of repentance, who lament the corruption of their nature, and their many actual transgressions, and God's withdrawings from them; and who, out of regard to God's honour, mourn also for the sins of others, and sigh and cry for their abominations, Eze 9:4. 2. A sympathizing mourning for the afflictions of others; the mourning of those who weep with them

that weep, are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, for the desolations of Zion (Zep 3:18,Ps 137:1), especially who look with compassion on perishing souls, and weep over them, as Christ over Jerusalem.

Now these gracious mourners,

(1.) Are blessed. As in vain and sinful laughter the heart is sorrowful, so in gracious mourning the heart has a serious joy, a secret satisfaction, which a stranger does not intermeddle with. They are blessed, for they are like the Lord Jesus, who was a man of sorrows, and of whom we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. The are armed against the many temptations that attend vain mirth, and are prepared for the comforts of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

(2.) They shall be comforted. Though perhaps they are not immediately comforted, yet plentiful provision is made for their comfort; light is sown for them; and in heaven, it is certain, they shall be comforted, as Lazarus, Lu 16:25. Note, The happiness of heaven consists in being perfectly and eternally comforted, and in the wiping away of all tears from their eyes. It is the joy of our Lord; a fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore; which will be doubly sweet to those who have been prepared for them by this godly sorrow. Heaven will be a heaven indeed to those who go mourning thither; it will be a harvest of joy, the return of a seed-time of tears (Ps 126:5,6); a mountain of joy, to which our way lies through a vale of tears. See Isa 66:10.

5 Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The meek. Meekness is patience in the reception of injuries. It is neither meanness, nor a surrender of our rights, nor cowardice; but it is the opposite of sudden anger, of malice, of long-harboured vengeance. Christ insisted on his right when he said, "If I have done evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Jn 18:23. Paul asserted his right when he said, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us

into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily; nay, verily, but let them come themselves, and fetch us out," Acts 16:37.

And yet Christ was the very model of meekness. It was one of his characteristics, "I am meek," Mt 11:29. So of Paul. No man endured more, and more patiently, than he. Yet they were not passionate. They bore it patiently. They did not harbour malice. They did not press their rights through thick and thin, and trample down the rights of others to secure their own.

Meekness is the reception of injuries with a belief that God will vindicate us. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," Rom 12:19. It little becomes us to take his place, and to do what he has a right to do, and what he has promised to do.

Meekness produces peace. It is proof of true greatness of soul. It comes from a heart too great to be moved by little insults. It looks upon those who offer them with pity. He that is constantly ruffled, that suffers every little insult or injury to throw him off his guard, and to raise a storm of passion within, is at the mercy of every mortal that chooses to disturb him. He is like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

The meek are happy (Mt 5:5); Blessed are the meek. The meek are those who quietly submit themselves to God, to his word and to his rod, who follow his directions, and comply with his designs, and are gentle towards all men (Tit 3:2); who can bear provocation without being inflamed by it; are either silent, or return a soft answer; and who can show their displeasure when there is occasion for it, without being transported into any indecencies; who can be cool when others are hot; and in their patience keep possession of their own souls, when they can scarcely keep possession of any thing else. They are the meek, who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified; and who would rather forgive twenty injuries than revenge one, having the rule of their own spirits.

These meek ones are here represented as happy, even in this world.

1. They are blessed, for they are like the blessed Jesus, in that wherein particularly they are to learn of him, Mt 11:29. They are like the blessed God himself, who is Lord of his anger, and in whom fury is not. They are blessed, for they have the most comfortable, undisturbed enjoyment of themselves, their friends, their God; they are fit for any relation, and condition, any company; fit to live, and fit to die.

2. They shall inherit the earth; it is quoted from Ps 37:11, and it is almost the only express temporal promise in all the New Testament. Not that they shall always have much of the earth, much less that they shall be put off with that only; but this branch of godliness has, in a special manner, the promise of life that now is. Meekness, however ridiculed and run down, has a real tendency to promote our health, wealth, comfort, and safety, even in this world. The meek and quiet are observed to live the most easy lives, compared with the froward and turbulent. Or, They shall inherit the land (so it may be read), the land of Canaan, a type of heaven. So that all the blessedness of heaven above, and all the blessings of earth beneath, are the portion of the meek.

They shall inherit the earth. This might have been translated the land. It is probable that here is a reference to the manner in which the Jews commonly expressed themselves to denote any great blessing. It was promised to them that they should inherit the land of Canaan. For a long time the patriarchs looked forward to this, Gen 15:7,8, Ex 32:13. They regarded it as a great blessing, It was so spoken of in the journey in the wilderness; and their hopes were crowned when they took possession of the promised land, De 1:38, 16:20. In the time of our Saviour they were in the constant habit of using the Old Testament, where this promise perpetually occurs, and they used it as a proverbial expression to denote any great blessing, perhaps as the sum of all blessings, Ps 37:20, Is 60:21. Our Saviour used it in this sense; and meant to say, not that

the meek should own great property or have many lands, but that they should possess peculiar blessings. The Jews also considered the land of Canaan as a type of heaven, and of the blessings under the Messiah. To inherit the land became, therefore, an expression denoting those blessings. When our Saviour promises it here, he means that the meek shall be received into his kingdom, and partake of its blessings here, and of the glories of the heavenly Canaan hereafter. The value of meekness, even in regard to worldly property and success in life, is often exhibited in the Scriptures, Prov 22:24,25, 15:1, 25:8, 15. It is also seen in common life that a meek, patient, mild man, is the most prospered. An impatient and quarrelsome man raises up enemies; often loses property in lawsuits; spends his time in disputes and broils, rather than in sober, honest industry; and is harassed, vexed, and unsuccessful in all that he does.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" 1Timm 4:8, 6:3-6,

The wages and reward belonging to that grace and duty, the inheritance of the earth.

Meekness either respects God, or our neighbour. As it respects God, so it implies flexibleness to his commanding will, and submissiveness to his providential pleasure.

As it respects our neighbour, it consists in forgiving injuries, bearing reproaches, and recompensing good for evil.

6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are they that hunger, etc. Hunger and thirst, here, are expressive of strong desire. Nothing would better express the strong desire which we ought to feel to obtain righteousness, than hunger and thirst. No wants are so keen, none so imperiously demand supply as these. They occur daily; and when long continued, as in case of those shipwrecked, and doomed to wander months or years over burning sands, with scarcely any drink or food, nothing is more distressing. An ardent desire for anything is often represented in the Scriptures by hunger and thirst, Ps 42:1,2,

63:1,2. A desire for the blessings of pardon and peace; a deep sense of sin, and want, and wretchedness, is also represented by thirsting, Is 55:1,2. Those that are perishing for want of righteousness; that feel that they are lost sinners, and strongly desire to be holy, shall be filled. Never was there a desire to be holy, which God was not willing to gratify. And the gospel of Christ has made provision to satisfy all who truly desire to be holy. See Is 55:1-13, 65:13, Jn 4:14, 6:35, 7:37,38, Ps 17:15.

They that hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy, Mt 5:6. Some understand this as a further instance of our outward poverty, and a low condition in this world, which not only exposes men to injury and wrong, but makes it in vain for them to seek to have justice done to them; they hunger and thirst after it, but such is the power on the side of their oppressors, that they cannot have it; they desire only that which is just and equal, but it is denied them by those that neither fear God nor regard men. This is a melancholy case! Yet, blessed are they, if they suffer these hardships for and with a good conscience; let them hope in God, who will see justice done, right take place, and will deliver the poor from their oppressors, Ps 103:6. Those who contentedly bear oppression, and quietly refer themselves to God to plead their cause, shall in due time be satisfied, abundantly satisfied, in the wisdom and kindness which shall be manifested in his appearances for them. But it is certainly to be understood spiritually, of such a desire as, being terminated on such an object, is gracious, and the work of God's grace in the soul, and qualifies for the gifts of the divine favour.

1. Righteousness is here put for all spiritual blessings. See Ps 24:5,Mt 6:33. They are purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ; conveyed and secured by the imputation of that righteousness to us; and confirmed by the faithfulness of God. To have Christ made of God to us righteousness, and to be made the righteousness of God in him; to have the whole man renewed in righteousness, so as to become a new man, and to bear the image of God; to have an interest in Christ and the promises--this is righteousness.

2. These we must hunger and thirst after. We must truly and really desire them, as one who is hungry and thirsty desires meat and drink, who cannot be satisfied with any thing but meat and drink, and will be satisfied with them, though other things be wanting. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest and importunate; "Give me these, or else I die; every thing else is dross and chaff, unsatisfying; give me these, and I have enough, though I had nothing else." Hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently, and call for fresh satisfactions; so these holy desires rest not in any thing attained, but are carried out toward renewed pardons, and daily fresh supplies of grace. The quickened soul calls for constant meals of righteousness, grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who hunger and thirst will labour for supplies; so we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means. Dr. Hammond, in his practical Catechism, distinguishes between hunger and thirst. Hunger is a desire of food to sustain, such as sanctifying righteousness. Thirst is the desire of drink to refresh, such as justifying righteousness, and the sense of our pardon.

Those who hunger and thirst after spiritual blessings, are blessed in those desires, and shall be filled with those blessings.

(1.) They are blessed in those desires. Though all desires of grace are not grace (feigned, faint desires are not), yet such a desire as this is; it is an evidence of something good, and an earnest of something better. It is a desire of God's own raising, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. Something or other the soul will be hungering and thirsting after; therefore they are blessed who fasten upon the right object, which is satisfying, and not deceiving; and do not pant after the dust of the earth, Am 2:7,Isa 55:2.

(2.) They shall be filled with those blessings. God will give them what they desire to complete their satisfaction. It is God only who

can fill a soul, whose grace and favour are adequate to its just desires; and he will fill those with grace for grace, who, in a sense of their own emptiness, have recourse to his fulness. He fills the hungry (Lu 1:53), satiates them, Jer 31:25. The happiness of heaven will certainly fill the soul; their righteousness shall be complete, the favour of God and his image, both in their full perfection.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the merciful. That is, those who are so affected by the sufferings of others, as to be disposed to alleviate them. This is given as an evidence of piety; and it is said that they who show mercy to others shall obtain it. The same sentiment is found in Mt 10:42. Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only unto one of these little ones, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward. See also Mt 25:34-40. It should be done to glorify God; that is, in obedience to his commandments, and with a desire that he should be honoured; and feeling that we are benefiting one of his creatures. Then he will regard it as done to him, and will reward us. See the sentiment of this verse, that the merciful shall obtain mercy, more fully expressed in 2Sam 22:26,27; and in Ps 18:25,26.

Nowhere do we imitate God more than in showing mercy. In nothing does God more delight than in the exercise of mercy, Ex 34:6, Eze 33:11 1Timm 2:4, 2Pet 3:9. To us, guilty sinners; to us, wretched, dying, and exposed to eternal woe, he has shown his mercy by giving his Son to die for us; by expressing his willingness to pardon and save us; and by sending his Spirit to renew and sanctify the heart. Each day of our life, each hour, and each moment, we partake of his undeserved mercy. All the blessings we enjoy are proofs of his mercy. If we also show mercy to the poor, the wretched, the guilty, it shows that we are like God; we have his spirit, and shall not lose our reward. And we have abundant opportunity to do it. Our world is full of guilt and woe, which we may help to relieve; and every day of our lives we have opportunity by helping the poor and wretched, and by forgiving those who injure us, to show that we are like God. Mt 6:14.

And as an encouragement, he adds, that as we deal with others, God will deal with us; our charity towards men shall be crowned with mercy from God, and that in abundance too; for our rivulet of charity we shall partake of an ocean of mercy: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Learn, That the merciful man is a blessed man, and therefore blessed because he shall obtain mercy, when he most wants it, and most desires it. Mercy, not wages.

"According to the view given in Scripture," says TRENCH most justly, "the Christian stands in a middle point, between a mercy received and a mercy yet needed. Sometimes the first is urged upon him as an argument for showing mercy—'forgiving one another, as Christ forgave you' (Col 3:13; Eph 4:32): sometimes the last—'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy'; 'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven' (Lu 6:37; Jas 5:9). And thus, while he is ever to look back on the mercy received as the source and motive of the mercy which he shows, he also looks forward to the mercy which he yet needs, and which he is assured that the merciful—according to what BENGEL beautifully calls the benigna talio ('the gracious requital') of the kingdom of God—shall receive, as a new provocation to its abundant exercise." The foretastes and beginnings of this judicial recompense are richly experienced here below: its perfection is reserved for that day when, from His great white throne, the King shall say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and thirsty, and a stranger, and naked, and sick, and in prison, and ye ministered unto Me." Yes, thus He acted towards us while on earth, even laying down His life for us; and He will not, He cannot disown, in the merciful, the image of Himself.

The merciful are happy, Mt 5:7. This, like the rest, is a paradox; for the merciful are not taken to be the wisest, nor are likely to be the richest; yet Christ pronounces them blessed. Those are the merciful, who are piously and charitably inclined to pity, help, and succour

persons in misery. A man may be truly merciful, who has not wherewithal to be bountiful or liberal; and then God accepts the willing mind. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must, by Christian sympathy, partake of the afflictions of our brethren; pity must be shown (Job 6:14), and bowels of mercy put on (Col 3:12); and, being put on, they must put forth themselves in contributing all we can for the assistance of those who are any way in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others, and help them; pity the ignorant, and instruct them; the careless, and warn them; those who are in a state of sin, and snatch them as brands out of the burning. We must have compassion on those who are melancholy and in sorrow, and comfort them (Job 16:5); on those whom we have advantage against, and not be rigorous and severe with them; on those who are in want, and supply them; which if we refuse to do, whatever we pretend, we shut up the bowels of our compassion, Jam 2:15,16,1Jo 3:17. Draw out they soul by dealing thy bread to the hungry, Isa 58:7,10. Nay, a good man is merciful to his beast.

Now as to the merciful. 1. They are blessed; so it was said in the Old Testament; Blessed is he that considers the poor, Ps 41:1. Herein they resemble God, whose goodness is his glory; in being merciful as he is merciful, we are, in our measure, perfect as he is perfect. It is an evidence of love to God; it will be a satisfaction to ourselves, to be any way instrumental for the benefit of others. One of the purest and most refined delights in this world, is that of doing good. In this word, Blessed are the merciful, is included that saying of Christ, which otherwise we find not in the gospels, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Ac 20:35. 2. They shall obtain mercy; mercy with men, when they need it; he that watereth, shall be watered also himself (we know not how soon we may stand in need of kindness, and therefore should be kind); but especially mercy with God, for with the merciful he will show himself merciful, Ps 18:25. The most merciful and charitable cannot pretend to merit, but must fly to mercy. The merciful shall find with God sparing mercy (Mt 6:14), supplying mercy (Pr 19:17), sustaining mercy (Ps 41:2), mercy in that day (2Ti 1:18); may, they shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them (Mt 25:34,35); whereas

they shall have judgment without mercy (which can be nothing short of hell-fire) who have shown no mercy.

8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the pure in heart. That is, whose minds, motives, and principles are pure. Who seek not only to have the external actions correct, but who desire to be holy in heart, and who are so. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.

Here is the most comprehensive character of the blessed: they are pure in heart. Note, True religion consists in heart-purity. Those who are inwardly pure, show themselves to be under the power of pure and undefiled religion. True Christianity lies in the heart, in the purity of heart; the washing of that from wickedness, Jer 4:14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps 24:4,5,1Ti 1:5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture--an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and from worldly lusts; covetousness is called filthy lucre; from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, all that which come out of the heart, and defiles the man. The heart must be purified by faith, and entire for God; must be presented and preserved a chaste virgin to Christ. Create in me such a clean heart, O God!

But oh, with what grand simplicity, brevity, and power is this great fundamental truth here expressed! And in what striking contrast would such teaching appear to that which was then current, in which exclusive attention was paid to ceremonial purification and external morality! This heart purity begins in a "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," or a "conscience purged from dead works" (Heb 10:22; 9:14; and see Ac 15:9); and this also is taught in the Old Testament (Ps 32:1, 2; compare Ro 4:5-8; Isa 6:5-8). The conscience thus purged—the heart thus sprinkled—there is light within wherewith to see God. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other"—He with us and we with Him—"and the blood of

Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us"—us who have this fellowship, and who, without such continual cleansing, would soon lose it again—"from all sin" (1Jo 1:6, 7). "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (1Jo 3:6); "He that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3Jo 11). The inward vision thus clarified, and the whole inner man in sympathy with God, each looks upon the other with complacency and joy, and we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory." But the full and beatific vision of God is reserved for that time to which the Psalmist stretches his views—"As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Ps 17:15). Then shall His servants serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads (Re 22:3, 4). They shall see Him as He is (1Jo 3:2). But, says the apostle, expressing the converse of this beatitude—"Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

They shall see God. There is a sense in which all shall see God, Rev 1:7. That is, they shall behold him as a Judge, not as a Friend. In this place it is spoken of as a peculiar favour. So also in Rev 22:4. And they shall see his face. To see the face of one, or to be in his presence, were, among the Jews, terms expressive of great favour. It was regarded as a high honour to be in the presence of kings and princes, and to be permitted to see them, Prov 22:29. He shall stand before kings, etc. See also 2Ki 25:19. "Those that stood in the king's presence ;" in the Hebrew, those that saw the face of the king; that is, who were his favourites and friends. So here, to see God, means to be his friends and favourites, and to dwell with him in his kingdom.

9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Those who strive to prevent contention, and strife, and war. Who use their influence to reconcile opposing parties, and to prevent lawsuits, and hostilities, in families and neighbourhoods. Every man may do something of this; and no man is more like God than he who does it. There ought not to be unlawful and officious interference in that which is none of our but, has business; without any danger of acquiring this character, every

man many opportunities of reconciling opposing parties. Friends, neighbours, men of influence, lawyers, physicians, may do much to promote peace. And it should be taken in hand in the beginning. "The beginning of strife," says Solomon, "is like the letting out of water." "An ounce of prevention," says the English proverb, "is worth a pound of cure." Long and most deadly quarrels might be prevented by a little kind interference in the beginning. Children of God. Those who resemble God, or who manifest a spirit like his. He is the Author of peace, (1Cor 14:33) and all those who endeavour to promote peace are like him, and are worthy to be called his children.

The peace-makers are happy, Mt 5:9. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable; the blessed ones are pure toward God, and peaceable toward men; for with reference to both, conscience must be kept void of offence. The connection between peace and puity; purity of heart and peaceableness of life accompany one another. There is no inward purity where there is not an endeavour after outward peace. The peace-makers are those who have,

1. A peaceable disposition: as, to make a lie, is to be given and addicted to lying, so, to make peace, is to have a strong and hearty affection to peace. I am for peace, Ps 120:7. It is to love, and desire, and delight in peace; to be put in it as in our element, and to study to be quiet.

2. A peaceable conversation; industriously, as far as we can, to preserve the peace that it be not broken, and to recover it when it is broken; to hearken to proposals of peace ourselves, and to be ready to make them to others; where distance is among brethren and neighbours, to do all we can to accommodate it, and to be repairers of the breaches. The making of peace is sometimes a thankless office, and it is the lot of him who parts a fray, to have blows on both sides; yet it is a good office, and we must be forward to it. Some think that this is intended especially as a lesson for ministers,

who should do all they can to reconcile those who are at variance, and to promote Christian love among those under their charge.

Now,
(1.) Such persons are blessed; for they have the satisfaction of enjoying themselves, by keeping the peace, and of being truly serviceable to others, by disposing them to peace. They are working together with Christ, who came into the world to slay all enmities, and to proclaim peace on earth.

(2.) They shall be called the children of God; it will be an evidence to themselves that they are so; God will own them as such, and herein they will resemble him. He is the God of peace; the Son of God is the Prince of peace; the Spirit of adoption is a Spirit of peace. Since God has declared himself reconcilable to us all, he will not own those for his children who are implacable in their enmity to one another; for if the peacemakers are blessed, woe to the peace-breakers! Now by this it appears, that Christ never intended to have his religion propagated by fire and sword, or penal laws, or to acknowledge bigotry, or intemperate zeal, as the mark of his disciples. The children of this world love to fish in troubled waters, but the children of God are the peace-makers, the quiet in the land.

10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Persecuted. To persecute, means literally to pursue, follow after, as one does a flying enemy. Here it means to vex, or oppress one, on account of his religion. They persecute others who injure their names, reputation, property, or endanger or take their life, on account of their religious opinions.

For righteousness' sake. Because they are righteous, or are the friends of God. We are not to seek persecution. We are not to provoke it by strange sentiments or conduct, or by violating the laws of civil society, or by modes of speech that are unnecessarily offensive to others. But if, in the honest effort to be Christians, and to live the life of Christians, others persecute and revile us, we are to consider this as a blessing. It is all evidence that we are the

children of God, and that he will defend us. All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, 2Ti 3:12

Their's is the kingdom of heaven. They have evidence that they are Christians, and shall be brought to heaven.

1. That all the disciples and followers of Christ, live they ever so holily and inoffensively in the world, yet must they expect suffering and persecution.

2. That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ministers of Christ, and falls heaviest on the prophets of God.

3. That such sufferings and such persecutions as will afford a man solid comfort, and entitle him to real blessedness, must be endured and undergone for righteousness-sake.

4. That it is the will and command of Christ, that those which suffer for him, and for righteousness-sake, should not only be meek and patient, but joyous and cheerful: rejoice, and be exceeding glad.

5. That such a patient and cheerful suffering of persecution for Christ in this life, shall certainly be rewarded with the glory and blessedness of the life that is to come. Great is your reward, &c.

How entirely this final beatitude has its ground in the Old Testament, is evident from the concluding words, where the encouragement held out to endure such persecutions consists in its being but a continuation of what was experienced by the Old Testament servants of God. But how, it may be asked, could such beautiful features of character provoke persecution? To this the following answers should suffice: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "There is yet one man (said wicked Ahab to good Jehoshaphat) by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil" (Joh 3:20; 7:7; 15:19; 2Ch 18:7). But more particularly, the seven characters here described are all in the teeth of the spirit of the world, insomuch that such hearers of this discourse as breathed that spirit must have been startled, and had their whole system of thought and action rudely dashed. Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of men's heart; a pensive disposition, in the view of one's universal deficiencies before God, is ill relished by the callous, indifferent, laughing, self-satisfied world; a meek and quiet spirit, taking wrong, is regarded as pusillanimous, and rasps against the proud, resentful spirit of the world; that craving after spiritual blessings rebukes but too unpleasantly the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; so does a merciful spirit the hard-heartedness of the world; purity of heart contrasts painfully with painted hypocrisy; and the peacemaker cannot easily be endured by the contentious, quarrelsome world. Thus does "righteousness" come to be "persecuted." But blessed are they who, in spite of this, dare to be righteous.

11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Revile you. Reproach you; call you by evil and contemptuous names; ridicule you because you are Christians. Thus they said of Jesus, that he was a Samaritan and had a devil; that he was mad; and thus they reviled and mocked him on the cross. But being reviled, he reviled not again, (1Pet 2:23) and thus being reviled, we should bless, (1Cor 4:12) and thus, though the contempt of the world is not in itself desirable, yet it is blessed to tread in the footsteps of Jesus, to imitate his example, and even to suffer for his sake, Php 1:29.

All manner of evil--falsely. An emphasis should be laid on the word falsely in this passage. It is not blessed to have evil spoken of us if we deserve it; but if we deserve it not, then we should not consider it as a calamity. We should take it patiently, and show how much

the Christian, under the consciousness of innocence, can bear, 1Pet 3:13-18.

For my sake. Because you are attached to me; because you are Christians. We are not to seek such things. We are not to do things to offend others; to treat them harshly or unkindly, and court revilings. We are not to say or do things, though they may be on the subject of religion, designed to disgust or offend. But if, in the faithful endeavour to be Christians, we are reviled, as our Master was, then we are to take it with patience, and to remember that thousands before us have been treated in like manner. When thus reviled, or persecuted, we are to be meek, patient, humble; not angry; not reviling again; but endeavouring to do good to our persecutors and slanderers, 2Ti 2:24,25. In this way, many have been convinced of the power and excellence of that religion which they were persecuting and reviling. They have seen that nothing else but Christianity could impart such patience and meekness to the persecuted; and have, by this means, been constrained to submit themselves to the gospel of Jesus. Long since, it became a proverb, "that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake—Observe this. He had before said, "for righteousness' sake." Here He identifies Himself and His cause with that of righteousness, binding up the cause of righteousness in the world with the reception of Himself. Would Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Paul have so expressed themselves? Never. Doubtless they suffered for righteousness' sake. But to have called this "their sake," would, as every one feels, have been very unbecoming. Whereas He that speaks, being Righteousness incarnate (see Mr 1:24; Ac 3:14; Re 3:7), when He so speaks, speaks only like Himself.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, are happy. This is the greatest paradox of all, and peculiar to Christianity; and therefore it is put last, and more largely insisted upon than any of the rest, Mt 5:10-12. This beatitude, like Pharaoh's dream, is

doubled, because hardly credited, and yet the thing is certain; and in the latter part there is change of the person, "Blessed are ye--ye my disciples, and immediate followers. This is that which you, who excel in virtue, are more immediately concerned in; for you must reckon upon hardships and troubles more than other men." Observe here,

1 The case of suffering saints described; and it is a hard case, and a very piteous one.

(1.) They are persecuted, hunted, pursued, run down, as noxious beasts are, that are sought for to be destroyed; as if a Christian did caput gerere lupinum--bear a wolf's head, as an outlaw is said to do--any one that finds him may slay him; they are abandoned as the offscouring of all things; fined, imprisoned, banished, stripped of their estates, excluded from all places of profit and trust, scourged, racked, tortured, always delivered to death, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. This has been the effect of the enmity of the serpent's seed against the holy seed, ever since the time of righteous Abel. It was so in Old-Testament times, as we find, Heb 11:35, &c. Christ has told us that it would much more be so with the Christian church, and we are not to think it strange, 1Jo 3:13. He has left us an example.

(2.) The are reviled, and have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Nicknames, and names of reproach, are fastened upon them, upon particular persons, and upon the generation of the righteous in the gross, to render them odious; sometimes to make them formidable, that they may be powerfully assailed; things are laid to their charge that they knew not, Ps 35:11,Jer 20:18,Ac 17:6. Those who have had no power in their hands to do them any other mischief, could yet do this; and those who have had power to persecute, had found it necessary to do this too, to justify themselves in their barbarous usage of them; they could not have baited them, if they had not dressed them in bear-skins; nor have given them the worst of treatment, if they had not first represented them as the worst of men. They will revile you, and persecute you. Note, Reviling the saints is persecuting them, and will be found so shortly, when hard speeches must be accounted

for (Jude 1:15), and cruel mockings, Heb 11:36. They will say all manner of evil of you falsely; sometimes before the seat of judgment, as witnesses; sometimes in the seat of the scornful, with hypocritical mockers at feasts; they are the song of the drunkards; sometimes to face their faces, as Shimei cursed David; sometimes behind their backs, as the enemies of Jeremiah did. Note, There is no evil so black and horrid, which, at one time or other, has not been said, falsely, of Christ's disciples and followers.

(3.) All this is for righteousness' sake (Mt 5:10); for my sake, Mt 5:11. If for righteousness' sake, then for Christ's sake, for he is nearly interested in the work of righteousness. Enemies to righteousness are enemies to Christ. This precludes those from the blessedness who suffer justly, and are evil spoken of truly for their real crimes; let such be ashamed and confounded, it is part of their punishment; it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr. Those suffer for righteousness' sake, who suffer because they will not sin against their consciences, and who suffer for doing that which is good. Whatever pretence persecutors have, it is the power of godliness that they have an enmity to; it is really Christ and his righteousness that are maligned, hated, and persecuted; For thy sake I have borne reproach, Ps 69:9,Ro 8:36.

2 The comforts of suffering saints laid down.

(1.) They are blessed; for they now, in their life-time, receive their evil things (Lu 16:25), and receive them upon a good account. They are blessed; for it is an honour to them (Ac 5:41); it is an opportunity of glorifying Christ, of doing good, and of experiencing special comforts and visits of grace and tokens of his presence, 2Co 1:5,Da 3:25.Ro 8:29.

(2.) They shall be recompensed; Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They have at present a sure title to it, and sweet foretastes of it; and shall ere long be in possession of it. Though there be nothing in those sufferings than can, in strictness, merit of God (for the sins of the best deserve the worst), yet this is here promised as a reward (Mt 5:12); Great is your reward in heaven: so great, as far to transcend the service. It is in heaven, future, and out of sight; but well secured, out of the reach of chance, fraud,

and violence. Note, God will provide that those who lose for him, though it be life itself, shall not lose by him in the end. Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompence for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. This is that which has borne up the suffering saints in all ages--this joy set before them.

(3.) "So persecuted they the prophets that were before you, Mt 5:12. They were before you in excellency, above what you are yet arrived at; they were before you in time, that they might be examples to you of suffering affliction and of patience, Jam 5:10. They were in like manner persecuted and abused; and can you expect to go to heaven in a way by yourself? Was not Isaiah mocked for his line upon line? Elisha for his bald head? Were not all the prophets thus treated? Therefore marvel not at it as a strange thing, murmur not at it as a hard thing; it is a comfort to see the way of suffering a beaten road, and an honour to follow such leaders. That grace which was sufficient for them, to carry them through their sufferings, shall not be deficient to you. Those who are your enemies are the seed and successors of them who of old mocked the messengers of the Lord," 2Ch 36:16,Mt 23:31,Ac 7:52.

The Salt of the Earth

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the salt of the earth. Salt renders food pleasant and palatable, and preserves from putrefaction. So Christians, by their lives and instructions, are to keep the world from entire moral corruption. By bringing down, by their prayers, the blessing of God, and by their influence and example, they save the world from universal vice and crime.

Salt have lost his savour. That is, if it has become insipid, tasteless, or have lost its preserving properties. The salt used in this country is a chemical compound--muriate of soda-- and if the saltness were lost, or it were to lose its savour, there would be nothing remaining.

It enters into the very nature of the substance. In eastern countries, however, the salt used was impure, mingled with vegetable and earthy substances; so that it might lose the whole of its saltness, and a considerable quantity of earthy matter remain. This was good for nothing, except that it was used, as it is said, to place in paths, or walks, as we use gravel. This kind of salt is common still in that country. It is found in the earth in veins or layers, and when exposed to the sun and rain, loses its saltness entirely. Maundrell says,

"I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savour. The inner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savour, as I found by proof."

As it Christ had said, "Ye are to be preachers and patterns to the world; ye are appointed by your pure doctrine, and good conversation, to purge the world from that corruption in which it lies: but if you lose either soundness of doctrine, or the savour of a good conversation, you will be wholly useless, as to these great ends, and must expect to be cast off by me, as unsavoury salt is cast to the dunghill."

Ye are the salt of the earth. This would encourage and support them under their sufferings, that, though they should be treated with contempt, yet they should really be blessings to the world, and the more so for their suffering thus. The prophets, who went before them, were the salt of the land of Canaan; but the apostles were the salt of the whole earth, for they must go into all the world to preach the gospel. It was a discouragement to them that they were so few and so weak. What could they do in so large a province as the whole earth? Nothing, if they were to work by force of arms and dint of sword; but, being to work silent as salt, one handful of that salt would diffuse its savour far and wide; would go a great way, and work insensibly and irresistibly as leaven, Mt 13:33. The doctrine of the gospel is as salt; it is penetrating, quick, and powerful (Heb 4:12); it reaches the heart Ac 2:37. It is cleansing, it is relishing, and preserves from putrefaction. We read of the savour of the

knowledge of Christ (2Co 2:14); for all other learning is insipid without that. An everlasting covenant is called a covenant of salt (Nu 18:19); and the gospel is an everlasting gospel. Salt was required in all the sacrifices (Le 2:13), in Ezekiel's mystical temple, Eze 43:24. Now Christ's disciples having themselves learned the doctrine of the gospel, and being employed to teach it to others, were as salt. Note, Christians, and especially ministers, are the salt of the earth.

1. If they be as they should be they are as good salt, white, and small, and broken into many grains, but very useful and necessary. Pliny says, Sine sale, vita humana non potest degere--Without salt human life cannot be sustained. See in this,

(1.) What they are to be in themselves--seasoned with the gospel, with the salt of grace; thoughts and affections, words and actions, all seasoned with grace, Col 4:6. Have salt in yourselves, else you cannot diffuse it among others, Mk 9:50.

(2.) What they are to be to others; they must not only be good but do good, must insinuate themselves into the minds of the people, not to serve any secular interest of their own, but that they might transform them into the taste and relish of the gospel.

(3.) What great blessings they are to the world. Mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were a vast heap of unsavoury stuff, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines, to season it with knowledge and grace, and so to render it acceptable to God, to the angels, and to all that relish divine things.

(4.) How they must expect to be disposed of. They must not be laid on a heap, must not continue always together at Jerusalem, but must be scattered as salt upon the meat, here a grain and there a grain; as the Levites were dispersed in Israel, that, wherever they live, they may communicate their savour. Some have observed, that whereas

it is foolishly called an ill omen to have the salt fall towards us, it is really an ill omen to have the salt fall from us.

2. If they be not, they are as salt that has lost its savour. If you, who should season others, are yourselves unsavoury, void of spiritual life, relish, and vigour; if a Christian be so, especially if a minister be so, his condition is very sad; for,

(1.) He is irrecoverable: Wherewith shall it be salted? Salt is a remedy for unsavoury meat, but there is no remedy for unsavoury salt. Christianity will give a man a relish; but if a man can take up and continue the profession of it, and yet remain flat and foolish, and graceless and insipid, no other doctrine, no other means, can be applied, to make him savoury. If Christianity do not do it, nothing will.

(2.) He is unprofitable: It is thenceforth good for nothing; what use can it be put to, in which it will not do more hurt than good? As a man without reason, so is a Christian without grace. A wicked man is the worst of creatures; a wicked Christian is the worst of men; and a wicked minister is the worst of Christians.

(3.) He is doomed to ruin and rejection; He shall be cast out--expelled the church and the communion of the faithful, to which he is a blot and a burden; and he shall be trodden under foot of men. Let God be glorified in the shame and rejection of those by whom he has been reproached, and who have made themselves fit for nothing but to be trampled upon.

The Light of the World

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

The light of the world. The light of the world often denotes the sun, Jn 11:9. The sun renders objects visible, shows their form their nature, their beauties, and deformities. The term light is often applied to religious teachers. See Jn 1:4, 8:12, Is 49:6. It is pre-

eminently applied to Jesus in these places; because he is, in the moral world, what the sun is in the natural world. The apostles, and Christian ministers, and all Christians, are lights of the world, because they, by their instructions and examples, show what God requires, what is the condition of man, what is the way of duty, peace, and happiness--the way that leads to heaven.

A city that is set on an hill, etc. Many of the cities of Judea were placed on the summits or sides of mountains, and could be seen from afar. This was the case with Jerusalem; and it is said by Maundrell, that near the place where our Saviour is supposed to have delivered his sermon, there is still such a town, called Saphat, anciently This can Bethesda. be seen far and near. Perhaps Jesus pointed to such a city, and told his disciples that they were like it. They were seen from far. Their actions could not be hid. The eyes of the World were upon them. They must be seen; and as this was the case, they ought to be holy, harmless, and undefiled.

The doctrine delivered is this, That Christians in general and the ministers of the gospel in particular, are the light of the world. But how? Not originally, but derivatively; not efficiently, but instrumentally, Christ himself is the light of the world by way of original, his ministers are lights by way of derivation, and participation from him.

1. Christ teaches them the end why he communicated light unto them, namely, to enlighten, direct, and quicken others: even as the sun in the firmament, and a candle in the house, diffuses and disperses its light to all that are within reach of it; so should all Christians, and particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, direct people in their way towards heaven.

2. The inference which our Saviour draws from the foregoing doctrine, ye are the light of the world, therefore let your light shine before men.

a. That our good works must shine, but not blaze; all vain glory and ostentation must be avoided in the good works we do.

b. Although we must abound in good works that men may see them, yet not to be seen of men.

c. That the glorifying of God, and doing good to mankind, must be the great end we propound in all the good works which we perform.

Ye are the light of the world—This being the distinctive title which our Lord appropriates to Himself (Joh 8:12; 9:5; and see Joh 1:4, 9; 3:19; 12:35, 36) —a title expressly said to be unsuitable even to the highest of all the prophets (Joh 1:8) —it must be applied here by our Lord to His disciples only as they shine with His light upon the world, in virtue of His Spirit dwelling in them, and the same mind being in them which was also in Christ Jesus. Nor are Christians anywhere else so called. Nay, as if to avoid the august title which the Master has appropriated to Himself, Christians are said to "shine"—not as "lights," as our translators render it, but—"as luminaries in the world" (Php 2:15); and the Baptist is said to have been "the burning and shining"—not "light," as in our translation, but "lamp" of his day (Joh 5:35). Let it be observed, too, that while the two figures of salt and sunlight both express the same function of Christians—their blessed influence on their fellow men—they each set this forth under a different aspect. Salt operates internally, in the mass with which it comes in contact; the sunlight operates externally, irradiating all that it reaches. Hence Christians are warily styled "the salt of the earth"—with reference to the masses of mankind with whom they are expected to mix; but "the light of the world"—with reference to the vast and variegated surface which feels its fructifying and gladdening radiance. The same distinction is observable in the second pair of those seven parables which our Lord spoke from the Galilean Lake—that of the "mustard seed," which grew to be a great overshadowing tree, answering to the sunlight which invests the world, and that of the "leaven," which a woman took and, like the salt, hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened (Mt 13:31-33).

Ye are the light of the world, Mt 5:14. This also bespeaks them useful, as the former (Sole et sale nihil utilius--Nothing more useful than the sun and salt), but more glorious. All Christians are light in the Lord (Eph 5:8), and must shine as lights (Php 2:15), but ministers in a special manner. Christ call himself the Light of the world (Joh 8:12), and they are workers together with him, and have some of his honour put upon them. Truly the light is sweet, it is welcome; the light of the first day of the world was so, when it shone out of darkness; so is the morning light of every day; so is the gospel, and those that spread it, to all sensible people. The world sat in darkness, Christ raised up his disciples to shine in it; and, that they may do so, from him they borrow and derive their light.

This similitude is here explained in two things:

1. As the lights of the world, they are illustrious and conspicuous, and have many eyes upon them. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. The disciples of Christ, especially those who are forward and zealous in his service, become remarkable, and are taken notice of as beacons. They are for signs (Isa 7:18), men wondered at (Zec 3:8); all their neighbours have any eye upon them. Some admire them, commend them, rejoice in them, and study to imitate them; others envy them, hate them, censure them, and study to blast them. They are concerned therefore to walk circumspectly, because of their observers; they are as spectacles to the world, and must take heed of every thing that looks ill, because they are so much looked at. The disciples of Christ were obscure men before he called them, but the character he put upon them dignified them, and as preachers of the gospel they made a figure; and though they were reproached for it by some, they were respected for it by others, advanced to thrones, and made judges (Lu 22:30); for Christ will honour those that honour him.

2. As the lights of the world, they are intended to illuminate and give light to others (Mt 5:15), and therefore, (1.) They shall be set up as lights. Christ has lighted these candles, they shall not be put under a bushel, not confined always, as they are now, to the cities of Galilee, or the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but they shall be

sent into all the world. The churches are the candlesticks, the golden candlesticks, in which these lights are placed, that they light may be diffused; and the gospel is so strong a light, and carries with it so much of its own evidence, that, like a city on a hill, it cannot be hid, it cannot but appear to be from God, to all those who do not wilfully shut their eyes against it. It will give light to all that are in the house, to all that will draw near to it, and come where it is. Those to whom it does not give light, must thank themselves; they will not be in the house with it; will not make a diligent and impartial enquiry into it, but are prejudiced against it. (2.) They must shine as lights, [1.] By their good preaching. The knowledge they have, they must communicate for the good of others; not put it under a bushel, but spread it. The talent must not be buried in a napkin, but traded with. The disciples of Christ must not muffle themselves up in privacy and obscurity, under pretence of contemplation, modesty, or self-preservation, but, as they have received the gift, must minister the same, Lu 12:3. [2.] By their good living. They must be burning and shining lights (Joh 5:35); must evidence, in their whole conversation, that they are indeed followers of Christ, Jam 3:13. They must be to others for instruction, direction, quickening, and comfort, Job 29:11. See here,

First, How our light must shine--by doing such good works as men may see, and may approve of; such works as are of good report among them that are without, and as will therefore give them cause to think well of Christianity. We must do good works that may be seen to the edification of others, but not that they may be seen to our own ostentation; we are bid to pray in secret, and what lies between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open and obvious to the sight of men, we must study to make congruous to our profession, and praiseworthy, Php 4:8. Those about us must not only hear our good words, but see our good works; that they may be convinced that religion is more than a bare name, and that we do not only make a profession of it, but abide under the power of it.

Secondly, For what end our light must shine--"That those who see your good works may be brought, not to glorify you (which was the things the Pharisees aimed at, and it spoiled all their performances), but to glorify your Father which is in heaven." Note, The glory of God is the great thing we must aim at in every thing we do in religion, 1Pe 4:11. In this centre the lines of all our actions must meet. We must not only endeavor to glorify God ourselves, but we must do all we can to bring others to glorify him. The sight of our good works will do this, by furnishing them, 1. With matter for praise. "Let them see your good works, that they may see the power of God's grace in you, and may thank him for it, and give him the glory of it, who has given such power unto men." 2. With motives of piety. "Let them see your good works, that they may be convinced of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, may be provoked by a holy emulation to imitate your good works, and so may glorify God." Note, The holy, regular, and exemplary conversation of the saints, may do much towards the conversion of sinners; those who are unacquainted with religion, may hereby be brought to know what it is. Examples teach. And those who are prejudiced against it, may hereby by brought in love with it, and thus there is a winning virtue in a godly conversation.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Let your light so shine, etc. Let your holy life, your pure conversation, and your faithful instruction, be everywhere seen and known, Always, in all societies, in all business, at home and abroad, in prosperity and adversity, let it be seen that you are real Christians.

That they may see your good works. This is not the motive to influence us, simply that we must be seen, (comp. Mt 6:1); but that our heavenly Father may be glorified. It is not right to do a thing merely to be seen by others, for this is pride and ostentation; but we are to do it that, being seen, God may be honoured. The Pharisees acted to be seen of men; true Christians act to glorify God, and care

little what men may think of them, except as by their conduct others may be brought to honour God.

Glorify your Father. Praise, or honour God, or be led to worship him. Seeing in your lives the excellency of religion, the power and purity of the gospel, they may be won to be Christians also, and give praise and glory to God for his mercy to a lost world. We learn here,

(1.) that religion, if it exists, cannot be concealed.

(2.) That where it is not manifest in the life, it does not exist.

(3.) That professors of religion, who live like other men, give evidence that they have never been renewed.

(4.) That to attempt to conceal or hide our Christian knowledge or experience is to betray our trust, and injure the cause of piety, and render our lives useless. And,

(5.) that good actions will be seen, and will lead men to honour God. If we have no other way of doing good--if we are poor, and unlearned and unknown--yet we may do good by our lives. No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain. The feeblest light at midnight is of use.

"How far this little calldie throws his beams!"
So shines a good deed in a naughty world!"

As nobody lights a lamp only to cover it up, but places it so conspicuously as to give light to all who need light, so Christians, being the light of the world, instead of hiding their light, are so to hold it forth before men that they may see what a life the disciples of Christ lead, and seeing this, may glorify their Father for so redeeming, transforming, and ennobling earth's sinful children, and

opening to themselves the way to like redemption and transformation.

Jesus' Attitude toward the Law

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Think not that I am come, etc. Our Saviour was just entering on his work. It was important for him to state what he came to do. By his setting up to be a teacher in opposition to the Scribes and Pharisees, some might charge him with an intention to destroy their law, and abolish the customs of the nation. He therefore told them that he did not come for that end, but really to fulfil or accomplish what was in the law and the prophets. To destroy. To abrogate; to deny their Divine authority; to set men free from the obligation to obey them.

The law. The five books of Moses, called the law. Lk 24:44.

The prophets. The books which the prophets wrote. These two divisions here seem to comprehend the Old Testament; and Jesus says that he came not to do away or destroy the authority of the Old Testament.

But to fulfil. To complete the design; to fill up what was predicted; to accomplish what was intended in them. The word fulfil, also, means sometimes to teach or inculcate, Co 1:25. The law of Moses contained many sacrifices and rites which were designed to shadow forth the Messiah, Heb 9:1-28. These were fulfilled when he came and offered himself a sacrifice to God--

"A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they."

The prophets contained many predictions respecting his coming and death. These were all to be fulfilled and fully accomplished by his life and his sufferings.

Our Saviour here informs his followers, That he had no design to abrogate any part of the moral law, or to loose mankind from the least measure of their duty either towards God or man, but that he came to fulfil it:

1. By yielding a personal obedience to it.

2. By giving a fuller and stricter interpretation of it, than the Pharisess were wont to give; for they taught, that the law did only reach to the outward man, and restrain outward actions.

As if Christ had said, "Though I preach a more special doctrine than is contained even in the letter of the moral law, yet think not that I am come to destroy and dissolve the obligation of that law, for I came to fulfil the types and predictions of the prophets, and to give you the full sense and spiritual import of the moral law."

He protests against the thought of cancelling and weakening the Old Testament; Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets.

"Let not the pious Jews, who have an affection for the law and the prophets, fear that I come to destroy them." Let them be not prejudiced against Christ and his doctrine, from a jealousy that this kingdom he came to set up, would derogate from the honour of the scriptures, which they had embraced as coming from God, and of which they had experienced the power and purity; no, let them be satisfied that Christ has no ill design upon the law and the prophets. "Let not the profane Jews, who have a disaffection to the law and the prophets, and are weary of that yoke, hope that I am come to destroy them." Let not carnal libertines imagine that the Messiah is come to discharge them from the obligation of divine precepts and yet to secure to them divine promises, to make the happy and yet to

give them leave to live as they list. Christ commands nothing now which was forbidden either by the law of nature or the moral law, nor forbids any thing which those laws had enjoined; it is a great mistake to think he does, and he here takes care to rectify the mistake; I am not come to destroy. The Saviour of souls is the destroyer of nothing but the works of the devil, of nothing that comes from God, much less of those excellent dictates which we have from Moses and the prophets. No, he came to fulfil them. That is,

[1.] To obey the commands of the law, for he was made under the law, Ga 4:4. He in all respects yielded obedience to the law, honoured his parents, sanctified the sabbath, prayed, gave alms, and did that which never any one else did, obeyed perfectly, and never broke the law in any thing.

[2.] To make good the promises of the law, and the predictions of the prophets, which did all bear witness to him. The covenant of grace is, for substance, the same now that it was then, and Christ the Mediator of it.

[3.] To answer the types of the law; thus (as bishop Tillotson expresses it), he did not make void, but make good, the ceremonial law, and manifested himself to be the Substance of all those shadows.

[4.] To fill up the defects of it, and so to complete and perfect it. Thus the word plerosai properly signifies. If we consider the law as a vessel that had some water in it before, he did not come to pour out the water, but to fill the vessel up to the brim; or, as a picture that is first rough-drawn, displays some outlines only of the piece intended, which are afterwards filled up; so Christ made an improvement of the law and the prophets by his additions and explications.

[5.] To carry on the same design; the Christian institutes are so far from thwarting and contradicting that which was the main design

of the Jewish religion, that they promote it to the highest degree. The gospel is the time of reformation (Heb 9:10), not the repeal of the law, but the amendment of it, and, consequently, its establishment.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Till heaven and earth pass. This expression denotes that the law never should be destroyed till it should be all fulfilled. It is the same as saying, everything else may change--the very earth and heaven may pass away--but the law of God shall not be destroyed, till its whole design shall be accomplished. That the law of God is an eternal and unchangeable rule of life and manners.

One jot. The word jot, or yod--'--is the name of the Hebrew letter I, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

One tittle. The Hebrew letters were written with small points or apices, as in the letter Schin--*** or Sin ***-- which serve to distinguish one letter from another. To change a small point of one letter, therefore, might vary the meaning of a word, and destroy the sense. Hence the Jews were exceedingly cautious in writing these letters, and considered the smallest change or omission a reason for destroying the whole manuscript when they were transcribing the Old Testament. The expression, "one jot or tittle," became proverbial, and means that the smallest part of the law should not be destroyed.

The laws of the Jews are common!y divided into moral, ceremonial, and judicial. The moral laws are such as grow out of the nature of things, which cannot, therefore, be changed--such as the duty of loving God and his creatures. These cannot be abolished as it can never be made right to hate God, or to hate our fellow-men Of this kind are the ten commandments; and these our Saviour has neither abolished nor superseded. The ceremonial laws are such as are appointed to meet certain states of society, or to regulate the religious rites and ceremonies of a people. These can be changed when circumstances are changed, and yet the moral law be

untouched. A general may command his soldiers to appear sometimes in a red coat, and sometimes in blue, or in yellow. This would be a ceremonial law, and might be changed as he pleased. The duty of obeying him, and of being faithful to his country, could not be changed. This is a moral law. A parent might suffer his children to have fifty different dresses at different times, and love them equally in all. The dress is a mere matter of ceremony, and may be changed. The child, in all these garments, is bound to love and obey his father. This is a moral law, and cannot be changed. So the laws of the Jews. Those to regulate mere matters of ceremony, and rites of worship, might be changed. Those requiring love and obedience to God, and love to men, could not be changed, and Christ did not attempt it, Mt 19:19, 22:37-39, Lk 10:27, Rom 13:9.

A third species of law was the judicial, or those regulating courts of justice, contained in the Old Testament. These were of the nature of the ceremonial law, and might also be changed at pleasure. The judicial law regulated the courts of justice of the Jews. It was adapted to their own civil society. When the form of the Jewish polity was changed, this was of course no longer binding. The ceremonial law was fulfilled by the coming of Christ: the shadow was lost in the substance, and ceased to be binding. The moral law was confirmed and unchanged.

He asserts the perpetuity of it; that not only he designed not the abrogation of it, but that it never should be abrogated (Mt 5:18); "Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, solemnly declare it, that till heaven and earth pass, when time shall be no more, and the unchangeable state of recompences shall supersede all laws, one jot, or one tittle, the least and most minute circumstance, shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled;" for what is it that God is doing in all the operations both of providence and grace, but fulfilling the scripture? Heaven and earth shall come together, and all the fulness thereof be wrapped up in ruin and confusion, rather than any word of God shall fall to the ground, or be in vain. The word of the Lord endures for ever, both that of the law, and that of the gospel. Observe, The care of God concerning his law extends

itself even to those things that seem to be of least account in it, the iotas and the tittles; for whatever belongs to God, and bears his stamp, be it ever so little, shall be preserved. The laws of men are conscious to themselves of so much imperfection, that they allow it for a maxim, Apices juris non sunt jura--The extreme points of the law are not the law, but God will stand by and maintain every iota and every tittle of his law.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

He gives it in charge to his disciples, carefully to preserve the law, and shows them the danger of the neglect and contempt of it (Mt 5:19); Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least commandments of the law of Moses, much more any of the greater, as the Pharisees did, who neglected the weightier matters of the law, and shall teach men so as they did, who made void the commandment of God with their traditions (Mt 15:3), he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. Though the Pharisees be cried up for such teachers as should be, they shall not be employed as teachers in Christ's kingdom; but whosoever shall do and teach them, as Christ's disciples would, and thereby prove themselves better friends to the Old Testament than the Pharisees were, they, though despised by men, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Note,

(1.) Among the commands of God there are some less than others; none absolutely little, but comparatively so. The Jews reckon the least of the commandments of the law to be that of the bird's nest (De 22:6,7); yet even that had a significance and an intention very great and considerable.

(2.) It is a dangerous thing, in doctrine or practice, to disannul the least of God's commands; to break them, that is, to go about either to contract the extent, or weaken the obligation of them; whoever does so, will find it is at his peril. Thus to vacate any of the ten commandments, is too bold a stroke for the jealous God to pass by.

It is something more than transgressing the law, it is making void the law, Ps 119:126.

(3.) That the further such corruptions as they spread, the worse they are. It is impudence enough to break the command, but is a greater degree of it to teach men so. This plainly refers to those who at this time sat in Moses' seat, and by their comments corrupted and perverted the text. Opinions that tend to the destruction of serious godliness and the vitals of religion, by corrupt glosses on the scripture, are bad when they are held, but worse when they are propagated and taught, as the word of God. He that does so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, in the kingdom of glory; he shall never come thither, but be eternally excluded; or, rather, in the kingdom of the gospel-church. He is so far from deserving the dignity of a teacher in it, that he shall not so much as be accounted a member of it. The prophet that teaches these lies shall be the tail in that kingdom (Isa 9:15); when truth shall appear in its own evidence, such corrupt teachers, though cried up as the Pharisees, shall be of no account with the wise and good. Nothing makes ministers more contemptible and base than corrupting the law, Mal 2:8,11. Those who extenuate and encourage sin, and discountenance and put contempt upon strictness in religion and serious devotion, are the dregs of the church. But, on the other hand, Those are truly honourable, and of great account in the church of Christ, who lay out themselves by their life and doctrine to promote the purity and strictness of practical religion; who both do and teach that which is good; for those who do not as they teach, pull down with one hand what they build up with the other, and give themselves the lie, and tempt men to think that all religion is a delusion; but those who speak from experience, who live up to what they preach, are truly great; they honour God, and God will honour them (1Sa 2:30), and hereafter they shall shine as the stars in the kingdom of our Father.

These least commandments. The Pharisees, it is probable, divided the precepts of the law into lesser and greater, teaching that they who violated the former were guilty of a trivial offence only. See Mt 23:23. Christ teaches that in his kingdom they who make this

distinction, or who taught that any laws of God might be violated with impunity, should be called least; while they should be held in high regard who observed all the laws of God without distinction.

Shall be called the least. That is, shall be least. The meaning of this passage seems to be this: "In the kingdom of heaven," that is, in the kingdom of the Messiah, or in the church which he is about to establish, (Mt 3:2) he that breaks the least of these commandments shall be in no esteem, or shall not be regarded as a proper religious teacher. The Pharisees divided the law into greater and lesser precepts. They made no small part of it void by their traditions and divisions, Mt 23:23, 15:3-6. Jesus says, that in his kingdom all this vain division and tradition should cease. Such divisions and distinctions should be a small matter. He that attempted it should be the least of all. Men would be engaged in yielding obedience to all the law of God, without any such vain distinctions.

Shall be called great, he that teaches that all the law of God is binding, and that all of it should be obeyed, without attempting to specify what is most important, shall be a teacher worthy of his office, shall teach the truth, and shall be called great. We learn hence,

(1.) that all the law of God is binding on Christians. Comp. Jas 2:10

(2.) That all the commands of God should be preached, in their proper place, by Christian ministers.

(3.) That they who pretend that there are any laws of God so small that they need not obey them, are unworthy of his kingdom. And,

(4.) that true piety has respect to all the commandments of God, and keeps them, Ps 119:6.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Your righteousness. Your holiness, your views of the nature or righteousness, and your conduct and lives. Unless you are more holy than they are, you cannot be saved.

Shall exceed. Shall excel, or abound more. This righteousness was external, and was not real holiness. The righteousness of true Christians is seated in the heart, and is therefore genuine. Jesus means, that unless they had more real holiness of character than the scribes, they could not be saved.

The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Mt 3:7. Their righteousness consisted in outward observances of the ceremonial and traditional law. They offered sacrifices, fasted often, prayed much, were very punctilious about ablutions and tithes and the ceremonies of religion, but neglected justice, truth, purity, holiness of heart, and did not strive to be pure in their motives before God. See Mt 23: 13-33. The righteousness that Jesus required in his kingdom was purity, chastity, honesty, temperance, the fear of God, and the love of man. It is pure, eternal, teaching the motives, and making the life holy.

The Kingdom of heaven. See Mt 3:2. Shall not be a fit subject of his kingdom here, or saved in the world to come.

Here is the special qualification of that righteousness expressed, which will entitle us to heaven and salvation: it must be a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and that these three ways;

1. In its principle and motive; love to God, and obedience to his command; not the applause and commendation of men.

2. In its aim and end; the Pharisees made themselves. their own credit and esteem, their worldly gain and interest, their ultimate end; and not God's glory, their supreme aim.

3. In the manner of performance; the Pharisees duty wanted that purity and spirituality which the law of God required. They had respect only to the outward action, without any regard to the inward intention, and to that purity of heart which God required.

Quest. In what things are we to exceed the Scribes and Pharisees?

Answ. In sincerity, or by being that within which we seem to be without.
-In simplicity, or having holy ends in our religious actions.
-In humility, or having low and humble thoughts of ourselves, and our best performances.
-In charity, or having compassion on all distressed persons.
-In universality of obedience to all commands.

Learn, That holiness of heart, and righteousness of life, which God's law requires of us, is absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation.

The righteousness which Christ came to establish by this rule, must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, Mt 5:20. This was strange doctrine to those who looked upon the scribes and Pharisees as having arrived at the highest pitch of religion. The scribes were the most noted teachers of the law, and the Pharisees the most celebrated professors of it, and they both sat in Moses' chair (Mt 23:2), and had such a reputation among the people, that they were looked upon as super-conformable to the law, and people did not think themselves obliged to be as good as they; it was therefore a great surprise to them, to hear that they must be better than they, or they should not go to heaven; and therefore Christ here avers it with solemnity; I say unto you, It is so. The scribes and Pharisees were enemies to Christ and his doctrine, and were great oppressors; and yet it must be owned, that there was something commendable in them. They were much in fasting and prayer, and giving of alms; they were punctual in observing the ceremonial appointments, and made it their business to teach others; they had such an interest in the people that they ought, if but two men went to heaven, one

would be a Pharisee; and yet our Lord Jesus here tells his disciples, that the religion he came to establish, did not only exclude the badness, but excel the goodness, of the scribes and Pharisees. We must do more than they, and better than they, or we shall come short of heaven. They were partial in the law, and laid most stress upon the ritual part of it; but we must be universal, and not think it enough to give the priest his tithe, but must give God our hearts. They minded only the outside, but we must make conscience of inside godliness. They aimed at the praise and applause of men, but we must aim at acceptance with God: they were proud of what they did in religion, and trusted to it as a righteousness; but we, when we have done all, must deny ourselves, and say, We are unprofitable servants, and trust only to the righteousness of Christ; and thus we may go beyond the scribes and Pharisees.

The superiority to the Pharisaic righteousness here required is plainly in kind, not degree; for all Scripture teaches that entrance into God's kingdom, whether in its present or future stage, depends, not on the degree of our excellence in anything, but solely on our having the character itself which God demands. Our righteousness, then—if it is to contrast with the outward and formal righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—must be inward, vital, spiritual. Some, indeed, of the scribes and Pharisees themselves might have the very righteousness here demanded; but our Lord is speaking, not of persons, but of the system they represented and taught.

Jesus' Attitude toward Anger

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Ye have heard. Or, this is the common interpretation among the Jews. Jesus proceeds here to comment on some prevailing opinions among the Jews; to show that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was defective; and that men needed a better righteousness, or they could not be saved. He shows what he meant by that better righteousness, by showing that the common opinions of the scribes were erroneous.

By them of old time. This might be translated, to the ancients, referring to Moses and the prophets. But it is more probable that he here refers to the interpreters of the law and the prophets. Jesus did not set himself against the law of Moses, but against the false and pernicious interpretations of the law prevalent in his time.

Thou shalt not kill. See Ex 20:13. This literally denotes taking the life of another, with malice, or with intention to murder him. The Jews understood it as meaning no more. The comment of our Saviour shows that it was spiritual, and was designed to extend to the thoughts and feelings, as well as the external act.

Shall be in danger of. Shall be held guilty, and be punished by. The law of Moses declared that the murderer should be put to death, Lev 24:21, Nu 35:16. It did not say, however, by whom this should be done, and it was left to the Jews to organize courts to have cognizance of such crimes, De 16:18.

The judgment. This was the tribunal that had cognizance of cases of murder, etc. It was a court that sat in each city or town, and consisted commonly of seven members. It was the lowest court among the Jews, and from it an appeal might be taken to the Sanhedrim.

22 but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Now this gloss of theirs upon this commandment was faulty, for it intimated that the law of the sixth commandment was only external, and forbade no more than the act of murder, and laid to restraint upon the inward lusts, from which wars and fightings come. This was indeed the proton pseudos--the fundamental error of the Jewish teachers, that the divine law prohibited only the sinful act, not the sinful thought; they were disposed hærere in cortice--to rest in the letter of the law, and they never enquired into the spiritual meaning of it. Paul, while a Pharisee, did not, till, by the key of the tenth

commandment, divine grace let him into the knowledge of the spiritual nature of all the rest, Ro 7:7,14.

When it exceeds due bounds; when we are hardy and headstrong in our anger, violent and vehement, outrageous and mischievous, and when we seek the hurt of those we are displeased at. This is a breach of the sixth commandment, for he that is thus angry, would kill if he could and durst; he has taken the first step toward it; Cain's killing his brother began in anger; he is a murderer in the account of God, who knows his heart, whence murder proceeds, Mt 15:19.

But I say unto you. Jesus being God as well as man, (Jn 1:1) and, therefore, being the original Giver of the law, had a right to expound it, or change it as he pleased. Comp. Mt 12:6,8. He therefore spoke here and elsewhere as having authority, and not as the scribes. It may be added here, that no mere man ever spake as Jesus did, when explaining or enforcing the law. He did it as having a right to do it; and he that has a right to ordain and change laws in the government of God must be himself Divine.

His brother. By a brother here seems to be meant a neighbour, or perhaps any one with whom we may be associated. As all men are descended from one Father, and are all the creatures of the same God, so they are all brethren; and so every man should be regarded and treated as a brother.

Raca. This is a Syriac word, expressive of great contempt. It comes from a verb signifying to be empty, vain; and hence, as a word of contempt, denotes senseless, stupid, shallow-brains. Jesus teaches here, that to use such words is a violation of the sixth commandment. It is a violation of the spirit of that commandment, and, if indulged, may lead to a more open and dreadful infraction of that law. Children should learn that to use such words is highly offensive to God, for we must give an account of every idle word which we speak in the day of judgment.

In danger of the council. The word translated council is, in the original, sanhedrim, and there can be no doubt that he refers to the Jewish tribunal of that name. This was instituted in the time of the Maccabees, probably about 200 years before Christ. It was composed of seventy-two judges; the high priest was the president of this tribunal. The seventy-two members were made up of the chief priests and elders of the people, and the scribes. The chief priests were such as had discharged the office of the high priest, and those who were the heads of the twenty-four classes of priests, who were called in an honorary way high or chief priests. See Mt 2:4. The elders were the princes of the tribes, or heads of the family associations. It is not to be supposed that all the elders had a right to a seat here, but such only as were elected to the office. The scribes were learned men of the nation, elected to this tribunal, being neither of the rank of priests nor elders. This tribunal had cognizance of the great affairs of the nation. Till the time when Judea was subjected to the Romans, it had the power of life and death. It still retained the power of passing sentence, though the Roman magistrate held the right of execution. It usually sat in Jerusalem, in a room near the temple. It was before this tribunal that our Saviour was tried. It was then assembled in the palace of the high priest, Mt 26:3-57; Jn 18:24.

Thou fool. This term expressed more than want of wisdom. It was expressive of the highest guilt. It had been commonly used to denote those who were idolaters, (De 22:21) and also one who is guilty of great crimes, Ps 14:1. Our Lord Himself applies the very word "fools" twice in one breath to the blind guides of the people (Mt 23:17, 19) —although, in both cases, it is to false reasoners rather than persons that such words are applied.

He tells them, that given opprobrious language to our brother is tongue-murder, calling him, Raca, and, Thou fool. When this is done with mildness and for a good end, to convince others of their vanity and folly, it is not sinful. Thus James says, O vain man; and Paul, Thou fool; and Christ himself, O fools, and slow of heart. But when it proceeds from anger and malice within, it is the smoke of

that fire which is kindled from hell, and falls under the same character.

(1.) Raca is a scornful word, and comes from pride, "Thou empty fellow;" it is the language of that which Solomon calls proud wrath (Pr 21:24), which tramples upon our brother-disdains to set him even with the dogs of our flock. This people who knoweth not the law, is cursed, is such language, Joh 7:49.

(2.) Thou fool, is a spiteful word, and comes from hatred; looking upon him, not only as mean and not to be honoured, but as vile and not to be loved; "Thou wicked man, thou reprobate." The former speaks a man without sense, this (in scripture language) speaks a man without grace; the more the reproach touches his spiritual condition, the worse it is; the former is a haughty taunting of our brother, this is a malicious censuring and condemning of him, as abandoned of God. Now this is a breach of the sixth commandment; malicious slanders and censures are poison under the tongue, that kills secretly and slowly; bitter words are as arrows that would suddenly (Ps 64:3), or as a sword in the bones. The good name of our neighbour, which is better than life, is thereby stabbed and murdered; and it is an evidence of such an ill-will to our neighbour as would strike at his life, if it were in our power.

Hellfire. The original of this is, "the GEHENNA of ore." The word GEHENNA, commonly translated hell, is made up of two Hebrew words, and signifies the valley of Hinnom. This was formerly a pleasant valley, near to Jerusalem, on the south, [or south- east.] A small brook or torrent usually ran through this valley, and partly encompassed the city. This valley the idolatrous Israelites devoted formerly to the horrid worship of Moloch, 2Kgs 16:3, 2Chr 28:3. In that worship the ancient Jewish writers inform us that the idol of Moloch was of brass, adorned with a royal crown, having the head of a calf, and his arms extended, as if to embrace any one. When they offered children to him, they heated the statue within by a great fire; and when it was burning hot, they put the miserable child into his arms, where it was soon consumed by the heat; and, in order

that the cries of the child might not be heard, they made a great noise with drums and other instruments about the idol. These drums were called Toph; and hence a common name of the place was TOPHET, Jer 7:31,32.

The following cut may furnish a useful illustration of this idol.

After the return of the Jews from captivity, this place was held in such abhorrence, that, by the example of Josiah, (2Ki 23:10) it was made the place where to throw all the dead carcases and filth of the city; and was not unfrequently the place of executions. It became, therefore, extremely offensive; the sight was terrific; the air was polluted and pestilential; and to preserve it in any manner pure, it was necessary to keep fires continually burning there. The extreme loathsomeness of the place; the filth and putrefaction; the corruption of the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by day and by night, made it one of the most appalling and terrific objects with which a Jew was acquainted. It was called the GEHENNA of fire; and was the image which our Saviour often employed to denote the future punishment of the wicked.

In this verse it denotes a degree of suffering higher than the punishment inflicted by the court of seventy, or the sanhedrim; and the whole verse may therefore mean, "He that hates his brother is guilty of a violation of the sixth commandment, and shall be punished with a severity similar to that inflicted by the court of judgment. He that shall suffer his passions to transport him to still greater extravagances, and shall make him an object of derision and contempt, shall be exposed to still severer punishment, corresponding to that which the sanhedrim, or council, inflicts. But he who shall load his brother with odious appellations and abusive language, shall incur the severest degree of punishment, represented by being burnt alive in the horrid and awful valley of Hinnom."

The amount, then, of this difficult and important verse is this: The Jews considered but one crime a violation of the sixth

commandment, viz., actual murder, or willful, unlawful, taking life. Jesus says that the commandment is much broader. It relates not only to the external act, but to the feelings and words. He specifies three forms of such violation:

(1.) Unjust anger.

(2.) Anger accompanied with an expression of contempt.

(3.) Anger, with an expression not only of contempt, but wickedness. Among the Jews there were three degrees of condemnation: that by the "judgment," the "council," and the "fire of Hinnom." Jesus says, likewise, there shall be grades of condemnation for the different ways of violating the sixth commandment. Not only murder shall be punished by God; but anger, and contempt, shall be regarded by him as a violation of the law, and punished according to the offense. As these offenses were not actually cognizable before the Jewish tribunals, he must mean that they will be punished hereafter. And all these expressions relate to degrees of punishment, proportionate to crime, in the future world--the world of justice and of woe.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee;

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, etc. The Pharisees were intent only on the external act in worship. They looked not at all to the internal acts of the mind. If a man conformed to the external rites of religion, however much envy, and malice, and secret hatred he might have, they thought he was doing well. Our Saviour taught a different doctrine. It was of more consequence to have the heart right, than to perform the outward act. If therefore, says he, a man has gone so far as to bring his gift to the very altar, and should remember that any one had anything against him, it was his duty there to leave his offering, and go and be reconciled. While a difference of this nature existed, his offering could not be acceptable. He was not to wait till the offended brother should come to him; he was to go and seek him out, and be reconciled. So now, the worship of God will not be acceptable, however well performed

externally, until we are at peace with those that we have injured. "To obey is better than sacrifice." He that comes to worship his Maker filled with malice, and hatred, and envy, and at war with his brethren, is a hypocritical worshipper, and must meet with God's displeasure. God is not deceived; and he will not be mocked.

Thy gift. Thy sacrifice. What thou art about to devote to God as an offering. To the altar. The altar was situated in front of the temple, see the representation on following page and was the place on which sacrifices were made. Mt 21:12. To bring a gift to the altar, was expressive of worshipping God, for this was the way in which he was formerly worshipped.

Thy brother. Any man, especially any fellow-worshipper. Any one of the same religious society.

Hath aught. Is offended, or thinks he has been injured by you in any manner:

First be reconciled. This means to settle the difficulty; to make proper acknowledgment, or satisfaction, for the injury. If you have wronged him, make restitution. If you owe him a debt which ought to be paid, pay it. If you have injured his character, confess it, and seek pardon. If he is under an erroneous impression; if your conduct has been such as to lead him to suspect that you have injured him, make an explanation. Do all in your power, and all you ought to do, to have the matter settled. From this we learn,

(1.) that in order to worship God acceptably, we must do justice to our fellow-men.

(2.) Our worship will not be acceptable, unless we do all we can to live peaceably with others.

(3.) It is our duty to seek reconciliation with others when we have injured them.

(4.) This should be done before we attempt to worship God.

(5.) This is often the reason why God does not accept our offerings, and we go empty away from our devotions. We do not do what we ought to others; we cherish improper feelings, or refuse to make proper acknowledgments, and God will not accept such attempts to worship him.

Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother—The meaning evidently is—not, "dismiss from thine own breast all ill feeling," but "get thy brother to dismiss from his mind all grudge against thee."

and then come and offer thy gift—"The picture," says THOLUCK, "is drawn from life. It transports us to the moment when the Israelite, having brought his sacrifice to the court of the Israelites, awaited the instant when the priest would approach to receive it at his hands. He waits with his gift at the rails which separate the place where he stands from the court of the priests, into which his offering will presently be taken, there to be slain by the priest, and by him presented upon the altar of sacrifice." It is at this solemn moment, when about to cast himself upon divine mercy, and seek in his offering a seal of divine forgiveness, that the offerer is supposed, all at once, to remember that some brother has a just cause of complaint against him through breach of this commandment in one or other of the ways just indicated. What then? Is he to say, As soon as I have offered this gift I will go straight to my brother, and make it up with him? Nay; but before another step is taken—even before the offering is presented—this reconciliation is to be sought, though the gift have to be left unoffered before the altar. The converse of the truth here taught is very strikingly expressed in Mr 11:25, 26: "And when ye stand praying (in the very act), forgive, if ye have aught (of just complaint) against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you," &c.

For preventing the sin of rash anger, which in our Savior's account is a degree of murder, he exhorts all his disciples and followers to brotherly agreement, and to seek mutual reconciliation with each other. Agree with thine adversary, that is, thy offended or offending brother; agree with him, as becomes a man; quickly, as becomes a Christian; implying, that it is a necessary duty for every Christian to seek reconciliation sincerely and speedily with such as have offended him, or have been offended by him.

The argument or motive with which Christ enforces his exhortation to brotherly reconciliation, drawn from the peril and danger of the neglect; and this is two-fold: The first respects our present duties and services, when we wait upon God at his altar, and attend upon him in holy offices. None of our performances will find malice and hatred, anger and ill-will, against our brother.

Learn, that no sacrifice we can offer will be acceptable to God, so long as we ourselves are implacable to men.
A second danger respects us, when we appear before God in judgement; then God will be our Adversary, Christ our Judge, Satan our accuser, hell our tormentor; If now from the heart we do not every one forgive our brother his trespasses.

Because, till this be done, we are utterly unfit for communion with God in holy ordinances, Mt 5:23,24. The case supposed is, "That thy brother have somewhat against thee," that thou has injured and offended him, either really or in his apprehension; if thou are the party offended, there needs not this delay; if thou have aught against thy brother, make short work of it; no more is to be done but to forgive him (Mk 11:25), and forgive the injury; but if the quarrel began on thy side, and the fault was either at first or afterwards thine, so that thy brother has a controversy with thee, go and be reconciled to him before thou offer thy gift at the altar, before thou approach solemnly to God in the gospel-services of prayer and praise, hearing the word or the sacraments.

Note,

(1.) When we are addressing ourselves to any religious exercises, it is good for us to take that occasion of serious reflection and self-examination: there are many things to be remembered, when we bring our gift to the altar, and this among the rest, whether our brother hath aught against us; then, if ever, we are disposed to be serious, and therefore should then call ourselves to an account.

(2.) Religious exercises are not acceptable to God, if they are performed when we are in wrath; envy, malice, and uncharitableness, are sins so displeasing to God, that nothing pleases him which comes from a heart wherein they are predominant, 1Ti 2:8. Prayers made in wrath are written in gall, Isa 1:15,58:4.

(3.) Love or charity is so much better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice, that God will have reconciliation made with an offended brother before the gift be offered; he is content to stay for the gift, rather than have it offered while we are under guilt and engaged in a quarrel.

(4.) Though we are unfitted for communion with God, by a continual quarrel with a brother, yet that can be no excuse for the omission or neglect of our duty: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, lest otherwise, when thou has gone away, thou be tempted not to come again." Many give this as a reason why they do not come to church or to the communion, because they are at variance with some neighbour; and whose fault is that? One sin will never excuse another, but will rather double the guilt. Want of charity cannot justify the want of piety. The difficulty is easily got over; those who have wronged us, we must forgive; and those whom we have wronged, we must make satisfaction to, or at least make a tender of it, and desire a renewal of the friendship, so that if reconciliation be not made, it may not be our fault; and then come, come and welcome, come and offer thy gift, and it shall be accepted. Therefore we must not let the sun go down upon our wrath any day, because we must go to prayer before we go to sleep; much less let

the sun rise upon our wrath on a sabbath-day, because it is a day of prayer.

Lord! how heinous then is this sin of inveterate anger, hatred, and malice, in our hearts, against any person! No gifts, though never so costly, no devotions, though never so specious, will prevail with God to pass it by, whilst we live: and if we die with hearts full of this rancour and bitterness, we can never expect to be encircled in the arms of Him who is all love, all mercy, all goodness and compassion: no reconciliation with God without an hearty good-will to all men.

24 leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Agree with thine adversary quickly. This is still an illustration of the sixth commandment. To be in hostility, to go to law, to be litigious, is a violation always, on one side or the other, of the law requiring us to love our neighbour; and our Saviour regards it as a violation of the sixth commandment. While you are in the way with him, says he, that is, while you are going to the court, before the trial has taken place, it is your duty, if possible, to come to an agreement. It is wrong to carry the contention to a court of law. See 1Cor 6:6,7. The consequence of not being reconciled, he expresses in the language of courts. The adversary shall deliver thee to the judge, and he to the executioner, and he shall throw you into prison. He did not mean to say, that this would be literally the way with God; but that His dealings with those that harboured these feelings, and would not be reconciled with their brethren, were represented by the punishment inflicted by human tribunals. That is, he would hold all such as violators of the sixth commandment, and would punish them accordingly.

There is no propriety in the use sometimes made of this verse, in regarding God as the "adversary" of the sinner, and urging him to be reconciled to God while in the way to judgment. Nor does the

phrase, "thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing," refer to the eternity of future punishment. It is language taken from courts of justice, to illustrate the truth that God will punish men according to justice, for not being reconciled. It will be eternal, indeed, but this passage does not prove it.

Thine adversary. A man that is opposed to us in law. It here means a creditor; a man who has a just claim on us.

In the way with him. While you are going before the court. Before the trial comes on.

The officer. The executioner; or, as we should say, the sheriff.

The uttermost farthing. The last farthing. All that is due. The farthing was a small coin used in Judea, equal to two mites. It was equal to about seven mills of our money, [three halfpence.]

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Jesus' Attitude toward Adultery

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

Ye have heard--Thou shalt not commit adultery. Our Saviour in these verses explains the seventh commandment. It is probable that the Pharisees had explained this commandment as they had the sixth, as extending only to the external act; and that they regarded evil thoughts and a wanton imagination as of little consequence, or as not forbidden by the law. Our Saviour assures them that the commandment did not regard the external act merely, but the secrets of the heart, and the movements of the eye. That they who indulged a wanton desire; that they who looked on a woman to increase their lust, have already, in the sight of God, violated the commandment, and committed adultery in the heart. Such was the guilt of David, whose deep and awful crime fully shows the danger of indulging in evil desires, and in the rovings of a wanton eye. See 2Sam 11:1-27 Ps 51:1-19. See also 2Pet 2:14. So exceeding strict

and broad is the law of God! And so heinous in his sight are thoughts and feelings, which may be for ever concealed from the world!

We are here taught, that there is such a thing as heart-adultery, adulterous thoughts and dispositions, which never proceed to the act of adultery or fornication; and perhaps the defilement which these give to the soul, that is here so clearly asserted, was not only included in the seventh commandment, but was signified and intended in many of those ceremonial pollutions under the law, for which they were to wash their clothes, and bathe their flesh in water. Whosoever looketh on a woman (not only another man's wife, as some would have it, but any woman), to lust after her, has committed adultery with her in his heart, Mt 5:28. This command forbids not only the acts of fornication and adultery, but,

(1.) All appetites to them, all lusting after the forbidden object; this is the beginning of the sin, lust conceiving (Jam 1:15); it is a bad step towards the sin; and where the lust is dwelt upon and approved, and the wanton desire is rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, it is the commission of sin, as far as the heart can do it; there wants nothing but convenient opportunity for the sin itself. Adultera mens est--The mind is debauched. Ovid. Lust is conscience baffled or biassed: biassed, if it say nothing against the sin; baffled, if it prevail not in what is says.

(2.) All approaches toward them; feeding the eye with the sight of the forbidden fruit; not only looking for that end, that I may lust; but looking till I do lust, or looking to gratify the lust, where further satisfaction cannot be obtained. The eye is both the inlet and outlet of a great deal of wickedness of this kind, witness Joseph's mistress (Ge 39:7), Samson (Jdg 16:1), David, 2Sa 11:2. We read the eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin, 2Pe 2:14. What need have we, therefore, with holy Job, to make a covenant with our eyes, to make this bargain with them that they should have the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun and the works of God, provided they would never fasten or dwell upon any thing that

might occasion impure imaginations or desires; and under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears! Job 31:1. What have we the covering of the eyes for, but to restrain corrupt glances, and to keep out of their defiling impressions? This forbids also the using of any other of our senses to stir up lust. If ensnaring looks are forbidden fruit, much more unclean discourses, and wanton dalliances, the fuel and bellows of this hellish fire. These precepts are hedges about the law of heart-purity, Mt 5:8. And if looking be lust, they who dress and deck, and expose themselves, with design to be looked at and lusted after (like Jezebel, that painted her face and tired her head, and looked out at the window) are no less guilty. Men sin, but devils tempt to sin.

28 but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Thy right eye. The Hebrews, like others, were accustomed to represent the affections of the mind by the members or parts of the body, Rom 7:23, 6:13. Thus, the bowels denoted compassion; the heart, affection or feeling; the reins, understanding, secret purpose. An evil eye denotes sometimes envy, (Mt 20:15) sometimes an evil passion, or sin in general. Mk 7:21,22, "Out of the heart proceedeth an evil eye." In this place as in 2Pet 2:14 it is used to denote strong adulterous passion, unlawful desire and inclination. The right eye and hand are mentioned, because they are of most use to us, and denote that, however strong the passion may be, or difficult to part with, yet that we should do it.

Shall offend thee. The noun from which the verb "offend," in the original, is derived, commonly means a stumbling-block, or a stone placed in the way, over which one might fall. It also means a net, or a certain part of a net, against which, if a bird strikes, it springs the net, and is taken. It comes to signify, therefore, anything by which we fall, or are ensnared; and, applied to morals, means anything by which we fall into sin, or by which we are ensnared. The English word offend means now, commonly, to displease; to make angry; to

affront. This is by no means the sense of the word in Scripture. It means, to cause to fall, or to allure, into sin. The eye does this, when it wantonly looks on a woman to lust after her.

Pluck it out, etc. It cannot be supposed that Christ intended this to be taken literally. His design was to teach that the dearest objects, if they caused us to sin, were to be abandoned; that, by all sacrifices and self-denials, we must overcome the evil propensities of our natures, and resist our wanton imaginations. Some of the Fathers, however, took this commandment literally. Our Saviour several times repeated this sentiment. See Mt 18:9, Mk 9:43-47. See also Co 3:5.

It is profitable for thee. It is better for thee. You will be a gainer by it.

One of the members perish. It is better to deny yourself the gratification of an evil passion here, however much it may cost you, than to go down to hell for ever.

Thy whole body be cast into hell. Thy body, with all its unsubdued and vicious propensities. This will constitute no small part of the misery of hell. The sinner will be sent there as he is, with every evil desire, every unsubdued propensity, every wicked and troublesome passion, and yet with no possibility of gratification. It constitutes our highest notions of misery, when we think of a man filled with anger, pride, malice, avarice, envy, and lust, and no opportunity of gratifying them for ever. This is all that is necessary to make an eternal hell.

Now in these verses Christ prescribes a remedy for the cure of this eye-malady: If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: which is not to be understood literally, as if Christ commanded any man to maim his bodily members; but spiritually, to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye, which otherwise would prove a dangerous snare to the soul.

Learn, 1. That sin may be avoided: it is our duty to avoid whatsoever leads to it, or may be an occasion of it; if we find the view of an ensnaring object will inflame us, we must, though not put out our eye, yet make a covenant with our eye that we will not look upon it.

Note, 2. That the best course we can take to be kept from the outward acts of sin, is to mortify our inward affection and love to sin. This is to kill it in the root; and if once our inward affections be mortified, our bodily members may be spared and preserved; for they will no longer be weapons of sin but instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

When we are tempted to think it hard to deny ourselves, and to crucify fleshly lusts, we ought to consider how much harder it will be to lie for ever in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; those do not know or do not believe what hell is, that will rather venture their eternal ruin in those flames, than deny themselves the gratification of a base and brutish lust.

In hell there will be torments for the body; the whole body will be cast into hell, and there will be torment in every part of it; so that if we have a care of our own bodies, we shall possess them in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness. Even those duties that are most unpleasant to flesh and blood, are profitable for us; and our Master requires nothing from us but what he knows to be for our advantage.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is
profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy
whole body should be cast into hell.

Jesus' Attitude toward Divorce

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a
writing of divorcement:
32 but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the
cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall
marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

It hath been said, etc. That is, by Moses, De 24:1,2 The husband was directed, if he put his wife away, to give her a bill of divorce, that is, a certificate of the fact that she had been his wife, and that he had dissolved the marriage. There was considerable difference of opinion among the Jews for what causes the husband was permitted to do this. One of their famous schools maintained that it might be done for any cause, however trivial. The other, that adultery only could justify it. The truth was, however, that the husband exercised this right at pleasure; that he was judge in the case, and dismissed his wife when, and for what cause, he chose. And this seems to be agreeable to the law in Deuteronomy. Our Saviour, in Mk 10:1-12, says that this was permitted on account of the hardness of their hearts; but in the beginning it was not so. God made a single pair, and ordained marriage for life. But Moses found the people so much hardened, so long accustomed to the practice, and so rebellious, that, as a matter of civil appointment, he thought it best not to attempt any change. Our Saviour brought marriage back to its original institution, and declared that whosoever put away his wife henceforward should be guilty of adultery. But one offence, he declared, could justify divorce. This is now the law of God. This was the original institution. This is the only law that is productive of peace and good morals, and the due respect of a wife and the good of children. Nor has any man, or set of men, a right to interfere, and declare that divorces may be granted for any other cause. Whosoever, therefore, are divorced for any cause except the single one of adultery, if they marry again, are, according to the Scriptures, living in adultery. No earthly laws can trample down the laws of God, or make that right which he has solemnly pronounced wrong.

Jesus' Attitude toward Oaths

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt
not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
34 but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is
God's throne:
35 nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city
of the great King.

We have here an exposition of the third commandment, which we are the more concerned right to understand, because it is particularly said, that God will not hold him guiltless, however he may hold himself, who breaks this commandment, by taking the name of the Lord in vain. Now as to this command,

I. It is agreed on all hands that it forbids perjury, forswearing, and the violation of oaths and vows, Mt 5:33. This was said to them of old time, and is the true intent and meaning of the third commandment. Thou shalt not use, or take up, the name of God (as we do by an oath) in vain, or unto vanity, or a lie. He hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, is expounded in the next words, nor sworn deceitfully, Ps 24:4. Perjury is a sin condemned by the light of nature, as a complication of impiety toward God and injustice toward man, and as rendering a man highly obnoxious to the divine wrath, which was always judged to follow so infallibly upon that sin, that the forms of swearing were commonly turned into execrations or imprecations; as that, God do so to me, and more also; and with us, So help me God; wishing I may never have any help from God, if I swear falsely. Thus, by the consent of nations, have men cursed themselves, not doubting but that God would curse them, if they lied against the truth then, when they solemnly called God to witness to it.

It is added, from some other scriptures, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths (Nu 30:2); which may be meant, either, 1. Of those promises to which God is a party, vows made to God; these must be punctually paid (Ec 5:4,5): or, 2. Of those promises made to our brethren, to which God was a Witness, he being appealed to concerning our sincerity; these must be performed to the Lord, with an eye to him, and for his sake: for to him, by ratifying the promises with an oath, we have made ourselves debtors; and if we break a promise so ratified, we have not lied unto men only, but unto God.

II. It is here added, that the commandment does not only forbid false swearing, but all rash, unnecessary swearing: Swear not at all, Mt 5:34,Jam 5:12. Not that all swearing is sinful; so far from that, if

rightly done, it is a part of religious worship, and we in it give unto God the glory due to his name. See De 6:13,10:20,Isa 45:23,Jer 4:2. We find Paul confirming what he said by such solemnities (2Co 1:23), when there was a necessity for it. In swearing, we pawn the truth of something known, to confirm the truth of something doubtful or unknown; we appeal to a greater knowledge, to a higher court, and imprecate the vengeance of a righteous Judge, if we swear deceitfully.

Now the mind of Christ in this matter is,

1. That we must not swear at all, but when we are duly called to it, and justice or charity to our brother, or respect to the commonwealth, make it necessary for the end of strife (Heb 6:16), of which necessity the civil magistrate is ordinarily to be the judge. We may be sworn, but we must now swear; we may be adjured, and so obliged to it, but we must not thrust ourselves upon it for our own worldly advantage.

2. That we must not swear lightly and irreverently, in common discourse: it is a very great sin to make a ludicrous appeal to the glorious Majesty of heaven, which, being a sacred thing, ought always to be very serious: it is a gross profanation of God's holy name, and of one of the holy things which the children of Israel sanctify to the Lord: it is a sin that has no cloak, no excuse for it, and therefore a sign of a graceless heart, in which enmity to God reigns: Thine enemies take thy name in vain.

3. That we must in a special manner avoid promissory oaths, of which Christ more particularly speaks here, for they are oaths that are to be performed. The influence of an affirmative oath immediately ceases, when we have faithfully discovered the truth, and the whole truth; but a promissory oath binds so long, and may be so many ways broken, by the surprise as well as strength of a temptation, that it is not to be used but upon great necessity: the frequent requiring and using of oaths, is a reflection upon Christians, who should be of such acknowledged fidelity, as that their sober words should be as sacred as their solemn oaths.

4. That we must not swear by any other creature. It should seem there were some, who, in civility (as they thought) to the name of

God, would not make use of that in swearing, but would swear by heaven or earth, &c. This Christ forbids here (Mt 5:34) and shows that there is nothing we can swear by, but it is some way or other related to God, who is the Fountain of all beings, and therefore that it is as dangerous to swear by them, as it is to swear by God himself: it is the verity of the creature that is laid at stake; now that cannot be an instrument of testimony, but as it has regard to God, who is the summum verum--the chief Truth. As for instance,

(a.) Swear not by the heaven; "As sure as there is a heaven, this is true;" for it is God's throne, where he resides, and in a particular manner manifests his glory, as a Prince upon his throne: this being the inseparable dignity of the upper world, you cannot swear by heaven, but you swear by God himself.

(b.) Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool. He governs the motions of this lower world; as he rules in heaven, so he rules over the earth; and though under his feet, yet it is also under his eye and care, and stands in relation to him as his, Ps 24:1. The earth is the Lord's; so that in swearing by it, you swear by its Owner.

(c.) Neither by Jerusalem, a place for which the Jews had such a veneration, that they could not speak of any thing more sacred to swear by; but beside the common reference Jerusalem has to God, as part of the earth, it is in special relation to him, for it is the city of the great King (Ps 48:2), the city of God (Ps 46:4), he is therefore interested in it, and in every oath taken by it.

(d.) "Neither shalt thou swear by the head; though it be near thee, and an essential part of thee, yet it is more God's than thine; for he made it, and formed all the springs and powers of it; whereas thou thyself canst not, from any natural intrinsic influence, change the colour of one hair, so as to make it white or black; so that thou canst not swear by thy head, but thou swearest by him who is the Life of thy head, and the Lifter up of it." Ps 3:3.

5. That therefore in all our communications we must content ourselves with, Yea, yea, and nay, nay, Mt 5:37. In ordinary discourse, if we affirm a thing, let us only say, Yea, it is so; and, if need be, to evidence our assurance of a thing, we may double it, and say, Yea, yea, indeed it is so: Verily, verily, was our Saviour's yea, yea. So if we deny a thing, let is suffice to say, No; or if it be

requisite, to repeat the denial, and say, No, no; and if our fidelity be known, that will suffice to gain us credit; and if it be questioned, to back what we say with swearing and cursing, is but to render it more suspicious. They who can swallow a profane oath, will not strain at a lie. It is a pity that this, which Christ puts in the mouths of all his disciples, should be fastened, as a name of reproach, upon a sect faulty enough other ways, when (as Dr. Hammond says) we are not forbidden any more than yea and nay, but are in a manner directed to the use of that.

The reason is observable; For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil, though it do not amount to the iniquity of an oath. It comes ek tou Diabolou; so an ancient copy has it: it comes from the Devil, the evil one; it comes from the corruption of men's nature, from passion and vehemence; from a reigning vanity in the mind, and a contempt of sacred things: it comes from that deceitfulness which is in men, All men are liars; therefore men use these protestations, because they are distrustful one of another, and think they cannot be believed without them. Note, Christians should, for the credit of their religion, avoid not only that which is in itself evil, but that which cometh of evil, and has the appearance of it. That may be suspected as a bad thing, which comes from a bad cause. An oath is physic, which supposes a disease.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Love for Enemies

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Verses 38-42. In these verses the law of retaliation is expounded, and in a manner repealed. Observe,

I. What the Old-Testament permission was, in case of injury; and here the expression is only, Ye have heard that is has been said; not,

as before, concerning the commands of the decalogue, that it has been said by, or to, them of old time. It was a command, that every one should of necessity require such satisfaction; but they might lawfully insist upon it, if they pleased; an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. This we find, Ex 21:24,Le 24:20,De 19:21; in all which places it is appointed to be done by the magistrate, who bears not the sword in vain, but is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath, Ro 13:4. It was a direction to the judges of the Jewish nation what punishment to inflict in case of maims, for terror to such as would do mischief on the one hand, and for a restraint to such as have mischief done to them on the other hand, that they may not insist on a greater punishment than is proper: it is not a life for an eye, nor a limb for a tooth, but observe a proportion; and it is intimated (Nu 35:31), that the forfeiture in this case might be redeemed with money; for when it is provided that no ransom shall be taken for the life of a murderer, it is supposed that for maims a pecuniary satisfaction was allowed.

But some of the Jewish teachers, who were not the most compassionate men in the world, insisted upon it as necessary that such revenge should be taken, even by private persons themselves, and that there was no room left for remission, or the acceptance of satisfaction. Even now, when they were under the government of the Roman magistrates, and consequently the judicial law fell to the ground of course, yet they were still zealous for any thing that looked harsh and severe.

Now, so far this is in force with us, as a direction to magistrates, to use the sword of justice according to the good and wholesome laws of the land, for the terror of evil-doers, and the vindication of the oppressed. That judge neither feared God nor regarded man, who would not avenge the poor widow of her adversary, Lu 18:2,3. And it is in force as a rule to lawgivers, to provide accordingly, and wisely to apportion punishments to crimes, for the restraint of rapine and violence, and the protection of innocency.

II. What the New-Testament precept is, as to the complainant himself, his duty is, to forgive the injury as done to himself, and no further to insist upon the punishment of it than is necessary to the

public good: and this precept is consonant to the meekness of Christ, and the gentleness of his yoke.

Two things Christ teaches us here:

1. We must not be revengeful (Mt 5:39); I say unto you, that ye resist not evil;--the evil person that is injurious to you. The resisting of any ill attempt upon us, is here as generally and expressly forbidden, as the resisting of the higher powers is (Ro 13:2); and yet this does not repeal the law of self-preservation, and the care we are to take of our families; we may avoid evil, and may resist it, so far as is necessary to our own security; but we must not render evil for evil, must not bear a grudge, nor avenge ourselves, nor study to be even with those that have treated us unkindly, but we must go beyond them by forgiving them, Pr 20:22,24:29,25:21,22,Ro 12:7. The law of retaliation must be made consistent with the law of love: nor, if any have injured us, is our recompence in our own hands, but in the hands of God, to whose wrath we must give place; and sometimes in the hands of his viceregents, where it is necessary for the preservation of the public peace; but it will not justify us in hurting our brother to say that he began, for it is the second blow that makes the quarrel; and when we were injured, we had an opportunity not to justify our injuring him, but to show ourselves the true disciples of Christ, by forgiving him.

Three things our Saviour specifies, to show that Christians must patiently yield to those who bear hard upon them, rather than contend; and these include others.

(1.) A blow on the cheek, which is an injury to me in my body; "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek," which is not only a hurt, but an affront and indignity (2Co 11:20), if a man in anger or scorn thus abuse thee, "turn to him the other cheek;" that is, "instead of avenging that injury, prepare for another, and bear it patiently: give not the rude man as good as he brings; do not challenge him, nor enter an action against him; if it be necessary to the public peace that he be bound to his good behaviour, leave that to the magistrate; but for thine own part, it will ordinarily be the wisest course to pass it by, and take no further notice of it: there are no bones broken, no great harm done, forgive it and forget it; and if proud fools think the worse of thee, and laugh at thee for it, all wise men will value and

honour thee for it, as a follower of the blessed Jesus, who, though he was the Judge of Israel, did not smite those who smote him on the cheek," Mic 5:1. Though this may perhaps, with some base spirits, expose us to the like affront another time, and so it is, in effect, to turn the other cheek, yet let not that disturb us, but let us trust God and his providence to protect us in the way of our duty. Perhaps, the forgiving of one injury may prevent another, when the avenging of it would but draw on another; some will be overcome by submission, who by resistance would but be the more exasperated, Pr 25:22. However, our recompence is in Christ's hands, who will reward us with eternal glory for the shame we thus patiently endure; and though it be not directly inflicted, it if be quietly borne for conscience' sake, and in conformity to Christ's example, it shall be put upon the score of suffering for Christ.

(2.) The loss of a coat, which is a wrong to me in my estate (Mt 5:40); If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat. It is a hard case. Note, It is common for legal processes to be made use of for the doing of greatest injuries. Though judges be just and circumspect, yet it is possible for bad men who make no conscience of oaths and forgeries, by course of law to force off the coat from a man's back. Marvel not at the matter (Ec 5:8), but, in such a case, rather than go to the law by way of revenge, rather than exhibit a cross bill, or stand out to the utmost, in defence of that which is thy undoubted right, let him even take thy cloak also. If the matter be small, which we may lose without an considerable damage to our families, it is good to submit to it for peace' sake. "It will not cost thee so much to buy another cloak, as it will cost thee by course of law to recover that; and therefore unless thou canst get it again by fair means, it is better to let him take it."

(3.) The going a mile by constraint, which is a wrong to me in my liberty (Mt 5:41); "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, to run an errand for him, or to wait upon him, grudge not at it, but go with him two miles rather than fall out with him:" say not, "I would do it, if I were not compelled to it, but I hate to be forced;" rather say, "Therefore I will do it, for otherwise there will be a quarrel;" and it is better to serve him, than to serve thy own lusts of pride and revenge. Some give this sense of it: The Jews taught that the disciples of the wise, and the students of the law, were not to be

pressed, as others might, by the king's officers, to travel upon the public service; but Christ will not have his disciples to insist upon this privilege, but to comply rather than offend the government. The sum of all is, that Christians must not be litigious; small injuries must be submitted to, and no notice taken of them; and if the injury be such as requires us to seek reparation, it must be for a good end, and without thought of revenge: though we must not invite injuries, yet we must meet them cheerfully in the way of duty, and make the best of them. If any say, Flesh and blood cannot pass by such an affront, let them remember, that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. We must be charitable and beneficent (Mt 5:42); must not only do no hurt to our neighbours, but labour to do them all the good we can. (1.) We must be ready to give; "Give to him that asketh thee. If thou has an ability, look upon the request of the poor as giving thee an opportunity for the duty of almsgiving." When a real object of charity presents itself, we should give at the first word: Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; yet the affairs of our charity must be guided with discretion (Ps 112:5), lest we give that to the idle and unworthy, which should be given to those that are necessitous, and deserve well. What God says to us, we should be ready to say to our poor brethren, Ask, and it shall be given you. (2.) We must be ready to lend. This is sometimes as great a piece of charity as giving; as it not only relieves the present exigency, but obliges the borrower to providence, industry, and honesty; and therefore, "From him that would borrow of thee something to live on, or something to trade on, turn not thou away: shun not those that thou knowest have such a request to make of thee, nor contrive excuses to shake them off." Be easy of access to him that would borrow: though he be bashful, and have not confidence to make known his case and beg the favour, yet thou knowest both his need and his desire, and therefore offer him the kindness. Exorabor antequam rogor; honestis precibus occuram--I will be prevailed on before I am entreated; I will anticipate the becoming petition. Seneca, De Vitâ Beatâ. It becomes us to be thus forward in acts of kindness, for before we call, God hears us, and prevents us with the blessings of his goodness.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have
thy cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.
44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
45 that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

We have here, lastly, an exposition of that great fundamental law of the second table, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, which was the fulfilling of the law.

I. See here how this law was corrupted by the comments of the Jewish teachers, Mt 5:43. God said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour; and by neighbour they understood those only of their own country, nation, and religion; and those only that they were pleased to look upon as their friends: yet this was not the worst; from this command, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, they were willing to infer what God never designed; Thou shalt hate thine enemy; and they looked upon whom they pleased as their enemies, thus making void the great command of God by their traditions, though there were express laws to the contrary, Ex 23:4,5,De 23:7. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, nor an Egyptian, though these nations had been as much enemies to Israel as any whatsoever. It was true, God appointed them to destroy the seven devoted nations of Canaan, and not to make leagues with them; but there was a particular reason for it--to make room for Israel, and that they might not be snares to them; but it was very ill-natured from hence to infer, that they must hate all their enemies; yet the moral philosophy of the heathen then allowed this. It is Cicero's rule, Nemini nocere nisi prius lacessitum injuriâ--To injure no one, unless previously injured. De Offic. See how willing corrupt passions are to fetch countenance from the word of God, and to take occasion by the commandment to justify themselves.

II. See how it is cleared by the command of the Lord Jesus, who teaches us another lesson: "But I say unto you, I, who come to be the great Peace-Maker, the general Reconciler, who loved you when you were strangers and enemies, I say, Love your enemies," Mt 5:44. Though men are ever so bad themselves, and carry it ever so basely towards us, yet that does not discharge us from the great debt we owe them, of love to our kind, love to our kin. We cannot but find ourselves very prone to wish the hurt, or at least very coldly to desire the good, of those that hate us, and have been abusive to us; but that which is at the bottom hereof is a root of bitterness, which must be plucked up, and a remnant of corrupt nature which grace must conquer. Note, it is the great duty of Christians to love their enemies; we cannot have complacency in one that is openly wicked and profane, nor put a confidence in one that we know to be deceitful; nor are we to love all alike; but we must pay respect to the human nature, and so far honour all men: we must take notice, with pleasure, of that even in our enemies which is amiable and commendable; ingenuousness, good temper, learning, and moral virtue, kindness to others, profession of religion, &c., and love that, though they are our enemies. We must have a compassion for them, and a good will toward them. We are here told,

1. That we must speak well of them: Bless them that curse you. When we speak to them, we must answer their revilings with courteous and friendly words, and not render railing for railing; behind their backs we must commend that in them which is commendable, and when we have said all the good we can of them, not be forward to say any thing more. See 1Pe 3:9. They, in whose tongues is the law of kindness, can give good words to those who give bad words to them.

2. That we must do well to them: "Do good to them that hate you, and that will be a better proof of love than good words. Be ready to do them all the real kindness that you can, and glad of an opportunity to do it, in their bodies, estates, names, families; and especially to do good to their souls." It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, that the way to make him a friend was to do him an ill turn; so many did he serve who had disobliged him.

3. We must pray for them: Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. Note,

(1.) It is no new thing for the most excellent saints to be hated, and cursed, and persecuted, and despitefully used, by wicked people; Christ himself was so treated.

(2.) That when at any time we meet with such usage, we have an opportunity of showing our conformity both to the precept and to the example of Christ, by praying for them who thus abuse us. If we cannot otherwise testify our love to them, yet this way we may without ostentation, and it is such a way as surely we durst not dissemble in. We must pray that God will forgive them, that they may never fare the worse for any thing they have done against us, and that he would make them to be at peace with us; and this is one way of making them so. Plutarch, in his Laconic Apophthegms, has this of Aristo; when one commended Cleomenes's saying, who, being asked what a good king should do, replied, Tous men philous euergetein, tous de echthrous kakos poiein--Good turns to his friends, and evil to his enemies; he said, How much better is it tous men philous euergetein, tous de echthrous philous poiein--to do good to our friends, and make friends of our enemies. This is heaping coals of fire on their heads.

Two reasons are here given to enforce this command (which sounds so harsh) of loving our enemies. We must do it,

[1.] That we may be like God our Father; "that ye may be, may approve yourselves to be, the children of your Father which is in heaven." Can we write a better copy? It is a copy in which love to the worst of enemies is reconciled to, and consistent with, infinite purity and holiness. God maketh his sun to rise, and sendeth rain, on the just and the unjust, Mt 5:45. Note, First, Sunshine and rain are great blessings to the world, and they come from God. It is his sun that shines, and the rain is sent by him. They do not come of course, or by chance, but from God. Secondly, Common mercies must be valued as instances and proofs of the goodness of God, who in them shows himself a bountiful Benefactor to the world of mankind, who would be very miserable without these favours, and are utterly

unworthy of the least of them. Thirdly, These gifts of common providence are dispensed indifferently to good and evil, just and unjust; so that we cannot know love and hatred by what is before us, but by what is within us; not by the shining of the sun on our heads, but by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in our hearts. Fourthly, The worst of men partake of the comforts of this life in common with others, though they abuse them, and fight against God with his own weapons; which is an amazing instance of God's patience and bounty. It was but once that God forbade his sun to shine on the Egyptians, when the Israelites had light in their dwellings; God could make such a distinction every day. Fifthly, The gifts of God's bounty to wicked men that are in rebellion against him, teach us to do good to those that hate us; especially considering, that though there is in us a carnal mind which is enmity to God, yet we share in his bounty. Sixthly, Those only will be accepted as the children of God, who study to resemble him, particularly in his goodness.

[2.] That we may herein do more than others, Mt 5:46,47. First, Publicans love their friends. Nature inclines them to it; interest directs them to it. To do good to them who do good to us, is a common piece of humanity, which even those whom the Jews hated and despised could give as good proofs as of the best of them. The publicans were men of no good fame, yet they were grateful to such as had helped them to their places, and courteous to those they had a dependence upon; and shall we be no better than they? In doing this we serve ourselves and consult our own advantage; and what reward can we expect for that, unless a regard to God, and a sense of duty, carrying us further than our natural inclination and worldly interest? Secondly, We must therefore love our enemies, that we may exceed them. If we must go beyond scribes and Pharisees, much more beyond publicans. Note, Christianity is something more than humanity. It is a serious question, and which we should frequently put to ourselves, "What do we more than others? What excelling thing do we do? We know more than others; we talk more of the things of God than others; we profess, and have promised, more than others; God has done more for us, and therefore justly expects more from us than from others; the glory of God is more concerned in us than in others; but what do we more than others? Wherein do we live above the rate of the children of this world? Are we not carnal, and

do we not walk as men, below the character of Christians? In this especially we must do more than others, that while every one will render good for good, we must render good for evil; and this will speak a nobler principle, and is consonant to a higher rule, than the most of men act by. Others salute their brethren, they embrace those of their own party, and way, and opinion; but we must not so confine our respect, but love our enemies, otherwise what reward have we? We cannot expect the reward of Christians, if we rise no higher than the virtue of publicans." Note, Those who promise themselves a reward above others must study to do more than others.

Lastly, Our Saviour concludes this subject with this exhortation (Mt 5:48), Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Which may be understood,

1. In general, including all those things wherein we must be followers of God as dear children. Note, It is the duty of Christians to desire, and aim at, and press toward a perfection in grace and holiness, Php 3:12-14. And therein we must study to conform ourselves to the example of our heavenly Father, 1Pe 1:15,16. Or,

2. In this particular before mentioned, of doing good to our enemies; see Lu 6:36. It is God's perfection to forgive injuries and to entertain strangers, and to do good to the evil and unthankful, and it will be ours to be like him. We that owe so much, that owe our all, to the divine bounty, ought to copy it out as well as we can.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew-6

Jesus' Teaching on Almsgiving

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them:
otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.
2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the
streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have
their reward.

As we must do better than the scribes and Pharisees in avoiding heart-sins, heart-adultery, and heart-murder, so likewise in maintaining and keeping up heart-religion, doing what we do from an inward, vital principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be applauded of men; that is, we must watch against hypocrisy, which was the leaven of the Pharisees, as well as against their doctrine, Lu 12:1. Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, are three great Christian duties--the three foundations of the law, say the Arabians: by them we do homage and service to God with our three principal interests; by prayer with our souls, by fasting with our bodies, by alms-giving with our estates. Thus we must not only depart from evil, but do good, and do it well, and so dwell for evermore.

Now in these verses we area cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. Take heed of it. Our being bid to take heed of it intimates that it is sin.

1. We are in great danger of; it is a subtle sin; vain-glory insinuates itself into what we do ere we are aware. The disciples would be tempted to it by the power they had to do many wondrous works, and their living with some that admired them and others that despised them, both which are temptations to covet to make a fair show in the flesh.

2. It is a sin we are in great danger by. Take heed of hypocrisy, for if it reign in you, it will ruin you. It is the dead fly that spoils the whole box of precious ointment.

Two things are here supposed,

I The giving of alms is a great duty, and a duty which all the disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. It is prescribed by the law of nature and of Moses, and great stress is laid upon it by the prophets. Divers ancient copies here for ten eleemosynen--your alms, read ten dikaiosynen--your righteousness, for alms are righteousness, Ps 112:9,Pr 10:2 The Jews called the poor's box the box of righteousness. That which is given to the poor is said to be their due, Pr 3:27. The duty is not the less necessary and excellent for its being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. If superstitious papists have placed a merit in works of charity, that will not be an excuse for covetous protestants that are barren in such good works. It is true, our alms-deeds do not deserve heaven; but it is as true that we cannot go to heaven without them. It is pure religion (Jam 1:27), and will be the test at the great day; Christ here takes it for granted that his disciples give alms, nor will he own those that do not.

Take heed that ye do not your alms—But the true reading seems clearly to be "your righteousness." The external authority for both readings is pretty nearly equal; but internal evidence is decidedly in favor of "righteousness." The subject of the second verse being "almsgiving" that word—so like the other in Greek—might easily be substituted for it by the copyist: whereas the opposite would not be so likely. But it is still more in favor of "righteousness," that if we so read the first verse, it then becomes a general heading for this whole section of the discourse, inculcating unostentatiousness in all deeds of righteousness—Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting being, in that case, but selected examples of this righteousness; whereas, if we read, "Do not your alms," &c., this first verse will have no reference but to that one point. By "righteousness," in this case, we are to understand that same righteousness of the kingdom of heaven,

whose leading features—in opposition to traditional perversions of it—it is the great object of this discourse to open up: that righteousness of which the Lord says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20). To "do" this righteousness, was an old and well-understood expression. Thus, "Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps 106:3). It refers to the actings of righteousness in the life—the outgoings of the gracious nature—of which our Lord afterwards said to His disciples, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (Joh 15:8).

The duty directed to, almsgiving after a right manner; Do not your alms before man: some copies read it, Do not your rigteousness before men: because almsgiving is a considerable part of that righteousness and justice which we owe unto our neighbour: he that is uncharitable is unjust: acts of charity are acts of justice and equity. It also intimates to us, that the matter of our alms should be goods righteously gotten: to give alms of what is gotten unjustly, is robbery, and not righteousness.

II. That it is such a duty as has a great reward attending it, which is lost if it be done in hypocrisy. It is sometimes rewarded in temporal things with plenty (Pr 11:24,25,19:17); security from want (Pr 28:27,Ps 37:21,25); succour in distress (Ps 41:1,2); honour and a good name, which follow those most that least covet them, Ps 112:9. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just (Lu 14:14), in eternal riches. Quas dederis, solas semper habebis, opes. The riches you impart form the only wealth you will always retain.--Martial.

This being supposed, observe now,

1. What was the practice of the hypocrites about this duty. They did it indeed, but not from any principle of obedience to God, or love to man, but in pride and vain-glory; not in compassion to the poor, but

purely for ostentation, that they might be extolled as good men, and so might gain an interest in the esteem of the people, with which they knew how to serve their own turn, and to get a great deal more than they gave. Pursuant to this intention, they chose to give their alms in the synagogues, and in the streets, where there was the greatest concourse of people to observe them, who applauded their liberality because they shared in it, but were so ignorant as not to discern their abominable pride. Probably they had collections for the poor in the synagogues, and the common beggars haunted the streets and highways, and upon these public occasions they chose to give their alms. Not that it is unlawful to give alms when men see us; we may do it; but not that men may see us; we should rather choose those objects of charity that are less observed. The hypocrites, if they gave alms to their own houses, sounded a trumpet, under pretence of calling the poor together to be served, but really to proclaim their charity, and to have that taken notice of and made the subject of discourse.

Now the doom that Christ passes upon this is very observable; Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. At first view this seems a promise--If they have their reward they have enough, but two words in it make it a threatening.

(a.) It is a reward, but it is their reward; not the reward which God promises to them that do good, but the reward which they promise themselves, and a poor reward it is; they did it to be seen of men, and they are seen of men; they chose their own delusions with which they cheated themselves, and they shall have what they chose. Carnal professors stipulate with God for preferment, honour, wealth, and they shall have their bellies filled with those things (Ps 17:14); but let them expect no more; these are their consolation (Lu 6:24), their good things (Lu 16:25), and they shall be put off with these. "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? It is the bargain that thou art likely to abide by."

(b.) It is a reward, but it is a present reward, they have it; and there is none reserved for them in the future state. They now have all that

they are likely to have from God; they have their reward here, and have none to hope for hereafter. Apechousi ton misthon. It signifies a receipt in full. What rewards the godly have in this life are but in part of payment; there is more behind, much more; but hypocrites have their all in this world, so shall their doom be; themselves have decided it. The world is but for provision to the saints, it is their spending-money; but it is pay to hypocrites, it is their portion.

2. What is the precept of our Lord Jesus about it, Mt 6:3,4. He that was himself such an example of humility, pressed it upon his disciples, as absolutely necessary to the acceptance of their performances. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth when thou givest alms." Perhaps this alludes to the placing of the Corban, the poor man's box, or the chest into which they cast their free-will offerings, on the right hand of the passage into the temple; so that they put their gifts into it with the right-hand. Or the giving of alms with the right hand, intimates readiness to it and resolution in it; do it dexterously, not awkwardly nor with a sinister intention. The right hand may be used in helping the poor, lifting them up, writing for them, dressing their sores, and other ways besides giving to them; but, "whatever kindness thy right hand doeth to the poor, let not thy left hand know it: conceal it as much as possible; industriously keep it private. Do it because it is a good work, not because it will give thee a good name." In omnibus factis, re, non teste, moveamur--In all our actions, we should be influenced by a regard to the object, not to the observer. Cic. de Fin. It is intimated,

(a.) That we must not let others know what we do; no, not those that stand at our left hand, that are very near us. Instead of acquainting them with it, keep it from them if possible; however, appear so desirous to keep it from them, as that in civility they may seem not to take notice of it, and keep it to themselves, and let it go no further.

(b.) That we must not observe it too much ourselves: the left hand is a part of ourselves; we must not within ourselves take notice too much of the good we do, must not applaud and admire ourselves.

Self-conceit and self-complacency, and an adoring of our own shadow, are branches of pride, as dangerous as vain-glory and ostentation before men. We find those had their good works remembered to their honour, who had themselves forgotten them: When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst?

Note thence, That the secrecy of our charity is one good evidence of its sincerity. Hence the Egyptians made the emblem of charity to be a blind boy reaching out honey to a bee that had lost her wings.

3. What is the promise to those who are thus sincere and humble in their alms-giving. Let thine alms be in secret, and then thy Father who seeth in secret will observe them. Note, When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. As God hears the wrongs done to us when we do not hear them (Ps 38:14,15), so he sees the good done by us, when we do not see it. As it is a terror to hypocrites, so it is a comfort to sincere Christians, that God sees in secret. But this is not all; not only the observation and praise, but the recompence is of God, himself shall reward thee openly. Note, They who in their alms-giving study to approve themselves to God, only turn themselves over to him as their Paymaster. The hypocrite catches at the shadow, but the upright man makes sure of the substance. Observe how emphatically it is expressed; himself shall reward, he will himself be the Rewarder, Heb 11:6. Let him alone to make it up in kind or kindness; nay, he will himself be the Reward (Ge 15:1), thine exceeding great reward. He will reward thee as thy Father, not as a master who gives his servant just what he earns and no more, but as a father who gives abundantly more, and without stint, to his son that serves him. Nay, he shall reward thee openly, if not in the present day, yet in the great day; then shall every man have praise of God, open praise, thou shall be confessed before men. If the work be not open, the reward shall, and that is better.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are:* for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

> And when thou prayest, etc. Hypocrites manifested the same spirit about prayer as alms-giving: it was done in public places. The word synagogues, here, clearly means not the place of worship of that name, but places where many were accustomed to assemble-- near the markets, or courts, where they could be seen of many. Our Lord evidently could not mean to condemn prayers in the synagogues. It might be said that he condemned ostentatious prayer there, while they neglected secret prayer; but this does not appear to be his design. The Jews were much in the habit of praying in public places. At certain times of the day they always offered their prayers. Wherever they were, they suspended their employment, and paid their devotions. This is also practised now everywhere by the Mohammedans, and in many places by the Roman Catholics. It seems, also, that they sought publicity, and regarded it as proof of great piety.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

> Enter into thy closet. Every Jewish house had a place for secret devotion. The roofs of their houses were flat places for walking, conversation, and meditation, in the cool of the evening. Mt 9:2. Over the porch, or entrance of the house, was, however, a small room of the size of the porch, raised a story above the rest of the house, expressly appropriated for the place of retirement, in secrecy and solitude, the pious Jew might offer his prayers, unseen by any but the Searcher of hearts. To this place, or to some similar place, our Saviour directed his disciples to repair when they wished to hold communion with God. This is the place commonly mentioned in the New Testament as the upper room, or the place for secret prayer.

The meaning of the Saviour is, that there should be some place where we may be in secret--where we may be alone with God. There should be some place to which we may resort where no ear will hear us but His ear, and no eye can see us but His eye. Unless there is such a place, secret prayer will not be long or strictly maintained. It is often said that we have no such place, and can secure none. We are away from home; we are travelling; we are among strangers; we are in stages and steam-boats, and how can we find such places of retirement? I answer, the desire to pray, and the love of prayer, will create such places in abundance. The Saviour had all the difficulties which we can have, but yet he lived in the practice of secret prayer. To be alone, he rose up "a great while before day," and went into a solitary place and prayed. With him, a grove, a mountain, a garden, furnished such a place; and though a traveller, and among strangers, and without a house, he lived in the habit of secret prayer. What excuse have they who have a home, and who spend the precious hours of the morning in sleep, and who will practise no self-denial that they may be alone with God? O Christian! thy Saviour would have broken in upon these hours, and would have trod his solitary way to the mountain or the grove, there he might pray. He did do it. He did it to pray for thee, too indolent and too unconcerned about thy own salvation and that of the world, to practise the least self-denial in order to commune with God! How can religion live thus ? How can such a soul be saved?

The Saviour does not specify the times when we should pray in secret. He does not say how often it should be done. The reasons may have been,

(1.) that he designed that his religion should be voluntary--and there is not a better test of true piety than a disposition to engage often in secret prayer. He designed to leave it to his people to show attachment to him by coming to God often--and as often as they chose.

(2.) An attempt to specify the times when this should be done would tend to make religion formal and heartless. Mohammed undertook

to regulate this, and the consequence is a cold and formal prostration at the appointed hours of prayer all over the land where his religion has spread.

(3.) The periods are so numerous, and the seasons for secret prayer vary so much, that it would not be easy to fix rules when this should be done. Yet without giving rules--where the Saviour has given none--we may suggest the following as times when secret prayer is proper:

(a) In the morning. Nothing can be more appropriate when we have been preserved through the night, and when we are about to enter upon the duties and dangers of another day, than to render him thanks, and to commit ourselves to his fatherly care.

(b) In the evening. When the day has closed, what more natural than to render thanks and to implore forgiveness for what we have said or done amiss, and to pray for a blessing on the labours of the day; and when about to lie down again to sleep, not knowing but it may be our last sleep, and that we may awake in eternity, what more proper than to commend ourselves to the care of Him "who never slumbers nor sleeps."

(c.) We should pray in times of embarrassment and perplexity. Such times occur in every man's life, and it is then a privilege and a duty to go to God and seek his direction. In the most difficult and embarrassed time of the American revolution, Washington was seen to retire daily to a grove in the vicinity of the camp at Valley Forge. Curiosity led a man to observe him on one occasion, and the father of his country was seen on his knees supplicating the God of Hosts in prayer. Who can tell how much the liberty of this nation is owing to the answer to the secret prayer of Washington?

(d.) We should pray when we are beset with strong temptations. So the Saviour prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, (Comp. Heb 5:7,8) and so we should pray when we are tempted.

(e.) We should pray when the Spirit prompts us to pray; when we feel just like praying; when nothing can satisfy the soul but prayer. Such times occur in the life, of every Christian; and they are "spring-times" of piety--favourable gales to waft us on to heaven. Prayer to the Christian, at such times, is just as congenial as conversation with a friend when the bosom is filled with love; as the society of father, mother, sister, child is, when the heart glows with attachment; as the strains of sweet music are to the ear best attuned to the love of harmony; as the most exquisite poetry is to the heart enamoured with the muses; and as the most delicious banquet is to the hungry. Prayer, then, is the element of being; the breath; the vital air; and then the Christian must and should pray. He is the most eminent Christian who is most favoured with such strong emotions urging him to prayer. The heart is then full. The soul is tender. The sun of glory shines with unusual splendour. No cloud intervenes. The Christian rises from the earth, and pants for glory. Then we may go alone with God, We may enter the closet, and breathe forth our warm desires into the ever-open ear of God, and he who sees in secret will reward us openly.

Who seeth in secret. Who sees what the human eye cannot see; who sees the secret real designs and desires of the heart. Prayer should always be offered, remembering that God is acquainted with our real desires; and that it is those real desires, and not the words of prayer, that he will answer.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do:* for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Use not vain repetitions. The original word here is supposed to be derived from the name of a Greek poet, who made long and weary verses, declaring, by many forms and endless repetitions, the same sentiment. Hence it means to repeat a thing often, to say the same thing in different words, or to repeat the same words, as though God did not hear at first. An example of this we have in 1Kgs 18:26: "They Called on Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us;"*

The heathen do. The original word is one commonly translated Gentile. The world was divided into two parts, the Jews and the Gentiles; that is, in the original, the "nations," the nations destitute of the true religion. Christ does not fix the length of our prayers. He says that they should not repeat the same thing, as though God did not hear. And it is not improbable that he intended to condemn the practice of long prayers. His own supplications were remarkably short.

A vain-glorious ostentation in prayer was condemned by our Saviour in the former verse; here a vain-glorious multiplicity of words, by idle tautologies and impetinent repetitions, is condemned also; after the manner of the heathens, who expected to have their prayers granted by God, for the multiplicity of words used by themselves.

Hence note, That a Christian's business in prayer being not to inform God (for he knoweth what things we need before we ask him) nor yet to move and persuade God (for he is our Father) it certainly argues an undue apprehension of God, when we lengthen out our prayers with vain repetitions and a multitude of words.

Yet note,

1. That it is not all repetition of the same words in prayer which Christ here condemns, for he himself prayed thrice, using the same words, that the cup might pass from him.

2. Nor, that are we to apprehend that prayers continued to a considerable length are forbidden by Christ; for Solomon's prayer was such, 1Kgs 8:1-66. In Neh 9:1-23, it is said, the people confessed, and worshipped for three hours; Christ continued in prayer all night; and the church, Acts 7:1-60, made prayers without ceasing for St. Peter's enlargement.

And we read of St. Paul's praying night and day, 1Thess 3:10, and of his commanding the churches to be instant in prayer, and to

continue in prayer. But Christ here condemns prayers lengthened out upon an apprehension that we shall be heard by our much speaking, or can move God by arguments, whilst we continue in our sins. (Dr. Whitby)

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

When Christ had condemned what was amiss, he directs to do better; for his are reproofs of instruction. Because we know not what to pray for as we ought, he here helps our infirmities, by putting words into our mouths; after this manner therefore pray ye, Mt 6:9. So many were the corruptions that had crept into this duty of prayer among the Jews, that Christ saw it needful to give a new directory for prayer, to show his disciples what must ordinarily be the matter and method of their prayer, which he gives in words that may very well be used as a form; as the summary or contents of the several particulars of our prayers. Not that we are tied up to the use of this form only, or of this always, as if this were necessary to the consecrating of our other prayers; we are here bid to pray after this manner, with these words, or to this effect. That in Luke differs from this; we do not find it used by the apostles; we are not here taught to pray in the name of Christ, as we are afterward; we are here taught to pray that the kingdom might come which did come when the Spirit was poured out: yet, without doubt, it is very good to use it as a form, and it is a pledge of the communion of saints, it having been used by the church in all ages, at least (says Dr. Whitby) from the third century. It is our Lord's prayer, it is of his composing, of his appointing; it is very compendious, yet very comprehensive, in compassion to our infirmities in praying. The matter is choice and necessary, the method instructive, and the expression very concise. It has much in a little, and it is requisite that we acquaint ourselves with the sense and meaning of it, for it is used acceptably no further than it is used with understanding and without vain repetition.

The Lord's prayer (as indeed every prayer) is a letter sent from earth to heaven. Here is the inscription of the letter, the person to whom it is directed, our Father; the where, in heaven; the contents of it in several errands of request; the close, for thine is the kingdom; the seal, Amen; and if you will, the date too, this day. Plainly thus: there are three parts of the prayer.

I. The preface, Our Father who art in heaven. Before we come to our business, there must be a solemn address to him with whom our business lies; Our Father. Intimating, that we must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others; for we are members one of another, and are called into fellowship with each other. We are here taught to whom to pray, to God only, and not to saints and angels, for they are ignorant of us, are not to have the high honours we give in prayer, nor can give favours we expect. We are taught how to address ourselves to God, and what title to give him, that which speaks him rather beneficent than magnificent, for we are to come boldly to the throne of grace.

1. We must address ourselves to him as our Father, and must call him so. He is a common Father to all mankind by creation, Mal 2:10,Ac 17:28. He is in a special manner a Father to the saints, by adoption and regeneration (Eph 1:5,Ga 4:6); and an unspeakable privilege it is. Thus we must eye him in prayer, keep up good thoughts of him, such as are encouraging and not affrighting; nothing more pleasing to God, nor pleasant to ourselves, than to call God Father. Christ in prayer mostly called God Father. If he be our Father, he will pity us under our weaknesses and infirmities (Ps 103:13), will spare us (Mal 3:17), will make the best of our performances, though very defective, will deny us nothing that is good for us, Lu 11:11-13. We have access with boldness to him, as to a father, and have an advocate with the Father, and the Spirit of adoption. When we come repenting of our sins, we must eye God as a Father, as the prodigal did (Lu 15:18,Jer 3:19); when we come begging for grace, and peace, and the inheritance and blessing of sons, it is an encouragement that we come to God, not as an

unreconciled, avenging Judge, but as a loving, gracious, reconciled Father in Christ, Jer 3:4.

2. As our Father in heaven: so in heaven as to be every where else, for the heaven cannot contain him; yet so in heaven as there to manifest his glory, for it is his throne (Ps 103:19), and it is to believers a throne of grace: thitherward we must direct our prayers, for Christ the Mediator is now in heaven, Heb 8:1. Heaven is out of sight, and a world of spirits, therefore our converse with God in prayer must be spiritual; it is on high, therefore in prayer we must be raised above the world, and lift up our hearts, Ps 5:1. Heaven is a place of perfect purity, and we must therefore lift up pure hands, must study to sanctify his name, who is the Holy One, and dwells in that holy place, Le 10:3. From heaven God beholds the children of men, Ps 33:13,14. And we must in prayer see his eye upon us: thence he has a full and clear view of all our wants and burdens and desires, and all our infirmities. It is the firmament of his power likewise, as well as of his prospect, Ps 150:1. He is not only, as a Father, able to help us, able to do great things for us, more than we can ask or think; he has wherewith to supply our needs, for every good gift is from above. He is a Father, and therefore we may come to him with boldness, but a Father in heaven, and therefore we must come with reverence, Ec 5:2. Thus all our prayers should correspond with that which is our great aim as Christians, and that is, to be with God in heaven. God and heaven, the end of our whole conversation, must be particularly eyed in every prayer; there is the centre to which we are all tending. By prayer, we send before us thither, where we profess to be going.

II. The petitions, and those are six; the three first relating more immediately to God and his honour, the three last to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual; as in the ten commandments, the four first teach us our duty toward God, and the last six our duty toward our neighbour. The method of this prayer teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then to hope that other things shall be added.

1. Hallowed be thy name. It is the same word that in other places is translated sanctified. But here the old word hallowed is retained, only because people were used to it in the Lord's prayer. In these words,

(a) We give glory to God; it may be taken not as a petition, but as an adoration; as that, the Lord be magnified, or glorified, for God's holiness is the greatness and glory of all his perfections. We must begin our prayers with praising God, and it is very fit he should be first served, and that we should give glory to God, before we expect to receive mercy and grace from him. Let him have praise of his perfections, and then let us have the benefit of them.

(b) We fix our end, and it is the right end to be aimed at, and ought to be our chief and ultimate end in all our petitions, that God may be glorified; all our other requests must be in subordination to this, and in pursuance of it. "Father, glorify thyself in giving me my daily bread and pardoning my sins," &c. Since all is of him and through him, all must be to him and for him. In prayer our thoughts and affections should be carried out most to the glory of God. The Pharisees made their own name the chief end of their prayers (Mt 6:5, to be seen of men), in opposition to which we are directed to make the name of God our chief end; let all our petitions centre in this and be regulated by it. "Do so and so for me, for the glory of thy name, and as far as is for the glory of it."

(c.) We desire and pray that the name of God, that is, God himself, in all that whereby he has made himself known, may be sanctified and glorified both by us and others, and especially by himself. "Father, let thy name be glorified as a Father, and a Father in heaven; glorify thy goodness and thy highness, thy majesty and mercy. Let thy name be sanctified, for it is a holy name; no matter what becomes of our polluted names, but, Lord, what wilt thou do to thy great name?" When we pray that God's name may be glorified,

[1.] We make a virtue of necessity; for God will sanctify his own name, whether we desire it or not; I will be exalted among the heathen, Ps 46:10.

[2.] We ask for that which we are sure shall be granted; for when our Saviour prayed, Father glorify thy name, it was immediately answered, I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.

2. Thy kingdom come. This petition has plainly a reference to the doctrine which Christ preached at this time, which John Baptist had preached before, and which he afterwards sent his apostles out to preach--the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of your Father who is in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, this is at hand, pray that it may come. Note, We should turn the word we hear into prayer, our hearts should echo to it; does Christ promise, surely I come quickly? our hearts should answer, Even so, come. Ministers should pray over the word: when they preach, the kingdom of God is at hand, they should pray, Father, thy kingdom come. What God has promised we must pray for; for promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer; and when the accomplishment of a promise is near and at the door, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we should then pray for it the more earnestly; thy kingdom come; as Daniel set his face to pray for the deliverance of Israel, when he understood that the time of it was at hand, Da 9:2. See Lu 19:11. It was the Jews' daily prayer to God, Let him make his kingdom reign, let his redemption flourish, and let his Messiah come and deliver his people. Dr. Whitby, ex Vitringa. "Let thy kingdom come, let the gospel be preached to all and embraced by all; let all be brought to subscribe to the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, and to embrace him as their Saviour and Sovereign. Let the bounds of the gospel-church be enlarged, the kingdom of the world be made Christ's kingdom, and all men become subjects to it, and live as becomes their character."

3. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. We pray that God's kingdom being come, we and others may be brought into obedience to all the laws and ordinances of it. By this let it appear that Christ's kingdom is come, let God's will be done; and by this let is appear that it is come as a kingdom of heaven, let it introduce a heaven upon earth. We make Christ but a titular Prince, if we call him King, and do not do his will: having prayed that he may rule us, we pray that we may in every thing be ruled by him. Observe,

(a) The thing prayed for, thy will be done; "Lord, do what thou pleasest with me and mine; 1Sa 3:18. I refer myself to thee, and am well satisfied that all thy counsel concerning me should be performed." In this sense Christ prayed, not my will, but thine be done. "Enable me to do what is pleasing to thee; give me that grace that is necessary to the right knowledge of thy will, and an acceptable obedience to it. Let thy will be done conscientiously by me and others, not our own will, the will of the flesh, or the mind, not the will of men (1Pe 4:2), much less Satan's will (Joh 8:44), that we may neither displease God in any thing we do (ut nihil nostrum displiceat Deo), nor be displeased at any thing God does" (ut nihil Dei displiceat nobis).

(b) The pattern of it, that it might be done on earth, in this place of our trial and probation (where our work must be done, or it never will be done), as it is done in heaven, that place of rest and joy. We pray that earth may be made more like heaven by the observance of God's will (this earth, which, through the prevalency of Satan's will, has become so near akin to hell), and that saints may be made more like the holy angels in their devotion and obedience. We are on earth, blessed be God, not yet under the earth; we pray for the living only, not for the dead that have gone down into silence.

4. Give us this day our daily bread. Because our natural being is necessary to our spiritual well-being in this world, therefore, after the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the necessary supports and comforts of this present life, which are the

gifts of God, and must be asked of him, Ton arton epiousion--Bread for the day approaching, for all the remainder of our lives. Bread for the time to come, or bread for our being and subsistence, that which is agreeable to our condition in the world (Pr 30:8), food convenient for us and our families, according to our rank and station.

Every word here has a lesson in it:

(a) We ask for bread; that teaches us sobriety and temperance; we ask for bread, not dainties, not superfluities; that which is wholesome, though it be not nice.

(b) We ask for our bread; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread out of other people's mouths, not the bread of deceit (Pr 20:17), not the brad of idleness (Pr 31:27), but the bread honestly gotten.

(c) We ask for our daily bread; which teaches us not to take thought for the morrow (Mt 6:34), but constantly to depend upon divine Providence, as those that live from hand to mouth.

(d) We beg of God to give it us, not sell it us, nor lend it us, but give it. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their daily bread,

(e) We pray, "Give it to us; not to me only, but to others in common with me." This teaches us charity, and a compassionate concern for the poor and needy. It intimates also, that we ought to pray with our families; we and our households eat together, and therefore ought to pray together.

(f) We pray that God would give us this day; which teaches us to renew the desire of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed; as duly as the day comes, we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we could as well go a day without meat, as without prayer.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, This is connected with the former; and forgive, intimating, that unless our sins be pardoned, we can have no comfort in life, or the supports of it. Our daily bread does but feed us as lambs for the slaughter, if our sins be not pardoned. It intimates, likewise, that we must pray for daily pardon, as duly as we pray for daily bread. He that is washed, needeth to wash his feet. Here we have,

(a) A petition; Father in heaven forgive us our debts, our debts to thee. Note,

[1.] Our sins are our debts; there is a debt of duty, which, as creatures, we owe to our Creator; we do not pray to be discharged from that, but upon the non-payment of that there arises a debt of punishment; in default of obedience to the will of God, we become obnoxious to the wrath of God; and for not observing the precept of the law, we stand obliged to the penalty. A debtor is liable to process, so are we; a malefactor is a debtor to the law, so are we.

[2.] Our hearts' desire and prayer to our heavenly Father every day should be, that he would forgive us our debts; that the obligation to punishment may be cancelled and vacated, that we may not come into condemnation; that we may be discharged, and have the comfort of it. In suing out the pardon of our sins, the great plea we have to rely upon is the satisfaction that was made to the justice of God for the sin of man, by the dying of the Lord Jesus our Surety, or rather Bail to the action, that undertook our discharge.

(b) An argument to enforce this petition; as we forgive our debtors. This is not a plea of merit, but a plea of grace. Note, Those that come to God for the forgiveness of their sins against him, must make conscience of forgiving those who have offended them, else they curse themselves when they say the Lord's prayer. Our duty is to forgive our debtors; as to debts of money, we must not be rigorous and severe in exacting them from those that cannot pay

them without ruining themselves and their families; but this means debt of injury; our debtors are those that trespass against us, that smite us (Mt 5:39,40), and in strictness of law, might be prosecuted for it; we must forbear, and forgive, and forget the affronts put upon us, and the wrongs done us; and this is a moral qualification for pardon and peace; it encourages to hope, that God will forgive us; for if there be in us this gracious disposition, it is wrought of God, and therefore is a perfection eminently and transcendently in himself; it will be an evidence to us that he has forgiven us, having wrought in us the condition of forgiveness.

6. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. This petition is expressed,

(a) Negatively: Lead us not into temptation. Having prayed that the guilt of sin may be removed, we pray, as it is fit, that we may never return again to folly, that we may not be tempted to it. It is not as if God tempted any to sin; but, "Lord, do not let Satan loose upon us; chain up that roaring lion, for he is subtle and spiteful; Lord, do not leave us to ourselves (Ps 19:13), for we are very weak; Lord, do not lay stumbling-blocks and snares before us, nor put us into circumstances that may be an occasion of falling." Temptations are to be prayed against, both because of the discomfort and trouble of them, and because of the danger we are in of being overcome by them, and the guilt and grief that then follow.

(b) Positively: But deliver us from evil; apo tou ponerou--from the evil one, the devil, the tempter; "keep us, that either we may not be assaulted by him, or we may not be overcome by those assaults:" Or from the evil thing, sin, the worst of evils; an evil, an only evil; that evil thing which God hates, and which Satan tempts men to and destroys them by. "Lord, deliver us from the evil of the world, the corruption that is in the world through lust; from the evil of every condition in the world; from the evil of death; from the sting of death, which is sin: deliver us from ourselves, from our own evil

hearts: deliver us from evil men, that they may not be a snare to us, nor we a prey to them."

III. The conclusion: For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen. Some refer this to David's doxology, 1Ch 29:11. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness. It is,

1. A form of plea to enforce the foregoing petitions. It is our duty to plead with God in prayer, to fill our mouth with arguments (Job 23:4) not to move God, but to affect ourselves; to encourage the faith, to excite our fervency, and to evidence both. Now the best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God himself, and from that which he has made known of himself. We must wrestle with God in his own strength, both as to the nature of our pleas and the urging of them. The plea here has special reference to the first three petitions; "Father in heaven, thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom; thy will be done, for thine is the power; hallowed be thy name, for thine is the glory." And as to our own particular errands, these are encouraging: "Thine is the kingdom; thou hast the government of the world, and the protection of the saints, thy willing subjects in it;" God gives and saves like a king. "Thine is the power, to maintain and support that kingdom, and to make good all thine engagements to thy people." Thine is the glory, as the end of all that which is given to, and done for, the saints, in answer to their prayers; for their praise waiteth for him. This is matter of comfort and holy confidence in prayer.

2. It is a form of praise and thanksgiving. The best pleading with God is praising of him; it is the way to obtain further mercy, as it qualifies us to receive it. In all our addresses to God, it is fit that praise should have a considerable share, for praise becometh the saints; they are to be our God for a name and for a praise. It is just and equal; we praise God, and give him glory, not because he needs it--he is praised by a world of angels, but because he deserves it; and it is our duty to give him glory, in compliance with his design in revealing himself to us. Praise is the work and happiness of

heaven; and all that would go to heaven hereafter, must begin their heaven now. Observe, how full this doxology is, The kingdom, and the power, and the glory, it is all thine. Note, It becomes us to be copious in praising God. A true saint never thinks he can speak honourably enough of God: here there should be a gracious fluency, and this for ever. Ascribing glory to God for ever, intimates an acknowledgement, that it is eternally due, and an earnest desire to be eternally doing it, with angels and saints above, Ps 71:14.

Lastly, To all this we are taught to affix our Amen, so be it. God's Amen is a grant; his fiat is, it shall be so; our Amen is only a summary desire; our fiat is, let it be so: it is in the token of our desire and assurance to be heard, that we say Amen. Amen refers to every petition going before, and thus, in compassion to our infirmities, we are taught to knit up the whole in one word, and so to gather up, in the general, what we have lost and let slip in the particulars. It is good to conclude religious duties with some warmth and vigour, that we may go from them with a sweet savour upon our spirits. It was of old the practice of good people to say, Amen, audibly at the end of every prayer, and it is a commendable practice, provided it be done with understanding, as the apostle directs (1Co 14:16), and uprightly, with life and liveliness, and inward expressions, answerable to that outward expression of desire and confidence.

Most of the petitions in the Lord's prayer had been commonly used by the Jews in their devotions, or words to the same effect: but that clause in the fifth petition, As we forgive our debtors, was perfectly new, and therefore our Saviour here shows for what reason he added it, not with any personal reflection upon the peevishness, litigiousness, and ill nature of the men of that generation, though there was cause enough for it, but only from the necessity and importance of the thing itself. God, in forgiving us, has a peculiar respect to our forgiving those that have injured us; and therefore, when we pray for pardon, we must mention our making conscience of that duty, not only to remind ourselves of it, but to bind ourselves

to it. See that parable, Mt 18:23-25. Selfish nature is loth to comply with this, and therefore it is here inculcated, Mt 6:14,15.

1. In a promise. If ye forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive. Not as if this were the only condition required; there must be repentance and faith, and new obedience; but as where other graces are in truth, there will be this, so this will be a good evidence of the sincerity of our other graces. He that relents toward his brother, thereby shows that he repents toward his God. Those which in the prayer are called debts, are here called trespasses, debts of injury, wrongs done to us in our bodies, goods, or reputation: trespasses is an extenuating term for offences, paraptomata--stumbles, slips, falls. Note, It is a good evidence, and a good help of our forgiving others, to call the injuries done us by a mollifying, excusing name. Call them not treasons, but trespasses; not wilful injuries, but casual inadvertencies; peradventure it was an oversight (Ge 43:12), therefore make the best of it. We must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven; and therefore must not only bear no malice, nor mediate revenge, but must not upbraid our brother with the injuries he has done us, nor rejoice in any hurt that befals him, but must be ready to help him and do him good, and if he repent and desire to be friends again, we must be free and familiar with him, as before.

2. In a threatening. "But if you forgive not those that have injured you, that is a bad sign you have not the other requisite conditions, but are altogether unqualified for pardon: and therefore your Father, whom you call Father, and who, as a father, offers you his grace upon reasonable terms, will nevertheless not forgive you. And if other grace be sincere, and yet you be defective greatly in forgiving, you cannot expect the comfort of your pardon, but to have your spirit brought down by some affliction or other to comply with this duty." Note, Those who would have found mercy with God must show mercy to their brethren; no can we expect that he should stretch out the hands of his favour to us, unless we lift up to him pure hands, without wrath, 1Ti 2:8. If we pray in anger, we have reason to fear God will answer in anger. It has been said,

Prayers made in wrath are written in gall. What reason is it that God should forgive us the talents we are indebted to him, if we forgive not our brethren the pence they are indebted to us? Christ came into the world as the great Peace-Maker, and not only to reconcile us to God, but one to another, and in this we must comply with him. It is great presumption and of dangerous consequence, for any to make a light matter of that which Christ here lays such a stress upon. Men's passions shall not frustrate God's word.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
15 but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus' Teaching on Fasting

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
18 that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

We are here cautioned against hypocrisy in fasting, as before in almsgiving, and in prayer.

I. It is here supposed that religious fasting is a duty required of the disciples of Christ, when God, in his providence, calls to it, and when the case of their own souls upon any account requires it; when the bridegroom is taken away, then shall they fast, Mt 9:15. Fasting is here put last, because it is not so much a duty for its own sake, as a means to dispose us for other duties. Prayer comes in between almsgiving and fasting, as being the life and soul of both. Christ here speaks especially of private fasts, such as particular persons prescribe to themselves, as free-will offerings, commonly used among the pious Jews; some fasted one day, some two, every week;

others seldomer, as they saw cause. On those days they did not eat till sun-set, and then very sparingly. It was not the Pharisee's fasting twice in the week, but his boasting of it, that Christ condemned, Lu 18:12. It is a laudable practice, and we have reason to lament it, that is so generally neglected among Christians. Anna was much in fasting, Lu 2:37. Cornelius fasted and prayed, Ac 10:30. The primitive Christians were much in it, see Ac 13:3,14:23. Private fasting is supposed, 1Co 7:5. It is an act of self-denial, and mortification of the flesh, a holy revenge upon ourselves, and humiliation under the hand of God. The most grown Christians must hereby own, they are so far from having any thing to be proud of, that they are unworthy of their daily bread. It is a means to curb the flesh and the desires of it, and to make us more lively in religious exercises, as fulness of bread is apt to make us drowsy. Paul was in fastings often, and so he kept under this body, and brought it into subjection.

II. We are cautioned not to do this as the hypocrites did it, lest we lose the reward of it; and the more difficulty attends the duty, the greater loss it is to lose the reward of it.

Now, 1 The hypocrites pretended fasting, when there was nothing of that contrition or humiliation of soul in them, which is the life and soul of the duty. Theirs were mock-fasts, the show and shadow without the substance; they took on them to be more humbled than really they were, and so endeavored to put a cheat upon God, than which they could not put a greater affront upon him. The fast that God has chosen, is a day to afflict the soul, not to hang down the head like a bulrush, nor for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him; we are quite mistaken if we call this a fast, Isa 58:5. Bodily exercise, if that be all, profits little, since that is not fasting to God, even to him.

2. They proclaimed their fasting, and managed it so that all who saw them might take notice that it was a fasting-day with them. Even on these days they appeared in the streets, whereas they should have been in their closets; and the affected a downcast look, a melancholy countenance, a slow and solemn pace; and perfectly disfigured themselves, that men might see how often they fasted, and might extol them as devout, mortified men. Note, It is sad that

men, who have, in some measure, mastered their pleasure, which is sensual wickedness, should be ruined by their pride, which is spiritual wickedness, and no less dangerous. Here also they have their reward, that praise and applause of men which they court and covet so much; they have it, and it is their all.

III. We are directed how to manage a private fast; we must keep it in private, Mt 6:17,18. He does not tell us how often we must fast; circumstances vary, and wisdom is profitable therein to direct; the Spirit in the word has left that to the Spirit in the heart; but take this for a rule, whenever you undertake this duty, study therein to approve yourselves to God, and not to recommend yourselves to the good opinion of men; humility must evermore attend upon our humiliation. Christ does not direct to abate any thing of the reality of the fast; he does not say,"take a little meat, or a little drink, or a little cordial;" no, "let the body suffer, but lay aside the show and appearance of it; appear with thy ordinary countenance, guise, and dress; and while thou deniest thyself thy bodily refreshments, do it so as that it may not be taken notice of, no, not by those that are nearest to thee; look pleasant, anoint thine head and wash thy face, as thou dost on ordinary days, on purpose to conceal thy devotion; and thou shalt be no loser in the praise of it at last; for though it be not of men, it shall be of God." Fasting is the humbling of the soul (Ps 35:13), that is the inside of the duty; let that therefore be thy principal care, and as to the outside of it, covet not to let it be seen. If we be sincere in our solemn fasts, and humble, and trust God's omniscience for our witness, and his goodness for our reward, we shall find, both that he did see in secret, and will reward openly. Religious fasts, if rightly kept, will shortly be recompensed with an everlasting feast. Our acceptance with God in our private fasts should make us dead, both to the applause of men (we must not do the duty in hopes of this), and to the censures of men too (we must not decline the duty for fear of them). David's fasting was turned to his reproach, Ps 69:10; and yet, Mt 6:13, As for me, let them say what they will of me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time.

The Jews fasted often. They had four annual fasts, in commemoration of the capture of Jerusalem, (Jer 52:7) of the

burning of the temple, (Zech 7:3) in memory of the death of Gedaliah, (Jer 41:4,) and in memory of the commencement of the attack on Jerusalem, Zech 8:19. In addition to these, they had a multitude of occasional fasts. It was customary, also, for the Pharisees to fast twice a week, Lk 17:12.

Treasure in Heaven

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth
corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust
doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Worldly-mindedness is as common and as fatal a symptom of hypocrisy as any other, for by no sin can Satan have a surer and faster hold of the soul, under the cloak of a visible and passable profession of religion, than by this; and therefore Christ, having warned us against coveting the praise of men, proceeds next to warn us against coveting the wealth of the world; in this also we must take heed, lest we be as the hypocrites are, and do as they do: the fundamental error that they are guilty of is, that they choose the world for their reward; we must therefore take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness, in the choice we make of our treasure, our end, and our masters.

I. In choosing the treasure we lay up. Something or other every man has which he makes his treasure, his portion, which his heart is upon, to which he carries all he can get, and which he depends upon for futurity. It is that good, that chief good, which Solomon speaks of with such an emphasis, Ec 2:3. Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing, which it has a complacency and confidence in above other things. Now Christ designs not to deprive us of our treasure, but to direct us in the choice of it; and here we have,

1. A good caution against making the things that are seen, that are temporal, our best things, and placing our happiness in them. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. Christ's disciples had left all to follow him, let them still keep in the same good mind. A treasure is an abundance of something that is in itself, at least in our opinion, precious and valuable, and likely to stand us in stead hereafter. Now we must not lay up our treasures on earth, that is,

(a) We must not count these things the best things, nor the most valuable in themselves, nor the most serviceable to us: we must not call them glory, as Laban's sons did, but see and own that they have no glory in comparison with the glory that excelleth.

(b) We must not covet an abundance of these things, nor be still grasping at more and more of them, and adding to them, as men do to that which is their treasure, as never knowing when we have enough.

(c) We must not confide in them for futurity, to be our security and supply in time to come; we must not say to the gold, Thou art my hope.

(d) We must not content ourselves with them, as all we need or desire: we must be content with a little for our passage, but not with all for our portion. These things must not be made our consolation (Lu 6:24), our good things, Lu 16:25. Let us consider we are laying up, not for our posterity in this world, but for ourselves in the other world. We are put to our choice, and made in a manner our own carvers; that is ours which we lay up for ourselves. It concerns thee to choose wisely, for thou art choosing for thyself, and shalt have as thou choosest. If we know and consider ourselves what we are, what we are made for, how large our capacities are, and how long our continuance, and that our souls are ourselves, we shall see it is foolish thing to lay up our treasures on earth.

2. Here is a good reason given why we should not look upon any thing on earth as our treasure, because it is liable to loss and decay:

(a) From corruption within. That which is treasure upon earth moth and rust do corrupt. If the treasure be laid up in fine clothes, the moth frets them, and they are gone and spoiled insensibly, when we thought them most securely laid up. If it be in corn or other eatables, as his was who had his barns full (Lu 12:16,17), rust (so we read it) corrupts that: Brosis--eating, eating by men, for as goods are increased they are increased that eat them (Ec 5:11); eating by mice or other vermin; manna itself bred worms; or it grows mouldy and musty, is struck, or smutted, or blasted; fruits soon rot. Or, if we understand it of silver and gold, they tarnish and canker; they grow less with using, and grow worse with keeping (Jam 5:2,3); the rust and the moth breed in the metal itself and in the garment itself. Note, Worldly riches have in themselves a principal of corruption and decay; they wither of themselves, and make themselves wings.

(b) From violence without. Thieves break through and steal. Every hand of violence will be aiming at the house where treasure is laid up; nor can any thing be laid up so safe, but we may be spoiled of it. Numquam ego fortunæ credidi, etiam si videretur pacem agere; omnia illa quæ in me indulgentissime conferebat, pecuniam, honores, gloriam, eo loco posui, unde posset ea, since metu meo, repetere--I never reposed confidence in fortune, even if she seemed propitious: whatever were the favours which her bounty bestowed, whether wealth, honours, or glory, I so disposed of them, that it was in her power to recall them without occasioning me any alarm. Seneca. Consol. ad Helv. It is folly to make that our treasure which we may so easily be robbed of.

3. Good counsel, to make the joys and glories of the other world, those things not seen that are eternal, our best things, and to place our happiness in them. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Note,

(a) There are treasures in heaven, as sure as there are on this earth; and those in heaven are the only true treasures, the riches and glories and pleasures that are at God's right hand, which those that

are sanctified truly arrive at, when they come to be sanctified perfectly.

(b) It is our wisdom to lay up our treasure in those treasures; to give all diligence to make sure our title to eternal life through Jesus Christ, and to depend upon that as our happiness, and look upon all things here below with a holy contempt, as not worthy to be compared with it. We must firmly believe there is such a happiness, and resolve to be content with that, and to be content with nothing short of it. If we thus make those treasures ours, they are laid up, and we may trust God to keep them safe for us; thither let us then refer all our designs, and extend all our desires; thither let us send before our best efforts and best affections. Let us not burthen ourselves with the cash of this world, which will but load and defile us, and be liable to sink us, but lay up in store good securities. The promises are bills of exchange, by which all true believers return their treasure to heaven, payable in the future state: and thus we make that sure that will be made sure.

(c) It is a great encouragement to us to lay up our treasure in heaven, that there it is safe; it will not decay of itself, no moth nor rust will corrupt it; nor can we be by force or fraud deprived of it; thieves do not break through and steal. It is a happiness above and beyond the changes and chances of time, an inheritance incorruptible.

4. A good reason why we should thus choose, and an evidence that we have done so (Mt 6:21), Where your treasure is, on earth or in heaven, there will you heart be. We are therefore concerned to be right and wise in the choice of our treasure, because the temper of our minds, and consequently the tenor of our lives, will be accordingly either carnal or spiritual, earthly or heavenly. The heart follows the treasure, as the needle follows the loadstone, or the sunflower the sun. Where the treasure is there the value and esteem are, there the love and affection are (Col 3:2), that way the desires and pursuits go, thitherward the aims and intents are levelled, and all is done with that in view. Where the treasure is, there our cares and fears are, lest we come short of it; about that we are most

solicitous; there our hope and trust are (Pr 18:10,11); there our joys and delights will be (Ps 119:111); and there our thoughts will be, there the inward thought will be, the first thought, the free thought, the fixed thought, the frequent, the familiar thought. The heart is God's due (Pr 23:26), and that he may have it, our treasure must be laid up with him, and then our souls will be lifted up to him.

This direction about laying up our treasure, may very fitly be applied to the foregoing caution, of not doing what we do in religion to be seen of men. Our treasure is our alms, prayers, and fastings, and the reward of them; if we have done these only to gain the applause of men, we have laid up this treasure on earth, have lodged it in the hands of men, and must never expect to hear any further of it. Now it is folly to do this, for the praise of men we covet so much is liable to corruption: it will soon be rusted, and moth-eaten, and tarnished; a little folly, like a dead fly, will spoil it all, Ec 10:1. Slander and calumny are thieves that break through and steal it away, and so we lose all the treasure of our performances; we have run in vain, and laboured in vain, because we misplaced our intentions in doing of them. Hypocritical services lay up nothing in heaven (Isa 58:3); the gain of them is gone, when the soul is called for, Job 27:8. But if we have prayed and fasted and given alms in truth and uprightness, with an eye to God and to his acceptance, and have approved ourselves to him therein, we have laid up that treasure in heaven; a book of remembrance is written there (Mal 3:16), and being there recorded, they shall be there rewarded, and we shall meet them again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. Hypocrites are written in the earth (Jer 17:13), but God's faithful ones have their names written in heaven, Lu 10:20. Acceptance with God is treasure in heaven, which can neither be corrupted nor stolen. His well done shall stand for ever; and if we have thus laid up our treasure with him, with him our hearts will be; and where can they be better?

II. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the end we look at. Our concern as to this is represented by two sorts of eyes which men have, a single eye and an evil eye,

Mt 6:22,23. The expressions here are somewhat dark because concise; we shall therefore take them in some variety of interpretation. The light of the body is the eye, that is plain; the eye is discovering and directing; the light of the world would avail us little without this light of the body; it is the light of the eye that rejoiceth the heart (Pr 15:30), but what is that which is here compared to the eye in the body.

1. The eye, that is, the heart (so some) if that be single--haplous--free and bountiful (so the word is frequently rendered, as Ro 12:8,2Co 8:2,9:11,13,Jam 1:5, and we read of a bountiful eye, Pr 22:9). If the heart be liberally affected and stand inclined to goodness and charity, it will direct the man to Christian actions, the whole conversation will be full of light, full of evidences and instances of true Christianity, that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father (Jam 1:27), full of light, of good works, which are our light shining before men; but if the heart be evil, covetous, and hard, and envious, griping and grudging (such a temper of mind is often expressed by an evil eye, Mt 20:15,Mk 7:22,Pr 7:22), the body will be full of darkness, the whole conversation will be heathenish and unchristian. The instruments of the churl are and always will be evil, but the liberal deviseth liberal things, Isa 32:5-8. If the light that is in us, those affections which should guide us to that which is good, be darkness, if these be corrupt and worldly, if there be not so much as good nature in a man, not so much as a kind disposition, how great is the corruption of a man, and the darkness in which he sits! This sense seems to agree with the context; we must lay up treasure in heaven by liberality in giving alms, and that not grudgingly but with cheerfulness, Lu 12:33,2Co 9:7. But these words in the parallel place do not come in upon any such occasion, Lu 11:34, and therefore the coherence here does not determine that to be the sense of them.

2. The eye, that is, the understanding (so some); the practical judgment, the conscience, which is to the other faculties of the soul, as the eye is to the body, to guide and direct their motions; now if

this eye be single, if it make a true and right judgment, and discern things that differ, especially in the great concern of laying up the treasure so as to choose aright in that, it will rightly guide the affections and actions, which will all be full of the light of grace and comfort; but if this be evil and corrupt, and instead of leading the inferior powers, is led, and bribed, and biassed by them, if this be erroneous and misinformed, the heart and life must needs be full of darkness, and the whole conversation corrupt. They that will not understand, are said to walk on in darkness, Ps 82:5. It is sad when the spirit of a man, that should be the candle of the Lord, is an ignis fatuus: when the leaders of the people, the leaders of the faculties, cause them to err, for then they that are led of them are destroyed, Isa 9:16. An error in the practical judgment is fatal, it is that which calls evil good and good evil (Isa 5:20); therefore it concerns us to understand things aright, to get our eyes anointed with eye-salve.

3. The eye, that is, the aims and intentions; by the eye we set our end before us, the mark we shoot at, the place we go to, we keep that in view, and direct our motion accordingly; in every thing we do in religion; there is something or other that we have in our eye; now if our eye be single, if we aim honestly, fix right ends, and move rightly towards them, if we aim purely and only at the glory of God, seek his honor and favour, and direct all entirely to him, then the eye is single; Paul's was so when he said, To me to live is Christ; and if we be right here, the whole body will be full of light, all the actions will be regular and gracious, pleasing to God and comfortable to ourselves; but if this eye be evil, if, instead of aiming only at the glory of God, and our acceptance with him, we look aside at the applause of men, and while we profess to honour God, contrive to honour ourselves, and seek our own things under colour of seeking the things of Christ, this spoils all, the whole conversation will be perverse and unsteady, and the foundations being thus out of course, there can be nothing but confusion and every evil work in the superstructure. Draw the lines from the circumference to any other point but the centre, and they will cross. If the light that is in thee be not only dim, but darkness itself, it is a fundamental error, and destructive to all that follows. The end specifies the action. It is of the last importance in religion, that we

be right in our aims, and make eternal things, not temporal, our scope, 2Co 4:18. The hypocrite is like the waterman, that looks one way and rows another; the true Christian like the traveller, that has his journey's end in his eye. The hypocrite soars like the kite, with his eye upon the prey below, which he is ready to come down to when he has a fair opportunity; the true Christian soars like the lark, higher and higher, forgetting the things that are beneath.

The light of the body, etc. The sentiment stated in the preceding verses--the duty of fixing the affections on heavenly things--Jesus proceeds to illustrate by a reference to the eye. When the eye is directed singly and steadily towards an object, and is in health, or is single, everything is clear and plain. If it vibrates, flies to different objects, is fixed on no one singly, or is diseased, nothing is seen clearly. Everything is dim and confused. The man, therefore, is unsteady. The eye regulates the motion of the body. To have an object distinctly in view, is necessary to correct and regulate action, Rope-dancers, in order to steady themselves, fix the eye on some object on the wall, and look steadily at that. If they should look down on the rope or the people, they would become dizzy and fall. A man crossing a stream on a log, if he will look across at some object steadily, will be in little danger. If he looks down on the dashing and rolling waters, he will become dizzy, and fall. So Jesus says, in order that the conduct may be right, it is important to fix the affections on heaven. Having the affections there--having the eye of faith single, steady, unwavering--all the conduct will be correspondent.

Single. Steady, devoted to one object. Not confused, as persons' eyes are when they see double.

Thy whole body shall be full of light. Your conduct will be regular and steady. All that is needful to direct the body is that the eye be fixed right. No other light is required. So all that is needful to direct the soul and the conduct is that the eye of faith be fixed on heaven, that the affections be there.

If therefore the light that is in thee, etc. The word light, here, signifies the mind, or principles of the soul. If this be dark, how great is that darkness! The meaning of this passage may be thus expressed: The light of the body, the guide and director, is the eye. All know how calamitous it is when that light is irregular or extinguished, as when the eye is diseased or lost. So the light that is in us is the soul. If that soul is debased by attending exclusively to earthly objects--if it is diseased, and not fixed on heaven--how much darker and more dreadful will it be than any darkness of the eye! Avarice darkens the mind, obscures the view, and brings in a dreadful and gloomy night over all the faculties.

III. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the master we serve, Mt 6:24. No man can serve two masters. Serving two masters is contrary to the single eye; for the eye will be to the master's hand, Ps 123:1,2. Our Lord Jesus here exposes the cheat which those put upon their own souls, who think to divide between God and the world, to have a treasure on earth, and a treasure in heaven too, to please God and please men too. Why not? says the hypocrite; it is good to have two strings to one's bow. They hope to make their religion serve their secular interest, and so turn to account both ways. The pretending mother was for dividing the child; the Samaritans will compound between God and idols. No, says Christ, this will not do; it is but a supposition that gain is godliness, 1Ti 6:5. Here is,

1. A general maxim laid down; it is likely it was a proverb among the Jews, No man can serve two masters, much less two gods; for their commands will some time or other cross or contradict one another, and their occasions interfere. While two masters go together, a servant may follow them both; but when they part, you will see to which he belongs; he cannot love, and observe, and cleave to both as he should. If to the one, not to the other; either this or that must be comparatively hated and despised. This truth is plain enough in common cases.

2 The application of it to the business in hand. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Mammon is a Syriac word, that signifies gain; so that whatever in this world is, or is accounted by us to be, gain (Php 3:7), is mammon. Whatever is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is mammon. To some their belly is their mammon, and they serve that (Php 3:19); to others their ease, their sleep, their sports and pastimes, are their mammon (Pr 6:9); to others worldly riches (Jam 4:13); to others honours and preferments; the praise and applause of men was the Pharisees' mammon; in a word, self, the unity in which the world's trinity centres, sensual, secular self, is the mammon which cannot be served in conjunction with God; for if it be served, it is in competition with him and in contradiction to him. He does not say, We must not or we should not, but we cannot serve God and Mammon; we cannot love both (1Jo 2:15,Jam 4:4); or hold to both, or hold by both in observance, obedience, attendance, trust, and dependence, for they are contrary the one to the other. God says, "My son, give me thy heart." Mammon says, "No, give it me." God says, "Be content with such things as ye have." Mammon says, "Grasp at all that ever thou canst. Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem--Money, money; by fair means or by foul, money." God says, "Defraud not, never lie, be honest and just in all thy dealings." Mammon says "Cheat thine own Father, if thou canst gain by it." God says, "Be charitable." Mammon says, "Hold thy own: this giving undoes us all." God says, "Be careful for nothing." Mammon says, "Be careful for every thing." God says, "Keep holy thy sabbath-day." Mammon says, "Make use of that day as well as any other for the world." Thus inconsistent are the commands of God and Mammon, so that we cannot serve both. Let us not then halt between God and Baal, but choose ye this day whom ye will serve, and abide by our choice.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole
body shall be full of light.
23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore
the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

God and Mammon

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the
other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve
God and mammon.

Care and Anxiety

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat,
or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not
the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?
26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor
gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much
better than they?
27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?
28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how
they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
29 and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed
like one of these.
30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and
tomorrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of
little faith?

There is scarcely any one sin against which our Lord Jesus more largely and earnestly warns his disciples, or against which he arms them with more variety of arguments, than the sin of disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares about the things of life, which are a bad sign that both the treasure and the heart are on the earth; and therefore he thus largely insists upon it. Here is,

I The prohibition laid down. It is the counsel and command of the Lord Jesus, that we take no thought about the things of this world; I say unto you. He says it as our Lawgiver, and the Sovereign of our hearts; he says it as our Comforter, and the Helper of our joy. What

is it that he says? It is this, and he that hath ears to hear, let him hear it. Take no thought for your life, nor yet for your body (Mt 6:25). Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? (Mt 6:31) and again (Mt 6:34), Take no thought, me merimnate--Be not in care. As against hypocrisy, so against worldly cares, the caution is thrice repeated, and yet no vain repetition: precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, to the same purport, and all little enough; it is a sin which doth so easily beset us. It intimates how pleasing it is to Christ, and of how much concern it is to ourselves, that we should live without carefulness. It is the repeated command of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, that they should not divide and pull in pieces their own minds with care about the world. There is a thought concerning the things of this life, which is not only lawful, but duty, such as is commended in the virtuous woman. See Pr 27:23. The word is used concerning Paul's care of the churches, and Timothy's care for the state of souls, 2Co 11:28,Php 2:20.

But the thought here forbidden is,

1. A disquieting, tormenting thought, which hurries the mind hither and thither, and hangs it in suspense; which disturbs our joy in God, and is a damp upon our hope in him; which breaks the sleep, and hinders our enjoyment of ourselves, of our friends, and of what God has given us.

2. A distrustful, unbelieving thought. God has promised to provide for those that are his all things needful for life as well as godliness, the life that now is, food and a covering: not dainties, but necessaries. He never said, "They shall be feasted," but, "Verily, they shall be fed." Now an inordinate care for time to come, and fear of wanting those supplies, spring from a disbelief of these promises, and of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence; and that is the evil of it. As to present sustenance, we may and must use lawful means to get it, else we tempt God; we must be diligent in our callings, and prudent in proportioning our expenses to what we have, and we must pray for daily bread; and if all other means fail, we may and must ask relief of those that are able to give it. He was none of

the best of men that said, To beg I am ashamed (Lu 16:3); as he was, who (Mt 6:21) desired to be fed with the crumbs; but for the future, we must cast our care upon God, and take no thought, because it looks like a jealousy of God, who knows how to give what we want when we know not now to get it. Let our souls dwell at ease in him! This gracious carelessness is the same with that sleep which God gives to his beloved, in opposition to the worldling's toil, Ps 127:2. Observe the cautions here,

(a) Take no thought for your life. Life is our greatest concern for this world; All that a man has will he give for his life; yet take no thought about it. [1.] Not about the continuance of it; refer it to God to lengthen or shorten it as he pleases; my times are in thy hand, and they are in a good hand. [2.] Not about the comforts of this life; refer it to God to embitter or sweeten it as he pleases. We must not be solicitous, no not about the necessary support of this life, food and raiment; these God has promised, and therefore we may more confidently expect; say not, What shall we eat? It is the language of one at a loss, and almost despairing; whereas, though many good people have the prospect of little, yet there are few but have present support.

(b) Take no thought for the morrow, for the time to come. Be not solicitous for the future, how you shall live next year, or when you are old, or what you shall leave behind you. As we must not boast of to-morrow, so we must not care for to-morrow, or the events of it.

II The reasons and arguments to enforce this prohibition. One would think the command of Christ was enough to restrain us from this foolish sin of disquieting, distrustful care, independently of the comfort of our own souls, which is so nearly concerned; but to show how much the heart of Christ is upon it, and what pleasures he takes in those that hope in his mercy, the command is backed with the most powerful arguments. If reason may but rule us, surely we shall ease ourselves of these thorns. To free us from anxious thoughts, and to expel them, Christ here suggests to us comforting thoughts, that we may be filled with them. It will be worth while to take pains with

our own hearts, to argue them out of their disquieting cares, and to make ourselves ashamed of them. They may be weakened by right reason, but it is by an active faith only that they can be overcome. Consider then,

1. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Mt 6:25. Yes, no doubt it is; so he says who had reason to understand the true value of present things, for he made them, he supports them, and supports us by them; and the thing speaks for itself. Note,

(a) Our life is a greater blessing than our livelihood. It is true, life cannot subsist without a livelihood; but the meat and raiment which are here represented as inferior to the life and body are such as are for ornament and delight; for about such as are for ornament ad delight; for about such we are apt to be solicitous. Meat and raiment are in order to life, and the end is more noble and excellent than the means. The daintiest food and finest raiment are from the earth, but life from the breath of God. Life is the light of men; meat is but the oil that feeds that light: so that the difference between rich and poor is very inconsiderable, since, in the greatest things, they stand on the same level, and differ only in the less.

(b) This is an encouragement to us to trust God for food and raiment, and so to ease ourselves of all perplexing cares about them. God has given us life, and given us the body; it was an act of power, it was an act of favour, it was done without our care: what cannot he do for us, who did that?--what will he not? If we take care about our souls and eternity, which are more than the body, and its life, we may leave it to God to provide for us food and raiment, which are less. God has maintained our lives hitherto; if sometimes with pulse and water, that has answered the end; he has protected us and kept us alive. He that guards us against the evils we are exposed to, will supply us with the good things we are in need of. If he had been pleased to kill us, to starve us, he would not so often have given his angels a charge concerning us to keep us.

2. Behold the fowls of the air, and consider the lilies of the field. Here is an argument taken from God's common providence toward the inferior creatures, and their dependence, according to their capacities, upon that providence. A fine pass fallen man has come to, that he must be sent to school to the fowls of the air, and that they must teach him! Job 12:7,8.

(a) Look upon the fowls, and learn to trust God for food (Mt 6:26), and disquiet not yourselves with thoughts what you shall eat.

[1.] Observe the providence of God concerning them. Look upon them, and receive instruction. There are various sorts of fowls; they are numerous, some of them ravenous, but they are all fed, and fed with food convenient for them; it is rare that any of them perish for want of food, even in winter, and there goes no little to feed them all the year round. The fowls, as they are least serviceable to man, so they are least within his care; men often feed upon them, but seldom feed them; yet they are fed, we know not how, and some of them fed best in the hardest weather; and it is your heavenly Father that feeds them; he knows all the wild fowls of the mountains, better than you know the tame ones at your own barn-door, Ps 50:11. Not a sparrow lights to the ground, to pick up a grain of corn, but by the providence of God, which extends itself to the meanest creatures. But that which is especially observed here is, that they are fed without any care or project of their own; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. The ant indeed does, and the bee, and they are set before us as examples of prudence and industry; but the fowls of the air do not; they make no provision for the future themselves, and yet every day, as duly as the day comes, provision is made for them, and their eyes wait on God, that great and good Housekeeper, who provides food for all flesh.

[2.] Improve this for your encouragement to trust in God. Are ye not much better than they? Yes, certainly you are. Note, The heirs of heaven are much better than the fowls of heaven; nobler and more excellent beings, and, by faith, they soar higher; they are of a better nature and nurture, wiser than the fowls of heaven (Job 35:11):

though the children of this world, that know not the judgment of the Lord, are not so wise as the stork, and the crane, and the swallow (Jer 8:7), you are dearer to God, and nearer, though they fly in the open firmament of heaven. He is their Master and Lord, their Owner and Master; but besides all this, he is your Father, and in his account ye are of more value than many sparrows; you are his children, his first-born; now he that feeds his birds surely will not starve his babes. They trust your Father's providence, and will not you trust it? In dependence upon that, they are careless for the morrow; and being so, they live the merriest lives of all creatures; they sing among the branches (Ps 104:12), and, to the best of their power, they praise their Creator. If we were, by faith, as unconcerned about the morrow as they are, we should sing as cheerfully as they do; for it is worldly care that mars our mirth and damps our joy, and silences our praise, as much as any thing.

(b) Look upon the lilies, and learn to trust God for raiment. That is another part of our care, what we shall put on; for decency, to cover us; for defence, to keep us warm; yea, and, with many, for dignity and ornament, to make them look great and fine; and so much concerned are they for gaiety and variety in their clothing, that this care returns almost as often as that for their daily bread. Now to ease us of this care, let us consider the lilies of the field; not only look upon them (every eyes does that with pleasure), but consider them. Note, There is a great deal of good to be learned from what we see every day, if we would but consider it, Pr 6:6,24:32.

[1.] Consider how frail the lilies are; they are the grass of the field. Lilies, though distinguished by their colours, are still but grass. Thus all flesh is grass: though some in the endowments of body and mind are as lilies, much admired, still they are grass; the grass of the field in nature and constitution; they stand upon the same level with others. Man's days, at best, are as grass, as the flower of the grass 1Pe 1:24. This grass to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; in a little while the place that knows us will know us no more. The grave is the oven into which we shall be cast, and in which we shall be consumed as grass in the fire, Ps 49:14. This intimates a reason

why we should not take thought for the morrow, what we shall put on, because perhaps, by to-morrow, we may have occasion for our grave-clothes.

[2.] Consider how free from care the lilies are: they toil not as men do, to earn clothing; as servants, to earn their liveries; neither do they spin, as women do, to make clothing. It does not follow that we must therefore neglect, or do carelessly, the proper business of this life; it is the praise of the virtuous woman, that she lays her hand to the spindle, makes fine linen and sells it, Pr 31:19,24. Idleness tempts God, instead of trusting him; but he that provides for inferior creatures, without their labour, will much more provide for us, by blessing our labour, which he has made our duty. And if we should, through sickness, be unable to toil and spin, God can furnish us with what is necessary for us.

[3.] Consider how fair, how fine the lilies are; how they grow; what they grow from. The root of the lily or tulip, as other bulbous roots, is, in winter, lost and buried under ground, yet, when spring returns, it appears, and starts up in a little time; hence it is promised to God's Israel, that they should grow as the lily, Ho 14:5. Consider what they grow to. Out of that obscurity in a few weeks they come to be so very gay, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. The array of Solomon was very splendid and magnificent: he that had the peculiar treasure of kings and provinces, and studiously affected pomp and gallantry, doubtless had the richest clothing, and the best made up, that could be got; especially when he appeared in his glory on high days. And yet, let him dress himself as fine as he could, he comes far short of the beauty of the lilies, and a bed of tulips outshines him. Let us, therefore, be ambitious of the wisdom of Solomon, in which he was outdone by none (wisdom to do our duty in our places), rather than the glory of Solomon, in which he was outdone by the lilies. Knowledge and grace are the perfection of man, not beauty, much less fine clothes. Now God is here said thus to clothe the grass of the field. Note, All the excellences of the creature flow from God, the Fountain and spring of them. It was he that gave the horse his strength, and the lily

its beauty; every creature is in itself, as well as to us, what he makes it to be.

[4.] Consider how instructive all this is to us, Mt 6:30.

First, As to fine clothing, this teaches us not to care for it at all, not to covet it, nor to be proud of it, not to make the putting on of apparel our adorning, for after all our care in this the lilies will far outdo us; we cannot dress so fine as they do, why then should we attempt to vie with them? Their adorning will soon perish, and so will ours; they fade--are to-day, and to-morrow are cast, as other rubbish, into the oven; and the clothes we are proud of are wearing out, the gloss is soon gone, the color fades, the shape goes out of fashion, or in awhile the garment itself is worn out; such is man in all his pomp (Isa 40:6,7), especially rich men (Jam 1:10); they fade away in their ways.

Secondly, As to necessary clothing; this teaches us to cast the care of it upon God--Jehovah-jireh; trust him that clothes the lilies, to provide for you what you shall put on. If he give such fine clothes to the grass, much more will he give fitting clothes to his own children; clothes that shall be warm upon them, not only when he quieteth the earth with the south wind, but when he disquiets it with the north wind, Job 37:17. He shall much more clothe you: for you are nobler creatures, of a more excellent being; if so he clothe the short-lived grass, much more will he clothe you that are made for immortality. Even the children of Nineveh are preferred before the gourd (Jon 4:10,11), much more the sons of Zion, that are in covenant with God. Observe the title he gives them (Mt 6:30), O ye of little faith. This may be taken, 1. As an encouragement to truth faith, though it be but weak; it entitles us to the divine care, and a promise of suitable supply. Great faith shall be commended, and shall procure great things, but little faith shall not be rejected, even that shall procure food and raiment. Sound believers shall be provided for, though they be not strong believers. The babes in the family are fed and clothed, as well as those that are grown up, and with a special care and tenderness; say not, I am but a child, but a dry tree (Isa 56:3,5), for

though poor and needy yet the Lord thinketh on thee. Or, 2. It is rather a rebuke to weak faith, though it be true, Mt 14:31. It intimates what is at the bottom of all our inordinate care and thoughtfulness; it is owing to the weakness of our faith, and the remains of unbelief in us. If we had but more faith, we should have less care.

3. Which of you, the wisest, the strongest of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature? (Mt 6:27) to his age, so some; but the measure of a cubit denotes it to be meant of the stature, and the age at longest is but a span, Ps 39:5. Let us consider,

(a) We did not arrive at the stature we are of by our own care and thought, but by the providence of God. An infant of a span long has grown up to be a man of six feet, and how was one cubit after another added to his stature? not by his own forecast or contrivance; he grew he knew not how, by the power and goodness of God. Now he that made our bodies, and made them of such size, surely will take care to provide for them. Note, God is to be acknowledged in the increase of our bodily strength and stature, and to be trusted for all needful supplies, because he has made it to appear, that he is mindful for the body. The growing age is the thoughtless, careless age, yet we grow; and shall not he who reared us to this, provide for us now we are reared?

(b) We cannot alter the stature we are of, if we would: what a foolish and ridiculous thing would it be for a man of low stature to perplex himself, to break his sleep, and beat his brains, about it, and to be continually taking thought how he might be a cubit higher; when, after all, he knows he cannot effect it, and therefore he had better be content and take it as it is! We are not all of a size, yet the difference in stature between one and another is not material, nor of any great account; a little man is ready to wish he were as tall as such a one, but he knows it is to no purpose, and therefore does as well as he can with it. Now as we do in reference to our bodily stature, so we should do in reference to our worldly estate.

[1.] We should not covet an abundance of the wealth of this world, any more than we would covet the addition of a cubit to one's stature, which is a great deal in a man's height; it is enough to grow by inches; such an addition would but make one unwieldy, and a burden to one's self.

[2.] We must reconcile ourselves to our state, as we do to our stature; we must set the conveniences against the inconveniences, and so make a virtue of necessity: what cannot be remedied must be made the best of. We cannot alter the disposals of Providence, and therefore must acquiesce in them, accommodate ourselves to them, and relieve ourselves, as well as we can, against inconveniences, as Zaccheus against the inconvenience of his stature, by climbing into the tree.

4. After all these things do the Gentiles seek, Mt 6:32. Thoughtfulness about the world is a heathenish sin, and unbecoming Christians. The Gentiles seek these things, because they know not better things; they are eager for this world, because they are strangers to a better; they seek these things with care and anxiety, because they are without God in the world, and understand not his providence. They fear and worship their idols, but know not how to trust them for deliverance and supply, and, therefore, are themselves full of care; but it is a shame for Christians, who build upon nobler principles, and profess a religion which teaches them not only that there is a Providence, but that there are promises made to the good of the life that now is, which teaches them a confidence in God and a contempt of the world, and gives such reasons for both; it is a shame for them to walk as Gentiles walk, and to fill their heads and hearts with these things.

5. Your heavenly Father knows ye have need of all these things; these necessary things, food and raiment; he knows our wants better than we do ourselves; though he be in heaven, and his children on earth, he observes what the least and poorest of them has occasion for (Re 2:9), I know thy poverty. You think, if such a good friend did not but know your wants and straits, you would soon have relief:

your God knows them; and he is your Father that loves you and pities you, and is ready to help you; your heavenly Father, who has wherewithal to supply all your needs: away, therefore, with all disquieting thoughts and cares; go to thy Father; tell him, he knows that thou has need of such and such things; he asks you, Children, have you any meat? Joh 21:5. Tell him whether you have or have not. Though he knows our wants, he will know them from us; and when we have opened them to him, let us cheerfully refer ourselves to his wisdom, power, and goodness, for our supply. Therefore, we should ease ourselves of the burthen of care, by casting it upon God, because it is he that careth for us (1Pe 5:7), and what needs all this ado? If he care, why should be care?

6. Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Mt 6:33. Here is a double argument against the sin of thoughtfulness; take no thought for your life, the life of the body; for,

(a) You have greater and better things to take thought about, the life of your soul, your eternal happiness; that is the one thing needful (Lu 10:42), about which you should employ your thoughts, and which is commonly neglected in those hearts wherein worldly cares have the ascendant. If we were but more careful to please God, and to work out our own salvation, we should be less solicitous to please ourselves, and work out an estate in the world. Thoughtfulness for our souls in the most effectual cure of thoughtfulness for the world.

(b) You have a surer and easier, a safer and more compendious way to obtain the necessaries of this life, than by carking, and caring, and fretting about them; and that is, by seeking first the kingdom of God, and making religion your business: say not that this is the way to starve, no, it is the way to be well provided for, even in this world. Observe here,

[1.] The great duty required: it is the sum and substance of our whole duty: "Seek first the kingdom of God, mind religion as your great and principle concern." Our duty is to seek; to desire, pursue, and

aim at these things; it is a word that has in it much of the constitution of the new covenant in favour of us; though we have not attained, but in many things fail and come short, sincere seeking (a careful concern and an earnest endeavor) is accepted. Now observe, First, The object of this seeking; The kingdom of God, and his righteousness; we must mind heaven as our end, and holiness as our way. "Seek the comforts of the kingdom of grace and glory as your felicity. Aim at the kingdom of heaven; press towards it; give diligence to make it sure; resolve not to take up short of it; seek for this glory, honour, and immortality; prefer heaven and heavenly blessings far before earth and earthly delights." We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heaven of it. And with the happiness of this kingdom, seek the righteousness of it; God's righteousness, the righteousness which he requires to be wrought in us, and wrought by us, such as exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees; we must follow peace and holiness, Heb 12:14. Secondly, The order of it. Seek first the kingdom of God. Let your care for your souls and another world take the place of all other cares: and let all the concerns of this life be made subordinate to those of the life to come: we must seek the things of Christ more than our own things; and if every they come in competition, we must remember to which we are to give the preference. "Seek these things first; first in thy days: let the morning of thy youth be dedicated to God. Wisdom must be sought early; it is good beginning betimes to be religious. Seek the first every day; let waking thoughts be of God." Let this be our principle, to do that first which is most needful, and let him that is the First, have the first.

[2.] The gracious promise annexed; all these things, the necessary supports of life, shall be added unto you; shall be given over and above; so it is in the margin. You shall have what you seek, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, for never any sought in vain, that sought in earnest; and besides that, you shall have food and raiment, by way of overplus; as he that buys goods has paper and packthread given him in the bargain. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, 1Ti 4:8. Solomon asked wisdom, and had that and other things added to him, 2Ch 1:11,12. O what a blessed change would it make in our hearts and lives, did we but firmly believe this

truth, that the best way to be comfortably provided for in this world, is to be most intent upon another world! We then begin at the right end of our work, when we begin with God. If we give diligence to make sure to ourselves the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, as to all the things of this life, Jehovah-jireh--the Lord will provide as much of them as he sees good for us, and more we would not wish for. Have we trusted in him for the portion of our inheritance at our end, and shall we not trust him for the portion of our cup, in the way to it? God's Israel were not only brought to Canaan at last, but had their charges borne through the wilderness. O that we were more thoughtful about the things that are not seen, that are eternal, and then the less thoughtful we should be, and the less thoughtful we should need to be, about the things that are seen, that are temporal! Also regard not your stuff, Ge 45:20,23.

7. The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, Mt 6:34. We must not perplex ourselves inordinately about future events, because every day brings along with it its own burthen of cares and grievances, as, if we look about us, and suffer not our fears to betray the succours which grace and reason offer, it brings along with it its own strength and supply too. So that we are here told,

(a) That thoughtfulness for the morrow is needless; Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. If wants and troubles be renewed with the day, there are aids and provisions renewed likewise; compassions, that are new every morning, La 3:22,23. The saints have a Friend that is their arm every morning, and gives out fresh supplies daily (Isa 33:2), according as the business of every day requires (Ezr 3:4), and so he keeps his people in constant dependence upon him. Let us refer it therefore to the morrow's strength, to do the morrow's work, and bear the morrow's burthen. To-morrow, and the things of it, will be provided for without us; why need we anxiously care for that which is so wisely cared for already? This does not forbid a prudent foresight, and preparation accordingly, but a perplexing solicitude, and a prepossession of difficulties and calamities, which may perhaps never come, or if they

do, may be easily borne, and the evil of them guarded against. The meaning is, let us mind present duty, and then leave events to God; do the work of the day in its day, and then let to-morrow bring its work along with it.

(b) That thoughtfulness for the morrow is one of those foolish and hurtful lusts, which those that will be rich fall into, and one of the many sorrows, wherewith they pierce themselves through. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. This present day has trouble enough attending it, we need not accumulate burthens by anticipating our trouble, nor borrow perplexities from to-morrow's evils to add to those of this day. It is uncertain what to-morrow's evils may be, but whatever they be, it is time enough to take thought about them when they come. What a folly it is to take that trouble upon ourselves this day by care and fear, which belongs to another day, and will be never the lighter when it comes? Let us not pull that upon ourselves all together at once, which Providence has wisely ordered to be borne by parcels. The conclusion of this whole matter then is, that it is the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that his disciples should not be their own tormentors, nor make their passage through this world more dark and unpleasant, by their apprehension of troubles, than God has made it by the troubles themselves. By our daily prayers we may procure strength to bear us up under our daily troubles, and to arm us against the temptations that attend them, and then let none of these things move us.

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

Matthew-7

Judging Others

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

A caution against judging Mt 7:1,2. There are those whose office it is to judge-magistrates and ministers. Christ, though he made not himself a Judge, yet came not to unmake them, for by him princes decree justice; but this is directed to private persons, to his disciples, who shall hereafter sit on thrones judging, but not now. Now observe,

1 The prohibition; Judge not. We must judge ourselves, and judge our own acts, but we must not judge our brother, not magisterially assume such an authority over others, as we allow not them over us: since our rule is, to be subject to one another. Be not many masters, Jam 3:1. We must not sit in the judgment-seat, to make our word a law to every body. We must not judge our brother, that is, we must not speak evil of him, so it is explained, Jam 4:11. We must not despise him, nor set him at nought, Ro 14:10. We must not judge rashly, nor pass such a judgment upon our brother as has no ground, but is only the product of our own jealousy and ill nature. We must not make the worst of people, nor infer such invidious things from their words and actions as they will not bear. We must not judge uncharitably, unmercifully, nor with a spirit of revenge, and a desire to do mischief. We must not judge of a man's state by a single act, nor of what he is in himself by what he is to us, because in our own cause we are apt to be partial. We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, for it is God's prerogative to try the heart, and we must not step into his throne; nor must we judge of their eternal state, nor call them hypocrites, reprobates, and castaways; that is stretching beyond our line; what have we to do, thus to judge another man's servant? Counsel him, and help him, but do not judge him.

2 The reason to enforce this prohibition. That ye be not judged. This intimates,

(A) That if we presume to judge others, we may expect to be ourselves judged. He who usurps the bench, shall be called to the bar; he shall be judged of men; commonly none are more censured, than those who are most censorious; every one will have a stone to throw at them; he who, like Ishmael, has his hand, his tongue, against every man, shall, like him, have every man's hand and tongue against him (Ge 16:12); and no mercy shall be shown to the reputation of those that show no mercy to the reputation of others. Yet that is not the worst of it; they shall be judged of God; from him they shall receive the greater condemnation, Jam 3:1. Both parties must appear before him (Ro 14:10), who, as he will relieve the humble sufferer, will also resist the haughty scorner, and give him enough of judging.

(B) That if we be modest and charitable in our censures of others, and decline judging them, and judge ourselves rather, we shall not be judged of the Lord. As God will forgive those that forgive their brethren; so he will not judge those that will not judge their brethren; the merciful shall find mercy. It is an evidence of humility, charity, and deference to God, and shall be owned and rewarded by him accordingly. See Ro 14:10.

The judging of those that judge others is according to the law of retaliation; With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, Mt 7:2 The righteous God, in his judgments, often observes a rule of proportion, as in the case of Adonibezek, Jdg 1:7. See also Re 13:10,18:6. Thus will he be both justified and magnified in his judgments, and all flesh will be silenced before him. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; perhaps in this world, so that men may read their sin in their punishment. Let this deter us from all severity in dealing with our brother. What shall we do when God rises up? Job 31:14. What would become of us, if God should be as exact and severe in judging us, as we are in judging our brethren; if he should weigh us in the same balance? We may justly

expect it, if we be extreme to mark what our brethren do amiss. In this, as in other things, the violent dealings of men return upon their own heads.

it shall be measured to you again—This proverbial maxim is used by our Lord in other connections—as in Mr 4:24, and with a slightly different application in Lu 6:38 —as a great principle in the divine administration. Unkind judgment of others will be judicially returned upon ourselves, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. But, as in many other cases under the divine administration, such harsh judgment gets self-punished even here. For people shrink from contact with those who systematically deal out harsh judgment upon others—naturally concluding that they themselves may be the next victims—and feel impelled in self-defense, when exposed to it, to roll back upon the assailant his own censures.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye?

Some cautions about reproving. Because we must not judge others, which is a great sin, it does not therefore follow that we must not reprove others, which is a great duty, and may be a means of saving a soul from death; however, it will be a means of saving our souls from sharing in their guilt. Now observe here,

1. It is not every one who is fit to reprove. Those who are themselves guilty of the same faults of which they accuse others, or of worse, bring shame upon themselves, and are not likely to do good to those whom they reprove, Mt 7:3-5. Here is,

(a) A just reproof to the censorious, who quarrel with their brother for small faults, while they allow themselves in great ones; who are quick-sighted to spy a mote in his eye, but are not sensible of a beam in their own; nay, and will be very officious to pull out the mote out

of his eye, when they are as unfit to do it as if they were themselves quite blind. Note,

[1.] There are degrees in sin: some sins are comparatively but as motes, others as beams; some as a gnat, others as a camel: not that there is any sin little, for there is no little God to sin against; if it be a mote (or splinter, for so it might better be read), it is in the eye; if a gnat, it is in the throat; both painful and perilous, and we cannot be easy or well till they are got out.

[2.] Our own sins ought to appear greater to us than the same sins in others: that which charity teaches us to call but a splinter in our brother's eye, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a beam in our own; for the sins of others must be extenuated, but our own aggravated.

[3.] There are many that have beams in their own eyes, and yet do not consider it. They are under the guilt and dominion of very great sins, and yet are not aware of it, but justify themselves, as if they needed no repentance nor reformation; it is as strange that a man can be in such a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in him eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world so artfully blinds their minds, that notwithstanding, with great assurance, they say, We see.

[4.] It is common for those who are most sinful themselves, and least sensible of it, to be most forward and free in judging and censuring others: the Pharisees, who were most haughty in justifying themselves, were most scornful in condemning others. They were severe upon Christ's disciples for eating with unwashen hands, which was scarcely a mote, while they encouraged men in a contempt of their parents, which was a beam. Pride and uncharitableness are commonly beams in the eyes of those that pretend to be critical and nice in their censures of others. Nay, many are guilty of that secret, which they have the face to punish in others when it is discovered. Cogita tecum, fortasse vitium de quo quereris, si te diligenter excusseris, in sinu invenies; inique publico irasceris

crimini tuo--Reflect that perhaps the fault of which you complain, might, on a strict examination, be discovered in yourself; and that it would be unjust publicly to express indignation against your own crime. Seneca, de Beneficiis. But,

[5.] Men's being so severe upon the faults of others, while they are indulgent of their own, is a mark of hypocrisy. Thou hypocrite, Mt 7:5. Whatever such a one may pretend, it is certain that he is no enemy to sin (if he were, he would be an enemy to his own sin), and therefore he is not worthy of praise; nay, it appears that he is an enemy to his brother, and therefore worthy of blame. This spiritual charity must begin at home; "For how canst thou say, how canst thou for shame say, to thy brother, Let me help to reform thee, when thou takest no care to reform thyself? Thy own heart will upbraid thee with the absurdity of it; thou wilt do it with an ill grace, and thou wilt expect every one to tell thee, that vice corrects sin: physician, heal thyself;" I præ, sequar--Go you before, I will follow. See Ro 2:21.

[6.] The consideration of what is amiss in ourselves, though it ought not to keep us from administering friendly reproof, ought to keep us from magisterial censuring, and to make us very candid and charitable in judging others. "Therefore restore with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself (Ga 6:1); what thou has been, what thou art, and what thou wouldst be, if God should leave thee to thyself."

(b) Here is a good rule for reproves, Mt 7:5. Go in the right method, first cast the beam out of thine own eye. Our own badness is so far from excusing us in not reproving, that our being by it rendered unfit to reprove is an aggravation of our badness; I must not say, "I have a beam in my own eye, and therefore I will not help my brother with the mote out of his." A man's offence will never be his defence: but I must first reform myself, that I may thereby help to reform my brother, and may qualify myself to reprove him. Note, Those who blame others, ought to be blameless and harmless themselves. Those who are reprovers in the gate, reprovers by office, magistrates and

ministers, are concerned to walk circumspectly, and to be very regular in their conversation: an elder must have a good report, 1Ti 3:2,7. The snuffers of the sanctuary were to be of pure gold.

Our Lord uses a most hyperbolical, but not unfamiliar figure, to express the monstrous inconsistency of this conduct. The "hypocrisy" which, not without indignation, He charges it with, consists in the pretense of a zealous and compassionate charity, which cannot possibly be real in one who suffers worse faults to lie uncorrected in himself. He only is fit to be a reprover of others who jealously and severely judges himself.

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

It is not every one that is fit to be reproved; Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, Mt 7:6. This may be considered, either, (1.) As a rule to the disciples in preaching the gospel; not that they must not preach it to any one who were wicked and profane (Christ himself preached to publicans and sinners), but the reference is to such as they found obstinate after the gospel was preached to them, such as blasphemed it, and persecuted the preachers of it; let them not spend much time among such, for it would be lost labour, but let them turn to others, Ac 13:41. So Dr. Whitby. Or, (2.) As a rule to all in giving reproof. Our zeal against sin must be guided by discretion, and we must not go about to give instructions, counsels, and rebukes, much less comforts, to hardened scorners, to whom it will certainly do no good, but who will be exasperated and enraged at us. Throw a pearl to a swine, and he will resent it, as if you threw a stone at him; reproofs will be called reproaches, as they were (Lu 11:45,Jer 6:10), therefore give not to dogs and swine (unclean creatures) holy things. Note, [1.] Good counsel and reproof are a holy thing, and a pearl: they are ordinances of God, they are precious; as an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is the wise reprover (Pr 25:12), and a wise reproof is like an excellent oil (Ps 141:5); it is a tree of life (Pr 3:18). [2.] Among the generation of the wicked, there are some that have arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that they are looked

upon as dogs and swine; they are impudently and notoriously vile; they have so long walked in the way of sinners, that they have sat down in the seat of the scornful; they professedly hate and despise instruction, and set it at defiance, so that they are irrecoverably and irreclaimably wicked; they return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow to her wallowing in the mire. [3.] Reproofs of instruction are ill bestowed upon such, and expose the reprover to all the contempt and mischief that may be expected from dogs and swine. One can expect no other than that they will trample the reproofs under their feet, in scorn of them, and rage against them; for they are impatient of control and contradiction; and they will turn again and rend the reprovers; rend their good names with their revilings, return them wounding words for their healing ones; rend them with persecution; Herod rent John Baptist for his faithfulness. See here what is the evidence of men's being dogs and swine. Those are to be reckoned such, who hate reproofs and reprovers, and fly in the face of those who, in kindness to their souls, show them their sin and danger. These sin against the remedy; who shall heal and help those that will not be healed and helped? It is plain that God has determined to destroy such. 2Ch 25:16. The rule here given is applicable to the distinguishing, sealing ordinances of the gospel; which must not be prostituted to those who are openly wicked and profane, lest holy things be thereby rendered contemptible, and unholy persons be thereby hardened. It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs. Yet we must be very cautious whom we condemn as dogs and swine, and not do it till after trial, and upon full evidence. Many a patient is lost, by being thought to be so, who, if means had been used, might have been saved. As we must take heed of calling the good, bad, by judging all professors to be hypocrites; so we must take heed of calling the bad, desperate, by judging all the wicked to be dogs and swine. [4.] Our Lord Jesus is very tender of the safety of his people, and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those that will turn again and rend them. Let them not be righteous over much, so as to destroy themselves. Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of his own laws, and precious is the blood of his subjects to him.

Ask, Seek, Knock

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
8 for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Our Saviour, in the foregoing chapter, had spoken of prayer as a commanded duty, by which God is honoured, and which, if done aright, shall be rewarded; here he speaks of it as the appointed means of obtaining what we need, especially grace to obey the precepts he had given, some of which are so displeasing to flesh and blood.

I. Here is a precept in three words to the same purport, Ask, Seek, Knock (Mt 7:7); that is, in one word, "Pray; pray often; pray with sincerity and seriousness; pray, and pray again; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it. Ask, as a beggar asks alms." Those that would be rich in grace, must betake themselves to the poor trade of begging, and they shall find it a thriving trade. "Ask; represent your wants and burthens to God, and refer yourselves to him for support and supply, according to his promise. Ask as a traveller asks the way; to pray is to enquire of God, Eze 36:37. Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost, or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls. Seek by prayer, Da 9:3. Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door." We would be admitted to converse with God, would be taken into his love, and favour, and kingdom; sin has shut and barred the door against us; by prayer, we knock; Lord, Lord, open to us. Christ knocks at our door (Re 3:20,So 5:2); and allows us to knock at his, which is a favour we do not allow to common beggars. Seeking and knocking imply something more than asking and praying.

1. We must not only ask but seek; we must second our prayers with our endeavors; we must, in the use of the appointed means, seek for that which we ask for, else we tempt God. When the dresser of the

vineyard asked for a year's respite for the barren fig-tree, he added, I will dig about it, Lu 13:7,8. God gives knowledge and grace to those that search the scriptures, and wait at Wisdom's gates; and power against sin to those that avoid the occasions of it.

2. We must not only ask, but knock; we must come to God's door, must ask importunately; not only pray, but plead and wrestle with God; we must seek diligently; we must continue knocking; must persevere in prayer, and in the use of means; must endure to the end in the duty.

II. Here is a promised annexed: our labour in prayer, if indeed we do labour in it, shall not be in vain: where God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God; he shall give thee an answer of peace. The precept is threefold, ask, seek, knock; there is precept upon precept; but the promise is sixfold, line upon line, for our encouragement; because a firm belief of the promise would make us cheerful and constant in our obedience. Now here,

1 The promise is made, and made so as exactly to answer the precept, Mt 7:7. Ask, and it shall be given you; not lent you, not sold you, but given you; and what is more free than gift? Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, whatever you ask, shall be given you, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? It is but ask and have; ye have not, because ye ask not, or ask not aright: what is not worth asking, is not worth having, and then it is worth nothing. Seek, and ye shall find, and then you do not lose your labour; God is himself found of those that seek him, and if we find him we have enough. "Knock, and it shall be opened; the door of mercy and grace shall no longer be shut against you as enemies and intruders, but opened to you as friends and children. It will be asked, who is at the door? If you be able to say, a friend, and have the ticket of promise ready to produce in the hand of faith, doubt not of admission. If the door be not opened at the first knock, continue instant in prayer; it is an affront to a friend to knock at his door, and then go away; though he tarry, yet wait."

2. It is repeated, Mt 7:8. It is to the same purport, yet with some addition.

(a) It is made to extend to all that pray aright; "Not only you my disciples shall receive what you pray for, but every one that asketh, receiveth, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, they are all alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith: for God is no respecter of persons."

(b) It is made so as to amount to a grant, in words of the present tense, which is more than a promise for the future. Every one that asketh, not only shall receive, but receiveth; by faith, applying and appropriating the promise, we are actually interested and invested in the good promised: so sure and inviolable are the promises of God, that they do, in effect, give present possession: an active believer enters immediately, and makes the blessings promised his own. What have we in hope, according to the promise, is as sure, and should be as sweet, as what we have in hand. God hath spoken in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine, Manasseh mine (Ps 108:7,8); it is all mine own, if I can but make it so by believing it so. Conditional grants become absolute upon the performance of the condition; so here, he that asketh, receiveth. Christ hereby puts his fiat to the petition; and he having all power, that is enough.

3. It is illustrated, by a similitude taken from earthly parents, and their innate readiness to give their children what they ask. Christ appeals to his hearers, What man is there of you, though never so morose and ill-humoured, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Mt 7:9,10. Whence he infers (Mt 7:11), If ye then, being evil, yet grant your children's requests, much more will your heavenly Father give you the good things you ask. Now this is of use,

(a) To direct our prayers and expectations.

[1.] We must come to God, as children to a Father in heaven, with reverence and confidence. How naturally does a child in want or distress run to the father with its complaints; My head, my head; thus should the new nature send us to God for supports and supplies.

[2.] We must come to him for good things, for those he gives to them that ask him; which teaches us to refer ourselves to him; we know not what is good for ourselves (Ec 6:12), but he knows what is good for us, we must therefore leave it with him; Father, thy will be done. The child is here supposed to ask bread, that is necessary, and a fish, that is wholesome; but if the child should foolishly ask for a stone, or a serpent, for unripe fruit to eat, or a sharp knife to play with, the father, though kind, is so wise as to deny him. We often ask that of God which would do us harm if we had it; he knows this, and therefore does not give it to us. Denials in love are better than grants in anger; we should have been undone ere this if we had had all we desired; this is admirably well expressed by a heathen, Juvenal, Sat. 10.

(b) To encourage our prayers and expectations. We may hope that we shall not be denied and disappointed: we shall not have a stone for bread, to break our teeth (though we have a hard crust to employ our teeth), nor a serpent for a fish, to sting us; we have reason indeed to fear it, because we deserve it, but God will be better to us than the desert of our sins. The world often gives stones for bread, and serpents for fish, but God never does; nay, we shall be heard and answered, for children are by their parents.

[1.] God has put into the hearts of parents a compassionate inclination to succour and supply their children, according to their need. Even those that have had little conscience of duty, yet have done it, as it were by instinct. No law was ever thought necessary to oblige parents to maintain their legitimate children, nor, in Solomon's time, their illegitimate ones.

[2.] He has assumed the relation of a Father to us, and owns us for his children; that from the readiness we find in ourselves to relieve

our children, we may be encouraged to apply ourselves to him for relief. What love and tenderness fathers have are from him; not from nature but from the God of nature; and therefore they must needs be infinitely greater in himself. He compares his concern for his people to that of a father for his children (Ps 103:13), nay, to that of a mother, which is usually more tender, Isa 66:13,Isa 49:14,15. But here it is supposed, that his love, and tenderness, and goodness, far excel that of any earthly parent; and therefore it is argued with a much more, and it is grounded upon this undoubted truth, that God is a better Father, infinitely better than any earthly parents are; his thoughts are above theirs. Our earthly fathers have taken care of us; we have taken care of our children; much more will God take care of his; for they are evil, originally so; the degenerate seed of fallen Adam; they have lost much of the good nature that belonged to humanity, and among other corruptions, have that of crossness and unkindness in them; yet they give good things to their children, and they know how to give, suitably and seasonably; much more will God, for he takes up when they forsake, Ps 27:10. And, First, God is more knowing; parents are often foolishly fond, but God is wise, infinitely so; he knows what we need, what we desire, and what is fit for us. Secondly, God is more kind. If all the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world were crowded into the bowels of one, yet compared with the tender mercies of our God, they would be but as a candle to the sun, or a drop to the ocean. God is more rich, and more ready to give to his children than the fathers of our flesh can be; for he is the Father of our spirits, an ever-loving, ever-living Father. The bowels of Fathers yearn even towards undutiful children, towards prodigals, as David's toward Absalom, and will not all this serve to silence disbelief?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

All things whatsoever, etc. This command has been usually called the Saviour's golden rule, a name given to it on account of its great value. All that you expect or desire of others in similar

circumstances, do to them. Act not from selfishness or injustice, but put yourself in the place of the other, and ask what you would expect of him then. This would make you impartial, and candid, and just. It would destroy avarice, envy, treachery, unkindness, slander, theft, adultery, and murder. It has been well said, that this law is what the balance-wheel is to machinery. It would prevent all irregularity of movement in the moral world, as that does in a steam-engine. It is easily applied, its justice is seen by all men, and all must acknowledge its force and value.

This is the law and the prophets. That is, this is the sum or substance of the Old Testament. It is nowhere found in so many words, but it is a summary expression of all that the law required. The sentiment was in use among the Jews. Hillel, an ancient Rabbi, said to a man who wished to become a proselyte, and who asked him to teach him the whole law, "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to another." Something of the same sentiment was found among the ancient Greeks and Romans.

The Narrow Gate

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that
leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
14 because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and
few there be that find it.

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II. We must make religion our business, and be intent upon it; we must be strict and circumspect in our conversation, which is here represented to us as entering in at a strait gate, and walking on in a narrow way, Mt 7:13,14. Observe here,

1 The account that is given of the bad way of sin, and the good way of holiness. There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking: no middle place hereafter, no middle way now: the distinction of the children of men into saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, will swallow up all to eternity.

Here is, (1.) An account given us of the way of sin and sinners; both what is the best, and what is the worst of it.

[1.] That which allures multitudes into it, and keeps them in it; the gate is wide, and the way broad, and there are many travellers in that way. First, "You will have abundance of liberty in that way; the gate is wide, and stands wide open to tempt those that go right on their way. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you; it gives no check to your appetites, to your passions: you may walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; that gives room enough." It is a broad way, for there is nothing to hedge in those that walk in it, but they wander endlessly; a broad way, for there are many paths in it; there is choice of sinful ways, contrary to each other, but all paths in this broad way. Secondly, "You will have abundance of company in that way: many there be that go in at this gate, and walk in this way." If we follow the multitude, it will be to do evil: if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to go down the stream, and do as the most

do; but it is too great a compliment, to be willing to be damned for company, and to go to hell with them, because they will not go to heaven with us: if many perish, we should be the more cautious.

[2.] That which should affright us all from it is, that it leads to destruction. Death, eternal death, is at the end of it (and the way of sin tends to it),--everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Whether it be the high way of open profaneness, or the back way of close hypocrisy, if it be a way of sin, it will be our ruin, if we repent not.

(2.) Here is an account given us of the way of holiness.

[1.] What there is in it that frightens many from it; let us know the worst of it, that we may sit down and count the cost. Christ deals faithfully with us, and tells us,

First, That the gate is strait. Conversion and regeneration are the gate, by which we enter into this way, in which we begin a life of faith and serious godliness; out of a state of sin into a state of grace we must pass, by the new birth, Joh 3:3,5. This is a strait gate, hard to find, and hard to get through; like a passage between two rocks, 1Sa 14:4. There must be a new heart, and a new spirit, and old things must pass away. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; what we have been doing all our days must be undone again. We must swim against the stream; much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. It is a strait gate, for we must stoop, or we cannot go in at it; we must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down; nay, we must strip, must deny ourselves, put off the world, put off the old man; we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ. The gate is strait to all, but to some straiter than others; as to the rich, to some that have been long prejudiced against religion. The gate is strait; blessed be God, it is not shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, Mt 25:10.

Secondly, That the way is narrow. We are not in heaven as soon as we have got through the strait gate, nor in Canaan as soon as we have got through the Red Sea; no, we must go through a wilderness, must travel a narrow way, hedged in by the divine law, which is

exceedingly broad, and that makes the way narrow; self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a right eye and a right hand; daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our inclination. We must endure hardness, must wrestle and be in an agony, must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection. We must go through much tribulation. It is hodos tethlimmene--an afflicted way, a way hedged about with thorns; blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but, as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it will open and enlarge, and grow more and more pleasant.

Thirdly, The gate being so strait and the way so narrow, it is not strange that there are but few that find it, and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they will not be at the pains to find it; they are well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others look upon it, but shun it; they like not to be so limited and restrained. Those that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage; as the eight that were saved in the ark, 1Pe 3:20. In vitia alter alterum trudimus; Quomodo ad salutem revocari potest, quum nullus retrahit, et populus impellit--In the ways of vice men urge each other onward: how shall any one be restored to the path of safety, when impelled forwards by the multitude, without any counteracting influence? Seneca, Epist. 29. This discourages many: they are loth to be singular, to be solitary; but instead of stumbling at this, say rather, If so few are going to heaven, there shall be one the more for me.

[2.] Let us see what there is in this way, which, notwithstanding this, should invite us all to it; it leads to life, to present comfort in the favour of God, which is the life of the soul; to eternal bliss, the hope of which, at the end of our way, should reconcile us to all the difficulties and inconveniences of the road. Life and godliness are put together (2Pe 1:3); The gate is strait and the way narrow and up-hill, but one hour in heaven will make amends for it.

2 The great concern and duty of every one of us, in consideration of all this; Enter ye in at the strait gate. The matter is fairly stated;

life and death, good and evil, are set before us; both the ways, and both the ends: now let the matter be taken entire, and considered impartially, and then choose you this day which you will walk in; nay, the matter determines itself, and will not admit of a debate. No man, in his wits, would choose to go to the gallows, because it is a smooth, pleasant way to it, nor refuse the offer of a palace and a throne, because it is a rough, dirty way to it; yet such absurdities as these are men guilty of, in the concerns of their souls. Delay not, therefore; deliberate not any longer, but enter ye in at the strait gate; knock at it by sincere and constant prayers and endeavors, and it shall be opened; nay, a wide door shall be opened, and an effectual one. It is true, we can neither go in, nor go on, without the assistance of divine grace; but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be wanting to those that seek it, and submit to it. Conversion is hard work, but it is needful, and, blessed be God, it is not impossible if we strive, Lu 13:24.

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

MHC COMMENTARY:

We have here a caution against false prophets, to take heed that we be not deceived and imposed upon by them. Prophets are properly such as foretel things to come; there are some mentioned in the Old Testament, who pretended to that without warrant, and the event disproved their pretensions, as Zedekiah, 1Ki 22:11, and another Zedekiah, Jer 29:21. But prophets did also teach the people their duty, so that false prophets here are false teachers. Christ being a Prophet and a Teacher come from God, and designing to send abroad teachers under him, gives warning to all to take heed of counterfeits,

who, instead of healing souls with wholesome doctrine, as they pretend, would poison them.

They are false teachers and false prophets,
1. Who produce false commissions, who pretend to have immediate warrant and direction from God to set up for prophets, and to be divinely inspired, when they are not so. Though their doctrine may be true, we are to beware of them as false prophets. False apostles are those who say they are apostles, and are not (Re 2:2); such are false prophets. "Take heed of those who pretend to revelation, and admit them not without sufficient proof, lest that one absurdity being admitted, a thousand follow."

2. Who preach false doctrine in those things that are essential to religion; who teach that which is contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, to the truth which is accordingly to godliness. The former seems to be the proper notion of pseudo-propheta, a false or pretending prophet, but commonly the latter falls in with it; for who would hang out false colours, but with design, under pretence of them, the more successfully to attack the truth. "Well, beware of them, suspect them, try them, and when you have discovered their falsehood, avoid them, have nothing to do with them. Stand upon your guard against this temptation, which commonly attends the days of reformation, and the breakings out of divine light in more than ordinary strength and splendour." When God's work is revived, Satan and his agents are most busy. Here is,

I. A good reason for this caution, Beware of them, for they are wolves in sheep's clothing, Mt 7:15.

1. We have need to be very cautious, because their pretences are very fair and plausible, and such as will deceive us, if we be not upon our guard. They come in sheep's clothing, in the habit of prophets, which was plain and coarse, and unwrought; they wear a rough garment to deceive, Zec 13:4. Elijah's mantle the Septuagint calls he melote--a sheep-skin mantle. We must take heed of being imposed upon by men's dress and garb, as by that of the scribes, who desire to walk in

long robes, Lu 20:46. Or it may be taken figuratively; they pretend to be sheep, and outwardly appear so innocent, harmless, meek, useful, and all that is good, as to be excelled by none; they feign themselves to be just men, and for the sake of their clothing are admitted among the sheep, which gives them an opportunity of doing them a mischief ere they are aware. They and their errors are gilded with the specious pretences of sanctity and devotion. Satan turns himself into an angel of light, 2Co 11:13,14. The enemy has horns like a lamb (Re 13:11); faces of men, Re 9:7,8. Seducers in language and carriage are soft as wool, Ro 16:18,Isa 30:10.

2. Because under these pretensions their designs are very malicious and mischievous; inwardly they are ravening wolves. Every hypocrite is a goat in sheep's clothing; not only not a sheep, but the worst enemy the sheep has, that comes not but to tear and devour, to scatter the sheep (Joh 10:12), to drive them from God, and from one another, into crooked paths. Those that would cheat us of any truth, and possess us with error, whatever they pretend, design mischief to our souls. Paul calls them grievous wolves, Ac 20:29. They raven for themselves, serve their own belly (Ro 16:18), make a prey of you, make a gain of you. Now since it is so easy a thing, and withal so dangerous, to be cheated, Beware of false prophets.

II. Here is a good rule to go by in this caution; we must prove all things (1Th 5:21), try the spirits (1Jo 4:1), and here we have a touchstone; ye shall know them by their fruits, Mt 7:16-20. Observe,

1 The illustration of this comparison, of the fruit's being the discovery of the tree. You cannot always distinguish them by their bark and leaves, nor by the spreading of their boughs, but by their fruits ye shall know them. The fruit is according to the tree. Men may, in their professions, put a force upon their nature, and contradict their inward principles, but the stream and bent of their practices will agree with them. Christ insists upon this, the agreeableness between the fruit and the tree, which is such as that,

(a) If you know what the tree is, you may know what fruit to expect. Never look to gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles; it is not in their nature to produce such fruits. An apple may be stuck, or a bunch of grapes may hang, upon a thorn; so may a good truth, a good word or action, be found in a bad man, but you may be sure it never grew there. Note,

[1.] Corrupt, vicious, unsanctified hearts are like thorns and thistles, which came in with sin, are worthless, vexing, and for the fire at last.

[2.] Good works are good fruit, like grapes and figs, pleasing to God and profitable to men.

[3.] This good fruit is never to be expected from bad men, and more than a clean thing out of an unclean: they want an influencing acceptable principle. Out of an evil treasure will be brought forth evil things.

(b) On the other hand, if you know what the fruit is, you may, by that, perceive what the tree is. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nay, it cannot but bring forth evil fruit. But then that must be reckoned the fruit of the tree which it brings forth naturally and which is its genuine product--which it brings forth plentifully and constantly and which is its usual product. Men are known, not by particular acts, but by the course and tenour of their conversation, and by the more frequent acts, especially those that appear to be free, and most their own, and least under the influence of external motives and inducements.

2 The application of this to the false prophets.

(a) By way of terror and threatening (Mt 7:19); Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down. This very saying John the Baptist had used, Mt 3:10. Christ could have spoken the same sense in other words; could have altered it, or given it a new turn; but he thought it no disparagement to him to say the same that John had said before him; let not ministers be ambitious of coining new expressions, nor

people's ears itch for novelties; to write and speak the same things must not be grievous, for it is safe. Here is,

[1.] The description of barren trees; they are trees that do not bring forth good fruit; though there be fruit, if it be not good fruit (though that be done, which for the matter of it is good, if it be not done well, in a right manner, and for a right end), the tree is accounted barren.

[2.] The doom of barren trees; they are, that is, certainly they shall be, hewn down, and cast into the fire; God will deal with them as men use to deal with dry trees that cumber the ground: he will mark them by some signal tokens of his displeasure, he will bark them by stripping them of their parts and gifts, and will cut them down by death, and cast them into the fire of hell, a fire blown with the bellows of God's wrath, and fed with the wood of barren trees. Compare this with Eze 31:12,13,Da 4:14,Joh 15:6.

(b) By way of trial; By their fruits ye shall know them.

[1.] By the fruits of their persons, their words and actions, and the course of their conversation. If you would know whether they be right or not, observe how they live; their works will testify for them or against them. The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's chair, and taught the law, but they were proud, and covetous, and false, and oppressive, and therefore Christ warned him disciples to beware of them and of their leaven, Mk 12:38. If men pretend to be prophets and are immoral, that disproves their pretensions; those are no true friends to the cross of Christ, whatever they profess, whose God is their belly, and whose mind earthly things, Php 3:18,19. Those are not taught nor sent of the holy God, whose lives evidence that they are led by the unclean spirit. God puts the treasure into earthen vessels, but not into such corrupt vessels: they may declare God's statutes, but what have they to do to declare them?

[2.] By the fruits of their doctrine; their fruits as prophets: not that this is the only way, but it is one way, of trying doctrines, whether they be of God or not. What do they tend to do? What affections and

practices will they lead those into, that embrace them? If the doctrine be of God, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love, with other Christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrines these prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversations, unjust or uncharitable, factious or disturbers of the public peace; if it indulge carnal liberty, and take people off from governing themselves and their families by the strict rules of the narrow way, we may conclude, that this persuasion comes not of him that calleth us, Ga 5:8.

BURKITT COMMENTARY:

Observe here, 1. A caution given, Beware of false prophets. There were two sorts of deceivers which our Saviour gave his disciples a special warning of; namely false Christs and false prophets: false Christs were such as pretended to be the true Messiahs; false prophets were such as pretended to own Christianity, but drew people away from the simplicity of the gospel.

Observe, 2. The ground of this caution: They come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves; that is, they make fair pretences to strictness in religion, and to greater measures and degrees of mortification and self-denial than others.

Whence we learn, That such who go about to seduce others, usually pretend to extraordinary measures of sanctity themselves, to raise an admiration among those who judge of saints more by their looks than by their lives; more by their expressions than by their actions. What heavenly looks and devout gestures, what long prayers and frequent fastings had the hypocritical Pharisees, beyond what Christ or his disciples ever practised!

Observe, 3. The rule laid down by Christ, whereby we are to judge of false teachers; by their fruits ye shall know them.

Learn, That the best course we can take to judge of teachers pretending to be sent of God, is to examine the design and tendency of their doctrines, and the course and tenor of their conversations. Good teachers, like good trees, will bring forth the good fruits of truth and holiness; but evil men and seducers, like corrupt trees, will bring forth error and wickedness in their life and doctrine.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

I Never Knew You

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

MHC COMMENTARY:

We have here the conclusion of this long and excellent sermon, the scope of which is to show the indispensable necessity of obedience to the commands of Christ; this is designed to clench the nail, that it might fix in a sure place: he speaks this to his disciples, that sat at his feet whenever he preached, and followed him wherever he went. Had he sought his own praise among men, he would have said, that was enough; but the religion he came to establish is in power, not in word only (1Co 4:20), and therefore something more is necessary.

I. He shows, by a plain remonstrance, that an outward profession of religion, however remarkable, will not bring us to heaven, unless there be a correspondent conversation, Mt 7:21-23. All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus; the keys are put into his hand; he has power to prescribe new terms of life and death, and to judge men according to them: now this is a solemn declaration pursuant to that power. Observe here,

1. Christ's law laid down, Mt 7:21. Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, into the kingdom of grace and glory. It is an answer to that question, Ps 15:1. Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?--the church militant; and who shall dwell in thy holy hill?--the church triumphant. Christ here shows,

(a) That it will not suffice to say, Lord, Lord; in word and tongue to own Christ for our Master, and to make addresses to him, and professions of him accordingly: in prayer to God, in discourse with men, we must call Christ, Lord, Lord; we say well, for so he is (Joh 13:13); but can we imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven, that such a piece of formality as this should be so recompensed, or that he who knows and requires the heart should be so put off with shows for substance? Compliments among men are pieces of civility that are returned with compliments, but they are never paid as real services; and can they then be of an account with Christ? There may be a seeming importunity in prayer, Lord, Lord: but if inward impressions be not answerable to outward expressions, we are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. This is not to take us off from saying, Lord, Lord; from praying, and being earnest in prayer, from professing Christ's name, and being bold in professing it, but from resting in these, in the form of godliness, without the power.

(b) That it is necessary to our happiness that we do the will of Christ, which is indeed the will of his Father in heaven. The will of God, as Christ's Father, is his will in the gospel, for there he is made known, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: and in him our Father. Now this is his will, that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we love one another. This is his will, even our sanctification. If we comply not with the will of God, we mock Christ in calling him Lord, as those did who put on him a gorgeous robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews. Saying and doing are two things, often parted in conversation of men: he that said, I go, sir, stirred never a step (Mt 21:30); but these two things God has joined in his command, and let no man that puts them asunder think to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2 The hypocrite's plea against the strictness of this law, offering other things in lieu of obedience, Mt 7:22. The plea is supposed to be in that day, that great day, when every man shall appear in his own colours; when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifest, and among the rest, the secret pretences with which sinners now support their vain hopes. Christ knows the strength of their cause, and it is but weakness; what they now harbour in their bosoms, they will then produce in arrest of judgment to stay the doom, but is will be in vain. They put in their plea with great importunity, Lord, Lord; and with great confidence, appealing to Christ concerning it; Lord, does thou not know,

(1.) That we have prophesied in thy name? Yes, it may be so; Balaam and Caiaphas were overruled to prophesy, and Saul was against his will among the prophets, yet that did not save them. These prophesied in his name, but he did not send them; they only made use of his name to serve a turn. Note, A man may be a preacher, may have gifts for the ministry, and an external call to it, and perhaps some success in it, and yet be a wicked man; may help others to heaven, and yet come short himself.

(2.) That in thy name we have cast out devils? That may be too; Judas cast out devils, and yet was a son of perdition. Origen says, that in his time so prevalent was the name of Christ to cast out devils, that sometimes it availed when named by wicked Christians. A man might cast devils out of others, and yet have a devil, nay, be a devil himself.

(3.) That in thy name we have done many wonderful works. There may be a faith of miracles, where there is no justifying faith; none of that faith which works by love and obedience. Gifts of tongues and healing would recommend men to the world, but it is real holiness or sanctification that is accepted of God. Grace and love are a more excellent way than removing mountains, or speaking with the tongues of men and of angels, 1Co 13:1,2. Grace will bring a man to heaven without working miracles, but working miracles will

never bring a man to heaven without grace. Observe, That which their heart was upon, in doing these works, and which they confided in, was the wonderfulness of them. Simon Magus wondered at the miracles (Ac 8:13), and therefore would give any money for power to do the like. Observe, They had not many good works to plead: they could not pretend to have done many gracious works of piety and charity; one such would have passed better in their account than many wonderful works, which availed not at all, while they persisted in disobedience. Miracles have now ceased, and with them this plea; but do not carnal hearts still encourage themselves in their groundless hopes, with the like vain supports? They think they shall go to heaven, because they have been of good repute among professors of religion, have kept fasts, and given alms, and have been preferred in the church; as if this would atone for their reigning pride, worldliness, and sensuality; and want of love to God and man. Bethel is their confidence (Jer 48:13), they are haughty because of the holy mountain (Zep 3:11); and boast that they are the temple of the Lord, Jer 7:4. Let us take heed of resting in external privileges and performances, lest we deceive ourselves, and perish eternally, as multitudes do, with a lie in our right hand.

3. The rejection of this plea as frivolous. The same that is the Law-Maker (Mt 7:21) is here the Judge according to that law (Mt 7:23), and he will overrule the plea, will overrule it publicly; he will profess to them with all possible solemnity, as sentence is passed by the Judge, I never knew you, and therefore depart from me, ye that work iniquity.--Observe,

(a) Why, and upon what ground, he rejects them and their plea--because they were workers for iniquity. Note, It is possible for men to have a great name for piety, and yet to be workers of iniquity; and those that are so will receive the greater damnation. Secret haunts of sin, kept under the cloak of a visible profession, will be the ruin of the hypocrites. Living in known sin nullifies men's pretensions, be they ever so specious.

(b) How it is expressed; I never knew you; "I never owned you as my servants, no, not when you prophesied in my name, when you were in the height of your profession, and were most extolled." This intimates, that if he had ever known them, as the Lord knows them that are his, had ever owned them and loved them as his, he would have known them, and owned them, and loved them, to the end; but he never did know them, for he always knew them to be hypocrites, and rotten at heart, as he did Judas; therefore, says he, depart from me. Has Christ need of such guests? When he came in the flesh, he called sinners to him (Mt 9:13), but when he shall come again in glory, he will drive sinners from him. They that would not come to him to be saved, must depart from him to be damned. To depart from Christ is the very hell of hell; it is the foundation of all the misery of the damned, to be cut off from all hope of benefit from Christ and he mediation. Those that go no further in Christ's service than a bare profession, he does not accept, nor will he own them in the great day. See from what a height of hope men may fall into the depth of misery! How they may go to hell, by the gates of heaven! This should be an awakening word to all Christians. If a preacher, one that cast out devils, and wrought miracles, be disowned of Christ for working iniquity; what will become of us, if we be found such? And if we be such, we shall certainly be found such. At God's bar, a profession of religion will not bear out any man in the practice and indulgence of sin; therefore let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity.

II. He shows, by a parable, that hearing these sayings of Christ will not make us happy, if we do not make conscience of doing them; but that if we hear them and do them, we are blessed in our deed, Mt 7:24-27.

1 The hearers of Christ's word are here divided into two sorts; some that hear, and do what they hear; others that hear and do not. Christ preached now to a mixed multitude, and he thus separates them, one from the other, as he will at the great day, when all nations shall be gathered before him. Christ is still speaking from heaven by his word

and Spirits, speaks by ministers, by providences, and of those that hear him there are two sorts.

(a) Some that hear his sayings and do them: blessed be God that there are any such, though comparatively few. To hear Christ is not barely to give him the hearing, but to obey him. Note, It highly concerns us all to do what we hear of the saying of Christ. It is a mercy that we hear his sayings: Blessed are those ears, Mt 13:16,17. But, if we practise not what we hear, we receive that grace in vain. To do Christ's sayings is conscientiously to abstain from the sins that he forbids, and to perform the duties that he requires. Our thoughts and affections, our words and actions, the temper of our minds, and the tenour of our lives, must be conformable to the gospel of Christ; that is the doing he requires. All the sayings of Christ, not only the laws he has enacted, but the truths he has revealed, must be done by us. They are a light, not only to our eyes, but to our feet, and are designed not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives: nor do we indeed believe them, if we do not live up to them. Observe, It is not enough to hear Christ's sayings, and understand them, hear them, and remember them, hear them, and talk of them, repeat them, dispute for them; but we must hear, and do them. This do, and thou shalt live. Those only that hear, and do, are blessed (Lu 11:28,Joh 13:17), and are akin to Christ. Mt 12:50.

(b) There are others who hear Christ's sayings and do them not; their religion rests in bare hearing, and goes no further; like children that have the rickets, their heads swell with empty notions, and indigested opinions, but their joints are weak, and they heavy and listless; they neither can stir, nor care to stir, in any good duty; they hear God's words, as if they desired to know his ways, like a people that did righteousness, but they will not do them, Eze 33:30,31,Isa 58:2. Thus they deceive themselves, as Micah, who thought himself happy, because he had a Levite to be his priest, though he had not the Lord to be his God. The seed is sown, but it never comes up; they see their spots in the glass of the word, but wash them off, Jam 1:22,24. Thus they put a cheat upon their own souls; for it is certain, if our hearing be not the means of our obedience, it will be the

aggravation of our disobedience. Those who only hear Christ's sayings, and do them not, sit down in the midway to heaven, and that will never bring them to their journey's end. They are akin to Christ only by the half-blood, and our law allows not such to inherit.

2. These two sorts of hearers are here represented in their true characters, and the state of their case, under the comparison of two builders; one was wise, and built upon a rock, and his building stood in a storm; the other foolish, and built upon the sand, and his building fell. Now,

(a) The general scope of this parable teaches us that the only way to make sure work for our souls and eternity is, to hear and do the sayings of the Lord Jesus, these sayings of his in this sermon upon the mount, which is wholly practical; some of them seem hard sayings to flesh and blood, but they must be done; and thus we lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come (1Ti 6:19); a good bond, so some read it; a bond of God's making, which secures salvation upon gospel-terms, that is a good bond; not one of our own devising, which brings salvation to our own fancies. They make sure the good part, who, like Mary, when they hear the word of Christ, sit at his feet in subjection to it: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

(b) The particular parts of it teach us divers good lessons.

[1.] That we have every one of us a house to build, and that house is our hope for heaven. It ought to be our chief and constant care, to make our calling and election sure, and so we make our salvation sure; to secure a title to heaven's happiness, and then to get the comfortable evidence of it; to make it sure, and sure to ourselves, that when we fail, we shall be received into everlasting habitations. Many never mind this: it is the furthest thing from their thoughts; they are building for this world, as if they were to be here always, but take no care to build for another world. All who take upon them a profession of religion, profess to enquire, what they shall do to be saved; how they may get to heaven at last, and may have a well-grounded hope of it in the mean time.

[2.] That there is a rock provided for us to build this house upon, and that rock is Christ. He is laid for a foundation, and other foundation can no may lay, Isa 28:16,1Co 3:11. He is our Hope, 1Ti 1:1. Christ in us is so; we must ground our hopes of heaven upon the fulness of Christ's merit, for the pardon of sin, the power of his Spirit, for the sanctification of our nature, and the prevalency of his intercession, for the conveyance of all that good which he has purchased for us. There is that in him, as he is made known, and made over, to us in the gospel, which is sufficient to redress all our grievances, and to answer all the necessities of our case, so that he is a Saviour to the uttermost. The church is built upon this Rock, and so is every believer. He is strong and immovable as a rock; we may venture our all upon him, and shall not be made ashamed of our hope.

[3.] That there is a remnant, who by hearing and doing the sayings of Christ, build their hopes upon this Rock; and it is their wisdom. Christ is our only Way to the Father, and the obedience of faith is our only way to Christ: for to them that obey him, and to them only, he becomes the Author of eternal salvation. Those build upon Christ, who having sincerely consented to him, as their Prince and Saviour, make it their constant care to conform to all the rules of his holy religion, and therein depend entirely upon him for assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and count every thing but loss and dung that they may win Christ, and be found in him. Building upon a rock requires care and pains: they that would make their calling and election sure, must give diligence. They are wise builders who begin to build so as they may be able to finish (Lu 14:30), and therefore lay a firm foundation.

[4.] That there are many who profess that they hope to go to heaven, but despise this Rock, and build their hopes upon the sand; which is done without much pains, but it is their folly. Every thing besides Christ is sand. Some build their hopes upon their worldly prosperity, as if they were a sure token of God's favour, Ho 12:8. Others upon their external profession of religion, the privileges they enjoy, and the performances they go through in that profession, and the

reputation they have got by it. They are called Christians, were baptized, go to church, hear Christ's word, say their prayers, and do nobody any harm, and, if they perish, God help a great many! This is the light of their own fire, which they walk in; this is that, upon which, with a great deal of assurance, they venture; but it is all sand, took weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven.

[5.] That there is a storm coming, that will try what our hopes are bottomed on; will try every man's work (1Co 3:13); will discover the foundation, Hab 3:13. Rain, and floods, and wind, will beat upon the house; the trial is sometimes in this world; when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, then it will be seen, who only heard the word, and who heard and practiced it; then when we have occasion to use our hopes, it will be tried whether they were right, and well-grounded, or not. However, when death and judgment come, then the storm comes, and it will undoubtedly come, how calm soever things may be with us now. Then every thing else will fail us but these hopes, and then, if ever, they will be turned into everlasting fruition.

[6.] That those hopes which are built upon Christ the Rock will stand, and will stand the builder in stead when the storm comes; they will be his preservation, both from desertion, and from prevailing disquiet. His profession will not wither; his comforts will not fail; they will be his strength and song, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. When he comes to the last encounter, those hopes will take off the terror of death and the grave; will carry him cheerfully through that dark valley; will be approved by the Judge; will stand the test of the great day; and will be crowned with endless glory, 2Co 1:12,2Ti 4:7,8. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, finds so doing, so hoping.

[7.] That those hopes which foolish builders ground upon any thing but Christ, will certainly fail them on a stormy day; will yield them no true comfort and satisfaction in trouble, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; will be no fence against temptations to apostacy, in a time of persecution. When God takes away the soul,

where is the hope of the hypocrite? Job 27:8. It is as the spider's web, and as the giving up of the ghost. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand, Job 8:14,15. It fell in the storm, when the builder had most need of it, and expected it would be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another: when a wicked man dies, his expectation perishes; then, when he thought it would have been turned into fruition, it fell, and great was the fall of it. It was a great disappointment to the builder; the shame and loss were great. The higher men's hopes have been raised, the lower they fall. It is the sorest ruin of all that attends formal professors; witness Capernaum's doom.

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Barnes Commentary:

Not every one that saith, etc. He goes on to say that many, on the ground of that profession, will claim admittance into his kingdom. Many will plead that they had done miracles, and preached or prophesied much, and will demand an entrance into heaven. The power of working miracles had no necessary connexion with piety. God may as well, if he chooses, give the power of raising the dead to a wicked man, as the skill of healing to a wicked physician. A miracle is a display of his own power through the medium of another. An act of healing the sick is also a display of his power through the agency of another. In neither of these cases is there any necessary connexion with moral character. So of preaching, or prophesying. God may use the agency of a man of talents, though not pious, to carry forward his purposes. Saving power on the mind is the work of God; and he may convey it by any agency which he may choose. Accordingly, many may be found in the day of judgment who may have been endowed with powers of prophecy, or miracle, as Balaam, or the magicians of Egypt; in the same way as many men of distinguished talents may be found yet destitute of piety, and shut out of his kingdom. See Mk 9:38, Lk 9:49, 1Cor 13:1-3. In this last place, Paul says, that though he spoke with the tongue of angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and could remove

mountains, and had not charity or love, all would be of no avail. 1Cor 13:1-3.

I never knew you. That is, I never approved, loved, or regarded you as my friends. See Ps 1:6, 2Ti 2:19, 1Cor 8:3. This proves that, with all their pretensions, they had never been true followers of Christ. Jesus will not then say to false prophets and false professors of religion, that he had once known them, and then rejected them; that they had been once Christians and then had fallen away; that they had been pardoned, and then had apostatized; but that he had never known them--THEY HAD NEVER BEEN TRUE CHRISTIANS. Whatever might have been their pretended joys, their raptures, their hopes, their self-confidence, their visions, their zeal, they had never been regarded by the Saviour as his true friends. I know not a more decided proof that Christians do not fall away from grace than this text. It settles the question; and proves that whatever else such men had, they never had any true religion. See 1Jn 2:19.

Jesus closes the sermon on the mount by a beautiful comparison, illustrating the benefit of attending to his words. It was not sufficient to hear them; they must be obeyed. He compares the man who should hear, and obey him, to a man who built his house on a rock. Palestine was, to a considerable extent, a land of hills and: mountains. Like other countries of that description, it was subject to sudden and violent rains. The Jordan, the principal stream, was annually swollen to a great extent, and became rapid and furious in its course. The streams which ran among the hills, whose channels might have been dry during some months of the year, became suddenly swollen with the rain, and would pour down impetuously into the plains below. Everything in the way of these torrents would be swept off. Even a house erected within the reach of these sudden inundations, and especially if founded on sand, or any unsolid basis, would not stand before them. The rising, bursting stream would shake it to its foundation; the rapid torrent would gradually wash away its base; it would totter and fall, and be swept away. Rocks in that country were common, and it was easy to secure for their houses a solid foundation. No comparison could, to a Jew, have been more

striking. So tempests, and storms of affliction and persecution, beat around the soul. Suddenly, when we think we are in safety, the heavens may be overcast; the storm may lower; and calamity beat upon us. In a moment, health, friends, comforts, may be gone. How desirable then to be possessed of something that the tempest cannot reach! Such is an interest in Christ; attention to his words; reliance on his promises; confidence in his protection; and a hope of heaven through his blood. Earthly calamities do not reach these; and, possessed of religion, all the storms and tempests of life may beat harmlessly around us.

There is another point in this comparison. The house built on the sand is beat upon by the floods and rains; its foundation gradually is worn away; it falls, and is borne down the stream, and is destroyed. So falls the slumber. The floods are wearing away his sandy foundation; and soon one tremendous storm shall beat upon him, and he and his hopes shall fall, for ever fall. Out of Christ, perhaps having heard his words from very childhood; perhaps having taught them to others in the Sunday-school; perhaps having been the means of laying the foundation on which others shall build for heaven, he has laid for himself no foundation; and soon an eternal tempest shall beat around his naked soul. How great will be that fall! What will be his emotions when sinking for ever in the flood, and destined for ever to live and writhe in the peltings of that ceaseless storm that shall beat when "God shall rain snares, fire, and a horrible tempest" upon the wicked!

The Two Foundations

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

Not every one; that is, Not any one that saith Lord, Lord, that is, that owneth me by way of profession, by way of prayer, and by way of appeal, shall be saved; But he that doeth the will of my Father sincerely and universally.

Learn hence, 1. That multitude at the great day shall be really disowned by Christ, as none of his servants, that did nominately own

him for their Lord and Master: many that have now prophesied in his name, shall then perish in his wrath: many that have cast out devils now, shall be cast out to devils then: such as have now done many wonderful works, shall then perish for evil workers.

Note, 2. That a bare name and profession of Christianity, without the practice of it, is a very insufficient ground to build our hopes of heaven and salvation upon. A profession of faith and purposes of obedience, without actual obedience to the commands of God, will avail no person to salvation.

3. That gifts, eminent gifts, yea extraordinary and miraculous gifts, are not to be rested in or depended upon as sufficient evidences for heaven and salvation. Gifts are as the gold which adorns the temple, but grace is like the temple that sanctifies the gold.

Christ here speaks of two houses, the one built upon a rock, the other on the sand; these two houses were alike skilfully and strongly built to outward appearance; while the sun shone and the weather was fair, none could discern but that the house upon the sand was built as well, and might stand as long, as that on the rock; but when the rain fell the foundation failed.

Thus, where is the hypocrite with all his faith and fear, with all his shew and appearance of grace, in a wet and windy day? His goodly outside is like the apples of Sodom, fair and alluring to the eye, being touched, instantly evaporate into dust and smoke. A hypocrite stands in grace no longer than till he falls into trouble; and accordingly our Saviour here concludes his excellent sermon with an elegant similitude.

The wise builder is not the frequent hearer, but the faithful doer of the word, or the obedient Christian; the house is heaven, and the hope of eternal life; the rock is Christ; the building upon the sand, is rested in the rare performance of outward duties: the rains, the winds, and the floods, are all kinds of afflicting evils, sufferings, and persecutions, that may befall us.

Note, 1. That the obedient believer is the only wise man, that builds his hope of heaven upon a sure and abiding foundation.

Note, 2. That such professors as rest in the outward performances of holy duties, are foolish builders, their foundation is weak and sandy, and all their hopes of salvation vain and uncertain. An outward profession of Christianity, though set off by prophesying and doing miracles, will not avail any man towards his account at the great day, without that real and faithful, that universal and impartial, obedience to the laws of Christ which the gospel requires.

25 and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

29 for he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

Matthew-8

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

The first verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon: the people that heard him were astonished at his doctrine; and the effect was, that when he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; though he was so strict a Lawgiver, and so faithful a Reprover, they diligently attended him, and were loth to disperse, and go from him. Note, They to whom Christ has manifested himself, cannot but desire to be better acquainted with him. They who know much of Christ should covet to know more; and then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know the Lord. It is pleasing to see

people so well affected to Christ, as to think they can never hear enough of him; so well affected to the best things, as thus to flock after good preaching, and to follow the Lamb withersoever he goes. Now was Jacob's prophecy concerning the Messiah fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be; yet they who gathered to him did not cleave to him. They who followed him closely and constantly were but few, compared with the multitudes that were but followers at large.

2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

BARNES COMMENTARY:

There came a leper. No disease with which the human family has been afflicted, has been more dreadful than that which is often mentioned in the Bible as the leprosy. It first exhibits itself on the surface of the skin. The appearance is not always the same, but it commonly resembles the spot made by the puncture of a pin, or the pustules of a ring-worm. The spots generally make their appearance very suddenly. Perhaps its appearance might be hastened by any sudden passion, as fear or anger. See Nu 12:10, 2Chr 26:19. The spots commonly exhibit themselves, at first, on the face, about the nose and eyes, and increase in size a number of years, till they become as large as a pea or a bean. There are three kinds of leprosy, distinguished by the appearance of the spots--the white, the black, and the red leprosy. These spots, though few at first, gradually spread till they cover the whole body. But though the appearance of the disease is at first in the skin, yet it is deeply seated in the bones, and marrow, and joints of the body. We have reason to suppose that, in children, it is concealed in the system for a number of years, till they arrive at the age of puberty; and in adults for three or four years, till at last it gives fearful indications on the skin of its having gained a well-rooted and permanent existence. A leprous person may live twenty, or thirty, or even fifty years, if he received the disease at his birth, but they will be years of indescribable misery. The bones and marrow are pervaded with the disease. The malady advances, from one stage to another, with slow and certain ruin. "Life still lingers amidst the desolation;" the joints, and hands,

and feet, lose their power; and the body collapses, or falls together, in a form hideous and awful. There is a form of the disease in which it commences at the extremities: the joints separate; the fingers, toes, and other members, one by one, fall off; and the malady thus gradually approaches the seat of life. The wretched victim is thus doomed to see himself dying piece-meal, assured that no human power can arrest, for a moment, the silent and steady march of this foe to the seat of life. This disease is contagious and hereditary. It is easily communicated from one to another, and is transmitted to the third and fourth generation. The last generation that is afflicted with it commonly exhibits the symptoms by decayed teeth, and fetid breath, and diseased complexion.

Moses gave particular directions by which the real leprosy was to be distinguished from other diseases. See Lev 13:1 and following. The leprous person was, in order to avoid contagion, very properly separated from the congregation. The inspection of the disease was committed to the priest; and a declaration, on his part, that the person was healed, was sufficient evidence to restore the afflicted man to the congregation. It was required, also, that the leprous person should bring an offering to the priest of two birds, commonly doves, one of which was slain, and the other dismissed. See Lev 14:1 and following. In compliance with the laws of the land, Jesus directed the man that he had healed to make the customary offering, and to obtain the testimony of the priest that he was healed. The leprosy has once, and but once appeared in America. This loathsome and most painful disease has, in all other instances, been confined to the old world, and chiefly to the eastern nations. It is matter of profound gratitude to a benignant God, that this scourge has been permitted but once to visit the new world. That awful calamity was in the island of Guadaloupe, in the West Indies, about the year 1730; and is thus described by an eye witness, M. Peyssanel:

"Its commencement is imperceptible. There appear only some few white spots on the skin. At first they are attended with no pain or

inconvenience; but no means whatever will remove them. The disease imperceptibly increases for many years. The spots become larger, and spread over the whole body. When the disease advances, the upper part of the nose swells, the nostrils become enlarged, and the nose itself soft. Tumours appear on the jaws; the eyebrows swell; the ears become thick; the points of the fingers, as also the feet and the toes, swell; the nails become scaly; the joints of the hands and feet separate, and drop off. In the last stage of the disease the patient becomes a hideous spectacle, and falls to pieces."

Worshipped him. Bowed down before him, to show him respect. Mt 2:2.

If thou wilt. This was an exhibition of great faith, and also an acknowledgment of his dependence on the will of Jesus, in order to be healed. So every sinner must come. He must feel that Jesus can save him. He must also feel that he has no claim on him; that it depends on his sovereign will; and must cast himself at his feet with the feelings of the leper:--
"I can but perish if I go; I am resolved to try: For if I stay away, I know I shall for ever die."
Happily, no one ever came to Jesus with this feeling who was not received, and pardoned.

Make me clean. Heal me. The leprosy was regarded as an unclean and disgusting disease. To be healed, therefore, was expressed by being cleansed from it.

3 And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

BURKITT COMMENTARY:

Note here, in general, that the Jews paid civil adoration to their kings and to their prophets: thus Saul stooped with his face to the ground to Samuel; Nebuchadnezzer fell on his face before Daniel, and Obadiah before Elijah; from whence may be gathered, that the

adorations given to Christ by them that knew nothing of his divinity, were paid him as a prophet sent from God.

Only next, several particulars are here observable; as,

Observe,1. The petitioner, and that is a leper; he came and worshipped Christ, and petitions him to heal him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Where he discovers a firm belief of Christ's power, but a diffidence and distrust in Christ's will, to heal him. Learn, Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him.

Observe, 2. How readily our Saviour grants his petition; Jesus touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. Our Saviour, by touching the leper, shewed himself to be above the law, as God; though subject to the law, as man; for by the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched. Yet it was a received rule among the Jews, that a prophet might vary from the punctilios of the ceremonial law, or change a ritual law; so did Elijah stretch himself on the dead child, and Elisha on the Shunamite's son, notwithstanding the prohibition of coming near the dead. But Christ's curing the leper by the word of his mouth, and the touch of his hand, shewed his divine power, and proved himself to be truly and really sent of God; leprosy being called by the Jews the finger of God, a disease of his sending, and of his removing, our Saviour, therefore, as a proof and of his being the Messias, tells the disciples of John, That the lepers were cleansed, Matt 11:5 and the dead raised. Which being put together, intimates that the cleansing of the leper is as peculiar and act of divine power, as the raising of the dead; and accordingly, 2Kgs 5:7 said the king, Am I a God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy?

Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure; immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ

shewed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness.

Observe, 4. The charge and command given by Christ after the cure: first, To tell it to no man: wherein the modesty, humility, and piety, of Christ, is discovered, together with the care of his own safety. His modesty, in not desiring his good deeds should be proclaimed; his humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety, in desiring all the praise, honour, and glory, should redound entirely to God; his care of his own safety, lest the publishing of this miracle should create him untimely danger from the Pharisees.

Christians, behold your pattern to do much good, and make but little noise. Christ affected no popular air, he did not spoil a good work by vain ostentation. When we work hard for God, take we great care that pride doth not blow either it or us. O how difficult it is for us to do much service, and not value ourselves too much for the services which we do!

The second part of the charge which Christ gave the recovered leper, was, To shew himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them; that is, a testimony to the Jews, that he was the Messiah, and that he did not oppose the ceremonial law given by Moses.

Where Note, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed, so long as the time for its continuance did endure; though he came to destroy that law, yet whilst it stood, he would have it observed.

Here Dr. Lightfoot observes, that though the priesthood was much degenerated from its primitive institution, by human inventions, yet Christ sends the leper to submit to it; because though they did corrupt, yet they did not extinguish the divine institution.

4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

MHC COMMENTARY:

The first verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon: the people that heard him were astonished at his doctrine; and the effect was, that when he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; though he was so strict a Lawgiver, and so faithful a Reprover, they diligently attended him, and were loth to disperse, and go from him. Note, They to whom Christ has manifested himself, cannot but desire to be better acquainted with him. They who know much of Christ should covet to know more; and then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know the Lord. It is pleasing to see people so well affected to Christ, as to think they can never hear enough of him; so well affected to the best things, as thus to flock after good preaching, and to follow the Lamb withersoever he goes. Now was Jacob's prophecy concerning the Messiah fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be; yet they who gathered to him did not cleave to him. They who followed him closely and constantly were but few, compared with the multitudes that were but followers at large.

In Mt 8:1-4 we have an account of Christ's cleansing a leper. It should seem, by comparing Mk 1:40,Lu 5:12, that this passage, though placed, by St. Matthew, after the sermon on the mount, because he would give account of his doctrine first, and then of his miracles, happened some time before; but that is not at all material. This is fitly recorded with the first of Christ's miracles,

1. Because the leprosy was looked upon, among the Jews, as a particular mark of God's displeasure: hence we find Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah, smitten with leprosy for some one particular sin; and therefore Christ, to show that he came to turn away the wrath of God, by taking away sin, began with the cure of a leper.

2. Because this disease, as it was supposed to come immediately from the hand of God, so also it was supposed to be removed immediately by his hand, and therefore it was not attempted to be cured by physicians, but was put under the inspection of the priests, the Lord's ministers, who waited to see what God would do. And its being in a garment, or in the walls of a house, was altogether supernatural: and it should seem to be a disease of a quite different nature from what we now call the leprosy. The king of Israel said, Am I God, that I am sent to, to recover a man of a leprosy? 2Ki 5:7. Christ proved himself God, by recovering many from the leprosy, and authorizing his disciples, in his name, to do so too (Mt 10:8), and it is put among the proofs of his being the Messiah, Mt 11:5. He also showed himself to be the Saviour of his people from their sins; for though every disease is both the fruit of sin, and a figure of it, as the disorder of the soul, yet the leprosy was in a special manner so; for it contracted such a pollution, and obliged to such a separation from holy things, as no other disease did; and therefore in the laws concerning it (Le 13:1-14:57), it is treated, not as a sickness, but as an uncleanness; the priest was to pronounce the party clean or unclean, according to the indications: but the honour of making the lepers clean was reserved for Christ, who was to do it as the High Priest of our profession; he comes to do that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Ro 8:3. The law discovered sin (for by the law is the knowledge of sin), and pronounced sinners unclean; it shut them up (Ga 3:23), as the priest did the leper, but could go no further; it could not make the comers thereunto perfect. But Christ takes away sin; cleanses us from it, and so perfecteth for ever them that are sanctified. Now here we have,

I The leper's address to Christ. If this happened, as it is here placed, after the sermon on the mount, we may suppose that the leper, though shut out by his disease from the cities of Israel, yet got within hearing of Christ's sermon, and was encouraged by it to make his application to him; for he that taught as one having authority, could heal so; and therefore he came and worshipped him, as one clothed with a divine power. His address is, Lord, if

thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. The cleaning of him may be considered,

1. As a temporal mercy; a mercy to the body, delivering it from a disease, which, though it did not threaten life, embittered it. And so it directs us, not only to apply ourselves to Christ, who has power over bodily diseases, for the cure of them, but it also teaches us in what manner to apply ourselves to him; with an assurance of his power, believing that he is as able to cure diseases now, as he was when on earth, but with a submission to his will; Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst. As to temporal mercies, we cannot be so sure of God's will to bestow them, as we may of his power, for his power in them is unlimited by a regard to his glory and our good: when we cannot be sure of his will, we may be sure of his wisdom and mercy, to which we may cheerfully refer ourselves; Thy will be done: and this makes the expectation easy, and the event, when it comes, comfortable.

2. As a typical mercy. Sin is the leprosy of the soul; it shuts us out from communion with God, to which that we maybe restored, it is necessary that we be cleansed from this leprosy, and this ought to be our great concern. Now observe, It is our comfort when we apply ourselves to Christ, as the great Physician, that if he will, he can make us clean; and we should, with an humble, believing boldness, go to him and tell him so. That is,

(a) We must rest ourselves upon his power; we must be confident of this, that Christ can make us clean. No guilt is so great but that there is a sufficiency in his righteousness to atone for it; no corruption so strong, but there is a sufficiency in his grace to subdue it. God would not appoint a physician to his hospital that is not par negotio--every way qualified for the undertaking.

(b) We must recommend ourselves to his pity; we cannot demand it as a debt, but we must humbly request it as a favour; "Lord, if thou wilt. I throw myself at thy feet, and if I perish, I will perish there."

II. Christ's answer to this address, which was very kind, Mt 8:3.

1. He put forth his hand and touched him. The leprosy was a noisome, loathsome disease, yet Christ touched him; for he did not disdain to converse with publicans and sinners, to do them good. There was a ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a leper; but Christ would show, that when he conversed with sinners, he was in no danger of being infected by them, for the prince of this world had nothing in him. If we touch pitch, we are defiled; but Christ was separate from sinners, even when he lived among them.

2. He said, I will, be thou clean. He did not say, as Elisha to Naaman, Go, wash in Jordan; did not put him upon a tedious, troublesome, chargeable course of a physic, but spake the word and healed him.

(a) Here is a word of kindness, I will; I am as willing to help thee, as thou art to be helped. Note, They who by faith apply themselves to Christ for mercy and grace, may be sure that he is willing, freely willing, to give them the mercy and grace they come to him for. Christ is a Physician, that does not need to be sought for, he is always in the way; does not need to be urged, while we are yet speaking, he hears; does not need to be feed, he heals freely, not for price nor reward. He has given all possible demonstration, that he is as willing as he is able to save sinners.

(b) A word of power, Be thou clean. Both a power of authority, and a power of energy, are exerted in this word. Christ heals by a word of command to us; Be thou clean; "Be willing to be clean, and use the means; cleanse thyself from all filthiness;" but there goes along with this a word of command concerning us, a word that does the work; I will that thou be clean. Such a word as this is necessary to

the cure, and effectual for it; and the Almighty grace which speaks it, shall not be wanting to those who truly desire it.

III. The happy change hereby wrought: Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Nature works gradually, but the God of nature works immediately; he speaks it, it is done; and yet he works effectually; he commands, and it stands fast. One of the first miracles Moses wrought, was curing himself of a leprosy (Ex 4:7), for the priests under the law offered sacrifices first for their own sin; but one of Christ's first miracles was curing another of leprosy, for he had no sin of his own to atone for.

IV. The after-directions Christ gave him. It is fit that they who are cured by Christ should ever after be ruled by him.

1. See thou tell no man; "Tell no man till thou has shown thyself to the priest, and he has pronounced thee clean; and so thou hast a legal proof, both that thou wast before a leper, and art now thoroughly cleansed." Christ would have his miracles to appear in their full light and evidence, and not to be published till they could appear so. Note, They that preach the truths of Christ should be able to prove them; to defend what they preach, and convince gainsayers. "Tell no man, till thou hast showed thyself to the priest, lest if he hear who cured thee, he should out of spite deny to give thee a certificate of the cure, and so keep thee under confinement." Such were the priests in Christ's time, that they who had any thing to do with them had need to have been as wise as serpents.

2. Go show thyself to the priest, according to the law, Le 14:2. Christ took care to have the law observed, lest he should give offence, and to show that he will have order kept up, and good discipline and respect paid to those that are in office. It may be of use to those that are cleansed of their spiritual leprosy, to have recourse to Christ's ministers, and to open their case to them, that they may assist them in their enquiries into their spiritual state, and advise, and comfort, and pray for them.

3. Offer the gift that Moses commanded, in token of thankfulness to God, and recompence to the priest for his pains; and this for a testimony unto them; either,

(a) Which Moses commanded for a testimony: the ceremonial laws were testimonies of God's authority over them, care of them, and of that grace which should afterwards be revealed. Or,

(b) "Do thou offer it for a testimony, and let the priest know who cleansed thee, and how; and it shall be a testimony, that there is one among them who does that which the high priest cannot do. Let it remain upon record as a witness of my power, and a testimony for me to them, if they will use it and improve it; but against them, if they will not:" for so Christ's word and works are testimonies.

A Centurion's Servant Healed

5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

6 and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*.

We have here an account of Christ's curing the centurion's servant of a palsy. This was done at Capernaum, where Christ now dwelt, Mt 4:13. Christ went about doing good, and came home to do good too; every place he came to was the better for him.

The persons Christ had now to do with were,

1. A centurion; he was a supplicant, a Gentile, a Roman, an officer of the army; probably commander-in-chief of that part of the Roman army which was quartered at Capernaum, and kept garrison there.

(a) Though he was a soldier (and a little piety commonly goes a great way with men of that profession), yet he was a godly man; he was eminently so. Note, God has his remnant among all sorts of people. No man's calling or place in the world will be an excuse for his unbelief and impiety; none shall say in the great day, I had been religious, if I had not been a soldier; for such there are among the ransomed of the Lord. And sometimes where grace conquers the unlikely, it is more than a conqueror; this soldier that was good, was very good.

(b) Though he was a Roman soldier, and his very dwelling among the Jews was a badge of their subjection to the Roman yoke, yet Christ, who was King of the Jews, favoured him; and therein has taught us to do good to our enemies, and not needlessly to interest ourselves in national enmities.

(c) Though he was a Gentile, yet Christ countenanced him. It is true, he went not to any of the Gentile towns (it was the land of Canaan that was Immanuel's land, Isa 8:8), yet he received addresses from Gentiles; now good old Simeon's word began to be fulfilled, that he should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel. Matthew, in annexing this cure to that of the leper, who was a Jew, intimates this; the leprous Jews Christ touched and cured, for he preached personally to them; but the paralytic Gentiles he cured at a distance; for to them he did not go in person, but sent his word and healed them; yet in them he was more magnified.

2. The centurion's servant; he was the patient. In this also it appears, that there is no respect of persons with God; for in Christ Jesus, as there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, so there is neither bond nor free. He is as ready to heal the poorest servant, as the

richest master; for himself took upon him the form of a servant, to show his regard to the meanest.

Now in the story of the cure of this servant, we may observe an intercourse or interchanging of graces, very remarkable between Christ and the centurion. See here,

I The grace of the centurion working towards Christ. Can any good thing come out of a Roman soldier? any thing tolerable, much less any thing laudable? Come and see, and you will find abundance of good coming out of this centurion that was eminent and exemplary. Observe, 1. His affectionate address to Jesus Christ, which speaks,

(1.) A pious regard to our great Master, as one able and willing to succour and relieve poor petitioners. He came to him beseeching him, not as Naaman the Syrian (a centurion too) came to Elisha, demanding a cure, taking state, and standing upon points of honour; but with cap in hand as a humble suitor. By this it seems that he saw more in Christ than appeared at first view; saw that which commanded respect, though to those who looked no further, his visage was marred more than any man's. The officers of the army, being comptrollers of the town, no doubt made a great figure, yet he lays by the thoughts of his post of honour, when he addresses himself to Christ, and comes beseeching him. Note, the greatest of men must turn beggars, when they have to do with Christ. He owns Christ's sovereignty, in calling him Lord, and referring the case to him, and to his will, and wisdom, by a modest remonstrance, without any formal and express petition. He knew he had to do with a wise and gracious Physician, to whom the opening of the malady was equivalent to the most earnest request. A humble confession of our spiritual wants and diseases shall not fail of an answer of peace. Pour out thy complaint, and mercy shall be poured out.

(2.) A charitable regard to his poor servant. We read of many that came to Christ for their children, but this is the only instance of one that came to him for a servant: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick. Note, it is the duty of masters to concern themselves for their

servants, when they are in affliction. The palsy disabled the servant for his work, and made him as troublesome and tedious as any distemper could, yet he did not turn him away when he was sick (as that Amalekite did his servants, 1Sa 30:13), did not send him to his friends, not let him lie by neglected, but sought out the best relief he could for him; the servant could not have done more for the master, than the master did here for the servant. The centurion's servants were very dutiful to him (Mt 8:9), and here we see what made them so; he was very kind to them, and that made them the more cheerfully obedient to him. As we must not despise the cause of our servants, when they contend with us (Job 31:13,15), so we must not despise their case when God contends with them; for we are made in the same mould, by the same hand, and stand upon the same level with them before God, and must not set them with the dogs of our flock. The centurion applies not to witches or wizards for his servant, but to Christ. The palsy is a disease in which the physician's skill commonly fails; it was therefore a great evidence of his faith in the power of Christ, to come to him for a cure, which was above the power of natural means to effect. Observe, How pathetically he represents his servant's case as very sad; he is sick of the palsy, a disease which commonly makes the patient senseless of pain, but this person was grievously tormented; being young, nature was strong to struggle with the stroke, which made it painful. (It was not paralysis simplex, but scorbutica). We should thus concern ourselves for the souls of our children, and servants, that are spiritually sick of the palsy, the dead-palsy, the dumb palsy; senseless of spiritual evils, inactive in that which is spiritually good, and bring them to the means of healing and health.

2. Observe his great humility and self-abasement. After Christ had intimated his readiness to come and heal his servants (Mt 8:7), he expressed himself with the more humbleness of mind. Note, Humble souls are made more humble, by Christ's gracious condescensions to them. Observe what was the language of his humility; Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof (Mt 8:8), which speaks mean thought of himself, and high thoughts of our Lord Jesus. He does not say, "My servant is not worthy that thou shouldest come into his chamber, because it is in

the garret;" But I am not worthy that thou shouldest come into my house. The centurion was a great man, yet he owned his unworthiness before God. Note, Humility very well becomes persons of quality. Christ now made but a mean figure in the world, yet the centurion, looking upon him as a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, paid him this respect. Note, We should have a value and veneration for what we see of God, even in those who, in outward condition, are every way our inferiors. The centurion came to Christ with a petition, and therefore expressed himself thus humbly. Note, In all our approaches to Christ, and to God through Christ, it becomes us to abase ourselves, and to lie low in the sense of our own unworthiness, as mean creatures and as vile sinners, to do any thing for God, to receive any good from him, or to have any thing to do with him.

3. Observe his great faith. The more humility the more faith; the more diffident we are of ourselves, the stronger will be our confidence in Jesus Christ. He had an assurance of faith not only that Christ could cure his servant, but,

(a) That he could cure him at a distance. There needed not any physical contact, as in natural operations, nor any application to the part affected; but the cure, he believed, might be wrought, without bringing the physician and patient together. We read afterwards of those, who brought the man sick of the palsy to Christ, through much difficulty, and set him before him; and Christ commended their faith for a working faith. This centurion did not bring his man sick of the palsy, and Christ commended his faith for a trusting faith: true faith is accepted of Christ, though variously appearing: Christ puts the best construction upon the different methods of religion that people take, and thereby has taught us to do so too. This centurion believed, and it is undoubtedly true, that the power of Christ knows no limits, and therefore nearness and distance are alike to him. Distance of place cannot obstruct either the knowing or working of him that fills all places. Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Jer 23:23.

(b) That he could cure him with a word, not send him a medicine, much less a charm; but speak the word only, and I do not question but my servant shall be healed. Herein he owns him to have a divine power, an authority to command all the creatures and powers of nature, which enables him to do whatsoever he pleases in the kingdom of nature; as at first he raised that kingdom by an almighty word, when he said, Let there be light. With men, saying and doing are two things; but not so with Christ, who is therefore the Arm of the Lord, because he is the eternal Word. His saying, Be ye warmed and filled (Jam 2:16), and healed, warms, and fills and heals.

The centurion's faith in the power of Christ he here illustrates by the dominion he had, as a centurion, over his soldiers, as a master over his servants; he says to one, Go, and he goes, &c. They were all at his beck and command, so as that he could by them execute things at a distance; his word was a law to them--dictum factum; well-disciplined soldiers know that the commands of their officers are not to be disputed, but obeyed. Thus could Christ speak, and it is done; such a power had he over all bodily diseases. The centurion had this command over his soldiers, though he was himself a man under authority; not a commander-in-chief, but a subaltern officer; much more had Christ this power, who is the supreme and sovereign Lord of all. The centurion's servants were very obsequious, would go and come at every the least intimation of their master's mind. Now,

[1.] Such servants we all should be to God: we must go and come at his bidding, according to the directions of his word, and the disposals of his providence; run where he sends us, return when he remands us, and do what he appoints. What saith my Lord unto his servant? When his will crosses our own, his must take place, and our own be set aside.

[2.] Such servants bodily diseases are to Christ. They seize us when he sends them; they leave us when he calls them back; they have that effect upon us, upon our bodies, upon our souls, that he orders. It is a matter of comfort to all that belong to Christ, for whose good

his power is exerted and engaged, that every disease has his commission, executes his command, is under his control, and is made to serve the intentions of his grace. They need not fear sickness, nor what it can do, who see it in the hand of so good a Friend.

II. Here is the grace of Christ appearing towards this centurion; for to the gracious he will show himself gracious.

1. He complies with his address at the first word. He did but tell him his servant's case, and was going on to beg a cure, when Christ prevented him, with this good word, and comfortable word, I will come and heal him (Mt 8:7); not I will come and see him--that had evinced him a kind Saviour; but, I will come and heal him--that shows him a mighty, an almighty Saviour; it was a great word, but no more than he could make good; for he has healing under his wings; his coming is healing. They who wrought miracles by a derived power, did not speak thus positively, as Christ did, who wrought them by his own power, as one that had authority. When a minister is sent for to a sick friend, he can but say, I will come and pray for him; but Christ says, I will come and heal him: it is well that Christ can do more for us than our ministers can. The centurion desired he would heal his servant; he says, I will come and heal him; thus expressing more favour than he did either ask or think of. Note, Christ often outdoes the expectations of poor supplicants. See an instance of Christ's humility, that he would make a visit to a poor soldier. He would not go down to see a nobleman's sick child, who insisted upon his coming down (Joh 4:47-49), but he proffers to go down to see a sick servant; thus does he regard the low estate of his people, and give more abundant honour to that part which lacked. Christ's humility, in being willing to come, gave an example to him, and occasioned his humility, in owning himself unworthy to have him come. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions to us, should make us the more humble and self-abasing before him.

2. He commends his faith, and takes occasion from it to speak a kind word of the poor Gentiles, Mt 8:10-12. See what great things a strong but self-denying faith can obtain from Jesus Christ, even of general and public concern.

(a) As to the centurion himself; he not only approved him and accepted him (that honour have all true believers), but he admired him and applauded him: that honour great believers have, as Job; there is none like unto him in the earth.

[1.] Christ admired him, not for his greatness, but for his graces. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled; not as if it were to him new and surprising, he knew the centurion's faith, for he wrought it; but it was great and excellent, rare and uncommon, and Christ spoke of it as wonderful, to teach us what to admire; not worldly pomp and decorations, but the beauty of holiness, and the ornaments which are in the sight of God of great price. Note, The wonders of grace should affect us more than the wonders of nature or providence, and spiritual attainments more than any achievements in this world. Of those that are rich in faith, not of those that are rich in gold and silver, we should say that they have gotten all this glory, Ge 30:1. But whatever there is admirable in the faith of any, it must redound to the glory of Christ, who will shortly be himself admired in all them that believe, as having done in and for them marvellous things.

[2] He applauded him in what he said to them that followed. All believers shall be, in the other world, but some believers are, in this world, confessed and acknowledged by Christ before men, in his eminent appearances for them and with them. Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Now this speaks, First, Honour to the centurion; who, though not a son of Abraham's loins, was an heir of Abraham's faith, and Christ found it so. Note, The thing that Christ seeks is faith, and wherever it is, he finds it, though but as a grain of mustard-seed. He had not found so great faith, all things considered, and in proportion to the means; as the poor widow is said to cast in more than they all, Lu 21:3. Though the

centurion was a Gentile, yet he was thus commended. Note, We must be so far from grudging, that we must be forward, to give those their due praise, that are not within our denomination or pale. Secondly, It speaks shame to Israel, to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, and all the assistances and encouragements of faith. Note, When the Son of man comes, he finds little faith, and, therefore, he finds so little fruit. Note, the attainments of some, who have had but little helps for their souls, will aggravate the sin and ruin of many, that have had great plenty of the means of grace, and have not made a good improvement of them. Christ said this to those that followed him, if by any means he might provoke them to a holy emulation, as Paul speaks, Ro 11:14. They were Abraham's seed; in jealousy for that honour, let them not suffer themselves to be outstripped by a Gentile, especially in that grace for which Abraham was eminent.

(b) As to others. Christ takes occasion from hence to make a comparison between Jews and Gentiles, and tells them two things, which could not but be very surprising to them who had been taught that salvation was of the Jews.

[1.] That a great many of the Gentiles should be saved, Mt 8:11. The faith of the centurion was but a specimen of the conversion of the Gentiles, and a preface to their adoption into the church. This was a topic our Lord Jesus touched often upon; he speaks it with assurance; I say unto you, "I that know all men;" and he could not say any thing more pleasing to himself, or more displeasing to the Jews; an intimation of this kind enraged the Nazarenes against him, Lu 4:27. Christ gives us here an idea, First, of the persons that shall be saved; many from the east and the west: he had said (Mt 7:14), Few there be that find the way of life; and yet here many shall come. Few at one time, and in one place; yet, when they come altogether, they will be a great many. We now see but here and there one brought to grace; but we shall shortly see the Captain of our salvation bringing many sons to glory, Heb 2:10. He will come with ten thousands of his saints (Jude 1:14), with such a company as no man can number (Re 7:9); with nations of them that are saved,

Re 21:24. They shall come from the east and from the west; places far distant from each other; and yet they shall all meet at the right hand of Christ, the Centre of their unity. Note, God has his remnant in all places; from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, Mal 1:11. The elect will be gathered from the four winds, Mt 24:31. They are sown in the earth, some scattered in every corner of the field. The Gentile world lay from east to west, and they are especially meant here; though they were strangers to the covenant of promise now, and had been long, yet who knows what hidden ones God had among them then? As in Elijah's time in Israel (1Ki 19:14), soon after which they flocked into the church in great multitudes, Isa 60:3,4. Note, When we come to heaven, as we shall miss a great many there, that we thought had been going thither, so we shall meet a great many there, that we did not expect. Secondly, Christ gives us an idea of the salvation itself. They shall come, shall come together, shall come together to Christ, 2Th 2:1. 1. They shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace on earth, into the covenant of grace made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they shall be blessed with faithful Abraham, whose blessing comes upon the Gentiles, Ga 3:14. This makes Zaccheus a son of Abraham, Lu 19:9. 2. They shall be admitted into the kingdom of glory in heaven. They shall come cheerfully, flying as doves to their windows; they shall sit down to rest from their labours, as having done their day's work; sitting denotes continuance: while we stand, we are going; where we sit, we mean to stay; heaven is a remaining rest, it is a continuing city; they shall sit down, as upon a throne (Re 3:21); as at a table; that is the metaphor here; they shall sit down to be feasted; which denotes both fulness of communication, and freedom and familiarity of communion, Lu 22:30. They shall sit down with Abraham. They who in this world were ever so far distant from each other in time, place, or outward condition, shall all meet together in heaven; ancients and moderns, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. The rich man in hell sees Abraham, but Lazarus sits down with him, leaning on his breast. Note, Holy society is a part of the felicity of heaven; and they on whom the ends of the world are come, and who are most obscure, shall share in glory with the renowned patriarchs.

[2.] That a great many of the Jews should perish, Mt 8:12. Observe,

First, A strange sentence passed; The children of the kingdom shall be cast out; the Jews that persist in unbelief, though they were by birth children of the kingdom, yet shall be cut off from being members of the visible church: the kingdom of God, of which they boasted that they were the children, shall be taken from them, and they shall become not a people, not obtaining mercy, Ro 11:20,Ro 9:31. In the great day it will not avail men to have been children of the kingdom, either as Jews or as Christians; for men will then be judged, not by what they were called, but by what they were. If children indeed, then heirs; but many are children in profession, in the family, but not of it, that will come short of the inheritance. Being born of professing parents denominates us children of the kingdom; but if we rest in that, and have nothing else to show for heaven but that, we shall be cast out.

Secondly, A strange punishment for the workers of iniquity described; They shall be cast into outer darkness, the darkness of those that are without, of the Gentiles that were out of the church; into that the Jews were cast, and into worse; they were blinded, and hardened, and filled with terrors, as the apostle shows, Ro 11:8-10. A people so unchurched and given up to spiritual judgments, are in utter darkness already: but it looks further, to the state of damned sinners in hell, to which the other is a dismal preface. They shall be cast out from God, and all true comfort, and cast into darkness. In hell there is fire, but no light; it is utter darkness; darkness in extremity; the highest degree of darkness, without any remainder, or mixture, or hope, of light; not the least gleam or glimpse of it; it is darkness that results from their being shut out of heaven, the land of light; they who are without, are in the regions of darkness; yet that is not the worst of it, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 1. In hell there will be great grief, floods of tears shed to no purpose; anguish of spirit preying eternally upon the vitals, in the sense of the wrath of God, is the torment of the damned. 2. Great indignation: damned sinners will gnash their teeth for spite and vexation, full of the fury of the Lord; seeing with envy the

happiness of others, and reflecting with horror upon the former possibility of their own being happy, which is now past.

3. He cures his servant. He not only commends his application to him, but grants him that for which he applied, which was a real answer, Mt 8:13. Observe,

(a) What Christ said to him: he said that which made the cure as great a favour to him as it was to his servant, and much greater; As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. The servant got a cure of his disease, but the master got the confirmation and approbation of his faith. Note, Christ often gives encouraging answers to his praying people, when they are interceding for others. It is kindness to us, to be heard for others. God turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42:10. It was a great honour which Christ put upon this centurion, when he gave him a blank, as it were; Be it done as thou believest. What could he have more? Yet what was said to him is said to us all, Believe, and ye shall receive; only believe. See here the power of Christ, and the power of faith. As Christ can do what he will, so an active believer may have what he will from Christ; the oil of grace multiplies, and stays not till the vessels of faith fail.

(b) What was the effect of this saying: the prayer of faith was a prevailing prayer, it ever was so, and ever will be so; it appears, by the suddenness of the cure, that it was miraculous: and by its coincidence with Christ's saying, that the miracle was his; he spake, and it was done; and this was a proof of his omnipotence, that he has a long arm. It is the observation of a learned physician, that the diseases Christ cured were chiefly such as were the most difficult to be cured by any natural means, and particularly the palsy. Omnis paralysis, præsertim vetusta, aut incurabilis est, aut difficilis curatu, etiam pueris: atque soleo ego dicere, morbos omnes qui Christo curandi fuerunt propositi, difficillimos sua matura curatu esse--Every kind of palsy, especially of long continuance, is either incurable, or is found to yield with the utmost difficulty to medical skill, even in young subjects; so that I have frequently remarked,

that all the diseases which were referred to Christ for cure appear to have been of the most obstinate and hopeless kind. Mercurialis De Morbis Puerorum, lib. 2. cap. 5.

10 When Jesus heard *it*, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:
12 but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

I. A particular account of the cure of Peter's wife's mother, who was ill of a fever; in which observe,

1 The case, which was nothing extraordinary; fevers are the most common distempers; but, the patient being a near relation of Peter's, it is recorded as an instance of Christ's peculiar care of, and kindness to, the families of his disciples. Here we find,

(1.) That Peter had a wife, and yet was called to be an apostle of Christ; and Christ countenanced the marriage state, by being thus kind to his wife's relations. The church of Rome, therefore, which forbids ministers to marry, goes contrary to that apostle from whom they pretend to derive an infallibility.

(2.) That Peter had a house, though Christ had not, Mt 8:20. Thus was the disciple better provided for than his Lord.

(3.) That he had a house at Capernaum, though he was originally of Bethsaida; it is probably, he removed to Capernaum, when Christ removed thither, and made that his principal residence. Note, It is worth while to change our quarters, that we may be near to Christ,

and have opportunities of converse with him. When the ark removes, Israel must remove and go after it.

(4.) That he had his wife's mother with him in his family, which is an example to yoke-fellows to be kind to one another's relations as their own. Probably, this good woman was old, and yet was respected and taken care of, as old people ought to be, with all possible tenderness.

(5.) That she lay ill of a fever. Neither the strength of youth, nor the weakness and coldness of age, will be a fence against diseases of this kind. The palsy was a chronical disease, the fever an acute disease, but both were brought to Christ.

2 The cure, Mt 8:15.

(1.) How it was effected; He touched her hand; not to know the disease, as the physicians do, by the pulse, but to heal it. This was an intimation of his kindness and tenderness; he is himself touched with the feeling of our infirmities; it likewise shows the way of spiritual healing, by the exerting of the power of Christ with his word, and the application of Christ to ourselves. The scripture speaks the word, the Spirit gives the touch, touches the heart, touches the hand.

(2.) How it was evidenced: this showed that the fever left her, she arose, and ministered to them. By this it appears,

[a] That the mercy was perfected. They that recover from fevers by the power of nature are commonly weak and feeble, and unfit for business a great while after; to show therefore that this cure was above the power of nature, she was immediately so well as to go about the business of the house.

[b] That the mercy was sanctified; and the mercies that are so are indeed perfected. Though she was thus dignified by a peculiar favour, yet she does not assume importance, but is as ready to wait

at table, if there be occasion, as any servant. They must be humble whom Christ has honoured; being thus delivered, she studies what she shall render. It is very fit that they whom Christ hath healed should minister unto him, as his humble servants, all their days.

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick:

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

MHC:

Here is a general account of the many cures that Christ wrought. This cure of Peter's mother-in-law brought him abundance of patients. "He healed such a one; why not me? Such a one's friend, why not mine?" Now we are here told,

1. What he did, Mt 8:16. (1.) He cast out devils; cast out the evil spirits with his word. There may be much of Satan's agency, by the divine permission, in those diseases of which natural causes may be assigned, as in Job's boils, especially in the diseases of the mind; but, about the time of Christ's being in the world, there seems to have been more than ordinary letting loose of the devil, to possess and vex the bodies of people; he came, having great wrath, for he knew that his time was short; and God wisely ordered it so, that Christ might have the fairer and more frequent opportunities of showing his power over Satan, and the purpose and design of his coming into the world, which was to disarm and dispossess Satan, to break his power, and to destroy his works; and his success was as glorious as his design was gracious. (2.) He healed all that were sick; all without exception, though the patient was ever so mean, and the case ever so bad.

2. How the scripture was herein fulfilled, Mt 8:17. The accomplishment of the Old-Testament prophecies was the great thing Christ had in his eye, and the great proof of his being the Messiah: among other things, it was written of him (Isa 53:4), Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: it is referred to, 1Pe 2:24, and there it is construed, he hath borne our

sins; here it is referred to, and is construed, he hath borne our sicknesses; our sins make our sicknesses our griefs; Christ bore away sin by the merit of his death, and bore away sickness by the miracles of his life; nay, though those miracles are ceased, we may say, that he bore our sicknesses then, when he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree; for sin is both the cause and the sting of sickness. Many are the diseases and calamities to which we are liable in the body: and there is more, in this one line of the gospels, to support and comfort us under them, than in all the writings of the philosophers--that Jesus Christ bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows; he bore them before us; though he was never sick, yet he was hungry, and thirsty, and weary, and troubled in spirit, sorrowful and very heavy; he bore them for us in his passion, and bears them with us in compassion, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities: and thus he bears them off from us, and makes them sit light, if it be not our own fault. Observe how emphatically it is expressed here: Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses; he was both able and willing to interpose in that matter, and concerned to deal with our infirmities and sicknesses, as our Physician; that part of the calamity of the human nature was his particular care, which he evidenced by his great readiness to cure diseases; and he is no less powerful, no less tender now, for we are sure that never were any the worse for going to heaven.

Barnes:

That it might be fulfilled, etc. This passage is found in Is 53:4. Our English translation of that important passage is, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." The Greek in Matthew is an exact translation of the Hebrew, and the same translation should have been made in both places. In the fifty-third chapter, Isaiah fully states the doctrine of atonement, or that the Messiah was to suffer for sin. In the verse quoted here, however, he states the very truth which Matthew declares. The word translated griefs, in Isaiah, and infirmities, in Matthew, means properly, in the Hebrew and Greek, diseases of the body. In neither does it refer to the disease of the mind, or to sin. To bear those griefs, is clearly to bear them away, or to remove them. This was done by his

miraculous power in healing the sick. The word rendered "sorrows," in Isaiah, and" sicknesses," in Matthew, means pains, griefs, or anguish of mind. To carry, then; is to sympathize with the sufferers; to make provision for alleviating those sorrows; and to take them away. This he did by his precepts, his example; and the cause of all sorrows--sin--he removed by his atonement. The passage in Isaiah and Matthew, therefore, mean precisely the same thing. See Magee on Atonement, and Isa 53:1 and following.

The Would-be Followers of Jesus

18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

Christ's communication with two, who, upon his remove to the other side, were loth to stay behind, and had a mind to follow him, not as others, who were his followers at large, but to come into close discipleship, which the most were shy of; for it carried such a face of strictness as they could not like, nor be well reconciled to; but here is an account of two who seemed desirous to come into communion, and yet were not right; which is here given as a specimen of the hindrances by which many are kept from closing with Christ, and cleaving to him; and a warning to us, to set out in following Christ, so as that we may not come short; to lay such a foundation, as that our building may stand.

We have here Christ's managing of two different tempers, one quick and eager, the other dull and heavy; and his instructions are adapted to each of them, and designed for our use.

1. Here is one that was too hasty in promising; and he was a certain scribe (Mt 8:19), a scholar, a learned man, one of those that studied and expounded the law; generally we find them in the gospels to be men of no good character; usually coupled with the Pharisees, as enemies to Christ and his doctrine. Where is the scribe? 1Co 1:20. He is very seldom following Christ; yet here was

one that bid pretty fair for discipleship, a Saul among the prophets. Now observe,

(1.) How he expressed his forwardness; Master, I will follow thee, whithersoever thou goest. I know not how any man could have spoken better. His profession of a self-dedication to Christ is, [1.] Very ready, and seems to be ex mero motu--from his unbiased inclination: he is not called to it by Christ, nor urged by any of the disciples, but, of his own accord, he proffers himself to be a close follower of Christ; he is not a pressed man, but a volunteer. [2.] Very resolute; he seems to be at a point in this matter; he does not say, "I have a mind to follow thee;" but, "I am determined, I will do it." [3.] It was unlimited and without reserve; "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; not only to the other side of the country, but if it were to the utmost regions of the world." Now we should think ourselves sure of such a man as this; and yet it appears, by Christ's answer, that his resolution was rash, his ends low and carnal: either he did not consider at all, or not that which was to be considered; he saw the miracles Christ wrought, and hoped he would set up a temporal kingdom, and he wished to apply betimes for a share in it. Note, There are many resolutions for religion, produced by some sudden pangs of conviction, and taken up without due consideration, that prove abortive, and come to nothing: soon ripe, soon rotten.

(2.) How Christ tried his forwardness, whether it were sincere or not, Mt 8:20. He let him know that this Son of man, whom he is so eager to follow, has not where to lay his head, Mt 8:20. Now from this account of Christ's deep poverty, we observe,

[1.] That it is strange in itself, that the Son of God, when he came into the world, should put himself into such a very low condition, as to want the convenience of a certain resting-place, which the meanest of the creatures have. If he would take our nature upon him, one would think, he should have taken it in its best estate and circumstances: no, he takes it in its worst. See here, First, How well provided for the inferior creatures are: The foxes have holes; though they are not only not useful, but hurtful, to man, yet God provides holes for them in which they are earthed: man endeavours to destroy them, but thus they are sheltered; their holes are their

castles. The birds of the air, though they take no care for themselves, yet are taken care of, and have nests (Ps 104:17); nests in the field; some of them nests in the house; in God's courts, Ps 84:3. Secondly, How poorly the Lord Jesus was provided for. It may encourage us to trust God for necessaries, that the beasts and birds have such good provision; and may comfort us, if we want necessaries, that our Master did so before us. Note, Our Lord Jesus, when he was here in the world, submitted to the disgraces and distresses of extreme poverty; for our sakes he became poor, very poor. He had not a settlement, had not a place of repose, not a house of his own, to put his head in, not a pillow of his own, to lay his head on. He and his disciples lived upon the charity of well-disposed people, that ministered to him of their substance, Lu 8:2. Christ submitted to this, not only that he might in all respects humble himself, and fulfil the scriptures, which spake of him as poor and needy, but that he might show us the vanity of worldly wealth, and teach us to look upon it with a holy contempt; that he might purchase better things for us, and so make us rich, 2Co 8:9.

[2.] It is strange that such a declaration should be made on this occasion. When a scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he would have encouraged him, and said, Come, and I will take care of thee; one scribe might be capable of doing him more credit and service than twelve fishermen: but Christ saw his heart, and answered to the thoughts of that, and therein teaches us all how to come to Christ. First, The scribe's resolve seems to have been sudden; and Christ would have us, when we take upon us a profession of religion, to sit down and count the cost (Lu 14:28), to do it intelligently, and with consideration, and choose the way of godliness, not because we know no other, but because we know no better. It is no advantage to religion, to take men by surprise, ere they are aware. They that take up a profession in a pang, will throw it off again in a fret; let them, therefore, take time, and they will have done the sooner: let him that will follow Christ know the worst of it, and expect to lie hard, and fare hard. Secondly, His resolve seems to have been from a worldly, covetous principle. He saw what abundance of cures Christ wrought, and concluded that he had large fees, and would get an estate quickly, and therefore he would follow him in hopes of growing rich with him; but Christ rectifies

his mistake, and tells him, he was so far from growing rich, that he had not a place to lay his head on; and that if he follow him, he cannot expect to fare better than he fared. Note, Christ will accept none for his followers that aim at worldly advantages in following him, or design to make any thing but heaven of their religion. We have reason to think that this scribe, hereupon, went away sorrowful, being disappointed in a bargain which he thought would turn to account; he is not for following Christ, unless he can get by him.

2. Here is another that was too slow in performing. Delay in execution is as bad, on the one hand, as precipitancy in resolution is on the other hand; when we have taken time to consider, and then have determined, let it never be said, we left that to be done to-morrow, which we could do to-day. This candidate for the ministry was one of Christ's disciples already (Mt 8:21), a follower of him at large. Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, from an ancient tradition, that this was Philip; he seems to be better qualified and disposed than the former; because not so confident and presumptuous: a bold, eager, over-forward temper is not the most promising in religion; sometimes the last are first, and the first last. Now observe here,

(1.) The excuse that this disciple made, to defer an immediate attendance on Christ (Mt 8:21); "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Before I come to be a close and constant follower of thee, let me be allowed to perform this last office of respect to my father; and in the mean time, let it suffice to be a hearer of thee now and then, when I can spare time." His father (some think) was now sick, or dying, or dead; others think, he was only aged, and not likely in a course of nature, to continue long; and he desired leave to attend upon him in his sickness, at his death, and to his grave, and then he would be at Christ's service. This seemed a reasonable request, and yet it was not right. He had not the zeal he should have had for the work, and therefore pleaded this, because it seemed a plausible plea. Note, An unwilling mind never wants an excuse. The meaning of Non vacat is, Non placet--The want of leisure is the want of inclination. We will suppose it to come from a true filial affection and respect for his father, yet still the preference should have been given to Christ. Note, Many are hindered from and in the

way of serious godliness, by an over-concern for their families and relations; these lawful things undo us all, and our duty to God is neglected, and postponed, under colour of discharging our debts to the world; here therefore we have need to double our guard.

(2.) Christ's disallowing of this excuse (Mt 8:22); Jesus said to him, Follow me; and, no doubt, power accompanied this word to him, as to others, and he did follow Christ, and cleaved to him, as Ruth to Naomi, when the scribe, in the Mt 8:19,20, like Orpah, took leave of him. That said, I will follow thee; to this Christ said, Follow me; comparing them together, it is intimated that we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, not of our promises to him; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy; he calls whom he will, Ro 9:16. This is because, He [Jesus] foreknew him, Ro 8: 29. And further, Note, Though chosen vessels may make excuses, and delay their compliance with divine calls a great while, yet Christ will at length answer their excuses, conquer their unwillingness, and bring them to his feet; when Christ calls, he will overcome, and make the call effectual, 1Sa 3:10. His excuse is laid aside as insufficient; Let the dead bury their dead. It is a proverbial expression; "Let one dead man bury another: rather let them lie unburied, than that the service of Christ should be neglected. Let the dead spiritually bury the dead corporally; let worldly offices be left to worldly people; do not thou encumber thyself with them. Burying the dead, and especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work at this time: it may be done as well by others, that are not called and qualified, as thou art, to be employed for Christ; thou hast something else to do, and must not defer that." Note, Piety to God must be preferred before piety to parents, though that is a great and needful part of our religion. The Nazarites, under the law, were not to mourn for their own parents, because they were holy to the Lord (Nu 6:6-8); nor was the high priest to defile himself for the dead, no, not for his own father, Le 21:11,12. And Christ requires of those who would follow him, that they hate father and mother (Lu 14:26); love them less than God; we must comparatively neglect and disesteem our nearest relations, when they come in competition with Christ, and either our doing for him, or our suffering for him.

Finally, it might mean Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests in himself, that is in the heart of the scribe himself while there is no any place to the Son of Man to lay his head. He himself is not the right temple of God; that is his heart is full of worldly things and there is no place for Jesus.

21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Jesus Calms a Storm

23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

Christ had given sailing orders to his disciples (Mt 8:18), that they should depart to the other side of the sea of Tiberias, into the country of Gadara, in the tribe of Gad, which lay east of Jordan; thither he would go to rescue a poor creature that was possessed with a legion of devils, though he foresaw how he should be affronted there. Now.

1. He chose to go by water. It had not been much about, if he had gone by land; but he chose to cross the lake, that he might have occasion to manifest himself the God of the sea as well as of the dry land, and to show that all power is his, both in heaven and in earth. It is a comfort to those who go down to the sea in ships, and are often in perils there, to reflect that they have a Saviour to trust in, and pray to, who knows what it is to be at sea, and to be in storms there. But observe, when he went to sea, he had no yacht or pleasure-boat to attend him, but made use of his disciples' fishing-boats; so poorly was he accommodated in all respects.

2. His disciples followed him; the twelve kept close to him, when others staid behind upon the terra firma, where there was sure footing. Note, They, and they only, will be found the true disciples of Christ, that are willing to go to sea with him, to follow him into dangers and difficulties. Many would be content to go the land-way

to heaven, that will rather stand still, or go back, than venture upon a dangerous sea; but those that would rest with Christ hereafter must follow him now wherever he leads them, into a ship or into a prison, as well as into a palace. Now observe here,

I The peril and perplexity of the disciples in this voyage; and in this appeared the truth of what Christ had just now said, that those who follow him must count upon difficulties, Mt 8:20.

1. There arose a very great storm, Mt 8:24. Christ could have prevented this storm, and have ordered them a pleasant passage, but that would not have been so much for his glory and the confirmation of their faith as their deliverance was: this storm was for their sakes, as Joh 11:4. One would have expected, that having Christ with them, they should have had a very favourable gale, but it is quite otherwise; for Christ would show that they who are passing with him over the ocean of this world to the other side, must expect storms by the way. The church is tossed with tempests (Isa 54:11); it is only the upper region that enjoys a perpetual calm, this lower one is ever and anon disturbed and disturbing.

2. Jesus Christ was asleep in this storm. We never read of Christ's sleeping but at this time; he was in watchings often, and continued all night in prayer to God: this was a sleep, not of security, like Jonah's in a storm, but of holy serenity, and dependence upon his Father: he slept to show that he was really and truly man, and subject to the sinless infirmities of our nature: his work made him weary and sleepy, and he had no guilt, no fear within, to disturb his repose. Those that can lay their heads upon the pillow of a clear conscience, may sleep quietly and sweetly in a storm (Ps 4:8), as Peter, Ac 12:6. He slept at this time, to try the faith of his disciples, whether they could trust him when he seemed to slight them. He slept not so much with a desire to be refreshed, as with a design to be awaked.

3. The poor disciples, though used to the sea, were in a great fright, and in their fear came to their Master, Mt 8:25. Whither else should

they go? It was well they had him so near them. They awoke him with their prayers; Lord, save us, we perish. Note, They who would learn to pray must go to sea. Imminent and sensible dangers will drive people to him who alone can help in time of need. Their prayer has life in it, Lord, save us, we perish.

(a) Their petition is, Lord, save us. They believed he could save them; they begged he would, Christ's errand into the world was to save, but those only shall be saved that call on the name of the Lord, Ac 2:21. They who by faith are interested in the eternal salvation wrought out by Christ, may with a humble confidence apply themselves to him for temporal deliverances. Observe, They call him, Lord, and then pray, Save us. Note, Christ will save none but those that are willing to take him for their Lord; for he is a Prince and a Saviour.

(b) Their plea is, We perish; which was,

[1.] The language of their fear; they looked upon their case as desperate, and gave up all for lost; they had received a sentence of death within themselves, and this they plead, "We perish, if thou dost not save us; look upon us therefore with pity."

[2.] It was the language of their fervency; they pray as men in earnest, that beg for their lives; it becomes us thus to strive and wrestle in prayer; therefore Christ slept, that he might draw out this importunity.

II The power and grace of Jesus Christ put forth for their succour: then the Lord Jesus awaked, as one refreshed, Ps 78:65. Christ may sleep when his church is in a storm, but he will not outsleep himself: the time, the set time to favour his distressed church, will come, Ps 102:13.

1. He rebuked the disciples (Mt 8:26); Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? He does not chide them for disturbing him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears. Christ

reproved them first, and then delivered them; this is his method, to prepare us for a mercy, and then to give it us. Observe,

(a) His dislike of their fears; "Why are ye fearful? Ye, my disciples? Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, let heathen mariners tremble in a storm, but you shall not be so. Enquire into the reasons of your fear, and weigh them."

(b) His discovery of the cause and spring of their fears; O ye of little faith. Many that have true faith are weak in it, and it does but little. Note,

[1.] Christ's disciples are apt to be disquieted with fears in a stormy day, to torment themselves with jealousies that things are bad with them, and dismal conclusions that they will be worse.

[2.] The prevalence of our inordinate fears in a stormy day is owing to the weakness of our faith, which would be as an anchor to the soul, and would ply the oar of prayer. By faith we might see through the storm to the quiet shore, and encourage ourselves with hope that we shall weather our point.

[3.] The fearfulness of Christ's disciples in a storm, and their unbelief, the cause of it, are very displeasing to the Lord Jesus, for they reflect dishonour upon him, and create disturbance to themselves.

2. He rebukes the wind; the former he did as the God of grace, and the Sovereign of the heart, who can do what he pleases in us; this he did as the God of nature, the Sovereign of the world, who can do what he pleases for us. It is the same power that stills the noise of the sea, and the tumult of fear, Ps 65:7. See,

(a) How easily this was done, with a word's speaking. Moses commanded the waters with a rod; Joshua, with the ark of the covenant; Elisha, with the prophet's mantle; but Christ with a word. See his absolute dominion over all the creatures, which bespeaks

both his honour, and the happiness of those that have him on their side.

(b) How effectually it was done? There was a great calm, all of a sudden. Ordinarily, after a storm, there is such a fret of the waters, that it is a good while ere they can settle; but if Christ speak the word, not only the storm ceases, but all the effects of it, all the remains of it. Great storms of doubt, and fear in the soul, under the power of the spirit of bondage, sometimes end in a wonderful calm, created and spoken by the Spirit of adoption.

3. This excited their astonishment (Mt 8:27); The men marvelled. They had been long acquainted with the sea, and never saw a storm so immediately turned into a perfect calm, in all their lives. It has all the marks and signatures of a miracle upon it; it is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in their eyes. Observe,

(a) Their admiration of Christ; What manner of man is this! Note, Christ is a Non such; every thing in him is admirable: none so wise, so mighty, so amiable, as he.

(b) The reason of it; Even the winds and the sea obey him. Upon this account, Christ is to be admired, that he has a commanding power even over winds and seas. Others pretended to cure diseases, but he only undertook to command the winds. We know not the way of the wind (Joh 3:8), much less can we control it; but he that bringeth forth the wind out of his treasury (Ps 135:7), when it is out, gathers it into his fists, Pr 30:4. He that can do this, can do any thing, can do enough to encourage our confidence and comfort in him, in the most stormy day, within or without, Isa 26:4. The Lord sits upon the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters. Christ, by commanding the seas, showed himself to be the same that made the world, when, at his rebuke, the waters fled (Ps 104:7,8), as now, at his rebuke, they fell.

25 And his disciples came to *him,* and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?

Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

The Gergesene Demoniacs

28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

MHC:

We have here the story of Christ's casting the devils out of two men that were possessed. The scope of this chapter is to show the divine power of Christ, by the instances of his dominion over bodily diseases, which to us are irresistible; over winds and waves, which to us are yet more uncontrollable; and lastly, over devils, which to us are most formidable of all. Christ has not only all power in heaven and earth and all deep places, but has the keys of hell too. Principalities and powers were made subject to him, even while he was in his estate of humiliation, as an earnest of what should be at his entrance into his glory (Eph 1:21); he spoiled them, Col 2:15. It was observed in general (Mt 8:16), that Christ cast out the spirits with his word; here we have a particular instance of it, which have some circumstances more remarkable than the rest. This miracle was wrought in the country of the Gergesenes; some think, they were the remains of the old Girgashites, De 7:1. Though Christ was sent chiefly to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet some sallies he made among the borderers, as here, to gain this victory over Satan, which was a specimen of the conquest of his legions in the Gentile world.

Now, besides the general instance which this gives us of Christ's power over Satan, and his design against him to disarm and dispossess him, we have here especially discovered to us the way

and manner of evil spirits in their enmity to man. Observe, concerning this legion of devils, What work they made where they were, and where they went.

I. What work they made where they were; which appears in the miserable condition of these two that were possessed by them; and some think, these two were man and wife, because the other Evangelists speak but of one.

1. They dwelt among the tombs; thence they came when the met Christ. The devil having the power of death, not as judge, but as executioner, he delighted to converse among the trophies of his victory, the dead bodies of men; but there, where he thought himself in the greatest triumph and elevation, as afterwards in Golgotha, the place of a skull, did Christ conquer and subdue him. Conversing among the graves increased the melancholy and frenzy of the poor possessed creatures, and so strengthened the hold he had of them by their bodily distemper, and also made them more formidable to other people, who generally startle at any thing that stirs among the tombs.

2. They were exceeding fierce; not only ungovernable themselves, but mischievous to others, frightening many, having hurt some; so that no man durst pass that way. Note, The devil bears malice to mankind, and shows it by making men spiteful and malicious one to another. Mutual enmities, where they should be mutual endearments and assistances, are effects and evidences of Satan's enmity to the whole race; he makes one man a wolf, a bear, a devil, to another--Homo homini lupus. Where Satan rules in a man spiritually, by those lusts that war in the members, pride, envy, malice, revenge, they make him as unfit for human society, as unworthy of it, and as much an enemy to the comfort of it, as these poor possessed creatures were.

3. They bid defiance to Jesus Christ, and disclaimed all interest in him, Mt 8:29. It is an instance of the power of God over the devils, that, notwithstanding the mischief they studied to do by and to these

poor creatures, yet they could not keep them from meeting Jesus Christ, who ordered the matter so as to meet them. It was his overpowering hand that dragged these unclean spirits into his presence, which they dreaded more than any thing else: his chains could hold them, when the chains that men made for them could not. But being brought before him, they protested against his jurisdiction, and broke out into a rage, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Here is,

(a) One word that the devil spoke like a saint; he addressed himself to Christ as Jesus the Son of God; a good word, and at this time, when it was a truth but in the proving, it was a great word too, what flesh and blood did not reveal to Peter, Mt 16:17. Even the devils know, and believe, and confess Christ to be the Son of God, and yet they are devils still, which makes their enmity to Christ so much the more wicked, and indeed a perfect torment to themselves; for how can it be otherwise, to oppose one they know to be the Son of God? Note, It is not knowledge, but love, that distinguishes saints from devils. He is the first-born of hell, that knows Christ and yet hates him, and will not be subject to him and his law. We may remember that not long since the devil made a doubt whether Christ were the Son of God or not, and would have persuaded him to question it (Mt 4:3), but now he readily owns it. Note, Though God's children may be much disquieted in an hour of temptation, by Satan's questioning their relation to God as a Father, yet the Spirit of adoption shall at length clear it up to them so much to their satisfaction, as to set it even above the devil's contradiction.

(b) Two words that he said like a devil, like himself.

[1.] A word of defiance; What have we to do with thee? Now, First, It is true that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Saviour, for he took not on him the nature of the angels that fell, nor did he lay hold on them (Heb 2:16); they are in no relation to him, they neither have, nor hope for, any benefit by him. O the depth of this mystery of divine love, that fallen man hath so much to do with Christ, when fallen angels have nothing to do with him! Surely here

was torment enough before the time, to be forced to own the excellency that is in Christ, and yet that he has no interest in him. Note, It is possible for me to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet have nothing to do with him. Secondly, It is as true, that the devils desire not to have any thing to do with Christ as a Ruler; they hate him, they are filled with enmity against him, they stand in opposition to him, and are in open rebellion against his crown and dignity. See whose language they speak, that will have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ, with his laws and ordinances, that throw off his yoke, that break his bands in sunder, and will not have him to reign over them; that say to the Almighty Jesus, Depart from us: they are of their father the devil, they do his lusts, and speak his language. Thirdly, But it is not true, that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Judge, for they have, and they know it. These devils could not say, What hast thou to do with us? could not deny that the Son of God is the Judge of devils; to his judgment they are bound over in chains of darkness, which they would fain shake off, and shake off the thought of.

[2.] A word of dread and deprecation; "Art thou come hither to torment us--to cast us out from these men, and to restrain us from doing the hurt we would do?" Note, To be turned out, and tied up, from doing mischief, is a torment to the devil, all whose comfort and satisfaction are man's misery and destruction. Should not we then count it our heaven to be doing well, and reckon that our torment, whether within or without, that hinders us from well-doing? Now must we be tormented by thee before the time; Note, First, There is a time in which devils will be more tormented than they are, and they know it. The great assize at the last day is the time fixed for their complete torture, in that Tophet which is ordained of old for the king, for the prince of the devils, and his angels (Isa 30:33,Mt 25:41); for the judgment of that day they are reserved, 2Pe 2:4. Those malignant spirits that are, by the divine permission, prisoners at large, walking to and fro through the earth (Job 1:7), are even now in a chain; hitherto shall their power reach, and no further; they will then be made close prisoners: they have now some ease; they will then be in torment without ease. This they here take for granted, and ask not never to be tormented (despair of

relief is the misery of their case), but they beg that they may not be tormented before the time; for though they knew not when the day of judgment should be, they knew it should not be yet. Secondly, The devils have a certain fearful looking for of that judgment and fiery indignation, upon every approach of Christ, and every check that is given to their power and rage. The very sight of Christ and his word of command to come out of the man, made them thus apprehensive of their torment. Thus the devils believe, and tremble, Jam 2:19. It is their own enmity to God and man that puts them upon the rack, and torments them before the time. The most desperate sinners, whose damnation is sealed, yet cannot quite harden their hearts against the surprise of fearfulness, when they see the day approaching.

II. Let us now see what work they made where they went, when they were turned out of the men possessed, and that was into a herd of swine, which was a good way off, Mt 8:30. These Gergesenes, though living on the other side Jordan, were Jews. What had they to do with swine, which by the law were unclean, and not to be eaten nor touched? Probably, lying in the outskirts of the land, there were many Gentiles among them, to whom this herd of swine belonged: or they kept them to be sold, or bartered, to the Romans, with whom they had now great dealings, and who were admirers of swine's flesh. Now observe,

1. How the devils seized the swine. Though they were a good way off, and, one would think, out of danger, yet the devils had an eye upon them, to do them a mischief: for they go up and down, seeking to devour, seeking an opportunity; and they seek not long but they find. Now here,

(a) They asked leave to enter into the swine (Mt 8:31); they besought him, with all earnestness, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. Hereby, [1.] They discover their own inclination to do mischief, and what a pleasure it is to them; those, therefore, are their children, and resemble them, whose sleep departeth from them, except they cause some to fall, Pr 4:16. "Let

us go into the herd of swine, any where rather than into the place of torment, any where to do mischief." If they might not be suffered to hurt men in their bodies, they would hurt them in their goods, and in that too they intend hurt to their souls, by making Christ a burthen to them: such malicious devices hath that old subtle serpent! [2.] They own Christ's power over them; that, without his sufferance and permission, they could not so much as hurt a swine. This is comfortable to all the Lord's people, that, though the devil's power be very great, yet it is limited, and not equal to his malice (what would become of us, if it were?) especially that it is under the control of our Lord Jesus, our most faithful, powerful friend and Saviour; that Satan and his instruments can go no further than he is pleased to permit; here shall their proud waves be stayed.

(b) They had leave. Christ said unto them, Go (Mt 8:32), as God did to Satan, when he desired leave to afflict Job. Note, God does often, for wise and holy ends, permit the efforts of Satan's rage, and suffer him to do the mischief he would, and even by it serve his own purposes. The devils are not only Christ's captives, but his vassals; his dominion over them appears in the harm they do, as well as in the hindrance of them from doing more. Thus even their wrath is made to praise Christ, and the remainder of it he does and will restrain. Christ permitted this, [1.] For the conviction of the Sadducees that were then among the Jews, who denied the existence of spirits, and would not own that there were such beings, because they could not see them. Now Christ would, by this, bring it as near as might be to an ocular demonstration of the being, multitude, power, and malice, of evil spirits, that, if they were not hereby convinced, they might be left inexcusable in their infidelity. We see not the wind, but it would be absurd to deny it, when we see trees and houses blown down by it. [2.] For the punishment of the Gadarenes, who perhaps, though Jews, took a liberty to eat swine's flesh, contrary to the law: however, their keeping swine bordered upon evil; and Christ would also show what a hellish crew they were delivered from, which, if he had permitted it, would soon have choked them, as they did their swine. The devils, in obedience to Christ's command, came out of the men, and having permission, when they were come out, immediately they went into the herd of

swine. See what an industrious enemy Satan is, and how expeditious; he will lose no time in doing mischief. Observe,

2. Whither they hurried them, when they had seized them. They were not bid to save their lives, and, therefore, they were made to run violently down a steep place into the sea, where they all perished, to the number of about two thousand, Mk 5:13. Note, The possession which the devil gets is for destruction. Thus the devil hurries people to sin, hurries them to that which they have resolved against, and which they know will be shame and grief to them: with what a force doth the evil spirit work in the children of disobedience, when by so many foolish and hurtful lusts they are brought to act in direct contradiction, not only to religion, but to right reason, and their interest in this world! Thus, likewise, he hurries them to ruin, for he is Apollyon and Abaddon, the great destroyer. By his lusts which men do, they are drowned in destruction and perdition. This is Satan's will, to swallow up and to devour; miserable then is the condition of those that are led captive by him at his will. They are hurried into a worse lake than this, a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Observe,

3. What effect this had upon the owners. The report of it was soon brought them by the swine-herds, who seemed to be more concerned for the loss of the swine than any thing else, for they went not to tell what was befallen to the possessed of the devils, till the swine were lost, Mt 8:33. Christ went not into the city, but the news of his being there did, by which he was willing to feel how their pulse beat, and what influence it had upon them, and then act accordingly. Now,

(a) Their curiosity brought them out to see Jesus. The whole city came out to meet him, that they might be able to say, they had seen a man who did such wonderful works. Thus many go out, in profession, to meet Christ for company, that have no real affection for him, nor desire to know him.

(b) Their covetousness made them willing to be rid of him. Instead of inviting him into their city, or bringing their sick to him to be healed, they desired him to depart out of their coasts, as if they had borrowed the words of the devils, What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? And now the devils had what they aimed at in drowning the swine; they did it, and then made the people believe that Christ had done it, and so prejudiced them against him. He seduced our first parents, by possessing them with hard thoughts of God, and kept the Gadarenes from Christ, by suggesting that he came into their country to destroy their cattle, and that he would do more hurt than good; for though he had cured two men, yet he had drowned two thousand swine. Thus the devil sows tares in God's field, does mischief in the Christian church, and then lays the blame upon Christianity, and incenses men against that. They besought him that he would depart, lest, like Moses in Egypt, he should proceed to some other plague. Note, There are a great many who prefer their swine before their Saviour, and so come short of Christ, and salvation by him. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts, and will not suffer his word to have a place in them, because he and his word will be the destruction of their brutish lusts--those swine which they give up themselves to feed. And justly will Christ forsake those that thus are weary of him, and say to them hereafter, Depart, ye cursed, who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us.

30 And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding.

31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

BARNES BIBLE COMMENTARY:

Country of the Gergesenes. Mk 5:1 says, that he came into the country of the Gadarenes. This difference is only apparent. Gadara was a city not far from the lake Gennesareth; one of the ten cities that were called Decapolis. Mt 4:25. Gergesa was a city about twelve miles to the south-east of Gadara, and about twenty miles to the east of the Jordan. There is no contradiction, therefore, in the evangelists. He came into the region in which the two cities were situated, and one mentioned one, and the other another. It shows that the writers had not agreed to impose on the world; for if they

had, they would have mentioned the same city; and it shows they were familiar with the country. No man would have written in this manner, but those who were acquainted with the facts. Impostors do not mention places, or names, if they can avoid it.

There met him two. Mark and Luke speak of only one that met him. "There met him out of the tombs a man," Mk 5:2. "There met him out of the city a certain man," etc., Lk 8:27. This difference of statement has given rise to considerable difficulty. It is to be observed, however, that neither Mark nor Luke say that there was no more than one. For particular reasons they might have been led to fix the attention on one of them that was more notorious, and furious, and difficult to be managed. Had they denied plainly that there was more than one, and had Matthew affirmed that there were two, there would have been an irreconcilable contradiction. As it is, they relate the affair as other men would. It shows that they were honest witnesses. Had they been impostors; had Matthew and Luke agreed to write books to deceive the world, they would have agreed exactly in a case so easy as this. They would have told the story with the same circumstances. Witnesses in courts of law; often differ in unimportant matters; and, provided the main narrative coincides, their testimony is thought to be more valuable.

Luke has given us a hint why he recorded only the cure of one of them. He says, there met him "out of the city," a man, etc.; or, as it should be rendered, "a man of the city," a citizen. Yet the man did not dwell in the city; for he adds in the same verse, "neither abode he in any house, but in the tombs." The truth of the case was, that he was born and educated in the city; he had probably been a man of wealth and eminence; he was well known; and the people felt a deep interest in the case. Luke was, therefore, particularly struck with his case; and as his cure fully established the power of Jesus, he recorded it. The other that Matthew mentions was probably a stranger, or a person less notorious as a maniac, and he felt less interest in the cure. Let two persons go into a lunatic asylum, and meet two insane persons, one of whom should be exceedingly fierce and ungovernable, and well known as having been a man of

worth and standing; let them converse with them; and let the more violent one attract the principal attention, and they would very likely give the same account that Matthew and Luke do; and no one would doubt the statement was correct.

Coming out of the tombs. Mark and Luke say that they dwelt in the tombs. The sepulchres of the Jews were commonly caves, beyond the walls of the cities in which they dwelt, or excavations made in the sides of hills, or sometimes in solid rocks. These caves, or excavations, were sometimes of great extent, They descended to them by flights of steps. These graves were not in the midst of cities, but in groves, and mountains, and solitudes. They afforded, therefore, to insane persons and demoniacs retreat and shelter. They delighted in these gloomy and melancholy recesses, as being congenial to the wretched state of their minds. Josephus, also, states that these sepulchres were the haunts and lurking-places of those desperate bands of robbers that infested Judea. The annexed cut will furnish an illustration of the nature of the sepulchres occurring in the east. A more full illustration may be seen by referring to Isa 64:4.

Son of God. The title, Son of God, is often given to Christ. Men are sometimes called sons, or children of God, to denote their piety and adoption into his family, 1Jn 3:1. But the title given, to Christ denotes his superiority to the prophets, (Heb 1:1) to Moses the founder of the Jewish economy, (Heb 3:6) it denotes his peculiar and near relation to the Father, as evinced by his resurrection, (Ps 2:7, Acts 13:33) it denotes his peculiar relation to God from his miraculous conception, (Lk 1:35) and is equivalent to a declaration that he is Divine, or equal to the Father, Jn 10:36.

rt thou come hither to torment us, etc. By the time here mentioned is meant the day of judgment. The Bible reveals the doctrine that evil spirits are not now bound as they will be after that day; that they are permitted to tempt and afflict men; but that in the day of judgment they also will be condemned to everlasting punishment with all the wicked, 2Pet 2:4, Jude 1:6. These spirits seemed to be

apprized of that, and alarmed lest the day that they had feared had come. They besought him, therefore, not to send them out of that country; not to consign them then to hell, but to put off the day of their final punishment. Mark and Luke say that Jesus inquired the name of the principal demoniac, and that he called his name Legion, for they were many. The name legion was given to a division in the Roman army. It did not always denote the same number; but, in the time of Christ, it consisted of six thousand--three thousand foot and three thousand horsemen. It came, therefore, to signify a large number, without specifying the exact amount.

They that kept them fled, etc. These swine were doubtless owned by the inhabitants of Gadara. Whether they were Jews or Gentiles is not certainly known. It was not properly in the territory of Judea; but as it was on its borders, it is probable that the inhabitants were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Swine were to Jews unclean animals, and it was unlawful for them to eat them, Lev 11:7. The Jews were forbidden by their own laws to keep them, even for the purpose of traffic. Either, therefore, they had expressly violated the law, or these swine were owned by the Gentiles.

The keepers fled in consternation. They were amazed at his power. Perhaps they feared a further destruction of property; or, more likely, they were acquainted with the laws of the Jews, and regarded this as a judgment of Heaven for keeping forbidden animals, and for tempting the Jews to violate the commands of God. They dreaded, perhaps, further punishment, and foolishly came and besought Jesus to depart from their country.

This is the only one of our Saviour's miracles, except the case of the fig-tree that he cursed, (Mt 21:18-20,) in which he caused any destruction of property. It is a striking proof of his benevolence, that his miracles tended directly to the comfort of mankind. It was a proof of goodness added to the direct purpose for which his miracles were wrought. That purpose was to confirm his Divine mission; and it might have been as fully done by splitting rocks, or

removing mountains, or causing water to run up steep hills, as by any other display of power. See Acts 2:22. He chose to exhibit the proof of his Divine power, however, in such a way as to benefit mankind.

Infidels have objected to this whole narrative. They have said that this was a wanton and unauthorized violation of private rights in the destruction of property. They have said that the account of devils going into swine, and destroying them, was ridiculous. In regard to these objections, the narrative is easily vindicated.

1st. If Christ, as the Bible declares, be Divine as well as human--God as well as man--then he had an original right to that and all other property, and might dispose of it as he pleased, Ps 50:10-12. If God had destroyed them by pestilence, or by lightning, or by an inundation or earthquake, neither the owners, nor any one else, would have had reason to complain. No one now feels that he has a right to murmur if God destroys a thousand times the amount of this property, by overturning a city by an earthquake. Why, then, should complaints be brought against him if he should do the same thing in another way?

2nd. If this property was held by the Jews, it was a violation of their law, and it was right that they should suffer the loss;--if by the Gentiles, it was known also to be a violation of the law of the people among whom they lived; a temptation and a snare to them; and an abomination in their sight; and it was proper that the nuisance should be removed.

3rd. The cure of two men, one of whom was probably a man of distinction and property, was of far more consequence than the amount of property destroyed. To restore a deranged man now, of family and standing, would be an act for which property could not compensate, and which could not be measured in value by any pecuniary consideration. But,

4th. Jesus was not at all answerable for this destruction of property. He did not command, he only suffered or permitted the devils to go into the swine. He commanded them merely to come out of the man. They originated the purpose of destroying the property, doubtless for the sake of doing as much mischief as possible, and of destroying the effect of the miracle of Christ. In this they seem to have had most disastrous success; and they only are responsible.

5th. If it should be said that Christ permitted this, when he might have prevented it, we reply, that the difficulty does not stop there. He permits all the evil that exists, when he might prevent it. He permits men to do much evil, when he might prevent it. He permits one bad man to injure the person and property of another bad man. He permits the bad to injure the good. He often permits a wicked man to fire a city, or to plunder a dwelling, or to rob a traveller, destroying property of many times the amount that was lost at Gadara. Why is it any more absurd to suffer a wicked spirit to do injury, than a wicked man? or to suffer a legion of devils to destroy a herd of swine, than for legions of men to desolate nations, and cover fields and towns with ruin and slaughter?

The whole city came out. The people of the city probably came with a view of arresting him for the injury done to the property; but seeing him, and being awed by his presence, they only besought him to leave them.

1st. that the design of Satan is to prejudice men against the Saviour; and even to make what Christ does an occasion why they should desire him to leave them.

2nd. The power of avarice. These men preferred their property to the Saviour. They loved it so much, that they were blind to the evidence of the miracle, and to the good he had done to the miserable men that he had healed. It is no uncommon thing for men to love the world so much; to love property, even like that owned by the people of Gadara, so much as to see no beauty in religion, and no excellence in the Saviour; and, rather than part with it, to

beseech Jesus to withdraw from them. The most grovelling employment; the most abandoned sins; the most loathsome vices, are often loved more than the presence of Jesus, and more than all the blessings of his salvation.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought *him* that he would depart out of their coasts.

Matthew-9

Jesus Heals a Palsied Man

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

The first words of this chapter oblige us to look back to the close of that which precedes it, where we find the Gadarenes so resenting the loss of their swine, that they were disgusted with Christ's company, and besought him to depart out of their coasts. Now here it follows, He entered into a ship, and passed over. They bid him begone, and he took them at their word, and we never read that he came into their coasts again. Now here observe, 1. His justice--that he left them. Note, Christ will not tarry long where he is not welcome. In righteous judgment, he forsakes those places and persons that are weary of him, but abides with those that covet and court his stay. If the unbeliever will depart from Christ, let him depart; it is at his peril, 1Co 7:15. 2. His patience--that he did not leave some destroying judgment behind him, to punish them, as they deserved, for their contempt and contumacy. How easily, how justly, might he have sent them after their swine, who were already so much under the devil's power. The provocation, indeed, was very great: but he put it up, and passed it by; and, without any angry resentments or upbraidings, he entered into a ship, and passed over. This was the

day of his patience; he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; not to kill, but to cure. Spiritual judgments agree more with the constitution of gospel times; yet some observe, that in those bloody wars which the Romans made upon the Jews, which began not many years after this, they first besieged the town of Gadara, where these Gadarenes dwelt. Note, Those that drive Christ from them, draw all miseries upon them. Woe unto us, if God depart from us.

He came into his own city, Capernaum, the principal place of his residence at present (Mk 2:1), and therefore called his own city. He had himself testified, that a prophet it least honoured in his own country and city, yet thither he came; for he sought not his own honour; but, being in a state of humiliation, he was content to be despised of the people. At Capernaum all the circumstances recorded in this chapter happened, and are, therefore, put together here, though, in the harmony of the evangelists, other events intervened. When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart, they of Capernaum received him. If Christ be affronted by some, there are others in whom he will be glorious; if one will not, another will.

2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

The moving and impulsive cause of this cure, Jesus seeing their faith: that is, their firm persuasion that he was clothed with a divine power, and able to help; together with their confidence in his goodness, that he was as willing as he was able; and no sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ did exert his divine power in healing. It was not the sick man's faith, but the faith of his friends: the faith of others may prevail for obtaining corporal benefits and temporal blessings for us; thus the centurion's faith healed his servant, and Jairus's faith raised his daughter. Little children cannot go to Christ themselves, but he will have an eye to the faith of those that bring them, and it shall not be in vain.

Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. It may seem remarkable that, since the man came only to be healed, Jesus should have at first

declared his sins forgiven. For this the following reasons may be suggested:

1st. The man might have brought on this affection of the palsy by a long course of vicious indulgence. Conscious of guilt, he may have feared that he was so great a sinner that Christ would not regard him. He therefore assured him that his offences were pardoned, and that he might lay aside his fears.

2nd. Jesus might be willing to show his power to forgive sins. Had he stated it without any miracle, the Jews would not have believed it, and even his disciples might have been staggered. In proof of it, he worked a miracle; and no one, therefore, could doubt that he had the power. The miracle was wrought in express attestation of the assertion that he had the power to forgive sins. As God would not work a miracle to confirm a falsehood, or to deceive men, the miracle was a solemn confirmation, on the part of God, that Jesus had the power to forgive sins.

3rd. The Jews regarded disease as the effect of sin, Jn 9:2; Jas 5:14,15. There is a real connexion between sin and suffering, as in the case of gluttony, intemperate drinking, lewdness, debauchery. Jesus might be willing to direct the minds of the spectators to this fact; and by pointing them to a manifest instance of the effect of sin, to lead them to hate and forsake it. Diseases are sometimes the direct judgment of God for sin, 1Cor 5:3-5, 11:30, 2Sam 24:10-14. This truth, also, Christ might have been desirous of impressing on the people.

The favour of Christ, in what he said to him; Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. This was a sovereign cordial to a sick man, and was enough to make all his bed in his sickness; and to make it easy to him. We read not of any thing said to Christ; probably the poor sick man could not speak for himself, and they that brought him chose rather to speak by actions than words; they set him before Christ; that was enough. Note, It is not in vain to present ourselves and our friends to Christ, as the objects of his pity. Misery cries as

well as sin, and mercy is no less quick of hearing than justice. Here is, in what Christ said,

1. A kind compellation; Son. Note, Exhortations and consolations to the afflicted speak to them as to sons, for afflictions are fatherly discipline, Heb 12:5.

2. A gracious encouragement; "Be of good cheer. Have a good heart on it; cheer up thy spirits." Probably the poor man, when let down among them all in his bed, was put out of countenance, was afraid of a rebuke for being brought in so rudely: but Christ does not stand upon ceremony; he bids him be of good cheer; all would be well, he should not be laid before Christ in vain. Christ bids him be of good cheer; and then cures him. He would have those to whom he deals his gifts, to be cheerful in seeking him, and in trusting in him; to be of good courage.

3. A good reason for that encouragement; Thy sins are forgiven thee. Now this may be considered,

(1.) as an introduction to the cure of his bodily distemper; "Thy sins are pardoned, and therefore thou shalt be healed." Note, As sin is the cause of sickness, so the remission of sin is the comfort of recovery from sickness; not but that sin may be pardoned, and yet the sickness not removed; not but that the sickness may be removed, and yet the sin not pardoned: but if we have the comfort of our reconciliation to God, with the comfort of our recovery from sickness, this makes it a mercy indeed to us, as to Hezekiah, Isa 38:17. Or,

(2.) As a reason of the command to be of good cheer, whether he were cured of his disease or not; "Though I should not heal thee, wilt thou not say thou hast not sought in vain, if I assure thee that thy sins are pardoned; and wilt thou not look upon that as a sufficient ground of comfort, though thou shouldst continue sick of the palsy?" Note, They who, through grace, have some evidence of the forgiveness of their sins, have reasons to be of good cheer, whatever outward troubles or afflictions they are under; see Isa 33:24.

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This *man* blasphemeth.

This man blasphemeth. The word blaspheme originally means to speak evil of any one, to injure by words, to blame unjustly. When applied to God, it means to speak of him unjustly, to ascribe to him acts and attributes which he does not possess, or to speak impiously or profanely. It also means to say or do anything by which his name or honour is insulted, or which conveys an impress on unfavourable to God. It means, also, to attempt to do or say a thing which belongs to him alone, or which he only can do. This is its meaning here. Christ was charged with saying a thing in his own name, or attempting to do a thing which properly belonged to God; thus assuming the place of God, and doing him injury, as the scribes supposed, by an invasion of his prerogatives. "None," said they, (see Mark and Luke,) "can forgive sins but God only" In this they reasoned correctly. See Is 43:25, 44:22. None of the prophets had this power; and by saying that he forgave sins, Jesus was understood to affirm that he was Divine; and as he proved this by working a miracle expressly to confirm the claim, it follows that he is Divine, or equal with the Father.

See here, how the best of men are sometimes charged with saying and doing the worst of things; to do well and bear ill, was the portion of Christ himself, and may be the portion of the holiest of those that belong to Christ; the innocent Jesus was accused of blasphemy, of sorcery, and of the blackest crimes. Innocency itself can protect no man from slander and false accusations. See how the greatest instance of heaven's power and grace is branded with the blackest note of hell's enmity; Christ's pardoning sin is termed blasphemy; nor had it been less, if he had not had commission from God for it. They, therefore, are guilty of blasphemy, that have no such commission, and yet pretend to pardon sin.

4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Jesus knowing their thoughts. Mark says, "Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned". The power of searching the hearts, and knowing the thoughts of men, belongs only to God, 1Chr 28:9, Rom

8:27, Rev 2:23, Jer 17:10. In claiming this, as Jesus did here, and often elsewhere, he gave clear proofs of his omniscience, Jn 2:24,25.

He charged them with it. Though they did but say it within themselves, he knew their thoughts. Note, Our Lord Jesus has the perfect knowledge of all that we say within ourselves. Thoughts are secret and sudden, yet naked and open before Christ, the eternal Word (Heb 4:12,13), and he understands them afar off, Ps 139:2. He could say to them (which no mere man could), Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? Note, There is a great deal of evil in sinful thoughts, which is very offensive to the Lord Jesus. He being the Sovereign of the heart, sinful thoughts invade his right, and disturb his possession; therefore he takes notice of them, and is much displeased with them. In them lies the root of bitterness, Ge 6:5. The sins that begin and end in the heart, and go no further, are as dangerous as any other.

5 For whether is easier, to say, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

Mic 7:18

(1.) How he asserts his authority in the kingdom of grace. He undertakes to make out, that the Son of man, the Mediator, has power on earth to forgive sins; for therefore the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, and has given him this authority, because he is the Son of man, Joh 5:22,27. If he has power to give eternal life, as he certainly has (Joh 17:2), he must have power to forgive sin; for guilt is a bar that must be removed, or we can never get to heaven. What an encouragement is this to poor sinners to repent, that the power of pardoning sin is put into the hands of the Son of man, who is bone of our bone! And if he had this power on earth, much more now that he is exalted to the Father's right hand, to give repentance and remission of sins, and so to be both a Prince and a Saviour, Ac 5:31.

(2.) How he proves it, by his power in the kingdom of nature; his power to cure diseases. Is it not as easy to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, as to say, Arise and walk? He that can cure the disease, whether

declaratively as a Prophet, or authoritatively as God, can, in like manner, forgive the sin. Now, [1.] This is a general argument to prove that Christ had a divine mission. His miracles, especially his miraculous cures, confirm what he said of himself, that he was the Son of God; the power that appeared in his cures proved him sent of God; and the pity that appeared in them proved him sent of God to heal and save. The God of truth would not set his seal to a lie. [2.] It had a particular cogency in this case. The palsy was but a symptom of the disease of sin; now he made it to appear, that he could effectually cure the original disease, by the immediate removal of that symptom; so close a connection was there between the sin and the sickness. He that had power to remove the punishment, no doubt, had power to remit the sin. The scribes stood much upon a legal righteousness, and placed their confidence in that, and made no great matter of the forgiveness of sin, the doctrine upon which Christ hereby designed to put honour, and to show that his great errand to the world was to save his people from their sins.

6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

The immediate cure of the sick man. Christ turned from disputing with them, and spake healing to him. The most necessary arguings must not divert us from doing the good that our hand finds to do. He saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house; and a healing, quickening, strengthening power accompanied this word (Mt 9:7): he arose and departed to his house. Now, 1. Christ bid him take up his bed, to show that he was perfectly cured, and that not only he had no more occasion to be carried upon his bed, but that he had strength to carry it. 2. He sent him to his house, to be a blessing to his family, where he had been so long a burden; and did not take him along with him for a show, which those would do in such a case who seek the honour that comes from men.

8 But when the multitudes saw *it*, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The impression which this made upon the multitude (Mt 9:8); they marvelled, and glorified God. Note, All our wonder should help to

enlarge our hearts in glorifying God, who alone does marvellous things. They glorified God for what he had done for this poor man. Note, Others' mercies should be our praises, and we should give him thanks for them, for we are members one of another. Though few of this multitude were so convinced, as to be brought to believe in Christ, and to follow him, yet they admired him, not as God, or the Son of God, but as a man to whom God had given such power. Note, God must be glorified in all the power that is given to men to do good. For all power is originally his; it is in him, as the Fountain, in men, as the cisterns.

The Call of Matthew

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

The call of Matthew, the penman of this gospel. Mark and Luke call him Levi; it was ordinary for the same person to have two names: perhaps Matthew was the name he was most known by as a publican, and, therefore, in his humility, he called himself by that name, rather than by the more honourable name of Levi. Some think Christ gave him the name of Matthew when he called him to be an apostle; as Simon, he surnamed Peter. Matthew signifies, the gift of God, Ministers are God's gifts to the church; their ministry, and their ability for it, are God's gifts to them. Now observe,

1 The posture that Christ's call found Matthew in. He was sitting at the receipt of custom, for he was a publican, Lu 5:27. He was a custom-house officer at the port of Capernaum, or an exciseman, or collector of the land-tax. Now, (1.) He was in his calling, as the rest of them whom Christ called, Mt 4:18. Note, As Satan chooses to come, with his temptations, to those that are idle, so Christ chooses to come, with his calls, to those that are employed. But, (2.) It was a calling of ill fame among serious people; because it was attended with so much corruption and temptation, and there were so few in that business that were honest men. Matthew himself owns what he was before his conversion, as does St. Paul (1Ti 1:13), that the grace of Christ in calling him might be the more magnified, and to show,

that God has his remnant among all sorts of people. None can justify themselves in their unbelief, by their calling in the world; for there is no sinful calling, but some have been saved out of it, and no lawful calling, but some have been saved in it.

2 The preventing power of this call. We find not that Matthew looked after Christ, or had any inclination to follow him, though some of his kindred were already disciples of Christ, but Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness. He is found of those that seek him not. Christ spoke first; we have not chosen him, but he hath chosen us. He said, Follow me; and the same divine, almighty power accompanied this word to convert Matthew, which attended that word (Mt 9:6), Arise and walk, to cure the man sick of the palsy. Note, A saving change is wrought in the soul by Christ as the Author, and his word as the means. His gospel is the power of God unto salvation, Ro 1:16. The call was effectual, for he came at the call; he arose, and followed him immediately; neither denied, nor deferred his obedience. The power of divine grace soon answers and overcomes all objections. Neither his commission for his place, nor his gains by it, could detain him, when Christ called him. He conferred not with flesh and blood, Ga 1:15,16. He quitted his post, and his hopes of preferment in that way; and, though we find the disciples that were fishers occasionally fishing again afterwards, we never find Matthew at the receipt of custom again.

Sitting at the receipt of custom. That is, at the place where custom, or tribute, was received; or, in other words, he was a publican, or tax-gatherer. Mt 5:47. This man was Matthew, the writer of this gospel. The same account is found in Mk 2:14, Lk 5:27,28. Both those evangelists call him Levi. That it was the same man is known by the circumstances in which he was called being the same in all the evangelists, and by all concurring in the statement that our Saviour was present at a feast soon after he called him, and by the fact that Levi is not mentioned in the catalogue of the apostles. The Jews were in the habit of giving several names to the same person. Thus Peter was also called Simon and Cephas. It is worthy of remark, that Luke has mentioned a circumstance favourable to Matthew, which Matthew himself has omitted. Luke says, "he left

all." Had Matthew said this, it would have been a commendation of himself, utterly unlike the evangelists. No men were ever farther from praising themselves than they were.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Christ's converse with publicans and sinners upon this occasion; Christ called Matthew, to introduce himself into an acquaintance with the people of that profession. Jesus sat at meat in the house, Mt 9:10. The other evangelists tell us, that Matthew made a great feast, which the poor fishermen, when they were called, were not able to do. But when he comes to speak of this himself, he neither tells us that it was his own house, nor that it was a feast, but only that he sat at meat in the house; preserving the remembrance of Christ's favours to the publicans, rather than of the respect he had paid to Christ. Note, It well becomes us to speak sparingly of our own good deeds.

Now observe, 1. When Matthew invited Christ, he invited his disciples to come along with him. Note, They that welcome Christ, must welcome all that are his, for his sake, and let them have a room in their hearts. 2. He invited many publicans and sinners to meet him. This was the chief thing Matthew aimed at in this treat, that he might have an opportunity of bringing his old associates acquainted with Christ. He knew by experience what the grace of Christ could do, and would not despair concerning them. Note, They who are effectually brought to Christ themselves, cannot but be desirous that others also may be brought to him, and ambitious of contributing something towards it. True grace will not contentedly eat its morsels alone, but will invite others. When by the conversion of Matthew the fraternity was broken, presently his house was filled with publicans, and surely some of them will follow him, as he followed Christ. Thus did Andrew and Philip, Joh 1:41,45,4:29. See Jdg 14:9.

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house. This feast was given to him by Levi, or Matthew, Lk 5:29. This is another circumstance favourable to Matthew, but omitted by him, and recorded by Luke; showing, also, that the apostles were averse to praising themselves. To receive Christ hospitably and kindly was a commendable act, and it strongly evinces Matthew's freedom from

ostentation that he has supposed the fact. It thus illustrates the command of the Saviour, as recorded by himself, Mt 6:1-4.

11 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?

The displeasure of the Pharisees at this, Mt 9:11. They cavilled at it; why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? Here observe,

1. That Christ was quarrelled with. It was not the least of his sufferings, that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. None was more quarrelled with by men, than he that came to take up the great quarrel between God and man. Thus he denied himself the honour due to an incarnate Deity, which was to be justified in what he spake, and to have all he said readily subscribed to: for though he never spoke or did anything amiss, every thing he said and did was found fault with. Thus he taught us to expect and prepare for reproach, and to bear it patiently.

2. They that quarrelled with him were the Pharisees; a proud generation of men, conceited of themselves, and censorious of others; of the same temper with those in the prophet's time, who said, Stand by thyself, come not near me; I am holier than thou: they were very strict in avoiding sinners, but not in avoiding sin; none greater zealots than they for the form of godliness, nor greater enemies to the power of it. They were for keeping up the traditions of the elders to a nicety, and so propagating the same spirit that they were themselves governed by.

3. They brought their cavil, not to Christ himself; they had not the courage to face him with it, but to his disciples. The disciples were in the same company, but the quarrel is with the Master: for they would not have done it, if he had not; and they thought it worse in him who was a prophet, than in them; his dignity, they thought, should set him at a greater distance from such company than others. Being offended at the Master, they quarrel with the disciples. Note, It concerns Christians to be able to vindicate and justify Christ, and his doctrines and laws, and to be ready always to give an answer to those that ask them a reason of the hope that is in them, 1Pe 3:15.

While he is an Advocate for us in heaven, let us be advocates for him on earth, and make his reproach our own.

4. The complaint was his eating with publicans and sinners: to be intimate with wicked people is against the law of God (Ps 119:115,Ps 1:1); to eat and drink with others denotes intimacy and familiarity. The Pharisees, by asking this question, accused him of seeking the society of such men, and of being the companion of the wicked. The inference which they would draw was, that he could not be himself righteous, since he delighted in the company of abandoned men.and perhaps by accusing Christ of this to his disciples, they hoped to tempt them from him, to put them out of conceit with him, and so to bring them over to themselves to be their disciples, who kept better company; for they compassed sea and land to make proselytes. To be intimate with publicans was against the tradition of the elders, and, therefore, they looked upon it as a heinous thing. They were angry with Christ for this,

(a) Because they wished ill to him, and sought occasion to misrepresent him. Note, It is an easy and very common thing to put the worst constructions upon the best words and actions.

(b) Because they wished no good to publicans and sinners, but envied Christ's favour to them, and were grieved to see them brought to repentance. Note, It may justly be suspected, that they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace, who are not pleased with it.

12 But when Jesus heard *that,* he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

The defence that Christ made for himself and his disciples, in justification of their converse with publicans and sinners. They that be whole, etc. Jesus, in reply, said that the whole needed not a physician. Sick persons only needed his aid. A physician would not commonly be found with those that were in health. His proper place was among the sick. So, says he, "If you Pharisees are such as you think yourselves, already pure and holy, you do not need my aid. It would be of no use to you, and you would not thank me for it. With

those persons who fed that they are sinners I may be useful; and there is my proper place." Or, the expression may mean, "I came on purpose to save sinners. My business is with them. There are none righteous; and as a physician is in his proper place with the sick, so am I with guilty and miserable sinners."

The disciples, it should seem, being yet weak, had to seek for an answer to the Pharisees' cavil, and, therefore, bring it to Christ, and he heard it (Mt 9:12), or perhaps overheard them whispering it to his disciples. Let him alone to vindicate himself and to plead his own cause, to answer for himself and for us too. Two things he urges in his defence,

1 The necessity and exigence of the case of the publicans, which called aloud for his help, and therefore justified him in conversing with them for their good. It was the extreme necessity of poor, lost sinners, that brought Christ from the pure regions above, to these impure ones; and the same was it, that brought him into this company which was thought impure. Now,

(a) He proves the necessity of the case of the publicans: they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The publicans are sick, and they need one to help and heal them, which the Pharisees think they do not. Note,

[1.] Sin is the sickness of the soul; sinners are spiritually sick. Original corruptions are the diseases of the soul, actual transgressions are its wounds, or the eruptions of the disease. It is deforming, weakening, disquieting, wasting, killing, but, blessed be God, not incurable.

[2.] Jesus Christ is the great Physician of souls. His curing of bodily diseases signified this, that he arose with healing under his wings. He is a skilful, faithful, compassionate Physician, and it is his office and business to heal the sick. Wise and good men should be as physicians to all about them; Christ was so. Hunc affectum versus omnes habet sapiens, quem versus ægros suos medicus--A wise man

cherishes towards all around him the feelings of a physician for his patient. Seneca De Const.

[3.] Sin-sick souls have need of this Physician, for their disease is dangerous; nature will not help itself; no man can help us; such need have we of Christ, that we are undone, eternally undone, without him. Sensible sinners see their need, and apply themselves to him accordingly.

[4.] There are multitudes who fancy themselves to be sound and whole, who think they have no need of Christ, but that they can shift for themselves well enough without him, as Laodicea, Re 3:17. Thus the Pharisees desired not the knowledge of Christ's word and ways, not because they had no need of him, but because they thought they had none. See Joh 9:40,41.

(b) He proves, that their necessity did sufficiently justify his conduct, in conversing familiarly with them, and that he ought not to be blamed for it; for that necessity made it an act of charity, which ought always to be preferred before the formalities of a religious profession, in which beneficence and munificence are far better than magnificence, as much as substance is better than shows or shadows. Those duties, which are of moral and natural obligation, are to take place even of those divine laws which are positive and ritual, much more of those impositions of men, and traditions of the elders, which make God's law stricter than he has made it. This he proves (Mt 9:13) by a passage quoted out of Ho 6:6, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. That morose separation from the society of publicans, which the Pharisees enjoined, was less than sacrifice; but Christ's conversing with them was more than an act of common mercy, and therefore to be preferred before it. If to do well ourselves is better than sacrifice, as Samuel shows (1Sa 15:22,23), much more to do good to others. Christ's conversing with sinners is here called mercy: to promote the conversion of souls is the greatest act of mercy imaginable; it is saving a soul from death, Jam 5:20. Observe how Christ quotes this, Go ye and learn what that meaneth. Note, It is not enough to be acquainted with the letter of scripture, but we must

learn to understand the meaning of it. And they have best learned the meaning of the scriptures, that have learned how to apply them as a reproof to their own faults, and a rule for their own practice. This scripture which Christ quoted, served not only to vindicate him, but,

[1.] To show wherein true religion consists; not in external observances: not in meats and drinks and shows of sanctity, not in little particular opinions and doubtful disputations, but in doing all the good we can to the bodies and souls of others; in righteousness and peace; in visiting the fatherless and widows.

[2.] To condemn the Pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals, more than in morals, Mt 23:23. They espouse those forms of godliness which may be made consistent with, and perhaps subservient to, their pride, covetousness, ambition, and malice, while they hate that power of it which is mortifying to those lusts.

2. He urges the nature and end of his own commission. He must keep to his orders, and prosecute that for which he was appointed to be the great Teacher; now, says he, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and therefore must converse with publicans." Observe,

(a) What his errand was; it was to call to repentance. This was his first text (Mt 4:17), and it was the tendency of all his sermons. Note, The gospel call is a call to repentance; a call to us to change our mind and to change our way.

(b) With whom his errand lay; not with the righteous, but with sinners. That is,

[1.] If the children of men had not been sinners, there had been no occasion for Christ's coming among them. He is the Saviour, not of man as man, but of man as fallen. Had the first Adam continued in his original righteousness, we had not needed a second Adam.

[2.] Therefore his greatest business lies with the greatest sinners; the more dangerous the sick man's case is, the more occasion there is for the physician's help. Christ came into the world to save sinners, but especially the chief (1Ti 1:15); to call not those so much, who, though sinners, are comparatively righteous, but the worst of sinners.

[3.] The more sensible any sinners are of their sinfulness, the more welcome will Christ and his gospel be to them; and every one chooses to go where his company is desired, not to those who would rather have his room. Christ came not with an expectation of succeeding among the righteous, those who conceit themselves so, and therefore will sooner be sick of their Saviour, than sick of their sins, but among the convinced humble sinners; to them Christ will come, for to them he will be welcome.

13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The Question about Fasting

14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

The objections which were made against Christ and his disciples gave occasion to some of the most profitable of his discourses; thus are the interests of truth often served, even by the opposition it meets with from gainsayers, and thus the wisdom of Christ brings good out of evil. This is the third instance of it in this chapter; his discourse of his power to forgive sin, and his readiness to receive sinners, was occasioned by the cavils of the scribes and Pharisees; so here, from a reflection upon the conduct of his family, arose a discourse concerning his tenderness for it. Observe,

I The objection which the disciples of John made against Christ's disciples, for not fasting so often as they did; which they are charged with, as another instance of the looseness of their profession, besides that of eating with publicans and sinners; and it is therefore suggested to them, that they should change that profession for another more strict. It appears by the other evangelists (Mk 2:18,Lu 5:33) that the disciples of the Pharisees joined with them, and we have reason to suspect that they instigated them, making use of John's disciples as their spokesmen, because they, being more in favour with Christ and his disciples, could do it more plausibly. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to set good men together by the ears; if the people of God differ in their sentiments, designing men will take that occasion to sow discord, and to incense them one against another, and alienate them one from another, and so make an easy prey of them. If the disciples of John and of Jesus clash, we have reason to suspect the Pharisees have been at work underhand, blowing the coals. Now the complaint is, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not? It is pity the duties of religion, which ought to be the confirmations of holy love, should be made the occasions of strife and contention; but they often are so, as here; where we may observe,

1. How they boasted of their own fasting. We and the Pharisees fast often. Fasting has in all ages of the church been consecrated, upon special occasions, to the service of religion; the Pharisees were much in it; many of them kept two fast-days in a week, and yet the generality of them were hypocrites and bad men. Note, False and formal professors often excel others in outward acts of devotion, and even of mortification. The disciples of John fasted often, partly in compliance with their master's practice, for he came neither eating nor drinking (Mt 11:18); and people are apt to imitate their leaders, though not always from the same inward principle; partly in compliance with their master's doctrine of repentance. Note, The severer part of religion is often most minded by those that are yet under the discipline of the Spirit, as a Spirit of bondage, whereas, though these are good in their place, we must pass through them to that life of delight in God and dependence on him, to which these

should lead. Now they come to Christ to tell him that they fasted often, at least they thought it often. Note, Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness, Pr 20:6. There is a proneness in professors to brag of their own performance in religion, especially if there by any thing extraordinary in them; nay, and not only to boast of them before men, but to plead them before God, and confide in them as a righteousness.

2. How they blamed Christ's disciples for not fasting so often as they did. Thy disciples fast not. They could not but know, that Christ had instructed his disciples to keep their fasts private, and to manage themselves so as that they might not appear unto men to fast; and, therefore, it was very uncharitable in them to conclude they did not fast, because they did not proclaim their fasts. Note, We must not judge of people's religion by that which falls under the eye and observation of the world. But suppose it was so, that Christ's disciples did not fast so often or so long as they did, why truly, they would therefore have it thought, that they had more religion in them than Christ's disciples had. Note, It is common for vain professors to make themselves a standard in religion, by which to try and measure persons and things, as if all who differed from them were so far in the wrong; as if all that did less than they, did too little, and all that did more than they, did too much, which is a plain evidence of their want of humility and charity.

3. How they brought this complaint to Christ. Note, If Christ's disciples, either by omission or commission, give offence, Christ himself will be sure to hear of it, and be reflected upon for it. O, Jesus, are these thy Christians? Therefore, as we tender the honour of Christ, we are concerned to conduct ourselves well. Observe, The quarrel with Christ was brought to the disciples (Mt 9:11), the quarrel with the disciples was brought to Christ (Mt 9:14), this is the way of sowing discord and killing love, to set people against ministers, ministers against people, and one friend against another.

II The apology which Christ made for his disciples in this matter. Christ might have upbraided John's disciples with the former part of their question, Why do ye fast often? "Nay, you know best why you do it; but the truth is, many abound in external instances of devotion, that scarcely do themselves know why and wherefore." But he only vindicates the practice of his disciples; whey they had nothing to say for themselves, he had something ready to say for them. Note, As it is wisdom's honour to be justified of all her children, so it is her children's happiness to be all justified of wisdom. What we do according to the precept and pattern of Christ, he will be sure to bear us out in, and we may with confidence leave it to him to clear up our integrity.

But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.
Herbert.

Two things Christ pleads in defence of their not fasting.

1. That it was not a season proper for that duty (Mt 9:15): Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? Observe, Christ's answer is so framed, as that it might sufficiently justify the practice of his own disciples, and yet not condemn the institution of John, or the practice of his disciples. When the Pharisees fomented this dispute, they hoped Christ would cast blame, either on his own disciples, or on John's, but he did neither. Note, When at any time we are unjustly censured, our care must be only to clear ourselves, not to recriminate, or throw dirt upon others; and such a variety may there be of circumstances, as may justify us in our practice, without condemning those that practise otherwise.

Now his argument is taken from the common usage of joy and rejoicing during the continuance of marriage solemnities; when all instances of melancholy and sorrow are looked upon as improper and absurd, as it was at Samson's wedding, Jdg 14:17. Now,

(a) The disciples of Christ were the children of the bride-chamber, invited to the wedding-feast, and welcome there; the disciples of the Pharisees were not so, but children of the bond-woman (Ga 4:25,31), continuing under a dispensation of darkness and terror. Note, The faithful followers of Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption, have a continual feast, while they who have the spirit of bondage and fear, cannot rejoice for joy, as other people, Ho 9:1.

(b) The disciples of Christ had the bridegroom with them, which the disciples of John had not; their master was now cast into prison, and lay there in continual danger of his life, and therefore it was seasonable for them to fast often. Such a day would come upon the disciples of Christ, when the bridegroom should be taken from them, when they should be deprived of his bodily presence, and then should they fast. The thoughts of parting grieved them when he was going, Joh 16:6. Tribulation and affliction befel them when he was gone, and gave them occasion of mourning and praying, that is, of religious fasting. Note,

[1.] Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of his Church, and his disciples are the children of the bride-chamber. Christ speaks of himself to John's disciples under this similitude, because that John had used it, when he called himself a friend of the bridegroom, Joh 3:29. And if they would by this hint call to mind what their master then said, they would answer themselves.

[2.] The condition of those who are the children of the bride-chamber is liable to many changes and alterations in this world; they sing of mercy and judgment.

[3.] It is merry or melancholy with the children of the bride-chamber, according as they have more or less of the bridegroom's presence. When he is with them, the candle of God shines upon their head, and all is well; but when he is withdrawn, though but for a small moment, they are troubled, and walk heavily; the presence and nearness of the sun makes day and summer, his absence and distance, night and winter. Christ is all in all to the church's joy.

[4.] Every duty is to be done in its proper season. See Ec 7:14,Jam 5:13. There is a time to mourn and a time to laugh, to each of which we should accommodate ourselves, and bring forth fruit in due season. In fasts, regard is to be had to the methods of God's grace towards us; when he mourns to us, we must lament; and also to the dispensations of his providence concerning us; there are times when the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning; regard is likewise to be had to any special work before us, Mt 17:21,Ac 13:2.

2. That they had not strength sufficient for that duty. This is set forth in two similitudes, one of putting new cloth into an old garment, which does but pull the old to pieces (Mt 9:16); the other of putting new wine into old bottles, which does but burst the bottles, Mt 9:17. Christ's disciples were not able to bear these severe exercises so well as those of John and of the Pharisees, which the learned Dr. Whitby gives this reason for: There were among the Jews not only sects of the Pharisees and Essenes, who led an austere life, but also schools of the prophets, who frequently lived in mountains and deserts, and were many of them Nazarites; they had also private academies to train men up in a strict discipline; and possibly from these many of John's disciples might come, and many of the Pharisees; whereas Christ's disciples, being taken immediately from their callings, had not been used to such religious austerities, and were unfit for them, and would by them be rather unfitted for their other work. Note,

(a) Some duties of religion are harder and more difficult than others, like new cloth and new wine, which require most intenseness of mind, and are most displeasing to flesh and blood; such are religious fasting and the duties that attend it.

(b) The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy; all the trees in Christ's garden are not of a growth, nor all his scholars in the same form; there are babes in Christ and grown men.

(c) In the enjoining of religious exercises, the weakness and infirmity of young Christians ought to be considered: as the food provided for them must be such as is proper for their age (1Co 3:2,Heb 5:12), so must the work be that is cut out for them. Christ would not speak to his disciples that which they could not then bear, Joh 16:12. Young beginners in religion must not be put upon the hardest duties at first, lest they be discouraged. Such as was God's care of his Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, not to lead them by the way of the Philistines (Ex 13:17,18), and such as was Jacob's care of his children and cattle, not to overdrive them (Ge 33:13), such is Christ's care of the little ones of his family, and the lambs of his flock: he gently leads them. For want of this care, many times, the bottles break, and the wine is spilled; the profession of many miscarries and comes to nothing, through indiscretion at first. Note, There may be over--doing even in well--doing, a being righteous over-much; and such an over--doing as may prove an undoing through the subtlety of Satan.

17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

The Ruler's Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment

18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

18-26. The account contained in these verses is also recorded, with some additional circumstances, in Mk 5:22-43, Lk 8:41-56.

My daughter is even now dead. Luke says that this was his only daughter, and that she was twelve years of age. Mark and Luke say that she was at the point of death, and that information of her actual death was brought to him by one who was sent by the ruler of the synagogue, while Jesus was going. Matthew combined the two facts, and stated the representation which was made to Jesus, without stopping particularly to exhibit the manner in which it was done. In a summary way he says that the ruler communicated the information.

Luke and Mark, dwelling more particularly on the circumstances, state at length the way in which it was done; that is, by himself stating, in a hurry, that she was about to die, or dying, and then in a few moments sending word that she was dead. The Greek word, rendered is even now dead, does not of necessity mean, as our translation would express, that she had actually expired, but only that she was dying or about to die. Compare Gen 48:21. It is likely that a father, in these circumstances, would use a word as nearly expressing actual death as would be consistent with the fact that she was alive. The passage may be expressed thus: "My daughter was so sick that she must be, by this time, dead."

We have here two passages of history put together; that of the raising of Jairus's daughter to life, and that of the curing of the woman that had the bloody issue, as he was going to Jairus's house, which is introduced in a parenthesis, in the midst of the other; for Christ's miracles were thick sown, and interwoven; the work of him that sent him was his daily work. He was called to do these good works from speaking the things foregoing, in answer to the cavils of the Pharisees, Mt 9:18: While he spake these things; and we may suppose it is a pleasing interruption given to that unpleasant work of disputation, which, though sometimes needful, a good man will gladly leave, to go about a work of devotion or charity. Here is,

I The ruler's address to Christ, Mt 9:18. A certain ruler, a ruler of the synagogue, came and worshipped him. Have any of the rulers believed on him? Yes, here was one, a church ruler, whose faith condemned the unbelief of the rest of the rulers. This ruler had a little daughter, of twelve years old, just dead, and this breach made upon his family comforts was the occasion of his coming to Christ. Note, In trouble we should visit God: the death of our relations should drive us to Christ, who is our life; it is well if any thing will do it. When affliction is in our families, we must not sit down astonished, but, as Job, fall down and worship. Now observe,

1. His humility in this address to Christ. He came with his errand to Christ himself, and did not send his servant. Note, It is no

disparagement to the greatest rulers, personally to attend on the Lord Jesus. He worshipped him, bowed the knee to him, and gave him all imaginable respect. Note, They that would receive mercy from Christ must give honour to Christ.

2. His faith in this address; "My daughter is even now dead," and though any other physician would now come too late (nothing more absurd than post mortem medicina--medicine after death), yet Christ comes not too late; he is a Physician after death, for he is the resurrection and the life; "O come then, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." This was quite above the power of nature (a privatione ad habitum non datur regressus--life once lost cannot be restored), yet within the power of Christ, who has life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will. Now Christ works in an ordinary, by nature and not against it, and, therefore, we cannot in faith bring him such a request as this; while there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer; but when our friends are dead, the case is determined; we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us. But while Christ was here upon earth working miracles, such a confidence as this was not only allowable but very commendable.

II The readiness of Christ to comply with his address, Mt 9:19. Jesus immediately arose, left his company, and followed him; he was not only willing to grant him what he desired, in raising his daughter to life, but to gratify him so far as to come to his house to do it. Surely he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. He denied to go along with the nobleman, who said, Sir, come down, ere my child die (Joh 4:48-50), yet he went along with the ruler of the synagogue, who said, Sir, come down, and my child shall live. The variety of methods which Christ took in working his miracles is perhaps to be attributed to the different frame and temper of mind which they were in who applied to him, which he who searcheth the heart perfectly knew, and accommodated himself to. He knows what is in man, and what course to take with him. And observe, when Jesus followed him, so did his disciples, whom he had chosen for his constant companions; it was not for state, or that he might come with observation, that he took his attendants with him, but that they might

be the witnesses of his miracles, who were hereafter to be the preachers of his doctrine.

19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and *so did* his disciples.

20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him,* and touched the hem of his garment:

21 for she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

The healing of the poor woman's bloody issue. I call her a poor woman, not only because her case was piteous, but because, she had spent it all upon physicians, for the cure of her distemper, and was never the better; which was a double aggravation of the misery of her condition, that she had been full, but was now empty; and that she had impoverished herself for the recovery of her health, and yet had not her health neither. This woman was diseased with a constant issue of blood twelve years (Mt 9:20); a disease, which was not only weakening and wasting, and under which the body must needs languish; but which also rendered her ceremonially unclean, and shut her out from the courts of the Lord's house; but it did not cut her off from approaching to Christ. She applied herself to Christ, and received mercy from him, by the way, as he followed the ruler, whose daughter was dead, to whom it would be a great encouragement, and a help to keep up his faith in the power of Christ. So graciously does Christ consider the frame, and consult the case, of weak believers. Observe,

1 The woman's great faith in Christ, and in his power. Her disease was of such a nature, that her modesty would not suffer her to speak openly to Christ for a cure, as others did, but by a peculiar impulse of the Spirit of faith, she believed him to have such an overflowing fulness of healing virtue, that the very touch of his garment would be her cure. This, perhaps, had something of fancy mixed with faith; for she had no precedent for this way of application to Christ, unless, as some think, she had an eye to the raising of the dead man by the touch of Elisha's bones, 2Ki 13:21. But what weakness of understanding there was in it, Christ was pleased to overlook, and to accept the sincerity and strength of her faith; for he eateth the honey-comb with the honey, So 4:11. She believed she should be healed if she did but touch the very hem of his garment, the very extremity of

it. Note, There is virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ. The holy oil with which the high priest was anointed, ran down to the skirts of his garments, Ps 133:2. Such a fulness of grace is there in Christ, that from it we may all receive, Joh 1:16.

2. Christ's great favour to this woman. He did not suspend (as he might have done) his healing influences, but suffered this bashful patient to steal a cure unknown to any one else, though she could not think to do it unknown to him. And now she was well content to be gone, for she had what she came for, but Christ was not willing to let he to so; he will not only have his power magnified in her cure, but his grace magnified in her comfort and commendation: the triumphs of her faith must be to her praise and honour. He turned about to see for her (Mt 9:22), and soon discovered her. Note, It is great encouragement to humble Christians, that they who hide themselves from men are known to Christ, who sees in secret their applications to heaven when most private. Now here,

(1.) He puts gladness into her heart, by that word, Daughter, be of good comfort. She feared being chidden for coming clandestinely, but she is encouraged. [1.] He calls her daughter, for he spoke to her with the tenderness of a father, as he did to the man sick of the palsy (Mt 9:2), whom he called son. Note, Christ has comforts ready for the daughters of Zion, that are of a sorrowful spirit, as Hannah was, 1Sa 1:15. Believing women are Christ's daughters, and he will own them as such. [2.] He bids her be of good comfort: she has reason to be so, if Christ own her for a daughter. Note, The saints' consolation is founded in their adoption. His bidding her be comforted, brought comfort with it, as his saying, Be ye whole, brought health with it. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be comforted, and it is his prerogative to command comfort to troubled spirits. He creates the fruit of the lips, peace, Isa 57:19.

(2.) He puts honour upon her faith. That grace of all others gives most honour to Christ, and therefore he puts most honour upon it; Thy faith has made thee whole. Thus by faith she obtained a good report. And as of all graces Christ puts the greatest honour upon faith, so of all believers he puts the greatest honour upon those that are most humble; as here on this woman, who had more faith than she thought she had. She had reason to be of good comfort, not only

because she was made whole, but because her faith had made her whole; that is, [1.] She was spiritually healed; that cure was wrought in her which is the proper fruit and effect of faith, the pardon of sin and the work of grace. Note, We may then be abundantly comforted in our temporal mercies when they are accompanied with those spiritual blessings that resemble them; our food and raiment will be comfortable, when by faith we are fed with the bread of life, and clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ; our rest and sleep will be comfortable, when by faith we repose in God, and dwell at ease in him; our health and prosperity will be comfortable, when by faith our souls prosper, and are in health. See Isa 38:16,17. [2.] Her bodily cure was the fruit of faith, of her faith, and that made it a happy, comfortable cure indeed. They out of whom the devils were cast, were helped by Christ's sovereign power; some by the faith of others (as Mt 9:2); but it is thy faith that has made thee whole. Note, Temporal mercies are then comforts indeed to us, when they are received by faith. If, when in pursuit of mercy, we prayed for it in faith, with an eye to the promise, and in dependence upon that, if we desired it for the sake of God's glory, and with a resignation to God's will, and have our hearts enlarged by it in faith, love, and obedience, we may then say, it was received by faith.

And behold a woman, etc. This disease was by the Jews reckoned unclean, (Lev 15:25) and she was unwilling to make personal application to Jesus, or even to touch his person. The disease was regarded as incurable. She had expended all her property, and grew worse, Mk 5:26.

Touched the hem of his garment. This garment was probably the square garment which was thrown over the shoulders. Mt 5:40. This was surrounded by a border, or fringe; and this fringe, or the loose threads hanging down, is what is meant by the hem. The Jews were commanded to wear this ill order to distinguish them from other nations. See Nu 15:38,39, De 22:12.

Mark says that the woman, fearing and trembling, came and told him all the truth. Perhaps she feared that, from the impure nature of her disease, he would be offended that she touched him.

Be of good comfort. Jesus silenced her fears, commended her faith, and sent her away in peace. He used an endearing appellation, calling her daughter, a word of tenderness and affection, and dismissed her who had been twelve long and tedious years labouring under a weakening and offensive disease, now in an instant made whole. Her faith, her strong confidence in Jesus, had been the means of her restoration. It was the power of Jesus that cured her; but that power would not have been exerted but in connexion with faith. So in the salvation of a sinner. No one is saved who does not believe; but faith is the instrument, and not the power, that saves.

22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

And when Jesus came in, etc. Jesus admitted only three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and the father and mother of the damsel, to go in with him where the corpse lay, Mk 5:37-40. It was important that there should be witnesses of the miracle, and he chose a sufficient number. Five witnesses were enough to establish the fact. The witnesses were impartial. The fact that she was dead was established beyond a doubt. Of this the mourners, the parents, the messengers, the people were satisfied. If she was presented to the people alive, the proof of the miracle was complete. The presence of more than the five witnesses would have made the scene tumultuous, and have been less satisfactory evidence of the fact of the restoration of the child. Five sober witnesses are always better than the confused voices of a rabble. These were the same disciples that were with him in the mount of transfiguration and garden of Gethsemane, Mk 9:2, 14:33, 2Pet 1:17,18.

He saw the minstrels and the people making a noise. Minstrels are persons who play on instruments of music. The people of the East

used to bewail the dead by cutting the flesh, tearing the hair, and crying bitterly. See Jer 9:17, 16:6,7, Eze 24:17. The expressions of grief at the death of a friend, in eastern countries, are extreme. As soon as a person dies, all the females in the family set up a loud and doleful cry. They continue it as long as they can without taking breath, and the shriek of wailing dies away in a low sob. Nor do the relatives satisfy themselves with these expressions of violent grief: they hire persons of both sexes, whose employment it is to mourn for the dead in the like frantic manner. See Amos 5:16, Jer 9:20. They sing the virtues of the deceased, recount his acts, dwell on his beauty, strength, or learning; on the comforts of his family and home, and in doleful strains ask him why he left his family and friends. To all this they add soft and melancholy music. They employ minstrels to aid their grief, and increase the expression of their sorrow. This violent grief continues, commonly, eight days. In the case of a king, or other very distinguished personage, it is prolonged through an entire month. This grief does not cease at the house; it is exhibited in the procession to the grave; and the air is rent with the wailings of real and of hired mourners.

The Jews were forbidden to tear their hair and cut their flesh. See Lev 19:28, De 14:1. They showed their grief by howling, by music, by concealing the chin with their garment, by rending the outer garment, by refusing to wash or anoint themselves, or to converse with people, by scattering ashes or dust in the air, or by lying down in them, Job 1:20, 2:12, 2Sam 1:2-4, 14:2, 15:30, Mk 14:63. The expressions of grief, therefore, mentioned on this occasion, though excessive and foolish, were yet strictly in accordance with eastern customs.

The posture in which he found the ruler's house, Mt 9:23. --He saw the people and the minstrels, or musicians, making a noise. The house was in a hurry: such work does death make, when it comes into a family; and, perhaps, the necessary cares that arise at such a time, when our dead is to be decently buried out of our sight, give some useful diversion to that grief which is apt to prevail and play the tyrant. The people in the neighbourhood came together to

condole on account of the loss, to comfort the parents, to prepare for, and attend on, the funeral, which the Jews were not wont to defer long. The musicians were among them, according to the custom of the Gentiles, with their doleful, melancholy tunes, to increase the grief, and stir up the lamentations of those that attended on this occasion; as (they say) is usual among the Irish, with their Ahone, Ahone. Thus they indulged a passion that is apt enough of itself to grow intemperate, and affected to sorrow as those that had no hope. See how religion provides cordials, where irreligion administers corrosives. Heathenism aggravates that grief which Christianity studies to assuage. Or perhaps these musicians endeavoured on the other hand to divert the grief and exhilarate the family; but, as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart. Observe, The parents, who were immediately touched with the affliction, were silent, while the people and minstrels, whose lamentations were forced, made such a noise. Note, The loudest grief is not always the greatest; rivers are most noisy where they run shallow. Ille dolet vere, qui sine teste dolet--That grief is most sincere, which shuns observation. But notice is taken of this, to show that the girl was really dead, in the undoubted apprehension of all about her.

24 he said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

The maid is not dead, but sleepeth. It cannot be supposed that our Lord means literally to say that the child was not dead. Every possible evidence of her death had been given, and he acted on that himself, and conveyed to the people the idea that he raised her from the dead. He meant to speak in opposition to their opinions. It is not unlikely that Jarius and the people favoured the opinions of the Sadducees; and that they understood by her being dead that she had ceased to be, and that she would never be raised up again. In opposition to this he used the expression she sleepeth; affirming mildly both that the body was dead, and implying that her spirit still lived, and that she would be raised up again. A similar mode of speaking is seen in Jn 11:11: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The sacred writers, who hold the doctrine of the resurrection, often spoke of the dead as sleeping, 2Pet 3:4, Acts 7:60, 1Cor 15:6,18 1Thes 4:13-15. The meaning of this passage then is--the maid has not

ceased to exist; but though her body is dead, yet her spirit lives, and she sleeps in the hope of the resurrection.

The rebuke that Christ gave to this hurry and noise, Mt 9:24. He said, Give place. Note, Sometimes, when the sorrow of the world prevails, it is difficult for Christ and his comforts to enter. They that harden themselves in sorrow, and, like Rachel, refuse to be comforted, should think they hear Christ saying to their disquieting thoughts, Give place: "Make room for him who is the Consolation of Israel, and brings with him strong consolations, strong enough to overcome the confusion and tyranny of these worldly griefs, if he may but be admitted into the soul." He gives a good reason why they should not thus disquiet themselves and one another; The maid is not dead but sleepeth. 1. This was eminently true of this maid, that was immediately to be raised to life; she was really dead, but not so to Christ, who knew within himself what he would do, and could do, and who had determined to make her death but as a sleep. There is little more difference between sleep and death, but in continuance; whatever other difference there is, it is but a dream. This death must be but of short continuance, and therefore is but a sleep, like one night's rest. He that quickens the dead, may well call the things which be not as though they were, Ro 4:17. 2. It is in a sense true of all that die, chiefly of them that die in the Lord. Note, (1.) Death is a sleep. All nations and languages, for the softening of that which is so dreadful, and withal so unavoidable, and the reconciling of themselves to it, have agreed to call it so. It is said, even of the wicked kings, that they slept with their fathers; and of those that shall arise to everlasting contempt, that they sleep in the dust, Da 12:2. It is not the sleep of the soul; its activity ceases not; but the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent, regardless and disregarded, wrapt up in darkness and obscurity. Sleep is a short death, and death a long sleep. But the death of the righteous is in a special manner to be looked upon as a sleep, Isa 57:2. They sleep in Jesus (1Th 4:14); they not only rest from the toils and labours of the day, but rest in hope of a joyful waking again in the morning of the resurrection, when they shall wake refreshed, wake to a new life, wake to be richly dressed and crowned, and wake to sleep no more. (2.) The consideration of this should moderate our grief at the death

of our dear relations: "say not, They are lost; no, they are but gone before: say not, They are slain; no, they are but fallen asleep; and the apostle speaks of it as an absurd thing to imagine that they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished (1Co 15:18); give place, therefore, to those comforts which the covenant of grace ministers, fetched from the future state, and the glory to be revealed."

Now could it be thought that such a comfortable word as this, from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, should be ridiculed as it was? They laughed him to scorn. These people lived in Capernaum, knew Christ's character, that he never spake a rash or foolish word; they knew how many mighty works he had done; so that if they did not understand what he meant by this, they might at least have been silent in expectation of the issue. Note, The words and works of Christ which cannot be understood, yet are not therefore to be despised. We must adore the mystery of divine sayings, even when they seem to contradict what we think ourselves most confident of. Yet even this tended to the confirmation of the miracle: for it seems she was so apparently dead, that it was thought a very ridiculous thing to say otherwise.

25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

The raising of the damsel to life by the power of Christ, Mt 9:25. The people were put forth. Note, Scorners that laugh at what they see and hear that is above their capacity, are not proper witnesses of the wonderful works of Christ, the glory of which lies not in pomp, but in power. The widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus, were raised from the dead openly, but this damsel privately; for Capernaum, that had slighted the lesser miracles of restoring health, was unworthy to see the greater, of restoring life; these pearls were not to be cast before those that would trample them under their feet.

Christ went in and took her by the hand, as it were to awake her, and to help her up, prosecuting his own metaphor of her being asleep. The high priest, that typified Christ, was not to come near the dead (Le 21:10,11), but Christ touched the dead. The Levitical priesthood leaves the dead in their uncleanness, and therefore keeps at a distance from them, because it cannot remedy them; but Christ, having power to raise the dead, is above the infection, and therefore

is not shy of touching them. He took her by the hand, and the maid arose. So easily, so effectually was the miracle wrought; not by prayer, as Elijah did (1kI 17:21), and Elisha (2kI 4:33), but by a touch. They did it as servants, he as a Son, as a God, to whom belong the issues from death. Note, Jesus Christ is the Lord of souls, he commands them forth, and commands them back, when and as he pleases. Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ take them by the hand: it is done in the day of his power. He helps us up, or we lie still.

26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

The general notice that was taken of this miracle, though it was wrought privately; Mt 9:26. The fame thereof went abroad into all that land: it was the common subject of discourse. Note, Christ's works are more talked of than considered and improved. And doubtless, they that heard only the report of Christ's miracles, were accountable for that as well as they that were eye-witnesses of them. Though we at this distance have not seen Christ's miracles, yet having an authentic history of them, we are bound, upon the credit of that, to receive his doctrine; and blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed, Joh 20:29.

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on us.

28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

In these verses we have an account of two more miracles wrought together by our Saviour.

I The giving of sight to two blind men, Mt 9:27-31. Christ is the Fountain of light as well as life; and as, by raising the dead, he showed himself to be the same that at first breathed into man the breath of life, so, by giving sight to the blind, he showed himself to

be the same that at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness. Observe,

1 The importunate address of the blind men to Christ. He was returning from the ruler's house to his own lodgings, and these blind men followed him, as beggars do, with their incessant cries, Mt 9:27. He that cured diseases so easily, so effectually, and, withal, at so cheap a rate, shall have patients enough. As for other things, so he is famed for an Oculist. Observe,

(a) The title which these blind men gave to Christ; Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. The promise made to David, that of his loins the Messiah should come, was well known, and the Messiah was therefore commonly called the Son of David. At this time there was a general expectation of his appearing; these blind men know, and own, and proclaim it in the streets of Capernaum, that he is come, and that this is he; which aggravates the folly and sin of the chief priests and Pharisees who denied and opposed him. They could not see him and his miracles, but faith comes by hearing. Note, They who, by the providence of God, are deprived of bodily sight, may yet, by the grace of God, have the eyes of their understanding so enlightened, as to discern those great things of God, which are hid from the wise and prudent.

(b) Their petition, Have mercy on us. It was foretold that the Son of David should be merciful (Ps 72:12,13), and in him shines the tender mercy of our God, Lu 1:78. Note, Whatever our necessities and burthens are, we need no more for supply and support, than a share in the mercy of our Lord Jesus. Whether he heal us or no, if he have mercy on us, we have enough; as to the particular instances and methods of mercy, we may safely and wisely refer ourselves to the wisdom of Christ. They did not each of them say for himself, Have mercy on me, but both for one another, Have mercy on us. Note, It becomes those that are under the same affliction, to concur in the same prayers for relief. Fellow-sufferers should be joint-petitioners. In Christ there is enough for all.

(c) Their importunity in this request; they followed him, crying. It seems, he did not take notice of them at first, for he would try their faith, which he knew to be strong; would quicken their prayers, and make his cures the more valued, when they did not always come at the first word; and would teach us to continue instant in prayer, always to pray, and not to faint: and, though the answer do not come presently, yet to wait for it, and to follow providence, even in those steps and out goings of it which seem to neglect or contradict our prayers. Christ would not heal them publicly in the streets, for this was a cure he would have kept private (Mt 9:30), but when he came into the house, they followed him thither, and came to him. Note, Christ's doors are always open to believing and importunate petitioners; it seemed rude in them to rush into the house after him, when he desired to retire; but, such is the tenderness of our Lord Jesus, that they were not more bold than welcome.

2 The confession of faith, which Christ drew from them upon this occasion. When they came to him for mercy, he asked them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? Note, Faith is the great condition of Christ's favours. They who would receive the mercy of Christ, must firmly believe the power of Christ. What we would have him do for us, we must be fully assured that he is able to do. They followed Christ, and followed him crying, but the great question is, Do ye believe? Nature may work fervency, but it is only grace that can work faith; spiritual blessings are obtained only by faith. They had intimated their faith in the office of Christ as Son of David, and in his mercy; but Christ demands likewise a profession of faith in his power. Believe ye that I am able to do this; to bestow this favour; to give sight to the blind, as well as to cure the palsy and raise the dead? Note, It is good to be particular in the exercise of faith, to apply the general assurances of God's power and good will, and the general promises, to our particular exigencies. All shall work for good, and if all, then this. "Believe ye that I am able, not only to prevail with God for it, as a prophet, but that I am able to do it by my own power?" This will amount to their belief of his being not only the Son of David, but the Son of God; for it is God's prerogative to open the eyes of the blind (Ps 146:8); he makes the seeing eye, Ex 4:11.

Job was eyes to the blind (Job 29:15); was to them instead of eyes, but he could not give eyes to the blind. Still it is put to us, Believe we that Christ is able to do for us, by the power of his merit and intercession in heaven, of his Spirit and grace in the heart, and of his providence and dominion in the world? To believe the power of Christ is not only to assure ourselves of it, but to commit ourselves to it, and encourage ourselves in it.

To this question they give an immediate answer, without hesitation: they said, Yea, Lord. Though he had kept them in suspense awhile, and had not helped them at first, they honestly imputed that to his wisdom, not to his weakness, and were still confident of his ability. Note, The treasures of mercy that are laid up in the power of Christ, are laid out and wrought for those that trust in him, Ps 31:19.

3. The cure that Christ wrought on them; he touched their eyes, Mt 9:29. This he did to encourage their faith, which, by his delay, he had tried, and to show that he gives sight to blind souls by the operations of his grace accompanying the word, anointing the eyes with eye-salve: and he put the cure upon their faith, According to your faith be it unto you. When they begged for a cure, he enquired into their faith (Mt 9:28), Believe ye that I am able? He did not enquire into their wealth, whether they were able to pay him for a cure; nor into their reputation, should he get credit by curing them; but into their faith; and now they had professed their faith he referred the matter to that: "I know you do believe, and the power you believe in shall be exerted for you; According to your faith be it unto you." This speaks,

(a) His knowledge of the sincerity of their faith, and his acceptance and approbation of it. Note, It is a great comfort to true believers, that Jesus Christ knows their faith, and is well pleased with it. Though it be weak, though others do not discern it, though they themselves are ready to question it, it is known to him.

(b) His insisting upon their faith as necessary; "If you believe, take what you come for." Note, They who apply themselves to Jesus

Christ, shall be dealt with according to their faith; not according to their fancies, nor according to their profession, but according to their faith; that is, unbelievers cannot expect to find any favour with God, but true believers may be sure to find all that favour which is offered in the gospel; and our comforts ebb or flow, according as our faith is stronger or weaker; we are not straitened in Christ, let us not then be straitened in ourselves.

4. The charge he gave them to keep it private (Mt 9:30), See that no man know it. He gave them this charge,

(a) To set us an example of that humility and lowliness of mind, which he would have us to learn of him. Note, In the good we do, we must not seek our own praise, but only the glory of God. It must be more our care and endeavour to be useful, than to be known and observed to be so, Pr 20:6,25:27 Thus Christ seconded the rule he had given, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.

(b) Some think that Christ, in keeping it private, showed his displeasure against the people of Capernaum, who had seen so many miracles, and yet believed not. Note, The silencing of those who should proclaim the works of Christ is a judgment to any place or people: and it is just in Christ to deny the means of conviction to those that are obstinate in their infidelity; and to shroud the light from those that shut their eyes against it.

(c) He did it in discretion, for his own preservation; because the more he was proclaimed, the more jealous would the rulers of the Jews be of his growing interest among the people.

(d) Dr. Whitby gives another reason, which is very considerable, why Christ sometimes concealed his miracles, and afterwards forbid the publishing of his transfiguration; because he would not indulge that pernicious conceit which obtained among the Jews, that their Messiah should be a temporal prince, and so give occasion to the people to attempt the setting up of his kingdom, by tumults and seditions, as they offered to do, Joh 6:15. But when, after his

resurrection (which was the full proof of his mission), his spiritual kingdom was set up, then that danger was over, and they must be published to all nations. And he observes, that the miracles which Christ wrought among the Gentiles and the Gadarenes, were ordered to be published, because with them there was not that danger.

But honour is like the shadow, which, as it flees from those that follow it, so it follows those that flee from it (Mt 9:31); They spread abroad his fame. This was more an act of zeal, than of prudence; and though it may be excused as honestly meant for the honour of Christ, yet it cannot be justified, being done against a particular charge. Whenever we profess to direct our intention to the glory of God, we must see to it that the action be according to the will of God.

30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*.

31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

A Dumb Man Speaks

32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

The healing of a dumb man, that was possessed with a devil. And here observe,

1. His case, which was very sad. He was under the power of the devil in this particular instance, that he was disabled from speaking, Mt 9:32. See the calamitous state of this world, and how various the afflictions of the afflicted are! We have no sooner dismissed two blind men, but we meet with a dumb man. How thankful should we be to God for our sight and speech! See the malice of Satan against mankind, and in how many ways he shows it. This man's dumbness was the effect of his being possessed with a devil; but it was better he should be unable to say any thing, than be forced to say, as those demoniacs did (Mt 8:29), What have we to do with thee? Of the two,

better a dumb devil than a blaspheming one. When the devil gets possession of a soul, it is made silent as to any thing that is good; dumb in prayers and praises, which the devil is a sworn enemy to. This poor creature they brought to Christ, who entertained not only those that came of themselves in their own faith, but those that were brought to him by their friends in the faith of others. Though the just shall live eternally by his faith, yet temporal mercies may be bestowed on us with an eye to their faith who are intercessors on our behalf. They brought him in just as the blind man went out. See how unwearied Christ was in doing good; how closely one good work followed another! Treasures of mercy, wondrous mercy, are hid in him; which may be continually communicated, but can never be exhausted.

2. His cure, which was very sudden (Mt 9:33), When the devil was cast out, the dumb spake. Note, Christ's cures strike at the root, and remove the effect by taking away the cause; they open the lips, by breaking Satan's power in the soul. In sanctification he heals the waters by casting salt into the spring. When Christ, by his grace, casts the devil out of a soul, presently the dumb speaks. When Paul was converted, behold, he prays; then the dumb spake.

3. The consequences of this cure.

(a) The multitudes marvelled; and well they might; though few believed, many wondered. The admiration of the common people is sooner raised than any other affection. It was foretold, that the new song, the New-Testament song, should be sung for marvellous works, Ps 98:1. They said, It was never so seen in Israel, and therefore never so seen any where; for no people experienced such wonders of mercy as Israel did. There had been those in Israel that were famous for working miracles, but Christ excelled them all. The miracles Moses wrought had reference to Israel as a people, but Christ's were brought home to particular persons.

(b) The Pharisees blasphemed, Mt 9:34. When they could not gainsay the convincing evidence of these miracles, they fathered

them upon the devil, as if they had been wrought by compact and collusion: he casteth out devils (say they) by the prince of the devils--a suggestion horrid beyond expression; we shall hear more of it afterwards, and Christ's answer to it (Mt 12:25); only observe here, how evil men and seducers wax worse and worse (2Ti 3:13), and it is both their sin and their punishment. Their quarrels with Christ for taking upon him to forgive sin (Mt 9:3), for conversing with publicans and sinners, (Mt 9:11), for not fasting (Mt 9:14), though spiteful enough, yet had some colour of piety, purity, and devotion in them; but this (which they are left to, to punish them for those) breathes nothing but malice and falsehood, and hellish enmity in the highest degree; it is diabolism all over, and was therefore justly pronounced unpardonable. Because the people marvelled, they must say something to diminish the miracle, and this was all they could say.

34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

The Harvest Is Plenteous

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Observe how Christ in his preaching had respect,

1. To the private towns. He visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages; there he preached, there he healed. The souls of those that are meanest in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be to us, as the souls of those that make the greatest figure. Rich and poor meet together in him, citizens and boors: his righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages must be rehearsed, Jdg 5:11.

2. To the public worship. He taught in their synagogues,

(1.) That he might bear a testimony to solemn assemblies, even then when there were corruptions in them. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

(2.) That he might have an opportunity of preaching there, where people were gathered together, with an expectation to hear. Thus, even where the gospel church was founded, and Christian meetings erected, the apostles often preached in the synagogues of the Jews. It is the wisdom of the prudent, to make the best of that which is.

36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the laborers *are* few;

38 pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

II. A preface, or introduction, to the account in the following chapter, of his sending forth his apostles. He took notice of the multitude (Mt 9:36); not only of the crowds that followed him, but of the vast numbers of people with whom (as he passed along) he observed the country to be replenished; he noticed what nests of souls the towns and cities were, and how thick of inhabitants; what abundance of people there were in every synagogue, and what places of concourse the openings of the gates were: so very populous was that nation now grown; and it was the effect of God's blessing on Abraham. Seeing this,

1. He pities them, and was concerned for them (Mt 9:36); He was moved with compassion on them; not upon a temporal account, as he pities the blind, and lame, and sick; but upon a spiritual account; he was concerned to see them ignorant and careless, and ready to perish for lack of vision. Note, Jesus Christ is a very compassionate friend to precious souls; here his bowels do in a special manner yearn. It was pity to souls that brought him from heaven to earth, and there to the cross. Misery is the object of mercy; and the miseries of sinful, self-destroying souls, are the greatest miseries: Christ pities those most that pity themselves least; so should we. The most Christian compassion is compassion to souls; it is most Christ-like. See what moved this pity.

(a) They fainted; they were destitute, vexed, wearied. They strayed, so some; were loosed one from another; The staff of bands was broken, Zec 11:14. They wanted help for their souls, and had none at hand that was good for any thing. The scribes and Pharisees filled them with vain notions, burthened them with the traditions of the elders, deluded them into many mistakes, while they were not instructed in their duty, nor acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law; therefore they fainted; for what spiritual health, and life, and vigour can there be in those souls, that are fed with husks and ashes, instead of the bread of life? Precious souls faint when duty is to be done, temptations to be resisted, afflictions to be borne, being not nourished up with the word of truth.

(b) They were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. That expression is borrowed from 1Ki 22:17, and it sets forth the sad condition of those that are destitute of faithful guides to go before them in the things of God. No creature is more apt to go astray than a sheep, and when gone astray more helpless, shiftless, and exposed, or more unapt to find the way home again: sinful souls are as lost sheep; they need the care of shepherds to bring them back. The teachers the Jews then had pretended to be shepherds, yet Christ says they had not shepherds, for they were worse than none; idle shepherds that led them away, instead of leading them back, and fleeced the flock, instead of feeding it: such shepherds as were described, Jer 23:1,Eze 34:2, &c. Note, The case of those people is very pitiable, who either have no ministers at all, or those that are as bad as none; that seek their own things, not the things of Christ and souls.

2. He excited his disciples to pray for them. His pity put him upon devising means for the good of these people. It appears (Lu 6:12,13) that upon this occasion, before he sent out his apostles, he did himself spend a great deal of time in prayer. Note, Those we pity we should pray for. Having spoken to God for them he turns to his disciples, and tells them,

(a) How the case stood; The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. People desired good preaching, but there were few good preachers. There was a great deal of work to be done, and a great deal of good likely to be done, but there wanted hands to do it.

[1.] It was an encouragement, that the harvest was so plenteous. It was not strange, that there were multitudes that needed instruction, but it was what does not often happen, that they who needed it, desired it, and were forward to receive it. They that were ill taught were desirous to be better taught; people's expectations were raised, and there was such a moving of affections, as promised well. Note, It is a blessed thing, to see people in love with good preaching. The valleys are then covered over with corn, and there are hopes it may be well gathered in. That is a gale of opportunity, that calls for a double care and diligence in the improvement of it; a harvest-day should be a busy day.

[2.] It was a pity when it was so that the labourers should be so few; that the corn should shed and spoil, and rot upon the ground for want of reapers; loiterers many, but labourers very few. Note, It is ill with the church, when good work stands still, or goes slowly on, for want of good workmen; when it is so, the labourers that there are have need to be very busy.

(b) What was their duty in this case (Mt 9:38); Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest. Note, The melancholy aspect of the times and the deplorable state of precious souls, should much excite and quicken prayer. When things look discouraging, we should pray more, and then we should complain and fear less. And we should adapt our prayers to the present exigencies of the church; such an understanding we ought to have of the times, as to know, not only what Israel ought to do, but what Israel ought to pray for. Note,

[1.] God is the Lord of the harvest; my Father is the Husbandman, Joh 15:1. It is the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, Isa 5:7. It is for him

and to him, and to his service and honour, that the harvest is gathered in. Ye are God's husbandry (1Co 3:9); his threshing, and the corn of his floor, Isa 21:10. He orders every thing concerning the harvest as he pleases; when and where the labourers shall work, and how long; and it is very comfortable to those who wish well to the harvest-work, that God himself presides in it, who will be sure to order all for the best.

[2.] Ministers are and should be labourers in God's harvest; the ministry is a work and must be attended to accordingly; it is harvest-work, which is needful work; work that requires every thing to be done in its season, and diligence to do it thoroughly; but it is pleasant work; they reap in joy, and the joy of the preachers of the gospel is likened to the joy of harvest (Isa 9:2,3); and he that reapeth receiveth wages; the hire of the labourers that reap down God's field, shall not be kept back, as theirs was, Jam 5:4.

[3.] It is God's work to send forth labourers; Christ makes ministers (Eph 4:11); the office is of his appointing, the qualifications of his working, the call of his giving. They will not be owned nor paid as labourers, that run without their errand, unqualified, uncalled. How shall they preach except they be sent?

[4.] All that love Christ and souls, should show it by their earnest prayers to God, especially when the harvest is plenteous, that he would send forth more skillful, faithful, wise, and industrious labourers into his harvest; that he would raise up such as he will own in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; would give them a spirit for the work, call them to it, and succeed them in it; that he would give them wisdom to win souls; that he would thrust forth labourers, so some; intimating unwillingness to go forth, because of their own weakness and the people's badness, and opposition from men, that endeavour to thrust them out of the harvest; but we should pray that all contradiction from within and from without, may be conquered and got over. Christ puts his friends upon praying this, just before he sends apostles forth to labour in the harvest. Note, It is a good sign God is about to bestow some special

mercy upon a people, when he stirs up those that have an interest at the throne of grace, to pray for it, Ps 10:17. Further observe, that Christ said this to his disciples, who were to be employed as labourers. They must pray, First, That God would send them forth. Here am I, send me, Isa 6:8. Note, Commissions, given in answer to prayer, are most likely to be successful; Paul is a chosen vessel, for behold he prays, Ac 9:11,15. Secondly, That he would send others forth. Note, Not the people only, but those who are themselves ministers, should pray for the increase of ministers. Though self-interest makes those that seek their own things desirous to be placed alone (the fewer ministers the more preferments), yet those that seek the things of Christ, desire more workmen, that more work may be done, though they be eclipsed by it.

Matthew-10

Jesus Chooses the Twelve

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, etc. This account of sending the apostles forth is recorded also in Mk 6:7-11, Lk 9:1-6. Mark says that he sent them out two and two. This was a kind arrangement, that each one might have a companion; and that they might visit more places, and accomplish more labour, than if they were all together. These twelve were the original number of apostles. The word apostle means one that is sent, and was given to them because they were sent forth to preach the gospel. They were ambassadors of Christ. To this number Matthias was afterwards added, to supply the place of Judas, Acts 1:26. And Paul was specially called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, Rom 1:1, 1Cor 15:8,9, Gal 1:1. So that there were in all fourteen apostles.

In selecting twelve at first, it is probable that he was somewhat guided by the number of the tribes of Israel. Twelve was, with them, a well-known number, and it was natural that he should select one for every tribe. Their office was clearly made known. They were to heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the gospel, etc. They were to be with him, receive his instructions, learn the nature of his religion, be witnesses of his resurrection, and bear his gospel then around the globe. The number twelve was the best for these purposes that could be selected. It was sufficiently large to answer the purpose of testimony; and it was so small as not to be disorderly, or easily divided into parties or factions. They were not learned men, and could not be supposed to spread their religion by art or talents. They were not men of wealth, and could not bribe men to follow them. They were not men of rank and office, and could not compel men to believe. They were just such men as are always found the best witnesses in courts of justice--plain men, of good sense, of fair character, of great honesty, and with favourable opportunities of ascertaining the facts to which they bore witness. Such men everybody believes, and especially when they are willing to lay down their lives to prove their sincerity.

It was important that ho should choose them early in his ministry, that they might be fully acquainted with him; might treasure up his instructions, and observe his manner of life and his person, that by having been long acquainted with him they might be able to testify to his identity, and be competent witnesses of his resurrection. No witnesses were ever so well qualified to give testimony as they; and none ever gave so much evidence of their sincerity as they did. See Acts 1:21,22.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is
called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his
brother;
3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the*
son of Alpheus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus;
4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Into the way of the Gentiles. That is, among the Gentiles, or nowhere but among the Jews. The full time for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was not come. It was proper that it should be first preached to the Jews, the ancient covenant people of God, and the people among whom the Messiah was born. He afterwards gave them a charge to go into all the world, Mt 28:19.

And into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, The Samaritans occupied the country formerly belonging to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. This region was situated between Jerusalem and Galilee; so that in passing from the one to the other, it was a direct course to pass through Samaria; so that they could not avoid going into the way of the Samaritans, but they must not enter into any of their cities. The capital of the country was Samaria, formerly a large and splendid city; It was situated about fifteen miles to the north-west of the city of Shechem or Sychar, Jn 4:6, and about forty miles to the north of Jerusalem. For a description of this city, Is 28:1. Sychar or Shechem was also a city in the limits of Samaria.

This people was formerly composed of a few of the ten tribes, and a mixture of foreigners. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity to Babylon, the king of Assyria sent people from Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, to inhabit their country, 2Kgs 17:24, Ezr 4:2-11. These people at first worshipped the idols of their own nations. But being troubled with lions, which had increased greatly while the country remained uninhabited, they supposed it was because they had not honoured the God of the country. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Babylon, to instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed partially from the books of Moses; but still retained many of their old rites and idolatrous customs, and embraced a religion made up of Judaism and idolatry, 2Kgs 17:26-28.

The grounds of difference between the two nations were the following :--

(1.) The Jews, after their return from Babylon, set about rebuilding their temple. The Samaritans offered to aid them. The Jews, however, perceiving that it was not from a love of true religion, but that they might obtain a part of the favors granted to the Jews by Cyrus, rejected their offer. The consequence was, that a state of long and bitter animosity arose between them and the Jews.

(2.) While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans used every art to thwart him in his undertaking, Neh 6:1-14.

(3.) The Samaritans at length obtained leave of the Persian monarch to build a temple for themselves. This was erected on Mount Gerizim, and they strenuously contended that that was the place designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, constituted his son-in-law, Manasses, high priest. The religion of the Samaritans thus became perpetuated, and an irreconcilable hatred arose between them and the Jews. Jn 4:20.

(4.) Afterwards Samaria became a place of resort for all the outlaws of Judea. They received willingly all the Jewish criminals, and refugees from justice. The violators of the Jewish laws, and those who had been excommunicated, betook themselves for safety to Samaria, and greatly increased their numbers and the hatred which subsisted between the two nations.

(5.) The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses, and rejected the writings of the prophets, and all the Jewish traditions. From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded them as the worst of the human race, (Jn 8:48) and had no dealings with them, Jn 4:9.

Our Saviour, however, preached the gospel to them afterwards, (Jn 4:6-26) and the apostles imitated his example, Acts 8:25. The gospel was, however, first preached to the Jews.

6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. To them Christ appropriated his own ministry (Mt 15:24), for he was a minister of the circumcision (Ro 15:8): and, therefore, to them the apostles, who were but his attendants and agents, must be confined. The first offer of salvation must be made to the Jews, Ac 3:26. Note, Christ had a particular and very tender concern for the house of Israel; they were beloved for the fathers' sakes, Ro 11:28. He looked with compassion upon them as lost sheep, whom he, as a shepherd, was to gather out of the by-paths of sin and error, into which they were gone astray, and in which, if not brought back, they would wander endlessly; see Jer 2:6.

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The preaching work which he appointed them. He did not send them forth without an errand; no, As ye go, preach, Mt 10:7. They were to be itinerant preachers: wherever they come they must proclaim the beginning of the gospel, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Not that they must say nothing else, but this must be their text; on this subject they must enlarge: let people know, that the kingdom of the Messiah, who is the Lord from heaven, is now to be set up according to the scriptures; from whence it follows, that men must repent of their sins and forsake them, that they might be admitted to the privileges of that kingdom. It is said (Mk 6:12), they went out, and preached that men should repent; which was the proper use and application of this doctrine, concerning the approach of the kingdom of heaven. They must, therefore, expect to hear more of this long-looked-for Messiah shortly, and must be ready to receive his doctrine, to believe in him, and to submit to his yoke. The preaching of this was like the morning light, to give notice of the approach of the rising sun. How unlike was this to the preaching of Jonah, which proclaimed ruin at hand! Jon 3:4. This proclaims salvation at hand, nigh them that fear God; mercy and truth meet together (Ps 85:9,10), that is, the kingdom of heaven at hand: not so much the personal presence of the king; that must not be doated upon; but a spiritual

kingdom which is to be set up, when his bodily presence is removed, in the hearts of men.

Now this was the same that John the Baptist and Christ had preached before. Note, People need to have good truths pressed again and again upon them, and if they be preached and heard with new affections, they are as if they were fresh to us. Christ, in the gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb 13:8. Afterwards, indeed, when the Spirit was poured out, and the Christian church was formed, this kingdom of heaven came, which was now spoken of as at hand; but the kingdom of heaven must still be the subject of our preaching: now it is come, we must tell people it is come to them, and must lay before them the precepts and privileges of it; and there is a kingdom of glory yet to come, which we must speak of as at hand, and quicken people to diligence from the consideration of that.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils:
freely ye have received, freely give.

The power he gave them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, Mt 10:8. When he- sent them to preach the same doctrine that he had preached, he empowered them to confirm it, by the same divine seals, which could never be set to a lie. This is not necessary now the kingdom of God is come; to call for miracles now is to lay again the foundation when the building is reared. The point being settled, and the doctrine of Christ sufficiently attested, by the miracles which Christ and his apostles wrought, it is tempting God to ask for more signs. They are directed here,

1. To use their power in doing good: not "Go and remove mountains," or "fetch fire from heaven," but, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers. They are sent abroad as public blessings, to intimate to the world, that love and goodness were the spirit and genius of that gospel which they came to preach, and of that kingdom which they were employed to set up. By this it would appear, that they were the servants of that God who is good and does good, and whose mercy is over all his works; and that the intention of the doctrine they preached, was to heal sick souls, and to raise those that were dead in sin; and therefore, perhaps, that of raising the dead is mentioned; for

though we read not of their raising any to life before the resurrection of Christ, yet they were instrumental to raise many to spiritual life.

2. In doing good freely; Freely ye heave received, freely give. Those that had power to heal all diseases, had an opportunity to enrich themselves; who would not purchase such easy certain cures at any rate? Therefore they are cautioned not to make a gain of the power they had to work miracles: they must cure gratis, further to exemplify the nature and complexion of the gospel kingdom, which is made up, not only of grace, but of free grace. Gratia gratis data (Ro 3:24), freely by his grace, Buy medicines without money, and without price, Isa 55:1. And the reason is, because freely you have received. Their power to heal the sick cost them nothing, and, therefore, they must not make any secular advantage to themselves of it. Simon Magus would not have offered money for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, if he had not hoped to get money by them; Ac 8:18. Note, The consideration of Christ's freeness in doing good to us, should make us free in doing good to others.

9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses;
10 nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

The provision that must be made for them in this expedition; it is a thing to be considered in sending an ambassador, who must bear the charge of the embassy. As to that,

1. They must make no provision for it themselves, Mt 10:9,10. Provide neither gold nor silver. As, on the one hand, they shall not raise estates by their work, so, on the other hand, they shall not spend what little they have of their own upon it. This was confined to the present mission, and Christ would teach them, (1.) To act under the conduct of human prudence. They were now to make but a short excursion, and were soon to return to their Master, and to their head-quarters again, and, therefore, why should they burthen themselves with that which they would have no occasion for? (2.) To act in dependence upon Divine Providence. They must be taught to live, without taking thought for life, Mt 6:25, &c. Note, They who go upon Christ's errand, have, of all people, most reason to trust him for food convenient. Doubtless he will not be wanting to

those that are working for him. Those whom he employs, as they are taken under special protection, so they are entitled to special provisions. Christ's hired servants shall have bread enough and to spare; while we abide faithful to God and our duty, and are in care to do our work well, we may cast all our other care upon God; Jehovah-jireh, let the Lord provide for us and ours as he thinks fit.

2. They might expect that those to whom they were sent would provide for them what was necessary, Mt 10:10. The workman is worthy of his meat. They must not expect to be fed by miracles, as Elijah was: but they might depend upon God to incline the hearts of those they went among, to be kind to them, and provide for them. Though they who serve at the altar may not expect to grow rich by the altar, yet they may expect to live, and to live comfortably upon it, 1Co 9:13,14. It is fit they should have their maintenance from their work. Ministers are, and must be, workmen, labourers, and they that are so are worthy of their meat, so as not to be forced to any other labour for the earning of it. Christ would have his disciples, as not to distrust their God, so not to distrust their countrymen, so far as to doubt of a comfortable subsistence among them. If you preach to them, and endeavour to do good among them, surely they will give you meat and drink enough for your necessities: and if they do, never desire dainties; God will pay you your wages hereafter, and it will be running on in the mean time.

11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

12 And when ye come into a house, salute it.

13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

The proceedings they were to observe in dealing with any place, Mt 10:11-15. They went abroad they knew not whither, uninvited, unexpected, knowing none, and known of none; the land of their nativity was to them a strange land; what rule must they go by? what course must they take? Christ would not send them out without full instructions, and here they are.

1. They are here directed how to conduct themselves toward those that were strangers to them; How to do,

(a) In strange towns and cities: when you come to a town, enquire who in it is worthy.

[1.] It is supposed that there were some such in every place, as were better disposed than others to receive the gospel, and the preachers of it; though it was a time of general corruption and apostasy. Note, In the worst of times and places, we may charitably hope that there are some who distinguish themselves, and are better than their neighbours; some who swim against the stream, and are as wheat among the chaff. There were saints in Nero's household. Enquire who is worthy, who there are that have some fear of God before their eyes, and have made a good improvement of the light and knowledge they have. The best are far from meriting the favour of a gospel offer; but some would be more likely than others to give the apostles and their message a favourable entertainment, and would not trample these pearls under their feet. Note, Previous dispositions to that which is good, are both directions and encouragements to ministers, in dealing with people. There is most hope of the word being profitable to those who are already so well inclined, as that it is acceptable to them; and there is here and there one such.

[2.] They must enquire out such; not enquire for the best inns; public houses were no proper places for them that neither took money with them (Mt 10:9), nor expected to receive any (Mt 10:8); but they must look out for accommodations in private houses, with those that would entertain them well, and expect no other recompence for it but a prophet's reward, an apostle's reward, their praying and preaching. Note, They that entertain the gospel, must neither grudge the expense of it, nor promise themselves to get by it in this world. They must enquire, not who is rich, but who is worthy; not who is the best gentleman, but who is the best man. Note, Christ's disciples, wherever they come, should ask for the good people of the place, and be acquainted with them; when we took God for our God, we took his people for our people, and like will rejoice in its like. Paul in all his travels found out the brethren,

if there were any, Ac 28:14. It is implied, that if they did enquire who was worthy, they might discover them. They that were better than their neighbours would be taken notice of, and any one could tell them, there lives an honest, sober, good man; for this is a character which, like the ointment of the right hand, betrays itself and fills the house with its odours. Every body knew where the seer's house was, 1Sa 9:18.

[3.] In the house of those they found worthy, they must continue; which intimates that they were to make so short a stay at each town, that they needed not change their lodging, but whatever house providence brought them to at first, there they must continue till they left that town. They are justly suspected, as having no good design, that are often changing their quarters. Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to make the best of that which is, to abide by it, and not be for shifting upon every dislike or inconvenience.

(b) In strange houses. When they had found the house of one they thought worthy, they must at their entrance salute it. "In those common civilities, be beforehand with people, in token of your humility. Think it not a disparagement, to invite yourselves into a house, nor stand upon the punctilio of being invited. Salute the family,

[1.] To draw on further discourse, and so to introduce your message." (From matters of common conversation, we may insensibly pass into that communication which is good to the use of edifying.)

[2.] "To try whether you are welcome or not; you will take notice whether the salutation be received with shyness and coldness, or with a ready return. He that will not receive your salutation kindly, will not receive your message kindly; for he that is unskilful and unfaithful in a little, will also be in much, Lu 16:10.

[3.] To insinuate yourselves into their good opinion. Salute the family, that they may see that though you are serious, you are not

morose." Note, Religion teaches us to be courteous and civil, and obliging to all with whom we have to do. Though the apostles went out backed with the authority of the Son of God himself, yet their instructions were, when they came into a house, not to command it, but to salute it; for love's sake rather to beseech, is the evangelical way, Phile 1:8,9. Souls are first drawn to Christ with the cords of a man, and kept to him by the bands of love, Ho 11:4. When Peter made the first offer of the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, Peter was first saluted; see Ac 10:25, for the Gentiles courted that which the Jews were courted to.

When they had saluted the family after a godly sort, they must by the return, judge concerning the family, and proceed accordingly. Note, The eye of God is upon us, to observe what entertainment we give to good people and good ministers; if the house be worthy, let your peace come and rest upon it; if not, let it return to you, Mt 10:13. It seems then, that after they had enquired for the most worthy (Mt 10:11), it was possible they might light upon those that were unworthy. Note, Though it is wisdom to hearken to, yet it is folly to rely upon, common report and opinion; we ought to use a judgment of discretion, and to see with our own eyes. The wisdom of the prudent is himself to understand his own way. Now this rule is intended,

First, For satisfaction to the apostles. The common salutation was, Peace be unto you; this, as they used it, was turned into gospel; it was the peace of God, the peace of the kingdom of heaven, that they wished. Now lest they should make a scruple of pronouncing this blessing upon all promiscuously, because many were utterly unworthy of it, this is to clear them of that scruple; Christ tells them that this gospel prayer (for so it was now become) should be put up for all, as the gospel proffer was made to all indefinitely, and that they should leave it to God who knows the heart, and every man's true character, to determine the issue of it. If the house be worthy, it will reap the benefit of your blessing; if now, there is no harm done, you will not lose the benefit of it; it shall return to you, as David's prayers for his ungrateful enemies did, Ps 35:13. Note, It

becomes us to judge charitably of all, to pray heartily for all, and to conduct ourselves courteously to all, for that is our part, and then to leave it with God to determine what effect it shall have upon them, for that is his part.

Secondly, For direction to them. "If, upon your salutation, it appear that they are indeed worthy, let them have more of your company, and so let your peace come upon them; preach the gospel to them, peace by Jesus Christ; but if otherwise, if they carry it rudely to you, and shut their doors against you, let your peace, as much as in you lies, return to you. Retract what you have said, and turn your backs upon them; by slighting this, they have made themselves unworthy of the rest of your favours, and cut themselves short of them." Note, Great blessings are often lost by a neglect seemingly small and inconsiderable, when men are in their probation and upon their behaviour. Thus Esau lost his birthright (Ge 25:34), and Saul his kingdom, 1Sa 13:13,14.

2. They are here directed how to carry it towards those that were refusers of them. The case is put (Mt 10:14) of those that would not receive them, nor hear their words. The apostles might think, that now they had such a doctrine to preach, and such a power to work miracles for the confirmation of it, no doubt but they should be universally entertained and made welcome: they are, therefore, told before, that there would be those that would slight them, and put contempt on them and their message. Note, The best and most powerful preachers of the gospel must expect to meet with some, that will not so much as give them the hearing, nor show them any token of respect. Many turn a deaf ear, even to the joyful sound, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmers, charm they never so wisely. Observe, "They will not receive you, and they will not hear your words." Note, Contempt of the gospel, and contempt of gospel ministers, commonly go together, and they will either of them be construed into a contempt of Christ, and will be reckoned for accordingly. Now in this case we have here,

(a) The directions given to the apostles what to do. They must depart out of that house or city. Note, The gospel will not tarry long with those that put it away from them. At their departure they must shake off the dust of their feet,

[1.] In detestation of their wickedness; it was so abominable, that it did even pollute the ground they went upon, which must therefore be shaken off as a filthy thing. The apostles must have no fellowship nor communion with them; must not so much as carry away the dust of their city with them. The work of them that turn aside shall not cleave to me, Ps 101:3. The prophet was not to eat or drink in Bethel, 1Ki 13:9.

[2.] As a denunciation of wrath against them. It was to signify, that they were base and vile as dust, and that God would shake them off. The dust of the apostles' feet, which they left behind them, would witness against them, and be brought in as evidence, that the gospel had been preached to them, Mk 6:11,Jam 5:3. See this practised, Ac 13:51,18:6. Note, They who despise God and his gospel shall be lightly esteemed.

(b) The doom passed upon such wilful recusants, Mt 10:15. It shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom, as wicked a place as it was. Note,

[1.] There is a day of judgment coming, when all those that refused the gospel will certainly be called to account for it; however they now make a jest of it. They that would not hear the doctrine that would save them, shall be made to hear the sentence that will ruin them. Their judgment is respited till that day.

[2.] There are different degrees of punishment in that day. All the pains of hell will be intolerable; but some will be more so than others. Some sinners sink deeper into hell than others, and are beaten with more stripes.

[3.] The condemnation of those that reject the gospel, will in that day be severer and heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom is said to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 1:7. But that vengeance will come with an aggravation upon those that despise the great salvation. Sodom and Gomorrah were exceedingly wicked (Ge 13:13), and that which filled up the measure of their iniquity was, that they received not the angels that were sent to them, but abused them (Ge 19:4,5), and hearkened not to their words, Mt 10:14. And yet it will be more tolerable for them than for those who receive not Christ's ministers and hearken not to their words. God's wrath against them will be more flaming, and their own reflections upon themselves more cutting. Son, remember I will sound most dreadfully in the ears of such as had a fair offer made them of eternal life, and chose death rather. The iniquity of Israel, when God sent them his servants the prophets, is represented as, upon that account, more heinous than the iniquity of Sodom (Eze 16:48,49), much more now he sent them his Son, the great Prophet.

14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Coming Persecutions

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Our Lord warned his disciples to prepare for persecution. They were to avoid all things which gave advantage to their enemies, all meddling with worldly or political concerns, all appearance of evil or selfishness, and all underhand measures. Christ foretold troubles, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise, but that they might confirm their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom. Thus Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost. Persecutors are worse than beasts, in that they prey upon those

of their own kind. The strongest bonds of love and duty, have often been broken through from enmity against Christ. Sufferings from friends and relations are very grievous; nothing cuts more. It appears plainly, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; and we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations. With these predictions of trouble, are counsels and comforts for a time of trial. The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and they need the serpent's wisdom. Be ye harmless as doves. Not only, do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill-will. Prudent care there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing thought; let this care be cast upon God. The disciples of Christ must think more how to do well, than how to speak well. In case of great peril, the disciples of Christ may go out of the way of danger, though they must not go out of the way of duty. No sinful, unlawful means may be used to escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. The fear of man brings a snare, a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be striven and prayed against. Tribulation, distress, and persecution cannot take away God's love to them, or theirs to him. Fear Him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They must deliver their message publicly, for all are deeply concerned in the doctrine of the gospel. The whole counsel of God must be made known, Act_20:27. Christ shows them why they should be of good cheer. Their sufferings witnessed against those who oppose his gospel. When God calls us to speak for him, we may depend on him to teach us what to say. A believing prospect of the end of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. They may be borne to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them. The strength shall be according to the day. And it is great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. See how the care of Providence extends to all creatures, even to the sparrows. This should silence all the fears of God's people; Ye are of more value than many sparrows. And the very hairs of your head are all numbered. This denotes the account God takes and keeps of his people. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as

in serving him. That denial of Christ only is here meant which is persisted in, and that confession only can have the blessed recompence here promised, which is the real and constant language of faith and love. Religion is worth every thing; all who believe the truth of it, will come up to the price, and make every thing else yield to it. Christ will lead us through sufferings, to glory with him. Those are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life. Though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be ever so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted. Christ does not say that they deserve a reward; for we cannot merit any thing from the hand of God; but they shall receive a reward from the free gift of God. Let us boldly confess Christ, and show love to him in all things.

(1.) Be ye wise as serpents, Mt 10:16. "You may be so" (so some take it, only as a permission); "you may be as wary as you please, provided you be harmless as doves." But it is rather to be taken as a precept, recommending to us that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, as useful at all times, but especially in suffering times. "Therefore, because you are exposed, as sheep among wolves; be ye wise as serpents; not wise as foxes, whose cunning is to deceive others; but as serpents, whose policy is only to defend themselves, and to shift for their own safety." The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and, therefore, they need the serpent's wisdom. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people and ministers, being so much exposed to troubles in this world, as they usually are, should not needlessly expose themselves, but use all fair and lawful means for their own preservation. Christ gave us an example of this wisdom, Mt 21:24,25,22:17,18,19,Joh 7:6,7; besides the many escapes he made out of the hands of his enemies, till his hour was come. See an instance of Paul's wisdom, Ac 23:6,7. In the cause of Christ we must sit loose to life and all its comforts, but must not be prodigal of them. It is the wisdom of the serpent to secure his head, that it may not be broken, to stop his ear to the voice of the charmer (Ps 58:4,5), and to take shelter in the clefts of the rocks; and herein we may be wise as serpents. We must be wise, not to pull trouble upon

our own heads; wise to keep silence in an evil time, and not to give offence, if we can help it.

(2.) Be ye harmless as doves. "Be mild, and meek, and dispassionate; not only do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill will; be without gall, as doves are; this must always go along with the former." They are sent forth among wolves, therefore must be as wise as serpents, but they are sent forth as sheep, therefore must be harmless as doves. We must be wise, not to wrong ourselves, but rather so than wrong any one else; must use the harmlessness of the dove to bear twenty injuries, rather than the subtlety of the serpent to offer or to return one. Note, It must be the continual care of all Christ's disciples, to be innocent and inoffensive in word and deed, especially in consideration of the enemies they are in the midst of. We have need of a dove-like spirit, when we are beset with birds of prey, that we may neither provoke them nor be provoked by them: David coveted the wings of a dove, on which to fly away and be at rest, rather than the wings of a hawk. The Spirit descended on Christ as a dove, and all believers partake of the Spirit of Christ, a dove-like spirit, made for love, not for war.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

All these verses relate to the sufferings of Christ's ministers in their work, which they are here taught to expect, and prepare for; they are directed also how to bear them, and how to go on with their work in the midst of them. This part of the sermon looks further than to their present mission; for we find not that they met with any great hardships or persecutions while Christ was with them, nor were they well able to bear them; but they are here forewarned of the troubles they should meet with, when after Christ's resurrection, their commission should be enlarged, and the kingdom of heaven, which was not at hand, should be actually set up; they dreamed of nothing then, but outward pomp and power; but Christ tells them, they must expect greater sufferings than they were yet called to; that they should then be made prisoners, when they expected to be made princes. It is good to be told what troubles we may hereafter

meet with, that we may provide accordingly, and may not boast, as if we had put off the harness, when we are yet but girding it on.

We have here intermixed, I. Predictions of trouble: and, II. Prescriptions of counsel and comfort, with reference to it.

I. We have here predictions of trouble; which the disciples should meet with in their work: Christ foresaw their sufferings as well as his own, and yet will have them go on, as he went on himself; and he foretold them, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise to them, and so a shock to their faith, but that, being the accomplishment of a prediction, they might be a confirmation to their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom.

1. What they should suffer: hard things to be sure; for, Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, Mt 10:16. And what may a flock of poor, helpless, unguarded sheep expect, in the midst of a herd of ravenous wolves, but to be worried and torn? Note, Wicked men are like wolves, in whose nature it is to devour and destroy. God's people, and especially his ministers, are like sheep among them, of a contrary nature and disposition, exposed to them, and commonly an easy prey to them. It looked unkind in Christ to expose them to so much danger, who had left all to follow him; but he knew that the glory reserved for his sheep, when in the great day they shall be set on his right hand, would be a recompence sufficient for sufferings as well as services. They are as sheep among wolves, that is frightful; but Christ sends them forth, that is comfortable; for he that sends them forth will protect them, and bear them out. But that they might know the worst, he tells them particularly what they must expect.

(a) They must expect to be hated, Mt 10:22. Ye shall be hated for my name's sake: that is the root of all the rest, and a bitter root it is. Note, Those whom Christ loves, the world hates; as whom the court blesses the country curses. If the world hated Christ without a cause (Joh 15:25), no marvel if it hated those that bore his image and served his interests. We hate what is nauseous, and they are counted

as the offscouring of all things, 1Co 4:13. We hate what is noxious, and they are counted the troublers of the land (1Ki 18:17), and the tormentors of their neighbours, Re 11:10. It is grievous to be hated, and to be the object of so much ill-will, but it is for thy name's sake; which, as it speaks the true reason of the hatred, whatever is pretended, so it speaks comfort to them who are thus hated; it is for a good cause, and they have a good friend that shares with them in it, and takes it to himself.

(b) They must expect to be apprehended and arraigned as malefactors. Their restless malice is resistless malice, and they will not only attempt, but will prevail, to deliver you up to the councils (Mt 10:17,18), to the bench of aldermen or justices, that take care of the public peace. Note, A deal of mischief is often done to good men, under colour of law and justice. In the place of judgment there is wickedness, persecuting wickedness, Ec 3:16. They must look for trouble, not only from inferior magistrates in the councils, but from governors and kings, the supreme magistrates. To be brought before them, under such black representations as were commonly made of Christ's disciples, was dreadful and dangerous; for the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion. We find this often fulfilled in the acts of the apostles.

(c) They must expect to be put to death (Mt 10:21); They shall deliver them to death, to death in state, with pomp and solemnity, when it shows itself most as the king of terrors. The malice of the enemies rages so high as to inflict this; it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after: the faith and patience of the saints stand so firm as to expect this; Neither count I my life dear to myself: the wisdom of Christ permits it, knowing how to make the blood of the martyrs the seal of the truth, and the seed of the church. By this noble army's not loving their lives to the death, Satan has been vanquished, and the kingdom of Christ and its interests greatly advanced, Re 11:11. They were put to death as criminals, so the enemies meant it, but really as sacrifices (Php 2:17,2Ti 4:6); as burnt offerings, sacrifices of acknowledgement to the honour of God, and in his truth and cause.

(d) They must expect, in the midst of these sufferings, to be branded with the most odious and ignominious names and characters that could be. Persecutors would be ashamed in this world, if they did not first dress up those in bear-skins whom they thus bait, and represent them in such colours as may serve to justify such cruelties. The blackest of all the ill characters they give them is here stated; they call them Beelzebub, the name of the prince of the devils, Mt 10:25. They represent them as ringleaders of the interest of the kingdom of darkness, and since every one thinks he hates the devil, thus they endeavour to make them odious to all mankind. See, and be amazed to see, how this world is imposed upon: [1.] Satan's sworn enemies are represented as his friends; the apostles, who pulled down the devil's kingdom, were called devils. Thus men laid to their charge, not only things which they knew not, but things which they abhorred, and were directly contrary to, and the reverse of. [2.] Satan's sworn servants would be thought to be his enemies, and they never more effectually do his work, than when they pretend to be fighting against him. Many times they who themselves are nearest akin to the devil, are most apt to father others upon him; and those that paint him on others' clothes have him reigning in their own hearts. It is well there is a day coming, when (as it follows here, Mt 10:26) that which is hid will be brought to light.

(e) These sufferings are here represented by a sword and division, Mt 10:34,35. Think not that I am come to send peace, temporal peace and outward prosperity; they thought Christ came to give all his followers wealth and power in the world; "no," says Christ, "I did not come with a view to give them peace; peace in heaven they may be sure of, but not peace on earth." Christ came to give us peace with God, peace in our consciences, peace with our brethren, but in the world ye shall have tribulation. Note, They mistake the design of the gospel, who think their profession of it will secure them from, for it will certainly expose them to, trouble in this world. If all the world would receive Christ, there would then follow a universal peace, but while there are and will be so many

that reject him (and those not only the children of this world, but the seed of the serpent), the children of God, that are called out of the world, must expect to feel the fruits of their enmity.

[1.] Look not for peace, but a sword, Christ came to give the sword of the word, with which his disciples fight against the world, and conquering work this sword has made and the sword of persecution, with which the world fights against the disciples, being cut to the heart with the sword of the word (Ac 7:54), and tormented by the testimony of Christ's witnesses and cruel work this sword made. Christ sent that gospel, which gives occasion for the drawing of this sword, and so may be said to send this sword; he orders his church into a suffering state for the trial and praise of his people's graces, and the filling up of the measure of their enemies' sins.

[2.] Look not for peace, but division (Mt 10:35), I am come to set men at variance. This effect of the preaching of the gospel is not the fault of the gospel, but of those who do not receive it. When some believe the things that are spoken, and others believe them not, the faith of those that believe condemns those that believe not, and, therefore, they have an enmity against them that believe. Note, the most violent and implacable feuds have ever been those that have arisen from difference in religion; no enmity like that of the persecutors, no resolution like that of the persecuted. Thus Christ tells his disciples what they should suffer, and these were hard sayings; if they could bear these, they could bear any thing. Note, Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost.

2. They are here told from whom, and by whom, they should suffer these hard things. Surely hell itself must be let loose, and devils, those desperate and despairing spirits, that have no part nor lot in the great salvation, must become incarnate, ere such spiteful enemies could be found to a doctrine, the substance of which was good will toward men, and the reconciling of the world to God; no, would you think it? all this mischief arises to the preachers of the

gospel, from those to whom they came to preach salvation. Thus the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul (Pr 29:10), and therefore heaven is so much opposed on earth, because earth is so much under the power of hell, Eph 2:2. These hard things Christ's disciples must suffer,

(a) From men (Mt 10:17). "Beware of men; you will have need to stand upon your guard, even against those who are of the same nature with you"--such is the depravity and degeneracy of that nature (homo homini lupus,--man is a wolf to man), crafty and politic as men, but cruel and barbarous as beasts, and wholly divested of the thing called humanity. Note, Persecuting rage and enmity turn men into brutes, into devils. Paul at Ephesus fought with beasts in the shape of men, 1Co 15:32. It is a sad pass that the world is come to, when the best friends it has, have need to beware of men. It aggravates the troubles of Christ's suffering servants, that they arise from those who are bone of their bone, made of the same blood. Persecutors are, in this respect, worse than beasts, that they prey upon those of their own kind: Sævis inter se convenit ursis--Even savage bears agree among themselves. It is very grievous to have men rise up against us (Ps 124:1-8), from whom we might expect protection and sympathy; men, and no more: mere men; men, and not saints; natural men (1Co 2:14); men of this world, Ps 17:14. Saints are more than men, and are redeemed from among men, and therefore are hated by them. The nature of man, if it be not sanctified, is the worst nature in the world next to that of devils. They are men, and therefore subordinate, dependent, dying creatures; they are men, but they are but men (Ps 9:20), and who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? Isa 51:12. Beware of the men, so Dr. Hammond; those you are acquainted with, the men of the Jewish sanhedrim, which disallowed Christ, 1Pe 2:4.

(b) From professing men, men that have a form of godliness, and make a show of religion. They will scourge you in their synagogues, their places of meeting for the worship of God, and for the exercise of their church-discipline: so that they looked upon the

scourging of Christ's ministers to be a branch of their religion. Paul was five times scourged in the synagogues, 2Co 11:24. The Jews, under colour of zeal for Moses, were the most bitter persecutors of Christ and Christianity, and placed those outrages to the score of their religion. Note, Christ's disciples have suffered much from conscientious persecutors, that scourge them in their synagogues, cast them out and kill them, and think they do God good service (Joh 16:2), and say, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5,Zec 11:4,5. But the synagogue will be so far from consecrating the persecution, that the persecution, doubtless, profanes and desecrates the synagogue.

(c) From great men, and men in authority. The Jews did not only scourge them, which was the utmost their remaining power extended to, but when they could go no further themselves, they delivered them up to the Roman powers, as they did Christ, Joh 18:30. Ye shall be brought before governors and kings (Mt 10:18), who, having more power, are in a capacity of doing the more mischief. Governors and kings receive their power from Christ (Pr 8:15), and should be his servants, and his church's protectors and nursing-fathers, but they often use their power against him, and are rebels to Christ, and oppressors of his church. The kings of the earth set themselves against his kingdom, Ps 2:1,2,Ac 4:25,26. Note, It has often been the lot of good men to have great men for their enemies.

(d) From all men (Mt 10:22). Ye shall be hated of all men, of all wicked men, and these are the generality of men, for the whole world lies in wickedness. So few are there that love, and own, and countenance Christ's righteous cause, that we may say, the friends of it are hated of all men; they are all gone astray, and, therefore, eat up my people, Ps 14:3. As far as the apostasy from God goes, so far the enmity against the saints goes; sometimes it appears more general than at other times, but there is something of this poison lurking in the hearts of all the children of disobedience. The world hates you, for it wonders after the beast, Re 13:3. Every man is a liar, and therefore a hater of truth.

(e) From those of their own kindred. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, Mt 10:21. A man shall be, upon this account, at variance with his own father; nay, and those of the weaker and tenderer sex too shall become persecutors and persecuted; the persecuting daughter will be against the believing mother, where natural affection and filial duty, one would think, should prevent or soon extinguish the quarrel; and then, no marvel if the daughter-in-law be against the mother-in-law; where, too often, the coldness of love seeks occasion of contention, Mt 10:35. In general, a man's foes shall be they of his own household (Mt 10:36). They who should be his friends will be incensed against him for embracing Christianity, and especially for adhering to it when it comes to be persecuted, and will join with his persecutors against him. Note, The strongest bonds of relative love and duty have often been broken through, by an enmity against Christ and his doctrine. Such has been the power of prejudice against the true religion, and zeal for a false one, that all other regards, the most natural and sacred, the most engaging and endearing, have been sacrificed to these Molochs. They who rage against the Lord, and his anointed ones, break even these bonds in sunder, and cast away even these cords from them, Ps 2:2,3. Christian's spouse suffers hard things from the anger of her own mother's children, So 1:6. Sufferings from such are more grievous; nothing cuts more than this, It was thou, a man, mine equal (Ps 55:12,13); and the enmity of such is commonly most implacable; a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, Pr 18:19. The martyrologies, both ancient and modern, are full of instances of this. Upon the whole matter, it appears, that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution; and through many tribulations we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God.

18 and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

Beware of men, Mt 10:17. "Be always upon your guard, and avoid dangerous company; take heed what you say and do, and presume not too far upon any man's fidelity; be jealous of the most plausible pretensions; trust not in a friend, no, not in the wife of thy bosom,"

Mic 7:5. Note, It becomes those who are gracious to be cautious, for we are taught to cease from man. Such a wretched world do we live in, that we know not whom to trust. Ever since our Master was betrayed with a kiss, by one of his own disciples, we have need to beware of men, of false brethren.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

Take no thought. That is, be not anxious, or unduly solicitous. Mt 6:26. God would inspire them. This was a full promise that they should be inspired, and was a most seasonable consolation. Poor, and ignorant, and obscure fishermen would naturally be solicitous what they should say before the great men of the earth. Eastern people regarded kings as raised far above common mortals: as approaching to divinity. How consoling, then, the assurance that God would aid them, and speak within them!

When you are brought before magistrates, conduct yourselves decently, but afflict not yourselves with care how you shall come off. A prudent thought there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing, disquieting thought; let this care be cast upon God, as well as that--what you shall eat and what you shall drink. Do not study to make fine speeches, ad captandam benevolentiam--to ingratiate yourselves; affect not quaint expressions, flourishes of wit, and laboured periods, which only serve to gild a bad cause; the gold of a good one needs it not. It argues a diffidence of your cause, to be solicitous in this matter, as if it were not sufficient to speak for itself. You know upon what grounds you go, and then verbaque prævisam rem non invita sequentur--suitable expressions will readily occur." Never any spoke better before governors and kings than those three champions, who took no thought before, what they should speak: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter, Da 3:16. See Ps 119:46. Note, The disciples of Christ must be more thoughtful how to do well than how to speak well; how to keep their integrity than how to vindicate it. Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus--Our lives, not boasting words, form the best apology.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.

History assures us that this has been done. If this be so, then how inexpressibly awful must be the malignity of the human heart by nature against religion! Nothing else but this dreadful opposition to God, and his gospel, ever has induced, or ever can induce men to violate the most tender relations, and consign the best friends to torture, racks, and flames. It adds to the horrors of this, that those who were put to death in persecution were tormented in the most awful modes that human ingenuity could devise. They were crucified; were thrown into boiling oil; were burnt at the stake; were roasted slowly over coals; were compelled to drink melted lead; were torn in pieces by beasts of prey; were covered with pitch, and burned, to give light in the gardens of Nero. Yet dreadful as this prediction was, it was fulfilled; and incredible as it seems, parents and children, and husbands and wives, were found wicked enough to deliver up each other to these cruel modes of death on account of their attachment to the gospel. Such is the opposition of the heart of man to the gospel! That hostility which will overcome the strong ties of natural affection, and which will be satisfied with nothing else to show its power, can be no slight opposition to to the gospel of God.

22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Ye shall be hated of all men. That is, of all kinds of men. The human heart would be opposed to them, because it is opposed to Christ. But he that endureth to the end, etc. That is, to the end of life, be it longer or shorter. He that bears all these unspeakable sufferings, and who does not shrink and apostatize, will give decisive evidence of attachment to me, and shall enter into heaven. See Rev 3:21,22.

That he that endures to the end shall be saved, Mt 10:22. Here it is very comfortable to consider, First, that there will be an end of these troubles; they may last long, but will not last always. Christ

comforted himself with this, and so may his followers; The things concerning me have an end, Lu 22:37. Dabit Deus his quoque finem--These also will God bring to a termination. Note, A believing prospect of the period of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. The weary will be at rest, when the wicked cease from troubling, Job 3:17. God will give an expected end, Jer 29:11. The troubles may seem tedious, like the days of a hireling, but, blessed be God, they are not everlasting. Secondly, That while they continue, they may be endured; as they are not eternal, so they are not intolerable; they may be borne, and borne to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them, in everlasting arms: The strength shall be according to the day, 1Co 10:13. Thirdly, Salvation will be the eternal recompence of all those that endure to the end. The weather stormy, and the way foul, but the pleasure of home will make amends for all. A believing regard to the crown of glory has been in all ages the cordial and support of suffering saints, 2Co 4:16,17,18,Heb 10:34. This is not only an encouragement to us to endure, but an engagement to endure to the end. They who endure but awhile, and in time of temptation fall away, have run in vain, and lose all that they have attained; but they who persevere, are sure of the prize, and they only. Be faithful unto death, and then thou shalt have the crown of life.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

When they persecute, etc. They were not permitted to throw away their lives. Where they could preserve them, without denying their Lord, they were to do it. Yet all the commands of Christ, as well as their conduct, show that they were rather to lay down their lives than deny their Saviour. We are to preserve our lives by all proper means; but rather die than save ourselves by doing anything wrong. Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, etc. That is, in fleeing from persecutors, from one city to another, you shall not have gone to every city in Judea, till the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish economy. Mt 24:28-30. By the coming of the Son of man, that is, of Christ, is probably meant the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened about thirty years after

this was spoken. The words axe often used in this sense. See Mt 24:30, Mk 13:26, Lk 21:27-32.

When they persecute you in this city, flee to another, Mt 10:23. "Thus reject them who reject you and your doctrine, and try whether others will not receive you and it. Thus shift for your own safety." Note, In case of imminent peril, the disciples of Christ may and must secure themselves by flight, when God, in his providence, opens to them a door of escape. He that flies may fight again. It is no inglorious thing for Christ's soldiers to quit their ground, provided they do not quit their colours: they may go out of the way of danger, though they must not go out of the way of duty. Observe Christ's care of his disciples, in providing places of retreat and shelter for them; ordering it so, that persecution rages not in all places at the same time; but when one city is made too hot for them, another is reserved for a cooler shade, and a little sanctuary; a favour to be used and not to be slighted; yet always with this proviso, that no sinful, unlawful means be used to make the escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. We have many examples to this rule in the history both of Christ and his apostles, in the application of all which to particular cases wisdom and integrity are profitable to direct.

24 The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

The disciple is not above his Master, etc. That is, you must expect the same treatment which I have received. They have called me, your Master and Teacher, Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, Mt 12:24, Lk 11:15, Jn 8:48) and you must expect that they will call all of the family by the same name. Beelzebub, or Beelzebul, was a god of the Eckronites. See 2Kgs 1:2 The word literally means the god of flies, so called because this idol was supposed to protect them from the numerous swarms of flies with which that country is supposed to have abounded. The word also signified, among the Jews, the god of filth, and was esteemed as the most low and offensive of all the idol gods. Hence the name was given to the

leader, or prince, of all the devils, Lk 11:15, Mk 3:22. By giving the name to Christ, they poured upon him the greatest possible abuse and contempt.

That whatever hard usage the disciples of Christ meet with, it is no more than what their Master met with before (Mt 10:24,25). The disciple is not above his master. We find this given them as a reason, why they should not hesitate to perform the meanest duties, no, not washing one another's feet. Joh 13:16. Here it is given as a reason, why they should not stumble at the hardest sufferings. They are reminded of this saying, Joh 15:20. It is a proverbial expression, The servant is not better than his master, and, therefore, let him not expect to fare better. Note, First, Jesus Christ is our Master, our teaching Master, and we are his disciples, to learn of him; our ruling master, and we are his servants to obey him: He is Master of the house, oikodespotes, has a despotic power in the church, which is his family. Secondly, Jesus Christ our Lord and Master met with very hard usage from the world; they called him Beelzebub, the god of flies, the name of the chief of the devils, with whom they said he was in league. It is hard to say which is here more to be wondered at, the wickedness of men who thus abused Christ, or the patience of Christ, who suffered himself to be thus abused; that he who was the God of glory should be stigmatized as the god of flies; the King of Israel, as the god of Ekron; the Prince of light and life, as the prince of the powers of death and darkness; that Satan's greatest Enemy and Destroyer should be run down as his confederate, and yet endure such contradiction of sinners. Thirdly, The consideration of the ill treatment which Christ met with in the world, should engage us to expect and prepare for the like, and to bear it patiently. Let us not think it strange, if they who hated him hate his followers, for his sake; nor think it hard if they who are shortly to be made like him in glory, be now made like him in sufferings. Christ began in the bitter cup, let us be willing to pledge him; his bearing the cross made it easy for us.

Whom to Fear

26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

That there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, Mt 10:26. We understand this, First, Of the revealing of the gospel to all the world. "Do you publish it (Mt 10:27), for it shall be published. The truths which are now, as mysteries, hid from the children of men, shall all be made known, to all nations, in their own language," Ac 2:11. The ends of the earth must see this salvation. Note, It is a great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. It is a plough which God will speed. Or, Secondly, Of the clearing up of the innocency of Christ's suffering servants, that are called Beelzebub; their true character is now invidiously disguised with false colours, but however their innocency and excellency are now covered, they shall be revealed; sometimes it is in a great measure done in this world, when the righteousness of the saints is made, by subsequent events, to shine forth as the light: however it will be done at the great day, when their glory shall be manifested to all the world, angels and men, to whom they are now made spectacles, 1Co 4:9. All their reproach shall be rolled away, and their graces and services, that are now covered, shall be revealed, 1Co 4:5. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God, under all the calumnies and censures of men, that there will be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies, at the last day, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun. Let Christ's ministers faithfully reveal his truths, and then leave it to him, in due time, to reveal their integrity.

27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

Fear them not (Mt 10:26), because they can but kill the body (Mt 10:28). Note, it is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples, not to fear the greatest of their adversaries. They who truly fear God, need not fear man; and they who are afraid of the least sin, need not be afraid of the greatest trouble. The fear of man brings a snare, a

perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be carefully watched, and striven, and prayed against. Be the times never so difficult, enemies never so outrageous, and events never so threatening, yet need we not fear, yet will we not fear, though the earth be removed, while we have so good a God, so good a cause, and so good a hope through grace.

Yes, this is soon said; but when it comes to the trial, racks and tortures, dungeons and galleys, axes and gibbets, fire and faggot, are terrible things, enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble, and to start back, especially when it is plain, that they may be avoided by a few declining steps; and therefore, to fortify us against this temptation, we have here,

[1.] A good reason against this fear, taken from the limited power of the enemies; they kill the body, that is the utmost their rage can extend to; hitherto they can go, if God permit them, but no further; they are not able to kill the soul, nor to do it any hurt, and the soul is the man. By this it appears, that the soul does not (as some dream) fall asleep at death, nor is deprived of thought and perception; for then the killing of the body would not be the killing of the soul too. The soul is killed when it is separated from God and his love, which is its life, and is made a vessel of his wrath; now this is out of the reach of their power. Tribulation, distress, and persecution may separate us from all the world, but cannot part between us and God, cannot make us either not to love him, or not to be loved by him, Ro 8:35,37. If, therefore, we were more concerned about our souls, as our jewels, we should be less afraid of men, whose power cannot rob us of them; they can but kill the body, which would quickly die of itself, not the soul, which will enjoy itself and its God in spite of them. They can but crush the cabinet: a heathen set the tyrant at defiance with this, Tunde capsam Anaxarchi, Anaxarchum nom lædis--you may abuse the case of Anaxarchus, you cannot injure Anaxarchus himself. The pearl of price is untouched. Seneca undertakes to make it out, that you cannot hurt a wise and good man, because death itself is no real evil to him. Si maximum illud ultra

quod nihil habent iratæ leges, aut sævissimi domini minantur, in quo imperium suum fortuna consumit, æquo placidoque animo accipimus, et scimus mortem malum non esse ob hoc, ne injuriam quidem--If with calmness and composure we meet that last extremity, beyond which injured laws and merciless tyrants have nothing to inflict, and in which fortune terminates her dominion, we know that death is not an evil, because it does not occasion the slightest injury. Seneca De Constantid.

[2.] A good remedy against it, and that is, to fear God. Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Note, First, Hell is the destruction both of soul and body; not of the being of either, but the well--being of both; it is the ruin of the whole man; if the soul be lost, the body is lost too. They sinned together; the body was the soul's tempter to sin, and its tool in sin, and they must eternally suffer together. Secondly, This destruction comes from the power of God: he is able to destroy; it is a destruction from his glorious power (2Th 1:9); he will in it make his power known; not only his authority to sentence, but his ability to execute the sentence, Ro 9:22. Thirdly, God is therefore to be feared, even by the best saints in this world. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to stand in awe of him. If according to his fear so is his wrath, then according to his wrath so should his fear be, especially because none knows the power of his anger, Ps 90:11. When Adam, in innocency, was awed by a threatening, let none of Christ's disciples think that they need not the restraint of a holy fear. Happy is the man that fears always. The God of Abraham, who was then dead, is called the Fear of Isaac, who was yet alive, Ge 31:42,53. Fourthly, The fear of God, and of his power reigning in the soul, will be a sovereign antidote against the fear of man. It is better to fall under the frowns of all the world, than under God's frowns, and therefore, as it is most right in itself, so it is most safe for us, to obey God rather than men, Ac 4:19. They who are afraid of a man that shall die, forget the Lord their Maker, Isa 51:12,13,Ne 4:14.

What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light (Mt 10:27); "whatever hazards you run, go on with your work, publishing and

proclaiming the everlasting gospel to all the world; that is your business, mind that. The design of the enemies is not merely to destroy you, but to suppress that, and, therefore, whatever be the consequence, publish that." What I tell you, that speak ye. Note, That which the apostles have delivered to us is the same that they received from Jesus Christ, Heb 2:3. They spake what he told them--that, all that, and nothing but that. Those ambassadors received their instructions in private, in darkness, in the ear, in corners, in parables. Many things Christ spake openly, and nothing in secret varying from what he preached in public, Joh 18:20. But the particular instructions which he gave his disciples after his resurrection, concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were whispered in the ear (Ac 1:3), for then he never showed himself openly. But they must deliver their embassy publicly, in the light, and upon the house-tops; for the doctrine of the gospel is what all are concerned in (Pr 1:20,21,8:2,3), therefore he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The first indication of the reception of the Gentiles into the church, was upon a house-top, Ac 10:9. Note, There is no part of Christ's gospel that needs, upon any account, to be concealed; the whole counsel of God must be revealed, Ac 20:27. In never so mixed a multitude let it be plainly and fully delivered.

28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

The general extent of providence to all the creatures, even the least, and least considerable, to the sparrows, Mt 10:29. These little animals are of so small account, that one of them is not valued; there must go two to be worth a farthing (nay, you shall have five for a halfpenny, Lu 12:6), and yet they are not shut out of the divine care; One of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father: That is, 1. They do not light on the ground for food, to pick up a grain of corn, but your heavenly Father, by his providence, laid it ready for them. In the parallel place, Lu 12:6, it is thus expressed, Not one of them is forgotten before God, forgotten to be provided for; he feedeth them, Mt 6:26. Now he that feeds the sparrows, will not starve the saints. 2. They do not fall to the ground by death, either a natural or a violent death, without the notice of God: though they are

so small a part of the creation, yet even their death comes within the notice of the divine providence; much more does the death of his disciples. Observe, The birds that soar above, when they die, fall to the ground; death brings the highest to the earth. Some think that Christ here alludes to the two sparrows that were used in cleansing the leper (Le 14:4-6); the two birds in the margin are called sparrows; of these one was killed, and so fell to the ground, the other was let go. Now it seemed a casual thing which of the two was killed; the persons employed took which they pleased, but God's providence designed, and determined which. Now this God, who has such an eye to the sparrows, because they are his creatures, much more will have an eye to you, who are his children. If a sparrow die not without your Father, surely a man does not,--a Christian,--a minister,--my friend, my child. A bird falls not into the fowler's net, nor by the fowler's shot, and so comes not to be sold in the market, but according to the direction of providence; your enemies, like subtle fowlers, lay snares for you, and privily shoot at you, but they cannot take you, they cannot hit you, unless God give them leave. Therefore be not afraid of death, for your enemies have no power against you, but what is given them from above. God can break their bows and snares (Ps 38:12-15,64:4,7), and make our souls to escape as a bird (Ps 124:7); Fear ye not, therefore, Mt 10:31. Note, There is enough in the doctrine of God's providence to silence all the fears of God's people: Ye are of more value than many sparrows. All men are so, for the other creatures were made for man, and put under his feet (Ps 8:6-8); much more the disciples of Jesus Christ, who are the excellent ones of the earth, however contemned, as if not worth one sparrow.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

The particular cognizance which providence takes of the disciples of Christ, especially in their sufferings (Mt 10:30), But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. This is a proverbial expression, denoting the account which God takes and keeps of all the concernments of his people, even of those that are most minute, and least regarded. This is not to be made a matter of curious enquiry, but of encouragement to live in a continual dependence upon God's providential care, which extends itself to all occurrences, yet without disparagement to the infinite glory, or disturbance to the infinite rest,

of the Eternal Mind. If God numbers their hairs, much more does he number their heads, and take care of their lives, their comforts, their souls. It intimates, that God takes more care of them, than they do of themselves. They who are solicitous to number their money, and goods, and cattle, yet were never careful to number their hairs, which fall and are lost, and they never miss them: but God numbers the hairs of his people, and not a hair of their head shall perish (Lu 21:18); not the least hurt shall be done them, but upon a valuable consideration: so precious to God are his saints, and their lives and deaths!

31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

That he will shortly, in the day of triumph, own those who now own him, in the day of trial, when those who deny him shall be for ever disowned and rejected by him, Mt 10:32,33.

Note,

First, It is our duty, and if we do it, it will hereafter be our unspeakable honour and happiness, to confess Christ before men.

1. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as in serving him. We must never be ashamed of our relation to Christ, our attendance on him, and our expectations from him: hereby the sincerity of our faith, is evidenced, his name glorified, and others edified.

2. However this may expose us to reproach and trouble now, we shall be abundantly recompensed for that, in the resurrection of the just, when it will be our unspeakable honour and happiness to hear Christ say (what would we more?) "Him will I confess, though a poor worthless worm of the earth; this is one of mine, one of my friends and favourites, who loved me and was beloved by me; the

purchase of my blood, the workmanship of my Spirit; I will confess him before my Father, when it will do him the most service; I will speak a good word for him, when he appears before my Father to receive his doom; I will present him, will represent him to my Father." Those who honour Christ he will thus honour. They honour him before men; that is a poor thing: he will honour them before his Father; that is a great thing.

Secondly, It is a dangerous thing for any to deny and disown Christ before men; for they who so do will be disowned by him in the great day, when they have most need of him: he will not own them for his servants who would not own him for their master: I tell you, I know you not, Mt 7:23. In the first ages of Christianity, when for a man to confess Christ was to venture all that was dear to him in this world, it was more a trial of sincerity, than it was afterwards, when it had secular advantages attending it.

Not Peace, but a Sword

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. Christ has to conquer a peace by overcoming the evil that is in the way of peace. Hence, to preach the gospel of purity and peace always arouses the opposition of the evil doer. Evil has to be put down before peace can prevail. Hence, while the great end that Christ proposes is peace, the immediate result of his coming, and of the preaching of the gospel, was opposition and bloodshed.

But a sword. The only sword that Christ or his followers use in the conflict is the Sword of the Spirit, but the persecutor has in every age turned upon them the carnal sword. The sword is sent because persecutors use it upon the church.

We must distinguish here betwixt the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental event of it. His intentional aim was to propagate and promote peace in the world; but through the

corruption of man's nature, the accidental event of his coming is war and division: not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the gospel, but occasional and accidental only.

Note, That the preaching of the gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ in the world, though it be not the natural cause, yet it is the accidental occasion, of much of that war and tumult, of much of that distraction and confusion, which the world abounds with.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

First, Before our nearest and dearest relations; father or mother, son or daughter. Between these relations, because there is little room left for envy, there is commonly more room for love, and, therefore, these are instanced, as relations which are most likely to affect us. Children must love their parents, and parents must love their children; but if they love them better than Christ, they are unworthy of him. As we must not be deterred from Christ by the hatred of our relations which he spoke of (Mt 10:21,35,36), so we must not be drawn from him, by their love. Christians must be as Levi, who said to his father, I have not seen him, De 33:9.

Secondly, Before our ease and safety. We must take up our cross and follow him, else we are not worthy of him. Here observe, 1. They who would follow Christ, must expect their cross and take it up. 2. In taking up the cross, we must follow Christ's example, and bear it as he did. 3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we meet with crosses, that in bearing them we follow Christ, who has showed us the way; and that if we follow him faithfully, he will lead us through sufferings like him, to glory with him.

Thirdly, Before life itself, Mt 10:39. He that findeth his life shall lose it; he that thinks he had found it when he has saved it, and kept it, by denying Christ, shall lose it in an eternal death; but he that loseth his life for Christ's sake, that will part with it rather than deny Christ, shall find it, to his unspeakable advantage, an eternal life.

They are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life.

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Rewards

40 He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

That Christ himself would so heartily espouse their cause, as to show himself a friend to all their friends, and to repay all the kindnesses that should at any time be bestowed upon them, Mt 10:40-42. He that receiveth you, receiveth me.

First, It is here implied, that though the generality would reject them, yet they should meet with some who would receive and entertain them, would bid the message welcome to their hearts, and the messengers to their houses, for the sake of it. Why was the gospel market made, but that if some will not, others will. In the worst of times there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Christ's ministers shall not labour in vain.

Secondly, Jesus Christ takes what is done to his faithful ministers, whether in kindness or in unkindness, as done to himself, and reckons himself treated as they are treated. He that receiveth you, receiveth me. Honour or contempt put upon an ambassador reflects honour or contempt upon the prince that sends him, and ministers are ambassadors for Christ. See how Christ may still be entertained by those who would testify their respects to him; his people and ministers we have always with us; and he is with them always, even to the end of the world. Nay, the honour rises higher, He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. Not only Christ takes it as done to himself, but through Christ God does so too. By entertaining Christ's ministers, they entertain not angels unawares, but Christ, nay, and God himself, and unawares too, as appears, Mt 25:37. When saw we thee an hungered?

Thirdly, That though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be never so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted, though it be but a cup of cold water given to one of these little ones, Mt 10:42. They are little ones, poor and weak, and often stand in need of refreshment, and glad of the least. The extremity may be such, that a cup of cold water may be a great favour. Note, Kindnesses shown to Christ's disciples are valued in Christ's books, not according to the cost of the gift, but according to the love and affection of the giver. On that score the widow's mite not only passed current, but was stamped high, Lu 21:3,4. Thus they who are truly rich in graces may be rich in good works, though poor in the world.

Fourthly, That kindness to Christ's disciples which he will accept, must b done with an eye to Christ, and for his sake. A prophet must be received in the name of a prophet, and a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, and one of those little ones in the name of a disciple; not because they are learned, or witty, nor because they are our relations or neighbours, but because they are righteous, and so bear Christ's image; because they are prophets and disciples, and so are sent on Christ's errand. It is a believing regard to Christ that puts an acceptable value upon the kindnesses done to his ministers. Christ does not interest himself in the matter, unless we first interest him in it. Ut tibi debeam aliquid pro eo quod præstas, debes non tantum mihi præstare, sed tanquam mihi--If you wish me to feel an obligation to you for any service you render, you must not only perform the service, but you must convince me that you do it for my sake. Seneca.

42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Matthew-11

The Messengers from John the Baptist

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

1. The ordination sermon which Christ preached to his disciples in the foregoing chapter is here called his commanding them. Note, Christ's commissions imply commands. Their preaching of the gospel was not only permitted them, but it was enjoined them. It was not a thing respecting which they were left at their liberty, but necessity was laid upon them, 1Co 9:16. The promises he made them are included in these commands, for the covenant of grace is a word which he hath commanded, Ps 105:8. He made an end of commanding, etelesendiatasson. Note, The instructions Christ gives are full instructions. He goes through with his work.

2. When Christ had said what he had to say to his disciples, he departed thence. It should seem they were very loth to leave their Master, till he departed and separated himself from them; as the nurse withdraws the hand, that the child may learn to go by itself. Christ would now teach them how to live, and how to work, without his bodily presence. It was expedient for them, that Christ should thus go away for awhile, that they might be prepared for his long departure, and that, by the help of the Spirit, their own hands might be sufficient for them (De 33:7), and they might not be always children. We have little account of what they did now pursuant to their commission. They went abroad, no doubt; probably into Judea (for in Galilee the gospel had been mostly preached hitherto), publishing the doctrine of Christ, and working miracles in his name: but still in a more immediate dependence upon him, and not being long from him; and thus they were trained up, by degrees, for their great work.

3. Christ departed, to teach and preach in the cities whither he sent his disciples before him to work miracles (Mt 10:1-8), and so to raise people's expectations, and to make way for his entertainment. Thus was the way of the Lord prepared; John prepared it by bringing people to repentance, but he did no miracles. The disciples go further, they work miracles for confirmation. Note, Repentance and faith prepare people for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ gives. Observe, When Christ empowered them to work miracles, he employed himself in teaching and preaching, as if that were the more honourable of the two. That was but in order to do this. Healing the sick was the saving of bodies, but preaching the gospel was to the saving of souls. Christ had directed his disciples to preach (Mt 10:7), yet he did not leave off preaching himself. He set them to work, not for his own ease, but for the ease of the country, and was not the less busy for employing them. How unlike are they to Christ, who yoke others only that they may themselves be idle! Note, the increase and multitude of labourers in the Lord's work should be made not an excuse for our negligence, but an encouragement to our diligence. The more busy others are, the more busy we should be, and all little enough, so much work is there to be done. Observe, he went to preach in their cities, which were populous places; he cast the net of the gospel where there were most fish to be enclosed. Wisdom cries in the cities (Pr 1:21), at the entry of the city (Pr 8:3), in the cities of the Jews, even of them who made light of him, who notwithstanding had the first offer.

2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Now John Baptist, hearing of Christ's works, sent two of his disciples to him; and what passed between them and him we have here an account of. Here is,

I The question they had to propose to him: Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? This was a serious and important question; Art thou the Messiah promised, or not? Art thou the Christ? Tell us.

1. It is taken for granted that the Messiah should come. It was one of the names by which he was known to the Old-Testament saints, he that cometh or shall come, Ps 118:26. He is now come, but there is another coming of his which we still expect.

2. They intimate, that if this be not he, they would look for another. Note, We must not be weary of looking for him that is to come, nor ever say, we will not more expect him till we come to enjoy him. Though he tarry, wait for him, for he that shall come will come, though not in our time.

3. They intimate likewise, that if they be convinced that this is he, they will not be sceptics, they will be satisfied, and will look for no other. 4. They therefore ask, Art thou he? John had said for his part, I am not the Christ, Joh 1:20. Now,

(a) Some think that John sent this question for his own satisfaction. It is true he had borne a noble testimony to Christ; he had declared him to be the Son of God (Joh 1:34), the Lamb of God (Joh 1:29), and he that should baptize with the Holy Ghost (Joh 1:33), and sent of God (Joh 3:34), which were great things. But he desired to be further and more fully assured, that he was the Messiah that had been so long promised and expected. Note, In matters relating to Christ and our salvation by him, it is good to be sure. Christ appeared not in that external pomp and power in which it was expected he should appear; his own disciples stumbled at this, and perhaps John did so; Christ saw something of this at the bottom of this enquiry, when he said, blessed is he who shall not be offended in me. Note, It is hard, even for good men, to bear up against vulgar errors.

(b) John's doubt might arise from his own present circumstances. He was a prisoner, and might be tempted to think, if Jesus be indeed the Messiah, whence is it that I, his friend and forerunner, am brought into this trouble, and am left to be so long in it, and he never looks after me, never visits me, nor sends to me, enquires not after me, does nothing either to sweeten my imprisonment or hasten my enlargement? Doubtless there was a good reason why our Lord Jesus

did not go to John in prison, lest there should seem to have been a compact between them: but John construed it into a neglect, and it was perhaps a shock to his faith in Christ. Note,

[1.] Where there is true faith, yet there may be a mixture of unbelief. The best are not always alike strong.

[2.] Troubles for Christ, especially when they continue long unrelieved, are such trials of faith as sometimes prove too hard to be borne up against.

[3.] The remaining unbelief of good men may sometimes, in an hour of temptation, strike at the root, and call in question the most fundamental truths which were thought to be well settled. Will the Lord cast off for ever? But we will hope that John's faith did not fail in this matter, only he desired to have it strengthened and confirmed. Note, The best saints have need of the best helps they can get for the strengthening of their faith, and the arming of themselves against temptations to infidelity. Abraham believed, and yet desired a sign (Ge 15:6,8), so did Gideon, Jdg 6:36. But,

(c) Others think that John sent his disciples to Christ with this question, not so much for his own satisfaction as for theirs. Observe, Though he was a prisoner they adhered to him, attended on him, and were ready to receive instructions from him; they loved him, and would not leave him. Now,

[1.] They were weak in knowledge, and wavering in their faith, and needed instruction and confirmation; and in this matter they were somewhat prejudiced; being jealous for their master, they were jealous of our Master; they were loth to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, because he eclipsed John, and are loth to believe their own master when they think he speaks against himself and them. Good men are apt to have their judgments blessed by their interest. Now John would have their mistakes rectified, and wished them to be as well satisfied as he himself was. Note, The strong ought to consider the infirmities of the weak, and to do what they can to help them:

and such as we cannot help ourselves we should send to those that can. When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

[2.] John was all along industrious to turn over his disciples to Christ, as from the grammar-school to the academy. Perhaps he foresaw his death approaching, and therefore would bring his disciples to be better acquainted with Christ, under whose guardianship he must leave them. Note, Ministers' business is to direct every body to Christ. And those who would know the certainty of the doctrine of Christ, must apply themselves to him, who is come to give an understanding. They who would grow in grace must be inquisitive.

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see:

5 the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Here is Christ's answer to this question, Mt 11:4-6. It was not so direct and express, as when he said, I that speak unto thee am he; but it was a real answer, an answer in fact. Christ will have us to spell out the convincing evidences of gospel truths, and to take pains in digging for knowledge.

1. He points them to what they heard and saw, which they must tell John, that he might from thence take occasion the more fully to instruct and convince them out of their own mouths. Go and tell him what you hear and see. Note, Our senses may and ought to be appealed to in those things that are their proper objects. Therefore the popish doctrine of the real presence agrees not with the truth as it is in Jesus; for Christ refers us to the things we hear and see. Go and tell John,

(a) What you see of the power of Christ's miracles; you see how, by the word of Jesus, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, &c. Christ's miracles were done openly, and in the view of all; for they feared not the strongest and most impartial scrutiny. Veritas no

quærit angulos--Truth seeks not concealment. They are to be considered,

[1.] As the acts of a divine power. None but the God of nature could thus overrule and outdo the power of nature. It is particularly spoken of as God's prerogative to open the eyes of the blind, Ps 146:8. Miracles are therefore the broad seal of heaven, and the doctrine they are affixed to must be of God, for his power will never contradict his truth; nor can it be imagined that he should set his seal to a lie; however lying wonders may be vouched for in proof of false doctrines, true miracles evince a divine commission; such Christ's were, and they leave no room to doubt that he was sent of God, and that his doctrine was his that sent him.

[2.] As the accomplishment of a divine prediction. It was foretold (Isa 35:5,6), that our God should come, and that then the eyes of the blind should be opened. Now if the works of Christ agree with the words of the prophet, as it is plain they do, then no doubt but this is our God whom we have waited for, who shall come with a recompence; this is he who is so much wanted.

(b) Tell him what you hear of the preaching of his gospel, which accompanies his miracles. Faith, though confirmed by seeing, comes by hearing. Tell him,

[1.] That the poor preach the gospel; so some read it. It proves Christ's divine mission, that those whom he employed in founding his kingdom were poor men, destitute of all secular advantages, who, therefore, could never have carried their point, if they had not been carried on by a divine power.

[2.] That the poor have the gospel preached to them. Christ's auditory is made up of such as the scribes and Pharisees despised, and looked upon with contempt, and the rabbies would not instruct, because they were notable to pay them. The Old-Testament prophets were sent mostly to kings and princes, but Christ preached to the congregations of the poor. It was foretold that the poor of the flock

should wait upon him, Zec 11:11. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions and compassions to the poor, are an evidence that it was he that should bring to the world the tender mercies of our God. It was foretold that the Son of David should be the poor man's King, Ps 72:2,4,12,13. Or we may understand it, not so much of the poor of the world, as the poor in spirit, and so that scripture is fulfilled, Isa 61:1, He hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek. Note, It is a proof of Christ's divine mission that his doctrine is gospel indeed; good news to those who are truly humbled in sorrow for their sins, and truly humble in the denial of self; to them it is accommodated, for whom God always declared he had mercy in store.

It was predicted of the Messiah, that he would preach good tidings to the meek, Is 41:1; or, as it is rendered in the New Testament, preach the gospel to the poor, Lk 4:18. By this therefore, also, John might infer that he was truly the Messiah. It adds to the force of this testimony, that the poor have always been overlooked by Pharisees and philosophers. No sect of philosophers had condescended to notice them before Christ; and no system of religion had attempted to instruct them, before the Christian religion. In all other schemes, the poor have been passed by as unworthy of notice.

[3.] That the poor receive the gospel, and are wrought upon by it, they are evangelized, they receive and entertain the gospel, are leavened by it, and delivered into it as into a mould. Note, The wonderful efficacy of the gospel is a proof of its divine original. The poor are wrought upon by it. The prophets complained of the poor, that they knew not the way of the Lord, Jer 5:4. They could do no good upon them; but the gospel of Christ made its way into their untutored minds.

2. He pronounces a blessing on those that were not offended in him, Mt 11:6. So clear are these evidences of Christ's mission, that they who are not wilfully prejudiced against him, and scandalized in him (so the word is), cannot but receive his doctrine, and so be blessed in him. Note,

(a) There are many things in Christ which they who are ignorant and unthinking are apt to be offended at, some circumstances for the sake of which they reject the substance of his gospel. The meanness of his appearance, his education at Nazareth, the poverty of his life, the despicableness of his followers, the slights which the great men put upon him, the strictness of his doctrine, the contradiction it gives to flesh and blood, and the sufferings that attend the profession of his name; these are things that keep many from him, who otherwise cannot but see much of God in him. Thus he is set for the fall of many, even in Israel (Lu 2:34), a Rock of offence, 1Pe 2:8.

(b) They are happy who get over these offences. Blessed are they. The expression intimates, that it is a difficult thing to conquer these prejudices, and a dangerous thing not to conquer them; but as to those, who, notwithstanding this opposition, to believe in Christ, their faith will be found so much the more, to praise, and honour, and glory.

6 And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

We have here the high encomium which our Lord Jesus gave of John the Baptist; not only to revive his honour, but to revive his work. Some of Christ's disciples might perhaps take occasion from the question John sent, to reflect upon him, as weak and wavering, and inconsistent with himself, to prevent which Christ gives him this character. Note, It is our duty to consult the reputation of our brethren, and not only to remove, but to obviate and prevent, jealousies and ill thoughts of them; and we must take all occasions, especially such as discover any thing of infirmity, to speak well of those who are praiseworthy, and to give them that fruit of their hands. John the Baptist, when he was upon the stage, and Christ in privacy and retirement, bore testimony to Christ; and now that Christ appeared publicly, and John was under a cloud, he bore testimony to John. Note, They who have a confirmed interest themselves, should

improve it for the helping of the credit and reputation of others, whose character claims it, but whose temper or present circumstances put them out of the way of it. This is giving honour to whom honour is due. John had abased himself to honour Christ (Joh 3:20,30,Mt 3:11), had made himself nothing, that Christ might be All, and now Christ dignifies him with this character. Note, They who humble themselves shall be exalted, and those that honour Christ he will honour; those that confess him before men, he will confess, and sometimes before men too, even in this world. John had now finished his testimony, and now Christ commends him. Note, Christ reserves honour for his servants when they have done their work, Joh 12:26. Now concerning this commendation of John, observe,

I. That Christ spoke thus honourably of John, not in the hearing of John's disciples, but as they departed, just after they were gone, Lu 7:24. He would not so much as seem to flatter John, nor have these praises of him reported to him. Note, Though we must be forward to give to all their due praise for their encouragement, yet we must avoid every thing that looks like flattery, or may be in danger of puffing them up. They who in other things are mortified to the world, yet cannot well bear their own praise. Pride is a corrupt humour, which we must not feed either in others or in ourselves.

II. That what Christ said concerning John, was intended not only for his praise, but for the people's profit, to revive the remembrance of John's ministry, which had been well attended, but which was now (as other such things used to be) strangely forgotten: they did for a season, and but for a season, rejoice in his light, Joh 5:35. "Now, consider, what went ye out into the wilderness to see? Put this question to yourselves."

1 John preached in the wilderness, and thither people flocked in crowds to him, though in a remote place, and an inconvenient one. If teachers be removed into corners, it is better to go after them than to be without them. Now if his preaching was worth taking so much pains to hear it, surely it was worth taking some care to recollect it.

The greater the difficulties we have broken through to hear the word, the more we are concerned to profit by it.

2. They went out to him to see him; rather to feed their eyes with the unusual appearance of his person, than to feed their souls with his wholesome instructions; rather for curiosity than for conscience. Note, Many that attend on the word come rather to see and be seen, than to learn and be taught, to have something to talk of, than to be made wise to salvation. Christ puts it to them, what went ye out to see? Note, They who attend on the word will be called to an account, what their intentions and what their improvements were. We think when the sermon is done, the care is over; no, then the greatest of the care begins. It will shortly be asked, "What business had you such a time at such an ordinance? What brought you thither? Was it custom or company, or was it a desire to honour God and get good? What have you brought thence? What knowledge, and grace, and comfort? What went you to see?" Note, When we go to read and hear the word, we should see that we aim right in what we do.

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?
behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is he, of whom it is written,
Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Let us see what the commendation of John was. They know not what answer to make to Christ's question; well, says Christ, "I will tell you what a man John the Baptist was."

1. "He was a firm, resolute man, and not a reed shaken with the wind; you have been so in your thoughts of him, but he was not so. He was not wavering in his principles, nor uneven in his conversation; but was remarkable for his steadiness and constant consistency with himself." They who are weak as reeds will be

shaken as reeds; but John was strong in spirit, Eph 4:14. When the wind of popular applause on the one hand blew fresh and fair, when the storm of Herod's rage on the other hand grew fierce and blustering, John was still the same, the same in all weathers. The testimony he had borne to Christ was not the testimony of a reed, of a man who was of one mind to-day, and of another to-morrow; it was not a weather-cock testimony; no, his constancy in it is intimated (Joh 1:20); he confessed and denied not, but confessed, and stood to it afterwards, Joh 3:28. And therefore this question sent by his disciples was not to be construed into any suspicion of the truth of what he had formerly said: therefore the people flocked to him, because he was not as a reed. Note, There is nothing lost in the long run by an unshaken resolution to go on with our work, neither courting the smiles, nor fearing the frowns of men.

2. He was a self-denying man, and mortified to this world. "Was he a man clothed in soft raiment? If so, you would not have gone into the wilderness to see him, but to the court. You went to see one that had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; his mien and habit showed that he was dead to all the pomps of the world and the pleasures of sense; his clothing agreed with the wilderness he lived in, and the doctrine he preached there, that of repentance. Now you cannot think that he who was such a stranger to the pleasures of a court, should be brought to change his mind by the terrors of a prison, and now to question whether Jesus be the Messiah or not!" Note, they who have lived a life of mortification, are least likely to be driven off from their religion by persecution. He was not a man clothed in soft raiment; such there are, but they are in kings' houses. Note, It becomes people in all their appearances to be consistent with their character and their situation. They who are preachers must not affect to look like courtiers; nor must they whose lot is cast in common dwellings, be ambitious of the soft clothing which they wear who are in kings' houses. Prudence teaches us to be of a piece. John appeared rough and unpleasant, yet they flocked after him. Note, The remembrance of our former zeal in attending on the word of God, should quicken us to, and in, our present work: let it not be said that we have done and

suffered so many things in vain, have run in vain and laboured in vain.

3. His greatest commendation of all was his office and ministry, which was more his honour than any personal endowments or qualifications could be; and therefore this is most enlarged upon in a full encomium.

(a) He was a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet (Mt 11:9); so he said of him who was the great Prophet, to whom all the prophets bear witness. John said of himself, he was not that prophet, that great prophet, the Messiah himself; and now Christ (a very competent Judge) says of him, that he was more than a prophet. He owned himself inferior to Christ, and Christ owned him superior to all other prophets. Observe, The forerunner of Christ was not a king, but a prophet, lest it should seem that the kingdom of the Messiah had been laid in earthly power; but his immediate forerunner was, as such, a transcendent prophet, more than an Old-Testament prophet; they all did virtuously, but John excelled them all; they saw Christ's day at a distance, and their vision was yet for a great while to come; but John saw the day dawn, he saw the sun rise, and told the people of the Messiah, as one that stood among them. They spake of Christ, but he pointed to him; they said, A virgin shall conceive: he said, Behold the Lamb of God!

(b) He was the same that was predicted to be Christ's forerunner (Mt 11:10); This is he of whom it is written. He was prophesied of by the other prophets, and therefore was greater than they. Malachi prophesied concerning John, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face. Herein some of Christ's honour was put upon him, that the Old-Testament prophets spake and wrote of him; and this honour have all the saints, that their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. It was great preferment to John above all the prophets, that he was Christ's harbinger. He was a messenger sent on a great errand; a messenger, one among a thousand, deriving his honour from his whose messenger he was: he is my messenger sent of God. His business was to prepare Christ's way, to dispose people to

receive the Saviour, by discovering to them their sin and misery, and their need of a Saviour. This he had said of himself (Joh 1:23) and now Christ said it of him; intending hereby not only to put an honour upon John's ministry, but to revive people's regard to it, as making way for the Messiah. Note, Much of the beauty of God's dispensations lies in their mutual connection and coherence, and the reference they have one to another. That which advanced John above the Old-Testament prophets was, that he went immediately before Christ. Note, The nearer any are to Christ, the more truly honourable they are.

(c) There was not a greater born of women than John the Baptist, Mt 11:11. Christ knew how to value persons according to the degrees of their worth, and he prefers John before all that went before him, before all that were born of women by ordinary generation. Of all that God had raised up and called to any service in his church, John is the most eminent, even beyond Moses himself; for he began to preach the gospel doctrine of remission of sins to those who are truly penitent; and he had more signal revelations from heaven than any of them had; for he saw heaven opened, and the Holy Ghost descend. He also had great success in his ministry; almost the whole nation flocked to him: none rose on so great a design, or came on so noble an errand, as John did, or had such claims to a welcome reception. Many had been born of women that made a great figure in the world, but Christ prefers John before them. Note, Greatness is not to be measured by appearances and outward splendour, but they are the greatest men who are the greatest saints, and the greatest blessings, who are, as John was, great in the sight of the Lord, Lu 1:15.

Yet this high encomium of John has a surprising limitation, notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

[1.] In the kingdom of glory. John was a great and good man, but he was yet in a state of infirmity and imperfection, and therefore came short of glorified saints, and the spirits of just men made

perfect. Note, First, There are degrees of glory in heaven, some that are less than others there; though every vessel is alike full, all are not alike large and capacious. Secondly, The least saint in heaven is greater, and knows more, and loves more, and does more in praising God, and receives more from him, than the greatest in this world. The saints on earth are excellent ones (Ps 16:3), but those in heaven are much more excellent; the best in this world are lower than the angels (Ps 8:5), the least there are equal with the angels, which should make us long for that blessed state, where the weak shall be as David, Zec 12:8.

[2.] By the kingdom of heaven here, is rather to be understood the kingdom of grace, the gospel dispensation in the perfection of its power and purity; and ho mikroteros--he that is less in that is greater than John. Some understand it of Christ himself, who was younger than John, and, in the opinion of some, less than John, who always spoke diminishingly of himself; I am a worm, and no man, yet greater than John; so it agrees with what John the Baptist said (Joh 1:15), He that cometh after me is preferred before me. But it is rather to be understood of the apostles and ministers of the New Testament, the evangelical prophets; and the comparison between them and John is not with respect to their personal sanctity, but to their office; John preached Christ coming, but they preached Christ not only come, but crucified and glorified. John came to the dawning of the gospel-day, and therein excelled the foregoing prophets, but he was taken off before the noon of that day, before the rending of the veil, before Christ's death and resurrection, and the pouring out of the Spirit; so that the least of the apostles and evangelists, having greater discoveries made to them, and being employed in a greater embassy, is greater than John. John did no miracles; the apostles wrought many. The ground of this preference is laid in the preference of the New-Testament dispensation to that of the Old Testament. Ministers of the New Testament therefore excel, because their ministration does so, 2Co 3:6, &c. John was a maximum quod sic--the greatest of his order; he went to the utmost that the dispensation he was under would allow; but minimum maximi est majus maximo minimi--the least of the highest order is superior to the first of the lowest; a dwarf upon a mountain sees

further than a giant in the valley. Note, All the true greatness of men is derived from, and denominated by, the gracious manifestation of Christ to them. The best men are no better than he is pleased to make them. What reason have we to be thankful that our lot is cast in the days of the kingdom of heaven, under such advantages of light and love! And the greater the advantages, the greater will the account be, if we receive the grace of God in vain.

(d) The great commendation of John the Baptist was, that God owned his ministry, and made it wonderfully successful for the breaking of the ice, and the preparing of people for the kingdom of heaven. From the days of the first appearing of John the Baptist, until now (which was not much above two years), a great deal of good was done; so quick was the motion when it came near to Christ the Centre; The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence--biazetai-vim patitur, like the violence of an army taking a city by storm, or of a crowd bursting into a house, so the violent take it by force. The meaning of this we have in the parallel place, Lu 16:16. Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. Multitudes are wrought upon by the ministry of John, and become his disciples. And it is

[1.] An improbable multitude. Those strove for a place in this kingdom, that one would think had no right nor title to it, and so seemed to be intruders, and to make a tortuous entry, as our law calls it, a wrongful and forcible one. When the children of the kingdom are excluded out of it, and many come into it from the east and the west, then it suffers violence. Compare this with Mt 21:31,32. The publicans and harlots believed John, whom the scribes and Pharisees rejected, and so went into the kingdom of God before them, took it over their heads, while they trifled. Note, It is no breach of good manners to go to heaven before our betters: and it is a great commendation of the gospel from the days of its infancy, that it has brought many to holiness that were very unlikely.

[2.] An importunate multitude. This violence denotes a strength, and vigour, and earnestness of desire and endeavour, in those who followed John's ministry, else they would not have come so far to attend upon it. It shows us also, what fervency and zeal are required of all those who design to make heaven of their religion. Note, They who would enter into the kingdom of heaven must strive to enter; that kingdom suffers a holy violence; self must be denied, the bent and bias, the frame and temper, of the mind must be altered; there are hard sufferings to be undergone, a force to be put upon the corrupt nature; we must run, and wrestle, and fight, and be in an agony, and all little enough to win such a prize, and to get over such opposition from without and from within. The violent take it by force. They who will have an interest in the great salvation are carried out towards it with a strong desire, will have it upon any terms, and not think them hard, nor quit their hold without a blessing, Ge 32:26. They who will make their calling and election sure must give diligence. The kingdom of heaven was never intended to indulge the ease of triflers, but to be the rest of them that labour. It is a blessed sight; Oh that we could see a greater number, not with an angry contention thrusting others out of the kingdom of heaven, but with a holy contention thrusting themselves into it!

(e) The ministry of John was the beginning of the gospel, as it is reckoned, Mk 1:1,Ac 1:22. This is shown here in two things:

[1.] In John the Old Testament dispensation began to die, Mt 11:13. So long that ministration continued in full force and virtue, but then it began to decline. Though the obligation of the law of Moses was not removed till Christ's death, yet the discoveries of the Old Testament began to be superseded by the more clear manifestation of the kingdom of heaven as at hand. Because the light of the gospel (as that of nature) was to precede and make way for its law, therefore the prophecies of the Old Testament came to an end (finis perficiens, not interficiens--an end of completion, not of duration), before the precepts of it; so that when Christ says, all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, he shows us, First, How the light

of the Old Testament was set up; it was set up in the law and the prophets, who spoke, though darkly, of Christ and his kingdom. Observe, The law is said to prophesy, as well as the prophets, concerning him that was to come. Christ began at Moses (Lu 24:27); Christ was foretold by the dumb signs of the Mosaic work, as well as by the more articulate voices of the prophets, and was exhibited, not only in the verbal predictions, but in the personal and real types. Blessed be God that we have both the New-Testament doctrine to explain the Old-Testament prophecies, and the Old-Testament prophecies to confirm and illustrate the New-Testament doctrine (Heb 1:1); like the two cherubim, they look at each other. The law was given by Moses long ago, and there had been no prophets for three hundred years before John, and yet they are both said to prophecy until John, because the law was still observed, and Moses and the prophets still read. Note, The scripture is teaching to this day, though the penmen of it are gone. Moses and the prophets are dead; the apostles and evangelists are dead (Zec 1:5), but the word of the Lord endures for ever (1Pe 1:25); the scripture is speaking expressly, though the writers are silent in the dust. Secondly, How this light was laid aside: when he says, they prophesied until John, he intimates, that their glory was eclipsed by the glory which excelled; their predictions superseded by John's testimony, Behold the Lamb of God! Even before the sun rises, the morning light makes candles to shine dim. Their prophecies of a Christ to come became out of date, when John said, He is come.

[2.] In him the New-Testament day began to dawn; for (Mt 11:14) This is Elias, that was for to come. John was as the loop that coupled the two Testaments; as Noah was Fibula utriusque mundi--the link connecting both worlds, so was he utriusque Testamenti--the link connecting both Testaments. The concluding prophecy of the Old Testament was, Behold, I will send you Elijah, Mal 4:5,6. Those words prophesied until John, and then, being turned into a history, they ceased to prophecy. First, Christ speaks of it as a great truth, that John the Baptist is the Elias of the New Testament; not Elias in propria persona--in his own person, as the carnal Jews expected; he denied that (Joh 1:21), but one that should come in the spirit and power of Elias (Lu 1:17), like him in temper and

conversation, that should press repentance with terrors, and especially as it is in the prophecy, that should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. Secondly, He speaks of it as a truth, which would not be easily apprehended by those whose expectations fastened upon the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and introductions to it agreeable. Christ suspects the welcome of it, if ye will receive it. Not but that it was true, whether they would receive it or not, but he upbraids them with their prejudices, that they were backward to receive the greatest truths that were opposed to their sentiments, though never so favourable to their interests. Or, "If you will receive him, or if you will receive the ministry of John as that of the promised Elias, he will be an Elias to you, to turn you and prepare you for the Lord," Note, Gospel truths are as they are received, a savour of life or death. Christ is a Saviour, and John an Elias, to those who will receive the truth concerning them.

Lastly, Our Lord Jesus closes this discourse with a solemn demand of attention (Mt 11:15): He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; which intimates, that those things were dark and hard to be understood, and therefore needed attention, but of great concern and consequence, and therefore well deserved it. "Let all people take notice of this, if John be the Elias prophesied of, then certainly here is a great revolution on foot, the Messiah's kingdom is at the door, and the world will shortly be surprised into a happy change. These are things which require your serious consideration, and therefore you are all concerned to hearken to what I say." Note, The things of God are of great and common concern: every one that has ears to hear any thing, is concerned to hear this. It intimates, that God requires no more from us but the right use and improvement of the faculties he has already given us. He requires those to hear that have ears, those to use their reason that have reason. Therefore people are ignorant, not because they want power, but because they want will; therefore they do not hear, because, like the deaf adder, they stop their ears.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elijah, which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,
17 and saying,
We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;
we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.
18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

The parable will be best explained by opening it and the illustration of it together in these five observations.

Note, 1 The God of heaven uses a variety of proper means and methods for the conversion and salvation of poor souls; he would have all men to be saved, and therefore leaves no stone unturned in order to it. The great thing he aims at, is the melting of our wills into a compliance with the will of God, and in order to this the affecting of us with the discoveries he has made of himself. Having various affections to be wrought upon, he uses various ways of working upon them, which though differing one from another, all tend to the same thing, and God is in them all carrying on the same design. In the parable, this is called his piping to us, and his mourning to us; he hath piped to us in the precious promises of the gospel, proper to work upon hope, and mourned to us in the dreadful threatenings of the law, proper to work upon fear, that he might frighten us out of our sins and allure us to himself. He had piped to us in gracious and merciful providences, mourned to us in calamitous, afflicting providences, and has set the one over against the other. He has taught his ministers to change their voice (Ga 4:20); sometimes to speak in thunder from mount Sinai, sometimes in a still small voice from mount Sion.

In the explanation of the parable is set forth the different temper of John's ministry and of Christ's, who were the two great lights of that generation.

(a) On the one hand, John came mourning to them, neither eating nor drinking; not conversing familiarly with people, nor ordinarily eating in company, but alone, in his cell in the wilderness, where his

meat was locusts and wild honey. Now this, one would think, should work upon them; for such an austere, mortified life as this, was very agreeable to the doctrine he preached: and that minister is most likely to do good, whose conversation is according to his doctrine; and yet the preaching even of such a minister is not always effectual.

(b) On the other hand, the Son of man came eating and drinking, and so he piped unto them. Christ conversed familiarly with all sorts of people, not affecting any peculiar strictness or austerity; he was affable and easy of access, not shy of any company, was often at feasts, both with Pharisees and publicans, to try if this would win upon those who were not wrought upon by John's reservedness: those who were not awed by John's frowns, would be allured by Christ's smiles; from whom St. Paul learned to be come all things to all men, 1Co 9:22. Now our Lord Jesus, by his freedom, did not at all condemn John, any more than John did condemn him, though their deportment was so very different. Note, Though we are never so clear in the goodness of our own practice, yet we must not judge of others by it. There may be a great diversity of operations, where it is the same God that worketh all in all (1Co 12:6), and this various manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, Mt 11:7. Observe especially, that God's ministers are variously gifted: the ability and genius of some lie one way, of others, another way: some are Boanerges--sons of thunder; others, Barnabeses--sons of consolation; yet all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit (1Co 12:11), and therefore we ought not to condemn either, but to praise both, and praise God for both, who thus tries various ways of dealing with persons of various tempers, that sinners may be either made pliable or left inexcusable, so that, whatever the issue is, God will be glorified.

Note, 2 The various methods which God takes for the conversion of sinners, are with many fruitless and ineffectual: "Ye have not danced, ye have not lamented; you have not been suitably affected either with the one or with the other." Particular means have, as in medicine, their particular intentions, which must be answered, particular impressions, which must be submitted to, in order to the

success of the great and general design; now if people will be neither bound by laws, nor invited by promises, nor frightened by threatenings, will neither be awakened by the greatest things, nor allured by the sweetest things, nor startled by the most terrible things, nor be made sensible by the plainest things; if they will hearken to the voice neither of scripture, nor reason, nor experience, nor providence, nor conscience, nor interest, what more can be done? The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed, the founder melteth in vain; reprobate silver shall men call them, Jer 6:29. Ministers' labour is bestowed in vain (Isa 49:4), and, which is a much greater loss, the grace of God received in vain, 2Co 6:1. Note, It is some comfort to faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, that it is no new thing for the best preachers and the best preaching in the world to come short of the desired end. Who has believed our report? If from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of those great commanders, Christ and john, returned so often empty (2Sa 1:22), no marvel if ours do so, and we prophecy to so little purpose upon dry bones.

Note, 3. That commonly those persons who do not profit by the means of grace, are perverse, and reflect upon the ministers by whom they enjoy those means; and because they do not get good themselves, they do all the hurt they can to others, by raising and propagating prejudices against the word, and the faithful preachers of it. Those who will not comply with God, and walk after him, confront him, and walk contrary to him. So this generation did; because they were resolved not to believe Christ and John, and to own them, as they ought to have done, for the best of men, they set themselves to abuse them, and to represent them as the worst.

(a) As for John the Baptist, they say, He has a devil. They imputed his strictness and reservedness to melancholy, and some kind or degree of a possession of Satan. "Why should we heed him? he is a poor hypochondriacal man, full of fancies, and under the power of a crazed imagination."

(b) As for Jesus Christ, they imputed his free and obliging conversation to the more vicious habit of luxury and flesh-pleasing: Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. No reflection could be more foul and invidious; it is the charge against the rebellious son (De 21:20), He is a glutton and a drunkard; yet none could be more false and unjust; for Christ pleased not himself (Ro 15:3), nor did ever any man live such a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world, as Christ lived: he that was undefiled, and separate from sinners, is here represented as in league with them, and polluted by them. Note, The most unspotted innocency, and the most unparalleled excellency, will not always be a fence against the reproach of tongues: nay, a man's best gifts and best actions, which are both well intended and well calculated for edification, may be made the matter of his reproach. The best of our actions may become the worst of our accusations, as David's fasting, Ps 69:10. It was true in some sense, that Christ was a Friend to publicans and sinners, the best Friend they ever had, for he came into the world to save sinners, great sinners, even the chief; so he said very feelingly, who had been himself not a publican and sinner, but a Pharisee and sinner; but this is, and will be to eternity, Christ's praise, and they forfeited the benefit of it who thus turned it to his reproach.

Note, 4. That the cause of this great unfruitfulness and perverseness of people under the means of grace, is that they are like children sitting in the markets; they are foolish as children, froward as children, mindless and playful as children; would they but show themselves men in understanding, there would be some hopes of them. The market-place they sit in is to some a place of idleness (Mt 20:3); to others a place of worldly business (Jam 4:13); to all a place of noise or diversion; so that if you ask the reason why people get so little good by the means of grace, you will find it is because they are slothful and trifling, and do not love to take pains; or because their heads, and hands, and hearts are full of the world, the cares of which choke the word, and choke their souls at last (Eze 33:31,Am 8:5); and they study to divert their own thoughts from every thing that is serious. Thus in the markets they are, and there they sit; in these things their hearts rest, and by them they resolve to abide.

Note, 5. Though the means of grace be thus slighted and abused by many, by the most, yet there is a remnant that through grace do improve them, and answer the designs of them, to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls. But wisdom is justified of her children. Christ is Wisdom; in him are hid treasures of wisdom; the saints are the children God has given him, Heb 2:13. The gospel is wisdom, it is the wisdom from above: true believers are begotten again by it, and born from above too; they are wise children, wise for themselves, and their true interests; not like the foolish children that sat in the markets. These children of wisdom justify wisdom; they comply with the designs of Christ's grace, answer the intentions of it, and are suitably affected with, and impressed by, the various methods it takes, and so evidence the wisdom of Christ in taking these methods. This is explained, Lu 7:29. The publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John, and afterwards embracing the gospel of Christ. Note, The success of the means of grace justifies the wisdom of God in the choice of these means, against those who charge him with folly therein. The cure of every patient, that observes the physician's orders, justifies the wisdom of the physician: and therefore Paul is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because, whatever it is to others, to them that believe it is the power of God unto salvation, Ro 1:16. When the cross of Christ, which to others is foolishness and a stumbling-block, is to them that are called the wisdom of God and the power of God (1Co 1:23,24), so that they make the knowledge of that the summit of their ambition (1Co 2:2), and the efficacy of that the crown of their glorying (Ga 6:14), here is wisdom justified of her children. Wisdom's children are wisdom's witnesses in the world (Isa 43:10), and shall be produced as witnesses in that day, when wisdom, that is now justified by the saints, shall be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe, 2Th 1:10. If the unbelief of some reproach Christ by giving him the lie, the faith of others shall honour him by setting to its seal that he is true, and that he also is wise, 1Co 1:25. Whether we do it or not, it will be done; not only God's equity, but his wisdom, will be justified when he speaks, when he judges.

Well, this is the account Christ gives of that generation, and that generation is not passed away, but remains in a succession of the like; for as it was then, it has been since and is still; some believe the things which are spoken, and some believe not, Ac 28:24.

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

As to the particular places in which Christ was most conversant. What he said in general of that generation, he applied in particular to those places, to affect them. Then began he to upbraid them, Mt 11:20. He began to preach to them long before (Mt 4:17), but he did not begin to upbraid till now. Note, Rough and unpleasing methods must not be taken, till gentler means have first been used. Christ is not apt to upbraid; he gives liberally, and upbraideth not, till sinners by their obstinacy extort it from him. Wisdom first invites, but when her invitations are slighted, then she upbraids, Pr 1:20,24. Those do not go in Christ's method, who begin with upbraidings. Now observe,

1 The sin charged upon them; not any against the moral law, then an appeal would have lain to the gospel, which would have relieved, but a sin against the gospel, the remedial law, and that is impenitency: this was it he upbraided them with, or reproached them for, as the most shameful, ungrateful thing that could be, that they repented not. Note, Wilful impenitency is the great damning sin of multitudes that enjoy the gospel, and which (more than any other) sinners will be upbraided with to eternity. The great doctrine that

both John the Baptist, and Christ, and the apostles preached, was repentance; the great thing designed, both in the piping and in the mourning, was to prevail with people to change their minds and ways, to leave their sins and turn to God; and this they would not be brought to. He does not say, because they believed not (for some king of faith many of them had) that Christ was a Teacher come from God; but because they repented not: their faith did not prevail to the transforming of their hearts, and the reforming of their lives. Christ reproved them for their other sins, that he might lead them to repentance; but when they repented not, He upbraided them with that, as their refusal to be healed: He upbraided them with it, that they might upbraid themselves, and might at length see the folly of it, as that which alone makes the sad case a desperate one, and the wound incurable.

2 The aggravation of the sin; they were the cities in which most of his mighty works were done; for thereabouts his principal residence had been for some time. Note, Some places enjoy the means of grace in greater plenty, power, and purity, than other places. God is a free agent, and acts so in all his disposals, both as the God of nature and as the God of grace, common and distinguishing grace. By Christ's mighty works they should have been prevailed with, not only to receive his doctrine, but to obey his law; the curing of bodily diseases should have been the healing of their souls, but it had not that effect. Note, The stronger inducements we have to repent, the more heinous is the impenitency and the severer will the reckoning be, for Christ keeps account of the mighty works done among us, and of the gracious works done for us too, by which also we should be led to repentance, Ro 2:4.

(a) Chorazin and Bethsaida are here instanced (Mt 11:21,22), they have each of them their woe: Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida. Christ came into the world to bless us; but if that blessing be slighted, he has woes in reserve, and his woes are of all others the most terrible. These two cities were situate upon the sea of Galilee, the former on the east side, and the latter on the west, rich and populous places; Bethsaida was lately advanced to a city by

Philip the tetrarch; out of it Christ took at least three of his apostles: thus highly were these places favoured! Yet because they knew not the day of their visitation, they fell under these woes, which stuck so close to them, that soon after this they decayed, and dwindled into mean, obscure villages. So fatally does sin ruin cities, and so certainly does the word of Christ take place!

Now Chorazin and Bethsaida are here compared with Tyre and Sidon, two maritime cities we read much of in the Old Testament, that had been brought to ruin, but began to flourish again; these cities bordered upon Galilee, but were in a very ill name among the Jews for idolatry and other wickedness. Christ sometimes went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21), but never thither; the Jews would have taken it very heinously if he had; therefore Christ, to convince and humble them, here shows,

[1.] That Tyre and Sidon would not have been so bad as Chorazin and Bethsaida. If they had had the same word preached, and the same miracles wrought among them, they would have repented, and that long ago, as Nineveh did, in sackcloth and ashes. Christ, who knows the hearts of all, knew that if he had gone and lived among them, and preached among them, he should have done more good there than where he was; yet he continued where he was for some time, to encourage his ministers to do so, though they see not the success they desire. Note, Among the children of disobedience, some are more easily wrought upon than others; and it is a great aggravation of the impenitency of those who plentifully enjoy the means of grace, not only that there are many who sit under the same means that are wrought upon, but that there are many more that would have been wrought upon, if they had enjoyed the same means. See Eze 3:6,7. Our repentance is slow and delayed, but theirs would have been speedy; they would have repented long ago. Ours has been slight and superficial; theirs would have been deep and serious, in sackcloth and ashes. Yet we must observe, with an awful adoration of the divine sovereignty, that the Tyrians and Sidonians will justly perish in their sin, though, if they had had the means of grace, they would have repented; for God is a debtor to no man.

[2.] That therefore Tyre and Sidon shall not be so miserable as Chorazin and Bethsaida, but it shall be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment, Mt 11:22. Note, First, At the day of judgment the everlasting state of the children of men will, by an unerring and unalterable doom, be determined; happiness or misery, and the several degrees of each. Therefore it is called the eternal judgment (Heb 6:2), because decisive of the eternal state. Secondly, In that judgment, all the means of grace that were enjoyed in the state of probation will certainly come into the account, and it will be enquired, not only how bad we were, but how much better we might have been, had it not been our own fault, Isa 5:3,4. Thirdly, Though the damnation of all that perish will be intolerable, yet the damnation of those who had the fullest and clearest discoveries made them of the power and grace of Christ, and yet repented not, will be of all others the most intolerable. The gospel light and sound open the faculties, and enlarge the capacities of all that see and hear it, either to receive the riches of divine grace, or (if that grace be slighted) to take in the more plentiful effusions of divine wrath. If self-reproach be the torture of hell, it must needs be hell indeed to those who had such a fair opportunity of getting to heaven. Son, remember that.

(b) Capernaum is here condemned with an emphasis (Mt 11:23), "And thou, Capernaum, hold up thy hand, and hear they doom," Capernaum, above all the cities of Israel, was dignified with Christ's most usual residence; it was like Shiloh of old, the place which he chose, to put his name there, and it fared with it as with Shiloh, Jer 7:12,14. Christ's miracles here were daily bread, and therefore, as the manna of old, were despised and called light bread. Many a sweet and comfortable lecture of grace Christ had read them to little purpose, and therefore he reads them a dreadful lecture of wrath: those who will not hear the former shall be made to feel the latter. We have here Capernaum's doom,

[1.] Put absolutely; Thou which art exalted to heaven shalt be brought down to hell Note, First, Those who enjoy the gospel in power and purity, are thereby exalted to heaven; they have therein a

great honour for the present, and a great advantage for eternity; they are lifted up toward heaven; but if, notwithstanding, they still cleave to the earth, they may thank themselves that they are not lifted up into heaven. Secondly, Gospel advantages and advancements abused will sink sinners so much lower into hell. Our external privileges will be so far from saving us, that if our hearts and lives be not agreeable to them, they will but inflame the reckoning: the higher the precipice is, the more fatal is the fall from it: Let us not therefore be high-minded, but fear; not slothful, but diligent. See Job 20:6,7.

[2.] We have it here put in comparison with the doom of Sodom--a place more remarkable, both for sin and ruin, than perhaps any other; and yet Christ here tells us,

First, That Capernaum's means would have saved Sodom. If these miracles had been done among the Sodomites, as bad as they were, they would have repented, and their city would have remained unto this day a monument of sparing mercy, as now it is of destroying justice, Jude 1:7. Note, Upon true repentance through Christ, even the greatest sin shall be pardoned and the greatest ruin prevented, that of Sodom not excepted. Angels were sent to Sodom, and yet it remained not; but if Christ had been sent thither, it would have remained; how well is it for us, then, that the world to come is put in subjection to Christ, and not to angels! Heb 2:5. Lot would not have seemed as one that mocked, if he had wrought miracles.

Secondly, That Sodom's ruin will therefore be less at the great day than Capernaum's. Sodom will have many things to answer for, but not the sin of neglecting Christ, as Capernaum will. If the gospel prove a savour of death, a killing savour, it is doubly so; it is of death unto death, so great a death (2Co 2:16); Christ had said the same of all other places that receive not his ministers nor bid his gospel welcome (Mt 10:15); It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for that city. We that have now the written word in our hands, the gospel preached, and the gospel ordinances administered to us, and live under the dispensation of the Spirit, have advantages not

inferior to those of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and the account in the great day will be accordingly. It has therefore been justly said, that the professors of this age, whether they go to heaven or hell, will be the greatest debtors in either of these places; if to heaven, the greatest debtors to divine mercy for those rich means that brought them thither; if to hell, the greatest debtors to divine justice, for those rich means that would have kept them from thence.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Come unto Me and Rest

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

In these verses we have Christ looking up to heaven, with thanksgiving to his Father for the sovereignty and security of the covenant of redemption; and looking around him upon this earth, with an offer to all the children of men, to whom these presents shall come, of the privileges and benefits of the covenant of grace.

I. Christ here returns thanks to God for his favour to those babes who had the mysteries of the gospel revealed to them (Mt 11:25,26). Jesus answered and said. It is called an answer, though no other words are before recorded but his own, because it is so comfortable a reply to the melancholy considerations preceding, and is aptly set in the balance against them. The sin and ruin of those woeful cities, no doubt, was a grief to the Lord Jesus; he could not but weep over them, as he did over Jerusalem (Lu 19:41); with this thought therefore he refreshes himself; and to make it the more refreshing, he puts it into a thanksgiving; that for all this, there is a remnant, though but babes, to whom the things of the gospel are revealed. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall he be glorious. Note, We may take great encouragement in looking upward to God, when

round about us we see nothing but what is discouraging. It is sad to see how regardless most men are of their own happiness, but it is comfortable to think that the wise and faithful God will, however, effectually secure the interests of his own glory. Jesus answered and said, I thank thee. Note, Thanksgiving is a proper answer to dark and disquieting thoughts, and may be an effectual means to silence them. Songs of praise are sovereign cordials to drooping souls, and will help to cure melancholy. When we have no other answer ready to the suggestions of grief and fear, we may have recourse to this, I thank thee, O Father; let us bless God that it is not worse with us than it is.

Now in this thanksgiving of Christ, we may observe,

1 The titles he gives to God; O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. Note,

(a) In all our approaches to God, by praise as well as by prayer, it is good for us to eye him as a Father, and to fasten on that relation, not only when we ask for the mercies we want, but when we give thanks for the mercies we have received. Mercies are then doubly sweet, and powerful to enlarge the heart in praise, when they are received as tokens of a Father's love, and gifts of a Father's hand; Giving thanks to the Father, Col 1:12. It becomes children to be grateful, and to say, Thank you, father, as readily as, Pray, father.

(b) When we come to God as a Father, we must withal remember, that he is Lord of heaven and earth; which obliges us to come to him with reverence, as to the sovereign Lord of all, and yet with confidence, as one able to do for us whatever we need or can desire; to defend us from all evil and to supply us with all good. Christ, in Melchizedec, had long since blessed God as the Possessor, or Lord of heaven and earth; and in all our thanksgivings for mercies in the stream, we must give him the glory of the all-sufficiency that is in the fountain.

2 The thing he gives thanks for: Because thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and yet revealed them to babes. These things; he does not say what things, but means the great things of the gospel, the things that belong to our peace, Lu 19:42. He spoke thus emphatically of them, these things, because they were things that filled him, and should fill us: all other things are as nothing to these things.

Note (a) The great things of the everlasting gospel have been and are hid from many that were wise and prudent, that were eminent for learning and worldly policy; some of the greatest scholars and the greatest statesmen have been the greatest strangers to gospel mysteries. The world by wisdom knew not God, 1Co 1:21. Nay, there is an opposition given to the gospel, by a science falsely so called, 1Ti 6:20. Those who are most expert in things sensible and secular, are commonly least experienced in spiritual things. Men may dive deeply into the mysteries of nature and into the mysteries of state, and yet be ignorant of, and mistake about, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, for want of an experience of the power of them.

Note (b) While the wise and prudent men of the world are in the dark about gospel mysteries, even the babes in Christ have the sanctifying saving knowledge of them: Thou hast revealed them unto babes. Such the disciples of Christ were; men of mean birth and education; no scholars, no artists, no politicians, unlearned and ignorant men, Ac 4:13. Thus are the secrets of wisdom, which are double to that which is (Job 11:6), made known to babes and sucklings, that out of their mouth strength might be ordained (Ps 8:2), and God's praise thereby perfected. The learned men of the world were not made choice of to be the preachers of the gospel, but the foolish things of the world (1Co 2:6,8,10).

Note (c) This difference between the prudent and the babes is of God's own making.

[1.] It is he that has hid these things from the wise and prudent; he gave them parts, and learning, and much of human understanding above others, and they were proud of that, and rested in it, and looked no further; and therefore God justly denies them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and then, though they hear the sound of the gospel tidings, they are to them as a strange thing. God is not the Author of their ignorance and error, but he leaves them to themselves, and their sin becomes their punishment, and the Lord is righteous in it. See Joh 12:39,40, Ro 8:29, Ro 11:7,8, Act 28:26,27. Had they honoured God with the wisdom and prudence they had, he would have given them the knowledge of these better things; but because they served their lusts with them, he has hid their hearts from this understanding. Eze 18:29-32.

[2.] It is he that has revealed them unto babes. Things revealed belong to our children (De 29:29), and to them he gives an understanding to receive these things, and the impressions of them. Thus he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble, Jam 4:6.

Note (d) This dispensation must be resolved into the divine sovereignty. Christ himself referred it to that; Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Christ here subscribes to the will of his Father in this matter; Even so. Let God take what ways he pleases to glorify himself, and make us of what instruments he pleases for the carrying on of his own work; his grace is his own, and he may give or withhold it as he pleases. We can give no reason why Peter, a fisherman, should be made an apostle, and not Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Jews, though he also believed in Christ; but so it seemed good in God's sight. Christ said this in the hearing of his disciples, to show them that it was not for any merit of their own that they were thus dignified and distinguished, but purely from God's good pleasure; he made them to differ.

Note (e) This way of dispensing divine grace is to be acknowledged by us, as it was by our Lord Jesus, with all thankfulness. We must thank God,

[1.] That these things are revealed; the mystery hid from ages and generations is manifested; that they are revealed, not to a few, but to be published to all the world.

[2.] That they are revealed to babes; that the meek and humble are beautified with this salvation; and this honour put upon those whom the world pours contempt upon.

[3.] It magnifies the mercy to them, that these things are hid from the wise and prudent: distinguishing favours are the most obliging. As Job adored the name of the Lord in taking away as well as in giving, so may we in hiding these things from the wise and prudent, as well as in revealing them unto babes; not as it is their misery, but as it is a method by which self is abased, proud thoughts brought down, all flesh silenced, and divine power and wisdom made to shine the more bright. See 1Co 1:27,31.

26 Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

His commission from the Father: All things are delivered unto me of my Father. Christ, as God, is equal in power and glory with the Father; but as Mediator he receives his power and glory from the Father; has all judgment committed to him. He is authorized to settle a new covenant between God and man, and to offer peace and happiness to the apostate world, upon such terms as he should think fit: he was sanctified and sealed to be the sole Plenipotentiary, to concert and establish this great affair. In order to this, he has all power both in heaven and in earth, (Mt 28:18); power over all flesh (Joh 17:2); authority to execute judgment, Joh 5:22,27. This encourages us to come to Christ, that he is commissioned to receive us, and to give us what we come for, and has all things delivered to him for that purpose, by him who is Lord of all. All powers, all treasures are in his hand. Observe, The Father has delivered his all into the hands of the Lord Jesus; let us but deliver our all into his hand and the work is done; God has made him the great Referee, the blessed Daysman, to lay his hand upon us both; that which we

have to do is to agree to the reference, to submit to the arbitration of the Lord Jesus, for the taking up of this unhappy controversy, and to enter into bonds to stand to his award.

28 Come unto me, all *ye* that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Here is the offer itself that is made to us, and an invitation to accept of it. After so solemn a preface, we may well expect something very great; and it is a faithful saying, and well worthy of all acceptation; words whereby we may be saved. We are here invited to Christ as our Priest, Prince, and Prophet, to be saved, and, in order to that, to be ruled and taught by him.

(a) We must come to Jesus Christ as our Rest, and repose ourselves in him (Mt 11:28), Come unto me all ye that labour.

Observe, [1.] The character of the persons invited; all that labour, and are heavy laden. This is a word in season to him that is weary, Isa 50:4. Those who complain of the burthen of the ceremonial law, which was an intolerable yoke, and was made much more so by the tradition of the elders (Lu 11:46), let them come to Christ, and they shall be made easy; he came to free his church from this yoke, to cancel the imposition of those carnal ordinances, and to introduce a purer and more spiritual way of worship; but it is rather to be understood of the burthen of sin, both the guilt and the power of it. Note, All those, and those only, are invited to rest in Christ, that are sensible of sin as a burthen, and groan under it; that are not only convinced of the evil of sin, of their own sin, but are contrite in soul for it; that are really sick of their sins, weary of the service of the world and of the flesh; that see their state sad and dangerous by reason of sin, and are in pain and fear about it, as Ephraim (Jer 31:18-20), the prodigal (Lu 15:17), the publican (Lu 18:13), Peter's hearers (Ac 2:37), Paul (Ac 9:4,6,9), the jailor (Ac 16:29,30). This is a necessary preparative for pardon and peace. The Comforter must first convince (Joh 16:8); I have torn and then will heal.

Observe, [2.] The invitation itself: Come unto me. That glorious display of Christ's greatness which we had (Mt 11:27), as Lord of all, might frighten us from him, but see here how he holds out the golden sceptre, that we may touch the top of it and may live. Note, It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy laden sinners to come to Jesus Christ. Renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to him, or in competition with him, we must accept of him, as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to his conduct and government; freely willing to be saved by him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. Come and cast that burden upon him, under which thou art heavy laden. This is the gospel call, The Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that is athirst come; Whoever will, let him come.

Observe, [3.] The blessing promised to those that do come: I will give you rest. Christ is our Noah, whose name signifies rest, for this same shall give us rest. Ge 5:29,8:9. Truly rest is good (Ge 49:15), especially to those that labour and are heavy laden, Ec 5:12. Note, Jesus Christ will give assured rest to those weary souls, that by a lively faith come to him for it; rest from the terror of sin, in a well-grounded peace of conscience; rest from the power of sin, in a regular order of the soul, and its due government of itself; a rest in God, and a complacency of soul, in his love. Ps 11:6,7. This is that rest which remains for the people of God (Heb 4:9), begun in grace, and perfected in glory.

(b) We must come to Jesus Christ as our Ruler, and submit ourselves to him (Mt 11:29). Take my yoke upon you. This must go along with the former, for Christ is exalted to be both a Prince and a Saviour, a Priest upon his throne. The rest he promises is a release from the drudgery of sin, not from the service of God, but an obligation to the duty we owe to him. Note, Christ has a yoke for our necks, as well as a crown for our heads, and this yoke he expects we should take upon us and draw in. To call those who are weary and heavy laden, to take a yoke upon them, looks like adding affliction to the afflicted; but the pertinency of it lies in the word my: "You are under a yoke which makes you weary: shake that off and try mine, which will

make you easy." Servants are said to be under the yoke (1Ti 6:1), and subjects, 1Ki 12:10. To take Christ's yoke upon us, is to put ourselves into the relation to servants and subjects to him, and then of conduct ourselves accordingly, in a conscientious obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful submission to all his disposals: it is to obey the gospel of Christ, to yield ourselves to the Lord: it is Christ's yoke; the yoke he has appointed; a yoke he has himself drawn in before us, for he learned obedience, and which he does by his Spirit draw in with us, for he helpeth our infirmities, Ro 8:26. A yoke speaks some hardship, but if the beast must draw, the yoke helps him. Christ's commands are all in our favour: we must take this yoke upon us to draw in it. We are yoked to work, and therefore must be diligent; we are yoked to submit, and therefore must be humble and patient: we are yoked together with our fellow-servants, and therefore must keep up the communion of saints: and the words of the wise are as goads, to those who are thus yoked.

30 For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

Now this is the hardest part of our lesson, and therefore it is qualified (Mt 11:30). My yoke is easy and my burden is light; you need not be afraid of it.

[1.] The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke; it is chrestos, not only easy, but gracious, so the word signifies; it is sweet and pleasant; there is nothing in it to gall the yielding neck, nothing to hurt us, but, on the contrary, must to refresh us. It is a yoke that is lined with love. Such is the nature of all Christ's commands, so reasonable in themselves, so profitable to us, and all summed up in one word, and that a sweet word, love. So powerful are the assistances he gives us, so suitable the encouragements, and so strong the consolations, that are to be found in the way of duty, that we may truly say, it is a yoke of pleasantness. It is easy to the new nature, very easy to him that understandeth, Pr 14:6. It may be a little hard at first, but it is easy afterwards; the love of God and the hope of heaven will make it easy.

[2.] The burden of Christ's cross is a light burden, very light: afflictions from Christ, which befal us as men; afflictions for Christ,

which befal us as Christians; the latter are especially meant. This burden in itself is not joyous, but grievous; yet as it is Christ's, it is light. Paul knew as much of it as any man, and he calls it a light affliction, 2Co 4:17. God's presence (Isa 43:2), Christ's sympathy (Isa 73:9,Da 3:25), and especially the Spirit's aids and comforts (2Co 1:5), make suffering for Christ light and easy. As afflictions abound, and are prolonged, consolations abound, and are prolonged too. Let this therefore reconcile us to the difficulties, and help us over the discouragements, we may meet with, both in doing work and suffering work; though we may lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him.

We must come to Jesus Christ as our Teacher, and set ourselves to learn of him, Mt 11:29. Christ has erected a great school, and has invited us to be his scholars. We must enter ourselves, associate with his scholars, and daily attend the instructions he gives by his word and Spirit. We must converse much with what he said, and have it ready to use upon all occasions; we must conform to what he did, and follow his steps, 1Pe 2:21. Some make the following words, for I am meek and lowly in heart, to be the particular lesson we are required to learn from the example of Christ. We must learn of him to be meek and lowly, and must mortify our pride and passion, which render us so unlike to him. We must so learn of Christ as to learn Christ (Eph 4:20), for he is both Teacher and Lesson, Guide and Way, and All in All. Two reasons are given why we must learn of Christ.

[1.] I am meek and lowly in heart, and therefore fit to teach you.

First, He is meek, and can have compassion on the ignorant, whom others would be in a passion with. Many able teachers are hot and hasty, which is a great discouragement to those who are dull and slow; but Christ knows how to bear with such, and to open their understandings. His carriage towards his twelve disciples was a specimen of this; he was mild and gentle with them, and made the best of them; though they were heedless and forgetful, he was not extreme to mark their follies.

Secondly, He is lowly in heart. He condescends to teach poor scholars, to teach novices; he chose disciples, not from the court, nor the schools, but from the seaside. He teaches the first principles, such things as are milk for babes; he stoops to the meanest capacities; he taught Ephraim to go, Ho 11:3. Who teaches like him? It is an encouragement to us to put ourselves to school to such a Teacher. This humility and meekness, as it qualifies him to be a Teacher, so it will be the best qualification of those who are to be taught by him; for the meek will he guide in judgment, Ps 25:9.

[2.] You shall find rest to your souls. This promise is borrowed from Jer 6:16, for Christ delighted to express himself in the language of the prophets, to show the harmony between the two Testaments. Note, First, Rest for the soul is the most desirable rest; to have the soul to dwell at ease. Secondly, The only way, and a sure way to find rest for our souls is, to sit at Christ's feet and hear his word. The way of duty is the way of rest. The understanding finds rest in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and is there abundantly satisfied, finding that wisdom in the gospel which has been sought for in vain throughout the whole creation, Job 28:12. The truths Christ teaches are such as we may venture our souls upon. The affections find rest in the love of God and Jesus Christ, and meet with that in them which gives them an abundant satisfaction; quietness and assurance for ever. And those satisfactions will be perfected and perpetuated in heaven, where we shall see and enjoy God immediately, shall see him as he is, and enjoy him as he is ours. This rest is to be had with Christ for all those who learn of him.

Well, this is the sum and substance of the gospel call and offer: we are here told, in a few words, what the Lord Jesus requires of us, and it agrees with what God said of him once and again. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.

Matthew-12

The Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were ahungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

What was the offence that the Pharisees took at this. It was but a dry breakfast, yet the Pharisees would not let them eat that in quietness. They did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn (they were no great zealots for justice), but for doing it on the sabbath day; for plucking and rubbing the ears of corn of that day was expressly forbidden by the tradition of the elders, for this reason, because it was a kind of reaping.

Note, It is no new thing for the most harmless and innocent actions of Christ's disciples to be evil spoken of, and reflected upon as unlawful, especially by those who are zealous for their own inventions and impositions. The Pharisees complained of them to their Master for doing that which it was not lawful to do. Note, Those are no friends to Christ and his disciples, who make that to be unlawful which God has not made to be so.

When the Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples for picking a few pieces of corn to eat on the Sabbath, Jesus defended his disciples by referring to two examples from the Old Testament.

First, when David and his men were very hungry and urgently needed food, they were rightly allowed to eat the holy bread of the tabernacle, which normally only priests were allowed to eat (Mat_12:1-4; cf. 1Sa_21:1-6). What it was that the disciples did. They were following their Master one sabbath day through a corn-field; it is likely they were going to the synagogue (Mt 12:9), for it becomes not Christ's disciples to take idle walks on that day, and they were hungry; let it be no disparagement to our Master's house-keeping. t is most holy to Aaron and his sons; and (Ex 29:33) a stranger shall not eat of it; yet the priest gave it to David and his

men; for though the exception of a case of necessity was not expressed, yet it was implied in that and all other ritual institutions. That which bore out David in eating the show-bread was not his dignity (Uzziah, that invaded the priest's office in the pride of his heart, though a king, was struck with a leprosy for it, 2Ch 26:16, &c.), but his hunger. The greatest shall not have their lusts indulged, but the meanest shall have their wants considered. Hunger is a natural desire which cannot be mortified, but must be gratified, and cannot be put off with any thing but meat; therefore we say, It will break through stone walls. Now the Lord is for the body, and allowed his own appointment to be dispensed with in a case of distress; much more might the tradition of the elders be dispensed with. Note, That may be done in a case of necessity which may not be done at another time; there are laws which necessity has not, but it is a law to itself. Men do not despise, but pity, a thief that steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry, Pr 6:30.

Second, even the Levitical priests worked on the Sabbath, for they had to prepare and offer the sacrifices (Mat_12:5; cf. Num_28:9-10).

These two examples show that in a case of necessity the legal requirement of the law may be overruled. Life is more important than ritual. To exercise mercy is more important than to offer sacrifices. Jesus is more important than the temple. People are more important than the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given for people's benefit, not for their discomfort; and since Jesus is the messianic Son of man, he has authority to decide how the Sabbath can best be used (Mat_12:6-8; Mar_2:27-28)

2 But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was ahungered, and they that were with him;

4 how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

He justifies them by arguments, three cogent ones.

[1.] In this place is one greater than the temple, Mt 12:6. If the temple-service would justify what the priests did in their ministration, the service of Christ would much more justify the disciples in what they did in their attendance upon him. The Jews had an extreme veneration for the temple: it sanctified the gold; Stephen was accused for blaspheming that holy place (Ac 6:13); but Christ, in a corn-field, was greater than the temple, for in him dwelt not the presence of God symbolically, but all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Note, If whatever we do, we do it in the name of Christ, and as unto him, it shall be graciously accepted of God, however it may be censured and cavilled at by men.

[2.] God will have mercy and not sacrifice, Mt 12:7. Ceremonial duties must give way to moral, and the natural, royal law of love and self-preservation must take place of ritual observances. This is quoted from Ho 6:6. It was used before, Mt 9:13, in vindication of mercy to the souls of men; here, of mercy to their bodies. The rest of the sabbath was ordained for man's good, in favour of the body, De 5:14. Now no law must be construed so as to contradict its own end. If you had known what this means, had known what it is to be of a merciful disposition, you would have been sorry that they were forced to do this to satisfy their hunger, and would not have condemned the guiltless. Note, First, Ignorance is the cause of our rash and uncharitable censures of our brethren. Secondly, It is not enough for us to know the scriptures, but we must labour to know the meaning of them. Let him that readeth understand. Thirdly, Ignorance of the meaning of the scripture is especially shameful in those who take upon them to teach others.

[3.] The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day, Mt 12:8. That law, as all the rest, is put into the hand of Christ, to be altered, enforced, or dispensed with, as he sees good. It was by the Son that God made the world, and by him he instituted the sabbath in innocency; by him he gave the ten commandments at mount Sinai, and as Mediator he is entrusted with the institution of ordinances,

and to make what changes he thought fit; and particularly, as being Lord of the sabbath, he was authorized to make such an alteration of that day, as that it should become the Lord's day, the Lord Christ's day. And if Christ be the Lord of the sabbath, it is fit the day and all the work of it should be dedicated to him. By virtue of this power Christ here enacts, that works of necessity, if they be really such, and not a pretended and self-created necessity, are lawful on the sabbath day; and this explication of the law plainly shows that it was to be perpetual. Exceptio firmat regulam--The exception confirms the rule.

6 But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple.
7 But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.
8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

The Man with a Withered Hand

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:
10 and, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.
11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out?

Christ having thus silenced the Pharisees, and got clear of them (Mt 12:9), departed, and went into their synagogue, the synagogue of these Pharisees, in which they presided, and toward which he was going, when they picked this quarrel with him. Note, First, We must take heed lest any thing that occurs in our way to holy ordinances unfit us for, or divert us from, our due attendance on them. Let us proceed in the way of our duty, notwithstanding the artifices of Satan, who endeavours, by the perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and many other ways, to ruffle and discompose us. Secondly, We must not, for the sake of private feuds and personal piques, draw back from public worship. Though the Pharisees had thus maliciously cavilled at Christ, yet he went into their synagogue. Satan gains this point, if, by sowing discord among

brethren, he prevail to drive them, or any of them, from the synagogue, and the communion of the faithful.

Christ, by healing the man that had the withered hand on the sabbath day, shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on that day. The work of necessity was done by the disciples, and justified by him; the work of mercy was done by himself; the works of mercy were his works of necessity; it was his meat and drink to do good. I must preach, says he, Lu 4:43. This cure is recorded for the sake of the time when it was wrought, on the sabbath.

The affliction that this poor man was in; his hand was withered so that he was utterly disabled to get his living by working with his hands. St. Jerome says, that the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, adds this circumstance to this story of the man with the withered hand, that he was Cæmentarius--a bricklayer, and applied himself to Christ thus; "Lord, I am a bricklayer, and have got my living by my labour (manibus victum quæritans); I beseech thee, O Jesus, restore me the use of my hand, that I may not be obliged to beg my bread" (ne turpiter mendicem cibos). Hieron. in loc. This poor man was in the synagogue. Note, Those who can do but little, or have but little to do for the world, must do so much the more for their souls; as the rich, the aged, and the infirm.

A spiteful question which the Pharisees put to Christ upon the sight of this man. They asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal? We read not here of any address this poor man made to Christ for a cure, but they observed Christ began to take notice of him, and knew it was usual for him to be found of those that sought him not, and therefore with their badness they anticipated his goodness, and started this case as a stumbling-block in the way of doing good; Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? Whether it was lawful for physicians to heal on that day or not, which was the thing disputed in their books, one would think it past dispute, that it is lawful for prophets to heal, for him to heal who discovered a divine power and goodness in all

he did of this kind, and manifested himself to be sent of God. Did ever any ask, whether it is lawful for God to heal, to send his word and heal? It is true, Christ was now made under the law, by a voluntary submission to it, but he was never made under the precepts of the elders. Is it lawful to heal? To enquire into the lawfulness and unlawfulness of actions is very good, and we cannot apply ourselves to any with such enquiries more fitly than to Christ; but they asked here, not that they might be instructed by him, but that they might accuse him. If he should say that it was lawful to heal on the sabbath day, they would accuse him of a contradiction to the fourth commandment; to so great a degree of superstition had the Pharisees brought the sabbath rest, that, unless in peril of life, they allowed not any medicinal operations on the sabbath day. If he should say that it was not lawful, they would accuse him of partiality, having lately justified his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on that day.

How much then is a man better than a sheep?—Resistless appeal! "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (Pr 12:10), and would instinctively rescue it from death or suffering on the sabbath day; how much more his nobler fellow man! But the reasoning, as given in the other two Gospels, is singularly striking: "But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life or to destroy it?" (Lu 6:8,9), or as in Mark (Mk 3:4), "to kill?" He thus shuts them up to this startling alternative: "Not to do good, when it is in the power of our hand to do it, is to do evil; not to save life, when we can, is to kill"—and must the letter of the sabbath rest be kept at this expense? This unexpected thrust shut their mouths. By this great ethical principle our Lord, we see, held Himself bound, as man. But here we must turn to Mark, whose graphic details make the second Gospel so exceedingly precious. "When He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man" (Mk 3:5). This is one of the very few passages in the Gospel history which reveal our Lord's

feelings. How holy this anger was appears from the "grief" which mingled with it at "the hardness of their hearts."

If an animal fell into a pit on the Sabbath day, the Jews would not hesitate to rescue it the same day. Yet they criticized Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath. Although no list of rules sets out all that a person should or should not do to keep the Sabbath holy, it is always right to do good on the Sabbath. To save life is better than to kill, and in this case Jesus was helping to save life. The Pharisees, by contrast, were looking for ways to kill him (Mat_12:9-14; Mar_3:1-6).

The cursed malice of the Pharisees against Christ (Mt 12:14); being enraged at the convincing evidence of his miracles, they went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. That which vexed them was, not only that by his miracles his honour eclipsed theirs, but that the doctrine he preached was directly opposite to their pride, and hypocrisy, and worldly interest; but they pretended to be displeased at his breaking the sabbath day, which was by the law a capital crime, Ex 35:2. Note, it is no new thing to see the vilest practices cloaked with the most specious pretences. Observe their policy; they took counsel about it, considered with themselves which way to do it effectually; they took counsel together in a close cabal about it, that they might both animate and assist one another. Observe their cruelty; they took counsel, not to imprison or banish him, but to destroy him, to be the death of him who came that we might have life. What an indignity was hereby put upon our Lord Jesus, to run him down as an outlaw (qui caput gerit lupinum--carries a wolf's head), and the plague of his country, who was the greatest blessing of it, the Glory of his people Israel!

Christ shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on the Lord's day. There are more ways of doing well upon sabbath days, than by the duties of worship: attending the sick, relieving the poor, helping those who need speedy relief, teaching the young to care for their souls; these are doing good: and these must be done

from love and charity, with humility and self-denial, and shall be accepted, Gen_4:7. This, like other cures which Christ wrought, had a spiritual meaning. By nature our hands are withered, and we are unable of ourselves to do any thing that is good. Christ only, by the power of his grace, cures us; he heals the withered hand by putting life into the dead soul, works in us both to will and to do: for, with the command, there is a promise of grace given by the word.

12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

The Chosen Servant

15 But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

16 and charged them that they should not make him known:

Christ's absconding upon this occasion, and the privacy he chose, to decline, not his work, but his danger; because his hour was not yet come (Mt 12:15), he withdrew himself from thence. He could have secured himself by miracle, but chose to do it in the ordinary way of flight and retirement; because in this, as in other things, he would submit to the sinless infirmities of our nature. Herein he humbled himself, that he was driven to the common shift of those who are most helpless; thus also he would give an example to his own rule, When they persecute you in one city, flee to another. Christ had said and done enough to convince those Pharisees, if reason or miracles would have done it; but instead of yielding to the conviction, they were hardened and enraged, and therefore he left them as incurable, Jer 51:9.

Christ did not retire for his own ease, nor seek an excuse to leave off his work; no, his retirements were filled up with business, and he was even then doing good, when he was forced to flee for the same. Thus he gave an example to his ministers, to do what they

can, when they cannot do what they would, and to continue teaching, even when they are removed into corners. When the Pharisees, the great dons and doctors of the nation, drove Christ from then, and forced him to withdraw himself, yet the common people crowded after him; great multitudes followed him and found him out. This some would turn to his reproach, and call him the ring-leader of the mob; but it was really his honour, that all who were unbiased and unprejudiced, and not blinded by the pomp of the world, were so hearty, so zealous for him, that they would follow him whithersoever he went, and whatever hazards they ran with him; as it was also the honour of his grace, that the poor were evangelized; that when they received him, he received them and healed them all. Christ came into the world to be a Physician-general, as the sun to the lower world, with healing under his wings. Though the Pharisees persecuted Christ for doing good, yet he went on in it, and did not let the people fare the worse for the wickedness of their rulers. Note, Though some are unkind to us, we must not on that account be unkind to others.

Christ studied to reconcile usefulness and privacy; he healed them all, and yet (Mt 12:16), charged them that they should not make him known; which may be looked upon, 1. As an act of prudence; it was not so much the miracles themselves, as the public discourse concerning them, that enraged the Pharisees (Mt 12:23,24); therefore Christ, though he would not omit doing good, yet would do it with as little noise as possible, to avoid offence to them and peril to himself. Note, Wise and good men, though they covet to do good, yet are far from coveting to have it talked of when it is done; because it is God's acceptance, not men's applause, that they aim at. And in suffering times, though we must boldly go on in the way of duty, yet we must contrive the circumstances of it so as not to exasperate, more than is necessary, those who seek occasion against us; Be ye wise as serpents, Mt 10:16. 2. It may be looked upon as an act of righteous judgment upon the Pharisees, who were unworthy to hear of any more of his miracles, having made so light of those they had seen. By shutting their eyes against the light, they had forfeited the benefit of it. 3. As an act of humility and self-denial. Though Christ's intention in his miracles was to prove himself the Messiah, and so to bring men to believe on him,

in order to which it was requisite that they should be known, yet sometimes he charged the people to conceal them, to set us an example of humility, and to teach us not to proclaim our own goodness or usefulness, or to desire to have it proclaimed. Christ would have his disciples to be the reverse of those who did all their works to be seen of men.

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,

18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen;
my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

The fulfilling of the scriptures in all this, Mt 12:17. Christ retired into privacy and obscurity, that though he was eclipsed, the word of God might be fulfilled, and so illustrated and glorified, which was the thing his heart was upon. The scripture here said to be fulfilled is Isa 42:1-4, which is quoted at large, Mt 12:18-21. The scope of it is to show how mild and quiet, and yet how successful, our Lord Jesus should be in his undertaking; instances of both which we have in the foregoing passages. Observe here,

1 The pleasure of the Father in Christ (Mt 12:18); Behold, my Servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased. Hence we may learn,

(a) That our Saviour was God's Servant in the great work of our redemption. He therein submitted himself to the Father's will (Heb 10:7), and set himself to serve the design of his grace and the interests of his glory, in repairing the breaches that had been made by man's apostasy. As a Servant, he had a great work appointed him, and a great trust reposed in him. This was a part of his humiliation, that though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet that in the work of our salvation he took upon him the form of a servant, received a law, and came into bonds. Though he were a son, yet learned he this obedience, Heb 5:8. The motto of this Prince is, Ich dien--I serve.

(b) That Jesus Christ was chosen of God, as the only fit and proper person for the management of the great work of our redemption.

He is my Servant whom I have chosen, as par negotio--equal to the undertaking. None but he was able to do the Redeemer's work, or fit to wear the Redeemer's crown. He was one chosen out of the people (Ps 89:19), chosen by Infinite Wisdom to that post of service and honour, for which neither man nor angel was qualified; none but Christ, that he might in all things have the pre-eminence. Christ did not thrust himself upon this work, but was duly chosen into it; Christ was so God's Chosen as to be the head of election, and of all other the Elect, for we are chosen in him, Eph 1:4.

(c) That Jesus Christ is God's Beloved, his beloved Son; as God, he lay from eternity in his bosom (Joh 1:18); he was daily his delight, (Pr 8:30). Between the Father and the Son there was before all time an eternal and inconceivable intercourse and interchanging of love, and thus the Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, Pr 8:22. As Mediator, the Father loved him; then when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he submitted to it, therefore did the Father love him, Joh 10:17.

(d) That Jesus Christ is one in whom the Father is well pleased, in whom his soul is pleased; which denotes the highest complacency imaginable. God declared, by a voice from heaven, that he was his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased; well pleased in him, because he was the ready and cheerful Undertaker of that work of wonder which God's heart was so much upon, and he is well pleased with us in him; for he had made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph 1:6. All the interest which fallen man has or can have in God is grounded upon and owing to God's well-pleasedness in Jesus Christ; for there is no coming to the Father but by him, Joh 14:6.

2 The promise of the Father to him in two things.

(a) That he should be every way well qualified for his undertaking; I will put my Spirit upon him, as a Spirit of wisdom and counsel, Isa 11:2,3. Those whom God calls to any service, he will be sure to fit and qualify for it; and by that it will appear that he called them to it, as Moses, Ex 4:12. Christ, as God, was equal in power and

glory with the Father; as Mediator, he received from the Father power and glory, and received that he might give: and all that the Father gave him, to qualify him for his undertaking, was summed up in this, he put his Spirit upon him: this was that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows, Heb 1:9. He received the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, Joh 3:34. Note, Whoever they be that God has chosen, and in whim he is well pleased, he will be sure to put his Spirit upon them. Wherever he confers his love, he confers somewhat of his likeness.

(b) That he should be abundantly successful in his understanding. Those whom God sends he will certainly own. It was long since secured by promise to our Lord Jesus, that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand, Isa 53:10. And here we have an account of that prospering good pleasure.

[1.] He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. Christ in his own person preached to those who bordered upon the heathen nations (see Mk 3:6-8), and by his apostle showed his gospel, called here his judgment, to the Gentile world. The way and method of salvation, the judgment which is committed to the Son, is not only wrought out by him as our great High Priest, but showed and published by him as our great Prophet. The gospel, as it is a rule of practice and conversation, which has a direct tendency to the reforming and bettering of men's hearts and lives, shall be showed to the Gentiles. God's judgments had been the Jews' peculiar (Ps 147:19), but it was often foretold, by the Old-Testament prophets, that they should be showed to the Gentiles, which therefore ought not to have been such a surprise as it was to the unbelieving Jews, much less a vexation.

[2.] In his name shall the Gentiles trust, Mt 12:21. He shall so show judgment to them, that they shall heed and observe what he shows them, and be influenced by it to depend upon him, to devote themselves to him, and conform to that judgment. Note, The great design of the gospel, is to bring people to trust in the name of Jesus Christ; his name Jesus, a Saviour, that precious name whereby he

is called, and which is as ointment poured forth; The Lord our Righteousness. The evangelist here follows the Septuagint (or perhaps the latter editions of the Septuagint follow the evangelist); the Hebrew (Isa 42:4) is, The isles shall wait for his law. The isles of the Gentiles are spoken of (Ge 10:5), as peopled by the sons of Japhet, of whom it was said (Ge 9:27), God shall persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem; which was now to be fulfilled, when the isles (says the prophet), the Gentiles (says the evangelist), shall wait for his law, and trust in his name: compare these together, and observe, that they, and they only, can with confidence trust in Christ's name, that wait for his law with a resolution to be ruled by it. Observe also, that the law we wait for is the law of faith, the law of trusting in his name. This is now his great commandment, that we believe in Christ, 1Jo 3:23.

3. The prediction concerning him, and his mild and quiet management of his undertaking, Mt 12:19,20. It is chiefly for the sake of this that it is here quoted, upon occasion of Christ's affected privacy and concealment.

(a) That he should carry on his undertaking without noise or ostentation. He shall not strive, or make an outcry. Christ and his kingdom come not with observation, Lu 17:20,21. When the First-begotten was brought into the world, it was not with state and ceremony; he made no public entry, had no harbingers to proclaim him King. He was in the world and the world knew him not. Those were mistaken who fed themselves with hopes of a pompous Saviour. His voice was not heard in the streets; "Lo, here is Christ;" or, "Lo, he is there:" he spake in a still small voice, which was alluring to all, but terrifying to none; he did not affect to make a noise, but came down silently like the dew. What he spake and did was with the greatest possible humility and self-denial. His kingdom was spiritual, and therefore not to be advanced by force or violence, or by high pretensions. No, the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

(b) That he should carry on his undertaking without severity and rigour (Mt 12:20). A bruised reed shall he not break. Some understand this of his patience in bearing with the wicked; he could as easily have broken these Pharisees as a bruised reed, and have quenched them as soon as smoking flax; but he will not do it till the judgment-day, when all his enemies shall be made his footstool. Others rather understand it of his power and grace in bearing up the weak. In general, the design of his gospel is to establish such a method of salvation as encourages sincerity, though there be much infirmity; it does not insist upon a sinless obedience, but accepts an upright, willing mind. As to particular persons, that follow Christ in meekness, and in fear, and in much trembling, observe,

[1.] How their case is here described--they are like a bruised reed, and smoking flax. Young beginners in religion are weak as a bruised reed, and their weakness offensive like smoking flax; some little life they have, but it is like that of a bruised reed; some little heat, but like that of smoking flax. Christ's disciples were as yet but weak, and many are so that have a place in his family. The grace and goodness in them are as a bruised reed, the corruption and badness in them are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle when it is put out and is yet smoking.

[2.] What is the compassion of our Lord Jesus toward them? He will not discourage them, much less reject them or cast them off; the reed that is bruised shall not be broken and trodden down, but shall be supported, and made as strong as a cedar or flourishing palm-tree. The candle newly lighted, though it only smokes and does not flame, shall not be blown out, but blown up. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and therefore he will not despise it, but make it the day of great things, Zec 4:10. Note, Our Lord Jesus deals very tenderly with those who have true grace, though they be weak in it, Isa 40:11,Heb 5:2. He remembers not only that we are dust, but that we are flesh.

[3.] The good issue and success of this, intimated in that, till he send forth judgment unto victory. That judgment which he showed

to the Gentiles shall be victorious, he will go on conquering and to conquer, Re 6:2. Both the preaching of the gospel in the world, and the power of the gospel in the heart, shall prevail. Grace shall get the upper hand of corruption, and shall at length be perfected in glory. Christ's judgment will be brought forth to victory, for when he judges he will overcome. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth; so it is, Isa 42:3. Truth and victory are much the same, for great is the truth, and will prevail.

19 He shall not strive, nor cry;
neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.
20 A bruised reed shall he not break,
and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory—"unto truth," says the Hebrew original, and the Septuagint also. But our Evangelist merely seizes the spirit, instead of the letter of the prediction in this point. The grandeur and completeness of Messiah's victories would prove, it seems, not more wonderful than the unobtrusive noiselessness with which they were to be achieved. And whereas one rough touch will break a bruised reed, and quench the flickering, smoking flax, His it should be, with matchless tenderness, love, and skill, to lift up the meek, to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, to comfort all that mourn, to say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.

21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

A Divided House Cannot Stand

22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.
23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David ?

And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?—The form of the interrogative requires this to be rendered, "Is this the Son of David?" And as questions put in this form (in Greek) suppose doubt, and expect rather a negative answer, the

meaning is, "Can it possibly be?"—the people thus indicating their secret impression that this must be He; yet saving themselves from the wrath of the ecclesiastics, which a direct assertion of it would have brought upon them. (On a similar question, see on Joh 4:29; and on the phrase, "Son of David," see on Mt 9:27).

24 But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Two things are here implied—first, that the bitterest enemies of our Lord were unable to deny the reality of His miracles; and next, that they believed in an organized infernal kingdom of evil, under one chief. This belief would be of small consequence, had not our Lord set His seal to it; but this He immediately does. Stung by the unsophisticated testimony of "all the people," they had no way of holding out against His claims but by the desperate shift of ascribing His miracles to Satan.

The blasphemous cavil of the Pharisees, Mt 12:24. The Pharisees were a sort of men that pretended to more knowledge in, and zeal for, the divine law, than other people; yet they were the most inveterate enemies to Christ and his doctrine. They were proud of the reputation they had among the people; that fed their pride, supported their power, and filled their purses; and when they heard the people say, Is not this the Son of David? they were extremely irritated, more at that than at the miracle itself; this made them jealous of our Lord Jesus, and apprehensive, that as his interest in the people's esteem increased, theirs must of course be eclipsed and diminished; therefore they envied him, as Saul did his father David, because of what the women sang of him, 1Sa 18:7,8. Note, Those who bind up their happiness in the praise and applause of men, expose themselves to a perpetual uneasiness upon every favourable word that they hear said of any other. The shadow of honour followed Christ, who fled from it, and fled from the Pharisees, who were eager in the pursuit of it. They said, "This fellow does not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, and therefore is not the Son of David." Observe,

1. How scornfully they speak of Christ, this fellow; as if that precious name of his, which is as ointment poured forth, were not

worthy to be taken into their lips. It is an instance of their pride and superciliousness, and their diabolical envy, that the more people magnified Christ, the more industrious they were to vilify him. It is a bad thing to speak of good men with disdain because they are poor.

2. How blasphemously they speak of his miracles; they could not deny the matter of fact; it was as plain as the sun, that devils were cast out by the word of Christ; nor could they deny that it was an extraordinary thing, and supernatural. Being thus forced to grant the premises, they had no other way to avoid the conclusion, that this is the Son of David, than by suggesting that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub; that there was a compact between Christ and the devil; pursuant to that, the devil was not cast out, but did voluntarily retire, and give back by consent and with design: or as if, by an agreement with the ruling devil, he had power to cast out the inferior devils. No surmise could be more palpably false and vile than this; that he, who is Truth itself, should be in combination with the father of lies, to cheat the world. This was the last refuge, or subterfuge rather, or an obstinate infidelity, that was resolved to stand it out against the clearest conviction. Observe, Among the devils there is a prince, the ringleader of the apostasy from God and rebellion against him; but this prince is Beelzebub--the god of a fly, or a dunghill god. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! from an anger of light, to be a lord of flies! Yet this is the prince of the devils too, the chief of the gang of infernal spirits.

25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

26 and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Christ's reply to this base insinuation, Mt 12:25-30. Jesus knew their thoughts. Note, Jesus Christ knows what we are thinking at any time, knows what is in man; he understands our thoughts afar

off. It should seem that the Pharisees could not for shame speak it out, but kept it in their minds; they could not expect to satisfy the people with it; they therefore reserved it for the silencing of the convictions of their own consciences. Note, Many are kept off from their duty by that which they are ashamed to own, but which they cannot hide from Jesus Christ: yet it is probable that the Pharisees had whispered what they thought among themselves, to help to harden one another; but Christ's reply is said to be to their thoughts, because he knew with what mind, and from what principle, they said it; that they did not say it in their haste, but that it was the product of a rooted malignity.

Christ's reply to this imputation is copious and cogent, that every mouth may be stopped with sense and reason, before it be stopped with fire and brimstone. Here are three arguments by which he demonstrates the unreasonableness of this suggestion.

1. It would be very strange, and highly improbably, that Satan should be cast out by such a compact, because then Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself; which, considering his subtlety, is not a thing to be imagined, Mt 12:25,26.

(a) Here is a known rule laid down, that in all societies a common ruin is the consequence of mutual quarrels: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every family too: Quæ enim domus tam stabilis est, quæ tam firma civitas, quæ non odiis atque dissidiis funditus everti possit?--For what family is so strong, what community so firm, as not to be overturned by enmity and dissension? Cic. Læl. 7. Divisions commonly end in desolations; if we clash, we break; if we divide one from another, we become an easy prey to a common enemy; much more if we bite and devour one another, shall we be consumed one of another, Ga 5:15. Churches and nations have known this by sad experience.

(b) The application of it to the case in hand (Mt 12:26), If Satan cast out Satan; if the prince of the devils should be at variance with the inferior devils, the whole kingdom and interest would soon be

broken; nay, if Satan should come into a compact with Christ, it must be to his own ruin; for the manifest design and tendency of Christ's preaching and miracles was to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, as a kingdom of darkness, wickedness, and enmity to God; and to set up, upon the ruins of it, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love. The works of the devil, as a rebel against God, and a tyrant over the souls of men, were destroyed by Christ; and therefore it was the most absurd thing imaginable, to think that Beelzebub should at all countenance such a design, or come into it: if he should fall in with Christ, how should then his kingdom stand? He would himself contribute to the overthrow of it. Note, The devil has a kingdom, a common interest, in opposition to God and Christ, which, to the utmost of his power, he will make to stand, and he will never come into Christ's interests; he must be conquered and broken by Christ, and therefore cannot submit and bend to him. What concord or communion can there be between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, Christ and Beelzebub? Christ will destroy the devil's kingdom, but he needs not do it by any such little arts and projects as that of a secret compact with Beelzebub; no, this victory must be obtained by nobler methods. Let the prince of the devils muster up all his forces, let him make use of all his powers and politics, and keep his interests in the closest confederacy, yet Christ will be too hard for his united force, and his kingdom shall not stand.

2. It was not at all strange, or improbable, that devils should be cast out by the Spirit of God; for,

(a) How otherwise do your children cast them out? There were those among the Jews who, by invocation of the name of the most high God, or the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did sometimes cast out devils. Josephus speaks of some in his time that did it; we read of Jewish exorcists (Ac 19:13), and of some that in Christ's name cast out devils, though they did not follow him (Mk 9:38), or were not faithful to him, Mt 7:22. These the Pharisees condemned not, but imputed what they did to the Spirit of God, and valued themselves and their nation upon it. It was therefore merely from

spite and envy to Christ, that they would own that others cast out devils by the Spirit of God, but suggest that he did it by compact with Beelzebub. Note, It is the way of malicious people, especially the malicious persecutors of Christ and Christianity, to condemn the same thing in those they hate, which they approve of and applaud in those they have a kindness for: the judgments of envy are made, not by things, but persons; not by reason, but prejudice. But those were very unfit to sit in Moses's seat, who knew faces, and knew nothing else in judgment: Therefore they shall be your judges; "This contradicting of yourselves will rise up in judgment against you at the last great day, and will condemn you." Note, In the last judgment, not only every sin, but every aggravation of it, will be brought into the account, and some of our notions that were right and good will be brought in evidence against us, to convict us of partiality.

(b) This casting out of devils was a certain token and indication of the approach and appearance of the kingdom of God (Mt 12:28); "But if it be indeed that I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, as certainly I do, then you must conclude, that though you are unwilling to receive it, yet the kingdom of the Messiah is now about to be set up among you." Other miracles that Christ wrought proved him sent of God, but this proved him sent of God to destroy the devil's kingdom and his works. Now that great promise was evidently fulfilled, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, Ge 3:15. "Therefore that glorious dispensation of the kingdom of God, which has been long expected, is now commenced; slight it at your peril." Note, [1.] The destruction of the devil's power is wrought by the Spirit of God; that Spirit who works to the obedience of faith, overthrows the interest of that spirit who works in the children of unbelief and disobedience. [2.] The casting out of devils is a certain introduction to the kingdom of God. If the devil's interest in a soul be not only checked by custom or external restraints, but sunk and broken by the Spirit of God, as a Sanctifier, no doubt but the kingdom of God is come to that soul, the kingdom of grace, a blessed earnest of the kingdom of the glory.

3. The comparing of Christ's miracles, particularly this of casting out devils, with his doctrine, and the design and tendency of his holy religion, evidenced that he was so far from being in league with Satan, that he was at open enmity and hostility against him (Mt 12:29); How can one enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, and carry them away, except he first bind the strong man? And then he may do what he pleases with his goods. The world, that sat in darkness, and lay in wickedness, was in Satan's possession, and under his power, as a house in the possession and under the power of a strong man; so is every unregenerate soul; there Satan resides, there he rules. Now, (1.) The design of Christ's gospel was to spoil the devil's house, which, as a strong man, he kept in the world; to turn the people from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from this world to a better, from the power of Satan unto God (Ac 26:18); to alter the property of souls. (2.) Pursuant to this design, he bound the strong man, when he cast out unclean spirits by his word: thus he wrested the sword out of the devil's hand, that he might wrest the sceptre out of it. The doctrine of Christ teaches us how to construe his miracles, and when he showed how easily and effectually he could cast the devil out of people's bodies, he encouraged all believers to hope that, whatever power Satan might usurp and exercise in the souls of men, Christ by his grace would break it: he will spoil him, for it appears that he can bind him. When nations were turned from the service of idols to serve the living God, when some of the worst of sinners were sanctified and justified, and became the best of saints, then Christ spoiled the devil's house, and will spoil it more and more.

4. It is here intimated, that this holy war, which Christ was carrying on with vigour against the devil and his kingdom, was such as would not admit of a neutrality (Mt 12:30), He that is not with me is against me. In the little differences that may arise between the disciples of Christ among themselves, we are taught to lessen the matters in variance, and to seek peace, by accounting those who are not against us, to be with us (Lu 9:50); but in the great quarrel between Christ and the devil, no peace is to be sought, nor any such favourable construction to be made of any indifference in the

matter; he that is not hearty for Christ, will be reckoned with as really against him: he that is cold in the cause, is looked upon as an enemy. When the dispute is between God and Baal, there is no halting between two (1Ki 18:21), there is no trimming between Christ and Belial; for the kingdom of Christ, as it is eternally opposite to, so it will be eternally victorious over, the devil's kingdom; and therefore in this cause there is no sitting still with Gilead beyond Jordan, or Asher on the sea-shore, (Jdg 4:16,17), we must be entirely, faithfully, and immovably, on Christ's side; it is the right side, and will at last be the rising side. See Ex 32:26.

The latter clause is to the same purport: He that gathereth not with me scattereth. Note,

(a) Christ's errand into the world was to gather, to gather in his harvest, to gather in those whom the Father had given him, Joh 11:52,Eph 1:10.

(b) Christ expects and requires from those who are with him, that they gather with him; that they not only gather to him themselves, but do all they can in their places to gather others to him, and so to strengthen his interest.

(c) Those who will not appear, and act, as furtherers of Christ's kingdom, will be looked upon, and dealt with, as hinderers of it; if we gather not with Christ, we scatter; it is not enough, not to do hurt, but we must do good. Thus is the breach widened between Christ and Satan, to show that there was no such compact between them as the Pharisees whispered.

29 Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Christ speaks here concerning other wicked words, the products of corruption reigning in the heart, and breaking out thence, Mt 12:33-35. It was said (Mt 12:25) that Jesus knew their thoughts, and here he spoke with an eye to them, showing that it was not strange that they should speak so ill, when their hearts were so full of enmity and malice; which yet they often endeavoured to cloak and cover, by feigning themselves just men. Our Lord Jesus therefore points to the springs and heals them; let the heart be sanctified and it will appear in our words.

(a) The heart is the root, the language is the fruit (Mt 12:33); if the nature of the tree be good, it will bring forth fruit accordingly. Where grace is the reigning principle in the heart, the language will be the language of Canaan; and, on the contrary, whatever lust reigns in the heart it will break out; diseased lungs make an offensive breath: men's language discovers what country they are of, so likewise what manner of spirit they are of: "Either make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good; get pure hearts and then you will have pure lips and pure lives; or else the tree will be corrupt, and the fruit accordingly. You may make a crab-stock to become a good tree, by grafting into it a shoot from a good tree, and then the fruit will be good; but if the tree be still the same, plant it where you will, and water it how you will, the fruit will be still corrupt." Note, Unless the heart be transformed, the life will never be thoroughly reformed. These Pharisees were shy of speaking out their wicked thoughts of Jesus Christ; but Christ here intimates, how vain it was for them to seek to hide that root of bitterness in them, that bore this gall and wormwood, when they never sought to mortify it. Note, It should be more our care to be good really, than to seem good outwardly.

(b) The heart is the fountain, the words are the streams (Mt 12:34); Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, as the streams are the overflowings of the spring. A wicked heart is said to send forth wickedness, as a fountain casts forth her waters, Jer 6:7. A troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring, such as Solomon speaks of (Pr 25:26), must needs send forth muddy and unpleasant streams. Evil words are the natural, genuine product of an evil heart. Nothing but the salt of grace, cast into the spring, will heal the waters, season the speech, and purify the corrupt communications. This they wanted, they were evil; and how can ye, being evil, speak good things? They were a generation of vipers; John Baptist had called them so (Mt 3:7), and they were still the same; for can the Ethiopian change his skin? The people looked upon the Pharisees as a generation of saints, but Christ calls them a generation of vipers, the seed of the serpent, that had an enmity to Christ and his gospel. Now what could be expected from a generation of vipers, but that which is poisonous and malignant? Can the viper be otherwise than venomous? Note, Bad things may be expected from bad people, as said the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, 1Sa 24:13. The vile person will speak villany, Isa 32:6. Those who are themselves evil, have neither skill nor will to speak good things, as they should be spoken. Christ would have his disciples know what sort of men they were to live among, that they might know what to look for. They are as Ezekiel among scorpions (Eze 2:6), and must not think it strange if they be stung and bitten.

(c) The heart is the treasury, the words are the things brought out of that treasury (Mt 12:35); and from hence men's characters may be drawn, and may be judged of.

[1.] It is the character of a good man, that he has a good treasure in his heart, and from thence brings forth good things, as there is occasion. Graces, comforts, experiences, good knowledge, good affections, good resolutions, these are a good treasure in the heart; the word of God hidden there, the law of God written there, divine

truths dwelling and ruling thee, are a treasure there, valuable and suitable, kept safe and kept secret, as the stores of the good householder, but ready for use upon all occasions. A good man, thus furnished, will bring forth, as Joseph out of his stores; will be speaking and doing that which is good, for God's glory, and the edification of others. See Pr 10:11,13,14,20,21,31,32. This is bringing forth good things. Some pretend to good expenses that have not a good treasure--such will soon be bankrupts: some pretend to have a good treasure within, but give no proof of it: they hope they have it in them, and thank God, whatever their words and actions are, they have good hearts; but faith without works is dead: and some have a good treasure of wisdom and knowledge, but they are not communicative, they do not bring forth out of it: they have a talent, but know not how to trade with it. The complete Christian in this bears the image of God, that he both is good, and does good.

[2.] It is the character of an evil man, that he has an evil treasure in his heart, and out of it bringeth forth evil things. Lusts and corruptions dwelling and reigning in the heart are an evil treasure, out of which the sinner brings forth bad words and actions, to the dishonour of God, and the hurt of others. See Ge 6:5,12,Mt 15:18-20,Jam 1:15. But treasures of wickedness (Pr 10:2) will be treasures of wrath.

3. Christ speaks here concerning idle words, and shows what evil there is in them (Mt 12:36,37); much more is there in such wicked words as the Pharisees spoke. It concerns us to think much of the day of judgment, that that may be a check upon our tongues; and let us consider,

(a) How particular the account will be of tongue-sins in that day: even for every idle words, or discourse, that men speak, they shall give account. This intimates,

[1.] That God takes notice of every word we say, even that which we ourselves do not notice. See Ps 139:4. Not a word in my tongue

but thou knowest it: though spoken without regard or design, God takes cognizance of it.

[2.] That vain, idle, impertinent talk is displeasing to God, which tends not to any good purpose, is not good to any use of edifying; it is the product of a vain and trifling heart. These idle words are the same with that foolish talking and jesting which is forbidden, Eph 5:4. This is that sin which is seldom wanting in the multitude of words, unprofitable talk, Job 15:3.

[3.] We must shortly account for these idle words; they will be produced in evidence against us, to prove us unprofitable servants, that have not improved the faculties of reason and speech, which are part of the talents we are entrusted with. If we repent not of our idle words, and our account for them be not balanced by the blood of Christ, we are undone.

(b) How strict the judgment will be upon that account (Mt 12:37); By thy words thou shall be justified or condemned; a common rule in men's judgments, and here applied to God's. Note, The constant tenour of our discourse, according as it is gracious or not gracious, will be an evidence for us, or against us, at the great day. Those who seemed to be religious, but bridled not their tongue, will then be found to have put a cheat upon themselves with a vain religion, Jam 1:26. Some think that Christ here refers to that of Eliphaz (Job 15:6), Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I; or, rather, to that of Solomon (Pr 18:21), Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

An Evil Generation Seeks a Sign

38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah:

> Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet those who ask amiss, ask and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them to confirm their faith, as Abraham and Gideon; but denied to those who demanded them to excuse their unbelief.

40 for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah *is* here.

> It is probable that these Pharisees with whom Christ is here in discourse were not the same that cavilled at him (Mt 12:24), and would not credit the signs he gave; but another set of them, who saw that there was no reason to discredit them, but would not content themselves with the signs he gave, nor admit the evidence of them, unless he would give them such further proof as they should demand. Here is,
>
> I. Their address to him, Mt 12:38. They compliment him with the title of Master, pretending respect for him, when they intended to abuse him; all are not indeed Christ's servants, who call him Master. Their request is, We would see a sign from thee. It was highly reasonable that they should see a sign, that he should by miracles prove his divine mission: see Ex 4:8,9. He came to take down a model of religion that was set up by miracles, and therefore it was requisite he should produce the same credentials; but it was highly unreasonable to demand a sign now, when he had given so many signs already, that did abundantly prove him sent of God. Note, It is natural to proud men to prescribe to God, and then to make that

an excuse for not subscribing to him; but a man's offence will never be his defence.

II. His answer to this address, this insolent demand,

1. He condemns the demand, as the language of an evil and adulterous generation, Mt 12:39. He fastens the charge, not only on the scribes and Pharisees, but the whole nation of the Jews; they were all like their leaders, a seed and succession of evil-doers: they were an evil generation indeed, that not only hardened themselves against the conviction of Christ's miracles, but set themselves to abuse him, and put contempt on his miracles. They were an adulterous generation,

(a) As an adulterous brood; so miserably degenerated from the faith and obedience of their ancestors, that Abraham and Israel acknowledged them not. See Isa 57:3. Or,

(b) As an adulterous wife; they departed from that God, to whom by covenant they had been espoused: they were not guilty of the whoredom of idolatry, as they had been before the captivity, but they were guilty of infidelity, and all iniquity, and that is whoredom too: they did not look after gods of their own making, but they looked for signs of their own devising; and that was adultery.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign than he has already given them, but that of the prophet Jonas. Note, Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and humours. Those who ask amiss, ask, and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them for the confirmation of their faith, as to Abraham and Gideon; but were denied to those who demanded them for the excuse of their unbelief.

Justly might Christ have said, They shall never see another miracle: but see his wonderful goodness;

(a) They shall have the same signs still repeated, for their further benefit, and more abundant conviction.

(b) They shall have one sign of a different kind from all these, and that is, the resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power, called here the sign of the prophet Jonas this was yet reserved for their conviction, and was intended to be the great proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for by that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Ro 1:4. That was such a sign as surpassed all the rest, completed and crowned them. "If they will not believe the former signs, they will believe this (Ex 4:9), and if this will not convince them, nothing will." And yet the unbelief of the Jews found out an evasion to shift off that too, by saying, His disciples came and stole him away; for none are so incurably blind as those who are resolved they will not see.

Now this sign of the prophet Jonas he further explains here; (Mt 12:40) As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and then came out again safe and well, thus Christ shall be so long in the grave, and then shall rise again.

[1.] The grave was to Christ as the belly of the fish was to Jonah; thither he was thrown, as a Ransom for lives ready to be lost in a storm; there he lay, as in the belly of hell (Jon 2:2), and seemed to be cast out of God's sight.

[2.] He continued in the grave just as long as Jonah continued in the fish's belly, three days and three nights; not three whole days and nights: it is probable, Jonah did not lie so long in the whale's belly, but part of three natural days (nychthemerai, the Greeks called them); he was buried in the afternoon of the sixth day of the week, and rose again in the morning of the first day; it is a manner of speech very usual; see 1Ki 20:29,Es 4:16,5:1,Lu 2:21. So long Jonah was a prisoner for his own sins, so long Christ was a Prisoner for ours. [3.] As Jonah in the whale's belly comforted himself with an assurance that yet he should look again toward God's holy temple (Jon 2:4), so Christ when he lay in the grave, is expressly

said to rest in hope, as one assured he should not see corruption, Ac 2:26,27. [4.] As Jonah on the third day was discharged from his prison, and came to the land of the living again, from the congregation of the dead (for dead things are said to be formed from under the waters, Job 26:5), so Christ on the third day should return to life, and rise out of his grave to send abroad the gospel to the Gentiles.

3. Christ takes this occasion to represent the sad character and condition of that generation in which he lived, a generation that would not be reformed, and therefore could not but be ruined; and he gives them their character, as it would stand in the day of judgment, under the full discoveries and final sentences of that day. Persons and things now appear under false colours; characters and conditions are here changeable: if therefore we would make a right estimate, we must take our measures from the last judgment; things are really, what they are eternally. Now Christ represents the people of the Jews,

(a) As a generation that would be condemned by the men of Nineveh, whose repenting at the preaching of Jonas would rise up in judgment against them, Mt 12:41. Christ's resurrection will be the sign of the prophet Jonas to them: but it will not have so happy an effect upon them, as that of Jonas had upon the Ninevites, for they were by it brought to such a repentance as prevented their ruin; but the Jews will be hardened in an unbelief that shall hasten their ruin; and in the day of judgment, the repentance of the Ninevites will be mentioned as an aggravation of the sin, and consequently the condemnation of those to whom Christ preached then, and of those to whom Christ is preached now; for this reason, because Christ is greater than Jonah.

[1.] Jonah was but a man, subject to like passions, to like sinful passions, as we are; but Christ is the Son of God.

[2.] Jonah was a stranger in Nineveh, he came among the strangers that were prejudiced against his country; but Christ came to his

own, when he preached to the Jews, and much more when he is preached among professing Christians, that are called by his name.

[3.] Jonah preached but one short sermon, and that with no great solemnity, but as he passed along the streets; Christ renews his calls, sat and taught, taught in the synagogues.

[4.] Jonah preached nothing but wrath and ruin within forty days, gave no instructions, directions, or encouragements, to repent: but Christ, besides the warning given us of our danger, has shown wherein we must repent, and assured us of acceptance upon our repentance, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[5.] Jonah wrought no miracle to confirm his doctrine, showed no good will to the Ninevites; but Christ wrought abundance of miracles, and all miracles of mercy: yet the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but the Jews were not wrought upon by Christ's preaching. Note, The goodness of some, who have less helps and advantages for their souls, will aggravate the badness of those who have much greater. Those who by the twilight discover the things that belong to their peace, will shame those who grope at noon-day.

(b) As a generation that would be condemned by the queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, Mt 12:42. The Ninevites would shame them for not repenting, the queen of Sheba for not believing in Christ. She came from a far country to hear the wisdom of Solomon; yet people will not be persuaded to come and hear the wisdom of Christ, though he is in every thing greater than Solomon.

[1.] The queen of Sheba had no invitation to come to Solomon, nor any promise of being welcome; but we are invited to Christ, to sit at his feet and hear his word.

[2.] Solomon was but a wise man, but Christ is wisdom itself, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom.

[3.] The queen of Sheba had many difficulties to break through; she was a woman, unfit for travel, the journey long and perilous; she was a queen, and what would become of her own country in her absence? We have no such cares to hinder us.

[4.] She could not be sure that it would be worth her while to go so far on this errand; fame uses to flatter men, and perhaps she might have in her own country or court wise men sufficient to instruct her; yet, having heard of Solomon's fame, she would see him; but we come not to Christ upon such uncertainties.

[5.] She came from the uttermost parts of the earth, but we have Christ among us, and his word nigh us: Behold he stands at the door, and knocks.

[6.] It should seem the wisdom the queen of Sheba came for was only philosophy and politics; but the wisdom that is to be had with Christ is wisdom to salvation.

[7.] She could only hear Solomon's wisdom; he could not give her wisdom: but Christ will give wisdom to those who come to him; nay, he will himself be made of God to them Wisdom; so that, upon all these accounts, if we do not hear the wisdom of Christ, the forwardness of the queen of Sheba to come and hear the wisdom of Solomon will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon.

(c) As a generation that were resolved to continue in the possession, and under the power, of Satan, notwithstanding all the methods that were used to dispossess him and rescue them. They are compared to one out of whom the devil is gone, but returns with double force, Mt 12:43-45. The devil is here called the unclean spirit, for he has lost all his purity, and delights in and promotes all manner of impurity among men. Now,

[1.] The parable represents his possessing men's bodies: Christ having lately cast out a devil, and they having said he had a devil, gave occasion to show how much they were under the power of Satan. This is a further proof that Christ did not cast out devils by compact with the devil, for then he would soon have returned again; but Christ's ejectment of him was final, and such as barred a re-entry: we find him charging the evil spirit to go out, and enter no more, Mk 9:25. Probably the devil was wont sometimes thus to sport with those he had possession of; he would go out, and then return again with more fury; hence the lucid intervals of those in that condition were commonly followed with the more violent fits. When the devil is gone out, he is uneasy, for he sleeps not except he have done mischief (Pr 4:16); he walks in dry places, like one that is very melancholy; he seeks rest but finds none, till he returns again. When Christ cast the legion out of the man, they begged leave to enter into the swine, where they went not long in dry places, but into the lake presently.

[2.] The application of the parable makes it to represent the case of the body of the Jewish church and nation: So shall it be with this wicked generation, that now resist, and will finally reject, the gospel of Christ. The devil, who by the labours of Christ and his disciples had been cast out of many of the Jews, sought for rest among the heathen, from whose persons and temples the Christians would every where expel him: so Dr. Whitby: or finding no where else in the heathen world such pleasant, desirable habitations, to his satisfaction, as here in the heart of the Jews: so Dr. Hammond: he shall therefore enter again into them, for Christ had not found admission among them, and they, by their prodigious wickedness and obstinate unbelief, were still more ready than ever to receive him; and then he shall take a durable possession here, and the state of this people is likely to be more desperately damnable (so Dr. Hammond) than it was before Christ came among them, or would have been if Satan had never been cast out.

The body of that nation is here represented, First, As an apostate people. After the captivity in Babylon, they began to reform, left

their idols, and appeared with some face of religion; but they soon corrupted themselves again: though they never relapsed into idolatry, they fell into all manner of impiety and profaneness, grew worse and worse, and added to all the rest of their wickedness a wilful contempt of, and opposition to, Christ and his gospel. Secondly, As a people marked for ruin. A new commission was passing the seals against that hypocritical nation, the people of God's wrath (like that, Isa 10:6), and their destruction by the Romans was likely to be greater than any other, as their sins had been more flagrant: then it was that wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1Th 2:15,16. Let this be a warning to all nations and churches, to take heed of leaving their first love, of letting fall a good work of reformation begun among them, and returning to that wickedness which they seemed to have forsaken; for the last state of such will be worse than the first.

42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.

The Return of the Unclean Spirit

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Jesus' Mother and Brethren

46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

Christ's preaching was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to his hearers. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. Frequently, those who are nearest to the means of

knowledge and grace are most negligent. We are apt to neglect that which we think we may have any day, forgetting that to-morrow is not ours. We often meet with hinderances in our work from friends about us, and are taken off by care for the things of this life, from the concerns of our souls. Christ was so intent on his work, that no natural or other duty took him from it. Not that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents, or unkind to relations; but the lesser duty must stand by, while the greater is done. Let us cease from men, and cleave to Christ; let us look upon every Christian, in whatever condition of life, as the brother, sister, or mother of the Lord of glory; let us love, respect, and be kind to them, for his sake, and after his example.

47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

Many excellent, useful sayings came from the mouth of our Lord Jesus upon particular occasions; even his digressions were instructive, as well as his set discourses: as here,

Observe, I. How Christ was interrupted in his preaching by his mother and his brethren, that stood without, desiring to speak with him (Mt 12:40,47); which desire of theirs was conveyed to him through the crowd. It is needless to enquire which of his brethren they were that came along with his mother (perhaps they were those who did not believe in him, Joh 7:5); or what their business was; perhaps it was only designed to oblige him to break off, for fear he should fatigue himself, or to caution him to take heed of giving offence by his discourse to the Pharisees, and or involving himself in a difficulty; as if they could teach him wisdom.

1. He was as yet talking to the people. Note, Christ's preaching was talking; it was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to their capacity and case. What Christ had delivered had been cavilled at, and yet he went on. Note, The opposition we meet within our work, must not drive us from it. He left off talking with the Pharisees, for he saw he could do no good with them; but continued to talk to the common people, who, not having such a conceit of their knowledge as the Pharisees had, were willing to learn.

2. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. They had the advantage of his daily converse in private, and therefore were less mindful to attend upon his public preaching. Note, Frequently those who are nearest to the means of knowledge and grace, are most negligent. Familiarity and easiness of access breed some degree of contempt. We are apt to neglect that this day, which we think we may have any day, for getting that it is only the present time we can be sure of; tomorrow is none of ours. There is too much truth in that common proverb, "The nearer the church, the further from God;" it is pity it should be so.

3. They not only would not hear him themselves, but they interrupted others that heard him gladly. The devil was a sworn enemy to our Saviour's preaching. He had sought to baffle his discourse by the unreasonable cavils of the scribes and Pharisees, and when he could not gain his point that way, he endeavoured to break it off by the unseasonable visits of relations. Note, We often meet with hindrances and obstructions in our work, by our friends that are about us, and are taken off by civil respects from our spiritual concerns. Those who really wish well to us and to our work, may sometimes, by their indiscretion, prove our back-friends, and impediments to us in our duty; as Peter was offensive to Christ, with his, "Master, spare thyself," when he thought himself very officious. The mother of our Lord desired to speak with him; it seemed she had not then learned to command her Son, as the iniquity and idolatry of the church of Rome has since pretended to teach her: nor was she so free from fault and folly as they would make her. It was Christ's prerogative, and not his mother's, to do every thing wisely, and well, and in its season. Christ once said to his mother, How is it that ye sought me? Wist he not, that I must be about my Father's business? And it was then said, she laid up that saying in her heart (Lu 2:49); but if she had remembered it now, she would not have given him this interruption when he was about his Father's business. Note, There is many a good truth that we thought was well laid up when we heard it, which yet is out of the way when we have occasion to use it.

II. How he resented this interruption, Mt 12:48-50.

1. He would not hearken to it; he was so intent upon his work, that no natural or civil respects should take him off from it. Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Not that natural affection is to be put off, or that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents, or unkind to other relations; but every thing is beautiful in its season, and the less duty must stand by, while the greater is done. When our regard to our relations comes in competition with the service of God, and the improving of an opportunity to do good, in such a case, we must say to our Father, I have not seen him, as Levi did, De 33:9. The nearest relations must be comparatively hated, that is, we must love them less than Christ (Lu 14:26), and our duty to God must have the preference. This Christ has here given us an example of; the zeal of God's house did so far eat him up, that it made him not only forget himself, but forget his dearest relations. And we must not take it ill of our friends, nor put it upon the score of their wickedness, if they prefer the pleasing of God before the pleasing of us; but we must readily forgive those neglects which may be easily imputed to a pious zeal for God's glory and others' good. Nay, we must deny ourselves and our own satisfaction, rather than do that which may any way divert our friends from, or distract them in, their duty to God.

2. He took that occasion to prefer his disciples, who were his spiritual kindred, before his natural relations as such: which was a good reason why he would not leave preaching to speak with his brethren. He would rather be profiting his disciples, than pleasing his relations. Observe,

(1.) The description of Christ's disciples. They are such as do the will of his Father; not only hear it, and know it, and talk of it, but do it; for doing the will of God is the best preparative for discipleship (Joh 7:17), and the best proof of it (Mt 7:21); that denominates us his disciples indeed. Christ does not say, "Whosoever shall do my will," for he came not to seek or do his own will distinct from his Father's: his will and his Father's are the same; but he refers us to his Father's will, because now in his present state and work he referred himself to it, Joh 6:38.

(2.) The dignity of Christ's disciples: The same is my brother, and sister, and mother. His disciples, that had left all to follow him,

and embraced his doctrine, were dearer to him than any that were akin to him according to the flesh. They had preferred Christ before their relations; they left their father (Mt 4:22,10:37); and now to make them amends, and to show that there was no love lost, he preferred them before his relations. Did not they hereby receive, in point of honour, a hundred fold? Mt 19:29. It was very endearing and very encouraging for Christ to say, Behold my mother and my brethren; yet it was not their privilege alone, this honour have all the saints. Note, All obedient believers are near akin to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, bear his image, have his nature, are of his family. He loves them, converses freely with them as his relations. He bids them welcome to his table, takes care of them, provides for them, sees that they want nothing that is fit for them: when he died he left them rich legacies, now he is in heaven he keeps up a correspondence with them, and will have them all with him at last, and will in nothing fail to do the kinsman's part (Ru 3:13), nor will ever be ashamed of his poor relations, but will confess them before men, before the angels, and before his Father.

49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Matthew-13

The Parable of the Sower

1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

When Christ preached this sermon; it was the same day that he preached the sermon in the foregoing chapter: so unwearied was he in doing good, and working the works of him that sent him. Note, Christ was for preaching both ends of the day, and has by his example recommended that practice to his church; we must in the morning sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand, Ec 11:6. An afternoon sermon well heard, will be so far from driving out the morning sermon, that it will rather clench it, and fasten the nail in a sure place. Though Christ had been in the morning opposed

and cavilled at by his enemies, disturbed and interrupted by his friends, yet he went on with his work; and in the latter part of the day, we do not find that he met with such discouragements. Those who with courage and zeal break through difficulties in God's service, will perhaps find them not so apt to recur as they fear. Resist them, and they will flee.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

To whom he preached; there were great multitudes gathered together to him, and they were the auditors; we do not find that any of the scribes or Pharisees were present. They were willing to hear him when he preached in the synagogue (Mt 12:9,14), but they thought it below them to hear a sermon by the sea-side, though Christ himself was the preacher: and truly he had better have their room than their company, for now they were absent, he went on quietly and without contradiction. Note, Sometimes there is most of the power of religion where there is least of the pomp of it: the poor receive the gospel. When Christ went to the sea-side, multitudes were presently gathered together to him. Where the king is, there is the court; where Christ is, there is the church, though it be by the sea-side. Note, Those who would get good by the word, must be willing to follow it in all its removes; when the ark shifts, shift after it. The Pharisees had been labouring, by base calumnies and suggestions, to drive the people off from following Christ, but they still flocked after him as much as ever. Note, Christ will be glorified in spite of all opposition; he will be followed.

Where he preached this sermon.

(1.) His meeting-place was the sea-side. He went out of the house (because there was no room for the auditory) into the open air. It was pity but such a Preacher should have had the most spacious, sumptuous, and convenient place to preach in, that could be devised, like one of the Roman theatres; but he was now in his state of humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he denied himself the honours due to him; as he had not a house of his own to live in, so

he had not a chapel of his own to preach in. By this he teaches us in the external circumstances of worship not to covet that which is stately, but to make the best of the conveniences which God in his providence allots to us. When Christ was born, he was crowded into the stable, and now to the sea-side, upon the strand, where all persons might come to him with freedom. He that was truth itself sought no corners (no adyta), as the pagan mysteries did. Wisdom crieth without, Pr 1:20,Joh 13:20.

(2.) His pulpit was a ship; not like Ezra's pulpit, that was made for the purpose (Ne 8:4); but converted to this use for want of a better. No place amiss for such a Preacher, whose presence dignified and consecrated any place: let not those who preach Christ be ashamed, though they have mean and inconvenient places to preach in. Some observe, that the people stood upon dry ground and firm ground, while the Preacher was upon the water in more hazard. Ministers are most exposed to trouble.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

4 and when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

The parable of the sower draws its lessons from the four different kinds of soil rather than from the work of the sower. The preacher puts the message of the kingdom into people's hearts as a farmer puts seed into the ground. But people's hearts vary just as the soil in different places varies. Some people hear the message but do not understand it because they are not interested. Others show early interest but soon give up because they have no deep spiritual concern. Others are too worried about the affairs of everyday life. Only a few respond to the message in faith, but when they do their lives are changed and a spiritual harvest results (Mat_13:3b-9, 18-23; Mar_4:3-9, 13-20).

So it is with the hearts of men, whose different characters are here described by four sorts of ground. Careless, trifling hearers, are an easy prey to Satan; who, as he is the great murderer of souls, so he is the great thief of sermons, and will be sure to rob us of the word,

if we take not care to keep it. Hypocrites, like the stony ground, often get the start of true Christians in the shows of profession. Many are glad to hear a good sermon, who do not profit by it. They are told of free salvation, of the believer's privileges, and the happiness of heaven; and, without any change of heart, without any abiding conviction of their own depravity, their need of a Saviour, or the excellence of holiness, they soon profess an unwarranted assurance. But when some heavy trial threatens them, or some sinful advantage may be had, they give up or disguise their profession, or turn to some easier system.

Worldly cares are fitly compared to thorns, for they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they are good in their place to stop a gap, but a man must be well armed that has much to do with them; they are entangling, vexing, scratching, and their end is to be burned, Heb_6:8. Worldly cares are great hinderances to our profiting by the word of God. The deceitfulness of riches does the mischief; they cannot be said to deceive us unless we put our trust in them, then they choke the good seed.

What distinguished the good ground was fruitfulness. By this true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites. Christ does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns; but none that could hinder its fruitfulness. All are not alike; we should aim at the highest, to bring forth most fruit. The sense of hearing cannot be better employed than in hearing God's word; and let us look to ourselves that we may know what sort of hearers we are.

5 some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith
they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:
6 and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root,
they withered away.
7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:
8 but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold,
some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.
9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The Purpose of the Parables

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

We have here the general reason why Christ taught in parables. The disciples were a little surprised at it, for hitherto, in his preaching, he had not much used them, and therefore they ask, Why speakest thou to them in parables? Because they were truly desirous that the people might hear with understanding. They do not say, Why speakest thou to us? (they knew how to get the parables explained) but to them. Note, We ought to be concerned for the edification of others, as well as for our own, by the word preached; and if ourselves be strong, yet to bear the infirmities of the weak.

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

To this question Christ answers largely, Mt 13:11-17, where he tells them, that therefore he preached by parables, because thereby the things of God were made more plain and easy to them who were willingly ignorant; and thus the gospel would be a savour of life to some, and of death to others. A parable, like the pillar of cloud and fire, turns a dark side towards Egyptians, which confounds them, but a light side towards Israelites, which comforts them, and so answers a double intention. The same light directs the eyes of some, but dazzles the eyes of others.

This reason is laid down (Mt 13:11): Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. That is,

(a) The disciples had knowledge, but the people had not. You know already something of these mysteries, and need not in this familiar way to be instructed; but the people are ignorant, are yet but babes, and must be taught as such by plain similitudes, being yet incapable of receiving instruction in any other way: for though they have eyes, they know not how to use them; so some. Or,

(b) The disciples were well inclined to the knowledge of gospel mysteries, and would search into the parables, and by them would be led into a more intimate acquaintance with those mysteries; but the carnal hearers that rested in bare hearing, and would not be at the pains to look further, nor to ask the meaning of the parables, would be never the wiser, and so would justly suffer for their remissions. A parable is a shell that keeps good fruit for the diligent, but keeps it from the slothful. Note, There are mysteries in the kingdom of heaven, and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: Christ's incarnation, satisfaction, intercession, our justification and sanctification by union with Christ, and indeed the whole work of redemption, from first to last, are mysteries, which could never have been discovered but by divine revelation (1Co 15:51), were at this time discovered but in part to the disciples, and will never be fully discovered till the veil shall be rent; but the mysteriousness of gospel truth should not discourage us from, but quicken us in, our enquiries after it and searches into it.

[1.] It is graciously given to the disciples of Christ to be acquainted with these mysteries. Knowledge is the first gift of God, and it is a distinguishing gift (Pr 2:6); it was given to the apostles, because they were Christ's constant followers and attendants. Note, The nearer we draw to Christ, and the more we converse with him, the better acquainted we shall be with gospel mysteries.

[2.] It is given to all true believers, who have an experimental knowledge of the gospel mysteries, and that is without doubt the best knowledge: a principle of grace in the heart, is that which makes men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and in the faith of Christ, and so in the meaning of parables; and for want of that, Nicodemus, a master in Israel, talked of the new birth as a blind man of colours.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

that is, keeps; as a thing which he values. He will be rewarded by an increase of what he so much prizes.

who lets this go or lie unused, as a thing on which he sets no value.or as it is in Luke (Lu 8:18), "what he seemeth to have," or, thinketh he hath. This is a principle of immense importance, and, like other weighty sayings, appears to have been uttered by our Lord on more than one occasion, and in different connections. (See on Mt2 5:9). As a great ethical principle, we see it in operation everywhere, under the general law of habit; in virtue of which moral principles become stronger by exercise, while by disuse, or the exercise of their contraries, they wax weaker, and at length expire. The same principle reigns in the intellectual world, and even in the animal—if not in the vegetable also—as the facts of physiology sufficiently prove. Here, however, it is viewed as a divine ordination, as a judicial retribution in continual operation under the divine administration.

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not;
and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Some were willingly ignorant; and such were amused by the parables (Mt 13:13); because they seeing, see not. They had shut their eyes against the clear light of Christ's plainer preaching, and therefore were now left in the dark. Seeing Christ's person, they see not his glory, see no difference between him and another man; seeing his miracles, and hearing his preaching, they see not, they hear not with any concern or application; they understand neither. Note,

[1.] There are many that see the gospel light, and hear the gospel sound, but it never reaches their hearts, nor has it any place in them.

[2.] It is just with God to take away the light from those who shut their eyes against it; that such as will be ignorant, may be so; and God's dealing thus with them magnifies his distinguishing grace to his disciples.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,
By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;
and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:
15 for this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing,

and their eyes they have closed;
lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart,
and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Now in this the scripture would be fulfilled, Mt 13:14,15. It is quoted from Isa 6:9,10. The evangelical prophet that spoke most plainly of gospel grace, foretold the contempt of it, and the consequences of that contempt. It is referred to no less than six times in the New Testament, which intimates, that in gospel times spiritual judgments would be most common, which make least noise, but are most dreadful. That which was spoken of the sinners in Isaiah's time was fulfilled in those in Christ's time, and it is still fulfilling every day; for while the wicked heart of man keeps up the same sin, the righteous hand of God inflicts the same punishment. Here is,

First. A description of sinners' wilful blindness and hardness, which is their sin. This people's heart is waxed gross; it is fattened, so the word is; which denotes both sensuality and senselessness (Ps 119:70); secure under the word and rod of God, and scornful as Jeshurun, that waxed fat and kicked, De 32:15. And when the heart is thus heavy, no wonder that the ears are dull of hearing; the whispers of the Spirit they hear not at all; the loud calls of the word, though the word be nigh them, they regard not, nor are at all affected by them: they stop their ears, Ps 58:4,5. And because they are resolved to be ignorant, they shut both the learning senses; for their eyes also they have closed, resolved that they would not see light come into the world, when the Son of Righteousness arose, but they shut their windows, because they loved darkness rather than light, Joh 3:19,2Pe 3:5.

Secondly, A description of that judicial blindness, which is the just punishment of this. "By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; what means of grace you have, shall be to no purpose to you; though, in mercy to others, they are continued, yet in judgment to you, the blessing upon them is denied." The saddest condition a man can be in on this side hell, is to sit under the most lively ordinances with a dead, stupid, untouched heart. To hear God's

word, and see his providences, and yet not to understand and perceive his will, either in the one or in the other, is the greatest sin and the greatest judgment that can be. Observe, It is God's work to give an understanding heart, and he often, in a way of righteous judgment, denies it to those to whom he has given the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, in vain. Thus does God choose sinners' delusions (Isa 66:4), and bind them over to the greatest ruin, by giving them up to their own hearts' lusts (Ps 81:11,12); let them alone (Ho 4:17); my Spirit shall not always strive, Ge 6:3.

Thirdly, The woeful effect and consequence of this; Lest at any time they should see. They will not see because they will not turn; and God says that they shall not see, because they shall not turn: lest they should be converted, and I should heal them. Note,

1. That seeing, hearing, and understanding, are necessary to conversion; for God, in working grace, deals with men as men, as rational agents; he draws with the cords of a man, changes the heart by opening the eyes, and turns from the power of Satan unto God, by turning first from darkness to light, (Ac 26:18).

2. All those who are truly converted to God, shall certainly be healed by him. "If they be converted I shall heal them, I shall save them:" so that if sinners perish, it is not to be imputed to God, but to themselves; they foolishly expected to be healed, without being converted.

3. It is just with God to deny his grace to those who have long and often refused the proposals of it, and resisted the power of it. Pharaoh, for a good while, hardened his own heart (Ex 8:15,32), and afterwards God hardened it, Mt 9:12,10:20. Let us therefore fear, lest by sinning against the divine grace, we sin it away.

16 But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.
17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them;* and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

Others were effectually called to be the disciples of Christ, and were truly desirous to be taught of him; and they were instructed, and made to improve greatly in knowledge, by these parables, especially when they were expounded; and by them the things of God were made more plain and easy, more intelligible and familiar, and more apt to be remembered (Mt 13:16,17). Your eyes see, your ears hear. They saw the glory of God in Christ's person; they heard the mind of God in Christ's doctrine; they saw much, and were desirous to see more, and thereby were prepared to receive further instruction; they had opportunity for it, by being constant attendants on Christ, and they should have it from day to day, and grace with it. Now this Christ speaks of,

[1.] As a blessing; "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; it is your happiness, and it is a happiness for which you are indebted to the peculiar favour and blessing of God." It is a promised blessing, that in the days of the Messiah the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, Isa 32:3. The eyes of the meanest believer that knows experimentally the grace of Christ, are more blessed than those of the greatest scholars, the greatest masters in experimental philosophy, that are strangers to God; who, like the other gods they serve, have eyes, and see not. Blessed are your eyes. Note, True blessedness is entailed upon the right understanding and due improvement of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The hearing ear and the seeing eye are God's work in those who are sanctified; they are the work of his grace (Pr 20:12), and they are a blessed work, which shall be fulfilled with power, when those who now see through a glass darkly, shall see face to face. It was to illustrate this blessedness that Christ said so much of the misery of those who are left in ignorance; they have eyes and see not; but blessed are your eyes. Note, The knowledge of Christ is a distinguishing favour to those who have it, and upon that account it lays under the greater obligations; see Joh 14:22. The apostles were to teach others, and therefore were themselves blessed with the clearest discoveries of divine truth. The watchmen shall see eye to eye, Isa 52:8.

[2.] As a transcendent blessing, desired by, but not granted to, many prophets and righteous men, Mt 13:17. The Old-Testament saints, who had some glimpses, some glimmerings of gospel light, coveted earnestly further discoveries. They had the types, shadows, and prophecies, of those things but longed to see the Substance, that glorious end of those things which they could not steadfastly look unto; that glorious inside of those things which they could not look into. They desired to see the great Salvation, the Consolation of Israel, but did not see it, because the fulness of time was not yet come. Note, First, Those who know something of Christ, cannot but covet to know more. Secondly, The discoveries of divine grace are made, even to prophets and righteous men, but according to the dispensation they are under. Though they were the favourites of heaven, with whom God's secret was, yet they have not seen the things which they desired to see, because God had determined not to bring them to light yet; and his favours shall not anticipate his counsels. There was then, as there is still, a glory to be revealed; something in reserve, that they without us should not be made perfect, Heb 11:40. Thirdly, For the exciting of our thankfulness, and the quickening of our diligence, it is good for us to consider what means we enjoy, and what discoveries are made to us, now under the gospel, above what they had, and enjoyed, who lived under the Old-Testament dispensation, especially in the revelation of the atonement for sin; see what are the advantages of the New Testament above the Old (2Co 3:7,Heb 12:18); and see that our improvements be proportionable to our advantages.

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it;* which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

> This well expresses the surprise, disappointment, and anxiety of Christ's faithful servants and people at the discovery of "false brethren" among the members of the Church.

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

> Compare with this the question of James and John (Lu 9:54), "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume" those Samaritans? In this kind of zeal there is usually a large mixture of carnal heat. (See Jam 1:20).

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

> Nothing could more clearly or forcibly teach the difficulty of distinguishing the two classes, and the high probability that in the attempt to do so these will be confounded/so confusing/.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

> In the present world those who are in the kingdom of God live alongside those who are not. This was contrary to popular Jewish thinking, which expected the kingdom to come in one mighty act

that would destroy all enemies and set up God's universal rule of righteousness and peace. Jesus points out that his kingdom is in the world already, but it will have its climax at the end of world history.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is
like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:
32 which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest
among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and
lodge in the branches thereof.

Here is the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, Mt 13:31,32. The scope of this parable is to show, that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but that its latter end would greatly increase. In this way the gospel church, the kingdom of God among us, would be set up in the world; in this way the work of grace in the heart, the kingdom of God within us, would be carried on in particular persons.

Now concerning the work of the gospel, observe,

1. That it is commonly very weak and small at first, like a grain of mustard-seed, which is one of the least of all seeds. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was now in the setting up, made but a small figure; Christ and the apostles, compared with the grandees of the world, appeared like a grain of mustard-seed, the weak things of the world. In particular places, the first breaking out of the gospel light is but as the dawning of the day; and in particular souls, it is at first the day of small things, like a bruised reed. Young converts are like lambs that must be carried in his arms, Isa 40:11. There is a little faith, but there is much lacking in it (1Th 3:10), and the groanings such as cannot be uttered, they are so small; a principle of spiritual life, and some motion, but scarcely discernible.

2. That yet it is growing and coming on. Christ's kingdom strangely got ground; great accessions were made to it; nations were born at once, in spite of all the oppositions it met with from hell and earth.

In the soul where grace is true it will grow really, though perhaps insensibly. A grain of mustard-seed is small, but however it is seed, and has in it a disposition to grow. Grace will be getting ground, shining more and more, Pr 4:18. Gracious habits confirmed, actings quickened, and knowledge more clear, faith more confirmed, love more inflamed; here is the seed growing.

3. That it will at last come to a great degree of strength and usefulness; when it is grown to some maturity, it becomes a tree, much larger in those countries than in ours. The church, like the vine brought out of Egypt, has taken root, and filled the earth, Ps 80:9-11. The church is like a great tree, in which the fowls of the air do lodge; God's people have recourse to it for food and rest, shade and shelter. In particular persons, the principle of grace, if true, will persevere and be perfected at last: growing grace will be strong grace, and will bring much to pass. Grown Christians must covet to be useful to others, as the mustard-seed when grown is to the birds; that those who dwell near or under their shadow may be the better for them, Ho 14:7.

The Parable of the Leaven

33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

The scope of this is much the same with that of the foregoing parable, to show that the gospel should prevail and be successful by degrees, but silently and insensibly; the preaching of the gospel is like leaven, and works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it.

1. A woman took this leaven; it was her work. Ministers are employed in leavening places, in leavening souls, with the gospel. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we have this treasure in such vessels.

2 The leaven was hid in three measures of meal. The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the tender heart that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn unground does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumbled and unbroken for sin: the law grinds the heart, and then the gospel leavens it. It is three measures of meal, a great quantity, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The meal must be kneaded, before it receive the leaven; our hearts, as they must be broken, so they must be moistened, and pains taken with them to prepare them for the word, that they may receive the impressions of it. The leaven must be hid in the heart (Ps 119:11), not so much for secrecy (for it will show itself) as for safety; our inward thought must be upon it, we must lay it up, as Mary laid up the sayings of Christ, Lu 2:51. When the woman hides the leaven in the meal, it is with an intention that it should communicate its taste and relish to it; so we must treasure up the word in our souls, that we may be sanctified by it, Joh 17:17.

3. The leaven thus hid in the dough, works there, it ferments; the word is quick and powerful, Heb 4:12. The leaven works speedily, so does the word, and yet gradually. What a sudden change did Elijah's mantle make upon Elisha! 1Ki 19:20. It works silently and insensibly (Mk 4:26), yet strongly and irresistibly: it does its work without noise, for so is the way of the Spirit, but does it without fail. Hide but the leaven in the dough, and all the world cannot hinder it from communicating its taste and relish to it, and yet none sees how it is done, but by degrees the whole is leavened.

(a) Thus it was in the world. The apostles, by their preaching, hid a handful of leaven in the great mass of mankind, and it had a strange effect; it put the world into a ferment, and in a sense turned it upside down (Ac 17:6), and by degrees made a wonderful change in the taste and relish of it: the savour of the gospel was manifested in every place, 2Co 2:14,Ro 15:19. It was thus effectual, not by outward force, and therefore not by any such force resistible and conquerable, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, who works, and none can hinder.

(b) Thus it is in the heart. When the gospel comes into the soul,

[1.] It works a change, not in the substance; the dough is the same, but in the quality; it makes us to savour otherwise than we have done, and other things to savour with us otherwise than they used to do, Ro 8:5.

[2.] It works a universal change; it diffuses itself into all the powers and faculties of the soul, and alters the property even of the members of the body, Ro 6:13.

[3.] This change is such as makes the soul to partake of the nature of the word, as the dough does of the leaven. We are delivered into it as into a mould (Ro 6:17), changed into the same image (2Co 3:18), like the impression of the seal upon the wax. The gospel savours of God, and Christ, and free grace, and another world, and these things now relish with the soul. It is a word of faith and repentance, holiness and love, and these are wrought in the soul by it. This savour is communicated insensibly, for our life is hid; but inseparably, for grace is a good part that shall never be taken away from those who have it. When the dough is leavened, then to the oven with it; trials and afflictions commonly attend this change; but thus saints are fitted to be bread for our Master's table.

This parable, while it teaches the same general truth as the foregoing one, holds forth, perhaps, rather the inward growth of the kingdom, while "the Mustard Seed" seems to point chiefly to the outward. It being a woman's work to knead, it seems a refinement to say that "the woman" here represents the Church, as the instrument of depositing the leaven. Nor does it yield much satisfaction to understand the "three measures of meal" of that threefold division of our nature into "spirit, soul, and body," alluded to in 1Th 5:23, or of the threefold partition of the world among the three sons of Noah (Ge 10:32), as some do. It yields more real satisfaction to see in this brief parable just the all-penetrating and assimilating quality of the Gospel, by virtue of which it will yet

mould all institutions and tribes of men, and exhibit over the whole earth one "kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."

Jesus' Use of Parables

34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

The disciples' request to their Master to have this parable expounded to them (Mt 13:36); Jesus sent the multitude away; and it is to be feared many of them went away no wiser than they came; they had heard a sound of words, and that was all. It is sad to think how many go away from sermons without the word of grace in their hearts. Christ went into the house, not so much for his own repose, as for particular converse with his disciples, whose instruction he chiefly intended in all his preaching. He was ready to do good in all places; the disciples laid hold on the opportunity, and they came to him. Note, Those who would be wise for every thing else, must be wise to discern and improve their opportunities, especially of converse with Christ, of converse with him alone, in secret meditation and prayer. It is very good, when we return from the solemn assembly, to talk over what we have heard there, and by familiar discourse to help one another to understand and remember it, and to be affected with it; for we lose the benefit of many a sermon by vain and unprofitable discourse after it. See Lu 24:32,De 6:6,7. It is especially good, if it may be, to ask of the ministers of the word the meaning of the word, for their lips should keep knowledge, Mal 2:7. Private conference would contribute much to

our profiting by public preaching. Nathan's Thou art the man, was that which touched David to the heart.

The disciples' request to their Master was, Declare unto us the parable of the tares. This implied an acknowledgement of their ignorance, which they were not ashamed to make. It is probable they apprehended the general scope of the parable, but they desired to understand it more particularly, and to be assured that they took it right. Note, Those are rightly disposed for Christ's teaching, that are sensible of their ignorance, and sincerely desirous to be taught. He will teach the humble (Ps 25:8,9), but will for this be enquired of. If any man lack instruction, let him ask it of God. Christ had expounded the foregoing parable unasked, but for the exposition of this they ask him. Note, The mercies we have received must be improved, both for direction what to pray for, and for our encouragement in prayer. The first light and the first grace are given in a preventing way, further degrees of both which must be daily prayed for.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

In the parable of the Sower, "the seed is the word of God" (Lu 8:11). But here that word has been received into the heart, and has converted him that received it into a new creature, a "child of the kingdom," according to that saying of James (Jam 1:18), "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." It is worthy of notice that this vast field of the world is here said to be Christ's own—"His field," says the parable. (See Ps 2:8).

The enemy, after sowing his "tares," "went his way"—his dark work soon done, but taking time to develop its true character.

The harvest is the end of the world—the period of Christ's second coming, and of the judicial separation of the righteous and the

wicked. Till then, no attempt is to be made to effect such separation. But to stretch this so far as to justify allowing openly scandalous persons to remain in the communion of the Church, is to wrest the teaching of this parable to other than its proper design, and go in the teeth of apostolic injunctions (1Co 5:1-13).

The tares are the children of the wicked one. Here is the character of sinners, hypocrites, and all profane and wicked people. [1.] They are the children of the devil, as a wicked one. Though they do not own his name, yet they bear his image, do his lusts, and from him they have their education; he rules over them, he works in them, Eph 2:2,Joh 8:44. [2.] They are tares in the field of this world; they do no good, they do hurt; unprofitable in themselves, and hurtful to the good seed, both by temptation and persecution: they are weeds in the garden, have the same rain, and sunshine, and soil, with the good plants, but are good for nothing: the tares are among the wheat. Note, God has so ordered it, that good and bad should be mixed together in this world, that the good may be exercised, the bad left inexcusable, and a difference made between earth and heaven.

39 the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

(5.) The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil; a sworn enemy to Christ and all that is good, to the glory of the good God, and the comfort and happiness of all good men. He is an enemy to the field of the world, which he endeavors to make his own, by sowing his tares in it. Ever since he became a wicked spirit himself, he has been industrious to promote wickedness, and has made it his business, aiming therein to counter-work Christ.

Now concerning the sowing of the tares, observe in the parable,

[1.] That they were sown while men slept. Magistrates slept, who by their power, ministers slept, who by their preaching, should have prevented this mischief. Note, Satan watches all opportunities, and lays hold of all advantages, to propagate vice and profaneness. The prejudice he does to particular persons is when reason and

conscience sleep, when they are off their guard; we have therefore need to be sober, and vigilant. It was in the night, for that is the sleeping time. Note, Satan rules in the darkness of this world; that gives him an opportunity to sow tares, Ps 104:20. It was while men slept; and there is no remedy but men must have some sleeping time. Note, It is as impossible for us to prevent hypocrites being in the church, as it is for the husbandman, when he is asleep, to hinder an enemy from spoiling his field.

[2.] The enemy, when he had sown the tares, went his way (Mt 13:25), that it might not be known who did it. Note, When Satan is doing the greatest mischief, he studies most to conceal himself; for his design is in danger of being spoiled if he be seen in it; and therefore, when he comes to sow tares, he transforms himself into an angel of light, 2Co 11:13,14. He went his way, as if he had done no harm; such is the way of the adulterous woman, Pr 30:20. Observe, Such is the proneness of fallen man to sin, that if the enemy sow the tares, he may even go his way, they will spring up of themselves and do hurt; whereas, when good seed is sown, it must be tended, watered, and fenced, or it will come to nothing.

[3.] The tares appeared not till the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit, Mt 13:26. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the hearts of men, which is long hid under the cloak of a plausible profession, but breaks out at last. As the good seed, so the tares, lie a great while under the clods, and at first springing up, it is hard to distinguish them; but when a trying time comes, when fruit is to be brought forth, when good is to be done that has difficulty and hazard attending it, then you will return and discern between the sincere and the hypocrite: then you may say, This is wheat, and that is tares.

[4.] The servants, when they were aware of it, complained to their master (Mt 13:27); Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? No doubt he did; whatever is amiss in the church, we are sure it is not of Christ: considering the seed which Christ sows, we may well ask, with wonder, Whence should these tares come? Note, The rise

of errors, the breaking out of scandals, and the growth of profaneness, are matter of great grief to all the servants of Christ; especially to his faithful ministers, who are directed to complain of it to him whose the field is. It is sad to see such tares, such weeds, in the garden of the Lord; to see the good soil wasted, the good seed choked, and such a reflection cast on the name and honour of Christ, as if his field were no better than the field of the slothful, all grown over with thorns.

[5.] The Master was soon aware whence it was (Mt 13:28); An enemy has done this. He does not lay the blame upon the servants; they could not help it, but had done what was in their power to prevent it. Note, The ministers of Christ, that are faithful and diligent, shall not be judged of Christ, and therefore should not be reproached by men, for the mixtures of bad with good, hypocrites with the sincere, in the field of the church. It must needs be that such offences will come; and they shall not be laid to our charge, if we do our duty, though it have not the desired success. Though they sleep, if they do not love sleep; though tares be sown, if they do not sow them nor water them, nor allow of them, the blame shall not lie at their door.

[6.] The servants were very forward to have these tares rooted up. "Wilt thou that we go and do it presently?" Note, The over-hasty and inconsiderate zeal of Christ's servants, before they have consulted with their Master, is sometimes ready, with the hazard of the church, to root out all that they presume to be tares: Lord, wilt thou that we call for fire from heaven?

[7.] The Master very wisely prevented this (Mt 13:29); Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Note, It is not possible for any man infallibly to distinguish between tares and wheat, but he may be mistaken; and therefore such is the wisdom and grace of Christ, that he will rather permit the tares, than any way endanger the wheat. It is certain, scandalous offenders are to be censured, and we are to withdraw from them; those who are openly the children of the wicked one, are not to be admitted to

special ordinances; yet it is possible there may be a discipline, either so mistaken in its rules, or so over-nice in the application of them, as may prove vexatious to many that are truly godly and conscientious. Great caution and moderation must be used in inflicting and continuing church censures, lest the wheat be trodden down, if not plucked up. The wisdom from above, as it is pure, so it is peaceable, and those who oppose themselves must not be cut off, but instructed, and with meekness, 2Ti 2:25. The tares, if continued under the means of grace, may become good corn; therefore have patience with them.

(6.) The harvest is the end of the world, Mt 13:39. This world will have an end; though it continue long, it will not continue always; time will shortly be swallowed up in eternity. At the end of the world, there will be a great harvest-day, a day of judgment; at harvest all is ripe and ready to be cut down: both good and bad are ripe at the great-day, Re 6:11. It is the harvest of the earth, Re 14:15. At harvest the reapers cut down all before them; not a field, not a corner, is left behind; so at the great day all must be judged (Re 20:12,13); God has set a harvest (Ho 6:11), and it shall not fail, Ge 8:22. At harvest every man reaps as he sowed; every man's ground, and seed, and skill, and industry, will be manifested: see Ga 6:7,8. Then they who sowed precious seed, will come again with rejoicing (Ps 126:5,6), with the joy of harvest (Isa 9:3); when the sluggard, who would not plough by reason of cold, shall beg, and have nothing (Pr 20:4); shall cry, Lord, Lord, but in vain; when the harvest of those who sowed to the flesh, shall be a day of grief, and of desperate sorrow, Isa 17:11.

(7.) The reapers are the angels: they shall be employed, in the great day, in executing Christ's righteous sentences, both of approbation and condemnation, as ministers of his justice, Mt 25:31. The angels are skilful, strong, and swift, obedient servants to Christ, holy enemies to the wicked, and faithful friends to all the saints, and therefore fit to be thus employed. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and the angels will not be unpaid for their attendance; for he that

soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together (Joh 4:36); that is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God.

(8.) Hell-torments are the fire, into which the tares shall then be cast, and in which they shall be burned. At the great day a distinction will be made, and with it a vast difference; it will be a notable day indeed.

[1.] The tares will then be gathered out: The reapers (whose primary work it is to gather in the corn) shall be charged first to gather out the tares. Note, Though good and bad are together in this world undistinguished, yet at the great day they shall be parted; no tares shall then be among the wheat; no sinners among the saints: then you shall plainly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here sometimes it is hard to do, Mal 3:18,4:1. Christ will not bear always, Ps 50:1, &c. They shall gather out of his kingdom all wicked things that offend, and all wicked persons that do iniquity: when he begins, he will make a full end. All those corrupt doctrines, worships, and practices, which have offended, have been scandals to the church, and stumbling-blocks to men's consciences, shall be condemned by the righteous Judge in that day, and consumed by the brightness of his coming; all the wood, hay, and stubble (1Co 3:12); and then woe to them that do iniquity, that make a trade of it, and persist in it; not only those in the last age of Christ's kingdom upon earth, but those in every age. Perhaps here is an allusion to Zep 1:3, I will consume the stumbling-blocks with the wicked.

[2.] They will then be bound in bundles, Mt 13:30. Sinners of the same sort will be bundled together in the great day: a bundle of atheists, a bundle of epicures, a bundle of persecutors, and a great bundle of hypocrites. Those who have been associates in sin, will be so in shame and sorrow; and it will be an aggravation of their misery, as the society of glorified saints will add to their bliss. Let us pray, as David, Lord, gather not my soul with sinners (Ps 26:9), but let it be bound in the bundle of life, with the Lord our God, 1Sa 25:29.

[3.] They will be cast into a furnace of fire; such will be the end of wicked, mischievous people, that are in the church as tares in the field; they are fit for nothing but fire; to it they shall go, it is the fittest place for them. Note, Hell is a furnace of fire, kindled by the wrath of God, and kept burning by the bundles of tares cast into it, who will be ever in the consuming, but never consumed. But he slides out of the metaphor into a description of those torments that are designed to be set forth by it: There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth; comfortless sorrow, and an incurable indignation at God, themselves, and one another, will be the endless torture of damned souls. Let us therefore, knowing these terrors of the Lord, be persuaded not to do iniquity.

(9.) Heaven is the barn into which all God's wheat shall be gathered in that harvest-day. But gather the wheat into my barn: so it is in the parable, Mt 13:30. Note,

[1.] In the field of this world good people are the wheat, the most precious grain, and the valuable part of the field.

[2.] This wheat shall shortly be gathered, gathered from among the tares and weeds: all gathered together in a general assembly, all the Old-Testament saints, all the New-Testament saints, not one missing. Gather my saints together unto me, Ps 50:5.

[3.] All God's wheat shall be lodged together in God's barn: particular souls are housed at death as a shock of corn (Job 5:26), but the general in-gathering will be at the end of time: God's wheat will then be put together, and no longer scattered; there will be sheaves of corn, as well as bundles of tares: they will then be secured, and no longer exposed to wind and weather, sin and sorrow: no longer afar off, and at a great distance, in the field, but near, in the barn. Nay, heaven is a garner (Mt 3:12), in which the wheat will not only be separated from the tares of ill companions, but sifted from the chaff of their own corruptions.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;
42 and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

as if they had been under a cloud during the present association with ungodly pretenders to their character, and claimants of their privileges, and obstructors of their course.

In the explanation of the parable, this is gloriously represented (Mt 13:43); Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. First, It is their present honour, that God is their Father. Now are we the sons of God (1Jo 3:2); our Father in heaven is King there. Christ, when he went to heaven, went to his Father, and our Father, Joh 20:17. It is our Father's house, nay, it is our Father's palace, his throne, Re 3:21. Secondly, The honour in reserve for them is, that they shall shine forth as the sun in that kingdom. Here they are obscure and hidden (Col 3:3), their beauty is eclipsed by their poverty, and the meanness of their outward condition; their own weaknesses and infirmities, and the reproach and disgrace cast upon them, cloud them; but then they shall shine forth as the sun from behind a dark cloud; at death they shall shine forth to themselves; at the great day they will shine forth publicly before all the world, their bodies will be made like Christ's glorious body: they shall shine by reflection, with a light borrowed from the Fountain of light; their sanctification will be perfected, and their justification published; God will own them for his children, and will produce the record of all their services and sufferings for his name: they shall shine as the sun, the most glorious of all visible beings. The glory of the saints is in the Old Testament compared to that of the firmament and the stars, but here to that of the sun; for life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel, than under the law. Those who shine as lights in this world, that God may be glorified, shall shine as the sun in the other world, that they may be glorified. Our Saviour concludes, as before, with a demand of attention; Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. These

are things which it is our happiness to hear of, and our duty to hearken to.

The Hidden Treasure

44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

That of the treasure hid in the field. Hitherto he had compared the kingdom of heaven to small things, because its beginning was small; but, lest any should thence take occasion to think meanly of it, in this parable and the next he represents it as of great value in itself, and of great advantage to those who embrace it, and are willing to come up to its terms; it is here likened to a treasure hid in the field, which, if we will, we may make our own.

1. Jesus Christ is the true Treasure; in him there is an abundance of all that which is rich and useful, and will be a portion for us: all fulness (Col 1:19,Joh 1:16): treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3), of righteousness, grace, and peace; these are laid up for us in Christ; and, if we have an interest in him, it is all our own.

2 The gospel is the field in which this treasure is hid: it is hid in the word of the gospel, both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament gospel. In gospel ordinances it is hid as the milk in the breast, the marrow in the bone, the manna in the dew, the water in the well (Isa 12:3), the honey in the honey-comb. It is hid, not in a garden enclosed, or a spring shut up, but in a field, an open field; whoever will, let him come, and search the scriptures; let him dig in this field (Pr 2:4); and whatever royal mines we find, they are all our own, if we take the right course.

3. It is a great thing to discover the treasure hid in this field, and the unspeakable value of it. The reason why so many slight the gospel, and will not be at the expense, and run the hazard, of entertaining it, is because they look only upon the surface of the field, and judge

by that, and so see no excellency in the Christian institutes above those of the philosophers; nay, the richest mines are often in grounds that appear most barren; and therefore they will not so much as bid for the field, much less come up to the price. What is thy beloved more than another beloved? What is the Bible more than other good books? The gospel of Christ more than Plato's philosophy, or Confucius's morals: but those who have searched the scriptures, so as in them to find Christ and eternal life (Joh 5:39), have discovered such a treasure in this field as makes it infinitely more valuable.

4. Those who discern this treasure in the field, and value it aright, will never be easy till they have made it their own upon any terms. He that has found this treasure, hides it, which denotes a holy jealousy, lest we come short (Heb 4:1), looking diligently (Heb 12:15), lest Satan come between us and it. He rejoices in it, though as yet the bargain be not made; he is glad there is such a bargain to be had, and that he is in a fair way to have an interest in Christ; that the matter is in treaty: their hearts may rejoice, who are yet but seeking the Lord, Ps 105:3. He resolves to buy this field: they who embrace gospel offers, upon gospel terms, buy this field; they make it their own, for the sake of the unseen treasure in it. It is Christ in the gospel that we are to have an eye to; we need not go up to heaven, but Christ in the word is nigh us. And so intent he is upon it, that he sells all to buy this field: they who would have saving benefit by Christ, must be willing to part with all, that they may make it sure to themselves; must count every thing but loss, that they may win Christ, and be found in him.

The Pearl of Great Price

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls:

46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

That of the pearl of price (Mt 13:45,46), which is to the same purport with the former, of the treasure. The dream is thus doubled, for the thing is certain. Note,

1. All the children of men are busy, seeking goodly pearls: one would be rich, another would be honourable, another would be learned; but the most are imposed upon, and take up with counterfeits for pearls.

2. Jesus Christ is a Pearl of great price, a Jewel of inestimable value, which will make those who have it rich, truly rich, rich toward God; in having him, we have enough to make us happy here and for ever.

3. A true Christian is a spiritual merchant, that seeks and finds this pearl of price; that does not take up with any thing short of an interest in Christ, and, as one that is resolved to be spiritually rich, trades high: He went and bought that pearl; did not only bid for it, but purchased it. What will it avail us to know Christ, if we do not know him as ours, made to us wisdom? 1Co 1:30.

4. Those who would have a saving interest in Christ, must be willing to part with all for him, leave all to follow him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though ever so dear to us.

The Net

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:
48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.
49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
50 and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

1. Here is the parable itself. Where note,

(a) The world is a vast sea, and the children of men are things creeping innumerable, both small and great, in that sea, Ps 104:25. Men in their natural state are like the fishes of the sea that have no ruler over them, Hab 1:14.

(b) The preaching of the gospel is the casting of a net into this sea, to catch something out of it, for his glory who has the sovereignty of the sea. Ministers are fishers of men, employed in casting and drawing this net; and then they speed, when at Christ's word they let down the net; otherwise, they toil and catch nothing.

(c) This net gathers of every kind, as large dragnets do. In the visible church there is a deal of trash and rubbish, dirt and weeds and vermin, as well as fish.

(d) There is a time coming when this net will be full, and drawn to the shore; a set time when the gospel shall have fulfilled that for which it was sent, and we are sure it shall not return void, Isa 55:10,11. The net is now filling; sometimes it fills faster than at other times, but still it fills, and will be drawn to shore, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

(e) When the net is full and drawn to the shore, there shall be a separation between the good and bad that were gathered in it. Hypocrites and true Christians shall then be parted; the good shall be gathered into vessels, as valuable, and therefore to be carefully kept, but the bad shall be cast away, as vile and unprofitable; and miserable is the condition of those who are cast away in that day. While the net is in the sea, it is not known what is in it, the fishermen themselves cannot distinguish; but they carefully draw it, and all that is in it, to the shore, for the sake of the good that is in it. Such is God's care for the visible church, and such should ministers' concern be for those under their charge, though they are mixed.

2. Here is the explanation of the latter part of the parable, the former is obvious and plain enough: we see gathered in the visible church, some of every kind: but the latter part refers to that which is yet to come, and is therefore more particularly explained, Mt 13:49,50. So shall it be at the end of the world; then, and not till then, will the dividing, discovering day be. We must not look for the net full of all good fish; the vessels will be so, but in the net they are mixed. See here,

(a) The distinguishing of the wicked from the righteous. The angels of heaven shall come forth to do that which the angels of the churches could never do; they shall sever the wicked from among the just; and we need not ask how they will distinguish them when they have both their commission and their instructions from him that knows all men, and particularly knows them that are his, and them that are not, and we may be sure there shall be no mistake or blunder either way.

(b) The doom of the wicked when they are thus severed. They shall be cast into the furnace, Note, Everlasting misery and sorrow will certainly be the portion of those who live among sanctified ones, but themselves die unsanctified. This is the same with what we had before, Mt 13:42. Note, Christ himself preached often of hell-torments, as the everlasting punishment of hypocrites; and it is good for us to be often reminded of this awakening, quickening truth.

Treasures New and Old

51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man *that is* a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.

He compares them to a good householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old; fruits of last year's growth and this year's gathering, abundance and variety, for the entertainment of his friends, So 7:13. See here,

[1.] What should be a minister's furniture, a treasure of things new and old. Those who have so many and various occasions, have need to stock themselves well in their gathering days with truths new and old, out of the Old Testament and out of the new; with ancient and modern improvements, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished, 2Ti 3:16,17. Old experiences, and new observations, all have their use; and we must not content ourselves with old discoveries, but must be adding new. Live and learn.

[2.] What use he should make of this furniture; he should bring forth: laying up is in order to laying out, for the benefit of others. Sic vox non vobis--You are to lay up, but not for yourselves. Many are full, but they have no vent (Job 32:19); have a talent, but they bury it; such are unprofitable servants; Christ himself received that he might give; so must we, and we shall have more. In bringing forth, things new and old do best together; old truths, but new methods and expressions, especially new affections.

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

53 And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works?

How they expressed their contempt of him. When he taught them in their synagogue, they were astonished; not that they were taken with his preaching, or admired his doctrine in itself, but only that it should be his; looking upon him as unlikely to be such a teacher. Two things they upbraided him with.

1. His want of academical education. They owned that he had wisdom, and did mighty works; but the question was, Whence he

had them: for they knew that he was not brought up at the feet of the rabbin: he had never been at the university, nor taken his degree, nor was called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. Note, Mean and prejudiced spirits are apt to judge of men by their education, and to enquire more into their rise than into their reasons. "Whence has this man these mighty works? Did he come honestly by them? Has he not been studying the black art?" Thus they turned that against him which was really for him; for if they had not been wilfully blind, they must have concluded him to be divinely assisted and commissioned, who without the help of education gave such proofs of extraordinary wisdom and power.

2 The meanness and poverty of his relations, Mt 13:55,56.

(1.) They upbraid him with his father. Is not this the carpenter's son? Yes, it is true he was reputed so: and what harm in that? No disparagement to him to be the son of an honest tradesman. They remember not (though they might have known it) that this carpenter was of the house of David (Lu 1:27), a son of David (Mt 1:20); though a carpenter, yet a person of honour. Those who are willing to pick quarrels will overlook that which is worthy and deserving, and fasten upon that only which seems mean. Some sordid spirits regard no branch, no not the Branch from the stem of Jesse (Isa 11:1), if it be not the top branch.

(2.) They upbraid him with his mother; and what quarrel have they with her? Why, truly, his mother is called Mary, and that was a very common name, and they all knew her, and knew her to be an ordinary person; she was called Mary, not Queen Mary, nor Lady Mary, nor so much as Mistress Mary, but plain Mary; and this is turned to his reproach, as if men had nothing to be valued by but foreign extraction, noble birth, or splendid titles; poor things to measure worth by.

(3.) They upbraid him with his brethren, whose names they knew, and had them ready enough to serve this turn; James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, good men but poor men, and therefore despised; and Christ for their sakes. These brethren, it is probable, were Joseph's children by a former wife; or whatever their relation was to him, they seem to have been brought up with him in the same family. And therefore of the calling of three of these, who

were of the twelve, to that honour (James, Simon, and Jude, the same with Thaddeus), we read not particularly, because they needed not such an express call into acquaintance with Christ who had been the companions of his youth.

(4.) His sisters too are all with us; they should therefore have loved him and respected him the more, because he was one of themselves, but therefore they despised him. They were offended in him: they stumbled at these stumbling-stones, for he was set for a sign that should be spoken against, Lu 2:34,Isa 8:14.

55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?

57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

1. It did not trouble his heart. It appears he was not much concerned at it; he despised the shame, Heb 12:2. Instead of aggravating the affront, or expressing an offence at it, or returning such an answer to their foolish suggestions as they deserved, he mildly imputes it to the common humour of the children of men, to undervalue excellences that are cheap, and common, and home-bred. It is usually so. A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country. Note,

(a) Prophets should have honour paid them, and commonly have; men of God are great men, and men of honour, and challenge respect. It is strange indeed if prophets have not honour.

(b) Notwithstanding this, they are commonly least regarded and reverenced in their own country, nay, and sometimes are most envied. Familiarity breeds contempt.

2. It did for the present (to speak with reverence), in effect, tie his hands: He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Note, Unbelief is the great obstruction to Christ's favours. All things are in general possible to God (Mt 19:26), but then it is

to him that believes as to the particulars, Mk 9:23. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but then it is to every one that believes, Ro 1:16. So that if mighty works be not wrought in us, it is not for want of power or grace in Christ, but for want of faith in us. By grace ye are saved, and that is a mighty work, but it is through faith, Eph 2:8.

Matthew-14

The Death of John the Baptist

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,
2 and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

1 The account brought to Herod of the miracles which Christ wrought. Herod the tetrarch or chief governor of Galilee heard of the fame of Jesus. At that time, when his countrymen slighted him, upon the account of his meanness and obscurity, he began to be famous at court. Note, God will honour those that are despised for his sake. And the gospel, like the sea, gets in one place what it loses in another. Christ had now been preaching and working miracles above two years; yet, it should seem, Herod had not heard of him till now, and now only heard the fame of him. Note, It is the unhappiness of the great ones of the world, that they are most out of the way of hearing the best things (1Co 2:8). Which none of the princes of this world knew, 1Co 1:26. Christ's disciples were now sent abroad to preach, and to work miracles in his name, and this spread the fame of him more than ever; which was an indication of the spreading of the gospel by their means after his ascension.

2 The construction he puts upon this (Mt 14:2); He said to his servants that told him of the fame of Jesus, as sure as we are here, this is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead. Either the leaven of Herod was not Sadducism, for the Sadducees say, There is no resurrection (Ac 23:8); or else Herod's guilty conscience (as is usual with atheists) did at this time get the mastery of his opinion,

and now he concludes, whether there be a general resurrection or no, that John Baptist is certainly risen, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. John, while he lived, did no miracle (Joh 10:41); but Herod concludes, that, being risen from the dead, he is clothed with a greater power than he had while he was living. And he very well calls the miracles he supposed him to work, not his mighty works, but mighty works showing forth themselves in him. Observe here concerning Herod,

(a) How he was disappointed in what he intended by beheading John. He thought if he could get that troublesome fellow out of the way, he might go on in his sins, undisturbed and uncontrolled; yet no sooner is that effected, than he hears of Jesus and his disciples preaching the same pure doctrine that John preached; and, which is more, even the disciples confirming it by miracles in their Master's name. Note, Ministers may be silenced, and imprisoned, and banished, and slain, but the word of God cannot be run down. The prophets live not for ever, but the word takes hold, Zec 1:5,6. See 2Ti 2:9. Sometimes God raises up many faithful ministers out of the ashes of one. This hope there is of God's trees, though they be cut down, Job 14:7-9.

(b) How he was filled with causeless fears, merely from the guilt of his own conscience. Thus blood cries, not only from the earth on which it was shed, but from the heart of him that shed it, and makes him Magor-missabib--A terror round about, a terror to himself. A guilty conscience suggests every thing that is frightful, and, like a whirlpool, gathers all to itself that comes near it. Thus the wicked flee when none pursue (Pr 28:1); are in great fear, where no fear is, Ps 14:5. Herod, by a little enquiry, might have found out that this Jesus was in being long before John Baptist's death, and therefore could not be Johannes redivivus--John restored to life; and so he might have undeceived himself; but God justly left him to this infatuation.

(c) How, notwithstanding this, he was hardened in his wickedness; for though he was convinced that John was a prophet, and one

owned of God, yet he does not express the least remorse or sorrow for his sin in putting him to death. The devils believe and tremble, but they never believe and repent. Note, There may be the terror of strong convictions, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion.

3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

The story itself of the imprisonment and martyrdom of John. These extraordinary sufferings of him who was the first preacher of the gospel, plainly show that bonds and afflictions will abide the professors of it. As the first Old-Testament saint, so the first New-Testament minister, died a martyr. And if Christ's forerunner was thus treated, let not his followers expect to be caressed by the world. Observe here,

1 John's faithfulness in reproving Herod, Mt 14:3,4. Herod was one of John's hearers (Mk 6:20), and therefore John might be the more bold with him. Note, Ministers, who are reprovers by office, are especially obliged to reprove those that are under their charge, and not to suffer sin upon them; they have the fairest opportunity of dealing with them, and with them may expect the most favourable acceptance.

The particular sin he reproved him for was, marrying his brother Philip's wife, not his widow (that had not been so criminal), but his wife. Philip was now living, and Herod inveigled his wife from him, and kept here for his own. Here was a complication of wickedness, adultery, incest, besides the wrong done to Philip, who had had a child by this woman; and it was an aggravation of the wrong, that he was his brother, his half-brother, by the father, but not by the mother. See Ps 50:20. For this sin John reproved him; not by tacit and oblique allusions, but in plain terms, It is not lawful for thee to have her. He charges it upon him as a sin; not, It is not honourable, or, It is not safe, but, It is not lawful; the sinfulness of sin, as it is the transgression of the law, is the worst thing in it. This was Herod's own iniquity, his beloved sin, and therefore John Baptist tells him of this particularly. Note,

(a) That which by the law of God is unlawful to other people, is by the same law unlawful to princes and the greatest of men. They who rule over men must not forget that they are themselves but men, and subject to God. "It is not lawful for thee, any more than for the meanest subject thou hast, to debauch another man's wife." There is no prerogative, no, not for the greatest and most arbitrary kings, to break the laws of God.

(b) If princes and great men break the law of God, it is very fit they should be told of it by proper persons, and in a proper manner. As they are not above the commands of God's word, so they are not above the reproofs of his ministers. It is not fit indeed, to say to a king, Thou art Belial (Job 34:18), any more than to call a brother Raca, or, Thou fool: it is not fit, while they keep within the sphere of their own authority, to arraign them. But it is fit that, by those whose office it is, they should be told what is unlawful, and told with application, Thou art the man; for it follows there (Job 34:19), that God (whose agents and ambassadors faithful ministers are) accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.

2 The imprisonment of John for his faithfulness, Mt 14:3. Herod laid hold on John when he was going on to preach and baptize, put an end to his work, bound him, and put him in prison; partly to gratify his own revenge, and partly to please Herodias, who of the two seemed to be most incensed against him; it was for her sake that he did it. Note, (1.) Faithful reproofs, if they do not profit, usually provoke; if they do not do good, they are resented as affronts, and they that will not bow to the reproof, will fly in the face of the reprover and hate him, as Ahab hated Micaiah, 1Ki 22:8. See Pr 9:8,15:10,12. Veritas odium parit--Truth produces hatred. (2.) It is no new thing for God's ministers to suffer ill for doing well. Troubles abide those most that are most diligent and faithful in doing their duty, Ac 20:20.

4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given *her.*

10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

The disposal of the poor remains of this blessed saint and martyr. The head and body being separated,

(a) The damsel brought the head in triumph to her mother, as a trophy of the victories of her malice and revenge, Mt 14:11. Jerome ad Rufin, relates, that when Herodias had John the Baptist's head brought her, she gave herself the barbarous diversion of pricking the tongue with a needle, as Fulvia did Tully's. Note, Bloody minds are pleased with bloody sights, which those of tender spirits shrink and tremble at. Sometimes the insatiable rage of bloody persecutors has fallen upon the dead bodies of the saints, and made sport with them, Ps 79:2. When the witnesses are slain, they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry, Re 11:10,Ps 14:4,5.

(b) The disciples buried the body, and brought the news in tears to our Lord Jesus. The disciples of John had fasted often whole their master was in prison, their bridegroom was taken away from them, and they prayed earnestly for his deliverance, as the church did for Peter's, Ac 12:5. They had free access to him in prison, which was a comfort to them, but they wished to see him at liberty, that he might preach to others; but now on a sudden all their hopes are

dashed. Disciples weep and lament, when the world rejoices. Let us see what they did.

[1.] They buried the body. Note, There is a respect owing to the servants of Christ, not only while they live, but in their bodies and memories when they are dead. Concerning the first two New-Testament martyrs, it is particularly taken notice of, that they were decently buried, John the Baptist by his disciples, and Stephen by devout men (Ac 8:2);

[2.] They went and told Jesus; not so much that he might shift for his own safety (no doubt he heard it from others, the country rang of it), as they might receive comfort from him, and be taken in among his disciples. Note, First, When any thing ails us at any time, it is our duty and privilege to make Christ acquainted with it. It will be a relief to our burthened spirits to unbosom ourselves to a friend we may be free with. Such a relation dead or unkind, such a comfort lost or embittered, go and tell Jesus who knows already, but will know from us, the trouble of our souls in adversity. Secondly, We must take heed, lest our religion and the profession of it die with our ministers; when John was dead, they did not return every man to his own, but resolved to abide by it still. When the shepherds are smitten, the sheep need not be scattered while they have the great Shepherd of the sheep to go to, who is still the same, Heb 13:8,20. The removal of ministers should bring us nearer to Christ, into a more immediate communion with him. Thirdly, Comforts otherwise highly valuable, are sometimes therefore taken from us, because they come between us and Christ, and are apt to carry away that love and esteem which are due to him only: John had long since directed his disciples to Christ, and turned them over to him, but they could not leave their old master while he lived; therefore he is removed that they may go to Jesus, whom they had sometimes emulated and envied for John's sake. It is better to be drawn to Christ by want and loss, than not to come to him at all. If our masters be taken from our head, this is our comfort, we have a Master in heaven, who himself is our Head.

Josephus mentions this story of the death of John the Baptist (Antiq. 18. 116-119), and adds, that a fatal destruction of Herod's army in his war with Aretas, king of Petrea (whose daughter was Herod's wife, whom he put away to make room for Herodias), was generally considered by the Jews to be a just judgment upon him, for putting John the Baptist to death. Herod having, at the instigation of Herodias, disobliged the emperor, was deprived of his government, and they were both banished to Lyons in France; which, says Josephus, was his just punishment for hearkening to her solicitations. And, lastly, it is storied of this daughter of Herodias, that going over the ice in winter, the ice broke, and she slipt in up to her neck, which was cut through by the sharpness of the ice. God requiring her head (says Dr. Whitby) for that of the Baptist; which, if true, was a remarkable providence.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

13 When Jesus heard *of it*, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard *thereof*, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

This passage of story, concerning Christ's feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the four Evangelists, which very few, if any, of Christ's miracles are: this intimates that there is something in it worthy of special remark. Observe,

The great resort of people to Christ, when he was retired into a desert place, Mt 14:13. He withdrew into privacy when he heard, not of John's death, but of the thoughts Herod had concerning him, that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead, and therefore so feared by Herod as to be hated; he departed further off, to get out of Herod's jurisdiction. Note, In times of peril, when God opens a door of escape, it is lawful to flee for our own preservation, unless we have some special call to expose ourselves. Christ's hour was not yet come, and therefore he would not thrust himself upon suffering. He could have secured himself by divine power, but

because his life was intended for an example, he did it by human prudence; he departed by ship. But a city on a hill cannot be hid; when the people heard it, they followed him on foot from all parts. Such an interest Christ had in the affections of the multitude, that his withdrawing from them did but draw them after him with so much the more eagerness. Here, as often, the scripture was fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be. It should seem, there was more crowding to Christ after John's martyrdom than before. Sometimes the suffering of the saints are made to further the gospel (Php 1:12), and "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Now John's testimony was finished, it was recollected, and more improved than ever. Note,

1. When Christ and his word withdraw from us, it is best for us (whatever flesh and blood may object to the contrary) to follow it, preferring opportunities for our souls before any secular advantages whatsoever. When the ark removes, ye shall remove, and go after it, Jos 3:3.

2. Those that truly desire the sincere milk of the word, will not stick at the difficulties they may meet with in their attendance on it. The presence of Christ and his gospel makes a desert place not only tolerable, but desirable; it makes the wilderness an Eden, Isa 51:3,Isa 41:19,20.

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

The tender compassion of our Lord Jesus towards those who thus followed him, Mt 14:14. 1. He went forth, and appeared publicly among them. Though he retired for his own security, and his own repose, yet he went forth from his retirement, when he saw people desirous to hear him, as one willing both to toil himself, and to expose himself, for the good of souls; for even Christ pleased not himself. 2. When he saw the multitude, he had compassion on them. Note, The sight of a great multitude may justly move compassion. To see a great multitude, and to think how many precious, immortal souls here are, the greatest part of which, we have reason to fear, are neglected and ready to perish, would grieve one to the heart.

None like Christ for pity to souls; his compassions fails not. 3. He did not only pity them, but he helped them; many of them were sick, and he, in compassion to them, healed them; for he came into the world to be the great Healer. After awhile, they were all hungry, and he, in compassion to them, fed them. Note, In all the favours Christ shows to us, he is moved with compassion, Isa 63:9.

15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

The motion which the disciples made for the dismissing of the congregation, and Christ's setting aside the motion. 1 The evening drawing on, the disciples moved it to Christ to send the multitude away; they thought there was a good day's work done, and it was time to disperse. Note, Christ's disciples are often more careful to show their discretion, than to show their zeal; and their abundant affection in the things of God. 2. Christ would not dismiss them hungry as they were, nor detain them longer without meat, nor put them upon the trouble and charge of buying meat for themselves, but orders his disciples to provide for them. Christ all along expressed more tenderness toward the people than his disciples did; for what are the compassions of the most merciful men, compared with the tender mercies of God in Christ? See how loth Christ is to part with those who are resolved to cleave to him! They need not depart. Note, Those who have Christ have enough, and need not depart to seek a happiness and livelihood in the creature; they that have made sure of the one thing needful, need not be cumbered about much serving: nor will Christ put his willing followers upon a needless expense, but will make their attendance cheap to them.

But if they be hungry, they have need to depart, for that is a necessity which has no law, therefore, give you them to eat. Note, The Lord is for the body; it is the work of his hands, it is part of his purchase; he was himself clothed with a body, that he might encourage us to depend upon him for the supply of our bodily wants. But he takes a particular care of the body, when it is employed to serve the soul in his more immediate service. If we seek first the kingdom of God, and make that our chief care, we may depend upon God to add other things to us, as far as he sees

fit, and may cast all care of them upon him. These followed Christ but for a trial, in a present fit of zeal, and yet Christ took this care of them; much more will he provide for those who follow him fully.

16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

The slender provision that was made for this great multitude; and here we must compare the number of invited guests with the bill of fare.

1 The number of the guests was five thousand of men, besides women and children; and it is probable the women and children might be as many as the men, if not more. This was a vast auditory that Christ preached to, and we have reason to think an attentive auditory; and, yet it should seem, far the greater part, notwithstanding all this seeming zeal and forwardness, came to nothing; they went off and followed him no more; for many are called, but few are chosen. We would rather perceive the acceptableness of the word by the conversion, than by the crowds, of its hearers; though that also is a good sight and a good sign.

2 The bill of fare was very disproportionable to the number of the guests, but five loaves and two fishes. This provision the disciples carried about with them for the use of the family, now they were retired into the desert. Christ could have fed them by miracle, but to set us an example of providing for those of our own households, he will have their own camp victualled in an ordinary way. Here is neither plenty, nor variety, nor dainty; a dish of fish was no rarity to them that were fishermen, but it was food convenient for the twelve; two fishes for their supper, and bread to serve them perhaps for a day or two: here was no wine or strong drink; fair water from the rivers in the desert was the best they had to drink with their meat; and yet out of this Christ will have the multitude fed. Note, Those who have but a little, yet when the necessity is urgent, must relieve others out of that little, and that is the way to make it more. Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Yes, he can, when he pleases, a plentiful table.

18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

The liberal distribution of this provision among the multitude (Mt 14:18,19); Bring them hither to me. Note, The way to have our creature-like comforts, comforts indeed to us, is to bring them to Christ; for every thing is sanctified by his word, and by prayer to him: that is likely to prosper and do well with us, which we put into the hands of our Lord Jesus, that he may dispose of it as he pleases, and that we may take it back from his hand, and then it will be doubly sweet to us. What we give in charity, we should bring to Christ first, that he may graciously accept it from us, and graciously bless it to those to whom it is given; this is doing it as unto the Lord. Now at this miraculous meal we may observe,

1 The seating of the guests (Mt 14:19); He commanded them to sit down; which intimates, that while he was preaching to them, they were standing, which is a posture of reverence, and readiness for motion. But what shall we do for chairs for them all? Let them sit down on the grass. When Ahasuerus would show the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, in a royal feast for the great men of all his provinces, the beds or couches they sat on were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble, Es 1:6. Our Lord Jesus did now show, in a divine feast, the riches of a more glorious kingdom than that, and the honour of a more excellent majesty, even a dominion over nature itself; but here is not so much as a cloth spread, no plates or napkins laid, no knives or forks, nor so much as a bench to sit down on; but, as if Christ intended indeed to reduce the world to the plainness and simplicity, and so to the innocency and happiness, of Adam in paradise, he commanded them to sit down on the grass. By doing every thing thus, without any pomp or splendour, he plainly showed that his kingdom was not of this world, nor cometh with observation.

2 The craving of a blessing. He did not appoint one of his disciples to be his chaplain, but he himself looked up to heaven, and blessed, and gave thanks; he praised God for the provision they had, and prayed to God to bless it to them. His craving a blessing, was commanding a blessing; for as he preached, so he prayed, like one

having authority; and in this prayer and thanksgiving, we may suppose, he had special reference to the multiplying of this food; but herein he has taught us that good duty of craving a blessing and giving thanks at our meals: God's good creatures must be received with thanksgiving, 1Ti 4:4. Samuel blessed the feast, 1Sa 9:13,Ac 2:46,47,27:24,35. This is eating and drinking to the glory of God (1Co 10:31); giving God thanks (Ro 14:6); eating before God, as Moses, and his father-in-law, Ex 18:12,15. When Christ blessed, he looked up to heaven, to teach us, in prayer, to eye God as a Father in heaven; and when we receive our creature-comforts to look thitherward, as taking them from God's hand, and depending on him for a blessing.

3. The carving of the meat. The Master of the feast was himself head-carver, for he brake, and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. Christ intended hereby to put honour upon his disciples, that they might be respected as workers together with him; as also to signify in what way the spiritual food of the word should be dispensed to the world; from Christ, as the original Author, by his ministers. What Christ designed for the churches he signified to his servant John (Re 1:1,4); they delivered all that, and that only, which they received from the Lord, 1Co 11:23. Ministers can never fill the people's hearts, unless Christ first fill their hands: and what he has given to the disciples, they must give to the multitude; for they are stewards, to give to every one his portion of meat, Mt 24:45. And, blessed be God, be the multitude ever so great, there is enough for all, enough for each.

4. The increase of the meat. This is taken notice of only in the effect, not in the cause or manner of it; here is no mention of any word that Christ spoke, by which the food was multiplied; the purposes and intentions of his mind and will shall take effect, though they be not spoken out: but this is observable, that the meat was multiplied, not in the heap at first, but in the distribution of it. As the widow's oil increased in the pouring out, so here the bread in the breaking. Thus grace grows by being acted, and, while other things perish in the using, spiritual gifts increase in the using. God

ministers seed to the sower, and multiplies not the seed hoarded up, but the seed sown, 2Co 9:10. Thus there is that scattereth and yet increaseth; that scattereth, and so increaseth.

19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

The plentiful satisfaction of all the guests with this provision. Though the disproportion was so great, yet there was enough and to spare.

1. There was enough: They did all eat, and were filled. Note, Those whom Christ feeds, he fills; so runs the promise (Ps 37:19), They shall be satisfied. As there was enough for all, they did all eat, so there was enough for each, they were filled; though there was but little, there was enough, and that is as good as a feast. Note, The blessing of God can make a little go a great way; as, if God blasts what we have, we eat, and have not enough, Hag 1:6.

2. There was to spare; They took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full, one basket for each apostle: thus what they gave they had again, and a great deal more with it; and they were so far from being nice, that they could make this broken meat serve another time, and be thankful. This was to manifest and magnify the miracle, and to show that the provision Christ makes for those who are his is not bare and scanty, but rich and plenteous; bread enough, and to spare (Lu 15:17), an overflowing fulness. Elisha's multiplying the loaves was somewhat like this, but far short of it; and then it was said, They shall eat and leave, 2Ki 4:43.

It is the same divine power, though exerted in an ordinary way, which multiplies the seed sown in the ground every year, and makes the earth yield her increase; so that what was brought out by handfuls, is brought home in sheaves. This is the Lord's doing; it is by Christ that all natural things consist, and by the word of his power that they are upheld.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Christ's dismissing of his disciples and the multitude, after he had fed them miraculously. He constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, Mt 14:22. St. John gives a particular reason for the hasty breaking up of this assembly, because the people were so affected with the miracle of the loaves, that they were about to take him by force, and make him a king (Joh 6:15); to avoid which, he immediately scattered the people, sent away the disciples, lest they should join with them, and he himself withdrew, Joh 6:15.

When they had sat down to eat and drink, they did not rise up to play, but each went to his business.

1. Christ sent the people away. It intimates somewhat of solemnity in the dismissing of them; he sent them away with a blessing, with some parting words of caution, counsel, and comfort, which might abide with them.

2. He constrained the disciples to go into a ship first, for till they were gone the people would not stir. The disciples were loth to go, and would not have gone, if he had not constrained them. They were loth to go to sea without him. If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence. Ex 33:15. They were loth to leave him alone, without any attendance, or any ship to wait for him; but they did it in pure obedience.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Christ's retirement hereupon (Mt 14:23); He went up into a mountain apart to pray. Observe here,

1. That he was alone; he went apart into a solitary place, and was there all alone. Though he had so much work to do with others, yet he chose sometimes to be alone, to set us an example. Those are not Christ's followers that do not care for being alone; that cannot enjoy themselves in solitude, when they have none else to converse with, none else to enjoy, but God and their own hearts.

2. That he was alone at prayer; that was his business in this solitude, to pray. Though Christ, as God, was Lord of all, and was prayed to, yet Christ, as Man, had the form of a servant, of a beggar, and prayed. Christ has herein set before us an example of secret prayer, and the performance of it secretly, according to the rule he gave, Mt 6:6. Perhaps in this mountain there was some private oratory or convenience, provided for such an occasion; it was usual among the Jews to have such. Observe, When the disciples went to sea, their Master went to prayer; when Peter was to be sifted as wheat, Christ prayed for him.

3. That he was long alone; there he was when the evening was come, and, for aught that appears, there he was till towards morning, the fourth watch of the night. The night came on, and it was a stormy, tempestuous night, yet he continued instant in prayer. Note, It is good, at least sometimes, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and to take full scope in pouring out our hearts before the Lord. We must not restrain prayer, Job 15:4.

The condition that the poor disciples were in at this time: Their ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, Mt 14:24. We may observe here,

1. That they were got into the midst of the sea when the storm rose. We may have fair weather at the beginning of our voyage, and yet meet with storms before we arrive at the port we are bound for.

Therefore, let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that puts it off, but after a long calm expect some storm or other.

2 The disciples were now where Christ sent them, and yet met with this storm. Had they been flying from their Master, and their work, as Jonah was, when he was arrested by the storm, it had been a dreadful one indeed; but they had a special command from their Master to go to sea at this time, and were going about their work. Note, It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with storms in the way of their duty, and to be sent to sea then when their Master foresees a storm; but let them not take it unkindly; what he does they know not now, but they shall know hereafter, that Christ designs hereby to manifest himself with the more wonderful grace to them and for them. 3. It was a great discouragement to them now that they had not Christ with them, as they had formerly when they were in a storm; though he was then asleep indeed, yet he was soon awaked (Mt 8:24), but now he was not with them at all. Thus Christ used his disciples first to less difficulties, and then to greater, and so trains them up by degrees to live by faith, and not by sense.

4. Though the wind was contrary, and they were tossed with waves, yet being ordered by their Master to the other side, they did not tack about and come back again, but made the best of their way forward. Note, Though troubles and difficulties may disturb us in our duty, they must not drive us from it; but through the midst of them we must press forwards.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Christ's approach to them in this condition (Mt 14:25); and in this we have an instance,

1. Of his goodness, that he went unto them, as one that took cognizance of their case, and was under a concern about them, as a father about his children. Note, The extremity of the church and people of God is Christ's opportunity to visit them and appear for them: but he came not till the fourth watch, toward three o'clock in the morning, for then the fourth watch began. It was in the morning-watch that the Lord appeared for Israel in the Red sea (Ex 14:24),

so was this. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, but, when there is occasion, walks in darkness for their succour; helps, and that right early.

2. Of his power, that he went unto them, walking on the sea. This is a great instance of Christ's sovereign dominion over all the creatures; they are all under his feet, and at his command; they forget their natures, and change the qualities that we call essential. We need not enquire how this was done, whether by condensing the surface of the water (when God pleases, the depths are congealed in the heart of the sea, Ex 15:8), or by suspending the gravitation of his body, which was transfigured as he pleased; it is sufficient that it proves his divine power, for it is God's prerogative to tread upon the waves of the sea (Job 9:8), as it is to ride upon the wings of the wind. He that made the waters of the sea a wall for the redeemed of the Lord (Isa 51:10), here makes them a walk for the Redeemer himself, who, as Lord of all, appears with one foot on the sea and the other on dry land, Re 10:2 The same power that made iron to swim (2Ki 6:6), did this. What ailed thee, O thou sea? Ps 114:5. It was at the presence of the Lord. Thy way, O God, is in the sea, (Ps 77:19). Note, Christ can take what way he pleases to save his people.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

How their fears were raised (Mt 14:26); When they saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; phantasma esti--It is an apparition; so it might much better be rendered. It seems, the existence and appearance of spirits were generally believed in by all except the Sadducees, whose doctrine Christ had warned his disciples against; yet, doubtless, many supposed apparitions have been merely the creatures of men's own fear and fancy. These disciples said, It is the Lord; it can be no other. Note,

[1.] Even the appearances and approaches of deliverance are sometimes the occasions of trouble and perplexity to God's people, who are sometimes most frightened when they are least hurt; nay, when they are most favoured, as the Virgin Mary, Lu 1:29,Ex 3:6,7.

The comforts of the Spirit of adoption are introduced by the terrors of the spirit of bondage, Ro 8:15.

[2.] The appearance of a spirit, or the fancy of it, cannot but be frightful, and strike a terror upon us, because of the distance of the world of spirits from us, the just quarrel good spirits have with us, and the inveterate enmity evil spirits have against us: see Job 4:14,15. The more acquaintance we have with God, the Father of spirits, and the more careful we are to keep ourselves in his love, the better able we shall be to deal with those fears.

[3.] The perplexing, disquieting fears of good people, arise from their mistakes and misapprehensions concerning Christ, his person, offices, and undertaking; the more clearly and fully we know his name, with the more assurance we shall trust in him, Ps 9:10.

[4.] A little thing frightens us in a storm. When without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears. Perhaps the disciples fancied it was some evil spirit that raised the storm. Note, Most of our danger from outward troubles arises from the occasion they give for inward trouble.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

How these fears were silenced, Mt 14:27. He straightway relieved them, by showing them their mistake; when they were wrestling with the waves, he delayed his succour for some time; but he hastened his succour against their fright, as much the more dangerous; he straightway laid that storm with his word, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

[1.] He rectified their mistake, by making himself known to them, as Joseph to his brethren; It is I. He does not name himself, as he did to Paul, I am Jesus; for Paul as yet knew him not: but to these disciples it was enough to say, It is I; they knew his voice, as his sheep (Joh 10:4), as Mary Magdalene, Joh 20:16. They need not ask, Who art thou, Lord? Art thou for us or for our adversaries? They could say with the spouse, It is the voice of my beloved, So

2:8,. True believers know it by a good token. It was enough to make them easy, to understand who it was they saw. Note, A right knowledge opens the door to true comfort, especially the knowledge of Christ.

[2.] He encouraged them against their fright; It is I, and therefore, First, Be of good cheer; tharseite--"Be courageous; pluck up your spirits, and be courageous." If Christ's disciples be not cheerful in a storm, it is their own fault, he would have them so. Secondly, Be not afraid;

1. "Be not afraid of me, now that you know it is I; surely you will not fear, for you know I mean you no hurt." Note, Christ will not be a terror to those to whom he manifests himself; when they come to understand him aright, the terror will be over.

2. "Be not afraid of the tempest, of the winds and waves, though noisy and very threatening; fear them not, while I am so near you. I am he that concerns himself for you, and will not stand by and see you perish." Note, Nothing needs be a terror to those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; no, not death itself.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Between him and Peter, Mt 14:28-31, where observe,

(A) Peter's courage, and Christ's countenancing that.

[1.] It was very bold in Peter, that he would venture to come to Christ upon the water (Mt 14:28); Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee. Courage was Peter's master grace; and that made him so forward above the rest to express his love to Christ, though others perhaps loved him as well.

First, It is an instance of Peter's affection to Christ, that he desired to come to him. When he sees Christ, whom, doubtless, during the storm, he had many a time wished for, he is impatient to be with him. He does not say, Bid me walk on the waters, as desiring it for the miracle sake; but, Bid me come to thee, as desiring it for Christ's sake; "Let me come to thee, no matter how." Note, True love will break through fire and water, if duly called to it, to come to Christ. Christ was coming to them, to succour and deliver them. Lord, said Peter, bid me come to thee. Note, When Christ is coming towards us in a way of mercy, we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty; and herein we must be willing and bold to venture with him and venture for him. Those that would have benefit by Christ as a Saviour, must thus by faith come to him. Christ had been now, for some time, absent, and hereby it appears why he absented himself; it was to endear himself so much the more to his disciples at his return, to make it highly seasonable and doubly acceptable. Note, When, for a small amount, Christ has forsaken his people, his returns are welcome, and most affectionately embraced; when gracious souls, after long seeking, find their Beloved at last, they hold him, and will not let him go, So 3:4.

Secondly, It is an instance of Peter's caution and due observance of the will of Christ, that he would not come without a warrant. Not, "If it be thou, I will come;" but If it be thou, bid me come. Note, The boldest spirits must wait for a call to hazardous enterprizes, and we must not rashly and presumptuously thrust ourselves upon them. Our will to services and sufferings is interpreted, not willingness, but wilfulness, if it have not a regard to the will of Christ, and be not regulated by his call and command. Such extraordinary warrants as this to Peter we are not now to expect, but must have recourse to the general rules of the word, in the application of which to particular cases, with the help of providential hints, wisdom is profitable to direct.

Thirdly, It is an instance of Peter's faith and resolution, that he ventured upon the water when Christ bid him. To quit the safety of the ship, and throw himself into the jaws of death, to despise the

threatening waves he so lately dreaded, argued a very strong dependence upon the power and word of Christ. What difficulty or danger could stand before such a faith and such a zeal?

[2.] It was very kind and condescending in Christ, that he was pleased to own him in it, Mt 14:29. He might have condemned the proposal as foolish and rash; nay, and as proud and assuming; "Shall Peter pretend to do as his Master does?" But Christ knew that it came from a sincere and zealous affection to him, and graciously accepted of it. Note, Christ is well pleased with the expressions of his people's love, though mixed with manifold infirmities, and makes the best of them.

First, He bid him come. When the Pharisees asked a sign, they had not only a repulse, but a reproof, for it, because they did it with a design to tempt Christ; when Peter asked a sign, he had it, because he did it with a resolution to trust Christ. The gospel call is, "Come, come, to Christ; venture all in his hand, and commit the keeping of your souls to him; venture through a stormy sea, a troublesome world, to Jesus Christ."

Secondly, He bore him out when he did come; Peter walked upon the water. The communion of true believers with Christ is represented by their being quickened with him, raised up with him, made to sit with him, (Eph 2:5,6), and being crucified with him, Ga 2:20. Now, methinks, it is represented in this story by their walking with him on the water. Through the strength of Christ we are borne up above the world, enabled to trample upon it, kept from sinking into it, from being overwhelmed by it, obtain a victory over it (1Jo 5:4), by faith in Christ's victory (Joh 16:33), and with him are crucified to it, Ga 6:14. See blessed Paul walking upon the water with Jesus, and more than a conqueror through him, and treading upon all the threatening waves, as not able to separate him from the love of Christ, Ro 8:35, &c. Thus the sea of the world is become like a sea of glass, congealed so as to bear; and they that have gotten the victory, stand upon it and sing, Re 15:2,3.

He walked upon the water, not for diversion or ostentation, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Note, When our souls are following hard after God, then it is that his right hand upholds us; it was David's experience, Ps 63:8. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, only in spiritual pursuits. When God bears his Israel upon eagles' wings, it is to bring them to himself (Ex 19:4); nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we be upheld by his power; it is in his own strength that we wrestle with him, that we reach after him, that we press forward toward the mark, being kept by the power of God, which power we must depend upon, as Peter when he walked upon the water: and there is no danger of sinking while underneath are the everlasting arms.

(B) Here is Peter's cowardice, and Christ's reproving him and succouring him. Christ bid him come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know Christ's power, but that he might sink, and so know his own weakness; for as he would encourage his faith, so he would check his confidence, and make him ashamed of it. Observe then,

[1.] Peter's great fear (Mt 14:30); He was afraid. The strongest faith and the greatest courage have a mixture of fear. Those that can say, Lord, I believe; must say, Lord, help my unbelief. Nothing but perfect love will quite cast out fear. Good men often fail in those graces which they are most eminent for, and which they have then in exercise; to show that they have not yet attained. Peter was very stout at first, but afterwards his heart failed him. The lengthening out of a trial discovers the weakness of faith. Here is,

First, The cause of this fear; He saw the wind boisterous. While Peter kept his eye fixed upon Christ, and upon his word and power, he walked upon the water well enough; but when he took notice withal of the danger he was in, and observed how the floods lift up their waves, then he feared. Note, Looking at difficulties with an eye of sense more than at precepts and promises with an eye of faith is at the bottom of all our inordinate fears, both as to public and

personal concerns. Abraham was strong in faith, because he considered not his own body (Ro 4:19); he minded not the discouraging improbabilities which the promise lay under, but kept his eye on God's power; and so, against hope, believed in hope, Mt 14:18. Peter, when he saw the wind boisterous, should have remembered what he had seen (Mt 8:27), when the winds and the sea obeyed Christ; but therefore we fear continually every day, because we forget the Lord our Maker, Isa 51:12,13.

Secondly, The effect of this fear; He began to sink. While faith kept up, he kept up above water: but when faith staggered, he began to sink. Note, The sinking of our spirits is owing to the weakness of our faith; we are upheld (but it is as we are saved) through faith (1Pe 1:5); and therefore, when our souls are cast down and disquieted, the sovereign remedy is, to hope in God, Ps 43:5. It is probable that Peter, being bred a fisherman, could swim very well (Joh 21:7); and perhaps he trusted in part to that, when he cast himself into the sea; if he could not walk, he could swim; but Christ let him begin to sink, to show him that it was Christ's right hand and his holy arm, not any skill of his own, that was his security. It was Christ's great mercy to him, that, upon the failing of his faith, he did not leave him to sink outright, to sink to the bottom as a stone (Ex 15:5), but gave him time to cry, Lord, save me. Such is the care of Christ concerning true believers; though weak, they do but begin to sink! A man is never sunk, never undone, till he is in hell. Peter walked as he believed; to him, as to others, the rule held good, According to your faith be it unto you.

Thirdly, The remedy he had recourse to in this distress, the old, tried, approved remedy, and that was prayer: he cried, Lord, save me. Observe, 1 The manner of his praying; it is fervent and importunate; He cried. Note, When faith is weak, prayer should be strong. Our Lord Jesus has taught us in the day of our fear to offer up strong cries, Heb 5:7. Sense of danger will make us cry, sense of duty and dependence on God should make us cry to him. 2 The matter of his prayer was pertinent and to the purpose; He cried, Lord, save me. Christ is the great Saviour, he came to save; those

that would be saved, must not only come to him, but cry to him for salvation; but we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking; sense of need will drive us to him.

[2.] Christ's great favour to Peter, in this fright. Though there was a mixture of presumption with Peter's faith in his first adventure, and of unbelief with his faith in his after-fainting, yet Christ did not cast him off; for,

First, He saved him; he answered him with the saving strength of his right hand (Ps 20:6), for immediately he stretched forth his hand, and caught him. Note, Christ's time to save is, when we sink (Ps 18:4-7): he helps at a dead lift. Christ's hand is still stretched out to all believers, to keep them from sinking. Those whom he hath once apprehended as his own, and hath snatched as brands out of the burning, he will catch out of the water too. Though he may seem to have left his hold, he doth but seem to do so, for they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand, Joh 10:28. Never fear, he will hold his own. Our deliverance from our own fears, which else would overwhelm us, is owing to the hand of his power and grace, Ps 34:4.

Secondly, He rebuked him; for as many as he loves and saves, he reproves and chides; O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Note, 1. Faith may be true, and yet weak; at first, like a grain of mustard-seed. Peter had faith enough to bring him upon the water, yet, because not enough to carry him through, Christ tells him he had but little. 2. Our discouraging doubts and fears are all owing to the weakness of our faith: therefore we doubt, because we are but of little faith. It is the business of faith to resolve doubts, the doubts of sense, in a stormy day, so as even then to keep the head above water. Could we but believe more, we should doubt less. 3. The weakness of our faith, and the prevalence of our doubts, are very displeasing to our Lord Jesus. It is true, he doth not cast off weak believers, but it is as true, that he is not pleased with weak faith, no, not in those that are nearest to him. Wherefore didst thou doubt? What reason was there for it? Note, Our doubts and fears

would soon vanish before a strict enquiry into the cause of them; for, all things considered, there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind, no, not in a stormy day, because he is ready to them a very present Help.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

The ceasing of the storm, Mt 14:32. When Christ was come into the ship, they were presently at the shore. Christ walked upon the water till he came to the ship, and then went into that, when he could easily have walked to the shore; but when ordinary means are to be had, miracles are not to be expected. Though Christ needs not instruments for the doing of his work, he is pleased to use them. Observe, when Christ came into the ship, Peter came in with him. Companions with Christ in his patience, shall be companions in his kingdoms, Re 1:9. Those that walk with him shall reign with him; those that are exposed, and that suffer with him, shall triumph with him.

When they were come into the ship, immediately the storm ceased, for it had done its work, its trying work. He that has gathered the winds into his fists, and bound the waters in a garment, is the same that ascended and descended; and his word even stormy winds fulfil, Ps 148:8. When Christ comes into a soul, he makes winds and storms to cease there, and commands peace. Welcome Christ, and the noise of her waves will soon be quelled. The way to be still is, to know that he is God, that he is the Lord with us.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

The adoration paid to Christ hereupon (Mt 14:33); They that were in the ship came and worshipped him, and said, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God. Two good uses they made of this distress, and this deliverance.

1. It was a confirmation of their faith in Christ, and abundantly convinced them that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him; for none but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea; they therefore

yield to the evidence, and make confession of their faith; Thou truly art the Son of God. They knew before that he was the Son of God, but now they know it better. Faith, after a conflict with unbelief, is sometimes the more active, and gets to greater degrees of strength by being exercised. Now they know it of a truth. Note, It is good for us to know more and more of the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed, Lu 1:4. Faith then grows, when it arrives at a full assurance, when it sees clearly, and saith, Of a truth.

2. They took occasion from it to give him the glory due unto his name. They not only owned that great truth, but were suitable affected by it; they worshiped Christ. Note, When Christ manifests his glory for us, we ought to return it to him (Ps 50:15); I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Their worship and adoration of Christ were thus expressed, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. Note, The matter of our creed may and must be made the matter of our praise. Faith is the proper principle of worship, and worship the genuine product of faith. He that comes to God must believe; and he that believes in God, will come, Heb 9:6.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

36 and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

We have here an account of miracles by wholesale, which Christ wrought on the other side of the water, in the land of Gennesaret. Whithersoever Christ went, he was doing good. Gennesaret was a tract of land that lay between Bethsaida and Capernaum, and either gave the name to, or took the name from, this sea, which is called (Lu 5:1) The Lake of Gennesaret; it signifies the valley of branches. Observe here,

I The forwardness and faith of the men of that place. These were more noble than the Gergesenes, their neighbours, who were borderers upon the same lake. Those besought Christ to depart from them, they had no occasion for him; these besought him to help them, they had need of him. Christ reckons it the greatest honour we can do him, to make use of him. Now here we are told,

1. How the men of that place were brought to Christ; they had knowledge of him. It is probable that his miraculous passage over the sea, which they that were in the ship would industriously spread the report of, might help to make way for his entertainment in those parts; and perhaps it was one thing Christ intended in it, for he has great reaches in what he does. This they had knowledge of, and of the other miracles Christ had wrought, and therefore they flocked to him. Note, They that know Christ's name, will make their application to him: if Christ were better known, he would not be neglected as he is; he is trusted as far as he is known.

They had knowledge of him, that is, of his being among them, and that he would be put awhile among them. Note, The discerning of the day of our opportunities is a good step toward the improvement of it. This was the condemnation of the world, that Christ was in the world, and the world knew him not (Joh 1:10); Jerusalem knew him not (Lu 19:42), but there were some who, when he was among them, had knowledge of him. It is better to know that there is a prophet among us than that there has been one, Eze 2:5.

2. How they brought others to Christ, by giving notice to their neighbours of Christ's being come into those parts; They sent out into all that country. Note, those that have got the knowledge of Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him too. We must not eat these spiritual morsels alone; there is in Christ enough for us all, so that there is nothing got by monopolizing. When we have opportunities of getting good to our souls, we should bring as many as we can to share with us.

More than we think of would close with opportunities, if they were but called upon and invited to them. They sent into their own country, because it was their own, and they desired the welfare of it. Note, We can no better testify our love to our country than by promoting and propagating the knowledge of Christ in it. Neighbourhood is an advantage of doing good which must be improved. Those that are near to us, we should contrive to do something for, at least by our example, to bring them near to Christ.

3. What their business was with Christ; not only, perhaps not chiefly, if at all, to be taught, but to have their sick healed; They brought unto him all that were diseased. If love to Christ and his doctrine will not bring them to him, yet self-love would. Did we but rightly seek our own things, the things of our own peace and welfare, we should seek the things of Christ. We should do him honour, and please him, by deriving grace and righteousness from him. Note, Christ is the proper Person to bring the diseased to; whither should they go but to the Physician, to the Sun of Righteousness, that hath healing under his wings?

4. How they made their application to him; They besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment, Mt 14:36. They applied themselves to him,

(a) With great importunity; they besought him. Well may we beseech to be healed, when God by his ministers beseecheth us that we will be healed. Note, The greatest favours and blessings are to be obtained from Christ by entreaty; Ask, and it shall be given.

(b) With great humility; they came to him as those that were sensible of their distance, humbly beseeching him to help them; and their desiring to touch the hem of his garment, intimates that they thought themselves unworthy that he should take any particular notice of them, that he should so much as speak to their case, much less touch them for their cure; but they will look upon it as a great favour, if he will give them leave to touch the hem of

his garment. The eastern nations show respect to their princes, by kissing their sleeve, or skirt.

(c) With great assurance of the all-sufficiency of his power, not doubting but that they should be healed, even by touching the hem of his garment; that they should receive abundant communications from him by the smallest token of symbol of communion with him. They did not expect the formality of striking his hand over the place or persons diseased, as Naaman did (2Ki 5:11); but they were sure that there was in him such an overflowing fulness of healing virtue, that they could not fail of a cure, who were but admitted near him. It was in this country and neighbourhood that the woman with the bloody issue was cured by touching the hem of his garment, and was commended for her faith (Mt 9:20-22); and thence, probably, they took occasion to ask this. Note, The experiences of others in their attendance upon Christ may be of use both to direct and to encourage us in our attendance on him. It is good using those means and methods which others before us have sped well in the use of.

II The fruit and success of this their application to Christ. It was not in vain that these seed of Jacob sought him, for as many as touched, were made perfectly whole. Note,

1. Christ's cures are perfect cures. Those that he heals, he heals perfectly. He doth not do his work by halves. Though spiritual healing be not perfected at first, yet, doubtless, he that has begun the good work will perform it, Php 1:6.

2. There is an abundance of healing virtue in Christ for all that apply themselves to him, be they ever so many. That precious ointment which was poured on his head, ran down to the skirts of his garment, Ps 133:2 The least of Christ's institutions, like the hem of his garment, is replenished with the overflowing fulness of his grace, and he is able to save to the uttermost.

3. The healing virtue that is in Christ, is put forth for the benefit of those that by a true and lively faith touch him. Christ is in heaven, but his word is nigh us, and he himself in that word. When we mix faith with the word, apply it to ourselves, depend upon it, and submit to its influences and commands, then we touch the hem of Christ's garment. It is but thus touching, and we are made whole. On such easy terms are spiritual cures offered by him, that he may truly be said to heal freely; so that if our souls die of their wounds, it is not owing to our Physician, it is not for want of skill or will in him; but it is purely owing to ourselves. He could have healed us, he would have healed us, but we would not be healed; so that our blood will lie upon our own heads.

Matthew-15

The Things That Defile

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws. The intemperate heat of the Jewish teachers for the support of their hierarchy, occasioned many excellent discourses of our Saviour's for the settling of the truth, as here.

By putting the commandments of men on a level with the divine requirements, their whole worship was rendered vain—a principle of deep moment in the service of God. "For," it is added in Mk 7:8, "laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do." The drivelling nature of their multitudinous observances is here pointedly exposed, in contrast with the manly observance of "the commandment of God"; and when our Lord says, "Many other such like things ye do," it is implied that He had but given a specimen of the hideous treatment which the divine law

received, and the grasping disposition which, under the mask of piety, was manifested by the ecclesiastics of that day.

Here, is the cavil of the scribes and Pharisees at Christ's disciples, for eating with unwashen hands. The scribes and Pharisees were the great men of the Jewish church, men whose gain was godliness, great enemies to the gospel of Christ, but colouring their opposition with a pretence of zeal for the law of Moses, when really nothing was intended but the support of their own tyranny over the consciences of men. They were men of learning and men of business. These scribes and Pharisees here introduced were of Jerusalem, the holy city, the head city, whither the tribes went up, and where were set the thrones of judgment; they should therefore have been better than others, but they were worse. Note, External privileges, if they be not duly improved, commonly swell men up the more with pride and malignity. Jerusalem, which should have been a pure spring, was now become a poisoned sink. How is the faithful city become a harlot!

Now if these great men be the accusers, pray what is the accusation? What articles do they exhibit against the disciples of Christ? Why, truly, the thing laid to their charge, is, nonconformity to the canons of their church (Mt 15:2); Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? This charge they make good in a particular instance; They wash not their hands when they eat bread. A very high misdemeanor! It was a sign that Christ's disciples conducted themselves inoffensively, when this was the worst thing they could charge them with.

Observe, 1. What was the tradition of the elders--That people should often wash their hands, and always at meat. This they placed a great deal of religion in, supposing that the meat they touched with unwashen hands would be defiling to them. The Pharisees practiced this themselves, and with a great deal of strictness imposed it upon others, not under civil penalties, but as matter of conscience, and making it a sin against God if they did not do it. Rabbi Joses determined, "that to eat with unwashen hands is as great a sin as

adultery." And Rabbi Akiba being kept a close prisoner, having water sent him both to wash his hands with, and to drink with his meat, the greatest part being accidentally shed, he washed his hands with the remainder, though he left himself none to drink, saying he would rather die than transgress the tradition of the elders. Nay, they would not eat meat with one that did not wash before meat. This mighty zeal in so small a matter would appear very strange, if we did not still see it incident to church-oppressors, not only to be fond of practising their own inventions, but to be furious in pressing their own impositions.

Additions to God's laws reflect upon his wisdom, as if he had left out something which was needed, and which man could supply; in one way or other they always lead men to disobey God. How thankful ought we to be for the written word of God! Never let us think that the religion of the Bible can be improved by any human addition, either in doctrine or practice. Our blessed Lord spoke of their traditions as inventions of their own, and pointed out one instance in which this was very clear, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment. When a parent's wants called for assistance, they pleaded, that they had devoted to the temple all they could spare, even though they did not part with it, and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them. This was making the command of God of no effect. The doom of hypocrites is put in a little compass; "In vain do they worship me." It will neither please God, nor profit themselves; they trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence.

2. A common practice of the Jews in Jesus' time was the ceremonial washing of hands. They believed that those who came in contact with 'unclean' people or things had to pour water over their hands to cleanse themselves. This was not a command of the law of Moses but a tradition of the Pharisees (Mar_7:1-5). Jesus argued that such traditions not only caused people to misunderstand the law, but stopped them from doing the more important things that the law required (Mar_7:6-8). "And when they come from the market" (Mk 7:4) —"And after market": after any common business, or attending

a court of justice, where the Jews, as WEBSTER and WILKINSON remark, after their subjection to the Romans, were especially exposed to intercourse and contact with heathens—"except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables"—rather, "couches," such as were used at meals, which probably were merely sprinkled for ceremonial purposes. "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him,"

What was the transgression of this tradition or injunction by the disciples; it seems, they did not wash their hands when they ate bread, which was the more offensive to the Pharisees, because they were men who in other things were strict and conscientious. The custom was innocent enough, and had a decency in its civil use. We read of the water for purifying at the marriage where Christ was present (Joh 2:6), though Christ turned it into wine, and so put an end to that use of it. But when it came to be practised and imposed as a religious rite and ceremony, and such a stress laid upon it, the disciples, though weak in knowledge, yet were so well taught as not to comply with it, or observe it; no not when the scribes and Pharisees had their eye upon them. They had already learned St. Paul's lesson, All things are lawful for me; no doubt, it is lawful to wash before meat; but I will not be brought under the power of any; especially not those who said to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over. 1Co 6:12.

3. What was the complaint of the scribes and Pharisees against them. They quarrel with Christ about it, supposing that he allowed them in it, as he did, no doubt, by his own example; "Why do thy disciples transgress the canons of the church? And why dost thou suffer them to do it?" It was well that the complaint was made to Christ; for the disciples themselves, though they knew their duty in this case, were perhaps not so well able to give a reason for what they did as were to be wished.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and,

He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is* a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 and honor not his father or his mother, *he shall be free.* Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Here is Christ's answer to this cavil, and his justification of the disciples in that which was charged upon them as a transgression. Note, While we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, he will be sure to bear us out in it.

Two ways Christ replies upon them;

By way of recrimination, Mt 15:3-6. They were spying motes in the eyes of his disciples, but Christ shows them a beam in their own. But that which he charges upon them is not barely a recrimination, for it will be no vindication of ourselves to condemn our reprovers; but it is such a censure of their tradition (and the authority of that was what they built their charge upon) as makes not only a non-compliance lawful, but an opposition a duty. That human authority must never be submitted to, which sets up in competition with divine authority.

1 The charge in general is, You transgress the commandment of God by your tradition. They called it the tradition of the elders, laying stress upon the antiquity of the usage, and the authority of them that imposed it, as the church of Rome does upon fathers and councils; but Christ calls it their tradition. Note, Illegal impositions will be laid to the charge of those who support and maintain them, and keep them up, as well of those who first invented and enjoined them. You transgress the commandment of God. Note, Those who are most zealous of their own impositions, are commonly most careless of God's commands; which is a good reason why Christ's disciples should stand upon their guard against such impositions, lest, though at first they seem only to infringe the liberty of Christians, they come at length to confront the authority of Christ. Though the Pharisees, in this command of washing before meat, did not entrench upon any command of God; yet, because in other instances they did, he justifies his disciples' disobedience to this.

2 The proof of this charge is in particular instance, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment.

[1.] Let us see what the command of God is (Mt 15:4), what the precept, and what the sanction of the law is.

The precept is, Honour thy father and thy mother; this is enjoined by the common Father of mankind, and by paying respect to them whom Providence has made the instruments of our being, we give honour to him who is the Author of it, who has thereby, as to us, put some of his image upon them. The whole of children's duty to their parents is included in this of honouring them, which is the spring and foundation of all the rest, If I be a father, where is my honour? Our Saviour here supposes it to mean the duty of children's maintaining their parents, and ministering to their wants, if there be occasion, and being every way serviceable to their comfort. Honour widows, that is, maintain them, 1Ti 5:3.

The sanction of this law in the fifth commandment, is, a promise, that thy days may be long; but our Saviour waives that, lest any should thence infer it to be only a thing commendable and profitable, and insists upon the penalty annexed to the breach of this commandment in another scripture, which denotes the duty to be highly and indispensably necessary; He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death: this law we have, Ex 21:17. The sin of cursing parents is here opposed to the duty of honouring them. Those who speak ill of their parents, or wish ill to them, who mock at them, or give them taunting and opprobrious language, break this law. If to call a brother Raca be so penal, what is it to call a father so? By our Saviour's application of this law, it appears, that denying service or relief to parents is included in cursing them. Though the language be respectful enough, and nothing abusive in it, yet what will that avail, if the deeds be not agreeable? it is but like him that said, I go, Sir, and went not, Mt 21:30.

[2.] Let us see what was the contradiction which the tradition of the elders gave to this command. It was not direct and downright, but implicit; their casuists gave them such rules as furnished them with an easy evasion from the obligation of this command, Mt 15:5,6. You hear what God saith, but ye say so and so. Note, That which men say, even great men, and learned men, and men in authority, must be examined by that which God saith; and if it be found either contrary or inconsistent, it may and must be rejected, Ac 4:19. Observe,

First, What their tradition was; That a man could not in any case bestow his worldly estate better than to give it to the priests, and devote it to the service of the temple: and that when any thing was so devoted, it was not only unlawful to alienate it, but all other obligations, though ever so just and sacred, were thereby superseded, and a man was thereby discharged from them. And this proceeded partly from their ceremoniousness, and the superstitious regard they had to the temple, and partly from their covetousness, and love of money: for what was given to the temple they were gainers by. The former was, in pretence, the latter was, in truth, at the bottom of this tradition.

Secondly, How they allowed the application of this to the case of children. When their parents' necessities called for their assistance, they pleaded, that all they could spare from themselves and their children, they had devoted to the treasury of the temple; It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them; suggesting withal, that the spiritual advantage of what was so devoted, would redound to the parents, who must live upon that air. This, they taught, was a good and valid plea, and many undutiful, unnatural children made use of it, and they justified them in it, and said, He shall be free; so we supply the sense. Some go further, and supply it thus, "He doth well, his days shall be long in the land, and he shall be looked upon as having duly observed the fifth commandment." The pretence of religion would make his refusal to provide for his parents not only passable but plausible. But the absurdity and impiety of this tradition

were very evident: for revealed religion was intended to improve, not to overthrow, natural religion; one of the fundamental laws of which is this of honouring our parents; and had they known what that meant, I will have justice, and mercy, and not sacrifice, they had not thus made the most arbitrary rituals destructive of the most necessary morals. This was making the command of God of no effect. Note, Whatever leads to, or countenances, disobedience, does, in effect, make void the command; and they that take upon them to dispense with God's law, do, in Christ's account, repeal and disannul it. To break the law is bad, but to teach men so, as the scribes and Pharisees did, is much worse, Mt 5:19. To what purpose is the command given, if it be not obeyed? The rule is, as to us, of none effect, if we be not ruled by it. It is time for thee, Lord, to work; high time for the great Reformer, the great Refiner, to appear; for they have made void thy law (Ps 119:126); not only sinned against the commandment, but, as far as in them lay, sinned away the commandment. But, thanks be to God, in spite of them and all their traditions, the command stands in full force, power, and virtue.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.

The other part of Christ's answer is by way of reprehension; and that which he here charges them with, is hypocrisy; Ye hypocrites, Mt 15:7. Note, It is the prerogative of him who searcheth the heart, and knows what is in man, to pronounce who are hypocrites. The eye of man can perceive open profaneness, but it is only the eye of Christ that can discern hypocrisy, Lu 16:15. And as it is a sin which his eye discovers, so it is a sin which of all others his soul hates.

Now Christ fetches his reproof from Isa 29:13. Well did Esaias prophesy of you. Isaiah spoke it of the men of that generation to which he prophesied, yet Christ applies it to these scribes and Pharisees. Note, The reproofs of sin and sinners, which we find in scripture, were designed to reach the like persons and practices to the end of the world; for they are not of private interpretation, 2Pe 1:20. The sinners of the latter days are prophesied of, 1Ti 4:1,2Ti 3:1,2,3:3. Threatenings directed against others, belong to us, if we

be guilty of the same sins. Isaiah prophesied not of them only, but of all other hypocrites, against whom that word of his is still levelled, and stands in force. The prophecies of scripture are every day in the fulfilling.

This prophecy exactly deciphers a hypocritical nation, Isa 9:17,10:6. Here is,

(a) The description of hypocrites, in two things.

[1.] In their own performances of religious worship, v. 8, when they draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, their heart is far from him. Observe,

First, How far a hypocrite goes; he draws nigh to God, and honours him; he is, in profession, a worshipper of God. The Pharisee went up to the temple, to pray; he does not stand at that distance which those are at, who live without God in the world, but has a name among the people near unto him. They honour him; that is, they take on them to honour God, they join with those that do so. Some honour God has even from the services of hypocrites, as they help to keep up the face and form of godliness in the world, whence God fetches honour to himself, though they intend it not to him. When God's enemies submit themselves but feignedly, when they lie unto him, so the word is (Ps 66:3), it redounds to his honour, and he gets himself a name.

Secondly, Where he rests and takes up; this is done gut with his mouth and with his lips. It is piety but from the teeth outwards; he shows much love, and that is all, there is in his heart no true love; they make their voices to be heard (Isa 58:4), mention the name of the Lord, Isa 48:1. Hypocrites are those that only make a lip-labour of religion and religious worship. In word and tongue, the worst hypocrites may do as well as the best saints, and speak as fair with Jacob's voice.

Thirdly, What that is wherein he comes short; it is in the main matter; Their heart is far from me, habitually alienated and estranged (Eph 4:18), actually wandering and dwelling upon something else; no serious thoughts of God, no pious affections toward him, no concern about the soul and eternity, no thoughts agreeable to the service. God is near in their mouth, but far from their reins, Jer 12:2,Eze 33:31. The heart, with the fool's eyes, is in the ends of the earth. It is a silly dove that is without a heart, and so it is a silly duty, Ho 7:11. A hypocrite says one thing, but thinks another. The great thing that God looks at and requires is the heart (Pr 23:26); if that be far from him, it is not a reasonable service and therefore not an acceptable one; it is the sacrifice of fools, Ec 5:1.

[2.] In their prescriptions to others. This is an instance of their hypocrisy, that they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The Jews then, as the papists since, paid the same respect to oral tradition that they did to the word of God, receiving it pari pietatis affectu ac reverentiâ--with the same pious affection and reverence. Conc. Trident. Sess. 4. Decr. 1. When men's inventions are tacked to God's institutions, and imposed accordingly, this is hypocrisy, a mere human religion. The commandments of men are properly conversant about the things of men, but God will have his own work done by his own rules, and accepts not that which he did not himself appoint. That only cones to him, that comes from him.

(b) The doom of hypocrites; it is put in a little compass; In vain do they worship me. Their worship does not attain the end for which it was appointed; it will neither please God, nor profit themselves. If it be not in spirit, it is not in truth, and so it is all nothing. That man who only seems to be religious, but is not so, his religion is vain (Jam 1:26); and if our religion be a vain oblation, a vain religion, how great is that vanity! How sad is it to live in an age of prayers and sermons, and sabbaths and sacraments, in vain, to beat the air in all these; it is so, if the heart be not with God in them. Lip-labour is lost labour, Isa 1:11. Hypocrites sow the wind and reap the whirlwind; they trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence.

Thus Christ justified his disciples in their disobedience to the traditions of the elders; and this the scribes and Pharisees got by their cavilling. We read not of any reply they made; if they were not satisfied, yet they were silenced, and could not resist the power wherewith Christ spake.

9 But in vain they do worship me,
teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

The solemn introduction to this discourse (Mt 15:10); He called the multitude. They were withdrawn while Christ discoursed with the scribes and Pharisees; probably those proud men ordered them to withdraw, as not willing to talk with Christ in their hearing; Christ must favour them at their pleasure with a discourse in private. But Christ had a regard to the multitude; he soon despatched the scribes and Pharisees, and then turned them off, invited the mob, the multitude, to be his hearers: thus the poor are evangelized; and the foolish things of the world, and things that are despised hath Christ chosen. The humble Jesus embraced those whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, and to them he designed it for a mortification. He turns from them as wilful and unteachable, and turns to the multitude, who, though weak, were humble, and willing to be taught. To them he said, Hear and understand. Note, What we hear from the mouth of Christ, we must give all diligence to understand. Not only scholars, but even the multitude, the ordinary people, must apply their minds to understand the words of Christ. He therefore calls upon them to understand, because the lesson he was now about to teach them, was contrary to the notions which they had sucked in with their milk from their teachers; and overturned many of the customs and usages which they were wedded to, and laid stress upon. Note, There is need of a great attention of mind and clearness of understanding to free men from those corrupt principles and practices which they have been bred up in and long accustomed to; for in that case the understanding is commonly bribed and biassed by prejudice.

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Not that which goes into the mouth defileth the man. It is not the kind or quality of our food, nor the condition of our hands, that affects the soul with any moral pollution or defilement. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, Ro 14:17. That defiles the man, by which guilt is contracted before God, and the man is rendered offensive to him, and disfitted for communion with him; now what we eat, if we do not eat unreasonably and immoderately, does not this; for to the pure all things are pure, Tit 1:15. The Pharisees carried the ceremonial pollutions, by eating such and such meats, much further than the law intended, and burdened it with additions of their own, which our Saviour witnesses against; intending hereby to pave the way to a repeal of the ceremonial law in that matter. He was now beginning to teach his followers to call nothing common or unclean; and if Peter, when he was bid to kill and eat, had remembered this word, he would not have said, Not so, Lord, Ac 10:13-15,28.

2. But that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. We are polluted, not by the meat we eat with unwashen hands, but by the words we speak from an unsanctified heart; thus it is that the mouth causeth the flesh to sin, Ec 5:6. Christ, in a former discourse, had laid a great stress upon our words (Mt 12:36,37); and that was intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at him; this here is intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at the disciples, and censured them. It is not the disciples that defile themselves with what they eat, but the Pharisees that defile themselves with what they speak spitefully and censoriously of them. Note, Those who charge guilt upon others for transgressing the commandments of men, many times bring greater guilt upon themselves, by transgressing the law of God against rash judging. Those most defile themselves, who are most forward to censure the defilements of others.

12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying ?

The offence that was taken at this truth and the account brought to Christ of that offence (Mt 15:12); "The disciples said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, and didst thou not foresee that they would be so, at this saying, and would think the

worse of thee and of thy doctrine for it, and be the more enraged at thee?"

1. It was not strange that the Pharisees should be offended at this plain truth, for they were men made up of error and enmity, mistakes and malice. Sore eyes cannot bear clear light; and nothing is more provoking to proud imposers than the undeceiving of those whom they have first blindfolded, and then enslaved. It should seem that the Pharisees, who were strict observers of the traditions, were more offended than the scribes, who were the teachers of them; and perhaps they were as much galled with the latter part of Christ's doctrine, which taught a strictness in the government of our tongue, as with the former part, which taught an indifference about washing our hands; great contenders for the formalities of religion, being commonly as great contemners of the substantials of it.

2 The disciples thought it strange that their Master should say that which he knew would give so much offence; he did not use to do so: surely, they think, if he had considered how provoking it would be, he would not have said it. But he knew what he said, and to whom he said it, and what would be the effect of it; and would teach us, that though in indifferent things we must be tender of giving offence, yet we must not, for fear of that, evade any truth or duty. Truth must be owned, and duty done; and if any be offended, it is his own fault; it is scandal, not given, but taken.

Perhaps the disciples themselves stumbled at the word Christ said, which they thought bold, and scarcely reconcileable with the difference that was put by the law of God between clean and unclean meats; and therefore objected this to Christ, that they might themselves be better informed. They seem likewise to have a concern upon them for the Pharisees, though they had quarrelled with them; which teaches us to forgive, and seek the good, especially the spiritual good, of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers. They would not have the Pharisees go away displeased at any thing Christ had said; and therefore, though they do not desire him to retract it, they hope he will explain, correct, and modify it. Weak hearers are sometimes more solicitous than they should be not to have wicked hearers offended. But if we please men with the concealment of

truth, and the indulgence of their errors and corruptions, we are not the servants of Christ.

13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

The doom passed upon the Pharisees and their corrupt traditions; which comes in as a reason why Christ cared not though he offended them, and therefore why the disciples should not care; because they were a generation of men that hated to be reformed, and were marked out for destruction. Their corrupt teaching is already doomed: the garden of the Lord upon earth, too long cumbered with their presence, shall yet be purged of them and their accursed system: yea, and whatsoever is not of the planting of My heavenly Father, the great Husbandman (Joh 15:1), shall share the same fate.

Two things Christ here foretels concerning them.

1. The rooting out of them and their traditions (Mt 15:13); Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Not only the corrupt opinions and superstitious practices of the Pharisees, but their sect, and way, and constitution, were plants not of God's planting. The rules of their profession were no institutions of his, but owed their origin to pride and formality. The people of the Jews were planted a noble vine; but now that they are become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, God disowned them, as not of his planting. Note,

(a) In the visible church, it is no strange thing to find plants that our heavenly Father has not planted. It is implied, that whatever is good in the church is of God's planting, Isa 41:19. But let the husbandman be ever so careful, his ground will cast forth weeds of itself, more or less, and there is an enemy busy sowing tares. What is corrupt, though of God's permitting, is not of his planting; he sows nothing but good seed in his field. Let us not therefore be deceived, as if all must needs be right that we find in the church, and all those persons and things our Father's plants that we find in our Father's garden. Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits; see Jer 19:5,23:31,32.

(b) Those that are of the spirit of the Pharisees, proud, formal, and imposing, what figure soever they make, and of what denomination soever they be, God will not own them as of his planting. By their fruit you shall know them.

(c) Those plants that are not of God's planting, shall not be of his protecting, but shall undoubtedly be rooted up. What is not of God shall not stand, Ac 5:38. What things are unscriptural, will wither and die of themselves, or be justly exploded by the churches; however in the great day these tares that offend will be bundled for the fire. What is become of the Pharisees and their traditions? They are long since abandoned; but the gospel of truth is great, and will remain. It cannot be rooted up.

2 The ruin of them; and their followers, who had their persons and principles in admiration, Mt 15:14. Where,

(a) Christ bids his disciples let them alone. "Have no converse with them or concern for them; neither court their favour, nor dread their displeasure; care not though they be offended, they will take their course, and let them take the issue of it. They are wedded to their own fancies, and will have every thing their own way; let them alone. Seek not to please a generation of men that please not God (1Th 2:15), and will be pleased with nothing less than absolute dominion over your consciences. They are joined to idols, as Ephraim (Ho 4:17), the idols of their own fancy; let them alone, let them be filthy still," Re 22:11. The case of those sinners is sad indeed, whom Christ orders his ministers to let alone.

(b) He gives them two reasons for it. Let them alone; for,

[1.] They are proud and ignorant; two bad qualities that often meet, and render a man incurable in his folly, Pr 26:12. They are blind leaders of the blind. They are grossly ignorant in the things of God, and strangers to the spiritual nature of the divine law; and yet so proud, that they think they see better and further than any, and

therefore undertake to be leaders of others, to show others the way to heaven, when they themselves know not one step of the way; and, accordingly, they prescribe to all, and proscribe those who will not follow them. Though they were blind, if they had owned it, and come to Christ for eye-salve, they might have seen, but they disdained the intimation of such a thing (Joh 9:40); Are we blind also? They were confident that they themselves were guides of the blind (Ro 2:19,20), were appointed to be so, and fit to be so; that every thing they said was an oracle and a law; "Therefore let them alone, their case is desperate; do not meddle with them; you may soon provoke them, but never convince them." How miserable was the case of the Jewish Church now when their leaders were blind, so self-conceitedly foolish, as to be peremptory in their conduct, while the people were so sottishly foolish as to follow them with an implicit faith and obedience, and willingly walk after the commandment, Ho 5:11. Now the prophecy was fulfilled, Isa 29:10,14. And it is easy to imagine what will be in the end hereof, when the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so, Jer 5:31.

[2.] They are posting to destruction, and will shortly be plunged into it; Both shall fall into the ditch. This must needs be the end of it, if both be so blind, and yet both so bold, venturing forward, and yet not aware of danger. Both will be involved in the general desolation coming upon the Jews, and both drowned in eternal destruction and perdition. The blind leaders and the blind followers will perish together. We find (Re 22:15), that hell is the portion of those that make a lie, and of those that love it when it is made. The deceived and the deceiver are obnoxious to the judgment of God, Job 12:16. Note, First, Those that by their cunning craftiness draw others to sin and error, shall not, with all their craft and cunning, escape ruin themselves. If both fall together into the ditch, the blind leaders will fall undermost, and have the worst of it; see Jer 14:15,16. The prophets shall be consumed first, and then the people to whom they prophesy, Jer 20:6,27:15,16. Secondly, The sin and ruin of the deceivers will be no security to those that are deceived by them. Though the leaders of this people cause them to err, yet they that are led of them are destroyed (Isa 9:16), because they shut their eyes

against the light which would have rectified their mistake. Seneca, complaining of most people's being led by common opinion and practice (Unusquisque mavult credere quam judicare--Things are taken upon trust, and never examined), concludes, Indeista tanta coacervatio aliorum super alios ruentium--Hence crowds fall upon crowds, in vast confusion. De Vitâ Beatâ. The falling of both together will aggravate the fall of both; for they that have thus mutually increased each other's sin, will mutually exasperate each other's ruin.

14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

Instruction given to the disciples concerning the truth Christ had laid down, Mt 15:10. Though Christ rejects the wilfully ignorant who care not to be taught, he can have compassion on the ignorant who are willing to learn, Heb 5:2. If the Pharisees, who made void the law, be offended, let them be offended: but this great peace have they who love the law, that nothing shall offend them, but, some way or other, the offence shall be taken off, Ps 119:165. Here is,

1. Their desire to be better instructed in this matter (Mt 15:15); in this request as in many others, Peter was their speaker; the rest, it is probable, putting him on to speak, or intimating their concurrence; Declare unto us this parable. What Christ said was plain, but, because it agreed not with the notions they had imbibed, though they would not contradict it, yet they call it a parable, and cannot understand it. Note, (1.) Weak understandings are apt to turn plain truths into parables, and to seek for a knot in a bulrush. The disciples often did so, as Joh 16:17. Even the grasshopper is a burthen to a weak stomach, and babes in understanding cannot bear and digest strong meat. (2.) Where a weak head doubts concerning any word of Christ, an upright heart and a willing mind will seek for instruction. The Pharisees were offended, but kept it to themselves; hating to be reformed, they hated to be informed; but the disciples, though

offended, sought for satisfaction, imputing the offence, not to the doctrine delivered, but to the shallowness of their own capacity.

2 The reproof Christ gave them for their weakness and ignorance (Mt 15:16); Are ye also yet without understanding? As many as Christ loves and teaches, he thus rebukes. Note, They are very ignorant indeed, who understand not that moral pollutions are abundantly worse and more dangerous than ceremonial ones. Two things aggravate their dulness and darkness.

(1.) That they were the disciples of Christ; "Are ye also without understanding? Ye whom I have admitted into so great a degree of familiarity with me, are ye so unskilful in the word of righteousness?" Note, The ignorance and mistakes of those that profess religion, and enjoy the privileges of church-membership, are justly a grief to the Lord Jesus. "No wonder that the Pharisees understand not this doctrine, who know nothing of the Messiah's kingdom: but ye that have heard of it, and embraced it yourselves, and preached it to others, are ye also such strangers to the spirit and genius of it?"

(2.) That they had been a great while Christ's scholars; "Are ye yet so, after ye have been so long under my teaching?" Had they been but of yesterday in Christ's school, it had been another matter, but to have been for so many months Christ's constant hearers, and yet to be without understanding, was a great reproach to them. Note, Christ expects from us some proportion of knowledge, and grace, and wisdom, according to the time and means we have had. See Joh 14:9,Heb 5:12,2Ti 3:7,8.

3. The explication Christ gave them of this doctrine of pollutions. Though he chid them for their dulness, he did not cast them off, but pitied them, and taught them, as Lu 24:25-27. He here shows us,

(1.) What little danger we are in of pollution from that which entereth in at the mouth, Mt 15:17. An inordinate appetite,

intemperance, and excess in eating, come out of the heart, and are defiling; but meat in itself is not so, as the Pharisees supposed. What there is of dregs and defilement in our meat, nature (or rather God of nature) has provided a way to clear us of it; it goes in at the belly, and is cast out into the draught, and nothing remains to us but pure nourishment. So fearfully and wonderfully are we made and preserved, and our souls held in life. The expulsive faculty is as necessary in the body as any other, for the discharge of that which is superfluous, or noxious; so happily is nature enabled to help itself, and shift for its own good: by this means nothing defiles; if we eat with unwashen hands, and so any thing unclean mix with our food, nature will separate it, and cast it out, and it will be no defilement to us. It may be a piece of cleanliness, but it is not point of conscience, to wash before meat; and we go upon a great mistake if we place religion in it. It is not the practice itself, but the opinion it is built upon, that Christ condemns, as if meat commended us to God (1Co 8:8); whereas Christianity stands not in such observances.

(2.) What great danger we are in of pollution from that which proceeds out of the mouth (Mt 15:18), out of the abundance of the heart: compare Mt 12:34. There is no defilement in the products of God's bounty; the defilement arises from the products of out corruption. Now here we have,

[1.] The corrupt fountain of that which proceeds out of the mouth; it comes from the heart; that is the spring and source of all sin, Jer 8:7. It is the heart that is so desperately wicked (Jer 17:9); for there is no sin in a word or deed, which was not first in the heart. There is the root of bitterness, which bears gall and wormwood. It is the inward part of a sinner, that is very wickedness, Ps 5:9. All evil speakings come forth from the heart, and are defiling; from the corrupt heart comes the corrupt communication.

[2.] Some of the corrupt streams which flow from this fountain, specified; though they do not all come out of the mouth, yet they all come out of the man, and are the fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart, and is wrought there, Ps 58:2.

First, Evil thoughts, sins against all the commandments. Therefore David puts vain thoughts in opposition to the whole law, Ps 119:113. These are the first-born of the corrupt nature, the beginning of its strength, and do most resemble it. These, as the son and heir, abide in the house, and lodge within us. There is a great deal of sin that begins and ends in the heart, and goes no further. Carnal fancies and imaginations are evil thoughts, wickedness in the contrivance (Dialogismoi poneroi), wicked plots, purposes, and devices of mischief to others, Mic 2:1.

Secondly, Murders, sins against the sixth commandment; these come from a malice in the heart against our brother's life, or a contempt of it. Hence he that hates his brother, is said to be a murderer; he is so at God's bar, 1Jo 3:15. War is in the heart, Ps 4:21,Jam 4:1.

Thirdly, Adulteries and fornications, sins against the seventh commandment; these come from the wanton, unclean, carnal heart; and the lust that reigns there, is conceived there, and brings forth these sins, Jam 1:15. There is adultery in the heart first, and then in the act, Mt 5:28.

Fourthly, Thefts, sins against the eighth commandment; cheats, wrongs, rapines, and all injurious contracts; the fountain of all these is in the heart, that is it that is exercised in these covetous practices (2Pe 2:14), that is set upon riches, Ps 62:10. Achan coveted, and then took, Jos 7:20,21.

Fifthly, False witness, against the ninth commandment; this comes from a complication of falsehood and covetousness, or falsehood and covetousness, or falsehood and malice in the heart. If truth, holiness, and love, which God requires in the inward parts, reigned as they ought, there would be no false witness bearing, Ps 64:6,Jer 9:8.

Sixthly, Blasphemies, speaking evil of God, against the third commandment; speaking evil of our neighbour, against the ninth commandment; these come from a contempt and disesteem of both in the heart; thence the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost proceeds (Mt 12:31,32); these are the overflowing of the gall within.

Now these are the things which defile a man, Mt 15:20. Note, Sin is defiling to the soul, renders it unlovely and abominable in the eyes of a pure and holy God; unfit for communion with him, and for the enjoyment of him in the new Jerusalem, into which nothing shall enter that defileth or worketh iniquity. The mind and conscience are defiled by sin, and that makes every thing else so, Tit 1:15. This defilement by sin was signified by the ceremonial pollutions which the Jewish doctors added to, but understood not. See Heb 9:13,14,1Jo 1:7.

These therefore are the things we must carefully avoid, and all approaches toward them, and not lay stress upon the washing of the hands. Christ doth not yet repeal the law of the distinction of meats (that was not done till Ac 10:9-16), but the tradition of the elders, which was tacked to that law; and therefore he concludes, To eat with unwashen hands (which was the matter now in question), this defileth not a man. If he wash, he is not the better before God; if he wash not, he is not the worse.

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

Familiar though these sayings have now become, what freedom from bondage to outward things do they proclaim, on the one hand; and on the other, how searching is the truth which they express—that nothing which enters from without can really defile us; and that only the evil that is in the heart, that is allowed to stir there, to rise up in thought and affection, and to flow forth in voluntary action, really defiles a man!

It is the heart that is desperately wicked, Jer_17:9, for there is no sin in word or deed, which was not first in the heart. They all come out of the man, and are fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart,

and is wrought there. When Christ teaches, he will show men the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own hearts; he will teach them to humble themselves, and to seek to be cleansed in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

"evil reasonings"; referring here more immediately to those corrupt reasonings which had stealthily introduced and gradually reared up that hideous fabric of tradition which at length practically nullified the unchangeable principles of the moral law. But the statement is far broader than this; namely that the first shape which the evil that is in the heart takes, when it begins actively to stir, is that of "considerations" or "reasonings" on certain suggested actions.

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies—detractions, whether directed against God or man; here the reference seems to be to the latter. Mark (Mk 7:22) adds, "covetousnesses"—or desires after more; "wickednesses"—here meaning, perhaps, malignities of various forms; "deceit, lasciviousness"—meaning, excess or enormity of any kind, though by later writers restricted to lewdness; "an evil eye"—meaning, all looks or glances of envy, jealousy, or ill will towards a neighbor; "pride, foolishness"—in the Old Testament sense of "folly"; that is, criminal senselessness, the folly of the heart. How appalling is this black catalogue!

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,
thefts, false witness, blasphemies:
20 these are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands
defileth not a man.

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and
Sidon.

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

We have here that famous story of Christ's casting the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter; it has something in it singular and very surprising, and which looks favourably upon the poor Gentiles, and is an earnest of the mercy which Christ had in store for them. Here is a gleam of that light which was to lighten the Gentiles, Lu 2:32. Christ came to his own, and his own received him not; but many of them quarrelled with him, and were offended in him; and observe what follows, Mt 15:21.

I. Jesus went thence. Note, Justly is the light taken from those that either play by it, or rebel against it. When Christ and his disciples could not be quiet among them, he left them, and so left an example to his own rule (Mt 10:14), Shake off the dust of your feet. Though Christ endure long, he will not always endure, the contradiction of sinners against himself. He had said (Mt 15:14), Let them alone, and he did so. Note, Wilful prejudices against the gospel, and cavils at it, often provoke Christ to withdraw, and to remove the candlestick out of its place. Ac 13:46,51.

II. When he went thence, he departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; not to those cities (they were excluded from any share in Christ's mighty works, Mt 11:21,22), but into that part of the land of Israel which lay that way: thither he went, as Elias to Sarepta, a city of Sidon (Lu 4:26); thither he went to look after this poor woman, whom he had mercy in reserve for. While he went about doing good, he was never out of his way. The dark corners of the country, which lay most remote, shall have their share of his benign influences; and as now the ends of the land, so afterward the ends of the earth, shall see his salvation, Isa 49:6. Here it was, that this miracle was wrought, in the story of which we may observe,

1 The address of the woman of Canaan to Christ, Mt 15:22. She was a Gentile, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel; probably one of the posterity of those accursed nations that were devoted by that word, Cursed be Canaan. Note, The doom of political bodies doth not always reach every individual member of them. God will have his remnant out of all nations, chosen vessels in all coasts, even the most unlikely: she came out of the same coasts. If Christ had not now made a visit to these coasts, though the mercy was worth travelling far for, it is probable that she had never come to him. Note, It is often an excitement to a dormant faith and zeal, to have opportunities of acquaintance with Christ brought to our doors, to have the word nigh us.

Her address was very importunate, she cried to Christ, as one in earnest; cried, as being at some distance from him, not daring to approach too near, being a Canaanite, lest she should give offence. In her address,

(a) She relates her misery; My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil, kakos daimonizetai--She is ill-bewitched, or possessed. There were degrees of that misery, and this was the worst sort. It was common case at that time, and very calamitous. Note, The vexations of children are the trouble of parents, and nothing should be more so than their being under the power of Satan. Tender parents very sensibly feel the miseries of those that are pieces of themselves. "Though vexed with the devil, yet she is my daughter still." The greatest afflictions of our relations do not dissolve our obligations to them, and therefore ought not to alienate our affections from them. It was the distress and trouble of her family, that now brought her to Christ; she came to him, not for teaching, but for healing; yet, because she came in faith, he did not reject her. Though it is need that drives us to Christ, yet we shall not therefore be driven from him. It was the affliction o her daughter, that gave her this occasion of applying to Christ. It is good to make the afflictions of others our own, in sense and sympathy, that we may make them our own, in improvement and advantage.

(b) She requests for mercy; Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, she owns him to be the Messiah: that is the great thing which faith should fasten upon, and fetch comfort from. From the Lord we may expect acts of power: he can command deliverances; from the Son of David we may expect all the mercy and grace which were foretold concerning him. Though a Gentile, she owns the promise made to the fathers of the Jews, and the honour of the house of David. The Gentiles must receive Christianity, not only as an improvement of natural religion, but as the perfection of the Jewish religion, with an eye to the Old Testament.

Her petition is, Have mercy on me. She does not limit Christ to this or that particular instance of mercy, but mercy, mercy is the thing she begs: she pleads not merit, but depends upon mercy; Have mercy upon me. Mercies to the children are mercies to the parents; favours to ours are favours to us, and are so to be accounted. Note, It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to be earnest in prayer for them, especially for their souls; "I have a son, a daughter, grievously vexed with a proud will, an unclean devil, a malicious devil, led captive by him at his will; Lord, help them." This is a case more deplorable than that of a bodily possession. Bring them to Christ by faith and prayer, who alone is able to heal them. Parents should look upon it as a great mercy to themselves, to have Satan's power broken in the souls of their children.

2 The discouragement she met with in this address; in all the story of Christ's ministry we do not meet with the like. He was wont to countenance and encourage all that came to him, and either to answer before they called, or to hear while they were yet speaking; but here was one otherwise treated: and what could be the reason of it?

(a) Some think that Christ showed himself backward to gratify this poor woman, because he would not give offence to the Jews, by being as free and forward in his favour to the Gentiles as to them. He had bid his disciples not go into the way of the Gentiles (Mt

10:5), and therefore would not himself seem so inclinable to them as to others, but rather more shy. Or rather,

(b) Christ treated her thus, to try her; he knows what is in the heart, knew the strength of her faith, and how well able she was, by his grace, to break through such discouragements; he therefore met her with them, that the trial of her faith might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1Pe 1:6,7. This was like God's tempting Abraham (Ge 22:1), like the angel's wrestling with Jacob, only to put him upon wrestling, Ge 32:24. Many of the methods of Christ's providence, and especially of his grace, in dealing with his people, which are dark and perplexing, may be explained with the key of this story, which is for that end left upon record, to teach us that there may be love in his face, and to encourage us, therefore, though he slay us, yet to trust in him.

Observe the particular discouragements given her:

[1.] When she cried after him, he answered her not a word, Mt 15:23. His ear was wont to be always open and attentive to the cries of poor supplicants, and his lips, which dropped as the honeycomb, always ready to give an answer of peace; but to this poor woman he turned a deaf ear, and she could get neither an alms nor an answer. It was a wonder that she did not fly off in a fret, and say, "Is this he that is so famed for clemency and tenderness? Have so many been heard and answered by him, as they talk, and must I be the first rejected suitor? Why so distant to me, if it be true that he hath stooped to so many?" But Christ knew what he did, and therefore did not answer, that she might be the more earnest in prayer. He heard her, and was pleased with her, and strengthened her with strength in her soul to prosecute her request (Ps 138:3,Job 23:6), though he did not immediately give her the answer she expected. By seeming to draw away the desired mercy from her, he drew her on to be so much the more importunate for it. Note, Every accepted prayer is not immediately an answered prayer. Sometimes God seems not to regard his people's prayers, like a man asleep or astonished (Ps 44:23,Jer 14:9,Ps 22:1,2); nay, to be

angry at them (Ps 80:4,La 3:8,44); but it is to prove, and so to improve, their faith, and to make his after-appearances for them the more glorious to himself, and the more welcome to them; for the vision, at the end, shall speak, and shall not lie, Heb 2:3. See Job 35:14.

[2.] When the disciples spake a good word for her, he gave a reason why he refused her, which was yet more discouraging.

First, It was some little relief, that the disciples interposed on her behalf; they said, Send her away, for she crieth after us. It is desirable to have an interest in the prayers of good people, and we should be desirous of it. But the disciples, though wishing she might have what she came for, yet therein consulted rather their own ease than the poor woman's satisfaction; "Send her away with a cure, for she cries, and is in good earnest; she cries after us, and is troublesome to us, and shames us." Continued importunity may be uneasy to men, even to good men; but Christ loves to be cried after.

Secondly, Christ's answer to the disciples quite dashed her expectations; "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; you know I am not, she is none of them, and would you have me go beyond by commission?" Importunity seldom conquers the settled reason of a wise man; and those refusals are most silencing, which are so backed. He doth not only not answer her, but he argues against her, and stops her mouth with a reason. It is true, she is a lost sheep, and hath as much need of his care as any, but she is not of the house of Israel, to whom he was first sent (Ac 3:26), and therefore not immediately interested in it, and entitled to it. Christ was a Minister of the circumcision (Ro 15:8); and though he was intended for a Light to the Gentiles, yet the fulness of time for that was not now come, the veil was not yet rent, nor the partition-wall taken down. Christ's personal ministry was to be the glory of his people Israel; "If I am sent to them, what have I to do with those that are none of them." Note, It is a great trial, when we have occasion given us to question whether we be of those to whom Christ was sent. But, blessed be God, no room is left for that doubt; the distinction

between Jew and Gentile is taken away; we are sure that he gave his life a ransom for many, and if for many, why not for me?

Thirdly, When she continued her importunity, he insisted upon the unfitness of the thing, and gave her not only a repulse, but a seeming reproach too (Mt 15:26); It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. This seems to cut her off from all hope, and might have driven her to despair, if she had not had a very strong faith indeed. Gospel grace and miraculous cures (the appurtenances of it), were children's bread; they belonged to them to whom pertained the adoption (Ro 9:4), and lay not upon the same level with that rain from heaven, and those fruitful seasons, which God gave to the nations whom he suffered to walk in their own ways (Ac 14:16,17); no, these were peculiar favours, appropriated to the peculiar people, the garden enclosed. Christ preached to the Samaritans (Joh 4:41), but we read not of any cures he wrought among them; that salvation was of the Jews: it is not meet therefore to alienate these. The Gentiles were looked upon by the Jews with great contempt, were called and counted dogs; and, in comparison with the house of Israel, who were so dignified and privileged, Christ here seems to allow it, and therefore thinks it not meet that the Gentiles should share in the favours bestowed on the Jews. But see how the tables are turned; after the bringing of the Gentiles into the church, the Jewish zealots for the law are called dogs, Php 3:2.

Now this Christ urgeth against this woman of Canaan; "How can she expect to eat of the children's bread, who is not of the family?" Note,

1. Those whom Christ intends most signally to honour, he first humbles and lays low in a sense of their own meanness and unworthiness. We must first see ourselves to be as dogs, less than the least of all God's mercies, before we are fit to be dignified and privileged with them.

2. Christ delights to exercise great faith with great trials, and sometimes reserves the sharpest for the last, that, being tried, we may come forth like gold. This general rule is applicable to other

cases for direction, though here used only for trial. Special ordinances and church-privileges are children's bread, and must not be prostituted to the grossly ignorant and profane. Common charity must be extended to all, but spiritual dignities are appropriated to the household of faith; and therefore promiscuous admission to them, without distinction, wastes the children's bread, and is the giving of that which is holy to the dogs, Mt 7:6. Procul hinc, procul inde, profani--Off, ye profane.

3. Here is the strength of her faith and resolution, in breaking through all these discouragements. Many a one, thus tried, would either have sunk into silence, or broken out into passion. "Here is cold comfort," might she have said, "for a poor distressed creature; as good for me to have staid at home, as come hither to be taunted at and abused at this rate; not only to have a piteous case slighted, but to be called a dog!" A proud, unhumbled heart would not have borne it. The reputation of the house of Israel was not now so great in the world, but that this slight put upon the Gentiles was capable of being retorted, had the poor woman been so minded. It might have occasioned a reflection upon Christ, and might have been a blemish upon his reputation, as well as a shock to the good opinion, she had entertained of him; for we re apt to judge of persons as we ourselves find them; and think that they are what they are to us. "Is this the Son of David?" (might she have said): "Is this he that has such a reputation for kindness, tenderness, and compassion? I am sure I have no reason to give him that character, for I was never treated so roughly in my life; he might have done as much for me as for others; or, if not, he needed not to have set me with the dogs of his flock. I am not a dog, I am a woman, and an honest woman, and a woman in misery; and I am sure it is not meet to call me a dog." No, here is not a word of this. Note, A humble, believing soul, that truly loves Christ, takes every thing in good part that he saith and doeth, and puts the best construction upon it.

She breaks through all these discouragements,

(a) With a holy earnestness of desire in prosecuting her petition. This appeared upon the former repulse (Mt 15:25); Then came she, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

[1.] She continued to pray. What Christ said, silenced the disciples; you hear no more of them; they took the answer, but the woman did not. Note, The more sensibly we feel the burthen, the more resolutely we should pray for the removal of it. And it is the will of God that we should continue instant in prayer, should always pray, and not faint.

[2.] She improved in prayer. Instead of blaming Christ, or charging him with unkindness, she seems rather to suspect herself, and lay the fault upon herself. She fears lest, in her first address, she had not been humble and reverent enough, and therefore now she came, and worshipped him, and paid him more respect than she had done; or she fears that she had not been earnest enough, and therefore now she cries, Lord, help me. Note, When the answers of prayer are deferred, God is thereby teaching us to pray more, and pray better. It is then time to enquire wherein we have come short in our former prayers, that what has been amiss may be amended for the future. Disappointments in the success of prayer, must be excitements to the duty of prayer. Christ, in his agony, prayed more earnestly.

[3.] She waives the question, whether she was of those to whom Christ was sent or no; she will not argue that with him, though perhaps she might have claimed some kindred to the house of Israel; but, "Whether an Israelite or no, I come to the Son of David for mercy, and I will not let him go, except he bless me." Many weak Christians perplex themselves with questions and doubts about their election, whether they are of the house of Israel or no; such had better mind their errand to God, and continue instant in prayer for mercy and grace; throw themselves by faith at the feet of Christ, and say, If I perish, I will perish here; and then that matter will by degrees clear itself. If we cannot reason down our unbelief, let us pray it down. A fervent, affectionate Lord, help me, will help us over many

of the discouragements which are sometimes ready to bear us down and overwhelm us.

[4.] Her prayer is very short, but comprehensive and fervent, Lord, help me. Take this, First, As lamenting her case; "If the Messiah be sent only to the house of Israel, the Lord help me, what will become of me and mine," Note, It is not in vain for broken hearts to bemoan themselves; God looks upon them then, Jer 31:18. Or, Secondly, As begging grace to insist her in this hour of temptation. She found it hard to keep up her faith when it was thus frowned upon, and therefore prays, "Lord, help me; Lord, strengthen my faith now; Lord, let thy right hand uphold me, while my soul is following hard after thee," Ps 63:8. Or, Thirdly, As enforcing her original request, "Lord, help me; Lord, give me what I come for." She believed that Christ could and would help her, though she was not of the house of Israel; else she would have dropt her petition. Still she keeps up good thoughts of Christ, and will not quit her hold. Lord, help me, is a good prayer, if well put up; and it is pity that it should be turned into a byword, and that we should take God's name in vain in it.

(b) With a holy skilfulness of faith, suggesting a very surprising plea. Christ had placed the Jews with the children, as olive-plants round about God's table, and had put the Gentiles with the dogs, under the table; and she doth not deny the aptness of the similitude. Note, There is nothing got by contradicting any word of Christ, though it bear ever so hard upon us. But this poor woman, since she cannot object against it, resolves to make the best of it (Mt 15:27); Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. Now, here,

[1.] Her acknowledgment was very humble: Truth, Lord. Note, You cannot speak so meanly and slightly of a humble believer, but he is ready to speak as meanly and slightly of himself. Some that seem to dispraise and disparage themselves, will yet take it as an affront if others do so too; but one that is humbled aright, will subscribe to the most abasing challenges, and not call them abusing ones. "Truth, Lord; I cannot deny it; I am a dog, and have no right to the children's bread." David, Thou hast done foolishly, very foolishly; Truth, Lord.

Asaph, Thou hast been as a beast before God; Truth, Lord. Agur, Thou art more brutish than any man; Truth, Lord. Paul, Thou hast been the chief of sinners, art less than the least of saints, not meet to be called an apostle; Truth, Lord.

[2.] Her improvement of this into a plea was very ingenious; Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. It was by a singular acumen, and spiritual quickness and sagacity, that she discerned matter of argument in that which looked like a slight. Note, A lively, active faith will make that to be for us, which seems to be against us; will fetch meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. Unbelief is apt to mistake recruits for enemies, and to draw dismal conclusions even from comfortable premises (Jdg 13:22,23); but faith can find encouragement even in that which is discouraging, and get nearer to God by taking hold on that hand which is stretched out to push it away. So good a thing it is to be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isa 11:3.

Her plea is, Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. It is true, the full and regular provision is intended for the children only, but the small, casual, neglected crumbs are allowed to the dogs, and are not grudged them; that is to the dogs under the table, that attend there expecting them. We poor Gentiles cannot expect the stated ministry and miracles of the Son of David, that belongs to the Jews; but they begin now to be weary of their meat, and to play with it, they find fault with it, and crumble it away; surely then some of the broken meat may fall to a poor Gentile; "I beg a cure by the by, which is but a crumb, though of the same precious bread, yet but a small inconsiderable piece, compared with the loaves which they have." Note, When we are ready to surfeit on the children's bread, we should remember how many there are, that would be glad of the crumbs. Our broken meat in spiritual privileges, would be a feast to many a soul; Ac 13:42. Observe here,

First, Her humility and necessity made her glad of crumbs. Those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve nothing, will be thankful for any thing; and then we are prepared for the greatest of

God's mercies, when we see ourselves less than the least of them. The least of Christ is precious to a believer, and the very crumbs of the bread of life.

Secondly, Her faith encouraged her to expect these crumbs. Why should it not be at Christ's table as at a great man's, where the dogs are fed as sure as the children? Observe, She calls it their master's table; if she were a dog, she was his dog, and it cannot be ill with us, if we stand but in the meanest relation to Christ; "Though unworthy to be called children, yet make me as one of thy hired servants: nay, rather let me be set with the dogs than turned out of the house; for in my Father's house there is not only bread enough, but to spare," Lu 15:17-19. It is good lying in God's house, though we lie at the threshold there.

4. The happy issue and success of all this. She came off with credit and comfort from this struggle; and, though a Canaanite, approved herself a true daughter of Israel, who, like a prince, had power with God, and prevailed. Hitherto Christ hid his face from her, but now gathers her with everlasting kindness, Mt 15:28. Then Jesus said, O woman, great is thy faith. This was like Joseph's making himself know to his brethren, I am Joseph; so here, in effect, I am Jesus. Now he begins to speak like himself, and to put on his own countenance. He will not contend for ever.

(a) He commended her faith. O woman, great is thy faith. Observe,

[1.] It is her faith that he commends. There were several other graces that shone bright in her conduct of this affair-wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, perseverance in prayer; but these were the product of her faith, and therefore Christ fastens upon that as most commendable; because of all graces faith honours Christ most, therefore of all graces Christ honours faith most.

[2.] It is the greatness of her faith. Note, First, Though the faith of all the saints is alike precious, yet it is not in all alike strong; all believers are not of the same size and stature. Secondly, The

greatness of faith consists much in a resolute adherence to Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, even in the face of discouragements; to love him, and trust him, as a Friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an Enemy. This is great faith! Thirdly, Though weak faith, if true, shall not be rejected, yet great faith shall be commended, and shall appear greatly well-pleasing to Christ; for in them that thus believe he is most admired. Thus Christ commended the faith of the centurion, and he was a Gentile too, he had a strong faith in the power of Christ, this woman in the good-will of Christ; both were acceptable.

(b) He cured her daughter; "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt: I can deny thee nothing, take what thou camest for." Note, Great believers may have what they will for the asking. When our will conforms to the will of Christ's precept, his will concurs with the will of our desire. Those that will deny Christ nothing, shall find that he will deny them nothing at last, though for a time he seems to hide his face from them. "Thou wouldst have thy sins pardoned, thy corruptions mortified, thy nature sanctified; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And what canst thou desire more?" When we come, as this poor woman did, to pray against Satan and his kingdom, we concur with the intercession of Christ, and it shall be accordingly. Though Satan may sift Peter, and buffet Paul, yet, through Christ's prayer and the sufficiency of his grace, we shall be more than conquerors, Lu 22:31,32,2Co 12:7-9,Ro 16:20.

The event was answerable to the word of Christ; Her daughter was made whole from that very hour; from thenceforward was never vexed with the devil any more; the mother's faith prevailed for the daughter's cure. Though the patient was at a distance, that was no hindrance to the efficacy of Christ's word. He spake, and it was done.

25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.
26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.
27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.
28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy

faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Jesus Heals Many People

29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

Here is, a general account of Christ's cures, his curing by wholesale. The tokens of Christ's power and goodness are neither scarce nor scanty; for there is in him an overflowing fulness. Now observe,

The place where these cures were wrought; it was near the sea of Galilee, a part of the country Christ was much conversant with. We read not of any thing he did in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, but the casting of the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter, as if he took that journey on purpose, with that in prospect. Let not ministers grudge their pains to do good, though but to few. He that knows the worth of souls, would go a great way to help to save one from death and Satan's power.

But Jesus departed thence. Having let fall that crumb under table, he here returns to make a full feast for the children. We may do that occasionally for one, which we may not make a constant practice of. Christ steps into the coast of Tyre and Sidon, but he sits down by the sea of Galilee (Mt 15:29), sits down not on a stately throne, or tribunal of judgment, but on a mountain: so mean and homely were his most solemn appearances in the days of his flesh! He sat down on a mountain, that all might see him, and have free access to him; for he is an open Saviour. He sat down there, as one tired with his journey, and willing to have a little rest; or rather, as one waiting to be gracious. He sat, expecting patients, as Abraham at his tent-door, ready to entertain strangers. He settled himself to this good work.

30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:

Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief, is to lay it at Christ's feet, to submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal.

Those who would have spiritual healing from Christ, must be ruled as he pleases. See what work sin has made; what various diseases human bodies are subject to. Here were such diseases as fancy could neither guess the cause nor the cure of, yet these were subject to the command of Christ. The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the maimed and the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at.

The multitudes and maladies that were healed by him (Mt 15:30); Great multitudes came to him; that the scripture might be fulfilled, Unto him shall the gathering of the people be, Ge 49:10. If Christ's ministers could cure bodily diseases as Christ did, there would be more flocking to them than there is; we are soon sensible of bodily pain and sickness, but few are concerned about their souls and their spiritual diseases. Now,

(a) Such was the goodness of Christ, that he admitted all sorts of people; the poor as well as the rich are welcome to Christ, and with him there is room enough for all comers. He never complained of crowds or throngs of seekers, or looked with contempt upon the vulgar, the herd, as they are called; for the souls of peasants are as precious with him as the souls of princes.

(b) Such was the power of Christ, that he healed all sorts of diseases; those that came to him, brought their sick relations and friends along with them, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, Mt 15:30. We read not of any thing they said to him, but they laid them down before him as objects of pity, to be looked upon by him. Their calamities spake more for them than the tongue of the most eloquent orator could. David showed before God his trouble, that was enough, he then left it with him, Ps 142:2. Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief, is, to lay it at Christ's feet, to spread it before him, and refer it to his cognizance, and then submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal. Those that would have spiritual healing from Christ,

must lay themselves at his feet, to be ruled and ordered as he pleaseth.

Here were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, brought to Christ. See what work sin has made! It has turned the world into a hospital: what various diseases are human bodies subject to! See what work the Saviour makes! He conquers those hosts of enemies to mankind. Here were such diseases as a flame of fancy could contribute neither to the cause of nor to the cure of; as lying not in the humours, but in the members of the body; and yet these were subject to the commands of Christ. He sent his word, and healed them. Note, All diseases are at the command of Christ, to go and come as he bids them. This is an instance of Christ's power, which may comfort us in all our weaknesses; and of his pity, which may comfort us in all our miseries.

31 insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

The influence that this had upon the people, Mt 15:31.

(1.) They wondered, and well they might. Christ's works should be our wonder. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous, Ps 118:23. The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at. Sing unto the Lord a new song, for thus he has done marvellous things.

(2.) They glorified the God of Israel, whom the Pharisees, when they saw these things, blasphemed. Miracles, which are the matter of our wonder, must be the matter of our praise; and mercies, which are the matter of our rejoicing, must be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those that were healed, glorified God; if he heal our diseases, all that is within us must bless his holy name; and if we have been graciously preserved from blindness, and lameness, and dumbness, we have as much reason to bless God as if we had been cured of them; nay, and the standers-by glorified God. Note, God must be acknowledged with praise and thankfulness in the mercies of others

as in our own. They glorified him as the God of Israel, his church's God, a God in covenant with his people, who hath sent the Messiah promised; and this is he. See Lu 1:68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. This was done by the power of the God of Israel, and no other could do it.

The Feeding of the Four Thousand

32 Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him,* and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

On the previous occasion the crowd consisted largely of Jews (see Joh_6:14-15), but on this occasion it probably consisted largely of Gentiles. That may have been why the disciples doubted whether Jesus would use his power to feed them (Mat_15:32-33; Mar_8:1-4). But he fed them as miraculously as he had the Jews (Mat_15:34-39; Mar_8:5-10).

34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them,* and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full.

38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

Christ sent away the people. Though he had fed them twice, they must not look for miracles to find their daily bread. Let them go home to their callings and their own tables. Lord, increase our faith, and pardon our unbelief, teaching us to live upon thy fulness and bounty, for all things pertaining to this life, and that which is to come.

Matthew-16

The Demand for a Sign

1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.

We have here Christ's discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, men at variance among themselves, as appears Ac 23:7,8, and yet unanimous in their opposition to Christ; because his doctrine did equally overthrow the errors and heresies of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of spirits and a future state; and the pride, tyranny, and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were the great imposters of the traditions of the elders. Christ and Christianity meet with opposition on all hands. Observe,

Their demand, and the design of it.

1 The demand was of a sign from heaven; this they desired him to show them; pretending they were very willing to be satisfied and convinced, when really they were far from being so, but sought excuses from an obstinate infidelity. That which they pretended to desire was,

(a) Some other sign than what they had yet had. They had great plenty of signs; every miracle Christ wrought was a sign, for no man could do what he did unless God were with him. But this will not serve, they must have a sign of their own choosing; they despised those signs which relieved the necessity of the sick and sorrowful, and insisted upon some sign which gratify the curiosity of the proud. It is fit that the proofs of divine revelation should be chosen by the wisdom of God, not by the follies and fancies of men. The evidence that is given is sufficient to satisfy an unprejudiced understanding, but was not intended to please a vain humour. Ant it is an instance of the deceitfulness of the heart, to think that we should be wrought upon by the means and advantages which we have not, while we

slight those which we have. If we hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would we be wrought upon though one rose from the dead.

(b) It must be a sign from heaven. They would have such miracles to prove his commission, as were wrought at the giving of the law upon mount Sinai: thunder, and lightening, and the voice of words, were the sign from heaven they required. Whereas the sensible signs and terrible ones were not agreeable to the spiritual and comfortable dispensation of the gospel. Now the word comes more nigh us (Ro 10:8), and therefore the miracles do so, and do not oblige us to keep such a distance as these did, Heb 12:18.

2 The design was to tempt him; not to be taught by him, but to ensnare him. If he should show them a sign from heaven, they would attribute it to a confederacy with the prince of the power of the air; if he should not, as they supposed he would not, they would have that to say for themselves, why they did not believe on him. They now tempted Christ as Israel did, 1Co 10:9. And observe their perverseness; then, when they had signs from heaven, they tempted Christ, saying, Can he furnish a table in the wilderness? Now that he had furnished a table in the wilderness, they tempted him, saying, Can he give us a sign from heaven?

2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red.

3 And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O *ye* hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times?

Christ's reply to this demand; lest they should be wise in their own conceit, he answered these fools according to their folly, Pr 26:5. In his answer,

1. He condemns their overlooking of the signs they had, Mt 16:2,3. They were seeking for the signs of the kingdom of God, when it was already among them. The Lord was in this place, and they knew it not. Thus their unbelieving ancestors, when miracles were their daily bread, asked, Is the Lord among us, or is he not?

To expose this, he observes to them,

(a) Their skilfulness and sagacity in other things, particularly in natural prognostications of the weather; "You know that a red sky over-night is a presage of fair weather, and a red sky in the morning of foul weather." There are common rules drawn from observation and experience, by which it is easy to foretel very probably what weather it will be. When second causes have begun to work, we may easily guess at their issue, so uniform is nature in its motions, and so consistent with itself. We know not the balancing of the clouds (Job 37:16), but we may spell something from the faces of them. This gives no countenance at all to the wild and ridiculous predictions of the astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators (Isa 47:13) concerning the weather long before, with which weak and foolish people are imposed upon; we are sure, in general, that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease. But as to the particulars, till, by the weather-glasses, or otherwise, we perceive the immediate signs and harbingers of the change of weather, it is not for us to know, no, not that concerning the times and seasons. Let it suffice, that it shall be what weather pleases God; and that which pleases God, should not displease us.

(b) Their sottishness and stupidity in the concerns of their souls; Can ye not discern the signs of the times?

[1.] "Do you not see that the Messiah is come?" The sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were just expiring, and yet they regarded not. The miracles Christ wrought, and the gathering of the people to him, were plain indications that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, that this was the day of their visitation. Note, First, There are signs of the times, by which wise and upright men are enabled to make moral prognostications, and so far to understand the motions and methods of Providence, as from thence to take their measures, and to know what Israel ought to do, as the men of Issachar, as the physician from some certain symptoms finds a crisis formed. Secondly, There are many who are skilful enough in other things, and yet cannot or will not discern the day of their

opportunities, are not aware of the wind when it is fair for them, and so let slip the gale. See Jer 8:7,Isa 1:3. Thirdly, It is great hypocrisy, when we slight the signs of God's ordaining, to seek for signs of our own prescribing.

[2.] "Do not you foresee your own ruin coming for rejecting him? You will not entertain the gospel of peace, and can you not evidently discern that hereby you pull an inevitable destruction upon your own heads?" Note, It is the undoing of multitudes, that they are not aware what will be the end of their refusing Christ.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign (Mt 16:4), as he had done before in the same words, Mt 12:39. Those that persist in the same iniquities, must expect to meet with the same reproofs. Here, as there,

(a) He calls them an adulterous generation; because, while they professed themselves of the true church and spouse of God, they treacherously departed from him, and brake their covenants with him. The Pharisees were a generation pure in their own eyes, having the way of the adulterous woman, that thinks she has done no wickedness, Pr 30:20.

(b) He refuses to gratify their desire. Christ will not be prescribed to; we ask, and have not, because we ask amiss.

(c) He refers them to the sign of the prophet Jonas, which should yet be given them; his resurrection from the dead, and his preaching by his apostles to the Gentiles; these were reserved for the last and highest evidences of his divine mission. Note, Though the fancies of proud men shall not be humoured, yet the faith of the humble shall be supported, and the unbelief of them that perish left for ever inexcusable, and every mouth shall be stopped.

This discourse broke off abruptly; he left them and departed. Christ will not tarry long with those that tempt him, but justly withdraws from those that are disposed to quarrel with him. He left them as

irreclaimable; Let them alone. He left them to themselves, left them in the hand of their own counsels; so he gave them up to their own hearts' lust.

4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. And he left them, and departed.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread.

8 *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

10 neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

12 Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

The rectifying of the mistake by this reproof (Mt 16:12); Then understood they what he meant. Note, Christ therefore shows us our folly and weakness, that we may stir up ourselves to take things right. He did not tell them expressly what he meant, but repeated what he had said, that they should beware of the leaven; and so obliged them, by comparing this with his other discourses, to arrive at the sense of it in their own thoughts. Thus Christ teaches by the Spirit of wisdom in the heart, opening the understanding to the Spirit of revelation in the word. And those truths are most precious, which we have thus digged for, and have found out after some mistakes. Though Christ did not tell them plainly, yet now they were aware

that by the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, he meant their doctrine and way, which were corrupt and vicious, but, as they managed them, very apt to insinuate themselves into the minds of men like leaven, and to eat like a canker. They were leading men, and were had in reputation, which made the danger of infection by their errors the greater. In our age, we may reckon atheism and deism to be the leaven of the Sadducees, and popery to be the leaven of the Pharisees, against both which it concerns all Christians to stand upon their guard.

Peter's Confession

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?

It lay at the foot of Mount Lebanon, near the sources of the Jordan, in the territory of Dan, and at the northeast extremity of Palestine. It was originally called Panium (from a cavern in its neighborhood dedicated to the god Pan) and Paneas. Philip, the tetrarch, the only good son of Herod the Great, in whose dominions Paneas lay, having beautified and enlarged it, changed its name to C泡rea, in honor of the Roman emperor, and added Philippi after his own name, to distinguish it from the other C泡rea (Ac 10:1) on the northeast coast of the Mediterranean Sea. [JOSEPHUS, Antiquities, 15.10,3; 18.2,1].

He enquires what the opinions of others were concerning him; Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?

1. He calls himself the Son of man; which may be taken either,

(a) As a title common to him with others. He was called, and justly, the Son of God, for so he was (Lu 1:35); but he called himself the Son of man; for he is really and truly "Man, made of a woman." In courts of honour, it is a rule to distinguish men by their highest titles; but Christ, having now emptied himself, though he was the Son of God, will be known by the style and title of the Son of man. Ezekiel

was often so called to keep him humble; Christ called himself so, to show that he was humble. Or,

(b) As a title peculiar to him as Mediator. He is made known, in Daniel's vision, as the Son of man, Da 7:13. I am the Messiah, that Son of man that was promised. But,

2. He enquires what people's sentiments were concerning him: "Who do men say that I am? The Son of man?" (So I think it might better be read). "Do they own me for the Messiah?" He asks not, "Who do the scribes and Pharisees say that I am?" They were prejudiced against him, and said that he was a deceiver and in league with Satan; but, "Who do men say that I am?" He referred to the common people, whom the Pharisees despised. Christ asked this question, not as one that knew not; for if he knows what men think, much more what they say; nor as one desirous to hear his own praises, but to make the disciples solicitous concerning the success of their preaching, by showing that he himself was so. The common people conversed more familiarly with the disciples than they did with their Master, and therefore from them he might better know what they said. Christ had not plainly said who he was, but left people to infer it from his works, Joh 10:24,25. Now he would know what inferences the people drew from them, and from the miracles which his apostles wrought in his name.

14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

To this question the disciples have him an answer (Mt 16:14), Some say, thou art John the Baptist, &c. There were some that said, he was the Son of David (Mt 12:23), and the great Prophet, Joh 6:14. The disciples, however, do not mention that opinion, but only such opinions as were wide of the truth, which they gathered up from their countrymen. Observe,

(a) They are different opinions; some say one thing, and others another. Truth is one; but those who vary from that commonly vary one from another. Thus Christ came eventually to send division, Lu 12:51. Being so noted a Person, every one would be ready to pass

his verdict upon him, and, "Many men, many minds;" those that were not willing to own him to be the Christ, wandered in endless mazes, and followed the chase of every uncertain guess and wild hypothesis.

(b) They are honourable opinions, and bespeak the respect they had for him, according to the best of their judgment. These were not the sentiments of his enemies, but the sober thoughts of those that followed him with love and wonder. Note, It is possible for men to have good thoughts of Christ, and yet not right ones, a high opinion of him, and yet not high enough.

(c) They all suppose him to be one risen from the dead; which perhaps arose from a confused notion they had of the resurrection of the Messiah, before his public preaching, as of Jonas. Or their notions arose from an excessive value for antiquity; as if it were not possible for an excellent man to be produced in their own age, but it must be one of the ancients returned to life again.

(d) They are all false opinions, built upon mistakes, and wilful mistakes. Christ's doctrines and miracles bespoke him to be an extraordinary Person; but because of the meanness of his appearance, so different from what they expected, they would not own him to be the Messiah, but will grant him to be any thing rather than that.

[1.] Some say, thou art John the Baptist. Herod said so (Mt 14:2), and those about him would be apt to say as he said. This notion might be strengthened by an opinion they had, that those who died as martyrs, should rise again before others; which some think the second of the seven sons refers to, in his answer to Antiochus, 2 Macc. vii. 9, The King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.

[2.] Some Elias; taking occasion, no doubt, from the prophecy of Malachi (Mt 4:5), Behold, I will send you Elijah. And the rather,

because Elijah (as Christ) did many miracles, and was himself, in his translation, the greatest miracle of all.

[3.] Others Jeremias: they fasten upon him, either because he was the weeping prophet, and Christ was often in tears; or because God had set him over the kingdoms and nations (Jer 1:10), which they thought agreed with their notion of the Messiah.

[4.] Or, one of the prophets. This shows what an honourable idea they entertained of the prophets; and yet they were the children of them that persecuted and slew them, Mt 23:29. Rather than they would allow Jesus of Nazareth, one of their own country, to be such an extraordinary Person as his works bespoke him to be, they would say, "It was not he, but one of the old prophets."

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

He enquires what their thoughts were concerning him; "But who say ye that I am? Mt 16:15. Ye tell me what other people say of me; can ye say better?" 1 The disciples had themselves been better taught than others; had, by their intimacy with Christ, greater advantages of getting knowledge than others had. Note, It is justly expected that those who enjoy greater plenty of the means of knowledge and grace than others, should have a more clear and distinct knowledge of the things of God than others. Those who have more acquaintance with Christ than others, should have truer sentiments concerning him, and be able to give a better account of him than others. 2 The disciples were trained up to teach others, and therefore it was highly requisite that they should understand the truth themselves: "Ye that are to preach the gospel of the kingdom, what are your notions of him that sent you?" Note, Ministers must be examined before they be sent forth, especially what their sentiments are of Christ, and who they say that he is; for how can they be owned as ministers of Christ, that are either ignorant or erroneous concerning Christ? This is a question we should every one of us be frequently putting to ourselves, "Who do we say, what kind of one do we say, that the Lord Jesus is? Is he precious to us? Is he in our eyes the chief of ten thousand? Is he the Beloved of our

souls?" It is well or ill with us, according as our thoughts are right or wrong concerning Jesus Christ.

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

He does not say, "Scribes and Pharisees, rulers and people, are all perplexed; and shall we, unlettered fishermen, presume to decide?" But feeling the light of his Master's glory shining in his soul, he breaks forth—not in a tame, prosaic acknowledgment, "I believe that Thou art," &c.—but in the language of adoration—such as one uses in worship, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!" He first owns Him the promised Messiah (see on Mt 1:16); then he rises higher, echoing the voice from heaven—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; and in the important addition—"Son of the LIVING GOD"—he recognizes the essential and eternal life of God as in this His Son—though doubtless without that distinct perception afterwards vouchsafed.

Peter's answer to this question, Mt 16:16. To the former question concerning the opinion others had of Christ, several of the disciples answered, according as they had heard people talk; but to this Peter answers in the name of all the rest, they all consenting to it, and concurring in it. Peter's temper led him to be forward in speaking upon all such occasions, and sometimes he spoke well, sometimes amiss; in all companies there are found some warm, bold men, to whom a precedency of speech falls of course; Peter was such a one: yet we find other of the apostles sometimes speaking as the mouth of the rest; as John (Mk 9:38), Thomas, Philip, and Jude, Joh 14:5,8,22. So that this is far from being a proof of such primacy and superiority of Peter above the rest of the apostles, as the church of Rome ascribes to him. They will needs advance him to be a judge, when the utmost they can make of him, is, that he was but foreman of the jury, to speak for the rest, and that only pro hâc vice--for this once; not the perpetual dictator or speaker of the house, only chairman upon this occasion.

Peter's answer is short, but it is full, and true, and to the purpose; Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Here is a confession

of the Christian faith, addressed to Christ, and so made an act of devotion. Here is a confession of the true God as the living God, in opposition to dumb and dead idols, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal. This is the conclusion of the whole matter.

[1.] The people called him a Prophet, that Prophet (Joh 6:14); but the disciples own him to be the Christ, the anointed One; the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the church; the true Messiah promised to the fathers, and depended on by them as He that shall come. It was a great thing to believe this concerning one whose outward appearance was so contrary to the general idea the Jews had of the Messiah.

[2.] He called himself the Son of Man; but they owned him to be the Son of the living God. The people's notion of him was, that he was the ghost of a dead man, Elias, or Jeremias; but they know and believe him to be the Son of the living God, who has life in himself, and has given to his Son to have life in himself, and to be the Life of the world. If he be the Son of the living God, he is of the same nature with him: and though his divine nature was now veiled with the cloud of flesh, yet there were those who looked through it, and saw his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Now can we with an assurance of faith subscribe to this confession? Let us then, with a fervency of affection and adoration, go to Christ, and tell him so; Lord Jesus, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Though it is not to be doubted that Peter, in this noble testimony to Christ, only expressed the conviction of all the Twelve, yet since he alone seems to have had clear enough apprehensions to put that conviction in proper and suitable words, and courage enough to speak them out, and readiness enough to do this at the right time—so he only, of all the Twelve, seems to have met the present want, and communicated to the saddened soul of the Redeemer at the

critical moment that balm which was needed to cheer and refresh it. Nor is Jesus above giving indication of the deep satisfaction which this speech yielded Him, and hastening to respond to it by a signal acknowledgment of Peter in return.

As a believer, Mt 16:17. Christ shows himself well pleased with Peter's confession, that it was so clear and express, without ifs or ands, as we say. Note, The proficiency of Christ's disciples in knowledge and grace is very acceptable to him; and Christ shows him whence he received the knowledge of this truth. At the first discovery of this truth in the dawning of the gospel day, it was a mighty thing to believe it; all men had not this knowledge, had not this faith. But,

First, Peter had the happiness of it; Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona. He reminds him of his rise and original, the meanness of his parentage, the obscurity of his extraction; he was Bar-jonas--The son of a dove; so some. Let him remember the rock out of which he was hewn, that he may see he was not born to this dignity, but preferred to it by the divine favour; it was free grace that made him to differ. Those that have received the Spirit must remember who is their Father, 1Sa 10:12. Having reminded him of this, he makes him sensible of his great happiness as a believer; Blessed art thou. Note, True believers are truly blessed, and those are blessed indeed whom Christ pronounces blessed; his saying they are so, makes them so. "Peter, thou art a happy man, who thus knowest the joyful sound," Ps 89:15. Blessed are your eyes, Mt 13:16. All happiness attends the right knowledge of Christ.

Secondly, God must have the glory of it; "For flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee. Thou hadst this neither by the invention of thy own wit and reason, nor by the instruction and information of others; this light sprang neither from nature nor from education, but from my Father who is in heaven." Note, 1 The Christian religion is a revealed religion, has its rise in heaven; it is a religion from above, given by inspiration of God, not the learning of philosophers, nor the politics of statesmen. 2. Saving faith is the

gift of God, and, wherever it is, is wrought by him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his sake, and upon the score of his mediation, Php 1:29. Therefore thou art blessed, because my Father has revealed it to thee. Note, The revealing of Christ to us and in us is a distinguishing token of God's good will, and a firm foundation of true happiness; and blessed are they that are thus highly favoured.

Perhaps Christ discerned something of pride and vain-glory in Peter's confession; a subtle sin, and which is apt to mingle itself even with our good duties. It is hard for good men to compare themselves with others, and not to have too great a conceit of themselves; to prevent which, we should consider that our preference to others is no achievement of our own, but the free gift of God's grace too us, and not to others; so that we have nothing to boast of, Ps 115:1,1Co 4:7.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Christ replies to him as an apostle or minister, Mt 16:18,19. Peter, in the name of the church, had confessed Christ, and to him therefore the promise intended for the church is directed. Note, There is nothing lost by being forward to confess Christ; for those who honour him, he will honour.

Upon occasion of this great confession made of Christ, which is the church's homage and allegiance, he signed and published this royal, this divine charter, by which that body politic is incorporated. Such is the communion between Christ and the church, the Bridegroom and the spouse. God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the rock of the promised Seed, Ge 3:15. But now, that promised Seed being come, it was requisite that the church should have a new charter, as Christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that charter; and a thousand pities it is, that this word, which is the great support of the kingdom of Christ, should be wrested and pressed into the service of antichrist. But the devil has employed his subtlety to pervert it, as he did that promise, Ps 91:11, which he perverted to

his own purpose, Mt 4:6, and perhaps both that scripture and this he thus perverted because they stood in his way, and therefore he owed them a spite. Now the purport of this charter is,

First, To establish the being of the church; I say also unto thee. It is Christ that makes the grant, he who is the church's Head, and Ruler, to whom all judgment is committed, and from whom all power is derived; he who makes it pursuant to the authority received from the Father, and his undertaking for the salvation of the elect. The grant is put into Peter's hand; "I say it to thee." The Old Testament promises relating to the church were given immediately to particular persons, eminent for faith and holiness, as to Abraham and David; which yet gave no supremacy to them, much less to any of their successors; so the New-Testament charter is here delivered to Peter as an agent, but to the use and behoof of the church in all ages, according to the purposes therein specified and contained. Now it is here promised,

1. That Christ would build his church upon a rock. This body politic is incorporated by the style and title of Christ's church. It is a number o the children of men called out of the world, and set apart from it, and dedicated to Christ. It is not thy church, but mine. Peter remembered this, when he cautioned ministers not to lord it over God's heritage. The church is Christ's peculiar, appropriated to him. The world is God's, and they that dwell therein; but the church is a chosen remnant, that stands in relation to God through Christ as Mediator. It bears him image and superscription.

(a) The Builder and Maker of the church is Christ himself; I will build it. The church is a temple which Christ is the Builder of, Zec 6:11-13. Herein Solomon was a type of Christ, and Cyrus, Isa 44:28. The materials and workmanship are his. By the working of his Spirit with the preaching of his word he adds souls to his church, and so builds it up with living stones, 1Pe 2:5. Ye are God's building; and building is a progressive work; the church in this world is but in fieri--in the forming, like a house in the building. It

is a comfort to all those who wish well to the church, that Christ, who has divine wisdom and power, undertakes to build it.

(b) The foundation on which it is built is, this Rock. Let the architect do his part ever so well, if the foundation be rotten, the building will not stand; let us therefore see what the foundation is, and it must be meant of Christ, for other foundation can no man lay. See Isa 28:16.

[1.] The church is built upon a rock; a firm, strong, and lasting foundation, which time will not waste, nor will it sink under the weight of the building. Christ would not build his house upon the sand, for he knew that storms would arise. A rock is high, Ps 61:2. Christ's church does not stand upon a level with this world; a rock is large, and extends far, so does the church's foundation; and the more large, the more firm; those are not the church's friends that narrow its foundation.

[2.] It is built upon this rock; thou art Peter, which signifies a stone or rock; Christ gave him that name when he first called him (Joh 1:42), and here he confirms it; "Peter, thou dost answer thy name, thou art a solid, substantial disciple, fixed and stayed, and one that there is some hold of. Peter is thy name, and strength and stability are with thee. Thou art not shaken with the waves of men's fluctuating opinions concerning me, but established in the present truth," 2Pe 1:12. From the mention of this significant name, occasion is taken for this metaphor of building upon a rock.

First, Some by this rock understand Peter himself as an apostle, the chief, though not the prince, of the twelve, senior among them, but not superior over them. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, Eph 2:20. The first stones of that building were laid in and by their ministry; hence their names are said to be written in the foundations of the new Jerusalem, Re 21:14. Now Peter being that apostle by whose hand the first stones of the church were laid, both in Jewish converts (Ac 2:1-47), and in the Gentile converts (Ac 10:1-48), he might in some sense be said to be the rock on

which it was built. Cephas was one that seemed to be a pillar, Ga 2:9. But it sounds very harsh, to call a man that only lays the first stone of a building, which is a transient act, the foundation on which it is built, which is an abiding thing. Yet if it were so, this would not serve to support the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome; for Peter had no such headship as he claims, much less could he derive it to his successors, least of all to the Bishops of Rome, who, whether they are so in place or no, is a question, but that they are not so in the truth of Christianity, is past all question.

Secondly, Others, by this rock, understand Christ; "Thou art Peter, thou hast the name of a stone, but upon this rock, pointing to himself, I will build my church." Perhaps he laid his hand on his breast, as when he said, Destroy this temple (Joh 2:19), when he spoke of the temple of his body. Then he took occasion from the temple, where he was, so to speak of himself, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of that; so here he took occasion from Peter, to speak of himself as the Rock, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of Peter. But this must be explained by those many scriptures which speak of Christ as the only Foundation of the church; see 1Co 3:11,1Pe 2:6. Christ is both its Founder and its Foundation; he draws souls, and draws them to himself; to him they are united, and on him they rest and have a constant dependence.

Thirdly, Others by this rock understand this confession which Peter made of Christ, and this comes all to one with understanding it of Christ himself. It was a good confession which Peter witnessed, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God; the rest concurred with him in it. "Now," saith Christ, "this is that great truth upon which I will build my church." 1. Take away this truth itself, and the universal church falls to the ground. If Christ be not the Son of God, Christianity is a cheat, and the church is a mere chimera; our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and you are yet in your sins, 1Co 15:14-17. If Jesus be not the Christ, those that own him are not of the church, but deceivers and deceived. 2. Take away the faith and confession of this truth from any particular church, and it ceases to be a part of Christ's church, and relapses to the state and

character of infidelity. This is articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesia--that article, with the admission or the denial of which the church either rises or falls; "the main hinge on which the door of salvation turns;" those who let go this, do not hold the foundation; and though they may call themselves Christians, they give themselves the lie; for the church is a sacred society, incorporated upon the certainty and assurance of this great truth; and great it is, and has prevailed.

2. Christ here promises to preserve and secure his church, when it is built; The gates of hell shall not prevail against it; neither against this truth, nor against the church which is built upon it.

(a) This implies that the church has enemies that fight against it, and endeavour its ruin overthrow, here represented by the gates of hell, that is, the city of hell; (which is directly opposite to this heavenly city, this city of the living God), the devil's interest among the children of men. The gates of hell are the powers and policies of the devil's kingdom, the dragon's head and horns, by which he makes war with the Lamb; all that comes out of hell-gates, as being hatched and contrived there. These fight against the church by opposing gospel truths, corrupting gospel ordinances, persecuting good ministers and good Christians; drawing or driving, persuading by craft or forcing by cruelty, to that which is inconsistent with the purity of religion; this is the design of the gates of hell, to root out the name of Christianity (Ps 83:4), to devour the man-child (Re 12:9), to raze this city to the ground.

(b) This assures us that the enemies of the church shall not gain their point. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, in which his truths and ordinances shall be owned and kept up, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness; They shall not prevail against it, Ps 129:1,2. This gives no security to any particular church, or church-governors that they shall never err, never apostatize or be destroyed; but that somewhere or other the Christian religion shall have a being, though not always in the same degree of purity and splendour, yet so as that the entail of it shall never be quite cut off. The woman lives, though in a wilderness (Re

12:14), cast down but not destroyed (2Co 4:9). Corruptions grieving, persecutions grievous, but neither fatal. The church may be foiled in particular encounters, but in the main battle it shall come off more than a conqueror. Particular believers are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, 1Pe 1:5.

Secondly, The other part of this charter is, to settle the order and government of the church, Mt 16:19. When a city or society is incorporated, officers are appointed and empowered to act for the common good. A city without government is a chaos. Now this constituting of the government of the church, is here expressed by the delivering of the keys, and, with them, a power to bind and loose. This is not to be understood of any peculiar power that Peter was invested with, as if he were sole door-keeper of the kingdom of heaven, and had that key of David which belongs only to the Son of David; no, this invests all the apostles and their successors with a ministerial power to guide and govern the church of Christ, as it exists in particular congregations or churches, according to the rules of the gospel. Claves regni cælorum in B. Petro apostolo cuncti suscepimus sacerdotes--All we that are priests, received, in the person of the blessed apostle Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; so Ambrose De Dignit. Sacerd. Only the keys were first put into Peter's hand, because he was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, Ac 10:28. As the king, in giving a charter to a corporation, empowers the magistrates to hold courts in his name, to try matters of fact, and determine therein according to law, confirming what is so done regularly as if done in any of the superior courts; so Christ, having incorporated his church, hath appointed the office of the ministry for the keeping up of order and government, and to see that his laws be duly served; I will give thee the keys. He doth not say, "I have given them," or "I do now;" but "I will do it," meaning after his resurrection; when he ascended on high, he gave those gifts, Eph 4:8; then this power was actually given, not to Peter only, but to all the rest, Mt 28:19,20,Joh 20:21. He doth not say, The keys shall be given, but, I will give them; for ministers derive their authority from Christ, and all their power is to be used in his name, 1Co 5:4.

Now, 1 The power here delegated is a spiritual power; it is a power pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, that is, to the church, that part of it which is militant here on earth, to the gospel dispensation; that is it about which the apostolical and ministerial power is wholly conversant. It is not any civil, secular power that is hereby conveyed, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; their instructions afterward were in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Ac 1:3.

2. It is the power of the keys that is given, alluding to the custom of investing men with authority in such a place, by delivering to them the keys of the place. Or as the master of the house gives the keys to the steward, the keys of the stores where the provisions are kept, that he may give to every one in the house his portion of meat in due season (Lu 12:42), and deny it as there is occasion, according to the rules of the family. Ministers are stewards, 1Co 4:1,Tit 1:7. Eliakim, who had the key of the house of David, was over the household, Isa 22:22.

3. It is a power to bind and loose, that is (following the metaphor of the keys), to shut and open. Joseph, who was lord of Pharaoh's house, and steward of the stores, had power to bind his princes, and to teach his senators wisdom, Ps 105:21,22. When the stores and treasures of the house are shut up from any, they are bound, interdico tibi aqu&acric; et igne--I forbid thee the use of fire and water; when they are opened to them again, they are loosed from that bond, are discharged from the censure, and restored to their liberty.

4. It is a power which Christ has promised to own the due administration of; he will ratify the sentences of his stewards with his own approbation; It shall be bound in heaven, and loosed in heaven: not that Christ hath hereby obliged himself to confirm all church-censures, right or wrong; but such as are duly passed according to the word, clave non errante--the key turning the right way, such are sealed in heaven; that is, the word of the gospel, in the mouth of faithful ministers, is to be looked upon, not as the

word of man, but as the word of God, and to be received accordingly, 1Th 2:13.Joh 12:20. Now the keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

(a) The key of doctrine, called the key of knowledge. "Your business shall be to explain to the world the will of God, both as to truth and duty; and for this you shall have your commissions, credentials, and full instructions to bind and loose:" these, in the common speech of the Jews, at that time, signified to prohibit and permit; to teach or declare a thing to be unlawful was to bind; to be lawful, was to loose. Now the apostles had an extraordinary power of this kind; some things forbidden by the law of Moses were now to be allowed, as the eating of such and such meats; some things allowed there were now to be forbidden, as divorce; and the apostles were empowered to declare this to the world, and men might take it upon their words. When Peter was first taught himself, and then taught others, to call nothing common or unclean, this power was exercised. There is also an ordinary power hereby conveyed to all ministers, to preach the gospel as appointed officers; to tell people, in God's name, and according to the scriptures, what is good, and what the Lord requires of them: and they who declare the whole counsel of God, use these keys well, Ac 20:27.

Some make the giving of the keys to allude to the custom of the Jews in creating a doctor of the law, which was to put into his hand the keys of the chest where the book of the law was kept, denoting his being authorized to take and read it; and the binding and loosing, to allude to the fashion about their books, which were in rolls; they shut them by binding them up with a string, which they untied when they opened them. Christ gives his apostles power to shut or open the book of the gospel to people, as the case required. See the exercise of this power, Ac 13:46,18:6. When ministers preach pardon and peace to the penitent, wrath and the curse to the impenitent, in Christ's name, they act then pursuant to this authority of binding and loosing.

(b) The key of discipline, which is but the application of the former to particular persons, upon a right estimate of their characters and actions. It is not legislative power that is hereby conferred, but judicial; the judge doth not make the law, but only declares what is law, and upon an impartial enquiry into the merits of the cause, gives sentence accordingly. Such is the power of the keys, wherever it is lodged, with reference to church-membership and the privileges thereof.

[1.] Christ's ministers have a power to admit into the church; "Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them; those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, admit them and their seed members of the church by baptism." Ministers are to let in to the wedding-feast those that are bidden; and to keep out such as are apparently unfit for so holy a communion.

[2.] They have a power to expel and cast out such as have forfeited their church-membership, that is binding; refusing to unbelievers the application of gospel promises and the seals of them; and declaring to such as appear to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, that they have no part or lot in the matter, as Peter did to Simon Magus, though he had been baptized; and this is a binding over to the judgment of God.

[3.] They have a power to restore and to receive in again, upon their repentance, such as had been thrown out; to loose those whom they had bound; declaring to them, that, if their repentance be sincere, the promise of pardon belongs to them. The apostles had a miraculous gift of discerning spirits; yet even they went by the rule of outward appearances (as Ac 8:21,1Co 5:1,2Co 2:7,1Ti 1:20), which ministers may still make a judgment upon, if they be skilful and faithful.

Whatever this mean, it was soon expressly extended to all the apostles (Mt 18:18); so that the claim of supreme authority in the Church, made for Peter by the Church of Rome, and then arrogated to themselves by the popes as the legitimate successors of St. Peter,

is baseless and impudent. As first in confessing Christ, Peter got this commission before the rest; and with these "keys," on the day of Pentecost, he first "opened the door of faith" to the Jews, and then, in the person of Cornelius, he was honored to do the same to the Gentiles. Hence, in the lists of the apostles, Peter is always first named. See on Mt1 8:18. One thing is clear, that not in all the New Testament is there the vestige of any authority either claimed or exercised by Peter, or conceded to him, above the rest of the apostles—a thing conclusive against the Romish claims in behalf of that apostle. In such matters their decision was right, and it was confirmed in heaven. But all pretensions of any man, either to absolve or retain men's sins, are blasphemous and absurd. None can forgive sins but God only. And this binding and loosing, in the common language of the Jews, signified to forbid and to allow, or to teach what is lawful or unlawful.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Lastly, Here is the charge which Christ gave his disciples, to keep this private for the present (Mt 16:20); They must tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. What they had professed to him, they must not yet publish to the world, for several reasons;

1. Because this was the time of preparation for his kingdom: the great thing now preached, was, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and therefore those things were now to be insisted on, which were proper to make way for Christ; as the doctrine of repentance; not this great truth, in and with which the kingdom of heaven was to be actually set up. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and it is good advice, Prepare thy work, and afterwards build, Pr 24:27.

2. Christ would have his Messiahship proved by his works, and would rather they should testify of him than that his disciples should, because their testimony was but as his own, which he insisted not

on. See Joh 5:31,34. He was so secure of the demonstration of his miracles, that he waived other witnesses, Joh 10:25,38.

3. If they had known that he was Jesus the Christ, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1Co 2:8.

4. Christ would not have the apostles preach this, till they had the most convincing evidence ready to allege in confirmation of it. Great truths may suffer damage by being asserted before they can be sufficiently proved. Now the great proof of Jesus being the Christ was his resurrection: by that he was declared to be the Son of God, with power; and therefore the divine wisdom would not have this truth preached, till that could be alleged for proof of it. 5. It was requisite that the preachers of so great a truth should be furnished with greater measures of the Spirit than the apostles as yet had; therefore the open asserting of it was adjourned till the Spirit should be poured out upon them. But when Christ was glorified and the Spirit poured out, we find Peter proclaiming upon the house-tops what was here spoken in a corner (Ac 2:36), That God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ; for, as there is a time to keep silence, so there is a time to speak.

Jesus Foretells His Death

21 From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Christ's foretelling of his sufferings. Now he began to do it, and from this time he frequently spake of them. Some hints he had already given of his sufferings, as when he said, Destroy this temple: when he spake of the Son of man being lifted up, and of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood: but now he began to show it, to speak plainly and expressly of it. Hitherto he had not touched upon this, because the disciples were weak, and could not well bear the notice of a thing so very strange, and so very melancholy; but now that they were more ripe in knowledge, and strong in faith, he began to tell them

this. Note, Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually, and lets in light as they can bear it, and are fit to receive it.

From that time, when they had made that full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, then he began to show them this. When he found them knowing in one truth, he taught them another; for to him that has, shall be given. Let them first be established in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and then go on to perfection, Heb 6:1. If they had not been well grounded in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, it would have been a great shaking to their faith. All truths are not to be spoken to all persons at all times, but such as are proper and suitable to their present state. Now observe,

1. What he foretold concerning his sufferings, the particulars and circumstances of them, and all surprising.

(a) The place where he should suffer. He must go to Jerusalem, the head city, the holy city, and suffer there. Though he lived most of his time in Galilee, he must die at Jerusalem; there all the sacrifices were offered, there therefore he must die, who is the great sacrifice.

(b) The persons by whom he should suffer; the elders, and chief priests, and scribes; these made up the great sanhedrim, which sat at Jerusalem, and was had in veneration by the people. Those that should have been most forward in owning and admiring Christ, were the most bitter in persecuting him. It was strange that men of knowledge in the scripture, who professed to expect the Messiah's coming, and pretended to have something sacred in their character, should use him thus barbarously when he did come. It was the Roman power that condemned and crucified Christ, but he lays it at the door of the chief priests and scribes, who were the first movers.

(c) What he should suffer; he must suffer many things, and be killed. His enemies' insatiable malice, and his own invincible patience, appear in the variety and multiplicity of his sufferings (he suffered many things) and in the extremity of them; nothing less than his death would satisfy them, he must be killed. The suffering of many

things, if not unto death, is more tolerable; for while there is life, there is hope; and death, without such prefaces, would be less terrible; but he must first suffer many things, and then be killed.

(d) What should be the happy issue of all his sufferings; he shall be raised again the third day. As the prophets, so Christ himself, when he testified beforehand his sufferings, testified withal the glory that should follow, 1Pe 1:11. His rising again the third day proved him to be the Son of God, notwithstanding his sufferings; and therefore he mentions that, to keep up their faith. When he spoke of the cross and the shame, he spoke in the same breath of the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. Thus we must look upon Christ's suffering for us, trace in it the way to his glory; and thus we must look upon our suffering for Christ, look through it to the recompence of reward. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.

2. Why he foretold his sufferings.

(a) To show that they were the product of an eternal counsel and consent; were agreed upon between the Father and the Son from eternity; Thus is behoved Christ to suffer. The matter was settled in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge, in pursuance of his own voluntary susception and undertaking for our salvation; his sufferings were no surprise to him, did not come upon him as a snare, but he had a distinct and certain foresight of them, which greatly magnifies his love, Joh 18:4.

(b) To rectify the mistakes which his disciples had imbibed concerning the external pomp and power of his kingdom. Believing him to be the Messiah, they counted upon nothing but dignity and authority in the world; but here Christ reads them another lesson, tells them of the cross and sufferings; nay, that the chief priests and the elders, whom, it is likely, they expected to be the supports of the Messiah's kingdom, should be its great enemies and persecutors; this would give them quite another idea of that kingdom which they themselves had preached the approach of; and it was requisite that

this mistake should be rectified. Those that follow Christ must be dealt plainly with, and warned not to expect great things in this world.

(c) It was to prepare them for the share, at least, of sorrow and fear, which they must have in his sufferings. When he suffered many things, the disciples could not but suffer some; if their Master be killed, they will be seized with terror; let them know it before, that they may provide accordingly, and, being fore-warned, may be fore-armed.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

The offence which Peter took at this he said, Be it far from thee, Lord: probably he spake the sense of the rest of the disciples, as before, for he was chief speaker. He took him, and began to rebuke him. Perhaps Peter was a little elevated with the great things Christ had how said unto him, which made him more bold with Christ than did become him; so hard is it to keep the spirit low and humble in the midst of great advancements!

1. It did not become Peter to contradict his Master, or take upon him to advise him; he might have wished, that, if it were possible, this cup might pass away, without saying so peremptorily, This shall not be, when Christ had said, It must be. Shall any teach God knowledge? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Note, When God's dispensations are either intricate or cross to us, it becomes us silently to acquiesce in, and not to prescribe to, the divine will; God knows what he has to do, without our teaching. Unless we know the mind of the Lord, it is not for us to be his counsellors, Ro 11:34.

2. It savoured much of fleshly wisdom, for him to appear so warmly against suffering, and to startle thus at the offence of the cross. It is the corrupt part of us, that is thus solicitous to sleep in a whole skin. We are apt to look upon sufferings as they relate to this present life, to which they are uneasy; but there are other rules to measure them by, which, if duly observed, will enable us cheerfully to bear them, Ro 8:18. See how passionately Peter speaks: "Be it far from thee,

Lord. God forbid, that thou shouldst suffer and be killed; we cannot bear the thoughts of it." Master, spare thyself: so it might be read; hileos soi, kyrie--"Be merciful to thyself, and then no one else can be cruel to thee; pity thyself, and then this shall not be to thee." He would have Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. He intimates, likewise, the improbability of the thing, humanly speaking; "This shall not be unto thee. It is impossible that one who hath so great an interest in the people as thou hast, should be crushed by the elders, who fear the people: this can never be; we that have followed thee, will fight for thee, if occasion be; and there are thousands that will stand by us."

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Christ's displeasure against Peter for this suggestion of his, Mt 16:23. We do not read of any thing said or done by any of his disciples, at any time, that he resented so much as this, though they often offended.

Observe, 1. How he expressed his displeasure: He turned upon Peter, and (we may suppose) with a frown said, Get thee behind me, Satan. He did not so much as take time to deliberate upon it, but gave an immediate reply to the temptation, which was such as made it to appear how ill he took it. Just now, he had said, Blessed art thou, Simon, and had even laid him in his bosom; but here, Get thee behind me, Satan; and there was cause for both. Note, A good man may by a surprise of temptation soon grow very unlike himself. He answered him as he did Satan himself, Mt 4:10. Note,

(a) It is the subtlety of Satan, to send temptations to us by the unsuspected hands of our best and dearest friends. Thus he assaulted Adam by Eve, Job by his wife, and here Christ by his beloved Peter. It concerns us therefore not to be ignorant of his devices, but to stand against his wiles and depths, by standing always upon our guard against sin, whoever moves us to it. Even the kindnesses of our

friends are often abused by Satan, and made use of as temptations to us.

(b) Those who have their spiritual senses exercised, will be aware of the voice of Satan, even in a friend, a disciple, a minister, that dissuades them from their duty. We must not regard who speaks, so much as what is spoken; we should learn to know the devil's voice when he speaks in a saint as well as when he speaks in a serpent. Whoever takes us off from that which is good, and would have us afraid of doing too much for God, speaks Satan's language.

(c) We must be free and faithful in reproving the dearest friend we have, that saith or doth amiss, though it may be under colour of kindness to us. We must not compliment, but rebuke, mistaken courtesies. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Such smitings must be accounted kindnesses, Ps 141:5.

(d) Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not parleyed with.

2. What was the ground of this displeasure; why did Christ thus resent a motion that seemed not only harmless, but kind? Two reasons are given:

(a) Thou art an offence to me--Skandalon mou ei--Thou art my hindrance (so it may be read); "thou standest in my way." Christ was hastening on in the work of our salvation, and his heart was so much upon it, that he took it ill to be hindered, or tempted to start back from the hardest and most discouraging part of his undertaking. So strongly was he engaged for our redemption, that they who but indirectly endeavoured to divert him from it, touched him in a very tender and sensible part. Peter was not so sharply reproved for disowning and denying his Master in his sufferings as he was for dissuading him from them; though that was the defect, this the excess, of kindness. It argues a very great firmness and resolution of mind in any business, when it is an offence to be dissuaded, and a man will not endure to hear any thing to the contrary; like that of

Ruth, Entreat me not to leave thee. Note, Our Lord Jesus preferred our salvation before his own ease and safety; for even Christ pleased not himself (Ro 15:3); he came into the world, not to spare himself, as Peter advised, but to spend himself.

See why he called Peter Satan, when he suggested this to him; because, whatever stood in the way of our salvation, he looked upon as coming from the devil, who is a sworn enemy to it. The same Satan that afterward entered into Judas, maliciously to destroy him in his undertaking, here prompted Peter plausibly to divert him from it. Thus he changes himself into an angel of light.

Thou art an offence to me. Note,

[1.] Those that engage in any great good work must expect to meet with hindrance and opposition from friends and foes, from within and from without.

[2.] Those that obstruct our progress in any duty must be looked upon as an offence to us. Then we do the will of God as Christ did, whose meat and drink it was to do it, when it is a trouble to us to be solicited from our duty. Those that hinder us from doing or suffering for God, when we are called to it, whatever they are in other things in that they are Satans, adversaries to us.

(b) Thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men. Note,

[1.] The things that are of God, that is, the concerns of his will and glory, often clash and interfere with the things that are of men, that is, with our own wealth, pleasure, and reputation. While we mind Christian duty as out way and work, and the divine favour as our end and portion, we savour the things of God; but if these be minded, the flesh must be denied, hazards must be run and hardships borne; and here is the trial which of the two we savour.

[2.] Those that inordinately fear, and industriously decline suffering for Christ, when they are called to it, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God; they relish those things more themselves, and make it appear to others that they do so.

the same words as He had addressed to the Tempter (Lu 4:8); for He felt in it a satanic lure, a whisper from hell, to move Him from His purpose to suffer. So He shook off the Serpent, then coiling around Him, and "felt no harm" (Ac 28:5). How quickly has the "rock" turned to a devil! The fruit of divine teaching the Lord delighted to honor in Peter; but the mouthpiece of hell, which he had in a moment of forgetfulness become, the Lord shook off with horror.

"Thou playest the Tempter, casting a stumbling-block in My way to the Cross. Could it succeed, where wert thou? and how should the Serpent's head be bruised?"

"Thou art carried away by human views of the way of setting up Messiah's kingdom, quite contrary to those of God." This was kindly said, not to take off the sharp edge of the rebuke, but to explain and justify it, as it was evident Peter knew not what was in the bosom of his rash speech.

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Here is the law of discipleship laid down, and the terms fixed, upon which we may have the honour and benefit of it, Mt 16:24. He said this to his disciples, not only that they might instruct others concerning it, but that by this rule they might examine their own security. Observe,

1. What it is to be a disciple of Christ; it is to come after him. When Christ called his disciples, this was the word of command, Follow me. A true disciple of Christ is one that doth follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that comes after Christ, not one that prescribes to him, as Peter now undertook to do, forgetting his place. A disciple of Christ comes after him, as the sheep after the

shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of heaven: and one that walks in the same way that he walked in, is led by his Spirit, treads in his steps, submits to his conduct, and follows the Lamb, whithersoever he goes, Re 14:4.

2. What are the great things required of those that will be Christ's disciples; If any man will come, ei tis thelei--If any man be willing to come. It denotes a deliberate choice, and cheerfulness and resolution in that choice. Many are disciples more by chance or the will of others than by any act of their own will; but Christ will have his people volunteers, Ps 110:3. It is as if Christ had said, "If any of the people that are not my disciples, be steadfastly minded to come to me, and if you that are, be in like manner minded to adhere to me, it is upon these terms, these and no other; you must follow me in sufferings as well as in other things, and therefore when you sit down to count the cost, reckon upon it."

Now what are these terms?

(a) Let him deny himself. Peter had advised Christ to spare himself, and would be ready, in the like case, to take the advice; but Christ tells them all, they must be so far from sparing themselves, that they must deny themselves. Herein they must come after Christ, for his birth, and life, and death, were all a continued act of self-denial, a self-emptying, Php 2:7,8. If self-denial be a hard lesson, and against the grain to flesh and blood, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised before us and for us, both for our redemption and for our instruction; and the servant is not above his lord. Note, All the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ must deny themselves. It is the fundamental law of admission into Christ's school, and the first and great lesson to be learned in this school, to deny ourselves; it is both the strait gate, and the narrow way; it is necessary in order to our learning all the other good lessons that are there taught. We must deny ourselves absolutely, we must not admire our own shadow, nor gratify our own humour; we must not lean to our own understanding, nor seek our own things, nor be our own end. We must deny ourselves comparatively; we must deny ourselves for

Christ, and his will and glory, and the service of his interest in the world; we must deny ourselves for our brethren, and for their good; and we must deny ourselves for ourselves, deny the appetites of the body for the benefit of the soul.

(b) Let him take up his cross. The cross is here put for all sufferings, as men or Christians; providential afflictions, persecutions for righteousness' sake, every trouble that befals us, either for doing well or for not doing ill. The troubles of Christians are fitly called crosses, in allusion to the death of the cross, which Christ was obedient to; and it should reconcile us to troubles, and take off the terror of them, that they are what we bear in common with Christ, and such as he hath borne before us. Note,

[1.] Every disciple of Christ hath his cross, and must count upon it; as each hath his special duty to be done, so each hath his special trouble to be borne, and every one feels most from his own burthen. Crosses are the common lot of God's children, but of this common lot of God's children, but of this common lot each hath his particular share. That is our cross which Infinite Wisdom has appointed for us, and a Sovereign Providence has laid on us, as fittest for us. It is good for us to call the cross we are under our own, and entertain it accordingly. We are apt to think we could bear such a one's cross better than our own; but that is best which is, and we ought to make the best of it.

[2.] Every disciple of Christ must take up that which the wise God hath made his cross. It is an allusion to the Roman custom of compelling those that were condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross: when Simon carried Christ's cross after him, this phrase was illustrated. First, It is supposed that the cross lies in our way, and is prepared for us. We must not make crosses to ourselves, but must accommodate ourselves to those which God has made for us. Our rule is, not to go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet a cross, or to miss one. We must not by our rashness and indiscretion pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take them up when they are laid in our way. We must so manage an affliction, that it may not

be a stumbling-block or hindrance to us in any service we have to do for God. We must take it up out of our way, by getting over the offence of the cross; None of these things move me; and we must then go on with it in our way, though it lie heavy. Secondly, That which we have to do, is, not only to bear the cross (that a stock, or a stone, or a stick may do), not only to be silent under it, but we must take up the cross, must improve it to some good advantage. We should not say, "This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it;" but, "This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it shall work for my good." When we rejoice in our afflictions, and glory in them, then we take up the cross. This fitly follows upon denying ourselves; for he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin, and the advantages of this world for Christ, when it comes to the push, will never have the heart to take up his cross. "He that cannot take up the resolution to live a saint, has a demonstration within himself, that he is never likely to die a martyr;" so Archbishop Tillotson.

(c) Let him follow me, in this particular of taking up the cross. Suffering saints must look unto Jesus, and take from him both direction and encouragement in suffering. Do we bear the cross? We therein follow Christ, who bears it before us, bears it for us, and so bears it from us. He bore the heavy end of the cross, the end that had the curse upon it, that was a heavy end, and so made the other light and easy for us. Or, we may take it in general, we must follow Christ in all instances of holiness and obedience. Note, The disciples of Christ must study to imitate their Master, and conform themselves in every thing to his example, and continue in well-doing, whatever crosses lie in their way. To do well and to suffer ill, is to follow Christ. If any man will come after me, let him follow me; that seems to be idem per idem--the same thing over again. What is the difference? Surely it is this, "If any man will come after me, in profession, and so have the name and credit of a disciple, let him follow me in truth, and so do the work and duty of a disciple." Or thus, "If any man will set out after me, in good beginnings, let him continue to follow me with all perseverance." That is following the

Lord fully, as Caleb did. Those that come after Christ, must follow after him.

"When He had called the people unto Him, with His disciples also, He said unto them"—turning the rebuke of one into a warning to all.

but what if His servants shall meet the same fate? They may not; but who follows Me must be prepared for the worst."

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Instead of these weighty words, which we find in Mk 8:36 also, it is thus expressed in Lu 9:25: "If he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away," or better, "If he gain the whole world, and destroy or forfeit himself." How awful is the stake as here set forth! If a man makes the present world—in its various forms of riches, honors, pleasures, and such like—the object of supreme pursuit, be it that he gains the world; yet along with it he forfeits his own soul. Not that any ever did, or ever will gain the whole world—a very small portion of it, indeed, falls to the lot of the most successful of the world's votaries—but to make the extravagant concession, that by giving himself entirely up to it, a man gains the whole world; yet, setting over against this gain the forfeiture of his soul—necessarily following the surrender of his whole heart to the world—what is he profited? But, if not the whole world, yet possibly something else may be conceived as an equivalent for the soul. Well, what is it?—"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Thus, in language the weightiest, because the simplest, does our Lord shut up His hearers, and all who shall read these words to the end of the world, to the priceless value to every man of his own soul. In Mark and Luke (Mk 8:38,Lu 9:26) the following words are added: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words [shall be ashamed of belonging to Me, and ashamed of My Gospel] in this adulterous and sinful generation" (see on Mt1 2:39), "of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." He will render back to that man his own treatment, disowning him before the most august of all assemblies, and putting him to "shame and everlasting contempt"

(Da 12:2). "O shame," exclaims BENGEL, "to be put to shame before God, Christ, and angels!" The sense of shame is founded on our love of reputation, which causes instinctive aversion to what is fitted to lower it, and was given us as a preservative from all that is properly shameful. To be lost to shame is to be nearly past hope. (Zep 3:5,Jer 6:15,Jer 3:3). But when Christ and "His words" are unpopular, the same instinctive desire to stand well with others begets that temptation to be ashamed of Him which only the expulsive power of a higher affection can effectually counteract.

Whatever is the object for which men forsake Christ, that is the price at which Satan buys their souls. Yet one soul is worth more than all the world. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter; he knew the price of souls, for he redeemed them; nor would he underrate the world, for he made it.

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Here are arguments to persuade us to submit to these laws, and come up to these terms. Self-denial, and patient suffering, are hard lessons, which will never be learned if we consult with flesh and blood; let us therefore consult with our Lord Jesus, and see what advice he gives us; and here he gives us,

1. Some considerations proper to engage us to these duties of self-denial and suffering for Christ. Consider,

(a) The weight of that eternity which depends upon our present choice (Mt 16:25); Whosoever will save his life, by denying Christ, shall lose it: and whosoever is content to lose his life, for owning Christ, shall find it. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, set before us. Observe,

[1.] The misery that attends the most plausible apostasy. Whosoever will save his life in this world, if it be by sin, he shall lose it in another; he that forsakes Christ, to preserve a temporal life and avoid a temporal death, will certainly come short of eternal life, and will be hurt of the second death, and eternally held by it. There cannot be

a fairer pretence for apostasy and iniquity than saving the life by it, so cogent is the law of self-preservation; and yet even that is folly, for it will prove in the end self-destruction; the life saved is but for a moment, the death shunned is but as a sleep; but the life lost is everlasting, and the death run upon is the depth and complement of all misery, and an endless separation from all good. Now, let any rational man consider of it, take advice and speak his mind, whether there is any thing got, at long run, by apostasy, though a man save his estate, preferment, or life, by it.

[2.] The advantage that attends the most perilous and expensive constancy; Whosoever will lose his life for Christ's sake in this world, shall find it in a better, infinitely to his advantage. Note, First, Many a life is lost, for Christ's sake, in doing his work, by labouring fervently for his name; in suffering work, by choosing rather to die than to deny him or his truths and ways. Christ's holy religion is handed down to us, sealed with the blood of thousands, that have not known their own souls, but have despised their lives (as Job speaks in another case), though very valuable ones, when they have stood in competition with their duty and the testimony of Jesus, Re 20:4. Secondly, Though many have been losers for Christ, even of life itself, yet never any one was, or will be, a loser by him in the end. The loss of other comforts, for Christ, may possibly be made up in this world (Mk 10:30); the loss of life cannot, but it shall be made up in the other world, in an eternal life; the believing prospect of which hath been the great support of suffering saints in all ages. An assurance of the life they should find, in lieu of the life they hazarded, hath enabled them to triumph over death in all its terrors; to go smiling to a scaffold, and stand singing at a stake, and to call the utmost instances of their enemies' rage but a light affliction.

[3.] The worth of the soul which lies at stake, and the worthlessness of the world in comparison of it (Mt 16:26). What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? ten psychen autou; the same word which is translated his life (Mt 16:25), for the soul is the life, Ge 2:7. This alludes to that common principle, that, whatever a man gets, if he lose his life, it will do him no good, he

cannot enjoy his gains. But it looks higher, and speaks of the soul as immortal, and a loss of it beyond death, which cannot be compensated by the gain of the whole world. Note, First, Every man has a soul of his own. The soul is the spiritual and immortal part of man, which thinks and reasons, has a power of reflection and prospect, which actuates the body now, and will shortly act in a separation from the body. Our souls are our own not in respect of dominion and property (for we are not our own, All souls are mine, saith God), but in respect of nearness and concern; our souls are our own, for they are ourselves. Secondly, It is possible for the soul to be lost, and there is danger of it. The soul is lost when it is eternally separated from all the good to all the evil that a soul is capable of; when it dies as far as a soul can die; when it is separated from the favour of God, and sunk under his wrath and curse. A man is never undone till he is in hell. Thirdly, If the soul be lost, it is of the sinner's own losing. The man loses his own soul, for he does that which is certainly destroying to it, and neglects that which alone would be saving, Ho 13:9. The sinner dies because he will die; his blood is on his own head. Fourthly, One soul is worth more than all the world; our own souls are of greater value to us than all the wealth, honour, and pleasures of this present time, if we had them. Here is the whole world set in the scale against one soul, and Tekel written upon it; it is weighed in the balance, and found too light to weigh it down. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter, and he is a competent Judge; he had reason to know the price of souls, for he redeemed them; nor would he under-rate the world, for he made it. Fifthly, The winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interest by his preposterous and inordinate care to secure and advance his temporal ones. It is the love of the world, and the eager pursuit of it, that drowns men in destruction and perdition. Sixthly, The loss of the soul is so great a loss, that the gain of the whole world will not countervail it, or make it up. He that loses his soul, though it be to gain the world, makes a very bad bargain for himself, and will sit down at last an unspeakable loser. When he comes to balance the account, and to compare profit and loss, he will find that, instead of the advantage he promised himself, he is ruined to all intents and purposes, is irreparably broken.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Note, If once the soul be lost, it is lost for ever. There is no antallagma--counter-price, that can be paid, or will be accepted. It is a loss that can never be repaired, never be retrieved. If, after that great price which Christ laid down to redeem our souls, and to restore us to the possession of them, they be so neglected for the world, that they come to be lost, that new mortgage will never be taken off; there remains no more sacrifice for sins, nor price for souls, but the equity of redemption is eternally precluded. Therefore it is good to be wise in time, and do well for ourselves.

2. Here are some considerations proper to encourage us in self-denial and suffering for Christ.

(a) The assurance we have of Christ's glory, at his second coming to judge the world, Mt 16:27. If we look to the end of all these things, the period of the world, and the posture of souls then, we shall thence form a very different idea of the present state of things. If we see things as the will appear then, we shall see them as they should appear now. The great encouragement to steadfastness in religion is taken from the second coming of Christ, considering it,

[1.] As his honour; The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels. To look upon Christ in his state of humiliation, so abased, so abused, a reproach of men, and despised of the people, would discourage his followers from taking any pains, or running any hazards for him; but with an eye of faith to see the Captain of our salvation coming in his glory, in all the pomp and power of the upper world, will animate us, and make us think nothing too much to do, or too hard to suffer, for him. The Son of man shall come. He here gives himself the title of his humble state (he is the Son of man), to show that he is not ashamed to own it. His first coming was in the meanness of his children, who being partakers of flesh, he took part of the same; but his second coming will be in the glory of his Father. At his first coming, he was attended with poor disciples; at his second coming, he will be attended with

glorious angels; and if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him, 2Ti 2:12.

[2.] As our concern; Then he shall reward every man according to his works. Observe, First, Jesus Christ will come as a Judge, to dispense rewards and punishments, infinitely exceeding the greatest that any earthly potentate has the dispensing of. The terror of men's tribunal (Mt 10:18) will be taken off by a believing prospect of the glory of Christ's tribunal. Secondly, Men will then be rewarded, not according to their gains in this world, but according to their works, according to what they were and did. In that day, the treachery of backsliders will be punished with eternal destruction, and the constancy of faithful souls recompensed with a crown of life. Thirdly, The best preparative for that day is to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Christ; for so we shall make the Judge our Friend, and these things will then pass well in the account. Fourthly, The rewarding of men according to their works is deferred till that day. Here good and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously; we see not apostasy punished with immediate strokes, nor fidelity encouraged with immediate smiles, from heaven; but in that day all will be set to rights. Therefore judge nothing before the time, 2Ti 4:6-8.

(b) Son of man coming in his kingdom. Mark and Luke have explained this. Mk 9:1, "Until they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." Lk 9:27, "Till they see the kingdom of God." The meaning evidently is, till they should see my kingdom, that is, my church, now small, feeble, and despised, greatly enlarged, established, and spreading with great rapidity and extent. All this was accomplished. All these apostles, except Judas, lived to see the wonders of the day of Pentecost; some of them, John particularly, saw the Jewish nation scattered, the temple destroyed, the gospel established in Asia, Rome, Greece, and in a large part of the known world.

The near approach of his kingdom in this world, Mt 16:28. It was so near, that there were some attending him who should live to see it.

As Simeon was assured that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ come in the flesh; so some here are assured that they shall not taste death (death is a sensible thing, its terrors are seen, its bitterness is tasted) till they had seen the Lord's Christ coming in his kingdom. At the end of time, he shall come in his Father's glory; but now, in the fulness of time, he was to come in his own kingdom, his mediatorial kingdom. Some little specimen was given of his glory a few days after this, in his transfiguration (Mt 17:1); then he tried his robes. But this points at Christ's coming by the pouring out of his Spirit, the planting of the gospel church, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the taking away of the place and nation of the Jews, who were the most bitter enemies to Christianity. Here was the Son of man coming in his kingdom. Many then present lived to see it, particularly John, who lived till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and saw Christianity planted in the world. Let this encourage the followers of Christ to suffer for him,

[1.] That their undertaking shall be succeeded; the apostles were employed in setting up Christ's kingdom; let them know, for their comfort, that whatever opposition they meet with, yet they shall carry their point, shall see of the travail of their soul. Note, It is a great encouragement to suffering saints to be assured, not only of the safety, but of the advancement of Christ's kingdom among men; not only notwithstanding their sufferings, but by their sufferings. A believing prospect of the success of the kingdom of grace, as well as of our share in the kingdom of glory, may carry us cheerfully through our sufferings.

[2.] That their cause shall be pleaded; their deaths shall be revenged, and their persecutors reckoned with.

[3.] That this shall be done shortly, in the present age. Note, The nearer the church's deliverances are, the more cheerful should we be in our sufferings for Christ. Behold the Judge standeth before the door. It is spoken as a favour to those that should survive the present cloudy time, that they should see better days. Note, It is desirable to share with the church in her joys, Da 12:12. Observe, Christ saith,

Some shall live to see those glorious days, not all; some shall enter into the promised land, but others shall fall in the wilderness. He does not tell them who shall live to see this kingdom, lest if they had known, they should have put off the thoughts of dying, but some of them shall; Behold, the Lord is at hand. The Judge standeth before the door; be patient, therefore, brethren.

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Matthew-17

The Transfiguration

1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart,

The witnesses of it. He took with him Peter and James and John.

(1.) He took three, a competent number to testify what they should see; for out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. Christ makes his appearances certain enough, but not too common; not to all the people, but to witnesses (Ac 10:41), that they might be blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.

(2.) He took these three because they were the chief of his disciples, the first three of the worthies of the Son of David; probably they excelled in gifts and graces; they were Christ's favourites, singled out to be the witnesses of his retirements. They were present when he raised the damsel to life, Mk 5:37. They were afterward to be the witnesses of his agony, and this was to prepare them for that. Note, A sight of Christ's glory, while we are here in this world, is a good preparative for our sufferings with him, as these are preparatives for the sight of his glory in the other world. Paul, who had abundance of trouble, had abundance of revelations.

2 and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

The place; it was on top of a high mountain apart. Christ chose a mountain,

(1.) As a secret place. He went apart; for though a city upon a hill can hardly be hid, two or three persons upon a hill can hardly be found; therefore their private oratories were commonly on mountains. Christ chose a retired place to be transfigured in, because his appearing publicly in his glory was not agreeable to his present state; and thus he would show his humility, and teach us that privacy much befriends our communion with God. Those that would maintain intercourse with Heaven, must frequently withdraw from the converse and business of this world; and they will find themselves never less alone than when alone, for the Father is with them.

(2.) Though a sublime place, elevated above things below. Note, Those that would have a transforming fellowship with God, must not only retire, but ascend; lift up their hearts, and seek things above. The call is, Come up hither, Re 4:1.

The manner of it (Mt 17:2); He was transfigured before them. The substance of his body remained the same, but the accidents and appearances of it were greatly altered; he was not turned into a spirit, but his body, which had appeared in weakness and dishonour, now appeared in power and glory. He was transfigured, metamorphothe--he was metamorphosed. The profane poets amused and abused the world with idle extravagant stories of metamorphoses, especially the metamorphoses of their gods, such as were disparaging and diminishing to them, equally false and ridiculous; to these some think Peter has an eye, when, being about to mention this transfiguration of Christ, he saith, We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made it known unto you, 2Pe 1:16. Christ was both God and man; but, in the days of his flesh, he took on him the form of a servant--morphen doulou, Php 2:7. He drew a veil over the glory of his godhead; but now, in his transfiguration, he put by

that veil, appeared en morphe theou--in the form of God (Php 2:6), and gave his disciples a glimpse of his glory, which could not but change his form.

The great truth which we declare, is, that God is light (1Jo 1:5), dwells in the light (1Ti 6:16), covers himself with light, Ps 104:2. And therefore when Christ would appear in the form of God, he appeared in light, the most glorious of all visible beings, the first-born of the creation, and most nearly resembling the eternal Parent. Christ is the Light; while he was in the world, he shined in darkness, and therefore the world knew him not (Joh 1:5,10); but, at this time, that Light shined out of the darkness.

Now his transfiguration appeared in two things:

1. His face did shine as the sun. The face is the principal part of the body, by which we are known; therefore such a brightness was put on Christ's face, that face which afterward he hid not from shame and spitting. It shone as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, so clear, so bright; for he is the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world. The face of Moses shone but as the moon, with a borrowed reflected light, but Christ's shone as the sun, with an innate inherent light, which was the more sensibly glorious, because it suddenly broke out, as it were, from behind a black cloud.

2. His raiment was white as the light. All his body was altered, as his face was; so that beams of light, darting from every part through his clothes, made them white and glittering. The shining of the face of Moses was so weak, that it could easily be concealed by a thin veil; but such was the glory of Christ's body, that his clothes were enlightened by it.

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus during his transfiguration, possibly to symbolize that the law and the prophets found their fulfilment in him. He was the one to whom the entire Old Testament pointed. They talked with Jesus about his coming death, confirming

what Jesus had recently told the apostles. The Messiah had to die before he could enter his glory (Mat_17:3; Luk_9:30-31).

The companions of it. He will come, at last, with ten thousands of his saints; and, as a specimen of that, there now appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him, Mt 17:3. Observe,

1. There were glorified saints attending him, that, when there were three to bear record on earth, Peter, James, and John, there might be some to bear record from heaven too. Thus here was a lively resemblance of Christ's kingdom, which is made up of saints in heaven and saints on earth, and to which belong the spirits of just men made perfect. We see here, that they who are fallen asleep in Christ are not perished, but exist in a separate state, and shall be forthcoming when there is occasion.

2. These two were Moses and Elias, men very eminent in their day. They had both fasted forty days and forty nights, as Christ did, and wrought other miracles, and were both remarkable at their going out of the world as well as in their living in the world. Elias was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot, and died not. The body of Moses was never found, possibly it was preserved from corruption, and reserved for this appearance. The Jews had great respect for the memory of Moses and Elias, and therefore they came to witness of him, they came to carry tidings concerning him to the upper world. In them the law and the prophets honoured Christ, and bore testimony to him. Moses and Elias appeared to the disciples; they saw them, and heard them talk, and, either by their discourse or by information from Christ, they knew them to be Moses and Elias; glorified saints shall know one another in heaven. They talked with Christ. Note, Christ has communion with the blessed, and will be no stranger to any of the members of that glorified corporation. Christ was now to be sealed in his prophetic office, and therefore these two great prophets were fittest to attend him, as transferring all their honour and interest to him; for in these last days God speaks to us by his Son, Heb 1:1.

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

The great pleasure and satisfaction that the disciples took in the sight of Christ's glory. Peter, as usual, spoke or the rest; Lord, it is good for us to be here. Peter here expresses,

1 The delight they had in this converse; Lord, it is good to be here. Though upon a high mountain, which we may suppose rough and unpleasant, bleak and cold, yet it is good to be here. He speaks the sense of his fellow-disciples; It is good not only for me, but for us. He did not covet to monopolize this favour, but gladly takes them in. He saith this to Christ. Pious and devout affections love to pour out themselves before the Lord Jesus. The soul that loves Christ, and loves to be with him, loves to go and tell him so; Lord, it is good for us to be here. This intimates a thankful acknowledgment of his kindness in admitting them to this favour. Note, Communion with Christ is the delight of Christians. All the disciples of the Lord Jesus reckon it is good for them to be with him in the holy mount. It is good to be here where Christ is, and whither he brings us along with him by his appointment; it is good to be here, retired and alone with Christ; to be here, where we may behold the beauty of the Lord Jesus, Ps 27:4. It is pleasant to hear Christ compare notes with Moses and the prophets, to see how all the institutions of the law, and all the predictions of the prophets, pointed at Christ, and were fulfilled in him.

2 The desire they had of the continuance of it; Let us make here three tabernacles. There was in this, as in many other of Peter's sayings, a mixture of weakness and of goodwill, more zeal than discretion.

(a) Here was a zeal for this converse with heavenly things, a laudable complacency in the sight they had of Christ's glory. Note, Those that by faith behold the beauty of the Lord in his house, cannot but desire to dwell there all the days of their life. It is good having a nail in God's holy place (Ezr 9:8), a constant abode; to be in holy ordinances as a man at home, not as a wayfaring man. Peter thought this

mountain was a fine spot of ground to build upon, and he was for making tabernacles there; as Moses in the wilderness made a tabernacle for the Shechinah, or divine glory.

It argued great respect for his Master and the heavenly guests, with some commendable forgetfulness of himself and his fellow-disciples, that he would have tabernacles for Christ, and Moses, and Elias, but none for himself. He would be content to lie in the open air, on the cold ground, in such good company; if his Master have but where to lay his head, no matter whether he himself has or no.

(b) Yet in this zeal he betrayed a great deal of weakness and ignorance. What need had Moses and Elias of tabernacles? They belonged to that blessed world, where they hunger no more, nor doth the sun light upon them. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and bidden his disciples expect the like; Peter forgets this, or, to prevent it, will needs be building tabernacles in the mount of glory, out of the way of trouble. Still he harps upon, Master, spare thyself, though he had been so lately checked for it. Note, There is a proneness in good men to expect the crown without the cross. Peter was for laying hold of this as the prize, though he had not yet fought his fight, nor finished his course, as those other disciples, Mt 20:21. We are out in our aim, if we look for a heaven here upon earth. It is not for strangers and pilgrims (such as we are in our best circumstances in this world), to talk of building, or to expect a continuing city.

Yet it is some excuse for the incongruity of Peter's proposal, not only that he knew not what he said (Lu 9:33), but also that he submitted the proposal to the wisdom of Christ; If thou wilt, let us make tabernacles. Note, Whatever tabernacles we propose to make to ourselves in this world, we must always remember to ask Christ's leave.

Now to this which Peter said, there was no reply made; the disappearing of the glory would soon answer it. They that promise themselves great things on earth will soon be undeceived by their own experience.

5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

The glorious testimony which God the Father gave to our Lord Jesus, in which he received from him honour and glory (2Pe 1:17), when there came this voice from the excellent glory. This was like proclaiming the titles of honour or the royal style of a prince, when, at his coronation, he appears in his robes of state; and be it known, to the comfort of mankind, the royal style of Christ is taken from his mediation. Thus, in vision, he appeared with a rainbow, the seal of the covenant, about his throne (Re 4:3); for it is his glory to be our Redeemer.

Now concerning this testimony from heaven to Christ, observe.

1. How it came, and in what manner it was introduced.

(a) There was a cloud. We find often in the Old Testament, that a cloud was the visible token of God's presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud (Ex 19:9), and so to Moses, Ex 34:5,nu 11:25. He took possession of the tabernacle in a cloud, and afterwards of the temple; where Christ was in his glory, the temple was, and there God showed himself present. We know not the balancing of the clouds, but we know that much of the intercourse and communication between heaven and earth is maintained by them. By the clouds vapours ascend, and rains descend; therefore God is said to make the clouds his chariots; so he did here when he descended upon this mount.

(b) It was a bright cloud. Under the law it was commonly a thick and dark cloud that God made the token of his presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a thick cloud (Ex 19:16), and said he would dwell in thick darkness; see 1Ki 8:12. But we are now come, not to the mount that was covered with thick blackness and darkness (Heb 12:18), but to the mount that is crowned with a bright cloud. Both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament dispensation had tokens of God's presence; but that was a

dispensation of darkness, and terror, and bondage, this of light, love, and liberty.

(c) It overshadowed them. This cloud was intended to break the force of that great light which otherwise would have overcome the disciples, and have been intolerable; it was like the veil which Moses put upon his face when it shone. God, in manifesting himself to his people, considers their frame. This cloud was to their eyes as parables to their understandings, to convey spiritual things by things sensible, as they were able to bear them.

(d) There came a voice out of the cloud, and it was the voice of God, who now, as of old, spake in the cloudy pillar, Ps 99:7. Here was no thunder, or lightning, or voice of a trumpet, as there was when the law was given by Moses, but only a voice, a still small voice, and that not ushered in with a strong wind, or an earthquake, or fire, as when God spake to Elias, 1Ki 19:11,12. Moses then and Elias were witnesses, that in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son, in another way than he spoke formerly to them. This voice came from the excellent glory (2Pe 1:17), the glory which excelleth, in comparison of which the former had no glory; though the excellent glory was clouded, yet thence came a voice, for faith comes by hearing.

2. What this testimony from heaven was; This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. Here we have,

(a) The great gospel mystery revealed; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This was the very same that was spoken from heaven at his baptism (Mt 3:17); and it was the best news that ever came from heaven to earth since man sinned. It is to the same purport with that great doctrine (2Co 5:19), That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Moses and Elias were great men, and favourites of Heaven, yet they were but servants, and servants that God was not always well pleased in; for Moses spoke unadvisedly, and Elias was a man subject to passions; but Christ is a Son, and in him God was always well pleased. Moses and Elias

were sometimes instruments of reconciliation between God and Israel; Moses was a great intercessor, and Elias a great reformer; but in Christ God is reconciling the world; his intercession is more prevalent than that of Moses, and his reformation more effectual than that of Elias.

This repetition of the same voice that came from heaven at his baptism was no vain repetition; but, like the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, was to show the thing was established. What God hath thus spoken once, yea twice, no doubt he will stand to, and he expects we should take notice of it. It was spoken at his baptism, because then he was entering upon his temptation, and his public ministry; and now it was repeated, because he was entering upon his sufferings, which are to be dated from hence; for now, and not before, he began to foretel them, and immediately after his transfiguration it is said (Lu 9:51), that the time was come that he should be received up; this therefore was then repeated, to arm him against the terror, and his disciples against the offence, of the cross. When sufferings begin to abound, consolations are given in more abundantly, 2Co 1:5.

(b) The great gospel duty required, and it is the condition of our benefit by Christ; Hear ye him. God is well pleased with none in Christ but those that hear him. It is not enough to give him the hearing (what will that avail us?) but we must hear him and believe him, as the great Prophet and Teacher; hear him, and be ruled by him, as the great Prince and Lawgiver; hear him, and heed him. Whoever would know the mind of God, must hearken to Jesus Christ; for by him God has in these last days spoken to us. This voice from heaven has made all the sayings of Christ as authentic as if they had been thus spoken out of a cloud. God does here, as it were, turn us over to Christ for all the revelations of his mind; and it refers to that prediction concerning the Prophet God would raise up like unto Moses (De 18:18); him shall ye hear.

Christ now appeared in glory; and the more we see of Christ's glory, the more cause we shall see to hearken to him: but the disciples

were gazing on that glory of his which they saw; they are therefore bid not to look at him, but to hear him. Their sight of his glory was soon intercepted by the cloud, but their business was to hear him. We walk by faith, which comes by hearing, not by sight, 2Co 5:7.

Moses and Elias were now with him; the law and the prophets; hitherto it was said, Hear them, Lu 16:29. The disciples were ready to equal them with Christ, when they must have tabernacles for them as well as for him. They had been talking with Christ, and probably the disciples were very desirous to know what they said, and to hear something more from them; No, saith God, hear him, and that is enough; him, and not Moses and Elias, who were present, and whose silence gave consent to this voice; they had nothing to say to the contrary; whatever interest they had in the world as prophets, they were willing to see it all transferred to Christ, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Be not troubled that Moses and Elias make so short a stay with you; hear Christ, and you will not want them.

6 And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

The fright which the disciples were put into by this voice, and the encouragement Christ gave them.

1 The disciples fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. The greatness of the light, and the surprise of it, might have a natural influence upon them, to dispirit them. But that was not all, ever since man sinned, and heard God's voice in the garden, extraordinary appearances of God have ever been terrible to man, who, knowing he has no reason to expect any good, has been afraid to hear any thing immediately from God. Note, even then when fair weather comes out of the secret place, yet with God is terrible majesty, Job 37:22. See what dreadful work the voice of the Lord makes, Ps 29:4. It is well for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

2. Christ graciously raised them up with abundance of tenderness. Note, The glories and advancements of our Lord Jesus do not at all lessen his regard to, and concern for, his people that are compassed

about with infirmity. It is comfortable to think, that now, in his exalted state, he has a compassion for, and condescends to, the meanest true believer. Observe here,

(a). What he did; he came, and touched them. His approaches banished their fears; and when they apprehended that they were apprehended of Christ, there needed no more to make them easy. Christ laid his right hand upon John is a like case, and upon Daniel, Re 1:17,Da 8:18,10:18. Christ's touches were often healing, and here they were strengthening and comforting.

(b) What he said; Arise, and be not afraid. Note, Though a fear of reverence in our converse with Heaven is pleasing to Christ, yet a fear of amazement is not so, but must be striven against. Christ said, Arise. Note, It is Christ by his word, and the power of his grace going along with it, that raises up good men from their dejections, and silences their fears; and none but Christ can do it; Arise, be not afraid. Note, causeless fears would soon vanish, if we would not yield to them, and lie down under them, but get up, and do what we can against them. Considering what they had seen and heard, they had more reason to rejoice than to fear, and yet, it seems, they needed this caution. Note, Through the infirmity of the flesh, we often frighten ourselves with that wherewith we should encourage ourselves. Observe, After they had an express command from heaven to hear Christ, the first word they had from him was, Be not afraid, hear that. Note, Christ's errand into the world was to give comfort to good people, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might serve God without fear, Lu 1:74,75.

7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

The disappearing of the vision (Mt 17:8); They lift up themselves, and then lift up their eyes, and saw no man, save Jesus only. Moses and Elias were gone, the rays of Christ's glory were laid aside, or veiled again. They hoped this had been the day of Christ's entrance into his kingdom, and his public appearance in that external splendour which they dreamed of; but see how they are disappointed. Note, It is not wisdom to raise our expectations high

in this world, for the most valuable of our glories and joys here are vanishing, even those of near communion with God are so, not a continual feast, but a running banquet. If sometimes we are favoured with special manifestations of divine grace, glimpses and pledges of future glory, yet they are withdrawn presently; two heavens are too much for those to expect that never deserve one. Now they saw no man, save Jesus only. Note, Christ will tarry with us when Moses and Elias are gone. The prophets do not live for ever (Zec 1:5), and we see the period of our ministers' conversation; but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb 13:7,8.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?

When the transfiguration was over and Jesus' appearance returned to normal, he again told the apostles that they were not yet to reveal what they had learnt (Mat_17:6-9; Luk_9:36). The vision of Elijah prompted the apostles to ask if Elijah would come before the Messiah. If Jesus was the Messiah, why had Elijah not come? Jesus replied that John the Baptist was the promised Elijah, but just as people rejected the Messiah's forerunner so would they reject the Messiah (Mat_17:10-13).

The discourse between Christ and his disciples as they came down from the mountain, Mt 17:9-13. Observe,

1. They came down from the mountain. Note, We must come down from the holy mountains, where we have communion with God, and complacency in that communion, and of which we are saying. It is good to be here; even there we have no continuing city. Blessed be God, there is a mountain of glory and joy before us, whence we shall never come down. But observe, When the disciples came down, Jesus came with them. Note, When we return to the world again after an ordinance, it must be our care to take Christ with us, and then it may be our comfort that he is with us.

2. As they came down, they talked of Christ. Note, When we are returning from holy ordinance, it is good to entertain ourselves and one another with discourse suitable to the work we have been about. That communication which is good to the use of edifying is then in a special manner seasonable; as, on the contrary, that which is corrupt, is worse then than at another time. Here is,

(a) The charge that Christ gave the disciples to keep the vision very private for the present (Mt 17:9); Tell it to no man till the Son of man is risen. If they had proclaimed it, the credibility of it would have been shocked by his sufferings, which were now hastening on. But let the publication of it be adjourned till after his resurrection, and then that and his subsequent glory will be a great confirmation of it. Note, Christ observed a method in the manifestation of himself; he would have his works put together, mutually to explain and illustrate each other, that they might appear in their full strength and convincing evidence. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Christ's resurrection was properly the beginning of the gospel state and kingdom, to which all before was but preparatory and by way of preface; and therefore, though this was transacted before, it must not be produced as evidence till then (and then it appears to have been much insisted on by 2Pe 1:16-18), when the religion it was designed for the confirmation of was brought to its full consistence and maturity. Christ's time is the best and fittest for the manifesting of himself and must be attended to by us.

(b) An objection which the disciples made against something Christ had said (Mt 17:10); "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? If Elias make so short a stay, and is gone so suddenly, and we must say nothing of him; why have we been taught out of the law to expect his public appearance in the world immediately before the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom? Must the coming of Elias be a secret, which every body looks for?" or thus; "If the resurrection of the Messiah, and with it the beginning of his kingdom, be at hand, what becomes of that glorious preface and introduction to it, which we expect in the coming of Elias?" The scribes, who were the public expositors of the law, said this

according to the scripture (Mal 4:5); Behold I send you Elijah the prophet. The disciples spoke the common language of the Jews, who made that the saying of the scribes which was the saying of the scripture, whereas of that which ministers speak to us according to the word of God, we should say, "God speaks to us, not the ministers;" for we must not receive it as the word of men, 1Th 2:13. Observe, When the disciples could not reconcile what Christ said with what they had heard out of the Old Testament, they desired him to explain it to them. Note, When we are puzzled with scripture difficulties, we must apply ourselves to Christ by prayer for his Spirit to open our understandings and to lead us into all truth.

(c) The solving of this objection. Ask, and it shall be given, ask instruction, and it shall be given.

[1.] Christ allows the prediction (Mt 17:11); "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things; so far you are in the right." Christ did not come to alter or invalidate any thing foretold in the Old Testament. Note, Corrupt and mistaken glosses may be sufficiently rejected and exploded, without diminishing or derogating from the authority or dignity of the sacred text. New-Testament prophecies are true and good, and are to be received and improved, though some hot foolish men may have misinterpreted them and drawn wrong inferences from them. He shall come, and restore all things; not restore them to their former state (John Baptist went not about to do that), but he shall accomplish all things (so it may be read), all things that were written of him, all the predictions of the coming of Elias. John Baptist came to restore things spiritually, to revive the decays of religion, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children; which means the same with this, he shall restore all things. John preached repentance, and that restores all things.

[2.] He asserts the accomplishment. The scribes say true, that Elias is come, Mt 17:12. Note, God's promises are often fulfilled, and men perceive it not, but enquire, Where is the promise? when it is already performed. Elias is come, and they knew him not; they knew him not to be the Elias promised, the forerunner of the

Messiah. The scribes busied themselves in criticizing upon the scripture, but understood not by the signs of the times the fulfilling of the scripture. Note, It is easier to explain the word of God than to apply it and make a right use of it. But it is no wonder that the morning star was not observed, when he who is the Sun itself, was in the world, and the world knew him not.

Because they knew him not, they have done to him whatsoever they listed; if they had known, they would not have crucified Christ, or beheaded John, 1Co 2:8. They ridiculed John, persecuted him, and at last put him to death; which was Herod's doing, but is here charged upon the whole generation of unbelieving Jews, and particularly the scribes, who, though they could not prosecute John themselves, were pleased with what Herod did. He adds, Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them. Marvel not that Elias should be abused and killed by those who pretended, with a great deal of reverence, to expect him, when the Messiah himself will be in like manner treated. Note, The sufferings of Christ took off the strangeness of all other sufferings (Joh 15:18); when they had imbrued their hands in the blood of John Baptist, they were ready to do the like to Christ. Note, As men deal with Christ's servants, so they would deal with him himself; and they that are drunk with the blood of the martyrs still cry, Give, give, Ac 12:1-3.

(d) The disciples' satisfaction in Christ's reply to their objection (Mt 17:13); They understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. He did not name John, but gives them such a description of him as would put them in mind of what he had said to them formerly concerning him; This is Elias. This is a profitable way of teaching; it engages the learners' own thoughts, and makes them, if not their own teachers, yet their own remembrancers; and thus knowledge becomes easy to him that understands. When we diligently use the means of knowledge, how strangely are mists scattered and mistakes rectified!

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things.

12 But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

15 Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

Two things the father of the child complains of.

1 The distress of his child (Mt 17:15); Lord have mercy on my son. The affliction of the children cannot but affect the tender parents, for they are pieces of themselves. And the case of afflicted children should be presented to God by faithful and fervent prayer. This child's distemper, probably, disabled him to pray for himself. Note, Parents are doubly concerned to pray for their children, not only that are weak and cannot, but much more that are wicked and will not, pray for themselves. Now,

(a). The nature of this child's disease was very sad; He was lunatic and sore vexed. A lunatic is properly one whose distemper lies in the brain, and returns with the change of the moon. The devil, by the divine permission, either caused this distemper, or at least concurred with it, to heighten and aggravate it. The child had the falling-sickness, and the hand of Satan was in it; by it he tormented then, and made it much more grievous than ordinarily it is. Those whom Satan got possession of, he afflicted by those diseases of the body which do most affect the mind; for it is the soul that he aims to do mischief to. The father, in his complain, saith, He is lunatic, taking notice of the effect; but Christ, in the cure, rebuked the devil, and so struck at the cause. Thus he doth in spiritual cures.

(b) The effects of the disease were very deplorable; He oft falls into the fire, and into the water. If the force of the disease made him to fall, the malice of the devil made him to fall into the fire or water; so mischievous is he where he gains possession and power in any soul. He seeks to devour, 1Pe 5:8.

2 The disappointment of his expectation from the disciples (Mt 17:16); I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cured him. Christ gave his disciples power to cast out devils (Mt 10:1,8), and therein they were successful (Lu 10:17); yet at this time they failed in the operation, though there were nine of them together, and before a great multitude. Christ permitted this,

(a) To keep them humble, and to show their dependence upon him, that without him they could do nothing.

(b) To glorify himself and his own power. It is for the honour of Christ to come in with help at a dead-lift, when other helpers cannot help. Elisha's staff in Gehazi's hand will not raise the child: he must come himself. Note, There are some special favours which Christ reserves the bestowment of to himself; and sometimes he keeps the cistern empty; that he may bring us to himself, the Fountain. But the failures of instruments shall not hinder the operations of his grace, which will work, if not by them, yet without them.

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him hither to me.

He chid those about him (Mt 17:17); O faithless and perverse generation! This is not spoken to the disciples, but to the people, and perhaps especially to the scribes, who are mentioned in Mk 9:14, and who, as it should seem, insulted over the disciples, because they had now met with a case that was too hard for them. Christ himself could not do many mighty works among a people in whom unbelief reigned. It was here owing to the faithlessness of this generation, that they could not obtain those blessings from God, which otherwise they might have had; as it was owing to the weakness of the disciples' faith, that they could not do those works for God, which otherwise they

might have done. They were faithless and perverse. Note, Those that are faithless will be perverse; and perverseness is sin in its worst colours. Faith is compliance with God, unbelief is opposition and contradiction to God. Israel of old was perverse, because faithless (Ps 95:9), froward, for in them is no faith, De 32:20.

Two things he upbraids them with.

(1.) His presence with them so long; "How long shall I be with you? Will you always need my bodily presence, and never come to such maturity as to be fit to be left, the people to the conduct of the disciples, and the disciples to the conduct of the Spirit and of their commission? Must the child be always carried, and will it never learn to go alone?"

(2.) His patience with them so long; How long shall I suffer you? Note,

[1.] The faithlessness and perverseness of those who enjoy the means of grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus. Thus did he suffer the manners of Israel of old, Ac 13:18.

[2.] The longer Christ has borne with a perverse and faithless people, the more he is displeased with their perverseness and unbelief; and he is God, and not man, else he would not suffer so long, nor bear so much, as he doth.

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

He cured the child, and set him to-rights again. He called, Bring him hither to me. Though the people were perverse, and Christ was provoked, yet care was taken of the child. Note, Though Christ may be angry, he is never unkind, nor doth he, in the greatest of his displeasure, shut up the bowels of his compassion from the miserable; Bring him to me. Note, When all other helps and succours fail, we are welcome to Christ, and may be confident in him and in his power and goodness.

See here an emblem of Christ's undertaking as our Redeemer.

(1.) He breaks the power of Satan (Mt 17:18); Jesus rebuked the devil, as one having authority, who could back with force his word of command. Note, Christ's victories over Satan are obtained by the power of his word, the sword that comes out of his mouth, Re 19:21. Satan cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ, though his possession has been ever so long. It is comfortable to those who are wrestling with principalities and powers, that Christ hath spoiled them, Col 2:15. The lion of the tribe of Judah will be too hard for the roaring lion that seeks to devour.

(2.) He redresses the grievances of the children of men; The child was cured from that very hour. It was an immediate cure, and a perfect one. This is an encouragement to parents to bring their children to Christ, whose souls are under Satan's power; he is able to heal them, and as willing as he is able. Not only bring them to Christ by prayer, but bring them to the word of Christ, the ordinary means by which Satan's strongholds are demolished in the soul. Christ's rebukes, brought home to the heart, will ruin Satan's power there.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?
20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

1. They ask the reason why they could not cast out the devil at this time (Mt 17:19); They came to Jesus apart. Note, Ministers, who are to deal for Christ in public, have need to keep up a private communion with him, that they may in secret, where no eye sees, bewail their weakness and straitness, their follies and infirmities, in their public performances, and enquire into the cause of them. We should make use of the liberty of access we have to Jesus apart, where we may be free and particular with him. Such questions as the disciples put to Christ, we should put to ourselves, in communing with our own hearts upon our beds; Why were we so dull and careless at such a time? Why came we so much short in such a duty? That which is amiss may, when found out, be amended.

2. Christ gives them two reasons why they failed.

(a) It was because of their unbelief, Mt 17:20. When he spake to the father of the child and to the people, he charged it upon their unbelief; when he spake to his disciples, he charged it upon theirs; for the truth was, there were faults on both sides; but we are more concerned to hear of our own faults than of other people's, and to impute what is amiss to ourselves than to others. When the preaching of the word seems not to be so successful as sometimes it has been, the people are apt to lay all the fault upon the ministers, and the ministers upon the people; whereas, it is more becoming for each to own his own faultiness, and to say, "It is owing to me." Ministers, in reproving, must learn thus to give to each his portion of the word; and to take people off from judging others, by teaching all to judge themselves; It is because of your unbelief. Though they had faith, yet that faith was weak and ineffectual. Note,

[1.] As far as faith falls short of its due strength, vigour, and activity, it may truly be said, "There is unbelief." Many are chargeable with unbelief, who yet are not to be called unbelievers.

[2.] It is because of our unbelief, that we bring so little to pass in religion, and so often miscarry, and come short, in that which is good.

Our Lord Jesus takes this occasion to show them the power of faith, that they might not be defective in that, another time, as they were now; If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall do wonders, Mt 17:20. Some make the comparison to refer to the quality of the mustard-seed, which is, when bruised, sharp and penetrating; "If you have an active growing faith, not dead, flat, or insipid, you will not be baffled thus." But it rather refers to the quantity; "If you had but a grain of true faith, though so little that it were like that which is the least of all seeds, you would do wonders." Faith in general is a firm assent to, a compliance with, and a confidence in, all divine revelation. The faith here required, is that which had for its object that particular revelation by which Christ gave his disciples power to work miracles in his name, for the confirmation of the doctrine

they preached. It was a faith in this revelation that they were defective in; either doubting the validity of their commission, or fearing that it expired with their first mission, and was not to continue when they were returning to their Master; or that it was some way or other forfeited or withdrawn. Perhaps their Master's absence with the three chief of his disciples, with a charge to the rest not to follow them, might occasion some doubts concerning their power, or rather the power of the Lord with them, to do this; however, there were not, at present, such a strong actual dependence upon, and confidence in, the promise of Christ's presence with them, as there should have been. It is good for us to be diffident of ourselves and of our own strength; but it is displeasing to Christ, when we distrust any power derived from him or granted by him.

If ye have ever so little of this faith in sincerity, if ye truly rely upon the powers committed to you, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove. This is a proverbial expression, denoting that which follows, and no more, Nothing shall be impossible to you. They had a full commission, among other things, to cast out devils without exception; but, this devil being more than ordinarily malicious and inveterate, they distrusted the power they had received, and so failed. To convince them of this, Christ shows them what they might have done. Note, An active faith can remove mountains, not of itself, but in the virtue of a divine power engaged by a divine promise, both which faith fastens upon.

(b) Because there was something in the kind of the malady, which rendered the cure more than ordinarily difficult (Mt 17:21); "This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting. This possession, which works by a falling-sickness, or this kind of devils that are thus furious, is not cast out ordinarily but by great acts of devotion, and wherein ye were defective." Note,

[1.] Though the adversaries we wrestle, be all principalities and powers, yet some are stronger than others, and their power more hardly broken.

[2.] The extraordinary power of Satan must not discourage our faith, but quicken us to a greater intenseness in the acting of it, and more earnestness in praying to God for the increase of it; so some understand it here; "This kind of faith (which removeth mountains) doth not proceed, is not obtained, from God, nor is it carried up to its full growth, nor drawn out into act and exercise, but by earnest prayer."

[3.] Fasting and prayer are proper means for the bringing down of Satan's power against us, and the fetching in of divine power to our assistance. Fasting is of use to put an edge upon prayer; it is an evidence and instance of humiliation which is necessary in prayer, and is a means of mortifying some corrupt habits, and of disposing the body to serve the soul in prayer. When the devil's interest in the soul is confirmed by the temper and constitution of the body, fasting must be joined with prayer, to keep under the body.

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:
23 and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.
And they were exceeding sorry.

Christ here foretels his own sufferings; he began to do it before (Mt 16:21); and, finding that it was to his disciples a hard saying, he saw it necessary to repeat it. There are some things which God speaketh once, yea twice, and yet man perceiveth it not. Observe here,

1. What he foretold concerning himself--that he should be betrayed and killed. He perfectly knew, before, all things that should come to him, and yet undertook the work of our redemption, which greatly commends his love; nay, his clear foresight of them was a kind of ante-passion, had not his love to man made all easy to him.

(a) He tells them that he should be betrayed into the hands of men. He shall be delivered up (so it might be read and understood of his

Father's delivering him up by his determined counsel and foreknowledge, Ac 2:23,Ro 8:32); but as we render it, it refers to Judas's betraying him into the hands of the priests, and their betraying him into the hands of the Romans. He was betrayed into the hands of men; men to whom he was allied by nature, and from whom therefore he might expect pity and tenderness; men whom he had undertaken to save, and from whom therefore he might expect honour and gratitude; yet these are his persecutors and murderers.

(b) That they should kill him; nothing less than that would satisfy their rage; it was his blood, his precious blood, that they thirsted after. This is the heir, come, let us kill him. Nothing less would satisfy God's justice, and answer his undertaking; if he be a Sacrifice of atonement, he must be killed; without blood no remission.

(c) That he shall be raised again the third day. Still, when he spoke of his death, he gave a hint of his resurrection, the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. This was an encouragement, not only to him, but to his disciples; for if he rise the third day, his absence from them will not be long, and his return to them will be glorious.

2. How the disciples received this; They were exceedingly sorry. Herein appeared their love to their Master's person, but with all their ignorance and mistake concerning his undertaking. Peter indeed durst not say any thing against it, as he had done before (Mt 16:22), having then been severely chidden for it; but he, and the rest of them, greatly lamented it, as it would be their own loss, their Master's grief, and the sin and ruin of them that did it.

Payment of the Tribute Money

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

Observe how it was demanded, Mt 17:24. Christ was now at Capernaum, his headquarters, where he mostly resided; he did not

keep from thence, to decline being called upon for his dues, but rather came thither, to be ready to pay them.

1 The tribute demanded was not any civil payment to the Roman powers, that was strictly exacted by the publicans, but the church-duties, the half shekel, about fifteen pence, which were required from every person or the service of the temple, and the defraying of the expenses of the worship there; it is called a ransom for the soul, Ex 30:12, &c. This was not so strictly exacted now as sometimes it had been, especially not in Galilee.

2 The demand was very modest; the collectors stood in such awe of Christ, because of his mighty works, that they durst not speak to him about it, but applied themselves to Peter, whose house was in Capernaum, and probably in his house Christ lodged; he therefore was fittest to be spoken to as the housekeeper, and they presumed he knew his Master's mind. Their question is, Doth not your master pay tribute? Some think that they sought an occasion against him, designing, if he refused, to represent him as disaffected to the temple-service, and his followers as lawless people, that would pay neither toll, tribute, nor custom, Ezr 4:13. It should rather seem, they asked this with respect, intimating, that if he had any privilege to exempt him from this payment, they would not insist upon it.

Peter presently his word for his Master; "Yes, certainly; my Master pays tribute; it is his principle and practice; you need not fear moving it to him."

(a) He was made under the law (Ga 4:4); therefore under this law he was paid for at forty days old (Lu 2:22), and now he paid for himself, as one who, in his state of humiliation, had taken upon him the form of a servant, Php 2:7,8.

(b) He was made sin for us, and was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh, Ro 8:3. Now this tax paid to the temple is called an atonement for the soul, Ex 30:15. Christ, that in every thing he might

appear in the likeness of sinners, paid it though he had no sin to atone for.

(c) Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness, Mt 3:15. He did this to set an example,

[1.] Of rendering to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, Ro 13:7. The kingdom of Christ not being of this world, the favourites and officers of it are so far from having a power granted them, as such, to tax other people's purses, that theirs are made liable to the powers that are.

[2.] Of contributing to the support of the public worship of God in the places where we are. If we reap spiritual things, it is fit that we should return carnal things. The temple was now made a den of thieves, and the temple-worship a pretence for the opposition which the chief priests gave to Christ and his doctrine; and yet Christ paid this tribute. Note, Church-duties, legally imposed, are to be paid, notwithstanding church-corruptions. We must take care not to use our liberty as a cloak of covetousness or maliciousness, 1Pe 2:16. If Christ pay tribute, who can pretend an exemption?

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

How it was disputed (Mt 17:25), not with the collectors themselves, lest they should be irritated, but with Peter, that he might be satisfied in the reason why Christ paid tribute, and might not mistake about it. He brought the collectors into the house; but Christ anticipated him, to give him a proof of his omniscience, and that no thought can be withholden from him. The disciples of Christ are never attacked without his knowledge.

Now,

1. He appeals to the way of the kings of the earth, which is, to take tribute of strangers, of the subjects of their kingdom, or foreigners that deal with them, but not of their own children that are of their families; there is such a community of goods between parents and

children, and a joint-interest in what they have, that it would be absurd for the parents to levy taxes upon the children, or demand any thing from them; it is like one hand taxing the other.

2. He applies this to himself; Then are the children free. Christ is the Son of God, and Heir of all things; the temple is his temple (Mal 3:1), his Father's house (Joh 2:16), in it he is faithful as a Son in his own house (Heb 3:6), and therefore not obliged to pay this tax for the service of the temple. Thus Christ asserts his right, lest his paying this tribute should be misimproved to the weakening of his title as the Son of God, and the King of Israel, and should have looked like a disowning of it himself. These immunities of the children are to be extended no further than our Lord Jesus himself. God's children are freed by grace and adoption from the slavery of sin and Satan, but not from their subjection to civil magistrates in civil things; here the law of Christ is express; Let every soul (sanctified souls not excepted) be subject to the higher powers. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.

26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

1. For what reason Christ waived his privilege, and paid this tribute, though he was entitled to an exemption--Lest we should offend them. Few knew, as Peter did, that he was the Son of God; and it would have been a diminution to the honour of that great truth, which was yet a secret, to advance it now, to serve such a purpose as this. Therefore Christ drops that argument, and considers, that if he should refuse this payment, it would increase people's prejudice against him and his doctrine, and alienate their affections from him, and therefore he resolves to pay it. Note, Christian prudence and humility teach us, in many cases, to recede from our right, rather than give offence by insisting upon it. We must never decline our duty for fear of giving offence (Christ's preaching and miracles

offended them, yet he went on with him, Mt 15:12,13, better offend men than God); but we must sometimes deny ourselves in that which is our secular interest, rather than give offence; as Paul, 1Co 8:13,Ro 14:13.

2. What course he took for the payment of this tax; he furnished himself with money for it out of the mouth of a fish (Mt 17:27), wherein appears,

(a) The poverty of Christ; he had not fifteen pence at command to pay his tax with, though he cured so many that were diseased; it seems, he did all gratis; for our sakes he became poor, 2Co 8:9. In his ordinary expenses, he lived upon alms (Lu 8:3), and in extraordinary ones, he lived upon miracles. He did not order Judas to pay this out of the bag which he carried; that was for subsistence, and he would not order that for his particular use, which was intended for the benefit of the community.

(b) The power of Christ, in fetching money out of a fish's mouth for this purpose. Whether his omnipotence put it there, or his omniscience knew that it was there, it comes all to one; it was an evidence of his divinity, and that he is Lord of hosts. Those creatures that are most remote from man are at the command of Christ, even the fishes of the sea are under his feet (Ps 8:5); and to evidence his dominion in this lower world, and to accommodate himself to his present state of humiliation, he chose to take it out of a fish's mouth, when he could have taken it out of an angel's hand. Now observe,

[1.] Peter must catch the fish by angling. Even in miracles he would use means to encourage industry and endeavour. Peter has something to do, and it is in the way of his own calling too; to teach us diligence in the employment we are called to, and called in. Do we expect that Christ should give to us? Let us be ready to work for him.

[2.] The fish came up, with money in the mouth of it, which represents to us the reward of obedience in obedience. What work we do at Christ's command brings its own pay along with it: In keeping God's commands, as well as after keeping them, there is great reward, Ps 19:11. Peter was made a fisher of men, and those that he caught thus, came up; where the heart is opened to entertain Christ's word, the hand is open to encourage his ministers.

[3.] The piece of money was just enough to pay the tax for Christ and Peter. Thou shalt find a stater, the value of a Jewish shekel, which would pay the poll-tax for two, for it was half a shekel, Ex 30:13. Christ could as easily have commanded a bag of money as a piece of money; but he would teach us not to covet superfluities, but, having enough for our present occasions, therewith to be content, and not to distrust God, though we live but from hand to mouth. Christ made the fish his cash-keeper; and why may not we make God's providence our storehouse and treasury? If we have a competency for today, let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself. Christ paid for himself and Peter, because it is probable that here he only was assessed, and of him it was at this time demanded; perhaps the rest had paid already, or were to pay elsewhere. The papists make a great mystery of Christ's paying for Peter, as if this made him the head and representative of the whole church; whereas the payment of tribute for him was rather a sign of subjection than of superiority. His pretended successors pay no tribute, but exact it. Peter fished for this money, and therefore part of it went for his use. Those that are workers together with Christ in winning souls shall shine with him. Give it for thee and me. What Christ paid for himself was looked upon as a debt; what he paid for Peter was a courtesy to him. Note, it is a desirable thing, if God so please, to have wherewithal of this world's goods, not only to be just, but to be kind; not only to be charitable to the poor, but obliging to our friends. What is a great estate good for, but that it enables a man to do so much the more good?

Lastly, Observe, The evangelist records here the orders Christ gave to Peter, the warrant; the effect is not particularly mentioned, but

taken for granted, and justly; for, with Christ, saying and doing are the same thing.

Matthew-18

Who Is the Greatest?

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

As there never was a greater pattern of humility, so there never was a greater preacher of it, than Christ; he took all occasions to command it, to commend it, to his disciples and followers.

The occasion of this discourse concerning humility was an unbecoming contest among the disciples for precedency; they came to him, saying, among themselves (for they were ashamed to ask him, Mk 9:34), Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? They mean not, who by character (then the question had been good, that they might know what graces and duties to excel in), but who by name. They had heard much, and preached much, of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, his church in this world; but ass yet they were so far from having any clear notion of it, that they dreamt of a temporal kingdom, and the external pomp and power of it. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, that he should rise again, from whence they expected his kingdom would commence; and now they thought it was time to put in for their places in it; it is good, in such cases, to speak early. Upon other discourses of Christ to that purport, debates of this kind arose (Mt 20:19,20,Lu 22:22,24); he spoke many words of his sufferings, but only one of his glory; yet they fasten upon that, and overlook the other; and, instead of asking how they might have strength and grace to suffer with him, they ask him, "Who shall be highest in reigning with him." Note, Many love to hear and speak of privileges and glory, who are willing to pass by the thoughts of work and trouble. They look so much at the crown, that

they forget the yoke and the cross. So the disciples here did, when they asked, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

1. They suppose that all who have a place in that kingdom are great, for it is a kingdom of priests. Note, Those are truly great who are truly good; and they will appear so at last, when Christ shall own them as his, though ever so mean and poor in the world.

2. They suppose that there are degrees in this greatness. All the saints are honourable, but not all alike so; one star differs from another star in glory. All David's officers were not worthies, nor all his worthies of the first three.

3. They suppose it must be some of them, that must be prime ministers of state. To whom should King Jesus delight to do honour, but to them who had left all for him, and were now his companions in patience and tribulation?

4. They strive who it should be, each having some pretence or other to it. Peter was always the chief speaker, and already had the keys given him; he expects to be lord-chancellor, or lord-chamberlain of the household, and so to be the greatest. Judas had the bag, and therefore he expects to be lord-treasurer, which, though now he come last, he hopes, will then denominate him the greatest. Simon and Jude are nearly related to Christ, and they hope to take place of all the great officers of state, as princes of the blood. John is the beloved disciple, the favourite of the Prince, and therefore hopes to be the greatest. Andrew was first called, and why should not he be first preferred? Note, We are very apt to amuse and humour ourselves with foolish fancies of things that will never be.

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

The discourse itself, which is a just rebuke to the question, Who shall be greatest? We have abundant reason to think, that if Christ ever intended that Peter and his successors at Rome should be heads of the church, and his chief vicars on earth, having so fair an occasion given him, he would now have let his disciples know it; but so far is he from this, that his answer disallows and condemns

the thing itself. Christ will not lodge such an authority or supremacy any where in his church; whoever pretend to it are usurpers; instead of settling any of the disciples in this dignity, he warns them all not to put in for it.

Christ here teacheth them to be humble,

By a sign (Mt 18:2); He called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them. Christ often taught by signs or sensible representations (comparisons to the eye), as the prophets of old. Note, Humility is a lesson so hardly learned, that we have need by all ways and means to be taught it. When we look upon a little child, we should be put in mind of the use Christ made of this child. Sensible things must be improved to spiritual purposes. He set him in the midst of them; not that they might play with him, but that they might learn by him. Grown men, and great men, should not disdain the company of little children, or think it below them to take notice of them. They may either speak to them, and give instruction to them; or look upon them, and receive instruction from them. Christ himself, when a child, was in the midst of the doctors, Lu 2:46.

3 and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

By as sermon upon this sign; in which he shows them and us,
The necessity of humility, Mt 18:3. His preface is solemn, and commands both attention and assent; Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, say it, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Here observe,

[1.] What it is that he requires and insists upon.

First, "You must be converted, you must be of another mind, and in another frame and temper, must have other thoughts, both of yourselves and of the kingdom of heaven, before you be fit for a place in it. The pride, ambition, and affectation of honour and dominion, which appear in you, must be repented of, mortified, and

reformed, and you must come to yourselves." Note, Besides the first conversion of a soul from a state of nature to a state of grace, there are after-conversions from particular paths of backsliding, which are equally necessary to salvation. Every step out of the way by sin, must be a step into it again by repentance. When Peter repented of his denying his Master, he was converted.

Secondly, You must become as little children. Note, Converting grace makes us like little children, not foolish as children (1Co 14:20), nor fickle (Eph 4:14), nor playful (Mt 11:16); but, as children, we must desire the sincere milk of the word (1Pe 2:2); as children, we must be careful for nothing, but leave it to our heavenly Father to care for us (Mt 6:31); we must, as children, be harmless and inoffensive, and void of malice (1Co 14:20), governable, and under command (Ga 4:2); and (which is here chiefly intended) we must be humble as little children, who do not take state upon them, nor stand upon the punctilios of honour; the child of a gentleman will play with the child of a beggar (Ro 12:16), the child in rags, if it have the breast, is well enough pleased, and envies not the gaiety of the child in silk; little children have no great aims at great places, or projects to raise themselves in the world; they exercise not themselves in things too high for them; and we should in like manner behave, and quiet ourselves, Ps 131:1,2. As children are little in body and low in stature, so we must be little and low in spirit, and in our thoughts of ourselves. This is a temper which leads to other good dispositions; the age of childhood is the learning age.

[2.] What stress he lays upon this; Without this, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Note, Disciples of Christ have need to be kept in awe by threatenings, that they may fear lest they seem to come short, Heb 4:1 The disciples, when they put that question (Mt 18:1), thought themselves sure of the kingdom of heaven; but Christ awakens them to be jealous of themselves. They were ambitious of being greatest in the kingdom of heaven; Christ tells them, that, except they came to a better temper, they should never come thither. Note, many that set up for great ones in the church,

prove not only little, but nothing, and are found to have no part or lot in the matter. Our Lord designs here to show the great danger of pride and ambition; whatever profession men make, if they allow themselves in this sin, they will be rejected both from God's tabernacle and from his holy hill. Pride threw the angels that sinned out of heaven, and will keep us out, if we be not converted from it. They that are lifted up with pride, fall into the condemnation of the devil; to prevent this, we must become as little children, and, in order to do that, must be born again, must put on the new man, must be like the holy child Jesus; so he is called, even after his ascension, Ac 4:27.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

He shows the honour and advancement that attend humility (Mt 18:4), thus furnishing a direct but surprising answer to their question. He that humbles himself as a little child, though he may fear that hereby he will render himself contemptible, as men of timid minds, who thereby throw themselves out of the way of preferment, yet the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Note, The humblest Christians are the best Christians, and most like to Christ, and highest in his favour; are best disposed for the communications of divine grace, and fittest to serve God in this world, and enjoy him in another. They are great, for God overlooks heaven and earth, to look on such; and certainly those are to be most respected and honoured in the church that are most humble and self-denying; for, though they least seek it, they best deserve it.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Those that thus humble themselves will be afraid,

[1.] That nobody will receive them; but (Mt 18:5), Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. Whatever kindnesses are done to such, Christ takes as done to himself. Whoso entertains a meek and humble Christian, keeps him in countenance, will not let him lose by his modesty, takes him into his love and friendship, and society and care, and studies to do him a kindness; and doth this in Christ's name, for his sake, because he bears the image of Christ, serves Christ, and because Christ has received

him; this shall be accepted and recompensed as an acceptable piece of respect to Christ. Observe, Though it be but one such little child that is received in Christ's name, it shall be accepted. Note, The tender regard Christ has to his church extends itself to every particular member, even the meanest; not only to the whole family, but to every child of the family; the less they are in themselves, to whom we show kindness, the more there is of good will in it to Christ; the less it is for their sakes, the more it is for his; and he takes it accordingly. If Christ were personally among us, we think we should never do enough to welcome him; the poor, the poor in spirit, we have always with us, and they are his receivers. See Mt 25:35-40.

[2.] They will be afraid that every body will abuse them; the basest men delight to trample upon the humble; Vexat censura columbas--Censure pounces on doves. This objection he obviates (Mt 18:6), where he warns all people, as they will answer it at their utmost peril, not to offer any injury to one of Christ's little ones. This word makes a wall of fire about them; he that touches them, touches the apple of God's eye.

Observe, First, The crime supposed; offending one of these little ones that believe in Christ. Their believing in Christ, though they be little ones, unites them to him, and interests him in their cause, so that, as they partake of the benefit of his sufferings, he also partakes in the wrong of theirs. Even the little ones that believe have the same privileges with the great ones, for they have all obtained like precious faith. There are those that offend these little ones, by drawing them to sin (1Co 8:10,11), grieving and vexing their righteous souls, discouraging them, taking occasion from their mildness to make a prey of them in their persons, families, goods, or good name. Thus the best men have often met with the worst treatment in this world.

Observe, Secondly, The punishment of this crime; intimated in that word, Better for him that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. The sin is so heinous, and the ruin proportionably so great, that he

had better undergo the sorest punishments inflicted on the worst of malefactors, which can only kill the body. Note,

1. Hell is worse than the depth of the sea; for it is a bottomless pit, and it is a burning lake. The depth of the sea is only killing, but hell is tormenting. We meet with one that had comfort in the depth of the sea, it was Jonah (Mt 2:2,4,9); but never any had the least grain or glimpse of comfort in hell, nor will have to eternity.

2 The irresistible irrevocable doom of the great Judge will sink sooner and surer, and bind faster, than a mill-stone hanged about the neck. It fixes a great gulf, which can never be broken through, Lu 16:26. Offending Christ's little ones, though by omission, is assigned as the reason of that dreadful sentence, Go ye cursed, which will at last be the doom of proud persecutors.

Temptations to Sin

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

If people want to be disciples of Jesus, they should not despise those who appear weak and insignificant. Indeed, they should take severe action against themselves to remove from their lives anything that might cause them to follow their own desires instead of submitting to Jesus. Wrong desires prevent people from receiving Jesus and lead only to hell (Mat_18:6-9; Mar_9:42-48). God will test and cleanse the disciples, but if they want to be useful for him in leading people to Jesus, they must cease their quarrelling and make sure that they themselves are pure in heart (Mar_9:49-50).

Jesus' disciples should have a loving concern for the weak, the helpless and the lost. They should not want any to miss out on his salvation (Mat_18:10-14). They must love others, and not act like those who tried to stop a man from casting out demons in Jesus' name because he did not belong to Jesus' apostolic group. The man

feared God, and God used him to deliver people from the power of evil. He was not an enemy of Jesus, and the apostles were not to despise him or hinder him in his work. If people do acts of kindness to others, and do them with the right motives, God will reward them no matter how insignificant those acts may appear to be (Mar_9:38-41; Luk_9:49-50).

It were better for him that a millstone, etc. Mills anciently were either turned by hand, Mt 24:41 or by beasts, chiefly by mules. These were of the larger kind; and the original words denote that it was this kind that was intended. This was one mode of capital punishment practised by the Greeks, Syrians, Romans, and by some other surrounding nations. The meaning is, it would be better for him to die before he had committed the sin. To injure, or to cause to sin, the feeblest Christian, will be regarded as a most serious offence, and will be punished accordingly.

7 Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!

Our Savior here speaks of offences, or scandals,

In general, Mt 18:7. Having mentioned the offending of little ones, he takes occasion to speak more generally of offences. That is an offence,

1. Which occasions guilt, which by enticement or affrightment tends to draw men from that which is good to that which is evil.

2. Which occasions grief, which makes the heart of the righteous sad. Now, concerning offences, Christ here tells them,

(a) That they were certain things; It must needs be, that offences come. When we are sure there is danger, we should be the better armed. Not that Christ's word necessitates any man to offend, but it is a prediction upon a view of the causes; considering the subtlety and malice of Satan, the weakness and depravity of men's hearts, and the foolishness that is found there, it is morally impossible but

that there should be offences; and God has determined to permit them for wise and holy ends, that both they which are perfect, and they which are not, may be made manifest. See 1Co 11:19,Da 11:35. Being told, before, that there will be seducers, tempters, persecutors, and many bad examples, let us stand upon our guard, Mt 24:24,Ac 20:29,30.

(b) That they would be woeful things, and the consequence of them fatal. Here is a dou

[1.] A woe to the careless and unguarded, to whom the offence is given; Woe to the world because of offences. The obstructions and oppositions given to faith and holiness in all places are the bane and plague of mankind, and the ruin of thousands. This present world is an evil world, it is so full of offences, of sins, and snares, and sorrows; a dangerous road we travel, full of stumbling-blocks, precipices, and false guides. Woe to the world. As for those whom God hath chosen and called out of the world, and delivered from it, they are preserved by the power of God from the prejudice of these offences, are helped over all these stones of stumbling. They that love God's law have great peace, and nothing shall offend them, Ps 119:165.

[2.] A woe to the wicked, who wilfully give the offence; But woe to that man by whom the offence comes. Though it must needs be, that the offence will come, that will be no excuse for the offenders. Note, Though God makes the sins of sinners to serve his purposes, that will not secure them from his wrath; and the guilt will be laid at the door of those who give the offence, though they also fall under a woe who take it. Note, They who any way hinder the salvation of others, will find their own condemnation the more intolerable, like Jeroboam, who sinned, and made Israel to sin. This woe is the moral of that judicial law (Ex 21:33-22:6), that he who opened the pit, and kindled the fire, was accountable for all the damage that ensued. The antichristian generation, by whom came

the great offence, will fall under this woe, for their delusion of sinners (2Th 2:11,12), and their persecutions of saints (Re 17:1,2,6), for the righteous God will reckon with those who ruin the eternal interests of precious souls, and the temporal interests of precious saints; for precious in the sight of the Lord is the blood of souls and the blood of saints; and men will be reckoned with, not only for their doings, but for the fruit of their doings, the mischief done by them.

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

In particular, Christ here speaks of offences given,

1. By us to ourselves, which is expressed by our hand or foot offending us; in such a case, it must be cut off, Mt 18:8,9. This Christ had said before (Mt 5:29,30), where it especially refers to seventh-commandment sins; here it is taken more generally. Note, Those hard sayings of Christ, which are displeasing to flesh and blood, need to be repeated to us again and again, and all little enough. Now observe,

(a) What it is that is here enjoined. We must part with an eye, or a hand, or a foot, that is, that, whatever it is, which is dear to us, when it proves unavoidably an occasion of sin to us. Note,

[1.] Many prevailing temptations to sin arise from within ourselves; our own eyes and hands offend us; if there were never a devil to tempt us, we should be drawn away of our own lust: nay, those things which in themselves are good, and may be used as instruments of good, even those, through the corruptions of our hearts, prove snares to us, incline us to sin, and hinder us in duty.

[2.] In such a case, we must, as far as lawfully we may, part with that which we cannot keep without being entangled in sin by it. First, It is certain, the inward lust must be mortified, though it be dear to us as an eye, or a hand. The flesh, with its affections and lusts, must be mortified, Ga 5:24. The body of sin must be destroyed; corrupt inclinations and appetites must be checked and crossed; the beloved lust, that has been rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be abandoned with abhorrence. Secondly, The outward occasions of sin must be avoided, though we thereby put as great a violence upon ourselves as it would be to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye. When Abraham quitted his native country, for fear of being ensnared in the idolatry of it, and when Moses quitted Pharaoh's court, for fear of being entangled in the sinful pleasures of it, there was a right hand cut off. We must think nothing too dear to part with, for the keeping of a good conscience.

(b) Upon what inducement this is required; It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to be cast into hell. The argument is taken from the future state, from heaven and hell; thence are fetched the most cogent dissuasives from sin. The argument is the same with that of the apostle, Ro 8:13.

[1.] If we live after the flesh, we shall die; having two eyes, no breaches made upon the body of sin, inbred corruption like Adonijah never displeased, we shall be cast into hell-fire.

[2.] If we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live; that is meant by our entering into life maimed, that is, the body of sin maimed; and it is but maimed at the best, while we are in this world. If the right hand of the old man be cut off, and its right eye be plucked out, its chief policies blasted and powers broken, it is well; but there is still an eye and a hand remaining, with which it will struggle. They that are Christ's have nailed the flesh to the cross, but it is not yet dead; its life is prolonged, but its dominion taken away (Da 7:12), and the deadly wound given it, that shall not be healed.

1. Concerning offences given by us to others, especially Christ's little ones, which we are here charged to take heed of, pursuant to what he had said, Mt 18:6. Observe,

The caution itself; Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones. This is spoken to the disciples. As Christ will be displeased with enemies of his church, if they wrong any of the members of it, even the least, so he will be displeased with the great ones of the church, if they despise the little ones of it. "You that are striving who shall be greatest, take heed lest in this contest you despise the little ones." We may understand it literally of little children; of them Christ was speaking, Mt 18:2,4. The infant seed of the faithful belong to the family of Christ, and are not to be despised. Or, figuratively; true but weak believers are these little ones, who in their outward condition, or the frame of their spirits, are like little children, the lambs of Christ's flock.

[1.] We must not despise them, not think meanly of them, as lambs despised, Job 12:5. We must not make a jest of their infirmities, not look upon them with contempt, not conduct ourselves scornfully or disdainfully toward them, as if we cared not what became of them; we must not say, "Though they be offended, and grieved, and stumble, what is that to us?" Nor should we make a slight matter of doing that which will entangle and perplex them. This despising of the little ones is what we are largely cautioned against, Ro 14:3,10,15,20,21. We must not impose upon the consciences of others, nor bring them into subjection to our humours, as they do who say to men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over. There is a respect owing to the conscience of every man who appears to be conscientious.

[2.] We must take heed that we do not despise them; we must be afraid of the sin, and be very cautious what we say and do, lest we should through inadvertency give offence to Christ's little ones, lest we put contempt upon them, without being aware of it. There were those that hated them, and cast them out, and yet said, Let the Lord

be glorified. And we must be afraid of the punishment; "Take heed of despising them, for it is at your peril if you do."

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

MHC commentary:
The reasons to enforce the caution. We must not look upon these little ones as contemptible, because really they are considerable. Let not earth despise those whom heaven respects; let not those be looked upon by us with respect, as his favourites. To prove that the little ones which believe in Christ are worthy to be respected, consider,

[1.] The ministration of the good angels about them; In heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father. This Christ saith to us, and we may take it upon his word, who came from heaven to let us know what is done there by the world of angels. Two things he lets us know concerning them,

First, That they are the little ones' angels. God's angels are theirs; for all his is ours, if we be Christ's. 1Co 3:22. They are theirs; for they have a charge concerning them to minister for their good (Heb 1:14), to pitch their tents about them, and bear them up in their arms. Some have imagined that every particular saint has a guardian angel; but why should we suppose this, when we are sure that every particular saint, when there is occasion, has a guard of angels? This is particularly applied here to the little ones, because they are most despised and most exposed. They have but little that they can call their own, but they can look by faith on the heavenly hosts, and call them theirs. While the great ones of the world have honourable men for their retinue and guards, the little ones of the church are attended with glorious angels; which bespeaks not only their dignity, but the danger those run themselves upon, who

despise and abuse them. It is bad being enemies to those who are so guarded; and it is good having God for our God, for then we have his angels for our angels.

Secondly, That they always behold the face of the Father in heaven. This bespeaks,

1 The angels' continual felicity and honour. The happiness of heaven consists in the vision of God, seeing him face to face as he is, beholding his beauty; this the angels have without interruption; when they are ministering to us on earth, yet even then by contemplation they behold the face of God, for they are full of eyes within. Gabriel, when speaking to Zecharias, yet stands in the presence of God, Re 4:8,Lu 1:19. The expression intimates, as some think, the special dignity and honour of the little ones' angels; the prime ministers of state are said to see the king's face (Es 1:14), as if the strongest angels had the charge of the weakest saints.

2. It bespeaks their continual readiness to minister to the saints. They behold the face of God, expecting to receive orders from him what to do for the good of the saints. As the eyes of the servant are to the hand of his master, ready to go or come upon the least beck, so the eyes of the angels are upon the face of God, waiting for the intimations of his will, which those winged messengers fly swiftly to fulfil; they go and return like a flash of lightning, Eze 1:14. If we would behold the face of God in glory hereafter, as the angels do (Lu 20:36), we must behold the face of God now, in readiness to our duty, as they do, Ac 9:6.

JFB commentary:
A difficult verse; but perhaps the following may be more than an illustration:—Among men, those who nurse and rear the royal children, however humble in themselves, are allowed free entrance with their charge, and a degree of familiarity which even the highest state ministers dare not assume. Probably our Lord means that, in virtue of their charge over His disciples (Heb 1:13; Joh 1:51), the angels have errands to the throne, a welcome there, and a dear

familiarity in dealing with "His Father which is in heaven," which on their own matters they could not assume.

PNT commentary:

In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father. The doctrine of guardian angels is emphatically taught in the Scriptures. See 1Ki 19:5-8 Ps 91:11 Heb 1:13 Ac 27:23. Who can afford to despise the children who have representatives right at the throne of God?

Wesley Commentary:

See that ye despise not one of these little ones - As if they were beneath your notice. Be careful to receive and not to offend, the very weakest believer in Christ: for as inconsiderable as some of these may appear to thee, the very angels of God have a peculiar charge over them: even those of the highest order, who continually appear at the throne of the Most High. To behold the face of God seems to signify the waiting near his throne; and to be an allusion to the office of chief ministers in earthly courts, who daily converse with their princes.

11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

The gracious design of Christ concerning them (Mt 18:11); For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. This is a reason, First, Why the little ones' angels have such a charge concerning them, and attend upon them; it is in pursuance of Christ's design to save them. Note, The ministration of angels is founded in the mediation of Christ; through him angels are reconciled to us; and, when they celebrated God's goodwill toward men, to it they annexed their own. Secondly, Why they are not to be despised; because Christ came to save them, to save them that are lost, the little ones that are lost in their own eyes (Isa 66:3), that are at a loss within themselves. Or rather, the children of men. Note,

1. Our souls by nature are lost souls; as a traveller is lost, that is out of his way, as a convicted prisoner is lost. God lost the service of fallen man, lost the honour he should have had from him.

2. Christ's errand into the world was to save that which was lost, to reduce us to our allegiance, restore us to our work, reinstate us in our privileges, and so to put us into the right way that leads to our great end; to save those that are spiritually lost from being eternally so.

3. This is a good reason why the least and weakest believers should not be despised or offended. If Christ put such a value upon them, let us not undervalue them. If he denied himself so much for their salvation, surely we should deny ourselves for their edification and consolation. See this argument urged, Ro 14:15,1Co 8:11,12. Nay, if Christ came into the world to save souls, and his heart is so much upon that work, he will reckon severely with those that obstruct and hinder it, by obstructing the progress of those that are setting their faces heavenward, and so thwart his great design.

12 How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep,* than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

The tender regard which our heavenly Father has to these little ones, and his concern for their welfare. This is illustrated by a comparison, Mt 18:12-14. Observe the gradation of the argument; the angels of God are their servants, the Son of God is their Saviour, and, to complete their honour, God himself is their Friend. None shall pluck them out of my Father's hand, Joh 10:28. Here is,

The comparison, Mt 18:12,13. The owner that had lost one sheep out of a hundred, does not slight it, but diligently enquires after it, is greatly pleased when he has found it, and has in that a sensible and affecting joy, more than in the ninety and nine that wandered not. The fear he was in of losing that one, and the surprise of finding it, add to the joy. Now this is applicable,

1. To the state of fallen man in general; he is strayed like a lost sheep, the angels that stood were as the ninety-nine that never went astray; wandering man is sought upon the mountains, which Christ, in great fatigue, traversed in pursuit of him, and he is found; which is a matter of joy. Greater joy there is in heaven for returning sinners than for remaining angels.

2. To particular believers, who are offended and put out of their way by the stumbling-blocks that are laid in their way, or the wiles of those who seduce them out of the way. Now though but one of a hundred should hereby be driven off, as sheep easily are, yet that one shall be looked after with a great deal of care, the return of it welcomed with a great deal of pleasure; and therefore the wrong done to it, no doubt, will be reckoned for with a great deal of displeasure. If there be joy in heaven for the finding of one of these little ones, there is wrath in heaven for the offending of them. Note, God is graciously concerned, not only for his flock in general, but for every lamb, or sheep, that belongs to it. Though they are many, yet out of those many he can easily miss one, for he is a great Shepherd, but not so easily lose it, for he is a good Shepherd, and takes a more particular cognizance of his flock than ever any did; for he calls his own sheep by name, Joh 10:3. See a full exposition of this parable, Eze 34:2,10,16,19.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

The application of this comparison (Mt 18:14); It is not the will of your Father, that one of these little ones should perish. More is implied than is expressed. It is not his will that any should perish, but,

1. It is his will, that these little ones should be saved; it is the will of his design and delight: he has designed it, and set his heart upon it, and he will effect it; it is the will of his precept, that all should do what they can to further it, and nothing to hinder it.

2. This care extends itself to every particular member of the flock, even the meanest. We think if but one or two be offended and ensnared, it is no great matter, we need not mind it; but God's thoughts of love and tenderness are above ours.

3. It is intimated that those who do any thing by which any of these little ones are brought into danger of perishing, contradict the will of God, and highly provoke him; and though they cannot prevail in it, yet they will be reckoned with for it by him, who, in his saints, as in other things, is jealous of his honour, and will not bear to have it trampled on. See Isa 3:15, What mean ye, that ye beat my people? Ps 76:8,9.

Observe, Christ called God, Mt 18:19, my Father which is in heaven; he calls him, Mt 18:14, your Father which is in heaven; intimating that he is not ashamed to call his poor disciples brethren; for have not he and they one Father? I ascend to my Father and your Father (Joh 20:17); therefore ours because his. This intimates likewise the ground of the safety of his little ones; that God is their Father, and is therefore inclined to succour them. A father takes care of all his children, but is particularly tender of the little ones, Ge 33:13. He is their Father in heaven, a place of prospect, and therefore he sees all the indignities offered them; and a place of power, therefore he is able to avenge them. This comforts offended little ones, that their Witness is in heaven (Job 16:19), their Judge is there, Ps 68:5.

How, then, can He but visit for those "offenses" which endanger the souls of these little ones?

A Brother Who Sins

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

Christ, having cautioned his disciples not to give offence, comes next to direct them what they must do in case of offences given them; which may be understood either of personal injuries, and then these

directions are intended for the preserving of the peace of the church; or of public scandals, and then they are intended for the preserving of the purity and beauty of the church. Let us consider it both ways.

Let us apply it to the quarrels that happen, upon any account, among Christians. If thy brother trespass against thee, by grieving thy soul (1Co 8:12), by affronting thee, or putting contempt or abuse upon thee; if he blemish thy good name by false reports or tale-bearing; if he encroach on thy rights, or be any way injurious to thee in thy estate; if he be guilty of any of those trespasses that are specified, Le 6:2,3; if he transgress the laws of justice, charity, or relative duties; these are trespasses against us, and often happen among Christ's disciples, and sometimes, for want of prudence, are of very mischievous consequence. Now observe what is the rule prescribed in this case,

1. Go, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Let this be compared with, and explained by, Le 19:17, Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; that is, "If thou hast conceived a displeasure at thy brother for any injury he hath done thee, do not suffer thy resentments to ripen into a secret malice (like a wound, which is most dangerous when it bleed inwardly), but give vent to them in a mild and grave admonition, let them so spend themselves, and they will expire the sooner; do not go and rail against him behind his back, but thou shalt in any ways reprove him. If he has indeed done thee a considerable wrong, endeavour to make him sensible of it, but let the rebuke be private, between thee and him alone; if thou wouldest convince him, do not expose him, for that will but exasperate him, and make the reproof look like a revenge." this agrees with Pr 25:8,9, "Go not forth hastily to strive, but debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, argue it calmly and amicably; and if he shall hear thee, well and good, thou hast gained thy brother, there is an end of the controversy, and it is a happy end; let no more be said of it, but let the falling out of friends be the renewing of friendship."

2. "If he will not hear thee, if he will not own himself in a fault, nor come to an agreement, yet do not despair, but try what he will say to it, if thou take one or two or more, not only to be witnesses of what passes, but to reason the case further with him; he will be the more likely to hearken to them because they are disinterested; and if reason will rule him, the word of reason in the mouth of two or three witnesses will be better spoken to him" (Plus vident oculi quam oculus--Many eyes see more than one), "and more regarded by him, and perhaps it will influence him to acknowledge his error, and to say, I repent."

3. "If he shall neglect to hear them, and will not refer the matter to their arbitration, then tell it to the church, to the ministers, elders, or other officers, or the most considerable persons in the congregation you belong to, make them the referees to accommodate the matter, and do not presently appeal to the magistrate, or fetch a writ for him." This is fully explained by the apostle (1Co 6:1-20), where he reproves those that went to law before the unjust, and not before the saints (Mt 18:1), and would have the saints to judge those small matters (Mt 18:2) that pertain to this life, Mt 18:3. If you ask, "Who is the church that must be told?" the apostle directs there (Mt 18:5), Is there not a wise man among you? Those of the church that are presumed to be most capable of determining such matters; and he speaks ironically, when he says (Mt 18:4), "Set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church; those, if there be no better, those, rather than suffer an irreconcileable breach between two church members." This rule was then in a special manner requisite, when the civil government was in the hands of such as were not only aliens, but enemies.

4. "If he will not hear the church, will not stand to their award, but persists in the wrong he has done thee, and proceeds to do thee further wrong, let him be to thee as a heathen man, and a publican; take the benefit of the law against him, but let that always be the last remedy; appeal not to the courts of justice till thou hast first tried all other means to compromise the matter in variance. Or thou mayest, if thou wilt, break off thy friendship and familiarity with him; though

thou must by no means study revenge, yet thou mayest choose whether thou wilt have any dealings with him, at least, in such a way as may give him an opportunity of doing the like again. Thou wouldest have healed him, wouldest have preserved his friendship, but he would not, and so has forfeited it." If a man cheat and abuse me once, it is his fault; if twice, it is my own.

If a professed Christian is wronged by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him his conduct. This would generally have all the desired effect with a true Christian, and the parties would be reconciled. The principles of these rules may be practised every where, and under all circumstances, though they are too much neglected by all. But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples!

16 But if he will not hear *thee, then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Let us apply it to scandalous sins, which are an offence to the little ones, of bad example to those that are weak and pliable, and of great grief to those that are weak and timorous. Christ, having taught us to indulge the weakness of our brethren, here cautions us not to indulge their wickedness under pretence of that. Christ, designing to erect a church for himself in the world, here took care for the preservation, 1. Of its purity, that it might have an expulsive faculty, a power to cleanse and clear itself, like a fountain of living waters, which is necessary as long as the net of the gospel brings up both good fish and bad. 2. Of its peace and order, that every member may know his place and duty, and the purity of it may be preserved in a regular way and not tumultuously. Now let us see,

(1.) What is the case supposed? If thy brother trespass against thee.

[1.] "The offender is a brother, one that is in Christian communion, that is baptized, that hears the word, and prays with thee, with whom thou joinest in the worship of God, statedly or occasionally." Note,

Church discipline is for church members. Them that are without God judges, 1Co 5:12,13. When any trespass is done against us, it is good to remember that the trespasser is a brother, which furnishes us with qualifying consideration.

[2.] "The offense is a trespass against thee; if thy brother sin against thee (so the word is), if he do any thing which is offensive to thee as a Christian." Note, A gross sin against God is a trespass against his people, who have a true concern for his honour. Christ and believers have twisted interests; what is done against them Christ takes as done against himself, and what is done against him they cannot but take as done against themselves. The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me, Ps 69:9.

(2.) What is to be done in this case. We have here,

[1.] The rules prescribed, Mt 18:15-17. Proceed in this method:

First, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Do not stay till he comes to thee, but go to him, as the physician visits the patient, and the shepherd goes after the lost sheep." Note, We should think no pains too much to take for the recovering of a sinner to repentance. "Tell him his fault, remind him of what he has done, and of the evil of it, show him his abominations." Note, People are loth to see their faults, and have need to be told of them. Though the fact is plain, and the fault too, yet they must be put together with application. Great sins often amuse conscience, and for the present stupify and silence it; and there is need of help to awaken it. David's own heart smote him, when he had cut off Saul's skirt, and when he had numbered the people; but (which is very strange) we do not find that it smote him in the matter of Uriah, till Nathan told him, Thou art the man.

"Tell him his fault, elenxon auton--argue the case with him" (so the word signifies); "and do it with reason and argument, not with passion." Where the fault is plain and great, the person proper for us to deal with, and we have an opportunity for it, and there is no apparent danger of doing more hurt than good, we must with meekness and faithfulness tell people of what is amiss in them. Christian reproof is an ordinance of Christ for the bringing of sinners to repentance, and must be managed as an ordinance. "Let the reproof be private, between thee and him alone; that it may appear you seek not his reproach, but his repentance." Note, It is a good rule, which should ordinarily be observed among Christians, not to speak of our brethren's faults to others, till we have first spoken of them to themselves, this would make less reproaching and more reproving; that is, less sin committed, and more duty done. It will be likely to work upon an offender, when he sees his reprover concerned not only for his salvation, in telling him his fault, but for his reputation in telling him of it privately.

"If he shall hear thee" --that is, "heed thee--if he be wrought upon by the reproof, it is well, thou hast gained thy brother; thou hast helped to save him from sin and ruin, and it will be thy credit and comfort," Jam 5:19,20. Note, The converting of a soul is the winning of that soul (Pr 11:30); and we should covet it, and labour after it, as gain to us; and, if the loss of a soul be a great loss, the gain of a soul is sure no small gain.

Secondly, If that doth not prevail, then take with thee one or two more, Mt 18:16. Note, We must not be weary of well-doing, though we see not presently the good success of it. "If he will not hear thee, yet do not give him up as in a desperate case; say not, It will be to no purpose to deal with him any further; but go on in the use of other means; even those that harden their necks must be often reproved, and those that oppose themselves instructed in meekness." In work of this kind we must travail in birth again (Ga 4:19); and it is after many pains and throes that the child is born.

"Take with thee one or two more; 1. To assist thee; they may speak some pertinent convincing word which thou didst not think of, and may manage the matter with more prudence than thou didst." note, Christians should see their need of help in doing good, and pray in the aid one of another; as in other things, so in giving reproofs, that the duty may be done, and may be done well. 2. "To affect him; he will be the more likely to be humbled for his fault, when he sees it witnessed against by two or three." De 19:15. Note, Those should think it high time to repent and reform, who see their misconduct become a general offence and scandal. Though in such a world as this it is rare to find one good whom all men speak well of, yet it is more rare to find one good whom all men speak ill of. 3. "To be witnesses of his conduct, in case the matter should afterward be brought before the church." None should come under the censure of the church as obstinate and contumacious, till it be very well proved that they are so.

Thirdly, If he neglect to hear them, and will not be humbled, then tell it to the church, Mt 18:17. There are some stubborn spirits to whom the likeliest means of conviction prove ineffectual; yet such must not be given over as incurable, but let the matter be made more public, and further help called in. Note, 1. Private admonitions must always go before public censures; if gentler methods will do the work, those that are more rough and severe must not be used, Tit 3:10. Those that will be reasoned out of their sins, need not be shamed out of them. Let God's work be done effectually, but with as little noise as may be; his kingdom comes with power, but not with observation. But, 2. Where private admonition does not prevail, there public censure must take place. The church must receive the complaints of the offended, and rebuke the sins of the offenders, and judge between them, after an impartial enquiry made into the merits of the cause.

Tell it to the church. It is a thousand pities that this appointment of Christ, which was designed to end differences, and remove offences, should itself be so much a matter of debate, and occasion differences

and offences, through the corruption of men's hearts. What church must be told--is the great question. The civil magistrate, say some; The Jewish sanhedrim then in being, say others; but by what follows, Mt 18:18, it is plain that he means a Christian church, which, though not yet formed, was now in the embryo. "Tell it to the church, that particular church in the communion of which the offender lives; make the matter known to those of that congregation who are by consent appointed to receive informations of that kind. Tell it to the guides and governors of the church, the minister or ministers, the elders or deacons, or (if such the constitution of the society be) tell it to the representatives or heads of the congregation, or to all the members of it; let them examine the matter and, if they find the complaint frivolous and groundless, let them rebuke the complainant; if they find it just, let them rebuke the offender, and call him to repentance, and this will be likely to put an edge and an efficacy upon the reproof, because given," 1. "With greater solemnity," and, 2. "With greater authority." It is an awful thing to receive a reproof from a church, from a minister, a reprover by office; and therefore it is the more regarded by such as pay any deference to an institution of Christ and his ambassadors.

Fourthly, "If he neglect to hear the church, if he slight the admonition, and will neither be ashamed of his faults, nor amend them, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and publican; let him be cast out of the communion of the church, secluded from special ordinances, degraded from the dignity of a church member, let him be put under disgrace, and let the members of the society be warned to withdraw from him, that he may be ashamed of his sin, and they may not be infected by it, or made chargeable with it." Those who put contempt on the orders and rules of a society, and bring reproach upon it, forfeit the honours and privileges of it, and are justly laid aside till they repent and submit, and reconcile themselves to it again. Christ has appointed this method for the vindicating of the church's honour, the preserving of its purity, and the conviction and reformation of those that are scandalous. But observe, he doth not

say, "Let him be to thee as a devil or damned spirit, as one whose case is desperate," but "as a heathen and a publican, as one in a capacity of being restored and received in again. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The directions given to the church of Corinth concerning the incestuous person, agree with the rules here; he must be taken away from among them (1Co 5:2), must be delivered to Satan; for if he be cast out of Christ's kingdom, he is looked upon as belonging to Satan's kingdom; they must not keep company with him, Mt 18:11,13. But when by this he is humbled and reclaimed, he must be welcomed into communion again, and all shall be well.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Here is a warrant signed for the ratification of all the church's proceedings according to these rules, Mt 18:18. What was said before to Peter is here said to all the disciples, and in them to all the faithful office-bearers in the church, to the world's end. While ministers preach the word of Christ faithfully, and in their government of the church strictly adhere to his laws (clave non errante--the key not turning the wrong way), they may be assured that he will own them, and stand by them, and will ratify what they say and do, so that it shall be taken as said and done by himself. He will own them,

First, In their sentence of suspension; Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. If the censures of the church duly follow the institution of Christ, his judgments will follow the censures of the church, his spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all other, such as the rejected Jews fell under (Ro 11:8), a spirit of slumber; for Christ will not suffer his own ordinances to be trampled upon, but will say amen to the righteous sentences which the church passes on obstinate offenders. How light soever proud scorners may make of the censures of the church, let them know that they are confirmed in the court of heaven; and it is in vain for them to appeal to that court, for judgment is there already given against them. They that are shut out from the congregation of the righteous now shall

not stand in it in the great day, Ps 1:5. Christ will not own those as his, nor receive them to himself, whom the church has duly delivered to Satan; but, if through error or envy the censures of the church be unjust, Christ will graciously find those who are so cast out, Joh 9:34,35.

Secondly, In their sentence of absolution; Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Note, 1. No church censures bind so fast, but that, upon the sinner's repentance and reformation, they may and must be loosed again. Sufficient is the punishment which has attained its end, and the offender must then be forgiven and comforted, 2Co 2:6. There is no unpassable gulf fixed but that between hell and heaven. 2. Those who, upon their repentance, are received by the church into communion again may take the comfort of their absolution in heaven, if their hearts be upright with God. As suspension is for the terror of the obstinate, so absolution is for the encouragement of the penitent. St. Paul speaks in the person of Christ, when he saith, To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also, 2Co 2:10.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Now it is a great honour which Christ here puts upon the church, that he will condescend not only to take cognizance of their sentences, but to confirm them; and in the following verses we have two things laid down as ground of this.

(a) God's readiness to answer the church's prayers (Mt 18:19); If two of you shall agree harmoniously, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them. Apply this,

[1.] In general, to all the requests of the faithful praying seed of Jacob; they shall not seek God's face in vain. Many promises we have in scripture of a gracious answer to the prayers of faith, but this gives a particular encouragement to the joint-prayer; "the requests which two of you agree in, much more which many agree in." No law of heaven limits the number of petitioners. Note, Christ has been pleased to put an honour upon, and to allow a special

efficacy in, the joint-prayers of the faithful, and the common supplications they make to God. If they join in the same prayer, if they meet by appointment to come together to the throne of grace on some special errand, or, though at a distance, agree in some particular matter of prayer, they shall speed well. Besides the general regard God has to the prayers of the saints, he is particularly pleased with their union and communion in those prayers. See 2Ch 5:13,Ac 4:31.

[2.] In particular, to those requests that are put up to God about binding and loosing; to which this promise seems more especially to refer. Observe, First, That the power of church discipline is not here lodged in the hand of a single person, but two, at least, are supposed to be concerned in it. When the incestuous Corinthian was to be cast out, the church was gathered together (1Co 5:4), and it was a punishment inflicted of many, 2Co 2:6. In an affair of such importance, two are better than one, and in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. Secondly, It is good to see those who have the management of church discipline, agreeing in it. Heats and animosities, among those whose work it is to remove offences, will be the greatest offence of all. Thirdly, Prayer must evermore go along with church discipline. Pass no sentence, which you cannot in faith ask God to confirm. The binding and loosing spoken of (Mt 16:19) was done by preaching, this by praying. Thus the whole power of gospel ministers is resolved into the word and prayer, to which they must wholly give themselves. He doth not say, "If you shall agree to sentence and decree a thing, it shall be done" (as if ministers were judges and lords); but, "If you agree to ask it of God, from him you shall obtain it." Prayer must go along with all our endeavours for the conversion of sinners; see Jam 5:16. Fourthly, The unanimous petitions of the church of God, for the ratification of their just censures, shall be heard in heaven, and obtain an answer; "It shall be done, it shall be bound and loosed in heaven; God will set his fiat to the appeals and applications you make to him." If Christ (who here speaks as one having authority) say, "It shall be done," we may be assured that it is done, though we see not the effect in the way that we look for it. God doth especially own and accept us, when we are praying for those that have

offended him and us. The Lord turned the captivity of Job, not when he prayed for himself, but when he prayed for his friends who had trespassed against him.

(b) The presence of Christ in the assemblies of Christians, Mt 18:20. Every believer has the presence of Christ with him; but the promise here refers to the meetings where two or three are gathered in his name, not only for discipline, but for religious worship, or any act of Christian communion. Assemblies of Christians for holy purposes are hereby appointed, directed, and encouraged.

[1.] They are hereby appointed; the church of Christ in the world exists most visibly in religious assemblies; it is the will of Christ that these should be set up, and kept up, for the honour of God, the edification of men, and the preserving of a face of religion upon the world. When God intends special answers to prayer, he calls for a solemn assembly, Joe 2:15,16. If there be no liberty and opportunity for large and numerous assemblies, yet then it is the will of God that two or three should gather together, to show their good-will to the great congregation. Note, When we cannot do what we would in religion, we must do as we can, and God will accept us.

[2.] They are hereby directed to gather together in Christ's name. In the exercise of church discipline, they must come together in the name of Christ, 1Co 5:4. That name gives to what they do an authority on earth, and an acceptableness in heaven. In meeting or worship, we must have an eye to Christ; must come together by virtue of his warrant and appointment, in token of our relation to him, professing faith in him, and in communion with all that in every place call upon him. When we come together, to worship God in a dependence upon the Spirit and grace of Christ as Mediator for assistance, and upon his merit and righteousness as Mediator for acceptance, having an actual regard to him as our Way to the Father, and our Advocate with the Father, then we are met together in his name.

[3.] They are hereby encouraged with an assurance of the presence of Christ; There am I in the midst of them. By his common presence he is in all places, as God; but this is a promise of his special presence. Where his saints are, his sanctuary is, and there he will dwell; it is his rest (Ps 132:14), it is his walk (Re 2:1); he is in the midst of them, to quicken and strengthen them, to refresh and comfort them, as the sun in the midst of the universe. He is in the midst of them, that is, in their hearts; it is a spiritual presence, the presence of Christ's Spirit with their spirits, that is here intended. There am I, not only I will be there, but I am there; as if he came first, is ready before them, they shall find him there; he repeated this promise at parting (Mt 28:20), Lo, I am with you always. Note, The presence of Christ in the assemblies of Christians is promised, and may in faith be prayed for and depended on; There am I. This is equivalent to the Shechinah, or special presence of God in the tabernacle and temple of old, Ex 40:34,2Ch 5:14.

Though but two or three are met together, Christ is among them; this is an encouragement to the meeting of a few, when it is either, First, of choice. Besides the secret worship performed by particular persons, and the public services of the whole congregation, there may be occasion sometimes for two or three to come together, either for mutual assistance in conference or joint assistance in prayer, not in contempt of public worship, but in concurrence with it; there Christ will be present. Or, Secondly, By constraint; when there are not more than two or three to come together, or, if there be, they dare not, for fear of the Jews, yet Christ will be in the midst of them, for it is not the multitude, but the faith and sincere devotion, of the worshippers, that invites the presence of Christ; and though there be but two or three, the smallest number that can be, yet, it Christ make one among them, who is the principal one, their meeting is as honourable and comfortable as if they were two or three thousand.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

On this passage—so full of sublime encouragement to Christian union in action and prayer—observe, first, the connection in which

it stands. Our Lord had been speaking of church meetings before which the obstinate perversity of a brother was in the last resort to be brought, and whose decision was to be final—such honor does the Lord of the Church put upon its lawful assemblies. But not these assemblies only does He deign to countenance and honor. For even two uniting to bring any matter before Him shall find that they are not alone, for My Father is with them, says Jesus. Next, observe the premium here put upon union in prayer. As this cannot exist with fewer than two, so by letting it down so low as that number, He gives the utmost conceivable encouragement to union in this exercise. But what kind of union? Not an agreement merely to pray in concert, but to pray for some definite thing. "As touching anything which they shall ask," says our Lord—anything they shall agree to ask in concert. At the same time, it is plain He had certain things at that moment in His eye, as most fitting and needful subjects for such concerted prayer. The Twelve had been "falling out by the way" about the miserable question of precedence in their Master's kingdom, and this, as it stirred their corruptions, had given rise—or at least was in danger of giving rise—to "offenses" perilous to their souls. The Lord Himself had been directing them how to deal with one another about such matters. "But now shows He unto them a more excellent way." Let them bring all such matters—yea, and everything whatsoever by which either their own loving relationship to each other, or the good of His kingdom at large, might be affected—to their Father in heaven; and if they be but agreed in petitioning Him about that thing, it shall be done for them of His Father which is in heaven. But further, it is not merely union in prayer for the same thing—for that might be with very jarring ideas of the thing to be desired—but it is to symphonious prayer, the prayer by kindred spirits, members of one family, servants of one Lord, constrained by the same love, fighting under one banner, cheered by assurances of the same victory; a living and loving union, whose voice in the divine ear is as the sound of many waters. Accordingly, what they ask "on earth" is done for them, says Jesus, "of My Father which is in heaven." Not for nothing does He say, "of MY FATHER"—not "YOUR FATHER"; as is evident from what follows: "For where two or three are gathered together unto My name"—the "My" is emphatic, "there am I in the midst of

them." As His name would prove a spell to draw together many clusters of His dear disciples, so if there should be but two or three, that will attract Himself down into the midst of them; and related as He is to both the parties, the petitioners and the Petitioned—to the one on earth by the tie of His assumed flesh, and to the other in heaven by the tie of His eternal Spirit—their symphonious prayers on earth would thrill upward through Him to heaven, be carried by Him into the holiest of all, and so reach the Throne. Thus will He be the living Conductor of the prayer upward, and the answer downward.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Peter asked how many times Jesus' followers should forgive before taking the severe action that Jesus had just outlined. Jesus' reply shows that the severe action was not intended to be an alternative to forgiveness. Believers do not take action against offenders out of spite, but out of a concern for the offenders' spiritual good. Regardless of how many times offenders do them wrong, believers must still forgive them (Mat_18:21-22).

Peter's question concerning this matter (Mt 18:21); Lord, how oft shall my brother trespass against me, and I forgive him? Will it suffice to do it seven times?

1. He takes it for granted that he must forgive; Christ had before taught his disciples this lesson (Mt 6:14,15), and Peter has not forgotten it. He knows that he must not only not bear a grudge against his brother, or meditate revenge, but be as good a friend as ever, and forget the injury.

2. He thinks it is a great matter to forgive till seven times; he means not seven times a day, as Christ said (Lu 17:4), but seven times in

his life; supposing that if a man had any way abused him seven times, though he were ever so desirous to be reconciled, he might then abandon his society, and have no more to do with him. Perhaps Peter had an eye to Pr 24:16. A just man falleth seven times; or to the mention of three transgressions, and four, which God would no more pass by, Am 2:1. Note, There is a proneness in our corrupt nature to stint ourselves in that which is good, and to be afraid of doing too much in religion, particularly of forgiving too much, though we have so much forgiven us.

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

that is, so long as it shall be needed and sought: you are never to come to the point of refusing forgiveness sincerely asked. (See on Lu1 7:3).

Christ's direct answer to Peter's question; I say not unto thee, Until seven times (he never intended to set up any such bounds), but, Until seventy times seven; a certain number for an indefinite one, but a great one. Note, It does not look well for us to keep count of the offences done against us by our brethren. There is something of ill-nature in scoring up the injuries we forgive, as if we would allow ourselves to be revenged when the measure is full. God keeps an account (De 32:34), because he is the Judge, and vengeance is his; but we must not, lest we be found stepping into his throne. It is necessary to the preservation of peace, both within and without, to pass by injuries, without reckoning how often; to forgive, and forget. God multiplies his pardons, and so should we, Ps 77:38,40. It intimates that we should make it our constant practice to forgive injuries, and should accustom ourselves to it till it becomes habitual.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

I. Christ's direct answer to Peter's question; I say not unto thee, Until seven times (he never intended to set up any such bounds), but, Until seventy times seven; a certain number for an indefinite one, but a great one. Note, It does not look well for us to keep count of the offences done against us by our brethren. There is something of ill-nature in scoring up the injuries we forgive, as if we would allow ourselves to be revenged when the measure is full. God keeps an account (De 32:34), because he is the Judge, and vengeance is his; but we must not, lest we be found stepping into his throne. It is necessary to the preservation of peace, both within and without, to pass by injuries, without reckoning how often; to forgive, and forget. God multiplies his pardons, and so should we, Ps 77:38,40. It intimates that we should make it our constant practice to forgive injuries, and should accustom ourselves to it till it becomes habitual.

II. A further discourse of our Saviour's, by way of parable, to show the necessity of forgiving the injuries that are done to us. Parables are of use, not only for the pressing of Christian duties; for they make and leave an impression. The parable is a comment upon the fifth petition of the Lord's prayer, Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Those, and those only, may expect to be forgiven of God, who forgive their brethren. The parable represents the kingdom of heaven, that is, the church, and the administration of the gospel dispensation in it. The church is God's family, it is his court; there he dwells, there he rules. God is our master; his servants we are, at least in profession and obligation. In general, the parable intimates how much provocation God has from his family on earth, and how untoward his servants are.

There are three things in the parable.

1 The master's wonderful clemency to his servant who was indebted to him; he forgave him ten thousand talents, out of pure compassion to him, Mt 18:23-27. Where observe,

(a) Every sin we commit is a debt to God; not like a debt to an equal, contracted by buying or borrowing, but to a superior; like a debt to a prince when a recognizance is forfeited, or a penalty incurred by a breech of the law or a breach of the peace; like the debt of a servant to his master, by withholding his service, wasting his lord's goods, breaking his indentures, and incurring the penalty. We are all debtors; we owe satisfaction, and are liable to the process of the law.

(b) There is an account kept of these debts, and we must shortly be reckoned with for them. This king would take account of his servants. God now reckons with us by our own consciences; conscience is an auditor for God in the soul, to call us to account, and to account with us. One of the first questions that an awakened Christian asks, is, How much owest thou unto my Lord? And unless it be bribed, it will tell the truth, and not write fifty for a hundred. There is another day of reckoning coming, when these accounts will be called over, and either passed or disallowed, and nothing but the blood of Christ will balance the account.

(c) The debt of sin is a very great debt; and some are more in debt, by reason of sin, than others. When he began to reckon, one of the first defaulters appeared to owe ten thousand talents. There is no evading the enquiries of divine justice; your sin will be sure to find you out. The debt was ten thousand talents, a vast sum, amounting by computation to one million eight hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds sterling; a king's ransom or a kingdom's subsidy, more likely than a servant's debt; see what our sins are, [1.] For the heinousness of their nature; they are talents, the greatest denomination that ever was used in the account of money or weight. Every sin is the load of a talent, a talent of lead, this is wickedness, Zec 5:7,8. The trusts committed to us, as stewards of the grace of God, are each of them a talent (Mt 25:15), a talent of gold, and for every one of them buried, much more for every one of them wasted, we are a talent in debt, and this raises the account. [2.] For the vastness of their number; they are ten thousand, a myriad, more than the hairs on our head, Ps 40:12. Who can understand the number of his errors, or tell how oft he offends? Ps 19:12.

(d) The debt of sin is so great, that we are not able to pay it; He had not to pay. Sinners are insolvent debtors; the scripture, which concludes all under sin, is a statute of bankruptcy against us all. Silver and gold would not pay our debt, Ps 49:6,7. Sacrifice and offering would not do it; our good works are but God's work in us, and cannot make satisfaction; we are without strength, and cannot help ourselves.

(e) If God should deal with us in strict justice; we should be condemned as insolvent debtors, and God might exact the debt by glorifying himself in our utter ruin. Justice demands satisfaction, Currat, lex--Let the sentence of the law be executed. The servant had contracted this debt by his wastefulness and wilfulness, and therefore might justly be left to lie by it. His lord commanded him to be sold, as a bond-slave into the galleys, sold to grind in the prison-house; his wife and children to be sold, and all that he had, and payment to be made. See here what every sin deserves; this is the wages of sin.

[1.] To be sold. Those that sell themselves to work wickedness, must be sold, to make satisfaction. Captives to sin are captives to wrath. He that is sold for a bond-slave is deprived of all his comforts, and has nothing left him but his life, that he may be sensible of his miseries; which is the case of damned sinners.

[2.] Thus he would have payment to be made, that is, something done towards it; though it is impossible that the sale of one so worthless should amount to the payment of so great a debt. By the damnation of sinners divine justice will be to eternity in the satisfying, but never satisfied.

(f) Convinced sinners cannot but humble themselves before God, and pray for mercy. The servant, under this charge, and this doom, fell down at the feet of his royal master, and worshipped him; or, as some copies read it, he besought him; his address was very

submissive and very importunate; Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all, Mt 18:26. The servant knew before that he was so much in debt, and yet was under no concern about it, till he was called to an account. Sinners are commonly careless about the pardon of their sins, till they come under the arrests of some awakening word, some startling providence, or approaching death, and then, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Mic 6:6. How easily, how quickly, can God bring the proudest sinner to his feet; Ahab to his sackcloth, Manasseh to his prayers, Pharaoh to his confessions, Judas to his restitution, Simon Magus to his supplication, Belshazzar and Felix to their tremblings. The stoutest heart will fail, when God sets the sins in order before it. This servant doth not deny the debt, nor seek evasions, nor go about to abscond.

But,

[1.] He begs time; Have patience with me. Patience and forbearance are a great favour, but it is folly to think that these alone will save us; reprieves are not pardons. Many are borne with, who are not thereby brought to repentance (Ro 2:4), and then their being borne with does them no kindness.

[2.] He promises payment; Have patience awhile, and I will pay thee all. Note, It is the folly of many who are under convictions of sin, to imagine that they can make God satisfaction for the wrong they have done him; as those who, like a compounding bankrupt, would discharge the debt, by giving their first-born for their transgressions (Mic 6:7), who go about to establish their own righteousness, Ro 10:3. He that had nothing to pay with (Mt 18:25) fancied he could pay all. See how close pride sticks, even to awakened sinners; they are convinced, but not humbled.

(g) The God of infinite mercy is very ready, out of pure compassion, to forgive the sins of those that humble themselves before him (Mt 18:27); The lord of that servant, when he might justly have ruined him, mercifully released him; and, since he could not be satisfied by

the payment of the debt, he would be glorified by the pardon of it. The servant's prayer was, Have patience with me; the master's grant is a discharge in full. Note,

[1.] The pardon of sin is owing to the mercy of God, to his tender mercy (Lu 1:77,78); He was moved with compassion. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself; he has mercy because he will have mercy. God looked with pity on mankind in general, because miserable, and sent his Son to be a Surety for them; he looks with pity on particular penitents, because sensible of their misery (their hearts broken and contrite), and accepts them in the Beloved.

[2.] There is forgiveness with God for the greatest sins, if they be repented of. Though the debt was vastly great, he forgave it all, Mt 18:32. Though our sins be very numerous and very heinous, yet, upon gospel terms, they may be pardoned.

[3.] The forgiving of the debt is the loosing of the debtor; He loosed him. The obligation is cancelled, the judgment vacated; we never walk at liberty till our sins are forgiven. But observe, Though he discharged him from the penalty as a debtor, he did not discharge him from his duty as a servant. The pardon of sin doth not slacken, but strengthen, our obligations to obedience; and we must reckon it a favour that God is pleased to continue such wasteful servants as we have been in such a gainful service as his is, and should therefore deliver us, that we might serve him, Lu 1:74. I am thy servant, for thou hast loosed my bonds.

2 The servant's unreasonable severity toward his fellow-servant, notwithstanding his lord's clemency toward him, Mt 18:28-30. This represents the sin of those who, though they are not unjust in demanding that which is not their own, yet are rigorous and unmerciful in demanding that which is their own, to the utmost of right, which sometimes proves a real wrong. Summum jus summa injuria--Push a claim to an extremity, and it becomes a wrong. To exact satisfaction for debts of injury, which tends neither to

reparation nor to the public good, but purely for revenge, though the law may allow it, in terrorem--in order to strike terror, and for the hardness of men's hearts, yet savours not of a Christian spirit. To sue for money-debts, when the debt or cannot possibly pay them, and so let him perish in prison, argues a greater love of money, and a less love of our neighbour, than we ought to have, Ne 5:7.

See here,

(a) How small the debt was, how very small, compared with the ten thousand talents which his lord forgave him; He owed him a hundred pence, about three pounds and half a crown of our money. Note, Offences done to men are nothing to those which are committed against God. Dishonours done to a man like ourselves are but as peace, motes, gnats; but dishonours done to God are as talents, beams, camels. Not that therefore we may make light of wronging our neighbour, for that is also a sin against God; but therefore we should make light of our neighbour's wronging us, and not aggravate it, or study revenge. David was unconcerned as the indignities done to him; I, as a deaf man, heard not; but laid much to heart the sins committed against God; for them, rivers of tears ran down his eyes.

(b) How severe the demand was; He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat. Proud and angry men think, if the matter of their demand be just, that will bear them out, though the manner of it be ever so cruel and unmerciful; but it will not hold. What needed all this violence? The debt might have been demanded without taking the debtor by the throat; without sending for a writ, or setting the bailiff upon him. How lordly is this man's carriage, and yet how base and servile is his spirit! If he had been himself going to prison for his debt to his lord, his occasions would have been so pressing, that he might have had some pretence for going to this extremity in requiring his own; but frequently pride and malice prevail more to make men severe than the most urgent necessity would do.

(c) How submissive the debtor was; His fellow servant, though his equal, yet knowing how much he lay at his mercy, fell down at his

feet, and humbled himself to him for this trifling debt, as much as he did to his lord for that great debt; for the borrower is servant to the lender, Pr 22:7. Note, Those who cannot pay their debts ought to be very respectful to their creditors, and not only give them good words, but do them all the good offices they possibly can: they must not be angry at those who claim their own, nor speak ill of them for it, no, not though they do it in a rigorous manner, but in that case leave it to God to plead their cause. The poor man's request is, Have patience with me; he honestly confesses the debt, and puts not his creditor to the charge of proving it, only begs time. Note, Forbearance, though it be no acquittance, is sometimes a piece of needful and laudable charity. As we must not be hard, so we must not be hasty, in our demands, but think how long God bears with us.

(d) How implacable and furious the creditor was (Mt 18:30); He would not have patience with him, would not hearken to his fair promise, but without mercy cast him into prison. How insolently did he trample upon one as good as himself, that submitted to him! How cruelly did he use one that had done him no harm, and though it would be no advantage to himself! In this, as in a glass, unmerciful creditors may see their own faces, who take pleasure in nothing more than to swallow up and destroy (2Sa 20:19), and glory in having their poor debtors' bones.

(e) How much concerned the rest of the servants were; They were very sorry (Mt 18:31), sorry for the creditor's cruelty, and for the debtor's calamity. Note, The sins and sufferings of our fellow-servants should be a matter of grief and trouble to us. It is sad that any of our brethren should either make themselves beast of prey, by cruelty and barbarity; or be made beasts of slavery, by the inhuman usage of those who have power over them. To see a fellow-servant, either raging like a bear or trampled on like a worm, cannot but occasion great regret to all that have any jealousy for the honour either of their nature of their religion. See with what eye Solomon looked both upon the tears of the oppressed, and the power of the oppressors, Ec 4:1.

(f) How notice of it was brought to the master; They came, and told their lord. They durst not reprove their fellow-servant for it, he was so unreasonable and outrageous (let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than such a fool in his folly); but they went to their lord, and besought him to appear for the oppressed against the oppressor. Note, That which gives us occasion for sorrow, should give us occasion for prayer. Let our complaints both of the wickedness of the wicked and of the afflictions of the afflicted, be brought to God, and left with him.

3. The master's just resentment of the cruelty his servant was guilty of. If the servants took it so ill, much more would the master, whose compassions are infinitely above ours. Now observe here,

(a) How he reproved his servant's cruelty (Mt 18:32,33); O thou wicked servant. Note, Unmercifulness is wickedness, it is great wickedness.

[1.] He upbraids him with the mercy he had found with his master; I forgive thee all that debt. Those that will use God's favours, shall never be upbraided with them, but those that abuse them, may expect it, Mt 11:20. Consider, It was all that debt, that great debt. Note, The greatness of sin magnifies the riches of pardoning mercy: we should think how much has been forgiven us, Lu 7:47.

[2.] He thence shows him the obligation he was under to be merciful to his fellow-servant; Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? Note, It is justly expected, that such as have received mercy, should show mercy. Dat ille veniam facile, cui venia est opus--He who needs forgiveness, easily bestows it. Senec. Agamemn. He shows him, First, That he should have been more compassionate to the distress of his fellow servant, because he had himself experienced the same distress. What we have had the feeling of ourselves, we can the better have the fellow feeling of with our brethren. The Israelites knew the heart of a stranger, for they were strangers; and this servant should have better known the heart of an arrested debtor, than to have been thus hard upon such a one. Secondly, That he should have been more

conformable to the example of his master's tenderness, having himself experienced it, so much to his advantage. Note, The comfortable sense of pardoning mercy tends much to the disposing of our hearts to forgive our brethren. It was in the close of the day o atonement that the jubilee trumpet sounded a release of debts (Le 25:9); for we must have compassion on our brethren, as God has on us.

(b) How he revoked his pardon and cancelled the acquittance, so that the judgment against him revived (Mt 18:34); He delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Though the wickedness was very great, his lord laid upon him no other punishment than the payment of his own debt. Note, Those that will not come up to the terms of the gospel need be no more miserable than to be left open to the law, and to let that have its course against them. See how the punishment answers the sin; he that would not forgive shall not be forgiven; He delivered him to the tormentors; the utmost he could do to his fellow servant was but to cast him into prison, but he was himself delivered to the tormentors. Note, The power of God's wrath to ruin us, goes far beyond the utmost extent of any creature's strength and wrath. The reproaches and terrors of his own conscience would be his tormentors, for that is a worm that dies not; devils, the executioners of God's wrath, that are sinners' tempters now, will be their tormentors for ever. He was sent to Bridewell till he should pay all. Note, Our debts to God are never compounded; either all is forgiven or all is exacted; glorified saints in heaven are pardoned all, through Christ's complete satisfaction; damned sinners in hell are paying all, that is, are punished for all. The offence done to God by sin is in point of honour, which cannot be compounded for without such a diminution as the case will by no means admit, and therefore, some way or other, by the sinner or by his surety, it must be satisfied.

Lastly, Here is the application of the whole parable, (Mt 18:35); So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you. The title Christ here gives to God was made use of, Mt 18:19, in a comfortable promise; It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven;

here it is made use of in a terrible threatening. If God's governing be fatherly, it follows thence, that it is righteous, but it does not therefore follow that it is not rigorous, or that under his government we must not be kept in awe by the fear of the divine wrath. When we pray to God as our Father in heaven, we are taught to ask for the forgiveness of sins, as we forgive our debtors. Observe here,

1 The duty of forgiving; we must from our hearts forgive. Note, We do not forgive our offending brother aright, nor acceptably, if we do not forgive from the heart; for that is it that God looks at. No malice must be harboured there, nor ill will to any person, one or another; no projects of revenge must be hatched there, nor desires of it, as there are in many who outwardly appear peaceable and reconciled. Yet this is not enough; we must from the heart desire and seek the welfare even of those that have offended us.

2 The danger of not forgiving; So shall your heavenly Father do.

(a) This is not intended to teach us that God reverses his pardons to any, but that he denies them to those that are unqualified for them, according to the tenour of the gospel; though having seemed to be humbled, like Ahab, they thought themselves, and others thought them, in a pardoned state, and they made bold with the comfort of it. Intimations enough we have in scripture of the forfeiture of pardons, for caution to the presumptuous; and yet we have security enough of the continuance of them, for comfort to those that are sincere, but timorous; that the one may fear, and the other may hope. Those that do not forgive their brother's trespasses, did never truly repent of their own, nor ever truly believe the gospel; and therefore that which is taken away is only what they seemed to have, Lu 8:18.

(b) This is intended to teach us, that they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy, Jam 2:13. It is indispensably necessary to pardon and peace, that we not only do justly, but love mercy. It is an essential part of that religion which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father, of that wisdom from above, which is gentle, and easy to be entreated. Look how they will

answer it another day, who, though they bear the Christian name, persist in the most rigorous and unmerciful treatment of their brethren, as if the strictest laws of Christ might be dispensed with for the gratifying of their unbridled passions; and so they curse themselves every time they say the Lord's prayer.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.
29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.
30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.
31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.
32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:
33 shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?
34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.
35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Matthew-19

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

1 And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan;
2 and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

He left Galilee. There he had been brought up, and had spent the greatest part of his life in that remote despicable part of the country; it was only upon occasion of the feasts, that he came up to Jerusalem, and manifested himself there; and, we may suppose, that, having no constant residence there when he did come, his preaching and miracles were the more observable and acceptable.

But it was an instance of his humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he appeared in a mean state, that he would go under the character of a Galilean, a north-countryman, the least polite and refined part of the nation. Most of Christ's sermons hitherto had been preached, and most of his miracles wrought, in Galilee; but now, having finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and it was his final farewell; for (unless his passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, Lu 17:11, was after this, which yet was but a visit in transitu--as he passed through the country) he never came to Galilee again till after his resurrection, which makes this transition very remarkable. Christ did not take his leave of Galilee till he had done his work there, and then he departed thence. Note, As Christ's faithful ministers are not taken out of the world, so they are not removed from any place, till they have finished their testimony in that place, Re 11:7. This is very comfortable to those that follow not their own humours, but God's providence, in their removals, that their sayings shall be finished before they depart. And who would desire to continue any where longer than he has work to do for God there?

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it
lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?
4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made
them at the beginning made them male and female,
5 and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave
to his wife:
and they twain shall be one flesh?

hrist's answer to this question; though it was proposed to tempt him, yet, being a case of conscience, and a weighty one, he gave a full answer to it, not a direct one, but an effectual one; laying down such principles as undeniably prove that such arbitrary divorces as were then in use, which made the matrimonial bond so very precarious, were by no means lawful. Christ himself would not give the rule without a reason, nor lay down his judgment without scripture proof to support it. Now his argument is this; "If husband and wife are by the will and appointment of God joined together in the strictest and closest union, then they are not to be lightly, and upon every occasion, separated; if the know be sacred, it cannot be

easily untied." Now, to prove that there is such a union between man and wife, he urges three things.

The creation of Adam and Eve, concerning which he appeals to their own knowledge of the scriptures; Have ye not read? It is some advantage in arguing, to deal with those that own, and have read, the scriptures; Ye have read (but have not considered) that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, Ge 1:27,5:2. Note, It will be of great use to us often to think of our creation, how and by whom, what and for what, we were created. He made them male and female, one female for one male; so that Adam could not divorce his wife, and take another, for there was no other to take. It likewise intimated an inseparable union between them; Eve was a rib out of Adam's side, so that he could not put her away, but he must put away a piece of himself, and contradict the manifest indications of her creation. Christ hints briefly at this, but, in appealing to what they had read, he refers them to the original record, where it is observable, that, though the rest of the living creatures were made male and female, yet it is not said so concerning any of them, but only concerning mankind; because between man and woman the conjunction is rational, and intended for nobler purposes than merely the pleasing of sense and the preserving of a seed; and it is therefore more close and firm than that between male and female among the brutes, who were not capable of being such help--meets for one another as Adam and Ever were. Hence the manner of expression is somewhat singular (Ge 1:27), In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them; him and them are used promiscuously; being one by creation before they were two, when they became one again by marriage-covenant, that oneness could not but be closer and indissoluble.

The fundamental law of marriage, which is, that a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, Mt 19:5. The relation between husband and wife is nearer than that between parents and children; now, if the filial relation may not easily be violated, much less may the marriage union be broken. May a child desert his parents, or may a parent abandon his children, for any cause, for every cause? No, by no means. Much less may a husband put away his wife, betwixt whom, though not by nature, yet by divine appointment, the relation is nearer, and the bond of union stronger, than between parents and children; for that is in a great

measure superseded by marriage, when a man must leave his parents, to cleave to his wife. See here the power of a divine institution, that the result of it is a union stronger than that which results from the highest obligations of nature.

. The nature of the marriage contract; it is a union of persons; They twain shall be one flesh, so that (Mt 19:6) they are no more twain, but one flesh. A man's children are pieces of himself, but his wife is himself. As the conjugal union is closer than that between parents and children, so it is in a manner equivalent to that between one member and another in the natural body. As this is a reason why husbands should love their wives, so it is a reason why they should not put away their wives, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, or cut it off, but nourishes and cherishes it, and does all he can to preserve it. They two shall be one, therefore there must be but one wife, for God made but one Eve for one Adam, Mal 2:15.

rom hence he infers, What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Note,

a) Husband and wife are of God's joining together; synezeuxen--he hath yoked them together, so the word is, and it is very significant. God himself instituted the relation between husband and wife in the state of innocence. Marriage and the sabbath are the most ancient of divine ordinances. Though marriage be not peculiar to the church, but common to the world, yet, being stamped with a divine institution, and here ratified by our Lord Jesus, it ought to be managed after a godly sort, and sanctified by the word of God, and prayer. A conscientious regard to God in this ordinance would have a good influence upon the duty, and consequently upon the comfort, of the relation.

b) Husband and wife, being joined together by the ordinance of God, are not to be put asunder by any ordinance of man. Let not man put them asunder; not the husband himself, nor any one for him; not the magistrate, God never gave him authority to do it. The God of Israel hath said, that he hateth putting away, Mal 2:16. It is a general rule that man must not go about to put asunder what God hath joined together.

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore

God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

An objection started by the Pharisees against this; an objection not destitute of colour and plausibility (Mt 19:7); "Why did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, in case a man did put away his wife?" He urged scripture reason against divorce; they allege scripture authority for it. Note, The seeming contradictions that are in the word of God are great stumbling-blocks to men of corrupt minds. It is true, Moses was faithful to him that appointed him, and commanded nothing but what he received from the Lord; but as to the thing itself, what they call a command was only as allowance (De 24:1), and designed rather to restrain the exorbitances of it than to give countenance to the thing itself. The Jewish doctors themselves observe such limitations in that law, that it could not be done without great deliberation. A particular reason must be assigned, the bill of divorce must be written, and, as a judicial act, must have all the solemnities of a deed, executed and enrolled. It must be given into the hands of the wife herself, and (which would oblige men, if they had any consideration in them, to consider) they were expressly forbidden ever to come together again.

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

tolerated a relaxation of the strictness of the marriage bond—not as approving of it, but to prevent still greater evils.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Christ's answer to this objection, in which,

1. He rectifies their mistake concerning the law of Moses; they called it a command, Christ calls it but a permission, a toleration. Carnal hearts will take an ell if but an inch be given them. The law of Moses, in this case, was a political law, which God gave, as the Governor of that people; and it was for reasons of state, that divorces were tolerated. The strictness of the marriage union being

the result, not of a natural, but of a positive law, the wisdom of God dispensed with divorces in some cases, without any impeachment of his holiness.

But Christ tells them there was a reason for this toleration, not at all for their credit; It was because of the hardness of your hearts, that you were permitted to put away your wives. Moses complained of the people of Israel in his time, that their hearts were hardened (De 9:6,31:27), hardened against God; this is here meant of their being hardened against their relations; they were generally violent and outrageous, which way soever they took, both in their appetites and in their passions; and therefore if they had not been allowed to put away their wives, when they had conceived a dislike of them, they would have used them cruelly, would have beaten and abused them, and perhaps have murdered them. Note, There is not a greater piece of hard-heartedness in the world, than for a man to be harsh and severe with his own wife. The Jews, it seems, were infamous for this, and therefore were allowed to put them away; better divorce them than do worse, than that the altar of the Lord should be covered with tears, Mal 2:13. A little compliance, to humour a madman, or a man in a frenzy, may prevent a greater mischief. Positive laws may be dispensed with for the preservation of the law of nature, for God will have mercy and not sacrifice; but then those are hard-hearted wretches, who have made it necessary; and none can wish to have the liberty of divorce, without virtually owning the hardness of their hearts. Observe, He saith, It is for the hardness of your hearts, not only theirs who lived then, but all their seed. Note, God not only sees, but foresees, the hardness of men's hearts; he suited both the ordinances and providences of the Old Testament to the temper of that people, both in terror. Further observe, The law of Moses considered the hardness of men's hearts, but the gospel of Christ cures it; and his grace takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. By the law was the knowledge of sin, but by the gospel was the conquest of it.

2. He reduces them to the original institution; But from the beginning it was not so. Note, Corruptions that are crept into any

ordinance of God must be purged out by having recourse to the primitive institution. If the copy be vicious, it must be examined and corrected by the original. Thus, when St. Paul would redress the grievances in the church of Corinth about the Lord's supper, he appealed to the appointment (1Co 11:23), So and so I received from the Lord. Truth was from the beginning; we must therefore enquire for the good old way (Jer 6:16), and must reform, not by later patterns, but by ancient rules.

3. He settles the point by an express law; I say unto you (Mt 19:9); and it agrees with what he said before (Mt 5:32); there it was said in preaching, here in dispute, but it is the same, for Christ is constant to himself. Now, in both these places,

(a) He allows divorce, in case of adultery; the reason of the law against divorce being this, They two shall be one flesh. If the wife play the harlot, and make herself one flesh with an adulterer, the reason of the law ceases, and so does the law. By the law of Moses adultery was punished with death, De 22:22. Now our Saviour mitigates the rigour of that, and appoints divorce to be the penalty. Dr. Whitby understands this, not of adultery, but (because our Saviour uses the word porneia--fornication) of uncleanness committed before marriage, but discovered afterward; because, if it were committed after, it was a capital crime, and there needed no divorce.

(b) He disallows it in all other cases: Whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. This is a direct answer to their query, that it is not lawful. In this, as in other things, gospel times are times of reformation, Heb 9:10. The law of Christ tends to reinstate man in his primitive integrity; the law of love, conjugal love, is no new commandment, but was from the beginning. If we consider what mischiefs to families and states, what confusions and disorders, would follow upon arbitrary divorces, we shall see how much this law of Christ is for our own benefit, and what a friend Christianity is to our secular interests.

The law of Moses allowing divorce for the hardness of men's hearts, and the law of Christ forbidding it, intimate, that Christians being under a dispensation of love and liberty, tenderness of heart may justly be expected among them, that they will not be hard-hearted, like Jews, for God has called us to peace. There will be no occasion for divorces, if we forbear one another, and forgive one another, in love, as those that are, and hope to be, forgiven, and have found God not forward to put us away, Isa 50:1. No need of divorces, if husbands love their wives, and wives be obedient to their husbands, and they live together as heirs of the grace of life: and these are the laws of Christ, such as we find not in all the law of Moses.

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

Here is a suggestion of the disciples against this law of Christ (Mt 19:10); If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is better not to marry. It seems, the disciples themselves were loth to give up the liberty of divorce, thinking it a good expedient for preserving comfort in the married state; and therefore, like sullen children, if they have not what they would have, they will throw away what they have. If they may not be allowed to put away their wives when they please, they will have no wives at all; though, from the beginning, when no divorce was allowed, God said, It is not good for man to be alone, and blessed them, pronounced them blessed who were thus strictly joined together; yet, unless they may have a liberty of divorce, they think it is good for a man not to marry. Note,

1. Corrupt nature is impatient of restraint, and would fain break Christ's bonds in sunder, and have a liberty for its own lusts.

2. It is a foolish, peevish thing for men to abandon the comforts of this life, because of the crosses that are commonly woven in with them, as if we must needs go out of the world, because we have not every thing to our mind in the world; or must enter into no useful calling or condition, because it is made our duty to abide in it. No, whatever our condition is, we must bring our minds to it, be thankful for its comforts, submissive to its crosses, and, as God has

done, set the one over against the other, and make the best of that which is, Ec 7:14. If the yoke of marriage may not be thrown off at pleasure, it does not follow that therefore we must not come under it; but therefore, when we do come under it, we must resolve to comport with it, by love, and meekness, and patience, which will make divorce the most unnecessary undesirable thing that can be.

11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

1. He allows it good for some not to marry; He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Christ allowed what the disciples said, It is good not to marry; not as an objection against the prohibition of divorce, as they intended it, but as giving them a rule (perhaps no less unpleasing to them), that they who have the gift of continence, and are not under any necessity of marrying, do best if they continue single (1Co 7:1); for they that are unmarried have opportunity, if they have but a heart, to care more for the things of the Lord, how they may please the Lord (1Co 7:32-34), being less encumbered with the cares of this life, and having a greater vacancy of thought and time to mind better things. The increase of grace is better than the increase of the family, and fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ is to be preferred before any other fellowship.

2. He disallows it, as utterly mischievous, to forbid marriage, because all men cannot receive this saying; indeed few can, and therefore the crosses of the married state must be borne, rather than that men should run themselves into temptation, to avoid them; better marry than burn.

Christ speaks here of a twofold unaptness to marriage.

(a) That which is a calamity by the providence of God; such as those labour under who are born eunuchs, or made so by men, who, being incapable of answering one great end of marriage, ought not to marry. But to that calamity let them oppose the opportunity that there is in the single state of serving God better, to balance it.

(b) That which is a virtue by the grace of God; such is theirs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. This is meant of an unaptness for marriage, not in body (which some, through mistake of this scripture, have foolishly and wickedly brought upon themselves), but in mind. Those have thus made themselves eunuchs who have attained a holy indifference to all the delights of the married state, have a fixed resolution, in the strength of God's grace, wholly to abstain from them; and by fasting, and other instances of mortification, have subdued all desires toward them. These are they that can receive this saying; and yet these are not to bind themselves by a vow that they will never marry, only that, in the mind they are now in, they purpose not to marry.

Now,

[1.] This affection to the single state must be given of God; for none can receive it, save they to whom it is given. Note, Continence is a special gift of God to some, and not to others; and when a man, in the single state, finds by experience that he has this gift, he may determine with himself, and (as the apostle speaks, 1Co 7:37), stand steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but having power over his own will, that he will keep himself so. But men, in this case, must take heed lest they boast of a false gift, Pr 25:14.

[2.] The single state must be chosen for the kingdom of heaven's sake; in those who resolve never to marry, only that they may save charges, or may gratify a morose selfish humour, or have a greater liberty to serve other lusts and pleasures, it is so far from being a virtue, that it is an ill-natured vice; but when it is for religion's sake,

not as in itself a meritorious act (which papists make it), but only as a means to keep our minds more entire for, and more intent upon, the services of religion, and that, having no families to provide for, we may do the more works of charity, then it is approved and accepted of God. Note, That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and stuck to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to the preparing of us for, and the preserving of us to, the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

The faith of those that brought them. How many they were, that were brought, we are not told; but they were so little as to be taken up in arms, a year old, it may be, or two at most. The account here given of it, is, that there were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray, Mt 19:13. Probably they were their parents, guardians, or nurses, that brought them; and herein,

1. They testified their respect to Christ, and the value they had for his favour and blessing. Note, Those who glorify Christ by coming to him themselves, should further glorify him by bringing all they have, or have influence upon, to him likewise. Thus give him the honour of his unsearchable riches of grace, his overflowing, never-failing, fulness. We cannot better honour Christ than by making use of him.

2. They did a kindness to their children, not doubting but they would fare the better, in this world and the other, for the blessing and prayers of the Lord Jesus, whom they looked upon at least as an extraordinary person, as a prophet, if not as a priest and king; and the blessings of such were valued and desired. Others brought their children to Christ, to be healed when they were sick; but these children were under no present malady, only they desired a blessing for them. Note, It is a good thing when we come to Christ ourselves,

and bring our children to him, before we are driven to him (as we say) by woe-need; not only to visit him when we are in trouble, but to address ourselves to him in a sense of our general dependence on him, and of the benefit we expect by him, this is pleasing to him.

They desired that he would put his hands on them, and pray. Imposition of hands was a ceremony used especially in paternal blessings; Jacob used it when he blessed and adopted the sons of Joseph, Ge 48:14. It intimates something of love and familiarity mixed with power and authority, and bespeaks an efficacy in the blessing. Whom Christ prays for in heaven, he puts his hand upon by his Spirit. Note,

(a) Little children may be brought to Christ as needing, and being capable of receiving, blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession.

(b) Therefore they should be brought to him. We cannot do better for our children than to commit them to the Lord Jesus, to be wrought upon, and prayed for, by him. We can but beg a blessing for them, it is Christ only that can command the blessing.

The fault of the disciples in rebuking them. They discountenanced the address as vain and frivolous, and reproved them that made it as impertinent and troublesome. Either they thought it below their Master to take notice of little children, except any thing in particular ailed them; or, they thought he had toil enough with his other work, and would not have him diverted from it; or, they thought if such an address as this were encouraged, all the country would bring their children to him, and they should never see an end of it. Note, It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discountenance any willing well-meaning souls in their enquiries after Christ, though they are but weak. If he do not break the bruised reed, we should not. Those that seek unto Christ, must not think it strange if they meet with opposition and rebuke, even from good men, who think they know the mind of Christ better than they do.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Many people thought that they could gain entrance into the kingdom of God through their own efforts. Jesus referred to the children gathered around him to illustrate that this was not so (Mar_10:13-14). People must realize that in relation to entering his kingdom they are as helpless and dependent as children. There is no room in his kingdom for those who hold high opinions of themselves, or who think they will gain eternal life through their wisdom or good works (Mar_10:15-16).

He rebuked the disciples (Mt 19:14); Suffer little children, and forbid them not; and he rectifies the mistake they went upon, Of such is the kingdom of heaven. Note,

(a) The children of believing parents belong to the kingdom of heaven, and are members of the visible church. Of such, not only of such in disposition and affection (that might have served for a reason why doves or lambs should be brought to him), but of such, in age, is the kingdom of heaven; to them pertain the privileges of visible church-membership, as among the Jews of old. The promise is to you, and to your children. I will be a God to thee and thy seed.

(b) That for this reason they are welcome to Christ, who is ready to entertain those who, when they cannot come themselves, are brought to him. And this,

[1.] In respect to the little children themselves, whom he has upon all occasions expressed a concern for; and who, having participated in the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, must needs share in the riches of the second Adam's grace, else what would become of the apostle's parallel? 1Co 15:22,Ro 5:14,15, &c. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out.

[2.] With an eye to the faith of the parents who brought them, and presented them as living sacrifices. Parents are trustees of their children's wills, are empowered by nature to transact for their

benefit; and therefore Christ accepts their dedication of them as their act and deed, and will own these dedicated things in the day he makes up his jewels.

[3.] Therefore he takes it ill of those who forbid them, and exclude those whom he has received: who cast them out from the inheritance of the Lord, and say, Ye have no part in the Lord (see Jos 22:27); and who forbid water, that they should be baptized, who, if that promise be fulfilled (Isa 44:3), have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, for aught we know.

2. He received the little children, and did as he was desired; he laid his hands on them, that is, he blessed them. The strongest believer lives not so much by apprehending Christ as by being apprehended of him (Php 3:12), not so much by knowing God as by being known of him (Ga 4:9); and this the least child is capable of. If they cannot stretch out their hands to Christ, yet he can lay his hands on them, and so make them his own, and own them for his own.

15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

The Rich Young Ruler

16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

The gentleman's serious address to Jesus Christ (Mt 19:16); Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Not a better question could be asked, not more gravely.

(a) He gives Christ an honourable title, Good Master--Didaskale agathe. It signifies not a ruling, but a teaching Master. His calling him Master, bespeaks his submissiveness, and willingness to be taught; and good Master, his affection and peculiar respect to the Teacher, like that of Nicodemus, Thou art a Teacher come from God. We read not of any that addressed themselves to Christ more respectfully than that Master in Israel and this ruler. It is a good thing

when men's quality and dignity increase their civility and courtesy. It was gentleman-like to give this title of respect to Christ, notwithstanding the present meanness of his appearance. It was not usual among the Jews to accost their teachers with the title of good; and therefore this bespeaks the uncommon respect he had for Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is a good Master, the best of teachers; none teaches like him; he is distinguished for his goodness, for he can have compassion on the ignorant; he is meek and lowly in heart.

(b) He comes to him upon an errand of importance (none could be more so), and he came not to tempt him, but sincerely desiring to be taught by him. His question is, What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? By this it appears,

[1.] That he had a firm belief of eternal life; he was no Sadducee. He was convinced that there is a happiness prepared for those in the other world, who are prepared for it in this world.

[2.] That he was concerned to make it sure to himself that he should live eternally, and was desirous of that life more than any of the delights of this life. It was a rare thing for one of his age and quality to appear so much in care about another world. The rich are apt to think it below them to make such an enquiry as this; and young people think it time enough yet; but here was a young man, and a rich man, solicitous about his soul and eternity.

[3.] That he was sensible something must be done, some good thing, for the attainment of this happiness. It is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for immortality, Ro 2:7. We must be doing, and doing that which is good. The blood of Christ is the only purchase of eternal life (he merited it for us), but obedience to Christ is the appointed way to it, Heb 5:9.

[4.] That he was, or at least thought himself, willing to do what was to be done for the obtaining of this eternal life. Those that know what it is to have eternal life, and what it is to come short of it, will be

glad to accept of it upon any terms. Such a holy violence does the kingdom of heaven suffer. Note, While there are many that say, Who will show us any good? our great enquiry should be, What shall we do, that we may have eternal life? What shall we do, to be for ever happy, happy in another world? For this world has not that in it that will make us happy.

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

The encouragement that Jesus Christ gave to this address. It is not his manner to send any away without an answer, that come to him on such an errand, for nothing pleases him more, Mt 19:17. In his answer,

(1.) He tenderly assists his faith; for, doubtless, he did not mean it for a reproof, when he said, Why callest thou me good? But he would seem to find that faith in what he said, when he called him good Master, which the gentleman perhaps was not conscious to himself of; he intended no more than to own and honour him as a good man, but Christ would lead him to own and honour him as a good God; for there is none good but one, that is God. Note, As Christ is graciously ready to make the best that he can of what is said or done amiss; so he is ready to make the most that can be of what is well said and well done. His constructions are often better than our intentions; as in that, "I was hungry, and you gave me meat, though you little thought it was to me." Christ will have this young man either know him to be God, or not call him good; to teach us to transfer to God all the praise that is at any time given to us. Do any call us good? Let us tell them all goodness is from God, and therefore not to us, but to him give glory. All crowns must lie before his throne. Note, God only is good, and there is none essentially, originally, and unchangeably, good, but God only. His goodness is of and from himself, and all the goodness in the creature is from him; he is the Fountain of goodness, and whatever the streams are, all the springs are in him, Jam 1:17. He is the great Pattern and Sample of goodness; by him all goodness is to be measured; that is good which

is like him, and agreeable to his mind. We in our language call him God, because he is good. In this, as in other things, our Lord Jesus was the Brightness of his glory (and his goodness is his glory), and the express image of his person, and therefore fitly called good Master.

(2.) He plainly directs his practice, in answer to his question. He started that thought of his being good, and therefore God, but did not stay upon it, lest he should seem to divert from, and so to drop, the main question, as many do in needless disputes and strifes of words. Now Christ's answer is, in short, this, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

[1.] The end proposed is, entering into life. The young man, in his question, spoke of eternal life. Christ, in his answer, speaks of life; to teach us, that eternal life is the only true life. The words concerning that are the words of this life, Ac 5:20. The present life scarcely deserves the name of life, for in the midst of life we are in death. Or into life, that spiritual life which is the beginning and earnest of eternal life. He desired to know how he might have eternal life; Christ tells him how he might enter into it; we have it by the merit of Christ, a mystery which was not as yet fully revealed, and therefore Christ waives that; but the way of entering into it, is, by obedience, and Christ directs us in that. By the former we make our title, by this, as by our evidence, we prove it; it is by adding to faith virtue, that an entrance (the word here used) is ministered to us into the everlasting kingdom, 2Pe 1:5,11. Christ, who is our Life, is the Way to the Father, and to the vision and fruition of him; he is the only Way, but duty, and the obedience of faith, are the way to Christ. There is an entrance into life hereafter, at death, at the great day, a complete entrance, and those only shall then enter into life, that do their duty; it is the diligent faithful servant that shall then enter into the joy of his Lord, and that joy will be his eternal life. There is an entrance into life now; we who have believed, do enter into rest, Heb 4:3. We have peace, and comfort, and joy, in the believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, and to this also sincere obedience is indispensably necessary.

[2.] The way prescribed is, keeping the commandments. Note, Keeping the commandments of God, according as they are revealed and made known to us, is the only way to life and salvation; and sincerity herein is accepted through Christ as our gospel perfection, provision being made of pardon, upon repentance, wherein we come short. Through Christ we are delivered from the condemning power of the law, but the commanding power of it is lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and under that, in that hand, we still are under the law to Christ (1Co 9:21), under it as a rule, though not as a covenant. Keeping the commandments includes faith in Jesus Christ, for that is the great commandment (1Jo 3:23), and it was one of the laws of Moses, that, when the great Prophet should be raised up, they should hear him. Observe, In order to our happiness here and for ever, it is not enough for us to know the commandments of God, but we must keep them, keep in them as our way, keep to them as our rule, keep them as our treasure, and with care, as the apple of our eye.

[3.] At his further instance and request, he mentions some particular commandments which he must keep (Mt 19:18,19); The young man saith unto him, Which? Note, Those that would do the commandments of God, must seek them diligently, and enquire after them, what they are. Ezra set himself to seek the law, and to do it, Ezr 7:10. "There were many commandments in the law of Moses; good Master, let me know which those are, the keeping o which is necessary to salvation."

In answer to this, Christ specifies several, especially the commandments of the second table. First, That which concerns our own and our neighbour's life; Thou shalt do no murder. Secondly, Our own and our neighbour's chastity, which should be as dear to us as life itself; Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thirdly, Our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate, as hedged about by the law of property; Thou shalt not steal. Fourthly, That which concerns truth, and our own and our neighbour's good name; Thou shalt not bear false witness, neither for thyself, nor against thy neighbour; for so it is here left at large. Fifthly, That which concerns the duties of

particular relations; Honour thy father and mother. Sixthly, That comprehensive law of love, which is the spring and summary of all these duties, whence they all flow, on which they are all founded, and in which they are all fulfilled; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Ga 5:14,Ro 13:9), that royal law, Jam 2:8. Some think this comes in here, not as the sum of the second table, but as the particular import of the tenth commandment; Thou shalt not covet, which Mark is, Defraud not; intimating that it is not lawful for me to design advantage or gain to myself by the diminution or loss of another; for that is to covet, and to love myself better than my neighbour, whom I ought to love a myself, and to treat as I would myself be treated.

Our Saviour here specifies second-table duties only; not as if the first were of less account, but, 1. Because they that now sat in Moses's seat, either wholly neglected, or greatly corrupted, these precepts in their preaching. While they pressed the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin,--judgment, and mercy, and faith, the summary of second-table duties, were overlooked, Mt 23:23. Their preaching ran out all in rituals and nothing in morals; and therefore Christ pressed that most, which they least insisted on. As one truth, so one duty, must not jostle out another, but each must know its place, and be kept in it; but equity requires that that be helped up, which is most in danger of being thrust out. That is the present truth which we are called to bear our testimony to, not only which is opposed, but which is neglected. 2. Because he would teach him, and us all, that moral honesty is a necessary branch of true Christianity, and to be minded accordingly. Though a mere moral man comes short of being a complete Christian, yet an immoral man is certainly no true Christian; for the grace of God teaches us to live soberly and righteously, as well as godly. Nay, though first-table duties have in them more of the essence of religion, yet second-table duties have in them more of the evidence of it. Our light burns in love to God, but it shines in love to our neighbour.

19 Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

1. By pride, and a vain conceit of his own merit and strength; this is the ruin of thousands, who keep themselves miserable by fancying themselves happy. When Christ told him what commandments he must keep, he answered very scornfully, All these things have I kept from my youth up, Mt 19:20. Now,

(a) According as he understood the law, as prohibiting only the outward acts of sin, I am apt to think that he said true, and Christ knew it, for he did not contradict him; nay, it is said in Mark, He loved him; so far was very good and pleasing to Christ. St. Paul reckons it a privilege, not contemptible in itself, though it was dross in comparison with Christ, that he was, as touching righteousness that is in the law, blameless, Php 3:6. His observance of these commands was universal; All these have I kept: it was early and constant; from my youth up. Note, A man may be free from gross sin, and yet come short of grace and glory. His hands may be clean from external pollutions, and yet he may perish eternally in his heart-wickedness. What shall we think then of those who do not attain to this; whose fraud and injustice, drunkenness and uncleanness, witness against them, that all these they have broken from their youth up, though they have named the name of Christ? Well, it is sad to come short of those that come short of heaven.

It was commendable also, that he desired to know further what his duty was; What lack I yet? He was convinced that he wanted something to fill up his works before God, and was therefore desirous to know it, because, if he was not mistaken in himself, he was willing to do it. Having not yet attained, he thus seemed to press forward. And he applied himself to Christ, whose doctrine was supposed to improve and perfect the Mosaic institution. He desired to know what were the peculiar precepts of his religion, that he might have all that was in them to polish and accomplish him. Who could bid fairer?

But,

(b) Even in this that he said, he discovered his ignorance and folly.

[1.] Taking the law in its spiritual sense, as Christ expounded it, no doubt, in many things he had offended against all these commands. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual meaning of the law, instead of saying, All these have I kept; what lack I yet? he would have said, with shame and sorrow, "All these have I broken, what shall I do to get my sins pardoned?"

[2.] Take it how you will, what he said savoured of pride and vain-glory, and had in it too much of that boasting which is excluded by the law of faith (Ro 3:27), and which excludes from justification, Lu 18:11,14. He valued himself too much, as the Pharisees did, upon the plausibleness of his profession before men, and was proud of that, which spoiled the acceptableness of it. That word, What lack I yet? perhaps was not so much a desire of further instruction as a demand of the praise of his present fancied perfection, and a challenge to Christ himself to show him any one instance wherein he was deficient.

2. He came short by an inordinate love of the world, and his enjoyments in it. This was the fatal rock on which he split. Observe,

(a) How he was tried in this matter (Mt 19:21); Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast. Christ waived the matter of his boasted obedience to the law, and let that drop, because this would be a more effectual way of discovering him than a dispute of the extent of the law. "Come," saith Christ, "if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt approve thyself sincere in thine obedience" (for sincerity is our gospel perfection), "if thou wilt come up to that which Christ has added to the law of Moses, if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt enter into life, and so be perfectly happy;" for that which Christ here prescribes, is not a thing of supererogation, or a perfection we may be saved without; but, in the main scope and intendment of it, it is our necessary and indispensable duty. What Christ said to him, he

thus far said to us all, that, if we would approve ourselves Christians indeed, and would be found at last the heirs of eternal life, we must do these two things:

[1.] We must practically prefer the heavenly treasures before all the wealth and riches in this world. That glory must have the pre-eminence in our judgment and esteem before this glory. No thanks to us to prefer heaven before hell, the worst man in the world would be glad of that Jerusalem for a refuge when he can stay no longer here, and to have it in reserve; but to make it our choice, and to prefer it before this earth--that is to be a Christian indeed. Now, as an evidence of this, First, We must dispose of what we have in this world, for the honour of God, and in his service: "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor. If the occasions of charity be very pressing, sell thy possessions that thou mayest have to give to them that need; as the first Christians did, with an eye to this precept, Ac 4:34. Sell what thou canst spare for pious uses, all thy superfluities; if thou canst not otherwise do good with it, sell it. Sit loose to it, be willing to part with it for the honour of God, and the relief of the poor." A gracious contempt of the world, and compassion of the poor and afflicted ones in it, are in all a necessary condition of salvation; and in those that have wherewithal, giving of alms is as necessary an evidence of that contempt of the world, and compassion to our brethren; by this the trial will be at the great day, Mt 25:35. Though many that call themselves Christians, do not act as if they believed it; it is certain, that, when we embrace Christ, we must let go the world, for we cannot serve God and mammon. Christ knew that covetousness was the sin that did most easily beset this young man, that, though what he had he had got honestly, yet he could not cheerfully part with it, and by this he discovered his insincerity. This command was like the call to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, to a land that I will show thee. As God tries believers by their strongest graces, so hypocrites by their strongest corruptions. Secondly, We must depend upon what we hope for in the other world as an abundant recompence for all we have left, or lost, or laid out, for God in this world; Thou shalt have treasure in heaven. We must, in the way of chargeable duty, trust God for a happiness out of sight, which will make us rich amends for all our expenses in God's

service. The precept sounded hard and harsh; "Sell that thou hast, and give it away;" and the objection against it would soon arise, that "Charity begins at home;" therefore Christ immediately annexes this assurance of a treasure in heaven. Note, Christ's promises make his precepts easy, and his yoke not only tolerable, but pleasant, and sweet, and very comfortable; yet this promise was as much a trial of this young man's faith as the precept was of his charity, and contempt of the world.

[2.] We must devote ourselves entirely to the conduct and government of our Lord Jesus; Come, and follow me. It seems here to be meant of a close and constant attendance upon his person, such as the selling of what he had in the world was as necessary to as it was to the other disciples to quit their callings; but of us it is required that we follow Christ, that we duly attend upon his ordinances, strictly conform to his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposals, and by upright and universal obedience observe his statutes, and keep his laws, and all this from a principle of love to him, and dependence on him, and with a holy contempt of every thing else in comparison of him, and much more in competition with him. This is to follow Christ fully. To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, unless we come, and follow Christ. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Well, on these terms, and on no lower, is salvation to be had; and they are very easy and reasonable terms, and will appear so to those who are brought to be glad of it upon any terms.

(b) See how he was discovered. This touched him in a tender part (Mt 19:22); When he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

[1.] He was a rich man, and loved his riches, and therefore went away. He did not like eternal life upon these terms. Note, First, Those who have much in the world are in the greatest temptation to love it, and to set their hearts upon it. Such is the bewitching nature of worldly wealth, that those who want it least desire most; when

riches increase, then is the danger of setting the heart upon them, Ps 62:10. If he had had but two mites in all the world, and had been commanded to give them to the poor, or but one handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, and had been bidden to make a cake of that for a poor prophet, the trial, one would think, had been much greater, yet those trials have been overcome (Lu 21:4,1Ki 17:14); which shows that the love of the world draws stronger than the most pressing necessities. Secondly, The reigning love of this world keeps many from Christ, who seem to have some good desires toward him. A great estate, as to those who are got above it, is a great furtherance, so to those who are entangled in the love of it, it is a great hindrance, in the way to heaven.

Yet something of honesty there was in it, that, when he did not like the terms, he went away, and would not pretend to that, which he could not find in his heart to come up to the strictness of; better so than do as Demas did, who, having known the way of righteousness, afterward turned aside, out of love to this present world, to the greater scandal of his profession; since he could not be a complete Christian, he would not be a hypocrite.

[2.] Yet he was a thinking man, and well-inclined, and therefore went away sorrowful. He had a leaning toward Christ, and was loth to part with him. Note, Many a one is ruined by the sin he commits with reluctance; leaves Christ sorrowfully, and yet is never truly sorry for leaving him, for, if he were, he would return to him. Thus this man's wealth was vexation of spirit to him, then when it was his temptation. What then would the sorrow be afterward, when his possessions would be gone, and all hopes of eternal life gone too?

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Though Christ spoke so strongly, few that have riches do not trust in them. How few that are poor are not tempted to envy! But men's earnestness in this matter is like their toiling to build a high wall to shut themselves and their children out of heaven. It should be

satisfaction to those who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition. If they live more hardly in this world than the rich, yet, if they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. Christ's words show that it is hard for a rich man to be a good Christian, and to be saved. The way to heaven is a narrow way to all, and the gate that leads into it, a strait gate; particularly so to rich people. More duties are expected from them than from others, and more sins easily beset them. It is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world. Rich people have a great account to make up for their opportunities above others. It is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches, to get to heaven. Christ used an expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the power of man. Nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. Who then can be saved? If riches hinder rich people, are not pride and sinful lusts found in those not rich, and as dangerous to them? Who can be saved? say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. The beginning, progress, and perfecting the work of salvation, depend wholly on the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. Not that rich people can be saved in their worldliness, but that they should be saved from it. Peter said, We have forsaken all. Alas! it was but a poor all, only a few boats and nets; yet observe how Peter speaks, as if it had been some mighty thing. We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, our expenses and losses, for Christ. However, Christ does not upbraid them; though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their all, and as dear to them as if it had been more. Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; he accepts according to what a man hath. Our Lord's promise to the apostles is, that when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, he will make all things new, and they shall sit with him in judgement on those who will be judged according to their doctrine. This sets forth the honour, dignity, and authority of their office and ministry. Our Lord added, that every one who had forsaken possessions or comforts, for his sake and the gospel, would be recompensed at last.

Wealth makes people independent of others, and for this reason the rich often find it difficult to acknowledge that they are not

independent of God. Their wealth makes them no better in God's sight than anyone else. As a result few of the rich enter the kingdom of God. Actually, no one at all could enter that kingdom apart from the work of God. By his grace he accepts those who humble themselves before him (Mat_19:23-26).

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

We have here Christ's promises to them, and to all others that tread in the steps of their faith and obedience. What there was either of vain-glory or of vain hopes in that which Peter said, Christ overlooks, and is not extreme to mark it, but takes this occasion to give the bond of a promise,

(a) To his immediate followers, Mt 19:28. They had signalized their respect to him, as the first that followed him, and to them he promises not only treasure, but honour, in heaven; and here they have a grant or patent for it from him who is the fountain of honour in that kingdom; Ye which have followed me in the regeneration shall sit upon twelve thrones. Observe,

[1.] The preamble to the patent, or the consideration of the grant, which, as usual, is a recital of their services; "You have followed me in the regeneration, and therefore this will I do for you." The time of Christ's appearing in this world was a time of regeneration, of reformation (Heb 9:10), when old things began to pass away, and all things to look new. The disciples had followed Christ when the church was yet in the embryo state, when the gospel temple was but

in the framing, when they had more of the work and service of the apostles than of the dignity and power that belonged to their office. Now they followed Christ with constant fatigue, when few did; and therefore on them he will put particular marks of honour. Note, Christ hath special favour for those who begin early with him, who trust him further than they can see him, as they did who followed him in the regeneration. Observe, Peter spoke of their forsaking all, to follow him, Christ only speaks of their following him, which was the main matter.

[2.] The date of their honour, which fixes the time when it should commence; not immediately from the day of the date of these presents, no, they must continue a while in obscurity, as they were. But when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory; and to this some refer that, in the regeneration; "You who now have followed me, shall, in the regeneration, be thus dignified." Christ's second coming will be a regeneration, when there shall be new heavens, and a new earth, and the restitution of all things. All that partake of the regeneration in grace (Joh 3:3) shall partake of the regeneration in glory; for as grace is the first resurrection (Re 20:6), so glory is the second regeneration.

Now their honour being adjourned till the Son of man's sitting in the throne of his glory, intimates, First, That they must stay for their advancement till then. Note, As long as our Master's glory is delayed, it is fit that ours should be so too, and that we should wait for it with an earnest expectation, as of a hope not seen. Ro 8:19. We must live, and work, and suffer, in faith, and hope, and patience, which therefore must be tried by these delays. Secondly, That they must share with Christ in his advancement; their honour must be a communion with him in his honour. They, having suffered with a suffering Jesus, must reign with a reigning Jesus, for both here and hereafter Christ will be all in all; we must be where he is (Joh 12:26), must appear with him (Col 3:4); and this will be an abundant recompence not only for our loss, but for the delay; and when our Lord comes, we shall receive not only our own, but our own with usury. The longest voyages make the richest returns.

[3.] The honour itself hereby granted; Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It is hard to determine the particular sense of this promise, and whether it was not to have many accomplishments, which I see no harm in admitting. First, When Christ is ascended to the right hand of the Father, and sits on the throne of his glory, then the apostles shall receive power by the Holy Ghost (Ac 1:8); shall be so much advanced above themselves as they are now, that they shall think themselves upon thrones, in promoting the gospel; they shall deliver it with authority, as a judge from the bench; they shall then have their commission enlarged, and shall publish the laws of Christ, by which the church, God's spiritual Israel (Ga 6:16), shall be governed, and Israel according to the flesh, that continues in infidelity, with all others that do likewise, shall be condemned. The honour and power given them, may be explained by Jer 1:19, See, I have set thee over the nations; and Eze 20:4, Wilt thou judge them? and Da 7:18, The saints shall take the kingdom; and Re 12:1, where the doctrine of Christ is called a crown of twelve stars. Secondly, When Christ appears for the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 24:31), then shall he send the apostles to judge the Jewish nation, because in that destruction their predictions, according to the word of Christ, would be accomplished. Thirdly, Some think it has reference to the conversion of the Jews, which is yet to come, at the latter end of the world, after the fall of antichrist; so Dr. Whitby; and that "it respects the apostles' government or the twelve tribes of Israel, not by a resurrection of their persons, but by a reviviscence of that Spirit which resided in them, and of that purity and knowledge which they delivered to the world, and, chiefly, by admission of their gospel to be the standard of their faith and the direction of their lives." Fourthly, It is certainly to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints in general shall judge the world, and the twelve apostles especially, as assessors with Christ, in the judgment of the great day, when all the world shall receive their final doom, and they shall ratify and applaud the sentence. But the tribe of Israel are named, partly because the number of the apostles was designedly the same with the number of the tribes; partly because the apostles were Jews, befriended them most, but were most spitefully persecuted by them;

and it intimates that the saints will judge their acquaintance and kindred according to the flesh, and will, in the great day, judge those they had a kindness for; will judge their persecutors, who in this world judged them.

But the general intendment of this promise is, to show the glory and dignity reserved for the saints in heaven, which will be an abundant recompence for the disgrace they suffered here in Christ's cause. There are higher degrees of glory for those that have done and suffered most. The apostles in this world were hurried and tossed, there they shall sit down at rest and ease; here bonds, and afflictions, and deaths, did abide them, but there they shall sit on thrones of glory; here they were dragged to the bar, there they shall be advanced to the bench; here the twelve tribes of Israel trampled upon them, there they shall tremble before them. And will not this be recompence enough to make up all their losses and expenses for Christ? Lu 22:29.

[4.] The ratification of this grant; it is firm, it is inviolably immutably sure; for Christ hath said, "Verily I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful Witness, who am empowered to make this grant, I have said it, and it cannot be disannulled."

(b) Here is a promise to all others that should in like manner leave all to follow Christ. It was not peculiar to the apostles, to be thus preferred, but this honour have all his saints. Christ will take care they shall none of them lose by him (Mt 19:29); Every one that has forsaken any thing for Christ, shall receive.

[1.] Losses for Christ are here supposed. Christ had told them that his disciples must deny themselves in all that is done to them in this world; now here he specifies particulars; for it is good to count upon the worst. If they have not forsaken all, as the apostles did, yet they have forsaken a great deal, houses suppose, and have turned themselves out, to wander in deserts; or dear relations, that would not go with them, to follow Christ; these are particularly mentioned,

as hardest for a tender gracious spirit to part with; brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children; and lands are added in the close; the profits of which were the support of the family.

Now, First, the loss of these things is supposed to be for Christ's name's sake; else he doth not oblige himself to make it up. Many forsake brethren, and wife, and children, in humour and passion, as the bird that wanders from her nest; that is a sinful desertion. But if we forsake them for Christ's sake, because we cannot keep them and keep a good conscience, we must either quit them, or quit our interest in Christ; if we do not quit our concern for them, or our duty to them, but our comfort in them, and will do it rather than deny Christ, and this with an eye to him, and to his will and glory, this is that which shall be thus recompensed. It is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes both the martyr and the confessor.

Secondly, It is supposed to be a great loss; and yet Christ undertakes to make up, for he is able to do it, be it ever so great. See the barbarity of the persecutors, that they stripped innocent people of all they had, for no other crime than their adherence to Christ! See the patience of the persecuted; and the strength of their love to Christ, which was such as all these waters could not quench!

[2.] A recompence of these losses is here secured. Thousands have dealt with Christ, and have trusted him far; but never any one lost by him, never any one but was an unspeakable gainer by him, when the account came to be balanced. Christ here gives his word for it, that he will not only indemnify his suffering servants, and save them harmless, but will abundantly reward them. Let them make a schedule of their losses for Christ, and they shall be sure to receive,

First, A hundred-fold in this life; sometimes in kind, in the things themselves which they have parted with. God will raise up for his suffering servants more friends, that will be so to them for Christ's sake, than they have left that were so for their own sakes. The apostles, wherever they came, met with those that were kind to them, and entertained them, and opened their hearts and doors to them.

However, they shall receive a hundred-fold, in kindness, in those things that are abundantly better and more valuable. Their graces shall increase, their comforts abound, they shall have tokens of God's love, more free communion with him, more full communications from him, clearer foresights, and sweeter foretastes, of the glory to be revealed; and then they may truly say, they have received a hundred times more comfort in God and Christ than they could have had in wife, or children.

Secondly, Eternal life at last. The former is reward enough, if there were no more; cent. per cent. is great profit; what then is a hundred to one? But this comes in over and above, as it were, into the bargain. The life here promised includes in it all the comforts of life in the highest degree, and all eternal. Now if we could but mix faith with the promise, and trust Christ for the performance of it, surely we should think nothing too much to do, nothing too hard to suffer, nothing too dear to part with, for him.

Our Saviour, in the last verse, obviates a mistake of some, as if pre-eminence in glory went by precedence in time, rather than the measure and degree of grace. No; Many that are first, shall be last, and the last, first, Mt 19:30. God will cross his hands; will reveal that to babes, which he hid from the wise and prudent; will reject unbelieving Jews and receive believing Gentiles. The heavenly inheritance is not given as earthly inheritances commonly are, by seniority of age, and priority of birth, but according to God's pleasure. This is the text of another sermon, which we shall meet with in the next chapter.

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Barnes Commentary:

This verse should have been connected with the following chapter. The parable there spoken is expressly to illustrate this sentiment. See its meaning, Mt 20:16.

Burkitt commentary:
A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words: the first respects the Jews and Gentiles in general the second, all professors of Christianity in particular, "The Jews (as if Christ had said) look upon themselves as first and nearest to the kingdom of heaven, but for their infidelity they shall be last in it; that is, never shall come there. And the Gentiles, who were looked upon as dogs, and farthest from heaven, shall be first there, upon their conversion to me, and faith in me."
As the words respect all professors, the sense is, "Many that are first in their own esteem, and in opinion of others, and forward in a profession of religion, yet at the day of judgment they will be last, and least in mine and my Father's estimation and account. And many that were little in their own, and less in the esteem of others, who had a less name and vogue in the world, shall yet be first and highest in my favour."
Learn hence, That the day of judgment will frustrate a great many persons expectations, both as touching others, and concerning themselves. Many will miss of heaven, and be last, who looked upon themselves to be first. And many will find others in heaven, whom they least expected there. The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth: We judge of man by outward appearances, but we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth. He can neither be deceived, nor yet deceive.

Matthew-20

Laborers in the Vineyard

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.
2 And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

For what term are they hired? For a day. It is but a day's work that is here done. The time of life is the day, in which we must work the

works of him that sent us into the world. It is a short time; the reward is for eternity, the work is but for a day; man is said to accomplish, as a hireling, his day, Job 14:6. This should quicken us to expedition and diligence in our work, that we have but a little time to work in, and the night is hastening on, when no man can work; and if our great work be undone when our day is done, we are undone for ever. It should also encourage us in reference to the hardships and difficulties of our work, that it is but for a day; the approaching shadow, which the servant earnestly desireth, will bring with it both rest, and the reward of our work, Job 7:2. Hold out, faith, and patience, yet a little while.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market place,

4 and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

Whence they are hired? Out of the market-place, where, till they are hired into God's service, they stand idle (Mt 20:3), all the day idle (Mt 20:6). Note, First, The soul of man stands ready to be hired into some service or other; it was (as all the creatures were) created to work, and is either a servant to iniquity, or a servant to righteousness, Ro 6:19. The devil, by his temptations, is hiring labourers into his field, to feed swine. God, by his gospel, is hiring labourers into his vineyard, to dress it, and keep it, paradise-work. We are put to our choice; for hired we must be (Jos 24:15); Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Secondly, Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle; a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may really be called a state of idleness; sinners are doing nothing, nothing to the purpose, nothing of the great work they were sent into the world about, nothing that will pass well in the account. Thirdly, The gospel call is given to those that stand idle in the market-place. The market-place is a place of concourse, and there Wisdom cries (Pr 1:20,21); it is a place of sport, there the children are playing (Mt 11:16); and the gospel calls us from vanity to seriousness; it is a place of business, of noise and hurry; and from that we are called to retire. "Come, come from this market-place."

Of course they had not been there, or not been disposed to offer themselves at the proper time; but as they were now willing, and the day was not over, and "yet there was room," they also are engaged, and on similar terms with all the rest.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

Notice is taken of the several hours of the day, at which the labourers were hired. The apostles were sent forth at the first and third hour of the gospel day; they had a first and a second mission, while Christ was on earth, and their business was to call in the Jews; after Christ's ascension, about the sixth and ninth hour, they went out again on the same errand, preaching the gospel to the Jews only, to them in Judea first, and afterward to them of the dispersion; but, at length, as it were about the eleventh hour, they called the Gentiles to the same work and privilege with the Jews, and told them that in Christ Jesus there should be no difference made between Jew and Greek.

But this may be, and commonly is, applied to the several ages of life, in which souls are converted to Christ. The common call is promiscuous, to come and work in the vineyard; but the effectual call is particular, and it is then effectual when we come at the call.

First, Some are effectually called, and begin to work in the vineyard when they are very young; are sent in early in the morning, whose tender years are seasoned with grace, and the remembrance of their Creator. John the Baptist was sanctified from the womb, and therefore great (Lu 1:15); Timothy from a child (2Ti 3:15); Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth. Those that have such a journey to go, had need set out betimes, the sooner the better.

Secondly, Others are savingly wrought upon in middle age; Go work in the vineyard, at the third, sixth, or ninth hour. The power of divine grace is magnified in the conversion of some, when they are in the midst of their pleasures and worldly pursuits, as Paul. God has work for all ages; no time amiss to turn to God; none can say, "It is all in good time;" for, whatever hour of the day it is with

us, the time past of our life may suffice that we have served sin; Go ye also into the vineyard. God turns away none that are willing to be hired, for yet there is room.

Thirdly, Others are hired into the vineyard in old age, at the eleventh hour, when the day of life is far spent, and there is but one hour of the twelve remaining. None are hired at the twelfth hour; when life is done, opportunity is done; but "while there is life, there is hope." 1. There is hope for old sinners; for if, in sincerity, they turn to God, they shall doubtless be accepted; true repentance is never too late. And, 2. There is hope of old sinners, that they may be brought to true repentance; nothing is too hard for Almighty grace to do, it can change the Ethiopian's skin, and the leopard's spots; can set those to work, who have contracted a habit of idleness. Nicodemus may be born again when he is old, and the old man may be put off, which is corrupt.

Yet let none, upon this presumption, put off their repentance till they are old. These were sent into the vineyard, it is true, at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them, or offered to hire them, before. The Gentiles came in at the eleventh hour, but it was because the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel offers made them at the third, or sixth hour, and have resisted and refused them, will not have that to say for themselves at the eleventh hour, that these had; No man has hired us; nor can they be sure that any man will hire them at the ninth or eleventh hour; and therefore not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that now is the accepted time; if we will hear his voice, it must be to-day.

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

A two-fold sense and interpretation is given of this parable; but both analogical.

One of which relates to the calling of the Gentiles. The Jews were the first people that God had in the world: they were hired into the vineyard betimes in the morning, the Gentiles not till the day was far spent; yet shall the Gentiles, by the favour and bounty of God,

receive the same reward of eternal life, which was promised to the Jews who bore the heat of the day, while the Gentiles stood idle.

In the other analogical sense we may understand all persons indefinitely called by the gospel into the visible church, those that are called last, shall be rewarded together with the first; and accordingly the design and scope of this parable, is to shew the freeness of divine grace, in the distribution of those rewards which the hand of mercy confers upon God's faithful servants.

The vineyard is the church of God, the husbandman is God himself; the labourers are particular persons.

God's going at diverse times into his vineyard, imports the several ages of man's life; some are called early in the morning, some at noon, others at night. Now when God comes to dispense his rewards, those that entered first into the vineyard and did most service for God, shall be plentifully rewarded by him; and such as came in later, but did faithful service, shall not miss of a merciful reward.

Learn,

1. That so long as a person keeps out of Christ's vineyard and service, he is idle. Every unregenerate man is an idle man.

2. That persons are called by the preaching of the gospel at several ages and periods of life into God's vineyard; that is, into the communion of the visible church.

3.That such as do come, though late, into God's vineyard, and work diligently and faithfully, shall not miss of a reward of grace at the hand of free mercy.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

When the account was taken; when the evening was come, then, as usual, the day-labourers were called and paid. Note, Evening time is the reckoning time; the particular account must be given up in the evening of our life; for after death cometh the judgment.

Faithful labourers shall receive their reward when they die; it is deferred till then, that they may wait with patience for it, but no longer; for God will observe his own rule, The hire of the labourers shall not abide with thee all night, until the morning. See De 24:15. When Paul, that faithful labourer, departs, he is with Christ presently. The payment shall not be wholly deferred till the morning of the resurrection; but then, in the evening of the world, will be the general account, when every one shall receive according to the things done in the body. When time ends, and with it the world of work and opportunity, then the state of retribution commences; then call the labourers, and give them their hire. Ministers call them into the vineyard, to do their work; death calls them out of the vineyard, to receive their penny: and those to whom the call into the vineyard is effectual, the call out of it will be joyful. Observe, They did not come for their pay till they were called; we must with patience wait God's time for our rest and recompence; go by our master's clock. The last trumpet, at the great day, shall call the labourers, 1Th 4:16. Then shalt thou call, saith the good and faithful servant, and I will answer. In calling the labourers, they must begin from the last, and so to the first. Let not those that come in at the eleventh hour, be put behind the rest, but, lest they should be discouraged, call them first. At the great day, though the dead in Christ shall rise first, yet they which are alive and remain, on whom the ends of the world (the eleventh hour of its day) comes, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds; no preference shall be given to seniority, but every man shall stand in his own lot at the end of the days.

9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

First, The general pay (Mt 20:9,10); They received every man a penny. Note, All that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, shall undoubtedly obtain eternal life (Ro 2:7), not as wages for the value of their work, but as the gift of God. Though there be degrees of glory in heaven, yet it will be to all a complete happiness. They that come from the east and west, and so come in late, that are picked up out of the highways and the hedges, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, at the same feast, Mt 7:11. In heaven, every vessel will be full,

brimful, though every vessel is not alike large and capacious. In the distribution of future joys, as it was in the gathering of the manna, he that shall gather much, will have nothing over, and he that shall gather little, will have no lack, Ex 16:18. Those whom Christ fed miraculously, though of different sizes, men, women, and children, did all eat, and were filled.

The giving of a whole day's wages to those that had not done the tenth part of a day's work, is designed to show that God distributes his rewards by grace and sovereignty, and not of debt. The best of the labourers, and those that begin soonest, having so many empty spaces in their time, and their works not being filled up before God, may truly be said to labour in the vineyard scarcely one hour of their twelve; but because we are under grace, and not under the law, even such defective services, done in sincerity, shall not only be accepted, but by free grace richly rewarded. Compare Lu 17:7,8,12:37.

Secondly, The particular pleading with those that were offended with this distribution in gavel-kind. The circumstances of this serve to adorn the parable; but the general scope is plain, that the last shall be first.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

We have here, the offence taken (Mt 20:11,12); They murmured at the good man of the house; not that there is, or can be, any discontent or murmuring in heaven, for that is both guilt and grief, and in heaven there is neither; but there may be, and often are, discontent and murmuring concerning heaven and heavenly things, while they are in prospect and promise in this world. This signifies the jealousy which the Jews were provoked to by the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven. As the elder brother, in

the parable of the prodigal, repined at the reception of his younger brother, and complained of his father's generosity to him; so these labourers quarrelled with their master, and found fault, not because they had not enough, so much as because others were made equal with them. They boast, as the prodigal's elder brother did, of their good services; We have borne the burthen and heat of the day; that was the most they could make of it. Sinners are said to labour in the very fire (Hab 2:13), whereas God's servants, at the worst, do but labour in the sun; not in the heat of the iron furnace, but only in the heat of the day. Now these last have worked but one hour, and that too in the cool of the day; and yet thou hast made them equal with us. The Gentiles, who are newly called in, have as much of the privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah as the Jews have, who have so long been labouring in the vineyard of the Old-Testament church, under the yoke of the ceremonial law, in expectation of that kingdom. Note, There is a great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and other too much, of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little, in the work of God. Very apt we all are to undervalue the deserts of others, and to overvalue our own. Perhaps, Christ here gives an intimation to Peter, not to boast too much, as he seemed to do, of his having left all to follow Christ; as if, because he and the rest of them had borne the burthen and heat of the day thus, they must have a heaven by themselves. It is hard for those that do or suffer more than ordinary for God, not to be elevated too much with the thought of it, and to expect to merit by it. Blessed Paul guarded against this, when, though the chief of the apostles, he owned himself to be nothing, to be less than the least of all saints.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny ?

14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

The offence removed. Three things the master of the house urges, in answer to this ill-natured surmise.

(a) That the complainant had no reason at all to say he had any wrong done to him, Mt 20:13,14. Here he asserts his own justice; Friend, I do thee no wrong. He calls him friend, for in reasoning

with others we should use soft words and hard arguments; if our inferiors are peevish and provoking, yet we should not thereby be put into a passion, but speak calmly to them.

[1.] It is incontestably true, that God can do no wrong. This is the prerogative of the King of kings. Is there unrighteousness with God? The apostle startles at the thought of it; God forbid! Ro 3:5,6. His word should silence all our murmurings, that, whatever God does to us, or withholds from us, he does us no wrong.

[2.] If God gives that grace to others, which he denies to us, it is kindness to them, but no injustice to us; and bounty to another, while it is no injustice to us, we ought not to find fault with. Because it is free grace, that is given to those that have it, boasting is for ever excluded; and because it is free grace, that is withheld from those that have it not, murmuring is for ever excluded. Thus shall every mouth be stopped, and all flesh be silent before God.

To convince the murmurer that he did no wrong, he refers him to the bargain: "Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? And if thou hast what thou didst agree for, thou hast no reason to cry out of wrong; thou shalt have what we agreed for." Though God is a debtor to none, yet he is graciously pleased to make himself a debtor by his own promise, for the benefit of which, through Christ, believers agree with him, and he will stand to his part of the agreement. Note, It is good for us often to consider what it was that we agreed with God for. First, Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; they choose their portion in this life (Ps 17:14); in these things they are willing to have their reward (Mt 6:2,5), their consolation (Lu 6:24), their good things (Lu 16:25); and with these they shall be put off, shall be cut off from spiritual and eternal blessings; and herein God does them no wrong; they have what they chose, the penny they agreed for; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it; it is conclusive against them. Secondly, Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and they must remember that they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take God's word for it? Thou didst; and wilt

thou go and agree with the world? Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all, and to take up with nothing short of it? And wilt thou seek for a happiness in the creature, or think from thence to make up the deficiencies of thy happiness in God?

He therefore,

1. Ties him to his bargain (Mt 20:14); Take that thine is, and go thy way. If we understand it of that which is ours by debt or absolute propriety, it would be a dreadful word; we are all undone, if we be put off with that only which we can call our own. The highest creature must go away into nothing, if he must go away with that only which is his own: but if we understand it of that which is ours by gift, the free gift of God, it teaches us to be content with such things as we have. Instead of repining that we have no more, let us take what we have, and be thankful. If God be better in any respect to others than to us, yet we have no reason to complain while he is so much better to us than we deserve, in giving us our penny, though we are unprofitable servants.

2. He tells him that those he envied should fare as well as he did; "I will give unto this last, even as unto thee; I am resolved I will." Note, The unchangeableness of God's purposes in dispensing his gifts should silence our murmurings. If he will do it, it is not for us to gainsay; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Neither giveth he an account of any of his matters; nor is it fit he should.

(b) He had no reason to quarrel with the master; for what he gave was absolutely his own, Mt 20:15. As before he asserted his justice, so here his sovereignty; Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Note,

[1.] God is the Owner of all good; his propriety in it is absolute, sovereign, and unlimited.

[2.] He may therefore give or withhold his blessings, as he pleases. What we have, is not our own, and therefore it is not lawful for us to do what we will with it; but what God has, is his own; and this will justify him, First, In all the disposals of his providence; when God takes from us that which was dear to us, and which we could ill spare, we must silence our discontents with this; May he not do what he will with his own? Abstulit, sed et dedit--He hath taken away; but he originally gave. It is not for such depending creatures as we are to quarrel with our Sovereign. Secondly, In all the dispensations of his grace, God gives or withholds the means of grace, and the Spirit of grace, as he pleases. Not but that there is a counsel in every will of God, and what seems to us to be done arbitrarily, will appear at length to have been done wisely, and for holy ends. But this is enough to silence all murmurs and objectors, that God is sovereign Lord of all, and may do what he will with his own. We are in his hand, as clay in the hands of a potter; and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or strive with him.

(c) He had no reason to envy his fellow servant, or to grudge at him; or to be angry that he came into the vineyard no sooner; for he was not sooner called; he had no reason to be angry that the master had given him wages for the whole day, when he had idled away the greatest part of it; for Is thine eye evil, because I am good? See here,

[1.] The nature of envy; It is an evil eye. The eye is often both the inlet and the outlet of this sin. Saul saw that David prospered, and he eyed him, 1Sa 18:9,15. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. What can have more evil in it? It is grief to ourselves, anger to God, and ill-will to our neighbour; and it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour, in it; it is an evil, an only evil.

[2.] The aggravation of it; "It is because I am good." Envy is unlikeness to God, who is good, and doeth good, and delighteth in

doing good; nay, it is an opposition and contradiction to God; it is a dislike of his proceedings, and a displeasure at what he does, and is pleased with. It is a direct violation of both the two great commandments at once; both that of love to God, in whose will we should acquiesce, and love to our neighbour, in whose welfare we should rejoice. Thus man's badness takes occasion from God's goodness to be more exceedingly sinful.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good ?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

"Take heed lest by indulging the spirit of these murmurers at the penny given to the last hired, ye miss your own penny, though first in the vineyard; while the consciousness of having come in so late may inspire these last with such a humble frame, and such admiration of the grace that has hired and rewarded them at all, as will put them into the foremost place in the end."

he therefore does no wrong to any, by showing extraordinary grace to some. See here the nature of envy. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. It is a grief to ourselves, displeasing to God, and hurtful to our neighbours: it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour. Let us forego every proud claim, and seek for salvation as a free gift. Let us never envy or grudge, but rejoice and praise God for his mercy to others as well as to ourselves.

Lastly, Here is the application of the parable (Mt 20:16), in that observation which occasioned it (Mt 19:30); So the first shall be last, and the last first. There were many that followed Christ now in the regeneration, when the gospel kingdom was first set up, and these Jewish converts seemed to have got the start of others; but Christ, to obviate and silence their boasting, here tells them,

1. That they might possibly be outstripped by their successors in profession, and, though they were before others in profession, might be found inferior to them in knowledge, grace, and holiness. The Gentile church, which was as yet unborn, the Gentile world,

which as yet stood idle in the market-place, would produce greater numbers of eminent, useful Christians, than were found among the Jews. More and more excellent shall be the children of the desolate than those of the married wife, Isa 54:1. Who knows but that the church, in its old age, may be more fat and flourishing than ever, to show that the Lord is upright? Though primitive Christianity had more of the purity and power of that holy religion than is to be found in the degenerate age wherein we live, yet what labourers may be sent into the vineyard in the eleventh hour of the church's day, in the Philadelphian period, and what plentiful effusions of the Spirit may then be, above what has been yet, who can tell?

2. That they had reason to fear, lest they themselves should be found hypocrites at last; for many are called but few chosen. This is applied to the Jews (Mt 22:14); it was so then, it is too true still; many are called with a common call, that are not chosen with a saving choice. All that are chosen from eternity, are effectually called, in the fulness of time (Ro 8:30), so that in making our effectual calling sure we make sure our election (2Pe 1:10); but it is not so as to the outward call; many are called, and yet refuse (Pr 1:24), nay, as they are called to God, so they go from him (Ho 11:2,7), by which it appears that they were not chosen, for the election will obtain, Ro 11:7. Note, There are but few chosen Christians, in comparison with the many that are only called Christians; it therefore highly concerns us to build our hope for heaven upon the rock of an eternal choice, and not upon the sand of an external call; and we should fear lest we be found but seeming Christians, and so should really come short; nay, lest we be found blemished Christians, and so should seem to come short, Heb 4:1.

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

19 and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

This is the third time that Christ gave his disciples notice of his approaching sufferings; he was not going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and to offer up himself the great Passover; both must be done at Jerusalem: there the passover must be kept (De 12:5), and there a prophet must perish, because there the great Sanhedrim sat, who were judges in that case, Lu 13:33. Observe,

I The privacy of this prediction; He took the twelve disciples apart in the way. This was one of those things which were told to them in darkness, but which they were afterward to speak in the light, Mt 10:27. His secret was with them, as his friends, and this particularly. It was a hard saying, and, if any could bear it, they could. They would be more immediately exposed to peril with him, and therefore it was requisite that they should know of it, that, being fore-warned, they might be fore-armed. It was not fit to be spoken publicly as yet,

1. Because many that were cool toward him, would hereby have been driven to turn their backs upon him; the scandal of the cross would have frightened them from following him any longer.

2. Because many that were hot for him, would hereby be driven to take up arms in his defense, and it might have occasioned an uproar among the people (Mt 26:5), which would have been laid to his charge, if he had told them of it publicly before: and, besides that such methods are utterly disagreeable to the genius of his kingdom, which is not of this world, he never countenanced any thing which had a tendency to prevent his sufferings. This discourse was not in the synagogue, or in the house, but in the way, as they travelled along; which teaches us, in our walks or travels with our friends, to keep up such discourse as is good, and to the use of edifying. See De 16:7.

II The prediction itself, Mt 20:18,19. Observe,

1. It is but a repetition of what he had once and again said before, Mt 16:21,17:22,23. This intimates that he not only saw clearly what troubles lay before him, but that his heart was upon his suffering-work; it filled him, not with fear, then he would have studied to avoid it, and could have done it, but with desire and expectation; he spoke thus frequently of his sufferings, because through them he was to enter into his glory. Note, It is good for us to be often thinking and speaking of our death, and of the sufferings which, it is likely, we may meet with betwixt this and the grave; and thus, by making them more familiar, they would become less formidable. This is one way of dying daily, and of taking up our cross daily, to be daily speaking of the cross, and of dying; which would come neither the sooner nor the surer, but much the better, for our thoughts and discourses of them.

2. He is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than any time before. He had said (Mt 16:21), that he should suffer many things, and be killed; and (Mt 17:22), that he should be betrayed into the hands of men, and they should kill him; but here he adds; that he shall be condemned, and delivered to the Gentiles, that they shall mock him, and scourge him, and crucify him. These are frightful things, and the certain foresight of them was enough to damp an ordinary resolution, yet (as was foretold concerning him, Isa 42:4) he did not fail, nor was discouraged; but the more clearly he foresaw his sufferings, the more cheerfully he went forth to meet them. He foretels by whom he should suffer, by the chief priests and the scribes; so he had said before, but here he adds, They shall deliver him to the Gentiles, that he might be the better understood; for the chief priests and scribes had no power to put him to death, nor was crucifying a manner of death in use among the Jews. Christ suffered from the malice both of Jews and Gentiles, because he was to suffer for the salvation both of Jews and Gentiles; both had a hand in his death, because he was to reconcile both by his cross, Eph 2:16.

3. Here, as before, he annexes the mention of his resurrection and his glory to that of his death and sufferings; The third day he shall rise again. He still brings this in,

(a) To encourage himself in his sufferings, and to carry him cheerfully through them. He endured the cross for the joy set before him; he foresaw he should rise again, and rise quickly, the third day. He shall be straightway glorified, Joh 13:32. The reward is not only sure, but very near.

(b) To encourage his disciples, and comfort them, who would be overwhelmed and greatly terrified by his sufferings.

(c) To direct us, under all the sufferings of this present time, to keep up a believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, to look at the things that are not seen, that are eternal, which will enable us to call the present afflictions light, and but for a moment.

The Request of James and John

20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou ? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

Here, is first, the request of the two disciples to Christ, and the rectifying of the mistake upon which that was grounded, Mt 20:20-23. The sons of Zebedee were James and John, two of the first three of Christ's disciples; Peter and they were his favourites; John was the disciple whom Jesus loved; yet none were so often reproved as they; whom Christ loves best he reproves most, Re 3:19.

Here is the ambitious address they made to Christ--that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, Mt 20:20,21. It was a great degree of faith, that they were confident of his kingdom, though now he appeared in meanness; but a great degree of ignorance, that they still expected a temporal

kingdom, with worldly pomp and power, when Christ had so often told them of sufferings and self-denial. In this they expected to be grandees. They ask not for employment in this kingdom, but for honour only; and no place would serve them in this imaginary kingdom, but the highest, next to Christ, and above every body else. It is probable that the last word in Christ's foregoing discourse gave occasion to this request, that the third day he should rise again. They concluded that his resurrection would be his entrance upon his kingdom, and therefore were resolved to put in betimes for the best place; nor would they lose it for want of speaking early. What Christ said to comfort them, they thus abused, and were puffed up with. Some cannot bear comforts, but they turn them to a wrong purpose; as sweetmeats in a foul stomach produce bile. Now observe,

1. There was policy in the management of this address, that they put their mother on to present it, that it might be looked upon as her request, and not theirs. Though proud people think well of themselves, they would not be thought to do so, and therefore affect nothing more than a show of humility (Col 2:18), and others must be put on to court that honour for them, which they are ashamed to court for themselves. The mother of James and John was Salome, as appears by comparing Mt 27:61,Mk 15:40. Some think she was daughter of Cleophas or Alpheus, and sister or cousin german to Mary the mother of our Lord. She was one of those women that attended Christ, and ministered to him; and they thought she had such an interest in him, that he could deny her nothing, and therefore they made her their advocate. Thus when Adonijah had reasonable request to make to Solomon, he put Bathsheba on to speak for him. It was their mother's weakness thus to become that tool of their ambition, which she should have given a check to. Those that are wise and good, would not be seen in an ill-favoured thing. In gracious requests, we should learn this wisdom, to desire the prayers of those that have an interest at the throne of grace; we should beg of our praying friends to pray for us, and reckon it a real kindness.

It was likewise policy to ask first for a general grant, that he would do a certain thing for them, not in faith, but in presumption, upon

that general promise; Ask, and it shall be given you; in which is implied this qualification of our request, that it be according to the revealed will of God, otherwise we ask and have not, if we ask to consume it upon our lusts, Jam 4:3.

2. There was pride at the bottom of it, a proud conceit of their own merit, a proud contempt of their brethren, and a proud desire of honour and preferment; pride is a sin that most easily besets us, and which it is hard to get clear of. It is a holy ambition to strive to excel others in grace and holiness; but it is a sinful ambition to covet to exceed others in pomp and grandeur. Seekest thou great things for thyself, when thou hast just now heard of thy Master's being mocked, and scourged, and crucified? For shame! Seek them not, Jer 45:5.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

Christ's answer to this address (Mt 20:22,23), directed not to the mother, but to the sons that set her on. Though others be our mouth in prayer, the answer will be given to us according as we stand effected. Christ's answer is very mild; they were overtaken in the fault of ambition, but Christ restored them with the spirit of meekness. Observe,

1. How he reproved the ignorance and error of their petition; Ye know not what ye ask.

(a) They were much in the dark concerning the kingdom they had their eye upon; they dreamed of a temporal kingdom, whereas Christ's kingdom is not of this world. They knew not what it was to sit on his right hand, and on his left; they talked of it as blind men do of colours. Our apprehensions of that glory which is yet to be revealed, are like the apprehensions which a child has of the preferments of grown men. If at length, through grace, we arrive at perfection, we shall then put away such childish fancies: when we come to see face to face, we shall know what we enjoy; but now, alas, we know not what we ask; we can but ask for the good as it lies

in the promise, Tit 1:2. What it will be in the performance, eye has not seen, nor ear heard.

(b) They were much in the dark concerning the way to that kingdom. They know not what they ask, who ask for the end, but overlook the means, and so put asunder what God has joined together. The disciples thought, when they had left what little all they had for Christ, and had gone about the country awhile preaching the gospel of the kingdom, all their service and sufferings were over, and it was now time to ask, What shall we have? As if nothing were now to be looked for but crowns and garlands; whereas there were far greater hardships and difficulties before them than they had yet met with. They imagined their warfare was accomplished when it was scarcely begun, and they had yet but run with the footmen. They dream of being in Canaan presently, and consider not what they shall do in the swellings of Jordan. Note,

[1.] We are all apt, when we are but girding on the harness, to boast as though we had put it off.

[2.] We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in our way to it.

2. How he repressed the vanity and ambition of their request. They were pleasing themselves with the fancy of sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in great state; now, to check this, he leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, and leaves them in the dark about their glory.

(a) He leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, which they were not so mindful of as they ought to have been. They looked so earnestly upon the crown, the prize, that they were ready to plunge headlong and unprepared into the foul way that led to it; and therefore he thinks it necessary to put them in mind of the hardships that were before them, that they might be no surprise or terror to them. Observe,

[1.] How fairly he puts the matter to them, concerning these difficulties (Mt 20:22); "You would stand candidates for the first post of honour in the kingdom; but are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? You talk of what great things you must have when you have done your work; but are you able to hold out to the end of it?" Put the matter seriously to yourselves. These same two disciples once knew not what manner of spirit they were of, when they were disturbed with anger, Lu 9:55; and now they were not aware what was amiss in their spirits when they were lifted up with ambition. Christ sees that pride in us which we discern not in ourselves.

Note,

First, That to suffer for Christ is to drink of a cup, and to be baptized with a baptism. In this description of sufferings, 1. It is true, that affliction doth abound. It is supposed to be a bitter cup, that is drunk of, wormwood and gall, those waters of a full cup, that are wrung out to God's people (Ps 43:10); a cup of trembling indeed, but not of fire and brimstone, the portion of the cup of wicked men, Ps 11:6. It is supposed to be a baptism, a washing with the waters of affliction; some are dipped in them; the waters compass them about even to the soul (Jon 2:5); others have but a sprinkling of them; both are baptism, some are overwhelmed in them, as in a deluge, others ill wet, as in a sharp shower. But, 2. Even in this, consolation doth more abound. It is but a cup, not an ocean; it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but we shall see the bottom of it; it is a cup in the hand of a Father (Joh 18:11); and it is full of mixture, Ps 75:8. It is but a baptism; if dipped, that is the worst of it, not drowned; perplexed, but not in despair. Baptism is an ordinance by which we join ourselves to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, Eze 20:37,Isa 48:10. Baptism is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;" and so is suffering for Christ, for unto us it is given, Php 1:29.

Secondly, It is to drink of the same cup that Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the same baptism that he was baptized with. Christ is beforehand with us in suffering, and in that as in other things left us an example. 1. It bespeaks the condescension of a suffering Christ, that he would drink of such a cup (Joh 18:11), nay, and such a brook (Ps 110:7), and drink so deep, and yet so cheerfully; that he would be baptized with such a baptism, and was so forward to it, Lu 12:50. It was much that he would be baptized with water as a common sinner, much more with blood as an uncommon malefactor. But in all this he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was made sin for us. 2. It bespeaks the consolation of suffering Christians, that they do but pledge Christ in the bitter cup, are partakers of his sufferings, and fill up that which is behind of them; we must therefore arm ourselves with the same mind, and go to him without the camp.

Thirdly, It is good for us to be often putting it to ourselves, whether we are able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with this baptism. We must expect suffering, and not look upon it as a hard thing to suffer well and as becomes us. Are we able to suffer cheerfully, and in the worst of times still to hold fast our integrity? What can we afford to part with for Christ? How far will we give him credit? Could I find in my heart to drink of a bitter cup, and to be baptized with a bloody baptism, rather than let go my hold of Christ? The truth is, Religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing; but it is worth little, if it be not worth suffering for. Now let us sit down, and count the cost of dying for Christ rather than denying him, and ask, Can we take him upon these terms?

[2.] See how boldly they engage for themselves; they said, We are able, in hopes of sitting on his right hand, and on his left; but at the same time they fondly hoped that they should never be tried. As before they knew not what they asked, so now they knew not what they answered. We are able; they would have done well to put in, "Lord, by thy strength, and in thy grace, we are able, otherwise we

are not." But the same that was Peter's temptation, to be confident of his own sufficiency, and presume upon his own strength, was here the temptation of James and John; and it is a sin we are all prone to. They knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism, and therefore they were thus bold in promising for themselves. But those are commonly most confident, that are least acquainted with the cross.

[3.] See how plainly and positively their sufferings are here foretold (Mt 20:23); Ye shall drink of my cup. Sufferings foreseen will be the more easily borne, especially if looked upon under a right notion, as drinking of his cup, and being baptized with his baptism. Christ began in suffering for us, and expects we should pledge him in suffering for him. Christ will have us know the worst, that we may make the best of our way to heaven; Ye shall drink; that is, ye shall suffer. James drank the bloody cup first of all the apostles, Ac 12:2 John, though at last he died in his bed, if we may credit the ecclesiastical historians, yet often drank of this bitter cup, as when he was banished into the isle of Patmos (Re 1:9), and when (as they say) at Ephesus he was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but was miraculously preserved. He was, as the rest of the apostles, in deaths often. He took the cup, offered himself to the baptism, and it was accepted.

(b) He leaves them in the dark about the degrees of their glory. To carry them cheerfully through their sufferings, it was enough to be assured that they should have a place in his kingdom. The lowest seat in heaven is an abundant recompence for the greatest sufferings on earth. But as to the preferments there, it was not fit there should be any intimation given for whom they were intended; for the infirmity of their present state could not bear such a discovery with any evenness; "To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, and therefore it is not for you to ask it or to know it; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

Note,

[1.] It is very probable that there are degrees of glory in heaven; for our Saviour seems to allow that there are some that shall sit on his right hand and on his left, in the highest places.

[2.] As the future glory itself, so the degrees of it, are purposed and prepared in the eternal counsel of God; as the common salvation, so the more peculiar honours, are appointed, the whole affair is long since settled, and there is a certain measure of the stature, both in grace and glory, Eph 4:13.

[3.] Christ, in dispensing the fruits of his own purchase, goes exactly by the measures of his Father's purpose; It is not mine to give, save to them (so it may be read) for whom it is prepared. Christ has the sole power of giving eternal life, but then it is to as many as were given him, Joh 17:2. It is not mine to give, that is, to promise now; that matter is already settled and concerted, and the Father and Son understand one another perfectly well in this matter. "It is not mine to give to those that seek and are ambitious of it, but to those that by great humility and self-denial are prepared for it."

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here are the reproof and instruction which Christ gave to the other ten disciples for their displeasure at the request of James and John.

He had much to bear with in them all, they were so weak in knowledge and grace, yet he bore their manners.

1 The fret that the ten disciples were in (Mt 20:24). They were moved with indignation against the two brethren; not because they were desirous to be preferred, which was their sin, and for which Christ was displeased with them, but because they were desirous to be preferred before them, which was a reflection upon them. Many seem to have indignation at sin; but it is not because it is sin, but because it touches them. They will inform against a man that swears; but it is only if he swear at them, and affront them, not because he dishonours God. These disciples were angry at their brethren's ambition, though they themselves, bay because they themselves, were as ambitious. Note, It is common for people to be angry at those sins in others which they allow of and indulge in themselves. Those that are proud and covetous themselves do not care to see others so. Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, or is the cause of more indignation and contention, than ambition, and desire of greatness. We never find Christ's disciples quarreling, but something of this was at the bottom of it.

2 The check that Christ gave them, which was very gentle, rather by way of instruction what they should be, than by way of reprehension for what they were. He had reproved this very sin before (Mt 18:3), and told them they must be humble as little children; yet they relapsed into it, and yet he reproved them for it thus mildly.

He called them unto him, which intimates great tenderness and familiarity. He did not, in anger, bid them get out of his presence, but called them, in love, to come into his presence: for therefore he is fit to teach, and we are invited to learn of him, because he is meek and lowly in heart. What he had to say concerned both the two disciples and the ten, and therefore he will have them all together. And he tells them, that, whereas they were asking which of them should have dominion a temporal kingdom, there was really no such dominion reserved for any of them. For,

(a) They must not be like the princes of the Gentiles. Christ's disciples must not be like Gentiles, no not like princes of the Gentiles. Principality doth no more become ministers than Gentilism doth Christians.

Observe,

[1.] What is the way of the princes of the Gentiles (Mt 20:25); to exercise dominion and authority over their subjects, and (if they can but win the upper hand with a strong hand) over one another too. That which bears them up in it is, that they are great, and great men think they may do any thing. Dominion and authority are the great things which the princes of the Gentiles pursue, and pride themselves in; they would bear sway, would carry all before them, have every body truckle to them, and every sheaf bow to theirs. They would have it cried before them, Bow the knee; like Nebuchadnezzar, who slew, and kept alive, at pleasure.

[2.] What is the will of Christ concerning his apostles and ministers, in this matter.

First, "It shall not be so among you. The constitution of the spiritual kingdom is quite different from this. You are to teach the subjects of this kingdom, to instruct and beseech them, to counsel and comfort them, to take pains with them, and suffer with them, not to exercise dominion or authority over them; you are not to lord it over God's heritage (1Pe 5:3), but to labour in it." This forbids not only tyranny, and abuse of power, but the claim or use of any such secular authority as the princes of the Gentiles lawfully exercise. So hard is it for vain men, even good men, to have such authority, and not to be puffed up with it, and do more hurt than good with it, that our Lord Jesus saw fit wholly to banish it out of his church. Paul himself disowns dominion over the faith of any, 2Co 1:24. The pomp and grandeur of the princes of the Gentiles ill become Christ's disciples. Now, if there were no such power and honour intended

to be in the church, it was nonsense for them to be striving who should have it. They knew not what they asked.

Secondly, How then shall it be among the disciples of Christ? Something of greatness among them Christ himself had intimated, and here he explains it; "He that will be great among you, that will be chief, that would really be so, and would be found to be so at last, let him be your minister, your servant," Mt 20:26,27. Here observe,

1. That it is the duty of Christ's disciples to serve one another, for mutual edification. This includes both humility and usefulness. The followers of Christ must be ready to stoop to the meanest offices of love for the good one of another, must submit one to another (1Pe 5:5,Eph 5:21), and edify one another (Ro 14:19), please one another for good, Ro 15:2 The great apostle made himself every one's servant; see 1Co 9:19.

2. It is the dignity of Christ's disciples faithfully to discharge this duty. The way to be great and chief is to be humble and serviceable. Those are to be best accounted of, and most respected, in the church, and will be so by all that understand things aright; not those that are dignified with high and mighty names, like the names of the great ones of the earth, that appear in pomp, and assume to themselves a power proportionable, but those that are most humble and self-denying, and lay out themselves most to do good, though to the diminishing of themselves. These honour God most, and those he will honour. As he must become a fool that would be wise, so he must become a servant that would be chief. St. Paul was a great example of this; he laboured more abundantly than they all, made himself (as some would call it) a drudge to his work; and is not he chief? Do we not by consent call him the great apostle, though he called himself less than the least? And perhaps our Lord Jesus had an eye to him, when he said, There were last that should be first; for Paul was one born out of due time (1Co 15:8); not only the youngest child of the family of the apostles, but a posthumous one, yet he became greatest. And perhaps he it was for whom the

first post of honour in Christ's kingdom was reserved and prepared of his Father, not for James who sought it; and therefore just before Paul began to be famous as an apostle, Providence ordered it so that James was cut off (Ac 12:2), that in the college of the twelve Paul might be substituted in his room.

(b) They must be like the Master himself; and it is very fit that they should, that, while they were in the world, they should be as he was when he was in the world; for to both the present state is a state of humiliation, the crown and glory were reserved for both in the future state. Let them consider that the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many, Mt 20:28. Our Lord Jesus here sets himself before his disciples as a pattern of those two things before recommended, humility, and usefulness.

[1.] Never was there such an example of humility and condescension as there was in the life of Christ, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. When the Son of God came into the world, his Ambassador to the children of men, one would think he should have been ministered to, should have appeared in an equipage agreeable to his person and character; but he did not so; he made no figure, had no pompous train of state-servants to attend him, nor was he clad in robes of honour, for he took upon him the form of a servant. He was indeed ministered to as a poor man, which was a part of his humiliation; there were those that ministered to him of their substance (Lu 8:2,3); but he was never ministered to as a great man; he never took state upon him, was not waited on at table; he once washed his disciples' feet, but we never read that they washed his feet. He came to minister help to all that were in distress; he made himself a servant to the sick and diseased; was as ready to their requests as ever any servant was at the beck of his master, and took as much pains to serve them; he attended continually to this very thing, and denied himself both food and rest to attend to it.

[2.] Never was there such an example of beneficence and usefulness as there was in the death of Christ, who gave his life a ransom for many. He lived as a servant, and went about doing good; but he died as a sacrifice, and in that he did the greatest good of all. He came into the world on purpose to give his life a ransom; it was first in his intention. The aspiring princes of the Gentiles make the lives of many a ransom for their own honour, and perhaps a sacrifice to their own humour. Christ doth not do so; his subjects' blood is precious to him, and he is not prodigal of it (Ps 72:14); but on the contrary, he gives his honour and life too ransom for his subjects. Note, First, Jesus Christ laid down his life for a ransom. Our lives were forfeited into the hands of divine justice by sin. Christ, by parting with his life, made atonement for sin, and so rescued ours; he was made sin, and a curse for us, and died, not only for our good, but in our stead, Ac 20:28,1Pe 1:18,19. Secondly, It was a ransom for many, sufficient for all, effectual for many; and, if for many, then, saith the poor doubting soul, "Why not for me?" It was for many, that by him many may be made righteous. These many were his seed, for which his soul travailed (Isa 53:10,11); for many, so they will be when they come all together, though now they appear but a little flock.

Now this is a good reason why we should not strive for precedency, because the cross is our banner, and our Master's death is our life. It is a good reason why we should study to do good, and, in consideration of the love of Christ in dying for us, not hesitate to lay down our lives for the brethren, 1Jo 3:16. Ministers should be more forward than others to serve and suffer for the good of souls, as blessed Paul was, Ac 20:24,Php 2:17. The nearer we are all concerned in, and the more we are advantaged by, the humility and humiliation of Christ, the more ready and careful we should be to imitate it.

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

We have here an account of the cure of two poor blind beggars; in which we may observe,

Their address to Christ, Mt 20:29,30. And in this,

1 The circumstances of it are observable. It was as Christ and his disciples departed from Jericho; of that devoted place, which was rebuilt under a curse, Christ took his leave with this blessing, for he received gifts even for the rebellious. It was in the presence of a great multitude that followed him; Christ had a numerous, though not a pompous, attendance, and did good to them, though he did not take state to himself. This multitude that followed him for loaves, and some for love, some for curiosity, and some in expectation of his temporal reign, which the disciples themselves dreamed of, very few with desire to be taught their duty; yet, for the sake of those few, he confirmed his doctrine by miracles wrought in the presence of great multitudes; who, if they were not convinced by them, would be the more inexcusable. Two blind men concurred in their request; for joint-prayer is pleasing to Christ, Mt 18:19. These joint-sufferers were joint-suitors; being companions in the same tribulation, they were partners in the same supplication. Note, It is good for those that are labouring under the same calamity, or infirmity of body or mind, to join together in the same prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken one another's fervency, and encourage one another's faith. There is mercy enough in Christ for all the petitioners. These blind men were sitting by the way-side, as blind beggars used to do. Note, Those that would receive mercy from Christ, must place themselves there where his out-goings are; where he manifests himself to those that seek him. It is good thus to way-lay Christ, to be in his road.

They heard that Jesus passed by. Though they were blind, they were not deaf. Seeing and hearing are the learning senses. It is a great calamity to want either; but the defect of one may be, and often is, made up in the acuteness of the other; and therefore it has been observed by some as an instance of the goodness of Providence, that none were ever known to be born both blind and deaf; but that,

one way or other, all are in a capacity of receiving knowledge. These blind men had heard of Christ by the hearing of the ear, but they desired that their eyes might see him. When they heard that Jesus passed by, they asked no further questions, who were with him, or whether he was in haste, but immediately cried out. Note, It is good to improve the present opportunity, to make the best of the price now in the hand, because, if once let slip, it may never return; these blind men did so, and did wisely; for we do not find that Christ ever came to Jericho again. Now is the accepted time.

2 The address itself is more observable; Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David, repeated again, Mt 20:31. Four things are recommended to us for an example in this address; for, though the eye of the body was dark, the eye of the mind was enlightened concerning truth, duty, and interest.

(a) Here is an example of importunity in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest; men in want are earnest, of course. Cold desires do but beg denials. Those that would prevail in prayer, must stir up themselves to take hold on God in duty. When they were discountenanced in it, they cried the more. The stream of fervency, if it be stopped, will rise and swell the higher. This wrestling with God in prayer, and makes us the fitter to receive mercy; for the more it is striven for, the more it will be prized and thankfully acknowledged.

(b) Of humility in prayer; in that word, Have mercy on us, not specifying the favour, or prescribing what, much less pleading merit, but casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to, the Mediator's mercy, in what way he pleases; "Only have mercy." They ask not for silver and gold, though they were poor, but mercy, mercy. This is that which our hearts must be upon, when we come to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy, Heb 4:16,Ps 130:7.

(c) Of faith in prayer; in the title they gave to Christ, which was in the nature of a plea; O Lord, thou Son o David; they confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord, and therefore had authority to command deliverance for them. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Christ Lord, 1Co 12:3. Thus they take their encouragement in prayer from his power, as in calling him the Son of David they take encouragement from his goodness, as Messiah, of whom so many kind and tender things had been foretold, particularly his compassion to the poor and needy, Ps 72:12,13. It is of excellent use, in prayer, to eye Christ in the grace and glory of his Messiahship; to remember that he is the Son of David, whose office it is to help, and save, and to plead it with him.

(d) Of perseverance in prayer, notwithstanding discouragement. The multitude rebuked them, as noisy, clamorous, and impertinent, and bid them hold their peace, and not disturb the Master, who perhaps at first himself seemed not to regard them. In following Christ with our prayers, we must expect to meet with hindrances and manifold discouragements from within and from without, something or other that bids us hold our peace. Such rebuke are permitted, that faith and fervency, patience and perseverance, may be tried. These poor blind men were rebuked by the multitude that followed Christ. Note, the sincere and serious beggars at Christ's door commonly meet with the worst rebukes from those that follow him but in pretence and hypocrisy. But they would not be beaten off so; when they were in pursuit of such a mercy, it was no time to compliment, or to practise a timid delicacy; no, they cried the more. Note, Men ought always to pray, and not to faint; to pray with all perseverance (Lu 18:1); to continue in prayer with resolution, and not to yield to opposition.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

The answer of Christ to this address of theirs. The multitude rebuked them; but Christ encouraged them. It were sad for us, if the Master were not more kind and tender than the multitude; but he loves to countenance those with special favour, that are under

frowns, and rebukes, and contempts from men. He will not suffer his humble supplicants to be run down, and put out of countenance.

1. He stood still, and called them, Mt 20:32. He was now going up to Jerusalem, and was straitened till his work there was accomplished; and yet he stood still to cure these blind men. Note, When we are ever so much in haste about any business, yet we should be willing to stand still to do good. He called them, not because he could not cure them at a distance, but because he would do it in the most obliging and instructive way, and would countenance weak but willing patients and petitioners. Christ not only enjoins us to pray, but invites us; holds out the golden sceptre to us, and bids us come touch the top of it.

2. He enquired further into their case; What will ye that I shall do unto you? This implies,

(a) A very fair offer; "Here I am; let me know what you would have, and you shall have it." What would we more? He is able to do for us, and as willing as he is able; Ask, and it shall be given you.

(b) A condition annexed to this offer, which is a very easy and reasonable one--that they should tell him what they would have him do for them. One would think this a strange question, any one might tell what they would have. Christ knew well enough; but he would know it from them, whether they begged only for alms, as from a common person, or for a cure, as from the Messiah. Note, It is the will of God that we should in every thing make our requests known to him by prayer and supplication; not to inform or move him, but to qualify ourselves for the mercy. The waterman in the boat, who with his hook takes hold of the shore, does not thereby pull the shore to the boat, but the boat to the shore. So in prayer we do not draw the mercy to ourselves, but ourselves to the mercy.

They soon made known their request to him, such a one as they never made to any one else; Lord, that our eyes may be opened. The wants and burthens of the body we are soon sensible of, and

can readily relate; Ubi dolor, ubi digitus--The finger promptly points to the seat of pain. O that we were but as apprehensive of our spiritual maladies, and could as feelingly complain of them, especially our spiritual blindness! Lord, that the eyes of our mind may be opened! Many are spiritually blind, and yet say they see, Joh 9:41. Were we but sensible of our darkness, we should soon apply ourselves to him, who alone has the eye-salve, with this request, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

3. He cured them; when he encouraged them to seek him, he did not say, Seek in vain. What he did was an instance,

(a) Of his pity; He had compassion on them. Misery is the object of mercy. They that are poor and blind are wretched and miserable (Re 3:17), and the objects of compassion. It was the tender mercy of our God, that gave light and sight to them that sat in darkness, Lu 1:78,79. We cannot help those that are under such calamities, as Christ did; but we may and must pity them, as Christ did, and draw out our soul to them.

(b) Of his power; He that formed the eye, can he not heal it? Yes, he can, he did, he did it easily, he touched their eyes; he did it effectually, Immediately their eyes received sight. Thus he not only proved that he was sent of God, but showed on what errand he was sent--to give sight to those that are spiritually blind, to turn them from darkness to light.

Lastly, These blind men, when they had received sight, followed him. Note, None follow Christ blindfold. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. They followed Christ, as his disciples, to learn of him, and as his witnesses, eye-witnesses, to bear their testimony to him and to his power and goodness. The best evidence of spiritual illumination is a constant inseparable adherence to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Leader.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Matthew-21

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to
Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,
2 saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall
find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

All the four evangelists take notice of this passage of Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, five days before his death. The passover was on the fourteenth day of the month, and this was the tenth; on which day the law appointed that the paschal lamb should be taken up (Ex 12:3), and set apart for that service; on that day therefore Christ our Passover, who was to be sacrificed for us, was publicly showed. So that this was the prelude to his passion. He had lodged at Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, for some time; at a supper there the night before Mary had anointed his feet, Joh 12:3. But, as usual with ambassadors, he deferred his public entry till some time after his arrival. Our Lord Jesus travelled much, and his custom was to travel on foot from Galilee to Jerusalem, some scores of miles, which was both humbling and toilsome; many a dirty weary step he had when he went about doing good. How ill does it become Christians to be inordinately solicitous about their own ease and state, when their Master had so little of either! Yet once in his life he rode in triumph; and it was now when he went into Jerusalem, to suffer and die, as if that were the pleasure and preferment he courted; and then he thought himself begin to look great.

Now here we have,

The provision that was made for this solemnity; and it was very poor and ordinary, and such as bespoke his kingdom to be not of this world. Here were no heralds at arms provided, no trumpet sounded before him, no chariots of state, no liveries; such things as these were not agreeable to his present state of humiliation, but will

be far outdone at his second coming, to which his magnificent appearance is reserved, when the last trumpet shall sound, the glorious angels shall be his heralds and attendants, and the clouds his chariots. But in this public appearance,

1 The preparation was sudden and offhand. For his glory in the other world, and ours with him, preparation was made before the foundation of the world, for that was the glory his heart was upon; his glory in this world he was dead to, and therefore, though he had it in prospect, did not forecast for it, but took what came next. They were come to Bethphage, which was the suburb of Jerusalem, and was accounted (say the Jewish doctors) in all things, as Jerusalem, a long scattering street that lay toward the mount of Olives; when he entered upon that, he sent two of his disciples, some think Peter and John, to fetch him an ass, for he had none ready for him.

2. It was very mean. He sent only for an ass and her colt, Mt 21:2. Asses were much used in that country for travel; horses were kept only by great men, and for war. Christ could have summoned a cherub to carry him (Ps 18:10); but though by his name Jah, which speaks him God, he rides upon the heavens, yet now by his name Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, in his state of humiliation, he rides upon an ass. Yet some think that he had herein an eye to the custom in Israel for the judges to ride upon white asses (Jdg 5:10), and their sons on ass-colts, Jdg 12:14. And Christ would thus enter, not as a Conqueror, but as the Judge of Israel, who for judgment came into this world.

3. It was not his own, but borrowed. Though he had not a house of his own, yet, one would think, like some wayfaring men that live upon their friends, he might have had an ass of his own, to carry him about; but for our sakes he became in all respects poor, 1Co 8:9. It is commonly said, "They that live on borrowing, live on sorrowing;" in this therefore, as in other things, Christ was a man of sorrows--that he had nothing of this world's goods but what was given him or lent him.

The disciples who were sent to borrow this ass are directed to say, The Lord has need of him. Those that are in need, must not be ashamed to own their need, nor say, as the unjust steward, To beg I am ashamed, Lu 16:3. On the other hand, none ought to impose upon the kindness of their friends, by going to beg or borrow when they have not need. In the borrowing of this ass,

(a) We have an instance of Christ's knowledge. Though the thing was altogether contingent, yet Christ could tell his disciples where they should find an ass tied, and a colt with her. His omniscience extends itself to the meanest of his creatures; asses and their colts, and their being bound or loosed. Doth God take care for oxen? (1Co 9:9) No doubt he doth, and would not see Balaam's ass abused. He knows all the creatures, so as to make them serve his own purpose.

(b) We have an instance of his power over the spirits of men. The hearts of the meanest subjects, as well as of kings, are in the hand of the Lord. Christ asserts his right to use the ass, in bidding them bring it to him; the fulness of the earth is the Lord Christ's; but he foresees some hindrance which disciples might meet with in this service; they must not take them clam et secreto--privily, but in the sight of the owner, much less vi et armis--with force and arms, but with the consent of the owner, which he undertakes they shall have; If any man say aught to you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of him. Note, What Christ sets us to do, he will bear us out in the doing of, and furnish us with answers tot he objections we may be assaulted with, and make them prevalent; as here, Straightway he will send them. Christ, in commanding the ass into his service, showed that he is Lord of hosts; and, in inclining the owner to send him without further security, showed that he is the God of the spirits of all flesh, and can bow men's hearts.

(c) We have an example of justice and honesty, in not using the ass, though for so small a piece of service as riding the length of a street or two, without the owner's consent. As some read the latter clause, it gives us a further rule of justice; "You shall say the Lord hath need of them, and he" (that is, the Lord) "will presently send them

back, and take care that they be safely delivered to the owner, as soon as he has done with them." Note, What we borrow we must restore in due time and in good order; for the wicked borrows and pays not again. Care must be taken of borrowed goods, that they be not damaged. Alas, Master, for it was borrowed!

3 And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion,
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass,
and a colt the foal of an ass.

The prediction that was fulfilled in this, Mt 21:4,5. Our Lord Jesus, in all that he did and suffered, had very much his eye upon this, That the scriptures might be fulfilled. As the prophets looked forward to him (to him they all bare witness), so he looked upon them, that all things which were written of the Messiah, might be punctually accomplished in him. This particularly which was written of him, Zec 9:9, where it ushers in a large prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh, must be accomplished. Now observe here,

1. How the coming of Christ is foretold; Tell ye the daughter of Sion, the church, the holy mountain, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. Note,

(a) Jesus Christ is the church's King, one of our brethren like unto us, according to the law of the kingdom, De 17:15. He is appointed King over the church, Ps 2:6. He is accepted King by the church; the daughter of Sion swears allegiance to him, Ho 1:11.

(b) Christ, the King of his church, came to his church, even in this lower world; he comes to thee, to rule thee, to rule in thee, to rule for thee; he is Head over all things to the church. He came to Sion (Ro 11:26), that out of Sion the law might go forth; for the church and its interests were all in all with the Redeemer.

(c) Notice was given to the church beforehand of the coming of her King; Tell the daughter of Sion. Note, Christ will have his coming looked for, and waited for, and his subjects big with expectation of it; Tell the daughters of Sion, that they may go forth, and behold King Solomon, So 3:11. Notices of Christ's coming are usually ushered in with a Behold! A note commanding both attention and admiration; Behold thy King cometh; behold, and wonder at him, behold, and welcome him. Here is a royal progress truly admirable. Pilate, like Caiaphas, said he knew not what, in that great word (Joh 19:14), Behold your King.

2. How his coming is described. When a king comes, something great and magnificent is expected, especially when he comes to take possession of his kingdom. The King, the Lord of hosts, was seen upon a throne, high and lifted up (Isa 6:1); but there is nothing of that here; Behold, he cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty.

(a) His temper is very mild. He comes not in wrath to take vengeance, but in mercy to work salvation. He is meek to suffer the greatest injuries and indignities for Sion's cause, meek to bear with the follies and unkindness of Sion's own children. He is easy of access, easy to be entreated. He is meek not only as a Teacher, but as a Ruler; he rules by love. His government is mild and gentle, and his laws not written in the blood of his subjects, but in his own. His yoke is easy.

(b) As an evidence of this, his appearance is very mean, sitting upon an ass, as creature made not for state, but service, not for battles, but for burthens; slow in its motions, but sure, and safe, and constant. The foretelling of this so long before, and the care taken that it should be exactly fulfilled, intimate it to have a peculiar significancy, for the encouragement of poor souls to apply themselves to Christ. Sion's King comes riding, not on a prancing horse, which the timorous petitioner dares not come near, or a running horse, which the slow-footed petitioner cannot keep pace

with, but on a quiet ass, that the poorest of his subjects may not be discouraged in their access to him. Mention is made in the prophecy of a colt, the foal of an ass; and therefore Christ sent for the colt with the ass, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

7 and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

1-11 This coming of Christ was described by the prophet Zechariah, Zec_9:9. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty, in mercy to work salvation. As meekness and outward poverty were fully seen in Zion's King, and marked his triumphal entrance to Jerusalem, how wrong covetousness, ambition, and the pride of life must be in Zion's citizens!

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying,
Hosanna to the Son of David:
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna signifies, Save now, we beseech thee! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! But of how little value is the applause of the people! The changing multitude join the cry of the day, whether it be Hosanna, or Crucify him. Multitudes often seem to approve the gospel, but few become consistent disciples. When Jesus was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved; some perhaps were moved with joy, who waited for the Consolation of Israel; others, of the Pharisees, were moved with envy. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom.

As the messianic king, the son of David, Jesus then entered his royal city of Zion. He came not riding a horse as a conquering warlord, but sitting on a donkey as a king of peace, as the Scriptures foretold (see Zec_9:9). People who were in Jerusalem for the Passover, along with local residents, welcomed him as the Messiah. They may not have understood the nature of his messiahship, but they were enthusiastic in their acceptance of him (Mat_21:4-11;

Luk_19:35-38; Joh_12:12-16. (The word 'Hosanna', meaning 'Save us, O Lord', came from two Hebrew words found in Psa 118, where Israel's victorious king was welcomed with the words, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'; Psa_118:25-26. By New Testament times the two expressions, used together, had become a declaration of praise to God for the promised Messiah.)

The Pharisees were annoyed at the welcome Jesus received and unsuccessfully tried to persuade him to silence the people (Luk_19:39-40). As the news of Jesus' raising of Lazarus spread, more and more people flocked to see him. The thing the Pharisees most feared was happening before their eyes (Joh_12:17-19).

10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

The Cleansing of the Temple

12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

If Christ came now into many parts of his visible church, how many secret evils he would discover and cleanse! And how many things daily practised under the cloak of religion, would he show to be more suitable to a den of thieves than to a house of prayer!

At the beginning of his public ministry Jesus had cleansed the temple (see Joh_2:13-25), but old practices had returned. Now that he had come to his messianic city he cleansed it again. By his action he showed God's judgment on those who had forgotten the real purpose of religious exercises and used them chiefly to make money (Mat_21:12-13)

When Christ came into Jerusalem, he did not go up to the court or the palace, though he came in as a King, but into the temple; for his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; it is in holy things that he rules, in the temple of God that he exercises authority. Now, what did he do there?

Thence he drove the buyers and sellers. Abuses must first be purged out, and the plants not of God's planting be plucked up, before that which is right can be established. The great Redeemer appear as a great Reformer, that turns away ungodliness, Ro 11:26. Here we are told,

1. What he did (Mt 21:12); He cast out all them that sold and bought; he had done this once before (Joh 2:14,15), but there was occasion to do it again. Note, Buyers and sellers driven out of the temple, will return and nestle there again, if there be not a continual care and oversight to prevent it, and if the blow be not followed, and often repeated.

(a) The abuse was, buying and selling, and changing money, in the temple. Note, Lawful things, ill timed and ill placed, may become sinful things. That which was decent enough in another place, and not only lawful, but laudable, on another day, defiles the sanctuary, and profanes the sabbath. This buying and selling, and changing money, though secular employments, yet had the pretence of being in ordine ad spiritualia--for spiritual purposes. They sold beasts for sacrifice, for the convenience of those that could more easily bring their money with them than their beast; and they changed money for those that wanted the half shekel, which was their yearly poll, or redemption-money; or, upon the bills of return; so that this might pass for the outward business of the house of God; and yet Christ will not allow of it. Note, Great corruptions and abuses come into the church by the practices of those whose gain is godliness, that is, who make worldly gain the end of their godliness, and counterfeit godliness their way to worldly gain (1Ti 6:5); from such withdraw thyself.

(b) The purging out of this abuse. Christ cast them out that sold. He did it before with a scourge of small cords (Joh 2:15); now he did it with a look, with a frown, with a word of command. Some reckon this none of the least of Christ's miracles, that he should himself thus clear the temple, and not be opposed in it by them who by this craft got their living, and were backed in it by the priests and elders. It is an instance of his power over the spirits of men, and the hold he has of them by their own consciences. This was the only act of regal authority and coercive power that Christ did in the days of his flesh; he began with it, Joh 2:12-25 and here ended with it. Tradition says, that his face shone, and beams of light darted from his blessed eyes, which astonished these market-people, and compelled them to yield to his command; if so, the scripture was fulfilled, Pr 20:8, A King that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes. He overthrew the tables of the money-changers; he did not take the money to himself, but scattered it, threw it to the ground, the fittest place for it. The Jews, in Esther's time, on the spoil laid not their hand, Es 9:10.

2. What he said, to justify himself, and to convict them (Mt 21:13); It is written. Note, In the reformation of the church, the eye must be upon the scripture, and that must be adhered to as the rule, the pattern in the mount; and we must go no further than we can justify ourselves with, It is written. Reformation is then right, when corrupted ordinances are reduced to their primitive institution.

(a) He shows, from a scripture prophecy, what the temple should be, and was designed to be; My house shall be called the house of prayer; which is quoted from Isa 56:7. Note, All the ceremonial institutions were intended to be subservient to moral duties; the house of sacrifices was to be a house of prayer, for that was the substance and soul of all those services; the temple was in a special manner sanctified to be a house of prayer, for it was not only the place of that worship, but the medium of it, so that the prayers made in or toward that house had a particular promise of acceptance (2Ch 6:21), as it was a type of Christ; therefore Daniel looked that way in prayer; and in this sense no house or place is now, or can be, a

house of prayer, for Christ is our Temple; yet in some sense the appointed places of our religious assemblies may be so called, as places where prayer is wont to be made, Ac 16:13.

(b) He shows, from a scripture reproof, how they had abused the temple, and perverted the intention of it; Ye have made it a den of thieves. This is quoted from Jer 7:11, Is this house become a den of robbers in your eyes? When dissembled piety is made the cloak and cover of iniquity, it may be said that the house of prayer is become a den of thieves, in which they lurk, and shelter themselves. Markets are too often dens of thieves, so many are the corrupt and cheating practices in buying and selling; but markets in the temple are certainly so, for they rob God of his honour, the worst of thieves, Mal 3:8. The priests lived, and lived plentifully, upon the altar; but, not content with that, they found other ways and means to squeeze money out of the people; and therefore Christ here calls them thieves, for they exacted that which did not belong to them.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,

There, in the temple, he healed the blind and the lame, Mt 21:14. When he had driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple, he invited the blind and lame into it; for he fills the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away. Christ, in the temple, by his word there preached, and in answer to the prayers there made, heals those that are spiritually blind and lame. It is good coming to the temple, when Christ is there, who, as he shows himself jealous for the honour of his temple, in expelling those who profane it, so he shows himself gracious to those who humbly seek him. The blind and the lame were debarred David's palace (2Sa 5:8), but were admitted into God's house; for the state and honour of his temple lie not in those things wherein the magnificence of princes' palaces is supposed to consist; from them blind and lame must keep their distance, but from God's temple only the wicked and profane. The temple was profane and abused when it was made a market-place, but it was graced and honoured when it was made an

hospital; to be doing good in God's, is more honourable, and better becomes it, than to be getting money there. Christ's healing was a real answer to that question, Who is this? His works testified of him more than the hosannas; and his healing in the temple was the fulfilling of the promise, that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former.

There also he silenced the offence which the chief priests and scribes took at the acclamations with which he was attended, Mt 21:15,16. They that should have been most forward to give him honour, were his worst enemies.

1. They were inwardly vexed at the wonderful things that he did; they could not deny them to be true miracles, and therefore were cut to the heart with indignation at them, as Ac 4:16,5:33. The works that Christ did, recommended themselves to every man's conscience. If they had any sense, they could not but own the miracle of them; and if any good nature, could not but be in love with the mercy of them: yet, because they were resolved to oppose him, for these they envied him, and bore him a grudge.

2. They openly quarrelled at the children's hosannas; they thought that hereby an honour was given him, which did not belong to him, and that it looked like ostentation. Proud men cannot bear that honour should be done to any but to themselves, and are uneasy at nothing more than at the just praises of deserving men. Thus Saul envied David the women's songs; and "Who can stand before envy?" When Christ is most honoured, his enemies are most displeased.

Just now we had Christ preferring the blind and the lame before the buyers and sellers; now here we have him (Mt 21:16), taking part with the children against priests and scribes. Observe,

(a) The children were in the temple, perhaps playing there; no wonder, when the rulers make it a market-place, that the children make it a place of pastime; but we are willing to hope that many of

them were worshipping there. Note, It is good to bring children betimes to the house of prayer, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Let children be taught to keep up the form of godliness, it will help to lead them to the power of it. Christ has a tenderness for the lambs of his flock.

(b) They were there crying Hosanna to the Son of David. This they learned from those that were grown up. Little children say and do as they hear others say, and see others do; so easily do they imitate; and therefore great care must be taken to set them good examples, and no bad ones. Maxima debetur puero reverentia--Our intercourse with the young should be conducted with the most scrupulous care. Children will learn of those that are with them, either to curse and swear, or to pray and praise. The Jews did betimes teach their children to carry branches at the feast of tabernacles, and to cry Hosanna; but God taught them here to apply it to Christ. Note, Hosanna to the Son of David well becomes the mouths of little children, who should learn young the language of Canaan.

(c) Our Lord Jesus not only allowed it, but was very well pleased with it, and quoted a scripture which was fulfilled in it (Ps 8:2), or, at least, may be accommodated to it; Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise; which, some think, refers to the children's joining in the acclamations of the people, and the women's songs with which David was honoured when he returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, and therefore is very fitly applied here to the hosannas with which the Son of David was saluted, now that he was entering upon his conflict with Satan, that Goliath. Note,

[1.] Christ is so far from being ashamed of the services of little children, that he takes particular notice of them (and children love to be taken notice of), and is well pleased with them. If God may be honoured by babes and sucklings, who are made to hope at the best, much more by children who are grown up to maturity and some capacity.

[2.] Praise is perfected out of the mouth of such; it has a peculiar tendency to the honour and glory of God for little children to join in his praises; the praise would be accounted defective and imperfect, if they had not their share in it; which is an encouragement for children to be good betimes, and to parents to teach them to be so; the labour neither of the one nor of the other shall be in vain. In the psalm it is, Thou hast ordained strength. Note, God perfecteth praise, by ordaining strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. When great things are brought about by weak and unlikely instruments, God is thereby much honoured, for his strength is perfected in weakness, and the infirmities of the babes and sucklings serve for a foil to the divine power. That which follows in the psalm, That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger, was very applicable to the priests and scribes; but Christ did not apply it to them, but left it to them to apply it.

16 and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read,

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

Christ returned in the morning to Jerusalem, Mt 21:18. Some think that he went out of the city over-night, because none of his friends there durst entertain him, for fear of the great men; yet, having work to do there, he returned. Note, We must never be driven off from our duty either by the malice of our foes, or the unkindness of our friends. Though he knew that in this city bonds and afflictions did abide him, yet none of these things moved him. Paul followed him when he went bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, Ac 20:22.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

18 Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered.

19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow

on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

This cursing of the barren fig-tree represents the state of hypocrites in general, and so teaches us that Christ looks for the power of religion in those who profess it, and the savour of it from those that have the show of it. His just expectations from flourishing professors are often disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only. A false profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse. The fig-tree that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. This represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular. Our Lord Jesus found among them nothing but leaves. And after they rejected Christ, blindness and hardness grew upon them, till they were undone, and their place and nation rooted up. The Lord was righteous in it. Let us greatly fear the doom denounced on the barren fig-tree.

As he went, he hungered. He was a Man, and submitted to the infirmities of nature; he was an active Man, and was so intent upon his work, that he neglected his food, and came out, fasting; for the zeal of God's house did even eat him up, and his meat and drink was to do his Father's will. He was a poor Man, and had no present supply; he was a Man that pleased not himself, for he would willingly have taken up with green raw figs for his breakfast, when it was fit that he should have had something warm.

Christ therefore hungered, that he might have occasion to work this miracle, in cursing and so withering the barren fig-tree, and therein might give us an instance of his justice and his power, and both instructive.

1. See his justice, Mt 21:19. He went to it, expecting fruit, because it had leaves; but, finding none, he sentenced it to a perpetual barrenness. The miracle had its significance, as well as others of his miracles. All Christ's miracles hitherto were wrought for the good of men, and proved the power of his grace and blessing (the sending the devils into the herd of swine was but a permission); all he did was for the benefit and comfort of his friends, none for the terror or punishment of his enemies; but now, at last, to show that all judgment is committed to him, and that he is able not only to save,

but to destroy, he would give a specimen of the power of his wrath and curse; yet this not on any man, woman, or child, because the great day of his wrath is not yet come, but on an inanimate tree; that is set forth for an example; Come, learn a parable of the fig-tree, Mt 24:32. The scope of it is the same with the parable of the fig-tree, Lu 13:6.

(a) This cursing of the barren fig-tree, represents the state of hypocrites in general; and so it teaches us,

[1.] That the fruit of fig-trees may justly be expected from those that have the leaves. Christ looks for the power of religion from those that make profession of it; the favour of it from those that have the show of it; grapes from the vineyard that is planted in a fruitful hill: he hungers after it, his soul desires the first ripe fruits.

[2.] Christ's just expectations from flourishing professors are often frustrated and disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only, and he discovers it. Many have a name to live, and are not alive indeed; dote on the form of godliness, and yet deny the power of it.

[3.] The sin of barrenness is justly punished with the curse and plague of barrenness; Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. As one of the chiefest blessings, and which was the first, is, Be fruitful; so one of the saddest curses is, Be no more fruitful. Thus the sin of hypocrites is made their punishment; they would not do good, and therefore they shall do none; he that is fruitless, let him be fruitless still, and lose his honour and comfort.

[4.] A false and hypocritical profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse; the fig-tree that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. Hypocrites may look plausible for a time, but, having no principle, no root in themselves, their profession will soon come to nothing; the gifts wither, common graces decay, the credit of the profession declines and sinks, and the falseness and folly of the pretender are manifested to all men.

(b) It represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular; they were a fig-tree planted in Christ's way, as a church. Now observe,

[1.] The disappointment they gave to our Lord Jesus. He came among them, expecting to find some fruit, something that would be pleasing to him; he hungered after it; not that he desired a gift, he needed it not, but fruit that might abound to a good account. But his expectations were frustrated; he found nothing but leaves; they called Abraham their father, but did not do the works of Abraham; they professed themselves expectants of the promised Messiah, but, when he came, they did not receive and entertain him.

[2.] The doom he passed upon them, that never any fruit should grow upon them or be gathered from them, as a church or as a people, from henceforward for ever. Never any good came from them (except the particular persons among them that believe), after they rejected Christ; they became worse and worse; blindness and hardness happened to them, and grew upon them, till they were unchurched, unpeopled, and undone, and their place and nation rooted up; their beauty was defaced, their privileges and ornaments, their temple, and priesthood, and sacrifices, and festivals, and all the glories of their church and state, fell like leaves in autumn. How soon did their fig-tree wither away, after they said, His blood be on us, and our children! And the Lord was righteous in it.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

See the power of Christ; the former is wrapped up in the figure, but this more fully discoursed of; Christ intending thereby to direct his disciples in the use of their powers.

(1.) The disciples admired the effect of Christ's curse (Mt 21:20); They marvelled; no power could do it but his, who spake, and it was done. They marvelled at the suddenness of the thing; How soon is the fig-tree withered away! There was no visible cause of the fig-tree's withering, but it was a secret blast, a worm at the root; it was not only the leaves of it that withered, but the body of the tree; it withered away in an instant and became like a dry stick. Gospel curses are, upon this account, the most dreadful--that they work insensibly and silently, by a fire not blown, but effectually.

(2.) Christ empowered them by faith to do the like (Mt 21:21,22); as he said (Joh 14:12), Greater works than these shall ye do. Observe,

[1.] The description of this wonder-working faith; If ye have faith, and doubt not. Note, Doubting of the power and promise of God is the great thing that spoils the efficacy and success of faith. "If you have faith, and dispute not" (so some read it), "dispute not with yourselves, dispute not with the promise of God; if you stagger not at the promise" (Ro 4:20); for, as far as we do so, our faith is deficient; as certain as the promise is, so confident our faith should be.

[2.] The power and prevalence of it expressed figuratively; If ye shall say to this mountain, meaning the mount of Olives, Be thou removed, it shall be done. There might be a particular reason for his saying so of this mountain, for there was a prophecy, that the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem, should cleave in the midst, and then remove, Zec 14:4. Whatever was the intent of that word, the same must be the expectation of faith, how impossible soever it might appear to sense. But this is a proverbial expression; intimating that we are to believe that nothing is impossible with God, and therefore that what he has promised shall certainly be performed, though to us it seem impossible. It was among the Jews a usual commendation of their learned Rabbin, that they were removers of mountains, that is, could solve the greatest difficulties;

now this may be done by faith acted on the word of God, which will bring great and strange things to pass.

[3.] The way and means of exercising this faith, and of doing that which is to be done by it; All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Faith is the soul, prayer is the body; both together make a complete man for any service. Faith, if it be right, will excite prayer; and prayer is not right, if it do not spring from faith. This is the condition of our receiving--we must ask in prayer, believing. The requests of prayer shall not be denied; the expectations of faith shall not be frustrated. We have many promises to this purport from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, and all to encourage faith, the principal grace, and prayer, the principal duty, of a Christian. It is but ask and have, believe and receive; and what would we more? Observe, How comprehensive the promise is--all things whatsoever ye shall ask; this is like all and every the premises in a conveyance. All things, in general; whatsoever, brings it to particulars; though generals include particulars, yet such is the folly of our unbelief, that, though we think we assent to promises in the general, yet we fly off when it comes to particulars, and therefore, that we might have strong consolation, it is thus copiously expressed, All things whatsoever.

22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Jesus' Authority Questioned

23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Our Lord Jesus (like St. Paul after him) preached his gospel with much contention; his first appearance was in a dispute with the doctors in the temple, when he was twelve years old; and here, just before he died, we have him engaged in controversy. In this sense, he was like Jeremiah, a man of contention; not striving, but striven with. The great contenders with him, were, the chief priests and the elders, the judges of two distinct courts: the chief priests presided in the ecclesiastical court, in all matters of the Lord, as they are called;

the elders of the people were judges of the civil courts, in temporal matters. See an idea of both, 2Ch 19:5,8,11. These joined to attack Christ thinking they should find or make him obnoxious either to the one or to the other. See how woefully degenerate that generation was, when the governors both in church and state, who should have been the great promoters of the Messiah's kingdom, were the great opposers of it! Here we have them disturbing him when he was preaching, Mt 21:23. They would neither receive his instructions themselves, nor let others receive them. Observe,

I. As soon as he came into Jerusalem, he went to the temple, though he had been affronted there the day before, was there in the midst of enemies and in the mouth of danger; yet thither he went, for there he had a fairer opportunity of doing good to souls than any where else in Jerusalem. Though he came hungry to the city, and was disappointed of a breakfast at the barren fig-tree, yet, for aught that appears, he went straight to the temple, as one that esteemed the words of God's mouth, the preaching of them, more than his necessary food.

II. In the temple he was teaching; he had called it a house of prayer (Mt 21:13), and here we have him preaching there. Note, In the solemn assemblies of Christians, praying and preaching must go together, and neither must encroach upon, or jostle out, the other. To make up communion with God, we must not only speak to him in prayer, but hear what he has to say to us by his word; ministers must give themselves both to the word and to prayer, Ac 6:4. Now that Christ taught in the temple, that scripture was fulfilled (Isa 2:3), Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways. The priests of old often taught there the good knowledge of the Lord; but they never had such a teacher as this.

III. When Christ was teaching the people, the priests and elders came upon him, and challenged him to produce his orders; the hand of Satan was in this, to hinder him in his work. Note, It cannot but be a trouble to a faithful minister, to be taken off, or diverted from, plain and practical preaching, by an unavoidable necessity of engaging in

controversies, yet good was brought out of this evil, for hereby occasion was given to Christ to dispel the objections that were advanced against him, to the greater satisfaction of his followers; and, while his adversaries thought by their power to have silenced him, he by his wisdom silenced them.

Now, in this dispute with them, we may observe,

1. How he was assaulted by their insolent demand; By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority? Had they duly considered his miracles, and the power by which he wrought them, they needed not to have asked this question; but they must have something to say for the shelter of an obstinate infidelity. "Thou ridest in triumph into Jerusalem, receivest the hosannas of the people, controllest in the temple, drivest out such as had license to be there, from the rulers of the temple, and paid them rent; thou are here preaching a new doctrine; whence hadst thou a commission to do all this? Was it from Cæsar, or from the high priest, or from God? Produce thy warrant, thy credentials. Dost not thou take too much upon thee?" Note, It is good for all that take upon them to act with authority, to put this question to themselves, "Who gave us that authority?" For, unless a man be clear in his own conscience concerning that, he cannot act with any comfort or hope of success. They who run before their warrant, run without their blessing, Jer 23:21,22.

Christ had often said it, and proved it beyond contradiction, and Nicodemus, a master in Israel, had owned it, that he was a teacher sent of God (Joh 3:2); yet, at this time of day, when that point had been so fully cleared and settled, they come to him with this question.

In the ostentation of their own power, as chief priests and elders, which they thought authorized them to call him to an account in this manner. How haughtily do they ask, Who gave thee this authority? Intimating that he could have no authority, because he had none from them, 1Ki 22:24,Jer 20:1. Note, It is common for the greatest

abusers of their power to be the most rigorous assertors of it, and to take a pride and pleasure in any thing that looks like the exercise of it. (2.) It was to ensnare and entangle him. Should he refuse to answer this question, they would enter judgment against him upon Nihil dicit--He says nothing; would condemn him as standing mute; and would insinuate to the people, that his silence was a tacit confessing of himself to be a usurper: should he plead an authority from God, they would, as formerly, demand a sign from heaven, or make his defence his offence, and accuse him of blasphemy for it.

24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

How he answered this demand with another, which would help them to answer it themselves (Mt 21:24,25); I also will ask you one thing. He declined giving them a direct answer, lest they should take advantage against him; but answers them with a question. Those that are as sheep in the midst of wolves, have need to be wise as serpents: the heart of the wise studieth to answer. We must give a reason of the hope that is in us, not only with meekness, but with fear (1Pe 3:15), with prudent caution, lest truth be damaged, or ourselves endangered.

Now this question is concerning John's baptism, here put for his whole ministry, preaching as well as baptizing; "Was this from heaven, or of men? One of the two it must be; either what he did was of his own head, or he was sent of God to do it." Gamaliel's argument turned upon this hinge (Ac 5:38,39); either this counsel is of men or of God. Though that which is manifestly bad cannot be of God, yet that which is seemingly good may be of men, nay of Satan, when he transforms himself into an angel of light. This question was not at all shuffling, to evade theirs; but,

(A) If they answered this question, it would answer theirs: should they say, against their consciences, that John's baptism was of men, yet it would be easy to answer, John did no miracle (Joh 10:41), Christ did many; but should they say, as they could not but own, that John's baptism was from heaven (which was supposed in the questions sent him, Joh 1:21, Art thou Elias, or that prophet?) then

their demand was answered, for he bare testimony to Christ. Note, Truths appear in the clearest light when they are taken in their due order; the resolving of the previous questions will be a key to the main question.

(B) If they refused to answer it, that would be a good reason why he should not offer proofs of his authority to men that were obstinately prejudiced against the strongest conviction; it was but to cast pearls before swine. Thus he taketh the wise in their own craftiness (1Co 3:19); and those that would not be convinced of the plainest truths, shall be convicted of the vilest malice, against John first, then against Christ, and in both against God.

How they were hereby baffled and run aground; they knew the truth, but would not own it, and so were taken in the snare they laid for our Lord Jesus. Observe,

How they reasoned with themselves, not concerning the merits of the cause, what proofs there were of the divine original of John's baptism; no, their care was, how to make their part good against Christ. Two things they considered and consulted, in this reasoning with themselves--their credit, and their safety; the same things which they principally aim at, who seek their own things.

[1.] They consider their own credit, which they would endanger if they should own John's baptism to be of God; for then Christ would ask them, before all the people. Why did ye not believe him? And to acknowledge that a doctrine is from God, and yet not to receive and entertain it, is the greatest absurdity and iniquity that a man can be charged with. Many that will not be kept by the fear of sin from neglecting and opposing that which they know to be true and good are kept by the fear of shame from owning that to be true and good which they neglect and oppose. Thus they reject the counsel of God against themselves, in not submitting to John's baptism, and are left without excuse.

[2.] They consider their own safety, that they would expose themselves to the resentments of the people, if they should say that John's baptism was of men; We fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. It seems, then, First, That the people had truer sentiments of John than the chief priests and the elders had, or, at least, were more free and faithful in declaring their sentiments. This people, of whom they said in their pride that they knew not the law, and were cursed (Joh 7:49), it seems, knew the gospel, and were blessed. Secondly, That the chief priests and elders stood in awe of the common people, which is an evidence that things were in disorder among them, and that mutual jealousies were at a great height; that the government was become obnoxious to the hatred and scorn of the people, and the scripture was fulfilled, I have made you contemptible and base, Mal 2:8,9. If they had kept their integrity, and done their duty, they had kept up their authority, and needed not to fear the people. We find sometimes that the people feared them, and it served them for a reason why they did not confess Christ, Joh 9:22,12:42. Note, Those could not but fear the people, who studied only how to make the people fear them. Thirdly, That it is usually the temper even of common people to be zealous for the honour of that which they account sacred and divine. If they account John as a prophet, they will not endure that it should be said, His baptism was of men; hence the hottest contests have been about holy things. Fourthly, That the chief priests and elders were kept from an open denial of the truth, even against the conviction of their own minds, not by the fear of God, but purely by the fear of the people; as the fear of man may bring good people into a snare (Pr 29:25), so sometimes it may keep bad people from being overmuch wicked, lest they should die before their time, Ec 7:17. Many bad people would be much worse than they are, if they durst.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

"Why did ye not believe the testimony which he bore to Me, as the promised and expected Messiah?" for that was the burden of John's whole testimony.

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

How they replied to our Saviour, and so dropped the question. They fairly confessed We cannot tell; that is, "We will not;" ouk oi damen--We never knew. The more shame for them, while they pretended to be leaders of the people, and by their office were obliged to take cognizance of such things; when they would not confess their knowledge, they were constrained to confess their ignorance. And observe, by the way, when they said, We cannot tell, they told a lie, for they knew that John's baptism was of God. Note, There are many who are more afraid of the shame of lying than of the sin, and therefore scruple not to speak that which they know to be false concerning their own thoughts and apprehensions, their affections and intentions, or their remembering or forgetting of things, because in those things they know nobody can disprove them.

Thus Christ avoided the snare they laid for him, and justified himself in refusing to gratify them; Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. If they be so wicked and base as either not to believe, or not to confess, that the baptism of John was from heaven (though it obliged to repentance, that great duty, and sealed the kingdom of God at hand, that great promise), they were not fit to be discoursed with concerning Christ's authority; for men of such a disposition could not be convinced of the truth, nay, they could not but be provoked by it, and therefore he that is thus ignorant, let him be ignorant still. Note, Those that imprison the truths they know, in unrighteousness (either by not professing them, or by not practising according to them), are justly denied the further truths they enquire after, Ro 1:18,19. Take away the talent from him that buried it; those that will not see, shall not see.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Evidently their difficulty was, how to answer, so as neither to shake their determination to reject the claims of Christ nor damage their reputation with the people. For the truth itself they cared nothing whatever.

The Parable of the Two Sons

28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard.

As Christ instructed his disciples by parables, which made the instructions the more easy, so sometimes he convinced his adversaries by parables, which bring reproofs more close, and make men, or ever they are aware, to reprove themselves. Thus Nathan convinced David by a parable (2Sa 22:1), and the woman of Tekoa surprised him in like manner, 2Sa 14:2: Reproving parables are appeals to the offenders themselves, and judge them out of their own mouths. This Christ designs here, as appears by the first words (Mt 21:28), But what think you?

In these verses we have the parable of the two sons sent to work in the vineyard, the scope of which is to show that they who knew not John's baptism to be of God, were shamed even by the publicans and harlots, who knew it, and owned it. Here is,

The parable itself, which represents two sorts of persons; some that prove better than they promise, represented by the first of those sons; others that promise better than they prove represented by the second.

1. They had both one and the same father, which signifies that God is a common Father to all mankind. There are favours which all alike receive from him, and obligations which all alike lie under to him; Have we not all one Father? Yes, and yet there is a vast difference between men's characters.

2. They had both the same command given them; Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. Parents should not breed up their children in idleness; nothing is more pleasing, and yet nothing more pernicious, to youth than that. La 3:27. God sets his children to work, though they are all heirs. This command is given to every one of us. Note,

(a) The work of religion, which we are called to engage in, is vineyard work, creditable, profitable, and pleasant. By the sin of Adam we were turned out to work upon the common, and to eat the herb of the field; but by the grace of our Lord Jesus we are called to work again in the vineyard.

(b) The gospel call to work in the vineyard, requires present obedience; Son, go work to-day, while it is called to-day, because the night comes when no man can work. We were not sent into the world to be idle, nor had we daylight given us to play by; and therefore, if ever we mean to do any thing for God and our souls, why not now? Why not to-day?

(c) The exhortation to go work to-day in the vineyard, speaketh unto us as unto children (Heb 12:5); Son, go work. It is the command of a Father, which carries with it both authority and affection, a Father that pities his children, and considers their frame, and will not overtask them (Ps 103:13,14), a Father that is very tender of his Son that serves him, Mal 3:17. If we work in our Father's vineyard, we work for ourselves.

3. Their conduct was very different.

(a) One of the sons did better than he said, proved better than he promised. His answer was bad, but his actions were good.

[1.] Here is the untoward answer that he gave to his father; he said, flat and plain I will not. See to what a degree of impudence the corrupt nature of man rises, to say, I will not, to the command of a Father; such a command of such a Father; they are impudent children, and stiff-hearted. Those that will not bend, surely they cannot blush; if they had any degree of modesty left them, they could not say, We will not. Jer 2:25. Excuses are bad, but downright denials are worse; yet such peremptory refusals do the calls of the gospel often meet with. First, Some love their ease, and will not work; they would live in the world as leviathan in the waters, to

play therein (Ps 104:26); they do not love working. Secondly, Their hearts are so much upon their own fields, that they are not for working in God's vineyard. They love the business of the world better than the business of their religion. Thus some by the delights of sense, and others by the employments of the world, are kept from doing that great work which they were sent into the world about, and so stand all the day idle.

[2.] Here is the happy change of his mind, and of his way, upon second thought; Afterward he repented, and went. Note, There are many who in the beginning are wicked and wilful, and very unpromising, who afterward repent and mend, and come to something. Some that God hath chosen, are suffered for a great while to run to a great excess of riot; Such were some of you, 1Co 6:11. These are set forth for patterns of long-suffering, 1Ti 1:16. Afterward he repented. Repentance is metanoia--an after-wit: and metameleia--an after-care. Better late than never. Observe, When he repented he went; that was the fruit meet for repentance. The only evidence of our repentance for our former resistance, is, immediately to comply, and set to work; and then what is past, shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. See what a kind Father God is; he resents not the affront of our refusals, as justly he might. He that told his father to his face, that he would not do as he bid him, deserved to be turned out of doors, and disinherited; but our God waits to be gracious, and, not withstanding our former follies, if we repent and mend, will favourably accept of us; blessed be God, we are under a covenant that leaves room for such a repentance.

(b) The other son said better than he did, promised better than he proved; his answer was good but his actions bad. To him the father said likewise, Mt 21:30. The gospel call, though very different, is, in effect, the same to all, and is carried on with an even tenour. We have all the same commands, engagements, encouragements, though to some they are a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. Observe,

[1.] How fairly this other son promised; He said, I go, sir. He gives his father a title of respect, sir. Note, It becomes children to speak respectfully to their parents. It is one branch of that honour which the fifth commandment requires. He professes a ready obedience, I go; not, "I will go by and by," but, "Ready, sir, you may depend upon it, I go just now." This answer we should give from the heart heartily to all the calls and commands of the word of God. See Jer 3:22,Ps 27:8.

[2.] How he failed in the performance; He went not. Note, There are many that give good words, and make fair promises, in religion, and those from some good motions for the present, that rest there, and go no further, and so come to nothing. Saying and doing are two things; and many there are that say, and do not; it is particularly charged upon the Pharisees, Mt 23:3. Many with their mouth show much love, but their heart goes another way. They had a good mind to be religious, but they met with something to be done, that was too hard, or something to be parted with, that was too dear, and so their purposes are to no purpose. Buds and blossoms are not fruit.

29 He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went.

TRENCH notices the rudeness of this answer, and the total absence of any attempt to excuse such disobedience, both characteristic; representing careless, reckless sinners resisting God to His face.The whole human race are like children whom the Lord has brought up, but they have rebelled against him, only some are more plausible in their disobedience than others. And it often happens, that the daring rebel is brought to repentance and becomes the Lord's servant, while the formalist grows hardened in pride and enmity.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not.

"I, sir." The emphatic "I," here, denotes the self-righteous complacency which says, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men" (Lu 18:11).

He did not "afterward repent" and refuse to go; for there was here no intention to go. It is the class that "say and do not" (Mt 23:3) —

a falseness more abominable to God, says STIER, than any "I will not."

31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

The publicans and the harlots were the first son, who, when told to work in the Lord's vineyard, said, I will not; but afterwards repented and went. Their early life was a flat and flagrant refusal to do what they were commanded; it was one continued rebellion against the authority of God. The chief priests and the elders of the people, with whom our Lord was now speaking, were the second son, who said, I go, sir, but went not. They were early called, and all their life long professed obedience to God, but never rendered it; their life was one of continued disobedience.

A general appeal upon the parable; Whether of them twain did the will of his father? Mt 21:31. They both had their faults, one was rude and the other was false, such variety of exercises parents sometimes have in the different humours of their children, and they have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to know what is the best way of managing them. But the question is, Which was the better of the two, and the less faulty? And it was soon resolved; the first, because his actions were better than his words, and his latter end than his beginning. This they had learned from the common sense of mankind, who would much rather deal with one that will be better than his word, than with one that will be false to his word. And, in the intention of it, they had learned from the account God gives of the rule of his judgment (Eze 18:21-24), that if the sinner turn from his wickedness, he shall be pardoned; andif the righteous man turn from his righteousness, he shall be rejected. The tenour of the whole scripture gives us to understand that those are accepted as doing their Father's will, who, wherein they have missed it, are sorry for it, and do better.

A particular application of it to the matter in hand, Mt 21:31,32. The primary scope of the parable is, to show how the publicans and harlots, who never talked of the Messiah and his kingdom, yet

entertained the doctrine, and submitted to the discipline, of John the Baptist, his forerunner, when the priests and elders, who were big with expectations of the Messiah, and seemed very ready to go into his measures, slighted John the Baptist, and ran counter to the designs of his mission. But it has a further reach; the Gentiles were sometimes disobedient, had been long so, children of disobedience, like the elder son (Tit 3:3,4); yet, when the gospel was preached to them, they became obedient to the faith; whereas the Jews who said, I go, sir, promised fair (Ex 24:7,Jos 24:24); yet went not; they did but flatter God with their mouth. Ps 78:36.

In Christ's application of this parable, observe.

1. How he proves that John's baptism was from heaven, and not of men. "If you cannot tell," saith Christ, "you might tell,"

(a) By the scope of his ministry; John came unto you in the way of righteousness. Would you know whether John had his commission from heaven, remember the rule of trial, By their fruits ye shall know them; the fruits of their doctrines, the fruits of their doings. Observe but their way, and you may trace out both their rise and their tendency. Now it was evident that John came in the way of righteousness. In his ministry, he taught people to repent, and to work the works of righteousness. In his conversation, he was a great example of strictness, and seriousness, and contempt of the world, denying himself, and doing good to every body else. Christ therefore submitted to the baptism of John, because it became him to fulfil all righteousness. Now, if John thus came in the way of righteousness, could they be ignorant that his baptism was from heaven, or make any doubt of it?

(b) By the success of his ministry; The publicans and the harlots believed him; he did abundance of good among the worst sort of people. St. Paul proves his apostleship by the seals of his ministry, 1Co 9:2. If God had not sent John the Baptist, he would not have crowned his labours with such wonderful success, nor have made him so instrumental as he was for the conversion f souls. If

publicans and harlots believe his report, surely the arm of the Lord is with him. The people's profiting is the minister's best testimonial.

2. How he reproves them for their contempt of John's baptism, which yet, for fear of the people, they were not willing to own. To shame them for it, he sets before them the faith, repentance, and obedience, of the publicans and harlots, which aggravated their unbelief and impenitence. As he shows, Mt 11:21, that the less likely would have repented, so here that the less likely did repent.

(a) The publicans and harlots were like the first son in the parable, from whom little of religion was expected. They promised little good, and those that knew them promised themselves little good from them. Their disposition was generally rude, and their conversation profligate and debauched; and yet many of them were wrought upon the by the ministry of John, who came in the spirit and power of Elias. See Lu 7:29. These fitly represented the Gentile world; for, as Dr. Whitby observes, the Jews generally ranked the publicans with the heathen; nay, and the heathen were represented by the Jews as harlots, and born of harlots, Joh 8:41.

(b) The scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and elders, and indeed the Jewish nation in general, were like the other son that gave good words; they made a specious profession of religion, and yet, when the kingdom of the Messiah was brought among them by the baptism of John, they slighted it, they turned their back upon it, nay they lifted up the heel against it. A hypocrite is more hardly convinced and converted than a gross sinner; the form of godliness, if that be rested in, becomes one of Satan's strongholds, by which he opposes the power of godliness. It was an aggravation of their unbelief,

[1.] That John was such an excellent person, that he came, and came to them, in the way of righteousness. The better the means are, the greater will the account be, if not improved.

[2.] That, when they saw the publicans and harlots go before them into the kingdom of heaven, they did not afterward repent and believe; were not thereby provoked to a holy emulation, Ro 11:14. Shall publicans and harlots go away with grace and glory; and shall not we put in for a share? Shall our inferiors be more holy and more happy than we? They had not the wit and grace that Esau had, who was moved to take other measures than he had done, by the example of his younger brother, Ge 28:6. These proud priests, that set up for leaders, scorned to follow, though it were into the kingdom of heaven, especially to follow publicans; through the pride of their countenance, they would not seek after God, after Christ, Ps 10:4.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

that is, calling you to repentance; as Noah is styled "a preacher of righteousness" (2Pe 2:5), when like the Baptist he warned the old world to "flee from the wrath to come."

They did not reject him; nay, they "were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (Joh 5:35); but they would not receive his testimony to Jesus.

Of the publicans this is twice expressly recorded, Lu 3:12,7:29. Of the harlots, then, the same may be taken for granted, though the fact is not expressly recorded. These outcasts gladly believed the testimony of John to the coming Saviour, and so hastened to Jesus when He came. See Lu 7:37,15:1, &c.

Instead of being "provoked to jealousy" by their example, ye have seen them flocking to the Saviour and getting to heaven, unmoved.

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; they and their leaders are the husbandmen here; and what is spoken for conviction to them, is spoken for caution to all that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, not to be high-minded, but fear.

We have here the privileges of the Jewish church, represented by the letting out of a vineyard to the husbandmen; they were as tenants holding by, from, and under, God the great Householder. Observe,

1. How God established a church for himself in the world. The kingdom of God upon earth is here compared to a vineyard, furnished with all things requisite to an advantageous management and improvement of it.

(a) He planted this vineyard. The church is the planting of the Lord, Isa 61:3. The forming of a church is a work by itself, like the planting of a vineyard, which requires a great deal of cost and care. It is the vineyard which his right hand has planted (Ps 80:15), planted with the choicest vine (Isa 5:2), a noble vine, Jer 2:21. The earth of itself produces thorns and briars; but vines must be planted. The being of a church is owing to God's distinguishing favour, and his manifesting himself to some, and not to others.

(b) He hedged it round about. Note, God's church in the world is taken under his special protection. It is a hedge round about, like that about Job on every side (Job 1:10), a wall of fire, Zec 2:5. Wherever God has a church, it is, and will always be, his peculiar care. The covenant of circumcision and the ceremonial law were a hedge or a wall of partition about the Jewish church, which is taken down by Christ; who yet has appointed a gospel order and discipline to be the hedge of his church. He will not have his vineyard to lie in common, that those who are without, may thrust in at pleasure; not to lie at large, that those who are within, may lash out at pleasure; but care is taken to set bounds about this holy mountain.

(c) He digged a wine-press and built a tower. The altar of burnt-offerings was the wine-press, to which all the offerings were brought. God instituted ordinances in his church, for the due oversight of it, and for the promoting of its fruitfulness. What could have been done more to make it every way convenient?

2. How he entrusted these visible church-privileges with the nation and people of the Jews, especially their chief priests and elders; he let it out to them as husbandmen, not because he had need of them as landlords have of their tenants, but because he would try them, and be honoured by them. When in Judah God was known, and his name was great, when they were taken to be to God for a people, and for a name, and for a praise (Jer 13:11), when he revealed his word unto Jacob (Ps 147:19), when the covenant of life and peace was made with Levi (Mal 2:4,5), then this vineyard was let out. See an abstract of the lease, So 8:11,12. The Lord of the vineyard was to have a thousand pieces of silver (compare Isa 7:13); the main profit was to be his, but the keepers were to have two hundred, a competent and comfortable encouragement. And then he went into a far country. When God had in a visible appearance settled the Jewish church at mount Sinai, he did in a manner withdraw; they had no more such open vision, but were left to the written word. Or, they imagined that he was gone into a far country, as Israel, when they made the calf, fancied that Moses was gone. They put far from them the evil day.

34 and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

God's expectation of rent from these husbandmen, Mt 21:34. It was a reasonable expectation; for who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? Note, From those that enjoy church-privileges, both ministers and people, God looks for fruit accordingly. 1. His expectations were not hasty; he did not demand a fore-rent, though he had been at such expense upon it; but staid till the time of the fruit drew near, as it did now that John preached the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God waits to be gracious, that he may give us time. 2. They were not high; he did not require them to come at

their peril, upon penalty of forfeiting their lease if they ran behind-hand; but he sent his servants to them, to remind them of their duty, and of the rent-day, and to help them in gathering in the fruit, and making return of it. These servants were the prophets of the Old Testament, who were sent, and sometimes directly, to the people of the Jews, to reprove and instruct them. 3. They were not hard; it was only to receive the fruits. He did not demand more than they could make of it, but some fruit of that which he himself planted--an observance of the laws and statutes he gave them. What could have been done more reasonable? Israel was an empty vine, nay it was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, and brought forth wild grapes.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

The husbandmen's baseness in abusing the messengers that were sent to them.

1. When he sent them his servants, they abused them, though they represented the master himself, and spoke in his name. Note, The calls and reproofs of the word, if they do not engage, will but exasperate. See here what hath all along been the lot of God's faithful messengers, more or less;

(a) To suffer; so persecuted they the prophets, who were hated with a cruel hatred. They not only despised and reproached them, but treated them as the worst of malefactors--they beat them, and killed them, and stoned them. They beat Jeremiah, killed Isaiah, stoned Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in the temple. If they that live godly in Christ Jesus themselves shall suffer persecution, much more they that press others to it. This was God's old quarrel with the Jews, misusing his prophets, 2Ch 36:16.

(b) It has been their lot to suffer from their Master's own tenants; they were the husbandmen that treated them thus, the chief priests

and elders that sat in Moses's chair, that professed religion and relation to God; these were the most bitter enemies of the Lord's prophets, that cast them out, and killed them, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5. See Jer 20:1,2,26:11.

Now see,

[1.] How God persevered in his goodness to them. He sent other servants, more than the first; though the first sped not, but were abused. He had sent them John the Baptist, and him they had beheaded; and yet he sent them his disciples, to prepare his way. O the riches of the patience and forbearance of God, in keeping up in his church a despised, persecuted ministry!

[2.] How they persisted in their wickedness. They did unto them likewise. One sin makes way for another of the same kind. They that are drunk with the blood of the saints, add drunkenness to thirst, and still cry, Give, give.

2. At length, he sent them his Son; we have seen God's goodness in sending, and their badness in abusing, the servants; but in the latter instance both these exceed themselves.

(a) Never did grace appear more gracious than in sending the Son. This was done last of all. Note, All the prophets were harbingers and forerunners to Christ. He was sent last; for if nothing else would work upon them, surely this would; it was therefore served for the ratio ultima--the last expedient. Surely they will reverence my Son, and therefore I will send him. Note, It might reasonably be expected that the Son of God, when he came to his own, should be reverenced; and reverence to Christ would be a powerful and effectual principle of fruitfulness and obedience, to the glory of God; if they will but reverence the Son, the point is gained. Surely they will reverence my Son, for he comes with more authority than the servants could; judgment is committed to him, that all men should honour him. There is greater danger in refusing him than in despising Moses's law.

(b) Never did sin appear more sinful than in the abusing of him, which was now to be done in two or three days. Observe,

[1.] How it was plotted (Mt 21:38); When they saw the Son: when he came, whom the people owned and followed as the Messiah, who would either have the rent paid, or distrain for it; this touched their copyhold, and they were resolved to make one bold push for it, and to preserve their wealth and grandeur by taking him out of the way, who was the only hindrance to it, and rival with them. This is the heir, come, let us kill him. Pilate and Herod, the princes of this world, knew not; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1Co 2:8. But the chief priests and elders knew that this was the heir, at least some of them; and therefore Come, let us kill him. Many are killed for what they have. The chief thing they envied him, and for which they hated and feared him, was his interest in the people, and their hosannas, which, if he was taken off, they hope to engross securely to themselves. They pretended that he must die, to save the people from the Romans (Joh 11:50); but really he must die, to save their hypocrisy and tyranny from that reformation which the expected kingdom of the Messiah would certainly bring along with it. He drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple; and therefore let us kill him; and then, as if the premises must of course go to the occupant, let us seize on his inheritance. They thought, if they could but get rid of this Jesus, they should carry all before them in the church without control, might impose what traditions, and force the people to what submissions, they pleased. Thus they take counsel against the Lord and his Anointed; but he that sits in heaven, laughs to see them outshot in their own bow; for, while they thought to kill him, and so to seize on his inheritance, he went by his cross to his crown, and they were broken pieces with a rod of iron, and their inheritance seized. Ps 2:2,3,6,9.

[2.] How this plot was executed, Mt 21:39. While they were so set upon killing him, in pursuance of their design to secure their own pomp and power, and while he was so set upon dying, in pursuance

of his design to subdue Satan, and save his chosen, no wonder if they soon caught him, and slew him, when his hour was come. Though the Roman power condemned him, yet it is still charged upon the chief priests and elders; for they were not only the prosecutors, but the principal agents, and had the greater sin. Ye have taken, Ac 2:23. Nay looking upon him to be as unworthy to live, as they were unwilling he should, they cast him out of the vineyard, out of the holy church, which they supposed themselves to have the key of, and out of the holy city for he was crucified without the gate, Heb 13:12. As if He had been the shame and reproach, who was the greatest glory of his people Israel. Thus they who persecuted the servants, persecuted the Son; as men treat God's ministers, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

that so, from mere servants, we may become lords. This is the deep aim of the depraved heart; this is emphatically "the root of all evil."

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Here is their doom read out of their own mouths, Mt 21:40,41. He puts it to them, When the Lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen? He puts it to themselves, for their stronger conviction, that knowing the judgment of God against them which do such things, they might be the more inexcusable. Note, God's proceedings are so unexceptionable, that there needs but an appeal to sinners themselves concerning the equity of them. God will be justified when he speaks. They could readily answer, He will miserably destroy those wicked men. Note, Many can easily prognosticate the dismal consequences of other people's sins, that see not what will be the end of their own.

1. Our Saviour, in his question, supposes that the lord of the vineyard will come, and reckon with them. God is the Lord of the vineyard; the property is his, and he will make them know it, who now lord it over his heritage, as if it were all their own. The Lord of the vineyard will come. Persecutors say in their hearts, He delays his coming, he doth not see, he will not require; but they shall find, though he bear long with them, he will not bear always. It is comfort to abused saints and ministers, that the Lord is at hand, the Judge stands before the door. When he comes, what will he do to carnal professors? What will he do to cruel persecutors? They must be called to account, they have their day now; but he sees that his day is coming.

2. They, in their answer, suppose that it will be a terrible reckoning; the crime appearing so very black, you may be sure,

(a) That he will miserably destroy those wicked men; it is destruction that is their doom. Kakous kakos apolesei--Malos male perdet. Let men never expect to do ill, and fare well. This was fulfilled upon the Jews, in that miserable destruction which was brought upon them by the Romans, and was completed about forty years after this; and unparalleled ruin, attended with all the most dismal aggravating circumstances. It will be fulfilled upon all that tread in the steps of their wickedness; hell is everlasting destruction, and it will be the most miserable destruction to them of all others, that have enjoyed the greatest share of church privileges, and have not improved them. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites and persecutors.

(b) That he will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. Note, God will have a church in the world, notwithstanding the unworthiness and opposition of many that abuse the privileges of it. The unbelief and frowardness of man shall not make the word of God of no effect. If one will not, another will. The Jews' leavings were the Gentiles' feast. Persecutors may destroy the ministers, but cannot destroy the church. The Jews imagined that no doubt they were the people, and wisdom and holiness must die with them; and

if they were cut off, what would God do for a church in the world? But when God makes use of any to bear up his name, it is not because he needs them, nor is he at all beholden to them. If we were made a desolation and an astonishment, God could build a flourishing church upon our ruins; for he is never at a loss what to do for his great name, whatever becomes of us, and of our place and nation.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner:
this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

The further illustration and application of this by Christ himself, telling them, in effect, that they had rightly judged.

1. He illustrates it by referring to a scripture fulfilled in this (Mt 21:42); Did ye never read in the scriptures? Yes, no doubt, they had often read and sung it, but had not considered it. We lose the benefit of what we read for want of meditation. The scripture he quotes is Ps 118:22,23, the same context out of which the children fetched their hosannas. The same word yields matter of praise and comfort to Christ's friends and followers, which speaks conviction and terror to his enemies. Such a two-edged sword is the word of God. That scripture, the Stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner, illustrates the preceding parable, especially that part of it which refers to Christ.

(a) The builders' rejecting of the stone is the same with the husbandmen's abusing of the son that was sent to them. The chief priests and the elders were the builders, had the oversight of the Jewish church, which was God's building: and they would not allow Christ a place in their building, would not admit his doctrine or laws into their constitution; they threw him aside as a despised broken vessel, a stone that would serve only for a stepping-stone, to be trampled upon.

(b) The advancing of this stone to be the head of the corner is the same with letting out the vineyard to other husbandmen. He who was rejected by the Jews was embraced by the Gentiles; and to that

church where there is no difference of circumcision or uncircumcision, Christ is all, and in all. His authority over the gospel church, and influence upon it, his ruling it as the Head, and uniting it as the Corner-stone, are the great tokens of his exhaltation. Thus, in spite of the malice of the priests and elders, he divided a portion with the great, and received his kingdom, though they would not have him to reign over them.

(c) The hand of God was in all this; This is the Lord's doing. Even the rejecting of him by the Jewish builders was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; he permitted and overruled it; much more was his advancement to the Head of the corner; his right hand and his holy arm brought it about; it was God himself that highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name; and it is marvellous in our eyes. The wickedness of the Jews that rejected him is marvellous,; that men should be so prejudiced against their own interest! See Isa 29:9,10,14. The honour done him by the Gentile world, notwithstanding the abuses done him by his own people, is marvellous; that he whom men despised and abhorred, should be adored by kings! Isa 49:7. But it is the Lord's doing.

2. He applies it to them, and application is the life of preaching.

He applies the sentence which they had passed (Mt 21:41), and turns it upon themselves; not the former part of it, concerning the miserable destruction of the husbandmen (he could not bear to speak of that), but the latter part, of letting out the vineyard to others; because though it looked black upon the Jews, it spoke good to the Gentiles. Know then,

[1.] That the Jews shall be unchurched; The kingdom of God shall be taken from you. This turning out of the husbandmen speaks the same doom with that of dismantling the vineyard, and laying it common. Isa 5:5. To the Jews had long pertained the adoption and the glory (Ro 9:4); to them were committed the oracles of God (Ro 3:2), and the sacred trust of revealed religion, and bearing up of God's name in the world (Ps 76:1,2); but now it shall be so no

longer. They were not only unfruitful in the use of their privileges, but, under pretence of them, opposed the gospel of Christ, and so forfeited them, and it was not long ere the forfeiture was taken. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to remove church privileges from those that not only sin against them, but sin with them, Re 2:4,5. The kingdom of God was taken from the Jews, not only by the temporal judgments that befel them, but by the spiritual judgments they lay under, their blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and indignation at the gospel, Ro 11:8-10,1Th 2:15.

[2.] That the Gentiles shall be taken in. God needs not ask us leave whether he shall have a church in the world; though his vine be plucked up in one place, he will find another to plant it in. He will give it ethnei--to the Gentile world, that will bring forth the fruit of it. They who had been not a people, and had not obtained mercy, became favourites of Heaven. This is the mystery which blessed Paul was so much affected with (Ro 11:30,33), and which the Jews were so much affronted by, Ac 22:21,22. At the first planting of Israel in Canaan, the fall of the Gentiles was the riches of Israel (Ps 135:10,11), so, at their extirpation, the fall of Israel was the riches of the Gentiles, Ro 11:12. It shall go to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Note, Christ knows beforehand who will bring forth gospel fruits in the use of gospel means; because our fruitfulness is all the work of his own hands, and known unto God are all his works. They shall bring forth the fruits better than the Jews had done; God has had more glory from the New Testament church than from that of the Old Testament; for, when he changes, it shall not be to his loss.

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; and what is spoken to convict them, is spoken to caution all that enjoy the privileges of the outward church. As men treat God's people, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them. How can we, if faithful to his cause, expect a favourable reception from a wicked world, or from ungodly professors of Christianity! And let us ask ourselves, whether we who have the vineyard and all its

advantages, render fruits in due season, as a people, as a family, or as separate persons. Our Saviour, in his question, declares that the Lord of the vineyard will come, and when he comes he will surely destroy the wicked.

the great evangelical community of the faithful, which, after the extrusion of the Jewish nation, would consist chiefly of Gentiles, until "all Israel should be saved" (Ro 11:25,26). This vastly important statement is given by Matthew only.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

He applies the scripture which he had quoted (Mt 21:42), to their terror, Mt 21:44. This Stone, which the builders refused, is set for the fall of many in Israel; and we have here the doom of two sorts of people, for whose fall it proves that Christ is set.

[1.] Some, through ignorance, stumble at Christ in his estate of humiliation; when this Stone lies on the earth, where the builders threw it, they, through their blindness and carelessness, fall on it, fall over it, and they shall be broken. The offence they take at Christ, will not hurt him, any more than he that stumbles, hurts the stone he stumbles at; but it will hurt themselves; they will fall, and be broken, and snared, Isa 8:14,1Pe 2:7,8. The unbelief of sinners will be their ruin.

[2.] Others, through malice, oppose Christ, and bid defiance to him in his estate of exaltation, when this Stone is advanced to the head of the corner; and on them it shall fall, for they pull it on their own heads, as the Jews did by that challenge, His blood be upon us and upon our children, and it will grind them to powder. The former seems to bespeak the sin and ruin of all unbelievers; this is the greater sin, and sorer ruin, of persecutors, that kick against the pricks, and persist in it. Christ's kingdom will be a burthensome stone to all those that attempt to overthrow it, or heave it out of its place; see Zec 12:3. This Stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will break in pieces all opposing power, Da 2:34,35. Some

make this an allusion to the manner of stoning to death among the Jews. The malefactors were first thrown down violently from a high scaffold upon a great stone, which would much bruise them; but then they threw another great stone upon them, which would crush them to pieces: one way or other, Christ will utterly destroy all those that fight against him. If they be so stout-hearted, that they are not destroyed by falling on this stone, yet it shall fall on them, and so destroy them. He will strike through kings, he will fill the places with dead bodies, Ps 110:5,6. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

Matthew-22

The Parable of the Marriage Feast

1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

We have here the parable of the guests invited to the wedding-feast. In this it is said (Mt 22:1), Jesus answered, not to what his opposers said (for they were put to silence), but to what they thought, when they were wishing for an opportunity to lay hands on him, Mt 21:46. Note, Christ knows how to answer men's thoughts, for he is a Discerner of them. Or, He answered, that is, he continued his discourse to the same purport; for this parable represents the gospel offer, and the entertainment it meets with, as the former, but under another similitude. The parable of the vineyard represents the sin of the rulers that persecuted the prophets; it shows also the sin of the people, who generally neglected the message, while their great ones were persecuting the messengers.

Gospel preparations are here represented by a feast which a king made at the marriage of his son; such is the kingdom of heaven,

such the provision made for precious souls, in and by the new covenant. The King is God, a great King, King of kings. Now,

1. Here is a marriage made for his son, Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride; the gospel-day is the day of his espousals, So 3:11. Behold by faith the church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, and were given to Christ by him whose they were; and in them you see the bride, the Lamb's wife, Re 21:9. The gospel covenant is a marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers, and it is a marriage of God's making. This branch of the similitude is only mentioned, and not prosecuted here.

2. Here is a dinner prepared for this marriage, Mt 22:4. All the privileges of church-membership, and all the blessings of the new covenant, pardon of sin, the favour of God, peace of conscience, the promises of the gospel, and all the riches contained in them, access to the throne of grace, the comforts of the Spirit, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. These are the preparations for this feast, a heaven upon earth now, and a heaven in heaven shortly. God has prepared it in his counsel, in his covenant. It is a dinner, denoting present privileges in the midst of our day, beside the supper at night in glory.

(a) It is a feast. Gospel preparations were prophesied of as a feast (Isa 25:6), a feast of fat things, and were typified by the many festivals of the ceremonial law (1Co 5:8); Let us keep the feast. A feast is a good day (Es 7:17); so is the gospel; it is a continual feast. Oxen and fatlings are killed for this feast; no niceties, but substantial food; enough, and enough of the best. The day of a feast is a day of slaughter, or sacrifice, Jam 5:5. Gospel preparations are all founded in the death of Christ, his sacrifice of himself. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's goodwill toward men. It was made for laughter (Ec 10:19), it is a rejoicing feast. It was made for fulness; the design of the gospel was to fill every hungry soul with good things. It was made for fellowship, to maintain an intercourse between heaven and earth.

We are sent for to the banquet of wine, that we may tell what is our petition, and what is our request.

(b) It is a wedding feast. Wedding feasts are usually rich, free, and joyful. The first miracle Christ wrought, was, to make plentiful provision for a wedding feast (Joh 2:7); and surely then he will not be wanting in provision for his own wedding feast, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready, a victorious triumphant feast, Re 19:7,17,18.

(c) It is a royal wedding feast; it is the feast of a king (1Sa 25:36), at the marriage, not of a servant, but of a son; and then, if ever, he will, like Ahasuerus, show the riches of his glorious kingdom, Es 1:4. The provision made for believers in the covenant of grace, is not such as worthless worms, like us, had any reason to expect, but such as it becomes the King of glory to give. He gives like himself; for he gives himself to be to them El shaddai--a God that is enough, a feast indeed for a soul.

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

3 and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

Gospel calls and offers are represented by an invitation to this feast. Those that make a feast will have guests to grace the feast with. God's guests are the children of men. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus dignified! The guests that were first invited were the Jews; wherever the gospel is preached, this invitation is given; ministers are the servants that are sent to invite, Pr 9:4,5.

Now,

1 The guests are called, bidden to the wedding. All that are within hearing of the joyful sound of the gospel, to them is the word of this invitation sent. The servants that bring the invitation do not set

down their names in a paper; there is no occasion for that, since none are excluded but those that exclude themselves. Those that are bidden to the dinner are bidden to the wedding; for all that partake of gospel privileges are to give a due and respectful attendance on the Lord Jesus, as the faithful friends and humble servants of the Bridegroom. They are bidden to the wedding, that they may go forth to meet the bridegroom; for it is the Father's will that all men should honour the Son.

2 The guests are called upon; for in the gospel there are not only gracious proposals made, but gracious persuasives. We persuade men, we beseech them in Christ's stead, 2Co 5:11,20. See how much Christ's heart is set upon the happiness of poor souls! He not only provides for them, in consideration of their want, but sends to them, in consideration of their weakness and forgetfulness. When the invited guests were slack in coming, the king sent forth other servants, Mt 22:4. When the prophets of the Old Testament prevailed not, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, who told them the entertainment was almost ready (the kingdom of God was at hand), the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, it was quite ready; and to persuade them to accept the offer. One would think it had been enough to give men an intimation that they had leave to come, and should be welcome; that, during the solemnity of the wedding, the king kept open house; but, because the natural man discerns not, and therefore desires not, the things of the Spirit of God, we are pressed to accept the call by the most powerful inducements, drawn with the cords of a man, and all the bonds of love. If the repetition of the call will move us, Behold, the Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that heareth say, Come; let him that is athirst come, Re 22:17. If the reason of the call will work upon us, Behold, the dinner is prepared, the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; the Father is ready to accept of us, the Son to intercede for us, the Spirit to sanctify us; pardon is ready; peace is ready, comfort is ready; the promises are ready, as wells of living water for supply; ordinances are ready, as golden pipes for conveyance; angels are ready to attend us, creatures are ready to be in league with us, providences are ready to work for our good, and

heaven, at last, is ready to receive us; it is a kingdom prepared, ready to be revealed in the last time. Is all this ready; and shall we be unready? Is all this preparation made for us; and is there any room to doubt of our welcome, if we come in a right manner? Come, therefore, O come to the marriage; we beseech you, receive not all this grace of God in vain, 2Co 6:1.

This points to those Gospel calls after Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and effusion of the Spirit, to which the parable could not directly allude, but when only it could be said, with strict propriety, "that all things were ready." Compare 1Co 5:7,8, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast"; also Joh 6:51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

The cold treatment which the gospel of Christ often meets with among the children of men, represented by the cold treatment that this message met with and the hot treatment that the messengers met with, in both which the king himself and the royal bridegroom are affronted. This reflects primarily upon the Jews, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves; but it looks further, to the contempt that would, by many in all ages, be put upon, and the opposition that would be given to, the gospel of Christ.

1 The message was basely slighted (Mt 22:3); They would not come. Note, The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him is, not because they cannot, but because they will not (Joh 5:40); Ye will not come to me. This will aggravate the misery of sinners, that they might have had happiness for the coming for, but it was their own act and deed to refuse it. I would, and ye would not. But this was not all (Mt 22:5); they made light of it; they thought it not worth coming for; thought the messengers made more ado than needs; let them magnify the preparations ever so much, they could feast as well at home. Note, Making light of Christ, and of the great

salvation wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. Amelesantes--They were careless. Note, Multitudes perish eternally through mere carelessness, who have not any direct aversion, but a prevailing indifference, to the matters of their souls, and an unconcernedness about them.

And the reason why they made light of the marriage feast was, because they had other things that they minded more, and had more mind to; they went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. Note, The business and profit of worldly employments prove to many a great hindrance in closing with Christ: none turn their back on the feast, but with some plausible excuse or other, Lu 14:18. The country people have their farms to look after, about which there is always something or other to do; the town's people must tend their shops, and be constant upon the exchange; they must buy, and sell, and get gain. It is true, that both farmers and merchants must be diligent in their business but not so as to keep them from making religion their main business. Licitis perimus omnes--These lawful things undo us, when they are unlawfully managed, when we are so careful and troubled about many things as to neglect the one thing needful. Observe, Both the city and the country have their temptations, the merchandise in the one, and the farms in the other; so that, whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ.

2 The messengers were basely abused; The remnant, or the rest of them, that is, those who did not go the farms, or merchandise, were neither husbandmen nor tradesmen, but ecclesiastics, the scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests; these were the persecutors, these took the servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them. This, in the parable, is unaccountable, never any could be so rude and barbarous as this, to servants that came to invite them to a feast; but, in the application of the parable, it was matter of fact; they whose feet should have been beautiful, because they brought the glad tidings of the solemn feasts (Na 1:15), were treated as the offscouring of all things, 1Co 4:13. The prophets and John the Baptist had been thus abused already, and the apostles and ministers

of Christ must count upon the same. The Jews were, either directly or indirectly, agents in most of the persecutions of the first preachers of the gospel; witness the history of the Acts, that is, the sufferings of the apostles.

6 and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.
7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

The utter ruin that was coming upon the Jewish church and nation is here represented by the revenge which the king, in wrath, took on these insolent recusants (Mt 22:7); He was wroth. The Jews, who had been the people of God's love and blessing, by rejecting the gospel became the generation of his wrath and curse. Wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1Th 2:16. Now observe here,

1. What was the crying sin that brought the ruin; it was their being murderers. He does not say, he destroyed those despisers of his call, but those murderers of his servants; as if God were more jealous for the lives of his ministers than for the honour of his gospel; he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. Note, Persecution of Christ's faithful ministers fills the measure of guilt more than any thing. Filling Jerusalem with innocent blood was that sin of Manasseh which the Lord would not pardon, 2Ki 24:4.

2. What was the ruin itself, that was coming; He sent forth his armies. The Roman armies were his armies, of his raising, of his sending against the people of his wrath; and he gave them a charge to tread them down, Isa 10:6. God is the Lord of men's host, and makes what use he pleases of them, to serve his own purposes, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa 10:7. See Mic 4:11,12. His armies destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. This points out very plainly the destruction of the Jews, and the burning of Jerusalem, by the Romans, forty years after this. No age ever saw a greater desolation than that, nor more of the direful effects of fire and sword. Though Jerusalem had been a holy city, the city that God had chosen, to put his name there, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; yet that city being now become a harlot, righteousness being no longer lodged in it, but

murderers, the worst of murderers (as the prophet speaks, Isa 1:21), judgment came upon it, and ruin without remedy; and it is set forth for an example to all that should oppose Christ and his gospel. It was the Lord's doing, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

The replenishing of the church again, by the bringing in of the Gentiles, is here represented by the furnishing of the feast with guests out of the high-ways, Mt 22:8-10.

Here is,

1 The complaint of the master of the feast concerning those that were first bidden (Mt 22:8), The wedding is ready, the covenant of grace ready to be sealed, a church ready to be founded; but they which were bidden, that is, the Jews, to whom pertained the covenant and the promises, by which they were of old invited to the feast of fat things, they were not worthy, they were utterly unworthy, and, by their contempt of Christ, had forfeited all the privileges they were invited to. Note, It is not owing to God, that sinners perish, but to themselves. Thus, when Israel of old was within sight of Canaan, the land of promise was ready, the milk and honey ready, but their unbelief and murmuring, and contempt of that pleasant land, shut them out, and their carcases were left to perish in the wilderness; and these things happened to them for ensamples. See 1Co 10:11,Heb 3:16-4:1.

2 The commission he gave to the servants, to invite other guests. The inhabitants of the city (Mt 22:7) had refused; Go into the high-ways then; into the way of the Gentiles, which at first they were to decline, Mt 10:5. Thus by the fall of the Jews salvation is come to the Gentiles, Ro 11:11,12,Eph 3:8. Note, Christ will have a kingdom in the world, though many reject the grace, and resist the power, of that

kingdom. Though Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious. The offer of Christ and salvation to the Gentiles was,

(1.) Unlooked for and unexpected; such a surprise as it would be to wayfaring men upon the road to be met with an invitation to a wedding feast. The Jews had notice of the gospel, long before, and expected the Messiah and his kingdom; but to the Gentiles it was all new, what they had never heard of before (Ac 17:19,20), and, consequently, what they could not conceive of as belonging to them. See Isa 65:1,2.

(2.) It was universal and undistinguishing; Go, and bid as many as you find. The highways are public places, and there Wisdom cries, Pr 1:20. "Ask them that go by the way, ask any body (Job 21:29), high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, young and old, Jew and Gentile; tell them all, that they shall be welcome to gospel-privileges upon gospel-terms; whoever will, let him come, without exception."

3. The success of this second invitation; if some will not come, others will (Mt 22:10); They gathered together all, as many as they found. The servants obeyed their orders. Jonah was sent into the high-ways, but was so tender of the honour of his country, that he avoided the errand; but Christ's apostles, though Jews, preferred the service of Christ before their respect to their nation; and St. Paul, though sorrowing for the Jews, yet magnifies his office as the apostle of Gentiles. They gathered together all. The design of the gospel is, (1.) To gather souls together; not the nation of the Jews only, but all the children of God who were scattered abroad (Joh 11:52), the other sheep that were not of that fold, Joh 10:16. They were gathered into one body, one family, one corporation. (2.) To gather them together to the wedding-feast, to pay their respect to Christ, and to partake of the privileges of the new covenant. Where the dole is, there will the poor be gathered together.

Now the guests that were gathered were,

[1.] A multitude, all, as many as they found; so many, that the guest-chamber was filled. The sealed ones of the Jews were numbered, but those of other nations were without number, a very great multitude, Re 7:9. See Isa 60:4,8.

[2.] A mixed multitude, both bad and good; some that before their conversion were sober and well-inclined, as the devout Greeks (Ac 17:4) and Cornelius; others that had run to an excess of riot, as the Corinthians (1Co 6:11); Such were some of you; or, some that after their conversion proved bad, that turned not to the Lord with all their heart, but feignedly; others that were upright and sincere, and proved of the right class. Ministers, in casting the net of the gospel, enclose both good fish and bad; but the Lord knows them that are his.

10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

that is, without making any distinction between open sinners and the morally correct. The Gospel call fetched in Jews, Samaritans, and outlying heathen alike.

11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

The language here is drawn from the following remarkable passage in Zep 1:7,8: —"Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel." The custom in the East of presenting festival garments (see Ge 45:22,2Ki 5:22), even though nor clearly proved, Is certainly presupposed here. It undoubtedly means something which they bring not of their own—for how could they have any such dress who were gathered in from the highways indiscriminately?—but which they receive as their appropriate dress. And what can that be but what is meant by "putting on the Lord Jesus," as "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?" (See Ps 45:13,14). Nor could such language be strange to those in whose ears had so long resounded those words of prophetic joy: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be

joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa 61:10).

It concerns all to prepare for the scrutiny; and those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, who have a Christian temper of mind, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding-garment. The imputed righteousness of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit, are both alike necessary. No man has the wedding-garment by nature, or can form it for himself. The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to account for all their presumptuous intruding into gospel ordinances, and usurpation of gospel privileges. Take him away. Those that walk unworthy of Christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously claimed. Our Saviour here passes out of the parable into that which it teaches. Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness. Many are called to the wedding-feast, that is, to salvation, but few have the wedding-garment, the righteousness of Christ, the sanctification of the Spirit. Then let us examine ourselves whether we are in the faith, and seek to be approved by the King.

However, not all the people who responded to the invitation were genuine. Some were like the man who thought he would like to go to the feast, but was either too lazy or too busy with his own affairs to prepare himself properly. The king had issued an invitation to all, but he denied entrance to those who wanted to gain the benefits of his feast without changing their self-centred ways. Jesus invited all to enter his kingdom, but there was no place for those who said they believed but showed no change in their attitudes and behaviour (Mat_22:11-14; cf._7:21-23; 11:29; 13:20-21; 16:24).

The case of hypocrites, who are in the church, but not of it, who have a name to live, but are not alive indeed, is represented by the guest that had not on a wedding garment; one of the bad that were gathered in. Those come short of salvation by Christ, not only who refuse to

take upon them the profession of religion, but who are not sound at heart in that profession. Concerning this hypocrite observe,

1. His discovery, how he was found out, Mt 22:11.

(a) The king came in to see the guests, to bid those welcome who came prepared, and to turn those out who came otherwise. Note, The God of heaven takes particular notice of those who profess religion, and have a place and name in the visible church. Our Lord Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks and therefore knows their works. See Re 2:1,2,So 7:12. Let this be a warning to us against hypocrisy, that disguises will shortly be stripped off, and every man will appear in his own colours; and an encouragement to us in our sincerity, that God is a witness to it.

Observe, This hypocrite was never discovered to be without a wedding garment, till the king himself came in to see the guests. Note, It is God's prerogative to know who are sound at heart in their profession, and who are not. We may be deceived in men, either one way or other; but He cannot. The day of judgment will be the great discovering day, when all the guests will be presented to the King: then he will separate between the precious and the vile (Mt 25:32), the secrets of all hearts will then be made manifest, and we shall infallibly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which now it is not easy to do. It concerns all the guests, to prepare for the scrutiny, and to consider how they will pass the piercing eye of the heart-searching God.

(b) As soon as he came in, he presently espied the hypocrite; He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; though but one, he soon had his eye upon him; there is no hope of being hid in a crowd from the arrests of divine justice; he had not on a wedding garment; he was not dressed as became a nuptial solemnity; he had not his best clothes on. Note, Many come to the wedding feast without a wedding garment. If the gospel be the wedding feast, then the wedding garment is a frame of heart, and a course of life agreeable to the gospel and our profession of it, worthy of the

vocation wherewith we are called (Eph 4:1), as becomes the gospel of Christ, Php 1:27. The righteousness of saints, their real holiness and sanctification, and Christ, made Righteousness to them, is the clean linen, Re 19:8. This man was not naked, or in rags; some raiment he had, but not a wedding garment. Those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, that have a Christian temper of mind, and are adorned with Christian graces, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding garment.

12 and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

His trial (Mt 22:12); and here we may observe,

(1.) How he was arraigned (Mt 22:12); Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? A startling question to one that was priding himself in the place he securely possessed at the feast. Friend! That was a cutting word; a seeming friend, a pretended friend, a friend in profession, under manifold ties and obligations to be a friend. Note, There are many in the church who are false friends to Jesus Christ, who say that they love him while their hearts are not with him. How camest thou in hither? He does not chide the servants for letting him in (the wedding garment is an inward thing, ministers must go according to that which falls within their cognizance); but he checks his presumption in crowding in, when he knew that his heart was not upright; "How durst thou claim a share in gospel benefits, when thou hadst no regard to gospel rules? What has thou to do to declare my statutes?" Ps 50:16,17. Such are spots in the feast, dishonour the bridegroom, affront the company, and disgrace themselves; and therefore, How camest thou in hither? Note, The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to an account for all their presumptuous intrusion into gospel ordinances, and usurpation of gospel privileges. Who hath required this at your hand? Isa 1:12. Despised sabbaths and abused sacraments must be reckoned for, and judgment taken out upon an action of waste against all those who received the grace of God in vain. "How camest thou to the Lord's table, at such a time, unhumbled and unsanctified? What brought thee to sit before God's prophets, as his people do, when thy heart went after thy covetousness? How camest thou in? Not by the door,

but some other way, as a thief and a robber. It was a tortuous entry, a possession without colour of a title." Note, It is good for those that have a place in the church, often to put it to themselves, "How came I in hither? Have I a wedding-garment?" If we would thus judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

(2.) How he was convicted; he was speechless: ephimothe--he was muzzled (so the word is used, 1Co 9:9); the man stood mute, upon his arraignment, being convicted and condemned by his own conscience. They who live within the church, and die without Christ, will not have one word to say for themselves in the judgment of the great day, they will be without excuse; should they plead, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, as they do, Lu 13:26, that is to plead guilty; for the crime they are charged with, is thrusting themselves into the presence of Christ, and to his table, before they were called. They who never heard a word of this wedding feast will have more to say for themselves; their sin will be more excusable, and their condemnation more tolerable, than theirs who came to the feast without the wedding garment, and so sin against the clearest light and dearest love.

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

His sentence (Mt 22:13); Bind him hand and foot, &c.

(1.) He is ordered to be pinioned, as condemned malefactors are, to be manacled and shackled. Those that will not work and walk as they should, may expect to be bound hand and foot. There is a binding in this world by the servants, the ministers, whose suspending of persons that walk disorderly, to the scandal of religion, is called binding of them, Mt 18:18. "Bind them up from partaking of special ordinances, and the peculiar privileges of their church-membership; bind them over to the righteous judgment of god." In the day of judgment, hypocrites will be bound; the angels shall bind up these tares in bundles for the fire, Mt 13:41. Damned sinners are bound hand and foot by an irreversible sentence; this signifies the same with the fixing of the great gulf; they can neither resist nor outrun their punishment.

(2.) He is ordered to be carried off from the wedding feast; Take him away. When the wickedness of hypocrites appears, they are to be taken away from the communion of the faithful, to be cut of as withered branches. This bespeaks the punishment of loss in the other world; they shall be taken away from the king, from the kingdom, from the wedding feast, Depart from me, ye cursed. It will aggravate their misery, that (like the unbelieving lord, 2Ki 7:2), they shall see all this plenty with their eyes, but shall not taste of it. Note, Those that walk unworthy of their Christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously laid claim to, and complimented themselves with a groundless expectation of.

(3.) He is ordered into a doleful dungeon; Cast him into utter darkness. Our Saviour here insensibly slides out of this parable into that which it intimates--the damnation of hypocrites in the other world. Hell is utter darkness, it is darkness out of heaven, the land of light; or it is extreme darkness, darkness to the last degree, without the least ray or spark of light, or hope of it, like that of Egypt; darkness which might be felt; the blackness of darkness, as darkness itself, Job 10:22. Note, Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness; and hell will be hell indeed to such, a condemnation more intolerable; there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth. This our Saviour often uses as part of the description of hell-torments, which are hereby represented, not so much by the misery itself, as by the resentment sinners will have of it; there shall be weeping, an expression of great sorrow and anguish; not a gush of tears, which gives present ease, but constant weeping, which is constant torment; and the gnashing of teeth is an expression of the greatest rage and indignation; they will be like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord, Isa 51:20,Isa 8:21,22. Let us therefore hear and fear.

Lastly, The parable is concluded with that remarkable saying which we had before (Mt 20:16), Many are called, but few are chosen, Mt 22:14. Of the many that are called to the wedding feast, if you set aside all those as unchosen that make light of it, and avowedly prefer other things before it; if then you set aside all that make a profession of religion, but the temper of whose spirits and the tenour of whose conversation are a constant contradiction to it;

if you set aside all the profane, and all the hypocritical, you will find that they are few, very few, that are chosen; many called to the wedding feast, but few chosen to the wedding garment, that is, to salvation, by sanctification of the Spirit. This is the strait gate, and narrow way, which few find.

14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

It was not the least grievous of the sufferings of Christ, that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and had snares laid for him by those that sought how to take him off with some pretence. In these verses, we have him attacked by the Pharisees and Herodians with a question about paying tribute to Cæsar. Observe,

What the design was, which they proposed to themselves; They took counsel to entangle him in his talk. Hitherto, his encounters had been mostly with the chief priests and the elders, men in authority, who trusted more to their power than to their policy, and examined him concerning his commission (Mt 21:23); but now he is set upon from another quarter; the Pharisees will try whether they can deal with him by their learning in the law, and in casuistical divinity, and they have a tentamen novum--a new trial for him. Note, It is in vain for the best and wisest of men to think that, by their ingenuity, or interest, or industry, or even by their innocence and integrity, they can escape the hatred and ill will of bad men, or screen themselves from the strife of tongues. See how unwearied the enemies of Christ and his kingdom are in their opposition!

1. They took counsel. It was foretold concerning him, that the rulers would take counsel against him (Ps 2:2); and so persecuted they the prophets. Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. See Jer 18:18,20:10. Note, The more there is of contrivance and consultation about sin, the worse it is. There is a particular woe to them that devise iniquity, Mic 2:1 The more there is of the wicked wit in the

contrivance of a sin, the more there is of the wicked will in the commission of it.

2. That which they aimed at was to entangle him in his talk. They saw him free and bold in speaking his mind, and hoped by that, if they could bring him to some nice and tender point, to get an advantage against him. It has been the old practice of Satan's agents and emissaries, to make a man an offender for a word, a word misplaced, or mistaken, or misunderstood; a word, though innocently designed, yet perverted by strained inuendos: thus they lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate (Isa 29:21), and represent the greatest teachers as the greatest troublers of Israel: thus the wicked plotteth against the just, Ps 37:12,13.

There are two ways by which the enemies of Christ might be revenged on him, and be rid of him; either by law or by force. By law they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the civil government; for it was not lawful for them to put any man to death (Joh 18:31); and the Roman powers were not apt to concern themselves about questions of words, and names, and their law, Ac 18:15. By force they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the people, who were always the hands, whoever were the heads, in such acts of violence, which they call the beating of the rebels; but the people took Christ for a Prophet, and therefore his enemies could not raise the mob against him. Now (as the old serpent was from the beginning more subtle than any beast of the field), the design was, to bring him into such a dilemma, that he must make himself liable to the displeasure either of the Jewish multitude, or of the Roman magistrates; let him take which side of the question he will, he shall run himself into a premunire; and so they will gain their point, and make his own tongue to fall upon him.

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

The question which they put to him pursuant to this design, Mt 22:16,17. Having devised this iniquity in secret, in a close cabal,

behind the curtain, when they went abroad without loss of time they practised it. Observe,

1 The persons they employed; they did not go themselves, lest the design should be suspected and Christ should stand the more upon his guard; but they sent their disciples, who would look less like tempters, and more like learners. Note, Wicked men will never want wicked instruments to be employed in carrying on their wicked counsels. Pharisees have their disciples at their beck, who will go any errand for them, and say as they say; and they have this in their eyes, when they are so industrious to make proselytes.

With them they sent the Herodians, a party among the Jews, who were for a cheerful and entire subjection to the Roman emperor, and to Herod his deputy; and who made it their business to reconcile people to that government, and pressed all to pay their tribute. Some think that they were the collectors of the land tax, as the publicans were of the customs, and that they went with the Pharisees to Christ, with this blind upon their plot, that while the Herodians demanded the tax, and the Pharisees denied it, they were both willing to refer it to Christ, as a proper Judge to decide the quarrel. Herod being obliged, by the charter of the sovereignty, to take care of the tribute, these Herodians, by assisting him in that, helped to endear him to his great friends at Rome. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were zealous for the liberty of the Jews, and did what they could to make them impatient of the Roman yoke. Now, if he should countenance the paying of tribute, the Pharisees would incense the people against him; if he should discountenance or disallow it, the Herodians would incense the government against him. Note, It is common for those that oppose one another, to continue in an opposition to Christ and his kingdom. Samson's foxes looked several ways, but met in one firebrand. See Ps 83:3,5,7,8. If they are unanimous in opposing, should not we be so in maintaining, the interests of the gospel?

2 The preface, with which they were plausibly to introduce the question; it was highly complimentary to our Saviour (Mt 22:16); Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in

truth. Note, It is a common thing for the most spiteful projects to be covered with the most specious pretences. Had they come to Christ with the most serious enquiry, and the most sincere intention, they could not have expressed themselves better. Here is hatred covered with deceit, and a wicked heart with burning lips (Pr 26:23); as Judas, who kissed, and betrayed, as Joab, who kissed, and killed.

Now,

(a) What they said of Christ was right, and whether they knew it or no, blessed be God, we know it.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was a faithful Teacher; Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth. For himself, he is true, the Amen, the faithful Witness; he is the Truth itself. As for his doctrine, the matter of his teaching was the way of God, the way that God requires us to walk in, the way of duty, that leads to happiness; that is the way of God. The manner of it was in truth; he showed people the right way, the way in which they should go. He was a skilful Teacher, and knew the way of God; and a faithful Teacher, that would be sure to let us know it. See Pr 8:6-9. This is the character of a good teacher, to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and not to suppress, pervert, or stretch, any truth, for favour or affection, hatred or good will, either out of a desire to please, or a fear to offend, any man.

[2.] That he was a bold Reprover. In preaching, he cared not for any; he valued no man's frowns or smiles, he did not court, he did not dread, either the great or the many, for he regarded not the person of man. In his evangelical judgment, he did not know faces; that Lion of the tribe of Judah, turned not away for any (Pr 30:30), turned not a step from the truth, nor from his work, for fear of the most formidable. He reproved with equity (11:4), and never with partiality.

(b) Though what they said was true for the matter of it, yet there was nothing but flattery and treachery in the intention of it. They called him Master, when they were contriving to treat him as the worst of

malefactors; they pretended respect for him, when they intended mischief against him; and they affronted his wisdom as Man, much more his omniscience as God, of which he had so often given undeniable proofs, when they imagined that they could impose upon him with these pretences, and that he could not see through them. It is the grossest atheism, that is the greatest folly in the world, to think to put a cheat upon Christ, who searches the heart, Re 2:23. Those that mock God do but deceive themselves. Ga 6:7.

3. The proposal of the case; What thinkest thou? As if they had said, "Many men are of many minds in this matter; it is a case which relates to practice, and occurs daily; let us have thy thought freely in the matter, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" This implies a further question; Has Cæsar a right to demand it? The nation of the Jews was lately, about a hundred years before this, conquered by the Roman sword, and so, as other nations, made subject to the Roman yoke, and became a province of the empire; accordingly, toll, tribute, and custom, were demanded from them, and sometimes poll-money. By this it appeared that the sceptre was departed from Judah (Ge 49:10); and therefore, if they had understood the signs of the times, they must have concluded that Shiloh was come, and either that this was he, or they must find out another more likely to be so.

Now the question was, Whether it was lawful to pay these taxes voluntarily, or, Whether they should not insist upon the ancient liberty of their nation, and rather suffer themselves to be distrained upon? The ground of the doubt was, that they were Abraham's seed, and should not by consent be in bondage to any man, Joh 8:33. God had given them a law, that they should not set a stranger over them. Did not that imply, that they were not to yield any willing subjection to any prince, state, or potentate, that was not of their own nation and religion? This was an old mistake, arising from that pride and thathaughty spirit which bring destruction and a fall. Jeremiah, in his time, though he spoke in God's name, could not possibly beat them off it, nor persuade them to submit to the king of Babylon; and their obstinacy in that matter was then their ruin (Jer 27:12,13): and now again they stumbled at the same stone; and it was the very thing

which, in a few years after, brought final destruction upon them by the Romans. They quite mistook the sense both of the precept and of the privilege, and, under colour of God's word, contended with his providence, when they should have kissed the rod, and accepted the punishment of their iniquity.

However, by this question they hoped to entangle Christ, and, which way soever he resolved it, to expose him to the fury either of the jealous Jews, or of the jealous Romans; they were ready to triumph, as Pharaoh did over Israel, that the wilderness had shut him in, and his doctrine would be concluded either injurious to the rights of the church, or hurtful to kings and provinces.

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

The breaking of this snare by the wisdom of the Lord Jesus.

1. He discovered it (Mt 22:18); He perceived their wickedness; for, surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird, Pr 1:17. A temptation perceived is half conquered, for our greatest danger lies from snakes under the green grass; and he said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Note, Whatever vizard the hypocrite puts on, our Lord Jesus sees through it; he perceives all the wickedness that is in the hearts of pretenders, and can easily convict them of it, and set it in order before them. He cannot be imposed upon, as we often are, by flatteries and fair pretences. He that searches the heart can call hypocrites by their own name, as Ahijah did the wife of Jeroboam (1Ki 14:6), Why feignest thou thyself to be another? Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Note, Hypocrites tempt Jesus Christ; they try his knowledge, whether he can discover them through their disguises; they try his holiness and truth, whether he will allow of them in this church; but if they that of old tempted Christ, when he was but darkly revealed, were destroyed of serpents, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who tempt him now in the midst of gospel light and love! Those that presume to tempt Christ will certainly find him too hard for them, and that he is of more

piercing eyes than not to see, and more pure eyes than not to hate, the disguised wickedness of hypocrites, that dig deep to hide their counsel from him.

2. He evaded it; his convicting them of hypocrisy might have served for an answer (such captious malicious questions deserve a reproof, not a reply): but our Lord Jesus gave a full answer to their question, and introduced it by an argument sufficient to support it, so as to lay down a rule for his church in this matter, and yet to avoid giving offence, and to break the snare.

He forced them, ere they were aware, to confess Cæsar's authority over them, Mt 22:19,20. In dealing with those that are captious, it is good to give our reasons, and, if possible, reasons of confessed cogency, before we give our resolutions. Thus the evidence of truth may silence gainsayers by surprise, while they only stood upon their guard against the truth itself, not against the reason of it; Show me the tribute-money. He had none of his own to convince them by; it should seem, he had not so much as one piece of money about him, for for our sakes he emptied himself, and became poor; he despised the wealth of this world, and thereby taught us not to over-value it; silver and gold he had none; why then should we covet to load ourselves with the thick clay? The Romans demanded their tribute in their own money, which was current among the Jews at that time: that therefore is called the tribute-money; he does not name what piece but the tribute money, to show that he did not mind things of that nature, nor concern himself about them; his heart was upon better things, the kingdom of God and the riches and righteousness thereof, and ours should be so too.

19 Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Christ asked them, Whose image is this? They owned it to be Cæsar's, and thereby convicted those of falsehood who said, We were never in bondage to any; and confirmed what afterward they said, We have no king but Cæsar. It is a rule in the Jewish Talmud,

that "he is the king of the country whose coin is current in the country." Some think that the superscription upon this coin was a memorandum of the conquest of Judea by the Romans, anno post captam Judæam--the year after that event; and that they admitted that too.

From thence he inferred the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar (Mt 22:21); Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; not, "Give it him" (as they expressed it, Mt 22:17), but, "Render it; Return," or "Restore it; if Cæsar fill the purses, let Cæsar command them. It is too late now to dispute paying tribute to Cæsar; for you are become a province of the empire, and, when once a relation is admitted, the duty of it must be performed. Render to all their due, and particularly tribute to whom tribute is due." Now by this answer,

[1.] No offence was given. It was much to the honour of Christ and his doctrine, that he did not interpose as a Judge or a Divider in matters of this nature, but left them as he found them, for his kingdom is not of this world; and in this he hath given an example to his ministers, who deal in sacred things, not to meddle with disputes about things secular, not to wade far into controversies relating to them, but to leave that to those whose proper business it is. Ministers that would mind their business, and please their master, must not entangle themselves in the affairs of this life: they forfeit the guidance of God's Spirit, and the convoy of his providence when they thus to out of their way. Christ discusses not the emperor's title, but enjoins a peaceable subjection to the powers that be. The government therefore had no reason to take offence at his determination, but to thank him, for it would strengthen Cæsar's interest with the people, who held him for a Prophet; and yet such was the impudence of his prosecutors, that, though he had expressly charged them to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, they laid the direct contrary in his indictment, that he forbade to give tribute to Cæsar, Lu 23:2. As to the people, the Pharisees could not accuse him to them, because they themselves had, before they were aware, yielded the premises, and then it was too late to evade the conclusion. Note, Though truth seeks not a fraudulent concealment,

yet it sometimes needs a prudent management, to prevent the offence which may be taken at it.

[2.] His adversaries were reproved. First, Some of them would have had him make it unlawful to give tribute to Cæsar, that they might have a pretence to save their money. Thus many excuse themselves from that which they must do, by arguing whether they may do it or no. Secondly, They all withheld from God his dues, and are reproved for that: while they were vainly contending about their civil liberties, they had lost the life and power of religion, and needed to be put in mind of their duty to God, with that to Cæsar.

[3.] His disciples were instructed, and standing rules left to the church.

First, That the Christian religion is no enemy to civil government, but a friend to it. Christ's kingdom doth not clash or interfere with the kingdoms of the earth, in any thing that pertains to their jurisdiction. By Christ kings reign.

Secondly, It is the duty of subjects to render to magistrates that which, according to the laws of their country, is their due. The higher powers, being entrusted with the public welfare, the protection of the subject, and the conservation of the peace, are entitled, in consideration thereof, to a just proportion of the public wealth, and the revenue of the nation. For this cause pay we tribute, because they attend continually to this very thing (Ro 13:6); and it is doubtless a greater sin to cheat the government than to cheat a private person. Though it is the constitution that determines what is Cæsar's, yet, when that is determined, Christ bids us render it to him; my coat is my coat, by the law of man; but he is a thief, by the law of God, that takes it from me.

Thirdly, When we render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, we must remember withal to render to God the things that are God's. If our purses be Cæsar's, our consciences are God's; he hath said, My son, give me thy heart: he must have the innermost and uppermost

place there; we must render to God that which is his due, out of our time and out of our estates; from them he must have his share as well as Cæsar his; and if Cæsar's commands interfere with God's we must obey God rather than men.

22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way.

Lastly, Observe how they were nonplussed by this answer; they marvelled, and left him, and went their way, Mt 22:22. They admired his sagacity in discovering and evading a snare which they thought so craftily laid. Christ is, and will be, the Wonder, not only of his beloved friends, but of his baffled enemies. One would think they should have marvelled and followed him, marvelled and submitted to him; no, they marvelled and left him. Note, There are many in whose eyes Christ is marvellous, and yet not precious. They admire his wisdom, but will not be guided by it, his power, but will not submit to it. They went their way, as persons ashamed, and made an inglorious retreat. The stratagem being defeated, they quitted the field. Note, There is nothing got by contending with Christ.

The Question about the Resurrection

23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

We have here Christ's dispute with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection; it was the same day on which he was attacked by the Pharisees about paying tribute. Satan was now more busy than ever to ruffle and disturb him; it was an hour of temptation, Re 3:10. The truth as it is in Jesus will still meet with contradiction, in some branch or other of it. Observe here,

The opposition which the Sadducees made to a very great truth of religion; they say, There is no resurrection, as there are some fools who say, There is no God. These heretics were called Sadducees from one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus Sochæus, who flourished about two hundred and eighty-four years before our Saviour's birth. They lie under heavy censures among the writers of their own nation, as men of base and debauched conversations, which their

principles led them to. They were the fewest in number of all the sects among the Jews, but generally persons of some rank. As the Pharisees and Essenes seemed to follow Plato and Pythagoras, so the Sadducees were much of the genius of the Epicureans; they denied the resurrection, they said, There is no future state, no life after this; that, when the body dies, the soul is annihilated, and dies with it; that there is no state of rewards or punishments in the other world; no judgment to come in heaven or hell. They maintained, that, except God, there is not spirit (Ac 23:8), nothing but matter and motion. They would not own the divine inspiration of the prophets, nor any revelation from heaven, but what God himself spoke upon mount Sinai. Now the doctrine of Christ carried that great truth of the resurrection and a future state much further than it had yet been revealed, and therefore the Sadducees in a particular manner set themselves against it. The Pharisees and Sadducees were contrary to each other, and yet confederates against Christ. Christ's gospel hath always suffered between superstitious ceremonious hypocrites and bigots on the one hand, and profane deists and infidels on the other. The former abusing, the latter despising, the form of godliness, but both denying the power of it.

24 saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

26 likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27 And last of all the woman died also.

28 Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

Christ's answer to this objection; by reproving their ignorance, and rectifying their mistake, he shows the objection to be fallacious and unconcluding.

1. He reproves their ignorance (Mt 22:29); Ye do err. Note, Those do greatly err, in the judgment of Christ, who deny the resurrection and

a future state. Here Christ reproves with the meekness of wisdom, and is not so sharp upon them (whatever was the reason) as sometimes he was upon the chief priests and elders; Ye do err, not knowing. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error; those that are in the dark, miss their way. The patrons of error do therefore resist the light, and do what they can to take away the key of knowledge; Ye do err in this matter, not knowing. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error about the resurrection and the future state. What it is in its particular instances, the wisest and best know not; it doth not yet appear what we shall be, it is a glory that is to be revealed: when we speak of the state of separate souls, the resurrection of the body, and of eternal happiness and misery, we are soon at a loss; we cannot order our speech, by reason of darkness, but that it is a thing about which we are not left in the dark; blessed be God, we are not; and those who deny it are guilty of a willing and affected ignorance. It seems, there were some Sadducees, some such monsters, among professing Christians, some among you, that say, There is no resurrection of the dead (1Co 15:12) and some that did in effect deny it, by turning it into an allegory, saying, The resurrection is past already. Now observe,

(a) They know not the power of God; which would lead men to infer that there may be a resurrection and a future state. Note, The ignorance, disbelief, or weak belief, of God's power, is at the bottom of many errors, particularly theirs who deny the resurrection. When we are told of the soul's existence and agency in a state of separation from the body, and especially that a dead body, which had lain many ages in the grave, and is turned into common and indistinguished dust, that this shall be raised the same body that it was, and live, move, and act, again; we are ready to say, How can these things be? Nature allows it for a maxim, A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus--The habits attaching to a state of existence vanish irrecoverably with the state itself. If a man die, shall he live again? And vain men, because they cannot comprehend the way of it, question the truth of it; whereas, if we firmly believe in God the Father Almighty, that nothing is impossible with God, all these difficulties vanish. This therefore we must fasten upon, in the first place, that God is omnipotent, and can do what he will; and then no room is left for doubting but that he will do what he has promised;

and, if so, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? Ac 26:8. His power far exceeds the power of nature.

(b) They know not the scriptures, which decidedly affirm that there shall be a resurrection and a future state. The power of God, determined and engaged by his promise, is the foundation for faith to build upon. Now the scriptures speak plainly, that the soul is immortal, and there is another life after this; it is the scope both of the law and of the prophets, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, Ac 24:14,15. Job knew it (Job 19:26), Ezekiel foresaw it (Eze 37:1-28), and Daniel plainly foretold it, Da 12:2. Christ rose again according to the scriptures (1Co 15:3); and so shall we. Those therefore who deny it, either have not conversed with the Scriptures, or do not believe them, or do not take the true sense and meaning of them. Note, Ignorance of the scripture is the rise of abundance of mischief.

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

He rectifies their mistake, and (Mt 22:30) corrects those gross ideas which they had of the resurrection and a future state, and fixes these doctrines upon a true and lasting basis. Concerning that state, observe,

(1.) It is not like the state we are now in upon earth; They neither marry, nor are given in marriage. In our present state marriage is necessary; it was instituted in innocency; whatever intermission or neglect there has been of other institutions, this was never laid aside, nor will be till the end of time. In the old world, they were marrying, and giving in marriage; the Jews in Babylon, when cut off from other ordinances, yet were bid to take them wives, Jer 29:6. All civilized nations have had a sense of the obligation of the marriage covenant; and it is requisite for the gratifying of the desires, and recruiting the deficiencies, of the human nature. But, in the resurrection, there is no occasion for marriage; whether in glorified bodies there will be any distinction of sexes some too curiously dispute (the ancients are divided in their opinions about it); but, whether there will be a

distinction or not, it is certain that there will be no conjunction; where God will be all in all, there needs no other meet-help; the body will be spiritual, and there will be in it no carnal desires to be gratified: when the mystical body is completed, there will be no further occasion to seek a godly seed, which was one end of the institution of marriage, Mal 2:15. In heaven there will be no decay of the individuals, and therefore no eating and drinking; no decay of the species, and therefore no marrying; where there shall be no more deaths (Re 21:4), there need be no more births. The married state is a composition of joys and cares; those that enter upon it are taught to look upon it as subject to changes, richer and poorer, sickness and health; and therefore it is fit for this mixed, changing world; but as in hell, where there is no joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride shall be heard no more at all, so in heaven, where there is all joy, and no care or pain or trouble, there will be no marrying. The joys of that state are pure and spiritual, and arise from the marriage of all of them to the Lamb, not of any of them to one another.

(2.) It is like the state angels are now in in heaven; They are as the angels of God in heaven; they are so, that is, undoubtedly they shall be so. They are so already in Christ their Head, who has made them sit with him in heavenly places, Eph 2:6. The spirits of just men already made perfect are of the same corporation with the innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:22,23. Man in his creation was made a little lower than the angels (Ps 8:5); but in his complete redemption and renovation will be as the angels; pure and spiritual as the angels, knowing and loving as those blessed seraphim, ever praising God like them and with them. The bodies of the saints shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, like the uncompounded vehicles of those pure and holy spirits (1Co 15:42, &c.), swift and strong, like them. We should therefore desire and endeavour to do the will of God now as the angels do it in heaven, because we hope shortly to be like the angels who always behold our Father's face. He saith nothing of the state of the wicked in the resurrection; but, by consequence, they shall be like the devils, whose lusts they have done.

31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob ? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Christ's argument to confirm this great truth of the resurrection and a future state; the matters being of great concern, he did not think it enough (as in some other disputes) to discover the fallacy and sophistry of the objection, but backed the truth with a solid argument; for Christ brings forth judgment to truth as well as victory, and enables his followers to give a reason of the hope that is in them. Now observe,

1. Whence he fetched his argument--from the scripture; that is the great magazine or armoury whence we may be furnished with spiritual weapons, offensive and defensive. It is written is Goliath's sword. Have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God? Note,

(a) What the scripture speaks God speaks.

(b) What was spoken to Moses was spoken to us; it was spoken and written for our learning.

(c) It concerns us to read and hear what God hath spoken, because it is spoken to us. It was spoken to you Jews in the first place, for to them were committed the oracles of God. The argument is fetched from the books of Moses, because the Sadducees received them only, as some think, or, at least, them chiefly, for canonical scriptures; Christ therefore fetched his proof from the most indisputable fountain. The latter prophets have more express proofs of a future state than the law of Moses has; for though the law of Moses supposes the immortality of the soul and a future state, as principles of what is called natural religion, yet no express revelation of it is made by the law of Moses; because so much of that law was peculiar to that people, and was therefore guarded as municipal laws used to be with temporal promises and threatenings, and the more express revelation of a future state was reserved for the latter days; but our Saviour finds a very solid argument for the resurrection even in the writings of Moses. Much scripture lies under ground, that must be digged for.

2. What his argument was (Mt 22:32); I am the God of Abraham. This was not an express proof, totidem verbis--in so many words; and yet it was really a conclusive argument. Consequences from scripture, if rightly deduced, must be received as scripture; for it was written for those that have the use of reason.

Now the drift of the argument is to prove,

(a) That there is a future state, another life after this, in which the righteous shall be truly and constantly happy. This is proved from what God said; I am the God of Abraham.

[1.] For God to be any one's God supposes some very extraordinary privilege and happiness; unless we know fully what God is, we could not comprehend the riches of that word, I will be to thee a God, that is, a Benefactor like myself. The God of Israel is a God to Israel (1Ch 17:24), a spiritual Benefactor; for he is the Father of spirits, and blesseth with spiritual blessings: it is to be an all-sufficient Benefactor, a God that is enough, a complete Good, and an eternal Benefactor; for he is himself an everlasting God, and will be to those that are in covenant with him an everlasting Good. This great word God had often said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and it was intended as a recompence for their singular faith and obedience, in quitting the country at God's call. The Jews had a profound veneration for those three patriarchs, and would extend the promise God made them to the uttermost.

[2.] It is manifest that these good men had no such extraordinary happiness, in this life, as might look any thing like the accomplishment of so great a word as that. They were strangers in the land of promise, wandering, pinched with famine; they had not a foot of ground of their own but a burying-place, which directed them to look for something beyond this life. In present enjoyments they came far short of their neighbours that were strangers to this covenant. What was there in this world to distinguish them and the heirs of their faith from other people, any whit proportionable to the dignity and distinction of this covenant? If no happiness had been reserved for these great and good men on the other side of death, that melancholy

word of poor Jacob's, when he was old (Ge 47:9), Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, would have been an eternal reproach to the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, of that God who had so often called himself the God of Jacob.

[3.] Therefore there must certainly be a future state, in which, as God will ever live to be eternally rewarding, so Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will ever live to be eternally rewarded. That of the apostle (Heb 11:16), is a key to this argument, where, when he had been speaking of the faith and obedience of the patriarchs in the land of their pilgrimage, he adds, Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; because he has provided for them a city, a heavenly city; implying, that if he had not provided so well for them in the other world, considering how they sped in this, he would have been ashamed to have called himself their God; but now he is not, having done that for them which answers it in its true intent and full extent.

(b) That the soul is immortal, and the body shall rise again, to be united; if the former point be gained, these will follow; but they are likewise proved by considering the time when God spoke this; it was to Moses at the bush, long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were dead and buried; and yet God saith, not, "I was," or "have been," but I am the God of Abraham. Now God is not God of the dead, but of the living. He is a living God, and communicates vital influences to those to whom he is a God. If, when Abraham died, there had been an end of him, there had been an end likewise of God's relation to him as his God; but at that time, when God spoke to Moses, he was the God of Abraham, and therefore Abraham must be then alive; which proves the immortality of the soul in a state of bliss; and that, by consequence, infers the resurrection of the body; for there is such an inclination in the human soul to its body, as would make a final and eternal separation inconsistent with the bliss of those that have God for their God. The Sadducees' notion was, that the union between body and soul is so close, that, when the body dies, the soul dies with it. Now, upon the same hypothesis, if the soul lives, as it certainly does, the body must some time or other live with it. And besides, the Lord is for the body, it is an essential part of the man; there is a

covenant with the dust, which will be remembered, otherwise the man would not be happy. The charge which the dying patriarchs gave concerning their bones, and that in faith, was an evidence that they had some expectation of the resurrection of their bodies. But this doctrine was reserved for a more full revelation after the resurrection of Christ, who was the first-fruits of them that slept.

33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

Lastly, We have the issue of this dispute. The Sadducees were put to silence (Mt 22:34), and so put to shame. They thought by their subtlety to put Christ to shame, when they were preparing shame for themselves. But the multitude were astonished at this doctrine, Mt 22:33. 1. Because it was new to them. See to what a sad pass the exposition of scripture was come among them, when people were astonished at it as a miracle to hear the fundamental promise applied to this great truth; they had sorry scribes, or this had been no news to them. 2. Because it had something in it very good and great. Truth often shows the brighter, and is the more admired, for its being opposed. Observe, Many gainsayers are silenced, and many hearers astonished, without being savingly converted; yet even in the silence and astonishment of unsanctified souls God magnifies his law, magnifies his gospel, and makes both honourable.

The Great Commandment

34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

Here is a discourse which Christ had with a Pharisee-lawyer, about the great commandment of the law. Observe,

The combination of the Pharisees against Christ, Mt 22:34. They heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, had stopped their mouths, though their understandings were not opened; and they were gathered together, not to return him the thanks of their party, as they ought to have done, for his effectually asserting and confirming of the truth against the Sadducees, the common enemies of their religion, but to tempt him, in hopes to get the reputation of puzzling

him who had puzzled the Sadducees. They were more vexed that Christ was honoured, than pleased that the Sadducees were silenced; being more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions, which Christ opposed, than for the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, which the Sadducees opposed. Note, It is an instance of Pharisaical envy and malice, to be displeased at the maintaining of a confessed truth, when it is done by those we do not like; to sacrifice a public good to private piques and prejudices. Blessed Paul was otherwise minded, Php 1:18.

35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question,
tempting him, and saying,
36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?
37 Jesus said unto him,
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
38 This is the first and great commandment.

Christ's answer to this question; it is well for us that such a question was asked him, that we might have his answer. It is no disparagement to great men to answer plain questions. Now Christ recommends to us those as the great commandments, not which are so exclusive of others, but which are therefore great because inclusive of others. Observe,

1. Which these great commandments are (Mt 22:37-39); not the judicial laws, those could not be the greatest now that the people of the Jews, to whom they pertained, were so little; not the ceremonial laws, those could not be the greatest, now that they were waxen old, and were ready to vanish away; nor any particular moral precept; but the love of God and our neighbour, which are the spring and foundation of all the rest, which (these being supposed) will follow of course.

(a) All the law is fulfilled in one word, and that is, love. See Ro 13:10. All obedience begins in the affections, and nothing in religion is done right, that is not done there first. Love is the leading affection, which gives law, and gives ground, to the rest; and therefore that, as the main fort, is to be first secured and garrisoned

for God. Man is a creature cut out for love; thus therefore is the law written in the heart, that it is a law of love. Love is a short and sweet word; and, if that be the fulfilling of the law, surely the yoke of the command is very easy. Love is the rest and satisfaction of the soul; if we walk in this good old way, we shall find rest.

(b) The love of God is the first and great commandment of all, and the summary of all the commands of the first table. The proper act of love being complacency, good is the proper object of it. Now God, being good infinitely, originally, and eternally, is to be loved in the first place, and nothing loved beside him, but what is loved for him. Love is the first and great thing that God demands from us, and therefore the first and great thing that we should devote to him.

Now here we are directed,

[1.] To love God as ours; Thou shalt love the Lord they God as thine. The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other God; which implies that we must have him for our God, and that will engage our love to him. Those that made the sun and moon their gods, loved them, Jer 8:2,Jdg 18:24. To love God as ours is to love him because he is ours, our Creator, Owner, and Ruler, and to conduct ourselves to him as ours, with obedience to him, and dependence on him. We must love God as reconciled to us, and made ours by covenant; that is the foundation of this, Thy God.

[2.] To love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind. Some make these to signify one and the same thing, to love him with all our powers; others distinguish them; the heart, soul, and mind, are the will, affections, and understanding; or the vital, sensitive, and intellectual faculties. Our love of God must be a sincere love, and not in word and tongue only, as theirs is who say they love him, but their hearts are not with him. It must be a strong love, we must love him in the most intense degree; as we must praise him, so we must love him, with all that is within us, Ps 103:1. It must be a singular and superlative love, we must love him more than any thing else; this way the stream of our affections must entirely run. The heart

must be united to love God, in opposition to a divided heart. All our love is too little to bestow upon him, and therefore all the powers of the soul must be engaged for him, and carried out toward him. This is the first and great commandment; for obedience to this is the spring of obedience to all the rest; which is then only acceptable, when it flows from love.

(c) To love our neighbour as ourselves is the second great commandment (Mt 22:39); It is like unto that first; it is inclusive of all the precepts of the second table, as that is of the first. It is like it, for it is founded upon it, and flows from it; and a right love to our brother, whom we have seen, is both an instance and an evidence of our love to God, whom we have not seen, 1Jo 4:20.

[1.] It is implied, that we do, and should, love ourselves. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and the root of the greatest sins, and it must be put off and mortified: but there is a self-love which is natural, and the rule of the greatest duty, and it must be preserved and sanctified. We must love ourselves, that is, we must have a due regard to the dignity of our own natures, and a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies.

[2.] It is prescribed, that we love our neighbour as ourselves. We must honour and esteem all men, and must wrong and injure none; must have a good will to all, and good wishes for all, and, as we have opportunity, must do good to all. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances; nay, in many cases we must deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour, and must make ourselves servants to the true welfare of others, and be willing to spend and be spent for them, to lay down our lives for the brethren.

2. Observe what the weight and greatness of these commandments is (Mt 22:40); On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets; that is, This is the sum and substance of all those precepts relating to practical religion which were written in men's hearts by nature, revived by Moses, and backed and enforced by the preaching

and writing of the prophets. All hang upon the law of love; take away this, and all falls to the ground, and comes to nothing. Rituals and ceremonials must give way to these, as must all spiritual gifts, for love is the more excellent way. This is the spirit of the law, which animates it, the cement of the law, which joins it; it is the root and spring of all other duties, the compendium of the whole Bible, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the gospel too, only supposing this love to be the fruit of faith, and that we love God in Christ, and our neighbour for his sake. All hangs on these two commandments, as the effect doth both on its efficient and on its final cause; for the fulfilling of the law is love (Ro 13:10) and the end of the law is love, 1Ti 1:5. The law of love is the nail, is the nail in the sure place, fastened by the masters of assemblies (Ec 12:11), on which is hung all the glory of the law and the prophets (Isa 22:24), a nail that shall never be drawn; for on this nail all the glory of the new Jerusalem shall eternally hang. Love never faileth. Into these two great commandments therefore let our hearts be delivered as into a mould; in the defence and evidence of these let us spend our zeal, and not in notions, names, and strifes of words, as if those were the mighty things on which the law and the prophets hung, and to them the love of God and our neighbour must be sacrificed; but to the commanding power of these let every thing else be made to bow.

39 And the second is like unto it,
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The Question about David's Son

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
42 saying, What think ye of Christ ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

Many questions the Pharisees had asked Christ, by which, though they thought to pose him, they did but expose themselves; but now let him ask them a question; and he will do it when they are gathered together, Mt 22:41. He did not take some one of them apart from the rest (ne Hercules contra duos--Hercules himself may be overmatched), but, to shame them the more, he took them all together, when they were in confederacy and consulting against him,

and yet puzzled them. Note, God delights to baffle his enemies when they most strengthen themselves; he gives them all the advantages they can wish for, and yet conquers them. Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces, Isa 3:9,10. Now here,

I. Christ proposes a question to them, which they could easily answer; it was a question in their own catechism; "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? Whose Son do you expect the Messiah to be, who was promised to the fathers?" This they could easily answer, The Son of David. It was the common periphrasis of the Messiah; they called him the Son of David. So the scribes, who expounded the scripture, had taught them, from Ps 89:35,36, I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever (Isa 9:7), upon the throne of David. And Isa 11:1, A rod out of the stem of Jesse. The covenant of royalty made with David was a figure of the covenant of redemption made with Christ, who as David, was made King with an oath, and was first humbled and then advanced. If Christ was the Son of David, he was really and truly Man. Israel said, We have ten parts in David; and Judah said, He is our bone and our flesh; what part have we then in the Son of David, who took our nature upon him?

What think ye of Christ? They had put questions to him, one after another, out of the law; but he comes and puts a question to them upon the promise. Many are so full of the law, that they forget Christ, as if their duties would save them without his merit and grace. It concerns each of us seriously to ask ourselves, What think we of Christ? Some think not of him at all, he is not in all, not in any, of their thoughts; some think meanly, and some think hardly, of him; but to them that believe he is precious; and how precious then are the thoughts of him! While the daughters of Jerusalem think no more of Christ than of another beloved; the spouse thinks of him as the Chief of ten thousands.

II. He starts a difficulty upon their answer, which they could not easily solve, Mt 22:43-45. Many can so readily affirm the truth, that they think they have knowledge enough to be proud of, who, when

they are called to confirm the truth, and to vindicate and defend it, show they have ignorance enough to be ashamed of. The objection Christ raised was, If Christ be David's son, how then doth David, in spirit, call him Lord? He did not hereby design to ensnare them, as they did him, but to instruct them in a truth they were loth to believe--that the expected Messiah is God.

1. It is easy to see that David calls Christ Lord, and this in spirit being divinely inspired, and actuated therein by a spirit of prophecy; for it was the Spirit of the Lord that spoke by him, 2Sa 23:1,2. David was one of those holy men that spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, especially in calling Christ Lord; for it was then, as it is still (1Co 12:3) that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now, to prove that David, in spirit, called Christ Lord, he quotes Ps 110:1, which psalm the scribes themselves understood of Christ; of him, it is certain, the prophet there speaks, of him and of no other man; and it is a prophetical summary of the doctrine of Christ, it describes him executing the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, both in his humiliation and also in his exaltation.

Christ quotes the whole verse, which shows the Redeemer in his exaltation;

(1.) Sitting at the right hand of God. His sitting denotes both rest and rule; his sitting at God's right hand denotes superlative honour and sovereign power. See in what great words this is expressed (Heb 8:1); He is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty. See Php 2:9,Eph 1:20. He did not take this honour to himself, but was entitled to it by covenant with his Father, and invested in it by commission from him, and here is that commission.

(2.) Subduing his enemies. There he shall sit, till they be all made either his friends or his footstool. The carnal mind, wherever it is, is enmity to Christ; and that is subdued in the conversion of the willing people that are called to his foot (as the expression is, Isa 41:2), and in the confusion of his impenitent adversaries, who shall be brought under his foot, as the kings of Canaan were under the feet of Joshua.

But that which this verse is quoted for is, that David calls the Messiah his Lord; the Lord, Jehovah, said unto my Lord. This intimates to us, that in expounding scripture we must take notice of, and improve, not only that which is the main scope and sense of a verse, but of the words and phrases, by which they Spirit chooses to express that sense, which have often a very useful and instructive significance. Here is a good note from that word, My Lord.

2. It is not so easy for those who believe not the Godhead of the Messiah, to clear this from an absurdity, if Christ b David's son. It is incongruous for the father to speak of his son, the predecessor of his successor, as his Lord. If David call him Lord, that is laid down (Mt 22:45) as the magis notum--the more evident truth; for whatever is said of Christ's humanity and humiliation must be construed and understood in consistency with the truth of his divine nature and dominion. We must hold this fast, that he is David's Lord, and by that explain his being David's son. The seeming differences of scripture, as here, may not only be accommodated, but contribute to the beauty and harmony of the whole. Amicæ scripturarum lites, utinam et nostræ--The differences observable in the scriptures are of a friendly kind; would to God that our differences were of the same kind!

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,
44 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
till I make thine enemies thy footstool ?
45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son ?
46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man
from that day forth ask him any more questions.

We have here the success of this gentle trial which Christ made of the Pharisees' knowledge, in two things.

1. It puzzled them (Mt 22:46); No man was able to answer him a word. Either it was their ignorance that they did not know, or their impiety that they would not own, the Messiah to be God; which truth was the only key to unlock this difficulty. What those Rabbies could not then answer, blessed be God, the plainest Christian that is led

into the understanding of the gospel of Christ, can now account for; that Christ, as God, was David's Lord; and Christ, as Man, was David's son. This he did not now himself explain, but reserved it till the proof of it was completed by his resurrection; but we have it fully explained by him in his glory (Re 22:16); I am the root and the offspring of David. Christ, as God, was David's Root; Christ, as Man, was David's Offspring. If we hold not fast this truth, that Jesus Christ is over all God blessed for ever, we run ourselves into inextricable difficulties. And well might David, his remote ancestor, call him Lord, when Mary, his immediate mother, after she had conceived him, called him, Lord and God, her Saviour, Lu 1:46,47.

2. It silenced them, and all others that sought occasion against him; Neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more such captious, tempting, ensnaring questions. Note, God will glorify himself in the silencing of many whom he will not glorify himself in the salvation of. Many are convinced, that are not converted, by the word. Had these been converted, they would have asked him more questions, especially that great question, What must we do to be saved? But since they could not gain their point, they would have no more to do with him. But, thus all that strive with their Master shall be convinced, as these Pharisees and lawyers here were, of the inequality of the match.

Matthew-23

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

Jesus Denounces the Scribes and Pharisees

1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
2 saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

We find not Christ, in all his preaching, so severe upon any sort of people as upon these scribes and Pharisees; for the truth is, nothing is more directly opposite to the spirit of the gospel than the temper and practice of that generation of men, who were made up of pride, worldliness, and tyranny, under a cloak and pretence of religion; yet these were the idols and darlings of the people, who thought, if but two men went to heaven, one would be a Pharisee. Now Christ directs his discourse here to the multitude, and to his disciples (Mt 23:1) to rectify their mistakes concerning these scribes and Pharisees, by painting them out in their true colours, and so to take off the prejudice which some of the multitude had conceived against Christ and his doctrine, because it was opposed by those men of their church, that called themselves the people's guides. Note, It is good to know the true characters of men, that we may not be imposed upon by great and mighty names, titles, and pretensions to power. People must be told of the wolves (Ac 20:29,30), the dogs (Php 3:2), the deceitful workers (2Co 11:13), that they may know here to stand upon their guard. And not only the mixed multitude, but even the disciples, need these cautions; for good men are apt to have their eyes dazzled with worldly pomp.

Now, in this discourse,

Christ allows their office as expositors of the law; The scribes and Pharisees (that is, the whole Sanhedrim, who sat at the helm of church government, who were all called scribes, and were some of them Pharisees), they sit in Moses' seat (Mt 23:2), as public teachers and interpreters of the law; and, the law of Moses being the

municipal law of their state, they were as judges, or a bench of justices; teaching and judging seem to be equivalent, comparing 2Ch 17:7,9,19:5,6,8. They were not the itinerant judges that rode the circuit, but the standing bench, that determined on appeals, special verdicts, or writs of error by the law; they sat in Moses's seat, not as he was Mediator between God and Israel, but only as he was chief justice, Ex 18:26. Or, we may apply it, not to the Sanhedrim, but to the other Pharisees and scribes, that expounded the law, and taught the people how to apply it to particular cases. The pulpit of wood, such as was made for Ezra, that ready scribe in the law of God (Ne 8:4), is here called Moses's seat, because Moses had those in every city (so the expression is, Ac 15:21), who in those pulpits preached him; this was their office, and it was just and honourable; it was requisite that there should be some at whose mouth the people might enquire the law, Mal 2:7. Note, 1. Many a good place is filled with bad men; it is no new thing for the vilest men to be exalted even to Moses's seat (Ps 12:8); and, when it is so, the men are not so much honoured by the seat as the seat is dishonoured by the men. Now they that sat in Moses's seat were so wretchedly degenerated, that it was time for the great Prophet to arise, like unto Moses, to erect another seat. 2. Good and useful offices and powers are not therefore to be condemned and abolished, because they fall sometimes into the hands of bad men, who abuse them. We must not therefore pull down Moses's seat, because scribes and Pharisees have got possession of it; rather than so, let both grow together until the harvest, Mt 13:30.

3 all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do;
but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

The word "therefore" is thus, it will be seen, of great importance, as limiting those injunctions which He would have them obey to what they fetched from the law itself. In requiring implicit obedience to such injunctions, He would have them to recognize the authority with which they taught over and above the obligations of the law itself—an important principle truly; but He who denounced the traditions of such teachers (Mt 15:3) cannot have meant here to throw His shield over these. It is remarked by WEBSTER and WILKINSON that the warning to beware of the scribes is given by Mark and Luke (Mk 12:38,Lu 20:46) without any qualification: the

charge to respect and obey them being reported by Matthew alone, indicating for whom this Gospel was especially written, and the writer's desire to conciliate the Jews.

Hence he infers (Mt 23:3), "Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do As far as they sit in Moses's seat, that is, read and preach the law that was given by Moses" (which, as yet, continued in full force, power, and virtue), "and judge according to that law, so far you must hearken to them, as remembrances to you of the written word." The scribes and Pharisees made it their business to study the scripture, and were well acquainted with the language, history, and customs of it, and its style and phraseology. Now Christ would have the people to make use of the helps they gave them for the understanding of the scripture, and do accordingly. As long as their comments did illustrate the text and not pervert it; did make plain, and not make void, the commandment of God; so far they must be observed and obeyed, but with caution and a judgment of discretion. Note, We must not think the worse of good truths for their being preached by bad ministers; nor of good laws for their being executed by bad magistrates. Though it is most desirable to have our food brought by angels, yet, if God send it to us by ravens, if it be good and wholesome, we must take it, and thank God for it. Our Lord Jesus promiseth this, to prevent the cavil which some would be apt to make at this following discourse; as if, by condemning the scribes and Pharisees, he designed to bring the law of Moses into contempt, and to draw people off from it; whereas he came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Note, It is wisdom to obviate the exceptions which may be taken at just reproofs, especially when there is occasion to distinguish between officers and their offices, that the ministry be not blamed when the ministers are.

He condemns the men. He had ordered the multitude to do as they taught; but here he annexeth a caution not to do as they did, to beware of their leaven; Do not ye after their works. Their traditions were their works, were their idols, the works of their fancy. Or, "Do not according to their example." Doctrines and practices are spirits that must be tried, and where there is occasion, must be carefully

separated and distinguished; and as we must not swallow corrupt doctrines for the sake of any laudable practices of those that teach them, so we must not imitate any bad examples for the sake of the plausible doctrines of those that set them. The scribes and Pharisees boasted as much of the goodness of their works as of the orthodoxy of their teaching, and hoped to be justified by them; it was the plea they put in (Lu 18:11,12); and yet these things, which they valued themselves so much upon, were an abomination in the sight of God.

Our Saviour Mt 23:3-32, specifies divers particulars of their works, wherein we must not imitate them. In general, they are charged with hypocrisy, dissimulation, or double-dealing in religion; a crime which cannot be enquired of at men's bar, because we can only judge according to outward appearance; but God, who searcheth the heart, can convict of hypocrisy; and nothing is more displeasing to him, for he desireth truth.

4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

1. Their saying and doing were two things. Their practice was no way agreeable either to their preaching or to their profession; for they say, and do not; they teach out of the law that which is good, but their conversation gives them the lie; and they seem to have found another way to heaven for themselves than what they show to others. See this illustrated and charged home upon them, Ro 2:17-24. Those are of all sinners most inexcusable that allow themselves in the sins they condemn in others, or in worse. This doth especially touch wicked ministers, who will be sure to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites (Mt 24:51); for what greater hypocrisy can there be, than to press that upon others, to be believed and done, which they themselves disbelieve and disobey; pulling down in their practice what they build up in their preaching; when in the pulpit, preaching so well that it is a pity they should ever come out; but, when out of the pulpit, living so ill that it is a pity they should ever come in; like bells, that call others to church, but hang out of it themselves; or Mercurial posts, that point the way to others, but stand still themselves? Such will be judged out of their own mouths. It is applicable to all others that say, and do not; that make

a plausible profession of religion, but do not live up to that profession; that make fair promises, but do not perform their promises; are full of good discourse, and can lay down the law to all about them, but are empty of good works; great talkers, but little doers; the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Vox et præterea nihil--mere sound. They speak fair, I go, sir; but there is no trusting them, for there are seven abominations in their heart.

2. They were very severe in imposing upon others those things which they were not themselves willing to submit to the burthen of (Mt 23:4); They bind heavy burthens, and grievous to be borne; not only insisting upon the minute circumstances of the law, which is called a yoke (Ac 15:10), and pressing the observation of them with more strictness and severity than God himself did (whereas the maxim of the lawyers, is Apices juris son sunt jura--Mere points of law are not law), but by adding to his words, and imposing their own inventions and traditions, under the highest penalties. They loved to show their authority and to exercise their domineering faculty, lording it over God's heritage, and saying to men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over; witness their many additions to the law of the fourth commandment, by which they made the sabbath a burthen on men's shoulders, which was designed to be the joy of their hearts. Thus with force and cruelty did those shepherds rule the flock, as of old, Eze 34:4.

But see their hypocrisy; They themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

(1.) They would not exercise themselves in those things which they imposed upon others; they pressed upon the people a strictness in religion which they themselves would not be bound by; but secretly transgressed their own traditions, which they publicly enforced. They indulged their pride in giving law to others; but consulted their

ease in their own practice. Thus it has been said, to the reproach of the popish priests, that they fast with wine and sweetmeats, while they force the people to fast with bread and water; and decline the penances they enjoin the laity.

(2.) They would not ease the people in these things, nor put a finger to lighten their burthen, when they saw it pinched them. They could find out loose constructions to put upon God's law, and could dispense with that, but would not bate an ace of their own impositions, nor dispense with a failure in the least punctilio of them. They allowed no chancery to relieve the extremity of their common law. How contrary to this was the practice of Christ's apostles, who would allow to others that use of Christian liberty which, for the peace and edification of the church, they would deny themselves in! They would lay no other burthen than necessary things, and those easy, Ac 15:28. How carefully doth Paul spare those to whom he writes! 1Co 7:28,9:12.

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

They were all for show, and nothing for substance, in religion (Mt 23:5); All their works they do, to be seen of men. We must do such good works, that they who see them may glorify God; but we must not proclaim our good works, with design that others may see them, and glorify us; which our Saviour here chargeth upon the Pharisees in general, as he had done before in the particular instances of prayer and giving of alms. All their end was to be praised of men, and therefore all their endeavour was to be seen of men, to make a fair show in the flesh. In those duties of religion which fall under the eye of men, none ere so constant and abundant as they; but in what lies between God and their souls, in the retirement of their closets, and the recesses of their hearts, they desire to be excused. The form of godliness will get them a name to live, which is all they aim at, and therefore they trouble not themselves with the power of it, which is essential to a life indeed. He that does all to be seen does nothing to the purpose.

He specifies two things which they did to be seen of men.

(a) They made broad their phylacteries. Those were little scrolls of paper or parchment, wherein were written, with great niceness, these four paragraphs of the law, Ex 13:2-11,13:11-16,De 6:4-9,11:13-21. These were sewn up in leather, and worn upon their foreheads and left arms. It was a tradition of the elders, which had reference to Ex 13:9, and Pr 7:3, where the expressions seem to be figurative, intimating no more than that we should bear the things of God in our minds as carefully as if we had them bound between our eyes. Now the Pharisees made broad these phylacteries, that they might be thought more holy, and strict, and zealous for the law, than others. It is a gracious ambition to covet to be really more holy than others, but it is a proud ambition to covet to appear so. It is good to excel in real piety, but not to exceed in outward shows; for overdoing is justly suspected of design, Pr 27:14. It is the guise of hypocrisy to make more ado than needs in external service, more than is needful either to prove, or to improve, the good affections and dispositions of the soul.

(b) They enlarged the borders of their garments. God appointed the Jews to make borders or fringes upon their garments (Nu 15:38), to distinguish them from other nations, and to be a memorandum to them of their being a peculiar people; but the Pharisees were not content to have these borders like other people's, which might serve God's design in appointing them; but they must be larger than ordinary, to answer their design of making themselves to be taken notice of; as if they were more religious than others. But those who thus enlarge their phylacteries, and the borders of their garments, while their hearts are straitened, and destitute of the love of God and their neighbour, though they may now deceive others, will in the end deceive themselves.

6 and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

They much affected pre-eminence and superiority, and prided themselves extremely in it. Pride was the darling reigning sin of the Pharisees, the sin that did most easily beset them and which our Lord Jesus takes all occasions to witness against.

He describes their pride, Mt 23:6,7. They courted, and coveted,

[1.] Places of honour and respect. In all public appearances, as at feasts, and in the synagogues, they expected, and had, to their hearts' delight, the uppermost rooms, and the chief seats. They took place of all others, and precedency was adjudged to them, as persons of the greatest note and merit; and it is easy to imagine what a complacency they took in it; they loved to have the preeminence, 3John 1:9. It is not possessing the uppermost rooms, nor sitting in the chief seats, that is condemned (somebody must sit uppermost), but loving them; for men to value such a little piece of ceremony as sitting highest, going first, taking the wall, or the better hand, and to value themselves upon it, to seek it, and to feel resentment if they have it not; what is that but making an idol of ourselves, and then falling down and worshipping it--the worst kind of idolatry! It is bad any where, but especially in the synagogues. There to seek honour to ourselves, where we appear in order to give glory to God, and to humble ourselves before him, is indeed to mock God instead of serving him. David would willingly lie at the threshold in God's house; so far was he from coveting the chief seat there, Ps 84:10. It savours much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care for going to church, unless they can look fine and make a figure there.

[2.] Titles of honour and respect. They loved greetings in the markets, loved to have people put off their hats to them, and show them respect when they met them in the streets. O how it pleased them, and fed their vain humour, digito monstrari et dicier, Hic est--to be pointed out, and to have it said, This be he, to have way made for them in the crowd of market people; "Stand off, here is a Pharisee coming!" and to be complimented with the high and pompous title of Rabbi, Rabbi! This was meat and drink and dainties to them; and they took as great a satisfaction in it as Nebuchadnezzar did in his palace, when he said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built? The greetings would not have done them half so much good, if they had not been in the markets, where every body might see how much they were respected, and how high they stood in the opinion of the

people. It was but a little before Christ's time, that the Jewish teachers, the masters of Israel, had assumed the title of Rabbi, Rab, or Rabban, which signifies great or much; and was construed as Doctor, or My lord. And they laid such a stress upon it, that they gave it for a maxim that "he who salutes his teacher, and does not call him Rabbi, provokes the divine Majesty to depart from Israel;" so much religion did they place in that which was but a piece of good manners! For him that is taught in the word to give respect to him that teaches is commendable enough in him that gives it; but for him that teaches to love it, and demand it, and affect it, to be puffed up with it, and to be displeased if it be omitted, is sinful and abominable; and, instead of teaching, he has need to learn the first lesson in the school of Christ, which is humility.

7 and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

He cautions his disciples against being herein like them; herein they must not do after their works; "But be not ye called so, for ye shall not be of such a spirit," Mt 23:8, &c. Here is,

A prohibition of pride. They are here forbidden,

First, To challenge titles of honour and dominion to themselves, Mt 23:8-10. It is repeated twice; Be not called Rabbi, neither be ye called Master or Guide: not that it is unlawful to give civil respect to those that are over us in the Lord, nay, it is an instance of the honour and esteem which it is our duty to show them; but,

1. Christ's ministers must not affect the name of Rabbi or Master, by way of distinction from other people; it is not agreeable to the simplicity of the gospel, for them to covet or accept the honour which they have that are in kings' palaces.

2. They must not assume the authority and dominion implied in those names; they must not be magisterial, nor domineer over their

brethren, or over God's heritage, as if they had dominion over the faith of Christians: what they received of the Lord, all must receive from them; but in other things they must not make their opinions and wills a rule and standard to all other people, to be admitted with an implicit obedience. The reasons for this prohibition are,

(a) One is your Master, even Christ, Mt 23:8,10. Note, [1.] Christ is our Master, our Teacher, our Guide. Mr. George Herbert, when he named the name of Christ, usually added, My Master. [2.] Christ only is our Master, ministers are but ushers in the school. Christ only is the Master, the great Prophet, whom we must hear, and be ruled and overruled by; whose word must be an oracle and a law to us; Verily I say unto you, must be enough to us. And if he only be our Master, then for his ministers to set up for dictators, and to pretend to a supremacy and an infallibility, is a daring usurpation of that honour of Christ which he will not give to another.

(b) All ye are brethren. Ministers are brethren not only to one another, but to the people; and therefore it ill becomes them to be masters, when there are none for them to master it over but their brethren; yea, and we are all younger brethren, otherwise the eldest might claim an excellency of dignity and power, Ge 49:3. But, to preclude that, Christ himself is the first-born among many brethren, Ro 8:29. Ye are brethren, as ye are all disciples of the same Master. School-fellows are brethren, and, as such, should help one another in getting their lesson; but it will by no means be allowed that one of the scholars step into the master's seat, and give law to the school. If we are all brethren, we must not be many masters. Jam 3:1.

Secondly, They are forbidden to ascribe such titles to others (Mt 23:9); "Call no man your father upon the earth; constitute no man the father of your religion, that is, the founder, author, director, and governor, of it." The fathers of our flesh must be called fathers, and as such we must give them reverence; but God only must be allowed as the Father of our spirits, Heb 12:9. Our religion must not be derived from, or made to depend upon, any man. We are

born again to the spiritual and divine life, not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God; not of the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God. Now the will of man, not being the rise of our religion, must not be the rule of it. We must not jurare in verba magistri--swear to the dictates of any creature, not the wisest or best, nor pin our faith on any man's sleeve, because we know not whither he will carry it. St. Paul calls himself a Father to those whose conversion he had been an instrument of (1Co 4:15,Philem 1:10); but he pretends to no dominion over them, and uses that title to denote, not authority, but affection: therefore he calls them not his obliged, but his beloved, sons, 1Co 4:14.

The reason given is, One is your Father, who is in heaven. God is our Father, and is All in all in our religion. He is the Fountain of it, and its Founder; the Life of it, and its Lord; from whom alone, as the Original, our spiritual life is derived, and on whom it depends. He is the Father of all lights (Jam 1:17), that one Father, from whom are all things, and we in him, Eph 4:6. Christ having taught us to say, Our Father, who art in heaven; let us call no man Father upon earth; no man, because man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, hewn out of the same rock with us; especially not upon earth, for man upon earth is a sinful worm; there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, and therefore no one is fit to be called Father.

10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

[2.] Here is a precept of humility and mutual subjection (Mt 23:11); He that is greatest among you shall be your servant; not only call himself so (we know of one who styles himself Servus servorum Dei--Servant of the servants of God, but acts as Rabbi, and father, and master, and Dominus Deus noster--The Lord our God, and what not), but he shall be so. Take it as a promise; "He shall be accounted greatest, and stand highest in the favour of God, that is most submissive and serviceable;" or as a precept; "He that is advanced to any place of dignity, trust, and honour, in the church,

let him be your servant" (some copies read esto for estai), "let him not think that his patent of honour is a writ of ease; no; he that is greatest is not a lord, but a minister." St. Paul, who knew his privilege as well as duty, though free from all, yet made himself servant unto all (1Co 9:19); and our Master frequently pressed it upon his disciples to be humble and self-denying, mild and condescending, and to abound in all offices of Christian love, though mean, and to the meanest; and of this he hath set us an example.

[3.] Here is a good reason for all this, Mt 23:12. Consider,

First, The punishment intended for the proud; Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased. If God give them repentance, they will be abased in their own eyes, and will abhor themselves for it; if they repent not, sooner or later they will be abased before the world. Nebuchadnezzar, in the height of his pride, was turned to be a fellow-commoner with the beasts; Herod, to be a feast for the worms; and Babylon, that sat as a queen, to be the scorn of nations. God made the proud and aspiring priests contemptible and base (Mal 2:9), and the lying prophet to be the tail, Isa 9:15. But if proud men have not marks of humiliation set upon them in this world, there is a day coming, when they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt (Da 12:2); so plentifully will he reward the proud doer! Ps 31:23.

Secondly, The preferment intended for the humble; He that shall humble himself shall be exalted. Humility is that ornament which is in the sight of God of great price. In this world the humble have the honour of being accepted with the holy God, and respected by all wise and good men; of being qualified for, and often called out to, the most honourable services; for honour is like the shadow, which flees from those that pursue it, and grasp at it, but follows those that flee from it. However, in the other world, they that have humbled themselves in contrition for their sin, in compliance with their God, and in condescension to their brethren, shall be exalted

to inherit the throne of glory; shall be not only owned, but crowned, before angels and men.

13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

In these verses we have eight woes levelled directly against the scribes and Pharisees by our Lord Jesus Christ, like so many claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning, from mount Sinai. Three woes are made to look very dreadful (Re 8:13,9:12); but here are eight woes, in opposition to the eight beatitudes, Mt 5:3. The gospel has its woes as well as the law, and gospel curses are of all curses the heaviest. These woes are the more remarkable, not only because of the authority, but because of the meekness and gentleness, of him that denounced them. He came to bless, and loved to bless; but, if his wrath be kindled, there is surely cause for it: and who shall entreat for him that the great Intercessor pleads against? A woe from Christ is a remediless woe.

This is here the burthen of the song, and it is a heavy burthen; Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Note, 1 The scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites; that is it in which all the rest of their bad characters are summed up; it was the leaven which gave the relish to all they said and did. A hypocrite is a stage-player in religion (that is the primary signification of the word); he personates or acts the part of one that he neither is nor may be, or perhaps the he neither is nor would be. 2. That hypocrites are in a woeful state and condition. Woe to hypocrites; so he said whose saying that their case is miserable makes it so: while they live, their religion is vain; when they die, their ruin is great.

Now each of these woes against the scribes and Pharisees has a reason annexed to it containing a separate crime charged upon them, proving their hypocrisy, and justifying the judgment of Christ upon them; for his woes, his curses, are never causeless.

They were sworn enemies to the gospel of Christ, and consequently to the salvation of the souls of men (Mt 23:13); They shut up the

kingdom of heaven against men, that is, they did all they could to keep people from believing in Christ, and so entering into his kingdom. Christ came to open the kingdom of heaven, that is, to lay open for us a new and living way into it, to bring men to be subjects of that kingdom. Now the scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses's seat, and pretended to the key of knowledge, ought to have contributed their assistance herein, by opening those scriptures of the Old Testament which pointed at the Messiah and his kingdom, in their true and proper sense; they that undertook to expound Moses and the prophets should have showed the people how they testified of Christ; that Daniel's weeks were expiring, the sceptre was departed from Judah, and therefore now was the time for the Messiah's appearing. Thus they might have facilitated that great work, and have helped thousands to heaven; but, instead of this, they shut up the kingdom of heaven; they made it their business to press the ceremonial law, which was now in the vanishing, to suppress the prophecies, which were now in the accomplishing, and to beget and nourish up in the minds of the people prejudices against Christ and his doctrine.

1. They would not go in themselves; Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? Joh 7:48. No; they were to proud to stoop to his meanness, too formal to be reconciled to his plainness; they did not like a religion which insisted so much on humility, self-denial, contempt of the world, and spiritual worship. Repentance was the door of admission into this kingdom, and nothing could be more disagreeable to the Pharisees, who justified and admired themselves, than to repent, that is, to accuse and abase and abhor themselves; therefore they went not in themselves; but that was not all.

2. They would not suffer them that were entering to go in. It is bad to keep away from Christ ourselves, but it is worse to keep others from him; yet that is commonly the way of hypocrites; they do not love that any should go beyond them in religion, or be better than they. Their not going in themselves was a hindrance to many; for, they having so great an interest in the people, multitudes rejected

the gospel only because their leaders did; but, besides that, they opposed both Christ's entertaining of sinners (Lu 7:39), and sinners' entertaining of Christ; they perverted his doctrine, confronted his miracles, quarrelled with his disciples, and represented him, and his institutes and economy, to the people in the most disingenuous, disadvantageous manner imaginable; they thundered out their excommunications against those that confessed him, and used all their wit and power to serve their malice against him; and thus they shut up the kingdom of heaven, so that they who would enter into it must suffer violence (Mt 11:12), and press into it (Lu 16:16), through a crowd of scribes and Pharisees, and all the obstructions and difficulties they could contrive to lay in their way. How well is it for us that our salvation is not entrusted in the hands of any man or company of men in the world! If it were, we should be undone. They that shut out of the church would shut out of heaven if they could; but the malice of men cannot make the promise of God to his chosen of no effect; blessed be God, it cannot.

14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

They made religion and the form of godliness a cloak and stalking-horse to their covetous practices and desires, Mt 23:14. Observe here,

1. What their wicked practices were; they devoured widows' houses, either by quartering themselves and their attendants upon them for entertainment, which must be of the best for men of their figure; or by insinuating themselves into their affections, and so getting to be the trustees of their estates, which they could make an easy prey of; for who could presume to call such as they were to an account? The thing they aimed at was to enrich themselves; and, this being their chief and highest end, all considerations of justice and equity were laid aside, and even widows' houses were sacrificed to this. Widows are of the weaker sex in its weakest state, easily imposed upon; and therefore they fastened on them, to make a prey of. They devoured those whom, by the law of God, they were particularly obliged to protect, patronise, and relieve. There is a

woe in the Old Testament to those that made widows their prey (Isa 10:1,2); and Christ here seconded it with his woe. God is the judge of the widows; they are his peculiar care, he establisheth their border (Pr 15:25), and espouseth their cause (Ex 22:22,23); yet these were they whose houses the Pharisees devoured by wholesale; so greedy were they to get their bellies filled with the treasures of wickedness! Their devouring denotes not only covetousness, but cruelty in their oppression, described Mic 3:3, They eat the flesh, and flay off the skin. And doubtless they did all this under colour of law; for they did it so artfully that it passed uncensured, and did not at all lessen the people's veneration for them.

2. What was the cloak with which they covered this wicked practice; For a pretence they made long prayers; very long indeed, if it be true which some of the Jewish writers tell us, that they spent three hours at a time in the formalities of meditation and prayer, and did it thrice every day, which is more than an upright soul, that makes a conscience of being inward with God in the duty, dares pretend ordinarily to do; but to the Pharisees it was easy enough, who never made a business of the duty, and always made a trade of the outside of it. By this craft they got their wealth, and maintained their grandeur. It is not probable that these long prayers were extemporary, for then (as Mr. Baxter observes) the Pharisees had much more the gift of prayer than Christ's disciples had; but rather that they were stated forms of words in use among them, which they said over by tale, as the papists drop their beads. Christ doth not here condemn long prayers, as in themselves hypocritical; nay if there were not a great appearance of good in them, they would not have been used for a pretence; and the cloak must be very thick which was used to cover such wicked practices. Christ himself continued all night in prayer to God, and we are commanded to pray without ceasing too soon; where there are many sins to be confessed, and many wants to pray for the supply of, and many mercies to give thanks for, there is occasion for long prayers. But the Pharisees' long prayers were made up of vain repetitions, and (which was the end of them) they were for a pretence; by them they got the reputation of pious devout men, that loved prayer, and were

the favourites of Heaven; and by this means people were made to believe it was not possible that such men as they should cheat them;, and, therefore, happy the widow that could get a Pharisee for her trustee, and guardian to her children! Thus, while they seemed to soar heaven-ward, upon the wings of prayer, their eye, like the kite's, was all the while upon their prey on the earth, some widow's house or other that lay convenient for them. Thus circumcision was the cloak of the Shechemites' covetousness (Ge 34:22,23), the payment of a vow in Hebron the cover of Absalom's rebellion (2Sa 15:7), a fast in Jezreel must patronise Naboth's murder, and the extirpation of Baal is the footstool of Jehu's ambition. Popish priests, under pretence of long prayers for the dead, masses and dirges, and I know not what, enrich themselves by devouring the house of the widows and fatherless. Note, It is no new thing for the show and form of godliness to be made a cloak to the greatest enormities. But dissembled piety, however it passeth now, will be reckoned for as double iniquity, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men.

3. The doom passed upon them for this; Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Note,

(a) There are degrees of damnation; there are some whose sin is more inexcusable, and whose ruin will therefore be more intolerable.

(b) The pretences of religion, with which hypocrites disguise or excuse their sin now, will aggravate their condemnation shortly. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, that the very thing by which sinners hope to expiate and atone for their sins will come against them, and make their sins more exceedingly sinful. But it is sad for the criminal, when his defence proves his offence, and his pleas (We have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name made long prayers) heightens the charge against him.

15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

While they were such enemies to the conversion of souls to Christianity, they were very industrious in the perversion of them to their faction. They shut up the kingdom of heaven against those that would turn to Christ, but at the same time compassed sea and land to make proselytes to themselves, Mt 23:15. Observe here,

1. Their commendable industry in making proselytes to the Jewish religion, not only proselytes of the gate, who obliged themselves to no more than the observance of the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, but proselytes of righteousness, who addicted themselves wholly to all the rites of the Jewish religion, for that was the game they flew at; for this, for one such, though but one, they compass sea and land, had many a cunning reach, and laid many a plot, rode and run, and sent and wrote, and laboured unweariedly. And what did they aim at? Not the glory of God, and the good of souls; but that they might have the credit of making them proselytes, and the advantage of making a prey of them when they were made. Note,

(a) The making of proselytes, if it be to the truth and serious godliness, and be done with a good design, is a good work, well worthy of the utmost care and pains. Such is the value of souls, that nothing must be thought too much to do, to save a soul from death. The industry of the Pharisees herein may show the negligence of many who would be thought to act from better principles, but will be at no pains or cost to propagate the gospel.

(b) To make a proselyte, sea and land must be compassed; all ways and means must be tried; first one way, and then another, must be tried, all little enough; but all well paid, if the point be gained.

(c) Carnal hearts seldom shrink from the pains necessary to carry on their carnal purposes; when a proselyte is to be made to serve a turn for themselves, they will compass sea and land to make him, rather than be disappointed.

2. Their cursed impiety in abusing their proselytes when they were made; "Ye make him the disciple of a Pharisee presently, and he

sucks in all a Pharisee's notions; and so ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Note,

(a) Hypocrites, while they fancy themselves heirs of heaven, are, in the judgment of Christ, the children of hell. The rise of their hypocrisy is from hell, for the devil is the father of lies; and the tendency of their hypocrisy is toward hell, that is the country they belong to, the inheritance they are heirs to; they are called children of hell, because of their rooted enmity to the kingdom of heaven, which was the principle and genius of Pharisaism.

(b) Though all that maliciously oppose the gospel are children of hell, yet some are twofold more so than others, more furious and bigoted and malignant.

(c) Perverted proselytes are commonly the greatest bigots; the scholars outdid their masters,

[1.] In fondness of ceremony; the Pharisees themselves saw the folly of their own impositions, and in their hearts smiled at the obsequiousness of those that conformed to them; but their proselytes were eager for them. Note, Weak heads commonly admire those shows and ceremonies which wise men (however for public ends they countenance them) cannot but think meanly of.

[2.] In fury against Christianity; the proselytes readily imbibed the principles which their crafty leaders were not wanting to possess them with, and so became extremely hot against the truth. The most bitter enemies the apostles met with in all places were the Hellenist Jews, who were mostly proselytes, Ac 13:45,14:2-19,17:5,18:6. Paul, a disciple of the Pharisees, was exceedingly mad against the Christians (Ac 26:11), when his master, Gamaliel, seems to have been more moderate.

16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold ?

Their seeking their own worldly gain and honour more than God's glory put them upon coining false and unwarrantable distinction, with which they led the people into dangerous mistakes, particularly in the matter of oaths; which, as an evidence of a universal sense of religion, have been by all nations accounted sacred (Mt 23:16); Ye blind guides. Note, 1. It is sad to think how many are under the guidance of such as are themselves blind, who undertake to show others that way which they are themselves willingly ignorant of. His watchmen are blind (Isa 56:10); and too often the people love to have it so, and say to the seers, See not. But the case is bad, when the leaders of the people cause them to err, Isa 9:16. 2. Though the condition of those whose guides are blind is very sad, yet that of the blind guides themselves is yet more woeful. Christ denounces a woe to the blind guides that have the blood of so many souls to answer for.

Now, to prove their blindness, he specifies the matter of swearing, and shows what corrupt casuists they were.

(a) He lays down the doctrine they taught.

[1.] They allowed swearing by creatures, provided they were consecrated to the service of God, and stood in any special relation to him. They allowed swearing by the temple and the altar, though they were the work of men's hands, intended to be the servants of God's honour, not sharers in it. An oath is an appeal to God, to his omniscience and justice; and to make this appeal to any creature is to put that creature in the place of God. See De 6:13.

[2.] They distinguished between an oath by the temple and an oath by the gold of the temple; an oath by the altar and an oath by the gift upon the altar; making the latter binding, but not the former. Here was a double wickedness; First, That there were some oaths which they dispensed with, and made light of, and reckoned a man was not bound by to assert the truth, or perform a promise. They

ought not to have sworn by the temple or the altar; but, when they had so sworn, they were taken in the words of their mouth. That doctrine cannot be of the God of truth which gives countenance to the breach of faith in any case whatsoever. Oaths are edge-tools and are not to be jested with. Secondly, That they preferred the gold before the temple, and the gift before the altar, to encourage people to bring gifts to the altar, and gold to the treasures of the temple, which they hoped to be gainers by. Those who had made gold their hope, and whose eyes were blinded by gifts in secret, were great friends to the Corban; and, gain being their godliness, by a thousand artifices they made religion truckle to their worldly interests. Corrupt church-guides make things to be sin or not sin as it serves their purposes, and lay a much greater stress on that which concerns their own gain than on that which is for God's glory and the good of souls.

(b) He shows the folly and absurdity of this distinction (Mt 23:17-19); Ye fools, and blind. It was in the way of a necessary reproof, not an angry reproach, that Christ called them fools. Let it suffice us from the word of wisdom to show the folly of sinful opinions and practices: but, for the fastening of the character upon particular persons, leave that to Christ, who knows what is in man, and has forbidden us to say, Thou fool.

To convict them of folly, he appeals to themselves, Whether is greater, the gold (the golden vessels and ornaments, or the gold in the treasury) or the temple that sanctifies the gold; the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Any one will own, Propter quod aliquid est tale, id est magis tale--That, on account of which any thing is qualified in a particular way, must itself be much more qualified in the same way. They that sware by the gold of the temple had an eye to it as holy; but what was it that made it holy but the holiness of the temple, to the service of which it was appropriated? And therefore the temple cannot be less holy than the gold, but must be more so; for the less is blessed and sanctified of the better, Heb 7:7. The temple and altar were dedicated to God fixedly, the gold and gift but secondarily. Christ is our altar (Heb 13:10), our temple (Joh

2:21); for it is he that sanctifies all our gifts, and puts an acceptableness in them, 1Pe 2:5. Those that put their own works into the place of Christ's righteousness in justification are guilty of the Pharisees' absurdity, who preferred the gift before the altar. Every true Christian is a living temple; and by virtue thereof common things are sanctified to him; unto the pure all things are pure (Tit 1:15), and the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, 1Co 7:14.

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift ?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

He rectifies the mistake (Mt 23:20-22), by reducing all the oaths they had invented to the true intent of an oath, which is, By the name of the Lord: so that though an oath by the temple, or the altar, or heaven, be formally bad, yet it is binding. Quod fieri non debuit, factum valet--Engagements which ought not to have been made, are yet, when made, binding. A man shall never take advantage of his own fault.

[1.] He that swears by the altar, let him not think to shake off the obligation of it by saying, "The altar is but wood, and stone, and brass;" for his oath shall be construed most strongly against himself; because he was culpable, and so as that the obligation of it may be preserved, ut res potius valeat quam pereat--the obligation being hereby strengthened rather than destroyed. And therefore an oath by the altar shall be interpreted by it and by all things thereon; for the appurtenances pass with the principal. And, the things thereon being offered up to God, to swear by it and them was, in effect, to call God himself to witness: for it was the altar of God; and he that went to that, went to God, Ps 43:4,Ps 26:6.

[2.] He that swears by the temple, if he understand what he does, cannot but apprehend that the ground of such a respect to it, is, not because it is a fine house, but because it is the house of God, dedicated to his service, the place which he has chosen to put his name there; and therefore he swears by it, and by him that dwells therein; there he was pleased in a peculiar manner to manifest himself, and give tokens of his presence; so that whoso swears by it, swears by him who had said, This is my rest, here will I dwell. Good Christians are God's temples, and the Spirit of God dwells in them (1Co 3:16,6:19), and God takes what is done to them as done to himself; he that grieves a gracious soul, grieves it and the Spirit that dwells in it. Eph 4:30.

[3.] If a man swears by heaven, he sins (Mt 5:34); yet he shall not therefore be discharged from the obligation of his oath; no, God will make him know that the heaven he swears by, is his throne (Isa 66:1); and he that swears by the throne, appeals to him that sits upon it; who, as he resents the affront done to him in the form of the oath, so he will certainly revenge the greater affront done to him by the violation of it. Christ will not countenance the evasion of a solemn oath, though ever so plausible.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier
matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

In Luke (Lu 11:42) it is "and rue, and all manner of herbs." They grounded this practice on Le 27:30, which they interpreted rigidly. Our Lord purposely names the most trifling products of the earth as examples of what they punctiliously exacted the tenth of.

In Luke (Lu 11:42) it is "judgment, mercy, and the love of God"—the expression being probably varied by our Lord Himself on the two different occasions. In both His reference is to Mic 6:6-8, where the prophet makes all acceptable religion to consist of three elements—"doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with

our God"; which third element presupposes and comprehends both the "faith" of Matthew and the "love" of Luke. See on Mr1 2:29; Mr1 2:32. The same tendency to merge greater duties in less besets even the children of God; but it is the characteristic of hypocrites.

There is no need for one set of duties to jostle out another; but it is to be carefully noted that of the greater duties our Lord says, "Ye ought to have done" them, while of the lesser He merely says, "Ye ought not to leave them undone."

They were very strict and precise in the smaller matters of the law, but as careless and loose in the weightier matters, Mt 23:23,24. They were partial in the law (Mal 2:9), would pick and choose their duty, according as they were interested or stood affected. Sincere obedience is universal, and he that from a right principle obeys any of God's precepts, will have respect to them all, Ps 119:6. But hypocrites, who act in religion for themselves, and not for God, will do no more in religion than they can serve a turn by for themselves. The partiality of the scribes and Pharisees appears here, in two instances.

1. They observed smaller duties, but omitted greater; they were very exact in paying tithes, till it came to mint, anise, and cummin, their exactness in tithing of which would not cost them much, but would be cried up, and they should buy reputation cheap. The Pharisee boasted of this, I give tithes of all that I possess, Lu 18:12. But it is probable that they had ends of their own to serve, and would find their own account in it; for the priests and Levites, to whom the tithes were paid, were in their interests, and knew how to return their kindness. Paying tithes was their duty, and what the law required; Christ tells them they ought not to leave it undone. Note, All ought in their places to contribute to the support and maintenance of a standing ministry: withholding tithes is called robbing God, Mal 2:8-10. They that are taught in the word, and do not communicate to them that teach them that love a cheap gospel, come short of the Pharisee.

But that which Christ here condemns them for, is, that they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; and their niceness in paying tithes, was, if not to atone before God, yet at least to excuse end palliate to men the omission of those. All the things of God's law are weighty, but those are most weighty, which are most expressive of inward holiness in the heart; the instances of self-denial, contempt of the world, and resignation to God, in which lies the life of religion. Judgment and mercy toward men, and faith toward God, are the weightier matters of the law, the good things which the Lord our God requires (Mic 6:8); to do justly, and love mercy, and humble ourselves by faith to walk with God. This is the obedience which is better than sacrifice or tithe; judgment is preferred before sacrifice, Isa 1:11. To be just to the priests in their tithe, and yet to cheat and defraud every body else, is but to mock God, and deceive ourselves. Mercy also is preferred before sacrifice, Ho 6:6. To feed those who made themselves fat with the offering of the Lord, and at the same time to shut up the bowels of compassion from a brother or a sister that is naked, and destitute of daily food, to pay tithe-mint to the priest, and to deny a crumb to Lazarus, is to lie open to that judgment without mercy, which is awarded to those who pretended to judgment, and showed no mercy; nor will judgment and mercy serve without faith in divine revelation; for God will be honoured in his truths as well as in his laws.

2. They avoided lesser sins, but committed greater (Mt 23:24); Ye blind guides; so he had called them before (Mt 23:16), for their corrupt teaching; here he calls them so for their corrupt living, for their example was leading as well as their doctrine; and in this also they were blind and partial; they strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. In their doctrine they strained at gnats, warned people against every the least violation of the tradition of the elders. In their practice they strained at gnats, heaved at them, with a seeming dread, as if they had a great abhorrence of sin, and were afraid of it in the least instance; but they made no difficulty of those sins which, in comparison with them, were as a camel to a gnat; when they devoured widows' houses, they did indeed swallow a camel; when they gave Judas the price of innocent blood, and yet scrupled to put

the returned money into the treasury (Mt 27:6); when they would not go into the judgment-hall, for fear of being defiled, and yet would stand at the door, and cry out against the holy Jesus (Joh 18:28); when they quarrelled with the disciples for eating with unwashen hands, and yet, for the filling of the Corban, taught people to break the fifth commandment, they strained at gnats, or lesser things, and yet swallowed camels. It is not the scrupling of a little sin that Christ here reproves; if it be a sin, though but a gnat, it must be strained at, but the doing of that, and then swallowing a camel. In the smaller matters of the law to be superstitious, and to be profane in the greater, is the hypocrisy here condemned.

24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

The proper rendering—as in the older English translations, and perhaps our own as it came from the translators' hands—evidently is, "strain out." It was the custom, says TRENCH, of the stricter Jews to strain their wine, vinegar, and other potables through linen or gauze, lest unawares they should drink down some little unclean insect therein and thus transgress (Le 11:20,23,41,42) —just as the Buddhists do now in Ceylon and Hindustan—and to this custom of theirs our Lord here refers.

the largest animal the Jews knew, as the "gnat" was the smallest; both were by the law unclean.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

They were all for the outside, and not at all for the inside, of religion. They were more desirous and solicitous to appear pious to men than to approve themselves so toward God. This is illustrated by two similitudes.

1. They are compared to a vessel that is clean washed on the outside, but all dirt within, Mt 23:25,26. The Pharisees placed religion in that which at best was but a point of decency--the washing of cups, Mk 7:4. They were in care to eat their meat in clean cups and platters, but made no conscience of getting their meat by extortion, and using it to excess. Now what a foolish thing would it be for a man to wash only the outside of a cup, which is to be looked at, and to leave the

inside dirty, which is to be used; so they do who only avoid scandalous sins, that would spoil their reputation with men, but allow themselves in heart-wickedness, which renders them odious to the pure and holy God. In reference to his, observe,

(a) The practice of the Pharisees; they made clean the outside. In those things which fell under the observation of their neighbours, they seemed very exact, and carried on their wicked intrigues with so much artifice, that their wickedness was not suspected; people generally took them for very good men. But within, in the recesses of their hearts and the close retirements of their lives, they were full of extortion and excess; of violence and incontinence (so Dr. Hammond); that is, of injustice and intemperance. While they would seem to be godly, they were neither sober nor righteous. Their inward part was very wickedness (Ps 5:9); and that we are really, which we are inwardly.

(b) The rule Christ gives, in opposition to this practice, Mt 23:26. It is addressed to the blind Pharisees. They thought themselves the seers of the land, but (Joh 9:39) Christ calls them blind. Note, those are blind, in Christ's account who (how quick-sighted soever they are in other things) are strangers, and no enemies, to the wickedness of their own hearts; who see not, and hate not, the secret sin that lodgeth there. Self-ignorance is the most shameful and hurtful ignorance, Re 3:17. The rule is, Cleanse first that which is within. Note, the principal care of every one of us should be to wash our hearts from wickedness, Jer 4:14. The main business of a Christian lies within, to get cleansed from the filthiness of the spirit. Corrupt affections and inclinations, the secret lusts that lurk in the soul, unseen and unobserved, these must first be mortified and subdued. Those sins must be conscientiously abstained from, which the eye of God only is a witness to, who searcheth the heart.

Observe the method prescribed; Cleanse first that which is within not that only, but that first; because, if due care be taken concerning that, the outside will be clean also. External motives and inducements may keep the outside clean, while the inside is filthy;

but if renewing, sanctifying grace make clean the inside, that will have an influence upon the outside, for the commanding principle is within. If the heart be well kept, all is well, for out of it are the issues of life; the eruptions will vanish of course. If the heart and spirit be made new, there will be a newness of life; here therefore we must begin with ourselves; first cleanse that which is within; we then make sure work, when this is our first work.

26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

In Luke (Lu 11:40) it is, "Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also?"—"He to whom belongs the outer life, and of right demands its subjection to Himself, is the inner man less His?" A remarkable example this of our Lord's power of drawing the most striking illustrations of great truths from the most familiar objects and incidents in life. To these words, recorded by Luke, He adds the following, involving a principle of immense value: "But rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean unto you" (Lu 11:41). As the greed of these hypocrites was one of the most prominent features of their character (Lu 16:14), our Lord bids them exemplify the opposite character, and then their outside, ruled by this, would be beautiful in the eye of God, and their meals would be eaten with clean hands, though much fouled with the business of this everyday world. (See Ec 9:7).

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

They are compared to whited sepulchres, Mt 23:27,28.

(1.) They were fair without, like sepulchres, which appear beautiful outward. Some make it to refer to the custom of the Jews to whiten graves, only for the notifying of them, especially if they were in unusual places, that people might avoid them, because of the ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a grave, Nu 19:16. And it was part of the charge of the overseers of the highways, to repair that whitening when it was decayed. Sepulchres were thus made remarkable, 2Ki 23:16,17. The formality of hypocrites, by which they study to recommend themselves to the world, doth but

make all wise and good men the more careful to avoid them, for fear of being defiled by them. Beware of the scribes, Lu 20:46. It rather alludes to the custom of whitening the sepulchres of eminent persons, for the beautifying of them. It is said here (Mt 23:29), that they garnished the sepulchres of the righteous; as it is usual with us to erect monuments upon the graves of great persons, and to strew flowers on the graves of dear friends. Now the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was like the ornaments of a grave, or the dressing up of a dead body, only for show. The top of their ambition was to appear righteous before men, and to be applauded and had in admiration by them. But,

(2.) They were foul within, like sepulchres, full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness: so vile are our bodies, when the soul has deserted them! Thus were they full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Hypocrisy is the worst iniquity of all other. Note, It is possible for those that have their hearts full of sin, to have their lives free from blame, and to appear very good. But what will it avail us, to have the good word of our fellow-servants, if our Master doth not say, Well done? When all other graves are opened, these whited sepulchres will be looked into, and the dead men's bones, and all the uncleanness, shall be brought out, and be spread before all the host of heaven, Jer 8:1,2. For it is the day when God shall judge, not the shows, but the secrets, of men. And it will then be small comfort to them who shall have their portion with hypocrites, to remember how creditably and plausibly they went to hell, applauded by all their neighbours.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

What a powerful way of conveying the charge, that with all their fair show their hearts were full of corruption! (Compare Ps 5:9,Ro 3:13). But our Lord, stripping off the figure, next holds up their iniquity in naked colors.

"Ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." As one might unconsciously walk over a grave concealed from view, and thus contract ceremonial

defilement, so the plausible exterior of the Pharisees kept people from perceiving the pollution they contracted from coming in contact with such corrupt characters.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

They pretended a deal of kindness for the memory of the prophets that were dead and gone, while they hated and persecuted those that were present with them. This is put last, because it was the blackest part of their character. God is jealous for his honour in his laws and ordinances, and resents it if they be profaned and abused; but he has often expressed an equal jealousy for his honour in his prophets and ministers, and resents it worse if they be wronged and persecuted: and therefore, when our Lord Jesus comes to this head, he speaks more fully than upon any of the other (Mt 23:29-37); for that toucheth his ministers, toucheth his Anointed, and toucheth the apple of his eye. Observe here,

1 The respect which the scribes and Pharisees pretend for the prophets that were gone, Mt 23:29,30. This was the varnish, and that in which they outwardly appeared righteous.

(a) They honoured the relics of the prophets, they built their tombs, and garnished their sepulchres. It seems, the places of their burial were known, David's sepulchre was with them, Ac 2:29. There was a title upon the sepulchre of the man of God (2Ki 23:17), and Josiah thought it respect enough not to move his bones, Mt 23:18. But they would do more, rebuild and beautify them. Now consider this,

[1.] As an instance of honour done to deceased prophets, who, while they lived, were counted as the off-scouring of all things, and had all manner of evil spoken against them falsely. Note, God can extort, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the honour of piety and holiness. Them that honour God he will honour, and sometimes with those from whom contempt is expected, 2Sa 6:22. The memory of the just is blessed, when the names of those that hated and persecuted them shall be covered with shame. The honour of constancy and resolution in the way of duty will be a lasting honour; and those that

are manifest to God, will be manifest in the consciences of those about them.

[2.] As an instance of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, who paid their respect to them. Note, Carnal people can easily honour the memories of faithful ministers that are dead and gone, because they do not reprove them, nor disturb them, in their sins. Dead prophets are seers that see not, and those they can bear well enough; they do not torment them, as the living witnesses do, that bear their testimony viva voce--with a living voice, Re 11:10. They can pay respect to the writings of the dead prophets, which tell them what they should be; but not the reproofs of the living prophets, which tell them what they are. Sit divus, modo non sit vivus--Let there be saints; but let them not be living here. The extravagant respect which the church of Rome pays to the memory of saints departed, especially the martyrs, dedicating days and places to their names, enshrining their relics, praying to them, and offering to their images, while they make themselves drunk with the blood of the saints of their own day, is a manifest proof that they not only succeed, but exceed, the scribes and Pharisees in a counterfeit hypocritical religion, which builds the prophets' tombs, but hates the prophets' doctrine.

(b) They protested against the murder of them (Mt 23:30); If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them. They would never have consented to the silencing of Amos, and the imprisonment of Micaiah, to the putting of Hanani in the stocks, and Jeremiah in the dungeon, to the stoning of Zechariah, the mocking of all the messengers of the Lord, and the abuses put upon his prophets; no, not they, they would sooner have lost their right hands than have done any such thing. What, is thy servant a dog? And yet they were at this time plotting to murder Christ, to whom all the prophets bore witness. They think, if they had lived in the days of the prophets, they would have heard them gladly and obeyed; and yet they rebelled against the light that Christ brought into the world. But it is certain, a Herod and an Herodias to John the Baptist, would have been an Ahab and a Jezebel to Elijah. Note, The

deceitfulness of sinners' hearts appears very much in this, that, while they go down the stream of the sins of their own day, they fancy they should have swum against the stream of the sins of the former days; that, if they had had other people's opportunities, they should have improved them more faithfully; if they had been in other people's temptations, they should have resisted them more vigorously; when yet they improve not the opportunities they have, nor resist the temptations they are in. We are sometimes thinking, if we had lived when Christ was upon earth, how constantly we would have followed him; we would not have despised and rejected him, as they then did; and yet Christ in his Spirit, in his word, in his ministers, is still no better treated.

30 and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

In thus, at the end of His ministry, recalling the words of the Baptist at the outset of his, our Lord would seem to intimate that the only difference between their condemnation now and then was, that now they were ripe for their doom, which they were not then.

Their enmity and opposition to Christ and his gospel, notwithstanding, and the ruin they were bringing upon themselves and upon that generation thereby, Mt 23:31-33. Observe here,

(a) The indictment proved; Ye are witnesses against yourselves. Note, Sinners cannot hope to escape the judgment of Christ for want of proof against them, when it is easy to find them witnesses against themselves; and their very pleas will not only be overruled, but turned to their conviction, and their own tongues shall be made to fall upon them, Ps 64:8.

[1.] By their own confession, it was the great wickedness of their forefathers, to kill the prophets; so that they knew the fault of it, and yet were themselves guilty of the same fact. Note, They who condemn sin in others, and yet allow the same or worse in themselves, are of all others most inexcusable, Ro 1:32-2:1. They

knew they ought not to have been partakers with persecutors, and yet were the followers of them. Such self-contradictions now will amount to self-condemnations in the great day. Christ puts another construction upon their building of the tombs of the prophets than what they intended; as if by beautifying their graves they justified their murderers (Lu 11:48), for they persisted in the sin.

[2.] By their own confession, these notorious persecutors were their ancestors; Ye are the children of them. They meant no more than that they were their children by blood and nature; but Christ turns it upon them;, that they were so by spirit and disposition; You are of those fathers, and their lusts you will do. They are, as you say, your fathers, and you patrizare--take after your fathers; it is the sin that runs in the blood among you. As your fathers did, so do ye, Ac 7:51. They came of a persecuting race, were a seed of evil doers (Isa 1:4), risen up in their fathers' stead, Nu 32:14. Malice, envy, and cruelty, were bred in the bone with them, and they had formerly espoused it for a principle, to do as their fathers did, Jer 44:17. And it is observable here (Mt 23:30) how careful they are to mention the relation; "They were our fathers, that killed the prophets, and they were men in honour and power, whose sons and successors we are." If they had detested the wickedness of their ancestors, as they ought to have done, they would not have been so fond to call them their fathers; for it is no credit to be akin to persecutors, though they have ever so much dignity and dominion.

(b) The sentence passed upon them. Christ here proceeds,

[1.] To give them up to sin as irreclaimable (Mt 23:32); Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. If Ephraim be joined to idols, and hate to be reformed, let him alone. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Christ knew they were now contriving his death, and in a few days would accomplish it; "Well," saith he, "go on with your plot, take your curse, walk in the way of your heart and in the sight of your eyes, and see what will come of it. What thou doest, do quickly. You will but fill up the measure of guilt, which will then overflow in a deluge of wrath." Note,

First, There is a measure of sin to be filled up, before utter ruin comes upon persons and families, churches and nations. God will bear long, but the time will come when he can no longer forbear, Jer 44:22. We read of the measure of the Amorites that was to be filled (Ge 15:16), of the harvest of the earth being ripe for the sickle (Re 14:15-19), and of sinners making an end to deal treacherously, arriving at a full stature in treachery, Isa 33:1.

Secondly, Children fill up the measure of their fathers' sins whey they are gone, if they persist in the same or the like. That national guilt which brings national ruin is made up of the sin of many in several ages, and in the successions of societies there is a score going on; for God justly visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children that tread in the steps of it.

Thirdly, Persecuting Christ, and his people and ministers, is a sin that fills the measure of a nation's guilt sooner than any other. This was it that brought wrath without remedy upon the fathers (2Ch 36:16), and wrath to the utmost upon the children too, 1Th 2:16. This was that fourth transgression, of which, when added to the other three, the Lord would not turn away the punishment, Am 1:3,6,9,11,13.

Fourthly, It is just with God to give those up to their own heart's lusts, who obstinately persist in the gratification of them. Those who will run headlong to ruin, let the reins be laid on their neck, and it is the saddest condition a man can be in on this side hell.

[2.] He proceeds to give them up to ruin as irrecoverable, to a personal ruin in the other world (Mt 23:33); Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? These are strange words to come from the mouth of Christ, into whose lips grace was poured. But he can and will speak terror, and in these words he explains and sums up the eight woes he had denounced against the scribes and Pharisees.

Here is,

First, Their description; Ye serpents. Doth Christ call names? Yes, but this doth not warrant us to do so. He infallibly knew what was in man, and knew them to be subtle as serpents, cleaving to the earth, feeding on dust; they had a specious outside, but were within malignant, had poison under their tongues, the seed of the old serpent. They were a generation of vipers; they and those that went before them, they and those that joined with them, were a generation of envenomed, enraged, spiteful adversaries to Christ and his gospel. They loved to be called of men, Rabbi, rabbi, but Christ calls them serpents and vipers; for he gives men their true characters, and delights to put contempt upon the proud.

Secondly, Their doom. He represents their condition as very sad, and in a manner desperate; How can ye escape the damnation of hell? Christ himself preached hell and damnation, for which his ministers have often been reproached by those that care not to hear of it. Note,

1 The damnation of hell will be the fearful end of all impenitent sinners. This doom coming from Christ, was more terrible than coming from all the prophets and ministers that ever were, for he is the Judge, into whose hands the keys of hell and death are put, and his saying they were damned, made them so.

2. There is a way of escaping this damnation, this is implied here; some are delivered from the wrath to come.

3. Of all sinners, those who are of the spirit of the scribes and Pharisees, are least likely to escape this damnation; for repentance and faith are necessary to that escape; and how will they be brought to these, who are so conceited of themselves, and so prejudiced against Christ and his gospel, as they were? How could they be healed and saved, who could not bear to have their wound searched, nor the balm of Gilead applied to it? Publicans and harlots, who were sensible of their disease and applied themselves to the Physician,

were more likely to escape the damnation of hell than those who, though they were in the high road to it, were confident they were in the way to heaven.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

We have left the blind leaders fallen into the ditch, under Christ's sentence, into the damnation of hell; let us see what will become of the blind followers, of the body of the Jewish church, and particularly Jerusalem.

I. Jesus Christ designs yet to try them with the means of grace; I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes. The connection is strange; "You are a generation of vipers, not likely to escape the damnation of hell;" one would think it should follow, "Therefore you shall never have a prophet sent to you any more;" but no, "Therefore I will send unto you prophets, to see if you will yet at length be wrought upon, or else to leave you inexcusable, and to justify God in your ruin." It is therefore ushered in with a note of admiration, behold! Observe,

1. It is Christ that sends them; I send. By this he avows himself to be God, having power to gift and commission prophets. It is an act of kingly office; he sends them as ambassadors to treat with us about the concerns of our souls. After his resurrection, he made this word good, when he said, So send I you, Joh 20:21. Though now he appeared mean, yet he was entrusted with this great authority.

2. He sends them to the Jews first; "I send them to you." They began at Jerusalem; and, wherever they went, they observed this rule, to make the first tender of gospel grace to the Jews, Ac 13:46.

3. Those he sends are called prophets, wise men, and scribes, Old-Testament names for New-Testament officers; to show that the

ministers sent to them now should not be inferior to the prophets of the Old Testament, to Solomon the wise, or Ezra the scribe. The extraordinary ministers, who in the first ages were divinely inspired, were as the prophets commissioned immediately from heaven; the ordinary settled ministers, who were then, and continue in the church still, and will do to the end of time, are as the wise men and scribes, to guide and instruct the people in the things of God. Or, we may take the apostles and evangelists for the prophets and wise men, and the pastors and teachers for the scribes, instructed to the kingdom of heaven (Mt 13:52); for the office of a scribe was honourable till the men dishonoured it.

II. He foresees and foretels the ill usage that his messengers would meet with among them; "Some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and yet I will send them." Christ knows beforehand how ill his servants will be treated, and yet sends them, and appoints them their measure of sufferings; yet he loves them never the less for his thus exposing them, for he designs to glorify himself by their sufferings, and them after them; he will counter-balance them, though not prevent them. Observe,

1 The cruelty of these persecutors; Ye shall kill and crucify them. It is no less than the blood, the life-blood, that they thirst after; their lust is not satisfied with any thing short of their destruction, Ex 15:9. They killed the two James's, crucified Simon the son of Cleophas, and scourged Peter and John; thus did the members partake of the sufferings of the Head, he was killed and crucified, and so were they. Christians must expect to resist unto blood.

2. Their unwearied industry; Ye shall persecute them from city to city. As the apostles went from city to city, to preach the gospel, the Jews dodged them, and haunted them, and stirred up persecution against them, Ac 14:19,17:13. They that did not believe in Judea were more bitter enemies to the gospel than any other unbelievers, Ro 15:31.

3. The pretence of religion in this; they scourged them in their synagogues, their place of worship, where they kept their ecclesiastical courts; so that they did it as a piece of service to the church; cast them out, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5,Joh 16:2.

35 that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of
Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.
36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

As it was only in the last generation of them that "the iniquity of the Amorites was full" (Ge 15:16), and then the abominations of ages were at once completely and awfully avenged, so the iniquity of Israel was allowed to accumulate from age to age till in that generation it came to the full, and the whole collected vengeance of heaven broke at once over its devoted head. In the first French Revolution the same awful principle was exemplified, and Christendom has not done with it yet.

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

How ineffably grand and melting is this apostrophe! It is the very heart of God pouring itself forth through human flesh and speech. It is this incarnation of the innermost life and love of Deity, pleading with men, bleeding for them, and ascending only to open His arms to them and win them back by the power of this story of matchless love, that has conquered the world, that will yet "draw all men unto Him," and beautify and ennoble Humanity itself! "Jerusalem" here does not mean the mere city or its inhabitants; nor is it to be viewed merely as the metropolis of the nation, but as the center of their religious life—"the city of their solemnities, whither the tribes went up, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord"; and at this moment it was full of them. It is the whole family of God, then, which is here apostrophized by a name dear to every Jew, recalling to him all that was distinctive and precious in his religion. The intense feeling that sought vent in this utterance comes out first in the redoubling of the opening word—"Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

but, next, in the picture of it which He draws—"that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee!"—not content with spurning God's messages of mercy, that canst not suffer even the messengers to live!

When He adds, "How often would I have gathered thee!" He refers surely to something beyond the six or seven times that He visited and taught in Jerusalem while on earth. No doubt it points to "the prophets," whom they "killed," to "them that were sent unto her," whom they "stoned." But whom would He have gathered so often? "Thee," truth-hating, mercy-spurning, prophet-killing Jerusalem—how often would I have gathered thee!

Compare with this that affecting clause in the great ministerial commission, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem!" (Lu 24:47). What encouragement to the heartbroken at their own long-continued and obstinate rebellion! But we have not yet got at the whole heart of this outburst. I would have gathered thee, He says, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Was ever imagery so homely invested with such grace and such sublimity as this, at our Lord's touch? And yet how exquisite the figure itself—of protection, rest, warmth, and all manner of conscious well-being in those poor, defenseless, dependent little creatures, as they creep under and feel themselves overshadowed by the capacious and kindly wing of the mother bird! If, wandering beyond hearing of her peculiar call, they are overtaken by a storm or attacked by an enemy, what can they do but in the one case droop and die, and in the other submit to be torn in pieces? But if they can reach in time their place of safety, under the mother's wing, in vain will any enemy try to drag them thence.

For rising into strength, kindling into fury, and forgetting herself entirely in her young, she will let the last drop of her blood be shed out and perish in defense of her precious charge, rather than yield them to an enemy's talons. How significant all this of what Jesus is and does for men! Under His great Mediatorial wing would He

have "gathered" Israel. For the figure, see De 32:10-12,Ru 2:12,Ps 17:8,36:7,61:4,63:7,91:4,Isa 31:5,Mal 4:2. The ancient rabbins had a beautiful expression for proselytes from the heathen—that they had "come under the wings of the Shekinah." For this last word, see on Mt2 3:38. But what was the result of all this tender and mighty love? The answer is, "And ye would not." O mysterious word! mysterious the resistance of such patient Love—mysterious the liberty of self-undoing! The awful dignity of the will, as here expressed, might make the ears to tingle.

He laments the wickedness of Jerusalem, and justly upbraids them with the many kind offers he had made them, Mt 23:37. See with what concern he speaks of that city; O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! The repetition is emphatical, and bespeaks abundance of commiseration. A day or two before Christ had wept over Jerusalem, now he sighed and groaned over it. Jerusalem, the vision of peace (so it signifies), must now be the seat of war and confusion. Jerusalem, that had been the joy of the whole earth, must now be a hissing, and an astonishment, and a by-word; Jerusalem, that has been a city compact together, shall now be shattered and ruined by its own intestine broils. Jerusalem, the place that God has chosen to put his name there, shall now be abandoned to the spoil and the robbers, La 1:1,4:1. But wherefore will the Lord do all this to Jerusalem? Why? Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, La 1:8.

1. She persecuted God's messengers; Thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee. This sin is especially charged upon Jerusalem; because there the Sanhedrim, or great council, sat, who took cognizance of church matters, and therefore a prophet could not perish but in Jerusalem, Lu 13:33. It is true, they had not now a power to put any man to death, but they killed the prophets in popular tumults, mobbed them, as Stephen, and put the Roman powers on to kill them. At Jerusalem, where the gospel was first preached, it was first persecuted (Ac 8:1), and that place was the head-quarters of the persecutors; thence warrants were issued out to other cities, and thither the saints were brought bound, Ac 9:2. Thou stonest them: that was a capital punishment, in use

only among the Jews. By the law, false prophets and seducers were to be stoned (De 13:10), under colour of which law, they put the true prophets to death. Note, It has often been the artifice of Satan, to turn that artillery against the church, which was originally planted in the defence of it. Brand the true prophets as seducers, and the true professors of religion as heretics and schismatics, and then it will be easy to persecute them. There was abundance of other wickedness in Jerusalem; but this was the sin that made the loudest cry, and which God had an eye to more than any other, in bringing that ruin upon them, as 2Ki 24:4,2Ch 36:16. Observe, Christ speaks in the present tense; Thou killest, and stonest; for all they had done, and all they would do, was present to Christ's notice.

2. She refused and rejected Christ, and gospel offers. The former was a sin without remedy, this against the remedy. Here is,

The wonderful grace and favour of Jesus Christ toward them; How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! Thus kind and condescending are the offers of gospel grace, even to Jerusalem's children, bad as she is, the inhabitants, the little ones not excepted.

[1.] The favour proposed was the gathering of them. Christ's design is to gather poor souls, gather them in from their wanderings, gather them home to himself, as the Centre of unity; for to him must the gathering of the people be. He would have taken the whole body of the Jewish nation into the church, and so gathered them all (as the Jews used to speak of proselytes) under the wings of the Divine Majesty. It is here illustrated by a humble similitude; as a hen clucks her chickens together. Christ would have gathered them, First, With such a tenderness of affection as the hen does, which has, by instinct, a peculiar concern for her young ones. Christ's gathering of souls, comes from his love, Jer 31:3. Secondly, For the same end. The hen gathered her chickens under her wings, for protection and safety, and for warmth and comfort; poor souls have in Christ both refuge and refreshment. The chickens naturally run to the hen for shelter, when they are threatened by the birds of prey;

perhaps Christ refers to that promise (Ps 91:4), He shall cover thee with his feathers. There is healing under Christ's wings (Mal 4:2); that is more than the hen has for her chickens.

[2.] The forwardness of Christ to confer this favour. His offers are, First, Very free; I would have done it. Jesus Christ is truly willing to receive and save poor souls that come to him. He desires not their ruin, he delights in their repentance. Secondly, Very frequent; How often! Christ often came up to Jerusalem, preached, and wrought miracles there; and the meaning of all this, was, he would have gathered them. He keeps account how often his calls have been repeated. As often as we have heard the sound of the gospel, as often as we have felt the strivings of the Spirit, so often Christ would have gathered us.

[3.] Their wilful refusal of this grace and favour; Ye would not. How emphatically is their obstinacy opposed to Christ's mercy! I would, and ye would not. He was willing to save them, but they were not willing to be saved by him. Note, It is wholly owing to the wicked wills of sinners, that they are not gathered under the wings of the Lord Jesus. They did not like the terms upon which Christ proposed to gather them; they loved their sins, and yet trusted to their righteousness; they would not submit either to the grace of Christ or to his government, and so the bargain broke off.

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

and these were His last words to the impenitent nation, see on Mr1 3:1, opening remarks.What? Does Jesus mean that He was Himself the Lord of the temple, and that it became "deserted" when HE finally left it? It is even so. Now is thy fate sealed, O Jerusalem, for the glory is departed from thee! That glory, once visible in the holy of holies, over the mercy seat, when on the day of atonement the blood of typical expiation was sprinkled on it and in front of it—called by the Jews the Shekinah, or the Dwelling, as being the visible pavilion of Jehovah—that glory, which Isaiah (Isa 6:1-13) saw in vision, the beloved disciple says was the glory of Christ (Joh

12:41). Though it was never visible in the second temple, Haggai foretold that "the glory of that latter house should be greater than of the former" (Hag 2:9) because "the Lord whom they sought was suddenly to come to His temple" (Mal 3:1), not in a mere bright cloud, but enshrined in living humanity! Yet brief as well as "sudden" was the manifestation to be: for the words He was now uttering were to be HIS VERY LAST within its precincts.

that is, till those "Hosannas to the Son of David" with which the multitude had welcomed Him into the city—instead of "sore displeasing the chief priests and scribes" (Mt 21:15) —should break forth from the whole nation, as their glad acclaim to their once pierced, but now acknowledged, Messiah. That such a time will come is clear from Zec 12:10,Ro 11:26,2Co 3:15,16, &c. In what sense they shall then "see Him" may be gathered from Zec 2:10-13,Eze 37:23-28,39:28,29, &c.

The present dispersion and unbelief of the Jews, and their future conversion to Christ, were here foretold. Jerusalem and her children had a large share of guilt, and their punishment has been signal. But ere long, deserved vengeance will fall on every church which is Christian in name only. In the mean time the Saviour stands ready to receive all who come to him. There is nothing between sinners and eternal happiness, but their proud and unbelieving unwillingness.

In rejecting the Messiah who had come among them, the Jews were rejecting their only hope. They would not experience God's blessing till they turned and welcomed Jesus as their Messiah and Saviour (Mat_23:37-39; see notes on Luk_13:31-35).

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

He reads Jerusalem's doom (Mt 23:38,39); Therefore behold your house is left unto you desolate. Both the city and the temple, God's house and their own, all shall be laid waste. But it is especially

meant of the temple, which they boasted of, and trusted to; that holy mountain because of which they were so haughty. Note, they that will not be gathered by the love and grace of Christ shall be consumed and scattered by his wrath; I would, and you would not. Israel would none of me, so I gave them up, Ps 81:11,12.

1. Their house shall be deserted; It is left unto you. Christ was now departing from the temple, and never came into it again, but by this word abandoned it to ruin. They doated on it, would have it to themselves; Christ must have no room or interest there. "Well," saith Christ, "it is left to you; take it, and make your best of it; I will never have any thing more to do with it." They had made it a house of merchandise, and a den of thieves, and so it is left to them. Not long after this, the voice was heard in the temple, "Let us depart hence." When Christ went, Ichabod, the glory departed. Their city also was left to them, destitute of God's presence and grace; he was no longer a wall of fire about them, nor the glory in the midst of them.

2. It shall be desolate; It is left unto you desolate; it is left eremos--a wilderness.

(a) It was immediately, when Christ left it, in the eyes of all that understood themselves, a very dismal melancholy place. Christ's departure makes the best furnished, best replenished place a wilderness, though it be the temple, the chief place of concourse; for what comfort can there be where Christ is not? Though there may be a crowd of other contentments, yet, if Christ's special spiritual presence be withdrawn, that soul, that place, is become a wilderness, a land of darkness, as darkness itself. This comes of men's rejecting Christ, and driving him away from them.

(b) It was, not long after, destroyed and ruined, and not one stone left upon another. The lot of Jerusalem's enemies will now become Jerusalem's lot, to be made of a city a heap, of a defenced city a ruin (Isa 25:2), a lofty city laid low, even to the ground, Isa 26:5.

The temple, that holy and beautiful house, became desolate. When God goes out, all enemies break in.

Lastly, Here is the final farewell that Christ took of them and their temple; Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh. This bespeaks,

1. His departure from them. The time was at hand, when he should leave the world, to go to his Father, and be seen no more. After his resurrection, he was seen only by a few chosen witnesses, and they saw him not long, but he soon removed to the invisible world, and there will be till the time of the restitution of all things, when his welcome at his first coming will be repeated with loud acclamations; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Christ will not be seen again till he come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him (Re 1:7); and then, even they, who, when time was, rejected and pierced him, will be glad to come in among his adorers; then every knee shall bow to him, even those that had bowed to Baal; and even the workers of iniquity will then cry, Lord, Lord, and will own, when his wrath is kindled, that blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Would we have our lot in that day with those that say, Blessed is he that cometh? let us be with them now, with them that truly worship, and truly welcome, Jesus Christ.

2. Their continued blindness and obstinacy; Ye shall not see me, that is, not see me to be the Messiah (for otherwise they did see him upon the cross), not see the light of the truth concerning me, nor the things that belong to your peace, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh. They will never be convinced, till Christ's second coming convince them, when it will be too late to make an interest in him, and nothing will remain but a fearful looking for of judgment. Note,

(a) Wilful blindness is often punished with judicial blindness. If they will not see, they shall not see. With this word he concludes his public preaching. After his resurrection, which was the sign of the prophet Jonas, they should have no other sign given them, till they should see the sign of the Son of man, Mt 24:30.

(b) When the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, he will convince all, and will force acknowledgments from the proudest of his enemies, of his being the Messiah, and even they shall be found liars to him. They that would not now come at his call, shall then be forced to depart with his curse. The chief priests and scribes were displeased with the children for crying hosanna to Christ; but the day is coming, when proud persecutors would gladly be found in the condition of the meanest and poorest they now trample upon. They who now reproach and ridicule the hosannas of the saints will be of another mind shortly; it were therefore better to be of that mind now. Some make this to refer to the conversion of the Jews to the faith of Christ; then they shall see him, and own him, and say, Blessed is he that cometh; but it seems rather to look further, for the complete manifestation of Christ, and conviction of sinners, are reserved to be the glory of the last day.

Matthew-24

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs before the End

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Here is,

I. Christ's quitting the temple, and his public work there. He had said, in the close of the foregoing chapter, Your house is left unto you desolate; and here he made his words good; He went out, and departed from the temple. The manner of expression is observable; he not only went out of the temple, but departed from it, took his final farewell of it; he departed from it, never to return to it any more; and then immediately follows a prediction of its ruin. Note, That house is left desolate indeed, which Christ leaves. Woe unto them

when I depart, Ho 9:12,Jer 6:8. It was now time to groan out their Ichabod, The glory is departed, their defence is departed. Three days after this, the veil of the temple was rent; when Christ left it, all became common and unclean; but Christ departed not till they drove him away; did not reject them, till they first rejected him.

II. His private discourse with his disciples; he left the temple, but he did not leave the twelve, who were the seed of the gospel church, which the casting off of the Jews was the enriching of. When he left the temple, his disciples left it too, and came to him. Note, It is good being where Christ is, and leaving that which he leaves. They came to him, to be instructed in private, when his public preaching was over; for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He had spoken of the destruction of the Jewish church to the multitude in parables, which here, as usual, he explains to his disciples. Observe,

1. His disciples came to him, to show him the buildings of the temple, It was a stately and beautiful structure, one of the wonders of the world; no cost was spared, no art left untried, to make it sumptuous. Though it came short of Solomon's temple, and its beginning was small, yet its latter end did greatly increase. It was richly furnished with gifts and offerings, to which there were continual additions made. They showed Christ these things, and desired him to take notice of them, either,

(a) As being greatly pleased with them themselves, and expecting he should be so too. They had lived mostly in Galilee, at a distance from the temple, had seldom seen it, and therefore were the more struck with admiration at it, and thought he should admire as much as they did all this glory (Ge 31:1); and they would have him divert himself (after his preaching, and from his sorrow which they saw him perhaps almost overwhelmed with) with looking about him. Note, Even good men are apt to be too much enamoured with outward pomp and gaiety, and to overvalue it, even in the things of God; whereas we should be, as Christ was, dead to it, and look upon it with contempt. The temple was indeed glorious, but, [1.] Its glory was sullied and stained with the sin of the priests and people; that

wicked doctrine of the Pharisees, which preferred the gold before the temple that sanctified it, was enough to deface the beauty of all the ornaments of the temple. [2.] Its glory was eclipsed and outdone by the presence of Christ in it, who was the glory of this latter house (Hag 2:9), so that the buildings had no glory, in comparison with that glory which excelled.

Or,

(b) As grieving that this house should be left desolate; they showed him the buildings, as if they would move him to reverse the sentence; "Lord, let not this holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, be made a desolation." They forgot how many providences, concerning Solomon's temple, had manifested how little God cared for that outward glory which they had so much admired, when the people were wicked, 2Ch 7:21. This house, which is high, sin will bring low. Christ had lately looked upon the precious souls, and wept for them, Lu 19:41. The disciples look upon the pompous buildings, and are ready to weep for them. In this, as in other things, his thoughts are not like ours. It was weakness, and meanness of spirit, in the disciples, to be so fond of fine buildings; it was a childish thing. Animo magno nihil magnum--To a great mind nothing is great. Seneca.

2. Christ, hereupon, foretels the utter ruin and destruction that were coming upon this place, Mt 24:2. Note, A believing foresight of the defacing of all worldly glory will help to take us off from admiring it, and overvaluing it. The most beautiful body will be shortly worms' meat, and the most beautiful building a ruinous heap. And shall we then set our eyes upon that which so soon is not, and look upon that with so much admiration which ere long we shall certainly look upon with so much contempt? See ye not all these things? They would have Christ look upon them, and be as much in love with them as they were; he would have them look upon them, and be as dead to them as he was. There is such a sight of these things as will do us good; so to see them as to see through them and see to the end of them.

Christ, instead of reversing the decree, ratifies it; Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another.

(a) He speaks of it as a certain ruin; "I say unto you. I, that know what I say, and know how to make good what I say; take my word for it, it shall be so; I, the Amen, the true Witness, say it to you." All judgment being committed to the Son, the threatenings, as well as the promises, are all yea, and amen, in him. Heb 6:17,18.

(b) He speaks of it as an utter ruin. The temple shall not only be stripped, and plundered, and defaced, but utterly demolished and laid waste; Not one stone shall be left upon another. Notice is taken, in the building of the second temple, of the laying of one stone upon another (Hag 2:15); and here, in the ruin, of not leaving one stone upon another. History tells us, that this was fulfilled in the latter; for though Titus, when he took the city, did all he could to preserve the temple, yet he could not restrain the enraged soldiers from destroying it utterly; and it was done to that degree, that Turnus Rufus ploughed up the ground on which it had stood: thus that scripture was fulfilled (Mic 3:12), Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field. And afterward, in Julian the Apostate's time, when the Jews were encouraged by him to rebuild their temple, in opposition to the Christian religion, what remained of the ruins was quite pulled down, to level the ground for a new foundation; but the attempt was defeated by the miraculous eruption of fire out of the ground, which destroyed the foundation they laid, and frightened away the builders. Now this prediction of the final and irreparable ruin of the temple includes a prediction of the period of the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law.

3. The disciples, not disputing either the truth or the equity of this sentence, nor doubting of the accomplishment of it, enquire more particularly of the time when it should come to pass, and the signs of its approach, Mt 24:3. Observe,

(a) Where they made this enquiry; privately, as he sat upon the mount of Olives; probably, he was returning to Bethany, and there sat down by the way, to rest him; the mount of Olives directly faced the temple, and from thence he might have a full prospect of it at some distance; there he sat as a Judge upon the bench, the temple and city being before him as at the bar, and thus he passed sentence on them. We read (Eze 11:23) of the removing of the glory of the Lord from the temple to the mountain; so Christ, the great Shechinah, here removes to this mountain.

(b) What the enquiry itself was; When shall these things be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? Here are three questions.

[1.] Some think, these questions do all point at one and the same thing--the destruction of the temple, and the period of the Jewish church and nation, which Christ had himself spoken of as his coming (Mt 16:28), and which would be the consummation of the age (for so it may be read), the finishing of that dispensation. Or, they thought the destruction of the temple must needs be the end of the world. If that house be laid waste, the world cannot stand; for the Rabbin used to say that the house of the sanctuary was one of the seven things for the sake of which the world was made; and they think, if so, the world will not survive the temple.

[2.] Others think their question, When shall these things be? refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the other two to the end of the world; or Christ's coming may refer to his setting up his gospel kingdom, and the end of the world to the day of judgment. I rather incline to think that their question looked no further than the event Christ now foretold; but it appears by other passages, that they had very confused thoughts of future events; so that perhaps it is not possible to put any certain construction upon this question of theirs.

But Christ, in his answer, though he does not expressly rectify the mistakes of his disciples (that must be done by the pouring out of the Spirit), yet looks further than their question, and instructs his church,

not only concerning the great events of that age, the destruction of Jerusalem, but concerning his second coming at the end of time, which here he insensibly slides into a discourse of, and of that it is plain he speaks in the next chapter, which is a continuation of this sermon.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world ?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

The disciples had asked concerning the times, When shall these things be? Christ gives them no answer to that, after what number of days and years his prediction should be accomplished, for it is not for us to know the times (Ac 1:7); but they had asked, What shall be the sign? That question he answers fully, for we are concerned to understand the signs of the times, Mt 16:3. Now the prophecy primarily respects the events near at hand--the destruction of Jerusalem, the period of the Jewish church and state, the calling of the Gentiles, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world; but as the prophecies of the Old Testament, which have an immediate reference to the affairs of the Jews and the revolutions of their state, under the figure of them do certainly look further, to the gospel church and the kingdom of the Messiah, and are so expounded in the New Testament, and such expressions are found in those predictions as are peculiar thereto and not applicable otherwise; so this prophecy, under the type of Jerusalem's destruction, looks as far forward as the general judgment; and, as is usual in prophecies, some passages are most applicable to the type, and others to the antitype; and toward the close, as usual, it points more particularly to the latter. It is observable, that what Christ here saith to his disciples tends more to engage their caution than to satisfy their curiosity; more to prepare them for the events that should happen than to give them a distinct idea of the events themselves. This is that good understanding of the time which we should all covet, thence to infer what Israel ought to do: and so this prophecy is of standing lasting use to the church, and will be so to the end of time; for the thing that hath been, is that which shall be (Ec 1:5,6,7,9), and the series, connection, and presages, of events, are much the same still that they were then; so that upon the prophecy of this chapter, pointing at that

event, moral prognostications may be made, and such constructions of the signs of the times as the wise man's heart will know how to improve.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

He foretels wars and great commotions among the nations, Mt 24:6,7. When Christ was born, there was a universal peace in the empire, the temple of Janus was shut; but think not that Christ came to send, or continue such a peace (Lu 12:51); no, his city and his wall are to be built even in troublesome times, and even wars shall forward his work. From the time that the Jews rejected Christ, and he left their house desolate, the sword did never depart from their house, the sword of the Lord was never quiet, because he had given it a charge against a hypocritical nation and the people of his wrath, and by it brought ruin upon them.

Here is,

1. A prediction of the event of the day; You will now shortly hear of wars, and rumours of wars. When wars are, they will be heard; for every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Isa 9:5. See how terrible it is (Jer 4:19), Thou hast heard, O my soul, the alarm of war! Even the quiet in the land, and the least inquisitive after new things, cannot but hear the rumours of war. See what comes of refusing the gospel! Those that will not hear the messengers of peace, shall be made to hear the messengers of war. God has a sword ready to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, his new covenant. Nation shall rise up against nation, that is, one part or province of the Jewish nation against another, one city against another (2Ch 15:5,6); and in the same province and city one party or faction shall rise up against another, so that they shall be devoured by, and dashed in pieces against one another, Isa 9:19-21.

2. A prescription of the duty of the day; See that ye be not troubled. Is it possible to hear such sad news, and not be troubled? Yet, where the heart is fixed, trusting in God, it is kept in peace, and is not afraid,

no not of the evil tidings of wars, and rumours of wars; no not the noise of Arm, arm. Be not troubled; Me throeithe--Be not put into confusion or commotion; not put into throes, as a woman with child by a fright; see that ye be not orate. Note, There is need of constant care and watchfulness to keep trouble from the heart when there are wars abroad; and it is against the mind of Christ, that his people should have troubled hearts even in troublous times.

We must not be troubled, for two reasons.

(a) Because we are bid to expect this: the Jews must be punished, ruin must be brought upon them; by this the justice of God and the honour of the Redeemer must be asserted; and therefore all those things must come to pass; the word is gone out of God's mouth, and it shall be accomplished in its season. Note, The consideration of the unchangeableness of the divine counsels, which govern all events, should compose and quiet our spirits, whatever happens. God is but performing the thing that is appointed for us, and our inordinate trouble is an interpretative quarrel with that appointment. Let us therefore acquiesce, because these things must come to pass; not only necessitate decreti--as the product of the divine counsel, but necessitate medii--as a means in order to a further end. The old house must be taken down (though it cannot be done without noise, and dust, and danger), ere the new fabric can be erected: the things that are shaken (and ill shaken they were) must be removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain, Heb 12:27.

(b) Because we are still to expect worse; The end is not yet; the end of time is not, and, while time lasts, we must expect trouble, and that the end of one affliction will be but the beginning of another; or, "The end of these troubles is not yet; there must be more judgments that one made use of to bring down the Jewish power; more vials of wrath must yet be poured out; there is but one woe past, more woes are yet to come, more arrows are yet to be spent upon them out of God's quiver; therefore be not troubled, do not give way to fear and trouble, sink not under the present burthen, but rather gather in all the strength and spirit you have, to encounter what is yet before you.

Be not troubled to hear of wars and rumours of wars; for then what will become of you when the famines and pestilences come?" If it be to us a vexation but to understand the report (Isa 28:19), what will it be to feel the stroke when it toucheth the bone and the flesh? If running with the footmen weary us, how shall we contend with horses? And if we be frightened at a little brook in our way, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? Jer 12:5.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.
9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you:
and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,)
16 then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:
17 let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:
18 neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.
19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!
20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:
21 for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.
23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there;
believe it not.
24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they
shall deceive the very elect.

Christ here foretels the going forth of deceivers; he begins with a caution, Take heed that no man deceive you. They expected to be told when these things should be, to be let into that secret; but this caution is a check to their curiosity, "What is that to you? Mind you your duty, follow me, and be not seduced from following me." Those that are most inquisitive concerning the secret things which belong not to them are most easily imposed upon by seducers, 2Th 2:3. The disciples, when they heard that the Jews, their most inveterate enemies, should be destroyed, might be in danger of falling into security; "Nay," saith Christ, "you are more exposed other ways." Seducers are more dangerous enemies to the church than persecutors.

Three times in this discourse he mentions the appearing of false prophets, which was, 1. A presage of Jerusalem's ruin. Justly were they who killed the true prophets, left to be ensnared by false prophets; and they who crucified the true Messiah, left to be deceived and broken by false Christs and pretended Messiahs. The appearing of these was the occasion of dividing that people into parties and factions, which made their ruin the more easy and speedy; and the sin of the many that were led aside by them, helped to fill the measure. 2. It was a trial to the disciples of Christ, and therefore agreeable to their state of probation, that they which are perfect, may be made manifest.

Now concerning these deceivers, observe here,

(a) The pretences they should come under. Satan acts most mischievously, when he appears as an angel of light: the colour of the greatest good is often the cover of the greatest evil.

[1.] There should appear false prophets (Mt 24:11-24); the deceivers would pretend to divine inspiration, an immediate mission, and a spirit of prophecy, when it was all a lie. Such they had been formerly (Jer 23:16,Eze 13:6), as was foretold, De 13:3. Some think, the seducers here pointed to were such as had been settled teachers in the church, and had gained reputation as such, but afterward

betrayed the truth they had taught, and revolted to error; and from such the danger is the greater, because least suspected. One false traitor in the garrison may do more mischief than a thousand avowed enemies without.

[2.] There should appear false Christs, coming in Christ's name (Mt 24:5), assuming to themselves the name peculiar to him, and saying, I am Christ, pseudo-christs, Mt 24:24. There was at that time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messiah; they spoke of him; as he that should come; but when he did come, the body of the nation rejected him; which those who were ambitious of making themselves a name, took advantage of, and set up for Christ. Josephus speaks of several such impostors between this and the destruction of Jerusalem; one Theudas, that was defeated by Cospius Fadus; another by Felix, another by Festus. Dosetheus said he was the Christ foretold by Moses. Origen adversus Celsum. See Ac 5:36,37. Simon Magus pretended to be the great power of God, Ac 8:10. In after-ages there have been such pretenders; one about a hundred years after Christ, that called himself Bar-cochobas--The son of a star, but proved Bar-cosba--The son of a lie. About fifty years ago Sabbati-Levi set up for a Messiah in the Turkish empire, and was greatly caressed by the Jews; but in a short time his folly was made manifest. See Sir Paul Rycaut's History. The popish religion doth, in effect, set up a false Christ; the Pope comes, in Christ's name, as his vicar, but invades and usurps all his offices, and so is a rival with him, and, as such, an enemy to him, a deceiver, and an antichrist.

[3.] These false Christs and false prophets would have their agents and emissaries busy in all places to draw people in to them, Mt 24:23. Then when public troubles are great and threatening, and people will be catching at any thing that looks like deliverance, then Satan will take the advantage of imposing on them; they will say, Lo, here is a Christ, or there is one; but do not mind them: the true Christ did not strive, nor cry; nor was it said of him, Lo, here! or Lo, there! (Lu 17:21), therefore if any man say so concerning him, look upon it as a temptation. The hermits, who place religion in a

monastical life, say, He is in the desert; the priests, who made the consecrated wafer to be Christ, say, "He is en tois tameiois--in the cupboards, in the secret chambers: lo, he is in this shrine, in that image." Thus some appropriate Christ's spiritual presence to one party or persuasion, as if they had the monopoly of Christ and Christianity; and the kingdom of Christ must stand and fall, must live and die, with them; "Lo, he is in this church, in that council:" whereas Christ is All in all, not here or there, but meets his people with a blessing in every place where he records his name.

(b) The proof they should offer for the making good of these pretences; They shall show great signs and wonders (Mt 24:24), not true miracles, those are a divine seal, and with those the doctrine of Christ stands confirmed; and therefore if any offer to draw us from that by signs and wonders, we must have recourse to that rule given of old (De 13:1-3), If the sign or wonder come to pass, yet follow not him that would draw you to serve other gods, or believe in other Christs, for the Lord your God proveth you. But these were lying wonders (2Th 2:9), wrought by Satan (God permitting him), who is the prince of the power of the air. It is not said, They shall work miracles, but, They shall show great signs; they are but a show; either they impose upon men's credulity by false narratives, or deceive their senses by tricks of legerdemain, or arts of divination, as the magicians of Egypt by their enchantments.

(c) The success they should have in these attempts,

[1.] They shall deceive many (Mt 24:5), and again, Mt 24:11. Note, The devil and his instruments may prevail far in deceiving poor souls; few find the strait gate, but many are drawn into the broad way; many will be imposed upon by their signs and wonders, and many drawn in by the hopes of deliverance from their oppressions. Note, Neither miracles nor multitudes are certain signs of a true church; for all the world wonders after the beast, Re 13:3.

[2.] They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, Mt 24:24. This bespeaks, First, The strength of the delusion; it is such as many

shall be carried away by (so strong shall the stream be), even those that were thought to stand fast. Men's knowledge, gifts, learning, eminent station, and long profession, will not secure them; but, notwithstanding these, many will be deceived; nothing but the almighty grace of God, pursuant to his eternal purpose, will be a protection. Secondly, The safety of the elect in the midst of this danger, which is taken for granted in that parenthesis, If it were possible, plainly implying that it is not possible, for they are kept by the power of God, that the purpose of God, according to the election, may stand. It is possible for those that have been enlightened to fall away (Heb 6:4,5,6), but not for those that were elected. If God's chosen ones should be deceived, God's choice would be defeated, which is not to be imagined, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified., Ro 8:29,30. They were given to Christ; and of all that were given to him, he will lose none, Joh 10:28. Grotius will have this to be meant of the great difficulty of drawing the primitive Christians from their religion, and quotes it as used proverbially by Galen; when he would express a thing very difficult and morally impossible, he saith, "You may sooner draw away a Christian from Christ."

(d) The repeated cautions which our Saviour gives to his disciples to stand upon their guard against them; therefore he gave them warning, that they might watch (Mt 24:25); Behold, I have told you before. He that is told before where he will be assaulted, may save himself, as the king of Israel did, 2Ki 6:9,10. Note, Christ's warnings are designed to engage our watchfulness; and though the elect shall be preserved from delusion, yet they shall be preserved by the use of appointed means, and a due regard to the cautions of the word; we are kept through faith, faith in Christ's word, which he has told us before.

[1.] We must not believe those who say, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, he is there, Mt 24:23. We believe that the true Christ is at the right hand of God, and that his spiritual presence is where two or three are gathered together in his name; believe not those therefore who would draw you off from a Christ in heaven, by telling you he is any where on earth; or by telling you he is here, or he is there; believe it not. Note, There is not a greater enemy to true faith than vain credulity. The simple believeth every word, and runs after every cry. Memneso apistein--Beware of believing.

[2.] We must not go forth after those that say, He is in the desert, or, He is in the secret chambers, Mt 24:26. We must not hearken to every empiric and pretender, nor follow every one that puts up the finger to point us to a new Christ, and a new gospel; "Go not forth, for if you do, you are in danger of being taken by them; therefore keep out of harm's way, be not carried about with every wind; many a man's vain curiosity to go forth hath led him into a fatal apostasy; your strength at such a time is to sit still, to have the heart established with grace."

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

The Coming of the Son of Man

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

We must expect them; "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree, Mt 24:32,33. Now learn what use to make of the things you have heard; so observe and understand the signs of the times, and compare them with the predictions of the word, as from thence to foresee what is at the door, that you may provide accordingly." The parable of the fig-tree is no more than this, that its budding and blossoming are a presage of summer; for as the stork in the heaven, so the trees of the field, know their appointed time. The beginning of the working of second causes assures us of the progress and perfection of it. Thus when God begins to fulfil prophecies, he will make an end. There is a certain series in the works of providence, as there is in the works of nature. The signs of the times are compared with the prognostics of the face of the sky (Mt 16:3), so here with those of the face of the earth; when that is renewed, we foresee that summer is coming, not immediately, but at some distance; after the branch grows tender, we expect the March winds, and the April showers, before the summer comes; however, we are sure it is coming; "so likewise ye, when the gospel day shall dawn, count upon it, that through this variety of events which I have told you of, the perfect day will come. The things revealed must shortly come to pass (Re 1:1); they must come in their own order, in the order appointed for them. Know that it is near." He does not here say what, but it is that which the hearts of his disciples are upon, and which they are inquisitive after, and long for; the kingdom of God is near, so it is expressed in the parallel place, Lu 21:31. Note, When the trees of righteousness begin to bud and blossom, when God's people promise faithfulness, it is a happy presage of good times. In them God begins his work, first prepares their heart, and then he will go on with it; for, as for God, his work is perfect; and he will revive it in the midst of their years.

33 so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Christ here assures us of the certainty of them (Mt 24:35); Heaven and earth shall pass away; they continue this day indeed, according to God's ordinance, but they shall not continue for ever (Ps 102:25,26,2Pe 3:10); but my words shall not pass away. Note, The word of Christ is more sure and lasting than heaven and earth. Hath he spoken? And shall he not do it? We may build with more assurance upon the word of Christ than we can upon the pillars of heaven, or the strong foundations of the earth; for, when they shall be made to tremble and totter, and shall be no more, the word of Christ shall remain, and be in full force, power, and virtue. See 1Pe 1:24,25. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than the word of Christ; so it is expressed, Lu 16:17. Compare Isa 54:10. The accomplishment of these prophecies might seem to be delayed, and intervening events might seem to disagree with them, but do not think that therefore the word of Christ is fallen to the ground, for that shall never pass away: though it be not fulfilled, either in the time or in the way that we have prescribed; yet, in God's time, which is the best time, and in God's way, which is the best way, it shall certainly be fulfilled. Every word of Christ is very pure, and therefore very sure.

He here instructs us as to the time of them, Mt 24:34,36. As to this, it is well observed by the learned Grotius, that there is a manifest distinction made between the tauta (Mt 24:34), and the ekeine (Mt 24:36), these things, and that day and hour; which will help to clear this prophecy.

(a) As to these things, the wars, seductions, and persecutions, here foretold, and especially the ruin of the Jewish nation; "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled (Mt 24:34); there are those now alive, that shall see Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jewish church brought to an end." Because it might seem strange, he backs it with a solemn asseveration; "Verily, I say unto you. You may take my word for it, these things are at the door." Christ often speaks of the nearness of that desolation, the more to affect people, and quicken them to prepare for it. Note, There may be greater trials and troubles yet before us, in our own day, than we

are aware of. They that are old, know not what sons of Anak may be reserved for their last encounters.

(b) But as to that day and hour which will put a period to time, that knoweth no man, Mt 24:36. Therefore take heed of confounding these two, as they did, who, from the words of Christ and the apostles; letters, inferred that the day of Christ was at hand, 2Th 2:2. No, it was not; this generation, and many another, shall pass, before that day and hour come. Note,

[1.] There is a certain day and hour fixed for the judgment to come; it is called the day of the Lord, because so unalterably fixed. None of God's judgments are adjourned sine die--without the appointment of a certain day.

[2.] That day and hour are a great secret.
Prudens futuri temporis exitum Caliginosa nocte premit Deus. But Heaven has wisely hid from human sight The dark decrees of future fate, And sown their seeds in depth of nights.--HORACE.

No man knows it; not the wisest by their sagacity, not the best by any divine discovery. We all know that there shall be such a day; but none knows when it shall be, no, not the angels; though their capacities for knowledge are great, and their opportunities of knowing this advantageous (they dwell at the fountain-head of light), and though they are to be employed in the solemnity of that day, yet they are not told when it shall be: none knows but my Father only. This is one of those secret things which belong to the Lord our God. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming, is, to those who are watchful, a savour of life unto life, and makes them more watchful; but to those who are careless, it is a savour of death unto death, and makes them more careless.

No Man Knoweth the Day and Hour

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

37 But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

To this end we must expect these events, that we may prepare for them; and here we have a caution against security and sensuality, which will make it a dismal day indeed to us, Mt 24:37-41. In these verses we have such an idea given us of the judgment day, as may serve to startle and awaken us, that we may not sleep as others do.

It will be a surprising day, and a separating day.

1. It will be a surprising day, as the deluge was to the old world, Mt 24:37-39. That which he here intends to describe, is, the posture of the world at the coming of the Son of man; besides his first coming, to save, he has other comings to judge. He saith (Joh 9:39), For judgment I am come; and for judgment he will come; for all judgment is committed to him, both that of the word, and that of the sword.

Now this here is applicable,

(a) To temporal judgments, particularly that which was now hastening upon the nation and people of the Jews; though they had fair warning given them of it, and there were many prodigies that were presages of it, yet it found them secure, crying, Peace and safety, 1Th 5:3. The siege was laid to Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, when they were met at the passover in the midst of their mirth; like the men of Laish, they dwelt careless when the ruin arrested them, Jdg 18:7,27. The destruction of Babylon, both that in the Old Testament and that in the New, comes when she saith, I shall be a lady for ever, Isa 47:7-9,Re 18:7. Therefore the plagues come in a moment, in one day. Note, Men's unbelief shall not make God's threatenings of no effect.

(b) To the eternal judgment; so the judgment of the great day is called, Heb 6:2. Though notice has been given of it from Enoch, yet, when it comes, it will be unlooked for by the most of men; the latter

days, which are nearest to that day, will produce scoffers, that say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2Pe 3:3,4,Lu 18:8. Thus it will be when the world that now is shall be destroyed by fire; for thus it was when the old world, being overflowed by water, perished, 2Pe 3:6,7. Now Christ here shows what were the temper and posture of the old world when the deluge came.

[1.] They were sensual and worldly; they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. It is not said, They were killing and stealing, and whoring and swearing (these were indeed the horrid crimes of some of the worst of them; the earth was full of violence); but they were all of them, except Noah, over head and ears in the world, and regardless of the word of God, and this ruined them. Note, Universal neglect of religion is a more dangerous symptom to any people than particular instances here and there of daring irreligion. Eating and drinking are necessary to the preservation of man's life; marrying and giving in marriage are necessary to the preservation of mankind; but, Licitus perimus omnes--These lawful things undo us, unlawfully managed. First, They were unreasonable in it, inordinate and entire in the pursuit of the delights of sense, and the gains of the world; they were wholly taken up with these things, esan trogontes--they were eating; they were in these things as in their element, as if they had their being for no other end than to eat and drink, Isa 56:12. Secondly, They were unreasonable in it; they were entire and intent upon the world and the flesh, when the destruction was at the door, which they had had such fair warning of. They were eating and drinking, when they should have been repenting and praying; when God, by the ministry of Noah, called to weeping and mourning, then joy and gladness. This was to them, as it was to Israel afterwards, the unpardonable sin (Isa 22:12,14), especially, because it was in defiance of those warnings by which they should have been awakened. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; if it must be a short life, let it be a merry one." The apostle James speaks of this as the general practice of the wealthy Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem; when they should have been weeping for the miseries that were coming upon them, they were living in pleasure, and nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter, Jam 5:1,5.

39 and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

They were secure and careless; they knew not, until the flood came, Mt 24:39. Knew not! Surely they could not but know. Did not God, by Noah, give them fair warning of it? Did he not call them to repentance, while his long-suffering waited? 1Pe 3:19,20. But they knew not, that is, they believed not; they might have known, but would not know. Note, What we know of the things that belong to our everlasting peace, if we do not mix faith with it, and improve it, is all one as if we did not know it at all. Their not knowing is joined with their eating, and drinking, and marrying; for,

First, Therefore they were sensual, because they were secure. Note, the reason why people are so eager in the pursuit, and so entangled in the pleasures of this world, is, because they do not know, and believe, and consider, the eternity which they are upon the brink of. Did we know aright that all these things must shortly be dissolved, and we must certainly survive them, we should not set our eyes and hearts so much upon them as we do.

Secondly, Therefore they were secure, because they were sensual; therefore they knew not that the flood was coming, because they were eating and drinking; were so taken up with things seen and present, that they had neither time nor heart to mind the things not seen as yet, which they were warned of. Note, As security bolsters men up in their brutal sensuality; so sensuality rocks them asleep in their carnal security. The knew not, until the flood came.

1 The flood did come, though they would not foresee it. Note, Those that will not know by faith, shall be made to know by feeling, the wrath of God revealed from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness. The evil day is never the further off for men's putting it far off from them.

2. They did not know it till it was too late to prevent it, as they might have done if they had known it in time, which made it so much the

more grievous. Judgments are most terrible and amazing to the secure, and those that have made a jest of them.

The application of this, concerning the old world, we have in these words; So shall the coming of the Son of man be; that is,

(a) In such a posture shall he find people, eating and drinking, and not expecting him. Note, Security and sensuality are likely to be the epidemical diseases of the latter days. All slumber and sleep, and at midnight the bridegroom comes. All are off their watch, and at their ease.

(b) With such a power, and for such a purpose, will he come upon them. As the flood took away the sinners of the old world, irresistibly and irrecoverably; so shall secure sinners, that mocked at Christ and his coming, be taken away by the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath comes, which will be like the coming of the deluge, a destruction which there is no fleeing from.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

It will be a separating day (Mt 24:40,41); Then shall two be in the field. Two ways this may be applied.

(a) We may apply it to the success of the gospel, especially at the first preaching of it; it divided the world; some believed the things which were spoken, and were taken to Christ; others believed not, and were left to perish in their unbelief. Those of the same age, place, capacity, employment, and condition, in the world, grinding in the same mill, those of the same family, nay, those that were joined in the same bond of marriage, were, one effectually called, the other passed by, and left in the gall of bitterness. This is that division, that separating fire, which Christ came to send, Lu 12:49,51. This renders free grace the more obliging, that it is distinguishing; to us, and not to the world (Joh 14:22), nay to us, and not to those in the same field, the same mill, the same house.

When ruin came upon Jerusalem, a distinction was made by Divine Providence, according to that which had been before made by divine

grace; for all the Christians among them were saved from perishing in that calamity, by the special care of Heaven. If two were at work in the field together, and one of them was a Christian, he was taken into a place of shelter, and had his life given him for a prey, while the other was left to the sword of the enemy. Nay, if but two women were grinding at the mill, if one of them belonged to Christ, though but a woman, a poor woman, a servant, she was taken to a place of safety, and the other abandoned. Thus the meek of the earth are hid in the day of the Lord's anger (Zep 2:3), either in heaven, or under heaven. Note, Distinguishing preservations, in times of general destruction, are special tokens of God's favour, and ought so to be acknowledged. If we are safe when thousands fall on our right hand and our left, are not consumed when others are consumed round about us, so that we are as brands plucked out of the fire, we have reason to say, It is of the Lord's mercies, and it is a great mercy.

(b) We may apply it to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the separation which will be made in that day. He had said before (Mt 24:31), that the elect will be gathered together. Here he tells us, that, in order to that, they will be distinguished from those who were nearest to them in this world; the choice and chosen ones taken to glory, the other left to perish eternally. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth, two in the same grave, their ashed mixed, shall yet arise, one to be taken to everlasting life, the other left to shame and everlasting contempt, Da 12:2. Here it is applied to them who shall be found alive. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy at their usual occupations, in the field, at the mill; and then, according as they are vessels of mercy prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath prepared for ruin, accordingly it will be with them; the one taken to meet the Lord and his angels in the air, to be for ever with him and them; the other left to the devil and his angels, who, when Christ has gathered out his own, will sweep up the residue. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. And it speaks abundance of comfort to the Lord's people.

[1.] Are they mean and despised in the world, as the man-servant in the field, or the maid at the mill (Ex 11:5)? Yet they shall not be forgotten or overlooked in that day. The poor in the world, if rich in faith, are heirs of the kingdom.

[2.] Are they dispersed in distant and unlikely places, where one would not expect to find the heirs of glory, in the field, at the mill? Yet the angels will find them there (hidden as Saul among the stuff, when they are to be enthroned), and fetch them thence; and well may they be said to be changed, for a very great change it will be to go to heaven from ploughing and grinding.

[3.] Are they weak, and unable of themselves to move heavenward? They shall be taken, or laid hold of, as Lot was taken out of Sodom by a gracious violence, Ge 19:16. Those whom Christ has once apprehended and laid hold on, he will never lose his hold of.

[4.] Are they intermixed with others, linked with them in the same habitations, societies, employments? Let not that discourage any true Christian; God knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, the gold and dross in the same lump, the wheat and chaff in the same floor.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Here is a general exhortation to us, to watch, and be ready against that day comes, enforced by divers weighty considerations, Mt 24:42, &c. Observe,

1 The duty required; Watch, and be ready, Mt 24:42,44.

(a) Watch therefore, Mt 24:42. Note, It is the great duty and interest of all the disciples of Christ to watch, to be awake and keep awake, that they may mind their business. As a sinful state or way is

compared to sleep, senseless and inactive (1Th 5:6), so a gracious state or way is compared to watching and waking. We must watch for our Lord's coming, to us in particular at our death, after which is the judgment, that is the great day with us, the end of our time; and his coming at the end of all time to judge the world, the great day with all mankind. To watch implies not only to believe that our Lord will come, but to desire that he would come, to be often thinking of his coming, and always looking for it as sure and near, and the time of it uncertain. To watch for Christ's coming, is to maintain that gracious temper and disposition of mind which we should be willing that our Lord, when he comes, should find us in. To watch is to be aware of the first notices of his approach, that we may immediately attend his motions, and address ourselves to the duty of meeting him. Watching is supposed to be in the night, which is sleeping time; while we are in this world, it is night with us, and we must take pains to keep ourselves awake.

(b) Be ye also ready. We wake in vain, if we do not get ready. It is not enough to look for such things; but we must therefore give diligence, 2Pe 3:11,14. We have then our Lord to attend upon, and we must have our lamps ready trimmed; a cause to be tried, and we must have our plea ready drawn and signed by our Advocate; a reckoning to make up, and we must have our accounts ready stated and balanced; there is an inheritance which we then hope to enter upon, and we must have ourselves ready, made meet to partake of it, Col 1:12.

2 The reasons to induce us to this watchfulness and diligent preparation for that day; which are two.

Because the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain. This is the reason immediately annexed to the double exhortation (Mt 24:42,44); and it is illustrated by a comparison, Mt 24:43. Let us consider then,

[1.] That we know not what hour he will come, Mt 24:42. We know not the day of our death, Ge 27:2. We may know that we have but a

little time to live (The time of my departure is at hand, 2Ti 4:6); but we cannot know that we have a long time to live, for our souls are continually in our hands; nor can we know how little a time we have to live, for it may prove less than we expect; much less do we know the time fixed for the general judgment. Concerning both we are kept at uncertainty, that we may, every day, expect that which may come any day; may never boast of a year's continuance (Jam 4:13), no, nor of tomorrow's return, as if it were ours, Pr 27:1,Lu 12:20.

[2.] That he may come at such an hour as we think not, Mt 24:44. Though there be such uncertainty in the time, there is none in the thing itself: though we know not when he will come, we are sure he will come. His parting word was, Surely I come quickly; his saying, "I come surely," obliges us to expect him: his saying "I come quickly." obliges us to be always expecting him; for it keeps us in a state of expectancy. In such an hour as you think not, that is, such an hour as they who are unready and unprepared, think not (Mt 24:50); nay, such an hour as the most lively expectants perhaps thought least likely. The bridegroom came when the wise were slumbering. It is agreeable to our present state, that we should be under the influence of a constant and general expectation, rather than that of particular presages and prognostications, which we are sometimes tempted vainly to desire and wish for.

[3.] That the children of this world are thus wise in their generation, that, when they know of a danger approaching, they will keep awake, and stand on their guard against it. This he shows in a particular instance, Mt 24:43. If the master of a house had notice that a thief would come such a night, and such a watch of the night (for they divided the night into four watches, allowing three hours to each), and would make an attempt upon his house, though it were the midnight-watch, when he was most sleepy, yet he would be up, and listen to every noise in every corner, and be ready to give him a warm reception. Now, though we know not just when our Lord will come, yet, knowing that he will come, and come quickly, and without any other warning than what he hath given in his word, it concerns us to watch always. Note,

First, We have every one of us a house to keep, which lies exposed, in which all we are worth is laid up: that house is our own souls, which we must keep with all diligence.

Secondly, The day of the Lord comes by surprise, as a thief in the night. Christ chooses to come when he is least expected, that the triumphs of his enemies may be turned into the greater shame, and the fears of his friends into the greater joy.

Thirdly, If Christ, when he comes, finds us asleep and unready, our house will be broken up, and we shall lose all we are worth, not as by a thief unjustly, but as by a just and legal process; death and judgment will seize upon all we have, to our irreparable damage and utter undoing. Therefore be ready, be ye also ready; as ready at all times as the good man of the house would be at the hour when he expected the thief: we must put on the armour of God, that we may not only stand in that evil day, but, as more than conquerors, may divide the spoil.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

The Unfaithful Servant

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Because the issue of our Lord's coming will be very happy and comfortable to those that shall be found ready, but very dismal and dreadful to those that shall not, Mt 24:45, &c. This is represented by the different state of good and bad servants, when their lord comes to reckon with them. It is likely to be well or ill with us to eternity, according as we are found ready or unready at that day; for Christ comes to render to every man according to his works. Now this parable, with which the chapter closes, is applicable to all Christians, who are in profession and obligation God's servants; but it seems especially intended as a warning to ministers; for the servant spoken of is a steward. Now observe what Christ here saith,

Concerning the good servant; he shows here what he is--a ruler of the household; what, being so, he should be--faithful and wise; and what, if he be so, he shall be eternally-blessed. Here are good instructions and encouragements to the ministers of Christ.

First, We have here his place and office. He is one whom the Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season. Note,

1.The church of Christ is his household, or family, standing in relation to him as the Father and Master of it. It is the household of God, a family named from Christ, Eph 3:15.

2. Gospel ministers are appointed rulers in this household; not at princes (Christ has entered a caveat against that), but as stewards, or other subordinate officers; not as lords, but as guides; not to prescribe new ways, but to show and lead in the ways that Christ has appointed: that is the signification of the hegoumenoi, which we translate, having rule over you (Heb 13:17); as overseers, not to cut out new work, but to direct in, and quicken to, the work which Christ has ordered; that is the signification of episkopoi--bishops. They are rulers by Christ; what power they have is derived from him, and none may take it from them, or abridge it to them; he is one whom the Lord has made ruler; Christ has the making of ministers. They are rulers under Christ, and act in subordination to him; and rulers for Christ, for the advancement of his kingdom. 3. The work of gospel ministers is to give to Christ's household their meat in due season, as stewards, and therefore they have the keys delivered to them.

(a) Their work is to give, not take to themselves (Eze 34:8), but give to the family what the Master has bought, to dispense what Christ has purchased. And to ministers it is said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, Ac 20:35.

(b) It is to give meat; not to give law (that is Christ's work), but to deliver those doctrines to the church which, if duly digested, will be nourishment to souls. They must give, not the poison of false doctrines, not the stones of hard and unprofitable doctrines, but the meat that is sound and wholesome.

(c) It must be given in due season, en kairo--while there is time for it; when eternity comes, it will be too late; we must work while it is day: or in time, that is, whenever any opportunity offers itself; or in the stated time, time after time, according as the duty of every day requires.

Secondly, His right discharge of this office. The good servant, if thus preferred, will be a good steward; for,

1. He is faithful; stewards must be so, 1Co 4:2. He that is trusted, must be trusty; and the greater the trust is, the more is expected from them. It is a great good thing that is committed to ministers (2Ti 1:14); and they must be faithful, as Moses was, Heb 3:2. Christ counts those ministers, and those only, that are faithful, 1Ti 1:12. A faithful minister of Jesus Christ is one that sincerely designs his master's honour, not his own; delivers the whole counsel of God, not his own fancies and conceits; follows Christ's institutions and adheres to them; regards the meanest, reproves the greatest, and doth not respect persons.

2. He is wise to understand his duty and the proper season of it; and in guiding of the flock there is need, not only of the integrity of the heart, but the skilfulness of the hands. Honesty may suffice for a good servant, but wisdom is necessary to a good steward; for it is profitable to direct.

3. He is doing; so doing as his office requires. The ministry is a good work, and they whose office it is, have always something to do; they must not indulge themselves in ease, nor leave the work undone, or carelessly turn it off to others, but be doing, and doing to the purpose--so doing, giving meat to the household, minding their own

business, and not meddling with that which is foreign; so doing as the Master has appointed, as the office imports, and as the case of the family requires; not talking, but doing. It was the motto Mr. Perkins used, Minister verbi es--You are a minister of the word. Not only Age--Be doing; but Hoc age--Be so doing.

4. He is found doing when his Master comes; which intimates,

(a) Constancy at his work. At what hour soever his Master comes, he is found busy at the work of the day. Ministers should not leave empty spaces in their time, lest their Lord should come in one of those empty spaces. As with a good God the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so with a good man, a good minister, the end of one duty is the beginning of another. When Calvin was persuaded to remit his ministerial labours, he answered, with some resentment, "What, would you have my Master find me idle?"

(b) Perseverance in his work till the Lord come. Hold fast till then, Re 2:25. Continue in these things, 1Ti 4:16,6:14. Endure to the end.

Thirdly, The recompense of reward intended him for this, in three things.

1. He shall be taken notice of. This is intimated in these words, Who then is that faithful and wise servant? Which supposes that there are but few who answer this character; such an interpreter is one of a thousand, such a faithful and wise steward. Those who thus distinguish themselves now by humility, diligence, and sincerity in their work, Christ will in the great day both dignify and distinguish by the glory conferred on them.

2. He shall be blessed? Blessed is that servant; and Christ's pronouncing him blessed makes him so. All the dead that die n the Lord are blessed, Re 14:13. But there is a peculiar blessedness secured to them that approve themselves faithful stewards, and are found so doing. Next to the honour of those who die in the field of battle, suffering for Christ as the martyrs, is the honour of those that

die in the field of service, ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, for Christ.

3. He shall be preferred (Mt 24:47); He shall make him ruler over all his goods. The allusion is to the way of great men, who, if the stewards of their house conduct themselves well in that place, commonly prefer them to be the managers of their estates; thus Joseph was preferred in the house of Potiphar, Ge 29:4,6. But the greatest honour which the kindest master ever did to his most tried servants in this world, is nothing to that weight of glory which the Lord Jesus will confer upon his faithful watchful servants in the world to come. What is here said by a similitude, is the same that is said more plainly, Joh 11:26, Him will my Father honour. And God's servants, when thus preferred; shall be perfect in wisdom and holiness to bear that weight of glory, so that there is no danger from these servants when they reign.

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.
48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;
49 and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

Concerning the evil servant. Here we have,

First, His description given (Mt 24:48,49); where we have the wretch drawn in his own colours. The vilest of creatures is a wicked man, the vilest of men is a wicked Christian, and the vilest of them a wicked minister. Corruptio optimi est pessima--What is best, when corrupted, becomes the worst. Wickedness in the prophets of Jerusalem is a horrible thing indeed, Jer 23:14. Here is,

1 The cause of his wickedness; and that is, a practical disbelief of Christ's second coming; He hath said in his heart, My Lord delays his coming; and therefore he begins to think he will never come, but has quite forsaken his church. Observe,

(a) Christ knows that they say in their hearts, who with their lips cry, Lord, Lord, as this servant here.

(b) The delay of Christ's coming, though it is a gracious instance of his patience, is greatly abused by wicked people, whose hearts are thereby hardened in their wicked ways. When Christ's coming is looked upon as doubtful, or a thing at an immense distance, the hearts of men are fully set to do evil, Ec 8:11. See Eze 12:27. They that walk by sense, are ready to say of the unseen Jesus, as the people did of Moses when he tarried in the mount upon their errand, We wot not what is become of him, and therefore up, make us gods, the world a god, the belly a god, any thing but him that should be.

2 The particulars of his wickedness; and they are sins of the first magnitude; he is a slave to his passions and his appetites.

(a) Persecution is here charged upon him. He begins to smite his fellow servants. Note,

[1.] Even the stewards of the house are to look upon all the servants of the house as their fellow servants, and therefore are forbidden to lord it over them. If the angel call himself fellow servant to John (Re 19:10), no marvel if John have learned to call himself brother to the Christians of the churches of Asia, Re 1:9.

[2.] It is no new thing to see evil servants smiting their fellow servants; both private Christians and faithful ministers. He smites them, either because they reprove him, or because they will not bow, and do him reverence; will not say as he saith, and do as he doeth, against their consciences: he smites them with the tongue, as they smote the prophet, Jer 18:18. And if he get power into his hand, or can press those into his service that have, as the ten horns upon the head of the beast, it goes further. Pashur the priest smote Jeremiah, and put him in the stocks, Jer 20:2 The revolters have often been of all others most profound to make slaughter, Ho 5:2 The steward, when he smites his fellow servants, does it under colour of his Master's authority, and in his name; he says, Let the Lord be glorified (Isa 66:5); but he shall know that he could not put a greater affront upon his Master.

(b) Profaneness and immorality; He begins to eat and drink with the drunken.

[1.] He associates with the worst of sinners, has fellowship with them, is intimate with them; he walks in their counsel, stands in their way, sits in their seat, and sings their songs. The drunken are the merry and jovial company, and those he is for, and thus he hardens them in their wickedness.

[2.] He does like them; eats, and drinks, and is drunken; so it is in Luke. This is an inlet to all manner of sin. Drunkenness is a leading wickedness; they who are slaves to that, are never masters of themselves in any thing else. The persecutors of God's people have commonly been the most vicious and immoral men. Persecuting consciences, whatever the pretensions be, are commonly the most profligate and debauched consciences. What will not they be drunk with, that will be drunk with the blood of the saints? Well, this is the description of a wicked minister, who yet may have the common gifts of learning and utterance above others; and, as hath been said of some, may preach so well in the pulpit, that it is a pity he should ever come out, and yet live so ill out of the pulpit, that it is a pity he should ever come in.

Secondly, His doom read, Mt 24:50,51. The coat and character of wicked ministers will not only not secure them from condemnation, but will greatly aggravate it. They can plead no exemption from Christ's jurisdiction, whatever they pretend to, in the church of Rome, from that of the civil magistrate; there is no benefit of clergy at Christ's bar. Observe,

1 The surprise that will accompany his doom (Mt 24:50); The Lord of that servant will come. Note,

(a) Our putting off the thoughts of Christ's coming will not put off his coming. Whatever fancy he deludes himself with, his Lord will

come. The unbelief of man shall not make that great promise, or threatening (call it which you will), of no effect.

(b) The coming of Christ will be a most dreadful surprise to secure and careless sinners, especially to wicked ministers; He shall come in a day when he looketh not for him. Note, Those that have slighted the warnings of the word, and silenced those of their own consciences concerning the judgment to come, cannot expect any other warnings; these will be adjudged sufficient legal notice given, whether taken or no; and no unfairness can be charged on Christ, if he come suddenly, without giving other notice. Behold, he has told us before.

2 The severity of his doom, Mt 24:51. It is not more severe than righteous, but it is a doom that carries in it utter ruin, wrapt up in two dreadful words, death and damnation.

Death. His Lord shall cut him asunder, dikotomesei auton, "he shall cut him off from the land of the living," from the congregation of the righteous, shall separate him unto evil; which is the definition of a curse (De 29:21), shall cut him down, as a tree that cumbers the ground; perhaps it alludes to the sentence often used in the law, That soul shall be cut off from his people; denoting an utter extirpation. Death cuts off a good man, as a choice imp is cut off to be grafted in a better stock; but it cuts off a wicked man, as a withered branch is cut off for the fire-cuts him off from this world, which he set his heart so much upon, and was, as it were, one with. Or, as we read it, shall cut him asunder, that is, part body and soul, send the body to the grave to be a prey for worms, and the soul to hell to be a prey for devils, and there is the sinner cut asunder. The soul and body of a godly man at death part fairly, the one cheerfully lifted up to God, the other left to the dust; but the soul and body of a wicked man at death are cut asunder, torn asunder, for to them death is the king of terrors, Job 18:14. The wicked servant divided himself between God and the world, Christ and Belial, his profession and his lusts, justly therefore will he thus be divided.

him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,
51 and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew-25

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

That in general which is to be illustrated is, the kingdom of heaven, the state of things under the gospel, the external kingdom of Christ, and the administration and success of it. Some of Christ's parables had shown us what it is like now in the present reception of it, as Mt 13:1-52 This tells us what it shall be like, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and that kingdom delivered up to the Father. The administration of Christ's government, towards the ready and the unready in the great day, may be illustrated by this similitude; or the kingdom is put for the subjects of the kingdom. The professors of Christianity shall then be likened to these ten virgins, and shall be thus distinguished.

The virgins are the professors of religion, members of the church; but here represented as her companions (Ps 45:14), as elsewhere her children (Isa 54:1), her ornaments, Isa 49:18. They that follow the Lamb, are said to be virgins (Re 14:4); this denotes their beauty and purity; they are to be presented as chaste virgins to Christ, 2Co 11:2 The bridegroom is a king; so these virgins are maids of honour, virgins without number (So 6:8), yet here said to be ten.

The office of these virgins is to meet the bridegroom, which is as much their happiness as their duty. They come to wait upon the bridegroom when he appears, and in the mean time to wait for him. See here the nature of Christianity. As Christians, we profess ourselves to be,

(1.) Attendants upon Christ, to do him honour, as the glorious Bridegroom, to be to him for a name and a praise, especially then when he shall come to be glorified in his saints. We must follow him as honorary servants do their masters, Joh 12:26. Hold up the name, and hold forth the praise of the exalted Jesus; this is our business.

(2.) Expectants of Christ, and of his second coming. As Christians, we profess, not only to believe and look for, but to love and long for, the appearing of Christ, and to act in our whole conversation with a regard to it. The second coming of Christ is the centre in which all the lines of our religion meet, and to which the whole of the divine life hath a constant reference and tendency.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

They are not distinguished into good and bad, as TRENCH observes, but into "wise" and "foolish"—just as in Mt 7:25-27 those who reared their house for eternity are distinguished into "wise" and "foolish builders"; because in both cases a certain degree of goodwill towards the truth is assumed. To make anything of the equal number of both classes would, we think, be precarious, save to warn us how large a portion of those who, up to the last, so nearly resemble those that love Christ's appearing will be disowned by Him when He comes.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

Their chief concern is to have lights in their hands, when they attend the bridegroom, thus to do him honour and do him service. Note, Christians are children of light. The gospel is light, and they who receive it must not only be enlightened by it themselves, but must shine as lights, must hold it forth, Php 2:15,16. This in general.

Now concerning these ten virgins, we may observe,

(1.) Their different character, with the proof and evidence of it.

[1.] Their character was that five were wise, and five foolish (Mt 25:2); and wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness;

so saith Solomon, a competent judge, Ec 2:13. Note, Those of the same profession and denomination among men, may yet be of characters vastly different in the sight of God. Sincere Christians are the wise virgins, and hypocrites the foolish ones, as in another parable they are represented by wise and foolish builders. Note, Those are wise or foolish indeed, that are so in the affairs of their souls. True religion is true wisdom; sin is folly, but especially the sin of hypocrisy, for those are the greatest fools, that are wise in their own conceit, and those the worst of sinners, that feign themselves just men. Some observe from the equal number of the wise and foolish, what a charitable decorum (it is Archbishop Tillotson's expression) Christ observes, as if he would hope that the number of true believers was nearly equal to that of hypocrites, or, at least, would teach us to hope the best concerning those that profess religion, and to think of them with a bias to the charitable side. Though, in judging of ourselves, we ought to remember that the gate is strait, and few find it; yet, in judging of others, we ought to remember that the Captain of our salvation brings many sons to glory.

[2.] The evidence of this character was in the very thing which they were to attend to; by that they are judged of.

First, It was the folly of the foolish virgins, that they took their lamps, and took no oil with them, Mt 25:3. They had just the oil enough to make their lamps burn for the present, to make a show with, as if they intended to meet the bridegroom; but no cruse or bottle of oil with them for a recruit if the bridegroom tarried; thus hypocrites,

1. They have no principle within. They have a lamp of profession in their hands, but have not in their hearts that stock of sound knowledge, rooted dispositions, and settled resolutions, which is necessary to carry them through the services and trials of the present state. They act under the influence of external inducements, but are void of spiritual life; like a tradesman, that sets up without a stock, or the seed on the stony ground, that wanted root.

2. They have no prospect of, nor make provision for, what is to come. They took lamps for a present show, but not oil for after use. This incogitancy is the ruin of many professors; all their care is to recommend themselves to their neighbours, whom they now converse with, not to approve themselves to Christ, whom they must hereafter appear before; as if any thing will serve, provide it will but serve for the present. Tell them of things not seen as yet, and you are like Lot to his sons-in-law, as one that mocked. They do not provide for hereafter, as the ant does, nor lay up for the time to come, 1Ti 6:19.

Secondly, It was the wisdom of the wise virgins, that they took oil in their vessels with their lamps, Mt 25:4. They had a good principle within, which would maintain and keep up their profession.

1 The heart is the vessel, which it is our wisdom to get furnished; for, out of a good treasure there, good things must be brought; but if that root be rottenness, the blossom will be dust.

2. Grace is the oil which we must have in this vessel; in the tabernacle there was constant provision made of oil for the light, Ex 35:14. Our light must shine before men in good works, but this cannot be, or not long, unless there be a fixed active principle in the heart, of faith in Christ, and love to God and our brethren, from which we must act in every thing we do in religion, with an eye to what is before us. They that took oil in their vessels, did it upon supposition that perhaps the bridegroom might tarry. Note, In looking forward it is good to prepare for the worst, to lay in for a long siege. But remember that this oil which keeps the lamps burning, is derived to the candlestick from Jesus Christ, the great and good Olive, by the golden pipes of the ordinances, as it is represented in that vision (Zec 4:2,3,12), which is explained Joh 1:16, Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

What are these "lamps" and this "oil"? Many answers have been given. But since the foolish as well as the wise took their lamps and went forth with them to meet the Bridegroom, these lighted lamps

and this advance a certain way in company with the wise, must denote that Christian profession which is common to all who bear the Christian name; while the insufficiency of this without something else, of which they never possessed themselves, shows that "the foolish" mean those who, with all that is common to them with real Christians, lack the essential preparation for meeting Christ. Then, since the wisdom of "the wise" consisted in their taking with their lamps a supply of oil in their vessels, keeping their lamps burning till the Bridegroom came, and so fitting them to go in with Him to the marriage, this supply of oil must mean that inward reality of grace which alone will stand when He appears whose eyes are as a flame of fire. But this is too general; for it cannot be for nothing that this inward grace is here set forth by the familiar symbol of oil, by which the Spirit of all grace is so constantly represented in Scripture. Beyond all doubt, this was what was symbolized by that precious anointing oil with which Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priestly office (Ex 30:23-25,30); by "the oil of gladness above His fellows" with which Messiah was to be anointed (Ps 45:7,Heb 1:9), even as it is expressly said, that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (Joh 3:34); and by the bowl full of golden oil, in Zechariah's vision, which, receiving its supplies from the two olive trees on either side of it, poured it through seven golden pipes into the golden lamp-stand to keep it continually burning bright (Zec 4:1-14) —for the prophet is expressly told that it was to proclaim the great truth, "Not by might, nor by power, but by MY SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts [shall this temple be built]. Who art thou, O great mountain [of opposition to this issue]? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain [or, be swept out of the way], and he shall bring forth the head stone [of the temple], with shoutings [crying], GRACE, GRACE unto it." This supply of oil, then, representing that inward grace which distinguishes the wise, must denote, more particularly, that "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," which, as it is the source of the new spiritual life at the first, is the secret of its enduring character. Everything short of this may be possessed by "the foolish"; while it is the possession of this that makes "the wise" to be "ready" when the Bridegroom appears, and fit to "go in with Him to the marriage." Just so in the parable of the Sower, the stony-

ground hearers, "having no deepness of earth" and "no root in themselves" Mt 13:5,Mk 4:17), though they spring up and get even into ear, never ripen, while they in the good ground bear the precious grain.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Christ "tarries," among other reasons, to try the faith and patience of His people.

Such was the state alike of the wise and the foolish virgins, even till the cry of the Bridegroom's approach awoke them. So likewise in the parable of the Importunate Widow: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Lu 18:8).

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

And at midnight—that is, the time when the Bridegroom will be least expected; for "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1Th 5:2).

The surprising summons given them, to attend the bridegroom (Mt 25:6); At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Note,

[1.] Though Christ tarry long, he will come at last; though he seem slow, he is sure. In his first coming, he was thought long by those that waited for the consolation of Israel; yet in the fulness of time he came; so his second coming, though long deferred, is not forgotten; his enemies shall find, to their cost, that forbearance is no acquittance; and his friends shall find, to their comfort, that the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie. The year of the redeemed is fixed, and it will come.

[2.] Christ's coming will be at our midnight, when we least look for him, and are most disposed to take our rest. His coming for the relief and comfort of his people, often is when the good intended seems to be at the greatest distance; and his coming to reckon with his enemies, is when they put the evil day furthest from them. It was at midnight that the first-born of Egypt were destroyed, and

Israel delivered, Ex 12:29. Death often comes when it is least expected; the soul is required this night, Lu 12:20. Christ will come when he pleases, to show his sovereignty, and will not let us know when, to teach us our duty.

[3.] When Christ comes, we must go forth to meet him. As Christians we are bound to attend all the motions of the Lord Jesus, and meet him in all his out-goings. When he comes to us at death, we must go forth out of the body, out of the world, to meet him with affections and workings of soul suitable to the discoveries we then expect him to make of himself. Go ye forth to meet him, is a call to those who are habitually prepared, to be actually ready.

[4.] The notice given of Christ's approach, and the call to meet him, will be awakening; There was a cry made. His first coming was not with any observation at all, nor did they say, Lo, here is Christ, or Lo, he is there; he was in the world, and the world knew him not; but his second coming will be with the observation of all the world; Every eye shall see him. There will be a cry from heaven, for he shall descend with a shout, Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment; and a cry from the earth too, a cry to rocks and mountains, Re 6:16.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

the foolish virgins as well as the wise. How very long do both parties seem the same—almost to the moment of decision! Looking at the mere form of the parable, it is evident that the folly of "the foolish" consisted not in having no oil at all; for they must have had oil enough in their lamps to keep them burning up to this moment: their folly consisted in not making provision against its exhaustion, by taking with their lamp an oil-vessel wherewith to replenish their lamp from time to time, and so have it burning until the Bridegroom should come. Are we, then—with some even superior expositors—to conclude that the foolish virgins must represent true Christians as well as do the wise, since only true Christians have the Spirit, and that the difference between the two classes consists only in the one having the necessary watchfulness which the other wants? Certainly not. Since the parable was designed to hold forth the prepared and the unprepared to meet Christ at His coming, and how

the unprepared might, up to the very last, be confounded with the prepared—the structure of the parable behooved to accommodate itself to this, by making the lamps of the foolish to burn, as well as those of the wise, up to a certain point of time, and only then to discover their inability to burn on for want of a fresh supply of oil. But this is evidently just a structural device; and the real difference between the two classes who profess to love the Lord's appearing is a radical one—the possession by the one class of an enduring principle of spiritual life, and the want of it by the other.

The address they all made to answer this summons (Mt 25:7); They all arose, and trimmed their lamps, snuffed them and supplied them with oil and went about with all expedition to put themselves in a posture to receive the bridegroom. Now,

[1.] This, in the wise virgins, bespeaks an actual preparation for the Bridegroom's coming. Note, even those that are best prepared for death, have, upon the immediate arrests of it, work to do, to get themselves actually ready, that they may be found in peace (2Pe 3:14), found doing (Mt 24:46), and not found naked, 2Co 5:3. It will be a day of search and enquiry; and it concerns us to think how we shall then be found. When we see the day approaching, we must address ourselves to our dying work with all seriousness, renewing our repentance for sin, our consent to the covenant, our farewells to the world; and our souls must be carried out toward God in suitable breathings.

[2.] In the foolish virgins, it denotes a vain confidence, and conceit of the goodness of their state, and their readiness for another world. Note, Even counterfeit graces will serve a man to make a show of when he comes to die, as well as they have done all his life long; the hypocrite's hopes blaze when they are just expiring, like a lightening before death.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

The distress which the foolish virgins were in, for want of oil, Mt 25:8,9. This bespeaks,

[1.] The apprehensions which some hypocrites have of the misery of their state, even on this side death, when God opens their eyes to see their folly, and themselves perishing with a lie in their right hand. Or, however,

[2.] The real misery of their state on the other side death, and in the judgment; how far their fair, but false, profession of religion will be from availing them any thing in the great day; see what comes of it.

First, Their lamps are gone out. The lamps of hypocrites often go out in this life; when they who have begun in the spirit, end in the flesh, and the hypocrisy breaks out in an open apostasy, 2Pe 2:20. The profession withers, and the credit of it is lost; the hopes fail, and the comfort of them is gone; how often is the candle of the wicked thus put out? Job 21:17. Yet many a hypocrite keeps up his credit, and the comfort of his profession, such as it is, to the last; but what is it when God taketh away his soul? Job 27:8. If his candle be not put out before him, it is put out with him, Job 18:5,6. He shall lie down in sorrow, Isa 50:11. The gains of a hypocritical profession will not follow a man to judgment, Mt 7:22,23. The lamps are gone out, when the hypocrite's hope proves like the spider's web (Job 8:11, &c.), and like the giving up of the ghost (Job 11:20), like Absalom's mule that left him in the oak.

Secondly, They wanted oil to supply them when they were going out. Note, Those that take up short of true grace, will certainly find the want of it one time or other. An external profession well humoured may carry a man far, but it will not carry him through; it may light him along this world, but the damps of the valley of the shadow of death will put it out.

Thirdly, They would gladly be beholden to the wise virgins for a supply out of their vessels; Give us of your oil. Note, The day is coming, when carnal hypocrites would gladly be found in the condition of true Christians. Those who now hate the strictness of

religion, will, at death and judgment, wish for the solid comforts of it. Those who care not to live the life, yet would die the death, of the righteous. The day is coming when those who now look with contempt upon humble contrite saints, would gladly get an interest in them, and would value those as their best friends and benefactors, whom now they set with the dogs of their flock. Give us of your oil; that is, "Speak a good word for us;" so some; but there is no occasion for vouchers in the great day, the Judge knows what is every man's true character. But is it not well that they are brought to say, Give us of your oil? It is so; but, 1. This request was extorted by sensible necessity. Note, Those will see their need of grace hereafter, when it should save them, who will not see their need of grace now, when it should sanctify and rule them. (2.) It comes too late. God would have given them oil, had they asked in time; but there is no buying when the market is over, no bidding when the inch of candle is dropped.

Fourthly, They were denied a share in their companions' oil. It is a sad presage of a repulse with God, when they were thus repulsed by good people. The wise answered, Not so; that peremptory denial is not in the original, but supplied by the translators: these wise virgins would rather give a reason without a positive refusal, than (as many do) give a positive refusal without a reason. They were well inclined to help their neighbours in distress; but, We must not, we cannot, we dare not, do it, lest there be not enough for us and you; charity begins at home; but go, and buy for yourselves. Note,

1. Those that would be saved, must have grace of their own. Though we have benefit by the communion of saints, and the faith and prayers of others may now redound to our advantage, yet our own sanctification is indispensably necessary to our own salvation. The just shall live by his faith. Every man shall give account of himself, and therefore let every man prove his own work; for he cannot get another to muster for him in that day.

2. Those that have most grace, have none to spare; all we have, is little enough for ourselves to appear before God in. The best have

need to borrow from Christ, but they have none to lend to any of their neighbours. The church of Rome, which dreams of works of supererogation and the imputation of the righteousness of saints, forgets that it was the wisdom of the wise virgins to understand that they had but oil enough for themselves, and none for others. But observe, These wise virgins do not upbraid the foolish with their neglect, nor boast of their own forecast, nor torment them with suggestions tending to despair, but give them the best advice the case will bear, Go ye rather to them that sell. Note, Those that deal foolishly in the affairs of their souls, are to be pitied, and not insulted over; for who made thee to differ? When ministers attend such as have been mindless of God and their souls all their days, but are under death-bed convictions; and, because true repentance is never too late, direct them to repent, and turn to God, and close with Christ; yet, because late repentance is seldom true, they do but as these wise virgins did by the foolish, even made the best of bad. They can but tell them what is to be done, if it be not too late, but whether the door may not be shut before it is done, is an unspeakable hazard. It is good advice now, if it be taken in time, Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Note, Those that would have grace, must have recourse to, and attend upon, the means of grace. See Isa 55:1.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

"In case there be not enough for us and you." A truly wise answer this. "And what, then, if we shall share it with you? Why, both will be undone."

Here again it would be straining the parable beyond its legitimate design to make it teach that men may get salvation even after they are supposed and required to have it already gotten. It is merely a friendly way of reminding them of the proper way of obtaining the needed and precious article, with a certain reflection on them for having it now to seek. Also, when the parable speaks of "selling" and "buying" that valuable article, it means simply, "Go, get it in the only legitimate way." And yet the word "buy" is significant; for we are elsewhere bidden, "buy wine and milk without money and

without price," and "buy of Christ gold tried in the fire," &c. (Isa 55:1,Re 3:18). Now, since what we pay the demanded price for becomes thereby our own property, the salvation which we thus take gratuitously at God's hands, being bought in His own sense of that word, becomes ours thereby in inalienable possession. (Compare for the language, Pr 23:23,Mt 13:44).

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

The coming of the bridegroom, and the issue of all this different character of the wise and foolish virgins. See what came of it.

[1.] While they went out to buy, the bridegroom came. Note, With regard to those that put off their great work to the last, it is a thousand to one, that they have not time to do it then. Getting grace is a work of time, and cannot be done in a hurry. While the poor awakened soul addresses itself, upon a sick bed, to repentance and prayer, in awful confusion, it scarcely knows which end to begin at, or what to do first; and presently death comes, judgment comes, and the work is undone, and the poor sinner undone for ever. This comes of having oil to buy when we should burn it, and grace to get when we should use it.

The bridegroom came. Note, Our Lord Jesus will come to his people, at the great day, as a Bridegroom; will come in pomp and rich attire, attended with his friends: now that the Bridegroom is taken away from us, we fast (Mt 9:15), but then will be an everlasting feast. Then the Bridegroom will fetch home his bride, to be where he is (Joh 17:24), and will rejoice over his bride, Isa 62:5.

[2.] They that were ready, went in with him to the marriage. Note, First, To be eternally glorified is to go in with Christ to the marriage, to be in his immediate presence, and in the most intimate fellowship and communion with him in a state of eternal rest, joy, and plenty. Secondly, Those, and those only, shall go to heaven hereafter, that are made ready for heaven here, that are wrought to the self-same thing, 2Co 5:5. Thirdly, The suddenness of death, and

of Christ's coming to us then, will be no obstruction to our happiness, if we have been habitually prepared.

[3.] The door was shut, as is usual when all the company is come, that are to be admitted. The door was shut, First, To secure those that were within; that, being now made pillars in the house of our God, they may go no more out, Re 3:12. Adam was put into paradise, but the door was left open and so he went out again; but when glorified saints are put into the heavenly paradise, they are shut in. Secondly, To exclude those that were out. The state of saints and sinners will then be unalterably fixed, and those that are shut out then, will be shut out for ever. Now the gate is strait, yet it is open; but then it will be shut and bolted, and a great gulf fixed. This was like the shutting of the door of the ark when Noah was in; as he was thereby preserved, so all the rest were finally abandoned.

[4.] The foolish virgins came when it was too late (Mt 25:11); Afterward came also the other virgins. Note, First, There are many that will seek admission into heaven when it is too late; as profane Esau, who afterward would have inherited the blessing. God and religion will be glorified by those late solicitations, though sinners will not be saved by them; it is for the honour of Lord, Lord, that, of fervent and importunate prayer, that those who slight it now, will flee to it shortly, and it will not be called whining and canting then. Secondly, The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them very far in their expectations of happiness. They go to heaven-gate, and demand entrance, and yet are shut out; lifted up to heaven in a fond conceit of the goodness of their state, and yet thrust down to hell.

[5.] They were rejected, as Esau was (Mt 25:12); I know you not. Note, We are all concerned to seek the Lord while he may be found; for there is a time coming when he will not be found. Time was, when, Lord, Lord, open to us, would have sped well, by virtue of that promise, Knock, and it shall be opened to you; but now it comes too late. The sentence is solemnly bound on with, Verily I say unto you, which amounts to no less than swearing in his wrath,

that they shall never enter into his rest. It bespeaks him resolved, and them silenced by it.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from this parable (Mt 25:13); Watch therefore, We had it before (Mt 24:42), and here it is repeated as the most needful caution. Note, 1. Our great duty is to watch, to attend to the business of our souls with the utmost diligence and circumspection. Be awake, and be wakeful. 2. It is a good reason for our watching, that the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain; we know neither the day nor the hour. Therefore every day and every hour we must be ready, and not off our watch any day in the year, or any hour in the day. Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day and all the day long.

They are sensible of their past folly; they have taken good advice: they are in the act of getting what alone they lacked: a very little more, and they also are ready. But the Bridegroom comes; the ready are admitted; "the door is shut," and they are undone. How graphic and appalling this picture of one almost saved—but lost!

The suddenness of death and of Christ's coming to us then, will not hinder our happiness, if we have been prepared. The door was shut. Many will seek admission into heaven when it is too late. The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them far in expectations of happiness. The unexpected summons of death may alarm the Christian; but, proceeding without delay to trim his lamp, his graces often shine more bright; while the mere professor's conduct shows that his lamp is going out. Watch therefore, attend to the business of your souls. Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

this reiteration of the name was an exclamation rather of surprise; here it is a piteous cry of urgency, bordering on despair. Ah! now at length their eyes are wide open, and they realize all the consequences of their past folly.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The Parable of the Talents

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Between master and slaves this was not uncommon in ancient times. Christ's "servants" here mean all who, by their Christian profession, stand in the relation to Him of entire subjection. His "goods" mean all their gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. As all that slaves have belongs to their master, so Christ has a claim to everything which belongs to His people, everything which, may be turned to good, and He demands its appropriation to His service, or, viewing it otherwise, they first offer it up to Him; as being "not their own, but bought with a price" (1Co 6:19,20), and He "delivers it to them" again to be put to use in His service.

We have three things, in general, in this parable.

The trust committed to these servants; Their master delivered to them his goods: having appointed them to work (for Christ keeps no servants to be idle), he left them something to work upon. Note,

1. Christ's servants have and receive their all from him; for they are of themselves worth nothing, nor have any thing they can call their own but sin.

2. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. Our privileges are intended to find us with business. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 3. Whatever we receive to be made use of for Christ, still the property is vested in him; we are but tenants upon his land, stewards of his manifold grace, 1Pe 4:10. Now observe here,

(a) On what occasion this trust was committed to these servants: The master was travelling into a far country. This is explained, Eph 4:8. When he ascended on high, he gave gifts to men. Note,

[1.] When Christ went to heaven, he was as a man travelling into a far country; that is, he went with a purpose to be away a great while.

[2.] When he went, he took care to furnish his church with all things necessary for it during his personal absence. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed to his church truths, laws, promises and powers; these were the parakatatheke--the great depositum (as it is called, 1Ti 6:20,2Ti 1:14), the good thing that is committed to us; and he sent his Spirit to enable his servants to teach and profess those truths, to press and observe those laws, to improve and apply those promises, and to exercise and employ those powers, ordinary or extraordinary. Thus Christ, at his ascension, left his goods to his church.

(b) In what proportion this trust was committed.

[1.] He gave talents; a talent of silver is computed to be in our money three hundred and fifty-three pounds eleven shillings and ten pence halfpenny; so the learned Bishop Cumberland. Note, Christ's gifts are rich and valuable, the purchases of his blood inestimable, and none of them mean.

[2.] He gave to some more, to others less; to one five talents, to another two, to another one; to every one according to his several ability. When Divine Providence has made a difference in men's ability, as to mind, body, estate, relation, and interest, divine grace dispenses spiritual gifts accordingly, but still the ability itself is from him. Observe, First, Every one had some one talent at least, and that is not a despicable stock for a poor servant to begin with. A soul of our own is the one talent we are every one of us entrusted with, and it will find us with work. Hoc nempe ab homine exigitur, ut prosit hominibus; si fieri potest, multis; si minus, paucis; si minus, proximis, si minus, sibi: nam cum se utilem cæteris efficit, commune

agit negotium. Et si quis bene de se meretur, hoc ipso aliis prodest quod aliis profuturum parat--It is the duty of a man to render himself beneficial to those around him; to a great number if possible; but if this is denied him, to a few; to his intimate connections; or, at least, to himself. He that is useful to others, may be reckoned a common good. And whoever entitles himself to his own approbation, is serviceable to others, as forming himself to those habits which will result in their favour. Seneca de Otio Sapient. Secondly, All had not alike, for they had not all alike abilities and opportunities. God is a free Agent, dividing to every man severally as he will; some are cut out for service in one kind, others in another, as the members of the natural body. When the householder had thus settled his affairs, he straightway took his journey. Our Lord Jesus, when he had given commandments to his apostles, as one in haste to be gone, went to heaven.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Compare Mt 21:33, where the same departure is ascribed to God, after setting up the ancient economy. In both cases, it denotes the leaving of men to the action of all those spiritual laws and influences of Heaven under which they have been graciously placed for their own salvation and the advancement of their Lord's kingdom.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

Two of the servants did well.

(1.) They were diligent and faithful; They went, and traded; they put the money they were entrusted with, to the use for which it was intended--laid it out in goods, and made returns of it; as soon as ever their master was gone, they immediately applied themselves to their business. Those that have so much work to do, as every Christian has, need to set about it quickly, and lose not time. They went, and traded. Note, A true Christian is a spiritual tradesman. Trades are called mysteries, and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; it is a manufacture trade; there is something to be done by upon our own hearts, and for the good of others. It is a merchant-trade; things of less value to us are parted with for things of greater

value; wisdom's merchandize, Pr 3:15,Mt 13:45. A tradesman is one who, having made his trade his choice, and taken pains to learn it, makes it his business to follow it, lays out all he has for the advancement of it, makes all other affairs bend to it, and lives upon the gain of it. Thus does a true Christian act in the work of religion; we have no stock of our own to trade with, but trade as factors with our master's stock. The endowments of the mind--reason, wit, learning, must be used in subserviency to religion; the enjoyments of the world--estate, credit, interest, power, preferment, must be improved for the honour of Christ. The ordinances of the gospel, and our opportunities of attending them, bibles, ministers, sabbaths, sacraments, must be improved for the end for which they were instituted, and communion with God kept up by them, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit must be exercised; and this is trading with our talents.

(2.) They were successful; they doubled their stock, and in a little time made cent. per cent. of it: he that had five talents, soon made them other five. Trading with our talents is not alway successful with others, but, however, it shall be so to ourselves, Isa 49:4. Note, The hand of the diligent makes rich in graces, and comforts, and treasures of good works. There is a great deal to be got by industry in religion.

Observe, The returns were in proportion to the receivings.

[1.] From those to whom God hath given five talents, he expects the improvement of five, and to reap plentifully where he sows plentifully. The greater gifts any have, the more pains they ought to take, as those must that have a large stock to manage.

[2.] From those to whom he has given but two talents, he expects only the improvement of two, which may encourage those who are placed in a lower and narrower sphere of usefulness; if they lay out themselves to do good according to the best of their capacity and opportunity, they shall be accepted, though they do not so much good as others.

17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

not misspending, but simply making no use of it. Nay, his action seems that of one anxious that the gift should not be misused or lost, but ready to be returned, just as he got it.

The third did ill (Mt 25:18); He that had received one talent, went, and hid his lord's money. Though the parable represents but one in three unfaithful, yet in a history that answers this parable, we find the disproportion quite the other way, when ten lepers were cleansed, nine of ten hid the talent, and only one returned to give thanks, Lu 17:17,18. The unfaithful servant was he that had but one talent: doubtless there are many that have five talents, and bury them all; great abilities, great advantages, and yet do no good with them: but Christ would hint to us,

(1.) That if he that had but one talent, be reckoned with thus for burying that one, much more will they be accounted offenders, that have more, that have many, and bury them. If he that was but of small capacity, was cast into utter darkness because he did not improve what he had as he might have done, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that tramples underfoot the greatest advantages?

(2.) That those who have least to do for God, frequently do least of what they have to do. Some make it an excuse for their laziness, that they have not the opportunities of serving God that others have; and because they have not wherewithal to do what they say they would, they will not do what we are sure they can, and so sit down and do nothing; it is really an aggravation of their sloth, that when they have but one talent to take care about, they neglect that one.

He digged in the earth, and hid the talent, for fear it should be stolen; he did not misspend or misemploy it, did not embezzle it or squander it away, but he hid it. Money is like manure (so my Lord Bacon used to say,) good for nothing in the heap, but it must be spread; yet it is an evil which we have often seen under the sun, treasure heaped

together (Jam 5:3,Ec 6:1,2), which does good to nobody; and so it is in spiritual gifts; many have them, and make no use of them for the end for which they were given them. Those that have estates, and do not lay them out in works of piety and charity; that have power and interest, and do not with it promote religion in the places where they live; ministers that have capacities and opportunities of doing good, but do not stir up the gift that is in them, are those slothful servants that seek their own things more than Christ's.

He hid his lord's money; had it been his own, he might have done as he pleased; but, whatever abilities and advantages we have, they are not our own, we are but stewards of them, and must give account to our Lord, whose goods they are. It was an aggravation of his slothfulness, that his fellow-servants were busy and successful in trading, and their zeal should have provoked his. Are others active, and shall we be idle?

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

How beautifully does this illustrate what the beloved disciple says of "boldness in the day of judgment," and his desire that "when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming!" (1Jo 4:17,1Jo 2:28).

The account of this improvement, Mt 25:19. 1 The account is deferred; it is not till after a long time that they are reckoned with; not that the master neglects his affairs, or that God is slack concerning his promise (2Pe 3:9); no, he is ready to judge (1Pe 4:5); but every thing must be done in its time and order. 2. Yet the day of account comes at last; The lord of those servants reckoneth with them. Note, The stewards of the manifold grace of God must shortly give account of their stewardship. We must all be reckoned with--what good we have got to our own souls, and what good we have done to others by the advantages we have enjoyed. See Ro 14:10,11. Now here is,

The good account of the faithful servants; and here observe,

[1.] The servants giving up the account (Mt 25:20,22); "Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents, and to me two; behold, I have gained five talents, and I two talents more."

First, Christ's faithful servants acknowledge with thankfulness his vouchsafements to them; Lord, thou deliveredst to me such and such things. Note, 1. It is good to keep a particular account of our receivings from God, to remember what we have received, that we may know what is expected from us, and may render according to the benefit. 2. We must never look upon our improvements but with a general mention of God's favour to us, of the honour he has put upon us, in entrusting us with his goods, and of that grace which is the spring and fountain of all the good that is in us or is done by us. For the truth is, the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him for making use of us, and enabling us, for his service.

Secondly, They produce, as an evidence of their faithfulness, what they have gained. Note, God's good stewards have something to show for their diligence; Show me thy faith by thy works. He that is a good man, let him show it, Jam 3:13. If we be careful in our spiritual trade, it will soon be seen by us, and our works will follow us, Re 14:13. Not that the saints will in the great day make mention of their own good deeds; no, Christ will do that for them (Mt 25:35); but it intimates that they who faithfully improve their talents, shall have boldness in the day of Christ, 1Jo 2:28-4:17. And it is observable that he who had but two talents, gave up his account as cheerfully as he who had five; for our comfort, in the day of account, will be according to our faithfulness, not according to our usefulness; our sincerity, not our success; according to the uprightness of our hearts, not according to the degree of our opportunities.

[2.] The master's acceptance and approbation of their account, Mt 25:21,23.

First, He commended them; Well done, good and faithful servant. Note, The diligence and integrity of those who approve themselves the good and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, will certainly be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at his appearing, 1Pe 1:7. Those that own and honour God now, he will own and honour shortly. 1. Their persons will be accepted; Thou good and faithful servant. He that knows the integrity of his servants now, will witness to it in the great day; and they that are found faithful, shall be called so. Perhaps they were censured by men, as righteous overmuch; but Christ will give them their just characters, of good and faithful. 2. Their performances will be accepted; Well done. Christ will call those, and those only, good servants, that have done well; for it is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for this glory and honour; and if we seek, we shall find; if we do that which is good, and do it well, we shall have praise of the same. Some masters are so morose, that they will not commend their servants, though they do their work ever so well; it is thought enough not to chide: but Christ will commend his servants that do well; whether their praise be of men or not, it is of him; and if we have the good word of our Master, the matter is not great what our fellow-servants say of us; if he saith, Well done, we are happy, and it should then be a small thing to us to be judged of men's judgment; as, on the contrary, not he who commendeth himself, or whom his neighbours commend, is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

Secondly, He rewards them. The faithful servants of Christ shall not be put off with bare commendation; no, all their work and labour of love shall be rewarded.

Now this reward is here expressed two ways.

1. In one expression agreeable to the parable; Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. It is usual in the courts of princes, and families of great men, to advance those to higher offices, that have been faithful in lower. Note, Christ is a master that will prefer his servants who acquit themselves well. Christ has honour in store for those that honour him--a crown (2Ti

4:8), a throne (Re 3:21), a kingdom, Mt 25:34. Here they are beggars; in heaven they shall be rulers. The upright shall have dominion: Christ's servants are all princes.

Observe the disproportion between the work and the reward; there are but few things in which the saints are serviceable to the glory of God, but there are many things wherein they shall be glorified with God. What charge we receive from God, what work we do for God in this world, is but little, very little, compared with the joy set before us. Put together all our service, all our sufferings, all our improvements, all the good we do to others, all we get to ourselves, and they are but a few things, next to nothing, not worthy to be compared, not fit to be named the same day with the glory to be revealed.

2. In another expression, which slips out of the parable into the thing signified by it; Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Note, (1.) The state of the blessed is a state of joy, not only because all tears shall then be wiped away, but all the springs of comfort shall be opened to them, and the fountains of joy broken up. Where there are the vision and fruition of God, a perfection of holiness, and the society of the blessed, there cannot but be a fulness of joy. (2.) This joy is the joy of their Lord; the joy which he himself has purchased and provided for them; the joy of the redeemed, bought with the sorrow of the Redeemer. It is the joy which he himself is in the possession of, and which he had his eye upon when he endured the cross, and despised the shame, Heb 12:2. It is the joy of which he himself is the fountain and centre. It is the joy of our Lord, for it is joy in the Lord, who is our exceeding joy. Abraham was not willing that the steward of his house, though faithful, should be his heir (Ge 15:3); but Christ admits his faithful stewards into his own joy, to be joint-heirs with him. (3.) Glorified saints shall enter into this joy, shall have a full and complete possession of it, as the heir when he comes of age enters upon his estate, or as they that were ready, went in to the marriage feast. Here the joy of our Lord enters into the saints, in the earnest of the Spirit; shortly they shall enter into it, shall be in it to eternity, as in their element.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed:

The sense is obvious: "I knew thou wast one whom it was impossible to serve, one whom nothing would please: exacting what was impracticable, and dissatisfied with what was attainable." Thus do men secretly think of God as a hard Master, and virtually throw on Him the blame of their fruitlessness.

Those who think it impossible to please God, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion. They complain that He requires of them more than they are capable of, and punishes them for what they cannot help. Whatever they may pretend, the fact is, they dislike the character and work of the Lord.

The bad account of the slothful servant. Observe,

[1.] His apology for himself, Mt 25:24,25. Though he had received but one talent, for that one he is called to account. The smallness of our receiving will not excuse us from a reckoning. None shall be called to an account for more than they have received; but for what we have, we must all account.

Observe,

First, What he confides in. He comes to the account with a deal of assurance, relying on the plea he had to put in, that he was able to say, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine; if I have not made it more, as the others have done, yet this I can say, I have not made it less."

This, he thinks, may serve to bring him off, if not with praise, yet with safety.

Note, Many a one goes very securely to judgment, presuming upon the validity of a plea that will be overruled as vain and frivolous. Slothful professors, that are afraid of doing too much for God, yet hope to come off as well as those that take so much pains in religion. Thus the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason, Pr 26:16. This servant thought that his account would pass well enough, because he could say, There thou hast that is thine. "Lord, I was no spendthrift of my estate, no prodigal of my time, no profaner of my sabbaths, no opposer of good ministers and good preaching; Lord, I never ridiculed my bible, nor set my wits to work to banter religion, nor abused my power to persecute any good man; I never drowned my parts, nor wasted God's good creatures in drunkenness and gluttony, nor ever to my knowledge did I injury to any body." Many that are called Christians, build great hopes for heaven upon their being able to make such an account; yet all this amounts to no more than there thou hast that is thine; as if no more were required, or could be expected.

Secondly, What he confesses. He owns the burying of his talent; I hid thy talent in the earth. He speaks as if that were no great fault; nay, as if he deserved praise for his prudence in putting it in a safe place, and running no hazards with it. Note, It is common for people to make a very light matter of that which will be their condemnation in the great day. Or, if he was conscious to himself that it was his fault, it intimates how easily slothful servants will be convicted in the judgment; there will need no great search for proof, for their own tongues shall fall upon them.

Thirdly, What he makes his excuse; I knew that thou were a hard man, and I was afraid. Good thought of God would beget love, and that love would make us diligent and faithful; but hard thoughts of God beget fear, and that fear makes us slothful and unfaithful. His excuse bespeaks,

1 The sentiments of an enemy; I knew thee, that thou art a hard man. This was like that wicked saying of the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal, Eze 18:25. Thus his defence is his offence. The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then, as if that would mend the matter, his heart fretteth against the Lord. This is covering the transgression, as Adam, who implicitly laid the fault on God himself; The woman which thou gavest me. Note, Carnal hearts are apt to conceive false and wicked opinions concerning God, and with them to harden themselves in their evil ways. Observe how confidently he speaks; I knew thee to be so. How could he know him to be so? What iniquity have we or our fathers found in him? Jer 2:5. Wherein has he wearied us with his work, or deceived us in his wages? Mic 6:3. Has he been a wilderness to us, or a land of darkness? Thus long God has governed the world, and may ask with more reason than Samuel himself could, Whom have I defrauded? or whom have I oppressed? Does not all the world know the contrary, that he is so far from being a hard master, that the earth is full of his goodness, so far from reaping where he sowed not, that he sows a great deal where he reaps nothing? For he causes the sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon the evil and unthankful, and fills their hearts with food and gladness who say to the Almighty, Depart from us. This suggestion bespeaks the common reproach which wicked people cast upon God, as if all the blame of their sin and ruin lay at his door, for denying them his grace; whereas it is certain that never any who faithfully improved the common grace they had, perished for want of special grace; nor can any show what could in reason have been done more for an unfruitful vineyard than God has done in it. God does not demand brick, and deny straw; no, whatever is required in the covenant, is promised in the covenant; so that if we perish, it is owing to ourselves.

2 The spirit of a slave; I was afraid, This ill affection toward God arose from his false notions of him; and nothing is more unworthy of God, nor more hinders our duty to him, than slavish fear. This has bondage and torment, and is directly opposite to that entire love which the great commandment requires. Note, Hard thoughts of God drive us from, and cramp us in his service. Those who think it

impossible to please him, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion.

25 and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

This depicts the conduct of all those who shut up their gifts from the active service of Christ, without actually prostituting them to unworthy uses. Fitly, therefore, may it, at least, comprehend those, to whom TRENCH refers, who, in the early Church, pleaded that they had enough to do with their own souls, and were afraid of losing them in trying to save others; and so, instead of being the salt of the earth, thought rather of keeping their own saltness by withdrawing sometimes into caves and wildernesses, from all those active ministries of love by which they might have served their brethren.

"Wicked" or "bad" means "falsehearted," as opposed to the others, who are emphatically styled "good servants." The addition of "slothful" is to mark the precise nature of his wickedness: it consisted, it seems, not in his doing anything against, but simply nothing for his master.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed:

His Lord's answer to this apology. His plea will stand him in no stead, it is overruled, nay, it is made to turn against him, and he is struck speechless with it; for here we have his conviction and his condemnation.

First, His conviction, Mt 25:26,27. Two things he is convicted of.

1. Slothfulness; Thou wicked and slothful servant. Note, Slothful servants are wicked servants, and will be reckoned with as such by their master, for he that is slothful in his work, and neglects the good that God has commanded, is brother to him that is a great waster, by doing the evil that God has forbidden, Pr 18:9. He that is careless in God's work, is near akin to him that is busy in the devil's work. Satis est mali nihil fecisse boni--To do no good is to incur very serious

blame. Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment; slothfulness makes way for wickedness; all become filthy, for there is none that doeth good, Ps 14:3. When the house is empty, the unclean spirit takes possession. Those that are idle in the affairs of their souls, are not only idle, but something worse, 1Ti 5:13. When men sleep, the enemy sows tares.

2. Self-contradiction (Mt 25:26,27); Thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers. Note, The hard thoughts which sinners have of God, though false and unjust, will be so far from justifying their wickedness and slothfulness, that they will rather aggravate and add to their guilt. Three ways this may be taken;

(a) "Suppose I had been so hard a master, shouldest not thou therefore have been the more diligent and careful to please me, if not for love, yet for fear, and for that reason oughtest not thou to have minded thy work?" If our God is a consuming fire, in consideration of that let us study how to serve him. Or thus,

(b) "If thou didst think me to be a hard master, and therefore durst not trade with the money thyself, for fear of losing by it, and being made to stand to the loss, yet thou mightest have put it into the hands of the exchangers, or goldsmith, mightest have brought it into the bank, and then at my coming, if I could not have had the greater improvement, by trade and merchandize (as of the other talents), yet I might have had the less improvement, of bare interest, and should have received my own with usury;" which, it seems, was a common practice at that time, and not disallowed by our Saviour. Note, If we could not, or durst not, do what we would, yet that excuse will not serve, when it will be made to appear that we did not do what we could and durst. If we could not find in our hearts to venture upon more difficult and hazardous services, yet will that justify us in shrinking from those that were more safe and easy? Something is better than nothing; if we fail of showing our courage in bold enterprises, yet we must not fail to testify our good will in honest

endeavours; and our Master will not despise the day of small things. Or thus,

(c) "Suppose I did reap where I sowed not, yet that is nothing to thee, for I had sowed upon thee, and the talent was my money which thou wast entrusted with, not only to keep, but to improve." Note, In the day of account, wicked and slothful servants will be left quite without excuse; frivolous pleas will be overruled, and every mouth will be stopped; and those who now stand so much upon their own justification will not have one word to say for themselves.

27 thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

His condemnation. The slothful servant is sentenced,

1. To be deprived of his talent (Mt 25:28,29); Take therefore the talent from him. The talents were first disposed of by the Master, as an absolute Owner, but this was now disposed of by him as a Judge; he takes it from the unfaithful servant, to punish him, and gives it to him that was eminently faithful, to reward him. And the meaning of this part of the parable we have in the reason of the sentence (Mt 25:29), To every one that hath shall be given. This may be applied,

(a) To the blessings of this life--worldly wealth and possessions. These we are entrusted with, to be used for the glory of God, and the good of those about us. Now he that hath these things, and useth them for these ends, he shall have abundance; perhaps abundance of the things themselves, at least, abundance of comfort in them, and of better things; but from him that hath not, that is, that hath these things as if he had them not, had not power to eat of them, or to do good with (Avaro deest, tam quod habet, quam quod non habet--The miser may be considered as destitute of what he has, as well as of what he has not), they shall be taken away. Solomon explains this, Pr 11:24. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. Giving to the poor is trading with what we have, and the returns will be rich; it will multiply the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse: but

those that are sordid, and niggardly, and uncharitable, will find that those riches which are so got, perish by evil travail, Ec 5:13,14. Sometimes Providence strangely transfers estates from those that do no good with them to those that do; they are gathered for him that will pity the poor, Pr 28:8. See Pr 13:22,Job 27:16,17,Ec 2:26.

(b) We may apply it to the means of grace. They who are diligent in improving the opportunities they have, God will enlarge them, will set before them an open door (Re 3:8); but they who know not the day of their visitation, shall have the things that belong to their peace hid from their eyes. For proof of this, go see what God did to Shiloh, Jer 7:12.

(c) We may apply it to the common gifts of the Spirit. He that hath these, and doeth good with them, shall have abundance; these gifts improve by exercise, and brighten by being used; the more we do, the more we may do, in religion; but those who stir not up the gift that is in them, who do not exert themselves according to their capacity, their gifts rust, and decay, and go out like a neglected fire. From his that hath not a living principle of grace in his soul, shall be taken away the common gifts which he hath, as the lamps of the foolish virgins went out for want of oil, Mt 25:8. Thus the arm of the idle shepherd, which he had sluggishly folded up in his bosom, comes to be dried up, and his right eye, which he had carelessly or wilfully shut, becomes utterly darkened, as it is threatened, Zec 11:17.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

He is sentenced to be cast into outer darkness, Mt 25:30. Here,

(1.) His character is that of an unprofitable servant. Note, Slothful servants will be reckoned with as unprofitable servants, who do nothing to the purpose of their coming into the world, nothing to answer the end of their birth or baptism, who are no way serviceable to the glory of God, the good of others, or the salvation

of their own souls. A slothful servant is a withered member in the body, a barren tree in the vineyard, an idle drone in the hive, he is good for nothing. In one sense, we are all unprofitable servants (Lu 17:10); we cannot profit God, Job 22:2. But to others, and to ourselves, it is required that we be profitable; if we be not, Christ will not own us as his servants: it is not enough not to do hurt, but we must do good, must bring forth fruit, and though thereby God is not profited, yet he is glorified, Joh 15:8.

(2.) His doom is, to be cast into outer darkness. Here, as in what was said to the faithful servants, our Saviour slides insensibly out of the parable into the thing intended by it, and it serves as a key to the whole; for, outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, is, in Christ's discourses, the common periphrasis of the miseries of the damned in hell. Their state is,

[1.] Very dismal; it is outer darkness. Darkness is uncomfortable and frightful: it was one of the plagues of Egypt. In hell there are chains of darkness, 2Pe 2:4. In the dark no man can work, a fit punishment for a slothful servant. It is outer darkness, out from the light of heaven, out from the joy of their Lord, into which the faithful servants were admitted; out from the feast. Compare Mt 8:12,22:13.

[2.] Very doleful; there is weeping, which bespeaks great sorrow, and gnashing of teeth, which bespeaks great vexation and indignation. This will be the portion of the slothful servant.

The Judgment of the Nations

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

We have here a description of the process of the last judgment in the great day. There are some passages in it that are parabolical; as the separating between the sheep and the goats, and the dialogues between the judge and the persons judged: but there is no thread of

similitude carried through the discourse, and therefore it is rather to be called a draught or delineation of the final judgment, than a parable; it is, as it were, the explanation of the former parables. And here we have,

The placing of the judge upon the judgment-seat (Mt 25:31); When the Son of man shall come. Observe here,

1. That there is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery, in the world of recompence or retribution, according to what he did in this world of trial and probation, which is to be judged of by the rule of the everlasting gospel.

2 The administration of the judgment of the great day is committed to the Son of man; for by him God will judge the world (Ac 17:31), and to him all judgment is committed, and therefore the judgment of that day, which is the centre of all. Here, as elsewhere, when the last judgment is spoken of, Christ is called the son of man, because he is to judge the sons of men (and, being himself of the same nature, he is the more unexceptionable); and because his wonderful condescension to take upon him our nature, and to become the son of man, will be recompensed by this exaltation in that day, and an honour put upon the human nature.

3. Christ's appearing to judge the world will be splendid and glorious. Agrippa and Bernice came to the judgment-seat with great pomp (Ac 25:23); but that was (as the original word is) great fancy. Christ will come to the judgment-seat in real glory: the Sun of righteousness shall then shine in his meridian lustre, and the Prince of the kings of the earth shall show the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honours of his excellent majesty; and all the world shall see what the saints only do now believe--that he is the brightness of his Father's glory. He shall come not only in the glory of his Father, but in his own glory, as mediator: his first coming was under a black cloud of obscurity; his second will be in a bright cloud of glory. The assurance Christ gave his disciples of his future glory,

might help to take off the offence of the cross, and his approaching disgrace and suffering.

4. When Christ comes in his glory to judge the world, he will bring all his holy angels with him. This glorious person will have a glorious retinue, his holy myriads, who will be not only his attendants, but ministers of his justice; they shall come with him both for state and service. They must come to call the court (1Th 4:16), to gather the elect (Mt 24:31), to bundle the tares (Mt 13:40), to be witnesses of the saints' glory (Lu 12:8), and of sinners' misery, Re 14:10.

5. He will then sit upon the throne of his glory. He is now set down with the Father upon his throne; and it is a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly; it is a throne of government, the throne of his father David; he is a priest upon that throne: but then he will sit upon the throne of glory, the throne of judgment. See Da 7:9,10. Solomon's throne, though there was not its like in any kingdom, was but a dunghill to it. Christ, in the days of his flesh, was arraigned as a prisoner at the bar; but at his second coming, he will sit as a judge upon the bench.

32 and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

The distinction that will then be made between the precious and the vile; He shall separate them one from another, as the tares and wheat are separated at the harvest, the good fish and the bad at the shore, the corn and chaff in the floor. Wicked and godly here dwell together in the same kingdoms, cities, churches, families, and are not certainly distinguishable one from another; such are the infirmities of saints, such the hypocrisies of sinners, and one event to both: but in that day they will be separated, and parted for ever; Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, Mal 3:18. They cannot separate themselves one from another in this world (1Co 5:10), nor can any one else separate them (Mt 13:29); but the Lord knows them that are his, and he can separate them. This separation will be so exact, that the most inconsiderable saints shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, nor the most plausible sinner hid

in the crowd of saints (Ps 1:5), but every one shall go to his own place. This is compared to a shepherd's dividing between the sheep and the goats; it is taken from Eze 34:17, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle. Note, 1. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd; he now feeds his flock like a shepherd, and will shortly distinguish between those that are his, and those that are not, as Laban divided his sheep from Jacob's, and set three days' journey between them, Ge 30:35,36. 2 The godly are like sheep--innocent, mild, patient, useful: the wicked are like goats, a baser kind of animal, unsavoury and unruly. The sheep and goats are here feeding all day in the same pasture, but will be coted at night in different folds. Being thus divided, he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left, Mt 25:33. Christ puts honour upon the godly, as we show respect to those we set on our right hand; but the wicked shall rise to everlasting shame, Da 12:2. It is not said that he shall put the rich on his right hand, and the poor on his left; the learned and noble on his right hand, and unlearned and despised on his left; but the godly on his right hand, and the wicked on his left. All other divisions and subdivisions will then be abolished; but the great distinction of men into saints and sinners, sanctified and unsanctified, will remain for ever, and men's eternal state will be determined by it. The wicked took up with left-handed blessings, riches and honour, and so shall their doom be.

33 and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

The process of the judgement concerning each of these.

1. Concerning the godly, on the right hand. Their cause must be first despatched, that they may be assessors with Christ in the judgement of the wicked, whose misery will be aggravated by their seeing Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, admitted into the kingdom of heaven, Lu 13:28. Observe here,

The glory conferred upon them; the sentence by which they shall be not only acquitted, but preferred and rewarded (Mt 25:34); The king shall say unto them. He that was the Shepherd (which bespeaks the care and tenderness wherewith he will make this disquisition), is here the King, which bespeaks the authority wherewith he will then

pronounce the sentence: where the word of this King is, there is power. Here are two things in this sentence:

[1.] The acknowledging of the saints to be the blessed of the Lord; Come, ye blessed of my Father. First, He pronounces them blessed; and his saying they are blessed, makes them so. The law curses them for their many discontinuances; but Christ having redeemed them from the curse of the law, and purchased a blessing for them, commands a blessing on them. Secondly, Blessed of his Father; reproached and cursed by the world, but blessed of God. As the Spirit glorifies the Son (Joh 16:14), so the Son glorifies the Father by referring the salvation of the saints to him as the First Cause; all our blessings in heavenly things flow to us from God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph 1:3. Thirdly, He calls them to come: this come is, in effect, "Welcome, ten thousand welcomes, to the blessings of my father; come to me, come to be for ever with me; you that followed me bearing the cross, now come along with me wearing the crown. The blessed of my Father are the beloved of my soul, that have been too long at a distance from me; come, now, come into my bosom, come into my arms, come into my dearest embraces!" O with what joy will this fill the hearts of the saints in that day! We now come boldly to the throne of grace, but we shall then come boldly to the throne of glory; and this word holds out the golden sceptre, with an assurance that our requests shall be granted to more than the half of the kingdom. Now the Spirit saith, Come, in the word; and the bride saith, Come, in prayer; and the result hereof is a sweet communion: but the perfection of bliss will be, when the King shall say, Come.

[2.] The admission of the saints into the blessedness and kingdom of the Father; Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

First, the happiness they shall be possessed of is very rich; we are told what it is by him who had reason to know it, having purchased it for them, and possessed it himself.

1. It is a kingdom; which is reckoned the most valuable possession on earth, and includes the greatest wealth and honour. Those that

inherit kingdoms, wear all the glories of the crown, enjoy all the pleasures of the court, and command the peculiar treasures of the provinces; yet this is but a faint resemblance of the felicities of the saints in heaven. They that here are beggars, prisoners, accounted as the off-scouring of all things, shall then inherit a kingdom, Ps 113:7,Re 2:26,27.

2. It is a kingdom prepared: the happiness must needs be great, for it is the product of the divine counsels. Note, There is great preparation made for the entertainment of the saints in the kingdom of glory. The Father designed it for them in his thoughts of love, and provided it for them in the greatness of his wisdom and power. The Son purchased it for them, and is entered as the fore-runner to prepare a place, Joh 14:2. And the blessed Spirit, in preparing them for the kingdom, in effect, is preparing it for them.

3. It is prepared for them. This bespeaks,

(a) The suitableness of this happiness; it is in all points adapted to the nature of a soul, and to the new nature of a a sanctified soul.

(b) Their property and interest in it. It is prepared on purpose for them; not only for such as you, but for you, you by name, you personally and particularly, who were chosen to salvation through sanctification.

4. It is prepared from the foundation of the world. This happiness was designed for the saints, and they for it, before time began, from all eternity, Eph 1:4. The end, which is last in execution, is first in intention. Infinite Wisdom had an eye to the eternal glorification of the saints, from the first founding of the creation: All things are for your sakes, 2Co 4:15. Or, it denotes the preparation of the place of this happiness, which is to be the seat and habitation of the blessed, in the very beginning of the work of creation, Ge 1:1. There in the heaven of heavens the morning stars were singing together, when the foundations of the earth were fastened, Job 38:4-7.

Secondly, The tenure by which they shall hold and possess it is very good, they shall come and inherit it. What we come to by inheritance, is not got by any procurement of our own, but purely, as the lawyers express it, by the act of God. It is God that makes heirs, heirs of heaven. We come to an inheritance by virtue of our sonship, our adoption; if children, then heirs. A title by inheritance is the sweetest and surest title; it alludes to possessions in the land of Canaan, which passed by inheritance, and would not be alienated longer than to the year of Jubilee. Thus is the heavenly inheritance indefeasible, and unalienable. Saints, in this world, are as heirs under age, tutored and governed till the time appointed of the Father (Ga 4:1,2); and then they shall be put in full possession of that which now through grace they have a title to; Come, and inherit it.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 for I was ahungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

The ground of this (Mt 25:35,36), For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat. We cannot hence infer that any good words of ours merit the happiness of heaven, by any intrinsic worth or excellency in them: our goodness extends not unto God; but it is plain that Jesus Christ will judge the world by the same rule by which he governs it, and therefore will reward those that have been obedient to that law; and mention will be made of their obedience, not as their title, but as their evidence of an interest in Christ, and his purchase. This happiness will be adjudged to obedient believers, not upon a quantum meruit--an estimate of merit, which supposes a proportion between the work and the reward, but upon the promise of God purchased by Jesus Christ, and the benefit of it secured under certain provisos and limitations; and it is the purchase and promise that give the title, the obedience is only the qualification of the person designed. An estate made by deed or will upon condition, when the condition is performed according to the true intent of the donor or testator, becomes absolute; and then, though the title be built purely upon the deed or will, yet the performing of the condition must be given in evidence: and so it

comes in here; for Christ is the Author of eternal salvation to those only that obey him, and who patiently continue in well doing.

Now the good works here mentioned are such as we commonly call works of charity to the poor: not but that many will be found on the right hand who never were in a capacity to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, but were themselves fed and clothed by the charity of others; but one instance of sincere obedience is put for all the rest, and it teaches us this in general, that faith working by love is all in all in Christianity; Show me thy faith by thy works; and nothing will abound to a good account hereafter, but the fruits of righteousness in a good conversation now. The good works here described imply three things, which must be found in all that are saved.

[1.] Self-denial, and contempt of the world; reckoning the things of the world no further good things, than as we are enabled to do good with them: and those who have not wherewithal to do good, must show the same disposition, by being contentedly and cheerfully poor. Those are fit for heaven that are mortified to the earth.

[2.] Love to our brethren; which is the second great commandment, the fulfilling of the law, and an excellent preparative for the world of everlasting love. We must give proof of this love by our readiness to do good, and to communicate; good wishes are but mockeries without good works, Jam 2:15,16,1Jo 3:17. Those that have not to give, must show the same disposition some other way.

[3.] A believing regard to Jesus Christ. That which is here rewarded is the relieving of the poor for Christ's sake, out of love to him, and with an eye to him. This puts an excellency upon the good work, when in it we serve the Lord Christ, which those may do that work for their own living, as well as those that help to keep others alive. See Eph 6:5-7. Those good works shall then be accepted which are done in the name of the Lord Jesus, Col 3:17.

I was hungry, that is, my disciples and followers were so, either by the persecutions of enemies for well-doing, or by the common dispensations of Providence; for in these things there is one event to the righteous and wicked: and you gave them meat. Note, First, Providence so variously orders and disposes of the circumstances of his people in this world, as that while some are in a condition to give relief, others need it. It is no new thing for those that are feasted with the dainties of heaven to be hungry and thirsty, and to want daily food; for those that are at home in God, to be strangers in a strange land; for those that have put on Christ, to want clothes to keep them warm; for those that have healthful souls, to have sickly bodies; and for those to be in prison, that Christ has made free. Secondly, Works of charity and beneficence, according as our ability is, are necessary to salvation; and there will be more stress laid upon them in the judgment of the great day, than is commonly imagined; these must be the proofs of our love, and of our professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, 2Co 9:13. But they that show no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy.

36 naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Now this reason is modestly excepted against by the righteous, but is explained by the Judge himself.

1. It is questioned by the righteous, Mt 25:37-39. Not as if they were loth to inherit the kingdom, or were ashamed of their good deeds, or had not the testimony of their own consciences concerning them: but,

(1.) The expressions are parabolical, designed to introduce and impress these great truths, that Christ has a mighty regard to works of charity, and is especially pleased with kindnesses done to his people for his sake. Or,

(2.) They bespeak the humble admiration which glorified saints will be filled with, to find such poor and worthless services, as

theirs are, so highly celebrated, and richly rewarded: Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Note, Gracious souls are apt to think meanly of their own good deeds; especially as unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Far from this is the temper of those who said, Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Isa 58:3. Saints in heaven will wonder what brought them thither, and that God should so regard them and their services. It even put Nathanael to the blush, to hear Christ's encomium of him: Whence knowest thou me? Joh 1:47,48. See Eph 3:20. "When saw we thee an hungered? We have seen the poor in distress many a time; but when saw we thee?" Note, Christ is more among us than we think he is; surely the Lord is in this place, by his word, his ordinances, his ministers, his Spirit, yea, and his poor, and we know it not: When thou wert under the fig-tree, I saw thee, Joh 1:48.

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

It is explained by the Judge himself (Mt 25:40); Inasmuch as ye have done it to these my brethren, to the least, to one of the least of them, ye have done it unto me. The good works of the saints, when they are produced in the great day,

(1.) Shall all be remembered; and not the least, not one of the least, overlooked, no not a cup of cold water.

(2.) They shall be interpreted most to their advantage, and the best construction that can be put upon them. As Christ makes the best of their infirmities, so he makes the most of their services.

We see what recompences Christ has for those that feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; but what will become of the godly poor, that had not wherewithal to do so? Must they be shut out? No,

[1.] Christ will own them, even the least of them, as his brethren; he will not be ashamed, nor think it any disparagement to him, to call them brethren, Heb 2:11. In the height of his glory, he will not disown his poor relations; Lazarus is there laid in his bosom, as a friend, as a brother. Thus he will confess them, Mt 10:32.

[2.] He will take the kindness done to them, as done to himself; Ye have done it unto me; which shows a respect to the poor that were relieved, as well as to the rich that did relieve them. Note, Christ espouses his people's cause, and interests himself in their interests, and reckons himself received, and love, and owned in them. If Christ himself were among us in poverty, how readily would we relieve him? In prison, how frequently would we visit him? We are ready to envy the honour they had, who ministered to him of their substance, Lu 8:3. Wherever poor saints and poor ministers are, there Christ is ready to receive our kindnesses in them, and they shall be put to his account.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 for I was ahungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

Here is the process concerning the wicked, those on the left hand. And in that we have,

(a) The sentence passed upon them, Mt 5:41. It was a disgrace to be set on the left hand; but that is not the worst of it, he shall say to them, Depart from me, ye cursed. Every word has terror in it, like that of the trumpet at mount Sinai, waxing louder and louder, every accent more and more doleful, and exclusive of comfort.

[1.] To be so near to Christ was some satisfaction, though under his frowns; but that will not be allowed, Depart from me. In this world they were often called to come to Christ, to come for life and rest, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls; justly therefore are they bid to depart from Christ, that would not come to him. "Depart from me the Fountain of all good, from me the Saviour, and therefore

from all hope of salvation; I will never have any thing more to say to you, or do with you." Here they said to the Almighty, Depart from us; then he will choose their delusions, and say to them, Depart from me. Note, It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ.

[2.] If they must depart, and depart from Christ, might they not be dismissed with a blessing, with one kind and compassionate word at least? No, Depart, ye cursed, They that would not come to Christ, to inherit a blessing, must depart from him under the burthen of a curse, that curse of the law on every one that breaks it, Gal 3:10. As they loved cursing, so it shall come unto them. But observe, The righteous are called the blessed of my Father; for their blessedness is owing purely to the grace of God and his blessing, but the wicked are called only ye cursed, for their damnation is of themselves. Hath God sold them? No, they have sold themselves, have laid themselves under the curse, Isa 50:1.

[3.] If they must depart, and depart with a curse, may they not go into some place of ease and rest? Will it not be misery enough for them to bewail their loss? No, there is a punishment of sense as well as loss; they must depart into fire, into torment as grievous as that of fire is to the body, and much more. This fire is the wrath of the eternal God fastening upon the guilty souls and consciences of sinners that have made themselves fuel for it. Our God is a consuming fire, and sinners fall immediately into his hands, Heb 10:31,Ro 2:8,9.

[4.] If into fire, may it not be some light or gentle fire? No, it is prepared fire; it is a torment ordained of old, Isa 30:33. The damnation of sinners is often spoken of as an act of the divine power; he is able to cast into hell. In the vessels of wrath he makes his power known; it is a destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. In it shall be seen what a provoked God can do to make a provoking creature miserable.

[5.] If into fire, prepared fire, O let it be but of short continuance, let them but pass through fire; no, the fire of God's wrath will be an

everlasting fire; a fire, that, fastening and preying upon immortal souls, can never go out for want of fuel; and, being kindled and kept burning by the wrath of an immortal God, can never go out for want of being blown and stirred up; and, the streams of mercy and grace being for ever excluded, there is nothing to extinguish it. If a drop of water be denied to cool the tongue, buckets of water will never be granted to quench this flame.

[6.] If they must be doomed to such a state of endless misery, yet may they not have some good company there? No, none but the devil and his angels, their sworn enemies, that helped to bring them to this misery, and will triumph over them in it. They served the devil while they lived, and therefore are justly sentenced to be where he is, as those that served Christ, are taken to be with him where he is. It is terrible to lie in a house haunted with devils; what will it be then to be companions with them for ever? Observe here, First, Christ intimates that there is one that is the prince of the devils, the ring-leader of the rebellion, and that the rest are his angels, his messengers, by whose agency he supports his kingdom. Christ and his angels will in that day triumph over the dragon and his, Re 12:7,8. Secondly, The fire is said to be prepared, not primarily for the wicked, as the kingdom is prepared for the righteous; but it was originally intended for the devil and his angels. If sinners make themselves associates with Satan by indulging their lusts, they may thank themselves if they become sharers in that misery which was prepared for him and his associates. Calvin notes upon this, that therefore the torment of the damned is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, to cut off all hope of escaping it; the devil and his angels are already made prisoners in the pit, and can worms of the earth think to escape?

(b) The reason of this sentence assigned. God's judgments are all just, and he will be justified in them. He is Judge himself, and therefore the heavens shall declare his righteousness.

Now,

[1.] All that is charged upon them, on which the sentence is grounded, is, omission; as, before, the servant was condemned, not for wasting his talent, but for burying it; so here, he doth not say, "I was hungry and thirsty, for you took my meat and drink from me; I was a stranger, for you banished me; naked, for you stripped me; in prison, for you laid me there:" but, "When I was in these distresses, you were so selfish, so taken up with your own ease and pleasure, made so much of your labour, and were so loth to part with your money, that you did not minister as you might have done to my relief and succour. You were like those epicures that were at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Am 6:4-6. Note, Omissions are the ruin of thousands.

[2.] It is the omission of works of charity to the poor. They are not sentenced for omitting their sacrifices and burnt-offerings (they abounded in these, Ps 50:8), but for omitting the weightier matter of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. The Ammonites and Moabites were excluded the sanctuary, because they met not Israel with bread and water, De 23:3,4. Note, Uncharitableness to the poor is a damning sin. If we will not be brought to works of charity by the hope of reward, let us be influenced by fear of punishment; for they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy. Observe, He doth not say, "I was sick, and you did not cure me; in prison, and you did not release me" (perhaps that was more than they could do); but, "You visited me not, which you might have done." Note, Sinners will be condemned, at the great day, for the omission of that good which it was in the power of their hand to do. But if the doom of the uncharitable be so dreadful, how much more intolerable will the doom of the cruel be, the doom of persecutors! Now this reason of the sentence is.

First, Objected against by the prisoners (Mt 25:44); Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst? Condemned sinners, though they have no plea that will bear them out, will yet in vain offer at excuses. Now. 1 The manner of their pleading bespeaks their present precipitation. They cut it short, as men in haste; when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked? They care not to repeat the

charge, as conscious to themselves of their own guilt, and unable to bear the terrors of the judgment. Nor will they have time allowed them to insist upon such frivolous pleas; for it is all (as we say) but "trifling with the court." 2 The matter of their plea bespeaks their former inconsideration of that which they might have known, but would not till now that it was too late. They that had slighted and persecuted poor Christians, would not own that they had slighted and persecuted Christ: no, they never intended any affront to him, nor expected that so great a matter would have been made of it. They imagined it was only a company of poor, weak, silly, and contemptible people, who made more ado than needed about religion, that they put those slights upon; but they who do so, will be made to know, either in the day of their conversion, as Paul, or of their condemnation, as these here, that it was Jesus whom they persecuted. And, if they say, Behold, we knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? Pr 24:11,12.

Secondly, Justified by the Judge, who will convince all the ungodly of the hard speeches spoken against him in those that are his, Jude 1:15. He goes by this rule (Mt 25:45); Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. Note, What is done against the faithful disciples and followers of Christ, even the least of them, he takes as done against himself. He is reproached and persecuted in them, for they are reproached and persecuted for his sake, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted. He that touches them, touches him in a part no less tender than the apple of his eye.

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you,

Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Lastly, Here is the execution of both these sentences, Mt 25:46. Execution is the life of the law, and Christ will take care that that be done according to the sentence.

1. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. Sentence will then be executed speedily, and no reprieve granted, nor any time allowed to move in arrest of judgment. The execution of the wicked is first mentioned; for first the tares are gathered and burned. Note,

(a) The punishment of the wicked in the future state will be an everlasting punishment, for that state is an unalterable state. It can neither be thought that sinners should change their own natures, nor that God should give his grace to change them, when in this world the day of grace was misspent, the Spirit of grace resisted, and the means of grace abused and baffled.

(b) The wicked shall be made to go away into that punishment; not that they will go voluntarily, no, they are driven from light into darkness; but it bespeaks an irresistible conviction of guilt, and a final despair of mercy.

2. The righteous shall go away into life eternal; that is, they shall inherit the kingdom, Mt 25:34. Note,

(a) Heaven is life, it is all happiness. The life of the soul results from its union with God by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as that of the body from its union with the soul by the animal spirits. The heavenly life consists in the vision and fruition of God, in a perfect conformity to him, and an immediate uninterrupted communion with him.

(b) It is eternal life. There is no death to put a period to the life itself, nor old age to put a period to the comfort of it, or any sorrow to embitter it. Thus life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, are set before us, that we may choose our way; and so shall our end be. Even the heathen had some notion of these different states of good and bad in the other world. Cicero in his Tusculan Questions, lib. 1, brings in Socrates thus speaking, Duæ sunt viæ,

duplicesque cursus è corpore exeuntium: nam qui se vitiis humanis contaminarunt, et libidinibus se tradiderunt, iis devium quoddam iter est, seclusum à consilio deorum; qui autem se integros castosque servarunt, quibusque fuerit minima cum corporibus contagio, suntque in corporibus humanis vitam imitati deorum, iis ad illos a quibus sunt profecti facile patet reditus--Two paths open before those who depart out of the body. Such as have contaminated themselves with human vices, and yielded to their lusts, occupy a path that conducts them far from the assembly and council of the gods; but the upright and chaste, such as have been least defiled by the flesh, and have imitated, while in the body, the gods, these find it easy to return to the sublime beings from whom they came.

Matthew-26

The Leaders Plot against Jesus

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

Here is,

1 The notice Christ gave his disciples of the near approach of his sufferings, Mt 26:1,2. While his enemies were preparing trouble for him, he was preparing himself and his followers for it. He had often told them of his sufferings at a distance, now he speaks of them as at the door; after two days, Note, After many former notices of trouble we still have need of fresh ones. Observe,

(a) The time when he gave this alarm; when he had finished all these sayings.

[1.] Not till he had finished all he had to say. Note, Christ's witnesses die not till they have finished their testimony. When Christ had gone through his undertaking as a prophet, he entered upon the execution of his office as a priest.

[2.] After he had finished these sayings, which go immediately before; he had bid his disciples to expect sad times, bonds and afflictions, and then tells them, The Son of man is betrayed; to intimate that they should fare no worse than he should, and that his sufferings should take the sting out of theirs. Note, Thoughts of a suffering Christ are great supports to a suffering Christian, suffering with him and for him.

(b) The thing itself he gave them notice of; The Son of man is betrayed. The thing was not only so sure, but so near, that it was as good as done. Note, It is good to make sufferings that are yet to come, as present to us. He is betrayed, for Judas was then contriving and designing to betray him.

2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

God 'passed over' those houses where a lamb had been sacrificed in the place of those under judgment (Exo_12:1-13).

3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

The plot of the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people, against the life of our Lord Jesus, Mt 5:3-5. Many consultations had been held against the life of Christ but this plot was laid deeper than any yet, for the grandees were all engaged in it. The chief priests, who presided in ecclesiastical affairs; the elders, who were judges in civil matters, and the scribes, who, as doctors of the law, were directors to both--these composed the sanhedrim, or great council that governed the nation, and these were confederate against Christ. Observe

(1.) The place where they met; in the palace of the high priest, who was the centre of their unity in this wicked project.

(2.) The plot itself; to take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him; nothing less than his blood, his life-blood, would serve their turn. So cruel and bloody have been the designs of Christ's and his church's enemies.

(3.) The policy of the plotters; Not on the feast-day. Why not? Was it in regard to the holiness of the time, or because they would not be disturbed in the religious services of the day? No, but lest there should be an uproar among the people. They knew Christ had a great interest in the common people, of whom there was a great concourse on the feast-day, and they would be in danger of taking up arms against their rulers, if they should offer to lay violent hands on Christ, whom all held for a prophet. They were awed, not by the fear of God, but by the fear of the people; all their concern was for their own safety, not God's honour. They would have it done at the feast; for it was a tradition of the Jews, that malefactors should be put to death at one of the three feasts, especially rebels and impostors, that all Israel might see and fear; but not on the feast-day.

4 and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

People in Jerusalem were excited as the festival approached. The chief priests therefore planned to wait until it was finished before arresting Jesus, as they did not want to be responsible for a riot (Mat_26:3-5). But when Judas came to them and offered to betray Jesus to them, their task was made easier. Judas could advise them of Jesus' movements, so that they could arrest him quietly without the people knowing (Mat_26:14-16).

5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

7 there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Between the account of the Jews' plotting and Judas' treachery, Matthew and Mark have inserted the account of an anointing of Jesus at Bethany. This may have been the anointing recorded earlier by John, and could have been put into the story at this point to contrast the loving devotion of a true believer with the violence and

treachery of others. If the three accounts refer to the same occasion, Simon the leper must have been the owner of the house where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Possibly he was their father (Mat_26:6-13; see notes on Joh_12:1-8).

The singular kindness of a good woman to our Lord Jesus in anointing his head, Mt 26:6,7. It was in Bethany, a village hard by Jerusalem, and in the house of Simon the leper. Probably, he was one who had been miraculously cleansed from his leprosy by our Lord Jesus, and he would express his gratitude to Christ by entertaining him; nor did Christ disdain to converse with him, to come in to him, and sup with him. Though he was cleansed, yet he was called Simon the leper. Those who are guilty of scandalous sins, will find that, though the sin be pardoned, the reproach will cleave to them, and will hardly be wiped away. The woman that did this, is supposed to have been Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was the same that was called Mary Magdalene. She had a box of ointment very precious, which she poured upon the head of Christ as he sat at meat. This, among us, would be a strange sort of compliment. But it was then accounted the highest piece of respect; for the smell was very grateful, and the ointment itself refreshing to the head. David had his head anointed, Ps 23:5,Lu 7:46. Now this may be looked upon,

1. As an act of faith in our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed. To signify that she believed in him as God's anointed, whom he had set king, she anointed him, and made him her king. They shall appoint themselves one head, Ho 1:11. This is kissing the Son.

2. As an act of love and respect to him. Some think that this was he who loved much at first, and washed Christ's feet with her tears (Lu 7:38,47); and that she had not left her first love, but was now as affectionate in the devotions of a grown Christian as she was in those of a young beginner. Note, Where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good, no, nor good enough, to bestow upon him.

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

The offence which the disciples took at this. They had indignation (Mt 26:8,9), were vexed to see this ointment thus spent, which they thought might have been better bestowed.

1. See how they expressed their offence at it. They said, To what purpose is this waste? Now this bespeaks,

(1.) Want of tenderness toward this good woman, in interpreting her over-kindness (suppose it was so) to be wastefulness. Charity teaches us to put the best construction upon every thing that it will bear, especially upon the words and actions of those that are zealously affected in doing a good thing, though we may think them not altogether so discreet in it as they might be. It is true, there may be over-doing in well-doing; but thence we must learn to be cautious ourselves, lest we run into extremes, but not to be censorious of others; because that which we may impute to the want of prudence, God may accept as an instance of abundant love. We must not say, Those do too much in religion, that do more than we do, but rather aim to do as much as they.

(2.) Want of respect to their Master. The best we can make of it, is, that they knew their Master was perfectly dead to all the delights of sense; he that was so much grieved for the affliction of Joseph, cared not for being anointed with the chief ointments, Am 6:6. And therefore they thought such pleasures ill bestowed upon one who took so little pleasure in them. But supposing that, it did not become them to call it waste, when they perceived that he admitted and accepted it as a token of his friend's love. Note, We must take heed of thinking any thing waste, which is bestowed upon the Lord Jesus, either by others or by ourselves. We must not think that time waste, that is spent in the service of Christ, or that money waste, which is laid out in any work of piety; for, though it seem to be cast upon the waters, to be thrown down the river, we shall find it again, to advantage, after many days, Ec 11:1.

2. See how they excused their offence at it, and what pretence they made for it; This ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. Note, It is no new thing for bad affections to shelter themselves under specious covers; for people to shift off works of piety under colour of works of charity.

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

The reproof Christ gave to his disciples for the offence at this good woman (Mt 26:10,11); Why trouble ye the woman? Note, It is a great trouble to good people to have their good works censured and misconstrued; and it is a thing that Jesus Christ takes very ill. He here took part with a good, honest, zealous, well-meaning woman, against all his disciples, though they seemed to have so much reason on their side; so heartily does he espouse the cause of the offended little ones, Mt 18:10.

Observe his reason; You have the poor always with you. Note,

1. There are some opportunities of doing and getting good which are constant, and which we must give constant attendance to the improvement of. Bibles we have always with us, sabbaths always with us, and so the poor, we have always with us. Note, Those who have a heart to do good, never need complain for want of opportunity. The poor never ceased even out of the land of Israel, De 15:11. We cannot but see some in this world, who call for our charitable assistance, who are as God's receivers, some poor members of Christ, to whom he will have kindness shown as to himself.

2. There are other opportunities of doing and getting good, which come but seldom, which are short and uncertain, and require more peculiar diligence in the improvement of them, and which ought to be preferred before the other; "Me ye have not always, therefore use me while ye have me." Note, (1.) Christ's constant bodily presence was not to be expected here in this world; it was expedient that he should go away; his real presence in the eucharist is a fond

and groundless conceit, and contradicts what he here said, Me ye have not always. (2.) Sometimes special works of piety and devotion should take place of common works of charity. The poor must not rob Christ; we must do good to all, but especially to the household of faith.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Christ's approbation and commendation of the kindness of this good woman. The more his servants and their services are cavilled at by men, the more he manifests his acceptance of them. He calls it a good work (Mt 26:10), and says more in praise of it than could have been imagined; particularly,

1. That the meaning of it was mystical (Mt 26:12); She did it for my burial.

(a) Some think that she intended it so, and that the woman better understood Christ's frequent predictions of his death and sufferings than the apostles did; for which they were recompensed with the honour of being the first witnesses of his resurrection.

(b) However, Christ interpreted it so; and he is always willing to make the best, to make the most of his people's well-meant words and actions. This was as it were the embalming of his body; because the doing of that after his death would be prevented by his resurrection, it was therefore done before; for it was fit that it should be done some time, to show that he was still the Messiah, even when he seemed to be triumphed over by death. The disciples thought the ointment wasted, which was poured upon his head. "But," saith he, "If so much ointment were poured upon a dead body, according to the custom of your country, you would not grudge it, or think it waste. Now this is, in effect, so; the body she anoints is as good as dead, and her kindness is very seasonable for that purpose; therefore rather than call it waste, put it upon that score."

2. That the memorial of it should be honourable (Mt 26:13); This shall be told for a memorial. This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that the preachers of Christ crucified, and the inspired writers of the history of his passion, could not choose but take notice of this passage, proclaim the notice of it, and perpetuate the memorial of it. And being once enrolled in these records, it was graven as with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever, and could not possibly be forgotten. None of all the trumpets of fame sound so loud and so long as the everlasting gospel. Note,

(a) The story of the death of Christ, though a tragical one, is gospel, glad-tidings, because he died for us.

(b) The gospel was to be preached in the whole world; not in Judea only, but in every nation, to every creature. Let the disciples take notice of this, for their encouragement, that their sound should go to the ends of the earth.

(c) Though the honour of Christ is principally designed in the gospel, yet the honour of his saints and servants is not altogether overlooked. The memorial of this woman was to be preserved, not by dedicating a church to her, or keeping an annual feast in honour of her, or preserving a piece of her broken box for a sacred relic; but by mentioning her faith and piety in the preaching of the gospel, for example to others, Heb 6:12. Hereby honour redounds to Christ himself, who in this world, as well as in that to come, will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
15 and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you ? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

Immediately after an instance of the greatness kindness done to Christ, follows an instance of the greatest unkindness; such mixture

is there of good and bad among the followers of Christ; he hath some faithful friends, and some false and feigned ones. What could be more base than this agreement which Judas here made with the chief priests, to betray Christ to them?

I The traitor was Judas Iscariot; he is said to be one of the twelve, as an aggravation of his villany. When the number of the disciples was multiplied (Ac 6:1), no marvel if there were some among them that were a shame and trouble to them; but when there were but twelve, and one of them was a devil, surely we must never expect any society perfectly pure on this side heaven. The twelve were Christ's chosen friends, that had the privilege of his special favour; they were his constant followers, that had the benefit of his most intimate converse, that upon all accounts had reason to love him and be true to him; and yet one of them betrayed him. Note, No bonds of duty or gratitude will hold those that have a devil, Mk 5:3,4.

II. Here is the proffer which he made to the chief priests; he went to them, and said, What will ye give me? Mt 26:15. They did not send for him, nor make the proposal to him; they could not have thought that one of Christ's own disciples should be false to him. Note, There are those, even among Christ's followers, that are worse than any one can imagine them to be, and want nothing but opportunity to show it.

Observe,

1. What Judas promised; "I will deliver him unto you; I will let you know where he is, and undertake to bring you to him, at such a convenient time and place that you may seize him without noise, or danger of an uproar." In their conspiracy against Christ, this was it they were at a loss about, Mt 26:4,5. They durst not meddle with him in public, and knew not where to find him in private. Here the matter rested, and the difficulty was insuperable; till Judas came, and offered them his service. Note, Those that give up themselves to be led by the devil, find him readier than they imagine to help

them at a dead lift, as Judas did the chief priests. Though the rulers, by their power and interest, could kill him when they had him in their hands, yet none but a disciple could betray him. Note, The greater profession men make of religion, and the more they are employed in the study and service of it, the greater opportunity they have of doing mischief, if their hearts be not right with God. If Judas had not been an apostle, he could not have been a traitor; if men had known the way of righteousness, they could not have abused it.

I will deliver him unto you. He did not offer himself, nor did they tamper with him, to be a witness against Christ, though they wanted evidence, Mt 26:59. And if there had been any thing to be alleged against him, which had but the colour of proof that he was an impostor, Judas was the likeliest person to have attested it; but this is an evidence of the innocency of our Lord Jesus, that his own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of life, and was false to him, could not charge him with any thing criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery.

2. What he asked in consideration of this undertaking; What will ye give me? This was the only thing that made Judas betray his Master; he hoped to get money by it: his Master had not given him any provocation, though he knew from the first that he had a devil; yet, for aught that appears, he showed the same kindness to him that he did to the rest, and put no mark of disgrace upon him that might disoblige him; he had placed him in a post that pleased him, had made him purse-bearer, and though he had embezzled the common stock (for he is called a thief, Joh 12:6), yet we do not find he was in any danger of being called to account for it; nor does it appear that he had any suspicion that the gospel was a cheat: no, it was not the hatred of his Master, nor any quarrel with him, but purely the love of money; that, and nothing else, made Judas a traitor.

What will ye give me? Why, what did he want? Neither bread to eat, nor raiment to put on; neither necessaries nor conveniences. Was not he welcome, wherever his Master was? Did he not fare as

he fared? Had he not been but just now nobly entertained at a supper in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, and a little before at another, where no less a person than Martha herself waited at table? And yet this covetous wretch could not be content, but comes basely cringing to the priests with, What will ye give me? Note, It is not the lack of money, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil, and particularly of apostasy from Christ; witness Demas, 2Ti 4:10. Satan tempted our Saviour with this bait, All these things will I give thee (Mt 4:9); but Judas offered himself to be tempted with it; he asks, What will ye give me? as if his Master was a commodity that stuck on his hands.

III. Here is the bargain which the chief priests made with him; they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; thirty shekels, which in our money is about three pounds eight shillings, so some; three pounds fifteen shillings, so others. It should seem, Judas referred himself to them, and was willing to take what they were willing to give; he catches at the first offer, lest the next should be worse. Judas had not been wont to trade high, and therefore a little money went a great way with him. By the law (Ex 21:32), thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave--a goodly price, at which Christ was valued! Zec 11:13. No wonder that Zion's sons, though comparable to fine gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, when Zion's King himself was thus undervalued. They covenanted with him; estesan--appenderunt--they paid it down, so some; gave him his wages in hand, to secure him and to encourage him.

IV. Here is the industry of Judas, in pursuance of his bargain (Mt 26:16); he sought opportunity to betray him, his head was still working to find out how he might do it effectually. Note, 1. It is a very wicked thing to seek opportunity to sin, and to devise mischief; for it argues the heart fully set in men to do evil, and a malice prepense. 2. Those that are in, think they must on, though the matter be ever so bad. After he had made that wicked bargain, he had time to repent, and to revoke it; but now by his covenant the devil has one hank more upon him than he had, and tells him that

he must be true to his word, though ever so false to his Master, as Herod must behead John for his oath's sake.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

After he had made that wicked bargain, Judas had time to repent, and to revoke it; but when lesser acts of dishonesty have hardened the conscience men do without hesitation that which is more shameful.

Jesus Eats the Passover with His Disciples

17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

We have here an account of Christ's keeping the passover. Being made under the law, he submitted to all the ordinances of it, and to this among the rest; it was kept in remembrance of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, the birth-day of that people; it was a tradition of the Jews, that in the days of the Messiah they should be redeemed on the very day of their coming out of Egypt; and it was exactly fulfilled, for Christ died the day after the passover, in which day they began their march.

I The time when Christ ate the passover, was the usual time appointed by God, and observed by the Jews (Mt 26:17); the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, which that year happened on the fifth day of the week, which is our Thursday. Some have advanced a suggestion, that our Lord Jesus celebrated the passover at this time of day sooner than other people did; but the learned Dr. Whitby has largely disproved it.

II The place where, was particularly appointed by himself to the disciples, upon their enquiry (Mt 26:17); they asked, Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover? Perhaps Judas was one of those that asked this question (where he would eat the passover,) that he might know the better how to lay his train; but the rest of the disciples asked it as usual, that they might do their duty.

1. They took it for granted that their Master would eat the passover, though he was at this time persecuted by the chief priests, and his life sought; they knew that he would not be put by his duty, either by frightenings without or fears within. Those do not follow Christ's example who make it an excuse for their not attending on the Lord's supper, our gospel passover, that they have many troubles and many enemies, are full of care and fear; for, if so, they have the more need of that ordinance, to help to silence their fears, and comfort them under their troubles, to help them in forgiving their enemies, and casting all their cares on God.

2. They knew very well that there must be preparation made for it, and that it was their business, as his servants, to make preparation; Where wilt thou that we prepare? Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be solemn preparation.

3. They knew that he had no house of his own wherein to eat the passover; in this, as in other things, for our sakes he became poor. Among all Zion's palaces there was none for Zion's King; but his kingdom was not of this world. See Joh 1:11.

4. They would not pitch upon a place without direction from him, and from him they had direction; he sent them to such a man (Mt 26:18), who probably was a friend and follower of his, and to his house he invited himself and his disciples.

(a) Tell him, My time is at hand; he means the time of his death, elsewhere called his hour (Joh 8:20,13:1); the time, the hour, fixed in the counsel of God, which his heart was upon, and which he had so often spoken of. He knew when it was at hand, and was busy accordingly; we know not our time (Ec 9:12), and therefore must never be off our watch; our time is always ready (Joh 7:6), and therefore we must be always ready. Observe, Because his time was at hand, he would keep the passover Note, The consideration of the near approach of death should quicken us to a diligent improvement of all our opportunities for our souls. Is our time at hand, and an eternity just before us? Let us then keep the feast with the

unleavened bread of sincerity. Observe, When our Lord Jesus invited himself to this good man's house, he sent him this intelligence, that his time was at hand. Note, Christ's secret is with them that entertain him in their hearts. Compare Joh 14:21,Re 3:20.

(b) Tell him, I will keep the passover at thy house. This was an instance of his authority, as the Master, which it is likely this man acknowledged; he did not beg, but command, the use of his house for this purpose. Thus, when Christ by his Spirit comes into the heart, he demands admission, as one whose own the heart is and cannot be denied, and he gains admission as one who has all power in the heart and cannot be resisted; if he saith, "I will keep a feast in such a soul," he will do it; for he works, and none can hinder; his people shall be willing, for he makes them so. I will keep the passover with my disciples. Note, Wherever Christ is welcome, he expects that his disciples should be welcome too. When we take God for our God, we take his people for our people.

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

Observe, the place for their eating the passover was pointed out by Christ to the disciples. He knows those hidden ones who favour his cause, and will graciously visit all who are willing to receive him. The disciples did as Jesus had appointed.

Normally the Jews killed the sacrificial lamb on the afternoon of Passover day, and ate it together in a meal that night (cf. Exo_12:6, 8). Jesus knew he was to die as the sacrificial lamb on Passover day, and therefore he prepared the meal a day earlier. He would eat the meal with his disciples the evening before Passover, but probably without a lamb, since he himself was to be the lamb.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

They ate the passover according to the law (Mt 26:20); He sat down, in the usual table-gesture, not lying on one side, for it was not easy to eat, nor possible to drink, in that posture, but sitting upright, though perhaps sitting low. It is the same word that is used

for his posture at other meals, Mt 9:10,Lu 7:37,Mt 26:7. It was only the first passover in Egypt, as most think, that was eaten with their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand, though all that might be in a sitting posture. His sitting down, denotes the composedness of his mind, when he addressed himself to this solemnity; He sat down with the twelve, Judas not excepted. By the law, they were to take a lamb for a household (Ex 12:3,4), which were to be not less than ten, nor more than twenty; Christ's disciples were his household. Note, They whom God has charged with families, must have their houses with them in serving the Lord.

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples at the passover-supper. The usual subject of discourse at that ordinance, was the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (Ex 12:26,27); but the great Passover is now ready to be offered, and the discourse of that swallows up all talk of the other, (Jer 16:14,15). Here is,

1 The general notice Christ gives his disciples of the treachery that should be among them (Mt 26:21); One of you shall betray me. Observe,

(a) Christ knew it. We know not what troubles will befal us, nor whence they will arise: but Christ knew all his, which, as it proves his omniscience, so it magnifies his love, that he knew all things that should befal him, and yet did not draw back. He foresaw the treachery and baseness of a disciple of his own, and yet went on; took care of those that were given him, though he knew there was a Judas among them; would pay the price of our redemption, though he foresaw some would deny the Lord that bought them; and shed his blood, though he knew it would be trodden under foot as an unholy thing.

(b) When there was occasion, he let those about him know it. He had often told them that the Son of man should be betrayed; now he tells them that one of them should do it, that when they saw it,

they might not only be the less surprised, but have their faith in him confirmed, Joh 13:19,14:29.

2 The disciples' feelings on this occasion, Mt 26:22. How did they take it?

(a) They were exceeding sorrowful.

[1.] It troubled them much to hear that their Master should be betrayed. When Peter was first told of it, he said, Be it far from thee; and therefore it must needs be a great trouble to him and the rest of them, to hear that it was very near to him.

[2.] It troubled them more to hear that one of them should do it. It would be a reproach to the fraternity, for an apostle to prove a traitor, and this grieved them; gracious souls grieve for the sins of others, especially of those that have made a more than ordinary profession of religion. 2Co 11:29.

[3.] It troubled them most of all, that they were left at uncertainty which of them it was, and each of them was afraid for himself, lest, as Hazael speaks (2Ki 8:13), he was the dog that should do this great thing. Those that know the strength and subtlety of the tempter, and their own weakness and folly, cannot but be in pain for themselves, when they hear that the love of many will wax cold.

(b) They began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?

[1.] They were not apt to suspect Judas. Though he was a thief, yet, it seems, he had carried it so plausibly, that those who were intimate with him, were not jealous of him: none of them so much as looked upon him, much less said, Lord, is it Judas? Note, It is possible for a hypocrite to go through the world, not only undiscovered, but unsuspected; like bad money so ingeniously counterfeited that nobody questions it.

[2.] They were apt to suspect themselves; Lord, is it I? Though they were not conscious to themselves of any inclination that way (no such thought had ever entered into their mind), yet they feared the worst, and asked Him who knows us better than we know ourselves, Lord, is it I? Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ always to be jealous over themselves with a godly jealousy, especially in trying times. We know not how strongly we may be tempted, nor how far God may leave us to ourselves, and therefore have reason, not to be high-minded, but fear. It is observable that our Lord Jesus, just before he instituted the Lord's supper, put his disciples upon this trial and suspicion of themselves, to teach us to examine and judge ourselves, and so to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

3. Further information given them concerning this matter (Mt 26:23,24), where Christ tells them,

(a) That the traitor was a familiar friend; He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, that is, One of you that are now with me at the table. He mentions this, to make the treachery appear the more exceeding sinful. Note, External communion with Christ in holy ordinances is a great aggravation of our falseness to him. It is base ingratitude to dip with Christ in the dish, and yet betray him.

(b) That this was according to the scripture, which would take off the offence at it. Was Christ betrayed by a disciple? So it was written (Ps 61:9); He that did eat bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. The more we see of the fulfilling of the scripture in our troubles, the better we may bear them.

(c) That it would prove a very dear bargain to the traitor; Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. This he said, not only to awaken the conscience of Judas, and bring him to repent, and revoke his bargain, but for warning to all others to take heed of sinning like Judas; though God can serve his own purposes by the sins of men, that doth not make the sinner's condition the less

woeful; It had been good for that man, if he had not been born. Note, The ruin that attends those who betray Christ, is so great, that it were more eligible by far not be at all than to be thus miserable.

4. The conviction of Judas, Mt 26:25.

(a) He asked, Is it I? to avoid coming under the suspicion of guilt by his silence. He knew very well that it was he, and yet wished to appear a stranger to such a plot. Note, Many whose consciences condemn them are very industrious to justify themselves before men, and put a good face on it, with, Lord, is it I? He could not but know that Christ knew, and yet trusted so much to his courtesy, because he had hitherto concealed it, that he had the impudence to challenge him to tell: or, perhaps, he was so much under the power of infidelity, that he imagined Christ did not know it, as those who said, The Lord shall not see (Ps 94:7), and asked, Can he judge through the dark clouds?

(b) Christ soon answered this question; Thou hast said, that is, It is as thou hast said. This is not spoken out so plainly as Nathan's Thou art the man; but it was enough to convict him, and, if his heart had not been wretchedly hardened, to have broken the neck of his plot, when he saw it discovered to his Master, and discovered by him. Note, They who are contriving to betray Christ, will, some time or other, betray themselves, and their own tongues will fall upon them.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I ?

The apostles were surprised when Jesus announced that one of them would betray him, for they did not suspect treachery among them. Perhaps they thought that one of them might unintentionally betray him through speaking carelessly. But Judas knew what Jesus meant (Mat_26:20-22; Joh_13:21-25). When Jesus took a piece of bread, dipped it in the dish and gave it to Judas, he was giving Judas a special honour. It was as if Jesus was making a last appeal to him. But Judas' heart was set on doing evil. Jesus knew Judas' intentions, but the apostles still did not suspect him of being a traitor (Mat_26:23-25; Joh_13:26-30).

23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

The institution itself. A sacrament must be instituted; it is no part of moral worship, nor is it dictated by natural light, but has both its being and significancy from the institution, from a divine institution; it is his prerogative who established the covenant, to appoint the seals of it. Hence the apostle (1Co 11:23, &c.), in that discourse of his concerning this ordinance, all along calls Jesus Christ the Lord, because, as Lord, as Lord of the covenant, Lord of the church, he appointed this ordinance. In which,

1 The body of Christ is signified and represented by bread; he had said formerly (Joh 6:35), I am the bread of life, upon which metaphor this sacrament is built; as the life of the body is supported by bread, which is therefore put for all bodily nourishment (Mt 4:4,6:11), so the life of the soul is supported and maintained by Christ's mediation.

(a) He took bread, ton apton--the loaf; some loaf that lay ready to hand, fit for the purpose; it was, probably, unleavened bread; but, that circumstance not being taken notice of, we are not to bind ourselves to that, as some of the Greek churches do. His taking the bread was a solemn action, and was, probably, done in such a manner as to be observed by them that sat with him, that they might expect something more than ordinary to be done with it. Thus was the Lord Jesus set apart in the counsels of divine love for the working out of our redemption.

(b) He blessed it; set it apart for this use by prayer and thanksgiving. We do not find any set form of words used by him upon this

occasion; but what he said, no doubt, was accommodated to the business in hand, that new testament which by this ordinance was to be sealed and ratified. This was like God's blessing the seventh day (Ge 2:3), by which it was separated to God's honour, and made to all that duly observe it, a blessed day: Christ could command the blessing, and we, in his name, are emboldened to beg the blessing.

(c) He brake it; which denotes,

[1.] The breaking of Christ's body for us, that it might be fitted for our use; He was bruised for our iniquities, as bread-corn is bruised (Isa 28:28); though a bone of him was not broken (for all his breaking did not weaken him), yet his flesh was broken with breach upon breach, and his wounds were multiplied (Job 9:17,16:14), and that pained him. God complains that he is broken with the whorish heart of sinners (Eze 6:9); his law broken, our covenants with him broken; now justice requires breach for breach (Le 24:20), and Christ was broken, to satisfy that demand.

[2.] The breaking of Christ's body to us, as the father of the family breaks the bread to the children. The breaking of Christ to us, is to facilitate the application; every thing is made ready for us by the grants of God's word and the operations of his grace.

(d) He gave it to his disciples, as the Master of the family, and the Master of this feast; it is not said, He gave it to the apostles, though they were so, and had been often called so before this, but to the disciples, because all the disciples of Christ have a right to this ordinance; and those shall have the benefit of it who are his disciples indeed; yet he gave it to them as he did the multiplied loaves, by them to be handed to all his other followers.

(e) He said, Take, eat; this is my body, Mt 26:26. He here tells them,

[1.] What they should do with it; "Take, eat; accept of Christ as he is offered to you, receive the atonement, approve of it, consent to it, come up to the terms on which the benefit of it is proposed to

you; submit to his grace and to his government." Believing on Christ is expressed by receiving him (Joh 1:12), and feeding upon him, Joh 6:57,58. Meat looked upon, or the dish ever so well garnished, will not nourish us; it must be fed upon: so must the doctrine of Christ.

[2.] What they should have with it; This is my body, not outos--this bread, but touto--this eating and drinking. Believing carries all the efficacy of Christ's death to our souls. This is my body, spiritually and sacramentally; this signifies and represents my body. He employs sacramental language, like that, Ex 12:11. It is the Lord's passover. Upon a carnal and much--mistaken sense of these words, the church of Rome builds the monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, which makes the bread to be changed into the substance of Christ's body, only the accidents of bread remaining; which affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament, and gives the lie to our senses. We partake of the sun, not by having the bulk and body of the sun put into our hands, but the beams of it darted down upon us; so we partake of Christ by partaking of his grace, and the blessed fruits of the breaking of his body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

The blood of Christ is signified and represented by the wine; to make it a complete feast, here is not only bread to strengthen, but wine to make glad the heart (Mt 26:27,28); He took the cup, the grace-cup, which was set ready to be drank, after thanks returned, according to the custom of the Jews at the passover; this Christ took, and made the sacramental-cup, and so altered the property. It was intended for a cup of blessing (so the Jews called it), and therefore St. Paul studiously distinguished between the cup of blessing which we bless, and that which they bless. He gave thanks, to teach us, not only in every ordinance, but in every part of the ordinance, to have our eyes up to God.

This cup he gave to the disciples,

(a) With a command; Drink ye all of it. Thus he welcomes his guests to his table, obliges them all to drink of his cup. Why should he so expressly command them all to drink, and to see that none let it pass them, and press that more expressly in this than in the other part of the ordinance? Surely it was because he foresaw how in after-ages this ordinance would be dismembered by the prohibition of the cup to the laity, with an express non obstante--notwithstanding to the command.

(b) With an explication; For this is my blood of the New Testament. Therefore drink it with appetite, delight, because it is so rich a cordial. Hitherto the blood of Christ had been represented by the blood of beasts, real blood: but, after it was actually shed, it was represented by the blood of grapes, metaphorical blood; so wine is called in an Old-Testament prophecy of Christ, Ge 49:10,11.

Now observe what Christ saith of his blood represented in the sacrament.

[1.] It is my blood of the New Testament. The Old Testament was confirmed by the blood of bulls and goats (Heb 9:19,20,Ex 24:8); but the New Testament with the blood of Christ, which is here distinguished from that; It is my blood of the New Testament. The covenant God is pleased to make with us, and all the benefits and privileges of it, are owing to the merits of Christ's death.

[2.] It is shed; it was not shed till next day, but it was now upon the point of being shed, it is as good as done. "Before you come to repeat this ordinance yourselves, it will be shed." He was now ready to be offered, and his blood to be poured out, as the blood of the sacrifices which made atonement.

[3.] It is shed for many. Christ came to confirm a covenant with many (Da 9:27), and the intent of his death agreed. The blood of the Old Testament was shed for a few: it confirmed a covenant, which (saith Moses) the Lord has made with you, Ex 24:8. The atonement was made only for the children of Israel (Le 16:34): but

Jesus Christ is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1Jo 2:2.

[4.] It is shed for the remission of sins, that is, to purchase remission of sins for us. The redemption which we have through his blood, is the remission of sins, Eph 1:7. The new covenant which is procured and ratified by the blood of Christ, is a charter of pardon, an act of indemnity, in order to a reconciliation between God and man; for sin was the only thing that made the quarrel, and without shedding of blood is no remission, Heb 9:22. The pardon of sin is that great blessing which is, in the Lord's supper, conferred upon all true believers; it is the foundation of all other blessings, and the spring of everlasting comfort, Mt 9:2,3. A farewell is now bidden to the fruit of the vine, Mt 26:29. Christ and his disciples had now feasted together with a deal of comfort, in both an Old Testament and a New Testament festival, fibula utriusque Testamenti--the connecting tie of both Testaments. How amiable were these tabernacles! How good to be here! Never such a heaven upon earth as was at this table; but it was not intended for a perpetuity; he now told them (Joh 16:16), that yet a little while and they should not see him: and again a little while and they should see him, which explains this here.

First, He takes leave of such communion; I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, that is, now that I am no more in the world (Joh 17:11); I have had enough of it, and am glad to think of leaving it, glad to think that this is the last meal. Farewell this fruit of the vine, this passover-cup, this sacramental wine. Dying saints take their leave of sacraments, and the other ordinances of communion which they enjoy in this world, with comfort, for the joy and glory they enter into supersede them all; when the sun rises, farewell the candles.

Secondly, He assures them of a happy meeting again at last. It is a long, but not an everlasting, farewell; until that day when I drink it new with you. 1. Some understand it of the interviews he had with them after his resurrection, which was the first step of his exaltation

into the kingdom of his Father; and though during those forty days he did not converse with them so constantly as he had done, yet he did eat and drink with them (Ac 10:41), which, as it confirmed their faith, so doubtless it greatly comforted their hearts, for they were overjoyed at it, Lu 24:41. 2. Others understand it of the joys and glories of the future state, which the saints shall partake of in everlasting communion with the Lord Jesus, represented here by the pleasures of a banquet of wine. That will be the kingdom of his Father, for unto him shall the kingdom be then delivered up; the wine of consolation (Jer 16:7) will there be always new, never flat or sour, as wine with long keeping; never nauseous or unpleasant, as wine to those that have drank much; but ever fresh. Christ will himself partake of those pleasures; it was the joy set before him, which he had in his eye, and all his faithful friends and followers shall partake with him.

28 for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish Passover had developed into a set form with a number of added procedures. Among the additions was a cup of wine, for which the head of the household offered a prayer of thanks (or blessing; cf. 1Co_10:16). He filled this cup and passed it among the participants, both before and after the eating of unleavened bread. The participants also sang a collection of psalms known as the Hallel (Psa 113-118). They sang two of the psalms before eating the lamb, the other psalms after. Some of these features are evident in the Gospels' account of the Passover meal that Jesus had with his disciples the night before his crucifixion. It is sometimes called the Last Supper, and was the occasion on which Jesus instituted the communion meal later known as the Lord's Supper (cf. 1Co_11:23-26).

Jesus took some of the bread and wine on the table, gave thanks, and distributed it among his disciples as symbols of his body and blood to be offered in sacrifice. His blood sealed God's covenant, that unconditional promise of forgiveness and eternal life to all who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Israelites kept the Passover in remembrance of God's gracious work in saving them

through the Passover lamb; the disciples of the Lord Jesus keep the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the one through whose death they are saved from sin and given eternal life (Mat_26:26-27; Luk_22:17-20; cf. Jer_31:31-34).

29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Despite all that Jesus had shown and taught his disciples about humility, and in spite of the death he was about to die for them, they were still arguing about who was the greatest among them. Jesus reminded them again of the different standards in the earthly and heavenly kingdoms. He had given them an example in the way he lived among them, showing that true greatness lay in serving others (Luk_22:24-27). They had stood by him in all his trials, and he wanted them to maintain their loyalty through the time of his suffering and death. Their reward would be to share his rule in the triumphant kingdom (Luk_22:28-30).

Peter's Denial Foretold

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon the way, as they were going to the mount of Olives. Observe,

A prediction of the trial which both he and his disciples were now to go through. He here foretels,

1. A dismal scattering storm just arising, Mt 26:31.

(a) That they should all be offended because of Christ that very night; that is, they would all be so frightened with the sufferings, that they would not have the courage to cleave to him in them, but would all basely desert him; Because of me this night, en emoi en te nykti

taute--because of me, even because of this night; so it might be read; that is, because of what happens to me this night. Note,

[1.] Offences will come among the disciples of Christ in an hour of trial and temptation; it cannot be but they should, for they are weak; Satan is busy; God permits offences; even they whose hearts are upright may sometimes be overtaken with an offence.

[2.] There are some temptations and offences, the effects of which are general and universal among Christ's disciples; All you shall be offended. Christ had lately discovered to them the treachery of Judas; but let not the rest be secure; though there will be but one traitor, they will be all deserters. This he saith, to alarm them all, that they might all watch.

[3.] We have need to prepare for sudden trials, which may come to extremity in a very little time. Christ and his disciples had eaten their supper well together in peace and quietness; yet that very night proved such a night of offence. How soon may a storm arise! We know not what a day, or a night, may bring forth, nor what great event may be in the teeming womb of a little time, Pr 27:1.

[4.] The cross of Christ is the great stumbling-block to many that pass for his disciples; both the cross he bore for us (1Co 1:23), and that which we are called out to bear for him, Mt 16:24.

(b) That herein the scripture would be fulfilled; I will smite the Shepherd. It is quoted from Zec 13:7.

[1.] Here is the smiting of the Shepherd in the sufferings of Christ. God awakens the sword of his wrath against the Son of his love, and he is smitten.

[2.] The scattering of the sheep, thereupon, in the flight of the disciples. When Christ fell into the hands of his enemies, his disciples ran, one one way and another another; it was each one's

care to shift for himself, and happy he that could get furthest from the cross.

2. He gives them the prospect of a comfortable gathering together again after this storm (Mt 26:32); "After I am risen again, I will go before you. Though you will forsake me, I will not forsake you; though you fall, I will take care you shall not fall finally: we shall have a meeting again in Galilee, I will go before you, as the shepherd before the sheep." Some make the last words of that prophecy (Zec 13:7), a promise equivalent to this here; and I will bring my hand again to the little ones. There is no bringing them back but by bringing his hand to them. Note, The captain of our salvation knows how to rally his troops, when, through their cowardice, they have been put into disorder.

32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

Improper self-confidence, like that of Peter, is the first step to a fall. There is a proneness in all of us to be over-confident. But those fall soonest and foulest, who are the most confident in themselves. Those are least safe, who think themselves most secure. Satan is active to lead such astray; they are most off their guard: God leaves them to themselves, to humble them.

The presumption of Peter, that he should keep his integrity, whatever happened (Mt 26:33); Though all men be offended, yet will I never be offended. Peter had a great stock of confidence, and was upon all occasions forward to speak, especially to speak for himself; sometimes it did him a kindness, but at other times it betrayed him, as it did here. Where observe,

1. How he bound himself with a promise, that he would never be offended in Christ; not only not this night, but at no time. If this promise had been made in a humble dependence upon the grace of Christ, it had been an excellent word. Before the Lord's supper, Christ's discourse led his disciples to examine themselves with, Lord, is it I? For that is our preparatory duty; after the ordinance, his

discourse leads them to an engaging of themselves to close walking, for that is the subsequent duty.

2. How he fancied himself better armed against temptation than any one else, and this was his weakness and folly; Though all men shall be offended yet will not I. This was worse than Hazael's, What! is thy servant a dog? For he supposed the thing to be so bad, that no man would do it. But Peter supposes it possible that some, nay that all, might be offended, and yet he escape better than any. Note, It argues a great degree of self-conceit and self-confidence, to think ourselves either safe from the temptations, or free from the corruptions, that are common to men. We should rather say, If it be possible that others may be offended, there is danger that I may be so. But it is common for those who think too well of themselves, easily to admit suspicions of others. See Ga 6:1.

34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

The particular warning Christ gave Peter of what he would do, Mt 26:34. He imagined that in the hour of temptation he should come off better than any of them, and Christ tells him that he should come off worse. The warning is introduced with a solemn asseveration; "Verily, I say unto thee; take my word for it, who know thee better than thou knowest thyself." He tells him,

1. That he should deny him. Peter promised that he would not be so much as offended in him, not desert him; but Christ tells him that he will go further, he will disown him. He said, "Though all men, yet not I;" and he did it sooner than any.

2. How quickly he should do it; this night, before to-morrow, nay, before cock-crowing. Satan's temptations are compared to darts (Eph 6:16), which wound ere we are aware; suddenly doth he shoot. As we know not how near we may be to trouble, so we know not how near we may be to sin; if God leave us to ourselves, we are always in danger.

3. How often he should do it; thrice. He thought that he should never once do such a thing; but Christ tells him that he would do it again and again; for, when once our feet begin to slip, it is hard to recover our standing again. The beginnings of sin are as the letting forth of water.

35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Peter's repeated assurances of his fidelity (Mt 26:35); Though I should die with thee. He supposed the temptation strong, when he said, Though all men do it, yet will not I. But here he supposeth it stronger, when he puts it to the peril of life; Though I should die with thee. He knew what he should do--rather die with Christ than deny him, it was the condition of discipleship (Lu 14:26); and he thought what he would do--never be false to his Master whatever it cost him; yet, it proved, he was. It is easy to talk boldly and carelessly of death at a distance; "I will rather die than do such a thing:" but it is not so soon done as said, when it comes to the setting-to, and death shows itself in its own colours.

What Peter said the rest subscribed to; likewise also said all the disciples. Note, 1. There is a proneness in good men to be over-confident of their own strength and stability. We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations, to go through the hardest and most hazardous services, and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ; but it is because we do not know ourselves. 2. Those often fall soonest and foulest that are most confident of themselves. Those are least safe that are most secure. Satan is most active to seduce such; they are most off their guard, and God leaves them to themselves, to humble them. See 1Co 10:12.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

Hitherto, we have seen the preparatives for Christ's sufferings; now, we enter upon the bloody scene. In these verses we have the story of his agony in the garden. This was the beginning of sorrows to our

Lord Jesus. Now the sword of the Lord began to awake against the man that was his Fellow; and how should it be quiet when the Lord had given it a charge? The clouds had been gathering a good while, and looked black. He had said, some days before, Now is my soul troubled, Joh 12:27. But now the storm began in good earnest. He put himself into this agony, before his enemies gave him any trouble, to show that he was a Freewill offering; that his life was not forced from him, but he laid it down of himself. Joh 10:18. Observe,

The place where he underwent this mighty agony; it was in a place called Gethsemane. The name signifies, torculus olei--an olive-mill, a press for olives, like a wine-press, where they trod the olives, Mic 6:15. And this was the proper place for such a thing, at the foot of the mount of Olives. There our Lord Jesus began his passion; there it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and crush him, that fresh oil might flow to all believers from him, that we might partake of the root and fatness of that good Olive. There he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath, and trod it alone.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

The company he had with him, when he was in this agony.

1. He took all the twelve disciples with him to the garden, except Judas, who was at this time otherwise employed. Though it was late in the night, near bed-time, yet they kept with him, and took this walk by moonlight with him, as Elisha, who, when he was told that his master should shortly be taken from his head, declared that he would not leave him, though he led him about; so these follow the Lamb, wheresoever he goes.

2. He took only Peter, and James, and John, with him into that corner of the garden where he suffered his agony. He left the rest at some distance, perhaps at the garden door, with this charge, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder; like that of Abraham to his young men (Ge 22:5), Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship.

(a) Christ went to pray alone, though he had lately prayed with his disciples, Joh 17:1. Note, Our prayers with our families must not excuse us from our secret devotions.

(b) He ordered them to sit here. Note, We must take heed of giving any disturbance or interruption to those who retire for secret communion with God. He took these three with him, because they had been the witnesses of his glory in his transfiguration (Mt 17:1,2), and that would prepare them to be the witnesses of his agony. Note, Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, that have by faith beheld his glory, and have conversed with the glorified saints upon the holy mount. If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him; and if we hope to reign with him, why should we not expect to suffer with him?

The agony itself that he was in; He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy. It is called an agony (Lu 22:44), a conflict. It was not any bodily pain or torment that he was in, nothing occurred to hurt him; but, whatever it was, it was from within; he troubled himself, Joh 11:33. The words here used are very emphatical; he began lupeisthai kai ademunein--to be sorrowful, and in a consternation. The latter word signifies such a sorrow as makes a man neither fit for company nor desirous of it. He had like a weight of lead upon his spirits. Physicians use a word near akin to it, to signify the disorder a man is in in a fit of an ague, or beginning of a fever. Now was fulfilled, Ps 22:14, I am poured out like water, my heart is like wax, it is melted; and all those passages in the Psalms where David complains of the sorrows of his soul, Ps 18:4,5,42:7,55:4,5,69:1-3.88:3,116:3, and Jonah's complaint, Jon 2:4,5.

But what was the cause of all this? What was it that put him into his agony? Why art thou cast down, blessed Jesus, and why disquieted? Certainly, it was nothing of despair or distrust of his Father, much less any conflict or struggle with him. As the Father loved him because he laid down his life for the sheep, so he was entirely subject to his Father's will in it. But,

1. He engaged in an encounter with the powers of darkness; so he intimates (Lu 22:53); This is your hour, and the power of darkness: and he spoke of it just before (Joh 14:30,31); "The prince of this world cometh. I see him rallying his forces, and preparing for a general assault; but he has nothing in me, no garrisons in his interest, none that secretly hold correspondence with him; and therefore his attempts, though fierce, will be fruitless: but as the Father gave me commandment, so I do; however it be, I must have a struggle with him, the field must be fairly fought; and therefore arise, let us go hence, let us hasten to the field of battle, and meet the enemy." Now is the close engagement in single combat between Michael and the dragon, hand to hand; now is the judgment of this world; the great cause is now to be determined, and the decisive battle fought, in which the prince of this world, will certainly be beaten and cast out, Joh 12:31. Christ, when he works salvation, is described like a champion taking the field, Isa 59:16-18. Now the serpent makes his fiercest onset on the seed of the woman, and directs his sting, the sting of death, to his very heart; animamque in vulnere ponit--and the wound is mortal.

2. He was now bearing the iniquities which the Father laid upon him, and, by his sorrow and amazement, he accommodated himself to his undertaking. The sufferings he was entering upon were for our sins; they were all made to meet upon him, and he knew it. As we are obliged to be sorry for our particular sins, so was he grieved for the sins of us all. So Bishop Pearson, p. 191. Now, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where Christ now was, God gathered all nations, and pleaded with them in his Son, Joe 3:2,12. He knew the malignity of the sins that were laid upon him, how provoking to God, how ruining to man; and these being all set in order before him, and charged upon him, he was sorrowful and very heavy. Now it was that iniquities took hold on him; so that he was not able to look up, as was foretold concerning him, Ps 40:7,12.

3. He had a full and clear prospect of all the sufferings that were before him. He foresaw the treachery of Judas, the unkindness of Peter, the malice of the Jews, and their base ingratitude. He knew

that he should now in a few hours be scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross; death in its most dreadful appearances, death in pomp, attended with all its terrors, looked him in the face; and this made him sorrowful, especially because it was the wages of our sin, which he had undertaken to satisfy for. It is true, the martyrs that have suffered for Christ, have entertained the greatest torments, and the most terrible deaths, without any such sorrow and consternation; have called their prisons their delectable orchards, and a bed of flames a bed of roses: but then,

(a) Christ was now denied the supports and comforts which they had; that is, he denied them to himself, and his soul refused to be comforted, not in passion, but in justice to his undertaking. Their cheerfulness under the cross was owing to the divine favour, which, for the present, was suspended from the Lord Jesus.

(b) His sufferings were of another nature from theirs. St. Paul, when he is to be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the saints' faith, can joy and rejoice with them all; but to be offered a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin, is quite a different case. On the saints' cross there is a blessing pronounced, which enables them to rejoice under it (Mt 5:10,12); but to Christ's cross there was a curse annexed, which made him sorrowful and very heavy under it. And his sorrow under the cross was the foundation of their joy under it.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

He who made atonement for the sins of mankind, submitted himself in a garden of suffering, to the will of God, from which man had revolted in a garden of pleasure. Christ took with him into that part of the garden where he suffered his agony, only those who had witnessed his glory in his transfiguration. Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, who have by faith beheld his glory. The words used denote the most entire dejection, amazement, anguish, and horror of mind; the state of one surrounded with sorrows, overwhelmed with miseries, and almost swallowed up with terror and dismay. He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, It is finished. He prayed that, if possible, the cup might

pass from him. But he also showed his perfect readiness to bear the load of his sufferings; he was willing to submit to all for our redemption and salvation. According to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitterest cup which God puts into our hands; though nature struggle, it must submit. It should be more our care to get troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of One who neither slumbers nor sleeps. All are tempted, but we should be much afraid of entering into temptation. To be secured from this, we should watch and pray, and continually look unto the Lord to hold us up that we may be safe. Doubtless our Lord had a clear and full view of the sufferings he was to endure, yet he spoke with the greatest calmness till this time. Christ was a Surety, who undertook to be answerable for our sins. Accordingly he was made sin for us, and suffered for our sins, the Just for the unjust; and Scripture ascribes his heaviest sufferings to the hand of God. He had full knowledge of the infinite evil of sin, and of the immense extent of that guilt for which he was to atone; with awful views of the Divine justice and holiness, and the punishment deserved by the sins of men, such as no tongue can express, or mind conceive. At the same time, Christ suffered being tempted; probably horrible thoughts were suggested by Satan that tended to gloom and every dreadful conclusion: these would be the more hard to bear from his perfect holiness. And did the load of imputed guilt so weigh down the soul of Him of whom it is said, He upholdeth all things by the word of his power? into what misery then must those sink whose sins are left upon their own heads! How will those escape who neglect so great salvation?

The 'cup' of suffering that caused Jesus such distress was not just physical suffering, great though that was. Above all it was the inner agony as the sinless one, God's Son, took upon himself the sin of his human creatures and bore God's wrath on their behalf (cf. 2Co_5:21; Heb_2:9; 1Pe_2:24). It was an experience no one else could know, for no one else had Jesus' sinlessness or shared his relationship with the Father. Jesus had a real human will, and when he considered the ordeal that lay ahead, a conflict arose within him. As he fought against the temptation to avoid the cross, his agony of mind was so

intense that he perspired what appeared to be blood. But he won the battle, and determined that he would willingly submit to whatever his Father would have him go through (Mar_14:35-36; Luk_22:41-44). Perhaps the reason why the disciples were unable to stay awake was not simply that they were over-tired, but that they were unable to withstand the satanic forces at work in the garden. Jesus saw their weakness and urged them to be alert and pray for strength, because they too were going to be put to the test. They would face the temptation to deny Jesus in order to save themselves (Mar_14:37-40; Luk_22:45-46).Jesus, by contrast, would give himself without reservation, in order to save others. The decisive victory he won in the garden enabled him to meet his betrayal, trial and death with renewed courage and assurance (Mar_14:41-42).

His complaint of this agony. Finding himself under the arrest of his passion, he goes to his disciples (Mt 26:38), and,

1. He acquaints them with his condition; My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. It gives some little ease to a troubled spirit, to have a friend ready to unbosom itself to, and give vent to its sorrows. Christ here tells them,

(a) What was the seat of his sorrow; it was his soul that was now in an agony. This proves that Christ had a true human soul; for he suffered, not only in his body, but in his soul. We had sinned both against our own bodies, and against our souls; both had been used in sin, and both had been wronged by it; and therefore Christ suffered in soul as well as in body.

(b) What was the degree of his sorrow. He was exceedingly sorrowful, perilypos--compassed about with sorrow on all hands. It was sorrow in the highest degree, even unto death; it was a killing sorrow, such sorrow as no mortal man could bear and live. He was ready to die for grief; they were sorrows of death.

(c) The duration of it; it will continue even unto death. "My soul will be sorrowful as long as it is in this body; I see no outlet but death."

He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, It is finished; that grief is now finished, which began in the garden. It was prophesied of Christ, that he should be a Man of sorrows (Isa 53:3); he was so all along, we never read that he laughed; but all his sorrows hitherto were nothing to this.

2. He bespeaks their company and attendance; Tarry ye here, and watch with me. Surely he was destitute indeed of help, when he entreated theirs, who, he knew, would be but miserable comforters; but he would hereby teach us the benefit of the communion of saints. It is good to have, and therefore good to seek, the assistance of our brethren, when at any time we are in an agony; for two are better than one. What he said to them, he saith to all, Watch, Mk 13:37. Not only watch for him, in expectation of his future coming, but watch with him, in application to our present work.

39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

What passed between him and his Father when he was in this agony; Being in an agony, he prayed. Prayer is never out of season, but it is especially seasonable in an agony.

Observe,

1 The place where he prayed; He went a little further, withdrew from them, that the scripture might be fulfilled, I have trod the wine-press alone; he retired for prayer; a troubled soul finds most ease when it is alone with God, who understands the broken language of sighs and groans. Calvin's devout remark upon this is worth transcribing, Utile est seorsim orare, tunc enim magis familiariter sese denudat fidelis animus, et simplicius sua vota, gemitus, curas, pavores, spes, et gaudia in Dei sinum exonerat--It is useful to pray apart; for then the faithful soul develops itself more

familiarly, and with greater simplicity pours forth its petitions, groans, cares, fears, hopes and joys, into the bosom of God. Christ has hereby taught us that secret prayer must be made secretly. Yet some think that even the disciples whom he left at the garden door, overheard him; for it is said (Heb 5:7), they were strong cries.

2. His posture in prayer; He fell on his face; his lying prostrate denotes,

(a) The agony he was in, and the extremity of his sorrow. Job, in great grief, fell on the ground; and great anguish is expressed by rolling in the dust, Mic 1:10.

(b) His humility in prayer. This posture was an expression of his, eulabeia--his reverential fear (spoken of Heb 5:7), with which he offered up these prayers: and it was in the days of his flesh, in his estate of humiliation, to which hereby he accommodated himself.

3. The prayer itself; wherein we may observe three things.

(a) The title he gives to God; O my Father. Thick as the cloud was, he could see God as a Father through it. Note, In all our addresses to God we should eye him as a Father, as our Father; and it is in a special manner comfortable to do so, when we are in an agony. It is a pleasing string to harp upon at such a time, My Father; whither should the child go, when any thing grieves him, but to his father?

(b) The favour he begs; If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. He calls his sufferings a cup; not a river, not a sea, but a cup, which we shall soon see the bottom of. When we are under troubles, we should make the best, the least, of them, and not aggravate them. His sufferings might be called a cup, because allotted him, as at feasts a cup was set to every mess. He begs that this cup might pass from him, that is, that he might avoid the sufferings now at hand; or, at least, that they might be shortened. This intimates no more than that he was really and truly Man, and as a Man he could not but be averse to pain and suffering. This is the first and simple act

of man's will--to start back from that which is sensibly grievous to us, and to desire the prevention and removal of it. The law of self-preservation is impressed upon the innocent nature of man, and rules there till overruled by some other law; therefore Christ admitted and expressed a reluctance to suffer, to show that he was taken from among men (Heb 5:1), was touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb 4:15), and tempted as we are; yet without sin. Note, A prayer of faith against an affliction, may very well consist with the patience of hope under affliction. When David had said, I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it; his very next words were, Remove thy stroke away from me, Ps 39:9,10. But observe the proviso; If it be possible. If God may be glorified, man saved, and the ends of his undertaking answered, without his drinking of this bitter cup, he desires to be excused; otherwise not. What we cannot do with the securing of our great end, we must reckon to be in effect impossible; Christ did so. Id possumus quod jure possumus--We can do that which we can do lawfully. We can do nothing, not only we may do nothing, against the truth.

(c) His entire submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of God; Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Not that the human will of Christ was adverse or averse to the divine will; it was only, in its first act, diverse from it; to which, in the second act of the will, which compares and chooses, he freely submits himself. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus, though he had a quick sense of the extreme bitterness of the sufferings he was to undergo, yet was freely willing to submit to them for our redemption and salvation, and offered himself, and gave himself, for us.

[2.] The reason of Christ's submission to his sufferings, was, his Father's will; as thou wilt, Mt 26:39. He grounds his own willingness upon the Father's will, and resolves the matter wholly into that; therefore he did what he did, and did it with delight, because it was the will of God, Ps 40:8. This he had often referred to, as that which put him upon, and carried him through, his whole

undertaking; This is the Father's will, Joh 6:39,40. This he sought (Joh 5:30); it was his meat and drink to do it, Joh 4:34.

[3.] In conformity to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitter cup which God puts into our hands, be it ever so bitter; though nature struggle, grace must submit. We then are disposed as Christ was, when our wills are in every thing melted into the will of God, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood; The will of the Lord be done, Ac 21:14.

4. The repetition of the prayer; He went away again the second time, and prayed (Mt 26:42), and again the third time (Mt 26:44), and all to the same purport; only, as it is related here, he did not, in the second and third prayer, expressly ask that the cup might pass from him, as he had done in the first. Note, Though we may pray to God to prevent and remove an affliction, yet our chief errand, and that which we should most insist upon, must be, that he will give us grace to bear it well. It should be more our care to get our troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. He prayed, saying, Thy will be done. Note, Prayer is the offering up, not only of our desires, but of our resignations, to God. It amounts to an acceptable prayer, when at any time we are in distress, to refer ourselves to God, and to commit our way and work to him; Thy will be done. The third time he said the same words, ton auton logon--the same word, that is the same matter or argument; he spoke to the same purport. We have reason to think that this was not all he said, for it should seem by Mt 26:40 that he continued an hour in his agony and prayer; but, whatever more he said, it was to this effect, deprecating his approaching sufferings, and yet resigning himself to God's will in them, in the expressions of which we may be sure he was not straitened.

But what answer had he to this prayer? Certainly it was not made in vain; he that heard him always, did not deny him now. It is true, the cup did not pass from him, for he withdrew that petition, and

did not insist upon it (if he had, for aught I know, the cup had passed away); but he had an answer to his prayer; for,

(a) He was strengthened with strength in his soul, in the day when he cried (Ps 138:3); and that was a real answer, Lu 22:43.

(b) He was delivered from that which he feared, which was, lest by impatience and distrust he should offend his Father, and so disable himself to go on with his undertaking, Heb 5:7. In answer to his prayer, God provided that he should not fail or be discouraged.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

What passed between him and his three disciples at this time; and here we may observe,

1 The fault they were guilty of; that when he was in his agony, sorrowful and heavy, sweating and wrestling and praying, they were so little concerned, that they could not keep awake; he comes, and finds them asleep, Mt 26:40. The strangeness of the thing should have roused their spirits to turn aside now, and see this great sight--the bush burning, and yet not consumed; much more should their love to their Master, and their care concerning him, have obliged them to a more close and vigilant attendance on him; yet they were so dull, that they could not keep their eyes open. What had become of us, if Christ had been now as sleepy as his disciples were? It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of one who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Christ engaged them to watch with him, as if he expected some succour from them, and yet they slept; surely it was the unkindest thing that could be. When David wept at this mount of Olives, all his followers wept with him (2Sa 15:30); but when the Son of David was here in tears, his followers were

asleep. His enemies, who watched for him, were wakeful enough (Mk 14:43); but his disciples, who should have watched with him, were asleep. Lord, what is man! What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves! Note, Carelessness and carnal security, especially when Christ is in his agony, are great faults in any, but especially in those who profess to be nearest in relation to him. The church of Christ, which is his body, is often in an agony, fightings without and fears within; and shall we be asleep then, like Gallio, that cared for none of these things; or those (Am 6:6) that lay at ease, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph?

2. Christ's favour to them, notwithstanding. Persons in sorrow are too apt to be cross and peevish with those about them, and to lay it grievously to heart, if they but seem to neglect them; but Christ in his agony is as meek as ever, and carries it as patiently toward his followers as toward his Father, and is not apt to take things ill.

When Christ's disciples put this slight upon him,

(a) He came to them, as if he expected to receive some comfort from them; and if they had put him in mind of what they had heard from him concerning his resurrection and glory perhaps it might have been some help to him; but, instead of that, they added grief to his sorrow; and yet he came to them, more careful for them than they were for themselves; when he was most engaged, yet he came to look after them; for those that were given him, were upon his heart, living and dying.

(b) He gave them a gentle reproof, for as many as he loves he rebukes; he directed it to Peter, who used to speak for them; let him now hear for them. The reproof was very melting; What! could ye not watch with me one hour? He speaks as one amazed to see them so stupid; every word, when closely considered, shows the aggravated nature of the case. Consider,

[1.] Who they were; "Could not ye watch--ye, my disciples and followers? No wonder if others neglect me, if the earth sit still, and be at rest (Zec 1:11); but from you I expected better things."

[2.] Who he was; "Watch with me. If one of yourselves were ill and in an agony, it would be very unkind not to watch with him; but it is undutiful not to watch with your Master, who has long watched over you for good, has led you, and fed you, and taught you, borne you, and borne with you; do ye thus requite him?" He awoke out of his sleep, to help them when they were in distress (Mt 8:26); and could not they keep awake, at least to show their good-will to him, especially considering that he was now suffering for them, in an agony for them? Jam tua res agiture--I am suffering in your cause.

[3.] How small a thing it was that he expected from them--only to watch with him. If he had bid them do some great thing, had bid them be in an agony with him, or die with him, they thought they could have done it; and yet they could not do it, when he only desired them to watch with him, 2Ki 5:13. [4.] How short a time it was that he expected it--but one hour; they were not set upon the guard whole nights, as the prophet was (Isa 21:8), only one hour. Sometimes he continued all night in prayer to God, but did not then expect that his disciples should watch with him; only now, when he had but one hour to spend in prayer.

(c) He gave them good counsel; Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, Mt 26:41.

[1.] There was an hour of temptation drawing on, and very near; the troubles of Christ were temptations to his followers to disbelieve and distrust him, to deny and desert him, and renounce all relation to him.

[2.] There was danger of their entering into the temptation, as into a snare or trap; of their entering into a parley with it, or a good opinion of it, of their being influenced by it, and inclining to comply with it; which is the first step toward being overcome by it.

[3.] He therefore exhorts them to watch and pray; Watch with me, and pray with me. While they were sleeping, they lost the benefit of joining in Christ's prayer. "Watch yourselves, and pray yourselves. Watch and pray against this present temptation to drowsiness and security; pray that you may watch; beg of God by his grace to keep you awake, now that there is occasion." When we are drowsy in the worship of God, we should pray, as a good Christian once did, "The Lord deliver me from this sleepy devil!" Lord, quicken thou me in thy way, Or, "Watch and pray against the further temptation you may be assaulted with; watch and pray lest this sin prove the inlet of many more." Note, When we find ourselves entering into temptation, we have need to watch and pray.

(d) He kindly excused for them; The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. We do not read of one word they had to say for themselves (the sense of their own weakness stopped their mouth); but then he had a tender word to say on their behalf, for it is his office to be an Advocate; in this he sets us an example of the love which covers a multitude of sins. He considered their frame, and did not chide them, for he remembered that they were but flesh; and the flesh is weak, though the spirit be willing, Ps 78:38,39. Note,

[1.] Christ's disciples, as long as they are here in this world, have bodies as well as souls, and a principle of remaining corruption as well as of reigning grace, like Jacob and Esau in the same womb, Canaanites and Israelites in the same land, Ga 5:17,24.

[2.] It is the unhappiness and burthen of Christ's disciples, that their bodies cannot keep pace with their souls in works of piety and devotion, but are many a time a cloud and clog to them; that, when the spirit is free and disposed to that which is good, the flesh is averse and indisposed. This St. Paul laments (Ro 7:25); With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin. Our impotency in the service of God is the great iniquity and infidelity of our nature, and it arises from these sad remainders of corruption, which are the constant grief and burthen of God's people.

[3.] Yet it is our comfort, that our Master graciously considers this, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, and pities and pardons the weakness and infirmity of the flesh; for we are under grace, and not under the law.

(e) Though they continued dull and sleepy, he did not any further rebuke them for it; for, though we daily offend, yet he will not always chide.

[1.] When he came to them the second time, we do not find that he said any thing to them (Mt 26:43); he findeth them asleep again. One would have thought that he had said enough to them to keep them awake; but it is hard to recover from a spirit of slumber. Carnal security, when once it prevails, is not easily shaken off. Their eyes were heavy, which intimates that they strove against it as much as they could, but were overcome by it, like the spouse; I sleep, but my heart waketh (So 5:2); and therefore their Master looked upon them with compassion.

[2.] When he came the third time, he left them to be alarmed with the approaching danger (Mt 26:45,46); Sleep on now, and take your rest. This is spoken ironically; "Now sleep if you can, sleep if you dare; I would not disturb you if Judas and his band of men would not." See here how Christ deals with those that suffer themselves to be overcome by security, and will not be awakened out of it. First, Sometimes he gives them up to the power of it; Sleep on now. He that will sleep, let him sleep still. The curse of spiritual slumber is the just punishment of the sin of it, Ro 11:8,Ho 4:17. Secondly, Many times he sends some startling judgment, to awaken those that would not be wrought upon by the word; and those who will not be alarmed by reasons and arguments, had better be alarmed by swords and spears than left to perish in their security. Let those that would not believe, be made to feel.

As to the disciples here,

1. Their Master gave them notice of the near approach of his enemies, who, it is likely, were now within sight or hearing, for they came with candles and torches, and, it is likely, made a great noise; The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. And again, He is at hand that doth betray me. Note, Christ's sufferings were no surprise to him; he knew what, and when, he was to suffer. By this time the extremity of his agony was pretty well over, or, at least, diverted; while with an undaunted courage he addresses himself to the next encounter, as a champion to the combat.

2. He called them to rise, and be going: not, "Rise, and let us flee from the danger;" but, "Rise, and let us go meet it;" before he had prayed, he feared his sufferings, but now he had got over his fears. But,

3. He intimates to them their folly, in sleeping away the time which they should have spent in preparation; now the event found them unready, and was a terror to them.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

No enemies are so much to be abhorred as those professed disciples that betray Christ with a kiss. God has no need of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was voluntary weakness; he submitted to death. If he had not been willing to suffer, they could not conquer him.

We are here told how the blessed Jesus was seized, and taken into custody; this followed immediately upon his agony, while he yet spake; for from the beginning to the close of his passion he had not the least intermission or breathing-time, but deep called unto deep. His trouble hitherto was raised within himself; but now the scene

is changed, now the Philistines are upon thee, thou blessed Samson; the Breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord is taken in their pits, La 4:20.

Now concerning the apprehension of the Lord Jesus, observe,

Who the persons were, that were employed in it.

1. Here was Judas, one of the twelve, at the head of this infamous guard: he was guide to them that took Jesus (Ac 1:16); without his help they could not have found him in this retirement. Behold, and wonder; the first that appears with his enemies, is one of his own disciples, who an hour or two ago was eating bread with him!

2. Here was with him a great multitude; that the scripture might be fulfilled, Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Ps 3:1. This multitude was made up partly of a detachment out of the guards, that were posted in the tower of Antonia by the Roman governor; these were Gentiles, sinners, as Christ calls them, Mt 26:45. The rest were the servants and officers of the High Priest, and they were Jews; they that were at variance with each other, agreed against Christ.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.

How they were armed for this enterprise.

1. What weapons they were armed with; They came with swords and staves. The Roman soldiers, no doubt, had swords; the servants of the priests, those of them that had not swords, brought staves or clubs. Furor arma ministrat--Their rage supplied their arms. They were not regular troops, but a tumultuous rabble. But wherefore is this ado? If they had been ten times as many, they could not have taken him had he not yielded; and, his hour being come for him to give up himself, all this force was needless. When a butcher goes into the field to take out a lamb for the slaughter, does he raise the

militia, and come armed? No, he needs not; yet is there all this force used to seize the Lamb of God.

2. What warrant they were armed with; They came from the chief priests, and elders of the people; this armed multitude was sent by them upon this errand. He was taken up by a warrant from the great sanhedrim, as a person obnoxious to them. Pilate, the Roman governor, gave them no warrant to search for him, he had no jealousy of him; but they were men who pretended to religion, and presided in the affairs of the church, that were active in this prosecution, and were the most spiteful enemies Christ had. It was a sign that he was supported by a divine power, for by all earthly powers he was not only deserted, but opposed; Pilate upbraided him with it; Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee to me, Joh 18:35.

III. The manner how it was done, and what passed at that time.

1. How Judas betrayed him; he did his business effectually, and his resolution in this wickedness may shame us who fail in that which is good. Observe,

(A) The instructions he gave to the soldiers (Mt 26:48); He gave them a sign; as commander of the party in this action, he gives the word or signal. He gave them a sign, lest by mistake they should seize one of the disciples instead of him, the disciples having so lately said, in Judas's hearing, that they would be willing to die for him. What abundance of caution was here, not to miss him--That same is he; and when they had him in their hands, not to lose him--Hold him fast; for he had sometimes escaped from those who thought to secure him; as Lu 6:30. Though the Jews, who frequented the temple, could not but know him, yet the Roman soldiers perhaps had never seen him, and the sign was to direct them; and Judas by his kiss intended not only to distinguish him, but to detain him, while they came behind him, and laid hands on him.

(B) The dissembling compliment he gave his Master. He came close up to Jesus; surely now, if ever, his wicked heart will relent; surely when he comes to look him in the face, he will either be awed by its majesty, or charmed by its beauty. Dares he to come into his very sight and presence, to betray him? Peter denied Christ, but when the Lord turned and looked upon him, he relented presently; but Judas comes up to his Master's face, and betrays him. Me mihi (perfide) prodis? me mihi prodis?--Perfidious man, betrayest thou me to thyself? He said, Hail, Master; and kissed him. It should seem, our Lord Jesus had been wont to admit his disciples to such a degree of familiarity with him, as to give them his cheek to kiss after they had been any while absent, which Judas villainously used to facilitate this treason. A kiss is a token of allegiance and friendship, Ps 2:12. But Judas, when he broke all the laws of love and duty, profaned this sacred sign to serve his purpose. Note, There are many that betray Christ with a kiss, and Hail, Master; who, under pretence of doing him honour, betray and undermine the interests of his kingdom. Mel in ore, fel in corde--Honey in the mouth, gall in the heart. Kataphilein ouk esti philein. To embrace is one thing, to love is another. Philo Judæus. Joab's kiss and Judas's were much alike.

(C) The entertainment his Master gave him, Mt 26:50.

[1.] He calls him friend. If he had called him villain, and traitor, raca, thou fool, and child of the devil, he had not mis--called him; but he would teach us under the greatest provocation to forbear bitterness and evil-speaking, and to show all meekness. Friend, for a friend he had been, and should have been, and seemed to be. Thus he upbraids him, as Abraham, when he called the rich man in hell, son. He calls him friend, because he furthered his sufferings, and so befriended him; whereas, he called Peter Satan for attempting to hinder them.

[2.] He asks him, "Wherefore art thou come? Is it peace, Judas? Explain thyself; if thou come as an enemy, what means this kiss? If as a friend, what mean these swords and staves? Wherefore art

thou come? What harm have I done thee? Wherein have I wearied thee? eph ho parei--Wherefore art thou present? Why hadst thou not so much shame left thee, as to keep out of sight, which thou mightest have done, and yet have given the officer notice where I was?" This was an instance of great impudence, for him to be so forward and barefaced in this wicked transaction. But it is usual for apostates from religion to be the most bitter enemies to it; witness Julian. Thus Judas did his part.

2. How the officers and soldiers secured him; Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him; they made him their prisoner. How were they not afraid to stretch forth their hands against the Lord's Anointed? We may well imagine what rude and cruel hands they were, which this barbarous multitude laid on Christ; and how, it is probable, they handled him the more roughly for their being so often disappointed when they sought to lay hands on him. They could not have taken him, if he had not surrendered himself, and been delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Ac 2:23. He who said concerning his anointed servants, Touch them not, and do them no harm (Ps 105:14,15), spared not his anointed Son, but delivered him up for us all; and again, gave his strength into captivity, his glory into the enemies' hands, Ps 78:61. See what was the complaint of Job (Mt 16:11), God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and apply that and other passages in that book of Job as a type of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus was made a prisoner, because he would in all things be treated as a malefactor, punished for our crime, and as a surety under arrest for our debt. The yoke of our transgressions was bound by the Father's hand upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, La 1:14. He became a prisoner, that he might set us at liberty; for he said, If ye seek me, let these go their way (Joh 18:8); and those are free indeed, whom he makes so.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear.

. How Peter fought for Christ, and was checked for his pains. It is here only said to be one of them that were with Jesus in the garden; but Joh 18:10, we are told that it was Peter who signalized himself upon this occasion. Observe,

(A) Peter's rashness (Mt 26:51); He drew his sword. They had but two swords among them all (Lu 22:38), and one of them, it seems, fell to Peter's share; and now he thought it was time to draw it, and he laid about him as if he would have done some great matter; but all the execution he did was the cutting off an ear from a servant of the High Priest; designing, it is likely, to cleave him down the head, because he saw him more forward than the rest in laying hands on Christ, he missed his blow. But if he would be striking, in my mind he should rather have aimed at Judas, and have marked him for a rogue. Peter had talked much of what he would do for his Master, he would lay down his life for him; yea, that he would; and now he would be as good as his word, and venture his life to rescue his Master: and thus far was commendable, that he had a great zeal for Christ, and his honour and safety; but it was not according to knowledge, nor guided by discretion; for

[1.] He did it without warrant; some of the disciples asked indeed, Shall we smite with the sword? (Lu 22:49) But Peter struck before they had an answer. We must see not only our cause good, but our call clear, before we draw the sword; we must show by what authority we do it, and who gave us that authority.

[2.] He indiscreetly exposed himself and his fellow-disciples to the rage of the multitude; for what could they with two swords do against a band of men?

(B) The rebuke which our Lord Jesus gave him (Mt 26:52); Put up again thy sword into its place. He does not command the officers and soldiers to put up their swords that were drawn against him, he left them to the judgment of God, who judges them that are without; but he commands Peter to put up his sword, does not chide him

indeed for what he had done, because done out of good will, but stops the progress of his arms, and provides that it should not be drawn into a precedent. Christ's errand into the world was to make peace. Note, The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; and Christ's ministers, though they are his soldiers, do not war after the flesh, 2Co 10:3,4. Not that the law of Christ overthrows either the law of nature of the law of nations, as far as those warrant subjects to stand up in defence of their civil rights and liberties, and their religion, when it is incorporated with them; but it provides for the preservation of public peace and order, by forbidding private persons, qua tales--as such, to resist the powers that are; nay, we have a general precept that we resist not evil (Mt 5:39), nor will Christ have his ministers propagate his religion by force of arms, Religio cogi non potest; et defendenda non occidendo, sed moriendo--Religion cannot be forced; and it should be defended, not by killing, but by dying. Lactantii Institut. As Christ forbade his disciples the sword of justice (Mt 20:25,26), so here the sword of war. Christ bade Peter put up his sword, and never bade him draw it again; yet that which Peter is here blamed for is his doing it unseasonably; the hour was come for Christ to suffer and die, he knew Peter knew it, the sword of the Lord was drawn against him (Zec 13:7), and for Peter to draw his sword for him, was like, Master, spare thyself.

Three reasons Christ give to Peter for this rebuke:

[1.] His drawing the sword would be dangerous to himself and to his fellow-disciples; They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword; they that use violence, fall by violence; and men hasten and increase their own troubles by blustering bloody methods of self-defence. They that take the sword before it is given them, that use it without warrant or call, expose themselves to the sword of war, or public justice. Had it not been for the special care and providence of the Lord Jesus, Peter and the rest of them had, for aught I know, been cut in pieces immediately. Grotius gives another, and a probable sense of this blow, making those that take the sword to be, not Peter, but the officers and soldiers that come with swords to

take Christ; They shall perish with the sword. "Peter, thou needest not draw they sword to punish them. God will certainly, shortly, and severely, reckon with them." They took the Roman sword to seize Christ with, and by the Roman sword, not long after, they and their place and nation were destroyed. Therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because God will repay (Ro 12:19); and therefore we must suffer with faith and patience, because persecutors will be paid in their own coin. See Re 13:10.

[2.] It was needless for him to draw his sword in defence of his Master, how, if he pleased, could summon into his service all the hosts of heaven (Mt 26:53); "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall send from heaven effectual succours? Peter, if I would put by these sufferings, I could easily do it without thy hand or thy sword." Note, God has no need of us, of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes; and it argues our distrust and disbelief of the power of Christ, when we go out of the way of our duty to serve his interests. God can do his work without us; if we look into the heavens, and see how he is attended there, we may easily infer, that, though we be righteous, he is not beholden to us, Job 35:5,7. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was a voluntary weakness; he submitted to death, not because he could not, but because he would not contend with it. This takes off the offence of the cross, and proves Christ crucified the power of God; even now in the depth of his sufferings he could call in the aid of legions of angels. Now, arti--yet; "Though the business is so far gone, I could yet with a word speaking turn the scale." Christ here lets us know,

First, What a great interest he had in his Father; I can pray to my Father, and he will send me help from the sanctuary. I can parakalesai--demand of my Father these succours. Christ prayer as one having authority. Note, It is a great comfort to God's people, when they are surrounded with enemies on all hands, that they have a way open heavenward; if they can do nothing else, they can pray to him that can do every thing. And they who are much in prayer at other times, have most comfort in praying when troublesome times

come. Observe, Christ saith, not only that God could send him such a number of angels, but that, if he insisted upon it, he would do it. Though he had undertaken the work of our redemption, yet, if he had desired to be released, it should seem by this that the Father would not have held him to it. He might yet have gone out free from the service, but he loved it, and would not; so that it was only with the cords of his own love that he was bound to the altar.

Secondly, What a great interest he had in the heavenly hosts; He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels, amounting to above seventy-two thousand. Observe here, 1. There is an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:2. A detachment of more than twelve legions might be spared for our service, and yet there would be no miss of them about the throne. See Da 7:10. They are marshalled in exact order, like the well-disciplined legions; not a confused multitude, but regular troops; all know their post, and observe the word of command. 2. This innumerable company of angels are all at the disposal of our heavenly Father, and do his pleasure, Ps 103:20,21. 3. These angelic hosts were ready to come in to the assistance of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings, if he had needed or desired it. See Heb 1:6,14. They would have been to him as they were to Elisha, chariots of fire, and horses of fire, not only to secure him, but to consume those that set upon him. 4. Our heavenly Father is to be eyed and acknowledged in all the services of the heavenly hosts; He shall give them me: therefore angels are not to be prayed to, but the Lord of the angels, Ps 91:11. 5. It is matter of comfort to all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, that there is a world of angels always at the service of the Lord Jesus, that can do wonders. He that has the armies of heaven at his beck, can do what he pleases among the inhabitants of the earth; He shall presently give them me. See how ready his Father was to hear his prayer, and how ready the angels were to observe his orders; they are willing servants, winged messengers, they fly swiftly. This is very encouraging to those that have the honour of Christ, and the welfare of his church, much at heart. Think they that they have more care and concern for Christ and his church, than God and the holy angels have?

52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?

54 But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me ? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

It was no time to make any defence at all, or to offer to put by the stroke; For how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be? Mt 26:54. It was written, that Christ should be led as a lamb to the slaughter, Isa 53:7. Should he summon the angels to his assistance, he would not be led to the slaughter at all; should he permit his disciples to fight, he would not be led as a lamb quietly and without resistance; therefore he and his disciples must yield to the accomplishment of the predictions. Note, In all difficult cases, the word of God must be conclusive against our own counsels, and nothing must be done, nothing attempted, against the fulfilling of the scripture. If the easing of our pains, the breaking of our bonds, the saving of our lives, will not consist with the fulfilling of the scripture, we ought to say, "Let God's word and will take place, let his law be magnified and made honourable, whatever becomes of us." Thus Christ checked Peter, when he set up for his champion, and captain of his life-guard.

4. We are next told how Christ argued the case with them that came to take him (Mt 26:55); though he did not resist them, yet he did reason with them. Note, It will consist with Christian patience under our sufferings, calmly to expostulate with our enemies and persecutors, as David with Saul, 1Sa 24:14,26:18. Are ye come out,

(A) With rage and enmity, as against a thief, as if I were an enemy to the public safety, and deservedly suffered this? Thieves draw upon themselves the common odium; every one will lend a hand to stop a thief: and thus they fell upon Christ as the offscouring of all things. If he had been the plague of his country, he could not have been prosecuted with more heat and violence.

(B) With all this power and force, as against the worst of thieves, that dare the law, bid defiance to public justice, and add rebellion to their sin? You are come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, as if there were danger of resistance; whereas ye have killed the just One, and he doth not resist you, Jam 5:6. If he had not been willing to suffer, it was folly to come with swords and staves, for they could not conquer him; had he been minded to resist, he would have esteemed their iron as straw, and their swords and staves would have been as briars before a consuming fire; but, being willing to suffer, it was folly to come thus armed, for he would not contend with them.

He further expostulates with them, by reminding them how he had behaved himself hitherto toward them, and they toward him.

[1.] Of his public appearance; I sat daily with you in the temple teaching. And,

[2.] Of their public connivance; Ye laid no hold on me. How comes then this change? They were very unreasonable, in treating him as they did. First, He had given them no occasion to look upon him as a thief, for he had taught in the temple. And such were the matter, and such the manner of his teaching, that he was manifested in the consciences of all that heard him, not to be a bad man. Such gracious words as came from his mouth, were not the words of a thief, nor of one that had a devil. Secondly, Nor had he given them occasion to look upon him as one that absconded, or fled from justice, that they should come in the night to seize him; if they had any thing to say to him, they might find him every day in the temple, ready to answer all challenges, all charges, and there they might do as they pleased with him; for the chief priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it; but to come upon him thus clandestinely, in the place of his retirement, was base and cowardly. Thus the greatest hero may be villainously assassinated in a corner, by one that in open field would tremble to look him in the face.

But all this was done (so it follows, Mt 26:56) that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. It is hard to say, whether these are the words of the sacred historian, as a comment upon this story, and a direction to the Christian reader to compare it with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at it; or, whether they are the words of Christ himself, as a reason why, though he could not but resent this base treatment, he yet submitted to it, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, to which he had just now referred himself, Mt 26:54. Note, The scripture are in the fulfilling every day; and all those scriptures which speak of the Messiah, had their full accomplishment in our Lord Jesus.

5. How he was, in the midst of this distress, shamefully deserted by his disciples; They all forsook him, and fled, Mt 26:56.

(A) This was their sin; and it was a great sin for them who had left all to follow him, now to leave him for they knew not what. There was unkindness in it, considering the relation they stood in to him, the favours they had received from him, and the melancholy circumstances he was now in. There was unfaithfulness in it, for they had solemnly promised to adhere to him, and never to forsake him. He had indented for their safe conduct (Joh 18:8); yet they could not rely upon that, but shifted for themselves by an inglorious flight. What folly was this, for fear of death to flee from him whom they themselves knew and had acknowledged to be the Fountain of life? Joh 6:67,68. Lord, what is man!

(B) It was a part of Christ's suffering, it added affliction to his bonds, to be thus deserted, as it did to Job (Mt 19:13), He hath put my brethren far from me; and to David (Ps 38:11), Lovers and friends stand aloof from my sore. They should have staid with him, to minister to him, to countenance him, and, if need were, to be

witnesses for him at his trial; but they treacherously deserted him, as, at St. Paul's first answer, no man stood with him. But there was a mystery in this.

[1.] Christ, as a sacrifice for sins, stood thus abandoned. The deer that by the keeper's arrow is marked out to be hunted and run down, is immediately deserted by the whole herd. In this he was made a curse for us, being left as one separated to evil.

[2.] Christ, as the Saviour of souls, stood thus alone; as he needed not, so he had not the assistance of any other in working out our salvation; he bore all, and did all himself. He trod the wine-press alone, and when there was none to uphold, then his own arm wrought salvation, Isa 63:3,5. So the Lord alone did lead his Israel, and they stand still, and only see this great salvation, De 32:12.

56 But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

It was a great sin for those who had left all to follow Jesus; now to leave him for they knew not what. What folly, for fear of death to flee from Him, whom they knew and acknowledged to be the Fountain of life!

Jesus before the Council

57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

The sitting of the court; the scribes and the elders were assembled, though it was in the dead time of the night, when other people were fast asleep in their beds; yet, to gratify their malice against Christ, they denied themselves that natural rest, and sat up all night, to be ready to fall upon the prey which Judas and his men, they hoped, would seize.

See,

1. Who they were, that were assembled; the scribes, the principal teachers, and elders, the principal rulers, of the Jewish church: these were the most bitter enemies to Christ our great teacher and ruler, on whom therefore they had a jealous eye, as one that eclipsed them; perhaps some of these scribes and elders were not so malicious at Christ as some others of them were; yet, in concurrence with the rest, they made themselves guilty. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Ps 22:16); The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. Jeremiah complains of an assembly of treacherous men; and David of his enemies gathering themselves together against him, Ps 35:15.

2. Where they were assembled; in the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest; there they assembled two days before, to lay the plot (Mt 26:3), and there they now convened again, to prosecute it. The High Priest was Ab-beth-din--the father of the house of judgment, but he is now the patron of wickedness; his house should have been the sanctuary of oppressed innocency, but it is become the throne of iniquity; and no wonder, when even God's house of prayer was made a den of thieves.

The setting of the prisoner to the bar; they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away, hurried him, no doubt, with violence, led him as a trophy of their victory, led him as a victim to the altar; he was brought into Jerusalem through that which was called the sheep-gate, for that was the way into town from the mount of Olives; and it was so called because the sheep appointed for sacrifice were brought that way to the temple; very fitly therefore is Christ led that way, who is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. Christ was led first to the High Priest, for by the law all sacrifices were to be first presented to the priest, and delivered into his hand, Le 17:5.

58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

The cowardice and faint-heartedness of Peter (Mt 26:58); But Peter followed afar off. This comes in here, with an eye to the following story of his denying him. He forsook him as the rest did, when he was seized, and what is here said of his following him is easily reconcilable with his forsaking him; such following was no better than forsaking him; for,

1. He followed him, but it was afar off. Some sparks of love and concern for his Master there were in his breast, and therefore he followed him; but fear and concern for his own safety prevailed, and therefore he followed afar off. Note, It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those that are willing to be Christ's disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter's denying him; for to follow him afar off, is by little and little to go back from him. There is danger in drawing back, nay, in looking back.

2. He followed him, but he went in, and sat with the servants. He should have gone up to the court, and attended on his Master, and appeared for him; but he went in where there was a good fire, and sat with the servants, not to silence their reproaches, but to screen himself. It was presumption in Peter thus to thrust himself into temptation; he that does so, throws himself out of God's protection. Christ had told Peter that he could not follow him now, and had particularly warned him of his danger this night; and yet he would venture into the midst of this wicked crew. It helped David to walk in his integrity, that he hated the congregation of evil doers, and would not sit with the wicked.

3. He followed him, but it was only to see the end, led more by his curiosity than by his conscience; he attended as an idle spectator rather than as a disciple, a person concerned. He should have gone in, to do Christ some service, or to get some wisdom and grace to himself, by observing Christ's behaviour under his sufferings: but he went in, only to look about him; it is not unlikely that Peter went in, expecting that Christ would have made his escape miraculously out of the hands of his persecutors; that, having so lately struck them down, who came to seize him, he would now have struck them dead,

who sat to judge him; and this he had a mind to see: if so, it was folly for him to think of seeing any other end than what Christ had foretold, that he should be put to death. Note, It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to enquire what the end will be. The event is God's, but the duty is ours.

59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

60 but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

Now the Scriptures were fulfilled, which said, False witnesses are risen up against me. Christ was accused, that we might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, let us remember we cannot expect to fare better than our Master. When Christ was made sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak. Hitherto Jesus had seldom professed expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenor of his doctrine spoke it, and his miracles proved it; but now he would not omit to make an open confession of it. He thus confessed, as an example and encouragement to his followers, to confess him before men, whatever hazard they ran. Disdain, cruel mocking, and abhorrence, are the sure portion of the disciple as they were of the Master, from such as would buffet and deride the Lord of glory. These things were exactly foretold in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah. Let us confess Christ's name, and bear the reproach, and he will confess us before his Father's throne.

Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas apparently lived in the same house. Annas had been the previous high priest and, though replaced by Caiaphas, was still well respected and influential. Jesus' captors took him to Annas first, while Peter and John, who had followed at a distance, waited in the courtyard. By now it was well past midnight and into the early hours of the morning (Joh_18:12-18; Luk_22:54).

When Annas asked Jesus questions about his teaching, Jesus replied that it was known to all. He had no need to testify on his own behalf (contrary to Jewish law) when many other witnesses could be called in. After being ill-treated for giving an honest and unanswerable reply, he was sent to Caiaphas (Joh_18:19-24).

Caiaphas had called the Sanhedrin together, determined to condemn Jesus without delay, even though it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to meet at night to judge an offence that carried the death sentence. The Jewish leaders' whole purpose was to get some statement from Jesus that they could use to charge him with blasphemy and so condemn him to death (Mat_26:57-63; Mar_14:53-61). They were soon satisfied when Jesus said he was the Messiah, the Son of God and the Son of man, and he was on the way to receiving the glorious kingdom given him by God (Mat_26:64; Mar_14:62; see earlier section, 'Jesus and the Kingdom'). With an outburst of violent abuse the Jewish leaders condemned him as worthy of death (Mat_26:65-68; Mar_14:63-65).

61 and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee ?

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

The trial of our Lord Jesus in this court.

1. They examined witnesses against him, though they were resolved, right or wrong, to condemn him; yet, to put the better colour upon it, they would produce evidence against him. The crimes properly cognizable in their court, were, false doctrine and blasphemy; these they endeavoured to prove upon him. And observe here,

(a) Their search for proof; They sought false witness against him; they had seized him, bound him, abused him, and after all have to seek for something to lay to his charge, and can show no cause for his commitment. They tried if any of them could allege seemingly from their own knowledge any thing against him; and suggested one calumny and then another, which, if true, might touch his life. Thus evil men dig up mischief, Pr 16:27. Here they trod in the steps of their predecessors, who devised devices against Jeremiah, Jer 18:18,20:10. They made proclamation, that, if any one could give

information against the prisoner at the bar, they were ready to receive it, and presently many bore false witness against him (Mt 26:60); for is a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, and will carry false stories to him, Pr 29:12. This is an evil often seen under the sun, Ec 10:5. If Naboth must be taken off, there are sons of Belial to swear against him.

(b) Their success in this search; in several attempts they were baffled, they sought false testimonies among themselves, others came in to help them, and yet they found none; they could make nothing of it, could not take the evidence together, or give it any colour of truth or consistency with itself, no, not they themselves being judges. The matters alleged were such palpable lies, as carried their own confutation along with them. This redounded much to the honour of Christ now, when they were loading him with disgrace.

But at last they met with two witnesses, who, it seems, agreed in their evidence, and therefore were hearkened to, in hopes that now the point was gained. The words they swore against him, were, that he should say, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days, Mt 26:61. Now by this they designed to accuse him, [1.] As an enemy to the temple, and one that sought for the destruction of it, which they could not bear to hear of; for they valued themselves by the temple of the Lord (Jer 7:4), and, when they abandoned other idols, made a perfect idol of that. Stephen was accused for speaking against this holy place, Ac 6:13,14. [2.] As one that dealt in witchcraft, or some such unlawful arts, by the help of which he could rear such a building in three days: they had often suggested that he was in league with Beelzebub. Now, as to this, First, The words were mis-recited; he said, Destroy ye this temple (Joh 2:19), plainly intimating that he spoke of a temple which his enemies would seek to destroy; they come, and swear that he said, I am able to destroy this temple, as if the design against it were his. He said, In Three days I will raise it up-- egero auton, a word properly used of a living temple; I will raise it to life. They come, and swear that he said, I am able, oikodomesai--to build it; which is properly used of a house temple. Secondly, The words were

misunderstood; he spoke of the temple of his body (Joh 2:21), and perhaps when he said, this temple, pointed to, or laid his hand upon, his own body; but they swore that he said the temple of God, meaning this holy place. Note, There have been, and still are, such as wrest the sayings of Christ to their own destruction, 2Pe 3:16. Thirdly, Make the worst they could of it, it was no capital crime, even by their own law; if it had been, no question but he had been prosecuted for it, when he spoke the words in a public discourse some years ago; nay, the words were capable of a laudable construction, and such as bespoke a kindness for the temple; if it were destroyed, he would exert himself to the utmost to rebuild it. But any thing that looked criminal, would serve to give colour to their malicious prosecution. Now the scriptures were fulfilled, which said, False witnesses are risen up against me (Ps 27:12); and see Ps 35:11. Though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me, Ho 7:13. We stand justly accused, the law accuseth us, De 27:26,Joh 5:45. Satan and our own consciences accuse us, 1Jo 3:20. The creatures cry out against us. Now, to discharge us from all these just accusations, our Lord Jesus submitted to this, to be unjustly and falsely accused, that in the virtue of his sufferings we may be enabled to triumph over all challenges; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Ro 8:33,34. He was accused, that he might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, have all manner of evil, not only said, but sworn, against us falsely, let us remember that we cannot expect to fare better than our Master.

(c) Christ's silence under all these accusations, to the amazement of the court, Mt 26:62. The High Priest, the judge of the court, arose in some heat, and said, "Answerest thou nothing? Come, you the prisoner at the bar; you hear what is sworn against you, what have you now to say for yourself? What defence can you make? Or what please have you to offer in answer to this charge?" But Jesus held his peace (Mt 26:63), not as one sullen, or as one self-condemned, or as one astonished and in confusion; not because he wanted something to say, or knew not how to say it, but that the scripture might be fulfilled (Isa 53:7); As the sheep is dumb before the shearer, and before the butcher, so he opened not his mouth; and that he might be the Son of David, who, when his enemies spoke

mischievous things against him, was as a deaf man that heard not, Ps 38:12-14. He was silent, because his hour was come; he would not deny the charge, because he was willing to submit to the sentence; otherwise, he could as easily have put them to silence and shame now, as he had done many a time before. If God had entered into judgment with us, we had been speechless (Mt 22:12), not able to answer for one of a thousand, Job 9:3. Therefore, when Christ was made sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak, Heb 12:24. He stood mute at this bar, that we might have something to say at God's bar.

Well, this way will not do; aliâ aggrediendum est viâ--recourse must be had to some other expedient.

2. They examined our Lord Jesus himself upon an oath like that ex officio; and, since they could not accuse him, they will try, contrary to the law of equity, to make him accuse himself.

(a) Here is the interrogatory put to him by the High Priest.

Observe,

[1.] The question itself; Whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God? That is, Whether thou pretend to be so? For they will by no means admit it into consideration, whether he be really so or no; though the Messiah was to be the Consolation of Israel, and glorious things were spoken concerning him in the Old Testament, yet so strangely besotted were they with a jealousy of any thing that threatened their exorbitant power and grandeur, that they would never enter into the examination of the matter, whether Jesus was the Messiah or no; never once put the case, suppose he should be so; they only wished him to confess that he called himself so, that they might on that indict him as a deceiver. What will not pride and malice carry men to?

[2.] The solemnity of the proposal of it; I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us. Not that he had any regard to the living God,

but took his name in vain; only thus he hoped to gain his point with our Lord Jesus; "If thou hast any value for the blessed name of God, and reverence for his Majesty, tell us this." If he should refuse to answer when he was thus adjured, they would charge him with contempt of the blessed name of God. Thus the persecutors of good men often take advantage against them by their consciences, as Daniel's enemies did against him in the matter of his God.

(b) Christ's answer to this interrogatory (Mt 26:64), in which,

[1.] He owns himself to be The Christ the Son of God. Thou hast said; that is, "It is as thou hast said;" for in St. Mark it is, I am. Hitherto, he seldom professed himself expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenour of his doctrine bespoke it, and his miracles proved it: but now he would not omit to make a confession of it, First, Because that would have looked like a disowning of that truth which he came into the world to bear witness to. Secondly, It would have looked like declining his sufferings, when he knew the acknowledgment of this would give his enemies all the advantage they desired against him. He thus confessed himself, for example and encouragement to his followers, when they are called to it, to confess him before men, whatever hazards they run by it. And according to this pattern the martyrs readily confessed themselves Christians, though they knew they must die for it, as the martyrs at Thebais, Euseb. Hist. 50.8, 100.9. That Christ answered out of a regard to the adjuration which Caiaphas had profanely used by the living God, I cannot think, any more than that he had any regard to the like adjuration in the devil's mouth, Mk 5:7.

[2.] He refers himself, for the proof of this, to his second coming, and indeed to his whole estate of exaltation. It is probable that they looked upon him with a scornful disdainful smile, when he said, "I am;" "A likely fellow," thought they, "to be the Messiah, who is expected to come in so much pomp and power;" and to that this nevertheless refers. "Though now you see me in this low and abject state, and think it a ridiculous thing for me to call myself the Messiah, nevertheless the day is coming when I shall appear

otherwise." Hereafter, ap arti--à modo--shortly; for his exaltation began in a few days; now shortly his kingdom began to be set up; and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, to judge the world; of which his coming shortly to judge and destroy the Jewish nation would be a type and earnest. Note, The terrors of the judgment-day will be a sensible conviction to the most obstinate infidelity, not in order to conversion (that will be then too late), but in order to an eternal confusion. Observe, First, Whom they should see; the Son of man. Having owned himself the Son of God, even now in his estate of humiliation, he speaks of himself as the Son of man, even in his estate of exaltation; for he had these two distinct natures in one person. The incarnation of Christ has made him Son of God and Son of man; for he is Immanuel, God with us. Secondly, In what posture they should see him;

1. Sitting on the right hand of power, according to the prophecy of the Messiah (Ps 110:1); Sit thou at my right hand; which denotes both the dignity and the dominion he is exalted to. Though now he stood at the bar, they should shortly see him sit on the throne.

2. Coming in the clouds of heaven; this refers to another prophecy concerning the Son of man (Da 7:13,14), which is applied to Christ (Lu 1:33), when he came to destroy Jerusalem; so terrible was the judgment, and so sensible the indications of the wrath of the Lamb in it, that it might be called a visible appearance of Christ; but doubtless it has reference to the general judgment; to this day he appeals, and summons them to an appearance, then and there to answer for what they are now doing. He had spoken of this day to his disciples, awhile ago, for their comfort, and had bid them lift up their heads for joy in the prospect of it, Lu 21:27,28. Now he speaks of it to his enemies, for their terror; for nothing is more comfortable to the righteous, nor more terrible to the wicked, than Christ's judging the world at the last day.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses ? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.
66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.
67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

His sentence passed, upon this conviction, Mt 26:66.

Here is,

1. Caiaphas's appeal to the bench; What think ye? See his base hypocrisy and partiality; when he had already prejudged the cause, and pronounced him a blasphemer, then, as if he were willing to be advised, he asks the judgment of his brethren; but hide malice ever so cunningly under the robe of justice, some way or other it will break out. If he would have dealt fairly, he should have collected the votes of the bench seriatim--in order, and begun with the junior, and delivered his own opinion last; but he knew that by the authority of his place he could sway the rest, and therefore declares his judgment, and presumes they are all of his mind; he takes the crime, with regard to Christ, pro confesso--as a crime confessed; and the judgment, with regard to the court, pro concesso--as a judgment agreed to.

2. Their concurrence with him; they said, He is guilty of death; perhaps they did not all concur: it is certain that Joseph of Arimathea, if he was present, dissented (Lu 23:51); so did Nicodemus, and, it is likely, others with them; however, the majority carried it that way; but, perhaps, this being an extraordinary council, or cabal rather, none had notice to be present but such as they knew would concur, and so it might be voted nemine contradicente--unanimously. The judgment was, "He is guilty of death; by the law he deserves to die." Though they had not power now to put any man to death, yet by such a judgment as this they made a man an outlaw among his people (qui caput gerit lupinum--he carries a wolf's head; so our old law describes an outlaw), and so exposed him to the fury either of a popular tumult, as Stephen was, or to be clamoured against before the governor, as Christ was. Thus was the Lord of life

condemned to die, that through him there may be no condemnation to us.

68 saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee ?

The abuses and indignities done to him after sentence passed (Mt 26:67,68); Then, when he was found guilty, they spat in his face. Because they had not power to put him to death, and could not be sure that they should prevail with the governor to be their executioner, they would do him all the mischief they could, now that they had him in their hands. Condemned prisoners are taken under the special protection of the law, which they are to make satisfaction to, and by all civilized nations have been treated with tenderness; sufficient is this punishment. But when they had passed sentence upon our Lord Jesus, he was treated as if hell had broken loose upon him, as if he were not only worthy of death, but as if that were too good for him, and he were unworthy of the compassion shown to the worst malefactors. Thus he was made a curse for us. But who were they that were thus barbarous? It should seem, the very same that had passed sentence upon him. They said, He is guilty of death, and then did they spit in his face. The priests began, and then no wonder if the servants, who would do any thing to make sport to themselves, and curry favour with their wicked masters, carried on the humour. See how they abused him.

1. They spat in his face. Thus the scripture was fulfilled (Isa 50:6), He hid not his face from shame and spitting. Job complained of this indignity done to him, and herein was a type of Christ (Job 31:10); They spare not to spit in my face. It is an expression of the greatest contempt and indignation possible; looking upon him as more despicable than the very ground they spit upon. When Miriam was under the leprosy, it was looked upon as a disgrace to her, like that of her father spitting in her face, Nu 12:14. He that refused to raise up seed to his brother, was to undergo this dishonour, De 25:9. Yet Christ, when he was repairing the decays of the great family of mankind, submitted to it. That face which was fairer than the children of men, which was white and ruddy, and which angels reverence, was thus filthily abused by the basest and vilest of the children of men. Thus was confusion poured upon his face, that ours

might not be filled with everlasting shame and contempt. They who now profane his blessed name, abuse his word, and hate his image in his sanctified ones; what do they better than spit in his face? They would do that, if it were in their reach.

2. They buffeted him, and smote him with the palms of their hands. This added pain to the shame, for both came in with sin. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Isa 50:6), I gave my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and (La 3:30), He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled with reproach, and yet keepeth silence (Mt 26:28); and (Mic 5:1), They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek; here the margin reads it, They smote him with rods; for so errapisan signifies, and this he submitted to.

3. They challenged him to tell who struck him, having first blindfolded him; Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?

(1.) They made sport of him, as the Philistines did with Samson; it is grievous to those that are in misery, for people to make merry about them, but much more to make merry with them and their misery. Here was an instance of the greatest depravity and degeneracy of the human nature that could be, to show that there was need of a religion that should recover men to humanity.

(2.) They made sport with his prophetical office. They had heard him called a prophet, and that he was famed for wonderful discoveries; this they upbraided him with, and pretended to make a trial of; as if the divine omniscience must stoop to a piece of children's play. They put a like affront upon Christ, who profanely jest with the scripture, and make themselves merry with holy things; like Belshazzar's revels in the temple bowls.

Peter Denies Jesus

69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

We have here the story of Peter's denying his Master, and it comes in as a part of Christ's sufferings. Our Lord Jesus was now in the High Priest's hall, not to be tried, but baited rather; and then it would have been some comfort to him to see his friends near him. But we do not find any friend he had about the court, save Peter only, and it would have been better if he had been at a distance. Observe how he fell, and how he got up again by repentance.

I. His sin, which is here impartially related, to the honour of the penmen of scripture, who dealt faithfully. Observe,

1 The immediate occasion of Peter's sin. He sat without in the palace, among the servants of the High Priest. Note, Bad company is to many an occasion of sin; and those who needlessly thrust themselves into it, go upon the devil's ground, venture into his crowds, and may expect either to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter was, or to be ridiculed and abused, as his Master was; they scarcely can come out of such company, without guilt or grief, or both. He that would keep God's commandments and his own covenant, must say to evil-doers, Depart from me, Ps 119:115. Peter spoke from his own experience, when he warned his new converts to save themselves from that untoward generation; for he had like to have ruined himself by but going once among them.

2 The temptation to it. He was challenged as a retainer to Jesus of Galilee. First one maid, and then another, and then the rest of the servants, charged it upon him; Thou also wert with Jesus of Galilee, Mt 26:69. And again, This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth, Mt 26:71. And again (Mt 26:73), Thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee to be a Galilean; whose dialect and pronunciation differed from that of the other Jews. Happy he whose speech betrays him to be a disciple of Christ, by the holiness and seriousness of whose discourse it appears that he has been with Jesus! Observe how scornfully they speak of Christ-Jesus of Galilee, and of Nazareth, upbraiding him with the country he was of: and how disdainfully they speak of Peter--This fellow; as if they thought it a reproach to them to have such a man in their company, and he

was well enough served for coming among them; yet they had nothing to accuse him of, but that he was with Jesus, which, they thought, was enough to render him both a scandalous and a suspected person.

3. The sin itself. When he was charged as one of Christ's disciples, he denied it, was ashamed and afraid to own himself so, and would have all about him to believe that he had no knowledge of him, nor any kindness or concern for him.

(a) Upon the first mention of it, he said, I know not what thou sayest. This was a shuffling answer; he pretended that he did not understand the charge, that he knew not whom she meant by Jesus of Galilee, or what she meant by being with him; so making strange of that which his heart was now as full of as it could be.

[1.] It is a fault thus to misrepresent our own apprehensions, thoughts, and affections, to serve a turn; to pretend that we do not understand, or did not think of, or remember, that which yet we do apprehend, and did think of, and remember; this is a species of lying which we are more prone to than any other, because in this a man is not easily disproved; for who knows the spirit of a man, save himself? But God knows it, and we must be restrained from this wickedness by a fear of him, Pr 24:12.

[2.] It is yet a greater fault to be shy of Christ, to dissemble our knowledge of him, and to shift off a confession of him, when we are called to it; it is, in effect, to deny him.

(b) Upon the next attack, he said, flat and plain, I know not the man, and backed it with an oath, Mt 26:72. This was, in effect, to say, I will not own him, I am no Christian; for Christianity is the knowledge of Christ. Why, Peter? Canst thou look upon yonder Prisoner at the bar, and say thou dost not know him? Didst not thou quit all to follow him? And hast thou not been the man of his counsel? Hast thou not known him better than any one else? Didst thou not confess him to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Hast

thou forgotten all the kind and tender looks thou hast had from him, and all the intimate fellowship thou hast had with him? Canst thou look him in the face, and say that thou dost not know him?

(c) Upon the third assault, he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man, Mt 26:74. This was worst of all, for the way of sin is down-hill. He cursed and swore,

[1.] To back what he said, and to gain credit to it, that they might not any more call it in question; he did not only say it, but swear it; and yet what he said, was false. Note, We have reason to suspect the truth of that which is backed with rash oaths and imprecations. None but the devil's sayings need the devil's proofs. He that will not be restrained by the third commandment from mocking his God, will not be kept by the ninth from deceiving his brother.

[2.] He designed it to be an evidence for him, that he was none of Christ's disciples, for this was none of their language. Cursing and swearing suffice to prove a man no disciple of Christ; for it is the language of his enemies thus to take his name in vain.

This is written for warning to us, that we sin not after the similitude of Peter's transgression; that we never, either directly or indirectly, deny Christ the Lord that bought us, by rejecting his offers, resisting his Spirit, dissembling our knowledge of him, and being ashamed of him and his words, or afraid of suffering for him and with his suffering people.

4. The aggravations of this sin, which it may be of use to take notice of, that we may observe the like transgressions in our own sins. Consider,

(a) Who he was: an apostle, one of the first three, that had been upon all occasions the most forward to speak to the honour of Christ. The greater profession we make of religion, the greater is our sin if in any thing we walk unworthily.

(b) What fair warning his Master had given him of his danger; if he had regarded this as he ought to have done, he would not have run himself into the temptation.

(c) How solemnly he had promised to adhere to Christ in this night of trial; he had said again and again, "I will never deny thee; no, I will die with thee first;" yet he broke these bonds in sunder, and his word was yea and nay.

(d) How soon he fell into this sin after the Lord's supper. There to receive such an inestimable pledge of redeeming love, and yet the same night, before morning, to disown his Redeemer, was indeed turning aside quickly.

(e) How weak comparatively the temptation was; it was not the judge, nor any of the officers of the court, that charged him with being a disciple of Jesus, but a silly maid or two, that probably designed him no hurt, nor would have done him any if he had owned it. This was but running with the footmen, Jer 12:5.

(f.) How often he repeated it; even after the cock had crowed once he continued in the temptation, and a second and third time relapsed into the sin. Is this Peter? How art thou fallen!

Thus was his sin aggravated; but on the other hand there is this to extenuate it, that, what he said he said in his haste, Ps 116:11. He fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design; his heart was against it; he spoke very ill, but it was unadvisedly, and before he was aware.

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.
And immediately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Peter's repentance for this sin, Mt 26:75. The former is written for our admonition, that we may not sin; but, if at any time we be overtaken, this is written for our imitation, that we may make haste to repent. Now observe,

1. What it was, that brought Peter to repentance.

(a) The cock crew (Mt 26:74); a common contingency; but, Christ having mentioned the crowing of the cock in the warning he gave him, that made it a means of bringing him to himself. The word of Christ can put a significancy upon whatever sign he shall please to choose, and by virtue of that word he can make it very beneficial to the souls of his people. The crowing of a cock is to Peter instead of a John Baptist, the voice of one calling to repentance. Conscience should be to us as the crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of what we had forgotten. When David's heart smote him the cock crew. Where there is a living principle of grace in the soul, though for the present overpowered by temptation, a little hint will serve, only for a memorandum, when God sets in with it, to recover it from a by-path. Here was the crowing of a cock made a happy occasion of the conversion of a soul. Christ comes sometimes in mercy at cock-crowing.

(b) He remembered the words of the Lord; this was it that brought him to himself, and melted him into tears of godly sorrow; a sense of his ingratitude to Christ, and the slight regard he had had to the gracious warning Christ had given him. Note, A serious reflection upon the words of the Lord Jesus will be a powerful inducement to repentance, and will help to break the heart for sin. Nothing grieves a penitent more than that he has sinned against the grace of the Lord Jesus and the tokens of his love.

2. How his repentance was expressed; He went out, and wept bitterly.

(a) His sorrow was secret; he went out, out of the High Priest's hall, vexed at himself that ever he came into it, now that he found what a snare he was in, and got out of it as fast as he could. He went out into the porch before (Mt 26:71); and if he had gone quite off then, his second and third denial had been prevented; but then he came in again, now he went out and came in no more. He went out to some place of solitude and retirement, where he might bemoan himself, like the doves of the valleys, Eze 7:16,Jer 9:1,2. He went out, that he might not be disturbed in his devotions on this sad occasion. We may then be most free in our communion with God, when we are most free from the converse and business of this world. In mourning for sin, we find the families apart, and their wives apart, Zec 12:11,12.

(b) His sorrow was serious; He wept bitterly. Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep, like that for an only son. Those that have sinned sweetly, must weep bitterly; for, sooner or later, sin will be bitterness. This deep sorrow is requisite, not to satisfy divine justice (a sea of tears would not do that), but to evidence that there is a real change of mind, which is the essence of repentance, to make the pardon the more welcome, and sin for the future the more loathsome. Peter, who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but confessed him often and openly, and in the mouth of danger; so far from ever saying, I know not the man, that he made all the house of Israel know assuredly that this same Jesus was Lord and Christ. True repentance for any sin will be best evidenced by our abounding in the contrary grace and duty; that is a sign of our weeping, not only bitterly, but sincerely. Some of the ancients say, that as long as Peter lived, he never heard a cock crow but it set him a weeping. Those that have truly sorrowed for sin, will sorrow upon every remembrance of it; yet not so as to hinder, but rather to increase, their joy in God and in his mercy and grace.

Matthew-27

Jesus Brought before Pilate

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:
2 and when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

We left Christ in the hands of the chief priests and elders, condemned to die, but they could only show their teeth; about two years before this the Romans had taken from the Jews the power of capital punishment; they could put no man to death, and therefore early in the morning another council is held, to consider what is to be done. And here we are told what was done in that morning-council, after they had been for two or three hours consulting with their pillows.

Christ is delivered up to Pilate, that he might execute the sentence they had passed upon him. Judea having been almost one hundred years before this conquered by Pompey, had ever since been tributary to Rome, and was lately made part of the province of Syria, and subject to the government of the president of Syria, under whom there were several procurators, who chiefly attended the business of the revenues, but sometimes, as Pilate particularly, had the whole power of the president lodged in them. This was a plain evidence that the sceptre was departed from Judah, and that therefore now the Shiloh must come, according to Jacob's prophecy, Ge 49:10. Pilate is characterized by the Roman writers of that time, as a man of a rough and haughty spirit, wilful and implacable, and extremely covetous and oppressive; the Jews had a great enmity to his person, and were weary of his government, and yet they made use of him as the tool of their malice against Christ.

1. They bound Jesus. He was bound when he was first seized; but either they took off these bonds when he was before the council, or now they added to them. Having found him guilty, they tied his hands behind him, as they usually do with convicted criminals. He was already bound with the bonds of love to man, and of his own undertaking, else he had soon broken these bonds, as Samson did his. We were fettered with the bond of iniquity, held in the cords of our sins (Pr 10:22); but God had bound the yoke of our transgressions upon the neck of the Lord Jesus (Isa 50:14), that we might be loosed by his bonds, as we are healed by his stripes.

2. They led him away in a sort of triumph, led him as a lamb to the slaughter; so was he taken from prison and from judgment, Isa 53:7,8. It was nearly a mile from Caiaphas's house to Pilate's. All that way they led him through the streets of Jerusalem, when in the morning they began to fill, to make him a spectacle to the world.

3. They delivered him to Pontius Pilate; according to that which Christ had often said, that he should be delivered to the Gentiles. Both Jews and Gentiles were obnoxious to the judgment of God, and concluded under sin, and Christ was to be the Saviour both of Jews and Gentiles; and therefore Christ was brought into the judgment both of Jews and Gentiles, and both had a hand in his death. See how these corrupt church-rulers abused the civil magistrate, making use of him to execute their unrighteous decrees, and inflict the grievance which they had prescribed, Isa 10:1. Thus have the kings of the earth been wretchedly imposed upon by the papal powers, and condemned to the drudgery of extirpating with the sword of war, as well as that of justice, those whom they have marked for heretics, right or wrong, to the great prejudice of their own interests.

The Death of Judas

3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

The money which they had paid to Judas for betraying Christ, is by him delivered back to them, and Judas, in despair, hangs himself. The chief priests and elders supported themselves with this, in prosecuting Christ, that his own disciple betrayed him to them; but now, in the midst of the prosecution, that string failed them, and even he is made to them a witness of Christ's innocency and a monument of God's justice; which served, 1. For glory to Christ in the midst of his sufferings, and a specimen of his victory over Satan who had entered into Judas. 2. For warning to his persecutors, and to leave them the more inexcusable. If their heart had not been fully set in them to do this evil, what Judas said and did, one would think, should have stopped the prosecution.

(a) See here how Judas repented: not like Peter, who repented, believed, and was pardoned: no, he repented, despaired, and was ruined. Now observe here,

[1.] What induced him to repent. It was when he saw that he was condemned. Judas, it is probable, expected that either Christ would have made his escape out of their hands, or would so have pleaded his own cause at their bar as to have come off, and then Christ would have had the honour, the Jews the shame, and he the money, and no harm done. This he had no reason to expect, because he had so often heard his Master say that he must be crucified; yet it is probable that he did expect it, and when the event did not answer his vain fancy, then he fell into this horror, when he saw the stream strong against Christ, and him yielding to it. Note, Those who measure actions by the consequences of them rather than by the divine law, will find themselves mistaken in their measures. The way of sin is down-hill; and if we cannot easily stop ourselves, much less can we stop others whom we have set a going in a sinful way. He repented himself; that is, he was filled with grief, anguish, and indignation, at himself, when reflecting upon what he had done. When he was tempted to betray his Master, the thirty pieces of silver looked very fine and glittering, like the wine, when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup. But when the thing was done, and the money paid, the silver was become dross, it bit like a serpent, and stung like an adder. Now

his conscience flew in his face; "What have I done! What a fool, what a wretch, am I, to sell my Master, and all my comfort and happiness in him, for such a trifle! All these abuses and indignities done him are chargeable upon me; it is owing to me, that he is bound and condemned, spit upon and buffeted. I little thought it would have come to this, when I made that wicked bargain; so foolish was I, and ignorant, and so like a beast." Now he curses the bag he carried, the money he coveted, the priests he dealt with, and the day that he was born. The remembrance of his Master's goodness to him, which he had so basely requited, the bowels of mercy he had spurned at, and the fair warnings he had slighted, steeled his convictions, and made them the more piercing. Now he found his Master's words true; It were better for that man, that he had never been born. Note, Sin will soon change its taste. Though it be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, in the bowels it will be turned into the gall of asps (Job 20:12-14), like John's book, Re 10:9.

[2.] What were the indications of his repentance.

First, He made restitution; He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, when they were all together publicly. Now the money burned in his conscience, and he was as sick of it as ever he had been fond of it. Note, That which is ill gotten, will never do good to those that get it, Jer 13:10,Job 20:15. If he had repented, and brought the money back before he had betrayed Christ, he might have done it with comfort, then he had agreed while yet in the way; but now it was too late, now he cannot do it without horror, wishing ten thousand times he had never meddled with it. See Jam 5:3. He brought it again. Note, what is unjustly gotten, must not be kept; for that is a continuance in the sin by which it was got, and such an avowing of it as is not consistent with repentance. He brought it to those from whom he had it, to let them know that he repented his bargain. Note, Those who have served and hardened others in their sin, when God gives them repentance, should let them know it whose sins they have been partakers in, that it may be a means to bring them to repentance.

Secondly, He made confession (Mt 27:4); I have sinner, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. 1. To the honour of Christ, he pronounces his blood innocent. If he had been guilty of any sinful practices, Judas, as his disciple, would certainly have know it, and, as his betrayer, would certainly have discovered it; but he, freely and without being urged to it, pronounces him innocent, to the face of those who had pronounced him guilty. 2. To his own shame, he confesses that he had sinned, in betraying this blood. He does not lay the blame on any one else; does not say, "You have sinned, in hiring me to do it;" but takes it all to himself; "I have sinned, in doing it." Thus far Judas went toward his repentance, yet it was not to salvation. He confessed, but not to God, did not go to him, and say, I have sinned, Father, against heaven. He confessed the betraying of innocent blood, but did not confess that wicked love of money, which was the root of this evil. There are those who betray Christ, and yet justify themselves in it, and so come short of Judas.

(b) See here how the chief priests and elders entertained Judas's penitential confession; they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. He made them his confessors, and that was the absolution they gave him; more like the priests of devils than like the priests of the holy living God.

[1.] See here how carelessly they speak of the betraying of Christ. Judas had told them that the blood of Christ was innocent blood; and they said, What is that to us? Was it nothing to them that they had thirsted after this blood, and hired Judas to betray it, and had now condemned it to be shed unjustly? Is this nothing to them? Does it give no check to the violence of their prosecution, no warning to take need what they do to this just man? Thus do fools make a mock at sin, as if no harm were done, no hazard run, by the commission of the greatest wickedness. Thus light do many make of Christ crucified; what is it to them, that he suffered such things?

[2.] See here how carelessly they speak of the sin of Judas; he said, I have sinned, and they said, "What is that to us? What are we concerned in thy sin, that thou tellest us of it?" Note, It is folly for

us to think that the sins of others are nothing to us, especially those sins that we are any way accessary to, or partakers in. Is it nothing to us, that God is dishonoured, souls wounded, Satan gratified and his interests served, and that we have aided and abetted it? If the elders of Jezreel, to please Jezebel, murder Naboth, is that nothing to Ahab? Yes, he has killed, for he has taken possession, 1Ki 21:19. The guilt of sin is not so easily transferred as some people think it is. If there were guilt in the matter, they tell Judas that he must look to it, he must bear it. First, Because he had betrayed him to them. His was indeed the greater sin (Joh 19:11); but it did not therefore follow, that theirs was no sin. It is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, to extenuate our own sin by the aggravation of other people's sins. But the judgment of God is according to truth, not according to comparison. Secondly, Because he knew and believed him to be innocent. "If he be innocent, see thou to it, that is more than we know; we have adjudged him guilty, and therefore may justly prosecute him as such," Wicked practices are buoyed up by wicked principles, and particularly by this, That sin is sin only to those that think it to be so; that it is no harm to persecute a good man, if we take him to be a bad man; but those who thus think to mock God, will but deceive and destroy themselves.

[3.] See how carelessly they speak of the conviction, terror, and remorse, that Judas was under. They were glad to make use of him in the sin, and were then very fond of him; none more welcome to them than Judas, when he said, What will ye give me, and I will betray him to you? They did not say, What is that to us? But now that his sin had put him into a fright, now they slighted him, had nothing to say to him, but turned him over to his own terrors; why did he come to trouble them with his melancholy fancies? They had something else to do than to heed him. But why so shy? First, Perhaps they were in some fear lest the sparks of his conviction, brought too near, should kindle a fire in their own consciences, and lest his moans, listened to, should give an alarm to their own convictions. Note, Obstinate sinners stand upon their guard against convictions; and those that are resolvedly impenitent, look with disdain upon the penitent. Secondly, However, they were in no concern to succour Judas; when they had brought him into the snare,

they not only left him, but laughed at him. Note, Sinners, under convictions, will find their old companions in sin but miserable comforters. It is usual for those that love the treason, to hate the traitor.

(c) Here is the utter despair that Judas was hereby driven into. If the chief priests had promised him to stay the prosecution, it would have been some comfort to him; but, seeing no hopes of that, he grew desperate, Mt 27:5.

[1.] He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple. The chief priests would not take the money, for fear of taking thereby the whole guilt to themselves, which they were willing that Judas should bear the load of; Judas would not keep it, it was too hot for him to hold, he therefore threw it down in the temple, that, whether they would or no, it might fall into the hands of the chief priests. See what a drug money was, when the guilt of sin was tacked to it, or was thought to be so.

[2.] He went, and hanged himself. First, He retired--anechorese; he withdrew into some solitary place, like the possessed man that was drawn by the devil into the wilderness, Lu 8:29. Woe to him that is in despair, and is alone. If Judas had gone to Christ, or to some of the disciples, perhaps he might have had relief, bad as the case was; but, missing of it with the chief priests, he abandoned himself to despair: and the same devil that with the help of the priests drew him to the sin, with their help drove him to despair. Secondly, He became his own executioner; He hanged himself; he was suffocated with grief, so Dr. Hammond: but Dr. Whitby is clear that our translation is right. Judas had a sight and sense of sin, but no apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and so he pined away in his iniquity. His sin, we may suppose, was not in its own nature unpardonable: there were some of those saved, that had been Christ's betrayers and murderers; but he concluded, as Cain, that his iniquity was greater than could be forgiven, and would rather throw himself on the devil's mercy than God's. And some have said, that Judas sinned more in despairing of the mercy of God, than in betraying his Master's blood.

Now the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him. All the curses written in God's book now came into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, as was foretold concerning him (Ps 109:18,19), and drove him to this desperate shift, for the escaping of a hell within him, to leap into that before him, which was but the perfection and perpetuity of this horror and despair. He throws himself into the fire, to avoid the flame; but miserable is the case when a man must go to hell for ease.

Now, in this story, 1. We have an instance of the wretched end of those into whom Satan enters, and particularly those that are given up to the love of money. This is the destruction in which many are drowned by it, 1Ti 6:9,10. Remember what became of the swine into which, and of the traitor into whom, the devil enters; and give not place to the devil. 2. We have an instance of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Ro 1:18. As in the story of Peter we behold the goodness of God, and the triumphs of Christ's grace in the conversion of some sinners; so in the story of Judas we behold the severity of God, and the triumphs of Christ's power and justice in the confusion of other sinners. When Judas, into whom Satan entered, was thus hung up, Christ made an open show of the principalities and powers he undertook the spoiling of, Col 2:15. 3. We have an instance of the direful effects of despair; it often ends in self-murder. Sorrow, even that for sin, if not according to God, worketh death (2Co 7:10), the worst kind of death; for a wounded spirit, who can bear? Let us think as bad as we can of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable; let us despair of help in ourselves, but not of help in God. He that thinks to ease his conscience by destroying his life, doth, in effect, dare God Almighty to do his worst. And self-murder, though prescribed by some of the heathen moralists, is certainly a remedy worse than the disease, how bad soever the disease may be. Let us watch against the beginnings of melancholy, and pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

4 saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.
And they said, What is that to us ? see thou to that.

A remarkable illustration of the power of an awakened conscience. A short time before, the promise of this sordid pelf was temptation enough to his covetous heart to outweigh the most overwhelming obligations of duty and love; now, the possession of it so lashes him that he cannot use it, cannot even keep it!

What a testimony this to Jesus! Judas had been with Him in all circumstances for three years; his post, as treasurer to Him and the Twelve (Joh 12:6), gave him peculiar opportunity of watching the spirit, disposition, and habits of his Master; while his covetous nature and thievish practices would incline him to dark and suspicious, rather than frank and generous, interpretations of all that He said and did. If, then, he could have fastened on one questionable feature in all that he had so long witnessed, we may be sure that no such speech as this would ever have escaped his lips, nor would he have been so stung with remorse as not to be able to keep the money and survive his crime. "Guilty or innocent is nothing to us: We have Him now—begone!" Was ever speech more hellish uttered?

The sarcastic, diabolical reply which he had got, in place of the sympathy which perhaps he expected, would deepen his remorse into an agony. in the temple— commonly called "the sanctuary," or "the holy place," into which only the priests might enter. How is this to be explained? Perhaps he flung the money in after them. But thus were fulfilled the words of the prophet—"I cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zec 11:13).

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

The disposal of the money which Judas brought back, Mt 27:6-10. It was laid out in the purchase of a field, called the potter's field; because some potter had owned it, or occupied it, or lived near it, or because broken potters' vessels were thrown into it. And this field was to be a burying-place for strangers, that is, proselytes to the Jewish religion, who were of other nations, and, coming to Jerusalem to worship, happened to die there.

[1.] It looks like an instance of their humanity, that they took care for the burying of strangers; and it intimates that they themselves allowed (as St. Paul saith, Ac 24:15), that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust; for we therefore take care of the dead body, not only because it has been the habitation of a rational soul, but because it must be so again. But,

[2.] It was no instance of their humility that they would bury strangers in a place by themselves, as if they were not worthy to be laid in their burying-places; strangers must keep their distance, alive and dead, and that principle must go down to the grace, Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou, Isa 65:5. The sons of Seth were better affected towards Abraham, though a stranger among them, when they offered him the choicest of their own sepulchres, Ge 23:6. But the sons of the stranger, that have joined themselves to the Lord, though buried by themselves, shall rise with all that are dead in Christ.

This buying of the potter's field did not take place on the day that Christ died (they were then too busy to mind any thing else but hunting him down); but it took place not long after; for Peter speaks of it soon after Christ's ascension; yet it is here recorded.

First, To show the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders. They were maliciously persecuting the blessed Jesus, and now,

1. They scruple to put that money into the treasury, or corban, of the temple, with which they had hired the traitor. Though perhaps they had taken it out of the treasury, pretending it was for the public good, and though they were great sticklers for the corban, and laboured to draw all the wealth of the nation into it, yet they would not put that money into it, which was the price of blood. The hire of a traitor they thought parallel to the hire of a whore, and the price of a malefactor (such a one they made Christ to be) equivalent to the price of a dog, neither of which was to be brought into the house of the Lord, De 23:18. They would thus save their credit with the people, by

possessing them with an opinion of their great reverence for the temple. Thus they that swallowed a camel, strained at a gnat.

2. They think to atone for what they had done, by this public good act of providing a burying-place for strangers, though not at their own charge. Thus in times of ignorance people were made to believe that building churches and endowing monasteries would make amends for immoralities.

Secondly, To signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to strangers, and sinners of the Gentiles. Through the price of his blood, a resting place is provided for them after death. Thus many of the ancients apply this passage. The grave is the potter's field, where the bodies are thrown as despised broken vessels; but Christ by his blood purchased it for those who by confessing themselves strangers on earth seek the better country; he has altered the property of it (as a purchaser doth), so that now death is ours, the grave is ours, a bed of rest for us. The Germans, in their language, call burying-places God's fields; for in them God sows his people as a corn of wheat, Joh 12:24. See Ho 2:23,Isa 26:19.

Thirdly, To perpetuate the infamy of those that bought and sold the blood of Christ. This field was commonly called Aceldama--the field of blood; not by the chief priests, they hoped in this burying-place to bury the remembrance of their own crime; but by the people; who took notice of Judas's acknowledgment that he had betrayed the innocent blood, though the chief priests made nothing of it. They fastened this name upon the field in perpetuam rei memoriam--for a perpetual memorial. Note, Divine Providence has many ways of entailing disgrace upon the wicked practices even of great men, who, though they seek to cover their shame, are put to a perpetual reproach.

Fourthly, That we may see how the scripture was fulfilled (Mt 27:9,10); Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet. The words quoted are found in the prophecy of Zechariah, Mt 11:12. How they are here said to be spoken by Jeremy is a

difficult question; but the credit of Christ's doctrine does not depend upon it; for that proves itself perfectly divine, though there should appear something human as to small circumstances in the penmen of it. The Syriac version, which is ancient, reads only, It was spoken by the prophet, not naming any, whence some have thought that Jeremy was added by some scribe; some think that the whole volume of the prophets, being in one book, and the prophecy of Jeremiah put first, it might not be improper, currente calamo--for a transcriber to quote any passage out of that volume, under his name. The Jews used to say, The spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah, and so they were as one prophet. Some suggest that it was spoken by Jeremiah, but written by Zechariah; or that Jeremiah wrote the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Zechariah. Now this passage in the prophet is a representation of the great contempt of God, that was found among the Jews, and the poor returns they made to him for rich receivings from him. But here that is really acted, which was there but figuratively expressed. The sum of money is the same--thirty pieces of silver; this they weighed for his price, at this rate they valued him; a goodly price; and this was cast to the potter in the house of the Lord; which was here literally accomplished. Note, We should better understand the events of Providence, if we were better acquainted even with the language and expressions of scripture; for even those also are sometimes written upon the dispensations of Providence so plainly, that he who runs may read them. What David spoke figuratively (Ps 42:7), Jonah made a literal application of; All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me, Jon 3:3.

The giving of the price of him that was valued, not for him, but for the potter's field, bespeaks,

1 The high value that ought to be put upon Christ. The price was given, not for him; no, when it was given for him, it was soon brought back again with disdain, as infinitely below his worth; he cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, nor this unspeakable Gift brought with money.

2 The low value that was put upon him. They of the children of Israel did strangely undervalue him, when his price did but reach to buy a potter's field, a pitiful sorry spot of ground, not worth looking upon. It added to the reproach of his being bought and sold, that it was at so low a rate. Cast it to the potter, so it is in Zechariah; a contemptible petty chapman, not the merchant that deals in things of value. And observe, They of the children of Israel thus undervalued him; they who were his own people, that should have known better what estimate to put upon him, they to whom he was first sent, whose glory he was, and whom he had valued so highly, and bought so dear. He gave kings' ransoms for them, and the richest countries (so precious were they in his sight, Isa 43:3,4), Egypt, and Ethiopia, and Seba; but they gave a slave's ransom for him (see Ex 21:32), and valued him but at the rate of a potter's field; so was that blood trodden under foot, which bought the kingdom of heaven for us. But all this was as the Lord appointed; so the prophetic vision was, which typified this event, and so the event itself, as the other instances of Christ's sufferings, was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,
And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued,
whom they of the children of Israel did value;

Never was a complicated prophecy, otherwise hopelessly dark, more marvellously fulfilled. Various conjectures have been formed to account for Matthew's ascribing to Jeremiah a prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. But since with this book he was plainly familiar, having quoted one of its most remarkable prophecies of Christ but a few chapters before (Mt 21:4,5), the question is one more of critical interest than real importance. Perhaps the true explanation is the following, from LIGHTFOOT: "Jeremiah of old had the first place among the prophets, and hereby he comes to be mentioned above all the rest in Mt 16:14; because he stood first in the volume of the prophets (as he proves from the learned DAVID KIMCHI) therefore he is first named. When, therefore, Matthew produceth a text of

Zechariah under the name of Jeremy, he only cites the words of the volume of the prophets under his name who stood first in the volume of the prophets.

10 and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

Many apply this passage of the buying the piece of ground, with the money Judas brought back, to signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to strangers, and sinners of the Gentiles.

Pilate Questions Jesus

11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

The Jews had charged Jesus with blasphemy for calling himself the Son of God, but when they took him to Pilate they twisted the charge. They emphasized not that he claimed to be God but that he claimed to be above Caesar. They suggested he was a political rebel trying to lead a messianic uprising that would overthrow Roman rule and set up an independent Jewish state Luk_23:2. Pilate tried to dismiss the case, but the Jews would not drop their charges (Joh_18:30-32).

Pilate, the governor of the area, usually lived in the provincial capital Caesarea, but he came to Jerusalem during Jewish festivals to help maintain order. His official residence and administration centre in Jerusalem was called the praetorium. The Jewish leaders, wanting to have Jesus dealt with and out of the way before the festival started, took him to Pilate early in the morning (Luk_23:1; Joh_18:28-29).

12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee ?

14 And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marveled greatly.

The trial Christ had before Pilate.

1. His arraignment; Jesus stood before the governor, as the prisoner before the judge. We could not stand before God because of our sins, nor lift up our face in his presence, if Christ had not been thus made

sin for us. He was arraigned that we might be discharged. Some think that this bespeaks his courage and boldness; he stood undaunted, unmoved by all their rage. He thus stood in this judgment, that we might stand in God's judgment. He stood for a spectacle, as Naboth, when he was arraigned, was set on high among the people.

2. His indictment; Art thou the king of the Jews? The Jews were now not only under the government, but under the very jealous inspection, of the Roman powers, which they were themselves to the highest degree disaffected to, and yet now pretended a concern for, to serve this turn; accusing Jesus as an Enemy to Cæsar (Lu 23:2), which they could produce no other proof of, than that he himself had newly owned he was the Christ. Now they thought that whoever was the Christ, must be the king of the Jews, and must deliver them from the Roman power, and restore to them a temporal dominion, and enable them to trample upon all their neighbours. According to this chimera of their own, they accused our Lord Jesus, as making himself king of the Jews, in opposition to the Roman yoke; whereas, though he said that he was the Christ, he meant not such a Christ as this. Note, Many oppose Christ's holy religion, upon a mistake of the nature of it; they dress it up in false colours, and then fight against it. They assuring the governor that, if he made himself Christ, he made himself king of the Jews, the governor takes it for granted, that he goes about to pervert the nation, and subvert the government. Art thou a king? It was plain that he was not so de facto--actually; "But dost thou lay any claim to the government, or pretend a right to rule the Jews?" Note, It has often been the hard fate of Christ's holy religion, unjustly to fall under the suspicions of the civil powers, as if it were hurtful to kings and provinces, whereas it tends mightily to the benefit of both.

3. His plea; Jesus said unto him, "Thou sayest. It is as thou sayest, though not as thou meanest; I am a king, but not such a king as thou dost suspect me to be." Thus before Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and was not ashamed to own himself a king, though it looked ridiculous, nor afraid, though at this time it was dangerous.

4. The evidence (Mt 27:12); He was accused of the chief priests. Pilate found no fault in him; whatever was said, nothing was proved, and therefore what was wanting in matter they made up in noise and violence, and followed him with repeated accusations, the same as they had given in before; but by the repetition they thought to force a belief from the governor. They had learned, not only calumniari--to calumniate, but fortiter calumniari--to calumniate stoutly. The best men have often been accused of the worst crimes.

5. The prisoner's silence as to the prosecutors' accusations; He answered nothing,

(a) Because there was no occasion; nothing was alleged but what carried its own confutation along with it.

(b) He was now taken up with the great concern that lay between him and his Father, to whom he was offering up himself a Sacrifice, to answer the demands of his justice, which he was so intent upon, that he minded not what they said against him.

(c) His hour was come, and he submitted to his Father's will; Not as I will, but as thou wilt. He knew what his Father's will was, and therefore silently committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. We must not thus by our silence throw away our lives, because we are not lords of our lives, as Christ was of his; nor can we know, as he did, when our hour is come. But hence we must learn, not to render railing for railing, 1Pe 2:23.

Now,

[1.] Pilate pressed him to make some reply (Mt 27:13); Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? What these things were, may be gathered from Lu 23:3,5,Joh 19:7. Pilate, having no malice at all against him, was desirous he should clear himself, urges him to it, and believes he could do it; Hearest thou not? Yes, he did hear; and still he hears all that is witnessed unjustly against his truths

and ways; but he keeps silence, because it is the day of his patience, and doth not answer, as he will shortly, Ps 50:3.

[2.] He wondered at his silence; which was not interpreted so much into a contempt of the court, as a contempt of himself. And therefore Pilate is not said to be angry at it, but to have marvelled greatly at it, as a thing very unusual. He believed him to be innocent, and had heard perhaps that never man spake like him; and therefore he thought it strange that he had not one word to say for himself.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.
16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

The outrage and violence of the people, in pressing the governor to crucify Christ. The chief priests had a great interest in the people, they called them Rabbi, Rabbi, made idols of them, and oracles of all they said; and they made use of this to incense them against him, and by the power of the mob gained the point which they could not otherwise carry. Now here are two instances of their outrage.

1. Their preferring Barabbas before him, and choosing to have him released rather than Jesus.

(a) It seems it was grown into a custom with the Roman governors, for the honouring of the Jews, to grace the feast of the passover with the release of a prisoner, Mt 27:15. This, they thought, did honour to the feast, and was agreeable to the commemoration of their deliverance; but it was an invention of their own, and no divine institution; though some think that it was ancient, and kept up by the Jewish princes, before they became a province of the empire. However, it was a bad custom, an obstruction to justice, and an encouragement to wickedness. But our gospel-passover is celebrated with the release of prisoners, by him who hath power on earth to forgive sins.

(b) The prisoner put in competition with our Lord Jesus was Barabbas; he is here called a notable prisoner (Mt 27:16); either because by birth and breeding he was of some note and quality, or because he had signalized himself by something remarkable in his crimes; whether he was so notable as to recommend himself the more to the favours of the people, and so the more likely to be interceded for, or whether so notable as to make himself more liable to their age, is uncertain. Some think the latter, and therefore Pilate mentioned him, as taking it for granted that they would have desired any one's release rather than his. Treason, murder, and felony, are the three most enormous crimes that are usually punished by the sword of justice; and Barabbas was guilty of all three, Lu 23:19,Joh 18:40. A notable prisoner indeed, whose crimes were so complicated.

(c) The proposal was made by Pilate the governor (Mt 27:17); Whom will ye that I release unto you? It is probable that the judge had the nomination of two, one of which the people were to choose. Pilate proposed to them to have Jesus released; he was convinced of his innocency, and that the prosecution was malicious; yet had not the courage to acquit him, as he ought to have done, by his own power, but would have him released by the people's election, and so he hoped to satisfy both his own conscience, and the people too; whereas, finding no fault in him, he ought not to have put him upon the country, or brought him into peril of his life. But such little tricks and artifices as these, to trim the matter, and to keep in with conscience and the world too, are the common practice of those that seek more to please men than God. What shall I do then, saith Pilate, with Jesus, who is called Christ? He puts the people in mind of this, that this Jesus, whose release he proposed, was looked upon by some among them as the Messiah, and had given pregnant proofs of his being so; "Do not reject one of whom your nation has professed such an expectation."

The reason why Pilate laboured thus to get Jesus discharged was because he knew that for envy the chief priests had delivered him up (Mt 27:18); that it was not his guilt, but his goodness, that they were

provoked at; and for this reason he hoped to bring him off by the people's act, and that they would be for his release. When David was envied by Saul, he was the darling of the people; and any one that heard the hosannas with which Christ was but a few days ago brought into Jerusalem, would have thought that he had been so, and that Pilate might safely have referred this matter to the commonalty, especially when so notorious a rogue was set up as a rival with him for their favours. But it proved otherwise.

(d) While Pilate was thus labouring the matter, he was confirmed in his unwillingness to condemn Jesus, by a message sent him from his wife (Mt 27:19), by way of caution; Have thou nothing to do with that just man (together with the reason), for I have suffered many things this day in a cream because of him. Probably, this message was delivered to Pilate publicly, in the hearing of all that were present, for it was intended to be a warning not to him only, but to the prosecutors. Observe,

[1.] The special providence of God, in sending this dream to Pilate's wife; it is not likely that she had heard any thing, before, concerning Christ, at least not so as to occasion her dreaming of him, but it was immediately from God: perhaps she was one of the devout and honourable women, and had some sense of religion; yet God revealed himself by dreams to some that had not, as to Nebuchadnezzar. She suffered many things in this dream; whether she dreamed of the cruel usage of an innocent person, or of the judgments that would fall upon those that had any hand in his death, or both, it seems that it was a frightful dream, and her thoughts troubled her, as Da 2:1,4:5. Note, The Father of spirits has many ways of access to the spirits of men, and can seal their instruction in a dream, or vision of the night, Job 33:15,16. Yet to those who have the written word, God more ordinarily speaks by conscience on a waking bed, than by dreams, when deep sleep falls upon men.

[2.] The tenderness and care of Pilate's wife, in sending this caution, thereupon, to her husband; Have nothing to do with that just man. First, This was an honourable testimony to our Lord Jesus,

witnessing for him that he was a just man, even then when he was persecuted as the worst of malefactors: when his friends were afraid to appear in defence of him, God made even those that were strangers and enemies, to speak in his favour; when Peter denied him, Judas confessed him; when the chief priests pronounced him guilty of death, Pilate declared he found no fault in him; when the women that loved him stood afar off, Pilate's wife, who knew little of him, showed a concern for him. Note, God will not leave himself without witnesses to the truth and equity of his cause, even when it seems to be most spitefully run down by its enemies, and most shamefully deserted by its friends. Secondly, It was a fair warning to Pilate; Have nothing to do with him. Note, God has many ways of giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences; it is also our great duty to hearken to them. O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates, is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Pilate's lady sent him this warning, out of the love she had to him; she feared not a rebuke from him for meddling with that which belonged not to her; but, let him take it how he would, she would give him the caution. Note, It is an instance of true love to our friends and relations, to do what we can to keep them from sin; and the nearer any are to us, and the greater affection we have for them, the more solicitous we should be not to suffer sin to come or lie upon them, Le 19:17. The best friendship is friendship to the soul. We are not told how Pilate turned this off, probably with a jest; but by his proceeding against the just man it appears that he did not regard it. Thus faithful admonitions are made light of, when they are given as warnings against sin, but will not be so easily made light of, when they shall be reflected upon as aggravations of sin.

(e) The chief priests and the elders were busy, all this while, to influence the people in favour of Barabbas, Mt 27:20. They persuaded the multitude, both by themselves and their emissaries, whom they sent abroad among them, that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus; suggesting that this Jesus was a deceiver, in league with Satan, an enemy to their church and temple; that, if he were let alone, the Romans would come, and take away their place

and nation; that Barabbas, though a bad man, yet, having not the interest that Jesus had, could not do so much mischief. Thus they managed the mob, who otherwise were well affected to Jesus, and, if they had not been so much at the beck of their priests, would never have done such a preposterous thing as to prefer Barabbas before Jesus. Here,

[1.] We cannot but look upon these wicked priests with indignation; by the law, in matters of controversy between blood and blood, the people were to be guided by the priests, and to do as they informed them, De 17:8,9. This great power put into their hands they wretchedly abused, and the leaders of the people caused them to err.

[2.] We cannot but look upon the deluded people with pity; I have compassion on the multitude, to see them hurried thus violently to so great wickedness, to see them thus priest-ridden, and falling in the ditch with their blind leaders.

(f) Being thus over-ruled by the priests, at length they made their choice, Mt 27:21. Whether of the twain (saith Pilate) will ye that I release unto you? He hoped that he had gained his point, to have Jesus released. But, to his great surprise, they said Barabbas; as if his crimes were less, and therefore he less deserved to die; or as if his merits were greater, and therefore he better deserved to live. The cry for Barabbas was so universal, one and all, that there was no colour to demand a poll between the candidates. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and, thou earth, be horribly afraid! Were ever men that pretended to reason or religion, guilty of such prodigious madness, such horrid wickedness! This was it that Peter charged so home upon them (Ac 3:14); Ye desired a murderer to be granted to you; yet multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions.

2. Their pressing earnestly to have Jesus crucified, Mt 27:22,23. Pilate, being amazed at their choice of Barabbas, was willing to hope that it was rather from a fondness for him than from an enmity to Jesus; and therefore he puts it to them, "What shall I do then with

Jesus? Shall I release him likewise, for the greater honour of your feast, or will you leave it to me?" No, they all said, Let him be crucified. That death they desired he might die, because it was looked upon as the most scandalous and ignominious; and they hoped thereby to make his followers ashamed to own him, and their relation to him. It was absurd for them to prescribe to the judge what sentence he should pass; but their malice and rage made them forget all rules of order and decency, and turned a court of justice into a riotous, tumultuous, and seditious assembly. Now was truth fallen in the street, and equity could not enter; where one looked for judgment, behold, oppression, the worst kind of oppression; for righteousness, behold, a cry, the worse cry that ever was, Crucify, crucify the Lord of glory. Though they that cried thus, perhaps, were not the same persons that the other day cried Hosanna, yet see what a change was made upon the mind of the populace in a little time: when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, so general were the acclamations of praise, that one would have thought he had no enemies; but now when he was led in triumph to Pilate's judgment-seat, so general were the outcries of enmity, that one would think he had no friends. Such revolutions are there in this changeable world, through which our way to heaven lies, as our Master's did, by honour and dishonour, by evil report, and good report, counter-changed (2Co 6:8); that we may not be lifted up by honour, as if, when we were applauded and caressed, we had made our nest among the stars, and should die in that nest; nor yet be dejected or discouraged by dishonour, as if, when we were trodden to the lowest hell, from which there is no redemption. Bides tu istos qui te laudant; omnes aut sunt hostes, aut (quod in æquo est) esse possunt--You observe those who applaud you; either they are all your enemies, or, which is equivalent, they may become so. Seneca de Vita Beat.

Now, as to this demand, we are further told,

(a) How Pilate objected against it; Why, what evil hath he done? A proper question to ask before we censure any in common discourse, much more for a judge to ask before he pass a sentence of death. Note, It is much for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that, though he

suffered as an evil-doer, yet neither his judge nor his prosecutors could find that he had done any evil. Had he done any evil against God? No, he always did those things that pleased him. Had he done any evil against the civil government? No, as he did himself, so he taught others, to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. Had he done any evil against the public peace? No, he did not strive or cry, nor did his kingdom come with observation. Had he done any evil to particular persons? Whose ox had he taken, or whom had he defrauded? No, so far from that, that he went about doing good. This repeated assertion of his unspotted innocency, plainly intimates that he died to satisfy for the sins of others; for if it had not been for our transgressions that he was thus wounded, and for our offences that he was delivered up, and that upon his own voluntary undertaking to atone for them, I see not how these extraordinary sufferings of a person that had never thought, said, or done, any thing amiss, could be reconciled with the justice and equity of that providence that governs the world, and at least permitted this to be done in it.

(b) How they insisted upon it; They cried out the more, Let him be crucified. They do not go about to show any evil he had done, but, right or wrong, he must be crucified. Quitting all pretensions to the proof of the premises, they resolve to hold the conclusion, and what was wanting in evidence to make up in clamour; this unjust judge was wearied by importunity into an unjust sentence, as he in the parable into a just one (Lu 18:4,5), and the cause carried purely by noise.

17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you ? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

When Pilate learnt that Jesus was from Galilee, which was not under his control, he tried to avoid the issue by sending Jesus to the Galilean governor Herod, who also was in Jerusalem for the festival (Luk_23:6-7). as a second way out, Pilate, unaware of the influence of the priests in the crowd and thinking that Jesus had widespread support, agreed to allow the crowd to choose between the two, no doubt thinking they would choose Jesus. As he waited for them to

make their choice, his wife sent him a warning not to condemn Jesus (Mat_27:19-20).

Having no malice against Jesus, Pilate urged him to clear himself, and laboured to get him discharged. The message from his wife was a warning. God has many ways of giving checks to sinners, in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences. O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates! is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Being overruled by the priests, the people made choice of Barabbas. Multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions. The Jews were so bent upon the death of Christ, that Pilate thought it would be dangerous to refuse. And this struggle shows the power of conscience even on the worst men. Yet all was so ordered to make it evident that Christ suffered for no fault of his own, but for the sins of his people. How vain for Pilate to expect to free himself from the guilt of the innocent blood of a righteous person, whom he was by his office bound to protect! The Jews' curse upon themselves has been awfully answered in the sufferings of their nation. None could bear the sin of others, except Him that had no sin of his own to answer for. And are we not all concerned? Is not Barabbas preferred to Jesus, when sinners reject salvation that they may retain their darling sins, which rob God of his glory, and murder their souls? The blood of Christ is now upon us for good, through mercy, by the Jews' rejection of it. O let us flee to it for refuge!

19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Pilate showed this pitiful figure to the crowd, apparently hoping it might make them feel ashamed and change their minds; but it only increased their hatred (Joh_19:4-6). Pilate became more uneasy when he heard that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Maybe, thought Pilate, this man was one of the gods. He became even more anxious to set Jesus free when Jesus told him that God would hold him responsible for the way he used his authority. Pilate was guilty for condemning a man he knew was innocent, but Caiaphas and the other Jews who handed Jesus over to him were more guilty (Joh_19:7-11).

Again Pilate tried to release Jesus, but the Jews reminded him that he himself could be in danger if he released a person guilty of treason. This disturbed Pilate further, and after a final offer that the Jews rejected, he handed Jesus over to be crucified. The Jews' declaration of loyalty to Caesar demonstrated their hypocrisy and confirmed their rejection of God (Joh_19:12-16).

Here is the devolving of the guilt of Christ's blood upon the people and priests.

1. Pilate endeavours to transfer it from himself, Mt 27:24.

(1.) He sees it to no purpose to contend. What he said,

[1.] Would do no good; he could prevail nothing; he could not convince them what an unjust unreasonable thing it was for him to condemn a man whom he believed innocent, and whom they could not prove guilty. See how strong the stream of lust and rage sometimes is; neither authority nor reason will prevail to give check to it. Nay,

[2.] It was more likely to do hurt; he saw that rather a tumult was made. This rude and brutish people fell to high words, and began to threaten Pilate what they would do if he did not gratify them; and how great a matter might this fire kindle, especially when the priests, those great incendiaries, blew the coals! Now this turbulent tumultuous temper of the Jews, by which Pilate was awed to condemn Christ against his conscience, contributed more than any thing to the ruin of that nation not long after; for their frequent insurrections provoked the Romans to destroy them, though they had reduced them, and their inveterate quarrels among themselves made them an easy prey to the common enemy. Thus their sin was their ruin.

Observe how easily we may be mistaken in the inclination of the common people; the priests were apprehensive that their endeavours to seize Christ would have caused an uproar, especially on the feast day; but it proved that Pilate's endeavour to save him, caused an uproar, and that on the feast day; so uncertain are the sentiments of the crowd.

(2.) This puts him into a great strait, betwixt the peace of his own mind, and the peace of the city; he is loth to condemn an innocent man, and yet loth to disoblige the people, and raise a devil that would not be soon laid. Had he steadily and resolutely adhered to the sacred laws of justice, as a judge ought to do, he had not been in any perplexity; the matter was plain and past dispute, that a man in whom was found no faulty, ought not to be crucified, upon any pretence whatsoever, nor must an unjust thing be done, to gratify any man or company of men in the world; the cause is soon decided; Let justice be done, though heaven and earth come together--Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum. If wickedness proceed from the wicked, though they be priests, yet my hand shall not be upon him.

(3.) Pilate thinks to trim the matter, and to pacify both the people and his own conscience too, by doing it, and yet disowning it, acting the thing, and yet acquitting himself from it at the same time. Such absurdities and self-contradictions do they run upon, whose

convictions are strong, but their corruptions stronger. Happy is he (saith the apostle, Ro 14:22) that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth; or, which is all one, that allows not himself in that thing which he condemns.

Now Pilate endeavours to clear himself from the guilt,

[1.] By a sign; He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude; not as if he thought thereby to cleanse himself from any guilt contracted before God, but to acquit himself before the people, from so much as contracting any guilt in this matter; as if he had said, "If it be done, bear witness that it is none of my doing." He borrowed the ceremony from that law which appointed it to be used for the clearing of the country from the guilt of an undiscovered murder (De 21:6,7); and he used it the more to affect the people with the conviction he was under of the prisoner's innocency; and, probably, such was the noise of the rabble, that, if he had not used some such surprising sign, in the view of them all, he could not have been heard.

[2.] By a saying; in which, First, He clears himself; I am innocent of the blood of this just person. What nonsense was this, to condemn him, and yet protest that he was innocent of his blood! For men to protest against a thing, and yet to practise it, is only to proclaim that they sin against their consciences. Though Pilate professed his innocency, God charges him with guilt, Ac 4:27. Some think to justify themselves, by pleading that their hands were not in the sin; but David kills by the sword of the children of Ammon, and Ahab by the elders of Jezreel. Pilate here thinks to justify himself, by pleading that his heart was not in the action; but this is an averment which will never be admitted. Protestatio non valet contra factum--In vain does he protest against the deed which at the same time he perpetrates. Secondly, He casts it upon the priests and people; "See ye to it; if it must be done, I cannot help it, do you answer it before God and the world." Note, Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own; and many deceive themselves with this, that they shall bear no blame if they can but find any to lay the

blame upon; but it is not so easy a thing to transfer the guilt of sin as many think it is. The condition of him that is infected with the plague is not the less dangerous, either for his catching the infection from others, or his communicating the infection to others; we may be tempted to sin, but cannot be forced. The priests threw it upon Judas; See thou to it; and now Pilate throws it upon them; See ye to it; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.

2 The priests and people consented to take the guilt upon themselves; they all said, "His blood be on us, and one our children; we are so well assured that there is neither sin nor danger in putting him to death, that we are willing to run the hazard of it;" as if the guilt would do no harm to them or theirs. They saw that it was the dread of guilt that made Pilate hesitate, and that he was getting over this difficulty by a fancy of transferring it; to prevent the return of his hesitation, and to confirm him in that fancy, they, in the heat of their rage, agreed to it, rather than lose the prey they had in their hands, and cried, His blood be upon us. Now,

(1.) By this they designed to indemnify Pilate, that is, to make him think himself indemnified, by becoming bound to divine justice, to save him harmless. But those that are themselves bankrupts and beggars will never be admitted security for others, nor taken as a bail for them. None could bear the sin of others, except him that had none of his own to answer for; it is a bold undertaking, and too big for any creature, to become bound for a sinner to Almighty God.

(2.) But they did really imprecate wrath and vengeance upon themselves and their posterity. What a desperate word was this, and how little did they think what as the direful import of it, or to what an abyss of misery it would bring them and theirs! Christ had lately told them, that upon them would come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from that of the righteous Abel; but as if that were too little, they here imprecate upon themselves the guilt of that blood which was more precious than all the rest, and the guilt of which would lie heavier. O the daring presumption of wilful

sinners, that run upon God, upon his neck, and defy his justice! Job 15:25,26. Observe,

[1.] How cruel they were in their imprecation. They imprecated the punishment of this sin, not only upon themselves, but upon their children too, even those that were yet unborn, without so much as limiting the entail of the curse, as God himself had been pleased to limit it, to the third and fourth generation. It was madness to pull it upon themselves, but the height of barbarity to entail it on their posterity. Surely they were like the ostrich; they were hardened against their young ones, as though they were not theirs. What a dreadful conveyance was this of guilt and wrath to them and their heirs for ever, and this delivered by joint consent, nemine contradicents--unanimously, as their own act and deed; which certainly amounted to a forfeiture and defeasance of that ancient charter, I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed. Their entailing the curse of the Messiah's blood upon their nation, cut off the entail of the blessings of that blood from their families, that, according to another promise made to Abraham, in him all the families of the earth might be blessed. See what enemies wicked men are to their own children and families; those that damn their own souls, care not how many they take to hell with them.

[2.] How righteous God was, in his retribution according to this imprecation; they said, His blood be on us, and on our children; and God said Amen to it, so shall thy doom be; as they loved cursing, so it came upon them. The wretched remains of that abandoned people feel it to this day; from the time they imprecated this blood upon them, they were followed with one judgment after another, till they were quite laid waste, and made an astonishment, a hissing, and a byword; yet on some of them, and some of theirs, this blood came, not to condemn them, but to save them; divine mercy, upon their repenting and believing, cut off this entail, and then the promise was again to them, and to their children. God is better to us and ours than we are.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.
26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged

Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

In these verses we have the preparatives for, and prefaces to, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Here is,

The sentence passed, and the warrant signed for his execution; and this immediately, the same hour.

1. Barabbas was released, that notorious criminal: if he had not been put in competition with Christ for the favour of the people, it is probable that he had died for his crimes; but that proved the means of his escape; to intimate that Christ was condemned for this purpose, that sinners, even the chief of sinners, might be released; he was delivered up, that we might be delivered; whereas the common instance of divine Providence, is, that the wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright, Pr 21:18,Pr 11:18. In this unparalleled instance of divine grace, the upright is a ransom for the transgressors, the just for the unjust.

2. Jesus was scourged; this was an ignominious cruel punishment, especially as is was inflicted by the Romans, who were not under the moderation of the Jewish law, which forbade scourgings, above forty stripes; this punishment was most unreasonably inflicted on one that was sentenced to die: the rods were not to introduce the axes, but to supersede them. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, The ploughers ploughed upon my back (Ps 129:3), I gave my back to the smiters (Isa 50:6), and, By his stripes we are healed, Isa 53:5. He was chastised with whips, that we might not be for ever chastised with scorpions.

3. He was then delivered to be crucified; though his chastisement was in order to our peace, yet there is no peace made but by the blood of his cross (Col 1:20); therefore the scourging is not enough, he must be crucified; a kind of death used only among the Romans; the manner of it is such, that it seems to be the result of wit and cruelty in combination, each putting forth itself to the utmost, to make death in the highest degree terrible and miserable. A cross was set up in the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed,

on which nails the weight of the body hung, till it died of the pain. This was the death to which Christ was condemned, that he might answer the type of the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It was a bloody death, a painful, shameful, cursed death; it was so miserable a death, that merciful princes appointed those who were condemned to it by the law, to be strangled first, and then nailed to the cross; so Julius Cæsar did by some pirates, Sueton. lib. 1. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, by an edict abolished the use of that punishment among the Romans, Sozomen, Hist. lib. 1. ch. 8. Ne salutare signum subserviret ad perniciem--That the symbol of salvation might not be subservient to the victim's destruction.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

The barbarous treatment which the soldiers gave him, while things were getting ready for his execution. When he was condemned, he ought to have had some time allowed him to prepare for death. There was a law made by the Roman senate, in Tiberius's time, perhaps upon complaint of this and the like precipitation, that the execution of criminals should be deferred at least ten days after sentence. Sueton in Tiber. cap. 25. But there were scarcely allowed so many minutes to our Lord Jesus; nor had he any breathing-time during those minutes; it was a crisis, and there were no lucid intervals allowed him; deep called unto deep, and the storm continued without any intermission.

When he was delivered to be crucified, that was enough; they that kill the body, yield that there is no more that they can do, but Christ's enemies will do more, and, if it be possible, wrap up a thousand deaths in one. Though Pilate pronounced him innocent, yet his soldiers, his guards, set themselves to abuse him, being swayed more by the fury of the people against him, than by their master's testimony for him; the Jewish rabble infected the Roman soldiery, or perhaps it was not so much in spite to him, as to make sport for themselves, that they thus abused him. They understood that he pretended to a crown; to taunt him with that gave them some

diversion, and an opportunity to make themselves and one another merry. Note, It is an argument of a base, servile, sordid spirit, to insult over those that are in misery, and to make the calamities of any matter of sport and merriment.

Observe,

1. Where this was done--in the common hall. The governor's house, which should have been a shelter to the wronged and abused, is made the theatre of this barbarity. I wonder that the governor, who was so desirous to acquit himself from the blood of this just person, would suffer this to be done in his house. Perhaps he did not order it to be done, but he connived at it; and those in authority will be accountable, not only for the wickedness which they do, or appoint, but for that which they do not restrain, when it is in the power of their hands. Masters of families should not suffer their houses to be places of abuse to any, nor their servants to make sport with the sins, or miseries, or religion, of others.

2. Who were concerned in it. They gathered the whole band, the soldiers that were to attend the execution, would have the whole regiment (at least five hundred, some think twelve or thirteen hundred) to share in the diversion. If Christ was thus made a spectacle, let none of his followers think it strange to be so used, 1Co 4:9,Heb 10:33.

3. What particular indignities were done him.

(a) They stripped him, Mt 27:28. The shame of nakedness came in with sin (Ge 3:7); and therefore Christ, when he came to satisfy for sin, and take it away, was made naked, and submitted to that shame, that he might prepare for us white raiment, to cover us, Re 3:18.

(b) They put on him a scarlet robe, some old red cloak, such as the Roman soldiers wore, in imitation of the scarlet robes which kings and emperors wore; thus upbraiding him with his being called a King. This sham of majesty they put upon him in his dress, when

nothing but meanness and misery appeared in his countenance, only to expose him to the spectators, as the more ridiculous; yet there was something of mystery in it; this was he that was red in his apparel (Isa 63:1,2), that washed his garments in wine (Ge 49:11); therefore he was dressed in a scarlet robe. Our sins were as scarlet and crimson. Christ being clad in a scarlet robe, signified his bearing our sins, to his shame, in his own body upon the tree; that we might wash our robes, and make them white, in the blood of the Lamb.

(c) They platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head, Mt 27:29. This was to carry on the humour of making him a mock-king; yet, had they intended it only for a reproach, they might have platted a crown of straw, or rushes, but they designed it to be painful to him, and to be literally, what crowns are said to be figuratively, lined with thorns; he that invented this abuse, it is likely, valued himself upon the wit of it; but there was a mystery in it.

[1.] Thorns came in with sin, and were part of the curse that was the product of sin, Ge 3:18. Therefore Christ, being made a curse for us, and dying to remove the curse from us, felt the pain and smart of those thorns, nay, and binds them as a crown to him (Job 31:36); for his sufferings for us were his glory.

[2.] Now he answered to the type of Abraham's ram that was caught in the thicket, and so offered up instead of Isaac, Ge 22:13.

[3.] Thorns signify afflictions, 2Ch 33:11. These Christ put into a crown; so much did he alter the property of them to them that are his, giving them cause to glory in tribulation, and making it to work for them a weight of glory.

[4.] Christ was crowned with thorns, to show that his kingdom was not of this world, nor the glory of it worldly glory, but is attended here with bonds and afflictions, while the glory of it is to be revealed.

[5.] It was the custom of some heathen nations, to bring their sacrifices to the altars, crowned with garlands; these thorns were the garlands with which this great Sacrifice was crowned.

[6.] these thorns, it is likely, fetched blood from his blessed head, which trickled down his face, like the previous ointment (typifying the blood of Christ with which he consecrated himself) upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, Ps 133:2. Thus, when he came to espouse to himself his love, his dove, his undefiled church, his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, So 5:2.

(d) They put a reed in his right hand; this was intended for a mock-sceptre, another of the insignia of the majesty they jeered him with; as if this were a sceptre good enough for such a King, as was like a reed shaken with the wind (Mt 11:7); like sceptre, like kingdom, both weak and wavering, and withering and worthless; but they were quite mistaken, for his throne is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre, Ps 45:6.

(e) They bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! Having made him a sham King, they thus make a jest of doing homage to him, thus ridiculing his pretensions to sovereignty, as Joseph's brethren (Ge 37:8); Shalt thou indeed reign over us? But as they were afterward compelled to do obeisance to him, and enrich his dreams, so these here bowed the knee, in scorn to him who was, soon after this, exalted to the right hand of God, that at his name every knee might bow, or break before him; it is ill jesting with that which, sooner or later, will come in earnest.

(f) They spit upon him; thus he had been abused in the High Priest's hall, Mt 26:67. In doing homage, the subject kissed the sovereign, in token of his allegiance; thus Samuel kissed Saul, and we are bid to kiss the Son: but they, in this mock-homage, instead of kissing him, spit in his face; that blessed face which outshines the sun, and before which the angels cover theirs, was thus polluted. It is strange that the

sons of men should ever do such a piece of villany, and that the Son of God should ever suffer such a piece of ignominy.

(g) They took the reed, and smote him on the head. That which they had made the mock-ensign of his royalty, they now make the real instrument of their cruelty, and his pain. They smote him, it is probable, upon the crown of thorns, and so struck them into his head, that they might wound it the deeper, which made the more sport for them, to whom his pain was the greatest pleasure. Thus was he despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. All this misery and shame he underwent, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

The conveying of him to the place of execution. After they had mocked and abused him, as long as they thought fit, they then took the robe off from him; to signify their divesting him of all the kingly authority they had invested him with, by putting it on him; and they put his own raiment on him, because that was to fall to the soldiers' share, that were employed in the execution. They took off the robe, but no mention is made of their taking off the crown of thorns, whence it is commonly supposed (though there is no certainty of it) that he was crucified with that on his head; for as he is a Priest upon his throne, so he was a King upon his cross. Christ was led to be crucified in his own raiment, because he himself was to bear our sins in his own body upon the tree. And here,

1. They led him away to be crucified; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sacrifice to the altar. We may well imagine how they hurried him on, and dragged him along, with all the speed possible, lest any thing should intervene to prevent the glutting of their cruel rage with his precious blood. It is probable that they now loaded him with taunts and reproaches, and treated him as the off-scouring of all things. They led him away out of the city; for Christ, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the

gate (Heb 13:12), as if he that was the glory of them that waited for redemption in Jerusalem was not worthy to live among them. To this he himself had an eye, when in the parable he speaks of his being cast out of the vineyard, Mt 21:39.

2. They compelled Simon of Cyrene to bear his cross, Mt 27:32. It seems, at first he carried the cross himself, as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt-offering, which was to burn him. And this was intended, as other things, both for pain and shame to him. But after a while they took the cross off from him, either,

(1.) In compassion to him, because they saw it was too great a load for him. We can hardly think that they had any consideration of that, yet it teaches us that God considers the frame of his people, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; he gives them some breathing-time, but they must expect that the cross will return, and the lucid intervals only give them space to prepare for the next fit. But,

(2.) Perhaps it was because he could not, with the cross on his back, go forward so fast as they would have him. Or,

(3.) They were afraid, lest he should faint away under the load of his cross, and die, and so prevent what their malice further intended to do against him: thus even the tender mercies of the wicked (which seem to be so) are really cruel. Taking the cross off from him, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to bear it, pressing him to the service by the authority of the governor or the priests. It was a reproach, and none would do it but by compulsion. Some think that this Simon was a disciple of Christ, at least a well-wisher to him, and that they knew it, and therefore put this upon him. Note, All that will approve themselves disciples indeed, must follow Christ, bearing his cross (Mt 16:24), bearing his reproach, Heb 13:13. We must know the fellowship of his sufferings for us, and patiently submit to all the sufferings for him we are called out to; for those only shall reign with him, that suffer with him; shall sit

with him in his kingdom, that drink of his cup, and are baptized with his baptism.

31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

Crucifixion was a death used only among the Romans; it was very terrible and miserable. A cross was laid on the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, it was then lifted up and fixed upright, so that the weight of the body hung on the nails, till the sufferer died in agony. Christ thus answered the type of the brazen serpent raised on a pole. Christ underwent all the misery and shame here related, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

We have here the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus.

The place where our Lord Jesus was put to death.

1. They came to a place called Golgotha, near adjoining to Jerusalem, probably the common place of execution. If he had had a house of his own in Jerusalem, probably, for his greater disgrace, they would have crucified him before his own door. But now in the same place where criminals were sacrificed to the justice of the government, was our Lord Jesus sacrificed to the justice of God. Some think that it was called the place of a skull, because it was the common charnel-house, where the bones and skulls of dead men were laid together out of the way, lest people should touch them, and be defiled thereby. Here lay the trophies of death's victory over multitudes of the children of men; and when by dying Christ would destroy death, he added this circumstance of honour to his victory, that he triumphed over death upon his own dunghill.

2. There they crucified him (Mt 27:35), nailed his hands and feet to the cross, and then reared it up, and him hanging on it; for so the manner of the Romans was to crucify. Let our hearts be touched with the feeling of that exquisite pain which our blessed Saviour now endured, and let us look upon him who was thus pierced, and mourn. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? And when we behold what manner of death he died, let us in that behold with what manner of love he loved us.

34 they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Therefore, he refused the offer of drugged wine intended to deaden the pain and dull the mind Mat_27:34.

35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,

They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

36 And sitting down they watched him there;

37 and set up over his head his accusation written, This is jesus the king of the jews.

It was usual to put shame upon malefactors, by a writing to notify the crime for which they suffered. So they set up one over Christ's head. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled it, that even his accusation was to his honour. There were crucified with him at the same time, two robbers. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints. The taunts and jeers he received are here recorded. The enemies of Christ labour to make others believe that of religion and of the people of God, which they themselves know to be false. The chief priests and scribes, and the elders, upbraid Jesus with being the King of Israel. Many people could like the King of Israel well enough, if he would but come down from the cross; if they could but have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must enter into it. But if no cross, then no Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him, must be willing to suffer with him. Thus our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God, did it, by submitting to the punishment of the worst of men. And in every minute particular recorded about the sufferings of Christ, we find some prediction in the Prophets or the Psalms fulfilled

38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left.

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

The barbarous and abusive treatment they gave him, in which their wit and malice vied which should excel. As if death, so great a death, were not bad enough, they contrived to add to the bitterness and terror of it.

1. By the drink they provided for him before he was nailed to the cross, Mt 27:34. It was usual to have a cup of spiced wine for those to drink of, that were to be put to death, according to Solomon's direction (Pr 31:6,7), Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish; but with that cup which Christ was to drink of, they mingled vinegar and gall, to make it sour and bitter. This signified,

(a) The sin of man, which is a root of bitterness, bearing gall and wormwood, De 29:18. The sinner perhaps rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but to God it is grapes of gall, De 32:32. It was so to the Lord Jesus, when he bare our sins, and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner himself, bitterness at the latter end, more bitter than death, Ec 7:26.

(b) It signified the wrath of God, that cup which is Father put into his hand, a bitter cup indeed, like the bitter water which caused the curse, Nu 5:18. This drink they offered him, as was literally foretold, Ps 69:21. And,

[1.] He tasted thereof, and so had the worst of it, took the bitter taste into his mouth; he let no bitter cup go by him untasted, when he was making atonement for all our sinful tasting of forbidden fruit; now he was tasting death in its full bitterness.

[2.] He would not drink it, because he would not have the best of it; would have nothing like an opiate to lessen his sense of pain, for he would die so as to feel himself die, because he had so much work to do, as our High Priest, in his suffering work.

2. By the dividing of his garments, Mt 27:35. When they nailed him to the cross, they stripped him of his garments, at least his upper garments; for by sin we were made naked, to our shame, and thus he purchased for us white raiment to cover us. If we be at any time stripped of our comforts for Christ, let us bear it patiently; he was stripped for us. Enemies may strip us of our clothes, but cannot strip us of our best comforts; cannot take from us the garments of praise. The clothes of those that are executed are the executioner's fee: four soldiers were employed in crucifying Christ, and they must each of them have a share: his upper garment, if it were divided, would be of no use to any of them, and therefore they agreed to cast lots for it.

(a) Some think that the garment was so fine and rich, that it was worth contending for; but that agreed not with the poverty Christ appeared in.

(b) Perhaps they had heard of those that had been cured by touching the hem of his garment, and they thought it valuable for some magic virtue in it. Or,

(c) They hoped to get money of his friends for such a sacred relic. Or,

(d) Because, in derision, they would seem to put a value upon it, as royal clothing. Or,

(e) It was for diversion; to pass away the time while they waited for his death, they would play a game at dice for the clothes; but, whatever they designed, the word of God is herein accomplished. In that famous psalm, the first words of which Christ made use of upon the cross, it was said, They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture, Ps 22:18. This was never true of David, but looks primarily at Christ, of whom David, in spirit, spoke. Then is the offence of this part of the cross ceased; for it appears to have been by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Christ stripped himself of his glories, to divide them among us.

They now sat down, and watched him, Mt 27:36. The chief priests were careful, no doubt, in setting this guard, lest the people, whom they still stood in awe of, should rise, and rescue him. But Providence so ordered it, that those who were appointed to watch him, thereby became unexceptionable witnesses for him; having the opportunity to see and hear that which extorted from them that noble confession (Mt 27:54), Truly this was the Son of God.

3. By the title set up over his head, Mt 27:37. It was usual for the vindicating of public justice, and putting the greater shame upon malefactors that were executed, not only by a crier to proclaim before them, but by a writing also over their heads to notify what was the crime for which they suffered; so they set up over Christ's head his accusation written, to give public notice of the charge against him; This is Jesus the King of the Jews. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled it, that even his accusation redounded to his honour. For,

(a) Here was no crime alleged against him. It is not said that he was a pretended Saviour, or a usurping King, though they would have it thought so (Joh 19:21); but, This is Jesus, a Saviour; surely that was no crime; and, This is the King of the Jews; nor was that a crime; for they expected that the Messiah should be so: so that, his enemies themselves being judges, he did no evil. Nay,

(b) Here was a very glorious truth asserted concerning him--that he is Jesus the King of the Jews, that King whom the Jews expected and ought to have submitted to; so that his accusation amounts to this, That he was the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; as Balaam, when he was sent for to curse Israel, blessed them all together, and that three times (Nu 24:10), so Pilate, instead of accusing Christ as a Criminal, proclaimed him a King, and that three times, in three inscriptions. Thus God makes men to serve his purposes, quite beyond their own.

4. By his companions with him in suffering, Mt 27:38. There were two thieves crucified with him at the same time, in the same place,

under the same guard; two highway-men, or robbers upon the road, as the word properly signifies. It is probable that this was appointed to be execution-day; and therefore they hurried the prosecution of Christ in the morning, that they might have him ready to be executed with the other criminals. Some think that Pilate ordered it thus, that this piece of necessary justice, in executing these thieves, might atone for his injustice in condemning Christ; others, that the Jews contrived it, to add to the ignominy of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus; however it was, the scripture was fulfilled in it (Isa 53:12), He was numbered with the transgressors.

(a) It was a reproach to him, that he was crucified with them. Though, while he lived, he was separate from sinners, yet in their deaths they were not divided, but he was made to partake with the vilest malefactors in their plagues, as if he had been a partaker with them in their sins; for he was made sin for us, and took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, and had his lot with the wicked, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints, and have our lot among the chosen.

(b) It was an additional reproach, that he was crucified in the midst, between them, as if he had been the worst of the three, the principal malefactor; for among three the middle is the place for the chief. Every circumstance was contrived to his dishonour, as if the great Saviour were of all others the greatest sinner. It was also intended to ruffle and discompose him, in his last moments, with the shrieks, and groans, and blasphemies, of these malefactors, who, it is likely, made a hideous outcry when they were nailed to the cross; but thus would Christ affect himself with the miseries of sinners, when he was suffering for their salvation. Some of Christ's apostles were afterwards crucified, as Peter, and Andrew, but none of them were crucified with him, lest it should have looked as if they had been joint undertakers with him, in satisfying for man's sin, and joint purchasers of life and glory; therefore he was crucified between two malefactors, who could not be supposed to contribute any thing to the merit of his death; for he himself bare our sins in his own body.

5. By the blasphemies and revilings with which they loaded him when he was hanging upon the cross; though we read not that they cast any reflections on the thieves that were crucified with him. One would have thought that, when they had nailed him to the cross, they had done their worst, and malice itself had been exhausted: indeed if a criminal be put into the pillory, or carted, because it is a punishment less than death, it is usually attended with such expressions of abuse; but a dying man, though an infamous man, should be treated with compassion. It is an insatiable revenge indeed which will not be satisfied with death, so great a death. But, to complete the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, and to show that, when he was dying, he was bearing iniquity, he was then loaded with reproach, and, for aught that appears, not one of his friends, who the other day cried Hosanna to him, durst be seen to show him any respect.

(a) The common people, that passed by, reviled him. His extreme misery and exemplary patience under it, did not mollify them, or make them to relent; but they who by their outcries brought him to this, now think to justify themselves in it by their reproaches, as if they did well to condemn him. They reviled him: eblasphemoun--they blasphemed him; and blasphemy it was, in the strictest sense, speaking evil of him who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Observe here,

[1.] The persons that reviled him; they that passed by, the travellers that went along the road, and it was a great road, leading from Jerusalem to Gibeon; they were possessed with prejudices against him by the reports and clamours of the High Priest's creatures. It is a hard thing, and requires more application and resolution than is ordinarily met with, to keep up a good opinion of persons and things that are every where run down, and spoken against. Every one is apt to say as the most say, and to throw a stone at that which is put into an ill name. Turba Remi sequitur fortunam semper et odit damnatos--The Roman rabble fluctuate with a man's fluctuating fortunes, and fail not to depress those that are sinking. Juvenal.

[2.] The gesture they used, in contempt of him--wagging their heads; which signifies their triumph in his fall, and their insulting over him, Isa 37:22,Jer 18:16,La 2:15. The language of it was, Aha, so would we have it, Ps 35:25. Thus they insulted over him that was the Saviour of their country, as the Philistines did over Samson the destroyer of their country. This very gesture was prophesied of (Ps 22:7); They shake the head at me. And Ps 109:25.

[3.] The taunts and jeers they uttered. These are here recorded.

First, They upbraided him with his destroying of the temple. Though the judges themselves were sensible that what he had said of that was misrepresented (as appears Mk 14:59), yet they industriously spread it among the people, to bring an odium upon him, that he had a design to destroy the temple; than which nothing would more incense the people against him. And this was not the only time that the enemies of Christ had laboured to make others believe that of religion and the people of God, which they themselves have known to be false, and the charge unjust "Thou that destroyest the temple, that vast and strong fabric, try thy strength now in plucking up that cross, and drawing those nails, and so save thyself; if thou hast the power thou hast boasted of, this is a proper time to exert it, and give proof of it; for it is supposed that every man will do his utmost to save himself." This made the cross of Christ such a stumbling-block to the Jews, that they looked upon it to be inconsistent with the power of the Messiah; he was crucified in weakness (2Co 13:4), so it seemed to them; but indeed Christ crucified is the Power of God.

Secondly, They upbraided him with his saying that he was the Son of God; If thou be so, say they, come down from the cross. Now they take the devil's words out of his mouth, with which he tempted him in the wilderness (Mt 4:3,6), and renew the same assault; If thou be the Son of God. They think that now, or never, he must prove himself to be the Son of God; forgetting that he had proved it by the miracles he wrought, particularly his raising of the dead; and unwilling to wait for the complete proof of it by his own resurrection, to which he had so often referred himself and them; which, if they had observed it,

would have anticipated the offence of the cross. This comes of judging things by the present aspect of them, without a due remembrance of what is past, and a patient expectation of what may further be produced.

(b) The chief priests and scribes, the church rulers, and the elders, the state rulers, they mocked him, Mt 27:41. They did not think it enough to invite the rabble to do it, but gave Christ the dishonour, and themselves the diversion, or reproaching him in their own proper persons. They should have been in the temple at their devotion, for it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when there was to be a holy convocation (Le 23:7); but they were here at the place of execution, spitting their venom at the Lord Jesus. How much below the grandeur and gravity of their character was this! Could any thing tend more to make them contemptible and base before the people? One would have thought, that, though they neither feared God nor regarded man, yet common prudence should have taught them who had so great a hand in Christ's death, to keep as much as might be behind the curtain, and to play least in sight; but nothing is so mean as that malice may stick at it. Did they disparage themselves thus, to do despite to Christ, and shall we be afraid of disparaging ourselves, by joining with the multitude to do him honour, and not rather say, If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile?

Two things the priests and elders upbraided him with.

[1.] That he could not save himself, Mt 27:42. He had been before abused in his prophetical and kingly office, and now in his priestly office as a Saviour. First, They take it for granted that he could not save himself, and therefore had not the power he pretended to, when really he would not save himself, because he would die to save us. They should have argued, "He saved others, therefore he could save himself, and if he do not, it is for some good reason." But, Secondly, They would insinuate, that, because he did not now save himself, therefore all his pretence to save others was but sham and delusion, and was never really done; though the truth of his miracles was demonstrated beyond contradiction. Thirdly, They upbraid him with

being the King of Israel. They dreamed of the external pomp and power of the Messiah, and therefore thought the cross altogether disagreeable to the King of Israel, and inconsistent with that character. Many people would like the King of Israel well enough, if he would but come down from the cross, if they could have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must enter into it. But the matter is settled; if no cross, then no Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him, must be willing to suffer with him, for Christ and his cross are nailed together in this world. Fourthly, They challenged him to come down from the cross. And what had become of us then, and the work of our redemption and salvation? If he had been provoked by these scoffs to come down from the cross, and so to have left his undertaking unfinished, we had been for ever undone. But his unchangeable love and resolution set him above, and fortified him against, this temptation, so that he did not fail, nor was discouraged. Fifthly, They promised that, if he would come down from the cross, they would believe him. Let him give them that proof of his being the Messiah, and they will own him to be so. When they had formerly demanded a sign, he told them that the sign he would give them, should be not his coming down from the cross, but, which was a greater instance of his power, his coming up from the grave, which they had not patience to wait two or three days for. If he had come down from the cross, they might with as much reason have said that the soldiers had juggled in nailing him to it, as they said, when he was raised from the dead, that the disciples came by night, and stole him away. But to promise ourselves that we would believe, if we had such and such means and motives of faith as we ourselves would prescribe, when we do not improve what God has appointed, is not only a gross instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, but the sorry refuge, or subterfuge rather, of an obstinate destroying infidelity.

[2.] That God, his Father, would not save him (Mt 27:43); He trusted in God, that is, he pretended to do so; for he said, I am the Son of God. Those who call God Father, and themselves his children, thereby profess to put a confidence in him, Ps 9:10. Now they suggest, that he did but deceive himself and others, when he made himself so much the darling of heaven; for, if he had been the Son of God (as

Job's friends argued concerning him), he would not have been abandoned to all this misery, much less abandoned in it. This was a sword in his bones, as David complains of the like (Ps 42:10); and it was a two-edged sword, for it was intended, First, To vilify him, and to make the standers-by think him a deceiver and an impostor; as if his saying, that he was the Son of God, were now effectually disproved. Secondly, To terrify him, and drive him to distrust and despair of his Father's power and love; which some think, was the thing he feared, religiously feared, prayed against, and was delivered from, Heb 5:7. David complained more of the endeavours of his persecutors to shake his faith, and drive him from his hope in God, than of their attempts to shake his throne, and drive him from his kingdom; their saying, There is no help for him in God (Ps 3:2), and, God has forsaken him, Ps 71:11. In this, as in other things, he was a type of Christ. Nay, these very words David, in that famous prophecy of Christ, mentions, as spoken by his enemies (Ps 22:8); He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him. Surely these priests and scribes had forgotten their psalter, or they would not have used the same words, so exactly to answer the type and prophecy: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

(c) To complete the reproach, the thieves also that were crucified with him were not only not reviled as he was, as if they had been saints compared with him, but, though fellow-sufferers with him, joined in with his prosecutors, and cast the same in his teeth; that is, one of them did, who said, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us, Lu 23:39. One would think that of all people this thief had least cause, and should have had least mind, to banter Christ. Partners in suffering, though for different causes, usually commiserate one another; and few, whatever they have done before, will breathe their last in revilings. But, it seems, the greatest mortifications of the body, and the most humbling rebukes of Providence, will not of themselves mortify the corruptions of the soul, nor suppress the wickedness of the wicked, without the grace of God.

Well, thus our Lord Jesus having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God for the wrong done him in his honour by sin, he did it by

suffering in his honour; not only by divesting himself of that which was due to him as the Son of God, but by submitting to the utmost indignity that could be done to the worst of men; because he was made sin for us, he was thus made a curse for us, to make reproach easy to us, if at any time we suffer it, and have all manner of evil said against us falsely, for righteousness' sake.

40 and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

All mocked with the same theme - he claimed to save others but he could not save himself. This was true, though not in the sense the mockers intended; for only by willingly sacrificing himself could he save guilty sinners (Mat_27:35-44; Luk_23:32-39; Joh_19:18-24). One of the criminals, realizing this, repented and experienced the saving power of Jesus that very day (Luk_23:40-43).

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

We have here the frowns of heaven, which our Lord Jesus was under, in the midst of all these injuries and indignities from men. Concerning which, observe,

1. How this was signified--by an extraordinary and miraculous eclipse of the sun, which continued for three hours, Mt 27:45. There was darkness epi pasan ten gen--over all the earth; so most interpreters understand it, though our translation confines it to that land. Some of the ancients appealed to the annals of the nation concerning this extraordinary eclipse at the death of Christ, as a thing well known, and which gave notice to those parts of the world of something great then in doing; as the sun's going back in Hezekiah's time did. It is reported that Dionysius, at Heliopolis in Egypt, took notice of this darkness, and said, Aut Deus naturæ patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur--Either the God of nature is suffering, or the

machine of the world is tumbling into ruin. An extraordinary light gave intelligence of the birth of Christ (Mt 2:2), and therefore it was proper that an extraordinary darkness should notify his death, for he is the Light of the world. The indignities done to our Lord Jesus, made the heavens astonished, and horribly afraid, and even put them into disorder and confusion; such wickedness as this the sun never saw before, and therefore withdrew, and would not see this. This surprising, amazing, darkness was designed to stop the mouths of those blasphemers, who were reviling Christ as he hung on the cross; and it should seem that, for the present, it struck such a terror upon them, that though their hearts were not changed, yet they were silent, and stood doubting what this should mean, till after three hours the darkness scattered, and then (as appears by Mt 27:47), like Pharaoh when the plague was over, they hardened their hearts. But that which was principally intended in this darkness, was,

(a) Christ's present conflict with the powers of darkness. Now the prince of this world, and his forces, the rulers of the darkness of this world, were to be cast out, to be spoiled and vanquished; and to make his victory the more illustrious, he fights them on their own ground; gives them all the advantage they could have against him by this darkness, lets them take the wind and sun, and yet baffles them, and so becomes more than a conqueror.

(b) His present want of heavenly comforts. This darkness signified that dark cloud which the human soul of our Lord Jesus was now under. God makes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust; but even the light of the sun was withheld from our Saviour, when he was made sin for us. A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but because now his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and the cup of divine displeasure was filled to him without mixture, even the light of the sun was suspended. When earth denied him a drop of cold water, heaven denied him a beam of light; having to deliver us from utter darkness, he did himself, in the depth of his sufferings, walk in darkness, and had no light, Isa 50:10. During the three hours that this darkness continued, we do not find that he said one word, but passed this time in a silent retirement into his own soul, which was now in

agony, wrestling with the powers of darkness, and taking in the impressions of his Father's displeasure, not against himself, but the sin of man, which he was now making his soul an offering for. Never were there three such hours since the day that God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the crisis of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation.

2. How he complained of it (Mt 27:46); About the ninth hour, when it began to clear up, after a long and silent conflict. Jesus cried, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? The words are related in the Syriac tongue, in which they were spoken, because worthy of double remark, and for the sake of the perverse construction which his enemies put upon them, in putting Elias for Eli. Now observe here,

(a) Whence he borrowed this complaint--from Ps 22:1. It is not probable (as some have thought) that he repeated the whole psalm; yet hereby he intimated that the whole was to be applied to him, and that David, in spirit, there spoke of his humiliation and exaltation. This, and that other word, Into thy hands I commit my spirit, he fetched from David's psalms (though he could have expressed himself in his own words), to teach us of what use the word of God is to us, to direct us in prayer, and to recommend to us the use of scripture-expressions in prayer, which will help our infirmities.

(b) How he uttered it--with a loud voice; which bespeaks the extremity of his pain and anguish, the strength of nature remaining in him, and the great earnestness of his spirit in this expostulation. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Joe 3:15,16); The sun and the moon shall be darkened. The Lord shall also roar out of Zion, and utter his voice form Jerusalem. David often speaks of his crying aloud in prayer, Ps 55:17.

(c) What the complaint was--My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? A strange complaint to come from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, who, we are sure, was God's elect, in whom his soul delighted (Isa 42:1), and one in whom he was always well pleased. The Father now loved him, nay, he knew that therefore he loved him,

because he laid down his life for the sheep; what, and yet forsaken of him, and in the midst of his sufferings too! Surely never sorrow was like unto that sorrow which extorted such a complaint as this from one who, being perfectly free from sin, could never be a terror to himself; but the heart knows its own bitterness. No wonder that such a complaint as this made the earth to quake, and rent the rocks; for it is enough to make both the ears of every one that hears it to tingle, and ought to be spoken of with great reverence.

Note,

[1.] That our Lord Jesus was, in his sufferings, for a time, forsaken by his Father. So he saith himself, who we are sure was under no mistake concerning his own case. Not that the union between the divine and human nature was in the least weakened or shocked; no, he was now by the eternal Spirit offering himself: nor as if there were any abatement of his Father's love to him, or his to his Father; we are sure that there was upon his mind no horror of God, or despair of his favour, nor any thing of the torments of hell; but his Father forsook him; that is, First, He delivered him up into the hands of his enemies, and did not appear to deliver him out of their hands. He let loose the powers of darkness against him, and suffered them to do their worst, worse than against Job. Now was that scripture fulfilled (Job 16:11), God hath turned me over into the hands of the wicked; and no angel is sent from heaven to deliver him, no friend on earth raised up to appear for him. Secondly, He withdrew from him the present comfortable sense of his complacency in him. When his soul was first troubled, he had a voice from heaven to comfort him (Joh 12:27); when he was in his agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him; but now he had neither the one nor the other. God hid his face from him, and for awhile withdrew his rod and staff in the darksome valley. God forsook him, not as he forsook Saul, leaving him to an endless despair, but as sometimes he forsook David, leaving him to a present despondency. Thirdly, He let out upon his soul an afflicting sense of his wrath against man for sin. Christ was made Sin for us, a Curse for us; and therefore, though God loved him as a Son, he frowned upon him as a Surety. These

impressions he was pleased to admit, and to waive that resistance of them which he could have made; because he would accommodate himself to this part of his undertaking, as he had done to all the rest, when it was in his power to have avoided it.

[2.] That Christ's being forsaken of his Father was the most grievous of his sufferings, and that which he complained most of. Here he laid the most doleful accents; he did not say, "Why am I scourged? And why spit upon? And why nailed to the cross?" Nor did he say to his disciples, when they turned their back upon him, Why have ye forsaken me? But when his Father stood at a distance, he cried out thus; for this as it that put wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. This brought the waters into the soul, Ps 69:1-3.

[3.] That our Lord Jesus, even when he was thus forsaken of his Father, kept hold of him as his God, notwithstanding; My God, my God; though forsaking me, yet mine. Christ was God's servant in carrying on the work of redemption, to him he was to make satisfaction, and by him to be carried through and crowned, and upon that account he calls him his God; for he was now doing his will. See Isa 49:5-9. This supported him, and bore him up, that even in the depth of his sufferings God was his God, and this he resolves to keep fast hold of.

(d) See how his enemies impiously bantered and ridiculed this complaint (Mt 27:47); They said, This man calleth for Elias. Some think that this was the ignorant mistake of the Roman soldiers, who had heard talk of Elias, and of the Jews' expectation of the coming of Elias, but knew not the signification of Eli, Eli, and so made this blundering comment upon these words of Christ, perhaps not hearing the latter part of what he said, for the noise of the people. Note, Many of the reproaches cast upon the word of God and the people of God, take rise from gross mistakes. Divine truths are often corrupted by ignorance of the language and style of the scripture. Those that hear by the halves, pervert what they hear. But others think that it was the wilful mistake of some of the Jews, who knew very well what he said, but were disposed to abuse him, and make themselves and their

companions merry, and to misrepresent him as one who, being forsaken of God, was driven to trust in creatures; perhaps hinting also, that he who had pretended to be himself the Messiah, would now be glad to be beholden to Elias, who was expected to be only the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah. Note, It is no new thing for the most pious devotions of the best men to be ridiculed and abused by profane scoffers; nor are we to think it strange if what is well said in praying and preaching be misconstrued, and turned to our reproach; Christ's words were so, though he spoke as never man spoke.

Nevertheless, at the very time he suffered such desolation, Jesus was in harmony with his Father's will. He wanted his final words to his Father to be loud enough for all to hear, and therefore he asked for something to moisten his dry mouth. The words he spoke made known to all that he was placing his spirit in his Father's hands. His final cry of triumph, 'It is finished', confirmed that even in his death he was still in control. No one took his life from him; he gave it up in a voluntary, unique act. He had completed the work that his Father sent him to do (Mat_27:50; Luk_23:46; Joh_19:28-30).

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Jesus uttered a complaint from Psa_22:1. Hereby he teaches of what use the word of God is to direct us in prayer, and recommends the use of Scripture expressions in prayer. The believer may have tasted some drops of bitterness, but he can only form a very feeble idea of the greatness of Christ's sufferings. Yet, hence he learns something of the Saviour's love to sinners; hence he gets deeper conviction of the vileness and evil of sin, and of what he owes to Christ, who delivers him from the wrath to come.

Let us, with an eye of faith, behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But his friends could give no more than a look; they beheld him, but could not help him. Never were the horrid nature and effects of sin so tremendously displayed, as on that day when the beloved Son of the Father hung

upon the cross, suffering for sin, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Let us yield ourselves willingly to his service.

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elijah.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

1. Some gave him vinegar to drink (Mt 27:48); instead of some cordial-water to revive and refresh him under this heavy burthen, they tantalized him with that which did not only add to the reproach they were loading him with, but did too sensibly represent that cup of trembling which his Father had put into his hand. One of them ran to fetch it, seeming to be officious to him, but really glad of an opportunity to abuse and affront him, and afraid lest any one should take it out of his hands.

2. Others, which the same purpose of disturbing and abusing him, refer him to Elias (Mt 27:49); "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Come, let him alone, his case is desperate, neither heaven nor earth can help him; let us do nothing either to hasten his death, or to retard it; he has appealed to Elias, and to Elias let him go."

49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

We have here, at length, an account of the death of Christ, and several remarkable passages that attended it.

The manner how he breathed his last (Mt 27:50); between the third and the sixth hour, that is, between nine and twelve o'clock, as we reckon, he was nailed to the cross, and soon after the ninth hour, that is, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, he died. That was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and the time when the paschal lamb was killed; and Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us and offered himself in the evening of the world a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour. It was at that time of the day, that the angel Gabriel delivered to Daniel that glorious prediction of the Messiah, Da 9:21,24, &c. And some think that from that very time when the angel spoke it, to this time when Christ died, was just

seventy weeks, that is, four hundred and ninety years to a day, to an hour; as the departure of Israel out of Egypt was at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day, Ex 12:41.

Two things are here noted concerning the manner of Christ's dying.

1. That he cried with a loud voice, as before, Mt 27:46. Now,

(a) This was a sign, that, after all his pains and fatigues, his life was whole in him, and nature strong. The voice of dying men is one of the first things that fails; with a panting breath and a faltering tongue, a few broken words are hardly spoken, and more hardly heard. But Christ, just before he expired, spoke like a man in his full strength, to show that his life was not forced from him, but was freely delivered by him into his Father's hands, as his own act and deed. He that had strength to cry thus when he died, could have got loose from the arrest he was under, and have bid defiance to the powers of death; but to show that by the eternal Spirit he offered himself, being the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, he cried with a loud voice.

(b) It was significant. This loud voice shows that he attacked our spiritual enemies with an undaunted courage, and such a bravery of resolution as bespeaks him hearty in the cause and daring in the encounter. He was now spoiling principalities and powers, and in this loud voice he did, as it were, shout for mastery, as one mighty to save, Isa 63:1. Compare with this, Isa 62:13,14. He now bowed himself with all his might, as Samson did, when he said, Let me die with the Philistines, Jdg 16:30. Animamque in vulnere ponit--And lays down his life. His crying with a loud voice when he died, signified that his death should be published and proclaimed to all the world; all mankind being concerned in it, and obliged to take notice of it. Christ's loud cry was like a trumpet blown over the sacrifices.

2. That then he yielded up the ghost. This is the usual periphrasis of dying; to show that the Son of God upon the cross did truly and properly die by the violence of the pain he was put to. His soul was separated from his body, and so his body was left really and truly

dead. It was certain that he did die, for it was requisite that he should die; thus it was written, both in the close rolls of the divine counsels, and in the letters patent of the divine predictions, and therefore thus it behoved him to suffer. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant (Thou shalt surely die), the Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement by means of death, otherwise no remission, Heb 9:15. He had undertaken to make his soul an offering for sin; and he did it, when he yielded up the ghost, and voluntarily resigned it.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

The miracles that attended his death. So many miracles being wrought by him in his life, we might well expect some to be wrought concerning him at his death, for his name was called Wonderful. Had he been fetched away as Elijah in a fiery chariot, that had itself been miracle enough; but, being sent for away by an ignominious cross, it was requisite that his humiliation should be attended with some signal emanations of the divine glory.

1. Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain. This relation is ushered in with Behold; "Turn aside, and see this great sight, and be astonished at it." Just as our Lord Jesus expired, at the time of the offering of the evening-sacrifice, and upon a solemn day, when the priests were officiating in the temple, and might themselves be eyewitnesses of it, the veil of the temple was rent by an invisible power; that veil which parted between the holy place and the most holy. They had condemned him for saying, I will destroy this temple, understanding it literally; now by this specimen of his power he let them know that, if he had pleased, he could have made his words good. In this, as in others of Christ's miracles, there was a mystery.

(a) It was in correspondence with the temple of Christ's body, which was now in the dissolving. This was the true temple, in which dwelt the fulness of the Godhead; when Christ cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost, and so dissolved that temple, the literal temple did, as it were, echo to that cry, and answer the stroke, by rending its veil. Note, Death is the rending of the veil of flesh which

interposes between us and the holy of holies; the death of Christ was so, the death of true Christians is so.

(b) It signified the revealing and unfolding of the mysteries of the Old Testament. The veil of the temple was for concealment, as was that on the face of Moses, therefore it was called the veil of the covering; for it was highly penal for any person to see the furniture of the most holy place, except the High-Priest, and he but once a year, with great ceremony and through a cloud of smoke; all which signified the darkness of that dispensation; 2Co 3:13. But now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open, the mysteries were unveiled, so that now he that runs may read the meaning of them. Now we see that the mercy-seat signified Christ the great Propitiation; the pot of manna signified Christ the Break of life. Thus we all with open face behold, as in a glass (which helps the sight, as the veil hindered it), the glory of the Lord. Our eyes see the salvation.

(c) It signified the uniting of Jew and Gentile, by the removing of the partition wall between them, which was the ceremonial law, by which the Jews were distinguished from all other people (as a garden enclosed), were brought near to God, while others were made to keep their distance. Christ, in his death, repealed the ceremonial law, cancelled that hand-writing of ordinances, took it out of the way, nailed it to his cross, and so broke down the middle wall of partition; and by abolishing those institutions abolished the enmity, and made in himself of twain one new man (as two rooms are made one, and that large and lightsome, by taking down the partition), so making peace, Eph 2:14-16. Christ died, to rend all dividing veils, and to make all his one, Joh 17:21.

(d) It signified the consecrating and laying open of a new and living way to God. The veil kept people off from drawing near to the most holy place, where the Shechinah was. But the rending of it signified that Christ by his death opened a way to God,

[1.] For himself. This was the great day of atonement, when our Lord Jesus, as the great High-Priest, not by the blood of goats and calves,

but by his own blood, entered once for all into the holy place; in token of which the veil was rent, Heb 9:7, &c. Having offered his sacrifice in the outer court, the blood of it was now to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat within the veil; wherefore lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; for the King of glory, the Priest of glory, shall come in. Now was he caused to draw near, and made to approach, Jer 30:21. Though he did not personally ascend into the holy place not made with hands till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission.

[2.] For us in him: so the apostle applies it, Heb 10:19,20. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by that new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil. He died, to bring us to God, and, in order thereunto, to rend that veil of guilt and wrath which interposed between us and him, to take away the cherubim and flaming sword, and to open the way to the tree of life. We have free access through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, now, and to the throne of glory hereafter, Heb 4:16,6:20. The rending of the veil signified (as that ancient hymn excellently expresses it), that, when Christ had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to heaven, for the veil is rent; a door is opened in heaven, Re 4:1.

2 The earth did quake; not only mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, but the whole land, and the adjacent countries. This earthquake signified two things.

(a) The horrible wickedness of Christ's crucifiers. The earth, by trembling under such a load, bore its testimony to the innocency of him that was persecuted, and against the impiety of those that persecuted him. Never did the whole creation, before, groan under such a burthen as the Son of God crucified, and the guilty wretches that crucified him. The earth quaked, as if it feared to open its mouth to receive the blood of Christ, so much more precious than that of Abel, which it had received, and was cursed for it (Ge 4:11,12); and

as if it fain would open its mouth, to swallow up those rebels that put him to death, as it had swallowed up Dathan and Abiram for a much less crime. When the prophet would express God's great displeasure against the wickedness of the wicked, he asks, Shall not the land tremble for this? Am 8:8.

(b) The glorious achievements of Christ's cross. This earthquake signified the mighty shock, nay, the fatal blow, now given to the devil's kingdom. So vigorous was the assault Christ now made upon the infernal powers, that (as of old, when he went out of Seir, when he marched through the field of Edom) the earth trembled, Jdg 5:4,Ps 68:7,8. God shakes all nations, when the Desire of all nations is to come; and there is a yet once more, which perhaps refers to this shaking, Hag 2:6,21.

3. The rocks rent; the hardest and firmest part of the earth was made to feel this mighty shock. Christ had said, that if the children should cease to cry Hosanna, the stones would immediately cry out; and now, in effect, they did so, proclaiming the glory of the suffering Jesus, and themselves more sensible of the wrong done him than the hard-hearted Jews were, who yet will shortly be glad to find a hole in the rocks, and a cleft in the ragged rocks, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. See Re 6:16,Isa 2:21. But when God's fury is poured out like fire, the rocks are thrown down by him, Na 1:6. Jesus Christ is the Rock; and the rending of these rocks, signified the rending of that rock,

(a) That in the clefts of it was may be hid, as Moses in the cleft of the rock at Horeb, that there we may behold the glory of the Lord, as he did, Ex 33:22. Christ's dove is said to be hid in the clefts of the rock (So 2:14), that is, as some make the allusion, sheltered in the wounds of our Lord Jesus, the Rock rent.

(b) That from the cleft of it rivers of living water may flow, and follow us in this wilderness, as from the rock which Moses smote (Ex 17:6), and which God clave (Ps 78:15); and that rock was Christ, 1Co 10:4. When we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death, our

hard and rocky hearts must be rent--the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock, that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified.

4. The graves were opened. This matter is not related so fully as our curiosity would wish; for the scripture was not intended to gratify that; it should seem, that same earthquake that rent the rocks, opened the graves, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose. Death to the saints is but the sleep of the body, and the grave the bed it sleeps in; they awoke by the power of the Lord Jesus, and (Mt 27:53) came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into Jerusalem, the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now here,

(a) We may raise many enquiries concerning it, which we cannot resolve: as,

[1.] Who these saints were, that did arise. Some think, the ancient patriarchs, that were in such care to be buried in the land of Canaan, perhaps in the believing foresight of the advantage of this early resurrection. Christ had lately proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the instance of the patriarchs (Mt 22:32), and here was a speedy confirmation of his argument. Others think, these that arose were modern saints, such as had been Christ in the flesh, but died before him; as his father Joseph, Zecharias, Simeon, John Baptist, and others, that had been known to the disciples, while they lived, and therefore were the fitter to be witnesses to them in an apparition after. What if we should suppose that they were the martyrs, who in the Old-Testament times had sealed the truths of God with their blood, that were thus dignified and distinguished? Christ particularly points at them as his forerunners, Mt 23:35. And we find (Re 20:4,5), that those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, arose before the rest of the dead. Sufferers with Christ shall first reign with him.

[2.] It is uncertain whether (as some think) they arose to life, now at the death of Christ, and disposed of themselves elsewhere, but did not go into the city till after his resurrection; or whether (as others

think), though their sepulchres (which the Pharisees had built and varnished, Mt 23:29), and so made remarkable, were shattered now by the earthquake (so little did God regard that hypocritical respect), yet they did not revive and rise till after the resurrection; only, for brevity-sake, it is mentioned here, upon the mention of the opening of the graves, which seems more probable.

[3.] Some think that they arose only to bear witness of Christ's resurrection to those to whom they appeared, and, having finished their testimony, retired to their graves again. But it is more agreeable, both to Christ's honour and theirs, to suppose, though we cannot prove, that they arose as Christ did, to die no more, and therefore ascended with him to glory. Surely on them who did partake of his first resurrection, a second death had no power.

[4.] To whom they appeared (not to all the people it is certain, but to many), whether enemies or friends, in what manner they appeared, how often, what they said and did, and how they disappeared, are secret things which belong not to us; we must not covet to be wise above what is written. The relating of this matter so briefly, is a plain intimation to us, that we must not look that way for a confirmation of our faith; we have a more sure word of prophecy. See Lu 16:31.

(b) Yet we may learn many good lessons from it.

[1.] That even those who lived and died before the death and resurrection of Christ, had saving benefit thereby, as well as those who have lived since; for he was the same yesterday that he is to-day, and will be for ever, Heb 13:8.

[2.] That Jesus Christ, by dying, conquered, disarmed, and disabled, death. These saints that arose, were the present trophies of the victory of Christ's cross over the powers of death, which he thus made a show of openly. Having by death destroyed him that had the power of death, he thus led captivity captive, and gloried in these re-taken prizes, in them fulfilling that scripture, I will ransom them from the power of the grave.

[3.] That, in virtue of Christ's resurrection, the bodies of all the saints shall, in the fulness of time, rise again. This was an earnest of the general resurrection at the last day, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And perhaps Jerusalem is therefore called here the holy city, because the saints, at the general resurrection, shall enter into the new Jerusalem; which will be indeed what the other was in name and type only, the holy city, Re 21:2.

[4.] That all the saints do, by the influence of Christ's death, and in conformity to it, rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. They are raised up with him to a divine and spiritual life; they go into the holy city, become citizens of it, have their conversation in it, and appear to many, as persons not of this world.

The rending of the veil signified that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God. We have an open way through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat now, and to the throne of glory hereafter. When we duly consider Christ's death, our hard and rocky hearts should be rent; the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is plainly set forth crucified.

52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

These sleeping saints (see on 1Th 4:14) were Old Testament believers, who—according to the usual punctuation in our version—were quickened into resurrection life at the moment of their Lord's death, but lay in their graves till His resurrection, when they came forth. But it is far more natural, as we think, and consonant with other Scriptures, to understand that only the graves were opened, probably by the earthquake, at our Lord's death, and this only in preparation for the subsequent exit of those who slept in them, when the Spirit of life should enter into them from their risen Lord, and along with Him they should come forth, trophies of His victory over the grave. Thus, in the opening of the graves at the moment of the Redeemer's expiring, there was a glorious symbolical proclamation that the death which had just taken place had "swallowed up death

in victory"; and whereas the saints that slept in them were awakened only by their risen Lord, to accompany Him out of the tomb, it was fitting that "the Prince of Life . . . should be the First that should rise from the dead" (Ac 26:23,1Co 15:20,23,Col 1:18,Re 1:5).

that there might be undeniable evidence of their own resurrection first, and through it of their Lord's. Thus, while it was not deemed fitting that He Himself should appear again in Jerusalem, save to the disciples, provision was made that the fact of His resurrection should be left in no doubt. It must be observed, however, that the resurrection of these sleeping saints was not like those of the widow of Nain's son, of Jairus' daughter, of Lazarus, and of the man who "revived and stood upon his feet," on his dead body touching the bones of Elisha (2Ki 13:21) —which were mere temporary recallings of the departed spirit to the mortal body, to be followed by a final departure of it "till the trumpet shall sound." But this was a resurrection once for all, to life everlasting; and so there is no room to doubt that they went to glory with their Lord, as bright trophies of His victory over death.

53 and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

The conviction of his enemies that were employed in the execution (Mt 27:54), which some make no less than another miracle, all things considered. Observe,

1 The persons convinced; the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus; a captain and his company, that were set on the guard on this occasion.

(a) They were soldiers, whose profession is commonly hardening, and whose breasts are commonly not so susceptible as some others of the impressions either of fear or pity. But there is no spirit too big, too bold, for the power of Christ to break and humble.

(b) They ware Romans, Gentiles, who knew not the scriptures which were now fulfilled; yet they only were convinced. A sad presage of the blindness that should happen to Israel, when the gospel should be sent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes. Here were the Gentiles softened, and the Jews hardened.

(c) They were the persecutors of Christ, and those that but just before had reviled him, as appears Lu 23:36. How soon can God, by the power he has over men's consciences, alter their language, and fetch confessions of his truths, to his own glory, out of the mouths of those that have breathed nothing but threatenings, and slaughter, and blasphemies!

2 The means of their conviction; they perceived the earthquake, which frightened them, and saw the other things that were done. These were designed to assert the honour of Christ in his sufferings, and had their end on these soldiers, whatever they had on others. Note, The dreadful appearances of God in his providence sometimes work strangely for the conviction and awakening of sinners.

3. The expressions of this conviction, in two things.

(a) The terror that was struck upon them; they feared greatly; feared lest they should have been buried in the darkness, or swallowed up in the earthquake. Note, God can easily frighten the most daring of his adversaries, and make them know themselves to be but men. Guilt puts men into fear. He that, when iniquity abounds, doth not fear always, with a fear of caution, when judgments are abroad, cannot but fear greatly, with a fear of amazement; whereas there are those who will not fear, though the earth be removed, Ps 46:1,2.

(b) The testimony that was extorted from them; they said, Truly this was the Son of God; a noble confession; Peter was blessed for it, Mt 16:16,17. It was the great matter now in dispute, the point upon which he and his enemies had joined issue, mt 26:63,64. His disciples believed it, but at this time durst not confess it; our Saviour

himself was tempted to question it, when he said, Why hast thou forsaken me? The Jews, now that he was dying upon the cross, looked upon it as plainly determined against him, that he was not the Son of God, because he did not come down from the cross. And yet now this centurion and the soldiers make this voluntary confession of the Christian faith, Truly this was the Son of God. The best of his disciples could not have said more at any time, and at this time they had not faith and courage enough to say thus much. Note, God can maintain and assert the honour of a truth then when it seems to be crushed, and run down; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

There cannot be a reasonable doubt that this expression was used in the Jewish sense, and that it points to the claim which Jesus made to be the Son of God, and on which His condemnation expressly turned. The meaning, then, clearly is that He must have been what He professed to be; in other words, that He was no impostor. There was no medium between those two. See, on the similar testimony of the penitent thief—"This man hath done nothing amiss"—Lu2 3:41.

55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

56 among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

The attendance of his friends, that were witnesses of his death, Mt 27:55,56. Observe,

1. Who they were; many women who followed him from Galilee. Not his apostles (only elsewhere we find John by the cross, Joh 19:26), their hearts failed them, they durst not appear, for fear of coming under the same condemnation. But here were a company of women, some would have called them silly women, that boldly stuck to Christ, when the rest of his disciples had basely deserted him. Note, Even those of the weaker sex are often, by the grace of God, made strong in faith, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in weakness. There have been women martyrs, famous for courage and resolution in Christ's cause. Now of these women it is said,

(a) That they had followed Jesus from Galilee, out of the great love they had to him, and a desire to hear him preach; otherwise, the males only were obliged to come up, to worship at the feast. Now having followed him such a long journey as from Galilee to Jerusalem, eighty or a hundred miles, they resolved not to forsake him now. Note, Our former services and sufferings for Christ should be an argument with us, faithfully to persevere to the end in our attendance on him. Have we followed him so far and so long, done so much, and laid out so much for him, and shall we forsake him now? Ga 3:3,4.

(b) That they ministered to him of their substance, for his necessary subsistence. How gladly would they have ministered to him now, if they might have been admitted! But, being forbidden that, they resolved to follow him. Note, When we are restrained from doing what we would, we must do what we can, in the service of Christ. Now that he is in heaven, though he is out of the reach of our ministration, he is not out of the reach of our believing views.

(c) Some of them are particularly named; for God will honour those that honour Christ. They were such as we have several times met with before, and it was their praise, that we meet with them to the last.

2. What they did; they were beholding afar off.

(a) They stood afar off. Whether their own fear or their enemies' fury kept them at a distance, is not certain; however, it was an aggravation of the sufferings of Christ, that his lovers and friends stood aloof from his sore, Ps 38:11,Job 19:13. Perhaps they might have come nearer, if they would; but good people, when they are in sufferings, must not think it strange, if some of their best friends be shy of them. When Paul's danger was imminent, no man stood by him, 2Ti 4:16. If we be thus looked strangely upon, remember, our Master was so before us.

(b) They were there beholding, in which they showed a concern and kindness for Christ; when they were debarred from doing any other office of love to him, they looked a look of love toward him.

[1.] It was a sorrowful look; they looked unto him who was now pierced, and mourned; and no doubt, were in bitterness for him. We may well imagine how it cut them to the heart, to see him in this torment; and what floods of tears it fetched from their eyes. Let us with an eye of faith behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But,

[2.] It was no more than a look; they beheld him, but they could not help him. Note, When Christ was in his sufferings, the best of his friends were but spectators and lookers on, even the angelic guards stood trembling by, saith Mr. Norris, for he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him; so his own arm wrought salvation.

The Burial of Jesus

57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:
58 he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

We have here an account of Christ's burial, and the manner and circumstances of it, concerning which observe,

1 The kindness and good will of his friends that laid him in the grave.

2 The malice and ill will of his enemies that were very solicitous to keep him there.

His friends gave him a decent burial. Observe,

1. In general, that Jesus Christ was buried; when his precious soul was gone to paradise, his blessed body was deposited in the chambers of the grave, that he might answer the type of Jonas, and

fulfil the prophecy of Isaias; he made his grave with the wicked. Thus in all things he must be made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted, and, like us, unto dust he must return. He was buried, to make his death the more certain, and his resurrection the more illustrious. Pilate would not deliver his body to be buried, till he was well assured that he was really dead; while the witnesses lay unburied, there were some hopes concerning them, Re 11:8. But Christ, the great Witness, is as one free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave. He was buried, that he might take off the terror of the grave, and make it easy to us, might warm and perfume that cold noisome bed for us, and that we might be buried with him.

2 The particular circumstances of his burial here related.

(a) The time when he was buried; when the evening was come; the same evening that he died, before sun-set, as is usual in burying malefactors. It was not deferred till the next day, because it was the sabbath; for burying the dead is not proper work either for a day of rest or for a day of rejoicing, as the sabbath is.

(b) The person that took care of the funeral was Joseph of Arimathea. The apostles had all fled, and none of them appeared to show this respect to their Master, which the disciples of John showed to him after he was beheaded, who took up his body, and buried it, Mt 14:12. The women that followed him durst not move in it; then did God stir up this good man to do it; for what work God has to do, he will find out instruments to do it. Joseph was a fit man, for,

[1.] He had wherewithal to do it, being a rich man. Most of Christ's disciples were poor men, such were most fit to go about the country to preach the gospel; but here was one that was a rich man, ready to be employed in a piece of service which required a man of estate. Note, Worldly wealth, though it is to many an objection in religion's way, yet, in some services to be done for Christ, it is an advantage and an opportunity, and it is well for those who have it, if withal they have a heart to use it for God's glory.

[2.] He was well affected to our Lord Jesus, for he was himself his disciple, believed in him, though he did not openly profess it. Note, Christ has more secret disciples than we are aware of; seven thousand in Israel, Ro 11:4.

(c) The grant of the dead body procured from Pilate, Mt 27:58. Joseph went to Pilate, the proper person to be applied to on this occasion, who had the disposal of the body; for in things wherein the power of the magistrate is concerned, due regard must be had to that power, and nothing done to break in upon it. What we do that is good, must be done peaceably, and not tumultuously. Pilate was willing to give the body to one that would inter it decently, that he might do something towards atoning for the guilt his conscience charged him with in condemning an innocent person. In Joseph's petition, and Pilate's ready grant of it, honour was done to Christ, and a testimony borne to his integrity.

(d The dressing of the body in its grave-clothes (Mt 27:59); though he was an honourable counsellor, yet he himself took the body, as it should seem, into his own arms, from the infamous and accursed tree (Ac 13:29); for where there is true love to Christ, no service will be thought too mean to stoop to for him. Having taken it, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth; for burying in linen was then the common usage, which Joseph complied with. Note, Care is to be taken of the dead bodies of good men, for there is a glory intended for them at the resurrection, which we must hereby testify our belief of, and wind up the dead body as designed for a better place. This common act of humanity, if done after a godly sort, may be made an acceptable piece of Christianity.

(e) The depositing of it in the sepulchre, Mt 27:60. Here there was nothing of that pomp and solemnity with which the grandees of the world are brought to the grave, and laid in the tomb, Job 21:32. A private funeral did best befit him whose kingdom came not with observation.

[1.] He was laid in a borrowed tomb, in Joseph's burying place; as he had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body when he was dead, which was an instance of his poverty; yet in this there might be somewhat of a mystery. The grave is the peculiar heritage of a sinner, Job 24:19. There is nothing we can truly call our own but our sins and our graves; he returneth to his earth, Ps 146:4. When we go to the grave, we go to our own place; but our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own; dying under imputed sin, it was fit that he should be buried in a borrowed grave; the Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God over-ruled it, so as that he should make it with the rich in his death, Isa 53:9.

[2.] He was laid in a new tomb, which Joseph, it is likely, designed for himself; it would, however, be never the worse for his lying in it, who was to rise so quickly, but a great deal the better for his lying in it, who has altered the property of the grave, and made it anew indeed, by turning it into a bed of rest, nay into a bed of spices, for all the saints.

[3.] In a tomb that was hewn out of a rock; the ground about Jerusalem was generally rocky. Shebna had his sepulchre hewn out thereabouts in a rock, Isa 22:16. Providence ordered it that Christ's sepulchre should be in a solid entire rock, that no room might be left to suspect his disciples had access to it by some underground passage, or broke through the back wall of it, to steal the body; for there was no access to it but by the door, which was watched.

[4.] A great stone was rolled to the door of his sepulchre; this also was according to the custom of the Jews in burying their dead, as appears by the description of the grave of Lazarus (Joh 11:38), signifying that those who are dead, are separated and cut off from all the living; if the grave were his prison, now was the prison-door locked and bolted. The rolling of the stone to the grave's mouth, was with them as filling up the grave is with us, it completed the funeral.

Having thus in silence and sorrow deposited the previous body of our Lord Jesus in the grave, the house appointed for all living, they departed without any further ceremony. It is the most melancholy circumstance in the funerals of our Christian friends, when we have laid their bodies in the dark and silent grave, to go home, and leave them behind; but alas, it is not we that go home, and leave them behind, no, it is they that are gone to the better home, and have left us behind.

(f) The company that attended the funeral; and that was very small and mean. Here were none of the relations in mourning, to follow the corpse, no formalities to grace the solemnity, but some good women that were true mourners--Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, Mt 27:56. These, as they had attended him to the cross, so they followed him to the grave; as if they composed themselves to sorrow, they sat over against the sepulchre, not so much to fill their eyes with the sight of what was done, as to empty them in rivers of tears. Note, True love to Christ will carry us through, to the utmost, in following him. Death itself cannot quench that divine fire, So 8:6,7.

59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

In the burial of Christ was nothing of pomp or solemnity. As Christ had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head, while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body, when he was dead. Our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own. The Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God overruled it, so that he should make it with the rich in his death, Isa_53:9.

61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

The Guard at the Tomb

62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

On the Jewish sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees, when they should have been at their devotions, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre. This was permitted that there might be certain proof of our Lord's resurrection. Pilate told them that they might secure the sepulchre as carefully as they could. They sealed the stone, and set a guard, and were satisfied that all needful care was taken. But to guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples was folly, because needless; while to think to guard it against the power of God, was folly, because fruitless, and to no purpose; yet they thought they dealt wisely. But the Lord took the wise in their own craftiness. Thus shall all the rage and the plans of Christ's enemies be made to promote his glory.

63 saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

His enemies did what they could to prevent his resurrection; what they did herein was the next day that followed the day of the preparation, Mt 27:62. That was the seventh day of the week, the Jewish sabbath, yet not expressly called so, but described by this periphrasis, because it was now shortly to give way to the Christian sabbath, which began the day after. Now,

1. All that day, Christ lay dead in the grave; having for six days laboured and done all his work, on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

2. On that day, the chief priests and Pharisees, when they should have been at their devotions, asking pardon for the sins of the week past, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre, and so adding rebellion to their sin. They that had so often quarrelled with Christ for works of the greatest mercy on that day, were themselves busied in a work of the greatest malice. Observe here,

(a) Their address to Pilate; they were vexed that the body was given to one that would bury it decently; but, since it must be so, they desire a guard may be set on the sepulchre.

[1.] Their petition sets forth, that that deceiver (so they call him who is truth itself) had said, After three days I will rise again. He had said so, and his disciples remembered those very words for the confirmation of their faith, but his persecutors remember them for the provocation of their rage and malice. Thus the same word of Christ to the one was a savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death. See how they compliment Pilate with the title of Sir, while they reproach Christ with the title of Deceiver. Thus the most malicious slanderers of good men are commonly the most sordid flatterers of great men.

[2.] It further sets forth their jealousy; lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say, He is risen.

First, That which really they were afraid of, was, his resurrection; that which is most Christ's honour and his people's joy, is most the terror of his enemies. That which exasperated Joseph's brethren against him, was the presage of his rise, and of his having dominion over them (Ge 37:8); and all they aimed at, in what they did against him, was, to prevent that. Come, say they, let us slay him, and see what will become of his dreams. So the chief priests and Pharisees laboured to defeat the predictions of Christ's resurrection, saying, as David's enemies of him (Ps 41:8), Now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more; if he should rise, that would break all their measures. Note, Christ's enemies, even when they have gained their point, are still in fear of losing it again. Perhaps the priests were surprised at the respect shown to Christ's dead body by Joseph and Nicodemus, two honourable counsellors, and looked upon it as an ill presage; nor can they forget his raising Lazarus from the dead, which so confounded them.

Secondly, That which they took on them to be afraid of, was, lest his disciples should come by night, and steal him away, which was a very improbable thing; for,

1. They had not the courage to own him while he lived, when they might have done him and themselves real service; and it was not likely that his death should put courage into such cowards.

2. What could they promise themselves by stealing away his body, and making people believe he was risen; when, if he should not rise, and so prove himself a deceiver, his disciples, who had left all for him in this world, in dependence upon a recompence in the other world, would of all others suffer most by the imposture, and would have had reason to throw the first stone at his name? What good would it do them, to carry on a cheat upon themselves, to steal away his body, and say, He is risen; when, if he were not risen, their faith was vain, and they were of all men the most miserable? The chief priests apprehend that if the doctrine of Christ's resurrection be once preached and believed, the last error will be worse than the first; a proverbial expression, intimating no more than this, that we shall all be routed, all undone. They think it was their error, that they had so long connived at his preaching and miracles, which error they thought they had rectified by putting him to death; but if people should be persuaded of his resurrection, that would spoil all again, his interest would revive with him, and theirs must needs sink, who had so barbarously murdered him. Note, Those that opposed Christ and his kingdom, will see not only their attempts baffled, but themselves miserably plunged and embarrassed, their errors each worse than other, and the last worst of all, Ps 2:4,5.

[3.] In consideration hereof, they humbly move to have a guard set upon the sepulchre till the third day; Command that the sepulchre be made sure. Pilate must still be their drudge, his civil and military power must both be engaged to serve their malice; one would think that death's prisoners needed no other guard, and that the grave were security enough to itself; but what will not those fear, who are conscious to themselves both of guilt and impotency, in opposing the Lord and his anointed?

(b) Pilate's answer to this address (Mt 27:65); He have a watch, make it sure, as sure as you can. He was ready to gratify Christ's friends,

in allowing them the body, and his enemies, in setting a guard upon it, being desirous to please all sides, while perhaps he laughed in his sleeve at both for making such ado, pro and con, about the dead body of a man, looking upon the hopes of one side and the fears of the other to be alike ridiculous. Ye have a watch; he means the constant guard that was kept in the tower of Antonia, out of which the allows them to detach as many as they pleased for that purpose, but, as if ashamed to be himself seen in such a thing, he leaves the management of it wholly to them. Methinks that word, Make it as sure as you can, looks like a banter, either,

[1.] Of their fears; "Be sure to set a strong guard upon the dead man;" or rather,

[2.] Of their hopes; "Do your worst, try your wit and strength to the utmost; but if he be of God, he will rise, in spite of you and all your guards." I am apt to think, that by this time Pilate had had some talk with the centurion, his own officer, of whom he would be apt to enquire how that just man died, whom he had condemned with such reluctance; and that he gave him such an account of those things as made him conclude that truly he was the Son of God; and Pilate would give more credit to him than to a thousand of those spiteful priests that called him a Deceiver; and if so, no marvel that he tacitly derides their project, in thinking to secure the sepulchre upon him who had so lately rent the rocks, and made the earth to quake. Tertullion, speaking of Pilate, saith, Ipse jam pro suâ conscientiâ Christianus--In his conscience he was a Christian; and it is possible that he might be under such convictions at this time, upon the centurion's report, and yet never be thoroughly persuaded, any more than Agrippa or Felix was, to be a Christian.

(c) The wonderful care they took, hereupon, to secure the sepulchre (Mt 27:66); They sealed the stone; probably with the great seal of their sanhedrim, whereby they interposed their authority, for who durst break the public seal? But not trusting too much to that, withal they set a watch, to keep his disciples from coming to steal him away, and, if possible, to hinder him from coming out of the grave.

So they intended, but God brought this good out of it, that they who were set to oppose his resurrection, thereby had an opportunity to observe it, and did so, and told the chief priests what they observed, who were thereby rendered the more inexcusable. Here was all the power of earth and hell combined to keep Christ a prisoner, but all in vain, when his hour was come; death, and all those sons and heirs of death, could then no longer hold him, no longer have dominion over him. To guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples, was folly, because needless; but to think to guard it against the power of God was folly, because fruitless and to no purpose; and yet they thought they had dealt wisely.

64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Matthew-28

The Resurrection

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

The coming of the good women to the sepulchre.

Observe,

1. When they came; in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mt 28:1. This fixes the time of Christ's resurrection.

(1.) He arose the third day after his death; that was the time which he had often prefixed, and he kept within it. He was buried in the evening of the sixth day of the week, and arose in the morning of

the first day of the following week, so that he lay in the grave about thirty-six or thirty-eight hours. He lay so long, to show that he was really and truly dead; and no longer, that he might not see corruption. He arose the third day, to answer the type of the prophet Jonas (Mt 12:40), and to accomplish that prediction (Ho 6:2), The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

(2.) He arose after the Jewish sabbath, and it was the passover-sabbath; all that day he lay in the grave, to signify the abolishing of the Jewish feasts and the other parts of the ceremonial law, and that his people must be dead to such observances, and take no more notice of them than he did when he lay in the grave. Christ on the sixth day finished his work; he said, It is finished; on the seventh day he rested, and then on the first day of the next week did as it were begin a new world, and enter upon new work. Let no man therefore judge us now in respect of the new moons, or of the Jewish sabbaths, which were indeed a shadow of good things to come, but the substance if of Christ. We may further observe, that the time of the saints' lying in the grave, is a sabbath to them (such as the Jewish sabbath was, which consisted chiefly in bodily rest), for there they rest from their labours (Job 3:17); and it is owing to Christ.

(3.) He arose upon the first day of the week; on the first day of the first week God commanded the light to shine out of darkness; on this day therefore did he who was to be the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave; and the seventh-day sabbath being buried with Christ, it arose again in the first-day sabbath, called the Lord's day (Re 1:10), and no other day of the week is from henceforward mentioned in all the New Testament than this, and this often, as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honour of Christ, Joh 20:19,26,Ac 20:7,1Co 16:2. If the deliverance of Israel out of the land of the north superseded the remembrance of that out of Egypt (Jer 23:7,8), much more doth our redemption by Christ eclipse the glory of God's former works. The sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the perfecting of the work of creation, Ge 2:1. Man by his revolt

made a breach upon that perfect work, which was never perfectly repaired till Christ arose from the dead, and the heavens and the earth were again finished, and the disordered hosts of them modelled anew, and the day on which this was done was justly blessed and sanctified, and the seventh day from that. He who on that day arose from the dead, is the same by whom, and for whom, all things were at first created, and now anew created.

(4.) He arose as it began to dawn toward that day; as soon as it could be said that the third day was come, the time prefixed for his resurrection, he arose; after his withdrawings from his people, he returns with all convenient speed, and cuts the work as short in righteousness as may be. He had said to his disciples, that though within a little while they should not see him, yet again a little while, and they should see him, and accordingly he made it as little a while as possible, Isa 54:7,8. Christ arose when the day began to dawn, because then the day-spring from on high did again visit us, Lu 1:78. His passion began in the night; when he hung on the cross the sun was darkened; he was laid in the grave in the dusk of the evening; but he arose from the grave when the sun was near rising, for he is the bright and morning Star (Re 22:16), the true Light. Those who address themselves early in the morning to the religious services of the Christian sabbath, that they may take the day before them, therein follow this example of Christ, and that of David, Early will I seek thee.

2. Who they were, that came to the sepulchre; Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the same that attended the funeral, and sat over against the sepulchre, as before they sat over against the cross; still they studied to express their love to Christ; still they were inquiring after him. Then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know. No mention is made of the Virgin Mary being with them; it is probable that the beloved disciple, who had taken her to his own home, hindered her from going to the grave to weep there. Their attendance on Christ not only to the grave, but in the grave, represents his like care for those that are his, when they have made their bed in the darkness. As Christ in the grave was beloved of the

saints, so the saints in the grave are beloved of Christ; for death and the grave cannot slacken that bond of love which is between them.

3. What they came to do: the other evangelists say that they came to anoint the body; Matthew saith that they came to see the sepulchre, whether it was as they left it; hearing perhaps, but not being sure, that the chief priests had set a guard upon it. They went, to show their good-will in another visit to the dear remains of their beloved Master, and perhaps not without some thoughts of his resurrection, for they could not have quite forgotten all he had said of it.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

The appearance of an angel of the Lord to them, Mt 28:2-4. We have here an account of the manner of the resurrection of Christ, as far as it was fit that we should know.

1. There was a great earthquake. When he died, the earth that received him, shook for fear; now that he arose, the earth that resigned him, leaped for joy in his exaltation. This earthquake did as it were loose the bond of death, and shake off the fetters of the grave, and introduce the Desire of all nations, Hag 2:6,7. It was the signal of Christ's victory; notice was hereby given of it, that, when the heavens rejoiced, the earth also might be glad. It was a specimen of the shake that will be given to the earth at the general resurrection, when mountains and islands shall be removed, that the earth may no longer cover her slain. There was a noise and a shaking in the valley, when the bones were to come together, bone to his bone, Eze 37:7. The kingdom of Christ, which was now to be set up, made the earth to quake, and terribly shook it. Those who are sanctified, and thereby raised to a spiritual life, while it is in the doing find an earthquake in their own bosoms, as Paul, who trembled and was astonished.

2 The angel of the Lord descended from heaven. The angels frequently attended our Lord Jesus, at his birth, in his temptation, in his agony; but upon the cross we find no angel attending him:

when his Father forsook him, the angels withdrew from him; but now that he is resuming the glory he had before the foundation of the world, now, behold, the angels of God worship him.

3. He came, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. Our Lord Jesus could have rolled back the stone himself by his own power, but he chose to have it done by an angel, to signify that having undertaken to make satisfaction for our sin, imputed to him, and being under arrest pursuant to that imputation, he did not break prison, but had a fair and legal discharge, obtained from heaven; he did not break prison, but an officer was sent on purpose to roll away the stone, and so to open the prison door, which would never have been done, if he had not made a full satisfaction. But being delivered for our offences, to complete the deliverance, he was raised again for our justification; he died to pay our debt, and rose again to take out our acquittance. The stone of our sins was rolled to the door of the grave of our Lord Jesus (and we find the rolling of a great stone to signify the contracting of guilt, 1Sa 14:33); but to demonstrate that divine justice was satisfied, an angel was commissioned to roll back the stone; not that the angel raised him from the dead, any more than those that took away the stone from Lazarus's grave raised him, but thus he intimated the consent of Heaven to his release, and the joy of Heaven in it. The enemies of Christ had sealed the stone, resolving, like Babylon, not to open the house of his prisoners; shall the prey be taken from the mighty? For this was their hour; but all the powers of death and darkness are under the control of the God of light and life. An angel from heaven has power to break the seal, though it were the great seal of Israel, and is able to roll away the stone, though ever so great. Thus the captives of the mighty are taken away. The angel's sitting upon the stone, when he had rolled it away, is very observable, and bespeaks a secure triumph over all the obstructions of Christ's resurrection. There he sat, defying all the powers of hell to roll the stone to the grave again. Christ erects his seat of rest and seat of judgment upon the opposition of his enemies; the Lord sitteth upon the floods. The angel sat as a guard to the grave, having frightened away the enemies' black guard; he sat, expecting the women, and ready to give them an account of his resurrection.

4. That his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, Mt 28:3. This was a visible representation, by that which we call splendid and illustrious, of the glories of the invisible world, which know no difference of colours. His look upon the keepers was like flashes of lightning; he cast forth lightning, and scattered them, Ps 144:6. The whiteness of his raiment was an emblem not only of purity, but of joy and triumph. When Christ died, the court of heaven went into keep mourning, signified by the darkening of the sun; but when he arose, they again put on the garments of praise. The glory of this angel represented the glory of Christ, to which he was now risen, for it is the same description that was given of him in his transfiguration (Mt 17:2); but when he conversed with his disciples after his resurrection, he drew a veil over it, and it bespoke the glory of the saints in their resurrection, when they shall be as the angels of God in heaven.

5. That for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men, Mt 28:4. They were soldiers, that thought themselves hardened against fear, yet the very sight of an angel struck them with terror. Thus when the Son of God arose to judgment, the stout-hearted were spoiled, Ps 76:5,9. Note, The resurrection of Christ, as it is the joy of his friends, so it is the terror and confusion of his enemies. They did shake; the word eseisthesan is the same with that which was used for the earthquake, Mt 28:2, seismos. When the earth shook, these children of the earth, that had their portion in it, shook too; whereas, those that have their happiness in things above, though the earth be removed, yet are without fear. The keepers became as dead men, when he whom they kept guard upon became alive, and they whom they kept guard against revived with him. It struck a terror upon them, to see themselves baffled in that which was their business here. They were posted here, to keep a dead man in his grave--as easy a piece of service surely as was ever assigned them, and yet it proves too hard for them. They were told that they must expect to be assaulted by a company of feeble faint-hearted disciples, who for fear of them would soon shake and become as dead men, but are amazed when they find themselves attacked by a

mighty angel, whom they dare not look in the face. Thus doth God frustrate his enemies by frightening them, Ps 9:20.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:
4 and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.
5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

The message which this angel delivered to the women, Mt 28:5-7.

1. He encourages them against their fears, Mt 28:5. To come near to graves and tombs, especially in silence and solitude, has something in it frightful, much more was it so to those women, to find an angel at the sepulchre; but he soon makes them easy with the word, Fear not ye. The keepers shook, and became as dead men, but, Fear not ye. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, for there is cause for it; but, Fear not, Abraham, nor any of the faithful seed of Abraham; why should the daughters of Sarah, that do well, be afraid with any amazement? 1Pe 3:6. "Fear not ye. Let not the news I have to tell you, be any surprise to you, for you were told before that your Master would rise; let it be no terror to you, for his resurrection will be your consolation; fear not any hurt, that I will do you, nor nay evil tidings I have to tell you. Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus. I know you are friends to the cause. I do not come to frighten you, but to encourage you." Note, Those that seek Jesus, have no reason to be afraid; for, if they seek him diligently they shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder. All our believing enquiries after the Lord Jesus are observed, and taken notice of, in heaven; I know that ye seek Jesus; and shall certainly be answered, as these were, with good words, and comfortable words. Ye seek Jesus that was crucified. He mentions his being crucified, the more to commend their love to him; "You seek him still, though he was crucified; you retain your kindness for him notwithstanding." Note, True believers love and seek Christ, not only though he was crucified, but because he was so.

2. He assures them of the resurrection of Christ; and there was enough in that to silence their fears (Mt 28:6); He is not here, for

he is risen. To be told He is not here, would have been no welcome news to those who sought him, if it had not been added, He is risen. Note, It is matter of comfort to those who seek Christ, and miss of finding him where they expected, that he is risen: if we find him not in sensible comfort, yet he is risen. We must not hearken to those who say, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there, for he is not here, he is not there, he is risen. In all our enquiries after Christ, we must remember that he is risen; and we must seek him as one risen.

(a) Not with any gross carnal thoughts of him. There were those that knew Christ after the flesh; but now henceforth know we him so no more, 2Co 5:16. It is true, he had a body; but it is now a glorified body. They that make pictures and images of Christ, forget that he is not here, he is risen; our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word, Ro 10:6-9.

(b) We must seek him with great reverence and humility, and an awful regard to his glory, for he is risen. God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, and therefore every knee and every soul must bow before him.

(c) We must seek him with a heavenly mind; when we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, It is good to be here, let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen, and therefore let not our hearts be here, but let them rise too, and seek the things that are above, Col 3:1-3,Php 3:20.

Two things the angel refers these women to, for the confirmation of their faith, touching Christ's resurrection.

[1.] To his word now fulfilled, which they might remember; He is risen, as he said. This he vouches as the proper object of faith; "He said that he would rise, and you know that he is the Truth itself, and therefore have reason to expect that he should rise; why should you be backward to believe that which he told you would be?" Let us never think that strange, of which the word of Christ has raised our expectations, whether the sufferings of this present time, or the

glory that is to be revealed. If we remember what Christ hath said to us, we shall be the less surprised at what he does with us. This angel, when he said. He is not here, he is risen, makes it to appear that he preaches no other gospel than what they had already received, for he refers himself to the word of Christ as sufficient to bear him out; He is risen, as he said.

[2.] To his grave now empty, which they might look into; "Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Compare what you have heard, with what you see, and, putting both together, you will believe. You see that he is not here, and, remembering what he said, you may be satisfied that he is risen; come, see the place, and you will see that he is not there, you will see that he could not be stolen thence, and therefore must conclude that he is risen." Note, It may be of use to affect us, and may have a good influence upon us, to come, and with an eye of faith see the place where the Lord lay. See the marks he has there left of his love in condescending so low for us; see how easy he has made that bed, and how lightsome, for us, by lying in it himself; when we look into the grave, where we expect we must lie, to take off the terror of it, let us look into the grave where the Lord lay; the place where our Lord lay, so the Syriac. The angels own him for their Lord, as well as we; for the whole family, both in heaven and earth, is named from him.

3. He directs them to go carry the tidings of it to his disciples (Mt 28:7); Go quickly, and tell his disciples. It is probable that they were for entertaining themselves with the sight of the sepulchre and discourse with the angels. It was good to be here, but they have other work appointed them; this is a day of good tidings, and though they have the premier seisin of the comfort, the first taste of it, yet they must not have the monopoly of it, must not hold their peace, any more than those lepers, 2Ki 7:9. They must go tell the disciples. Note, Public usefulness to others must be preferred before the pleasure of secret communion with God ourselves; for it is more blessed to give than to receive. Observe,

(a) The disciples of Christ must first be told the news; not, Go, tell the chief priests and the Pharisees, that they may be confounded; but, Tell the disciples, that they may be comforted. God anticipates the joy of his friends more than the shame of his enemies, though the perfection of both is reserved for hereafter. Tell his disciples; it may be they will believe your report, however tell them,

[1.] That they may encourage themselves under their present sorrows and dispersions. It was a dismal time with them, between grief and fear; what a cordial would this be to them now, to hear, their Master is risen!

[2.] That they may enquire further into it themselves. This alarm was sent them, to awaken them from that strange stupidity which had seized them, and to raise their expectations. This was to set them on seeking him, and to prepare them for his appearance to them. General hints excite to closer searches. They shall now hear of him, but shall very shortly see him. Christ discovers himself gradually.

(b) The women are sent to tell it to them, and so are made, as it were, the apostles of the apostles. This was an honour put upon them, and a recompence for their constant affectionate adherence to him, at the cross, and in the grave, and a rebuke to the disciples who forsook him. Still God chooses the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty, and puts the treasure, not only into earthen vessels, but here into the weaker vessels; as the woman, being deceived by the suggestions of an evil angel, was first in the transgression (1Ti 2:14), so these women, being duly informed by the instructions of a good angel, were first in the belief of the redemption from transgression by Christ's resurrection, that that reproach of their sex might be rolled away, by putting this in the balance against it, which is their perpetual praise.

(c) They were bid to go quickly upon this errand. Why, what haste was there? Would not the news keep cold, and be welcome to them at any time? Yes, but they were now overwhelmed with grief, and

Christ would have this cordial hastened to them; when Daniel was humbling himself before God for sin, the angel Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly with a message of comfort, Da 9:21. We must always be ready and forward;

[1.] To obey the commands of God, Ps 119:60.

[2.] To do good to our brethren, and to carry comfort to them, as those that felt from their afflictions; Say not, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; but now quickly.

(4.) They were directed to appoint the disciples to meet him in Galilee. There were other appearances of Christ to them before that in Galilee, which were sudden and surprising; but he would have one to be solemn and public, and gave them notice of it before. Now this general rendezvous was appointed in Galilee, eighty or a hundred miles from Jerusalem;

[1.] In kindness to those of his disciples that remained in Galilee, and did not (perhaps they could not) come up to Jerusalem; into that country therefore he would go, to manifest himself to his friends there. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest. Christ knows where his disciples dwell, and will visit there. Note, The exaltation of Christ doth not make him forget the meaner and poorer sort of his disciples, but even to them that are at a distance from the plenty of the means of grave he will graciously manifest himself.

[2.] In consideration of the weakness of his disciples that were now at Jerusalem, who as yet were afraid of the Jews, and durst not appear publicly, and therefore this meeting was adjourned to Galilee. Christ knows our fears, and considers our frame, and made his appointment where there was least danger of disturbance.

Lastly, The angel solemnly affirms upon his word the truth of what he had related to them; "Lo, I have told you, you may be assured of

it, and depend upon it; I have told you, who dare not tell a lie." The word spoken by angels was stedfast, Heb 2:2. God had been wont formerly to make known his mind to his people by the ministration of angels, as at the giving of the law; but as he intended in gospel times to lay aside that way of communication (for unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, nor appointed them to be the preachers of the gospel), this angel was now sent to certify the resurrection of Christ to the disciples, and so leave it in their hands to be published to the world, 2Co 4:7. In saying, Lo, I have told you, he doth, as it were, discharge himself from the blame of their unbelief, if they should not receive this record, and throw it upon them; "I have done my errand, I have faithfully delivered my message, now look you to it, believe it at your peril; whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I have told you." Note, Those messengers from God, that discharge their trust faithfully, may take the comfort of that, whatever the success be, Ac 20:26,27.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

When we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, It is good to be here, then let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen; therefore let our hearts rise, and seek the things that are above.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

The women's departure from the sepulchre, to bring notice to the disciples, Mt 28:8. And observe,

1. What frame and temper of spirit they were in; They departed with fear and great joy; a strange mixture, fear and joy at the same time, in the same soul. To hear that Christ was risen, was matter of joy; but to be led into his grave, and to see an angel, and talk with him about it, could not but cause fear. It was good news, but they were afraid that it was too good to be true. But observe, it is said of their joy, I was great joy; it is not said so of their fear. Note,

(1.) Holy fear has joy attending it. They that serve the Lord with reverence, serve him with gladness.

(2.) Spiritual joy is mixed with trembling, Ps 2:11. It is only perfect love and joy that will cast out all fear.

2. What haste they made; They did run. The fear and joy together quickened their pace, and added wings to their motion; the angel bid them go quickly, and they ran. Those that are sent on God's errand must not loiter, or lose time; where the heart is enlarged with the glad tidings of the gospel, the feet will run the way of God's commandments.

3. What errand they went upon; They ran, to bring his disciples word. Not doubting but it would be joyful news to them, they ran, to comfort them with the same comforts wherewith they themselves were comforted of God. Note, The disciples of Christ should be forward to communicate to each other their experiences of sweet communion with heaven; should tell others what God has done for their souls, and spoken to them. Joy in Christ Jesus, like the ointment of the right hand, will betray itself, and fill all places within the lines of its communication with its odours. When Samson found honey, he brought it to his parents.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Christ's appearing to the women, to confirm the testimony of the angel, Mt 28:9,10. These zealous good women not only heard the first tidings of him, but had the first sight of him, after his resurrection. The angel directed those that would see him, to go to Galilee, but before that time came, even here also, they looked after him that lives, and sees them. Note, Jesus Christ is often better than his word, but never worse; often anticipates, but never frustrates, the believing expectations of his people.

Here is,

1. Christ's surprising appearance to the women; As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them. Note, God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty, and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was unexpected, or ever they were aware, So 6:12. Note, Christ is nearer to his people than they imagine. They needed not descend into the deep, to fetch Christ thence; he was not there, he was risen; nor go up to heaven, for he was not yet ascended: but Christ was high them, and still in the word is nigh us.

2 The salutation wherewith he accosted them; All hail--chairete. We use the old English form of salutation, wishing all health to those we meet; for so All hail signifies, and is expressive of the Greek form of salutation here used, answering to that of the Hebrew, Peace be unto you. And it bespeaks, (1.) The good-will of Christ to us and our happiness, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. Though he is advanced, he wishes us as well as ever, and is as much concerned for our comfort. (2.) The freedom and holy familiarity which he used in his fellowship with his disciples; for he called them friends. But the Greek word signifies, Rejoice ye. They were affected both with fear and joy; what he said to them tended to encourage their joy (Mt 28:9), Rejoice ye, and to silence their fear (Mt 28:10), Be not afraid. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes them with abundant matter for joy.

3. The affectionate respect they paid him; They came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Thus they expressed,

(a) The reverence and honour they had for him; they threw themselves at his feet, put themselves into a posture of adoration, and worshipped him with humility and godly fear, as the Son of God, and now exalted.

(b) The love and affection they had to him; they held him, and would not let him go, So 3:4. How beautiful were the feet of the Lord Jesus to them! Isa 52:7. (3.) The transport of joy they were in, now that

they had this further assurance of his resurrection; they welcomed it with both arms. Thus we must embrace Jesus Christ offered us in the gospel, with reverence cast ourselves at his feet, by faith take hold of him, and with love and joy lay him near our hearts.

4. The encouraging words Christ said to them, Mt 28:10. We do not find that they said any thing to him, their affectionate embraces and adorations spoke plainly enough; and what he said to them was no more than what the angel had said (Mt 28:5,6); for he will confirm the word of his messengers (Isa 44:26); and his way of comforting his people, is, by his Spirit to speak over again to their hearts the same that they had heard before from his angels, the ministers. Now observe here,

(a) How he rebukes their fear; Be not afraid. They must not fear being imposed upon by these repeated notices of his resurrection, nor fear any hurt from the appearance of one from the dead; for the news, though strange, was both true and good. Note, Christ arose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them.

(b) How he repeats their message; "Go, tell my brethren, that they must prepare for a journey into Galilee, and there they shall see me." If there be any communion between our souls and Christ, it is he that appoints the meeting, and he will observe the appointment. Jerusalem had forfeited the honour of Christ's presence, it was a tumultuous city, therefore he adjourns the meeting to Galilee. Come, my beloved, let us go forth, So 7:11. But that which is especially observable here, is, that he calls his disciples his brethren. Go, tell my brethren, not only those of them that were akin to him, but all the rest, for they are all his brethren (Mt 12:50), but he never called them so till after his resurrection, here and Joh 20:17. Being by the resurrection himself declared to be the Son of God with power, all the children of God were thereby declared to be his brethren. Being the First-begotten from the dead, he is become the First-born among many brethren, even of all that are planted together in the likeness of his resurrection. Christ did not now converse so constantly and

familiarly with his disciples as he had done before his death; but, lest they should think him grown strange to them, he gives them this endearing title, Go to my brethren, that the scripture might be fulfilled, which, speaking of his entrance upon his exalted state, saith, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. They had shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive and forget, and to teach us to do so, he not only continues his purpose to meet them, but calls them brethren. Being all his brethren, they were brethren one to another, and must love as brethren. His owning them for his brethren put a great honour upon them, but withal gave them an example of humility in the midst of that honour.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Christ rose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them. The disciples had just before shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive, and to teach us to do so, he calls them brethren. Notwithstanding his majesty and purity, and our meanness and unworthiness, he still condescends to call believers his brethren.

The Report of the Guard

11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

How it was baffled and stifled by them. They called an assembly, and considered what was to be done. For their own parts, they were resolved not to believe that Jesus was risen; but their care was, to keep others from believing, and themselves from being quite ashamed from their disbelief of it. They had put him to death, and there was no way of standing to what they had done, but by confronting the evidence of his resurrection. Thus they who have sold themselves to work wickedness, find that one sin draws on another, and that they have plunged themselves into a wretched necessity of adding iniquity to iniquity, which is part of the curse of Christ's persecutors, Ps 69:27.

The result of their debate was, that those soldiers must by all means be bribed off, and hired not to tell tales.

1. They put money into their hands; and what wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money? They gave large money, probably a great deal more than they gave to Judas, unto the soldiers. These chief priests loved their money as well as most people did, and were as loth to part with it; and yet, to carry on a malicious design against the gospel of Christ, they were very prodigal of it; they gave the soldiers, it is likely, as much as they asked, and they knew how to improve their advantages. Here was large money given for the advancing of that which they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for the advancement of that which they know to be the truth, though they have a promise of being reimbursed in the resurrection of the just. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see a bad one so liberally supported.

2. They put a lie into their mouths (Mt 28:13); Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; a sorry shift is better than none, but this is a sorry one indeed.

(a) The sham was ridiculous, and carried along with it its own confutation. If they slept, how could they know any thing of the matter, or say who came? If any one of them was awake to observe it, no doubt, he would awake them all to oppose it; for that was the only thing they had in charge. It was altogether improbable that a company of poor, weak, cowardly, dispirited men should expose themselves for so inconsiderable an achievement as the rescue of the dead body. Why were not the houses where they lodged diligently searched, and other means used to discover the dead body; but this was so thin a lie as one might easily see through. But had it been ever so plausible,

(b) It was a wicked thing for these priests and elders to hire those soldiers to tell a deliberate lie (if it had been in a matter of ever so small importance), against their consciences. Those know not what they do, who draw others to commit one wilful sin; for that may

debauch conscience, and be an inlet to many. But, (3.) Considering this as intended to overthrow the great doctrine of Christ's resurrection, this was a sin against the last remedy, and was, in effect, a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, imputing that to the roguery of the disciples, which was done by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But lest the soldiers should object the penalty they incurred by the Roman law for sleeping upon the guard, which was very severe (Ac 12:19), they promised to interpose with the governor; "We will persuade him, and secure you. We will use our own interest in him, to get him not to take notice of it;" and they had lately found how easily they could manage him. If really these soldiers had slept, and so suffered the disciples to steal him away, as they would have the world believe, the priests and elders would certainly have been the forwardest to solicit the governor to punish them for their treachery; so that their care for the soldiers' safety plainly gives the lie to the story. They undertook to secure them from the sword of Pilate's justice, but could not secure them from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the head of those that love and make a lie. They promise more than they can perform who undertake to save a man harmless in the commission of a wilful sin.

Well, thus was the plot laid; now what success had it?

[1.] Those that were willing to deceive, took the money, and did as they were taught. They cared as little for Christ and his religion as the chief priests and elders did; and men that have no religion at all, can be very well pleased to see Christianity run down, and lend a hand to it, if need be, to serve a turn. They took the money; that was it they aimed at, and nothing else. Note, Money is a bait for the blackest temptation; mercenary tongues will sell the truth for it.

The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is, his resurrection, and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers had; they saw the angel descend

from heaven, saw the stone rolled away, saw the body of Christ come out of the grave, unless the consternation they felt hindered them; and yet they were so far from being convinced by it themselves, that they were hired to belie him, and to hinder others from believing in him. Note, The most sensible evidence will not convince men, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit.

[2.] Those that were willing to be deceived, not only credited, but propagated, the story; This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. The sham took well enough, and answered the end. The Jews, who persisted in their infidelity, when they were pressed with the argument of Christ's resurrection, had this still ready to reply, His disciples came, and stole him away. To this purport was the solemn narrative, which (as Justin Martyr relates in his dialogue with Typho the Jew) the great sanhedrim sent to all the Jews of the dispersion concerning this affair, exciting them to a vigorous resistance of Christianity--that, when they had crucified, and buried him, the disciples came by night, and stole him out of the sepulchre, designing thereby not only to overthrow the truth of Christ's resurrection, but to render his disciples odious to the world, as the greatest villains in nature. When once a lie is raised, none knows how far it will spread, nor how long it will last, nor what mischief it will do. Some give another sense of this passage, This saying is commonly reported, that is, "Notwithstanding the artifice of the chief priests, thus to impose upon the people, the collusion that was between them and the soldiers, and the money that was given to support the cheat, were commonly reported and whispered among the Jews;" for one way or other truth will out.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

13 saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

which, as we have observed, was a capital offense for soldiers on guard.

14 And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

rather, "If this come before the governor"; that is, not in the way of mere report, but for judicial investigation. The "we" and the "you"

are emphatic here—"we shall [take care to] persuade him and keep you from trouble," or "save you harmless." The grammatical form of this clause implies that the thing supposed was expected to happen. The meaning then is, "If this come before the governor—as it likely will—we shall see to it that," &c. The "persuasion" of Pilate meant, doubtless, quieting him by a bribe, which we know otherwise he was by no means above taking (like Felix afterwards, Ac 24:26).

The priests undertook to secure them from the sword of Pilate, but could not secure these soldiers from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the heads of those that love and make a lie. Those men promise more than they can perform, who undertake to save a man harmless in doing a wilful sin.But this falsehood disproved itself. Had the soldiers been all asleep, they could not have known what passed. If any had been awake, they would have roused the others and prevented the removal; and certainly if they had been asleep, they never would have dared to confess it; while the Jewish rulers would have been the first to call for their punishment. Again, had there been any truth in the report, the rulers would have prosecuted the apostles with severity for it. The whole shows that the story was entirely false. And we must not charge such things to the weakness of the understanding, but to the wickedness of the heart. God left them to expose their own course. The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is his resurrection; and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers; yet they took bribes to hinder others from believing. The plainest evidence will not affect men, without the work of the Holy Spirit.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

thus consenting to brand themselves with infamy. to the date of the publication of this Gospel. The wonder is that so clumsy and incredible a story lasted so long. But those who are resolved not to come to the light will catch at straws. JUSTIN MARTYR, who flourished about A.D. 170, says, in his Dialogue with Trypho the

Jew, that the Jews dispersed the story by means of special messengers sent to every country.

Jesus Commissions the Eleven

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

This evangelist passes over several other appearances of Christ, recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to this, which was of all other the most solemn, as being promised and appointed again and again before his death, and after his resurrection. Observe,

How the disciples attended his appearance, according to the appointment (Mt 28:16); They went into Galilee, a long journey to go for one sight of Christ, but it was worth while. They had seen him several times at Jerusalem, and yet they went into Galilee, to see him there.

1. Because he appointed them to do so. Though it seemed a needless thing to go into Galilee, to see him whom they might see at Jerusalem, especially when they must so soon come back again to Jerusalem, before his ascension, yet they had learned to obey Christ's commands and not object against them. Note, Those who would maintain communion with Christ, must attend him there where he has appointed. Those who have met him in one ordinance, must attend him in another; those who have seen him at Jerusalem, must go to Galilee.

2. Because that was to be a public and general meeting. They had seen him themselves, and conversed with him in private, but that should not excuse their attendance in a solemn assembly, where many were to be gathered together to see him. Note, Our communion with God in secret must not supersede our attendance on public worship, as we have opportunity; for God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we. The place was a mountain in Galilee, probably the same mountain on which he was transfigured. There

they met, for privacy, and perhaps to signify the exalted state into which he was entered, and his advances toward the upper world.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

How they were affected with the appearance of Christ to them, Mt 28:17. Now was the time that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, 1Co 15:6. Some think that they saw him, at first, at some distance, above in the air, ephthe epano--He was seen above, of five hundred brethren (so they read it); which gave occasion to some to doubt, till he came nearer (Mt 28:18), and then they were satisfied. We are told,

1. That they worshipped him; many of them did so, nay, it should seem, they all did that, they gave divine honour to him, which was signified by some outward expressions of adoration. Note, All that see the Lord Jesus with an eye of faith are obliged to worship him.

2. But some doubted, some of those that were then present. Note, Even among those that worship there are some that doubt. The faith of those that are sincere, may yet be very weak and wavering. They doubted, edistasan--they hung in suspense, as the scales of the balance, when it is hard to say which preponderates. These doubts were afterward removed, and their faith grew up to a full assurance, and it tended much to the honour of Christ, that the disciples doubted before they believed; so that they cannot be said to be credulous, and willing to be imposed upon; for they first questioned, and proved all things, and then held fast that which was true, and which they found to be so.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

What Jesus Christ said to them (Mt 28:18-20); Jesus came, and spoke unto them. Though there were those that doubted, yet, he did not therefore reject them; for he will not break the bruised reed. He did not stand at a distance, but came near, and gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as turned the wavering scale, and made their faith to triumph over their doubts. He came, and

spoke familiarly to them, as one friend speaks to another, that they might be fully satisfied in the commission he was about to give them. He that drew near to God, to speak for us to him, draws near to us, to speak from him to us. Christ now delivered to his apostles the great charter of his kingdom in the world, was sending them out as his ambassadors, and here gives them their credentials.

In opening this great charter, we may observe two things.

1 The commission which our Lord Jesus received himself from the Father. Being about to authorize his apostles, if any ask by what authority he doeth it, and who gave him that authority, here he tells us, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; a very great word, and which none but he could say. Hereby he asserts his universal dominion as Mediator, which is the great foundation of the Christian religion. He has all power. Observe,

(a) Whence he hath this power. He did not assume it, or usurp it, but it was given him, he was legally entitled to it, and invested in it, by a grant from him who is the Fountain of all being, and consequently of all power. God set him King (Ps 2:6), inaugurated and enthroned him, Lu 1:32. As God, equal with the Father, all power was originally and essentially his; but as Mediator, as God-man, all power was given him; partly in recompence of his work (because he humbled himself, therefore God thus exalted him), and partly in pursuance of his design; he had this power given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him (Joh 17:2), for the more effectual carrying on and completing our salvation. This power he was now more signally invested in, upon his resurrection, Ac 13:3. He had power before, power to forgive sins (Mt 9:6); but now all power is given him. He is now going to receive for himself a kingdom (Lu 19:12), to sit down at the right hand, Ps 110:1. Having purchased it, nothing remains but to take possession; it is his own for ever.

(b) Where he has this power; in heaven and earth, comprehending the universe. Christ is the sole universal Monarch, he is Lord of all,

Ac 10:36. He has all power in heaven. He has power of dominion over the angels, they are all his humble servants, Eph 1:20,21. He has power of intercession with his Father, in the virtue of his satisfaction and atonement; he intercedes, not as a suppliant, but as a demandant; Father, I will. He has all power on earth too; having prevailed with God, by the sacrifice of atonement, he prevails with men, and deals with them as one having authority, by the ministry of reconciliation. He is indeed, in all causes and over all persons, supreme Moderator and Governor. By him kings reign. All souls are his, and to him every heart and knee must bow, and every tongue confess him to be the Lord. This our Lord Jesus tells them, not only to satisfy them of the authority he had to commission them, and to bring them out in the execution of their commission, but to take off the offence of the cross; they had no reason to be ashamed of Christ crucified, when they saw him thus glorified.

2 The commission he gives to those whom he sent forth; Go ye therefore. This commission is given,

(a) To the apostles primarily, the chief ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, the architects that laid the foundation of the church. Now those that had followed Christ in the regeneration, were set on thrones (Lu 22:30); Go ye. It is not only a word of command, like that, Son, go work, but a word of encouragement, Go, and fear not, have I not sent you? Go, and make a business of this work. They must not take state, and issue out summons to the nations to attend upon them; but they must go, and bring the gospel to their doors, Go ye. They had doted on Christ's bodily presence, and hung upon that, and built all their joys and hopes upon that; but now Christ discharges them from further attendance on his person, and sends them abroad about other work. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, to excite them to fly (De 32:11), so Christ stirs up his disciples, to disperse themselves over all the world.

(b) It is given to their successors, the ministers of the gospel, whose business it is to transmit the gospel from age to age, to the end of the world in time, as it was theirs to transmit it from nation to

nation, to the end of the world in place, and no less necessary. The Old-Testament promise of a gospel ministry is made to a succession (Isa 59:21); and this must be so understood, otherwise how could Christ be with them always to the consummation of the world? Christ, at his ascension, gave not only apostles and prophets, but pastors and teachers, Eph 4:11. Now observe,

[1.] How far his commission is extended; to all nations. Go, and disciples all nations. Not that they must go all together into every place, but by consent disperse themselves in such manner as might best diffuse the light of the gospel. Now this plainly signifies it to be the will of Christ, First, That the covenant of peculiarity, made with the Jews, should now be cancelled and disannulled. This word broke down the middle wall of partition, which had so long excluded the Gentiles from a visible church-state; and whereas the apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, now they were sent to all nations. Secondly, That salvation by Christ should be offered to all, and none excluded that did not by their unbelief and impenitence exclude themselves. The salvation they were to preach is a common salvation; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit of the act of indemnity; for there is no difference of Jew or Greek in Christ Jesus. Thirdly, That Christianity should be twisted in with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ's kingdoms, and their kings the church's nursing-fathers.

[2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to disciple all nations. Matheteusate--"Admit them disciples; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations;" not, "Go to the nations, and denounce the judgments of God against them, as Jonah against Nineveh, and as the other Old-Testament prophets" (though they had reason enough to expect it for their wickedness), "but go, and disciple them." Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the nations of the earth under his banner. The work which the apostles had to do, was,

to set up the Christian religion in all places, and it was honourable work; the achievements of the mighty heroes of the world were nothing to it. They conquered the nations for themselves, and made them miserable; the apostles conquered them for Christ, and made them happy.

[3.] Their instructions for executing this commission.

First, They must admit disciples by the sacred rite of baptism; "Go into all nations, preach the gospel to them, work miracles among them, and persuade them to come in themselves, and bring their children with them, into the church of Christ, and then admit them and theirs into the church, by washing them with water;" either dipping them in the water, or pouring or sprinkling water upon them, which seems the more proper, because the thing is most frequently expressed so, as Isa 44:3, I will pour my Spirit on thy seed. And, Tit 3:5,6, Which he shed on us abundantly. And, Eze 36:25, I will sprinkle clean water upon you. And, Isa 52:15, So shall he sprinkle many nations; which seems a prophecy of this commission to baptize the nations.

Secondly, This baptism must be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Thirdly, Those that are thus baptized, and enrolled among the disciples of Christ, must be taught (Mt 28:20); Teaching them to observe all thing, whatsoever I have commanded you. This denotes two things.

1 The duty of disciples, of all baptized Christians; they must observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, and, in order to that, must submit to the teaching of those whom he sends. Our admission into the visible church is in order to something further; when Christ hath discipled us, he hath not done with us; he enlist soldiers that he may train them up for his service.

All that are baptized, are thereby obliged,

(a) To make the command of Christ their rule. There is a law of faith, and we are said to be under the law to Christ; we are by baptism bound, and must obey.

(b) To observe what Christ has commanded. Due obedience to the commands of Christ requires a diligent observation; we are in danger of missing, if we take not good heed: and in all our obedience, we must have an eye to the command, and do what we do as unto the Lord.

(c) To observe all things, that he has commanded, without exception; all the moral duties, and all the instituted ordinances. Our obedience to the laws of Christ is not sincere, if it be not universal; we must stand complete in his whole will.

(d) To confine themselves to the commands of Christ, and as not to diminish from them, so not to add to them.

(e) To learn their duty according to the law of Christ, from those whom he has appointed to be teachers in his school, for therefore we were entered into his school.

2 The duty of the apostles of Christ, and his ministers; and that is, to beach the commands of Christ, to expound them to his disciples, to press upon them the necessity of obedience, and to assist them in applying the general commands of Christ to particular cases. They must teach them, not their own inventions, but the institutions of Christ; to them they must religiously adhere, and in the knowledge of them Christians must be trained up. A standing ministry is hereby settled in the church, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the perfect man, Eph 4:11-13. The heirs of heaven, till they come to age, must be under tutors and governors.

3. Here is the assurance he gives them of his spiritual presence with them in the execution of this commission; And lo, I am with you

always, even unto the end of the world. This exceeding great and precious promise is ushered in with a behold, to strengthen their faith, and engage their observation of it. "Take notice of this; it is what you may assure yourselves of and venture upon." Observe,

(a) The favour promised them; I am with you. Not, I will be with you, but I am--ego eimi. As God sent Moses, so Christ sent his apostles, by this name, I am; for he is God, to whom past, present, and to come, are the same. See Re 1:8. He was now about to leave them; his bodily presence was now to be removed from them, and this grieved them; but he assures them of his spiritual presence, which was more expedient for them than his bodily presence could be; I am with you; that is, "My Spirit is with you, the Comforter shall abide with you, Joh 16:7. I am with you, and not against you: with you to take your part, to be on your side, and to hold with you, as Michael our prince is said to do, Da 10:21. I am with you, and not absent from you, not at a distance; I am a very present help," Ps 46:1. Christ was now sending them to set up his kingdom in the world, which was a great undertaking. And then doth he seasonably promise them his presence with them,

[1.] To carry them on through the difficulties they were likely to meet with. "I am with you, to bear you up, to plead your cause; with you in all your services, in all your sufferings, to bring you through them with comfort and honour. When you go through the fire or water, I will be with you. In the pulpit, in the prison, lo, I am with you."

[2.] To succeed this great undertaking; "Lo, I am with you, to make your ministry effectual for the discipling of the nations, for the pulling down of the strong holds of Satan, and the setting up of stronger for the Lord Jesus." It was an unlikely thing that they should unhinge national constitutions in religion, and turn the stream of so long a usage; that they should establish a doctrine so directly contrary to the genius of the age, and persuade people to become the disciples of a crucified Jesus; but lo, I am with you, and therefore you shall gain your point.

(b) The continuance of the favour, always, even unto the end of the world.

[1.] They shall have his constant presence; Always, pasas tas hemeras--all days, every day. "I will be with you on sabbath days and week days, fair days and foul days, winter days and summer days." There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, that day, that hour, they were undone. Since his resurrection he had appeared to them now and then, once a week it may be, and scarcely that. But he assures them that they shall have his spiritual presence continued to them without intermission. Wherever we are the word of Christ is nigh us, even in our mouth, and the Spirit of Christ nigh us, even in our hearts. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself (Isa 45:15), but never a God that absenteth himself; sometimes in the dark, but never at a distance.

[2.] They shall have his perpetual presence, even to the end of the world. There is a world before us, that will never have an end, but this is hastening towards its period; and even till then the Christian religion shall, in one part of the world or other, be kept up, and the presence of Christ continued with his ministers. I am with you to the end of the world, not with your persons, they died quickly, but, First, With you and your writings. There is a divine power going along with the scripture of the New Testament, not only preserving them in being, but producing strange effects by them, which will continue to the end of time. Secondly, With you and your successors; with you and all the ministers of the gospel in the several ages of the church; with all to whom this commission extends, with all who, being duly called and sent, thus baptize and thus teach. When the end of the world is come, and the kingdom delivered up to God, even the Father, there will then be no further need of ministers and their ministration; but till then they shall continue, and the great intentions of the institution shall be answered. This is an encouraging word to all the faithful ministers

of Christ, that what was said to the apostles, was said to them all, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Two solemn farewells we find our Lord Jesus giving to his church, and his parting word at both of them is very encouraging; one was here, when he closed up his personal converse with them, and then his parting word was, "Lo, I am with you always; I leave you, and yet still I am with you;" the other was, when he closed up the canon of the scripture by the pen of his beloved disciple, and then his parting word was, "Surely, I come quickly. I leave you for awhile, but I will be with you again shortly," Re 22:20. By this it appears that he did not part in anger, but in love, and that it is his will we should keep up both our communion with him and our expectation of him.

There is one word more remaining, which must not be overlooked, and that is Amen; which is not a cipher, intended only for a concluding word, like finis at the end of a book, but it has its significancy.

1. It bespeaks Christ's confirmation of this promise, Lo, I am with you. It is his Amen, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen, "Verily I am, and will be, with you; I the Amen, the faithful Witness, do assure you of it." Or,

2. It bespeaks the church's concurrence with it, in their desire, and prayer, and expectation. It is the evangelist's Amen--So be it, blessed Lord. Our Amen to Christ's promises turns them into prayers. Hath Christ promised to be present with his ministers, present in his word, present in the assemblies of his people, though but two or three are gathered together in his name, and this always, even to the end of the world? Let us heartily say Amen to it; believe that it shall be so, and pray that it may be so: Lord, Remember this word unto thy servants, upon which thou hast caused us to hope.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Christianity is the religion of a sinner who applies for salvation from deserved wrath and from sin; he applies to the mercy of the Father, through the atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and gives up himself to be the worshipper and servant of God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons but one God, in all his ordinances and commandments. Baptism is an outward sign of that inward washing, or sanctification of the Spirit, which seals and evidences the believer's justification. Let us examine ourselves, whether we really possess the inward and spiritual grace of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, by which those who were the children of wrath become the children of God. Believers shall have the constant presence of their Lord always; all days, every day. There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, in that day, that hour, they would be undone. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself, but never a God at a distance. To these precious words Amen is added. Even so, Lord Jesus, be thou with us and all thy people; cause thy face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

The Gospel According To St. Mark

[Mark]

Mark-1

The Preaching of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

> The beginning of the Gospel. The word gospel literally signifies good tidings, and particularly the good tidings respecting the way of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have understood the word gospel here to mean, history or life--the beginning of the history, etc. But Mark says nothing of the early life of the Saviour. It has reference rather to the preaching of John, an account of which immediately follows, and means the beginning of the good news, or annunciation, respecting the Messiah. It was very customary thus to prefix a title to a book.
>
> The Son of God. This title was used here to attract attention, and secure the respect of those who should read this gospel. It is no common history. It does not recount the deeds of man--of a hero, or philosopher-- but the doctrines and doings of THE SON OF GOD. The history, therefore, commands respect.

2 As it is written in the prophets,
Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

> As it is written in the prophets. He mentions prophets, here, without specifying which. The places are found in Mal 3:1; and in Isa 40:3. Mt 3:3.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

> "John did" Mt 3:1, Lk 3:3, Jn 3:23 (1) "baptism of repentance" or, "unto repentance"

A twofold account is here given of St. John's execution of his ministry and office: First, his baptising; secondly, his preaching.

John did baptise; that is, admit persons into the church, by washing them with water: John baptised into the name of Christ, who was to come; the apostles baptised into the name of Christ, already come.

The second part of his office was preaching.

Where note, That preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments, are to go together, and belong only to the ministers of the word, lawfully called. John did baptise and preach; but where and what did he preach? The place where, was the wilderness; a place not much frequented, though not altogether uninhabited; a solitary, mean, and obscure place. Thither God had called him, and there he contents himself.

Learn hence, That the ministers of God must be content to execute their ministry where God calls them, be the place never so mean and obscure, and the people never so rude and barbarous: John was a preacher of great note and fame; Jerusalem the chief city might seem more fit for him; but God had called him to preach in the wilderness, and he would not leave it.

We must not leave our place because it is mean and obscure, nor desert our people, thinking them too base to instruct; but where God has called us we must there abide, till he that called us thither remove us thence.

Observe farther, As the place where the Baptist preached, in the wilderness, so the doctrine which he preached, namely, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; that is, the doctrine of Baptism, which sealeth the remission of sins to the party baptized.

Learn hence, The the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is absolutely necessary, and the indespensable duty of every gospel-minister. John Baptist preached it, our Saviour preached it, his apostles preached it: They went out preaching every where that men should repent. The baptism of repentance (says the learned Lightfoot) belongs to children, though they know not what

repentance means, because it engages them to repentance when they come to years to understand that engagement. For thus it was with children circumcised, they became debtors to observe that whole law, though they came to years of discretion.

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Here we have an account of the success of St. John's ministry; 1. In the general concourse and resort of the people to it, All Judea and Jerusalem; that is, a great many of all degrees and ranks, of all ages and sexes. John was famed for a prophet, and a prophet was now a great rarity. Malachi was the last prophet before John, and he lived about five hundred years before John. Now the excellency of his person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, that the Messias was come, and the austerity of his life and conversation, all these caused the people to flock unto him.

Learn hence, That it is a great encouragement to the ministers of Christ when people show themselves ready and forward to repair unto the places where the word and sacraments are dispensed to them: All Judea and Jerusalem attended upon John's ministry.

The second fruit of John's ministry was, that the people were ready to receive at his hand the sacrament of baptism: They were all baptised of him in Jordan.
Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ ought not only to preach the word, but also to dispense the sacraments to their people, even to all that do desire them, and are fit to be partakers of them.

A third fruit of John's ministry was, his hearers' profession of repentance is requisite in all that are baptized, so a free and voluntary, and ingenuous and impartial, confession of sin, is a good evidence and testimony of the truth and sincerity of our repentance.

"confessing their sins." Lev 26:40-42, Ps 32:5, Prov 28:13 1Jn 1:8-10

6 And John was clothed with camel’s hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

This verse acquaints us with the strictness and austerity of St. John's life in the wilderness; which is laid down in two things; in his mean and frugal apparel, and in his sober and temperate diet.

His apparel was rough and hairy, and his girdle of leather; as Elijah his forerunner was clad before him, 2Kgs 1:8.

His diet was coarse and ordinary, locusts and wild honey; that is, such plain and ordinary food as the wilderness afforded.

His example teaches us, That the ministers of the gospel are not to effect either bravery in apparel, or delicacy in diet; but both by their habit and diet set an example of gravity and sobriety before their people; being in these, as well as in other things, an example unto their flocks.

7 and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Observe here, 1. The high opinion that the Baptist had of Christ. He is mightier than I; that is, a Person of greater dignity and excellency by far than myself: whence may be gathered, that though Christ was Man, he was not mere man, but more than man: even very God, equal with his Father; for John Baptist was the greatest of them that were born of woman, Matt 11:11 yet, says he, Christ is mightier and greater than I. How so, but in regard to the dignity of his person, being both God and Man in two distinct natures and one person.

Observe, 2. The humble and low estimation that the Baptist had of himself; His shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose: a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the basest and meanest service for Christ. O how well doth humility of mind, an humble apprehension, a low esteem and opinion of themselves and their own gifts and abilities, become the messengers and ministers of Christ! John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoe, or do the meanest office for him.

"There cometh" Mt 3:11, Jn 1:27, Acts 13:25

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

John showed the dignity of Christ's person above his own, in the former verse; in this he declares the excellency of Christ's office, and the meanness of his own; I wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit.

Thence learn, That though the ministers of Christ do by Christ's command dispense the outward ordinance of baptism, yet it is Christ himself, that by the inward work of his Spirit doth make it effectual to such as receive it. I baptize with water; but he with the Holy Ghost.

Mt 3:3, also Mt 3:4-6,11.

The Baptism of Jesus

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

Observe here, 1. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John: Christ, though he was John's Lord and Master, yea, Lord of heaven and earth, yet cometh to hear John preach, and will be baptized of his messenger.

Thence learn, That the greatest persons should neither think themselves too great, nor too good, to come unto the ministers of God, to hear the word from their mouth, or to receive the sacrament at their hand. Christ the Son of God was content to be baptized of John, a mean person in comparsion of himself. How dare then the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man, being appointed by God?

Observe, 2. The solemn investing of Christ with the office of Mediator, by a threefold miracle; namely, the opening of the heavens, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and God the Father's voice or testimony concerning his Son; the heavens were opened, to show, that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our

sins, is now opened to us by Christ's undertaking for us. As Christ opened heaven by his meritorious passion, so he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession.

Next, the Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Saviour. Here we have a proof and evidence of the Blessed Trinity. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost descends in the likeness of a dove. But why did the Holy Ghost now descend upon Christ?

First, for the designation of his person, to show that he was the Person set apart for his word and office of a mediator.

Secondly, for the sanctification of his person for the performance of that office. This was Christ's unction, the day on which he was anointed above his fellows to be the King, Priest, and Prophet, of his church: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath anointed me, Isa 61:1, &c.

Observe, 3. the voice of God the Father pronounced,
(1.) The nearness of Christ's relation to himself: This is my Son.
(2.) The endearedness of his person: This is my beloved Son.
(3.) The fruit and benefit of his near and dear relation unto us: In whom I am well pleased.

Hence learn, That there is no possibility for a person to please God out of Christ; neither our persons nor our performances can find acceptance but through him, and for his sake;--that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ground and Cause of all that love which God the Father showeth to the sons of men. In Christ, God is well pleased with us, as a reconciled Father; out of him, a consuming Fire.

"baptized of John" Mt 3:13, Lk 3:21.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

11 and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The Temptation of Jesus

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

Mark here relates concisely what Matthew has recorded, more at length in Mt 4.

The spirit driveth. The word driveth does not mean that he was compelled forcibly against his will to go there, but that he was inclined to go there by the Spirit, or was led there. The Spirit of God, for important purposes, caused him to go. Comp. Mt 9:25, where the same word is used in the original: "But when the people were put forth"-- in Greek, all driven out.

And was with the wild beasts. This is added to show the desolation and danger of his dwelling there. In this place, surrounded by such dangers, the temptations offered by Satan were the stronger. Amidst want, and perils, Satan might suppose he would be more easily seduced from God. But he trusted in his Father, and was alike delivered from dangers, from the wild beasts, and from the power of temptation: thus teaching us what to do in the day of danger and trial.

And the angels ministered unto him. From Lk 4:2, we learn that in those days he did eat nothing. When Mark says, therefore, that the angels ministered to him, it means after the days of temptation had expired, as is said by Matthew, Mt 4:11.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan;
and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Immediately, That is, 1. After his baptism. Christ is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation: such as are baptized with Christ, and entered into the profession of christianity, must look to be assaulted with Satan's temptations.

Again, immediately, that is, 2. After the Father had declared his complacency in him, and being well pleased with him.

Learn thence, That great manifestations of love from God are usually followed with great temptations from God. The Spirit driveth him, that is, the Holy Spirit of God. For the devil is seldom, if ever, called the Spirit, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as the evil spirit, or the unclean spirit and the like.

Christ was led by the Spirit, says Matt 4:1. He was driven by the Spirit, says St. Mark; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God to be tempted by Satan, and did not go of his own private motion to enter the lists with Satan. Teaching us our duty, not to run into or rush upon temptations, without a warrant and call from God.

Observe next, The place where Satan assaulted Christ with his temptations: it was a solitary wilderness. No place can privilege us from temptations, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assaults. The solitary wilderness has a tempter in it: yea, Satan oftentimes makes use of men's solitariness to further his temptations; and such as separate themselves from human society, and give themselves up to solitude and retirement, give great advantage to the tempter to tempt them.

Observe next, the time and continuance of our holy Lord's temptations; not for an hour, a day, a week, or a month, but for forty days and forty nights; not all the time, but very often in that time. Teaching us what we are to expect from Satan; temptations not a few; he will not solicit us once, but often to resist him.

Observe farther, A special aggravation of our Lord's temptations in the wilderness. He was with the wild beasts, having no comfort from man, but only wild beasts for his companions, which were more likely to annoy and hurt him, than any way to help and comfort him. Here we have an evidence of the divine power of Christ; who, as Lord of the creatures, can alter and change the nature of the creature at his pleasure; restraining the most savage and hurtful beasts from hurting either himself or any of his people.

Observe lastly, The supply sent in to Christ in the hour of temptation: The angels came and ministered unto him; food to his hungry body, and comfort to his tempted soul.

Learn thence, that those who in the hour of temptation do hold out in resisting Satan, shall find that the power and faithfulness of God will not be wanting to them to send in succour and relief at last; Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

Barnes:

Now after that John, etc. John was imprisoned by Herod, Mt 14:3. Jesus came into Galilee. He left Judea, and went into the more retired country of Galilee. He supposed that if he remained in Judea, Herod would also persecute him, and attempt his life. His time of death had not come; and he therefore prudently sought safety in retirement, hence we may learn, that when we have great duties to perform for the church of God, we are not wantonly to endanger our lives. When we can secure them without a sacrifice of principle, we are to do it. See Mt 24:16.

Mk 1:15 Verse 15. The time is fulfilled. That is, the time for the appearance of the Messiah. The time, so long foretold, has come. The kingdom of God is at hand. Mt 3:2. Repent ye. Exercise sorrow for sins, and turn from them. And believe the Gospel. Literally, trust in the gospel, or believe the good tidings--to wit, respecting salvation. Mt 4:17. (q) "time is" Dan 2:44, 9:25, Gal 4:4, Eph 1:10 (r) "repent ye" Acts 2:38 (s) "believe" Rom 16:26

Burkitt:

In this our Saviour's first beginning to preach the gospel, we have an account of the time when, the place where, and the sum of what, he preached.

Observe, 1. The time when our Lord began to preach, and that was after John the Baptist was cast into prison,

Where note, 1. The undue reward which the ministers of God do sometimes meet with from a wicked world; they are hated, persecuted, and imprisoned, for their courage in reproving sin: John for reproving Herod's incest was put in prison.

Note, 2. John was no sooner in prison, and stopped and hindered from preaching, but Christ began to preach. See the care and kindness of God towards his church, in that he never leaves it wholly destitute of the means of instruction: when some of his faithful ministers are restrained from preaching, he stirreth up others in their room, not suffering all their mouths to be stopped at once.

Observe, 2. The place where our Lord first preached, in Galilee. The land of Canaan, in our Saviour's time, was divided into three principal provinces: on the south, Judea; on the north, Galilee; in the midst, Samaria.

Galilee was divided into the upper and lower Galilee; the higher was called Galilee of the Gentiles, because it was the utmost part of the land, and so next unto the Gentiles. In this upper Galilee, Capernaum was the metropolis, or chief; and Chorazin a lesser city.

Now much of our Saviour's time was spent in Galilee; he was conceived and brought up at Nazareth, a city in Galilee; he first preached at Capernaum in Galilee; he wrought his first miracle at Cana in Galilee; his transfiguration was upon mount Tabor in Galilee; and our Saviour's ordinary residence was in Galilee. He came into Judea, and up to Jerusalem, only at the feasts: and after his resurrection he appoints his disciples to meet him in Galilee. Only his nativity, his passion, and ascension, were proper to Judea.

His nativity at Bethlehem, his passion at Jerusalem,and his ascension upon mount Olivet, hard by Jerusalem.

Now all this demonstrates Christ to be the true and promised Messias; for according to prophecy, the Messias was to have his presence and principal abode in the province of Galilee, Isa 9:1,2,3, &c. Yet because he was of Galilee, the Jews would not believe him to be the Messiah, saying in scorn, Can any good thing come out of Galilee? Whereas our Saviour's habitation and free conversation there, was a proof unto them, and ought to have persuaded them, that according to the prophecy he was the very Christ.

Observe, 3. The sum of what our Lord preached, namely, a doctrine, and an exhortation. His doctrine is, That the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; that is, that the time foretold by the prophets, when the kingdom of the Messiah should begin, was now come. The exhortation is, Therefore repent, and believe the gospel.

From the former note, That the Messiah's coming, or our Saviour's appearing in the flesh, was exactly at the time foretold by the holy prophets: The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of the Messiah is at hand.

Note, 2. That the great doctrines of repentance and faith are taught only in and by the gospel, and accordingly ought in a special manner to be preached and insisted upon by the ministers of the gospel. The doctrine of Christ, and his ambassadors, is and ought to be the same; they both teach the great doctrines of faith and repentance to a lost world: Repent, and believe the gospel.

15 and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

Mt 4:18, Lk 5:4

In this history of our Saviour's calling the four disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, observe these particulars. 1. The meanness of the persons whom he calls, illiterate fishermen: Christ took hereby effectual care that his gospel should be known to be the power of God, and not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instruments should not carry away the glory of the work.

Observe, 2. Christ called his apostles by couples, two and two; first Peter and Andrew, then James and John: thereby signifying to us, that the work of the ministry requires the concurrence of all hands that are called to it. All the ministers of God should join their hearts and hands, and set their shoulders as on man to this great work; and all little enough, God knows, to carry it on with advantage and success.

Observe, 3. The work which they are called from, and called to: from being fishermen, to be fishers of men; from catching fish with the labour of their tongues.

Observe, 4. Our Saviour's command, first to follow him, before they be sent out by him: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. We must be Christ's disciples before we are his ministers; his followers, before we are his ambassadors: we must learn Christ before we preach him; otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, but not for souls.

Observe, 5. The gracious promise which Christ gives his apostles for their encouragement; namely, to qualify them for, and to succeed them in, their office: I will make you fishers of men. Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour, is our part; but the blessing and success is Christ's: our labour is only in the cast; Christ's power is wholly in the draught.

Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, more wallow in mud; and verily we shall labour all our days and catch

nothing, if Christ do not bring our fish to the net, and enclose them in it, as well as asist us in the throwing and casting of it.

Observe, 6. The apostles' ready compliance with our Saviour's call. Straightway they forsook their father and friends, ship and nets, and followed Jesus. Whom Christ calls, he calls effectually: and draws whom he calls and works their hearts to a ready compliance with their duty.

Observe, 7. That upon their call to the ministry they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and nets, and lie close to their ministerial employment. Teaching us, That the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves up to their great work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs and worldly business. Nothing but an indispensable necessity, in providing for a family, can excuse a minister's incumbering himself with worldly concerns and business.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

A Man with an Unclean Spirit

21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

Our Saviour having called his disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, to follow him, in order to their preaching of the gospel; here we may observe how he went himself along with them, teaching personally in the synagogues wherever he came: he did not send his apostles forth as his curates, and lie at home himself upon his couch of ease. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen that set others to the drag, but care only to feed themselves with the fish; not willing to wet their hands with the net, or take any pains

themselves? Our Saviour did not thus; but when he sent forth his apostles, he still preached himself: he went into their synagogues and taught.

Observe farther, the success of his preaching; the people were astonished at his doctrine, struck with admiration, apprehending and believing him to be an extraordinary prophet sent from God.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

There was a man with an unclean spirit; That is, an unclean spirit did enter into him, and bodily possess him. Amongst the many calamities which sin has brought upon our bodies, this is one, that we are liable to be bodily possessed by Satan. The devil has an inveterate malice against mankind, seeking to ruin our souls by his suggestions and temptations, and to destroy our bodies by some means or other: but, blessed be God, though his malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; as he cannot do all he can.

O how much is it our interest, as well as our duty, by prayer to put ourselves morning and evening under the divine protection, that we may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits!

Observe, 2. The attribute or title given to the devil, he is called an unclean spirit. The devils, those wicked spirits of hell, are most impure and filthy creatures; impure by means of their original apostasy; impure by means of their actual and daily sins, such as murder, malice, lying, and the like, by which they continually pollute themselves; impure by means of their continual desire and endeavour to pollute mankind with the contagion of their own sin. Lord, how foul is the nature of sin, which makes the devil such a foul and unclean creature!

Observe, 3. This unclean spirit no sooner saw Christ, but he cried out.

Whence note, That the greatness of Christ's power (being the Son of God) over devils and wicked spirits is such, that it is very terrible

and tormenting to them; it was terrible to them in his state of humiliation on earth, and made them cry out. But oh, how terrible will his power be to them at the great day, when Christ shall come in flaming fire, to render vengenance both to men and devils!

Observe, 4. The substance of the devil's outcry; Let us alone, what have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?
Where note, that though the devils are now as full of sin and discontent as they can be, yet are they not so full of misery and torment as they shall be. Art thou come to torment us before the time? says St. Matthew. Matt 8:29 and Art thou come to destroy us? says St. Mark: that is to bring upon us our full and final destruction.

Implying, that the devil has not yet his full judgment and complete damnation. Therefore there is certainly a day of judgment to come, and the devils are in chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of that great day. But some by these words, Art thou come to destroy us? understand as much as, "Art thou come to restrain us from the exercise of our power?"
Learn we thence, That the devil thinks himself destroyed when he is restrained from doing mischief.

Observe, 5. The title which the devil put upon our Saviour; Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God. Although there was ground for the common people's calling Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, because he was bred and brought up there, and lived there during his private life, till about thirty years of age; though he was not born there, but at Bethlehem; yet it is conceived that the devil gave this title to our Saviour in policy, to disguise the place of Christ's nativity, that so the Jews might not believe him to be the true Messiah, because he was of Nazareth, whereas the Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem, but Jesus of Nazareth. But how comes the next title out of the devil's mouth; The Holy One of God? Could an apostle, could Peter himself, make a profession beyond this? But how comes the devil to make it? For no good end or purpose, we may be sure; for he never speaks truth for truth's sake, but for advantage.

Probably,

(1.) He made this profession, that so he might bring the truth professes into suspicion, hoping that a truth which received testimony from the father of lies would be suspected.

(2.) It might perhaps be done that the people might believe that our Saviour had some familiarity with Satan, and did work miracles by his help, because he did confess him, and seem so much to honour him.

From this instance and example learn, That it is possible for a person to own and acknowledge Christ to be the true and only Saviour, and yet to miss of salvation by him. If a speculative knowledge, and a verbal profession, of Christ, were sufficient to salvation, the devil himself would not miss of happiness.

Observe, 6. How our Saviour rebukes the devil for his confession, and commands him silence; And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace. But why was this rebuke given the devil when he spake the truth?

Ans. 1. Because Christ knew that the devil confessed this truth on purpose to disgrace the truth.

2. Because the devil was not fit person to make this profession. A testimony of truth from the father of lies is enough to render truth itself suspected. Yet the devil's evidence, that Christ was the holy One of God, will rise up in judgment against the wicked Pharisees, who shut their eyes against the miracles, and stop their ears against the doctrine, of the Holy One of God.

Observe lastly, How the unclean spirit obeys the voice of Christ, though with great reluctance and regret. When the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out. Christ is Lord over the wicked angels, and has an absolute power and

authority to overrule them, and command them at his pleasure; if Christ says to the evil spirit, Come out, out he must come.

Yet observe the devil's spite at parting, he tears the man, tortures his body, throws him violently from place to place, showing how loth he was to be dispossessed. Where Satan has once gotten an hold, and settled himself for a time, how unwilling is he to be cast out of possession! yea, it is a torture and vexation to him to be cast out: it is much easier to keep him out than to cast him out. Satan may possess the body by God's permission, but he cannot possess our hearts without our own consent and approgbation: it will be our wisdom to deny him entrance into our souls at first, by rejecting his wicked motions and suggestions; for when once entered, he will, like the strong man armed, keep the house till a stronger than he casts him out.

24 saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this ? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

Jesus Heals Simon's Mother-in-Law

29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him of her.

The second miracle which our Saviour wrought in this chapter, to confirm the truth and authority of his doctrine was his raising up of Peter's wife's mother from her bed of sickness.

Where note,

1. that St. Peter, now a disciple, and afterwards an apostle, was a married person. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the ministers of the New, did abhor the marriage-bed, nor think themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The church of Rome, by denying the lawfulness of priests' marriage, makes herself wiser than God, who says, Marriage is honourable amongst all men. Heb 13:4.

Observe, 2. Peter, though a good man, and his wife's mother probably a gracious woman, yet is his family visited with sickness; strength of grace, and dearness of respect even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases. God's own children are visited with bodily sickness as well as others.

Observe, 3. The charitable care of St. Peter, and the other disciples, forthwith to acquaint Christ with the condition of this sick person, Anon they tell him of her. The care of our fellow-christians, especially when of the number of our near and dear relations, in a time of sickness, is not to be deferred or delayed. Outward help for their bodies, and the spiritual help of our prayers for their souls, are both straightway to be afforded them.

Observe, 4. Christ's divine power manifested in this miraculous cure: He no sooner took her by the hand but the fever left her. The miracle was not in curing an incurable distemper, but in curing an ordinary distemper after a miraculous manner; namely,

1. By a touch of the hand.
2. The recovery was instantaneous and sudden: Immediately the fever left her.
3. The visible effects of her recovery instantly appeared: She arose and ministered unto Christ and his disciples.

That she could arise, argued her cure miraculous; that she did arise, and did minister to Christ, argued her thankfulness.

Learn thence, That after Christ hath graciously healed any of us, it ought to be our first work and care to administer unto Christ; that

is, to employ our recovered health in the service of Christ, and to improve our renewed strength to the honour and glory of Christ.

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Jesus Heals Many at Evening

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

The evangelist here declares sundry other miracles wrought by our Saviour before the door of St. Peter's house, where he now was; he healed all the diseased that were brought unto him, and cast devils out of them that were possessed with them.

But how comes it to pass, that we read of so many possessed with devils in our Saviour's time, and so few either before or since?

Ans. 1. Probably Satan, perceiving that the Messiah was come in the flesh to destroy his kingdom, did rage the more, and discover great malice and enmity against mankind.

2. Perhaps Almighty God permitted Satan at that time to possess so many, that Christ might have occasion to manifest his divine power by casting Satan out: and accordingly we find our Saviour dispossessing all that were possessed by Satan.

It is added, that he suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. That is, Christ would not be made known to be the Son of God by the preaching of the devil, to whom it belonged not to publish the gospel, lest the world should take from thence an occasion to think that our Saviour held a correspondence with those wicked spirits, and that the miracles he wrought were performed by the devil's assistance, as being one in combination with him. Possibly the devil's owning Christ to be the Holy One of God, the Pharisees concluded that there was a compact and agreement betwixt them, and thereupon their affirmation was grounded, He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, &c.

33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

Jesus Departs on a Preaching Tour

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Observe here, 1. The duty performed by our Saviour, Namely, prayer, solitary and private prayer. He went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best friends is not always seasonable, nor acceptable; there are times and cases when a Christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should hear that conversation which passes betwixt him and his God.

Observe, 2. Christ chooses the opportunity of the morning for prayer, he rises a great while before day to set about this work. Teaching us, that the morning is a fit season, yea, the best season, for private duties: now our spirits are freshest and our minds freest, before the distractions of the day break in upon us. It is better to go from prayer to business, than from business to prayer.

36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

Observe here two things: First, the great end of Christ in his incarnation and coming into the world, namely, as a Prophet sent from God to reveal his will, and to publish the doctrine of the gospel. Therefore came I forth; that is, to preach and plant the gospel.

Secondly, It being Christ's design not only to plant but to propagate the gospel, he would not confine his ministry to any particular places, no, not to the great city of Capernaum, but resolves to preach the word in the smallest towns and villages. Leaving his ministers herein an instructive example, to be as willing to preach

the gospel in the smallest villages, as in the largest cities, if God calls them thereunto.

Let the place be never so obscure and mean, and the congregation never so small and little, if God sends us thither, the greatest of us must not think it beneath us to go and instruct a handful of people.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

The last miracle of our Saviour's recorded in this chapter, is the healing of a leper; he came, beseeching Christ to heal him, saying, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Where observe, 1. He doth not question Christ's power, but distrusts Christ's willingness to heal him; Lord if thou wilt, thou canst. Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed, by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him.

Observe, 2. The great readiness of Christ to help and heal this distressed person. Jesus touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. By the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched, therefore Christ's touching the leper showed him to be above the law, and that he was the Lord of it, and might dispense with it; and his healing the leper by the word of his mouth, and touch of his hand, showed him to be truly and really God. Leprosy among the Jews was an incurable distemper, called the finger of God, a disease of his sending, and of his removing.

Our Saviour therefore, as a proof of his being the true Messiah, tells John's disciples, that the lepers were cleansed, and the dead raised Matt 11:5 by him; which two being joined together, do imply, that the cleansing of lepers is as much an act of divine power as the raising of the dead.

And accordingly, it is said, Am I God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy? 2Kgs 5:7

Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure was a proof of Christ's divine power; immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ showed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness.

Observe, 4. The cause, moving our Saviour to cure this leper; his bowels were moved with tender pity and compassion towards him. Christ's exercising acts of mercy and compassion, with such condolency and sympathizing pity, should by way of example teach us to be inwardly moved with tender compassion and mercy towards such as are in misery. We are not only to draw out our bread, but to draw out our soul, to the hungry.

Observe, 5. A twofold charge and command given by Christ to the leper after his cure.

First, to conceal and tell it to no man. Where the great modesty, humility, and piety, of Christ, is discovered, together with the care of his own safety. His modesty, in not desiring his good deeds should be published and proclaimed; his humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety, in desiring all honour and glory should redound entirely to God. And the care of his own safety appeared, lest the publishing of his miracles should create him untimely danger from the Pharisees.

The second part of the charge given to the recovered leper, was to show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them; that is, to testify to the Jews, that he did not oppose the ceremonial law, which required a thank-offering at his hand, and that he was the true and promised Messiah.

Learn thence, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed so long as the time for its continuance did endure; though he came to destroy that law, yet, whilst it stood, he would have it punctually observed.

Observe, 6. Notwithstanding our Saviour's strict prohibition, the leper publishes the fame of this miracle. It is likely his intention might be good, in extolling his great Benefactor; but his acting contrary to Christ's command was a fault, and shows the corruption of human nature, in being most forward to that which is most forbidden. It is a sin to do any thing against the command of Christ, though with never so good a meaning, purpose, and intention, to exalt and honour Christ.

Observe lastly, The inconveniences which attended our Saviour upon this indiscreet publication of the miracle; and they were two:

1. Our Saviour could no more enter into Capernaum, and other cities, to preach in an open manner, as he had done, by reason of the great concourse of people after him.

2. The fame of this miracle brought the people about him from all quarters; not so much to hear as to see; not so much to hear his holy and heavenly doctrine which he taught, as to gratify their curiosity with the sight of the miracles which he wrought.
O how many thronged after Christ, more to have their bodily diseases cured, than their souls healed! Christ desired not their flocking after him upon this account; therefore he retires from the breath of popular applause: he would not openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places. O how great humility! How little

did our blessed Redeemer regard the applause and commendation of men!

Constantly we find him, as soon as his public preaching and working of miracles was over, withdrawing himself from the multitude into some private place apart: he doth not stay in the crowd with his ear open to listen how men admire the preacher, and applaud the sermon. Plainly showing, that he sought his Father's glory, not his own praise or the people's commendation; leaving his example as an instructive pattern to all his ministers and ambassadors, to take heed of vain-glory; not to affect popularity, or to seek the applause and commendation of men in what they do, resolving that man's opinion shall be nothing with them, but that the pleasing of God, and doing their duty to the souls of their people, shall always be their whole scope.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Mark-2

Jesus Heals a Palsied Man

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

In the last verse of the foregoing chapter we find how industriously our blessed Saviour withdrew himself from the concourse and throng of people which flocked after him from every quarter; and to

show how little he affected the applause and commendation of the multitude, he left the cities and was without in desert places. Hereby giving his ministers an instructive example to decline vain-glory, and to shun popular applause. But now the words before us show that our Saviour having entered (privately, as is probable) into the city of Capernaum, it is presently, noised and reported that he was in the house, and a mighty concourse and throng of people are after him; insomuch that neither the house, nor hardly the streets, could contain them.

Thence learn, That such as least seek after honour and applause from men, are oft-times most famous and renowned. Our Saviour was so far from seeking the people's praise and commendation, that he came into Capernaum without observation, and betook himself to his dwelling-house there; but the more he sought to lie hid, the more he was taken notice of.

Honour flies from them that pursue it, and pursues those that fly from it. The way to be honoured, is to be humble. God seldom honours a proud man, by making him either eminently serviceable or successful.

Observe farther, The people being come together, our Saviour takes the opportunity to preach; And he preached the word unto them. Teaching his ministers by his example, to embrace all opportunities, in season and out of season, on the Lord's day and on the week day, to edify our people by our ministry, by our public exhortations, by our private instructions, prudent admonitions, and holy examples.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

As the grievousness of the disease, so the greatness of their faith. The man and his friends had a firm persuasion that Christ was clothed with a divine power, and able to help him, and they hoped in his goodness that he was also willing to help him. Accordingly, the roof of the Jewish houses being flat, they uncovered some part

of it, and let the bed down with the sick man in it into the room where Christ was.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

No sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ exerts his divine power in healing. And see the marvellous efficacy of faith; it obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected. They desired only the healing of the body, but Christ heals body and soul too. Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Thereby our Saviour shows them, that sin is the original cause of all bodily diseases; and consequently, that in sickness, the best way to find ease and deliverance from pain, is first to seek for pardon. The sense of pardon in some degree will take away the sense of pain.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies ? who can forgive sins but God only?

The exception which the scribes took against our Saviour for pronouncing that this man's sins were forgiven him. They accuse him of the sin of blasphemy: urging, that it is God's peculiar prerogative to pardon sin. Their doctrine was true, but their application false. Nothing more true, than that it is the greatest degree of blasphemy for any mere man to arrogate to himself the incommunicable prerogative of God, which consists, in an absolute and authoritative power to forgive sin. But then their denying this power to Christ of forgiving sin, which he had as God from all eternity, and as Mediator, God and man in one person, when here upon earth; this was blasphemy in them; the challenging of it, none in him.

8 And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts ?

Our Saviour gives these scribes a twofold demonstration of his Godhead,

(1.) By letting them understand that he knew their thoughts: Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they reasoned within themselves. To

search the hearts, and to know the thoughts and reasonings of men, but the prerogative of God only.

(2.) By assuming to himself a power to forgive sin; for our Saviour here, by assuming to himself a power to forgive sins in his own name, and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof and convincing evidence of his Godhead. For who can forgive sins but God only?

9 whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

The effect of this miracle upon the minds of the people; they marvelled and were amazed, but did not believe. They admire our Saviour for an extraordinary man, but did not believe him to be God.

Learn thence, That the sight of Christ's miracles is not sufficient to work faith in the soul, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit. The one may make us marvel, the other must make us believe.

The Call of Levi

13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

The unwearied pains and diligence which our Saviour used in the execution of his ministerial office and calling; no sooner had he done preaching in Capernaum, and healing the sick of the palsy; but he goeth out thence to the sea-side to preach there.

O blessed Saviour! How perpetually wert thou employed in the labours of thy calling, in the service of thy Father, and for the good of mankind! Thou wentest about doing good, setting a pattern for

all thy ministers to follow. How doth the example of thy laborious diligence at once instruct and shame us!

14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alpheus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

The number of our Lord's disciples not being filled up, observe what a free and gracious, unexpected and undeserved, choice he makes. Levi, that is, Matthew, (for he hath both names,) a grinding publican, who gathered the taxes for the Romans, and was probably guilty, as others were, of the sins of covetousness, extortion, and oppression; yet he is called to follow Christ as a special disciple.

Learn thence, That such is the freeness of God's grace, that it calls and converts sinners unto Christ when they think not of him, nor seek unto him. Little did Levi now think of a Saviour, much less seek after him, yet he is at this time called by him.

Matthew, a publican, Zaccheus, an extortioner, Saul, a persecutor, all these are brought home to God, as instances and evidences of the mighty power of converting grace.

Matthew's ready compliance with Christ's call; he arose, and followed him. When the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanieth the outward call of the word, the soul readily complies, and presently yields obedience to the voice of Christ. Christ oft-times speaks by his word to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not; but when he speaks by his Spirit efficaciously to our hearts, Satan shall not hold us down, the world shall not keep us back, but we shall with Levi instantly arise and follow our Saviour.

15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many, and they followed him.

Levi, or Matthew, to show his thankfulness to Christ, makes him a great feast. Christ invited Matthew to a discipleship, Matthew invites Christ to a dinner. The servant invites his Master, a sinner invites his Saviour. We do not find, that when Christ was invited to any table, that he ever refused to go: if a publican, if a Pharisee invited him, he constantly went; not so much for the pleasure of

eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Christ feasts us when we feast him.

Learn hence, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very expressive in their love unto him. Matthew, touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast.

16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The cavil and exception which the scribes and Pharisees made at our Lord's free conversation. They censure him for conversing with sinners; he justifies himself, telling them, that he conversed with them as their physician, not as their companion. They that are whole need no physician, says Christ, but they that are sick.

As if our Lord had said, "With whom should a physician converse, but with his sick patients? Now I am come into the world to do the office of a kind physician unto men, surely then I am to take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, for they that are sick need the physician: but as for you scribes and Pharisees, who are well and whole in your own opinion and conceit, I have no hopes of doing good upon you: for such as think themselves whole desire no physician's help."

From this assertion of our Saviour these truths are suggested to us,

1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness.

2. That Christ is the Physician appointed by God for the cure and healing of this disease.

3. That there are multitudes of sinners spiritually sick, whole yet think themselves sound and whole.

4. That such, and only such, as find and feel themselves spiritually sick, are the subjects capable of Christ's healing.

They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the (opiniatively) righteous, but the (sensible) sinner to repentance.

The Question about Fasting

18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

A great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in the matter of fasting. John's disciples imitated him, who was a man of an austere life, and much given to fasting; therefore he is said to come neither eating nor drinking, Matt 11:18.

On the other side, Christ's disciples follow him, who came eating and drinking, as other men did; and yet, though there was a great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in matters of practice, they were all of one faith and religion.

Thence learn, That there may be unity of faith and religion among those who do not maintain an uniformity in practice. Men may differ in some outward religious observances and customs, and yet agree in the fundamentals of faith and religion. Thus did John's disciples and Christ's; the one fasted often, the other fasted not.

In that the disciples of the Pharisees used to fast as well as John's disciples, we may learn, That hypocrites and wicked men may be, and sometimes are, as strict and forward in the outward duties of religion, as the holiest and best of christians; they pray, they fast, they hear the word, they receive the sacraments: they do, yea, it may be, they outdo and go beyond, the sincere christian in external duties and outward performances.

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

The defensative plea which our blessed Saviour makes for the not fasting of his disciples; he declares that it was neither suitable to them, nor tolerable for them, thus to fast at present. Not suitable, in regard of Christ's bodily presence with them. This made it a time of joy and rejoicing, not of mourning and fasting.

Christ is the Bridegroom, and his church the bride; whilst therefore his spouse did enjoy his bodily presence with her, it was a day of joy and rejoicing to her, and mourning and fasting were improper for her. But when Christ's bodily presence shall be removed, there will be cause enough to fast and mourn.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

Again, this discipline of fasting was not at present tolerable for the disciples; for they were raw, green, and tender, not fit for austerities; nor could bear as yet the severities of religion, no more than an old garment could bear a piece of new stiff cloth to be set into it, which will make the rent worse, if the garment comes to a stretch; or no more than old bottles can keep new wine.

As if our Saviour had said, "My disciples at present are tender and weak, newly called and converted; they cannot therefore bear the severities of religion presently; but ere long I shall leave them, and go to heaven, from whence I will send down the Holy Spirit upon them, which shall enable them to do all the duties which the gospel enjoins.

Now the intended lesson of instruction from hence is this, That it is hurtful and dangerous for young converts, for weak christians, to be put upon the severer exercises of religion, or to be urged to the performance of such duties as are above their strength. But they

ought to be handled with that tenderness which becomes the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour here commends prudence to his ministers in treating their people according to their strength, and putting them upon duties according to their time and standing.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

The Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

The poverty, the low estate and condition, of Christ's own disciples in this world; they wanted bread, and are forced to pluck the ears of corn to satisfy their hunger. God may, and sometimes doth, suffer his dearest children to fall in streights, to taste of want, for the trial of their faith, and dependence upon his power and providence.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful ?

How the Pharisees (who accompanied our Saviour only with a design to cavil at, and quarrel with, every thing that either he or his disciples did) blame this action of the disciples, namely, the plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day.

Yet note, 1. It was not any theft which the disciples were charged with; for to take in our necessity so much of our neighbour's goods as we may reasonably suppose that, if he were present, and knew our circumstances, he would give us, is no theft. But it is the servile labour on the sabbath, in gathering the ears of corn, which the Pharisees scruple.

Whence observe, How zealous hypocrites are for the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater, and are superstitiously

addicted to outward ceremonies, placing all holiness in the observation of them, neglecting moral duties.

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was ahungered, he, and they that were with him?

How our Saviour defends the action of his disciples in gathering the ears of corn in their necessity, by the practice and example of David. Necessity freed him from fault and blame in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat. For in cases of necessity a ceremonial precept must give way to a moral duty. Works of mercy and necessity for preserving our lives, and for the better fitting us for sabbath-services, are certainly lawful for the sabbath-day.

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

A double argument which our Saviour uses, to prove that the sabbath's observation may be dispensed with in a case of absolute necessity;

1. Drawn from the end of the sabbath's institution: the sabbath was made for man; that is, instituted of God for the good and benefit of mankind, both with respect to their souls and to their bodies. The outward observing and keeping of the sabbath is subordinate to the good of man, and therefore the good of man is to be preferred before the outward keeping of the sabbath.

2. Argument is drawn from the authority which Christ, the Institutor of the sabbath, has over it. The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath; that is, he has authority and power, both as God and as Mediator, to institute and appoint a sabbath, to alter and change the sabbath, to dispense with the breach of it upon a just and great occasion; and consequently, acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought to be done upon the sabbath-day: which was the proposition which our Saviour undertook to prove.

28 therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Mark-3

The Man with a Withered Hand

1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.
2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.
3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.
4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

Or to do evil? to saw life, or to kill?. It seems to have been a maxim with the Jews, that not to do good, when we have an opportunity, was to do evil; not to save life was to kill, or to be guilty of murder. If a man has an opportunity of saving a man's life when he is in danger, and does not do it, he is evidently guilty of his death. On this principle our Saviour puts this question to the Jews, whether it was better for him, having the power to heal this man, to do it, or to suffer him to remain in this suffering condition. And he illustrates it by an example, showing that in a matter of much less importance--that respecting their cattle--they would do on the Sabbath just as he would if he should heal this man. The same remark may apply to all opportunities of doing good. "The ability to do good imposes an obligation to do it."--Cotton Mather. He that has the means of feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and instructing the ignorant, and sending the gospel to the destitute, and that does it not, is guilty; for he is practically doing evil; he is suffering evils to exist which he might remove, So the wicked will be condemned in the day of judgment, because "they did it not," Mt 25:45. If this be true, what an obligation rests on the rich to do good!

Learn thence, That the unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men against us for well-doing, must not discourage us from doing our duty either towards God, or towards our neighbour. Though the Pharisees watched our Saviour, and when their envy

and malice could find no occasion of quarrel, they could invent and make one; yet such was our Lord's courage and resolution, that he bids the man which had the withered hand, stand forth: to show that he was resolved to heal him, notwithstanding their malicious purpose to accuse him for it as a breaker of the sabbath. Opposition met with in doing our duty, must not discourage us from doing good, if we will follow the example of our blessed Redeemer.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

With anger. With a severe and stern countenance; with indignation at their hypocrisy and hardness of heart. This was not, however, a spiteful or revengeful passion; it was caused by excessive grief at their state. It was not sudden and tumultuous hatred of the men whose hearts were so hard; it was hatred of the sin which they exhibited, joined with the extreme grief that neither his teaching, nor the law of God, nor any means which could be used, overcame their confirmed wickedness. Such anger is not unlawful, Eph 4:26. And, in this instance, our Lord has taught us that anger is never lawful, except when it is tempered with grief or compassion for those who have offended.

Hardness of their hearts. The heart--figuratively the seat of feeling, or affection is said to be tender when it is easily affected by the sufferings of others; by our own sin and danger; by the love and commands of God;--when we are easily made to feel on the great subjects pertaining to our interest, Eze 11:19,20. It is hard, when nothing moves it; when a man is alike insensible to the sufferings of others, the dangers of his own condition, and the commands, the love, and the threatenings of God. It is most tender in youth, or when we have committed fewest crimes. It is made hard by indulgence in sin; by long resisting the offers of life; or by opposing any great and affecting appeals which God may make to us by his Spirit or Providence, by affliction, or by a revival of religion. Hence it is that the most favourable period for securing an interest in Christ, or for becoming a Christian, is in youth; the first, the tenderest, and the best days of life. Nay, in the days of childhood--

in the Sabbath-school--God may be found, and the soul prepared to die.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

How they might destroy him. They hated him for his holiness; because he reproved them; because he laid open their hypocrisy; and because he won the hearts of the people, and lessened their influence. They therefore determined to remove him, if possible, and thus avoid his reproofs. Sinners would often rather put to death the man that reproves them, than to forsake their sins. The Pharisees had rather commit any crime, even to the murder of the Messiah, than forsake the sins of which he rebuked them.

A Multitude at the Seaside

7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea,

8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Jesus Chooses the Twelve

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15 and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

16 and Simon he surnamed Peter;

17 and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite,
19 and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.
And they went into a house.

A Divided House Cannot Stand

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

> They could not so much as eat bread. Their time and attention were so occupied, that they were obliged to forego their regular meals. The affairs of religion may so occupy the attention of ministers, and others, as to destroy their relish for the ordinary comforts and employments of life, and prevent their engaging in their customary pursuits. Religion is all-important--far more important than the ordinary business of this life; and there is nothing unreasonable if our temporal affairs sometimes give way to the higher interests of our own souls, and the souls of others. At the same time, it is true that religion is ordinarily consistent with a close attention to worldly business, It promotes industry, economy, order, neatness, and punctuality--all indispensable to worldly prosperity. Of these there has been no more illustrious example than that of our Saviour himself.

21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him:
for they said, He is beside himself.

> He is beside himself. He is delirious, or deranged, The reason why this report gained any belief was, probably, that our Lord had lived among them as a carpenter; that he was poor, and unknown; and that now, at thirty years of age, he broke off from his occupations, abandoned his common employment, spent much time in the deserts, denied himself the common comforts of life, and set up his claims to be the Messiah, who was expected by all the people to come with great pomp and splendour. The charge of derangement on account of attention to religion has not been confined to our Saviour. Let a man be made deeply sensible of his sins, and spend much of his time in prayer, and have no relish for the ordinary amusements or business of life; or let a Christian be much impressed with his obligation to devote himself to God, and act as if he believed there was an eternity, and warn his neighbours of

their danger; or let a minister show uncommon zeal, and waste his strength in the service of his Master, and the world is not slow to call it derangement. And none will be more ready to originate or believe the charge than an ungodly and infidel parent or brother; a self-righteous Pharisee or professor in the church. At the same time, men may endanger themselves on the bosom of the deep, or in the bowels of the earth, for wealth; or may plunge into the vortex of fashion, and folly, and vice, and break in upon the hours of repose, and neglect their duties to their family, and the demands of business, and in the view of the world it is wisdom, and proof of a sane mind! Such is the consistency of boasted reason; such the wisdom and prudence of worldly men!

When his friends in Capernaum heard how he was followed, and what pains he took, they went out, to lay hold on him, and fetch him home, for they said, He is beside himself.

1. Some understand it of an absurd preposterous care, which had more in it of reproach to him than of respect; and so we must take it as we read it, He is beside himself; either they suspected it themselves, or it was suggested to them, and they gave credit to the suggestion, that he was gone distracted, and therefore his friends ought to bind him, and put him in a dark room, to bring him to his right mind again. His kindred, many of them, had mean thoughts of him (Joh 7:5), and were willing to hearken to this ill construction which some put upon his great zeal, and to conclude him crazed in his intellects, and under that pretence to take him off from his work. The prophets were called mad fellows, 2Ki 9:11.

2. Others understand it of a well-meaning care; and then they read exeste--"He fainteth, he has no time to eat bread, and therefore his strength will fail him; he will be stifled with the crowd of people, and will have his spirits quite exhausted with constant speaking, and the virtue that goes out of him in his miracles; and therefore let us use a friendly violence with him, and get him a little breathing-

time." In his preaching-work, as well as his suffering-work, he was attacked with, Master, spare thyself. Note, They who go on with vigour and zeal in the work of God, must expect to meet with hindrances, both from the groundless disaffection of their enemies, and the mistaken affections of their friends, and they have need to stand upon their guard against both.

22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29 but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

30 because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Jesus' Mother and Brethren

31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

He looked upon those that at about him, and pronounced those of them that not only heard, but did, the will of God, to be to him as his brother, and sister, and mother; as much esteemed, loved, and cared for, as his nearest relations, Mk 3:33-35. This is a good reason why we should honour those that fear the Lord, and choose them for our people; why we should be not hearers of the word only, but doers of the work, that we may share with the saints in

this honour, Surely it is good to be akin to those who are thus nearly allied to Christ, and to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with Christ; and woe to those that hate and persecute Christ's kindred, that are his bone and his flesh, every one resembling the children of a king (see Jdg 8:18,19); for he will with jealously plead their cause, and avenge their blood.

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Mark-4

The Parable of the Sower

1 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat
in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

This is the first recorded teaching in parables. For notes on the parable of the Sower, see Mt 13:1-23. Compare Lu 8:4-15. Mark's report is nearly that of Matthew, word for word, as well as of the explanation that follows. Matthew gives much the fullest account of this day's teaching, reporting a number of parables not found elsewhere.

3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

4 and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

6 but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred.

9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.
11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these
things are done in parables:
12 that seeing they may see, and not perceive;
and hearing they may hear, and not understand;
lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.
13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?
14 The sower soweth the word.
15 And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.
16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;
17 and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.
18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,
19 and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.
20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

A Candle under a Bushel

21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed ? and not to be set on a candlestick ?

Is a candle brought, etc. A candle is not lit up to be put immediately under a measure, or a bed, where it can give no light. Its design is to give light. So my preaching by parables is not designed to obscure the truth, but to throw light on it. You should understand those parables; and, understanding them, should impart the truth to others also, as a candle throws its beams upon a dark world.

The end and design of Christ in revealing his word and will to his disciples, and in communicating to them the light of spiritual

knowledge; namely that they may communicate it to others, and not keep it close unto themselves. Even as the candle in a house diffuses and disperses its light to all that come within the reach of it; in like manner ought all Christians, and particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, to direct persons in their way towards heaven. Such as are enlightened by God in any measure, with the knowledge and understanding of his word, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves, but communicate it to others, and employ it for the good and benefit of others.

22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

There is nothing hid, etc. Mt 10:26.

23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.

Let him give the gospel of Christ a fair hearing; but that is not enough, it is added (Mk 4:24), Take heed what ye hear, and give a due regard to that which ye do hear; Consider what ye hear, so Dr. Hammond reads it. Note, What we hear, doth us no good, unless we consider it; those especially that are to teach others must themselves be very observant of the things of God; must take notice of the message they are to deliver, that they may be exact. We must likewise take heed what we hear, by proving all things, that we may hold fast that which is good. We must be cautious, and stand upon our guard, lest we be imposed upon. To enforce this caution, consider,

1. As we deal with God, God will deal with us, so Dr. Hammond explains these words, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. If ye be faithful servants to him, he will be a faithful Master to you: with the upright he will show himself upright."

2. As we improve the talents we are entrusted with, we shall increase them; if we make use of the knowledge we have, for the glory of God and the benefit of others, it shall sensibly grow, as

stock in trade doth by being turned; Unto you that hear, shall more be given; to you that have, it shall be given, Mk 4:25. If the disciples deliver that to the church, which they have received of the Lord, they shall be led more into the secret of the Lord. Gifts and graces multiply by being exercised; and God has promised to bless the hand of the diligent.

3. If we do not use, we lose, what we have; From him that hath not, that doeth no good with what he hath, and so hath it in vain, is as if he had it not, shall be taken even that which he hath. Burying a talent is the betraying of a trust, and amounts to a forfeiture; and gifts and graces rust for want of wearing.

25 For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

The Parable of the Growing Seed

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27 and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

This parable of our Saviour's is an instructive lesson to the ministers of the gospel, faithfully to do their parts in sowing the seed of the word amongst their people, and then not to be over-solicitous about the event, but to leave the issue to God; not to be discouraged, though the fruit of their labour doth not presently appear.

Accordingly Christ propounds the laborious husbandman to his ministers' imitation. As the husbandman, when he has prudently and painfully cast his seed into the ground, is not anxiously disquieted, but goes to bed, and rests in hope, and at length the corn springs up; first the blade, then the ear, then the grain.

In like manner let the ministers of God do their duty without discouragement; in the morning sow their seed, and in the evening not withhold their hand. And although the seed sown doth not appear presently, (it may be in in our days,) but seems rotting

among the clods; yet may it appear afterwards with a plentiful increase, when our own heads are laid among the clods; verifying that saying of our Saviour, One soweth, and another reapeth.

Learn hence,

1. That the ministry of the word is the ordinary, the necessary and the principal means which God has appointed for sowing the seed of grace in the hearts of his people: So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.

2. That the virtue and efficacy of the word preached doth not depend upon the parts of a man, but upon the power of God; The seed springeth up, he knoweth not how.
Learn, 3. That the word of God sincerely preached may be successful, though it be not presently successful; the seed sown in one minister's days, may spring up in another's.

Happy we, if as God's husbandmen we be employed in plowing, sowing, or reaping; our Lord will reward us secundum laborem, non fructum; not according to our success, but according to our endeavours. The care and endeavour is ours, but the blessing and success is God's.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God ? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

32 but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Mt 13:31,32, Lk 13:18,19

Jesus' Use of Parables

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Jesus Calms a Storm

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

See Mt 8:18-27.

36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him ?

Mark-5

The Gadarene Demoniac Healed

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

See notes on Mt 8:28-34.

3 who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4 because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

An account of the conduct of the poor man after his deliverance. 1. He desired that he might go along with Christ (Mk 5:18), perhaps for fear lest the evil spirit should again seize him; or, rather, that he might receive instruction from him, being unwilling to stay among those heathenish people that desired him to depart. Those that are freed from the evil spirit, cannot but covet acquaintance and fellowship with Christ. 2. Christ would not suffer him to go with him, lest it should savour of ostentation, and to let him know that he could both protect and instruct him at a distance. And besides, he had other work for him to do; he must go home to his friends, and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him, the Lord Jesus had done; that Christ might be honoured, and his neighbours and friends might be edified, and invited to believe in Christ. He must take particular notice rather of Christ's pity than of his power, for that is it which especially he glories in; he must tell them what compassion the Lord had had on him in his misery. 3. The man, in a transport of joy, proclaimed, all the country over, what great things Jesus had done for him, Mk 5:20. This is a debt we owe both to Christ and to our brethren, that he may be glorified and they edified. And see what was the effect of it; All men did marvel, but few went any further. Many that cannot but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not, as they ought, wonder after him.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea.

See the account of the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, fully explained Mt 9:18 and Mt 9:19-26.

22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23 and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24 And Jesus went with him.

And much people followed him, and thronged him.
25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,
26 and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,
27 when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.
28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.
29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.
30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes ?
31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?
32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.
33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.
34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole;
go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.
35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further?
36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.
37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and
John the brother of James.
38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.
39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.
40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.
41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee,) arise.
42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.
43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Mark-6

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

> See this passage explained Mt 13:54 and Mt 13:55-58.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things ? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went round about the villages, teaching.

The Mission of the Twelve

7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

> See notes on Mt 10:5-18
>
> they were commanded not to go among the Gentiles or Samaritans. Mark omits that direction, perhaps, because he was writing for the Gentiles, and the direction might create unnecessary difficulty or offence. Perhaps he omits it also because the command was given for a temporary purpose, and was not in force at tile time of his writing.

8 and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

9 but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.
12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad;) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

> See this account of the death of John the Baptist fully explained in Mt 14:1-12.

15 Others said, That it is Elijah. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.
16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.
17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her.
18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.
19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:
20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.
21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;
22 and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.
23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.
24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.
25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.
27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,
28 and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother.
29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

> And the apostles gathered themselves together. That is, those whom he had sent out two and two, Mk 6:7. Having travelled around the country, they returned and met the Saviour at Capernaum.

31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.
32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.
33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.
34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

> They had no one to teach them, and guide them. The priests and scribes were proud, corrupt, and despised the common people and neglected them.

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

> See notes on Mt 13:14-21

36 send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.
37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?
38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.
40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.
41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.
42 And they did all eat, and were filled.
43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.
44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

See notes on Mt 14:22-33

46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.
47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.
48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.
49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:
50 for they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.
51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.
52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

See notes on Mt 14:34-36

54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,
55 and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

Mark-7

The Things That Defile

1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

See notes on Mt 15:1-20

2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault.
3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.
4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.
5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?
6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,
This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.
7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me,
teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.
8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.
9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of
God, that ye may keep your own tradition.
10 For Moses said,
Honor thy father and thy mother;
and,
Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:
11 but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.
12 And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother;
13 making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:
15 there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.
16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.
17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.
18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;
19 because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats ?
20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.
21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,
22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:
23 all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith

24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

See this miracle explained in Mt 15:21-28.

25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:
26 the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.
27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.
28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.
29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.
30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

Jesus Heals a Deaf and Dumb Man

31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

See here, 1. The bitter fruits and sad effects of sin, which has brought deafness, dumbness, and blindness, upon the human nature. As death, so all diseases entered into the world by sin; sin first brought infirmitities and mortality into our natures, and the wages of sin are diseases and death.

Observe, 2. That the blessing of bodily health and healing is from Christ; who by his divine power, as he was God, miraculously and immediately healed them that were brought unto him.

Observe, 3. The actions and gestures which our Saviour used in healing this deaf person. He puts his finger into his ears, he spit, and touched his tongue. Not that these were means or natural causes effecting the cures for there was no healing virtue in the spittle; but only outward signs, testimonies, and pledges, of Christ's divine power and gracious readiness to cure the person in distress.

Observe, 4. How Christ withdrew the person from the multitude, whom he was about to help and heal. Teaching us, In all our good works to avoid all shew and appearance of ostentation and vain-glory: to set God's glory before our eyes, and not to seek our own praise.

Observe, 5. The effect which this miracle had upon the multitude; it occasioned their astonishment and applause: They were astonished, and said, He hath done all things well. It becomes us both to take notice of the wonderful works of God, and also to magnify and extol the author of them. This is one way of glorifying our Creator.

32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.
33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;
34 and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.
35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.
36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;
37 and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Mark-8

The Feeding of the Four Thousand

1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

See notes on Mt 15:32-39.

2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:
3 and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.
4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?
5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye ? And they said, Seven.
6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.
7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.
8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.
9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.
10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

The Demand for a Sign

11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

See this passage explained in Mt 16:1-12.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign ? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

The Leaven of the Pharisees

14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread ? perceive ye not yet, neither understand ? have ye your heart yet hardened ?

18 Having eyes, see ye not ? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember ?

19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

A Blind Man Healed at Bethsaida

22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

Here is a blind man brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would touch him, Mk 8:22. Here appears the faith of those that brought him--they doubted not but that one touch of Christ's hand would recover him his sight; but the man himself showed not

that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure that other blind men did. If those that are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to touch them.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught.

Here is Christ leading this blind man, Mk 8:23. He did not bid his friends lead him, but (which bespeaks his wonderful condescension) he himself took him by the hand, and led him, to teach us to be as Job was, eyes to the blind, Job 29:15. Never had poor blind man such a Leader. He led him out of the town. Had he herein only designed privacy, he might have led him into a house, into an inner chamber, and have cured him there; but he intended hereby to upbraid Bethsaida with the mighty works that had in vain been done in her (Mt 11:21), and was telling her, in effect, she was unworthy to have any more done within her walls. Perhaps Christ took the blind man out of the town, that he might have a larger prospect in the open fields, to try his sight with, than he could have in the close streets.

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist, who came into the world to preach the recovering of sight to the blind (Lu 4:18), and to give what he preached. In this cure we may observe,

1. That Christ used a sign; he spat on his eyes (spat into them, so some), and put his hand upon him. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith which was very weak, and to help him against his unbelief. And this spittle signified the eye-salve wherewith Christ anoints the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, Re 3:18.

2. That the cure was wrought gradually, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He asked him if he saw aught, Mk 8:23. Let him tell what condition his sight was in, for the satisfaction of those about him. And he looked up; so far he recovered his sight, that he could

open his eyes, and he said, I see men as trees walking; he could not distinguish men from trees, otherwise than he could discern them to move. He had some glimmerings of sight, and betwixt him and the sky could perceive a man erect like a tree, but could not discern the form thereof, Job 4:16. But,

3. It was soon completed; Christ never doeth his work by the halves, nor leaves it till he can say, It is finished. He put his hands again upon his eyes, to disperse the remaining darkness, and then bade him look up again, and he saw every man clearly, Mk 8:25. Now Christ took this way,

(a) Because he would not tie himself to a method, but would show with what liberty he acted in all he did. He did not cure by rote, as I may say, and in a road, but varied as he thought fit. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with an implicit faith.

(b) Because it should be to the patient according to his faith; and perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterward gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Not that Christ always went by this rule, but thus he would sometimes put a rebuke upon those who came to him, doubting.

(c) Thus Christ would show how, and in what method, those are healed by his grace, who by nature are spiritually blind; at first, their knowledge is confused, they see men as trees walking; but, like the light of the morning, it shines more and more to the perfect day, and then they see all things clearly, Pr 4:18. Let us enquire then, if we see aught of those things which faith is the substance and evidence of; and if through grace we see any thing of them, we may hope that we shall see yet more and more, for Jesus Christ will perfect for ever those that are sanctified.

26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

The directions Christ gave the man he had cured, not to tell it to any in the town of Bethsaida, nor so much as to go into the town, where

probably there were some expecting him to come back, who had seen Christ lead him out of the town, but, having been eyewitnesses of so many miracles, had not so much as the curiosity to follow him: let not those be gratified with the sight of him when he was cured, who would not show so much respect to Christ as to go a step out of the town, to see this cure wrought. Christ doth not forbid him to tell it to others, but he must not tell it to any in the town. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and Christ will make those know the worth of their privileges by the want of them, that would not know them otherwise. Bethsaida, in the day of her visitation, would not know the things that belonged to her peace, and now they are hid from her eyes. They will not see, and therefore shall not see.

Peter's Confession

27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

See this passage illustrated in Mt 16:13-28.

28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elijah; and others, One of the prophets.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

Jesus Foretells His Death

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Mark-9

1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

The Transfiguration

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

See this passage explained; Mt 17:1-13

3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.
4 And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.
5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.
6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.
7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.
8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.
9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them
that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.
11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come?
12 And he answered and told them, Elijah verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.
13 But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

See notes on Mt 17:14-21

15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.
16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?
17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;
18 and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.
19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him unto me.
20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.
21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him ? And he said, Of a child.
22 And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.
23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.
24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.
25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.
27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.
28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?
29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

See notes on Mt 17:22,23

31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.
32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Who Is the Greatest?

33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

See notes on Mt 18:2-6

34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.
35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.
36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,
37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

He That Is Not against Us Is for Us

38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us.

He rebukes them for vilifying all but themselves; while they are striving which of them should be greatest, they will not allow those who are not in communion with them to be any thing. Observe,

1 The account which John gave him, of the restraint they had laid upon one from making use of the name of Christ, because he was not of their society. Though they were ashamed to own their contests for preferment, they seem to boast of this exercise of their authority, and expected their Master would not only justify them in it, but commend them for it; and hoped he would not blame them for desiring to be great, when they would thus use their power for maintaining the honour of the sacred college. Master, saith John, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, but he followeth not us, Mk 9:38.

(a) It was strange that the one who was not a professed disciple and follower of Christ, should yet have power to cast out devils, in his name, for that seemed to be peculiar to those whom he called, Mk 6:7. But some think that he was a disciple of John, who made use of the name of the Messiah, not as come, but as near at hand, not knowing that Jesus was he. It should rather seem that he made use of the name of Jesus, believing him to be the Christ, as the other disciples did. And why not he receive that power from Christ, whose Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth, without such an outward call as the apostles had? And perhaps there were many more such. Christ's grace is not tied to the visible church.

(b) It was strange that one who cast out devils in the name of Christ, did not join himself to the apostles, and follow Christ with them, but should continue to act in separation from them. I know of nothing that could hinder him from following them, unless because he was loth to leave all to follow them; and if so, that was an ill principle. The thing did not look well, and therefore the disciples forbade him to make use of Christ's name as they did, unless he would follow him as they did. This was like the motion Joshua made concerning Eldad and Medad, that prophesied in the camp, and went not up with the rest to the door of the tabernacle; "My lord Moses, forbid them

(Nu 11:28); restrain them, silence them, for it is a schism." Thus apt are we to imagine that those do not follow Christ at all, who do not follow him with us, and that those do nothing well, who do not just as we do. But the Lord knows them that are his, however they are dispersed; and this instance gives us a needful caution, to take heed lest we be carried, by an excess of zeal for the unity of the church, and for that which we are sure is right and good, to oppose that which yet may tend to the enlargement of the church, and the advancement of its true interests another way.

2 The rebuke he gave to them for this (Mk 9:39); Jesus said, "Forbid him not, nor any other that does likewise." This was like the check Moses gave to Joshua; Enviest thou for my sake? Note, That which is good, and doeth good, must not be prohibited, though there be some defect or irregularity in the manner of doing it. Casting out devils, and so destroying Satan's kingdom, doing this in Christ's name, and so owning him to be sent of God, and giving honour to him as the Fountain of grace, preaching down sin, and preaching up Christ, are good things, very good things, which ought not to be forbidden to any, merely because they follow not with us. If Christ be preached, Paul therein doth, and will rejoice, though he be eclipsed by it, Php 1:18. Two reasons Christ gives why such should not be forbidden.

(a) Because we cannot suppose that any man who makes use of Christ's name in working miracles, should blaspheme his name, as the scribes and Pharisees did. There were those indeed that did in Christ's name cast out devils, and yet in other respects were workers of iniquity; but they did not speak evil of Christ.

(b) Because those that differed in communion, while they agreed to fight against Satan under the banner of Christ, ought to look upon one another as on the same side, notwithstanding that difference. He that is not against us is on our part. As to the great controversy between Christ an Beelzebub, he had said, He that is not with me is against me, Mt 12:30. He that will not own Christ, owns Satan. But as to those that own Christ, though not in the same circumstances, that follow him, though not with us, we must reckon that though

these differ from us, they are not against us, and therefore are on our part, and we must not be any hindrance to their usefulness.

39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Temptations to Sin

42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

See Mt 18:7-9.

He threatens those that offend his little ones, that wilfully are the occasion of sin or trouble to them, Mk 9:42. Whosoever shall grieve any true Christians, though they be of the weakest, shall oppose their entrance into the ways of God, or discourage and obstruct their progress in those ways, shall either restrain them from doing good, or draw them in to commit sin, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea: his punishment will be very great, and the death and ruin of his soul more terrible than such a death and ruin of his body would be. See Mt 18:6.

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

He warns all his followers to take heed of ruining their own souls. This charity must begin at home; if we must take heed of doing any thing to hinder others from good, and to occasion their sin, much more careful must we be to avoid every thing that will take us off from our duty, or lead us to sin; and that which doth so we must part with, though it be ever so dear to us. This we had twice in Matthew, Mt 5:29,30,18:8,9. It is here urged somewhat more largely and pressingly; certainly this requires our serious regard, which is so much insisted upon. Observe,

1 The case supposed, that our own hand, or eye, or foot, offend us; that the impure corruption we indulge is as dear to us as an eye or a hand, or that that which is to us as an eye or a hand, is become an invisible temptation to sin, or occasion of it. Suppose the beloved is become a sin, or the sin a beloved. Suppose we cannot keep that which is dear to us, but it will be a snare and a stumbling-block; suppose we must part with it, or part with Christ and a good conscience.

2 The duty prescribed in that case; Pluck out the eye, cut off the hand and foot, mortify the darling lust, kill it, crucify it, starve it, make no provision for it. Let the idols that have been delectable things, be cast away as detestable things; keep at a distance from that which is a temptation, though ever so pleasing. It is necessary that the part which is gangrened, should be taken off for the preservation of the whole. Immedicabile vulnus ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur--The part that is incurably wounded must be cut off, lest the parts that are sound be corrupted. We must put ourselves to pain, that we may not bring ourselves to ruin; self must be denied, that it may not be destroyed.

3. The necessity of doing this. The flesh must be mortified, that we may enter into life (Mk 9:43,45), into the kingdom of God, Mk 9:47. Though, by abandoning sin, we may, for the present, feel ourselves as if we were halt and maimed (it may seem to be a force put upon ourselves, and may create us some uneasiness), yet it is for life; and all that men have, they will give for their lives: it is for a kingdom, the kingdom of God, which we cannot otherwise obtain; these halts and maims will be the marks of the Lord Jesus, will be in that kingdom scars of honour.

4. The danger of not doing this. The matter is brought to this issue, that either sin must die, or we must die. If we will lay this Delilah in our bosom, it will betray us; if we be ruled by sin, we shall inevitably be ruined by it; if we must keep our two hands, and two eyes, and two feet, we must with them be cast into hell. Our Saviour often

pressed our duty upon us, from the consideration of the torments of hell, which we run ourselves into if we continue in sin. With what an emphasis of terror are those words repeated three times here, Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched! The words are quoted from Isa 66:24.

(a) The reflections and reproaches of the sinner's own conscience are the worm that dieth not; which will cleave to the damned soul as the worms do to the dead body, and prey upon it, and never leave it till it is quite devoured. Son, remember, will set this worm gnawing; and how terrible will it bite that word (Pr 5:12,23), How have I hated instruction! The soul that is food to this worm, dies not; and the worm is bred in it, and one with it, and therefore neither doth that die. Damned sinners will be to eternity accusing, condemning, and upbraiding, themselves with their own follies, which, how much soever they are now in love with them, will at the last bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.

(b) The wrath of God fastening upon a guilty and polluted conscience, is the fire that is not quenched; for it is the wrath of the living God, the eternal God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall. There are no operations of the Spirit of grace upon the souls of the damned sinners, and therefore there is nothing to alter the nature of the fuel, which must remain for ever combustible; nor is there any application of the merit of Christ to them, and therefore there is nothing to appease or quench the violence of the fire. Dr. Whitby shows that the eternity of the torments of hell was not only the constant faith of the Christian church, but had been so of the Jewish church. Josephus saith, The Pharisees held that the souls of the wicked were to be punished with perpetual punishment; and that there was appointed for them a perpetual prison. And Philo saith, The punishment of the wicked is to live for ever dying, and to be for ever in pains and griefs that never cease.

44 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.
45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life,
than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:
46 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:
48 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.
49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

The Mk 9:49,50 are somewhat difficult, and interpreters agree not in the sense of them; for every one in general, or rather every one of them that are cast into hell, shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Therefore have salt in yourselves.

[1.] It was appointed by the law of Moses, that every sacrifice should be salted with salt, not to preserve it (for it was to be immediately consumed), but because it was the food of God's table, and no flesh is eaten without salt; it was therefore particularly required in the meat-offerings, Le 2:13.

[2.] The nature of man, being corrupt, and as such being called flesh (Ge 6:3,Ps 78:39), some way or other must be salted, in order to its being a sacrifice to God. The salting of fish (and I think of other things) they call the curing of it.

[3.] Our chief concern is, to present ourselves living sacrifices to the grace of God (Ro 12:1), and, in order to our acceptableness, we must be salted with salt, our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified, and we must have in our souls a savour of grace. Thus the offering up or sacrificing of the Gentiles is said to be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, as the sacrifices were salted, Ro 15:16.

[4.] Those that have the salt of grace, must make it appear that they have it; that they have salt in themselves, a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out all corrupt dispositions, and every thing in the soul that tends to putrefaction, and would offend our God, or our own consciences, as unsavoury meat doth. Our speech must be always with grace seasoned with this salt, that no corrupt communication may proceed out of our mouth, but we may loathe it as much as we would to put putrid meat into our mouths.

[5.] As this gracious salt will keep our own consciences void of offence, so it will keep our conversation with others so, that we may not offend any of Christ's little ones, but may be at peace one with another.

[6.] We must not only have this salt of grace, but we must always retain the relish and savour of it; for if this salt lose its saltiness, if a Christian revolt from his Christianity, if he loses the savour of it, and be no longer under the power and influence of it, what can recover him, or wherewith will ye season him? This was said Mt 5:13.

[7.] Those that present not themselves living sacrifices to God's grace, shall be made for ever dying sacrifices to his justice, and since they would not give honour to him, he will get him honour upon them; they would not be salted with the salt of divine grace, would not admit that to subdue their corrupt affections, no, they would not submit to the operation, could not bear the corrosives that were necessary to eat out the proud flesh, it was to them like cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye; and therefore in hell they shall be salted with fire; coals of fire shall be scattered upon them (Eze 10:2), as salt upon the meat, and brimstone (Job 18:15), as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom; the pleasures they have lived in, shall eat their flesh, as it were with fire, Jam 5:3. The pain of mortifying the flesh now is no more to be compared with the punishment for not mortifying it, than salting with burning. And since he had said, that the fire of hell shall not be quenched, but it might be objected, that the fuel will not last always, he here intimates, that by the power of God it shall be made to last always; for those that are cast into hell, will find the fire to have not only the corroding quality of salt, but its preserving quality; whence it is used to signify that which is lasting: a covenant of salt is a perpetual covenant, and Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt, made her a remaining monument of divine vengeance. Now since this will certainly be the doom of those that do not crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, let us, knowing this terror of the Lord, be persuaded to do it.

50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Every one shall be salted with fire. PERHAPS NO PASSAGE IN THE New Testament has given more perplexity to commentators than this; and it may be impossible now to fix its precise meaning. The common meaning affixed to it has been, that as salt preserves from putrefaction, so fire, applied to the wicked in hell, shall have the property of preserving them in existence, or they shall be preserved amidst the sprinkling of fire, to be continually, in their sufferings, a sacrifice to the justice of God. But this meaning is not quite satisfactory. Another opinion has been, that as salt is sprinkled on the victim preparatory to its being devoted to God, (Lev 2:13) so should the apostles, by trials, calamities, etc., represented here by fire be prepared as a sacrifice and offering to God. Probably the passage has not reference at all to future punishment; and the difficulty of interpreting it has arisen from supposing it connected with the 48th verse, or given as a reason for what is said in that verse, rather than considering it as designed to illustrate the general design of the passage. The main scope of the passage was not to discourse of future punishment. That is brought in incidentally. The chief object of the passage was,

(1st) to teach them that other men, not with them, might be true Christians, Mk 9:38,39.

(2nd.) That they should be disposed to look favourably upon the slightest evidence that they might be, Mk 9:41

(3rd.) That they ought to avoid giving offence to such feeble and obscure Christians, Mk 9:42.

(4th.) That everything calculated to give offence, or to dishonour religion, should be removed, Mk 9:43. And,

(5th.) that everything which would endanger their salvation should be sacrificed; that they should deny themselves and practise all self-

denials, in order to obtain eternal life. In this way they would be preserved to eternal life. The word "fire" here, therefore, denotes self-denials, sacrifices, trials, in keeping ourselves from the gratification of the flesh. As if he had said: "Look at the sacrifice on the altar. It is an offering to God, about to be presented to him. It is sprinkled with salt, emblematic of PURITY, of PRESERVATION, and of fitting it, therefore, for a sacrifice. So you are devoted to God. YOU are sacrifices, victims, offerings, to him in his service. To make you acceptable offerings, everything must be done to preserve you from sin, to purify you, and to make you fit offerings. Self-denials, subduing the lusts, enduring trials, removing offences, are the proper preservatives in the service of God. Doing this, you will be acceptable offerings, and be saved; without this, you will be unfit for his eternal service, and will be lost."

Mark-10

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

1 And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

See notes on Mt 19:3-12

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.
12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

Mt 19:13-15

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.
15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

The Rich Young Ruler

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

See notes on Mt 19:16-30.

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.
19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother.
20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.
21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.
22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.
23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God !

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved ?

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

See notes on Mt 20:17-19

33 saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34 and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again.

The Request of James and John

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

See notes on Mt 20:20-28.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of ? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?
39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:
40 but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give;
but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.
41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with
James and John.
42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that
they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.
43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:
44 and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.
45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Blind Bartimeus Receives Sight

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway side begging.

> Blind Bartimaeus. Matthew says there were two. Mark mentions but one, though he does not deny that there was another. He mentions this man because he was well known--Bartimaeus, THE blind man.
>
> See notes on Mt 20:29-34.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.
48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.
49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.
50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.
51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Mark-11

The Triumphal Entry into Jesus

1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

See this passage illustrated in Mt 21:1-16

2 and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.
3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.
4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.
5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?
6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.
7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him;
and he sat upon him.
8 And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way.
9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:
10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.
11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

See notes on Mt 21:18-22

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13 and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.
14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

The Cleansing of the Temple

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and
overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves;
16 and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.
17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.
18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.
19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.
21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.
22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.
23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.
24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.
25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Jesus' Authority Questioned

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,
28 and say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

See notes on Mt 21:23-27

29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.
30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.
31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?
32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.
33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Mark-12

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the winevat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

See this parable explained in Notes on Mt 21:33-46

2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.
3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.
4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.
5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.
6 Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.
7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.
8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.
9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10 And have ye not read this Scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:
11 this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?
12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

See notes on Mt 22:16-22

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?
15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.
16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.
17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at him.

The Question about the Resurrection

18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

See this passage fully explained in Mt 22:23-33.

19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.
20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.
21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.
22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.
23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them ? for the seven had her to wife.
24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God ?

25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.
26 And as touching the dead, that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?
27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The Great Commandment

28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all ?

See notes on Mt 22:34-40

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is,
Hear, O Israel;
The Lord our God is one Lord:
30 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:
this is the first commandment.
31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
There is none other commandment greater than these.
32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:
33 and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.
34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

The Question about David's Son

35 And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

See notes on Mt 22:41-46

36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places,

See notes on Mt 23

39 and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40 which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

The Widow's Offering

41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

This passage of story was not in Matthew, but is here and in Luke; it is Christ's commendation of the poor widow, that cast two mites into the treasury, which our Saviour, busy as he was in preaching, found leisure to take notice of. Observe,

I. There was a public fund for charity, into which contributions were brought, and out of which distributions were made; a poor's-box, and this in the temple; for works of charity and works of piety very fitly go together; where God is honoured by our worship, it is proper he should be honoured by the relief of his poor; and we often find prayers and alms in conjunction, as Ac 10:2,4. It is good to erect public receptacles of charity for the inviting and directing of private hands in giving to the poor; nay it is good for those who are of ability to have funds of their own, to lay by as God has prospered them (1Co 16:2), that they might have something ready to give when an object of charity offers itself, which is before dedicated to such uses.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye upon it; He sat over against the treasury, and beheld now the people cast money into it; not grudging either that he had none to cast in, or had not the disposal of that which

was cast in, but observing what was cast in. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of what we contribute to pious and charitable uses; whether we give liberally or sparingly; whether cheerfully or with reluctance and ill-will; nay, he looks at the heart; he observes what principles we act upon, and what our views are, in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men.

III. He saw many that were rich cast in much: and it was a good sight to see rich people charitable, to see many rich people so, and to see them not only cast in, but cast in much. Note, Those that are rich, ought to give richly; if God give abundantly to us, he expects we should give abundantly to the poor; and it is not enough for those that are rich, to say, that they give as much as others do, who perhaps have much less of the world than they have, but they must give in proportion to their estates; and if objects of charity do not present themselves, that require so much, they ought to enquire them out, and to devise liberal things.

IV. There was a poor widow that cast in two mites, which make a farthing (Mk 12:42); and our Lord Jesus highly commended her; called his disciples to him, and bid them take notice of it (Mk 12:43); told them that she could very ill spare that which she gave, she had scarcely enough for herself, it was all her living, all she had to live upon for that day, and perhaps a great part of what she had earned by her labour the day before; and that forasmuch as he knew she did it from a truly charitable disposition, he reckoned it more than all that put together, which the rich people threw in; for they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want, Mk 12:44. Now many would have been ready to censure this poor widow, and to think she did ill; why should she give to others, when she had little enough for herself? Charity begins at home; or, if she would give it, why did she not bestow it upon some poor body that she knew? What occasion was there for her bringing it to the treasury to be disposed of by the chief priests, who, we have reason to fear, were partial in the disposal of it? It is so rare a thing to find any that would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find any that will imitate her; and yet our Saviour commends her, and therefore

we are sure that she did very well and wisely. If Christ saith, Well-done, no matter who saith otherwise; and we must hence learn,

1. That giving alms, is an excellent good thing, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus; and if we be humble and sincere in it, he will graciously accept of it, though in some circumstances there may not be all the discretion in the world.

2. Those that have but a little, ought to give alms out of their little. Those that live by their labour, from hand to mouth, must give to those that need, Eph 4:28.

3. It is very good for us to straiten and deny ourselves, that we may be able to give the more to the poor; to deny ourselves not only superfluities, but even conveniences, for the sake of charity. We should in many cases pinch ourselves, that we may supply the necessities of others; this is loving our neighbours as ourselves.

4. Public charities should be encouraged, for they bring upon a nation public blessings; and though there may be some mismanagement of them, yet that is not a good reason why we should not bring in our quota to them.

5. Though we can give but a little in charity, yet if it be according to our ability, and be given with an upright heart, it shall be accepted of Christ, who requires according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not; two mites shall be put upon the score, and brought to account, if given in a right manner, as if they had been two pounds.

6. It is much to the praise of charity, when we give not only to our power, but beyond our power, as the Macedonian churches, whose deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality, 2Co 8:2,3. When we can cheerfully provide for others, out of our own necessary provision, as the widow of Sarepta for Elijah, and Christ for his five thousand guests, and trust God to provide for us some other way, this is thank-worthy.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.
43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:
44 for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Mark-13

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs before the End

1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here !

> The principal things in this chapter are fully explained in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew.

2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,
4 Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled ?
5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:
6 for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.
8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.
9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.
10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.
11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.
13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains:
15 and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:
16 and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.
17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days !
18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.
19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.
20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.
21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:
22 for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.
23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The Coming of the Son of Man

24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,
25 and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.
26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.
27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.
28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:
29 so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.
31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.
32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.
33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.
34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.
35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:
36 lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.
37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Mark-14

The Leaders Plot against Jesus

1 After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

See this passage explained in Mt 26:1-16

2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

3 And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.
4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?
5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.
6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.
8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.
9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.
11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Jesus Eats the Passover with His Disciples

12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

See notes on Mt 16:17-19

13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.
14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ?
15 And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared:
there make ready for us.
16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

See notes on Mt 26:20-35.

18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.
19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is
it I? and another said, Is it I?
20 And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it,
and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Peter's Denial Foretold

26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written,
I will smite the shepherd,
and the sheep shall be scattered.

28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

See notes on Mt 26:36-46

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

34 and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death:
tarry ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.
37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou ? couldest not thou watch one hour ?
38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.
39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.
40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.
41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

43 And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.
44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.
45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed him.
46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

See notes on Mat 26:49-75

47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.
48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?
49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the Scriptures must be fulfilled.
50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

The Young Man Who Fled

51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:
52 and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Jesus before the Council

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.
54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.
55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.
56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.
57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,
58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.
59 But neither so did their witness agree together.
60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?
61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.
63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?
64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye ? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.
65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Peter Denies Jesus

66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:
67 and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.
68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.
69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Mark-15

Jesus before Pilate

1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

See the principal events in this chapter explained in Mt 27.

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things; but he answered nothing.

4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing?
behold how many things they witness against thee.

5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in
the insurrection.

8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?
13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.
14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.
15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.
16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Pretorium;
and they call together the whole band.
17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,
18 and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews !
19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.
20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.
22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.
23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.
24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.
25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.
26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The king of the jews.
27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.
28 And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.
29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,
30 save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.
32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.
33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.
34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah.
36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.
37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.
38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.
39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.
40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;
41 who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

The Burial of Jesus

42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,
43 Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.
44 And Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.
45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.
46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

Mark-16

The Resurrection

1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

See this passage explained on Mt 28:1-8

2 And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

And Peter. It is remarkable that Peter is singled out for special notice. It was proof of the kindness and mercy of the Lord Jesus. Peter, just before the death of Jesus, had denied him. He had brought dishonour on his profession of attachment to him. He had been brought to see the crime, and to weep bitterly. It would have been right if the Lord Jesus had from that moment cast him off, and noticed him no more. But he loved him still. Having loved him once, he loved unto the end, Jn 13:1. As a proof that he forgave him, and still loved him, he sent him this special message---the assurance that though he had denied him, and had done much to aggravate his sufferings, yet he had risen, and was still his Lord and Redeemer. We are not to infer, because the

angel said, "Tell his disciples and Peter," that Peter was not still a disciple. The meaning is, "Tell his disciples, and especially Peter:" sending to him a particular message. Peter was still a disciple. Before his fall, Jesus had prayed for him that his faith should not fail, (Lk 22:32;) and as the prayer of Jesus was always heard, Jn 11:42, so it follows that Peter still retained faith sufficient to be a disciple though, like other disciples, he was suffered to fall into sin.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.
10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.
11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.
13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

Jesus Commissions the Eleven

14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

See notes on Mt 28:17-20.

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
18 they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

19 So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

The Gospel According To St. Luke

[Luke]

Luke-1

Dedication to Theophilus

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,
2 even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;
3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,
4 that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Complimental prefaces and dedications, the language of flattery and the food and fuel of pride, are justly condemned by the wise and good; but it doth not therefore follow, that such as are useful and instructive are to be run down; such is this, in which St. Luke dedicates his gospel to his friend Theophilus, not as to his patron, though he was a man of honour, to protect it, but as to his pupil, to learn it, and hold it fast. It is not certain who this Theophilus was; the name signifies a friend of God; some think that it does not mean any particular person, but every one that is a lover of God; Dr. Hammond quotes some of the ancients understanding it so: and then it teaches us, that those who are truly lovers of God, will heartily welcome the gospel of Christ, the design and tendency of which are, to bring us to God. But it is rather to be understood of some particular person, probably a magistrate; because Luke gives him here the same title of respect which St. Paul gave to Festus the governor, kratiste (Ac 26:25), which we there translate most noble Festus, and here most excellent Theophilus. Note, Religion does not destroy civility and good manners, but teaches us, according to the usages of our country, to give honour to them to whom honour is due.

Now observe here,

I. Why St. Luke wrote this gospel. It is certain that he was moved by the Holy Ghost, not only to the writing, but in the writing of it; but in both he was moved as a reasonable creature, and not as a mere machine; and he was made to consider,

1. That the things he wrote of were things that were most surely believed among all Christians, and therefore things which they ought to be instructed in, that they may know what they believe, and things which ought to be transmitted to posterity (who are as much concerned in them as we are); and, in order to that, to be committed to writing, which is the surest way of conveyance to the ages to come. He will not write about things of doubtful disputation, things about which Christians may safely differ from one another and hesitate within themselves; but the things which are, and ought to be, most surely believed, pragmata peplerophoremena--the things which were performed (so some), which Christ and his apostles did, and did with such circumstances as gave a full assurance that they were really done, so that they have gained an established lasting credit. Note, Though it is not the foundation of our faith, yet it is a support to it, that the articles of our creed are things that have been long most surely believed. The doctrine of Christ is what thousands of the wisest and best of men have ventured their souls upon with the greatest assurance and satisfaction.

2. That it was requisite there should be a declaration made in order of those things; that the history of the life of Christ should be methodized, and committed to writing, for the greater certainty of the conveyance. When things are put in order, we know the better where to find them for our own use, and how to keep them for the benefit of others.

3. That there were many who had undertaken to publish narratives of the life of Christ, many well-meaning people, who designed well, and did well, and what they published had done good, though not done by divine inspiration, nor so well done as might be, nor intended for perpetuity. Note,

(a) The labours of others in the gospel of Christ, if faithful and honest, we ought to commend and encourage, and not to despise, though chargeable with many deficiencies.

(b) Others' services to Christ must not be reckoned to supersede ours, but rather to quicken them.

4. That the truth of the things he had to write was confirmed by the concurring testimony of those who were competent and unexceptionable witnesses of them; what had been published in writing already, and what he was now about to publish, agreed with that which had been delivered by word of mouth, over and over, by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, Lu 1:2. Note,

(a) The apostles were ministers of the word of Christ, who is the Word (so some understand it), or of the doctrine of Christ; they, having received it themselves, ministered it to others, 1Jo 1:1. They had not a gospel to make as masters, but a gospel to preach as ministers.

(b) The ministers of the word were eye-witnesses of the things which they preached, and, which is also included, ear-witnesses. They did themselves hear the doctrine of Christ, and see his miracles, and had them not by report, at second hand; and therefore they could not but speak, with the greatest assurance, the things which they had seen and heard, Ac 4:20.

(c) They were so from the beginning of Christ's ministry, Lu 1:2. He had his disciples with him when he wrought his first miracle, Joh 2:11. They companied with him all the time he went in and out among them (Ac 1:21), so that they not only heard and saw all that which was sufficient to confirm their faith, but, if there had been any thing to shock it, they had opportunity to discover it.

(d) The written gospel, which we have to this day, exactly agrees with the gospel which was preached in the first days of the church.

(e) That he himself had a perfect understanding of the things he wrote of, from the first, Lu 1:3. Some think that here is a tacit reflection upon those who had written before him, that they had not a perfect understanding of what they wrote, and therefore, Here am I, send me (--facit indignatio versum--my wrath impels my pen); or rather, without reflecting on them, he asserts his own ability for this undertaking: "It seemed good to me, having attained to the exact knowledge of all things, anothen--from above;" so I think it should be rendered; for if he meant the same with from the beginning (Lu 1:2), as our translation intimates, he would have used the same word.

[1.] He had diligently searched into these things, had followed after them (so the word is), as the Old-Testament prophets are said to have enquired and searched diligently, 1Pe 1:10. He had not taken things so easily and superficially as others who had written before him, but made it his business to inform himself concerning particulars.

[2.] He had received his intelligence, not only by tradition, as others had done, but by revelation, confirming that tradition, and securing him from any error or mistake in the recording of it. He sought it from above (so the word intimates), and from thence he had it; thus, like Elihu, he fetched his knowledge from afar. He wrote his history as Moses wrote his, of things reported by tradition, but ratified by inspiration.

[3.] He could therefore say that he had a perfect understanding of these things. He knew them, akribos--accurately, exactly. "Now, having received this from above, it seemed good to me to communicate it;" for such a talent as this ought not to be buried.

II. Observe why he sent it to Theophilus: "I wrote unto thee these things in order, not that thou mayest give reputation to the work, but that thou mayest be edified by it (Lu 1:4); that thou mayest know the certainty of those things wherein thou has been instructed."

1. It is implied, that he had been instructed in these things either before his baptism, or since, or both, according to the rule, Mt 28:19,20.

Probably, Luke had baptized him, and knew how well instructed he was; peri hon katechethes--concerning which thou hast been catechized; so the word is; the most knowing Christians began with being catechized. Theophilus was a person of quality, perhaps of noble birth; and so much the more pains should be taken with such when they are young, to teach them the principles of the oracles of God, that they may be fortified against temptations, and furnished for the opportunities, of a high condition in the world.

2. It was intended that he should know the certainty of those things, should understand them more clearly and believe more firmly. There is a certainty in the gospel of Christ, there is that therein which we may build upon; and those who have been well instructed in the things of God when they were young should afterwards give diligence to know the certainty of those things, to know not only what we believe, but why we believe it, that we may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in us.

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

The two preceding evangelists had agreed to begin the gospel with the baptism of John and his ministry, which commenced about six months before our Saviour's public ministry (and now, things being near a crisis, six months was a deal of time, which before was but a little), and therefore this evangelist, designing to give a more particular account than had been given of our Saviour's conception and birth, determines to do so of John Baptist, who in both was his harbinger and forerunner, the morning-star to the Sun of righteousness. The evangelist determines thus, not only because it is commonly reckoned a satisfaction and entertainment to know something of the original extraction and early days of those who afterwards prove great men, but because in the beginning of these there were many things miraculous, and presages of what they afterwards proved. In these verses our inspired historian begins as early as the conception of John Baptist. Now observe here,

The account given of his parents (Lu 1:5): They lived in the days of Herod the king, who was a foreigner, and a deputy for the Romans, who had lately made Judea a province of the empire. This is taken notice of to show that the sceptre was quite departed from Judah, and therefore that now was the time for Shiloh to come, according to Jacob's prophecy, Ge 49:10. The family of David was now sunk, when it was to rise, and flourish again, in the Messiah. Note, None ought to despair of the reviving and flourishing of religion, even when civil liberties are lost. Israel enslaved, yet then comes the glory of Israel.

Now the father of John Baptist was a priest, a son of Aaron; his name Zacharias. No families in the world were ever so honoured of God as those of Aaron and David; with one was made the covenant of priesthood, with the other that of royalty; they had both forfeited their honour, yet the gospel again puts honour upon both in their latter days, on that of Aaron in John Baptist, on that of David in Christ, and then they were both extinguished and lost. Christ was of David's house, his forerunner of Aaron's; for his priestly agency and influence opened the way to his kingly authority and dignity. This Zacharias was of the course of Abia. When in David's time the family of Aaron was multiplied, he divided them into twenty-four courses, for the more regular performances of their office, that it might never be either neglected for want of hands or engrossed by a few. The eighth of those was that of Abia (1Ch 24:10), who was descended from Eleazar, Aaron's eldest son; but Dr. Lightfoot suggests that many of the families of the priests were lost in the captivity, so that after their return they took in those of other families, retaining the names of the heads of the respective courses. The wife of this Zacharias was of the daughters of Aaron too, and her name was Elisabeth, the very same name with Elisheba the wife of Aaron, Ex 6:23. The priests (Josephus saith) was very careful to marry within their own family, that they might maintain the dignity of the priesthood and keep it without mixture.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

That they were a very religious couple (Lu 1:6): They were both righteous before God; they were so in his sight whose judgment, we are

sure, is according to truth; they were sincerely and really so. They are righteous indeed that are so before God, as Noah in his generation, Ge 7:1. They approved themselves to him, and he was graciously pleased to accept them. It is a happy thing when those who are joined to each other in marriage are both joined to the Lord; and it is especially requisite that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should with their yoke-fellows be righteous before God, that they may be examples to the flock, and rejoice their hearts. They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.

(1.) Their being righteous before God was evidenced by the course and tenour of their conversations; they showed it, not by their talk, but by their works; by the way they walked in and the rule they walked by.

(2.) They were of a piece with themselves; for their devotions and their conversations agreed. They walked not only in the ordinances of the Lord, which related to divine worship, but in the commandments of the Lord, which have reference to all the instances of a good conversation, and must be regarded.

(3.) They were universal in their obedience; not that they never did in any thing come short of their duty, but it was their constant care and endeavor to come up to it.

(4.) Herein, though they were not sinless, yet they were blameless; nobody could charge them with any open scandalous sin; they lived honestly and inoffensively, as ministers and their families are in a special manner concerned to do, that the ministry be not blamed in their blame.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years.

That they had been long childless, Lu 1:7. Children are a heritage of the Lord. But there are many of his heirs in a married state, that yet are denied this heritage; they are valuable desirable blessings; yet many there are, who are righteous before God, and, if they had children, would bring them up in his fear, who yet are not thus blessed, while the men of this world are full of children (Ps 17:14), and send forth their little ones like a flock, Job 21:11. Elisabeth was barren, and they began to despair of

ever having children, for they were both now well stricken in years, when the women that have been most fruitful leave off bearing. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been long childless, as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and so here John Baptist, to make their birth the more remarkable and the blessing of it the more valuable to their parents, and to show that when God keeps his people long waiting for mercy he sometimes is pleased to recompense them for their patience by doubling the worth of it when it comes.

8 And it came to pass, that, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

The appearing of an angel to his father Zacharias, as he was ministering in the temple, Lu 1:8-11. Zechariah the prophet was the last of the Old Testament that was conversant with angels, and Zacharias the priest the first in the New Testament. Observe,

1. How Zacharias was employed in the service of God (Lu 1:8): He executed the priest's office, before God, in the order of his course; it was his week of waiting, and he was upon duty. Though his family was not built up, or made to grow, yet he made conscience of doing the work of his own place and day. Though we have not desired mercies, yet we must keep close to enjoined services; and, in our diligent and constant attendance on them, we may hope that mercy and comfort will come at last. Now it fell to Zacharias's lot to burn incense morning and evening for that week of his waiting, as other services fell to other priests by lot likewise. The services were directed by lot, that some might not decline them and others engross them, and that, the disposal of the lot being from the Lord, they might have the satisfaction of a divine call to the work. This was not the high priest burning incense on the day of atonement, as some have fondly imagined, who have thought by that to find out the time of our Saviour's birth; but it is plain that it was the burning of the daily incense at the altar of incense (Lu 1:11), which was in the temple (Lu 1:9), not in the most holy place, into which the high priest entered. The Jews say that one and the same priest burned not incense twice in all his days (there were such a multitude of them), at least never more than one week. It is very probable that this was upon the sabbath day, because

there was a multitude of people attending (Lu 1:10), which ordinarily was not on a week day; and thus God usually puts honour upon his own day. And then if Dr. Lightfoot reckon, with the help of the Jewish calendars, that this course of Abia fell on the seventeenth day of the third month, the month Sivan, answering to part of May and part of June, it is worth observing that the portions of the law and the prophets which were read this day in synagogues were very agreeable to that which was doing in the temple; namely, the law of the Nazarites (Nu 6:1-27), and the conception of Samson, Jdg 13:1-25

While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without, Lu 1:10. Dr. Lightfoot says that there were constantly in the temple, at the hour of prayer, the priests of the course that then served, and, if it were the sabbath day, those of that course also that had been in waiting the week before, and the Levites that served under the priests, and the men of the station, as the Rabbin call them, who were the representatives of the people, in putting their hands upon the head of the sacrifices, and many besides, who, moved by devotion, left their employments, for that time, to be present at the service of God; and those would make up a great multitude, especially on sabbaths and feast-days: now these all addressed themselves to their devotions (in mental prayer, for their voice was not heard), when by the tinkling of a bell they had notice that the priest was gone in to burn incense.

Now observe here,

(1.) That the true Israel of God always were a praying people; and prayer is the great and principal piece of service by which we give honour to God, fetch in favours from him, and keep up our communion with him.

(2.) That then, when ritual and ceremonial appointments were in full force, as this of burning incense, yet moral and spiritual duties were required to go along with them, and were principally looked at. David knew that when he was at a distance from the altar his prayer might be heard without incense, for it might be directed before God as incense, Ps

141:2. But, when he was compassing the altar, the incense could not be accepted without prayer, any more than the shell without the kernel.

(3.) That is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if our hearts do not join in the worship, and go along with the minister, in all the parts of it. If he burn the incense ever so well, in the most pertinent, judicious, lively prayer, if we be not at the same time praying in concurrence with him, what will it avail us?

(4.) All the prayers we offer up to God here in his courts are acceptable and successful only in virtue of the incense of Christ's intercession in the temple of God above. To this usage in the temple-service there seems to be an allusion (Re 8:1,3,4), where we find that there was silence in heaven, as there was in the temple, for half an hour, while the people were silently lifting up their hearts to God in prayer; and that there was an angel, the angel of the covenant, who offered up much incense with the prayers of all saints before the throne. We cannot expect an interest in Christ's intercession if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and continue instant in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayers should gain acceptance, and bring in an answer of peace, but through the mediation of Christ, who ever lives, making intercession.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

What impression this made upon Zacharias (Lu 1:12): When Zacharias saw him, it was a surprise upon him, even to a degree of terror, for he was troubled, and fear fell upon him, Lu 1:12. Though he was righteous before God, and blameless in his conversation, yet he could not be without some apprehensions at the sight of one whose visage and surrounding lustre bespoke him more than human. Ever since man sinned, his mind has been unable to bear the glory of such revelations and his conscience afraid of evil tidings brought by them; even Daniel himself could not bear it, Da 10:8. And for this reason God chooses to speak to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zechariah: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

The message which the angel had to deliver to him, Lu 1:13. He began his message, as angels generally did, with, Fear not. Perhaps it had never been Zacharias's lot to burn incense before; and, being a very serious conscientious man, we may suppose him full of care to do it well, and perhaps when he saw the angel he was afraid lest he came to rebuke him for some mistake or miscarriage; "No," saith the angel, "fear not; I have no ill tidings to bring thee from heaven. Fear not, but compose thyself, that thou mayest with a sedate and even spirit receive the message I have to deliver thee." Let us see what that is.

1 The prayers he has often made shall now receive an answer of peace: Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard.

(a) If he means his particular prayer for a son to build up his family, it must be the prayers he had formerly made for that mercy, when he was likely to have children; but we may suppose, now that he and his wife were both well stricken in years, as they had done expecting it, so they had done praying for it: like Moses, it sufficeth them, and they speak no more to God of that matter, De 3:26. But God will now, in giving this mercy, look a great way back to the prayers that he had made long since for and with his wife, as Isaac for and with his, Ge 25:21. Note, Prayers of faith are filed in heaven, and are not forgotten, though the thing prayed for is not presently given in. Prayers made when we were young and coming into the world may be answered when we are old and going out of the world. But,

(b) If he means the prayers he was now making, and offering up with his incense, we may suppose that those were according to the duty of his place, for the Israel of God and their welfare, and the performance of the promises made to them concerning the Messiah and the coming of his kingdom: "This prayer of thine is now heard: for thy wife shall shortly conceive him that is to be the Messiah's forerunner." Some of the Jewish

writers themselves say that the priest, when he burnt incense, prayed for the salvation of the whole world; and now that prayer shall be heard. Or,

(c) In general, "The prayers thou now makest, and all thy prayers, are accepted of God, and come up for a memorial before him" (as the angel said to Cornelius, when he visited him at prayer, Ac 10:30,31); "and this shall be the sign that thou are accepted of God, Elisabeth shall bear thee a son." Note, it is very comfortable to praying people to know that their prayers are heard; and those mercies are doubly sweet that are given in answer to prayer.

He shall have a son in his old age, by Elisabeth his wife, who had been long barren, that by his birth, which was next to miraculous, people might be prepared to receive and believe a virgin's bringing forth of a son, which was perfectly miraculous. He is directed what name to give his son: Call him John, in Hebrew Johanan, a name we often meet in the Old Testament: it signifies gracious. The priests must beseech God that he will be gracious (Mal 1:9), and must so bless the people, Nu 6:25. Zacharias was now praying thus, and the angel tells him that his prayer is heard, and he shall have a son, whom, in token of an answer to his prayer, he shall call Gracious, or, The Lord will be gracious, Isa 30:18,19.

This son shall be the joy of his family and of all his relations, Lu 1:14. He shall be another Isaac, thy laughter; and some think that is partly intended in his name, John. He shall be a welcome child. Thou for thy part shall have joy and gladness. Note, Mercies that have been long waited for, when they come at last, are the more acceptable. "He shall be such a son as thou shalt have reason to rejoice in; many parents, if they could foresee what their children will prove, instead of rejoicing at their birth, would wish they had never been; but I will tell thee what thy son will be, and then thou wilt not need to rejoice with trembling at his birth, as the best must do, but mayest rejoice with triumph at it." Nay, and many shall rejoice at his birth; all the relations of the family will rejoice in it, and all its well-wishers, because it is for the honour and comfort of the family, Lu 1:58. All good people will rejoice that such a religious couple as Zacharias and Elisabeth have a son, because they will give him a good education, such as, it may be hoped, will make him a public blessing to

his generation. Yea, and perhaps many shall rejoice by an unaccountable instinct, as a presage of the joyous days the gospel will introduce.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

This son shall be a distinguished favourite of Heaven, and a distinguished blessing to the earth. The honour of having a son is nothing to the honour of having such a son.

(a) He shall be great in the sight of the Lord; those are great indeed that are so in God's sight, not those that are so in the eye of a vain and carnal world. God will set him before his face continually, will employ him in his work and send him on his errands; and that shall make him truly great and honourable. He shall be a prophet, yea more than a prophet, and upon that account as great as any that every were born of women, Mt 11:11. He shall live very much retired from the world, out of men's sight, and, when he makes a public appearance, it will be very mean; but he shall be much, he shall be great, in the sight of the Lord.

(b) He shall be a Nazarite, set apart to God from every thing that is polluting; in token of this, according to the law of Nazariteship, he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink,--or, rather, neither old wine nor new; for most think that the word here translated strong drink signifies some sort of wine, perhaps those that we call made wines, or any thing that is intoxicating. He shall be, as Samson was by the divine precept (Jdg 13:7), and Samuel by his mother's vow (1Sa 1:11), a Nazarite for life. It is spoken of as a great instance of God's favour to his people that he raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites (Am 2:11), as if those that were designed for prophets were trained up under the discipline of the Nazarites; Samuel and John Baptist were; which intimates that those that would be eminent servants of God, and employed in eminent services, must learn to live a life of self-denial and mortification,

must be dead to the pleasures of sense, and keep their minds from every thing that is darkening and disturbing to them.

(c) He shall be abundantly fitted and qualified for those great and eminent services to which in due time he shall be called: He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and as soon as it is possible he shall appear to have been so. Observe,

[1.] Those that would be filled with the Holy Ghost must be sober and temperate, and very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for that is it that fits him for this. Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, with which that is not consistent, Eph 5:18.

[2.] It is possible that infants may be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, even from their mother's womb; for John Baptist even then was filled with the Holy Ghost, who took possession of his heart betimes; and an early specimen was given of it, when he leaped in his mother's womb for joy, at the approach of the Saviour; and afterwards it appeared very early that he was sanctified. God had promised to pour out his Spirit upon the seed of believers (Isa 44:3), and their first springing up in a dedication of themselves betimes to God is the fruit of it, Lu 1:4,5. Who then can forbid water, that they should not be baptized who for aught we know (and we can say no more of the adult, witness Simon Magus) have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and have the seeds of grace sown in their hearts? Ac 10:47.

(d) He shall be instrumental for the conversion of many souls to God, and the preparing of them to receive and entertain the gospel of Christ, Lu 1:16,17.

[1.] He shall be sent to the children of Israel, to the nation of the Jews, to whom the Messiah also was first sent, and not to the Gentiles; to the whole nation, and not the family of the priests only, with which, though he was himself of that family, we do not find he had any particular intimacy or influence.

[2.] He shall go before the Lord their God, that is, before the Messiah, whom they must expect to be, not their king, in the sense wherein they commonly take it, a temporal prince to their nation, but their Lord and their God, to rule and defend, and serve them in a spiritual way by his influence on their hearts. Thomas knew this, when he said to Christ, My Lord and my God, better than Nathanael did, when he said, Rabbi, thou are the king of Israel. John shall go before him, a little before him, to give notice of his approach, and to prepare people to receive him.

[3.] He shall go in the spirit and power of Elias. That is, First, He shall be such a man as Elias was, and do such work as Elias did,--shall, like him, preach the necessity of repentance and reformation to a very corrupt and degenerate age,--shall, like him, be bold and zealous in reproving sin and witnessing against it even in the greatest, and be hated and persecuted for it by a Herod and his Herodias, as Elijah was by an Ahab and his Jezebel. He shall be carried on in his work, as Elijah was, by a divine spirit and power, which shall crown his ministry with wonderful success. As Elias went before the writing prophets of the Old Testament, and did as it were usher in that signal period of the Old-Testament dispensation by a little writing of his own (2Ch 21:12), so John Baptist went before Christ and his apostles, and introduced the gospel dispensation by preaching the substance of the gospel doctrine and duty, Repent, with an eye to the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, He shall be that very person who was prophesied of by Malachi under the name of Elijah (Mal 4:5), who should be sent before the coming of the day of the Lord. Behold, I send you a prophet, even Elias, not Elias the Tishbite (as the LXX. has corruptly read it, to favour the Jews' traditions), but a prophet in the spirit and power of Elias, as the angel here expounds it.

[4.] He shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, shall incline their hearts to receive the Messiah, and bid him welcome, by awakening them to a sense of sin and a desire of righteousness. Whatever has a tendency to turn us from iniquity, as John's preaching and baptism had, will turn us to Christ as our Lord and our God; for those who through grace are wrought upon to shake off the yoke of sin, that is, the dominion of the world and the flesh, will soon be persuaded to take upon them the yoke of the Lord Jesus.

[5.] Hereby he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, that is, of the Jews to the Gentiles; shall help to conquer the rooted prejudices which the Jews have against the Gentiles, which was done by the gospel, as far as it prevailed, and was begun to be done by John Baptist, who came for a witness, that all through him might believe, who baptized and taught Roman soldiers as well as Jewish Pharisees, and who cured the pride and confidence of those Jews who gloried in their having Abraham to their father, and told them that God would out of stones raise up children unto Abraham (Mt 3:9), which would tend to cure their enmity to the Gentiles. Dr. Lightfoot observes, It is the constant usage of the prophets to speak of the church of the Gentiles as children to the Jewish church, Isa 54:5,6,13,60:4,9,62:5,66:12. When the Jews that embraced the faith of Christ were brought to join in communion with the Gentiles that did so too, then the heart of the fathers was turned to the children. And he shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that is, he shall introduce the gospel, by which the Gentiles, who are now disobedient, shall be turned, no so much to their fathers the Jews, but to the faith of Christ, here called the wisdom of the just, in communion with the believing Jews; or thus, He shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, that is, the hearts of old and young, shall be instrumental to bring some of every age to be religious, to work a great reformation in the Jewish nation, to bring them off from a ritual traditional religion which that had rested in, and to bring them up to substantial serious godliness: and the effect of this will be, that enmities will be slain and discord made to cease; and they are at variance, being united in his baptism, will be better reconciled one to another. This agrees with the account Josephus gives of John Baptist, Antiq. 18. 117-118. "That he was a good man, and taught the Jews the exercise of virtue, in piety towards God, and righteous towards one another, and that they should convene and knit together in baptism." And he saith, "The people flocked after him, and were exceedingly delighted in his doctrine." Thus he turned the hearts of fathers and children to God and to one another, by turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Observe, First, True religion is the wisdom of just men, in distinction from the wisdom of the world. It is both our wisdom and our duty to be religious; there is both equity and prudence in it. Secondly, It is not possible but that those who have been unbelieving and disobedient may be

turned to the wisdom of the just; divine grace can conquer the greatest ignorance and prejudice. Thirdly, The great design of the gospel is to bring people home to God, and to bring them nearer to one another; and on this errand John Baptist is sent. In the mention that is twice made of his turning people, there seems to be an allusion to the name of the Tishbite, which is given to Elijah, which, some think, does not denote the country or city he was of, but has an appellative signification, and therefore the render it Elijah the converter, one that was much employed, and very successful, in conversion-work. The Elias of the New Testament is therefore said to turn or convert many to the Lord their God.

[6.] Hereby he shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord, shall dispose the minds of people to receive the doctrine of Christ, that thereby they may be prepared for the comforts of his coming. Note, First, All that are to be devoted to the Lord, and made happy in him, must first be prepared and made ready for him. We must be prepared by grace in this world for the glory in the other, by the terrors of the law for the comforts of the gospel, by the spirit of bondage for the Spirit of adoption. Secondly, Nothing has a more direct tendency to prepare people for Christ than the doctrine of repentance received and submitted to. When sin is thereby made grievous, Christ will become very precious.

18 And Zechariah said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zechariah, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple.

Zacharias's unbelief of the angel's prediction, and the rebuke he was laid under for that unbelief. He heard all that the angel had to say, and should have bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, saying, Be it unto thy servant according to the word which thou hast spoken; but it was not so. We are here told,

1. What his unbelief spoke, Lu 1:18. He said to the angel, Whereby shall I know this? This was not a humble petition for the confirming of his faith, but a peevish objection against what was said to him as altogether incredible; as if he should say, "I can never be made to believe this." He could not but perceive that it was an angel that spoke to him; the message delivered, having reference to the Old-Testament prophecies, carried much of its own evidence along with it. There are many instances in the Old Testament of those that had children when they were old, yet he cannot believe that he shall have this child of promise: "For I am an old man, and my wife hath not only been all her days barren, but is now well stricken in years, and not likely ever to have children." Therefore he must have a sign given him, or he will not believe. Though the appearance of an angel, which had long been disused in the church, was sign enough,--though he had this notice given him in the temple, the place of God's oracles, where he had reason to think no evil angel would be permitted to come,--though it was given him when he was praying, and burning incense,--and though a firm belief of that great principle of religion that God has an almighty power, and with him nothing is impossible, which we ought not only to know, but to teach others, was enough to silence all objections,--yet, considering his own body and his wife's too much, unlike a son of Abraham, he staggered at the promise, Ro 4:19,20.

2. How his unbelief was silenced, and he silenced for it.

(1.) The angel stops his mouth, by asserting his authority. Doth he ask, Whereby shall I know this? Let him know it by this, I am Gabriel, Lu 1:19. He puts his name to his prophecy, doth as it were sign it with his own hand, teste meipso--take my word for it. Angels have sometimes refused to tell their names, as to Manoah and his wife; but his angel readily saith, I am Gabriel, which signifies the power of God, or the mighty one of God, intimating that the God who bade him say this was able to make it good. He also makes himself known by this name to put him in mind of the notices of the Messiah's coming sent to Daniel by the man Gabriel, Da 8:16,9:21. "I am the same that was sent then, and am sent now in pursuance of the same intention." He is Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, an immediate attendant upon the throne of God. The prime ministers of state in the Persian court are described by this,

that they saw the king's face, Es 1:14. "Though I am now talking with thee here, yet I stand in the presence of God. I know his eye is upon me, and I dare not say any more than I have warrant to say. But I declare I am sent to speak to thee, sent on purpose to show thee these glad tidings, which, being so well worthy of all acceptation, thou oughtest to have received cheerfully."

(2.) The angel stops his mouth indeed, by exerting his power: "That thou mayest object no more, behold thou shalt be dumb, Lu 1:20. If thou wilt have a sign for the support of thy faith, it shall be such a one as shall be also the punishment of thine unbelief; thou shalt not be able to speak till the day that these things shall be performed," Lu 1:20. Thou shalt be both dumb and deaf; the same word signifies both, and it is plain that he lost his hearing as well as his speech, for his friends made signs to him (Lu 1:62), as well as he to them, Lu 1:22. Now, in striking him dumb,

[1.] God dealt justly with him, because he had objected against God's word. Hence we may take occasion to admire the patience of God and his forbearance toward us, that we, who have often spoken to his dishonour, have not been struck dumb, as Zacharias was, and as we had been if God had dealt with us according to our sins.

[2.] God dealt kindly with him, and very tenderly and graciously. For,

First, Thus he prevented his speaking any more such distrustful unbelieving words. If he has thought evil, and will not himself lay his hands upon his mouth, nor keep it as with a bridle, God will. It is better not to speak at all than to speak wickedly.

Secondly, Thus he confirmed his faith; and, by his being disabled to speak, he is enabled to think the better. If by the rebukes we are under for our sin we be brought to give more credit to the word of God, we have no reason to complain of them.

Thirdly, Thus he was kept from divulging the vision, and boasting of it, which otherwise he would have been apt to do, whereas it was designed for the present to be lodged as a secret with him.

Fourthly, It was a great mercy that God's words should be fulfilled in their season, notwithstanding his sinful distrust. The unbelief of man shall not make the promises of God of no effect, they shall be fulfilled in their season, and he shall not be for ever dumb, but only till the day that these things shall be performed, and then thy lips shall be opened, that thy mouth may show forth God's praise. Thus, though God chastens the iniquity of his people with the rod, yet his loving kindness he will not take away.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

Jesus' Birth Foretold

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the
Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
33 and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom
there shall be no end.
34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a
man?
35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come
upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore
also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of
God.
36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her
old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.
37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.
38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me
according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Mary Visits Elisabeth

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste,
into a city of Judah;
40 and entered into the house of Zechariah, and saluted Elisabeth.
41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary,
the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy
Ghost:
42 and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among
women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to
me?
44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the
babe leaped in my womb for joy.
45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of
those things which were told her from the Lord.
46 And Mary said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord,
47 and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:

for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
and holy is his name.
50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
51 He hath showed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
53 He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
55 as he spake to our fathers,
to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.
58 And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.
59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zechariah, after the name of his father.
60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called
John.
61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.
62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.
63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is
John. And they marveled all.
64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.
65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea.

66 And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Zechariah's Prophecy

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

How he was qualified for this: He was filled with the Holy Ghost, was endued with more than ordinary measures and degrees of it, for this purpose; he was divinely inspired. God not only forgave him his unbelief and distrust (which was signified by discharging him from the punishment of it), but, as a specimen of the abounding of grace towards believers, he filled him with the Holy Ghost, and put this honour upon him, to employ him for his honour.

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;
for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

What the matter of his song was. Here is nothing said of the private concerns of his own family, the rolling away of the reproach from it and putting of a reputation upon it, by the birth of this child, though, no doubt, he found a time to give thanks to God for this, with his family; but in this song he is wholly taken up with the kingdom of the Messiah, and the public blessings to be introduced by it. He could have little pleasure in this fruitfulness of his vine, and the hopefulness of his olive-plant, if herein he had not foreseen the good of Jerusalem, peace upon Israel, and blessings on both out of Zion, Ps 128:3,5,6. The Old-Testament prophesies are often expressed in praises and new songs, so is the beginning of New-Testament prophecy: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall he be called; yet Zacharias, speaking of the work of redemption, called him the Lord God of Israel, because to Israel the prophecies, promises, and types, of the redemption had hitherto been given, and to them the first proffers and proposals of it were now to be made. Israel, as a chosen people, was a type of the elect of God out of all nations, whom God had a particular eye to, in sending the Saviour; and therefore he is therein called the Lord God of Israel.

Now Zacharias here blesses God,

1. For the work of salvation that was to be wrought out by the Messiah himself, Lu 1:68-75. This it is that fills him, when he is filled with the Holy Ghost, and it is that which all who have the Spirit of Christ are full of.

(a) In sending the Messiah, God has made a gracious visit to his people, whom for many ages he had seemed to neglect, and to be estranged from; he hath visited them as a friend, to take cognizance of their case. God is said to have visited his people in bondage when he delivered them (Ex 3:16,4:31), to have visited his people in famine when he gave them bread, Ru 1:6. He had often sent to them by his prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them; but now he himself made them a visit.

(b) He has wrought out redemption for them: He has redeemed his people. This was the errand on which Christ came into the world, to redeem those that were sold for sin, and sold under sin; even God's own people, his Israel, his son, his first-born, his free-born, need to be redeemed, and are undone if they be not. Christ redeems them by price out of the hands of God's justice, and redeems them by power out of the hands of Satan's tyranny, as Israel out of Egypt.

(c) He has fulfilled the covenant of royalty made with the most famous Old-Testament prince, that is, David. Glorious things had been said of his family, that on him, as a mighty one, help should be laid, that his horn should be exalted, and his seed perpetuated, Ps 89:19,20,24,29. But that family had been long in a manner cast off and abhorred, Ps 89:38. Now here it is glorified in, that, according to the promise, the horn of David should again be made to bud; for, Ps 132:17, he hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (Lu 1:69), there, where it was promised and expected to arise. David is called God's servant, not only as a good man, but as a king that ruled for God; and he was an instrument of the salvation of Israel, by being employed in the government of Israel; so Christ is the author of eternal redemption to those only that obey him. There is in Christ, and in him only, salvation for us, and it is a horn of salvation; for,

[1.] It is an honourable salvation. It is raised up above all other salvations, none of which are to be compared with it: in it the glory both of the Redeemer and of the redeemed are advanced, and their horn exalted with honour.

[2.] It is a plentiful salvation. It is a cornucopia--a horn of plenty, a salvation in which we are blessed with spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, abundantly.

[3.] It is a powerful salvation: the strength of the beast is in his horn. He has raised up such a salvation as shall pull down our spiritual enemies, and protect us from them. In the chariots of this salvation the Redeemer shall go forth, and go on, conquering and to conquer.

(d) He has fulfilled all the precious promises made to the church by the most famous Old-Testament prophets (Lu 1:70): As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets. His doctrine of salvation by the Messiah is confirmed by an appeal to the prophets, and the greatness and importance of that salvation thereby evidenced and magnified; it is the same that they spoke of, which therefore ought to be expected and welcomed; it is what they enquired and searched diligently after (1Pe 1:10,11), which therefore ought not to be slighted or thought meanly of. God is now doing that which he has long ago spoken of; and therefore be silent, O all flesh, before him, and attend to him. See,

[1.] How sacred the prophecies of this salvation were. The prophets who delivered them were holy prophets, who durst not deceive and who aimed at promoting holiness among men; and it was the holy God himself that spoke by them.

[2.] How ancient they were: ever since the world began. God having promised, when the world began, that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, that promise was echoed to when Adam called his wife's name Eve-Life, for the sake of that Seed of hers; when Eve called her first son Cain, saying, I have gotten a man from the Lord, and

another son, Seth, settled; when Noah was called rest, and foretold that God should dwell in the tents of Shem. And it was not long after the new world began in Noah that the promise was made to Abraham that in his Seed the nations of the earth should be blessed.

[3.] What a wonderful harmony and concert we perceive among them. God spoke the same thing by them all, and therefore it is said to be dia stomatos, not by the mouths, but by the mouth, of the prophets, for they all speak of Christ as it were with one mouth.

69 and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David;

70 as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

Now what is this salvation which was prophesied of?

First, It is a rescue from the malice of our enemies; it is soterian ex echthron hemon--a salvation out of our enemies, from among them, and out of the power of them that hate us (Lu 1:71); it is a salvation from sin, and the dominion of Satan over us, both by corruptions within and temptations without. The carnal Jews expected to be delivered from under the Roman yoke, but intimation was betimes given that it should be a redemption of another nature. He shall save his people from their sins, that they may not have dominion over them, Mt 1:21.

Secondly, It is a restoration to the favour of God; it is to perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, Lu 1:72. The Redeemer shall not only break the head of the serpent that was the author of our ruin, but he shall re-instate us in the mercy of God and re-establish us in his covenant; he shall bring us as it were into a paradise again, which was signified by the promises made to the patriarchs, and the holy covenant made with them, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, Lu 1:73. Observe,

1. That which was promised to the fathers, and is performed to us, is mercy, pure mercy; nothing in it is owing to our merit (we deserve wrath

and the curse), but all to the mercy of God, which designed us grace and life: ex mero motu--of his own good pleasure, he loved us because he would love us.

2. God herein had an eye to his covenant, his holy covenant, that covenant with Abraham: I will be a God to thee and thy seed. This his seed had really forfeited by their transgressions; this he seemed to have forgotten in the calamities brought upon them; but he will now remember it, will make it appear that he remembers it, for upon that are grounded all his returns of mercy: Le 26:42, Then will I remember my covenant.

Thirdly, It is a qualification for, and an encouragement to, the service of God. Thus was the oath he sware to our Father Abraham, That he would give us power and grace to serve him, in an acceptable manner to him and a comfortable manner to ourselves, Lu 1:74,75. Here seems to be an allusion to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which, God tells Moses, was in pursuance of the covenant he made with Abraham (Ex 3:6-8), and that this was the design of his bringing them out of Egypt, that they might serve God upon this mountain, Ex 3:12. Note, The great design of gospel grace is not to discharge us from, but to engage us to, and encourage us in, the service of God. Under this notion Christianity was always to be looked upon, as intended to make us truly religious, to admit us into the service of God, to bind us to it, and to quicken us in it. We are therefore delivered from the iron yoke of sin, that our necks may be put under the sweet and easy yoke of the Lord Jesus. The very bonds which he has loosed do bind us faster unto him, Ps 116:16. We are hereby enabled,

1. To serve God without fear--aphobos. We are therefore put into a state of holy safety that we might serve God with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that are quiet from the fears of evil. God must be served with a filial fear, a reverent obedient fear, an awakening quickening fear, but not with a slavish fear, like that of the slothful servant, who represented him to himself as a hard master, and unreasonable; not with that fear that has torment and amazement in it; not with the fear of a legal spirit; a spirit of bondage, but with the boldness of an evangelical spirit, a spirit of adoption.

2. To serve him in holiness and righteousness, which includes the whole duty of man towards God and our neighbour. It is both the intention and the direct tendency of the gospel to renew upon us that image of God in which man was at first made, which consisted in righteousness and true holiness, Ps 50:14.

3. To serve him, before him, in the duties of his immediate worship, wherein we present ourselves before the Lord, to serve him as those that have an eye always upon him, and see his eye always upon us, upon our inward man, that is serving him before him.

4. To serve him all the days of our life. The design of the gospel is to engage us in constancy and perseverance in the service of God, by showing us how much depends upon our not drawing back, and by showing us how Christ loved us to the end, and thereby engaged us to love him to the end.

He blessed God for the work of preparation for this salvation, which was to be done by John Baptist (Lu 1:76): Thou child, though now but a child of eight days' old, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest. Jesus Christ is the Highest, for he is God over all, blessed for evermore (Ro 9:5), equal with the Father. John Baptist was his prophet, as Aaron was Moses's prophet (Ex 7:1); what he said was as his mouth, what he did was as his harbinger. Prophecy had now long ceased, but in John it revived, as it had done in Samuel, who was born of an aged mother, as John was, after a long cessation. John's business was,

(a) To prepare people for the salvation, by preaching repentance and reformation as great gospel duties: Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, and but a little before him, to prepare his ways, to call people to make room for him, and get ready for his entertainment. Let every thing that may obstruct his progress, or embarrass it, or hinder people from coming to him, be taken away: see Isa 40:3,4. Let valleys be filled, and hills be brought low.

(b) To give people a general idea of the salvation, that they might know, not only what to do, but what to expect; for the doctrine he preached was that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. There are two things in which you must know that this salvation consists:--

[1.] The forgiveness of what we have done amiss. It is salvation by the remission of sins, those sins which stand in the way of the salvation, and by which we are all become liable to ruin and condemnation, Lu 1:77. John Baptist gave people to understand that, though their case was sad, by reason of sin, it was not desperate, for pardon might be obtained through the tender mercy of our God (the bowels of mercy, so the word is): there was nothing in us but a piteous case to recommend us to the divine compassion.

[2.] Direction to do better for the time to come. The gospel salvation not only encourages us to hope that the works of darkness shall be forgiven us, but sets up a clear and true light, by which we may order our steps aright. In it the day-spring hath visited us from on high (Lu 1:78); and this also is owing to the tender mercy of our God. Christ is anatole--the morning Light, the rising Sun, Mal 4:2 The gospel brings light with it (Joh 3:19), leaves us not to wander in the darkness of Pagan ignorance, or in the moonlight of the Old-Testament types or figures, but in it the day dawns; in John Baptist it began to break, but increased apace, and shone more and more to the perfect day. We have as much reason to welcome the gospel day who enjoy it as those have to welcome the morning who had long waited for it. First, The gospel is discovering; it shows us that which before we were utterly in the dark about (Lu 1:79); it is to give light to them that sit in darkness, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; the day-spring visited this dark world to lighten the Gentiles, Ac 26:18. Secondly, It is reviving; it brings light to them that sit in the shadow of death, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon, to bring them the tidings of a pardon, at least of a reprieve and opportunity of procuring a pardon; it proclaims the opening of the prison (Isa 61:1), brings the light of life. How pleasant is that light! Thirdly, It is directing; it is to guide our feet in the way of peace, into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a light to our eyes, but a light to our feet (Ps 119:105); it guides us into the

way of making our peace with God, of keeping up a comfortable communion; that way of peace which as sinners we have wandered from and have not known (Ro 3:17), nor could ever have known of ourselves.

72 to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 the oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

74 that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies,

might serve him without fear,

75 in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest:

for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

77 to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

78 through the tender mercy of our God;

whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

79 to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.

80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

In the Lu 1:80, we have short account of the younger years of John Baptist. Though he was the son of a priest, he did not, like Samuel, go up, when he was a child, to minister before the Lord; for he was to prepare the way for a better priesthood. But we are here told,

1. Of his eminence as to the inward man: The child grew in the capacities of his mind, much more than other children; so that he waxed strong in the spirit; had a strong judgment and strong resolution. Reason and conscience (both which are the candle of the Lord) were so strong in him that he had the inferior faculties of appetite and passion in complete subjection betimes. By this it appeared that he was betimes filled with the Holy Ghost; for those that are strong in the Lord are strong in spirit.

2. Of his obscurity as to the outward man: He was in the deserts; not that he lived a hermit; cut off from the society of men. No, we have reason to think that he went up to Jerusalem at the feasts, and frequented the synagogues on the sabbath day, but his constant residence was in some of those scattered houses that were in the wilderness of Zuph or Maon, which we read of in the story of David. There he spent most of his time, in contemplation and devotion, and had not his education in the schools, or at the feet of the rabbin. Note, Many a one is qualified for great usefulness, who yet is buried alive; and many are so long buried who are designed, and are thereby in the fitting, for so much greater usefulness at last; as John Baptist, who was in the desert only till the day of his showing to Israel, when he was in the thirtieth year of his age. Note, There is a time fixed for the showing of those favours to Israel which are reserved; the vision of them is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

Luke-2

The Birth of Jesus

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

The fulness of time was now come, when God would send forth his Son, made of a woman, and made under the law; and it was foretold that he should be born at Bethlehem. Now here we have an account of the time, place, and manner of it.

The time when our Lord Jesus was born. Several things may be gathered out of these verses which intimate to us that it was the proper time.

1. He was born at the time when the fourth monarchy was in its height, just when it was become, more than any of the three before it, a universal monarchy. He was born in the days of Augustus Cæsar, when the Roman empire extended itself further than ever before or since, including Parthia one way, and Britain another way; so that it was then called Terraram orbis imperium--The empire of the whole earth; and here that empire is

called all the world (Lu 2:1), for there was scarcely any part of the civilized world, but what was dependent on it. Now this was the time when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy (Da 2:44): In the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

2. He was born when Judea was become a province of the empire, and tributary to it; as appears evidently by this, that when all the Roman empire was taxed, the Jews were taxed among the rest. Jerusalem was taken by Pompey the Roman general, about sixty years before this, who granted the government of the church to Hyrcanus, but not the government of the state; by degrees it was more and more reduced, till now at length it was quite subdued; for Judea was ruled by Cyrenius the Roman governor of Syria (Lu 2:2): the Roman writers call him Sulpitius Quirinus. Now just at this juncture, the Messiah was to be born, for so was dying Jacob's prophecy, that Shiloh should come when the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, Ge 49:10. This was the first taxing that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom.

3. There is another circumstance, as to the time, implied in this general enrolment of all the subjects of the empire, which is, that there was now universal peace in the empire. The temple of Janus was now shut, which it never used to be if any wars were on foot; and now it was fit for the Prince of peace to be born, in whose days swords should be beaten into plough-shares.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,)

The place where our Lord Jesus was born is very observable. He was born at Bethlehem; so it was foretold (Mic 5:2), the scribes so understood it (Mt 2:5,6), so did the common people, Joh 7:42. The name of the place was significant. Bethlehem signifies the house of bread; a proper place for him to be born in who is the Bread of life, the Bread that came down

from heaven. But that was not all; Bethlehem was the city of David, where he was born, and therefore there he must be born who was the Son of David. Zion was also called the city of David (2Sa 5:7), yet Christ was not born there; for Bethlehem was that city of David where he was born in meanness, to be a shepherd; and this our Saviour, when he humbled himself, chose for the place of his birth; not Zion, where he ruled in power and prosperity, that was to be a type of the church of Christ, that mount Zion. Now when the virgin Mary was with child, and near her time, Providence so ordered it that, by order from the emperor, all the subjects of the Roman empire were to be taxed; that is, they were to give in their names to the proper officers, and they were to be registered and enrolled, according to their families, which is the proper signification of the word here used; their being taxed was but secondary. It is supposed that they made profession of subjection to the Roman empire, either by some set form of words, or at least by payment of some small tribute, a penny suppose, in token of their allegiance, like a man's atturning tenant. Thus are they vassals upon record, and may thank themselves.

According to this decree, the Jews (who were now nice in distinguishing their tribes and families) provided that in their enrolments particular care should be had to preserve the memory of them. Thus foolishly are they solicitous to save the shadow, when they had lost the substance.

That which Augustus designed was either to gratify his pride in knowing the numbers of his people, and proclaiming it to the world, or he did it in policy, to strengthen his interest, and make his government appear the more formidable; but Providence had another reach in it. All the world shall be at the trouble of being enrolled, only that Joseph and Mary may. This brought them up from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, because they were of the stock and lineage of David (Lu 2:4,5); and perhaps, being poor and low, they thought the royalty of their extraction rather than a burden and expense to them than a matter of pride. Because it is difficult to suppose that every Jew (women as well as men) was obliged to repair to the city of which their ancestors were, and there be enrolled, now, at a time when they kept not to the bounds of their tribes, as formerly, it may be offered as a conjecture that this great exactness was used only with the family of David, concerning which, it is probable,

the emperor gave particular orders, it having been the royal family, and still talked of as designed to be so, that he might know its number and strength. Divers ends of Providence were served by this.

1. Hereby the virgin Mary was brought, great with child, to Bethlehem, to be delivered there, according to the prediction; whereas she had designed to lie in at Nazareth. See how man purposes and God disposes; and how Providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the scripture, and makes use of the projects men have for serving their own purposes, quite beyond their intention, to serve his.

2. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David; for what brings his mother to Bethlehem now, but because she was of the stock and lineage of David? This was a material thing to be proved, and required such an authentic proof as this. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the earliest advocates for the Christian religion, appeal to these rolls or records of the Roman empire, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David.

3. Hereby it appeared that he was made under the law; for he became a subject of the Roman empire as soon as he was born, a servant of rulers, Isa 49:7. Many suppose that, being born during the time of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Instead of having kings tributaries to him, when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

The circumstances of his birth, which were very mean, and under all possible marks of contempt. He was indeed a first-born son; but it was a poor honour to be the first-born of such a poor woman as Mary was, who had no inheritance to which he might be entitled as first-born, but what was in nativity.

1. He was under some abasements in common with other children; he was wrapped in swaddling clothes, as other children are when they are new-born, as if he could be bound, or needed to be kept straight. He that makes darkness a swaddling band for the sea was himself wrapped in

swaddling bands, Job 38:9. The everlasting Father became a child of time, and men said to him whose out-goings were of old from everlasting, We know this man, whence he is, Joh 7:27. The Ancient of days became an infant of a span long.

2. He was under some abasements peculiar to himself.

(a) He was born at an inn. That son of David that was the glory of his father's house had no inheritance that he could command, no not in the city of David, no nor a friend that would accommodate his mother in distress with lodgings to be brought to bed in. Christ was born in an inn, to intimate that he came into the world but to sojourn here for awhile, as in an inn, and to teach us to do likewise. An inn receives all comers, and so does Christ. He hangs out the banner of love for his sign, and whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out; only, unlike other inns, he welcomes those that come without money and without price. All is on free cost.

(b) He was born in a stable; so some think the word signifies which we translate a manger, a place for cattle to stand to be fed in. Because there was no room in the inn, and for want of conveniences, nay for want of necessaries, he was laid in a manger, instead of a cradle. The word which we render swaddling clothes some derive from a word that signifies to rend, or tear, and these infer that he was so far from having a good suit of child-bed linen, that his very swaddles were ragged and torn. His being born in a stable and laid in a manger was an instance,

[1.] Of the poverty of his parents. Had they been rich, room would have been made for them; but, being poor, they must shift as they could.

[2.] Of the corruption and degeneracy of manners in that age; that a woman in reputation for virtue and honour should be used so barbarously. If there had been any common humanity among them, they would not have turned a woman in travail into a stable.

[3.] It was an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. We were become by sin like an out-cast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one Christ was. Thus he would answer the type of Moses, the great prophet and lawgiver of the Old Testament, who was in his infancy cast out in an ark of bulrushes, as Christ in a manger. Christ would hereby put a contempt upon all worldly glory, and teach us to slight it. Since his own received him not, let us not think it strange if they receive us not.

5 to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

The meanest circumstances of Christ's humiliation were all along attended with some discoveries of his glory, to balance them, and take off the offence of them; for even when he humbled himself God did in some measure exalt him and give him earnests of his future exaltation. When we saw him wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, we were tempted to say, "Surely this cannot be the Son of God." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely this cannot be the Son of God." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely it can be no other than the Son of God, concerning whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb 1:6.

We had in Matthew an account of the notice given of the arrival of this ambassador, this prince from heaven, to the wise men, who were Gentiles, by a star; here we are told of the notice given of it to the shepherds, who were Jews, by an angel: to each God chose to speak in the language they were most conversant with.

See here how the shepherds were employed; they were abiding in the fields adjoining to Bethlehem, and keeping watch over their flocks by night, Lu 2:8. The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders (they were not prepared to receive these tidings), but to a company of poor shepherds, who were like Jacob, plain men dwelling in tents, not like Esau, cunning hunters. The patriarchs were shepherds. Moses and David particularly were called from keeping sheep to rule God's people; and by this instance God would show that he had still a favour for those of that innocent employment. Tidings were brought to Moses of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, when he was keeping sheep, and to these shepherds, who, it is probable, were devout pious men, the tidings were brought of a greater salvation. Observe,

1. They were not sleeping in their beds, when this news was brought them (though many had very acceptable intelligence from heaven in slumbering upon the bed), but abiding in the fields, and watching. Those that would hear from God must stir up themselves. They were broad awake, and therefore could not be deceived in what they saw and heard, so as those may be who are half asleep.

2. They were employed now, not in acts of devotion, but in the business of their calling; they were keeping watch over their flock, to secure them from thieves and beasts of prey, it being probably in the summer time, when they kept their cattle out all night, as we do now, and did not house them. Note, We are not out of the way of divine visits when we are sensibly employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

What the message was which the angel had to deliver to the shepherds, Lu 2:10-12.

1. He gives a supersedeas to their fears: "Fear not, for we have nothing to say to you that needs be a terror to you; you need not fear your enemies, and should not fear your friends."

2. He furnishes them with abundant matter for joy: "Behold, I evangelize to you great joy; I solemnly declare it, and you have reason to bid it welcome, for it shall bring joy to all people, and not to the people of the Jews only; that unto you is born this day, at this time, a Saviour, the Saviour that has been so long expected, which is Christ the Lord, in the city of David," Lu 2:11. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed; he is the Lord, Lord of all; he is a sovereign prince; nay, he is God, for the Lord, in the Old Testament, answers to Jehovah. He is a Saviour, and he will be a Saviour to those only that accept him for their Lord. "The Saviour is born, he is born this day; and, since it is matter of great joy to all people, it is not to be kept secret, you may proclaim it, may tell it to whom you please. He is born in the place where it was foretold he should be born, in the city of David; and he is born to you; to you Jews he is sent in the first place, to bless you, to you shepherds, though poor and mean in the world." This refers to Isa 9:6, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. To you men, not to us angels; he took not on him the nature of angels. This is matter of joy indeed to all people, great joy. Long-looked for is come at last. Let heaven and earth rejoice before this Lord, for he cometh.

3. He gives them a sign for the confirming of their faith in this matter. "How shall we find out this child in Bethlehem, which is now full of the descendants from David?" "You will find him by this token: he is lying in a manger, where surely never any new-born infant was laid before." They expected to be told, "You shall find him, though a babe, dressed up in robes, and lying in the best house in the town, lying in state, with a numerous train of attendants in rich liveries." "No, you will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." When Christ was here upon earth, he distinguished himself, and made himself remarkable, by nothing so much as the instances of his humiliation.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

The angels' doxology to God, and congratulations of men, upon this solemn occasion, Lu 2:13,14. The message was no sooner delivered by one angel (that was sufficient to go express) than suddenly there was with that angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts; sufficient, we may be sure, to make a chorus, that were heard by the shepherds, praising God; and certainly their song was not like that (Re 14:3) which no man could learn, for it was designed that we should all learn it.

1. Let God have the honour of this work: Glory to God in the highest. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds very much to his praise; and angels in the highest heavens, though not immediately interested in it themselves, will celebrate it to his honour, Re 5:11,12. Glory to God, whose kindness and love designed this favour, and whose wisdom contrived it in such a way as that one divine attribute should not be glorified at the expense of another, but the honour of all effectually secured and advanced. Other works of God are for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his glory in the highest.

2. Let men have the joy of it: On earth peace, good-will toward men. God's good-will in sending the Messiah introduced peace in this lower world, slew the enmity that sin had raised between God and man, and resettled a peaceable correspondence. If God be at peace with us, all peace results from it: peace of conscience, peace with angels, peace between Jew and Gentile. Peace is here put for all good, all that good which flows to us from the incarnation of Christ. All the good we have, or hope, is owing to God's good-will; and, if we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Nor must any peace, and good, be expected in a way inconsistent with the glory of God; therefore not in any way of sin, nor in any way but by a Mediator. Here was the peace proclaimed with great solemnity; whoever will, let them come and take the benefit of it. It is on earth peace, to men of good-will (so some copies read it), en anthropois eudokias; to men who have a good-will to God, and are willing to be reconciled; or to men whom God has a good-will to, though vessels of his mercy. See how well affected the angels are to man, and to his welfare and happiness; how well pleased they were in the incarnation of the Son of God, though he passed by their nature; and ought not we much more to be affected with it? This is a faithful saying, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well

worthy of all acceptation, That the good-will of God toward men is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth.

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

The visit which the shepherds made to the new-born Saviour.

1. They consulted about it, Lu 2:15. While the angels were singing their hymn, they could attend to that only; but, when they were gone away from them into heaven (for angels, when they appeared, never made any long stay, but returned as soon as they had despatched their business), the shepherds said one to another, Let us go to Bethlehem. Note, When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we must set ourselves to improve the advantages we have for the confirming of our faith, and the keeping up of our communion with God in this lower world. And it is no reflection upon the testimony of angels, no nor upon a divine testimony itself, to get it corroborated by observation and experience. But observe, These shepherds do not speak doubtfully, "Let us go see whether it be so or no;" but with assurance, Let us go see this thing which is come to pass; for what room was left to doubt of it, when the Lord had thus made it known to them? The word spoken by angels was stedfast and unquestionably true.

2. They immediately made the visit, Lu 2:16. They lost no time, but came with haste to the place, which, probably, the angel directed them to more particularly than is recorded ("Go to the stable of such an inn"); and there they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. The poverty and meanness in which they found Christ the Lord were no shock to their faith, who themselves knew what it was to live a life of comfortable communion with God in very poor and mean circumstances. We have reason to think that the shepherds told Joseph and Mary of the vision of the angels they had seen, and the song of the angels they had heard, which was a great encouragement to them, more than if a visit had been made

them by the best ladies in the town. And it is probable that Joseph and Mary told the shepherds what visions they had had concerning the child; and so, by communicating their experiences to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

The care which the shepherds took to spread the report of this (Lu 2:17): When they had seen it, though they saw nothing in the child that should induce them to believe that he was Christ the Lord, yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied; and as the lepers argued (2Ki 12:9, This being a day of good tidings, we dare not hold our peace), so they made known abroad the whole story of what was told them, both by the angels, and by Joseph and Mary, concerning this child, that he was the Saviour, even Christ the Lord, that in him there is peace on earth, and that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin. This they told every body, and agreed in their testimony concerning it. And now if, when he is in the world, the world knows him not, it is their own fault, for they have sufficient notice given them. What impression did it make upon people? Why truly, All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds, Lu 2:18. The shepherds were plain, downright, honest men, and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them; what they had said therefore was likely to be true, and, if true, they could not but wonder at it, that the Messiah should be born in a stable and not in a palace, that angels should bring news of it to poor shepherds and not to the chief priests. They wondered, but never enquired any further about the Saviour, their duty to him, or advantages by him, but let the thing drop as a nine days' wonder. O the amazing stupidity of the men of that generation! Justly were the things which belonged to their peace hid from their eyes, when they thus wilfully shut their eyes against them.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

The use which those made of these things, who did believe them.

1 The virgin Mary made them the matter of her private meditation. She said little, but kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart, Lu 2:19. She laid the evidences together, and kept them in reserve, to be compared with the discoveries that should afterwards be made her. As she had silently left it to God to clear up her virtue, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honour, now when it was veiled; and it is satisfaction enough to find that, if no one else takes notice of the birth of her child, angels do. Note, The truths of Christ are worth keeping; and the way to keep them safe is to ponder them. Meditation is the best help to memory.

2 The shepherds made them the matter of their more public praises. If others were not affected with those things, yet they themselves were (Lu 2:20): They returned, glorifying and praising God, in concurrence with the holy angels. If others would not regard the report they made to them, God would accept the thanksgivings they offered to him. They praised God for what they had heard from the angel, and for what they had seen, the babe in the manger, and just then in the swaddling, when they came in, as it had been spoken to them. They thanked God that they had seen Christ, though in the depth of his humiliation. As afterwards the cross of Christ, so now his manger, was to some foolishness and a stumbling-block, but others saw in it, and admired, and praised, the wisdom of God and the power of God.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Our Lord Jesus, being made of a woman, was made under the law, Ga 4:4. He was not only, as the son of a daughter of Adam, made under the law of nature, but as the son of a daughter of Abraham was made under the law of Moses; he put his neck under that yoke, though it was a heavy yoke, and a shadow of good things to come. Though its institutions were

beggarly elements, and rudiments of this world, as the apostle calls them, Christ submitted to it, that he might with the better grace cancel it, and set it aside for us.

Now here we have two instances of his being made under that law, and submitting to it.

He was circumcised on the very day that the law appointed (Lu 2:21): When eight days were accomplished, that day seven-night that he was born, they circumcised him.

1. Though it was a painful operation (Surely a bloody husband thou has been, said Zipporah to Moses, because of the circumcision, Ex 4:25), yet Christ would undergo it for us; nay, therefore he submitted to it, to give an instance of his early obedience, his obedience unto blood. Then he shed his blood by drops, which afterwards he poured out in purple streams.

2. Though it supposed him a stranger, that was by that ceremony to be admitted into covenant with God, whereas he had always been his beloved Son; nay, though it supposed him a sinner, that needed to have his filthiness taken away, whereas he had no impurity or superfluity of naughtiness to be cut off, yet he submitted to it; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he would be made in the likeness, not only of flesh, but of sinful flesh, Ro 8:3.

3. Though thereby he made himself a debtor to the whole law (Ga 5:3), yet he submitted to it; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he would take upon him the form of a servant, though he was free-born. Christ was circumcised,

(a) That he might own himself of the seed of Abraham, and of that nation of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and who was to take on him the seed of Abraham, Heb 2:16.

(b) That he might own himself a surety for our sins, and an undertaker for our safety. Circumcision (saith Dr. Goodwin) was our bond, whereby we

acknowledged ourselves debtors to the law; and Christ, by being circumcised, did as it were set his hand to it, being made sin for us. The ceremonial law consisted much in sacrifices; Christ hereby obliged himself to offer, not the blood of bulls or goats, but his own blood, which none that ever were circumcised before could oblige themselves to.

(c) That he might justify, and put an honour upon, the dedication of the infant seed of the church to God, by that ordinance which is the instituted seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness which is by faith, as circumcision was (Ro 4:11), and baptism is. And certainly his being circumcised at eight days old doth make much more for the dedicating of the seed of the faithful by baptism in their infancy than his being baptized at thirty years old doth for the deferring of it till they are grown up. The change of the ceremony alters not the substance.

At his circumcision, according to the custom, he had his name given him; he was called Jesus or Joshua, for he was so named of the angel to his mother Mary before he was conceived in the womb (Lu 1:31), and to his supposed father Joseph after, Mt 1:21.

[1.] It was a common name among the Jews, as John was (Col 4:11), and in this he would be made like unto his brethren.

[2.] It was the name of two eminent types of him in the Old Testament, Joshua, the success or of Moses, who was commander of Israel, and conqueror of Canaan; and Joshua, the high priest, who was therefore purposely crowned, that he might prefigure Christ as a priest upon his throne, Zec 6:11,13.

[3.] It was very significant of his undertaking. Jesus signifies a Saviour. He would be denominated, not from the glories of his divine nature, but from his gracious designs as Mediator; he brings salvation.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

Even when he humbles himself, still Christ has honour done him to balance the offence of it. That we might not be stumbled at the meanness of his birth, angels then did him honour; and now, that we may not be offended at his being presented in the temple, like other children born in sin, and without any manner of solemnity peculiar to him, but silently, and in the crowd of other children, Simeon and Anna now do him honour, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

A very honourable testimony is borne to him by Simeon, which was both a reputation to the child and an encouragement to the parents, and might have been a happy introduction of the priests into an acquaintance with the Saviour, if those watchmen had not been blind. Now observe here,

The account that is given us concerning this Simeon, or Simon. He dwelt now in Jerusalem, and was eminent for his piety and communion with God. Some learned men, who have been conversant with the Jewish writers, find that there was at this time one Simeon, a man of great note in Jerusalem, the son of Hillel, and the first to whom they gave the title of Rabban, the highest title that they gave to their doctors, and which was never given but to seven of them. He succeeded his father Hillel, as president of the college which his father founded, and of the great Sanhedrim. The Jews say that he was endued with a prophetical spirit, and that he was turned out of his place because he witnessed against the common opinion of the Jews concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messiah; and they likewise observe that there is no mention of him in their Mishna, or book of traditions, which intimates that he was no patron of those fooleries. One thing objected against this conjecture is that at this time his father Hillel was living, and that he himself lived many years after this, as appears by the Jewish histories; but, as to that, he is not here said to be old; and his saying, Now let thy servant depart intimates that he was

willing to die now, but does not conclude that therefore he did die quickly. St. Paul lived many years after he had spoken of his death as near, Ac 20:25. Another thing objected is that the son of Simeon was Gamaliel, a Pharisee, and an enemy to Christianity; but, as to that, it is no new thing for a faithful lover of Christ to have a son a bigoted Pharisee.

The account given of him here is,

(a) That he was just and devout, just towards men and devout towards God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other, but neither will atone for the defect of the other.

(b) That he waited for the consolation of Israel, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harassed and oppressed, would find consolation. Christ is not only the author of his people's comfort, but the matter and ground of it, the consolation of Israel. He was long a coming, and they who believed he would come continued waiting, desiring his coming, and hoping for it with patience; I had almost said, with some degree of impatience waiting till it came. He understood by books, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now more than ever big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel, so and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be very welcome to those who have waited for it, and continue waiting.

(c) The Holy Ghost was upon him, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy; he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and enabled to speak things above himself.

(d) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, Lu 2:26. He was searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets did signify, and whether it were not now at hand; and he received this oracle (for so the word signifies), that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed. Note, Those, and those only, can with

courage see death, and look it in the face without terror, that have had by faith a sight of Christ.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

The seasonable coming of Simeon into the temple, at the time when Christ was presented there, Lu 2:27. Just then, when Joseph and Mary brought in the child, to be registered as it were in the church-book, among the first-born, Simeon came, by direction of the Spirit, into the temple. The same Spirit that had provided for the support of his hope now provided for the transport of his joy. It was whispered in his ear, "Go to the temple now, and you shall see what you have longed to see." Note, Those that would see Christ must go to his temple; for there The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to meet you, and there you must be ready to meet him.

28 then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

The abundant satisfaction wherewith he welcomed this sight: He took him up in his arms (Lu 2:28), he embraced him with the greatest affection imaginable, laid him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could, which was as full of joy as it could hold. He took him up in his arms, to present him to the Lord (so some think), to do either the parent's part or the priest's part; for divers of the ancients say that he was himself a priest. When we receive the record which the gospel gives us of Christ with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ with love and resignation, then we take Christ in our arms. It was promised him that he should have a sight of Christ; but more is performed than was promised: he has him in his arms.

30 for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

He has a pleasant prospect concerning himself, and (which is a great attainment) is got quite above the love of life and fear of death; nay, he is arrived at a holy contempt of life, and desire of death: "Lord, now let thou thy servant depart, for mine eyes have seen the salvation I was promised a sight of before I died." Here is,

[1.] An acknowledgment that God had been as good as his word; there has not failed one tittle of his good promises, as Solomon owns, 1Ki 8:56. Note, Never any that hoped in God's word were made ashamed of their hope.

[2.] A thanksgiving for it. He blessed God that he saw that salvation in his arms which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not.

[3.] A confession of his faith, that the child in his arms was the saviour, the Salvation itself; thy salvation, the salvation of thine appointing, the salvation which thou has prepared with a great deal of contrivance. And, while it has been thus long in the coming, it hath still been in the preparing.

[4.] It is a farewell to this world: "Now let thy servant depart; now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them be closed, and see no more in this world." The eye is not satisfied with seeing (Ec 1:8), till it hath seen Christ, and then it is. What a poor thing doth this world look to one that hath Christ in his arms and salvation in his eye! Now adieu to all my friends and relations, all my enjoyments and employments here, even the temple itself.

[5.] It is a welcome to death: Now let thy servant depart. Note, Death is a departure, the soul's departure out of the body, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God give us our discharge, for we are his servants and must not quit his service till we have accomplished our time. Moses was promised that he should see Canaan, and then die; but he prayed that this word might be altered, De 3:24,25. Simeon is promised that he should not see death till he had seen Christ; and he is willing to construe that beyond what was expressed, as an intimation that, when he had seen Christ, he should die: Lord, be it so, saith he, now let me depart. See here, First, How comfortable the death of a good man is; he departs as God's servant from the place of his toil to that of his rest. He departs in peace, peace with God, peace with his own conscience; in peace with death, well-reconciled to it, well-acquainted with it. He departs according to God's word, as Moses at the word of the Lord (De 34:5): the word of precept, Go up and die; the word of promise, I will come again and receive you to myself. Secondly, What is the ground of this comfort?

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. This bespeaks more than a great complacency in the sight, like that of Jacob (Ge 46:30), Now let me die, since I have seen thy face. It bespeaks a believing expectation of a happy state on the other side death, through this salvation he now had a sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it gain, Php 1:21. Note, Those that have welcomed Christ may welcome death.

32 a light to lighten the Gentiles,
and the glory of thy people Israel.

He has a pleasant prospect concerning the world, and concerning the church. This salvation shall be,

[1.] A blessing to the world. It is prepared before the face of all people, not to be hid in a corner, but to be made known; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles that now sit in darkness: they shall have the knowledge of him, and of God, and another world through him. This has reference to Isa 49:6, I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles; for Christ came to be the light of the world, not a candle in the Jewish candlestick, but the Sun of righteousness.

[2.] A blessing to the church: the glory of thy people Israel. It was an honour to the Jewish nation that the Messiah sprang out of one of their tribes, and was born, and lived, and died, among them. And of those who were Israelites indeed of the spiritual Israel, he was indeed the glory, and will be so to eternity, Isa 60:19. They shall glory in him. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory, Isa 45:25. When Christ ordered his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, therein he made himself a light to lighten the Gentiles; and when he added, beginning at Jerusalem, he made himself the glory of his people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

The prediction concerning this child, which he delivered, with his blessing, to Joseph and Mary. They marvelled at those things which were still more and more fully and plainly spoken concerning this child, Lu 2:33. And because they were affected with, and had their faith strengthened by, that which was said to them, here is more said to them.

(a) Simeon shows them what reason they had to rejoice; for he blessed them (Lu 2:34), he pronounced them blessed who had the honour to be related to this child, and were entrusted with the bringing him up. He prayed for them, that God would bless them, and would have others do so too. They had reason to rejoice, for this child should be, not only a comfort and honour to them, but a public blessing. He is set for the rising again of many in Israel, that is, for the conversion of many to God that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. Those whom he is set for the fall of may be the same with those whom he is set for the rising again of. He is set eis ptosin kai anastasin--for their fall, in order to their rising again; to humble and abase them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on Christ; he wounds and then heals, Paul falls, and rises again.

(b) He shows them likewise what reason they had to rejoice with trembling, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah's kingdom, Ps 2:11. Lest Joseph, and Mary especially, should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, here is a thorn in the flesh for them, an allay to their joy; and it is what we sometimes need.

[1.] It is true, Christ shall be a blessing to Israel; but there are those in Israel whom he is set for the fall of, whose corruptions will be provoked, who will be prejudiced and enraged against him, and offended, and whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many who will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead, and split their souls on the Rock of salvation, to whom this precious Foundation-stone will be a stone of stumbling. This refers to that prophecy (Isa 8:14,15), He shall be for a sanctuary to some, and yet for a snare to others, 1Pe 2:7,8. Note, As it is pleasant to think how many there are to whom Christ and his gospel are a savour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there

are to whom it is a savour of death unto death. He is set for a sign, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. He had many eyes upon him, during the time of his public ministry, he was a sign, but he had many tongues against him, the contradiction and reproach of sinners, he was continually cavilled at and abused; and the effects of this will be that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed (Lu 2:35), that is, upon this occasion, men will show themselves, will discover, and so distinguish, themselves. The secret good affections and dispositions in the minds of some will be revealed by their embracing Christ, and closing with him; the secret corruptions and vicious dispositions of others, that otherwise would never have appeared so bad, will be revealed by their enmity to Christ and their rage against him. Men will be judged of by the thoughts of their hearts, their thoughts concerning Christ; are they for him, or are they for his adversaries? The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and by it we are discovered to ourselves, and shall be judged hereafter.

[2.] It is true, Christ shall be a comfort to his mother; but be not thou too proud of it, for a sword shall pass through thine own soul also. He shall be a suffering Jesus; and, First, "Thou shalt suffer with him, by sympathy, more than any other of his friends, because of the nearness of thy relation, and strength of affection, to him." When he was abused, it was a sword in her bones. When she stood by his cross, and saw him dying, we may well think her inward grief was such that it might truly be said, A sword pierced through her soul, it cut her to the heart. Secondly, Thou shalt suffer for him. Many understand it as a prediction of her martyrdom; and some of the ancients say that it had its accomplishment in that. Note, In the midst of our greatest delights and advancements in this world, it is good for us to know that bonds and afflictions abide us.

35 (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also;) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

He is taken notice of by one Anna, or Ann, a prophetess, that one of each sex might bear witness to him in whom both men and women are invited to believe, that they may be saved. Observe,

1 The account here given of this Anna, who she was. She was,

(1.) A prophetess; the Spirit of prophecy now began to revive, which had ceased in Israel above three hundred years. Perhaps no more is meant than that she was one who had understanding in the scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the younger women in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God left not himself without witness.

(2.) She was the daughter of Phanuel; her father's name (says Grotius) is mentioned, to put us in mind of Jacob's Phanuel, or Penuel (Ge 32:30), that now the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should as it were see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies gracious.

(3.) She was of the tribe of Asher, which was in Galilee; this, some think, is taken notice of to refute those who said, Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet, when no sooner did prophecy revive but it appeared from Galilee.

(4.) She was of a great age, a widow of about eighty-four years; some think she had now been eighty-four years a widow, and then she must be considerably above a hundred years old; others, rather than suppose that a woman so very old should be capable of fasting and praying as she did, suppose that she was only eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow. Though she was a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again, but continued a widow to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise.

(5.) She was a constant resident in or at least attendant on the temple. Some think she had lodgings in the courts of the temple, either in an alms-house, being maintained by the temple charities; or, as a prophetess, she was lodged there, as in a proper place to be consulted and advised with by those that desired to know the mind of God; others think her not

departing from the temple means no more, than that she was constantly there at the time of divine service: when any good work was to be done, she was ready to join in it. It is most probable she had an apartment of her own among the out-buildings of the temple; and, besides her constant attendance on the public worship, abounded in private devotions, for she served God with fastings and prayers night and day: having no secular business to employ herself in, or being past it, she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, and not only fasted twice in the week, but always lived a mortified life, and spent that time in religious exercises which others spent in eating and drinking and sleeping; she not only observed the hours of prayer, but prayed night and day; was always in a praying frame, lived a life of prayer, gave herself to prayer, was frequent in ejaculations, large in solemn prayers, and very particular in her intercessions. And in these she served God; that was it that put a value upon them and an excellency in to them. The Pharisees fasted often, and made long prayers, but they served themselves, and their own pride and covetousness, in their fastings and prayers; but this good woman not only did that which was good, but did it from a good principle, and with a good end; she served God, and aimed at his honour, in fasting and praying. Note,

[1.] Devotion is a thing we ought to be constant in; other duties are in season now and then, but we must pray always.

[2.] It is a pleasant sight to see aged Christians abounding in acts of devotion, as those that are not weary of well-doing, that do not think themselves above these exercises, or past them, but that take more and more pleasure in them, and see more and more need of them, till they come to heaven.

[3.] Those that are diligent and faithful in improving the light and means they have shall have further discoveries made them. Anna is now at length abundantly recompensed for her attendance so many years in the temple.

2 The testimony she bore to our Lord Jesus (Lu 2:38): She came in at that instant when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning

him; she, who was so constant to the temple, could not miss the opportunity.

Now,

(1.) She gave thanks likewise to the Lord, just as Simeon, perhaps like him, wishing now to depart in peace. Note, Those to whom Christ is made known have reason enough to give thanks to the Lord for so great a favour; and we should be excited to that duty by the praises and thanksgivings of others; why should not we give thanks likewise, as well as they? Anna concurred with Simeon, and helped to make up the harmony. She confessed unto the Lord (so it may be read); she made an open profession of her faith concerning this child.

(2.) She, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him: She spoke of him to all them that believed the Messiah would come, and with him looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Redemption was the thing wanted, waited for, and wished for; redemption in Jerusalem, for thence the word of the Lord was to go forth, Isa 2:3. Some there were in Jerusalem that looked for redemption; yet but a few, for Anna, it should seem, had acquaintance with all them that were joint-expectants with her of the Messiah; she knew where to find them, or they where to find her, and she told them all the good news, that she had seen the Lord; and it was great news, this of his birth now, as afterwards that of his resurrection. Note, Those that have an acquaintance with Christ themselves should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him.

37 and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

Where he spent it, Lu 2:39. When the ceremony of presenting the child, and purifying the mother, was all over, they returned into Galilee. Luke relates no more concerning them, till they were returned into Galilee; but it appears by St. Matthew's gospel (Mt 2:1-23) that from Jerusalem they returned to Bethlehem, where the wise men of the east found them, and there they continued till they were directed to flee into Egypt, to escape the malice and rage of Herod; and, returning thence when Herod was dead, they were directed to go to their old quarters in Nazareth, whence they had been perhaps some years absent. It is here called their own city, because there they had lived a great while, and their relations were there. He was ordered further from Jerusalem, because his kingdom and priesthood were to have no affinity with the present government of the Jewish church or state. He is sent into a place of obscurity and reproach; for in this, as in other things, he must humble himself and make himself of no reputation.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

How he spent it, Lu 2:40. In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, and therefore he passed through infancy and childhood as other children did, yet without sin; nay, with manifest indications of a divine nature in him. As other children, he grew in stature of body, and the improvement of understanding in his human soul, that his natural body might be a figure of his mystical body, which, though animated by a perfect spirit, yet maketh increase of itself till it comes to the perfect man, Eph 4:13,16. But,

(1.) Whereas other children are weak in understanding and resolution, he was strong in spirit. By the Spirit of God his human soul was endued with extraordinary vigour, and all his faculties performed their offices in an extraordinary manner. He reasoned strongly, and his judgment was penetrating.

(2.) Whereas other children have foolishness bound in their hearts, which appears in what they say or do, he was filled with wisdom, not by any advantages of instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost; every thing he said and did was wisely said, and wisely done, above his years.

(3.) Whereas other children show that the corruption of nature is in them, and the tares of sin grow up with the wheat of reason, he made it appear that nothing but the grace of God was upon him (the wheat sprang up without tares), and that, whereas other children are by nature children of wrath, he was greatly beloved, and high in the favour of God; that God loved him, and cherished him, and took a particular care of him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

We have here the only passage of story recorded concerning our blessed Saviour, from his infancy to the day of his showing to Israel at twenty-nine years old, and therefore we are concerned to make much of this, for it is in vain to wish we had more. Here is,

Christ's going up with his parents to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, Lu 2:41,42.

1. It was their constant practice to attend there, according to the law, though it was a long journey, and they were poor, and perhaps not well able, without straitening themselves, to bear the expenses of it. Note, Public ordinances must be frequented, and we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Worldly business must give way to spiritual concerns. Joseph and Mary had a son in the house with them, that was able to teach them better than all the rabbin at Jerusalem; yet they went up thither, after the custom of the feast. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so should we. We have reason to suppose that Joseph went up likewise at the feasts of pentecost and tabernacles; for all the males were to appear there thrice a year, but Mary only at the passover, which was the greatest of the three feasts, and had most gospel in it.

2 The child Jesus, at twelve years old, went up with them. The Jewish doctors say that at twelve years old children must begin to fast from time

to time, that they may learn to fast on the day of atonement; and that at thirteen years old a child begins to be a son of the commandment, that is, obliged to the duties of adult church-membership, having been from his infancy, by virtue of his circumcision, a son of the covenant. It is not said that this was the first time that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast: probably he had done it for some years before, having spirit and wisdom above his years; and all should attend on public worship that can hear with understanding, Ne 8:2. Those children that are forward in other things should be put forward in religion. It is for the honour of Christ that children should attend on public worship, and he is pleased with their hosannas; and those children that were in their infancy dedicated to God should be called upon, when they are grown up, to come to the gospel passover, to the Lord's supper, that they make it their own act and deed to join themselves to the Lord.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

The child tarried behind in Jerusalem, not because he was loth to go home, or shy of his parents' company, but because he had business to do there, and would let his parents know that he had a Father in heaven, whom he was to be observant of more than of them; and respect to him must not be construed disrespect to them. Some conjecture that he tarried behind in the temple, for it was the custom of the pious Jews, on the morning that they were to go home, to go first to the temple, to worship God; there he staid behind, and found entertainment there till they found him again. Or, perhaps, he staid at the house where they lodged, or some other friend's house (and such a child as he was could not but be the darling of all that knew him, and every one would court his company), and went up to the temple only at church-time; but so it was that he staid behind. It is good to see young people willing to dwell in the house of the Lord; they are then like Christ.

His parents went the first day's journey without any suspicion that he was left behind, for they supposed him to have been in the company, Lu 2:44.

On these occasions, the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey, and the roads full of people; and they concluded that he came along with some of their neighbours, and they sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, that were upon the road, going down. Pray did you see our Son? or, Did you see him? Like the spouses's inquiry, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? This was a jewel worth seeking after. They knew that every one would be desirous of his company, and that he would be willing to do good among his kinsfolk and acquaintance, but among them they found him not, Lu 2:45. There are many, too many, who are our kinsfolk and acquaintance, that we cannot avoid conversing with, among whom we find little or nothing of Christ. When they could not hear of him in this and the other company upon the road, yet they hoped they should meet with him at the place where they lodged that night; but there they could learn no tidings of him. Compare this with Job 23:8,9.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

The third day they found him in the temple, in some of the apartments belonging to the temple, where the doctors of the law kept, not their courts, but their conferences rather, or their schools for disputation; and there they found him sitting in the midst of them (Lu 2:46), not standing as a catechumen to be examined or instructed by them, for he had discovered such measures of knowledge and wisdom that they admitted him to sit among them as a fellow or member of their society. This is an instance, not only that he was filled with wisdom (Lu 2:40), but that he had both a desire to increase it and a readiness to communicate it; and herein he is an example to children and young people, who should learn of Christ to delight in the company of those they may get good by, and choose to sit in the midst of the doctors rather than in the midst of the players. Let them begin at twelve years old, and sooner, to enquire after knowledge, and to associate with those that are able to instruct them; it is a hopeful and promising presage in youth to be desirous of instruction. Many a youth at Christ's age now would have been playing with the children in the temple, but he was sitting with the doctors in the temple.

(a) He heard them. Those that would learn must be swift to hear.

(b) He asked them questions; whether, as a teacher (he had authority so to ask) or as a learner (he had humility so to ask) I know not, or whether as an associate, or joint-searcher after truth, which must be found out by mutual amicable disquisitions.

(c) He returned answers to them, which were very surprising and satisfactory, Lu 2:47. And his wisdom and understanding appeared as much in the questions he asked as in the answers he gave, so that all who heard him were astonished: they never heard one so young, no indeed any of their greatest doctors, talk sense at the rate that he did; like David, he had more understanding than all his teachers, yea, than the ancients, Ps 119:99,100. Now Christ showed forth some rays of his glory, which were presently drawn in again. He gave them a taste (says Calvin) of his divine wisdom and knowledge. Methinks this public appearance of Christ in the temple, as a teacher, was like Moses's early attempt to deliver Israel, which Stephen put this construction upon, that he supposed his brethren would have understood, by that, how God by his hand would deliver them, Ac 7:24,25. They might have taken the hint, and been delivered then, but they understood not; so they here might have had Christ (for aught I know) to enter upon his work now, but they were only astonished, and understood not the indication; and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity again, and they hear no more of him for many years after.

His mother talked with him privately about it. When the company broke up, she took him aside, and examined him about it with a deal of tenderness and affection, Lu 2:48. Joseph and Mary were both amazed to find him there, and to find that he had so much respect showed him as to be admitted to sit among the doctors, and to be taken notice of. His father knew he had only the name of a father, and therefore said nothing. But,

(a) His mother told him how ill they took it: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Why didst thou put us into such a fright?" They were ready to say, as Jacob of Joseph, "A wild beast has devoured him; or, He is fallen into the hands of some more cruel enemy, who has at length found

out that he was the young child whose life Herod had sought some years ago." A thousand imaginations, we may suppose, they had concerning him, each more frightful than another. "Now, why hast thou given us occasion for these fears? Thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee, to bring thee along with us." Note, Those may have leave to complain of their losses that think they have lost Christ. But their weeping did not hinder sowing; they did not sorrow and sit down in despair, but sorrowed and sought. Note, If we would find Christ, we must seek him sorrowing, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. They that thus seek him in sorrow shall find him, at length, with so much the greater joy.

(b) He gently reproved their inordinate solicitude about him (Lu 2:49): "How is it that you sought me? You might have depended upon it, I would have followed you home when I had done the business I had to do here. I could not be lost in Jerusalem. Wist ye not that I ought to be, en tois tou patros mou;--in my Father's house?" so some read it; "where else should the Son be, who abideth in the house for ever? I ought to be,"

[1.] "Under my Father's care and protection; and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him, and not have burdened yourselves with it." Christ is a shaft hid in his Father's quiver, Isa 49:2. He takes care of his church likewise, and therefore let us never despair of its safety.

[2.] "At my Father's work" (so we take it): "I must be about my Father's business, and therefore could not go home as soon as you might. Wist ye not? Have you not already perceived that concerning me, that I have devoted myself to the service of religion, and therefore must employ myself in the affairs of it?" Herein he hath left us an example; for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend their heavenly Father's business, and to make all other business give way to it. This word of Christ we now think we understand very well, for he hath explained it in what he hath done and said. It was his errand into the world, and his meat and drink in the world, to do his Father's will, and finish his work: and yet at that time his parents understood not this saying,

Lu 2:50. They did not understand what business he had to do then in the temple for his Father. They believed him to be the Messiah, that should have the throne of his father David; but they thought that should rather bring him to the royal palace than to the temple. They understood not his prophetical office; and he was to do much of his work in that.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

Lastly, Here is their return to Nazareth. This glimpse of his glory was to be short. It was now over, and he did not urge his parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem or to settle him there (though that was the place of improvement and preferment, and where he might have the best opportunities of showing his wisdom), but very willingly retired into his obscurity at Nazareth, where for many years he was, as it were, buried alive. Doubtless, he came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast, three times a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told; it is not improbable but he might. But here we are told,

1. That he was subject to his parents. Though once, to show that he was more than a man, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father's business, yet he did not, as yet, make that his constant practice, nor for many years after, but was subject to them, observed their order, and went and came as they directed, and, as it should seem, worked with his father at the trade of a carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being made of a woman, he was made under the law of the fifth commandment, to teach the seed of the faithful thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father was only his supposed father, yet he was subject

to them; though he was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom nay though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his parents; how then will they answer it who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?

2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand her son's sayings, yet kept them in her heart, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However we may neglect men's sayings because they are obscure (Si non vis intelligi debes negligi--If it be not intelligible, it is not valuable), yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That which at first is dark, so that we know not what to make of it, may afterwards become plain and easy; we should therefore lay it up for hereafter. See Joh 2:22. We may find use for that another time which now we see not how to make useful to us. A scholar keeps those grammar rules in memory which at present he understands not the use of, because he is told that they will hereafter be of use to him; so we must do by Christ's sayings.

3. That he improved, and came on, to admiration (Lu 2:52): He increased in wisdom and stature. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this is meant of his human nature, his body increased in stature and bulk, he grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in wisdom, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the divinity that dwelt in him manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, ad modum recipientis--in proportion to his capacity; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in favour with God and man, that is, in all those graces that rendered him acceptable to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an infant, a child, a youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, when he grew up to be a youth, than it did, or could, while he was an infant and a child. Note, Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom, and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Luke-3

The Preaching of John the Baptist

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

Now in the fifteenth year. This was the thirteenth year of his being sole emperor. He was two years joint emperor with Augustus, and Luke reckons from the time when he was admitted to share the empire with Augustus Caesar. See Lardner's Credibility, vol. i.

Tiberius Caesar. Tiberius succeeded Augustus in the empire, and began his sole reign Aug. 19, A.D. 14. He was a most infamous character -- a scourge to the Roman people. He reigned twenty-three years, and was succeeded by Caius Caligula, whom he appointed his successor on account of his notorious wickedness, and that he might be, as he expressed it, a serpent to the Romans.

Pontius Pilate. Herod the Great left his kingdom to three sons. Mt 2:22. To Archelaus he left Judea. Archelaus reigned nine years, when, on account of his crimes, he was banished into Vienne, and Judea was made a Roman province, and placed entirely under Roman governors or procurators, and became completely tributary to Rome. Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor that had been sent, and of course had been in Judea but a short time. See the chronological table at the end of the volume.

Herod being tetrarch of Galilee. This was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, to whom Galilee had been left as his part of his father's kingdom. The word tetrarch properly denotes one who presides over a fourth part of a country or province; but it also came to be a general title, denoting one who reigned over any part--a, third, a half, &c. In this case

Herod had a third of the dominions of his father, but he was called tetrarch. It was this Herod who imprisoned John the Baptist, and to whom our Saviour, when arraigned, was sent by Pilate.

And his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea. Iturea was so called from Jetur, one of the sons of Ishmael, Gen 25:15, 1Chr 1:31. It was situated on the east side of the Jordan, and was taken from the descendants of Jetur by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, 1Chr 5:19.

Region of Trachonitis. This region was also on the east of the Jordan, and extended northward to the district of Damascus and eastward to the deserts of Arabia. It was bounded on the west by Gaulonitis and south by the city of Bostra. Philip had obtained this region from the Romans on condition that he would extirpate the robbers.

Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene. Abilene was so called from Abila, its chief city. It was situated in Syria, north-west of Damascus and south-east of Mount Lebanon, and was adjacent to Galilee.

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

By the government of the Jews among themselves, to show that they were a corrupt people, and that therefore it was time that the Messiah should come, to reform them, Lu 3:2. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. God had appointed that there should be but one high priest at a time, but here were two, to serve some ill turn or other: one served one year and the other the other year; so some. One was the high priest, and the other the sagan, as the Jews called him, to officiate for him when he was disabled; or, as others say, one was high priest, and represented Aaron, and that was Caiaphas; Annas, the other, was nasi, or head of the sanhedrim, and represented Moses. But to us there is but one high priest, one Lord of all, to whom all judgment is committed.

The origin of it was from heaven: The word of God came unto John, Lu 3:2. He received full commission and full instructions from God to do what he did. It is the same expression that is used concerning the Old-Testament prophets (Jer 1:2); for John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, and in him prophecy revived, which had been long suspended.

We are not told how the word of the Lord came to John, whether by an angel, as to his father, or by dream, or vision, or voice, but it was to his satisfaction, and ought to be to ours. John is here called the son of Zacharias, to refer us to what the angel said to his father, when he assured him that he should have this son. The word of the Lord came to him in the wilderness; for those whom God fits he will find out, wherever they are. As the word of the Lord is not bound in a prison, so it is not lost in a wilderness. The word of the Lord made its way to Ezekiel among the captives by the river of Chebar, and to John in the isle of Patmos. John was the son of a priest, now entering upon the thirtieth year of his age; and therefore, according to the custom of the temple, he was now to be admitted into the temple-service, where he should have attended as a candidate five years before. But God had called him to a more honourable ministry, and therefore the Holy Ghost enrols him here, since he was not enrolled in the archives of the temple: John the son of Zacharias began his ministration such a time.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

The scope and design of it were to bring all the people of his country off from their sins and home to their God, Lu 3:3. He came first into all the country about Jordan, the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that part of the country which Israel took possession of first, when they entered the land of promise under Joshua's conduct; there was the banner of the gospel first displayed. John resided in the most solitary part of the country: but, when the word of the Lord came to him, he quitted his deserts, and came into the inhabited country. Those that are best pleased in their retirements must cheerfully exchange them, when God calls them into places of concourse. He came out of the wilderness into all the country, with some marks of distinction, preaching a new baptism; not a sect, or party, but a profession, or distinguishing badge. The sign, or ceremony, was such as was ordinarily used among the Jews, washing with water, by which proselytes were sometimes admitted, or disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was, repentance for the remission of sins: that is, all that submitted to his baptism,

(1.) Were thereby obliged to repent of their sins, to be sorry for what they had done amiss, and to do so no more. The former they professed, and

were concerned to be sincere in their professions; the latter they promised, and were concerned to make good what they promised. He bound them, not to such ceremonious observances as were imposed by the tradition of the elders, but to change their mind, and change their way, to cast away from them all their transgressions, and to make them new hearts and to live new lives. The design of the gospel, which now began, was to make men devout and pious, holy and heavenly, humble and meek, sober and chaste, just and honest, charitable and kind, and good in every relation, who had been much otherwise; and this is to repent.

(2.) They were thereby assured of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance. As the baptism he administered bound them not to submit to the power of sin, so it sealed to them a gracious and pleadable discharge from the guilt of sin. Turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin; agreeing with the word of the Lord, by the Old-Testament prophets, Eze 18:30.

4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying,
The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

The fulfilling of the scriptures in the ministry of John. The other evangelists had referred us to the same text that is here referred to, that of Esaias, Isa 40:3. It is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, which he heard from God, which he spoke for God, those words of his which were written for the generations to come. Among them it is found that there should be the voice of one crying in the wilderness; and John is that voice, a clear distinct voice, a loud voice, an articulate one; he cries, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight. John's business is to make way for the entertainment of the gospel in the hearts of the people, to bring them into such a frame and temper as that Christ might be welcome to them, and they welcome to Christ. Luke goes further on with the quotation than Matthew and Mark had done, and applies the following words likewise to John's ministry (Lu 3:5,6), Every valley shall be filled. Dr. Hammond understands this as a prediction of the desolation coming upon the people of the Jews for their infidelity: the land should be made plain by the pioneers for the Roman army, and should be laid waste by it, and there should then be a visible distinction made between the impenitent on the one side and the receivers of the

gospel on the other side. But it seems rather to be meant of the gospel of Christ, of which that was the introduction.

1 The humble shall by it be enriched with grace: Every valley that lies low and moist shall be filled and be exalted.

2 The proud shall by it be humbled; the self-confident that stand upon their own bottom, and the self-conceited that lift up their own top, shall have contempt put upon them: Every mountain and hill shall be brought low. If they repent, they are brought to the dust; if not, to the lowest hell.

3. Sinners shall be converted to God: The crooked ways and the crooked spirits shall be made straight; for, though none can make that straight which God hath made crooked (Ec 7:13), yet God by his grace can make that straight which sin hath made crooked.

4. Difficulties that were hindering and discouraging in the way to heaven shall be removed: The rough ways shall be made smooth; and they that love God's law shall have great peace, and nothing shall offend them. The gospel has made the way to heaven plain and easy to be found, smooth and easy to be walked in.

5. The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further (Lu 3:6): All flesh shall see the salvation of God; not the Jews only, but the Gentiles. All shall see it; they shall have it set before them and offered to them, and some of all sorts shall see it, enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel into the heart, by the captivation of high thoughts and bringing them into obedience to Christ, by the leveling of the soul and the removing of all obstructions that stand in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome.

5 Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be brought low;
and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;
6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

The general warnings and exhortations which he gave to those who submitted to his baptism, Lu 3:7-9. In Matthew he is said to have preached these same things to many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, that came to his baptism (Mt 3:7-10); but here he is said to have spoken them to the multitude, that came forth to be baptized of him, Lu 3:7. This was the purport of his preaching to all that came to him, and he did not alter it in compliment to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they came, but dealt as plainly with them as with any other of his hearers. And as he did not flatter the great, so neither did he compliment the many, or make his court to them, but gave the same reproofs of sin and warnings of wrath to the multitude that he did to the Sadducees and Pharisees; for, if they had not the same faults, they had others as bad. Now observe here,

1. That the guilty corrupted race of mankind is become a generation of vipers; not only poisoned, but poisonous; hateful to God, hating one another. This magnifies the patience of God, in continuing the race of mankind upon the earth, and not destroying that nest of vipers. He did it once by water, and will again by fire.

2. This generation of vipers is fairly warned to flee from the wrath to come, which is certainly before them if they continue such; and their being a multitude will not be at all their security, for it will be neither reproach nor loss to God to cut them off. We are not only warned of this wrath, but are put into a way to escape it, if we look about us in time.

3. There is no way of fleeing from the wrath to come, but by repentance. They that submitted to the baptism of repentance thereby evidenced that they were warned to flee from the wrath to come and took the warning; and we by our baptism profess to have fled out of Sodom, for fear of what is coming upon it.

4. Those that profess repentance are highly concerned to live like penitents (Lu 3:8): "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, else, notwithstanding your professions of repentance, you cannot escape the

wrath to come." By the fruits of repentance it will be known whether it be sincere or no. By the change of our way must be evidenced the change of our mind.

5. If we be not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church will stand us in no stead at all: Begin not now to frame excuses from this great duty of repentance, by saying within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. What will it avail us to be the children of godly parents if we be not godly, to be within the pale of the Church if we be not brought into the bond of the covenant?

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon our external privileges and professions of religion, because God has no need of us or of our services, but can effectually secure by his own honour and interest without us. If we were cut off and ruined, he could raise up to himself a church out of the most unlikely,--children to Abraham even out of stones.

7. The greater professions we make of repentance, and the greater assistances and encouragements are given us to repentance, the nearer and the sorer will our destruction be if we do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Now that the gospel begins to be preached, now that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, now that the axe is laid to the root of the tree, threatenings to the wicked and impenitent are now more terrible than before, as encouragements to the penitent are now more comfortable. "Now that you are upon your behaviour, look to yourselves."

8. Barren trees will be cast into the fire at length; it is the fittest place for them: Every tree that doth not bring forth fruit, good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. If it serve not for fruit, to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel, to the honour of his justice.

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then ?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

The particular instructions he gave to several sorts of persons, that enquired of him concerning their duty: the people, the publicans, and the soldiers. Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism; but we do not find them asking, What shall we do? They thought they knew what they had to do as well as he could tell them, or were determined to do what they pleased, whatever he told them. But the people, the publicans, and the soldiers, who knew that they had done amiss, and that they ought to do better, and were conscious to themselves of great ignorance and unacquaintedness with the divine law, were particularly inquisitive: What shall we do? Note,

1. Those that are baptized must be taught, and those that have baptized them are concerned, as they have opportunity, to teach them, Mt 28:19,20.

2. Those that profess and promise repentance in general must evidence it by particular instances of reformation, according as their place and condition are.

3. They that would do their duty must desire to know their duty, and enquire concerning it. The first good word Paul said, when he was converted, was, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? These here enquire, not, What shall this man do? but, What shall we do? What fruits meet for repentance shall we bring forth? Now John gives answer to each, according to their place and station.

(a) He tells the people their duty, and that is to be charitable (Lu 3:11): He that has two coats, and, consequently, one to spare, let him give, or lend at least, to him that has none, to keep him warm. Perhaps he saw among his hearers some that were overloaded with clothes, while others were ready to perish in rags, and he puts those who had superfluities upon contributing to the relief of those that had not necessaries. The gospel requires mercy, and not sacrifice; and the design of it is to engage us to do all the good we can. Food and raiment are the two supports of life; he that hath meat to spare, let him give to him that is destitute of daily food,

as well as he that hath clothes to spare: what we have we are but stewards of, and must use it, accordingly, as our Master directs.

(b) He tells the publicans their duty, the collectors of the emperor's revenue (Lu 3:13): Exact no more than that which is appointed you. They must do justice between the government and the merchant, and not oppress the people in levying the taxes, nor any way make them heavier or more burdensome than the law had made them. They must not think that because it was their office to take care that the people did not defraud the prince they might therefore, by the power they had, bear hard upon the people; as those that have ever so little a branch of power are apt to abuse it: "No, keep to your book of rates, and reckon it enough that you collect for Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and do not enrich yourselves by taking more." The public revenues must be applied to the public service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons. Observe, He does not direct the publicans to quit their places, and to go no more to the receipt of custom; the employment is in itself lawful and necessary, but let them be just and honest in it.

(c) He tells the soldiers their duty, Lu 3:14. Some think that these soldiers were of the Jewish nation and religion: others think that they were Romans; for it was not likely either that the Jews would serve the Romans or that the Romans would trust the Jews in their garrisons in their own nation; and then it is an early instance of Gentiles embracing the gospel and submitting to it. Military men seldom seem inclined to religion; yet these submitted even to the Baptist's strict profession, and desired to receive the word of command from him: What must we do? Those who more than other men have their lives in their hands, and are in deaths often, are concerned to enquire what they shall do that they may be found in peace. In answer to this enquiry, John does not bid them lay down their arms, and desert the service, but cautions them against the sins that soldiers were commonly guilty of; for this is fruit meet for repentance, to keep ourselves from our iniquity.

[1.] They must not be injurious to the people among whom they were quartered, and over whom indeed they were set: "Do violence to no man.

Your business is to keep the peace, and prevent men's doing violence to one another; but do not you do violence to any. Shake no man" (so the word signifies); "do not put people into fear; for the sword of war, as well as that of justice, is to be a terror only to evil doers, but a protection to those that do well. Be not rude in your quarters; force not money from people by frightening them. Shed not the blood of war in peace; offer no incivility either to man or woman, nor have any hand in the barbarous devastations that armies sometimes make." Nor must they accuse any falsely to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and get bribes.

[2.] They must not be injurious to their fellow-soldiers; for some think that caution, not to accuse falsely, has special reference to them: "Be not forward to complain one of another to your superior officers, that you may be revenged on those whom you have a pique against, or undermine those above you, and get into their places." Do not oppress any; so some think the word here signifies as used by the LXX. in several passages of the Old Testament.

[3.] They must not be given to mutiny, or contend with their generals about their pay: "Be content with your wages. While you have what you agreed for, do not murmur that it is not more." It is discontent with what they have that makes men oppressive and injurious; they that never think they have enough themselves will not scruple at any the most irregular practices to make it more, by defrauding others. It is a rule to all servants that they be content with their wages; for they that indulge themselves in discontents expose themselves to many temptations, and it is wisdom to make the best of that which is.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do ?

13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do ? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy

Ghost and with fire:

Observe here, 1. How the extraordinariness of John the Baptist's person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, and the exemplariness of his conversation, drew all persons to an admiration of him; insomuch that they began to think within themselves, whether here were not the Messiah himself. He plainly tells them he was not, but only his servant, his harbinger and forerunner.

Observe 2. The high opinion which John had of Christ, He is mightier than I; that is, a person of greater authority, dignity, and excellency, than myself.

From whence may be gathered, that though Christ was man, he was more than man, even very God, equal with the Father: for John himself was the greatest of them that were born of women. Matt 11:11 Yet, says John, Christ is mightier than I. How so? In regard of the dignity of his person, being both God and man? He that cometh after me is mightier than I.

Observe, 3. The humble and low estimation that the holy Baptist had of himself: His shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose: a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the lowest offices, and meanest services for Christ.

Lord, how well does humility of mind, an humble apprehension, and a low opinion of themselves, become the messengers and ministers of Christ! John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoe.

Observe, 4. John does not only declare the dignity of Christ's person, but the excellency of his office; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. As if he had said, "I only wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit, which is as fire in the effects of it, purifying the hearts of his people from sin, and

consuming their lusts and corruptions; yet at the same time having fiery indignation, and flaming judgments, to destroy and burn up impenitent sinners like dry stubble."

Observable it is in scripture, that Christ is represented by one and the same metaphor of fire, in a way of comfort to his children, and in a way of terror to his enemies; he is fire unto both. He sits in the hearts of his people as a refiner's fire; he is amongst his enemies as a consuming fire: a fire for his church to take comfort in, a fire for his enemies to perish by.

Observe, lastly, how the holy Baptist compares our Saviour to an husbandman, and the Jewish church to a barn floor; the office of an husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow, his corn, separating it from the chaff, preserving the one, and consuming the other.

Observe,

1. That the church is Christ's floor.

2. That this floor Christ will purge, and that thoroughly.

3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor.

The church is compared to a floor, upon the account of that mixture which is in the church. In a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed. Thus in the church there has been, there is, and ever will be, a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere Christians: but this floor Christ will purge; purge it, but not break it up; purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its essence and existence: and the fan in Christ's hand, with which he will purge his floor, is his holy word, accompanied with the wing of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wing dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both the floor is purged: His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge.

17 whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor,
and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.
18 And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.
19 But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,
20 added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

See notes on Mt 14:1-13

Added this above all, To all his former crimes he added this; not implying that this was the worst of his acts, but that this was one of his deeds, of like character as the others. The event here mentioned did not take place until some time after this, but it is mentioned here to show what was the end of John's preaching, or to fill out the account concerning him.

The Baptism of Jesus

21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,
22 and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

See notes on Mt 3:13-17

The Genealogy of Jesus

23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,
24 which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,
25 which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Nahum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Naggai,

26 which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah,

27 which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zerubbabel, which was the son of Shealtiel, which was the son of Neri,

28 which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er,

29 which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi,

30 which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Judah, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim,

31 which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,

32 which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Boaz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Nahshon,

33 which was the son of Amminadab, which was the son of Ram, which was the son of Hezron, which was the son of Pharez, which was the son of Judah,

34 which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Terah, which was the son of Nahor,

35 which was the son of Serug, which was the son of Reu, which was the son of Peleg, which was the son of Eber, which was the son of Salah,

36 which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Shem, which was the son of Noah, which was the son of Lamech,

37 which was the son of Methuselah, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Mahalaleel, which was the son of Cainan,

38 which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

Luke-4

The Temptation of Jesus

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

2 being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

See notes on Mt 4:1-11

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

5 And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan:
for it is written,
Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10 for it is written,
He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

11 and in their hands they shall bear thee up,
lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

After Christ had vanquished the evil spirit, he made it appear how much he was under the influence of the good Spirit; and, having defended himself against the devil's assaults, he now begins to act offensively, and to make those attacks upon him, by his preaching and miracles, which he could not resist or repel. Observe,

What is here said in general of his preaching, and the entertainment it met with in Galilee, a remote part of the country, distant from Jerusalem; it was a part of Christ's humiliation that he began his ministry there.

But,

1. Thither he came in the power of the Spirit. The same Spirit that qualified him for the exercise of his prophetical office strongly inclined him to it. He was not to wait for a call from men, for he had light and life in himself.

2. There he taught in their synagogues, their places of public worship, where they met, not, as in the temple, for ceremonial services, but for the moral acts of devotion, to read, expound, and apply, the word, to pray and praise, and for church-discipline; these came to be more frequent since the captivity, when the ceremonial worship was near expiring.

3. This he did so as that he gained a great reputation. A fame of him went through all that region (Lu 4:14), and it was a good fame; for (Lu 4:15) he was glorified of all. Every body admired him, and cried him up; they never heard such preaching in all their lives. Now, at first, he met with no contempt or contradiction; all glorified him, and there were none as yet that vilified him.

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Of his preaching at Nazareth, the city where he was brought up; and the entertainment it met with there. And here we are told how he preached there, and how he was persecuted.

1. How he preached there. In that observe,

(a) The opportunity he had for it: He came to Nazareth when he had gained a reputation in other places, in hopes that thereby something at least of the contempt and prejudice with which his countrymen would look upon him might be worn off. There he took occasion to preach,

[1.] In the synagogue, the proper place, where it had been his custom to attend when he was a private person, Lu 4:16. We ought to attend on the public worship of God, as we have opportunity. But, now that he was entered upon his public ministry, there he preached. Where the multitudes of fish were, there this wise Fisherman would cast his net.

[2.] On the sabbath day, the proper time which the pious Jews spent, not in a mere ceremonial rest from worldly labour, but in the duties of God's worship, as of old they frequented the schools of the prophets on the new moons and the sabbaths. Note, It is good to keep sabbaths in solemn assemblies.

(b) The call he had to it.

[1.] He stood up to read. They had in their synagogues seven readers every sabbath, the first a priest, the second a Levite, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. We often find Christ preaching in other synagogues, but never reading, except in this synagogue at Nazareth, of which he had been many years a member. Now he offered his service as

he had perhaps often done; he read one of the lessons out of the prophets, Ac 13:15. Note, The reading of the scripture is very proper work to be done in religious assemblies; and Christ himself did not think it any disparagement to him to be employed in it.

[2.] The book of the prophet Esaias was delivered to him, either by the ruler of the synagogue or by the minister mentioned (Lu 4:20), so that he was no intruder, but duly authorized pro hac vice--on this occasion. The second lesson for that day being in the prophecy of Esaias, they gave him that volume to read in.

(c) The text he preached upon. He stood up to read, to teach us reverence in reading and hearing the word of God. When Ezra opened the book of the law, all the people stood up (Ne 8:5); so did Christ here, when he read in the book of the prophets. Now the book being delivered to him,

[1.] He opened it. The books of the Old Testament were in a manner shut up till Christ opened them, Isa 29:11. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to take the book, and open the seals; for he can open, not the book only, but the understanding.

[2.] He found the place which was appointed to be read that day in course, which he needed not to be directed to; he soon found it, and read it, and took it for his text. Now his text was taken out of Isa 61:1,2, which is here quoted at large, Lu 4:18,19. There was a providence in it that that portion of scripture should be read that day, which speaks so very plainly of the Messiah, that they might be left inexcusable who knew him not, though they heard the voices of the prophets read every sabbath day, which bore witness of him, Ac 13:27. This text gives a full account of Christ's undertaking, and the work he came into the world to do. Observe,

First, How he was qualified for the work: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred upon him, not by measure, as upon other prophets, but without measure, Joh 3:34. He now came in the power of the Spirit, Lu 4:14.

Secondly, How he was commissioned: Because he had anointed me, and sent me. His extraordinary qualification amounted to a commission; his being anointed signifies both his being fitted for the undertaking and called to it. Those whom God appoints to any service he anoints for it: "Because he hath sent me, he hath sent his Spirit along with me."

Thirdly, What his work was. He was qualified and commissioned,

1. To be a great prophet. He was anointed to preach; that is three times mentioned here, for that was the work he was now entering upon. Observe,

(a) To whom he was to preach: to the poor; to those that were poor in the world, whom the Jewish doctors disdained to undertake the teaching of and spoke of with contempt; to those that were poor in spirit, to the meek and humble, and to those that were truly sorrowful for sin: to them the gospel and the grace of it will be welcome, and they shall have it, Mt 11:5.

(b) What he was to preach. In general, he must preach the gospel. He is sent euangelizesthai--to evangelize them; not only to preach to them, but to make that preaching effectual; to bring it, not only to their ears, but to their hearts, and deliver them into the mould of it. Three things he is to preach:--

[1.] Deliverance to the captives, The gospel is a proclamation of liberty, like that to Israel in Egypt and in Babylon. By the merit of Christ sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. It is a deliverance from the worst of thraldoms, which all those shall have the benefit of that are willing to make Christ their Head, and are willing to be ruled by him.

[2.] Recovering of sight to the blind. He came not only by the word of his gospel to bring light to them that sat in the dark, but by the power of his grace to give sight to them that were blind; not only the Gentile world,

but every unregenerate soul, that is not only in bondage, but in blindness, like Samson and Zedekiah. Christ came to tell us that he has eye-salve for us, which we may have for the asking; that, if our prayer be, Lord, that our eyes may be opened, his answer shall be, Receive your sight.

[3.] The acceptable year of the Lord, Lu 4:19. He came to let the world know that the God whom they had offended was willing to be reconciled to them, and to accept of them upon new terms; that there was yet a way of making their services acceptable to him; that there is now a time of good will toward men. It alludes to the year of release, or that of jubilee, which was an acceptable year to servants, who were then set at liberty; to debtors, against whom all actions then dropped; and to those who had mortgaged their lands, for then they returned to them again. Christ came to sound the jubilee-trumpet; and blessed were they that heard the joyful sound, Ps 89:15. It was an acceptable time, for it was a day of salvation.

2. Christ came to be a great Physician; for he was sent to heal the broken-hearted, to comfort and cure afflicted consciences, to give peace to those that were troubled and humbled for sins, and under a dread of God's wrath against them for them, and to bring them to rest who were weary and heavy-laden, under the burden of guilt and corruption.

3. To be a great Redeemer. He not only proclaims liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the Jews in Babylon (Whoever will, may go up), but he sets at liberty them that are bruised; he doth by his Spirit incline and enable them to make use of the liberty granted, as then none did but those whose spirit God stirred up, Ezr 1:5. He came in God's name to discharge poor sinners that were debtors and prisoners to divine justice. The prophets could but proclaim liberty, but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had power on earth to forgive sins, came to set at liberty; and therefore this clause is added here. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that, according to a liberty the Jew allowed their readers, to compare scripture with scripture, in their reading, for the explication of the text, Christ added it from Isa 58:6, where it is made the duty of the acceptable year to let the oppressed go free, where the phrase the LXX. uses is the same with this here.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah.

And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;

he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

Here is Christ's application of this text to himself (Lu 4:21): When he had read it, he rolled up the book, and gave it again to the minister, or clerk, that attended, and sat down, according to the custom of the Jewish teachers; he sat daily in the temple, teaching, Mt 26:55. Now he began his discourse thus, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This, which Isaiah wrote by way of prophecy, I have now read to you by way of history." It now began to be fulfilled in Christ's entrance upon his public ministry; now, in the report they heard of his preaching and miracles in other places; now, in his preaching to them in their own synagogue. It is most probable that Christ went on, and showed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled in the doctrine he preached concerning the kingdom of heaven at hand; that it was preaching liberty, and sight, and healing, and all the blessings of the acceptable year of the Lord. Many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, which these were but the beginning of; for Christ often preached long sermons, which we have but a short account of. This was enough to introduce a great deal: This day is this scripture fulfilled.

Note,

[1.] All the scriptures of the Old Testament that were to be fulfilled in the Messiah had their full accomplishment in the Lord Jesus, which abundantly proves that this was he that should come.

[2.] In the providences of God, it is fit to observe the fulfilling of the scriptures. The works of God are the accomplishment not only of his secret word, but of his word revealed; and it will help us to understand both the scriptures and the providences of God to compare them one with another.

Here is the attention and admiration of the auditors.

[1.] Their attention (Lu 4:20): The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue (and, probably, there were a great many) were fastened on him, big with expectation what he would say, having heard so much of late concerning him. Note, It is good, in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed upon the minister by whom God is speaking to us; for, as the eye effects the heart, so, usually, the heart follows the eye, and is wandering, or fixed, as that is. Or, rather, let us learn hence to keep the eye fixed upon Christ speaking to us in and by the minister. What saith my Lord unto his servants?

[2.] Their admiration (Lu 4:22): They all bore him witness that he spoke admirably well, and to the purpose. They all commended him, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; and yet, as appears by what follows, they did not believe in him. Note, It is possible that those who are admirers of good ministers and good preaching may yet be themselves not true Christians. Observe, First, What it was they admired: The gracious words which proceedeth out of his mouth. The words of grace; good words, and spoken in a winning melting way. Note, Christ's words are words of grace, for, grace being poured into his lips (Ps 45:2), words of grace poured from them. And these words of grace are to be wondered at; Christ's name was Wonderful, and in nothing was he more so than in his grace, in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with those words. We may well wonder that he should speak such words of grace to such graceless wretches as we are. Secondly, What it was that increased their wonder

and that was the consideration of his original: They said, Is not this Joseph's son, and therefore his extraction mean and his education mean? Some from this suggestion took occasion perhaps so much the more to admire his gracious words, concluding he must needs be taught of God, for they knew no one else had taught him; while others perhaps with this consideration corrected their wonder at his gracious words, and concluded there could be nothing really admirable in them, whatever appeared, because he was the Son of Joseph. Can any thing great, or worthy our regard, come from one so mean?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

Christ's anticipating an objection which he knew to be in the minds of many of his hearers. Observe,

[1.] What the objection was (Lu 4:23): "You will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself. Because you know that I am the Son of Joseph, your neighbour, you will expect that I should work miracles among you, as I have done in other places; as one would expect that a physician, if he be able, should heal, not only himself, but those of his own family and fraternity." Most of Christ's miracles were cures;--"Now why should not the sick in thine own city be healed as well as those in other cities?" They were designed to cure people of their unbelief;--"Now why should not the disease of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city as well as in those of others? Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, that has been so much talked of, do here also in thine own country." They were pleased with Christ's gracious words, only because they hoped they were but the introduction to some wondrous works of his. They wanted to have their lame, and blind, and sick, and lepers, healed and helped, that the charge of their town might be eased; and that was the chief thing they looked at. They thought their own town as worthy to be the stage of miracles as any other; and why should not he rather draw company to that than to any other? And why should not his neighbours and acquaintances have the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other?

[2.] How he answers this objection against the course he took.

First, By a plain and positive reason why he would not make Nazareth his headquarters (Lu 4:24), because it generally holds true that no prophet is accepted in his own country, at least not so well, nor with such probability of doing good, as in some other country; experience seals this. When prophets have been sent with messages and miracles of mercy, few of their own country-men, that have known their extraction and education, have been fit to receive them. So Dr. Hammond. Familiarity breeds contempt; and we are apt to think meanly of those whose conversation we have been accustomed to; and they will scarcely be duly honoured as prophets who were well known when they were in the rank of private men. That is most esteemed that is far-fetched and dear-bought, above what is home-bred, though really more excellent. This arises likewise from the envy which neighbours commonly have towards one another, so that they cannot endure to see him their superior whom awhile ago they took to be every way their inferior. For this reason, Christ declined working miracles, or doing any thing extraordinary, at Nazareth, because of the rooted prejudices they had against him there.

Secondly, By pertinent examples of two of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament, who chose to dispense their favours among foreigners rather than among their own countrymen, and that, no doubt, by divine direction.

1. Elijah maintained a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon, one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, when there was a famine in the land, Lu 4:25,26. The story we have 1Ki 17:9, &c. It is said there that the heaven was shut up three years and six months; whereas it is said, 1Ki 18:1, that in the third year Elijah showed himself to Ahab, and there was rain; but that was not the third year of the drought, but the third year of Elijah's sojourning with the widow of Sarepta. As God would hereby show himself a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, so he would show that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles.

2. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy, though he was a Syrian, and not only a foreigner, but an enemy to Israel (Lu 4:27); Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus, four particularly, that brought

the news of the Syrians' raising the siege of Samaria with precipitation, and leaving the plunder of their tents to enrich Samaria, when Elisha was himself in the besieged city, and this was the accomplishment of his prophecy too; see 2Ki 7:1,3, &c. And yet we do not find that Elisha cleansed them, no not for a reward of their service, and the good tidings they brought, but only the Syrian; for none besides had faith to apply himself to the prophet for a cure. Christ himself often met with greater faith among Gentiles than in Israel. And here he mentions both these instances, to show that he did not dispense the favour of his miracles by private respect, but according to God's wise appointment. And the people of Israel might as justly have said to Elijah, or Elisha, as the Nazarenes to Christ, Physician, heal thyself. Nay, Christ wrought his miracles, though not among his townsmen, yet among Israelites, whereas these great prophets wrought theirs among Gentiles. The examples of the saints, though they will not make a bad action good, yet will help to free a good action from the blame of exceptious people.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Zarephath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

How he was persecuted at Nazareth.

(a) That which provoked them was his taking notice of the favour which God by Elijah and Elisha showed to the Gentiles: When they heard these things, they were filled with wrath (Lu 4:28), they were all so; a great change since Lu 4:22, when they wondered at the gracious words that

proceeded out of his mouth; thus uncertain are the opinions and affections of the multitude, and so very fickle. If they had mixed faith with those gracious words of Christ which they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words of his to take heed of sinning away their opportunities; but those only pleased the ear, and went no further, and therefore these grated on the ear, and irritated their corruptions. They were angry that he should compare himself, whom they knew to be the son of Joseph, with those great prophets, and compare them with the men of that corrupt age, when all had bowed the knee to Baal. But that which especially exasperated them was that he intimated some kindness God had in reserve for the Gentiles, which the Jews could by no means bear the thoughts of, Ac 22:21. Their pious ancestors pleased themselves with the hopes of adding the Gentiles to the church (witness many of David's psalms and Isaiah's prophecies); but this degenerate race, when they had forfeited the covenant themselves, hated to think that any others should be taken in.

(b) They were provoked to that degree that they made an attempt upon his life. This was a severe trial, now at his setting out, but a specimen of the usage he met with when he came to his own, and they received him not.

[1.] They rose up in a tumultuous manner against him, interrupted him in his discourse, and themselves in their devotions, for they could not stay until their synagogue-worship was over.

[2.] They thrust him out of the city, as one not worthy to have a residence among them, though there he had had a settlement so long. They thrust from them the Saviour and the salvation, as if he had been the offscouring of all things. How justly might he have called for fire from heaven upon them! But this was the day of his patience.

[3.] They led him to the brow of the hill, with a purpose to throw him down headlong, as one not fit to live. Though they knew how inoffensively he had for so many years lived among them, how shining his conversation had been,--though they had heard such a fame of him and had but just now themselves admired his gracious words,--though in

justice he ought to have been allowed a fair hearing and liberty to explain himself, yet they hurried him away in a popular fury, or frenzy rather, to put him to death in a most barbarous manner. Sometimes they were ready to stone him for the good works he did (Joh 10:32), here for not doing the good works they expected from him. To such a height of wickedness was violence sprung up.

(c) Yet he escaped, because his hour was not yet come: He passed through the midst of them unhurt. Either he blinded their eyes, as God did those of the Sodomites and Syrians, or he bound their hands, or filled them with confusion, so that they could not do what they designed; for his work was not done, it was but just begun; his hour was not yet come, when it was come, he freely surrendered himself. They drove him from them, and he went his way. He would have gathered Nazareth, but they would not, and therefore their house is left to them desolate. This added to the reproach of his being Jesus of Nazareth, that not only it was a place whence no good thing was expected, but that it was such a wicked, rude place, and so unkind to him. Yet there was a providence in it, that he should not be much respected by the men of Nazareth, for that would have looked like a collusion between him and his old acquaintance; but now, though they received him not, there were those that did.

30 But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way,

31 and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

A Man with an Unclean Spirit

33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

34 saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

See notes on Mr 1:21-27. Matthew omits this account.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this ! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

Jesus Heals Simon's Mother-in-Law

38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

See notes on Mt 8:14-17

Jesus Heals Many at Evening

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

Jesus Departs on a Preaching Tour

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

See notes on Mt 4:23-25

Luke-5

The Great Catch of Fish

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

This passage of story fell, in order of time, before the two miracles we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be fishers of men, Mt 4:18,Mk 1:16. They had not related this miraculous draught of fishes at that time, having only in view the calling of his disciples; but Luke gives us that story as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which had not been written in the foregoing books, Joh 20:30,31. Observe here,

I. What vast crowds attended Christ's preaching: The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God (Lu 5:1), insomuch that no house would contain them, but he was forced to draw them out to the strand, that they might be reminded of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand upon the sea shore (Ge 22:17), and yet of them but a remnant shall be saved, Ro 9:27. The people flocked about him (so the word signifies); they showed respect to his preaching, though not without some rudeness to his person, which was very excusable, for they pressed upon him. Some would reckon this a discredit to him, to be thus cried up by the vulgar, when none of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him; but he reckoned it an honour to him, for their souls were as precious as the souls of the grandees, and it is his aim to bring not so much the mighty as the many sons to God. It was foretold concerning him that to him shall the gathering of the people be. Christ was a popular preacher; and though he was able, at twelve, to dispute with the doctors, yet he chose, at thirty, to preach to the capacity of the vulgar. See how the people relished good preaching, though under all external disadvantages: they pressed to hear the word of God; they could perceive

it to be the word of God, by the divine power and evidence that went along with it, and therefore they coveted to hear it.

II. What poor conveniences Christ had for preaching: He stood by the lake of Gennesareth (Lu 5:1), upon a level with the crowd, so that they could neither see him nor hear him; he was lost among them, and, every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, and in danger of being crowded into the water: what must he do? It does not appear that his hearers had any contrivance to give him advantage, but there were two ships, or fishing boats, brought ashore, one belonging to Simon and Andrew, the other to Zebedee and his sons, Lu 5:2. At first, Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance (so Matthew tells us, Lu 4:18); but he waited till they came to land, and till the fishermen, that is, the servants, were gone out of them having washed their nets, and thrown them by for that time: so Christ entered into that ship that belonged to Simon, and begged of him that he would lend it him for a pulpit; and, though he might have commanded him, yet, for love's sake, he rather prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land, which would be the worse for his being heard, but Christ would have it so, that he might the better be seen; and it is his being lifted up that draws men to him. Wisdom cries in the top of high places, Pr 8:2. It intimates that Christ had a strong voice (strong indeed, for he made the dead to hear it), and that he did not desire to favour himself. There he sat down, and taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

What a particular acquaintance Christ, hereupon, fell into with these fishermen. They had had some conversation with him before, which began at John's baptism (Joh 1:40,41); they were with him at Cana of Galilee (Joh 2:2), and in Judea (Joh 4:3); but as yet they were not called to attend him constantly, and therefore here we have them at their calling, and now it was that they were called into a more intimate fellowship with Christ.

1. When Christ had done preaching, he ordered Peter to apply himself to the business of his calling again: Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets, Lu 5:4. It was not the sabbath day, and therefore, as soon as the lecture was over, he set them to work. Time spent on week-days in the public exercises of religion may be but little hindrance to us in time, and a great furtherance to us in temper of mind, in our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling when we have been in the mount with God, and from thence fetch a double blessing into our worldly employments, and thus have them sanctified to us by the word and prayer! It is our wisdom and duty so to manage our religious exercises as that they may befriend our worldly business, and so to manage our worldly business as that it may be no enemy to our religious exercises.

2 Peter having attended upon Christ in his preaching, Christ will accompany him in his fishing. He staid with Christ at the shore, and now Christ will launch out with him into the deep. Note, Those that will be constant followers of Christ shall have him a constant guide to them.

3. Christ ordered Peter and his ship's crew to cast their nets into the sea, which they did, in obedience to him, though they had been hard at it all night, and had caught nothing, Lu 5:4,5. We may observe here,

(a) How melancholy their business had now been: "Master, we have toiled all the night, when we should have been asleep in our beds, and have taken nothing, but have had our labour for our pains." One would have thought that this should have excused them from hearing the sermon; but such a love had they to the word of God that it was more refreshing and reviving to them, after a wearisome night, than the softest slumbers. But they mention it to Christ, when he bids them go a fishing again.

Note,

[1.] Some callings are much more toilsome than others are, and more perilous; yet Providence has so ordered it for the common good that there

is no useful calling so discouraging but some or other have a genius for it. Those who follow their business, and get abundance by it with a great deal of ease, should think with compassion of those who cannot follow theirs but with a great fatigue, and hardly get a bare livelihood by it. When we have rested all night, let us not forget those who have toiled all night, as Jacob, when he kept Laban's sheep.

[2.] Be the calling ever so laborious, it is good to see people diligent in it, and make the best of it; these fishermen, that were thus industrious, Christ singled out for his favourites. They were fit to be preferred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ who had thus learned to endure hardness.

[3.] Even those who are most diligent in their business often meet with disappointments; they who toiled all night yet caught nothing; for the race is not always to the swift. God will have us to be diligent, purely in duty to his command and dependence upon his goodness, rather than with an assurance of worldly success. We must do our duty, and then leave the event to God. [4.] When we are tired with our worldly business, and crossed in our worldly affairs, we are welcome to come to Christ, and spread our case before him, who will take cognizance of it.

(b) How ready their obedience was to the command of Christ: Nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net.

[1.] Though they had toiled all night, yet, if Christ bid them, they will renew their toil, for they know that they who wait on him shall renew their strength, as work is renewed upon their hands; for every fresh service they shall have a fresh supply of grace sufficient.

[2.] Though they have taken nothing, yet, if Christ bid them let down for a draught, they will hope to take something. Note, We must not abruptly quit the callings wherein we are called because we have not the success in them we promised ourselves. The ministers of the gospel must continue to let down that net, though they have perhaps toiled long and caught nothing; and this is thank-worthy, to continue unwearied in our labours, though we see not the success of them.

[3.] In this they have an eye to the word of Christ, and a dependence upon that: "At thy word, I will let down the net, because thou dost enjoin it, and thou dost encourage it." We are then likely to speed well when we follow the guidance of Christ's word.

4. The draught of fish they caught was so much beyond what was ever known that it amounted to a miracle (Lu 5:6): They enclosed a great multitude of fishes, so that their net broke, and yet, which is strange, they did not lose their draught. It was so great a draught that they had not hands sufficient to draw it up; but they were obliged to beckon to their partners, who were at a distance, out of call, to come and help them, Lu 5:7. But the greatest evidence of the vastness of the draught was that they filled both the ships with fish, to such a degree that they overloaded them, and they began to sink, so that the fish had like to have been lost again with their own weight. Thus many an overgrown estate, raised out of the water, returns to the place whence it came. Suppose these ships were but five or six tons a piece, what a vast quantity of fish must there be to load, nay to over-load, them both!

Now by this vast draught of fishes,

(a) Christ intended to show his dominion in the seas as well as on the dry land, over its wealth as over its waves. Thus he would show that he was that Son of man under whose feet all things were put, and particularly the fish of the sea and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, Ps 8:8.

(b) He intended hereby to confirm the doctrine he had just now preached out of Peter's ship. We may suppose that the people on shore, who heard the sermon, having a notion that the preacher was a prophet sent of God, carefully attended his motions afterward, and staid halting about there, to see what he would do next; and this miracle immediately following would be a confirmation to their faith, of his being at least a teacher come from God.

(c) He intended hereby to repay Peter for the loan of his boat; for Christ's gospel now, as his ark formerly in the house of Obed-edom, will be sure to make amends, rich amends, for its kind entertainment. None shall shut a door or kindle a fire in God's house for nought, Mal 1:10. Christ's recompences for services done to his name are abundant, they are superabundant.

(d) He intended hereby to give a specimen, to those who were to be his ambassadors to the world, of the success of their embassy, that though they might for a time, and in one particular place, toil and catch nothing, yet they should be instrumental to bring in many to Christ, and enclose many in the gospel net.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

The impression which this miraculous draught of fishes made upon Peter was very remarkable.

(a) All concerned were astonished, and the more astonished for their being concerned. All the boat's crew were astonished at the draught of fishes which they had taken (Lu 5:9); they were all surprised; and the more they considered it, and all the circumstances of it, the more they were wonder-struck, I had almost said thunder-struck, at the thought of it, and so were also James and John, who were partners with Simon (Lu 5:10), and who, for aught that appears, were not so well acquainted with Christ, before this, as Peter and Andrew were. Now they were the more affected with it,

[1.] Because they understood it better than others did. They that were well acquainted with this sea, and it is probable had plied upon it many years,

had never seen such a draught of fishes fetched out of it, nor any thing like it, any thing near it; and therefore they could not be tempted to diminish it, as others might, by suggesting that it was accidental at this time, and what might as well have happened at any time. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles that those who were best acquainted with them most admired them.

[2.] Because they were most interested in it, and benefited by it. Peter and his part-owners were gainers by this great draught of fishes; it was a rich booty for them and therefore it transported them, and their joy was a helper to their faith. Note, When Christ's works of wonder are to us, in particular, works of grace, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

(b) Peter, above all the rest, was astonished to such a degree that he fell down at Jesus's knees, as he sat in the stern of his boat, and said, as one in an ecstasy or transport, that knew not where he was or what he said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord, Lu 5:8. Not that he feared the weight of the fish would sink him because he was a sinful man, but that he thought himself unworthy of the favour of Christ's presence in his boat, and worthy that it should be to him a matter rather of terror than of comfort. This word of Peter's came from the same principle with theirs who, under the Old-Testament, so often said that they did exceedingly fear and quake at the extraordinary display of the divine glory and majesty. It was the language of Peter's humility and self-denial, and had not the least tincture of the devils' dialect, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?

[1.] His acknowledgment was very just, and what it becomes us all to make: I am a sinful man, O Lord. Note, Even the best men are sinful men, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to him who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves?

[2.] His inference from it was what might have been just, though really it was not so. If I be a sinful man, as indeed I am, I ought to say, "Come to

me, O Lord, or let me come to thee, or I am undone, for ever undone." But, considering what reason sinful men have to tremble before the holy Lord God and to dread his wrath, Peter may well be excused, if, in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness, he cried out on a sudden, Depart from me. Note, Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance from him. We must all own ourselves sinful men, and that therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us; but we must therefore fall down at his knees, to pray him that he would not depart; for woe unto us if he leave us, if the Saviour depart from the sinful man.

6. The occasion which Christ took from this to intimate to Peter (Lu 5:10), and soon after to James and John (Mt 4:21), his purpose to make them his apostles, and instruments of planting his religion in the world. He said unto Simon, who was in the greatest surprise of any of them at this prodigious draught of fishes, "Thou shalt both see and do greater things than these; fear not; let not this astonish thee; be not afraid that, after having done thee this honour, it is so great that I shall never do thee more; no, henceforth thou shalt catch men, by enclosing them in the gospel net, and that shall be a greater instance of the Redeemer's power, and his favour to thee, than this is; that shall be a more astonishing miracle, and infinitely more advantageous than this." When by Peter's preaching three thousand souls were, in one day, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Lastly, The fishermen's farewell to their calling, in order to their constant attendance on Christ (Lu 5:11): When they had brought their ships to land, instead of going to seek for a market for their fish, that they might make the best hand they could of this miracle, they forsook all and followed him, being more solicitous to serve the interests of Christ than to advance any secular interests of their own. It is observable that they

left all to follow Christ, when their calling prospered in their hands more than ever it had done and they had had uncommon success in it. When riches increase, and we are therefore most in temptation to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for the service of Christ, this is thankworthy.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

See notes on Mt 8:2-4

13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: But go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Jesus Heals a Palsied Man

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

See notes on Mt 9:2-8

18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies ? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts ?

23 whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.

The Call of Levi

27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.

See notes on Mt 9:9-17

28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The Question about Fasting

33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

Mt 9:15-17.

34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

36 And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.

37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

39 No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.

Luke-6

The Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

1 And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

see Mt 12:1-15

2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?

3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was ahungered, and they which were with him;

4 how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

The Man with a Withered Hand

6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil ? to save life, or to destroy it?

10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

Jesus Chooses the Twelve

12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes,

16 and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Jesus Ministers to a Great Multitude

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

18 and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

given much more fully in Mt 5:1-12:29

Blessings and Woes

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

24 But woe unto you that are rich ! for ye have received your consolation.

25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you ! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Woes denounced against prospering sinners as miserable people, though the world envies them. These we had not in Matthew. It should seem, the best exposition of these woes, compared with the foregoing blessings, is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus had the blessedness of those that are poor, and hunger, and weep, now, for in Abraham's bosom all the promises made to them who did so were made good to him; but the rich man had the woes that follow here, as he had the character of those on whom these woes are entailed.

1. Here is a woe to them that are rich, that is, that trust in riches, that have abundance of this world's wealth, and, instead of serving God with it, serve their lusts with it; woe to them, for they have received their consolation, that which they placed their happiness in, and were willing to take up with for a portion, Lu 6:24. They in their life-time received their good things, which, in their account, were the best things, and all the good things they are ever likely to receive from God. "You that are rich are in temptation to set your hearts upon a smiling world, and to say, Soul, take thine ease in the embraces of it, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; and then woe unto you."

(a) It is the folly of carnal worldlings that they make the things of this world their consolation, which were intended only for their convenience. They please themselves with them, pride themselves in them, and make them their heaven upon earth; and to them the consolations of God are small, and of no account.

(b) It is their misery that they are put off with them as their consolation. Let them know it, to their terror, when they are parted from these things, there is an end of all their comfort, a final end of it, and nothing remains to them but everlasting misery and torment.

2. Here is a woe to them that are full (Lu 6:25), that are fed to the full, and have more than heart could wish (Ps 73:7), that have their bellies filled with the hid treasures of this world (Ps 17:14), that, when they have abundance of these, are full, and think they have enough, they need no more, they desire no more, Re 3:17. Now ye are full, now ye are rich, 1Co 4:8. They are full of themselves, without God and Christ. Woe to such, for they shall hunger, they shall shortly be stripped and emptied of all the things they are so proud of; and, when they shall have left behind them in the world all those things which are their fulness, they shall carry away with them such appetites and desires as the world they remove to will afford them no gratifications of; for all the delights of sense, which they are now so full of, will in hell be denied, and in heaven superseded.

3. Here is a woe to them that laugh now, that have always a disposition to be merry, and always something to make merry with; that know no other joy than that which is carnal and sensual, and know no other use of this world's good than purely to indulge that carnal sensual joy that banishes sorrow, even godly sorrow, from their minds, and are always entertaining themselves with the laughter of the fool. Woe unto such, for it is but now, for a little time, that they laugh; they shall mourn and weep shortly, shall mourn and weep eternally, in a world where there is nothing but weeping and wailing, endless, easeless, and remediless sorrow.

4. Here is a woe to them whom all men speak well of, that is, who make it their great and only care to gain the praise and applause of men, who

value themselves upon that more than upon the favour of God and his acceptance (Lu 6:26): "Woe unto you; that is, it would be a bad sign that you were not faithful to your trust, and to the souls of men, if you preached so as that nobody would be disgusted; for your business is to tell people of their faults, and, if you do that as you ought, you will get that ill will which never speaks well. The false prophets indeed, that flattered your father in their wicked ways, that prophesied smooth things to them, were caressed and spoken well of; and, if you be in like manner cried up, you will be justly suspected to deal deceitfully as they did." We should desire to have the approbation of those that are wise and good, and not be indifferent to what people say of us; but, as we should despise the reproaches, so we should also despise the praises, of the fools in Israel.

Love for Enemies

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28 bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

See notes on Mt 5:39-48

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judging Others

37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

> See notes on Mt 7:1-2.

38 give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

> I think there is not one text of scripture that declares the bounty of God more fully in rewarding acts of charity and mercy than this before us. O how liberal a paymaster is God! How sure and bountiful are the returns Christ makes to us for the relief given to him in his members!
>
> He promises us here,
>
> 1. Not bare measure but good measure.
>
> 2. Pressed down, shaken together, and running over; nothing adds more to the measure than the shaking of the bushel, the crowding and pressing of the corn, and heaping till the measure runs over: now a measure will run over as long as you will pour.
>
> Learn hence, that charities done in faith, in obedience to God, and with an eye to the glory of God, will produce a certain and plentiful increase. Liberality is the way to riches; giving is the best and surest way of thriving.
>
> A little charity from us, if we have but a little, is looked upon by God as a great deal. But it is the greatest imprudence as well as impiety, to do but a little when we have the ability to do much; for he that sows bountifully shall reap bountifully: good measure, pressed down, and running over.

39 And he spake a parable unto them; Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?

See notes on "Mt 15:14".

40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

See Mt 10:24.

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

See notes on Mt 7:3-5.

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

See notes on Mt 7:15-20.

44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

The House Built on a Rock

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

See notes on Mt 7:21-27.

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like:

48 he is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat

vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Luke-7

A Centurion's Servant Healed

1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

> For notes on the healing of the centurion's servant, see Mt 8:5-13.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

5 for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:

7 wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

9 When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

We have here the story of Christ's raising to life a widow's son at Nain, that was dead and in the carrying out to be buried, which Matthew and Mark had made no mention of; only, in the general, Matthew had recorded it, in Christ's answer to the disciples of John, that the dead were raised up, Mt 11:5. Observe,

Where, and when, this miracle was wrought. It was the next day after he had cured the centurion's servant, Lu 7:11. Christ was doing good every day, and never had cause to complain that he had lost a day. It was done at the gate of a small city, or town, called Nain, not far from Capernaum, probably the same with a city called Nais, which Jerome speaks of.

12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

Who were the witnesses of it. It is as well attested as can be, for it was done in the sight of two crowds that met in or near the gate of the city. There was a crowd of disciples and other people attending Christ (Lu 7:11), and a crowd of relations and neighbours attending the funeral of the young man, Lu 7:12. Thus there was a sufficient number to attest the truth of this miracle, which furnished greater proof of Christ's divine authority than his healing diseases; for by no power of nature, or any means, can the dead be raised.

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

See how tender his compassions are towards the afflicted (Lu 7:13): When the Lord saw the poor widow following her son to the grave, he had compassion on her. Here was not application made to him for her, not so much as that he would speak some words of comfort to her, but, ex mero motu--purely from the goodness of his nature, he was troubled for her. The case was piteous, and he looked upon it with pity. His eye affected his heart; and he said unto her, Weep not. Note, Christ has a concern for the mourners, for the miserable, and often prevents them with the blessing of his goodness. He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation, in his love and in his pity, Isa 63:9. What a pleasing idea does this give us of the compassions of the Lord Jesus, and the multitude

of his tender mercies, which may be very comfortable to us when at any time we are in sorrow! Let poor widows comfort themselves in their sorrows with this, that Christ pities them and knows their souls in adversity; and, if others despise their grief, he does not. Christ said, Weep not; and he could give her a reason for it which no one else could: "Weep not for a dead son, for he shall presently become a living one." This was a reason peculiar to her case; yet there is a reason common to all that sleep in Jesus, which is of equal force against inordinate and excessive grief for their death--that they shall rise again, shall rise in glory; and therefore we must not sorrow as those that have no hope, 1Th 4:13. Let Rachel, that weeps for her children, refrain her eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border, Jer 31:17. And let our passion at such a time be checked and claimed by the consideration of Christ's compassion.

14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

See how triumphant his commands are over even death itself (Lu 7:14): He came, and touched the bier, or coffin, in or upon which the dead body lay; for to him it would be no pollution. Hereby he intimated to the bearers that they should not proceed; he had something to say to the dead young man. Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom, Job 33:24. Hereupon they that bore him stood still, and probably let down the bier from their shoulders to the ground, and opened the coffin, it if was closed up; and then with solemnity, as one that had authority, and to whom belonged the issues from death, he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. The young man was dead, and could not arise by any power of his own (no more can those that are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins); yet it was no absurdity at all for Christ to bid him arise, when a power went along with that word to put life into him. The gospel call to all people, to young people particularly, is, "Arise, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life." Christ's dominion over death was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word (Lu 7:15): He that was dead sat up. Have we grace from Christ? Let us show it. Another evidence of life was that he began to speak; for whenever Christ gives us spiritual life he opens the lips in prayer and praise. And, lastly,

he would not oblige this young man, to whom he had given a new life, to go along with him as his disciple, to minister to him (though he owed him even his own self), much less as a trophy or show to get honour by him, but delivered him to his mother, to attend her as became a dutiful son; for Christ's miracles were miracles of mercy, and a great act of mercy this was to this widow; now she was comforted, according to the time in which she had been afflicted and much more, for she could now look upon this son as a particular favourite of Heaven, with more pleasure than if he had not died.

16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

17 And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

What influence it had upon the people (Lu 7:16): There came a fear on all; it frightened them all, to see a dead man start up alive out of his coffin in the open street, at the command of a man; they were all struck with wonder at his miracle, and glorified God. The Lord and his goodness, as well as the Lord and his greatness, are to be feared. The inference they drew from it was, "A great prophet is risen up among us, the great prophet that we have been long looking for; doubtless, he is one divinely inspired who can thus breathe life into the dead, and in him God hath visited his people, to redeem them, as was expected," Lu 1:68. This would be life from the dead indeed to all them that waited for the consolation of Israel. When dead souls are thus raised to spiritual life, by a divine power going along with the gospel, we must glorify God, and look upon it as a gracious visit to his people. The report of this miracle was carried, 1. In general, all the country over (Lu 7:17): This rumour of him, that he was the great prophet, went forth upon the wings of fame through all Judea, which lay a great way off, and throughout all Galilee, which was the region round about. Most had this notice of him, yet few believed in him, and gave up themselves to him. Many have the rumour of Christ's gospel in their ears that have not the savour and relish of it in their souls. 2. In particular, it was carefully brought to John Baptist, who was now in prison (Lu 7:18): His disciples came, and gave him an account of all things, that he might know that though he was bound yet the word of the Lord was not bound; God's work was going on, though he was laid aside.

The Messengers from John the Baptist

see Mt 11:2-19.

18 And the disciples of John showed him of all these things.

19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?

Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

27 This is he, of whom it is written,

Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

32 They are like unto children sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saying,

We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;

we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine;

and ye say, He hath a devil.

34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners !

35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Jesus at the Home of Simon the Pharisee

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him.

And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Observe here, 1. The Pharisee's civility and our Saviour's courtesy: the Pharisee invites Christ to eat with him; Christ readily accepts the invitation, never refusing any opportunity for doing good. There is a duty of civil courtesy which we owe to the worst of men: none are so bad but we may soberly eat and drink with them; only let us take care, that if our converse do not make them better, their example may not make us worse.

Observe, 2. What an opportunity our Saviour lays hold upon in the Pharisee's house of doing good to a sinful woman; who coming to Christ bowed down in a sorrowful sight and sense of her sins, finds an hearty welcome to him, and is dismissed with comfort from him. The history runs thus: Behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, that is, a Gentile, say some; a remarkable, notorious, and infamous sinner, say others; probably, a lewd, unclean woman: she is led in with a note of admiration, Behold a woman that was a sinner!

Learn, that to see a sensual and notorious sinner, out of true remorse of conscience to seek unto a Saviour, is a rare and wonderful sight.

Observe farther, it is not said, "behold, a woman that sinned," but, Behold, a woman that was a sinner. One action does not denominate a person a sinner, but a habit and trade of sin.

Again, it is said, Behold, a woman in the city: the place where she acted her lewdness added to the heinousness of her sin, it was in the city; the more public the offence, the greater the scandal. Sin is sin, though in the desert, where no eye sees it; but the offence is aggravated by the number and multitude of beholders.

Yet observable it is, that there is no mention made, either of the woman's name, or of the city's name; and it is both presumption and injuriousness for any to name her, whose name God has been pleased to conceal; for this is not the same woman that anointed Christ's feet. Matt 26:6-12; Mr 14:1-9; Joh 12:1-7

That was in Bethany, this in Galilee; that in the house of Simon the leper, this of Simon the Pharisee.

Observe, 3. The behavior and demeanor of this poor woman; she appears in the poster of a penitent: She stood at Christ's feet behind him, weeping.

Where note, 1. The great change wrought in this sinful woman, and the evident effects of it: her eyes, which had been formerly lamps of fire by lust, are now a holy fountain of penitential tears; her hair, which she had used as a net to catch her fond and foolish lovers, does now become a towel for her Saviour's feet.

Verily, such a heart, as has once felt the sting and smart of sin, will make plentiful expressions of the greatness of its sorrow.

Again, 2. She sits behind Christ and weeps: this proceeded, no doubt, from a holy bashfulness; she that was wont to look boldly in the face of her lovers, dares not now behold the face of her Saviour; she that was

wont to end her alluring beams forth into the eyes of her wanton lovers, now casts her dejected eyes down upon the earth.

And behold the plenty of her tears, they flow in such abundance that she washes Christ's feet with them. She began to wash his feet, says the text, but we read not when she ended; never were our Saviour's feet bedewed with more precious liquor than this of remorseful tears. Thus does a holy penitent account no office too mean that is done to the honor of its Saviour.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.

Observe here, 1. How unreasonably the Pharisee was offended with Christ, for permitting this poor woman to come near him, and touch him. Admit she had been the greatest of sinners, might not such come to Christ, when he was come from heaven to them?

Oh, blessed Saviour! There is merit enough in thy blood, and mercy enough in thy bowels, to justify and save the vilest sinners, which by repentance and faith do make a timely application to thee.

Observe, 2. The parable which Christ makes use of, for the Pharisee's conviction, and the woman's comfort: namely, the parable of the two debtors, one of whom owed a greater sum, and the other a less, who both having nothing to pay, were both freely forgiven; and both upon their forgiveness loved their creditor much, but he most to whom most was forgiven.

Now from this parable we gather these lessons of instruction;

1. That great is the debt which all mankind have contracted, and lie under to the justice of God: 'tis here expressed by five hundred pence. Our debt is infinite; and, had not miraculous mercy interposed, divine justice could never have been satisfied, but by undergoing an infinite punishment.

2. That yet all sinners stand not alike indebted to the justice of God; some owe more, and others less; all are guilty, but not all alike; some owe five hundred talents, others fifty pence.

3. That be men's debt greater or less, their sins more or fewer, 'tis utterly impossible for any person of himself to clear his debt, and make satisfaction, but they that owe least stand in need of mercy and forgiveness; He forgave them both.

4. That the forgiveness that is in God is a free, gratuitous, and gracious forgiveness: he frankly forgave them both: Gracious art thou, O Lord, in thy doings towards thy children, and thy tender mercy is over all thy works.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.

Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recounts and sums up the several particular instances of this woman's love and respect towards himself: she washed, wiped, kissed, and anointed his feet, according to the custom of those eastern countries. Love will creep where it cannot go, it will stoop to the meanest offices, and is ambitous of the highest services for, and towards the persons we sincerely love.

Observe, 2. The words of comfort given by our Saviour to this poor woman: Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.

Thence learn, that the pardoning mercy of God is boundless and unlimited; it is not limited to any degree of sins or sinners; Thy sins, that are many, are forgiven thee: and thy sins, which are heinous, are forgiven also.

Observe, 3. What is the effect and fruit, of great pardoning mercy; it is great love; her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. Her love to Christ was the effect of his pardoning love to her, and not the cause of it; she did not first love much, and then Christ forgave her, and then she loved much. Her love was a love of gratitude, because she was pardoned, and not a love of merit to purchase and procure her pardon.

The Papists interpret this word (for) as if it were the antecedent cause of her forgiveness; whereas it is a consequential sign and evidence, that the free grace and mercy of Christ had forgiven her; her many and great sins were forgiven her, and therefore she loved much. The debt is not forgiven, because the debtor loves his creditor; but the debtor therefore loves, because the debt is forgiven. Forgiveness goes before, and love follows after.

Hence learn, that much love will follow great forgiveness. Love will work in the heart towards God, in some proportion to that love which we have experienced from God.

Observe lastly, the very gracious dismission which this woman meets with from our blessed Saviour: what could she desire that is not here granted to her? Here is remission, safety, faith, and peace; all these here meet to make a contrite soul happy: remission is the ground of her safety, faith the ground of her peace, peace the fruit of her faith, and salvation the issue of her remission.

O woman! Great was thy sin, great was Christ's pardoning grace, and great was thy joy and comfort: Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Luke-8

Some Women Accompany Jesus

1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

Observe, here, the great work and business, which not only the apostles, but Christ himself was engaged in, and employed about, namely, preaching the gospel, those glad tidings of salvation to a lost world.

Where note, that Christ himself labored in this work of public preaching; he did not send forth his apostles as his curates to work and sweat in the vineyard, while he himself took his ease at home; but he accompanies them himself, yea, he goes before them himself in this great and excellent work: Jesus went preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, and the twelve were with him.

Learn thence, that preaching of the gospel is a great and necessary work, incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ, let their dignity and pre-eminence in the church be what it will. Surely none of the servants are above their Lord and Master! Did he labor in the word and doctrine?

Observe, 2. The places where Christ and his apostles preached, not only in the populous cities, but in the poor country villages: They went through every city and village preaching the gospel. Some will preach the gospel,

provided they may preach at court, or in the capital cities of the nation; but the poor country villages are overlooked by them.

Our Saviour and his apostles were not of this mind: 'tis true, they were itinerary preachers, we are settled; but be the place never so mean and obscure, and the people never so rude and barbarous, we must not think it beneath the greatest of us to exercise our ministry there, if God calls us thither: Christ went through the villages, as well as cities, preaching.

2 and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Amongst the number of those that did accompany our Saviour and his apostles, mention is here made of a certain woman, who had been healed by Christ of evil spirits and infirmities; that is, of spiritual and corporeal diseases, for the Jews were wont to call vices and evil habits by the name of devils, as the devil of pride, the devil of malice, etc.

Now as concerning these women's following of Christ, and administering to him, several circumstances are observable; as,

1. That women did make up a considerable number of Christ's followers, yes, and of his apostles' followers too: The devout women not a few. Acts 17:4

And verily it is no disgrace or shame, but matter of glory, and cause of thankfulness, if our ministry be attended by, and blest unto, the weaker sex. I believe in many of our congregations, and at most of our communions, are found two women for one man; God grant them knowledge answerable to their zeal, and obedience proportionable to their devotion.

Observe, 2. One of these women that followed Christ was Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward. What! One of Herod's family transplanted into Christ's household!

Oh the freeness of the grace of God! Even in the worst societies and places God has a number to stand up for his name, and bear witness to his truth:

we read of a Joseph in Pharaoh's court; of an Obadiah in Ahab's court; of a Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court; of a church in Nero's house; and of a Joanna here in bloody Herod's family, who had put John the Baptist to death.

Observe, 3. The holy courage and resolution of our Saviour's female followers. No doubt they met with taunts and jeers, with scoffs and scorns enough, and perhaps from their husbands too, of following the carpenter's son, and a few fishermen: but this does not damp but inflame, their zeal.

The Holy Ghost acquaints us with several instances of masculine courage and manly resolution in the women that followed Christ as his female disciples. At our Saviour's trail, the women clave to him, when his disciples fed from him; they accompanied him to his cross, they assisted at his funeral, they attended his hearse to the grave, they watched his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night nor the rudeness of the soldiers. These feeble women had more courage than all the apostles.

Learn, that courage is the special and peculiar gift of God; and where he gives courage, it s not in man to make afraid.

Observe, 4. The pious and charitable care of these holy women, to supply the wants and outward necessities of our Saviour: They ministered unto him of their substance.

Where note, 1. The great poverty of Christ: he lived upon the basket, he would not honor the world so far as to have any part of it in his own hand, but was beholden to others for what he ate and drank; yet must we not suppose that either Christ or his apostles were common beggars, but it is probable there was a bag or common purse amongst them, which upon occasion supplied their necessities; and there were certain sisters, or Christian women as the learned Dr. Hammond observes, who accompanied Christ and his apostles in their travels, and provided necessaries for them, when they went up and down, preaching the gospel.

Note also, 2. The condescending grace and humility of Christ; he was not ashamed either of these women's following of him, or administering to him, because of their former vicious course of life; it is not what we formerly were, but what we now are, that Christ considers; it is a glory to him, to have great and notorious sinners brought to a closure and compliance with him. The reproach is not that they have been sinners, for Christ did not give himself for a people that were pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle, but to make them so by his word and Spirit, Eph 5:26 Christ is only ashamed of those that eat of his bread, and lift up the heel against him.

The Parable of the Sower

4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

See notes on Mt 13:3-23

5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be ?

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables;

that seeing they might not see,

and hearing they might not understand.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

A Light under a Vessel

16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

See notes on Mt 5:15

17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

See notes on Mt 10:26-28

18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. Jesus' Mother and Brethren

See notes on Mt 13:12

19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

See notes on Mt 12:46-50

20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Jesus Calms a Storm

22 Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

see Mt 8:23-27

23 But as they sailed, he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

The Gadarene Demoniac Healed

26 And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

see Mt 8:28-34

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32 And there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment

40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.

see notes on Mt 9:18-26

41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue; and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

42 for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying.

But as he went the people thronged him.

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44 came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me ? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people

for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.

50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Luke-9

The Mission of the Twelve

1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

See notes on Mt 10:2-15

2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.

4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

The Death of John the Baptist

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead;

8 and of some, that Elijah had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

see notes on Mt 14:1-12

9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded; but who is this, of whom I hear such things ? And he desired to see him.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

see notes on Mt 14:13-27

11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

Peter's Declaration

18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him; and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

See notes on Peter's confession of faith, Mt 16:13-20

19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

Jesus Foretells His Death

21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

see notes on Mt 16:21-28

22 saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

The Transfiguration

28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

see notes on Mt 17:1-9

29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah:

31 who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said.

34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

see Mt 17:14-21

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child.

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

see notes on Mt 17:22-23

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Who Is the Greatest?

46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

See notes on Mt 18:1-6

47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,

48 and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

He That Is Not against Us Is for Us

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.

See notes on Mk 9:38-41

50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Jesus Rebukes James and John

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

This passage of story we have not in any other of the evangelists, and it seems to come in here for the sake of its affinity with that next before, for in this also Christ rebuked his disciples, because they envied for his sake. There, under colour of zeal for Christ, they were for silencing and restraining separatists: here, under the same colour, they were for putting infidels to death; and, as for that, so for this also, Christ reprimanded them, for a spirit of bigotry and persecution is directly contrary to the spirit of Christ and Christianity. Observe here,

The readiness and resolution of our Lord Jesus, in prosecuting his great undertaking for our redemption and salvation. Of this we have an instance, Lu 9:51: When the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Observe 1. There was a time fixed for the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, and he knew well enough when it was, and had a clear and certain foresight of it, and yet was so far from keeping out of the way that then he appeared most publicly of all, and was most busy, knowing that his time was short.

2. When he saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them and beyond them, to the glory that should follow; he looked upon it as the time when he should be received up into glory (1Ti 3:16), received up into the highest heavens, to be enthroned there. Moses and Elias spoke of his death as his departure out of this world, which made it not formidable; but he went further, and looked upon it as his translation to a better world, which made it very desirable. All good Christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being received up, to be with Christ where he is; and, when the time of their being received up is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh.

3. On this prospect of the joy set before him, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem the place where he was to suffer and die. He was fully determined to go, and would not be dissuaded; he went directly to Jerusalem, because there now his business lay, and he did not go about to other towns, or fetch a compass, which if he had done, as commonly he did, he might have avoided going through Samaria. He went cheerfully and courageously thither, though he knew the things that should befal him there. He did not fail nor was discouraged, but set his face as a flint, knowing that he should be not only justified, but glorified (Isa 50:7), not only not run down, but received up. How should this shame us for, and shame us out of, our backwardness to do and suffer for Christ! We draw back, and turn our faces another way from his service who stedfastly set his face against all opposition, to go through with the work of our salvation.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

The rudeness of the Samaritans in a certain village (not named, nor deserving to be so) who would not receive him, nor suffer him to bait in their town, though his way lay through it.

Observe here,

1. How civil he was to them: He sent messengers before his face, some of his disciples, that went to take up lodgings, and to know whether he might have leave to accommodate himself and his company among them; for he would not come to give offence, or if they took any umbrage at the number of his followers. He sent some to make ready for him, not for state, but convenience, and that his coming might be no surprise.

2. How uncivil they were to him, Lu 9:53. They did not receive him, would not suffer him to come into their village, but ordered their watch to keep him out. He would have paid for all he bespoke, and been a generous guest among them, would have done them good, and preached the gospel to them, as he had done some time ago to another city of the Samaritans, Joh 4:41. He would have been, if they pleased, the greatest blessing that ever came to their village, and yet they forbid him entrance. Such treatment his gospel and ministers have often met with. Now the

reason was because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem; they observed, by his motions, that he was steering his course that way. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans was about the place of worship--whether Jerusalem or mount Gerizim near Sychar; see Joh 4:20. And so hot was the controversy between them that the Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans, nor they with them, Joh 4:9. Yet we may suppose that they did not deny other Jews lodgings among them, no, not when they went up to the feast; for if that had been their constant practice Christ would not have attempted it, and it would have been a great way about for some of the Galileans to go to Jerusalem any other way than through Samaria. But they were particularly incensed against Christ, who was a celebrated teacher, for owning and adhering to the temple at Jerusalem, when the priests of that temple were such bitter enemies to him, which, they hoped, would have driven him to come and worship at their temple, and bring that into reputation; but when they saw that he would go forward to Jerusalem, notwithstanding this, they would not show him the common civility which probably they used formerly to show him in his journey thither.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did ?

The resentment which James and John expressed of this affront, Lu 9:54. When these two heard this message brought, they were all in a flame presently, and nothing will serve them but Sodom's doom upon this village: "Lord," say they, "give us leave to command fire to come down from heaven, not to frighten them only, but to consume them."

1. Here indeed was something commendable, for they showed,

(a) A great confidence in the power they had received from Jesus Christ; though this had not been particularly mentioned in their commission, yet they could with a word's speaking fetch fire from heaven. Theleis eipomen--Wilt thou that we speak the word, and the thing will be done.

(b) A great zeal for the honour of their Master. They took it very ill that he who did good wherever he came and found a hearty welcome should be denied the liberty of the road by a parcel of paltry Samaritans; they

could not think of it without indignation that their Master should be thus slighted.

(c) A submission, notwithstanding, to their Master's good will and pleasure. They will not offer to do such a thing, unless Christ give leave: Wilt thou that we do it?

(d) A regard to the examples of the prophets that were before them. It is doing as Elias did? they would not have thought of such a thing if Elijah had not done it upon the soldiers that came to take him, once and again, 2Ki 1:10,12. They thought that this precedent would be their warrant; so apt are we to misapply the examples of good men, and to think to justify ourselves by them in the irregular liberties we give ourselves, when the case is not parallel.

2. But though there was something right in what they said, yet there was much more amiss, for

(a) This was not the first time, by a great many, that our Lord Jesus had been thus affronted, witness the Nazarenes thrusting him out of their city, and the Gadarenes desiring him to depart out of their coast; and yet he never called for any judgment upon them, but patiently put up with the injury.

(b) These were Samaritans, from whom better was not to be expected, and perhaps they had heard that Christ had forbidden his disciples to enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans (Mt 10:5), and therefore it was not so bad in them as in others who knew more of Christ, and had received so many favours from him.

(c) Perhaps it was only some few of the town that knew any thing of the matter, or that sent that rude message to him, while, for aught they knew, there were many in the town who, if they had heard of Christ's being so near them, would have gone to meet him and welcomed him; and must the whole town be laid in ashes for the wickedness of a few? Will they have the righteous destroyed with the wicked?

(d) Their Master had never yet upon any occasion called for fire from heaven, nay, he had refused to give the Pharisees any sign from heaven when they demanded it (Mt 16:1,2); and why should they think to introduce it? James and John were the two disciples whom Christ had called Boanerges--sons of thunder (Mk 3:17); and will not that serve them, but they must be sons of lightning too?

(e) The example of Elias did not reach the case. Elijah was sent to display the terrors of the law, and to give proof of that, and to witness as a bold reprover against the idolatries and wickednesses of the court of Ahab, and it was agreeable enough to him to have his commission thus proved; but it is a dispensation of grace that is now to be introduced, to which such a terrible display of divine justice will not be at all agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson suggests that their being now near Samaria, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, might help to put it in their heads; perhaps at the very place; but, though the place was the same, the times were altered.

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

The reproof he gave to James and John for their fiery, furious zeal (Lu 9:55): He turned with a just displeasure, and rebuked them; for as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens, particularly for what they do, that is irregular and unbecoming them, under colour of zeal for him.

1. He shows them in particular their mistake: Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; that is,

(a) "You are not aware what an evil spirit and disposition you are of; how much there is of pride, and passion, and personal revenge, covered under this pretence of zeal for your Master." Note, There may be much corruption lurking, nay, and stirring too, in the hearts of good people, and they themselves not be sensible of it.

(b) "You do not consider what a good spirit, directly contrary to this, you should be of. Surely you have yet to learn, though you have been so long

learning, what the spirit of Christ and Christianity is. Have you not been taught to love your enemies, and to bless them that curse you, and to call for grace from heaven, not fire from heaven, upon them? You know not how contrary your disposition herein is to that which it was the design of the gospel you should be delivered into. You are not now under the dispensation of bondage, and terror, and death, but under the dispensation of love, and liberty, and grace, which was ushered in with a proclamation of peace on earth and good will toward men, to which you ought to accommodate yourselves, and not by such imprecations as these oppose yourselves."

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

He shows them the general design and tendency of his religion (Lu 9:56): The Son of man is not himself come, and therefore does not send you abroad to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He designed to propagate his holy religion by love and sweetness, and every thing that is inviting and endearing, not by fire and sword, and blood and slaughter; by miracles of healing, not by plagues and miracles of destruction, as Israel was brought out of Egypt. Christ came to slay all enmities, not to foster them. Those are certainly destitute of the spirit of the gospel that are for anathematizing and rooting out by violence and persecution all that are not of their mind and way, that cannot in conscience say as they say, and do as they do. Christ came, not only to save men's souls, but to save their lives too--witness the many miracles he wrought for the healing of diseases that would otherwise have been mortal, by which, and a thousand other instances of beneficence, it appears that Christ would have his disciples do good to all, to the utmost of their power, but hurt to none, to draw men into his church with the cords of a man and the bands of love, but not think to drive men into it with a rod of violence or the scourge of the tongue.

His retreat from this village. Christ would not only not punish them for their rudeness, but would not insist upon his right of travelling the road (which was as free to him as to his neighbours), would not attempt to force his way, but quietly and peaceably went to another village, where they were not so stingy and bigoted, and there refreshed himself, and went on his way. Note, When a stream of opposition is strong, it is

wisdom to get out of the way of it, rather than to contend with it. If some be very rude, instead of revenging it, we should try whether others will not be more civil.

The Would-be Followers of Jesus

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

see notes on Mt 8:18-22

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Luke-10

The Mission of the Seventy

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

See notes on Mt 10:5-42

4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

Salute no man by the way. The Jewish salutations were very formal, hypocritical, and consumed much time. It is said that it often required from one to three hours to complete these formal salutations. The disciples were not to consume thus their precious time, nor did the Savior wish them to go through with foolish and insincere forms.

5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9 and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

See notes on Mt 11:21-24

14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

See Mt 10:40

The Return of the Seventy

17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

He confirmed what they said, as agreeing with his own observation (Lu 10:18): "My heart and eye went along with you; I took notice of the success you had, and I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven." Note, Satan and his kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel. "I see how it is," saith Christ, "as you get ground the devil loseth ground." He falls as lightning falls from heaven, so suddenly, so irrecoverably, so visibly, that all may perceive it, and say, "See how Satan's kingdom totters, see how it tumbles." They triumphed in casting devils out of the bodies of people; but Christ sees and rejoices in the fall of the devil from the interest he has in the souls of men, which is called his power in high places, Eph 6:12. He foresees this to be but an earnest of what should now be shortly done and was already begun--the destroying of Satan's kingdom in the world by the extirpating of idolatry and the turning of the nations to the faith of Christ. Satan falls from heaven when he falls from the throne in men's hearts, Ac 26:18. And Christ foresaw that the preaching of the gospel, which would fly like lightning through the world, would wherever it went pull down Satan's kingdom. Now is the prince of this world cast out. Some have given another sense of this, as looking back to the fall of the angels, and designed for a caution to these disciples, lest their success should puff them up with pride: "I saw angels turned into devils by pride: that was the sin for which Satan was cast down from heaven, where he had been an angel of light I saw it, and give you an intimation of it lest you, being lifted up with pride should fall into that condemnation of the devil, who fell by pride," 1Ti 3:6.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

He repeated, ratified, and enlarged their commission: Behold I give you power to tread on serpents, Lu 10:19. Note, To him that hath, and useth well what he hath, more shall be given. They had employed their power vigorously against Satan, and now Christ entrusts them with greater power.

(1.) An offensive power, power to tread on serpents and scorpions, devils and malignant spirits, the old serpent: "You shall bruise their heads in my name," according to the first promise, Ge 3:15. Come, set your feet on the necks of these enemies; you shall tread upon these lions and adders wherever you meet with them; you shall trample them under foot, Ps 91:13. You shall tread upon all the power of the enemy, and the kingdom of the Messiah shall be every where set up upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. As the devils have now been subject to you, so they shall still be.

(2.) A defensive power: "Nothing shall by any means hurt you; not serpents nor scorpions, if you should be chastised with them or thrown into prisons and dungeons among them; you shall be unhurt by the most venomous creatures," as St. Paul was (Ac 28:5), and as is promised in Mk 16:18. "If wicked men be as serpents to you, and you dwell among those scorpions (as Eze 2:6), you may despise their rage, and tread upon it; it need not disturb you, for they have no power against you but what is given them from above; they may hiss, but they cannot hurt." You may play upon the hole of the asp, for death itself shall not hurt nor destroy, Isa 11:8,19,25:8.

20 Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

He directed them to turn their joy into the right channel (Lu 10:20): "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, that they have been so, and shall be still so. Do not rejoice in this merely as it is your honour, and a confirmation of your mission, and as it sets you a degree above other good people; do not rejoice in this only, or in this chiefly, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven, because you are chosen of God to eternal life, and are the children of God through faith." Christ, who knew the counsels of God, could tell them that their names were written in heaven, for it is the Lamb's book of life that they are written in. All believers are through grace, entitled to the inheritance of sons, and have received the adoption of sons, and the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of that inheritance and so are enrolled among his family; now this is matter of joy, greater joy than casting out devils. Note, Power to become the children of God is to be valued more

than a power to work miracles; for we read of those who did in Christ's name cast out devils, as Judas did, and yet will be disowned by Christ in the great day. But they whose names are written in heaven shall never perish; they are Christ's sheep, to whom he will give eternal life. Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts; holy love is a more excellent way than speaking with tongues.

Jesus Rejoices

21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

See notes on Mt 11:25-27

22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed

are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

24 for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

See Mt 13:16-17

The Good Samaritan

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

We have here Christ's discourse with a lawyer about some points of conscience, which we are all concerned to be rightly informed in and are so here from Christ though the questions were proposed with no good intention.

We are concerned to know what that good is which we should do in this life, in order to our attaining eternal life. A question to this purport was proposed to our Saviour by a certain lawyer, or scribe, only with a design

to try him, not with a desire to be instructed by him, Lu 10:25. The lawyer stood up, and asked him, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? If Christ had any thing peculiar to prescribe, by this question he would get it out of him, and perhaps expose him for it; if not, he would expose his doctrine as needless, since it would give no other direction for obtaining happiness than what they had already received; or, perhaps, he had no malicious design against Christ, as some of the scribes had, only he was willing to have a little talk with him, just as people go to church to hear what the minister will say. This was a good question: What shall I do to inherit eternal life? But it lost all its goodness when it was proposed with an ill design, or a very mean one. Note, It is not enough to speak of the things of God, and to enquire about them, but we must do it with a suitable concern. If we speak of eternal life, and the way to it, in a careless manner, merely as matter of discourse, especially as matter of dispute, we do but take the name of God in vain, as the lawyer here did. Now this question being started, observe,

How Christ turned him over to the divine law, and bade him follow the direction of that. Though he knew the thoughts and intents of his heart, he did not answer him according to the folly of that, but according to the wisdom and goodness of the question he asked. He answered him with a question: What is written in the law? How readest thou? Lu 10:26. He came to catechize Christ, and to know him; but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself. He talks to him as a lawyer, as one conversant in the law: the studies of his profession would inform him; let him practise according to his knowledge, and he should not come short of eternal life. Note, It will be of great use to us, in our way to heaven, to consider what is written in the law, and what we read there. We must have recourse to our bibles, to the law, as it is now in the hand of Christ and walk in the way that is shown us there. It is a great mercy that we have the law written, that we have it thereby reduced to certainty, and that thereby it is capable of spreading the further, and lasting the longer. Having it written, it is our duty to read it, to read it with understanding, and to treasure up what we read, so that when there is occasion, we may be able to tell what is written in the law, and how we read. To this we must appeal; by this we must try doctrines and end disputes; this must be our oracle, our

touchstone, our rule, our guide. What is written in the law? How do we read? if there be light in us, it will have regard to this light.

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law ? how readest thou ?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;
and thy neighbor as thyself.

What a good account he gave of the law, of the principal commandments of the law, to the observance of which we must bind ourselves if we would inherit eternal life. He did not, like a Pharisee, refer himself to the tradition of the elders, but, like a good textuary, fastened upon the two first and great commandments of the law, as those which he thought must be most strictly observed in order to the obtaining of eternal life, and which included all the rest, Lu 10:27. (1.) We must love God with all our hearts, must look upon him as the best of beings, in himself most amiable, and infinitely perfect and excellent; as one whom we lie under the greatest obligations to, both in gratitude and interest. We must prize him, and value ourselves by our elation to him; must please ourselves in him, and devote ourselves entirely to him. Our love to him must be sincere, hearty, and fervent; it must be a superlative love, a love that is as strong as death, but an intelligent love, and such as we can give a good account of the grounds and reasons of. It must be an entire love; he must have our whole souls, and must be served with all that is within us. We must love nothing besides him, but what we love for him and in subordination to him. (2.) We must love our neighbours as ourselves, which we shall easily do, if we, as we ought to do, love God better than ourselves. We must wish well to all and ill to none; must do all the good we can in the world and no hurt, and must fix it as a rule to ourselves to do to others as we would they should do to us; and this is to love our neighbour as ourselves.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Christ's approbation of what he said, Lu 10:28. Though he came to tempt him, yet what he said that was good Christ commended: Thou hast answered right. Christ himself fastened upon these as the two great commandments of the law (Mt 22:37): both sides agreed in this. Those who do well shall have praise of the same, and so should those have that

speak well. So far is right; but the hardest part of this work yet remains: "This do, and thou shalt live; thou shalt inherit eternal life."

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

His care to avoid the conviction which was now ready to fasten upon him. When Christ said, This do, and thou shalt live, he began to be aware that Christ intended to draw from him an acknowledgment that he had not done this, and therefore an enquiry what he should do, which way he should look, to get his sins pardoned; an acknowledgment also that he could not do this perfectly for the future by any strength of his own, and therefore an enquiry which way he might fetch in strength to enable him to do it: but he was willing to justify himself, and therefore cared not for carrying on that discourse, but saith, in effect, as another did (Mt 19:20), All these things have I kept from my youth up. Note, Many ask good questions with a design rather to justify themselves than to inform themselves, rather proudly to show what is good in them than humbly to see what is bad in them.

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

We are concerned to know who is our neighbour, whom by the second great commandment we are obliged to love. This is another of this lawyer's queries, which he started only that he might drop the former, lest Christ should have forced him, in the prosecution of it, to condemn himself, when he was resolved to justify himself. As to loving God, he was willing to say no more of it; but, as to his neighbour, he was sure that there he had come up to the rule, for he had always been very kind and respectful to all about him. Now observe,

1. What was the corrupt notion of the Jewish teachers in this matter. Dr. Lightfoot quotes their own words to this purport: "Where he saith, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, he excepts all Gentiles, for they are not our neighbours, but those only that are of our own nation and religion." They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not his neighbour: they indeed say that they ought not to kill a Gentile whom they were not at war with; but, if they saw a Gentile in danger of death, they thought themselves under no obligation to help to save his life. Such

wicked inferences did they draw from that holy covenant of peculiarity by which God had distinguished them, and by abusing it thus they had forfeited it; God justly took the forfeiture, and transferred covenant-favours to the Gentile world, to whom they brutishly denied common favours.

2. How Christ corrected this inhuman notion, and showed, by a parable, that whomsoever we have need to receive kindness from, and find ready to show us the kindness we need, we cannot but look upon as our neighbour; and therefore ought to look upon all those as such who need our kindness, and to show them kindness accordingly, though they be not of our own nation and religion. Now observe,

The parable itself, which represents to us a poor Jew in distressed circumstances, succoured and relieved by a good Samaritan. Let us see here,

How he was abused by his enemies. The honest man was traveling peaceably upon his lawful business in the road, and it was a great road that led from Jerusalem to Jericho, Lu 10:30. The mentioning of those places intimates that it was matter of fact, and not a parable; probably it happened lately, just as it is here related. The occurrences of Providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them, and would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and be more affecting. This poor man fell among thieves. Whether they were Arabians, plunderers, that lived by spoil, or some profligate wretches of his own nation, or some of the Roman soldiers, who, notwithstanding the strict discipline of their army, did this villany, does not appear; but they were very barbarous; they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and, that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition (for otherwise what profit was there in his blood?) they wounded him, and left him half dead, ready to die of his wounds. We may here conceive a just indignation at highwaymen, that have divested themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute beasts, beasts of prey, made to be taken and destroyed; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on those that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready, when it is in our

power, to help them. What reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers!

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

How he was slighted by those who should have been his friends, who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest and the other a Levite, men of a public character and station; nay, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion (Heb 5:2), who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case as this, which was to deliver them that were drawn unto death; yet they would not themselves do it. Dr. Lightfoot tells us that many of the courses of the priests had their residence in Jericho, and thence came up to Jerusalem, when it was their turn to officiate there, and so back again, which occasioned abundance of passing and repassing of priests that way, and Levites their attendants. They came this way, and saw the poor wounded man. It is probable that they heard his groans, and could not but perceive that if he were not helped he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but came and looked on him Lu 10:32. But they passed by on the other side; when they saw his case, they got as far off him as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, Behold, we knew it not. It is sad when those who should be examples of charity are prodigies of cruelty, and when those who should by displaying the mercies of God, open the bowels of compassion in others, shut up their own.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

How he was succoured and relieved by a stranger, a certain Samaritan, of that nation which of all others the Jews most despised and detested and would have no dealings with. This man had some humanity in him, Lu 10:33. The priest had his heart hardened against one of his own people, but the Samaritan had his opened towards one of another people. When he saw him he had compassion on him, and never took into consideration what country he was of. Though he was a Jew, he was a man, and a man

in misery, and the Samaritan has learned to honour all men; he knows not how soon this poor man's case may be his own, and therefore pities him, as he himself would desire and expect to be pitied in the like case. That such great love should be found in a Samaritan was perhaps thought as wonderful as that great faith which Christ admired in a Roman, and in a woman of Canaan; but really it was not so, for pity is the work of a man, but faith is the work of divine grace. The compassion of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion; he did not think it enough to say, "Be healed, be helped" (Jam 2:16); but, when he drew out his soul, he reached forth his hand also to this poor needy creature, Isa 58:7,Pr 31:20. See how friendly this good Samaritan was.

First, He went to the poor man, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from; he enquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and condoled with him.

Secondly, He did the surgeon's part, for want of a better. He bound up his wounds, making use of his own linen, it is likely, for that purpose; and poured in oil and wine, which perhaps he had with him; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up. He did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril, of his wounds, as one whose heart bled with him.

Thirdly, He set him on his own beast, and went on foot himself, and brought him to an inn. A great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all the conveniences for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hindrance, would have got that night to his journey's end; but, in compassion to that poor man, he takes up short at an inn. Some think that the priest and Levite pretended they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose the Samaritan went upon business; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this.

Fourthly, He took care of him in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and, it may be, prayed with him. Nay,

Fifthly, As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to be laid out for his use, and passed his word for what he should spend more. Twopence of their money was about fifteen pence of ours, which, according to the rate of things then, would go a great way; however, here it was an earnest of satisfaction to the full of all demands. All this was kind and generous, and as much as one could have expected from a friend or a brother; and yet here it is done by a stranger and foreigner.

Now this parable is applicable to another purpose than that for which it was intended; and does excellently set forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards sinful miserable man. We were like this poor distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, had robbed us, stripped us, wounded us; such is the mischief that sin had done us. We were by nature more than half dead, twice dead, in trespasses and sins; utterly unable to help ourselves, for we were without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of the law, looks upon us, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief, passes by on the other side, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan (and they said of him, by way of reproach, he is a Samaritan), he has compassion on us, he binds up our bleeding wounds (Ps 147:3,Isa 61:1), pours in, not oil and wine, but that which is infinitely more precious, his own blood. He takes care of us, and bids us put all the expenses of our cure upon his account; and all this though he was none of us, till he was pleased by his voluntary condescension to make himself so, but infinitely above us. This magnifies the riches of his love, and obliges us all to say, "How much are we indebted, and what shall we render?"

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?

The application of the parable.

[1.] The truth contained in it is extorted from the lawyer's own mouth. "Now tell me," saith Christ, "which of these three was neighbour to him

that fell among thieves (Lu 10:36), the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? Which of these did the neighbour's part?" To this the lawyer would not answer, as he ought to have done, "Doubtless, the Samaritan was;" but, "He that showed mercy on him; doubtless, he was a good neighbour to him, and very neighbourly, and I cannot but say that it was a good work thus to save an honest Jew from perishing."

[2.] The duty inferred from it is pressed home upon the lawyer's own conscience: Go, and do thou likewise. The duty of relations is mutual and reciprocal; the titles of friends, brethren, neighbours, are, as Grotius here speaks ton pros ti--equally binding on both sides: if one side be bound, the other cannot be loose, as is agreed in all contracts. If a Samaritan does well that helps a distressed Jew, certainly a Jew does not well if he refuses in like manner to help a distressed Samaritan. Petimusque damusque vicissim--These kind offices are to be reciprocated. "And therefore go thou and do as the Samaritan did, whenever occasion offers: show mercy to those that need thy help, and do it freely, and with concern and compassion, though they be not of thy own nation and thy own profession, or of thy own opinion and communion in religion. Let thy charity be thus extensive, before thou boastest of having conformed thyself to that great commandment of loving thy neighbour." This lawyer valued himself much upon his learning and his knowledge of the laws, and in that he thought to have puzzled Christ himself; but Christ sends him to school to a Samaritan, to learn his duty: "Go, and do like him." Note, It is the duty of every one of us, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity, and of lawyers particularly; and herein we must study to excel many that are proud of their being priests and Levites.

37 And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

The entertainment which Martha gave to Christ and his disciples at her house, Lu 10:38. Observe,

1. Christ's coming to the village where Martha lived: As they went (Christ and his disciples together), he and they with him entered into a certain village. This village was Bethany, nigh to Jerusalem, whither Christ was now going up, and he took this in his way. Note

(a) Our Lord Jesus went about doing good (Ac 10:38), scattering his benign beams and influences as the true light of the world.

(b) Wherever Christ went his disciples went along with him.

(c) Christ honoured the country-villages with his presence and favour, and not the great and populous cities only; for, as he chose privacy, so he countenanced poverty.

2. His reception at Martha's house: A certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house, and made him welcome, for she was the housekeeper. Note,

(a) Our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, was so poor that he was necessitated to be beholden to his friends for a subsistence. Though he was Zion's King, he had no house of his own either in Jerusalem or near it.

(b) There were some who were Christ's particular friends, whom he loved more than his other friends, and them he visited most frequently. He loved this family (Joh 11:5), and often invited himself to them. Christ's visits are the tokens of his love, Joh 14:23.

(c) There were those who kindly received Christ into their houses when he was here upon earth. It is called Martha's house, for, probably, she was a widow, and was the housekeeper. Though it was expensive to entertain Christ for he did not come alone, but brought his disciples with him, yet she would not regard the cost of it. (How can we spend what we have better than in Christ's service!) Nay, though at this time it was grown dangerous to entertain him especially so near Jerusalem, yet she cared not what hazard she ran for his name's sake. Though there were many that

rejected him, and would not entertain him, yet there was one that would bid him welcome. Though Christ is every where spoken against, yet there is a remnant to whom he is dear, and who are dear to him.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

The attendance which Mary, the sister of Martha, gave upon the word of Christ, Lu 10:39.

1. She heard his word. It seems, our Lord Jesus, as soon as he came into Martha's house, even before entertainment was made for him, addressed himself to his great work of preaching the gospel. He presently took the chair with solemnity; for Mary sat to hear him, which intimates that it was a continued discourse. Note, A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed as to make them turn to a spiritual advantage. Mary, having this price put into her hands, sat herself to improve it, not knowing when she should have such another. Since Christ is forward to speak, we should be swift to hear.

2. She sat to hear, which denotes a close attention. Her mind was composed, and she resolved to abide by it: not to catch a word now and then, but to receive all that Christ delivered. She sat at his feet, as scholars at the feet of their tutors when they read their lectures; hence Paul is said to be brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Our sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, signifies a readiness to receive it, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the guidance of it. We must either sit at Christ's feet or be made his footstool; but, if we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

The care of Martha about her domestic affairs: But Martha was cumbered about much serving (Lu 10:40), and that was the reason why she was not where Mary was--sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was providing for the entertainment of Christ and those that came with him. Perhaps she had no notice before of his coming, and she was unprovided, but was in care to have every thing handsome upon this occasion; she had

not such guests every day. Housekeepers know what care and bustle there must be when a great entertainment is to be made. Observe here,

1. Something commendable, which must not be overlooked.

(a) Here was a commendable respect to our Lord Jesus; for we have reason to think it was not for ostentation, but purely to testify her good-will to him, that she made this entertainment. Note, Those who truly love Christ will think that well bestowed that is laid out for his honour.

(b) Here was a commendable care of her household affairs. It appears, from the respect shown to this family among the Jews (Joh 11:19), that they were persons of some quality and distinction; and yet Martha herself did not think it a disparagement to her to lay her hand even to the service of the family, when there was occasion for it. Note, It is the duty of those who have the charge of families to look well to the ways of their household. The affectation of state and the love of ease make many families neglected.

2. Here was something culpable, which we must take notice of too.

(a) She was for much serving. Her heart was upon it, to have a very sumptuous and splendid entertainment; great plenty, great variety, and great exactness, according to the fashion of the place. She was in care, peri pollen diakonian--concerning much attendance. Note, It does not become the disciples of Christ to affect much serving, to affect varieties, dainties, and superfluities in eating and drinking; what need is there of much serving, when much less will serve?

(b) She was cumbered about it; periespato--she was just distracted with it. Note, Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us we must not be cumbered with them, nor be disquieted and perplexed by them. Care is good and duty; but cumber is sin and folly.

(c) She was then cumbered about much serving when she should have been with her sister, sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word. Note, Worldly

business is then a snare to us when it hinders us from serving God and getting good to our souls.

The complaint which Martha made to Christ against her sister Mary, for not assisting her, upon this occasion, in the business of the house (Lu 10:40): "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister, who is concerned as well as I in having things done well, has left me to serve alone? Therefore dismiss her from attending thee, and bid her come and help me." Now,

1. This complaint of Martha's may be considered as a discovery of her worldliness: it was the language of her inordinate care and cumber. She speaks as one in a mighty passion with her sister, else she would not have troubled Christ with the matter. Note, The inordinacy of worldly cares and pursuits is often the occasion of disturbance in families and of strife and contention among relations. Moreover, those that are eager upon the world themselves are apt to blame and censure those that are not so too; and while they justify themselves in their worldliness, and judge of others by their serviceableness to them in their worldly pursuits, they are ready to condemn those that addict themselves to the exercises of religion, as if they neglected the main chance, as they call it. Martha, being angry at her sister, appealed to Christ, and would have him say that she did well to be angry. Lord, doest not thou care that my sister has let me to serve alone? It should seem as if Christ had sometimes expressed himself tenderly concerned for her, and her ease and comfort, and would not have her go through so much toil and trouble, and she expected that he should now bid her sister take her share in it. When Martha was caring, she must have Mary, and Christ and all, to care too, or else she is not pleased. Note, Those are not always in the right that are most forward to appeal to God; we must therefore take heed, lest at any time we expect that Christ should espouse our unjust and groundless quarrels. The cares which he cast upon us we may cheerfully cast upon him, but not those which we foolishly draw upon ourselves. He will be the patron of the poor and injured, but not of the turbulent and injurious.

2. It may be considered as a discouragement of Mary's piety and devotion. Her sister should have commended her for it, should have told her that she was in the right; but, instead of this, she condemns her as wanting in her

duty. Note, It is no strange thing for those that are zealous in religion to meet with hindrances and discouragements from those that are about them; not only with opposition from enemies, but with blame and censure from their friends. David's fasting, and his dancing before the ark, were turned to his reproach.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

The reproof which Christ gave to Martha for her inordinate care, Lu 10:41. She appealed to him, and he gives judgment against her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, whereas but one thing is needful.

1. He reproved her, though he was at this time her guest. Her fault was her over-solicitude to entertain him, and she expected he should justify her in it, yet he publicly checked her for it. Note, As many as Christ loves he rebukes and chastens. Even those that are dear to Christ, if any thing be amiss in them, shall be sure to hear of it. Nevertheless I have something against thee.

2. When he reproved her, he called her by her name, Martha; for reproofs are then most likely to do good when they are particular, applied to particular persons and cases, as Nathan's to David, Thou art the man. He repeated her name, Martha, Martha; he speaks as one in earnest, and deeply concerned for her welfare. Those that are entangled in the cares of this life are not easily disentangled. To them we must call again and again, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.

3. That which he reproved her for was her being careful and troubled about many things. He was not pleased that she should think to please him with a rich and splendid entertainment, and with perplexing herself to prepare it for him; whereas he would teach us, as not to be sensual in using such things, so not to be selfish in being willing that others should be troubled, no matter who or how many, so we may be gratified. Christ reproves her, both for the intenseness of her care ("Thou art careful and troubled, divided and disturbed by thy care"), and for the extensiveness of it, "about many things; thou dost grasp at many enjoyments, and so art troubled at many disappointments. Poor Martha, thou hast many things to fret at, and this

puts thee out of humour, whereas less ado would serve." Note, Inordinate care or trouble about many things in this world is a common fault among Christ's disciples; it is very displeasing to Christ, and that for which they often come under the rebukes of Providence. If they fret for no just cause, it is just with him to order them something to fret at.

4. That which aggravated the sin and folly of her care was that but one thing is needful. It is a low construction which some put upon this, that, whereas Martha was in care to provide many dishes of meat, there was occasion but for one, one would be enough. There is need but of one thing--henos de esti chreia. If we take it so, it furnishes us with a rule of temperance, not to affect varieties and dainties, but to be content to sit down to one dish of meat, to half on one, Pr 23:1-3. It is a forced construction which some of the ancients put upon it: But oneness is needful, in opposition to distractions. There is need of one heart to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. The one thing needful is certainly meant of that which Mary made her choice--sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was troubled about many things, when she should have applied herself to one; godliness unites the heart, which the world had divided. The many things she was troubled about were needless, while the one thing she neglected was needful. Martha's care and work were good in their proper season and place; but now she had something else to do, which was unspeakably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ to have blamed Mary for not doing as she did, but he blamed her for not doing as Mary did; and we are sure the judgment of Christ is according to truth. The day will come when Martha will wish she had set where Mary did.

42 but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Christ's approbation and commendation of Mary for her serious piety: Mary hath chosen the good part. Mary said nothing in her own defence; but, since Martha has appealed to the Master, to him she is willing to refer it, and will abide by his award; and here we have it.

1. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it; for one thing is needful, this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to

the guidance of Christ, and receive the law from his mouth. Note, Serious godliness is a needful thing, it is the one thing needful; for nothing without this will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world.

2. She had herein wisely done well for herself. Christ justified Mary against her sister's clamours. However we may be censured and condemned by men for our piety and zeal, our Lord Jesus will take our part: But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. Let us not then condemn the pious zeal of any, lest we set Christ against us; and let us never be discouraged if we be censured for our pious zeal, for we have Christ for us. Note, Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all; he applauded her for her wisdom: She hath chosen the good part; for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took a better way of honouring Christ and of pleasing him, by receiving his word into her heart, than Martha did by providing for his entertainment in her house.

Note,

(a) A part with Christ is a good part; it is a part for the soul and eternity, the part Christ gives to his favourites (Joh 13:38), who are partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), and partakers with Christ, Ro 8:17.

(b) It is a part that shall never be taken away from those that have it. A portion in this life will certainly be taken away from us, at the furthest, when we shall be taken away from it; but nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ, and our part in that love. Men and devils cannot take it away from us, and God and Christ will not.

(c) It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us to choose this good part, to choose the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. In particular cases we must choose that which has a tendency to religion, and reckon that best for us that is best for our souls. Mary was at her choice whether she would partake with Martha in her care, and get the reputation of a fine

housekeeper, or sit at the feet of Christ and approve herself a zealous disciple; and, by her choice in this particular, Christ judges of her general choice.

(d) Those who choose this good part shall not only have what they choose, but shall have their choice commended in the great day.

Luke-11

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

See notes on Mt 6:9-13

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,
as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

He stirs up and encourages importunity, fervency, and constancy, in prayer, by showing,

1. That importunity will go far in our dealings with men, Lu 11:5-8. Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a loaf or two of bread of a neighbour, at an unseasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him. His neighbour will be loth to accommodate him, for he has wakened him with his knocking, and put him out of humour, and he has a great deal to say in his excuse. The door is shut and locked, his children are asleep in bed, in the same room with him, and, if he make a noise, he shall disturb them. His servants are asleep, and he cannot make them hear; and, for his own part, he shall catch cold if he rise to give him. But his neighbour will have no nay, and therefore he continues knocking still, and tells him he will do so till he has

what he comes for; so that he must give it to him, to be rid of him: He will rise, and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity. He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that in Lu 18:1: That men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity; we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels. We prevail with men by importunity because they are displeased with it, but with God because he is pleased with it. Now this similitude may be of use to us,

(a) To direct us in prayer.

[1.] We must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbour or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him.

[2.] We must come for bread, for that which is needful, and which we cannot be without.

[3.] We must come to him by prayer for others as well as for ourselves. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord accepted Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42:10. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do good, to feed many with our lips, to entertain and edify those that come to us.

[4.] We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait that we have not brought ourselves into by our own folly and carelessness, but Providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread if his friend had not come in unexpectedly. The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence. [5.] We ought to continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

(b) To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man who was angry at it, much more with a God who is infinitely more kind

and ready to do good to us than we are to one another, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mercies that we are importunate. If he do not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray.

2. That God has promised to give us what we ask of him. We have not only the goodness of nature to take comfort from, but the word which he has spoken (Lu 11:9,10): "Ask, and it shall be given you; either the thing itself you shall ask or that which is equivalent; either the thorn in the flesh removed, or grace sufficient given in."--We had this before, Mt 7:7,8. I say unto you. We have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen. We must not only ask, but we must seek, in the use of means, must second our prayers with our endeavours; and, in asking and seeking, we must continue pressing, still knocking at the same door, and we shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in concert, but by our particular prayers: Every one that asketh receiveth, even the meanest saint that asks in faith. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, Ps 34:6. When we ask of God those things which Christ has here directed us to ask, that his name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done, in these requests we must be importunate, must never hold our peace day or night; we must not keep silence, nor give God any rest, until he establish, until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, Isa 62:6,7.

6 for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him ?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

See notes on Mt 7:7-11

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?

A Divided House Cannot Stand

14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.

See notes on Mt 12:22-29,43-45

15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

22 but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

23 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

The Return of the Unclean Spirit

24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

True Blessedness

27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

We had not this passage in the other evangelists, nor can we tack it, as Dr. Hammond does, to that of Christ's mother and brethren desiring to speak with him (for this evangelist also has related that in Lu 8:19), but it contains an interruption much like that, and, like that, occasion is taken from it for instruction.

1 The applause which an affectionate, honest, well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his excellent discourses. While the scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman (and probably she was a person of some quality) admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spoke: As he spoke these things (Lu 11:27), with a convincing force and evidence, a certain woman of the company was so pleased to hear how he had confounded the Pharisees, and conquered them, and put them to shame, and cleared himself from their vile insinuations, that she could not forbear crying out, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee. What an admirable, what an excellent man is this! Surely never was there a greater or better born of a woman: happy the woman that has him for her son. I should have thought myself very happy to have been the mother of one that speaks as never man spoke, that has so much of the grace of heaven in him, and is so great a blessing to this earth." This was well said, as it expressed her high esteem of Christ, and that for the sake of his doctrine; and it was not amiss that it reflected honour upon the virgin Mary his mother, for it agreed with what she herself had said (Lu 1:48), All generations shall call me blessed; some even of this generation, bad as it was. Note, To all that believe the word of Christ the person of Christ is precious, and he is an honour, 1Pe 2:7. Yet we must be careful, lest, as this good woman, we too much magnify

the honour of his natural kindred, and so know him after the flesh, whereas we must now henceforth know him so no more.

2 The occasion which Christ took from this to pronounce them more happy who are his faithful and obedient followers than she was who bore and nursed him. He does not deny what this woman said, nor refuse her respect to him and his mother; but leads her from this to that which was of higher consideration, and which more concerned her: Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it, Lu 11:28. He thinks them so; and his saying that they are so makes them so, and should make us of his mind. This is intended partly as a check to her, for doting so much upon his bodily presence and his human nature, partly as an encouragement to her to hope that she might be as happy as his own mother, whose happiness she was ready to envy, if she would hear the word of God and keep it. Note, Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet those only are truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it and keep it, that keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

28 But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

An Evil Generation Seeks a Sign

29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.

See notes on Mt 12:38-42

30 For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

32 The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

The Light of the Body

33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

See notes on Mt 5:15 6:22,23.

34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

35 Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Jesus Denounces the Pharisees and Lawyers

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

See notes on mat 23

38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed before dinner.

39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

40 Ye fools, did not he, that made that which is without, make that which is within also?

41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 Woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.
44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.
45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.
46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers ! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.
47 Woe unto you ! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.
48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.
49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:
50 that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;
51 from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zechariah, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.
52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.
53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:
54 laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Luke-12

A Warning against Hypocrisy

1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

see Mt 10:26-28

3 Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

Whom to Fear

4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Confessing Christ before Men

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

9 but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

12 for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

The application that was made to Christ, very unseasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose between him and his brother in a matter that concerned the estate of the family (Lu 12:13): "Master, speak to my brother; speak as a prophet, speak as a king, speak with authority; he is one that will have regard to what thou sayest; speak to him, that he divide the inheritance with me."

Now,

1. Some think that his brother did him wrong, and that he appealed to Christ to right him, because he knew the law was costly. His brother was such a one as the Jews called Ben-hamesen--a son of violence, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, who have no sense at all either of natural equity or natural affection, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They who are so wronged have God to go to, who will execute judgment and justice for those that are oppressed.

2. Others think that he had a mind to do his brother wrong, and would have Christ to assist him; that, whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had but by that rule (De 21:16,17), he would have Christ to alter that law, and oblige his brother, who perhaps was a follower of Christ at large, to divide the inheritance equally with him, in gavel-kind, share and share alike, and to allot him as much as his elder brother. I suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against covetousness, pleonexia--a desire of having more, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a sinful desire of getting more than his own.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter (Lu 12:14): Man, who made me a judge or divider over you? In matters of this nature, Christ will not assume either a legislative power to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a judicial power to determine controversies concerning them. He could have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the

physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases; but he would not, for it was not in his commission: Who made me a judge? Probably he refers to the indignity done to Moses by his brethren in Egypt, with which Stephen upbraided the Jews, Ac 7:27,35. "If I should offer to do this, you would taunt me as you did Moses, Who made thee a judge or a divider?" He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal (it was coram non judice--not before the proper judge), and so dismisses his bill. If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuit of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help; but as to this matter he has nothing to do: Who made me a judge? Note, Jesus Christ was no usurper; he took no honour, no power, to himself, but what was given him, Heb 5:5. Whatever he did, he could tell by what authority he did it, and who gave him that authority. Now this shows us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world.

1. It does not interfere with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power.

2. It does not intermeddle with civil rights; it obliges all to do justly, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not founded in grace.

3. It does not encourage our expectations of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that in consideration of this Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature.

4. It does not encourage our contests with our brethren, and our being rigorous and high in our demands, but rather, for peace' sake, to recede from our right.

5. It does not allow ministers to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life (2Ti 2:4), to leave the word of God to serve tables. There are those whose business it is, let it be left to them, Tractent fabrilia fabri--Each workman to his proper craft.

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from this to give to his hearers. Though he came not to be a divider of men's estates, he came to be a director of their consciences about them, and would have all take heed of harbouring that corrupt principle which they saw to be in others the root of so much evil. Here is,

1 The caution itself (Lu 12:15): Take heed and beware of covetousness; horate--"Observe yourselves, keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them; and phylassesthe--preserve yourselves, keep a strict band upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles rule and give law in them." Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against.

2 The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution: For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; that is, "our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world."

(1.) The life of the soul, undoubtedly, does not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last so long as it will last. Nay,

(2.) Even the life of the body and the happiness of that do not consist in an abundance of these things; for many live very contentedly and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth of it (a dinner of herbs with holy love is better than a feast of fat things); and, on the other hand, many live very miserably who have a great deal of the things of this world; they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they bereave their souls of good, Ec 4:8. Many who have abundance are discontented and fretful, as Ahab and Haman; and then what good does their abundance do them?

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

The illustration of this by a parable, the sum of which is to show the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended not only for a check to that man who came to Christ with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his soul and another world, but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to take heed of covetousness. The parable gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a happy man.

(1.) Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance (Lu 12:16): The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, chora--regio--the country. He had a whole country to himself, a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for the king himself is served by the field, Ec 5:9. He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully to wicked men, to whom it is a snare, that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us.

(2.) Here are the workings of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, Lu 12:17. Note, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for it. He is both a discerner and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are hid and thoughts are free. Let us here observe,

What his cares and concerns were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicts himself with this thought, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? He speaks as one at a loss, and full of perplexity. What shall I do now? The poorest beggar in the country, that did not know where to get a meal's meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disquieting care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance. The more men have, the

more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitous they are to keep what they have and to add to it, how to spare and how to spend; so that even the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep, for thinking what they shall do with what they have and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak it with a sigh, What shall I do? And if you ask, Why, what is the matter? Truly he had abundance of wealth, and wants a place to put it in, that is all.

17 and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

What his projects and purposes were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish like them (Lu 12:18): "This will I do, and it is the wisest course I can take, I will pull down my barns, for they are too little, and I will build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, and then I shall be at ease."

Now here,

First, It was folly for him to call the fruits of the ground his fruits and his goods. He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that, my fruits and my goods; whereas what we have is but lent us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our Lord's goods, tenants at will of our Lord's land. It is my corn (saith God) and my wine, Ho 2:8,9.

Secondly, It was folly for him to hoard up what he had, and then to think it well bestowed. There will I bestow it all; as if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, but all in the great barn.

Thirdly, It was folly for him to let his mind rise with his condition; when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, as if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year as it was too little this. Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty,

as they did in Egypt; and therefore it were better to stack some of his corn for this once.

Fourthly, It was folly for him to think to ease his care by building new barns, for the building of them would but increase his care; those know this who know any thing of the spirit of building. The way that God prescribes for the cure of inordinate care is certainly successful, but the way of the world does but increase it. Besides, when he had done this, there were other cares that would still attend him; the greater the barns, still the greater the cares, Ec 5:10.

Fifthly, It was folly for him to contrive and resolve all this absolutely and without reserve. This I will do: I will pull down my barns and will build greater, yea, that I will; without so much as that necessary proviso, If the Lord will, I shall live, Jam 4:13-15. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as know what shall be on the morrow.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

What his pleasing hopes and expectations were, when he should have made good these projects. "Then I will say to my soul, upon the credit of this security, whether God say it or no, Soul, mark what I say, thou hast much goods laid up for many years in these barns; now take thine ease, enjoy thyself, eat, drink, and be merry," Lu 12:19. Here also appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it.

First, It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance till he had compassed his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns, and filled them (which will be a work of time), then he will take his ease; and might he not as well have done that now? Grotius here quotes the story of Pyrrhus, who was projecting to make himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places, in the prosecution of his victories. Well, says his friend Cyneas, and what must we do then? Postea vivemus, says he, Then we will live; At hoc jam licet, says Cyneas, We may live now if we please.

Secondly, It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were laid up for many years, as if his bigger barns would be safer than those he had; whereas in an hour's time they might be burnt to the ground and all that was laid up in them, perhaps by lightning, against which there is no defence. A few years may make a great change; moth and rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal.

Thirdly, It was folly for him to count upon certain ease, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of their greatest abundance. One dead fly may spoil a whole pot of precious ointment; and one thorn a whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, who has ever so much of the wealth of this world.

Fourthly, It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to eat and drink, and to be merry; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, and being put thereby into a better capacity of serving God and his generation: as if we lived to eat, and did not eat to live, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness.

Fifthly, It was the greatest folly of all to say all this to his soul. if he had said, Body, take thine ease, for thou hast goods laid up for many years, there had been sense in it; but the soul, considered as an immortal spirit, separable from the body, was no way interested in a barn full of corn or a bag full of gold. If he had had the soul of a swine, he might have blessed it with the satisfaction of eating and drinking; but what is this to the soul of a man, that has exigencies and desires which these things will be no ways suited to? It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

Here is God's sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. He said to himself, said to his soul, Take thine ease. If

God had said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesses with the spirit of believers to make them easy. But God said quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, 1Co 4:3,4. His neighbours blessed him (Ps 10:3), praised him as doing well for himself (Ps 49:18); but God said he did ill for himself: Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, Lu 12:20. God said to him, that is, decreed this concerning him, and let him know it, either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said when he was in the fulness of his sufficiency (Job 20:22), when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve to answer the end, but by pulling them down and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy. When he was forecasting this, and had brought it to an issue, and then lulled himself asleep again with a pleasing dream of many years' enjoyment of his present improvements, then God said this to him. Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said,

[1.] The character he gave him: Thou fool, thou Nabal, alluding to the story of Nabal, that fool (Nabal is his name, and folly is with him) whose heart was struck dead as a stone while he was regaling himself in the abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, Thou fool, and they will call themselves so.

[2.] The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death: This night thy soul shall be required of thee; they shall require thy soul (so the words are), and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? He thought he had goods that should be his for many years, but he must part from them this night; he thought he should enjoy them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself and terrible to them.

First, It is a force, an arrest; it is the requiring of the soul, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul, who canst use it no better? Thy soul shall be required; this intimates that he is

loth to part with it. A good man, who has taken his heart off from this world, cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has it torn from him with violence; it is a terror to him to think of leaving this world. They shall require thy soul. God shall require it; he shall require an account of it. "Man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul. Give an account of that stewardship." They shall; that is, evil angels as the messengers of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall require it as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires thy soul as his own, for it did, in effect, give itself to him.

Secondly, It is a surprize, an unexpected force. It is in the night, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man; it is his morning. But it is night to a worldling, a dark night; he lies down in sorrow. It is this night, this present night, without delay; there is no giving bail, or begging a day. This pleasant night, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die, and go to judgment. Thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast; but, in the midst of all, here is an end of all, Isa 21:4.

Thirdly, It is the leaving of all those things behind which they have provided, which they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind. Their pomp shall not descend after them (Ps 49:17), but they shall go as naked out of the world as they came into it, and they shall have no benefit at all by what they have hoarded up either in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

Fourthly, It is leaving them to they know not who: "Then whose shall those things be? Not thine to be sure, and thou knowest not what they will prove for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will be wise or fools (Ec 2:18,19), whether such as will bless thy memory or curse it, be a credit to thy family or a blemish, do good or hurt with what thou leavest them, keep it or spend it; nay, thou

knowest not but those for whom thou dost design it may be prevented from the enjoyment of it, and it may be turned to somebody else thou little thinkest of; nay, though thou knowest to whom thou leavest it, thou knowest not to whom they will leave it, or into whose hand it will come at last." If many a man could have foreseen to whom his house would have come after his death, he would rather have burned it than beautified it.

Fifthly, It is a demonstration of his folly. Carnal worldlings are fools while they live: this their way is their folly (Ps 49:13); but their folly is made most evident when they die: at his end he shall be a fool (Jer 17:11); for then it will appear that he took pains to lay up treasure in a world he was hastening from, but took no care to lay it up in the world he was hastening to.

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Lastly, Here is the application of this parable (Lu 12:21): So is he, such a fool, a fool in God's judgment, a fool upon record, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. This is the way and this is the end of such a man. Observe here,

1 The description of a worldly man: He lays up treasure for himself, for the body, for the world, for himself in opposition to God, for that self that is to be denied.

(a) It is his error that he counts his flesh himself, as if the body were the man. If self be rightly stated and understood, it is only the true Christian that lays up treasure for himself, and is wise for himself, Pr 9:12.

(b) It is his error that he makes it his business to lay up for the flesh, which he calls laying up for himself. All his labour is for his mouth (Ec 6:7), making provision for the flesh.

(c) It is his error that he counts those things his treasure which are thus laid up for the world, and the body, and the life that now is; they are the wealth he trusts to, and spends upon, and lets out his affections toward.

(d) The greatest error of all is that he is in no care to be rich towards God, rich in the account of God, whose accounting us rich makes us so (Re 2:9), rich in the things of God, rich in faith (Jam 2:5), rich in good works, in the fruits of righteousness (1Ti 6:18), rich in graces, and comforts, and spiritual gifts. Many who have abundance of this world are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls, which will make them rich towards God, rich for eternity.

2 The folly and misery of a worldly man: So is he. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. Note, It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men to mind and pursue the wealth of this world more than the wealth of the other world, that which is merely for the body and for time, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.

Care and Anxiety

22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

These verses are found in almost the same words in Mt 6:24-34. See notes there.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls ?

25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest ?

27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Treasure in Heaven

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

They have better things to expect and hope for: Fear not, little flock, Lu 12:32. For the banishing of inordinate cares, it is necessary that fears should be suppressed. When we frighten ourselves with an apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination. Therefore fear not, little flock, but hope to the end; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This comfortable word we had not in Matthew.

Note,

[1.] Christ's flock in this world is a little flock; his sheep are but few and feeble. The church is a vineyard, a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as Israel (1Ki 20:27), who were like two little flocks of kids, when the Syrians filled the country.

[2.] Though it be a little flock, quite over-numbered, and therefore in danger of being overpowered, by its enemies, yet it is the will of Christ that they should not be afraid: "Fear not, little flock, but see yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy."

[3.] God has a kingdom in store for all that belong to Christ's little flock, a crown of glory (1Pe 5:4), a throne of power (Re 3:21), unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. The

sheep on the right hand are called to come and inherit the kingdom; it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each.

[4.] The kingdom is given according to the good pleasure of the Father; It is your Father's good pleasure; it is given not of debt, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace; even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee. The kingdom is his; and may he not do what he will with his own?

[5.] The believing hopes and prospects of the kingdom should silence and suppress the fears of Christ's little flock in this world. "Fear no trouble; for, though it should come, it shall not come between you and the kingdom, that is sure, it is near." (That is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of which cannot separate us from the love of God). "Fear not the want of any thing that is good for you; for, if it be your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, you need not question but he will bear your charges thither."

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

He charged them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, Lu 12:33,34. Those who have done this may be very easy as to all the events of time.

1. "Sit loose to this world, and to all your possessions in it: Sell that ye have, and give alms," that is, "rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly necessitous, sell what you have that is superfluous, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to the poor. Sell what you have, if you find it a hindrance from, or incumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished, for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, thought they be the inheritance of your fathers. Do not sell to hoard up the money, or because you can make more of it by usury, but sell and give alms; what is given in alms, in a right manner, is put out to the best interest, upon the best security."

2. "Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, that wax not empty, not

of gold, but of grace in the heart and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last." Grace will go with us into another world, for it is woven in the soul; and our good works will follow us, for God is not unrighteous to forget them. These will be treasures in heaven, that will enrich us to eternity.

(a) It is treasure that will not be exhausted; we may spend upon it to eternity, and it will not be at all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it.

(b) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for no thief approaches near it; what is laid up in heaven is out of reach of enemies.

(c) It is treasure that will not spoil with keeping, any more than it will waste with spending; the moth does not corrupt it, as it does our garments which we now wear. Now by this it appears that we have laid up our treasure in heaven if our hearts be there while we are here (Lu 12:34), if we think much of heaven and keep our eye upon it, if we quicken ourselves with the hopes of it and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But, if your hearts be set upon the earth and the things of it, it is to be feared that you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Watchful Servants

35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

See notes on Mt 24:42-51.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

The Unfaithful Servant

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Jesus the Cause of Division

49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

See notes on Mt 10:34-37

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay;
but rather division:

52 for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Discerning the Times

54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

See notes on Mt 16:2,3.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat;
and it cometh to pass.

56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

Agree with Your Adversary

57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

See notes on Mt 5:25,26.

58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Luke-13

Repent or Perish

1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Tidings brought to Christ of the death of some Galileans lately, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, Lu 13:1. Let us consider,

1. What this tragical story was. It is briefly related here, and is not met with in any of the historians of those times. Josephus indeed mentions Pilate's killing some Samaritans, who, under the conduct of a factious leader, were going in a tumultuous manner to mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans' temple was; but we can by no means allow that story to be the same with this. Some think that these Galileans were of the faction of Judas Gaulonita, called also Judas of Galilee (Ac 5:37), who disowned Cæsar's authority and refused to pay tribute to him: or perhaps these, being Galileans, were only suspected by Pilate to be of that faction, and barbarously murdered, because those who were in league with that pretender were out of his reach. The Galileans being Herod's subjects, it is probable that this outrage committed upon them by Pilate occasioned the quarrel that was between Herod and Pilate, which we read of in Lu 23:12. We are not told what number they were, perhaps but a few, whom Pilate had some particular pique against (and therefore the story is overlooked by Josephus); but the circumstance remarked is that he mingled their blood with their sacrifices in the court of the temple. Though perhaps they had reason to fear Pilate's malice, yet they would not, under pretence of that fear, keep away from Jerusalem, whither the law obliged them to go up with their sacrifices. Dr Lightfoot thinks it probable that they were themselves killing their sacrifices (which was allowed, for the priest's work, they said, began with the sprinkling of the blood), and that Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at the time when they were off their guard (for otherwise the Galileans were mettled men, and generally went well-armed), and mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices, as if it had been equally acceptable to God. Neither the

holiness of the place nor of the work would be a protection to them from the fury of an unjust judge, who neither feared God nor regarded man. The altar, which used to be a sanctuary and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap, a place of danger and slaughter.

2. Why it was related at this season to our Lord Jesus.

(a) Perhaps merely as a matter of news, which they supposed he had not heard before, and as a thing which they lamented, and believed he would do so too; for the Galileans were their countrymen. Note, Sad providences ought to be observed by us, and the knowledge of them communicated to others, that they and we may be suitably affected with them, and make a good use of them.

(b) Perhaps it was intended as a confirmation of what Christ had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the necessity of making our peace with God in time, before we be delivered to the officer, that is, to death, and so cast into prison, and then it will be too late to make agreements: "Now," say they, "Master, here is a fresh instance of some that were very suddenly delivered to the officer, that were taken away by death when they little expected it; and therefore we have all need to be ready." Note, It will be of good use to us both to explain the word of God and to enforce it upon ourselves by observing the providences of God.

(c) Perhaps they would stir him up, being himself of Galilee, and a prophet, and one that had a great interest in that country, to find out a way to revenge the death of these Galileans upon Herod. If they had any thoughts of this kind, they were quite mistaken; for Christ was now going up to Jerusalem, to be delivered into the hands of Pilate, and to have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice.

(d) Perhaps this was told Christ to deter him from going up to Jerusalem, to worship (Lu 13:22), lest Pilate should serve him as he had served those Galileans, and should suggest against him, as probably he had insinuated against those Galileans, in vindication of his cruelty, that they came to sacrifice as Absalom did, with a seditious design, under colour of sacrificing, to raise rebellion. Now, lest Pilate, when his hand was in,

should proceed further, they think it advisable that Christ should for the present keep out of the way.

(e) Christ's answer intimates that they told him this with a spiteful innuendo, that, though Pilate was unjust in killing them, yet without doubt they were secretly bad men, else God would not have permitted Pilate thus barbarously to cut them off. It was very invidious; rather than they would allow them to be martyrs, though they died sacrificing, and perhaps suffered for their devotion, they would, without any colour of proof, suppose them to be malefactors; and it may be for no other reason than because they were not of their party and denomination, differed from them, or had difference with them. This fate of theirs, which was capable not only of a favourable, but an honourable construction, shall be called a just judgment of God upon them, though they know not for what.

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Christ's reply to this report, in which,

1. He seconded it with another story, which, like it, gave an instance of people's being taken away by sudden death. It is not long since the tower of Siloam fell, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. Dr Lightfoot's conjecture is that this tower adjoined to the pool of Siloam, which was the same with the pool of Bethesda, and that it belonged to those porches which were by the pool, in which the impotent folks lay, that waited for the stirring of the water (Joh 5:3), and that they who were killed were some of them, or some of those who in this pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service, for it was near the temple. Whoever they were, it was a sad story; yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: for as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them, Ec 9:12. Towers, that were built for safety, often prove men's destruction.

2. He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and similar events, nor take occasion thence to censure great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners: Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the

Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay, Lu 13:2,3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans were Jews, and were glad of any thing that furnished them with matter of reflection upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ retorted upon them the story of the men of Jerusalem, that came to an untimely end; for, with what measure of that kind we mete, it shall be measured to us again. "Now suppose ye that those eighteen who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, were debtors to divine justice above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you nay." Whether it make for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's sins by their sufferings in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold to be purified, not as dross and chaff to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in their censures of him, lest we condemn the generation of the righteous, Ps 72:14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we know love or hatred by all that is before us, because all things come alike to all, Ec 9:1,2. And we might as justly conclude that the oppressors, and Pilate among the rest, on whose side are power and success, are the greatest saints, as that the oppressed, and those Galileans among the rest, who are all in tears and have no comforter, no, not the priests and Levites that attended the altar, are the greatest sinners. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by; for as we do we shall be done by: Judge not, that ye be not judged, Mt 7:1.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem ?

On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, Lu 13:3-5.

(1.) This intimates that we all deserve to perish as much as they did, and had we been dealt with according to our sins, according to the iniquity of our holy things, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices by the justice of God. It must moderate our censure, not only that we are sinners, but that we are as great sinners as they, have as much sin to repent of as they had to suffer for.

(2.) That therefore we are all concerned to repent, to be sorry for what we have done amiss, and to do so no more. The judgments of God upon others are loud calls to us to repent. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty which he came not only to gain room for, and give hopes to, but to enjoin upon us--and that is, to repent.

(3.) That repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way: so iniquity shall not be your ruin, but upon no other terms.

(4.) That, if we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some lay an emphasis upon the word likewise, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had their blood mingled with their sacrifices; and many of them, both in Jerusalem and in other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their ears, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Siloam. But certainly it looks further; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perished out of this world. The same Jesus that calls us to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids us repent because otherwise we shall perish; so that he has set before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to our choice.

(5.) The perishing of those in their impenitency who have been most harsh and severe in judging others will be in a particular manner aggravated.

5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; except you be reformed, you will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down."

This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and obedience from them, which, turning to his praise and honour, he would have accounted fruit; but they disappointed his expectations: they did not do their duty; they were a reproach instead of being a credit to their profession. Upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but, upon Christ's intercession, as of old upon that of Moses, he graciously gave them further time and further mercy; tried them, as it were, another year, by sending his apostles among them, to call them to repentance, and in Christ's name to offer them pardon, upon repentance. Some of them were wrought upon to repent, and bring forth fruit, and with them all was well; but the body of the nation continued impenitent and unfruitful, and ruin without remedy came upon them; about forty years after they were cut down, and cast into the fire, as John Baptist had told them (Mt 3:10), which saying of his this parable enlarges upon.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground ?

1. The doom passed upon it; Cut it down. He saith this to the dresser of the vineyard, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the ministers who are in his name to declare this doom. Note, No other can be expected concerning barren trees than that they should be cut down. As the unfruitful vineyard is dismantled, and thrown open to the common (Isa 5:5,6), so the unfruitful trees in the vineyard are cast out of it, and wither, Joh 15:6. It is cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, Isa 6:9,10. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell; and with good reason, for why cumbers it the ground? What reason is there why it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose?

2. The dresser's intercession for it. Christ is the great Intercessor; he ever lives, interceding. Ministers are intercessors; they that dress the vineyard should intercede for it; those we preach to we should pray for, for we must give ourselves to the word of God and to prayer. Now observe,

(a) What it is he prays for, and that is a reprieve: Lord, let it alone this year also. He doth not pray, "Lord, let it never be cut down," but, "Lord, not now. Lord, do not remove the dresser, do not withhold the dews, do not pluck up the tree."

Note,

[1.] It is desirable to have a barren tree reprieved. Some have not yet grace to repent, yet it is a mercy to them to have space to repent, as it was to the old world to have 120 years allowed them to make their peace with God.

[2.] We owe it to Christ, the great Intercessor, that barren trees are not cut down immediately: had it not been for his interposition, the whole world had been cut down, upon the sin of Adam; but he said, Lord, let it alone; and it is he that upholds all things.

[3.] We are encouraged to pray to God for the merciful reprieve of barren fig-trees: "Lord, let them alone; continue them yet awhile in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious." Thus must we stand in the gap, to turn away wrath.

[4.] Reprieves of mercy are but for a time; Let it alone this year also, a short time, but a sufficient time to make trial. When God has borne long, we may hope he will bear yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always.

[5.] Reprieves may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not pardons; there must be our own faith, and repentance, and prayers, else no pardon.

(b) How he promises to improve this reprieve, if it be obtained: Till I shall dig about it, and dung it, Note,

[1.] In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours. The dresser seems to say, "Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that

which is my part; but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness." Thus in all our prayers we must request God's grace, with a humble resolution to do our duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for.

[2.] In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The dresser of the vineyard engages to do his part, and therein teaches ministers to do theirs. He will dig about the tree and will dung it. Unfruitful Christians must be awakened by the terrors of the law, which break up the fallow ground, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warming and fattening, as manure to the tree. Both methods must be tried; the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

(c) Upon what foot he leaves the matter: "Let us try it, and try what we can do with it one year more, and, if it bear fruit, well, Lu 13:9. It is possible, nay, there is hope, that yet it may be fruitful." In this hope the owner will have patience with it, and the dresser will take pains with it, and, if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word well is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt: If it bear fruit!--supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the owner and dresser will be. If it bear fruit, there will be cause of rejoicing; we have what we would have. But it cannot be better expressed than as we do: well. Note, Unfruitful professors of religion, if after long unfruitfulness they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find all is well. God will be pleased, for he will be praised; ministers' hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it; the ground will be no longer cumbered, but bettered, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. As for the tree itself, it is well for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall receive blessing from God (Heb 6:7); it shall be purged, and shall bring forth more fruit, for the Father is its husbandman (Joh 15:2); and it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth to the paradise above.

Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the

visible church, to see to it that the temper of their minds and the tenour of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the fruit required. Now observe here,

1 The advantages which this fig-tree had. It was planted in a vineyard, in better soil, and where it had more care taken of it and more pains taken with it, than other fig-trees had, that commonly grew, not in vineyards (Those are for vines), but by the way-side, Mt 21:19. This fig-tree belonged to a certain man, that owned it, and was at expense upon it. Note, The church of God is his vineyard, distinguished from the common, and fenced about, Isa 5:1,2. We are fig-trees planted in this vineyard by our baptism; we have a place and a name in the visible church, and this is our privilege and happiness. It is a distinguishing favour: he has not dealt so with other nations.

2 The owner's expectation from it: He came, and sought fruit thereon, and he had reason to expect it. He did not send, but came himself, intimating his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, came to his own, to the Jews, seeking fruit. Note, The God of heaven requires and expects fruit from those that have a place in his vineyard. He has his eye upon those that enjoy the gospel, to see whether they live up to it; he seeks evidences of their getting good by the means of grace they enjoy. Leaves will not serve, crying, Lord, Lord; blossoms will not serve, beginning well and promising fair; there must be fruit. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be according to the gospel, light and love.

3. The disappointment of his expectation: He found none, none at all, not one fig. Note, It is sad to think how many enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and yet do nothing at all to the honour of God, nor to answer the end of his entrusting them with those privileges; and it is a disappointment to him and a grief to the Spirit of his grace.

(A) He here complains of it to the dresser of the vineyard: I come, seeking fruit, but am disappointed--I find none, looking for grapes, but behold wild grapes. He is grieved with such a generation.

(B) He aggravates it, with two considerations:--

[1.] That he had waited long, and yet was disappointed. As he was not high in his expectations, he only expected fruit, not much fruit, so he was not hasty, he came three years, year after year: applying it to the Jews, he came one space of time before the captivity, another after that, and another in the preaching of John Baptist and of Christ himself; or it may allude to the three years of Christ's public ministry, which were now expiring. In general, it teaches us that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. How many times three years has God come to many of us, seeking fruit, but has found none, or next to none, or worse than none!

[2.] That this fig-tree did not only not bring forth fruit, but did hurt; it cumbered the ground; it took up the room of a fruitful tree, and was injurious to all about it. Note, Those who do not do good commonly do hurt by the influence of their bad example; they grieve and discourage those that are good; they harden and encourage those that are bad. And the mischief is the greater, and the ground the more cumbered, if it be a high, large, spreading tree, and if it be an old tree of long standing.

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church, to see to it that the temper of their minds and the tenour of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the fruit required. Now observe here,

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9 and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

But he adds, If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. Observe here,

[1.] That, though God bear long, he will not bear always with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and, if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be cut down at last, and cast into the fire.

[2.] The longer God has waited, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be: to be cut down after that, after all these expectations from it, these debates concerning it, this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation.

[3.] Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God does not take pleasure in: for observe here, the owner said to the dresser, "Do thou cut it down, for it cumbereth the ground." "Nay," said the dresser, "if it must be done at last, thou shalt cut it down; let not my hand be upon it."

[4.] Those that now intercede for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay, they will approve and applaud, the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it, Re 15:3,4.

A Crippled Woman Healed on the Sabbath

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

Observe here, 1. The afflicted person, a woman which had a sore disease inflicted upon her by the devil for eighteen years, which almost bowed her together. There is nothing that the devil delights more in, than the miseries and calamities of mankind. Satan is not satisfied barely to infect the mind, and poison the souls of men; but he delights to afflict and hurt the body, where and when he can obtain leave.

Observe, 2. Christ's compassion towards her, and his miraculous healing of her; Jesus called her to him, and with a word speaking, healed her.

Where note, that the inveterateness of the disease, and the instantaneousness of the cure, made the miracle evident. She that had been bowed down eighteen years, in an instant is made straight, and only by a word of Christ's mouth. Such a miraculous operation was an evident testimony of his divine mission, that he was the Son of God.

Observe, 3. How the heart of the poor woman is affected with Christ's hand: she glorified God; that is, she gave thanks to God, and attributed the miracle to him. As the chief end of all God's extraordinary works, either of power or mercy, is the exaltation of his own glory; so the only way that we can set forth his glory, is by celebrating his praises, and expressing our own thankfulness: He that offereth me praises and thanks, glorifies me, Ps 50:23.

11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people,

There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

Observe, 4. The unreasonable anger and unjust indignation, which was found with the ruler of the synagogue against our holy Lord for working this miraculous cure on the sabbath day. There is no person so holy, no action so innocent, but may fall under unjust censure, especially where malice and ignorance are combined. What a severe reflection does this man make upon our blessed Lord for performing a work of mercy on the sabbath day!

Observe, 5. Our Lord's vindication of himself from calumny and false accusation;

1. He charges his accusers with hyprocrisy. Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you loose his ox or his ass from the stall on the sabbath day, and water him? It is one note of an hypocrite, to condemn that in another which he does himself: the Jews held it lawful to loose and lead a beast to watering on the sabbath day, which was a work of servile labor; and yet would condemn Christ for healing a poor woman only with a word speaking.

2. Christ vindicates his own action, by comparing it with theirs, which they judged lawful on the sabbath day: Was their loosing and watering the beast a work of necessity? Much more was his. Was theirs a work of mercy? His much more. Their compassion was to a brute beast, his to a rational creature, to a woman, and that not a stranger, an heathen woman; but one of their own, a Jewish woman, a daughter of Abraham. No, farther, Christ's act was an act of far greater necessity, and more special mercy, than theirs. The beast might live a day without water; the beast might not be sick: but this woman was in sore distress, and had been so for eighteen years; no, she was in the hands of the enemy of mankind, bound by Satan. Was it not then a greater act of mercy and compassion to loose her, than to lead a beast?

Observe, 6. What effect our Lord's vindication of himself had upon the hearers of it: His adversaries were ashamed, and the people rejoiced, verse 17. His accusers were ashamed, and probably convinced, perhaps

silenced; but we read not that they confessed their error, or acknowledged their unjust censure, or craved Christ's pardon.

When persons judgments are under conviction of an error or mistake, it is very hard to bring themselves to confess and own their mistake, because all men stand very much upon the credit and reputation of their understandings, and look upon it as a reproach to own themselves mistaken; though it is really otherwise. But though our Saviour's adversaries were only ashamed, others rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day ?

17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

For notes on the parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven, see Mt 13:31-33.

The Parable of the Leaven

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God ?

21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

The Narrow Gate

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

> Strait gate. Mt 7:13,14

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

> See notes on Mt 25:1-13

26 then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

> [1] What grounds they had for this confidence. Let us see what their plea is, Lu 13:26. First, They had been Christ's guests, had had an intimate converse with him, and had shared in his favours: We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, at thy table. Judas ate bread with Christ, dipped with him in the dish. Hypocrites, under the disguise of their external profession, receive the Lord's supper, and in it partake of the children's bread, as if they were children. Secondly, They had been Christ's hearers, had received instruction from him, and were well acquainted with his doctrine and law: "Thou hast taught in our streets--a distinguishing favour, which few had, and surely it might be taken as a pledge of distinguishing favour now; for wouldest thou teach us, and not save us?"
>
> [2] How their confidence will fail them, and all their pleas be rejected as frivolous. Christ will say to them, I know you not whence you are, Lu 13:25. And again (Lu 13:27), I tell you, I know you not, depart from me. He does not deny that what they pleaded was true; they had eaten and drunk in his presence, by the same token that they had no sooner eaten of his bread than they lifted up the heel against him. He had taught in their streets, by the same token that they had despised his instruction and

would not submit to it. And therefore, First, He disowns them: "I know you not; you do not belong to my family." The Lord knows them that are his, but them that are not he does not know, he has nothing to do with them: "I know you not whence you are. You are not of me, you are not from above, you are not branches of my house, of my vine." Secondly, He discards them: Depart from me. It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ, the principal part of the misery of the damned. "Depart from my door, here is nothing for you, no, not a drop of water." Thirdly, He gives them such a character as is the reason of this doom: You are workers of iniquity. This is their ruin, that, under a pretence of piety, they kept up secret haunts of sin, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

How terrible their punishment will be (Lu 13:28): There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, the utmost degree of grief and indignation; and that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is a sight of the happiness of those that are saved: You shall see the patriarchs and prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. Observe here, First, That the Old-Testament saints are in the kingdom of God; those had benefit by the Messiah who died before his coming, for they saw his day at a distance and it reflected comfort upon them. Secondly, That New-Testament sinners will be thrust out of the kingdom of God. It intimates that they will be thrusting in, and will presume upon admission, but in vain; they shall be thrust out with shame, as having no part or lot in the matter. Thirdly, That the sight of the saint's glory will be a great aggravation of sinner's misery; they shall thus far see the kingdom of God that they shall see the prophets in it, whom they hated and despised, and themselves, though they thought themselves sure of it, thrust out. This is that at which they will gnash their teeth, Ps 112:10.

Think who are they that shall be saved, notwithstanding: They shall come from the east and the west; and the last shall be first, Lu 13:29,30.

[1.] By what Christ said, it appears that but few shall be saved of those whom we think most likely, and who bid fairest for it. Yet do not say then that the gospel is preached in vain; for, though Israel be not gathered, Christ will be glorious. There shall come many from all parts of the Gentile world that shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. Plainly thus, when we come to heaven, we shall meet a great many there whom we little thought to have met there, and miss a great many thence whom we verily expected to have found there.

[2.] Those who sit down in the kingdom of God are such as had taken pains to get thither, for they came from far--from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; they had passed through different climates, had broken through many difficulties and discouragements. This shows that they who would enter into that kingdom must strive, as the queen of Sheba, who came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. They who travel now in the service of God and religion shall shortly sit down to rest in the kingdom of God.

[3.] Many who stood fair for heaven came short, and others who seemed cast behind, and thrown quite out of the way, will win and wear this prize, and therefore it concerns us to strive to enter. Let us be provoked, as Paul desires the Jews might be, to a holy emulation, by the zest an forwardness of the Gentiles, Ro 11:14. Shall I be outstripped by my juniors? Shall I, who started first, and stood nearest, miss of heaven, when others, less likely, enter into it? If it be got by striving, why should not I strive?

29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first; and there are first which shall be last.

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee.

A suggestion to Christ of his danger from Herod, now that he was in Galilee, within Herod's jurisdiction (Lu 13:31): Certain of the Pharisees (for there were those of that sect dispersed all the nation over) came to Christ, pretending friendship and a concern for his safety, and said, Get thee out of this country, and depart hence, for otherwise Herod will kill thee, as he did John. Some think that these Pharisees had no ground at all for this, that Herod had not given out any words to this purport, but that they framed this lie, to drive him out of Galilee, where he had a great and growing interest, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life. But, Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem that the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was enraged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had borne to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance which John preached. Herod was willing to get rid of Christ out of his dominions; and, when he durst not put him to death, he hoped to frighten him away by sending him this threatening message.

32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

His defiance of Herod's rage and the Pharisees' too; he fears neither the one nor the other: Go you, and tell that fox so, Lu 13:32. In calling him a fox, he gives him his true character; for he was subtle as a fox, noted for his craft, and treachery, and baseness, and preying (as they say of a fox) furthest from his own den. And, though it is a black and ugly character, yet it did not ill become Christ to give it to him, nor was it in him a violation of that law, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. For Christ was a prophet, and prophets always had a liberty of speech in reproving princes and great men. Nay, Christ was more than a prophet, he was a king, he was King of kings, and the greatest of men were accountable to him, and therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name; but it is not to be drawn into an example by us. "Go, and tell that fox, yea, and this fox too" (for so it is in the original, te alopeki taute); "that Pharisee, whoever he is, that whispers this in my ear, let him know that I do not fear him, nor regard his menaces. For,"

1. "I know that I must die, and must die shortly; I expect it, and count upon it, the third day," that is, "very shortly; my hour is at hand." Note,

It will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death, to make death familiar to us, to expect it, think of it, and converse with it, and see it at the door. "If Herod should kill me, he will not surprise me."

2. "I know that death will be not only no prejudice to me, but that it will be my preferment; and therefore tell him I do not fear him; when I die, I shall be perfected. I shall then have finished the hardest part of my undertaking; I shall have completed my business;" teleioumai--I shall be consecrated. When Christ dies, he is said to have sanctified himself; he consecrated himself to his priestly office with his own blood.

3. "I know that neither he nor any one else can kill me till I have done my work. Go, and tell him that I value not his impotent rage. I will cast out devils, and do cures, to-day and to-morrow," that is, "now and for some little space of time yet to come, in spite of him and all his threats. I must walk, I must go on in my intended journey, and it is not in his power to hinder me. I must go about, as I do, preaching and healing, to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following." Note, It is good for us to look upon the time we have before us as but a little, two or three days perhaps may be the utmost, that we may thereby be quickened to do the work of the day in its day. And it is a comfort to us, in reference to the power and malice of our enemies, that they can have no power to take us off as long as God has any work for us to do. The witnesses were not slain till they had finished their testimony.

4. "I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because my time is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction: It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem," that is, "any where but at Jerusalem." If a true prophet was put to death, he was prosecuted as a false prophet. Now none undertook to try prophets, and to judge concerning them, but the great sanhedrim, which always sat at Jerusalem; it was a cause which the inferior courts did not take cognizance of, and therefore, if a prophet be put to death, it must be at Jerusalem.

33 Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

His lamentation for Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city, Lu 13:34,35. This we had Mt 23:37-39. Perhaps this was not said now in Galilee, but the evangelist, not designing to bring it in in its proper place, inserts it here, upon occasion of Christ's mentioning his being put to death at Jerusalem.

Note,

1 The wickedness of persons and places that more eminently than others profess religion and relation to God is in a particular manner provoking and grieving to the Lord Jesus. How pathetically does he speak of the sin and ruin of that holy city! O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

2. Those that enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, are often prejudiced against them. They that would not hearken to the prophets, nor welcome those whom God had sent to them, killed them, and stoned them. If men's corruptions are not conquered, they are provoked.

3. Jesus Christ has shown himself willing, freely willing, to receive and entertain poor souls that come to him, and put themselves under his protection: How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, with such care and tenderness!

4. The reason why sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, is because they will not: I would, I often would, and ye would not. Christ's willingness aggravates sinners' unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads.

5. The house that Christ leaves is left desolate. The temple, though richly adorned, though greatly frequented, is yet desolate if Christ has deserted

it. He leaves it to them; they had made an idol of it, and let them take it to themselves, and make their best of it, Christ will trouble it no more.

6. Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them. They would not be gathered by him, and therefore, saith he, "You shall not see me, you shall not hear me, any more," as Moses said to Pharaoh, when he forbade him his presence, Ex 10:28,29. 7. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers that would not now be convinced: "Then you will say, Blessed is he that cometh," that is, "you will be glad to be among those that say so, and will not see me to be the Messiah till then when it is too late."

35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Luke-14

Jesus Heals the Man Who Had Dropsy

1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

5 and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

See notes on Mt 12:11.

A Lesson to Guests and a Host

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go

up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

He applied this generally, and would have us all learn not to mind high things, but to content ourselves with mean things, as for other reasons, so for this, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men: for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; but humility and self-denial are really honourable: he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, Lu 14:11. We see in other instances that a man's pride will bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit, and before honour is humility.

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither

thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

He takes occasion to reprove the master of the feast for inviting so many rich people, who had wherewithal to dine very well at home, when he should rather have invited the poor, or, which was all one, have sent portions to them for whom nothing was prepared, and who could not afford themselves a good meal's meat. See Ne 8:10. Our Saviour here teaches us that the using of what we have in works of charity is better, and will turn to a better account, than using it in works of generosity and in magnificent house-keeping.

1. "Covet not to treat the rich; invite not thy friends, and brethren, and neighbours, that are rich," Lu 14:12. This does not prohibit the entertaining of such; there may be occasion for it, for the cultivating of friendship among relations and neighbours. But,

(a) "Do not make a common custom of it; spend as little as thou canst that way, that thou mayest not disable thyself to lay out in a much better way, in almsgiving. Thou wilt find it very expensive and troublesome; one feast for the rich will make a great many meals for the poor." Solomon saith, He that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want, Pr 22:16. "Give" (saith Pliny, Epist.) "to thy friends, but let it be to thy poor friends, not to those that need thee not."

(b) "Be not proud of it." Many make feasts only to make a show, as Ahasuerus did (Es 1:3,4), and it is no reputation to them, they think, if they have not persons of quality to dine with them, and thus rob their families, to please their fancies.

(c) "Aim not at being paid again in your own coin." This is that which our Saviour blames in making such entertainments: "You commonly do it in hopes that you will be invited by them, and so a recompence will be made you; you will be gratified with such dainties and varieties as you treat your friends with, and this will feed your sensuality and luxury, and you will be no real gainer at last."

2. "Be forward to relieve the poor (Lu 14:13,14): When thou makest a feast, instead of furnishing thyself with what is rare and nice, get thy table spread with a competency of plain and wholesome meat, which will not be so costly, and invite the poor and maimed, such as have nothing to live upon, nor are able to work for their living. These are objects of charity; they want necessaries; furnish them, and they will recompense thee with their prayers; they will commend thy provisions, which the rich, it may be, will despise. They will go away, and thank God for thee, when the rich will go away and reproach thee. Say not that thou art a loser, because they cannot recompense thee, thou art so much out of pocket; no, it is so much set out to the best interest, on the best security, for thou shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." There will be a resurrection of the just, a future state of the just. There is a state of happiness reserved for them in the other world; and we may be sure that the charitable will be remembered in the resurrection of the just, for alms are righteousness.

Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded in this world, for the things of this world are not the best things, and therefore God does not pay the best men in those things; but they shall in no wise lose their reward; they shall be recompensed in the resurrection. It will be found that the longest voyages make the richest returns, and that the charitable will be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by having their recompense adjourned till the resurrection.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14 and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

The Parable of the Great Supper

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Compare it with Mt 22:1-14.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

The Cost of Discipleship

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

See notes on Mt 10:37-39.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Tasteless Salt

34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

See notes on Mt 5:13

Luke-15

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

See notes on Mt 9:10-13

2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

See notes on Mt 18:12,13.

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

I The parable represents God as a common Father to all mankind, to the whole family of Adam. We are all his offspring, have all one Father, and one God created us, Mal 2:10. From him we had our being, in him we still have it, and from him we receive our maintenance. He is our Father, for he has the educating and portioning of us, and will put us in his testament, or leave us out, according as we are, or are not, dutiful children to him. Our Saviour hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees that these publicans and sinners, whom they thus despised, were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shown them. God is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles, (Ro 3:29): the same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

II. It represents the children of men as of different characters, though all related to God as their common Father. He had two sons, one of them a solid grave youth, reserved and austere, sober himself, but not at all good-humoured to those about him; such a one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other volatile and mercurial, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to be sent forth to preach repentance. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.

The younger son is the prodigal, whose character and case are here designed to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state, but especially of some. Now we are to observe concerning him,

1. His riot and ramble when he was a prodigal, and the extravagances and miseries he fell into. We are told,

(1.) What his request to his father was (Lu 15:12): He said to his father, proudly and pertly enough, "Father, give me"--he might have put a little more in his mouth, and have said, Pray give me, or, Sir, if you please, give me, but he makes an imperious demand--"give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; not so much as you think fit to allot to me, but that which falls to me as my due." Note, It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as debts. "Give me the portion, all my child's part, that falls to me;" not, "Try me with a little, and see how I can manage that, and accordingly trust me with more;" but, "Give it me all at present in possession, and I will never expect any thing in reversion, any thing hereafter." Note, The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them, is being content to have their portion in hand, now in this lifetime to receive their good things. They look only at the things that are seen, that are temporal, and covet only a present gratification, but have no care for a future felicity, when that is spent and gone. And why did he desire to have his portion in his own hands? Was it that he might apply himself to business, and trade with it, and so make it more? No, he had no thought of that.

But,

[1.] He was weary of his father's government, of the good order and discipline of his father's family, and was fond of liberty falsely so called, but indeed the greatest slavery, for such a liberty to sin is. See the folly of many young men, who are religiously educated, but are impatient of the confinement of their education, and never think themselves their own masters, their own men, till they have broken all God's bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from them, and, instead of them, bound themselves with the cords of their own lust. Here is the original of the apostasy of sinners from God; they will not be tied up to the rules of God's government; they will themselves be as gods, knowing no other good and evil than what themselves please.

[2.] He was willing to get from under his father's eye, for that was always a check upon him, and often gave a check to him. A shyness of God, and a willingness to disbelieve his omniscience, are at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked.

[3.] He was distrustful of his father's management. He would have his portion of goods himself, for he thought that his father would be laying up for hereafter for him, and, in order to that, would limit him in his present expenses, and that he did not like.

[4.] He was proud of himself, and had a great conceit of his own sufficiency. He thought that if he had but his portion in his own hands he could manage it better than his father did, and make a better figure with it. There are more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. Our first parents ruined themselves and all theirs by a foolish ambition to be independent, and not to be beholden even to God himself; and this is at the bottom of sinners' persisting in their sin--they will be for themselves.

(2.) How kind his father was to him: He divided unto them his living. He computed what he had to dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger son his share, and offered the elder his, which ought to be a double portion; but, it should seem, he desired his father to keep it in his own hands still, and we may see what he got by it (Lu 15:31): All that I have is thine. He got all by staying for something in reserve. He gave the younger son what he asked, and the son had no reason to complain that he did him any wrong in the dividend; he had as much as he expected, and perhaps more.

[1.] Thus he might now see his father's kindness, how willing he was to please him and make him easy, and that he was not such an unkind father as he was willing to represent him when he wanted an excuse to be gone.

[2.] Thus he would in a little time be made to see his own folly, and that he was not such a wise manager for himself as he would be thought to be. Note, God is a kind Father to all his children, and gives to them all life, and breath, and all things, even to the evil and unthankful, dieilen autois ton bion--He divided to them life. God's giving us life is putting us in a capacity to serve and glorify him.

12 and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

How he managed himself when he had got his portion in his own hands. He set himself to spend it as fast as he could, and, as prodigals generally do, in a little time he made himself a beggar: not many days after, Lu 15:13. Note, if God leave us ever so little to ourselves, it will not be long ere we depart from him. When the bridle of restraining grace is taken off we are soon gone. That which the younger son determined was to be gone presently, and, in order to that, he gathered all together. Sinners, that go astray from God, venture their all.

Now the condition of the prodigal in this ramble of his represents to us a sinful state, that miserable state into which man is fallen.

[1.] A sinful state is a state of departure and distance from God. First, It is the sinfulness of sin that it is an apostasy from God. He took his journey from his father's house. Sinners are fled from God; they go a whoring from him; they revolt from their allegiance to him, as a servant that runs from his service, or a wife that treacherously departs from her husband, and they say unto God, Depart. They get as far off him as they can. The world is the far country in which they take up their residence, and are as at home; and in the service and enjoyment of it they spend their all. Secondly. It is the misery of sinners that they are afar off from God, from him who is the Fountain of all good, and are going further and further from him. What is hell itself, but being afar off from God?

[2.] A sinful state is a spending state: There he wasted his substance with riotous living (Lu 15:13), devoured it with harlots (Lu 15:30), and in a little time he had spent all, Lu 15:14. He bought fine clothes, spent a great deal in meat and drink, treated high, associated with those that helped him to make an end of what he had in a little time. As to this world, they that live riotously waste what they have, and will have a great deal to answer for, that they spend that upon their lusts which should be for the necessary substance of themselves and their families. But this is to be applied spiritually. Wilful sinners waste their patrimony; for they misemploy their thoughts and all the powers of their souls, misspend their

time and all their opportunities, do not only bury, but embezzle, the talents they are entrusted to trade with for their Master's honour; and the gifts of Providence, which were intended to enable them to serve God and to do good with, are made the food and fuel of their lusts. The soul that is made a drudge, either to the world or to the flesh, wastes its substance, and lives riotously. One sinner destroys much good, Ec 9:18. The good he destroys is valuable, and it is none of his own; they are his Lord's goods that he wastes, which must be accounted for.

[3.] A sinful state is a wanting state: When he had spent all upon his harlots, they left him, to seek such another prey; and there arose a mighty famine in that land, every thing was scarce and dear, and he began to be in want, Lu 15:14. Note, Wilful waste brings woeful want. Riotous living in time, perhaps in a little time, brings men to a morsel of bread, especially when bad times hasten on the consequences of bad husbandry, which good husbandry would have provided for. This represents the misery of sinners, who have thrown away their own mercies, the favour of God, their interest in Christ, the strivings of the Spirit, and admonitions of conscience; these they gave away for the pleasure of sense, and the wealth of the world, and then are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessaries for their souls; they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is like a land where famine reigns, a mighty famine; for the heaven is as brass (the dews of God's favour and blessing are withheld, and we must needs want good things if God deny them to us), and the earth is as iron (the sinner's heart, that should bring forth good things, is dry and barren, and has no good in it). Sinners are wretchedly and miserably poor, and, what aggravates it, they brought themselves into that condition, and keep themselves in it by refusing the supplies offered.

[4.] A sinful state is a vile servile state. When this young man's riot had brought him to want his want brought him to servitude. He went, and joined himself to a citizen of that country, Lu 15:15. The same wicked life that before was represented by riotous living is here represented by servile living; for sinners are perfect slaves. The devil is the citizen of that country; for he is both in city and country. Sinners join themselves to him, hire themselves into his service, to do his work, to be at his beck,

and to depend upon him for maintenance and a portion. They that commit sin are the servants of sin, Joh 8:34. How did this young gentleman debase and disparage himself, when he hired himself into such a service and under such a master as this! He sent him into the fields, not to feed sheep (there had been some credit in that employment; Jacob, and Moses, and David, kept sheep), but to feed swine. The business of the devil's servants is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine; and how can rational immortal souls more disgrace themselves?

[5.] A sinful state is a state of perpetual dissatisfaction. When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by going to service; and he must be content with the provision which not the house, but the field, afforded; but it is poor provision: He would fain have filled his belly, satisfied his hunger, and nourished his body, with the husks which the swine did eat, lu 15:16. A fine pass my young master had brought himself to, to be fellow-commoner with the swine! Note, That which sinners, when they depart from God, promise themselves satisfaction in, will certainly disappoint them; they are labouring for that which satisfieth not, Isa 55:2. That which is the stumbling-block of their iniquity will never satisfy their souls, nor fill their bowels, Eze 7:19. Husks are food for swine, but not for men. The wealth of the world and the entertainments of sense will serve for bodies; but what are these to precious souls? They neither suit their nature, nor satisfy their desires, nor supply their needs. He that takes up with them feeds on wind (Ho 12:1), feeds on ashes, Isa 44:20.

[6.] A sinful state is a state which cannot expect relief from any creature. This prodigal, when he could not earn his bread by working, took to begging; but no man gave unto him, because they knew he had brought all this misery upon himself, and because he was rakish, and provoking to every body; such poor are least pitied. This, in the application of the parable, intimates that those who depart from God cannot be helped by any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and the flesh (those gods which we have served); they have that which will poison a soul, but have nothing to give it which will feed and nourish it. If thou refuse God's help, whence shall any creature help thee?

[7.] A sinful state is a state of death: This my son was dead, Lu 15:24,32. A sinner is not only dead in law, as he is under a sentence of death, but dead in state too, dead in trespasses and sins, destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ, no spiritual senses exercised, no living to God, and therefore dead. The prodigal in the far country was dead to his father and his family, cut off from them, as a member from the body or a branch from the tree, and therefore dead, and it is his own doing.

[8.] A sinful state is a lost state: This my son was lost--lost to every thing that was good--lost to all virtue and honour--lost to his father's house; they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God are lost souls; lost as a traveller that is out of his way, and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be lost as a ship that is sunk at sea, lost irrecoverably.

[9.] A sinful state is a state of madness and frenzy. This is intimated in that expression (Lu 15:17), when he came to himself, which intimates that he had been beside himself. Surely he was so when he left his father's house, and much more so when he joined himself to the citizen of that country. Madness is said to be in the heart of sinners, Ec 9:3. Satan has got possession of the soul; and how raging mad was he that was possessed by Legion! Sinners, like those that are mad, destroy themselves with foolish lusts, and yet at the same time deceive themselves with foolish hopes; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

We have here his return from this ramble, his penitent return to his father again. When he was brought to the last extremity, then he bethought himself how much it was his interest to go home. Note, We must not

despair of the worst; for while there is life there is hope. The grace of God can soften the hardest heart, and give a happy turn to the strongest stream of corruption. Now observe here,

(a) What was the occasion of his return and repentance. It was his affliction; when he was in want, then he came to himself. Note, Afflictions, when they are sanctified by divine grace, prove happy means of turning sinners from the error of their ways. By them the ear is opened to discipline and the heart disposed to receive instructions; and they are sensible proofs both of the vanity of the world and of the mischievousness of sin. Apply it spiritually. When we find the insufficiency of creatures to make us happy, and have tried all other ways of relief for our poor souls in vain, then it is time to think of returning to God. When we see what miserable comforters, what physicians of no value, all but Christ are, for a soul that groans under the guilt and power of sin, and no man gives unto us what we need, then surely we shall apply ourselves to Jesus Christ.

(b) What was the preparative for it; it was consideration. He said within himself, he reasoned with himself, when he recovered his right mind, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough! Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion, Eze 18:28. He considers, and turns. To consider is to retire into ourselves, to reflect upon ourselves, to compare one thing with another, and determine accordingly. Now observe what it was that he considered.

[1.] He considered how bad his condition was: I perish with hunger. Not only, "I am hungry," but, "I perish with hunger, for I see not what way to expect relief." Note, Sinners will not come to the service of Christ till they are brought to see themselves just ready to perish in the service of sin; and the consideration of that should drive us to Christ. Master, save us, we perish. And though we be thus driven to Christ he will not therefore reject us, nor think himself dishonoured by our being forced to him, but rather honoured by his being applied to in a desperate case.

[2.] He considered how much better it might be made if he would but return: How many hired servants of my father's, the meanest in his

family, the very day-labourers, have bread enough, and to spare, such a good house does he keep!

Note,

First, In our Father's house there is bread for all his family. This was taught by the twelve loaves of showbread, that were constantly upon the holy table in the sanctuary, a loaf for every tribe.

Secondly, There is enough and to spare, enough for all, enough for each, enough to spare for such as will join themselves to his domestics, enough and to spare for charity. Yet there is room; there are crumbs that fall from his table, which many would be glad of, and thankful for.

Thirdly, Even the hired servants in God's family are well provided for; the meanest that will but hire themselves into his family, to do his work, and depend upon his rewards, shall be well provided for.

Fourthly, The consideration of this should encourage sinners, that have gone astray from God, to think of returning to him. Thus the adulteress reasons with herself, when she is disappointed in her new lovers: I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now, Ho 2:7.

(c) What was the purpose of it. Since it is so, that his condition is so bad, and may be bettered by returning to his father, his consideration issues, at length, in this conclusion: I will arise, and go to my father. Note, Good purposes are good things, but still good performances are all in all.

[1.] He determined what to do: I will arise and go to my father. He will not take any longer time to consider of it, but will forthwith arise and go. Though he be in a far country, a great way off from his father's house, yet, far as it is, he will return; every step of backsliding from God must be a step back again in return to him. Though he be joined to a citizen of this country, he makes no difficulty of breaking his bargain with him. We are not debtors to the flesh; we are under no obligation at all to our

Egyptian task-masters to give them warning, but are at liberty to quit the service when we will. Observe with what resolution he speaks: "I will arise, and go to my father: I am resolved I will, whatever the issue be, rather than stay here and starve."

[2.] He determined what to say. True repentance is a rising, and coming to God: Behold, we come unto thee. But what words shall we take with us? He here considers what to say. Note, In all our addresses to God, it is good to deliberate with ourselves beforehand what we shall say, that we may order our cause before him, and fill our mouth with arguments. We have liberty of speech, and we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, how we may use that liberty to the utmost, and yet not abuse it. Let us observe what he purposed to say.

First, He would confess his fault and folly: I have sinned. Note, Forasmuch as we have all sinned, it behoves us, and well becomes us, to own that we have sinned. The confession of sin is required and insisted upon, as a necessary condition of peace and pardon. If we plead not guilty, we put ourselves upon a trial by the covenant of innocency, which will certainly condemn us. If guilty, with a contrite, penitent, and obedient heart, we refer ourselves to the covenant of grace, which offers forgiveness to those that confess their sins.

Secondly, He would aggravate it, and would be so far from extenuating the matter that he would lay a load upon himself for it: I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee. Let those that are undutiful to their earthly parents think of this; they sin against heaven, and before God. Offences against them are offences against God. Let us all think of this, as that which renders our sin exceedingly sinful, and should render us exceedingly sorrowful for it.

1. Sin is committed in contempt of God's authority over us: We have sinned against Heaven. God is here called Heaven, to signify how highly he is exalted above us, and the dominion he has over us, for the Heavens do rule. The malignity of sin aims high; it is against Heaven. The daring sinner is said to have set his mouth against the heavens, Ps 63:9. Yet it is impotent malice, for we cannot hurt the heavens. Nay, it is foolish malice;

what is shot against the heavens will return upon the head of him that shoots it, Ps 7:16. Sin is an affront to the God of heaven, it is a forfeiture of the glories and joys of heaven, and a contradiction to the designs of the kingdom of heaven.

2. It is committed in contempt of God's eye upon us: "I have sinned against Heaven and yet before thee, and under thine eye," than which there could not be a greater affront put upon him.

Thirdly, He would judge and condemn himself for it, and acknowledge himself to have forfeited all the privileges of the family: I am no more worthy to be called thy son, Lu 15:19. He does not deny the relation (for that was all he had to trust to), but he owns that his father might justly deny the relation, and shut his doors against him. He had, at his own demand, the portion of goods that belonged to him, and had reason to expect no more. Note, It becomes sinners to acknowledge themselves unworthy to receive any favour from God, and to humble and abase themselves before him.

Fourthly, He would nevertheless sue for admission into the family, though it were into the meanest post there: "Make me as one of thy hired servants: that is good enough, and too good for me." Note, True penitents have a high value for God's house, and the privileges of it, and will be glad of any place, so they may but be in it, though it be but as door-keepers, Ps 84:10. If it be imposed on him as a mortification to sit with the servants, he will not only submit to it, but count it a preferment, in comparison with his present state. Those that return to God, from whom they have revolted, cannot but be desirous some way or other to be employed for him, and put into a capacity of serving and honouring him: "Make me as a hired servant, that I may show I love my father's house as much as ever I slighted it."

Fifthly, In all this he would have an eye to his father as a father: "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father." Note, Eyeing God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance and return to him. It will make our sorrow for sin genuine, our resolutions

against it strong, and encourage us to hope for pardon. God delights to be called Father both by penitents and petitioners. Is not Ephraim a dear son?

(d) What was the performance of this purpose: He arose, and came to his father. His good resolve he put in execution without delay; he struck while the iron was hot, and did not adjourn the thought to some more convenient season. Note, It is our interest speedily to close with our convictions. Have we said that we will arise and go? Let us immediately arise and come. He did not come halfway, and then pretend that he was tired and could get no further, but, weak and weary as he was, he made a thorough business of it. If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, and do thy first works.

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I
have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

We have here his reception and entertainment with his father: He came to his father; but was he welcome? Yes, heartily welcome. And, by the way, it is an example to parents whose children have been foolish and disobedient, if they repent, and submit themselves, not to be harsh and severe with them, but to be governed in such a case by the wisdom that is from above, which is gentle and easy to be entreated; herein let them be followers of God, and merciful, as he is. But it is chiefly designed to set forth the grace and mercy of God to poor sinners that repent and return to him, and his readiness to forgive them. Now here observe,

(a) The great love and affection wherewith the father received the son: When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, Lu 15:20. He expressed his kindness before the son expressed his repentance; for God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness. Even before we call he answers; for he knows what is in our hearts. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. How lively are the images presented here!

[1.] Here were eyes of mercy, and those eyes quick-sighted: When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, before any other of the family were aware of him, as if from the top of some high tower he had been looking that way which his son was gone, with such a thought as this, "O that I could see yonder wretched son of mine coming home!" This intimates God's desire of the conversion of sinners, and his readiness to meet them that are coming towards him. He looketh on men, when they are gone astray from him, to see whether they will return to him, and he is aware of the first inclination towards him.

[2.] Here were bowels of mercy, and those bowels turning within him, and yearning at the sight of his son: He had compassion. Misery is the object of pity, even the misery of a sinner; though he has brought it upon himself, yet God compassionates. His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, Ho 11:8,Jdg 10:16.

[3.] Here were feet of mercy, and those feet quick-paced: He ran. This denotes how swift God is to show mercy. The prodigal son came slowly, under a burden of shame and fear; but the tender father ran to meet him with his encouragements.

[4.] Here were arms of mercy, and those arms stretched out to embrace him: He fell on his neck. Though guilty and deserving to be beaten, though dirty and newly come from feeding swine, so that any one who had not the strongest and tenderest compassions of a father would have loathed to touch him, yet he thus takes him in his arms, and lays him in his bosom. Thus dear are true penitents to God, thus welcome to the Lord Jesus.

[5.] Here were lips of mercy, and those lips dropping as a honey-comb: He kissed him. This kiss not only assured him of his welcome, but sealed his pardon; his former follies shall be all forgiven, and not mentioned against him, nor is one word said by way of upbraiding. This was like David's kissing Absalom, 2Sa 14:33. And this intimates how ready, and free, and forward the Lord Jesus is to receive and entertain poor returning repenting sinners, according to his Father's will.

(b) The penitent submission which the poor prodigal made to his father (Lu 15:21): He said unto him, Father, I have sinned. As it commends the good father's kindness that he showed it before the prodigal expressed his repentance, so it commends the prodigal's repentance that he expressed it after his father had shown him so much kindness. When he had received the kiss which sealed his pardon, yet he said, Father, I have sinned. Note, Even those that have received the pardon of their sins, and the comfortable sense of their pardon, must have in their hearts a sincere contrition for it, and with their mouths must make a penitent confession of it, even of those sins which they have reason to hope are pardoned. David penned the Ps 51:1-19 after Nathan had said, The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shall not die. Nay, the comfortable sense of the pardon of sin should increase our sorrow for it; and that is ingenuous evangelical sorrow which is increased by such a consideration. See Eze 16:63, Thou shalt be ashamed and confounded, when I am pacified towards thee. The more we see of God's readiness to forgive us, the more difficult it should be to us to forgive ourselves.

(c) The splendid provision which this kind father made for the returning prodigal. He was going on in his submission, but one word we find in his purpose to say (Lu 15:19) which we do not find that he did say (Lu 15:21), and that was, Make me as one of thy hired servants. We cannot think that he forgot it, much less that he changed his mind, and was now either less desirous to be in the family or less willing to be a hired servant there than when he made that purpose; but his father interrupted him, prevented his saying it: "Hold, son, talk no more of thy unworthiness, thou art heartily welcome, and, though not worthy to be called a son, shalt be treated as a dear son, as a pleasant child." He who is thus entertained at first needs not ask to be made as a hired servant. Thus when Ephraim bemoaned himself God comforted him, Jer 31:18-20. It is strange that here is not one word of rebuke: "Why did you not stay with your harlots and your swine? You could never find the way home till beaten hither with your own rod." No, here is nothing like this; which intimates that, when God forgives the sins of true penitents, he forgets them, he remembers them no more, they shall not be mentioned against them, Eze 18:22. But this is not all; here is rich and royal provision made for him, according to his birth and quality, far beyond what he did or could expect. He would have thought it sufficient,

and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bid him go to the kitchen, and get his dinner with his servants; but God does for those who return to their duty, and cast themselves upon his mercy, abundantly above what they are able to ask or think. The prodigal came home between hope and fear, fear of being rejected and hope of being received; but his father was not only better to him than his fears, but better to him than his hopes--not only received him, but received him with respect.

[1.] He came home in rags, and his father not only clothed him, but adorned him. He said to the servants, who all attended their master, upon notice that his son was come, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him. The worst old clothes in the house might have served, and these had been good enough for him; but the father calls not for a coat, but for a robe, the garment of princes and great men, the best robe--ten stolen ten proten. There is a double emphasis: "that robe, that principal robe, you know which I mean;" the first robe (so it may be read); the robe he wore before he ran his ramble. When backsliders repent and do their first works, they shall be received and dressed in their first robes. "Bring hither that robe, and put it on him; he will be ashamed to wear it, and think that it ill becomes him who comes home in such a dirty pickle, but put it on him, and do not merely offer it to him: and put a ring on his hand, a signet-ring, with the arms of the family, in token of his being owned as a branch of the family." Rich people wore rings, and his father hereby signified that though he had spent one portion, yet, upon his repentance, he intended him another. He came home barefoot, his feet perhaps sore with travel, and therefore, "Put shoes on his feet, to make him easy." Thus does the grace of God provide for true penitents. First, The righteousness of Christ is the robe, that principal robe, with which they are clothed; they put on the Lord Jesus Christ, are clothed with that Sun. The robe of righteousness is the garment of salvation, Isa 61:10. A new nature is this best robe; true penitents are clothed with this, being sanctified throughout. Secondly, The earnest of the Spirit, by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption, is the ring on the hand. After you believed you were sealed. They that are sanctified are adorned and dignified, are put in power, as Joseph was by Pharaoh's giving him a ring: "Put a ring on his hand, to be before him a constant memorial of his father's kindness, that he may never forget it."

Thirdly, The preparation of the gospel of peace is as shoes for our feet (Eph 6:15), so that, compared with this here, signifies (saith Grotius) that God, when he receives true penitents into his favour, makes use of them for the convincing and converting of others by their instructions, at least by their examples. David, when pardoned, will teach transgressors God's ways, and Peter, when converted, will strengthen his brethren. Or it intimates that they shall go on cheerfully, and with resolution, in the way of religion, as a man does when he has shoes on his feet, above what he does when he is barefoot.

[2.] He came home hungry, and his father not only fed him, but feasted him (Lu 15:23): "Bring hither the fatted calf, that has been stall-fed, and long reserved for some special occasion, and kill it, that my son may be satisfied with the best we have." Cold meat might have served, or the leavings of the last meal; but he shall have fresh meat and hot meat, and the fatted calf can never be better bestowed. Note, There is excellent food provided by our heavenly Father for all those that arise and come to him. Christ himself is the Bread of Life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; in him there is a feast for souls, a feast for fat things. It was a great change with the prodigal, who just before would fain have filled his belly with husks. How sweet will the supplies of the new covenant be, and the relishes of its comforts, to those who have been labouring in vain for satisfaction in the creature! Now he found his own words made good, In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare.

(d) The great joy and rejoicing occasioned by his return. The bringing of the fatted calf was designed to be not only a feast for him, but a festival for the family: "Let us all eat, and be merry, for it is a good day; for this my son was dead, when he was in his ramble, but his return is as life from the dead, he is alive again; we thought that he was dead, having heard nothing from him of a long time, but behold he lives; he was lost, we gave him up for lost, we despaired of hearing of him, but he is found."

Note,

[1.] The conversion of a soul from sin to God is the raising of that soul from death to life, and the finding of that which seemed to be lost: it is a

great, and wonderful, and happy change. What was in itself dead is made alive, what was lost to God and his church is found, and what was unprofitable becomes profitable, Philem 1:11. It is such a change as that upon the face of the earth when the spring returns.

[2.] The conversion of sinners is greatly pleasing to the God of heaven, and all that belong to his family ought to rejoice in it; those in heaven do, and those on earth should. Observe, It was the father that began the joy, and set all the rest on rejoicing. Therefore we should be glad of the repentance of sinners, because it accomplishes God's design; it is the bringing of those to Christ whom the Father had given him, and in whom he will be for ever glorified. We joy for your sakes before our God, with an eye to him (1Th 3:9), and ye are our rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Master of the family, 1Th 2:19. The family complied with the master: They began to be merry. Note, God's children and servants ought to be affected with things as he is.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

We have here the repining and envying of the elder brother, which is described by way of reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, to show them the folly and wickedness of their discontent at the repentance and conversion of the publicans and sinners, and the favour Christ showed them; and he represents it so as not to aggravate the matter, but as allowing them still the privileges of elder brethren: the Jews had those privileges (though the Gentiles were favoured), for the preaching of the gospel must begin at Jerusalem. Christ, when he reproved them for their faults, yet accosted them mildly, to smooth them into a good temper towards the poor publicans. But by the elder brother here we may understand those who are really good, and have been so from their youth up, and never went astray into any vicious course of living, who comparatively need no repentance;

and to such these words in the close, Son, thou art ever with me, are applicable without any difficulty, but not to the scribes and Pharisees. Now concerning the elder brother, observe,

(a) How foolish and fretful he was upon occasion of his brother's reception, and how he was disgusted at it. It seems he was abroad in the field, in the country, when his brother came, and by the time he had returned home the mirth was begun; When he drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing, either while the dinner was getting ready, or rather after they had eaten and were full, Lu 15:25. He enquired what these things meant (Lu 15:26), and was informed that his brother was come, and his father had made him a feast for his welcome home, and great joy there was because he had received him safe and sound, Lu 15:27. It is but one word in the original, he had received him hygiainonta--in health, well both in body and mind. He received him not only well in body, but a penitent, returned to his right mind, and well reconciled to his father's house, cured of his vices and his rakish disposition, else he had not been received safe and sound. Now this offended him to the highest degree: He was angry, and would not go in (Lu 15:28), not only because he was resolved he would not himself join in the mirth, but because he would show his displeasure at it, and would intimate to his father that he should have kept out his younger brother. This shows what is a common fault,

[1.] In men's families. Those who have always been a comfort to their parents think they should have the monopoly of their parents' favours, and are apt to be too sharp upon those who have transgressed, and to grudge their parents' kindness to them.

[2.] In God's family. Those who are comparatively innocents seldom know how to be compassionate towards those who are manifestly penitents. The language of such we have here, in what the elder brother said (Lu 15:29,30), and it is written for warning to those who by the grace of God are kept from scandalous sin, and kept in the way of virtue and sobriety, that they sin not after the similitude of this transgression. Let us observe the particulars of it. First, He boasted of himself and his own virtue and obedience. He had not only not run from his father's house, as his brother did, but had made himself as a servant in it, and had long done so: Lo,

these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment. Note, It is too common for those that are better than their neighbours to boast of it, yea, and to make their boast of it before God himself, as if he were indebted to them for it. I am apt to think that this elder brother said more than was true, when he gloried that he had never transgressed his father's commands, for them I believe he would not have been so obstinate as now he was to his father's entreaties. However, we will admit it comparatively; he had not been so disobedient as his brother had been. O what need have good men to take heed of pride, a corruption that arises out of the ashes of other corruptions! Those that have long served God, and been kept from gross sins, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for, but nothing proudly to boast of. Secondly, He complained of his father, as if he had not been so kind as he ought to have been to him, who had been so dutiful: Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. He was out of humour now, else he would not have made this complaint; for, no questions, if he had asked such a thing at any time, he might have had it at the first word; and we have reason to think that he did not desire it, but the killing of the fatted calf put him upon making this peevish reflection. When men are in a passion they are apt to reflect in a way they would not if they were in their right mind. He had been fed at his father's table, and had many a time been merry with him and the family; but his father had never given him so much as a kid, which was but a small token of love compared with the fatted calf. Note, Those that think highly of themselves and their services are apt to think hardly of their master and meanly of his favours. We ought to own ourselves utterly unworthy of those mercies which God has thought fit to give us, much more of those that he has not thought fit to give us, and therefore we must not complain. He would have had a kid, to make merry with his friends abroad, whereas the fatted calf he grudged so much was given to his brother, not to make merry with his friends abroad, but with the family at home: the mirth of God's children should be with their father and his family, in communion with God and his saints, and not with any other friends. Thirdly, He was very ill-humoured towards his younger brother, and harsh in what he thought and said concerning him. Some good people are apt to be overtaken in this fault, nay, and to indulge themselves too much in it, to look with disdain upon those who have not preserved their reputation so clean as they have done, and to be sour and morose towards them, yea, though they have given very good evidence of their repentance

and reformation. This is not the Spirit of Christ, but of the Pharisees. Let us observe the instances of it.

1. He would not go in, except his brother were turned out; one house shall not hold him and his own brother, no, not his father's house. The language of this was that of the Pharisee (Isa 65:5): Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou; and (Lu 18:11) I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican. Note, Though we are to shun the society of those sinners by whom we are in danger of being infected, yet we must not be shy of the company of penitent sinners, by whom we may get good. He saw that his father had taken him in, and yet he would not go in to him. Note, We think too well of ourselves, if we cannot find in our hearts to receive those whom God hath received, and to admit those into favour, and friendship, and fellowship with us, whom we have reason to think God has a favour for, and who are taken into friendship and fellowship with him.

2. He would not call him brother; but this thy son, which sounds arrogantly, and not without reflection upon his father, as if his indulgence had made him a prodigal: "He is thy son, thy darling." Note, Forgetting the relation we stand in to our brethren, as brethren, and disowning that, are at the bottom of all our neglects of our duty to them and our contradictions to that duty. Let us give our relations, both in the flesh and in the Lord, the titles that belong to them. Let the rich call the poor brethren, and let the innocents call the penitents so.

3. He aggravated his brother's faults, and made the worst of them, endeavouring to incense his father against him: He is thy son, who hath devoured thy living with harlots. It is true, he had spent his own portion foolishly enough (whether upon harlots or no we are not told before, perhaps that was only the language of the elder brother's jealousy and ill will), but that he had devoured all his father's living was false; the father had still a good estate. Now this shows how apt we are, in censuring our brethren, to make the worst of every thing, and to set it out in the blackest colours, which is not doing as we would be done by, nor as our heavenly Father does by us, who is not extreme to mark iniquities.

4. He grudged him the kindness that his father showed him: Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf, as if he were such a son as he should be. Note, It is a wrong thing to envy penitents the grace of God, and to have our eye evil because he is good. As we must not envy those that are the worst of sinners the gifts of common providence (Let not thine heart envy sinners), so we must not envy those that have been the worst of sinners the gifts of covenant love upon their repentance; we must not envy them their pardon, and peace, and comfort, no, nor any extraordinary gift which God bestows upon them, which makes them eminently acceptable or useful. Paul, before his conversion, had been a prodigal, had devoured his heavenly Father's living by the havoc he made of the church; yet when after his conversion he had greater measures of grace given him, and more honour put upon him, than the other apostles, they who were the elder brethren, who had been serving Christ when he was persecuting him, and had not transgressed at any time his commandment, did not envy him his visions and revelations, nor his more extensive usefulness, but glorified God in him, which ought to be an example to us, as the reverse of this elder brother.

(b) Let us now see how favourable and friendly his father was in his carriage towards him when he was thus sour and ill-humoured. This is as surprising as the former. Methinks the mercy and grace of our God in Christ shine almost as brightly in his tender and gentle bearing with peevish saints, represented by the elder brother here, as before in his reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance, represented by the younger brother. The disciples of Christ themselves had many infirmities, and were men subject to like passions as others, yet Christ bore with them, as a nurse with her children. See 1Th 2:7.

[1.] When he would not come in, his father came out, and entreated him, accosted him mildly, gave him good words, and desired him to come in. He might justly have said, "If he will not come in, let him stay out, shut the doors against him, and send him to seek a lodging where he can find it. Is not the house my own? and may I not do what I please in it? Is not the fatted calf my own? and may I not do what I please with it?" No, as he to meet the younger son, so now he goes to court the elder, did not send a servant out with a kind message to him, but went himself. Now, First, This

is designed to represent to us the goodness of God; how strangely gentle and winning he has been towards those that were strangely froward and provoking. He reasoned with Cain: Why art thou wroth? He bore Israel's manners in the wilderness, Ac 13:18. How mildly did God reason with Elijah, when he was upon the fret (1Ki 19:46), and especially with Jonah, whose case was very parallel with this here, for he was there disquieted at the repentance of Nineveh, and the mercy shown to it, as the elder brother here; and those questions, Dost thou well to be angry? and, Should not I spare Nineveh? are not unlike these expostulations of the father with the elder brother here. Secondly, It is to teach all superiors to be mild and gentle with their inferiors, even when they are in a fault and passionately justify themselves in it, than which nothing can be more provoking; and yet even in that case let fathers not provoke their children to more wrath, and let masters forbear threatening, and both show all meekness.

[2.] His father assured him that the kind entertainment he gave his younger brother was neither any reflection upon him nor should be any prejudice to him (Lu 15:31): "Thou shalt fare never the worse for it, nor have ever the less for it. Son, thou art ever with me; the reception of him is no rejection of thee, nor what is laid out on him any sensible diminution of what I design for thee; thou shalt still remain entitled to the pars enitia (so our law calls it), the double portion (so the Jewish law called it); thou shalt be hæres ex asse (so the Roman law called it): all that I have is thine, by an indefeasible title." If he had not given him a kid to make merry with his friends, he had allowed him to eat bread at his table continually; and it is better to be happy with our Father in heaven than merry with any friend we have in this world. Note, First, It is the unspeakable happiness of all the children of God, who keep close to their Father's house, that they are, and shall be, ever with him. They are so in this world by faith; they shall be so in the other world by fruition; and all that he has is theirs; for, if children, then heirs, Ro 8:17. Secondly, Therefore we ought not to envy others God's grace to them because we shall have never the less for their sharing in it. If we be true believers, all that God is, all that he has, is ours; and, if others come to be true believers, all that he is, and all that he has, is theirs too, and yet we have not the less, as they that walk in the light and warmth of the sun have all the benefit they can have by it, and yet not the less for others having as much; for Christ in his church is like what is said

of the soul in the body: it is tota in toto--the whole in the whole, and yet tota in qualibet parte--the whole in each part.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Luke-16

The Parable of the Dishonest Steward

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

The parable itself, in which all the children of men are represented as stewards of what they have in this world, and we are but stewards. Whatever we have, the property of it is God's; we have only the use of it, and that according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. Rabbi Kimchi, quoted by Dr. Lightfoot, says, "This world is a house; heaven the roof; the stars the lights; the earth, with its fruits, a table spread; the Master of the house is the holy and blessed God; man is the steward, into whose hands the goods of this house are delivered; if he behave himself well, he shall find favour in the eyes of his Lord; if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship." Now,

1. Here is the dishonesty of this steward. He wasted his lord's goods, embezzled them, misapplied them, or through carelessness suffered them to be lost and damaged; and for this he was accused to his lord, Lu 16:1. We are all liable to the same charge. We have not made a due improvement of what God has entrusted us with in this world, but have perverted his purpose; and, that we may not be for this judged of our Lord, it concerns us to judge ourselves.

2. His discharge out of his place. His lord called for him, and said, "How is it that I hear this of thee? I expected better things from thee." He speaks as one sorry to find himself disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him from his service: it troubles him to hear it; but the steward cannot deny it, and therefore there is no remedy, he must make up his accounts; and be gone in a little time, Lu 16:2. Now this is designed to teach us,

(1.) That we must all of us shortly be discharged from our stewardship in this world; we must not always enjoy those things which we now enjoy. Death will come, and dismiss us from our stewardship, will deprive us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places and have the same.

(2.) That our discharge from our stewardship at death is just, and what we have deserved, for we have wasted our Lord's goods, and thereby forfeited our trust, so that we cannot complain of any wrong done us.

(3.) That when our stewardship is taken from us we must give an account of it to our Lord: After death the judgment. We are fairly warned both of our discharge and our account, and ought to be frequently thinking of them.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

His after-wisdom. Now he began to consider, What shall I do? Lu 16:3. He would have done well to have considered this before he had so

foolishly thrown himself out of a good place by his unfaithfulness; but it is better to consider late than never. Note, Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are concerned to consider what we shall do then. He must live; which way shall he have a livelihood?

(1.) He knows that he has not such a degree of industry in him as to get his living by work: "I cannot dig; I cannot earn by bread by my labour." But why can he not dig? It does not appear that he is either old or lame; but the truth is, he is lazy. His cannot is a will not; it is not a natural but a moral disability that he labours under; if his master, when he turned him out of the stewardship, had continued him in his service as a labourer, and set a task-master over him, he would have made him dig. He cannot dig, for he was never used to it. Now this intimates that we cannot get a livelihood for our souls by any labour for this world, nor indeed do any thing to purpose for our souls by any ability of our own.

(2.) He knows that he has not such a degree of humility as to get his bread by begging: To beg I am ashamed. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness. Those whom God, in his providence, has disabled to help themselves, should not be ashamed to ask relief of others. This steward had more reason to be ashamed of cheating his master than of begging his bread.

(3.) He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors, or his tenants that were behind with their rent, and had given notes under their hands for it: "I am resolved what to do, Lu 16:4. My lord turns me out of his house. I have none of my own to go to. I am acquainted with my lord's tenants, have done them many a good turn, and now I will do them one more, which will so oblige them that they will bid me welcome to their houses, and the best entertainment they afford; and so long as I live, at least till I can better dispose of myself, I will quarter upon them, and go from one good house to another." Now the way he would take to make them his friends was by striking off a considerable part of their debt to his lord, and giving it in his accounts so much less than it was. Accordingly, he sent for one, who owed his lord a hundred measures of oil (in that commodity he paid his rent): Take thy bill, said he, here it is, and sit down

quickly, and write fifty (Lu 16:6); so he reduced his debt to the one half. Observe, he was in haste to have it done: "Sit down quickly, and do it, lest we be taken treating, and suspected." He took another, who owed his lord a hundred measures of wheat, and from his bill he cut off a fifth part, and bade him write fourscore (Lu 16:7); probably he did the like by others, abating more or less according as he expected kindness from them. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are; they are most so to those who have most of them, who devolve upon others all the care concerning them, and so put it into their power to cheat them, because they will not trouble themselves to see with their own eyes. See also what treachery is to be found even among those in whom trust is reposed. How hard is it to find one that confidence can be reposed in! Let God be true, but every man a liar. Though this steward is turned out for dealing dishonestly, yet still he does so. So rare is it for men to mend of a fault, though they smart for it.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ?

6 And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Barnes commentary:

The lord commended. Praised, or expressed admiration at his wisdom. These are not the words of Jesus, as commending him, but a part of the narrative or parable. His master commended him--saw that he was wise and considerate, though he was dishonest.

The unjust steward. It is not said that his master commended him because he was unjust, but because he was wise. This is the only thing in his conduct of which there is any approbation expressed, and this approbation

was expressed by his master. This passage cannot be brought, therefore, to prove that Jesus meant to commend his dishonesty It was a commendation of his shrewdness or forethought; but the master could no more approve of his conduct as a moral act than he could the first act of cheating him.

The children of this world. Those who are devoted to this world; who live for this world only; who are careful only to obtain property, and to provide for their temporal necessities. It does not mean that they are peculiarly wicked and profligate, but only that they are worldly, and anxious about earthly things. See Mt 13:22, 2Ti 4:10.

Are wiser. More prudent, cunning, and anxious about their particular business. They show more skill, study more plans, contrive more ways to provide for themselves, than the children of light do to promote the interests of religion.

In their generation. Some have thought that this means in their manner of living, or in managing their affairs. The word generation sometimes denotes the manner of life, Gen 6:9, 37:2. Others suppose that it means toward or among the men of their own age. They are more prudent and wise than Christians in regard to the people of their own time; they turn their connection with them to good account, and make it subserve their worldly interests, while Christians fail much more to use the world in such a manner as to subserve their spiritual interests.

Children of light. Those who have been enlightened from above--who are Christians. This may be considered as the application of the parable. It does not mean that it is more wise to be a worldly man than to be a child of light, but that those who are worldly show much prudence in providing for themselves; seize occasions for making good bargains; are active and industrious; try to turn everything to the best account, and thus exert themselves to the utmost to advance their interests; while Christians often suffer opportunities of doing good to pass unimproved; are less steady, firm, and anxious about eternal things, and thus show less wisdom. Alas! this is too true; and we cannot but reflect here how different the world would be if all Christians were as anxious, and diligent, and prudent in

religious matters as others are in worldly things. (b) "children of light" Jn 12:36, Eph 5:8

MHC COMMENTARY:

The approbation of this: The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely, Lu 16:8. It may be meant of his lord, the lord of that servant, who, though he could not but be angry at his knavery, yet was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself; but, taking it so, the latter part of the verse must be the words of our Lord, and therefore I think the whole is meant of him. Christ did, as it were, say, "Now commend me to such a man as this, that knows how to do well for himself, how to improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity." He does not commend him because he had done falsely to his master, but because he had done wisely for himself. Yet perhaps herein he did well for his master too, and but justly with the tenants. He knew what hard bargains he had set them, so that they could not pay their rent, but, having been screwed up by his rigour, were thrown behindhand, and they and their families were likely to go to ruin; in consideration of this, he now, at going off, did as he ought to do both in justice and charity, not only easing them of part of their arrears, but abating their rent for the future. How much owest thou? may mean, "What rent dost thou sit upon? Come, I will set thee an easier bargain, and yet no easier than what thou oughtest to have." He had been all for his lord, but now he begins to consider the tenants, that he might have their favour when he had lost his lord's. The abating of their rent would be a lasting kindness, and more likely to engage them than abating their arrears only. Now this forecast of his, for a comfortable subsistence in this world, shames our improvidence for another world: The children of this world, who choose and have their portions in it, are wiser for their generation, act more considerately, and better consult their worldly interest and advantage, than the children of light, who enjoy the gospel, in their generation, that is, in the concerns of their souls and eternity. Note,

(1.) The wisdom of worldly people in the concerns of this world is to be imitated by us in the concerns of our souls: it is their principle to improve their opportunities, to do that first which is most needful, in summer and

harvest to lay up for winter, to take a good bargain when it is offered them, to trust the faithful and not the false. O that we were thus wise in our spiritual affairs!

(2.) The children of light are commonly outdone by the children of this world. Not that the children of this world are truly wise; it is only in their generation. But in that they are wiser than the children of light in theirs; for, though we are told that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, yet we do not provide as we were to be here always and as if there were not another life after this, and are not so solicitous as this steward was to provide for hereafter. Though as children of the light, that light to which life and immortality are brought by the gospel, we cannot but see another world before us, yet we do not prepare for it, do not send our best effects and best affections thither, as we should.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Barnes Commentary:

Make to yourselves friends. Some have understood the word friends, here, as referring to the poor; others, to holy angels; and others, to God. Perhaps, however, the word should not be considered as referring to any particular persons, but is used in accordance with the preceding parable; for in the application our Saviour uses the language appropriated to the conduct of the steward to express the general truth that we are to make a proper use of riches. The steward had so managed his pecuniary affairs as to secure future comfort for himself, or so as to find friends that would take care of him beyond the time when he was put out of the office. That is, he would not be destitute, or cast off, or without comfort, when he was removed from his office. So, says our Saviour to the publicans and those who had property, so use your property as to secure happiness and comfort beyond the time when you shall be removed from the present life. Have reference, in the use of your money, to the future. Do not use it so that it shall not avail you anything hereafter; but so employ it that, as the steward found friends, comfort, and a home by his wisdom in the use of it, so you may, after you are removed to another world, find friends, comfort, and a home--that is, may be happy in heaven. Jesus, here, does not say that we should

do it in the same way that the steward did, for that was unjust; but only that we should secure the result. This may be done by using our riches as we should do; that is, by not suffering them to entangle us in cares and perplexities dangerous to the soul, engrossing the time, and stealing away the affections; by employing them in works of mercy and benevolence, aiding the poor, contributing to the advance of the gospel, bestowing them where they will do good, and in such a manner that God will approve the deed, and will bless us for it. Commonly riches are a hindrance to piety. To many they are snares; and, instead of positively benefitting the possessor, they are an injury, as they engross the time and the affections, and do not contribute at all to the eternal welfare of the soul. Everything may, by a proper use, be made to contribute to our welfare in heaven. Health, wealth, talents, and influence may be so employed; and this is what our Saviour doubtless means here.

Of unrighteousness. These words are an Hebrew expression for unrighteous mammon, the noun being used for an adjective, as is common in the New Testament. The word unrighteous, here, stands opposed to "the true riches" in Lk 16:11, and means deceitful, false, not to be trusted. It has this meaning often. See 1Timm 6:17, Lk 12:33, Mt 6:19, 19:21. It does not signify, therefore, that they had acquired the property unjustly, but that property was deceitful and not to be trusted. The wealth of the steward was deceitful; he could not rely on its continuance; it was liable to be taken away at any moment. So the wealth of the world is deceitful. We cannot calculate on its continuance. It may give us support or comfort now, but it may be soon removed, or we taken from it, and we should therefore so use it as to derive benefit from it hereafter.

When ye fail. When ye are left, or when ye die. The expression is derived from the parable as referring to the discharge of the steward; but it refers to death, as if God then discharged his people, or took them from their stewardship and called them to account.

They may receive you. This is a form of expression denoting merely that you may be received. The plural form is used because it was used in the corresponding place in the parable, Lk 16:4. The direction is, so to use our worldly goods that we may be received into heaven when we die. God will

receive us there, and we are to employ our property so that he will not cast us off for abusing it.

Everlasting habitations. Heaven, the eternal home of the righteous, where all our wants will be supplied, and where there can be no more anxiety, and no more removal from enjoyments, 2Cor 5:1.

MHC COMMENTARY:

The application of this parable, and the inferences drawn from it (Lu 16:9): "I say unto you, you my disciples" (for to them this parable is directed, Lu 16:1), "though you have but little in this world, consider how you may do good with that little." Observe,

1. What it is that our Lord Jesus here exhorts us to; to provide for our comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, as the steward with his lord's goods made his lord's tenants his friends." It is the wisdom of the men of this world so to manage their money as that they may have the benefit of it hereafter, and not for the present only; therefore they put it out to interest, buy land with it, put it into this or the other fund. Now we should learn of them to make use of our money so as that we may be the better for it hereafter in another world, as they do in hopes to be the better for it hereafter in this world; so cast it upon the waters as that we may find it again after many days, Ec 11:1. And in our case, though whatever we have are our Lord's goods, yet, as long as we dispose of them among our Lord's tenants and for their advantage, it is so far from being reckoned a wrong to our Lord, that it is a duty to him as well as policy for ourselves.

Note,

(a) The things of this world are the mammon of unrighteousness, or the false mammon, not only because often got by fraud and unrighteousness, but because those who trust to it for satisfaction and happiness will

certainly be deceived; for riches are perishing things, and will disappoint those that raise their expectations from them.

(b) Though this mammon of unrighteousness is not to be trusted to for a happiness, yet it may and must be made use of in subserviency to our pursuit of that which is our happiness. Though we cannot find true satisfaction in it, yet we may make to ourselves friends with it, not by way of purchase or merit, but recommendation; so we may make God and Christ our friends, the good angels and saints our friends, and the poor our friends; and it is a desirable thing to be befriended in the account and state to come.

(c) At death we must all fail, hotan eklipete--when ye suffer an eclipse. Death eclipses us. A tradesman is said to fail when he becomes a bankrupt. We must all thus fail shortly; death shuts up the shop, seals up the hand. Our comforts and enjoyments on earth will all fail us; flesh and heart fail.

(d) It ought to be our great concern to make it sure to ourselves, that when we fail at death we may be received into everlasting habitations in heaven. The habitations in heaven are everlasting, not made with hands, but eternal, 2Co 5:1. Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that are his, and is there ready to receive them; the bosom of Abraham is ready to receive them, and, when a guard of angels carries them thither, a choir of angels is ready to receive them there. The poor saints that are gone before to glory will receive those that in this world distributed to their necessities.

(e) This is a good reason why we should use what we have in the world for the honour of God and the good of our brethren, that thus we may with them lay up in store a good bond, a good security, a good foundation for the time to come, for an eternity to come. See 1Ti 6:17-19, which explains this here.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

With what arguments he presses this exhortation to abound in works of piety and charity.

(a) If we do not make a right use of the gifts of God's providence, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the gifts of his spiritual grace? Our Saviour here compares these, and shows that though our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit any favour at the hand of God, yet our unfaithfulness in the use of them may be justly reckoned a forfeiture of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, and that is it which our Saviour here shows, Lu 16:10-14.

[1.] The riches of this world are the less; grace and glory are the greater. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things of this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared that we should be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we should receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. He that serves God, and does good, with his money, will serve God, and do good, with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and spiritual gifts, and the earnests of heaven; but he that buries the one talent of this world's wealth will never improve the five talents of spiritual riches. God withholds his grace from covetous worldly people more than we are aware of.

[2.] The riches of this world are deceitful and uncertain; they are the unrighteous mammon, which is hastening from us apace, and, if we would make any advantage of it, we must bestir ourselves quickly; if we do not, how can we expect to be entrusted with spiritual riches, which are the only true riches? Lu 16:11. Let us be convinced of this, that those are truly rich, and very rich, who are rich in faith, and rich towards God, rich in Christ, in the promises, and in the earnests of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, expect our portion from them, and mind them in the first place, the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, and then, if other things be added to us, use them in ordine ad spiritualia--with a spiritual reference, so that by using them well we may take the faster hold of the true riches, and may be qualified to receive yet more grace from God; for God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, that is, to a free-hearted charitable man, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy (Ec 2:26); that

is, to a man that is faithful in the unrighteous mammon, he gives the true riches.

[3.] The riches of this world are another man's. They are ta allotria, not our own; for they are foreign to the soul and its nature and interest. They are not our own; for they are God's; his title to them is prior and superior to ours; the property remains in him, we are but usufructuaries. They are another man's; we have them from others; we use them for others, and what good has the owner from his goods that increase, save the beholding of them with his eyes, while still they are increased that eat them; and we must shortly leave them to others, and we know not to whom? But spiritual and eternal riches are our own (they enter into the soul that becomes possessed of them) and inseparably; they are a good part that will never be taken away from us. If we make Christ our own, and the promises our own, and heaven our own, we have that which we may truly call our own. But how can we expect God should enrich us with these if we do not serve him with our worldly possessions, of which we are but stewards?

(b) We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God than by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make mammon, that is, all our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service (Lu 16:13): No servant can serve two masters, whose commands are so inconsistent as those of God and mammon are. If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will hate God and despise him. He will make all his pretensions of religion truckle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world. But, on the other hand, if a man will love God, and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world (whenever God and the world come in competition) and will despise it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to his furtherance in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us: Ye cannot serve God and mammon. So divided are their interests that their services can never be compounded. If therefore we be determined to serve God, we must disclaim and abjure the service of the world.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

We are here told what entertainment this doctrine of Christ met with among the Pharisees, and what rebuke he gave them.

(a) They wickedly ridiculed him, Lu 16:14. The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and could not contradict him, but they derided him. Let us consider this, [1.] As their sin, and the fruit of their covetousness, which was their reigning sin, their own iniquity. Note, Many that make a great profession of religion, have much knowledge, and abound in the exercise of devotion, are yet ruined by the love of the world; nor does any thing harden the heart more against the word of Christ. These covetous Pharisees could not bear to have that touched, which was their Delilah, their darling lust; for this they derided him, exemykterizon auton--they snuffled up their noses at him, or blew their noses on him. It is an expression of the utmost scorn and disdain imaginable; the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, Jer 6:10. They laughed at him for going so contrary to the opinion and way of the world, for endeavouring to recover them from a sin which they were resolved to hold fast. Note, It is common for those to make a jest of the word of God who are resolved that they will not be ruled by it; but they will find at last that it cannot be turned off so. [2.] As his suffering. Our Lord Jesus endured not only the contradiction of sinners, but their contempt; they had him in derision all the day. He that spoke as never man spoke was bantered and ridiculed, that his faithful ministers, whose preaching is unjustly derided, may not be disheartened at it. It is no disgrace to a man to be laughed at, but to deserve to be laughed at. Christ's apostles were mocked, and no wonder; the disciple is not greater than his Lord.

(b) He justly reproved them; not for deriding him (he knew how to despise the shame), but for deceiving themselves with the shows and colours of piety, when they were strangers to the power of it, Lu 16:15. Here is,

[1.] Their specious outside; nay, it was a splendid one. First, They justified themselves before men; they denied whatever ill was laid to their charge, even by Christ himself. They claimed to be looked upon as men of singular sanctity and devotion, and justified themselves in that claim: "You are they that do that, so as none ever did, that make it your business to court the opinion of men, and, right or wrong, will justify yourselves before the world; you are notorious for this." Secondly, They were highly esteemed among men. Men did not only acquit them from any blame they were under, but applauded them, and had them in veneration, not only as good men, but as the best of men. Their sentiments were esteemed as oracles, their directions as laws, and their practices as inviolable prescriptions.

[2.] Their odious inside, which was under the eye of God: "He knows your heart, and it is in his sight an abomination; for it is full of all manner of wickedness." Note, First, It is folly to justify ourselves before men, and to think this enough to bear us out, and bring us off, in the judgment of the great day, that men know no ill of us; for God, who knows our hearts, knows that ill of us which no one else can know. This ought to check our value for ourselves, and our confidence in ourselves, that God knows our hearts, and how much deceit is there, for we have reason to abase and distrust ourselves. Secondly, It is folly to judge of persons and things by the opinion of men concerning them, and to go down with the stream of vulgar estimate; for that which is highly esteemed among men, who judge according to outward appearance, is perhaps an abomination in the sight of God, who sees things as they are, and whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. On the contrary, there are those whom men despise and condemn who yet are accepted and approved of God, 2Co 10:18.

(c) He turned from them to the publicans and sinners, as more likely to be wrought upon by his gospel than those covetous conceited Pharisees (Lu 16:16): "The law and the prophets were indeed until John; the Old-Testament dispensation, which was confined to you Jews, continued till John Baptist appeared, and you seemed to have the monopoly of righteousness and salvation; and you are puffed up with this, and this gains you esteem among men, that you are students in the law and the prophets; but since John Baptist appeared the kingdom of God is preached, a New-

Testament dispensation, which does not value men at all for their being doctors of the law, but every man presses into the gospel kingdom, Gentiles as well as Jews, and no man thinks himself bound in good manners to let his betters go before him into it, or to stay till the rulers and the Pharisees have led him that way. It is not so much a political national constitution as the Jewish economy was, when salvation was of the Jews; but it is made a particular personal concern, and therefore every man that is convinced he has a soul to save, and an eternity to provide for, thrusts to get in, lest he should come short by trifling and complimenting." Some give this sense of it; they derided Christ or speaking in contempt of riches, for, thought they, were there not many promises of riches and other temporal good things in the law and the prophets? And were not many of the best of God's servants very rich, as Abraham and David? "It is true," saith Christ, "so it was, but now that the kingdom of God is begun to be preached things take a new turn; now blessed are the poor, and the mourners, and the persecuted." The Pharisees, to requite the people for their high opinion of them, allowed them in a cheap, easy, formal religion. "But," saith Christ, "now that the gospel is preached the eyes of the people are opened, and as they cannot now have a veneration for the Pharisees, as they have had, so they cannot content themselves with such an indifferency in religion as they have been trained up in, but they press with a holy violence into the kingdom of God." Note, Those that would go to heaven must take pains, must strive against the stream, must press against the crowd that are going the contrary way.

(d) Yet still he protests against any design to invalidate the law (Lu 16:17): It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, parelthein--to pass by, to pass away, though the foundations of the earth and the pillars of heaven are so firmly established, than for one tittle of the law to fail. The moral law is confirmed and ratified, and not one tittle of that fails; the duties enjoined by it are duties still; the sins forbidden by it are sins still. Nay, the precepts of it are explained and enforced by the gospel, and made to appear more spiritual. The ceremonial law is perfected in the gospel colours; not one tittle of that fails, for it is found printed off in the gospel, where, though the force of it is as a law taken off, yet the figure of it as a type shines very brightly, witness the epistle to the Hebrews. There were some things which were connived at by the law, for the preventing of greater mischiefs, the

permission of which the gospel has indeed taken away, but without any detriment or disparagement to the law, for it has thereby reduced them to the primitive intention of the law, as in the case of divorce (Lu 16:18), which we had before, Mt 5:32,19:9. Christ will not allow divorces, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of men's corrupt appetites and passions, to kill them, and pluck them up; and therefore they must not be so far indulged as that permission did indulge them, for the more they are indulged the more impetuous and headstrong they grow.

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

The Law and the Kingdom of God

16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

Was carried by the angels. The Jews held the opinion that the spirits of the righteous were conveyed by angels to heaven at their death. Our Saviour

speaks in accordance with this opinion; and as he expressly affirms the fact, it seems as proper that it should be taken literally, as when it is said the rich man died and was buried. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation (He 1:14), and there is no more improbability in the supposition that they attend departing spirits to heaven, than that they attend them while on earth.

Abraham's bosom. This is a phrase taken from the practice of reclining at meals, where the head of one lay on the bosom of another, and the phrase therefore denotes intimacy and friendship. Mt 23:6. Jn 13:23. Jn 21:20. The Jews had no doubt that Abraham was in paradise. To say that Lazarus was in his bosom was therefore the same as to say that he was admitted to heaven and made happy there. The Jews, moreover, boasted very much of being the friends of Abraham and of being his descendants, Mt 3:9. To be his friend was, in their view, the highest honour and happiness. Our Saviour therefore showed them that this poor and afflicted man might be raised to the highest happiness, while the rich, who prided themselves on their being descended from Abraham, might be cast away and lost for ever.

Was buried. This is not said of the poor man. Burial was thought to be an honour, and funerals were, as they are now, often expensive, splendid, and ostentatious. This is said of the rich man to show that he had every earthly honour, and all that the world calls happy and desirable.

23 and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

In hell. The word here translated hell (Hades) means literally a dark, obscure place; the place where departed spirits go, but especially the place where wicked spirits go. Job 10:21 also Job 10:22, Isa 14:9. The following circumstances are related of it in this parable:

1st. It is far off from the abodes of the righteous. Lazarus was seen afar off.

2nd. It is a place of torment.

3rd. There is a great gulf fixed between that and heaven, Lk 16:26.

4th. The suffering is great. It is represented by torment in a flame, Lk 16:24.

5th. There will be no escape from it, Lk 16:26. The word hell here means, therefore, that dark, obscure, and miserable place, far from heaven, where the wicked shall be punished for ever.

He lifted up his eyes. A phrase in common use among the Hebrews, meaning he looked, Gen 13:10, 18:2, 31:10, Dan 8:3, Lk 6:20.

Being in torment. The word torment means pain, anguish (Mt 4:24); particularly the pain inflicted by the ancients in order to induce men to make confession of their crimes. These torments or tortures were the keenest that they could inflict, such as the rack, or scourging, or burning; and the use of the word here denotes that the sufferings of the wicked can be represented only by the extremest forms of human suffering.

And seeth Abraham, &c. This was an aggravation of his misery. One of the first things that occurred in hell was to look up, and see the poor man that lay at his gate completely happy. What a contrast! Just now he was rolling in wealth, and the poor man was at his gate. He had no expectation of these sufferings' now they have come upon him, and Lazarus is happy and for ever fixed in the paradise of God.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Father Abraham. The Jews considered it a signal honour that Abraham was their father--that is, that they were descendants from him. Though this man was now in misery, yet he seems not to have abandoned the idea of his relation to the father of the faithful. The Jews supposed that departed spirits might know and converse with each other. See Lightfoot on this place. Our Saviour speaks in conformity with that prevailing opinion; and as it was not easy to convey ideas about the spiritual world without some such representation, he therefore speaks in the language which was usual in his time. We are not, however, to suppose that this

was literally true, but only that it was designed to represent more clearly the sufferings of the rich man in hell.

Have mercy on me. Pity me. The rich man is not represented as calling on God. The mercy of God will be at an end when the soul is lost. Nor did he ask to be released from that place. Lost spirits know that their sufferings will have no end, and that it would be in vain to ask to escape the place of torment. Nor does he ask to be admitted where Lazarus was. He had no desire to be in a holy place, and he well knew that there was no restoration to those who once sink down to hell.

Send Lazarus. This shows how low he was reduced, and how the circumstances of men change when they die. Just before, Lazarus was laid at his gate full of sores; now he is happy in heaven. Just before, he had nothing to give, and the rich man could expect to derive no benefit from him; now he asks, as the highest favour, that he might come and render him relief. Soon the poorest man on earth, if he is a friend of God, will have mercies which the rich, if unprepared to die, can never obtain. The rich will no longer despise such men; they would then be glad of their friendship, and would beg for the slightest favour at their hands.

Dip the tip, &c. This was a small favour to ask, and it shows the greatness of his distress when so small a thing would be considered a great relief.

Cool my tongue. The effect of great heat on the body is to produce almost insupportable thirst. Those who travel in burning deserts thus suffer inexpressibly when they are deprived of water. So pain of any kind produces thirst, and particularly of connected with fever. The sufferings of the rich man are therefore represented as producing burning thirst, so much that even a drop of water would be refreshing to his tongue. We can scarce form an idea of more distress and misery than where this is continued from one day to another without relief. We are not to suppose that he had been guilty of any particular wickedness with his tongue as the cause of this. It is simply an idea to represent the natural effect of great suffering, and especially suffering in the midst of great heat.

I am tormented. I am in anguish--in insupportable distress.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Son. This is a representation designed to correspond with the word father. He was a descendant of Abraham--a Jew--and Abraham is represented as calling this thing to his remembrance. It would not lessen his sorrows to remember that he was a son of Abraham, and that he ought to have lived worthy of that relation to him.

Remember. This is a cutting word in this place. One of the chief torments of hell will be the remembrance of what was enjoyed and of what was done in this world. Nor will it be any mitigation of the suffering to spend an eternity where there will be nothing else to do, day or night, but to remember what urns done, and what might have been, if the life had been right.

But now, &c. How changed the scene! How different the condition! And how much better was the portion of Lazarus, after all, than that of the rich man! It is probable that Lazarus had the most real happiness in the land of the living, for riches without the love of God can never confer happiness like the favour of God, even in poverty. But the comforts of the rich man are now gone for ever, and the joys of Lazarus have just commenced. One is to be comforted, and the other to be tormented, to all eternity. How much better, therefore, is poverty, with the friendship of God, than riches, with all that the world can bestow! And how foolish to seek our chief pleasures only in this life!

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Neither can they pass to us, &c. There can be no doubt that the wicked will desire to pass the gulf that divides them from heaven. They would be glad to be in a state of happiness; but all such wishes will be vain. How, in the face of the solemn statement of the Saviour here, can men believe that there will be a restoration of all the wicked to heaven? He solemnly assures us that there can be no passage from that world of woe to the abodes of the blessed; yet, in the face of this, many Universalists hold that hell will yet be vacated of its guilty millions, and that all its

miserable inhabitants will be received to heaven! Who shall conduct them across this gulf, when Jesus Christ says it cannot be passed? Who shall build a bridge over that yawning chasm which he says is "fixed?" No: if there is anything certain from the Scripture, it is that they who enter hell return no more; they who sink there sink for ever.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

May testify unto them. May bear witness to them, or may inform them of what is my situation, and the dreadful consequences of the life that I have led. It is remarkable that he did not ask to go himself. He knew that he could not be released, even for so short a time. His condition was fixed. Yet he had no wish that his friends should suffer, and he supposed that if one went from the dead they would hear him.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

They have Moses. The writings of Moses. The first five books of the Bible.

The prophets. The remainder of the Old Testament. What the prophets had written.

Hear them. Hear them speak in the Scriptures. Read them, or hear them read in the synagogues, and attend to what they have delivered.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Nay. No. They will not hear Moses and the prophets. They have heard them so long in vain, that there is no prospect now that they will attend to the message; but if one should go to them directly from the eternal world they would hear him. The novelty of the message would attract their attention, and they would listen to what he would say.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

A very awakening text this is, which speaks dreadfully to persons sitting all their days under the ministry of the gospel, and yet find not their

understandings enlightened, their judgments convinced, their wills subdued, and their lives reformded by it. Were it possible for such persons to see one come from the dead, yea, from the damned, with the flames of hell about his ears, wringing his hands, and gnashing his teeth, bewailing his misery, and beseeching them to take warning by his example, and in time to acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace; all this would have no farther effect upon them, than to move their passions a little for the present, while the dreadful sound is in their ears: the ordinances of God and not his providences, are the instituted and appointed means for men's conversion and salvation.

Note then, 1. That no visions or apparitions, no new revelations concerning eternal rewards and punishments, are to be expected from the other world, in order to men's conversion and salvation.

Note, 2. That the word of God dispensed to us, and the ordinary means of grace enjoyed by us, are more conducible and effectual means to persuade men to repentance, than if one should arise from the dead, and preach unto us. A messenger from the dead cannot bring with him either a more necessary doctrine, or a more certain and infallible doctrine, nor bring with him better arguments for our conviction, than what the scriptures do propound for our consideration; nor can we expect a greater co-operation of the Holy Spirit, or a greater concurrence of divine power, to render a message from the dead more effectual, than does ordinarily attend the ministry of the word.

Henceforward then, let us not wonder, if when a drunkard drops down dead upon the spot, the companions say one to another, Drink on; if sinners daily tumble one another into the grave, without considering the operation of God's hand; this, to those that consider this text, will not seem strange; For if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be converted, though hundreds of sinners before their eyes drop down dead: nay, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

From this impressive and instructive parable we may learn - - -

1st. That the souls of men do not die with their bodies.

2nd. That the soul is conscious after death; that it does not sleep, as some have supposed, till the morning of the resurrection.

3rd. That the righteous are taken to a place of happiness immediately at death, and the wicked consigned at once to misery.

4th. That wealth does not secure from death.

"How vain are riches to secure Their haughty owners from the grave !"

The rich, the beautiful, the gay, as well as the poor, go down to the grave. All their pomp and apparel, all their honours, their palaces, and their gold cannot save them. Death can as easily find his way into the splendid mansions of the rich as into the cottages of the poor; and the rich shall turn to the same corruption, and soon, like the poor, be undistinguished from common dust and be unknown.

5th. We should not envy the condition of the rich.

"On slippery rocks I see them stand, And fiery billows roll below. "Now let them boast how tall they rise, I'll never envy them again; There they may stand with haughty eyes, Till they plunge deep in endless pain. "Their fancied joys how fast they flee! Like dreams, as fleeting and as vain; Their songs of softest harmony Are but a prelude to their pain."

6th. We should strive for a better inheritance than can be possessed in this life.

"Now I esteem their mirth and wine Too dear to purchase with my blood: Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine-- My life, my portion, and my God."

7th. The sufferings of the wicked in hell will be indescribably great. Think what is represented by torment; by burning flame; by insupportable thirst; by that state where a single drop of water would afford relief. Remember that all this is but a representation of the pains of the damned, and that this will have no intermission day or night, but will continue from year to year, and age to age, without any end, and you have a faint view of the sufferings of those who are in hell.

8th. There is a place of sufferings beyond the grave--a hell. If there is not, then this parable has no meaning. It is impossible to make anything of it unless it be designed to teach that.

9th. There will never be any escape from those gloomy regions. There is a gulf fixed-:fixed, not movable. Nor can any of the damned beat a pathway across this gulf to the world of holiness.

10th. We see the amazing folly of those who suppose there may be an end to the sufferings of the wicked, and who, on that supposition, seem willing to go down to hell to suffer a long time, rather than go at once to heaven. If man were to suffer but a thousand years, or even one year, why should he be so foolish as to choose that suffering rather than go at once to heaven, and be happy at once when he dies?

11th. God gives us sufficient warning to prepare for death. He has sent his Word, his servants, his Son; he warns us by his Spirit and his providence; by the entreaties of our friends and by the death of sinners; he offers us heaven, and he threatens hell. If all this will not move sinners, what would do it? There is nothing that would.

12th. God will give us nothing farther to warn us. No dead man will come to life to tell us of what he has seen. If he did, we would not believe him. Religion appeals to man not by ghosts and frightful apparitions. It appeals to their reason, their conscience, their hopes, their fears. It sets life and death soberly before men, and if they will not choose the former, they must die. If you will not hear the Son of God and the warnings of the

Scriptures, there is nothing which you will or can hear. You will never be persuaded, and will never escape the place of torment.

Luke-17

Causing to Sin

1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!

See notes on Mt 18:6-7.

2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

See notes on Mt 18:15-22.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Increase Our Faith

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

See notes on Mt 17:20.

6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

The Servant's Duty

7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

That, whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favour at his hand, or claim it as a

debt; even the apostles themselves, who did so much more for Christ than others, must not think that they had thereby made him their debtor.

1. We are all God's servants (his apostles and ministers are in a special manner so), and, as servants, are bound to do all we can for his honour. Our whole strength and our whole time are to be employed for him; for we are not our own, nor at our own disposal, but at our Master's.

2. As God's servants, it becomes us to fill up our time with duty, and we have a variety of work appointed us to do; we ought to make the end of one service the beginning of another. The servant that has been ploughing, or feeding cattle, in the field, when he comes home at night has work to do still; he must wait at table, Lu 17:7,8. When we have been employed in the duties of a religious conversation, that will not excuse us from the exercises of devotion; when we have been working for God, still we must be waiting on God, waiting on him continually.

3. Our principal care here must be to do the duty of our relation, and leave it to our Master to give us the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit. No servant expects that his master should say to him, Go and sit down to meat; it is time enough to do that when we have done our day's work. Let us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well, and then the reward will come in due time.

4. It is fit that Christ should be served before us: Make ready wherewith I may sup, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink. Doubting Christians say that they cannot give to Christ the glory of his love as they should, because they have not yet obtained the comfort of it; but this is wrong.

First let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with our praises, and then we shall eat and drink in the comfort of that love, and in this there is a feast.

5. Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must gird themselves, must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and encumbering, and fit themselves with a close application of mind to go

on, and go through, with their work; they must gird up the loins of their mind. When we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have made ready wherewith he may sup, we must then gird ourselves, to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he does not insist upon it. He was among his disciples as one that served, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and to be ministered unto, but to minister; witness his washing his disciples' feet.

6. Christ's servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him: "Does he thank that servant? Does he reckon himself indebted to him for it? No, by no means." No good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God's favour, not because we have by our services made him a debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a debtor to his own honour, and this we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a quantum meruit--according to merit.

7. Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more perhaps than some others do, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should do all things that are commanded us, and alas! in many things we come short of this, yet there is no work of supererogation; it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment of loving God with all our heart and soul, which includes the utmost.

8. The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are unprofitable servants; though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into utter darkness, yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are unprofitable; our goodness extendeth not unto God, nor if we are righteous is he the better, Ps 16:2,Job 22:2,35:7. God cannot be a gainer by our services, and therefore cannot be made a debtor by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections. It becomes us therefore to call ourselves unprofitable servants, but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.

8 and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not.

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

We have here an account of the cure of ten lepers, which we had not in any other of the evangelists. The leprosy was a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God's displeasure; and therefore Christ, who came to take away sin, and turn away wrath, took particular care to cleanse the lepers that fell in his way. Christ was now in his way to Jerusalem, about the mid-way, where he had little acquaintance in comparison with what he had either at Jerusalem or in Galilee. He was now in the frontier-country, the marches that lay between Samaria and Galilee. He went that road to find out these lepers, and to cure them; for he is found of them that sought him not. Observe,

The address of these lepers to Christ. They were ten in a company; for, though they were shut out from society with others, yet those that were infected were at liberty to converse with one another, which would be some comfort to them, as giving them an opportunity to compare notes, and to condole with one another. Now observe,

1. They met Christ as he entered into a certain village. They did not stay till he had refreshed himself for some time after the fatigue of his journey, but met him as he entered the town, weary as he was; and yet he did not put them off, nor adjourn their cause.

2. They stood afar off, knowing that by the law their disease obliged them to keep their distance. A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ. Who are we, that we should

draw near to him that is infinitely pure? We are impure. 3. Their request was unanimous, and very importunate (Lu 17:13): They lifted up their voices, being at a distance, and cried, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. those that expect help from Christ must take him for their Master, and be at his command. If he be Master, he will be Jesus, a Saviour, and not otherwise. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy, but, Have mercy on us; and it is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they fail not. They heard the fame of this Jesus (though he had not been much conversant in that country), and that was such as encouraged them to make application to him; and, if but one of them began in so cheap and easy an address, they would all join.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

Christ sent them to the priest, to be inspected by him, who was the judge of the leprosy. He did not tell them positively that they should be cured, but bade them go show themselves to the priests, Lu 17:14. This was a trial of their obedience, and it was fit that it should be so tried, as Naaman's in a like case: Go wash in Jordan. Note, Those that expect Christ's favours must take them in his way and method. Some of these lepers perhaps would be ready to quarrel with the prescription: "Let him either cure or say that he will not, and not send us to the priests on a fool's errand;" but, over-ruled by the rest, they all went to the priest. As the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care that it should be observed, and the reputation of it kept up, and due honour paid to the priests in things pertaining to their function; but, probably, he had here a further design, which was to have the priest's judgment of, and testimony to, the perfectness of the cure; and that the priest might be awakened, and others by him, to enquire after one that had such a commanding power over bodily diseases.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

One of them, and but one, returned, to give thanks, Lu 17:15. When he saw that he was healed, instead of going forward to the priest, to be by him

declared clean, and so discharged from his confinement, which was all that the rest aimed at, he turned back towards him who was the Author of his cure, whom he wished to have the glory of it, before he received the benefit of it. He appears to have been very hearty and affectionate in his thanksgivings: With a loud voice he glorified God, acknowledging it to come originally from him; and he lifted up his voice in his praises, as he had done in his prayers, Lu 17:13. Those that have received mercy from God should publish it to others, that they may praise God too, and may be encouraged by their experiences to trust in him. But he also made a particular address of thanks to Christ (Lu 17:16): He fell down at his feet, put himself into the most humble reverent posture he could, and gave him thanks. Note, We ought to give thanks for the favours Christ bestows upon us, and particularly for recoveries from sickness; and we ought to be speedy in our returns of praise, and not defer them, lest time wear out the sense of the mercy. It becomes us also to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. It becomes the seed of Jacob, like him, to own themselves less than the least of God's mercies, when they have received them, as well as when they are in pursuit of them.

16 and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Christ took notice of this one that had thus distinguished himself; for, it seems, he was a Samaritan, whereas the rest were Jews, Lu 17:16. The Samaritans were separatists from the Jewish church, and had not the pure knowledge and worship of God among them that the Jews had, and yet it was one of them that glorified God, when the Jews forgot, or, when it was moved to them, refused, to do it. Now observe here,

1 The particular notice Christ took of him, of the grateful return he made, and the ingratitude of those that were sharers with him in the mercy--that he who was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel was the only one that returned to give glory to God, Lu 17:17,18. See here,

(1.) How rich Christ is in doing good: Were there not ten cleansed? Here was a cure by wholesale, a whole hospital healed with one word's speaking. Note, There is an abundance of healing cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ, sufficient for all his patients, though ever so many. Here

are ten at a time cleansed; we shall have never the less grace for others sharing it.

(2.) How poor we are in our returns: "Where are the nine? Why did not they return to give thanks?" This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin. Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but few, very few, that return to give thanks in a right manner (scarcely one in ten), that render according to the benefit done to them.

(3.) How those often prove most grateful from whom it was least expected. A Samaritan gives thanks, and a Jew does not. Thus many who profess revealed religion are out-done, and quite shamed, by some that are governed only by natural religion, not only in moral value, but in piety and devotion. This serves here to aggravate the ingratitude of those Jews of whom Christ speaks, as taking it very ill that his kindness was so slighted. And it intimates how justly he resents the ingratitude of the world of mankind, for whom he had done so much, and from whom he has received so little.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed ? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

The great encouragement Christ gave him, Lu 17:19. The rest had their cure, and had it not revoked, as justly it might have been, for their ingratitude, though they had such a good example of gratitude set before them; but he had his cure confirmed particularly with an encomium: Thy faith hath made thee whole. The rest were made whole by the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole by his faith, by which Christ saw him distinguished from the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubled and sweetened to us when they are fetched in by the prayers of faith, and returned by the praises of faith.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

We have here a discourse of Christ's concerning the kingdom of God, that is, the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now shortly to be set up, and of which there was great expectation.

I. Here is the demand of the Pharisees concerning it, which occasioned this discourse. They asked when the kingdom of God should come, forming a notion of it as a temporal kingdom, which should advance the Jewish nation above the nations of the earth. They were impatient to hear some tidings of its approach; they understood, perhaps, that Christ had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of it, and they had long preached that it was at hand. "Now," say the Pharisees, "when will that glorious view open? When shall we see this long-looked-for kingdom?"

II. Christ's reply to this demand, directed to the Pharisees first, and afterwards to his own disciples, who knew better how to understand it (Lu 17:22); what he said to both, he saith to us.

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a spiritual kingdom, and not temporal and external. They asked when it would come. "You know not what you ask," saith Christ; "it may come, and you not be aware of it." For it has not an external show, as other kingdoms have, the advancements and revolutions of which are taken notice of by the nations of the earth, and fill the newspapers; so they expected this kingdom of God would do. "No," saith Christ,

(1.) "It will have a silent entrance, without pomp, without noise; it cometh not with observation," meta paratereseos--with outward show. They desired to have their curiosity satisfied concerning the time of it, to which Christ does not give them any answer, but will have their mistakes rectified concerning the nature of it: "It is not for you to know the times of this kingdom, these are secret things, which belong not to you; but the great intentions of this kingdom, these are things revealed." When Messiah the Prince comes to set up his kingdom, they shall not say, Lo

here, or Lo there, as when a prince goes in progress to visit his territories it is in every body's mouth, he is here, or he is there; for where the king is there is the court. Christ will not come with all this talk; it will not be set up in this or that particular place; nor will the court of that kingdom be here or there; nor will it be here or there as it respects the country men are of, or the place they dwell in, as if that would place them nearer to, or further from, that kingdom. Those who confine Christianity and the church to this place or that party, cry, Lo here, or Lo there, than which nothing is more contrary to the designs of catholic Christianity; so do they who make prosperity and external pomp a mark of the true church.

(2.) "It has a spiritual influence: The kingdom of God is within you." It is not of this world, Joh 18:36. Its glory does not strike men's fancies, but affects their spirits, and its power is over their souls and consciences; from them it receives homage, and not from their bodies only. The kingdom of God will not change men's outward condition, but their hearts and lives. Then it comes when it makes those humble, and serious, and heavenly, that were proud, and vain, and carnal,--when it weans those from the world that were wedded to the world; and therefore look for the kingdom of God in the revolutions of the heart, not of the civil government. The kingdom of God is among you; so some read it. "You enquire when it will come, and are not aware that it is already begun to be set up in the midst of you. The gospel is preached, it is confirmed by miracles, it is embraced by multitudes, so that it is in your nation, though not in your hearts." Note, It is the folly of many curious enquirers concerning the times to come that they look for that before them which is already among them.

21 neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

That the setting up of this kingdom was a work that would meet with a great deal of opposition and interruption, Lu 17:22. The disciples thought they should carry all before them, and expected a constant series of success in their work; but Christ tells them it would be otherwise: "The days will come, before you have finished your testimony and done your work, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man"

(one such a day as we now have), "of the prosperity and progress of the gospel, and shall not see it. At first, indeed, you will have wonderful success" (so they had, when thousands were added to the church in a day); "but do not think it will be always so; no, you will be persecuted and scattered, silenced and imprisoned, so that you will not have opportunities of preaching the gospel without fear, as you now have; people will grow cool to it, when they have enjoyed it awhile, so that you will not see such harvests of souls gathered in to Christ afterwards as at first, nor such multitudes flocking to him as doves to their windows." This looks forward to his disciples in after-ages; they must expect much disappointment; the gospel will not be always preached with equal liberty and success. Ministers and churches will sometimes be under outward restraints. Teachers will be removed into corners, and solemn assemblies scattered. Then they will wish to see such days of opportunity as they have formerly enjoyed, sabbath days, sacrament days, preaching days, praying days; these are days of the Son of man, in which we hear from him, and converse with him. The time may come when we may in vain wish for such days. God teaches us to know the worth of such mercies by the want of them. It concerns us, while they are continued, to improve them, and in the years of plenty to lay up in store for the years of famine. Sometimes they will be under inward restraints, will not have such tokens of the presence of the Son of man with them as they have had. The Spirit is withdrawn from them; they see not their signs; the angel comes not down to stir the waters; there is a great stupidity among the children of men, and a great lukewarmness among the children of God; then they shall wish to see such victorious triumphant days of the Son of man as they have sometimes seen, when he has ridden forth with his bow and his crown, conquering and to conquer, but they will not see them. Note, We must not think that Christ's church and cause are lost because not always alike visible and prevailing.

23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

That Christ and his kingdom are not to be looked for in this or that particular place, but his appearance will be general in all places at once (Lu 17:23,24): "They will say to you, See here, or, See there; here is one that will deliver the Jews out of the hands of the oppressing Romans, or there is one that will deliver the Christians out of the hands of the

oppressing Jews; here is the Messiah, and there is his prophet; here in this mountain, or there at Jerusalem, you will find the true church. Go not after them, nor follow them; do not heed such suggestions. The kingdom of God was not designed to be the glory of one people only, but to give light to the Gentiles; for as the lightning that lightens out of one part under heaven, and shines all on a sudden irresistibly to the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day."

(1.) "The judgments that are to destroy the Jewish nation, to lay them waste, and to deliver the Christians from them, shall fly like lightning through the land, shall lay all waste from one end of it to another; and those that are marked for this destruction can no more avoid it, nor oppose it, than they can a flash of lightning."

(2.) "The gospel that is to set up Christ's kingdom in the world shall fly like lightning through the nations. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to be a local thing, but is to be dispersed far and wide over the face of the whole earth; it shall shine from Jerusalem to all parts about, and that in a moment. The kingdoms of the earth shall be leavened by the gospel ere they are aware of it." The trophies of Christ's victories shall be erected on the ruins of the devil's kingdom, even in those countries that could never be subdued to the Roman yoke. The design of the setting up of Christ's kingdom was not to make one nation great, but to make all nations good--some, at least, of all nations; and this point shall be gained, though the nations rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves with all their might against it.

24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

That the Messiah must suffer before he must reign (Lu 17:25): "First must he suffer many things, many hard things, and be rejected of this generation; and, if he be thus treated, his disciples must expect no other than to suffer and be rejected too for his sake." They thought of having the kingdom of the Messiah set up in external splendour: "No," saith Christ, "we must go by the cross to the crown. The Son of man must suffer many things. Pain, and shame, and death, are those many things.

He must be rejected by this generation of unbelieving Jews, before he be embraced by another generation of believing Gentiles, that his gospel may have the honour of triumphing over the greatest opposition from those who ought to have given it the greatest assistance; and thus the excellency of the power will appear to be of God, and not of man; for, though Israel be not gathered, yet he will be glorious to the ends of the earth."

26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

That the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah would introduce the destruction of the Jewish nation, whom it would find in a deep sleep of security, and drowned in sensuality, as the old world was in the days of Noah, and Sodom in the days of Lot, Lu 17:26, &c. Observe,

How it had been with sinners formerly, and in what posture the judgments of God, of which they had been fairly warned, did at length find them. Look as far back as the old world, when all flesh had corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence. Come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom, who were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. Now observe concerning both these,

[1.] That they had fair warning given them of the ruin that was coming upon them for their sins. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the old world; so was Lot to the Sodomites. They gave them timely notice of what would be in the end of their wicked ways, and that it was not far off.

[2.] That they did not regard the warning given them, and gave no credit, no heed to it. They were very secure, went on in their business as unconcerned as you could imagine; they did eat, they drank, indulged themselves in their pleasures, and took no care of any thing else, but to make provision for the flesh, counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state, and therefore married wives, and were given in marriage, that their families might be built up. They were all very merry; so were the men of Sodom, and yet very busy too: they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. These were lawful things, but the fault was that they minded these inordinately, and their hearts were entirely set upon them, as that they had no heart at all to prepare against the

threatened judgments. When they should have been, as the men of Nineveh, fasting and praying, repenting and reforming, upon warning given them of an approaching judgment, they were going on securely, eating flesh, and drinking wine, when God called to weeping and to mourning, Isa 22:12,13.

[3.] That they continued in their security and sensuality, till the threatened judgment came. Until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and Lot went out of Sodom, nothing said or done to them served to alarm or awaken them. Note, Though the stupidity of sinners in a sinful way is as strange as it is without excuse, yet we are not to think it strange, for it is not without example. It is the old way that wicked men have trodden, that have gone slumbering to hell, as if their damnation slumbered while they did.

[4.] That God took care for the preservation of those that were his, who believed and feared, and took the warning themselves which they gave to others. Noah entered into the ark, and there he was safe; Lot went out of Sodom, and so went out of harm's way. If some run on heedless and headlong into destruction, that shall be no prejudice to the salvation of those that believe.

[5.] That they were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear, and were swallowed up in it, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. The flood came, and destroyed all the sinners of the old world; fire and brimstone came, and destroyed all the sinners of Sodom. God has many arrows in his quiver, and uses which he will in making war upon his rebellious subjects, for he can make which he will effectual. But that which is especially intended here is to show what a dreadful surprise destruction will be to those who are secure and sensual.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

How it will be with sinners still (Lu 17:30): Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. When Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation, by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation will be found under such a reigning security and stupidity as this. They have warning given by Christ now, and will have it repeated to them by the apostles after him, as they had by Noah and Lot; but it will be all in vain. They will continue secure, will go on in their neglect and opposition of Christ and his gospel, till all the Christians are withdrawn from among them and gone to the place of refuge. God will provide for them on the other side Jordan, and then a deluge of judgments shall flow in upon them, which will destroy all the unbelieving Jews. One would have thought that this discourse of our Saviour's, which was public, and not long after published to the world, should have awakened them; but it did not, for the hearts of that people were hardened, to their destruction. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, at the end of time, sinners will be found in the same secure and careless posture, altogether regardless of the judgment approaching, which will therefore come upon them as a snare; and in like manner the sinners of every age go on securely in their evil ways, and remember not their latter end, nor the account that they must give. Woe to them that are thus at ease in Zion.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

That it ought to be the care of his disciples and followers to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day, and, leaving them, their city and country, to themselves, to flee at the signal given, according to the direction that should be given. Let them retire, as Noah to his ark, and Lot to his Zoar. You would have healed Jerusalem, as of old Babylon, but she is not healed, and therefore forsake her, flee out of the midst of her, and deliver every man his soul, Jer 51:6,9. This flight of theirs from Jerusalem must be expeditious, and must not be retarded by any concern about their worldly affairs (Lu 17:31): "He that shall be on the house-top, when the alarm is given, let him not come down, to take his stuff away, both because he cannot spare so much time, and because the carrying away of his effects will but encumber him and retard his flight." Let him not regard his stuff at such a time, when it will be next to a miracle of mercy if he have his life

given him for a prey. It will be better to leave his stuff behind him than to stay to look after it, and perish with them that believe not. It will be their concern to do as Lot and his family were charged to do: Escape for thy life. Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning (Lu 17:32): "Remember Lot's wife; and take warning by her not only to flee from this Sodom (for so Jerusalem is become, Isa 1:10), but to persevere in your flight, and do not look back, as she did; be not loth to leave a place marked for destruction, whomsoever or whatsoever you leave behind you, that is ever so dear to you." Those who have left the Sodom of a natural state, let them go forward, and not so much as look a kind look towards it again. Let them not look back, lest they should be tempted to go back; nay, lest that be construed a going back in heart, or an evidence that the heart was left behind. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, that she might remain a lasting monument of God's displeasure against apostates, who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. (3.) There would be no other way of saving their lives than by quitting the Jews, and, if they thought to save themselves by a coalition with them, they would find themselves mistaken (Lu 17:33): "Whosoever shall seek to save his life, by declining from his Christianity and complying with the Jews, he shall lose it with them and perish in the common calamity; but whosoever is willing to venture his life with the Christians, upon the same bottom on which they venture, to take his lot with them in life and in death, he shall preserve his life, for he shall make sure of eternal life, and is in a likelier way at that time to save his life than those who embark in a Jewish bottom, or ensure upon their securities." Note, Those do best themselves that trust God in the way of duty.

32 Remember Lot’s wife.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

That all good Christians should certainly escape, but many of them very narrowly, from that destruction, Lu 17:34-36. When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will take an effectual course to preserve those that are his, by remarkable providences distinguishing between them and others

that were nearest to them: two in a bed, one taken and the other left; one snatched out of the burning and taken into a place of safety, while the other is left to perish in the common ruin. Note, Though the sword devours one as well as another, and all things seem to come alike to all, yet sooner or later it shall be made to appear that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not, and how to take out the precious from the vile. We are sure that the Judge of all the earth will do right; and therefore, when he sends a judgment on purpose to avenge the death of his Son upon those that crucified him, he will take care that none of those who glorified him, and gloried in his cross, shall be taken away by that judgment.

35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

That this distinguishing, dividing, discriminating work shall be done in all places, as far as the kingdom of God shall extend, Lu 17:37. Where, Lord? They had enquired concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity with any information concerning that; they therefore tried him with another question: "Where, Lord? Where shall those be safe that are taken? Where shall those perish that are left?" The answer is proverbial, and may be explained so as to answer each side of the question: Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

(1.) Wherever the wicked are, who are marked for perdition, they shall be found out by the judgments of God; as wherever a dead carcase is, the birds of prey will smell it out, and make a prey of it. The Jews having made themselves a dead and putrefied carcase, odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice, wherever any of that unbelieving generation is, the judgments of God shall fasten upon them, as the eagles do upon the prey: Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies (Ps 21:8), though they set their nests among the stars, Ob 1:4. The Roman soldiers will hunt the Jews out of all their recesses and fastnesses, and none shall escape.

(2.) Wherever the godly are, who are marked for preservation, they shall be found happy in the enjoyment of Christ. As the dissolution of the Jewish church shall be extended to all parts, so shall the constitution of the Christian church. Wherever Christ is, believers will flock to him, and meet in him, as eagles about the prey, without being directed or shown the way, by the instinct of the new nature. Now Christ is where his gospel, and his ordinances, and his church are: For where two or three are gathered in his name there is he in the midst of them, and thither therefore others will be gathered to him. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to have one particular place for its metropolis, such as Jerusalem was to the Jewish church, to which all Jews were to resort; but, wherever the body is, wherever the gospel is preached and ordinances are ministered, thither will pious souls resort, there they will find Christ, and by faith feast upon him. Wherever Christ records his name he will meet his people, and bless them, Joh 4:21,1Ti 2:8. Many good interpreters understand it of the gathering of the saints together to Christ in the kingdom of glory: "Ask not where the carcase will be, and how they shall find the way to it, for they shall be under infallible direction; to him who is their living, quickening Head, and the centre of their unity, to him shall the gathering of the people be."

Luke-18

The Parable of the Widow and the Judge

1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

This parable has its key hanging at the door; the drift and design of it are prefixed. Christ spoke it with this intent, to teach us that men ought always to pray and not to faint, Lu 18:1. It supposes that all God's people are praying people; all God's children keep up both a constant and an occasional correspondence with him, send to him statedly, and upon every emergency. It is our privilege and honour that we may pray. It is our duty; we ought to pray, we sin if we neglect it. It is to be our constant work; we ought always to pray, it is that which the duty of every day requires. We must pray, and never grow weary of praying, nor think of leaving it off till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. But

that which seems particularly designed here is to teach us constancy and perseverance in our requests for some spiritual mercies that we are in pursuit of, relating either to ourselves or to the church of God. When we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies, we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and not faint, for we shall not seek God's face in vain. So we must likewise in our prayers for the deliverance of the people of God out of the hands of their persecutors and oppressors.

Christ shows, by a parable, the power of importunity among men, who will be swayed by that, when nothing else will influence, to do what is just and right. He gives you an instance of an honest cause that succeeded before an unjust judge, not by the equity or compassionableness of it, but purely by dint of importunity.

Observe here, 1 The bad character of the judge that was in a certain city. He neither feared God nor regarded man; he had no manner of concern either for his conscience or for his reputation; he stood in no awe either of the wrath of God against him or of the censures of men concerning him: or, he took no care to do his duty either to God or man; he was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honour, and had no notion of either. It is not strange if those that have cast off the fear of their Creator be altogether regardless of their fellow-creatures; where no fear of God is no good is to be expected. Such a prevalency of irreligion and inhumanity is bad in any, but very bad in a judge, who has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and, if he be not, instead of doing good with his power he will be in danger of doing hurt. Wickedness in the place of judgment was one of the sorest evils Solomon saw under the sun, Ec 3:16.

2 The distressed case of a poor widow that was necessitated to make her appeal to him, being wronged by some one that thought to bear her down with power and terror. She had manifestly right on her side; but, it should seem, in soliciting to have right done her, she tied not herself to the formalities of the law, but made personal application to the judge from day to day at his own house, still crying, Avenge me of mine adversary; that is, Do me justice against mine adversary; not that she desired to be

revenged on him for any thing he had done against her, but that he might be obliged to restore what effects he had of hers in his hands, and might be disabled any more to oppress her. Note, Poor widows have often many adversaries, who barbarously take advantage of their weak and helpless state to invade their rights, and defraud them of what little they have; and magistrates are particularly charged, not only not to do violence to the widow (Jer 21:3), but to judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow (Isa 1:17), to be their patrons and protectors; then they are as gods, for God is so, Ps 68:5.

3. The difficulty and discouragement she met with in her cause: He would not for awhile. According to his usual practice, he frowned upon her, took no notice of her cause, but connived at all the wrong her adversary did her; for she had no bribe to give him, no great man whom he stood in any awe of to speak for her, so that he did not at all incline to redress her grievances; and he himself was conscience of the reason of his dilatoriness, and could not but own within himself that he neither feared God nor regarded man. It is sad that a man should know so much amiss of himself, and be in no care to amend it.

4. The gaining of her point by continually dunning this unjust judge (Lu 18:5): "Because this widow troubleth me, gives me a continual toil, I will hear her cause, and do her justice; not so much lest by her clamour against me she bring me into an ill name, as lest by her clamour to me she weary me; for she is resolved that she will give me no rest till it is done, and therefore I will do it, to save myself further trouble; as good at first as at last." Thus she got justice done her by continual craving; she begged it at his door, followed him in the streets, solicited him in open court, and still her cry was, Avenge me of mine adversary, which he was forced to do, to get rid of her; for his conscience, bad as he was, would not suffer him to send her to prison for an affront upon the court.

2 saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

He applies this for the encouragement of God's praying people to pray with faith and fervency, and to persevere therein.

He assures them that God will at length be gracious to them (Lu 18:6): Hear what the unjust judge saith, how he owns himself quite overcome by a constant importunity, and shall not God avenge his own elect? Observe,

(a) What it is that they desire and expect: that God would avenge his own elect. Note,

[1.] There are a people in the world that are God's people, his elect, his own elect, a choice people, a chosen people. And this he has an eye to in all he does for them; it is because they are his chosen, and in pursuance of the choice he has made of them.

[2.] God's own elect meet with a great deal of trouble and opposition in this world; there are many adversaries that fight against them; Satan is their great adversary.

[3.] That which is wanted and waited for is God's preserving and protecting them, and the work of his hands in them; his securing the interest of the church in the world and his grace in the heart.

(b) What it is that is required of God's people in order to the obtaining of this: they must cry day and night to him; not that he needs their remonstrances, or can be moved by their pleadings, but this he has made their duty, and to this he has promised mercy. We ought to be particular in praying against our spiritual enemies, as St. Paul was: For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; like this importunate widow. Lord, mortify this corruption. Lord, arm me against this temptation. We ought to concern ourselves for the persecuted and oppressed churches, and to pray that God would do them justice, and set

them in safety. And herein we must be very urgent; we must cry with earnestness: we must cry day and night, as those that believe prayer will be heard at last; we must wrestle with God, as those that know how to value the blessing, and will have no nay. God's praying people are told to give him no rest, Isa 62:6,7.

(c) What discouragements they may perhaps meet with in their prayers and expectations. He may bear long with them, and may not presently appear for them, in answer to their prayers. He is makrothymon ep autois--he exercises patience towards the adversaries of his people, and does not take vengeance on them; and he exercises the patience of his people, and does not plead for them. He bore long with the cry of the sin of the Egyptians that oppressed Israel, and with the cry of the sorrows of those that were oppressed.

(4.) What assurance they have that mercy will come at last, though it be delayed, and how it is supported by what the unjust judge saith: If this widow prevail by being importunate, much more shall God's elect prevail. For,

[1.] This widow was a stranger, nothing related to the judge; but God's praying people are his own elect, whom he knows, and loves, and delights in, and has always concerned himself for.

[2.] She was but one, but the praying people of God are many, all of whom come to him on the same errand, and agree to ask what they need, Mt 18:19. As the saints of heaven surround the throne of glory with their united praises, so saints on earth besiege the throne of grace with their united prayers.

[3.] She came to a judge that bade her keep her distance; we come to a Father that bids us come boldly to him, and teaches us to cry, Abba, Father.

[4.] She came to an unjust judge; we come to a righteous Father (Joh 17:25), one that regards his own glory and the comforts of his poor creatures, especially those in distress, as widows and fatherless.

[5.] She came to this judge purely upon her own account; but God is himself engaged in the cause which we are soliciting; and we can say, Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause; and what wilt thou do to thy great name?

[6.] She had no friend to speak for her, to add force to her petition, and to use interest for her more than her own; but we have an Advocate with the Father, his own Son, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and has a powerful prevailing interest in heaven.

[7.] She had no promise off speeding, no, nor any encouragement given her to ask; but we have the golden sceptre held out to us, are told to ask, with a promise that it shall be given to us.

[8.] She could have access to the judge only at some certain times; but we may cry to God day and night, at all hours, and therefore may the rather hope to prevail by importunity.

[9.] Her importunity was provoking to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our importunity is pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is his delight, and therefore, we may hope, shall avail much, if it be an effectual fervent prayer.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

He intimates to them that, notwithstanding this, they will begin to be weary of waiting for him (Lu 18:8): "Nevertheless, though such assurances are given that God will avenge his own elect, yet, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The Son of man will come to avenge his own elect, to plead the cause of persecuted Christians against the persecuting Jews; he will come in his providence

to plead the cause of his injured people in every age, and at the great day he will come finally to determine the controversies of Zion. Now, when he comes, will he find faith on the earth? The question implies a strong negation: No, he will not; he himself foresees it.

(a) This supposes that it is on earth only that there is occasion for faith; for sinners in hell are feeling that which they would not believe, and saints in heaven are enjoying that which they did believe.

(b) It supposes that faith is the great thing that Jesus Christ looks for. He looks down upon the children of men, and does not ask, Is there innocency? but, Is there faith? He enquired concerning the faith of those who applied themselves to him for cures.

(c) It supposes that if there were faith, though ever so little, he would discover it, and find it out. His eye is upon the weakest and most obscure believer.

(d) It is foretold that, when Christ comes to plead his people's cause, he will find but little faith in comparison with what one might expect. That is,

[1.] In general, he will find but few good people, few that are really and truly good. Many that have the form and fashion of godliness, but few that have faith, that are sincere and honest: nay, he will find little fidelity among men; the faithful fail, Ps 12:1,2. Even to the end of time there will still be occasion for the same complaint. The world will grow no better, no, not when it is drawing towards its period. Bad it is, and bad it will be, and worst of all just before Christ's coming; the last times will be the most perilous.

[2.] In particular, he will find few that have faith concerning his coming. When he comes to avenge his own elect he looks if there be any faith to help and to uphold, and wonders that there is none, Isa 59:16,63:5. It intimates that Christ, both in his particular comings for the relief of his people, and in his general coming at the end of time, may, and will, delay

his coming so long as that, First, Wicked people will begin to defy it, and to say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2Pe 3:4. They will challenge him to come (Isa 5:10,Am 5:19); and his delay will harden them in their wickedness, Mt 24:48. Secondly, Even his own people will begin to despair of it, and to conclude he will never come, because he has passed their reckoning. God's time to appear for his people is when things are brought to the last extremity, and when Zion begins to say, The Lord has forsaken me. See Isa 49:14,Isa 40:27. But this is our comfort, that, when the time appointed comes, it will appear that the unbelief of man has not made the promise of God of no effect.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The scope of this parable likewise is prefixed to it, and we are told (Lu 18:9) who they were whom it was levelled at, and for whom it was calculated. He designed it for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. They were such as had,

1. A great conceit of themselves, and of their own goodness; they thought themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbours, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all;

2. They had a confidence in themselves before God, and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed God, as their plea: They trusted in themselves as being righteous; they thought they had made God their debtor, and might demand any thing from him; and,

3. They despised others, and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them. Now Christ by this parable would

show such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a parable, though there be nothing of similitude in it; but it is rather a description of the different temper and language of those that proudly justify themselves, and those that humbly condemn themselves; and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day.

Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer at the same place and time (Lu 18:10): Two men went up into the temple (for the temple stood upon a hill) to pray. It was not the hour of public prayer, but they went thither to offer up their personal devotions, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the place, but the medium of worship, and God had promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that, whatever prayer was made in a right manner in or towards that house, it should therefore the rather be accepted. Christ is our temple, and to him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God. The Pharisees and the publican both went to the temple to pray.

Note, Among the worshippers of God, in the visible church, there is a mixture of good and bad, of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, proud as he was, could not think himself above prayer; nor could the publican, humble as he was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think that these went with different views.

1 The Pharisee went to the temple to pray because it was a public place, more public than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion, which perhaps was more than was expected. The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that all their works they did to be seen of men, gives us occasion for this suspicion. Note, Hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion only to save or gain credit. There are many whom we see every day at the temple, whom, it is to be feared, we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

2 The publican went to the temple because it was appointed to be a house of prayer for all people, Isa 56:7. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a compliment, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Here is the Pharisee's address to God (for a prayer I cannot call it): He stood and prayed thus with himself (Lu 18:11,12): standing by himself, he prayed thus, so some read it; he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but self, his own praise, and not God's glory; or, standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or, setting himself with a great deal of state and formality, he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to say is that which shows,

1. That he trusted to himself that he was righteous. A great many good things he said of himself, which we will suppose to be true. He was free from gross and scandalous sins; he was not an extortioner, not a usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him. He was not unjust in any of his dealings; he did no man any wrong; he could say, as Samuel, Whose ox or whose ass have I taken? He was no adulterer, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honour. Yet this was not all; he fasted twice in the week, as an act partly of temperature, partly of devotion. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday. Thus he glorified God with his body: yet that was not all; he gave tithes of all that he possessed, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate. Now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee: yet he was not accepted; and why was he not?

(a) His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a mere formality. He does not say, By the grace of God I am what I am, as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, God, I thank thee, which

is intended but for a plausible introduction to a proud vainglorious ostentation of himself.

(b) He makes his boast of this, and dwells with delight upon this subject, as if all his business to the temple was to tell God Almighty how very good he was; and he is ready to say, with those hypocrites that we read of (Isa 58:3), Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?

(c) He trusted to it as a righteousness, and not only mentioned it, but pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God, and made him his debtor. (4.) Here is not one word of prayer in all he saith. He went up to the temple to pray, but forgot his errand, was so full of himself and his own goodness that he thought he had need of nothing, no, not of the favour and grace of God, which, it would seem, he did not think worth asking.

2. That he despised others.

(a) He thought meanly of all mankind but himself: I thank thee that I am not as other men are. He speaks indefinitely, as if he were better than any. We may have reason to thank God that we are not as some men are, that are notoriously wicked and vile; but to speak at random thus, as if we only were good, and all besides us were reprobates, is to judge by wholesale.

(b) He thought meanly in a particular manner of this publican, whom he had left behind, it is probable, in the court of the Gentiles, and whose company he had fallen into as he came to the temple. He knew that he was a publican, and therefore very uncharitably concluded that he was an extortioner, unjust, and all that is naught. Suppose it had been so, and he had known it, what business had he to take notice of it? Could not he say his prayers (and that was all that the Pharisees did) without reproaching his neighbours? Or was this a part of his God, I thank thee? And was he as much pleased with the publican's badness as with his own goodness? There could not be a plainer evidence, not only of the want of humility and charity, but of reigning pride and malice, than this was.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Here is the publican's address to God, which was the reverse of the Pharisee's, as full of humility and humiliation as his was of pride and ostentation; as full of repentance for sin, and desire towards God, as his was of confidence in himself and his own righteousness and sufficiency.

1. He expressed his repentance and humility in what he did; and his gesture, when he addressed himself to his devotions, was expressive of great seriousness and humility, and the proper clothing of a broken, penitent, and obedient heart.

(a) He stood afar off. The Pharisee stood, but crowded up as high as he could, to the upper end of the court; the publican kept at a distance under a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, and perhaps for fear of offending the Pharisee, whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Hereby he owned that God might justly behold him afar off, and send him into a state of eternal distance from him, and that it was a great favour that God was pleased to admit him thus nigh.

(b) He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He did lift up his heart to God in the heavens, in holy desires, but, through prevailing shame and humiliation, he did not lift up his eyes in holy confidence and courage. His iniquities are gone over his head, as a heavy burden, so that he is not able to look up, Ps 40:12. The dejection of his looks is an indication of the dejection of his mind at the thought of sin.

(c) He smote upon his breast, in a holy indignation at himself for sin: "Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain out of which flow all the streams of sin, if I could come at it." The sinner's heart first smites him in a penitent rebuke, 2Sa 24:10. David's heart smote him. Sinner, what hast thou done? And then he smites his heart with penitent remorse: O wretched man that I am? Ephraim is said to smite

upon his thigh, Jer 31:19. Great mourners are represented tabouring upon their breasts, Na 2:7.

2. He expressed it in what he said. His prayer was short. Fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words; but what he said was to the purpose: God, be merciful to me a sinner. And blessed be God that we have this prayer upon record as an answered prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it went to his house justified; and so shall we, if we pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ: "God, be merciful to me a sinner; the God of infinite mercy be merciful to me, for, if he be not, I am for ever undone, for ever miserable. God be merciful to me, for I have been cruel to myself."

(a) He owns himself a sinner by nature, by practice, guilty before God. Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? The Pharisee denies himself to be a sinner; none of his neighbours can charge him, and he sees no reason to charge himself, with any thing amiss; he is clean, he is pure from sin. But the publican gives himself no other character than that of a sinner, a convicted criminal at God's bar.

(b) He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God, that, and that only, he relies upon. The Pharisee had insisted upon the merit of his fastings and tithes; but the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and flies to mercy as his city of refuge, and takes hold of the horn of that altar. "Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy, mercy."

(c) He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy: "O God, be merciful, be propitious, to me; forgive my sins; be reconciled to me; take me into thy favour; receive me graciously; love me freely." He comes as a beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for hunger. Probably he repeated this prayer with renewed affections, and perhaps said more to the same purport, made a particular confession of his sins, and mentioned the particular mercies he wanted, and waited upon God for; but still this was the burden of the song: God, be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Here is the publican's acceptance with God. We have seen how differently these two addressed themselves to God; it is now worth while to enquire how they sped. There were those who would cry up the Pharisee, by whom he would go to his house applauded, and who would look with contempt upon this sneaking whining publican. But our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, who is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the court of heaven, assures us that this poor, penitent, broken-hearted publican went to his house justified, rather than the other. The Pharisee thought that if one of them must be justified, and not the other, certainly it must be he rather than the publican. "No," saith Christ, "I tell you, I affirm it with the utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the utmost concern, I tell you, it is the publican rather than the Pharisee." The proud Pharisee goes away, rejected of God; his thanksgivings are so far from being accepted that they are an abomination; he is not justified, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he delivered from condemnation: he is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because he is so righteous in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble address to Heaven, obtains the remission of his sins, and he whom the Pharisee would not set with the dogs of his flock God sets with the children of his family. The reason given for this is because God's glory is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble.

1. Proud men, who exalt themselves, are rivals with God, and therefore they shall certainly be abased. God, in his discourse with Job, appeals to this proof that he is God, that he looks upon every one that is proud, and brings him low, Job 40:12.

2. Humble men, who abase themselves, are subject to God, and they shall be exalted. God has preferment in store for those that will take it as a favour, not for those that demand it as a debt. He shall be exalted into the love of God, and communion with him, shall be exalted into a satisfaction in himself, and exalted at last as high as heaven. See how the punishment answers the sin: He that exalteth himself shall be abased. See how the recompence answers the duty: He that humbles himself shall be exalted. See also the power of God's grace in bringing good out of evil; the publican had been a great sinner, and out of the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness of his repentance; out of the eater came forth meat.

See, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in bringing evil out of good. It was good that the Pharisee was no extortioner, nor unjust; but the devil made him proud of this, to his ruin.

Jesus Blesses Little Children

15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

See notes on Mt 19:13-15

16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

The Rich Young Ruler

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

see notes on Mt 19:16-30

20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother.

21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

30 who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

See notes on Mt 20:17-19

32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

33 and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again.

34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

A Blind Beggar Healed near Jericho

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging:

36 and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

See notes on Mt 20:29-34

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

41 saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Luke-19

Jesus and Zaccheus

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

Many, no doubt, were converted to the faith of Christ of whom no account is kept in the gospels; but the conversion of some, whose case had something in it extraordinary, is recorded, as this of Zaccheus. Christ passed through Jericho, Lu 19:1. This city was build under a curse, yet Christ honoured it with his presence, for the gospel takes away the curse. Though it ought not to have been built, yet it was not therefore a sin to live in it when it was built. Christ was now going from the other side Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem, to raise Lazarus to life; when he was going to do one good work he contrived to do many by the way. He did good both to the souls and to the bodies of people; we have here an instance of the former. Observe,

Who, and what, this Zaccheus was. His name bespeaks him a Jew. Zaccai was a common name among the Jews; they had a famous rabbi, much about this time, of that name. Observe,

1. His calling, and the post he was in: He was the chief among the publicans, receiver-general; other publicans were officers under him; he was, as some think, farmer of the customs. We often read of publicans coming to Christ; but here was one that was chief of the publicans, was in authority, that enquired after him. God has his remnant among all sorts. Christ came to save even the chief of publicans.

2. His circumstances in the world were very considerable: He was rich. The inferior publicans were commonly men of broken fortunes, and low in the world; but he that was chief of the publicans had raised a good estate. Christ had lately shown how hard it is for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God, yet presently produces an instance on one rich man

that had been lost, and was found, and that not as the prodigal by being reduced to want.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.

How he came in Christ's way, and what was the occasion of his acquaintance with him.

1. He had a great curiosity to see Jesus, what kind of a man he was, having heard great talk of him, Lu 19:3. It is natural to us to come in sight, if we can, of those whose fame has filled our ears, as being apt to imagine there is something extraordinary in their countenances; at least, we shall be able to say hereafter that we have seen such and such great men. But the eye is not satisfied with seeing. We should now seek to see Jesus with an eye of faith, to see who he is; we should address ourselves in holy ordinances with this in our eye, We would see Jesus.

2. He could not get his curiosity gratified in this matter because he was little, and the crowd was great. Christ did not study to show himself, was not carried on men's shoulders (as the pope is in procession), that all men might see him; neither he nor his kingdom came with observation. He did not ride in an open chariot, as princes do, but, as one of us, he was lost in a crowd; for that was the day of his humiliation. Zaccheus was low of stature, and over-topped by all about him, so that he could not get a sight of Jesus. Many that are little of stature have large souls, and are lively in spirit. Who would not rather be a Zaccheus than a Saul, though he was higher by head and shoulders than all about him? Let not those that are little of stature take thought of adding cubits to it.

3. Because he would not disappoint his curiosity he forgot his gravity, as chief of the publicans, and ran before, like a boy, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree, to see him. Note, Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ will use the proper means for gaining a sight of him, and will break

through a deal of difficulty and opposition, and be willing to take pains to see him. Those that find themselves little must take all the advantages they can get to raise themselves to a sight of Christ, and not be ashamed to own that they need them, and all little enough. Let not dwarfs despair, with good help, by aiming high to reach high.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.

The notice Christ took of him, the call he gave him to a further acquaintance (Lu 19:5), and the efficacy of that call, Lu 19:6.

1. Christ invited himself to Zaccheus's house, not doubting of his hearty welcome there; nay, wherever Christ comes, as he brings his own entertainment along with him, so he brings his own welcome; he opens the heart, and inclines it to receive him. Christ looked up into the tree, and saw Zaccheus. He came to look upon Christ, and resolved to take particular notice of him, but little thought of being taken notice of by Christ. That was an honour too great, and too far above his merit, for him to have any thought of. See how Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness, and outdid his expectations; and see how he encouraged very weak beginnings, and helped them forward. He that had a mind to know Christ shall be known of him; he that only courted to see him shall be admitted to converse with him. Note, Those that are faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more. And sometimes those that come to hear the word of Christ, as Zaccheus did, only for curiosity, beyond what they thought of, have their consciences awakened, and their hearts changed. Christ called him by name, Zaccheus, for he knows his chosen by name; are they not in his book? He might ask, as Nathanael did (Joh 1:48), Whence knowest thou me? But before he climbed the sycamore-tree Christ saw him, and knew him. He bade him make haste, and come down. Those that Christ calls must come down, must humble themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any righteousness of their own; and they must make haste and come down, for delays are dangerous. Zaccheus must not hesitate, but hasten; he knows it is not a matter that needs consideration whether he should welcome such a guest to his house. He must come down, for Christ intends this day to bait at his house, and stay an hour or two with him. Behold, he stands at the door and knocks.

2. Zaccheus was overjoyed to have such an honour put upon his house (Lu 19:6): He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully; and his receiving him into his house was an indication and token of his receiving him into his heart. Note, When Christ calls to us we must make haste to answer his calls; and when he comes to us we must receive him joyfully. Lift up your heads, O ye gates. We may well receive him joyfully who brings all good along with him, and, when he takes possession of the soul, opens springs of joy there which shall flow to eternity. How often has Christ said to us, Open to me, when we have, with the spouse, made excuses! So 5:2,

3. Zaccheus's forwardness to receive Christ will shame us. We have not now Christ to entertain in our houses, but we have his disciples, and what is done to them he takes as done to himself.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

The offence which the people took at this kind greeting between Christ and Zaccheus. Those narrow-souled censorious Jews murmured, saying that he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner, para hamartolo andri--with a sinful man; and were not they themselves sinful men? Was it not Christ's errand into the world to seek and save men that are sinners? But Zaccheus they think to be a sinner above all men that dwelt in Jericho, such a sinner as was not fit to be conversed with. Now this was very unjust to blame Christ for going to his house; for,

1. Though he was a publican, and many of the publicans were bad men, it did not therefore follow that they were all so. We must take heed of condemning men in the lump, or by common fame, for at God's bar every man will be judged as he is.

2. Though he had been a sinner, it did not therefore follow that he was now as bad as he had been; though they knew his past life to be bad, Christ might know his present frame to be good. God allows room for repentance, and so must we.

3. Though he was now a sinner, they ought not to blame Christ for going to him, because he was in no danger of getting hurt by a sinner, but in great hopes of doing good to a sinner; whither should the physician go but to the sick? Yet see how that which is well done may be ill construed.

8 And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

The proofs which Zaccheus gave publicly that, though he had been a sinner, he was now a penitent, and a true convert, Lu 19:8. He does not expect to be justified by his works as the Pharisee who boasted of what he had done, but by his good works he will, through the grace of God, evidence the sincerity of his faith and repentance; and here he declares what his determination was. He made this declaration standing, that he might be seen and heard by those who murmured at Christ for coming to his house; with the mouth confession is made of repentance as well as faith. He stood, which denotes his saying it deliberately and with solemnity, in the nature of a vow to God. He addressed himself to Christ in it, not to the people (they were not to be his judges), but to the Lord, and he stood as it were at his bar. What we do that is good we must do as unto him; we must appeal to him, and approve ourselves to him, in our integrity, in all our good purposes and resolutions. He makes it appear that there is a change in his heart (and that is repentance), for there is a change in his way. His resolutions are of second-table duties; for Christ, upon all occasions, laid great stress on them: and they are such as are suited to his condition and character; for in them will best appear the truth of our repentance.

1. Zaccheus had a good estate, and, whereas he had been in it hitherto laying up treasure for himself, and doing hurt to himself, now he resolves that for the future he will be all towards God, and do good to others with

it: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. Not, "I will give it by my will when I die," but, "I do give it now." Probably he had heard of the command of trial which Christ gave to another rich man to sell what he had, and give to the poor (Mt 19:21), and how he broke with Christ upon it. "But so will not I," saith Zaccheus; "I agree to it at the first word; though hitherto I have been uncharitable to the poor, now I will relieve them, and give so much the more for having neglected the duty so long, even the half of my goods." This is a very large proportion to be set apart for works of piety and charity. The Jews used to say that a fifth part of a man's income yearly was very fair to be given to pious uses, and about that share the law directed; but Zaccheus would go much further, and give one moiety to the poor, which would oblige him to retrench all his extravagant expenses, as his retrenching these would enable him to relieve many with his superfluities. If we were but more temperate and self-denying, we should be more charitable; and, were we content with less ourselves, we should have the more to give to them that need. This he mentions here as a fruit of his repentance. Note, It well becomes converts to God to be charitable to the poor.

2. Zaccheus was conscious to himself that he had not gotten all he had honestly and fairly, but some by indirect and unlawful means, and of what he had gotten by such means he promises to make restitution: "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, or if I have wronged any man in the way of my business as a publican, exacting more than was appointed, I promise to restore him four-fold." This was the restitution that a thief was to make, Ex 22:1.

(a) He seems plainly to own that he had done wrong; his office, as a publican, gave him opportunity to do wrong, imposing upon the merchants to curry favour with the government. True penitents will own themselves not only in general guilty before God, but will particularly reflect upon that which has been their own iniquity, and which, by reason of their business and employment in the world, has most easily beset them.

(b) That he had done wrong by false accusation; this was the temptation of the publicans, which John Baptist had warned them of particularly, Lu

3:14. They had the ear of the government, and every thing would be stretched in favour of the revenue, which gave them an opportunity of gratifying their revenge if they bore a man an ill will.

(c) He promises to restore four-fold, as far as he could recollect or find by his books that he had wronged any man. He does not say, "If I be sued, and compelled to it, I will make restitution" (some are honest when they cannot help it); but he will do it voluntarily: It shall be my own act and deed. Note, Those who are convinced of having done wrong cannot evidence the sincerity of their repentance but by making restitution. Observe, He does not think that his giving half his estate to the poor will atone for the wrong he has done. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and we must first do justly and then love mercy. It is no charity, but hypocrisy, to give that which is none of our own; and we are not to reckon that our own which we have not come honestly by, nor that our own which is not so when all our debts are paid, and restitution made for wrong done.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

Christ's approbation and acceptance of Zaccheus's conversion, by which also he cleared himself from any imputation in going to be a guest with him, Lu 19:9,10.

1. Zaccheus is declared to be now a happy man. Now he is turned from sin to God; now he has bidden Christ welcome to his house, and is become an honest, charitable, good man: This day is salvation come to this house. Now that he is converted he is in effect saved, saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his. Christ is come to his house, and, where Christ comes, he brings salvation along with him. He is, and will be, the Author of eternal salvation to all that own him as Zaccheus did. Yet this is not all. Salvation this day comes to his house.

(a) When Zaccheus becomes a convert, he will be, more than he had been, a blessing to his house. He will bring the means of grace and salvation to his house, for he is a son of Abraham indeed now, and therefore, like Abraham, will teach his household to keep the way of the Lord. He that is

greedy of gain troubles his own house, and brings a curse upon it (Hab 2:9), but he that is charitable to the poor does a kindness to his own house, and brings a blessing upon it and salvation to it, temporal at least, Ps 112:3.

(b) When Zaccheus is brought to Christ himself his family also become related to Christ, and his children are admitted members of his church, and so salvation comes to his house, for that he is a son of Abraham, and therefore interested in God's covenant with Abraham, that blessing of Abraham which comes upon the publicans, upon the Gentiles, through faith, that God will be a God to them and to their children; and therefore, when he believes, salvation comes to his house, as the gaoler's to whom it was said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house, Ac 16:31. Zaccheus is by birth a son of Abraham, but, being a publican, he was deemed a heathen; they are put upon a level, Mt 18:17. And as such the Jews were shy of conversing with him, and expected Christ should be so; but he shows that, being a true penitent, he is become rectus in curia--upright in court, as good a son of Abraham as if he had never been an publican, which therefore ought not to be mentioned against him.

2. What Christ had done to make him, in particular, a happy man, was consonant to the great design and intention of his coming into the world, Lu 19:10. With the same argument he had before justified his conversing with publicans, Mt 9:13. There he pleaded that he came to call sinners to repentance; now that he came to seek and save that which was lost, to apololos--the lost thing. Observe,

(a) The deplorable case of the sons of men: they were lost; and here the whole race of mankind is spoken of as one body. Note, The whole world of mankind, by the fall, is become a lost world: lost as a city is lost when it has revolted to the rebels, as a traveller is lost when he has missed his way in a wilderness, as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable, or as a prisoner is lost when sentence is passed upon him.

(b) The gracious design of the Son of God: he came to seek and save, to seek in order to saving. He came from heaven to earth (a long journey), to seek that which was lost (which had wandered and gone astray), and to

bring it back (Mt 18:11,12), and to save that which was lost, which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ undertook the cause when it was given up for lost: undertook to bring those to themselves that were lost to God and all goodness. Observe, Christ came into this lost world to seek and save it. His design was to save, when there was not salvation in any other. In prosecution of that design, he sought, took all probable means to effect that salvation. He seeks those that were not worth seeking to; he seeks those that sought him not, and asked not for him, as Zaccheus here.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

The Parable of the Ten Pounds

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

From fifteen to twenty miles away. The crowd thought that when he reached Jerusalem "his kingdom would immediately appear"; an earthly kingdom like that of David. The parable that follows was spoken, in part, to correct that idea.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

While this parable is much like that of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30 Mr 13:34-36), it is a different one in many particulars; spoken elsewhere, for a different purpose.

To receive for himself a kingdom. As Christ would leave the earth and ascend to heaven before he would receive his kingdom.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to

whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

> The ascent begins at Jericho, and about 3,000 feet has to be climbed before the city is reached. The account of the royal entrance into Jerusalem is given in Mt 21:1-16 Mr 11:1-11 Joh 12:12-19. See the notes on Matthew.

29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

30 saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

38 saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord:

peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

42 saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

The great Ambassador from heaven is here making his public entry into Jerusalem, not to be respected there, but to be rejected; he knew what a nest of vipers he was throwing himself into, and yet see here two instances of his love to that place and his concern for it.

The tears he shed for the approaching ruin of the city (Lu 19:41): When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it. Probably, it was when he was coming down the descent of the hill from the mount of Olives, where he had a full view of the city, the large extent of it, and the many stately structures in it, and his eye affected his heart, and his heart his eye again. See here,

1. What a tender spirit Christ was of; we never read that he laughed, but we often find him in tears. In this very place his father David wept, and those that were with him, though he and they were men of war. There are cases in which it is no disparagement to the stoutest of men to melt into tears.

2. That Jesus Christ wept in the midst of his triumphs, wept when all about him were rejoicing, to show how little he was elevated with the applause and acclamation of the people. Thus he would teach us to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not. If Providence do not stain the beauty of our triumphs, we may ourselves see cause to sully it with our sorrows.

3. That he wept over Jerusalem. Note, There are cities to be wept over, and none to be more lamented than Jerusalem, that had been the holy city, and the joy of the whole earth, if it be degenerated. But why did Christ weep at the sight of Jerusalem? Was it because "Yonder is the city in which I must be betrayed and bound, scourged and spit upon, condemned and crucified?" No, he himself gives us the reason of his tears.

(a) Jerusalem has not improved the day of her opportunities. He wept, and said, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, if thou wouldst but yet know, while the gospel is preached to thee, and salvation offered thee by it; if thou wouldest at length bethink thyself, and understand the things that belong to thy peace, the making of thy peace with God, and the securing of thine own spiritual and eternal welfare--but thou dost not know the day of thy visitation, Lu 19:44. The manner of speaking is abrupt: If thou hadst known! O that thou hadst, so some take it; like that O that my people had hearkened unto me, Ps 81:13,Isa 48:18. Or, If thou hadst known, well; like that of the fig-tree, Lu 13:9. How happy had it been for thee! Or, "If thou hadst known, thou wouldest have wept for thyself, and I should have no occasion to weep for thee, but should have rejoiced rather." What he says lays all the blame of Jerusalem's impending ruin upon herself.

Note,

[1.] There are things which belong to our peace, which we are all concerned to know and understand; the way how peace is made, the offers made of peace, the terms on which we may have the benefit of peace. The things that belong to our peace are those things that relate to our present and future welfare; these we must know with application.

[2.] There is a time of visitation when those things which belong to our peace may be known by us, and known to good purpose. When we enjoy the means of grace in great plenty, and have the word of God powerfully preached to us--when the Spirit strives with us, and our own consciences are startled and awakened--then is the time of visitation, which we are concerned to improve.

[3.] With those that have long neglected the time of their visitation, if at length, if at last, in this their day, their eyes be opened, and they bethink themselves, all will be well yet. Those shall not be refused that come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour.

[4.] It is the amazing folly of multitudes that enjoy the means of grace, and it will be of fatal consequence to them, that they do not improve the day of their opportunities. The things of their peace are revealed to them, but are not minded or regarded by them; they hide their eyes from them, as if they were not worth taking notice of. They are not aware of the accepted time and the day of salvation, and to let it slip and perish through mere carelessness. None are so blind as those that will not see; nor have any the things of their peace more certainly hidden from their eyes than those that turn their back upon them.

[5.] The sin and folly of those that persist in a contempt of gospel grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and should be so to us. He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls, that continue impenitent, and run headlong upon their own ruin; he had rather that they would turn and live than go on and die, for he is not willing that any should perish.

(b) Jerusalem cannot escape the day of her desolation. The things of her peace are now in a manner hidden from her eyes; they will be shortly. Not but that after this the gospel was preached to them by the apostles; all the house of Israel were called to know assuredly that Christ was their peace (Ac 2:36), and multitudes were convinced and converted. But as to the body of the nation, and the leading part of it, they were sealed up under unbelief; God had given them the spirit of slumber, Ro 11:8. They were so prejudiced and enraged against the gospel, and those few that did embrace it then, that nothing less than a miracle of divine grace (like that which converted Paul) would work upon them; and it could not be expected that such a miracle should be wrought, and so they were justly given up to judicial blindness and hardness. The peaceful things are not hidden from the eyes of particular persons; but it is too late to think now of the nation of the Jews, as such, becoming a Christian nation, by embracing Christ. And therefore they are marked for ruin, which Christ here foresees and foretels, as the certain consequence of their rejecting Christ. Note, Neglecting the great salvation of ten brings temporal judgments upon a people; it did so upon Jerusalem in less than forty years after this, when all that Christ here foretold was exactly fulfilled.

[1.] The Romans besieged the city, cast a trench about it, compassed it round, and kept their inhabitants in on every side. Josephus relates that Titus ran up a wall in a very short time, which surrounded the city, and cut off all hopes of escaping.

[2.] They laid it even with the ground. Titus commanded his soldiers to dig up the city, and the whole compass of it was levelled, except three towers; see Josephus's history of the wars of the Jews, 5. 356-360; 7. 1. Not only the city, but the citizens were laid even with the ground (thy children within thee), by the cruel slaughters that were made of them: and there was scarcely one stone left upon another. This was for their crucifying Christ; this was because they knew not the day of their visitation. Let other cities and nations take warning.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

44 and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

The Cleansing of the Temple

45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

46 saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer;
but ye have made it a den of thieves.

See notes on Mt 21:12-15

47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,

48 and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

Luke-20

Jesus' Authority Questioned

1 And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders,

2 and spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things ? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

See notes on Mt 21:23-27

3 And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing;
and answer me:

4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not ?

6 But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

7 And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.

8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

See notes on Mt 21:33-46

10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.

12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected,
the same is become the head of the corner?

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

see notes on Mt 22:15-22

21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no ?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marveled at his answer, and held their peace.

The Question about the Resurrection

27 Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him,

28 saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

see notes on Mt 22:23-33

29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died.

32 Last of all the woman died also.

33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.

34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

35 but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

36 neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels;
and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.
37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he
calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God
of Jacob.
38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.
39 Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said.
40 And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

The Question about David's Son

41 And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son?
42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my
Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
43 till I make thine enemies thy footstool.
44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?

See notes on Mt 22:41-46

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,

See notes on Mt 23

46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love
greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the
chief rooms at feasts;
47 which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers:
the same shall receive greater damnation.

Luke-21

The Widow's Offering

1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the
treasury.

see Mr 12:41-44.

2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

4 for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs before the End

5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

See notes on Math 24

7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified : for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11 and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

See notes on Math 24

17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

18 But there shall not a hair of your head perish.

19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

The Coming of the Son of Man

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26 men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

30 when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

See notes on Math 24

31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

33 Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.

34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

37 And in the daytime he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Luke-22

The Plot against Jesus

1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover.

See Mt 26:1-5.

2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him;
for they feared the people.

3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

See notes on Mt 26:14-16.

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Jesus Eats the Passover with His Disciples

7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.

8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare ?

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

> see notes on Mt 26:17-19.

11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

> There are four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper: Mt 26:26-30 Mr 14:22-25 1Co 11:23-25. See notes on Matthew.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

The incident concerning the betrayal mentioned in these verses occurred before the Lord's Supper was eaten (Mt 26:21). It seems probable, from Joh 13:21-35, that Judas left before the supper On this passage, see notes on Mt 26:21-25.

22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

23 And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

The Dispute about Greatness

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

This contention probably arose while they were taking seats for the paschal meal, each seeking the chief place. It was rebuked by the Lord washing their feet (Joh 13:3-5). See notes on Mt 18:1-4.

25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth ? is not he that sitteth at meat ? but I am among you as he that serveth.

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

30 that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Peter's Denial Foretold

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Simon, Simon. For the warning to Peter of his Denial of the Lord, see Mt 26:31-35.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Purse, Scrip, and Sword

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

See Mt 10:9-15

Concerning the condition of all the disciples.

He appeals to them concerning what had been, Lu 22:35. He had owned that they had been faithful servants to him, Lu 22:28. Now he expects, at parting, that they should acknowledge that he had been a kind and careful Master to them ever since they left all to follow him: When I sent you without purse, lacked you any thing?

(a) He owns that he had sent them out in a very poor and bare condition, barefoot, and with no money in their purses, because they were not to go far, nor be out long; and he would thus teach them to depend upon the providence of God, and, under that, upon the kindness of their friends. If God thus send us out into the world, let us remember that better than we have thus begun low.

(b) Yet ye will have them own that, notwithstanding this, they had lacked nothing; they then lived as plentifully and comfortably as ever; and they readily acknowledged it: "Nothing, Lord; I have all, and abound."

Note,

[1.] It is good for us often to review the providences of God that have been concerning us all our days, and to observe how we have got through the straits and difficulties we have met with.

[2.] Christ is a good Master, and his service a good service; for though his servants may sometimes be brought low, yet he will help them; and though he try them, yet will he not leave them. Jehovah-jireh.

[3.] We must reckon ourselves well done by, and must not complain, but be thankful, if we have had the necessary supports of life, though we have had neither dainties nor superfluities, though we have lived from hand to mouth, and lived upon the kindness of our friends. The disciples lived upon contribution, and yet did not complain that their maintenance was precarious, but owned, to their Master's honour, that it was sufficient; they had wanted nothing.

2. He gives them notice of a very great change of their circumstances now approaching.

For,

(a) He that was their Master was now entering upon his sufferings, which he had often foretold (Lu 22:37): "Now that which is written must be fulfilled in me, and this among the rest, He was numbered among the transgressors-- he must suffer and die as a malefactor, and in company with some of the vilest of malefactors. This is that which is yet to be accomplished, after all the rest, and then the things concerning me, the things written concerning me, will have an end; then I shall say, It is finished." Note, It may be the comfort of suffering Christians, as it was of a suffering Christ, that their sufferings were foretold, and determined in the counsels of heaven, and will shortly determine in the joys of heaven. They were written concerning them, and they will have an end, and will end well, everlastingly well.

(b) They must therefore expect troubles, and must not think now to have such an easy and comfortable life as they had had; no, the scene will alter.

They must now in some degree suffer with their Master; and, when he is gone, they must expect to suffer like him. The servant is not better than his Lord.

[1.] They must not now expect that their friends would be so kind and generous to them as they had been; and therefore, He that has a purse, let him take it, for he may have occasion for it, and for all the good husbandry he can use.

[2.] They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce upon them than they had been, and they would need magazines as well as stores: He that has no sword wherewith to defend himself against robbers and assassins (2Co 11:26) will find a great want of it, and will be ready to wish, some time or other, that he had sold his garment and bought one. This is intended only to show that the times would be very perilous, so that no man would think himself safe if he had not a sword by his side. But the sword of the Spirit is the sword which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves with. Christ having suffered for us, we must arm ourselves with the same mind (1Pe 4:1), arm ourselves with an expectation of trouble, that it may not be a surprise to us, and with a holy resignation to the will of God in it, that there may be no opposition in us to it: and then we are better prepared than if we had sold a coat to buy a sword. The disciples hereupon enquire what strength they had, and find they had among them two swords (Lu 22:38), of which one was Peter's. The Galileans generally travelled with swords. Christ wore none himself, but he was not against his disciples' wearing them. But he intimates how little he would have them depend upon this when he saith, It is enough, which some think is spoken ironically: "Two swords among twelve men! you are bravely armed indeed when our enemies are now coming out against us in great multitudes, and every one with a sword!" Yet two swords are sufficient for those who need none, having God himself to be the shield of their help and the sword of their excellency, De 33:29.

36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

Jesus Prays in the Garden

39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

see notes on Mt 26:36-46

40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

42 saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

46 and said unto them, Why sleep ye ? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

see notes on Mt 26:47-56

48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss ?

49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword ?

50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Peter Denies Jesus

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

See notes on Mt 26:69-75

55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean.

60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Jesus Mocked and Beaten

63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.

64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee ?

65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

Jesus before the Council

66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying,

67 Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:

68 and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.

See notes on Mt 26:57-68.

69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God ? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

71 And they said, What need we any further witness ? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

Luke-23

Jesus before Pilate

1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king.

See notes on Mt 27:1-10.

3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

Jesus before Herod

6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean.

7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14 said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

15 no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:

19 (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

See notes on Mt 27:15-26

22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified: and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

The Crucifixion

26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

See notes on Mt 27:32-56

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

32 And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

37 and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the king of the jews.

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

The Burial of Jesus

50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor; and he was a good man, and a just:

51 (the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them:) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

see notes on Mt 27:57-61

52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

Luke-24

The Resurrection

1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

See notes on Mt 28:1-10.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

9 and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

The Walk to Emmaus

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

This appearance of Christ to the two disciples going to Emmaus was mentioned, and but just mentioned, before (Mk 16:12); here it is largely related. It happened the same day that Christ rose, the first day of the new world that rose with him. One of these two disciples was Cleopas or Alpheus, said by the ancients to be the brother of Joseph, Christ's supposed father; who the other was is not certain. Some think it was Peter; it should seem indeed that Christ did appear particularly to Peter that day, which the eleven spoke of among themselves (Lu 24:34), and Paul mentions, 1Co 15:5. But it could not be Peter that was one of the two, for he was one of the eleven to whom the two returned; and, besides, we know Peter so well as to think that if he had been one of the two he would have been the chief speaker, and not Cleopas. It was one of those that were associated with the eleven, mentioned Lu 24:9. Now in this passage of story we may observe,

The walk and talk of these two disciples: They went to a village called Emmaus, which is reckoned to be about two hours' walk from Jerusalem; it is here said to be about sixty furlongs, seven measured miles, Lu 24:13. Whether they went thither upon business, or to see some friend, does not appear. I suspect that they were going homewards to Galilee, with an intention not to enquire more after this Jesus; that they were meditating a retreat, and stole away from their company without asking leave or taking leave; for the accounts brought them that morning of their Master's resurrection seemed to them as idle tales; and, if so, no wonder that they began to think of making the best of their way home. But as they travelled

they talked together of all those things which had happened, Lu 24:14. They had not courage to confer of these things, and consult what was to be done in the present juncture at Jerusalem, for fear of the Jews; but, when they were got out of the hearing of the Jews, they could talk it over with more freedom. They talked over these things, reasoning with themselves concerning the probabilities of Christ's resurrection; for, according as these appeared, they would either go forward or return back to Jerusalem. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are together, to talk of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up one another's devout affections.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

The good company they met with upon the road, when Jesus himself came, and joined himself to them (Lu 24:15): They communed together, and reasoned, and perhaps were warm at the argument, one hoping that their Master was risen, and would set up his kingdom, the other despairing. Jesus himself drew near, as a stranger who, seeing them travel the same way that he went, told them that he should be glad of their company. We may observe it, for our encouragement to keep up Christian conference and edifying discourse among us, that where but two together are well employed in work of that kind Christ will come to them, and make a third. When they that fear the Lord speak one to another the Lord hearkens and hears, and is with them of a truth; so that two thus twisted in faith and love become a threefold cord, not easily broken, Ec 4:12. They in their communings and reasonings together were searching for Christ, comparing notes concerning him, that they might come to more knowledge of him; and now Christ comes to them. Note, They who seek Christ shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that enquire after him, and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. When the spouse enquired of the watchman concerning her beloved, it was but a little that she passed from them, but she found him. So 3:4. But, though they had Christ with them, they were not at first aware of it (Lu 24:16): Their eyes were held, that they should not know him. It should seem, there were both an alteration of the object (for it is said in Mark that now he appeared in another form) and a restraint upon

the organ (for here it is said that their eyes were held by a divine power); or, as some think, there was a confusion in the medium; the air was so disposed that they could not discern who it was. No matter how it was, but so it was they did not know him, Christ so ordering it that they might the more freely discourse with him and he with them, and that it might appear that his word, and the influence of it, did not depend upon his bodily presence, which the disciples had too much doted upon, and must be weaned from; but he could teach them, and warm their hearts, by others, who should have his spiritual presence with them, and should have his grace going along with them unseen.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

The conference that was between Christ and them, when he knew them, and they knew not him. Now Christ and his disciples, as is usual when friends meet incognito, or in a disguise, are here crossing questions.

1. Christ's first question to them is concerning their present sadness, which plainly appeared in their countenances: What manner of communications are those that you have one with another as you walk, and are sad? Lu 24:17. It is a very kind and friendly enquiry. Observe,

(a) They were sad; it appeared to a stranger that they were so.

[1.] They had lost their dear Master, and were, in their own apprehensions, quite disappointed in their expectations from him. They had given up the cause, and knew not what course to take to retrieve it. Note, Christ's disciples have reason to be sad when he withdraws from them, to fast when the Bridegroom is taken from them.

[2.] Though he was risen from the dead, yet either they did not know it or did not believe it, and so they were still in sorrow. Note, Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful even when they have reason to rejoice, but through the weakness of their faith they cannot take the comfort that is offered to them.

[3.] Being sad, they had communications one with another concerning Christ. Note, First, It becomes Christians to talk of Christ. Were our hearts as full of him, and of what he has done and suffered for us, as they should be, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak, not only of God and his providence, but of Christ and his grace and love. Secondly, Good company and good converse are an excellent antidote against prevailing melancholy. When Christ's disciples were sad they did not each one get by himself, but continued as he sent them out, two and two, for two are better than one, especially in times of sorrow. Giving vent to the grief may perhaps give ease to the grieved; and by talking it over we may talk ourselves or our friends may talk us into a better frame. Joint mourners should be mutual comforters; comforts sometimes come best from such.

(b) Christ came up to them, and enquired into the matter of their talk, and the cause of their grief: What manner of communications are these? Though Christ had now entered into his state of exaltation, yet he continued tender of his disciples, and concerned for their comfort. He speaks as one troubled to see their melancholy: Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? Ge 40:7. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions. Christ has hereby taught us,

[1.] To be conversable. Christ here fell into discourse with two grave serious persons, though he was a stranger to them and they knew him not, and they readily embraced him. It does not become Christians to be morose and shy, but to take pleasure in good society.

[2.] We are hereby taught to be compassionate. When we see our friends in sorrow and sadness, we should, like Christ here, take cognizance of their grief, and give them the best counsel and comfort we can: Weep with them that weep.

2. In answer to this, they put a question to him concerning his strangeness. Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days? Observe,

(a) Cleopas gave him a civil answer. He does not rudely ask him. "As for what we are talking of, what is that to you?" and bid him go about his business. Note, We ought to be civil to those who are civil to us, and to conduct ourselves obligingly to all, both in word and deed. It was a dangerous time now with Christ's disciples; yet he was not jealous of this stranger, that he had any design upon them, to inform against them, or bring them into trouble. Charity is not forward to think evil, no, not of strangers.

(b) He is full of Christ himself and of his death and sufferings, and wonders that every body else is not so too: "What! art thou such a stranger in Jerusalem as not to know what has been done to our Master there?" Note, Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem that know not of the death and sufferings of Christ. What! are they daughters of Jerusalem, and yet so little acquainted with Christ as to ask, What is thy beloved more than another beloved?

(c) He is very willing to inform this stranger concerning Christ, and to draw on further discourse with him upon this subject. He would not have any one that had the face of a man to be ignorant of Christ. Note, Those who have themselves the knowledge of Christ crucified should do what they can to spread that knowledge, and lead others into an acquaintance with him. And it is observable that these disciples, who were so forward to instruct the stranger, were instructed by him; for to him that has, and uses what he has, shall be given.

(d) It appears, by what Cleopas says, that the death of Christ made a great noise in Jerusalem, so that it could not be imagined that any man should be such a stranger in the city as not to know of it; it was all the talk of the town, and discoursed of in all companies. Thus the matter of fact came to be universally known, which, after the pouring out of the Spirit, was to be explained.

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

Christ, by way of reply, asked concerning their knowledge (Lu 24:19): He said unto them, What things? thus making himself yet more a stranger. Observe,

(a) Jesus Christ made light of his own sufferings, in comparison with the joy set before him, which was the recompence of it. Now that he was entering upon his glory, see with what unconcernedness he looks back upon his sufferings: What things? He had reason to know what things; for to him they were bitter things, and heavy things, and yet he asks, What things? The sorrow was forgotten, for joy that the man-child of our salvation was born. He took pleasure in infirmities for our sakes, to teach us to do so for his sake.

(b) Those whom Christ will teach he will first examine how far they have learned; they must tell him what things they know, and then he will tell them what was the meaning of these things. and lead them into the mystery of them.

4. They, hereupon, gave him a particular account concerning Christ, and the present posture of his affairs. Observe the story they tell, Lu 24:19, &c.

(a) Here is a summary of Christ's life and character. The things they are full of are concerning Jesus of Nazareth (so he was commonly called), who was a prophet, a teacher come from God. He preached a true and excellent doctrine, which had manifestly its rise from heaven, and its tendency towards heaven. He confirmed it by many glorious miracles, miracles of mercy, so that he was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; that is, he was both a great favourite of heaven and a great blessing to this earth. He was, and appeared to be, greatly beloved of God, and much the darling of his people. He had great acceptance with God, and a great reputation in the country. Many are great before all the

people, and are caressed by them, who are not so before God, as the scribes and Pharisees; but Christ was mighty both in his doctrine and in his doings, before God and all the people. Those were strangers in Jerusalem that did not know this.

(b) Here is a modest narrative of his sufferings and death, Lu 24:20. "Though he was so dear both to God and man, yet the chief priests and our rulers, in contempt of both, delivered him to the Roman power, to be condemned to death, and they have crucified him." It is strange that they did not aggravate the matter more, and lay a greater load upon those that had been guilty of crucifying Christ; but perhaps because they spoke to one that was a stranger they thought it prudent to avoid all reflections upon the chief priests and their rulers, how just soever.

(c) Here is an intimation of their disappointment in him, as the reason of their sadness: "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel, Lu 24:21. We are of those who not only looked upon him to be a prophet, like Moses, but, like him, a redeemer too." He was depended upon, and great things expected from him, by them that looked for redemption, and in it for the consolation of Israel. Now, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, hope disappointed, especially such a hope, kills the heart. But see how they made that the ground of their despair which if they had understood it aright was the surest ground of their hope, and that was the dying of the Lord Jesus: We trusted (say they) that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel. And is it not he that doth redeem Israel? Nay, is he not by his death paying the price of their redemption? Was it not necessary, in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer? Sop that now, since that most difficult part of his undertaking was got over, they had more reason than ever to trust that this was he that should deliver Israel; yet now they are ready to give up the cause.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

Here is an account of their present amazement with reference to his resurrection.

[1.] "This is the third day since he was crucified and died, and that was the day when it was expected, if ever, that he should rise again, and rise in glory and outward pomp, and show himself as publicly in honour as he had been shown three days before in disgrace; but we see no sign of it; nothing appears, as we expected, to the conviction and confusion of his prosecutors, and the consolation of his disciples, but all is silent."

[2.] They own that there was a report among them that he was risen, but they seem to speak of it very slightly, and as what they gave no credit at all to (Lu 24:22,23): "Certain women also of our company made us astonished (and that was all), who were early at the sepulchre, and found the body gone, and they said that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive; but we are ready to think it was only their fancy, and no real thing, for angels would have been sent to the apostles, not to the women, and women are easily imposed upon."

[3.] They acknowledge that some of the apostles had visited the sepulchre, and found it empty, Lu 24:24. "But him they saw not, and therefore we have reason to fear that he is not risen, for, if he be, surely he would have shown himself to them; so that, upon the whole matter, we have no great reason to think that he is risen, and therefore have no expectations from him now; our hopes were all nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave."

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Our Lord Jesus, though not known by face to them, makes himself known to them by his word.

He reproves them for their incogitancy, and the weakness of their faith in the scriptures of the Old Testament: O fools, and slow of heart to believe, Lu 24:25. When Christ forbade us to say to our brother, Thou fool, it was

intended to restrain us from giving unreasonable reproaches, not from giving just reproofs. Christ called them fools, not as it signifies wicked men, in which sense he forbade it to us, but as it signifies weak men. He might call them fools, for he knows our foolishness, the foolishness that is bound in our hearts. Those are fools that act against their own interest; so they did who would not admit the evidence given them that their Master was risen, but put away the comfort of it. That which is condemned in them as their foolishness is, First, Their slowness to believe. Believers are branded as fools by atheists, and infidels, and free-thinkers, and their most holy faith is censured as a fond credulity; but Christ tells us that those are fools who are slow of heart to believe, and are kept from it by prejudices never impartially examined. Secondly, Their slowness to believe the writings of the prophets. He does not so much blame them for their slowness to believe the testimony of the women and of the angels, but for that which was the cause thereof, their slowness to believe the prophets; for, if they had given the prophets of the Old Testament their due weight and consideration, they would have been as sure of Christ's rising from the dead that morning (being the third day after his death) as they were of the rising of the sun; for the series and succession of events as settled by prophecy are no less certain and inviolable than as settled by providence. Were we but more conversant with the scripture, and the divine counsels as far as they are made known in the scripture, we should not be subject to such perplexities as we often entangle ourselves in.

26 ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

He shows them that the sufferings of Christ, which were such a stumbling-block to them, and made them unapt to believe his glory, were really the appointed way to his glory, and he could not go to it any other way (Lu 24:26): "Ought not the Christ (the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Was it not decreed, and was not that decree declared, that the promised Messiah must first suffer and then reign, that he must go by his cross to his crown?" Had they never read the fifty-third of Isaiah and the ninth of Daniel, where the prophets speak so very plainly of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow? 1Pe 1:11. The cross of Christ was that to which they could not reconcile themselves; now here he shows them two things which take off

the offence of the cross:--First, That the Messiah ought to suffer these things; and therefore his sufferings were not only no objection against his being the Messiah, but really a proof of it, as the afflictions of the saints are an evidence of their sonship; and they were so far from ruining their expectations that really they were the foundation of their hopes. He could not have been a Saviour, if he had not been a sufferer. Christ's undertaking our salvation was voluntary; but, having undertaken it, it was necessary that he should suffer and die. Secondly, That, when he had suffered these things, he should enter into his glory, which he did at his resurrection; that was his first step upward. Observe, It is called his glory, because he was duly entitled to it, and it was the glory he had before the world was; he ought to enter into it, for in that, as well as in his sufferings, the scripture must be fulfilled. He ought to suffer first, and then to enter into his glory; and thus the reproach of the cross is for ever rolled away, and we are directed to expect the crown of thorns and then that of glory.

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

He expounded to them the scriptures of the Old Testament, which spoke of the Messiah, and showed them how they were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and now can tell them more concerning him than they could before tell him (Lu 24:27): Beginning at Moses, the first inspired writer of the Old Testament, he went in order through all the prophets, and expounded to them the things concerning himself, showing that the sufferings he had now gone through were so far from defeating the prophecies of the scripture concerning him that they were the accomplishment of them. He began at Moses, who recorded the first promise, in which it was plainly foretold that the Messiah should have his heel bruised, but that by it the serpent's head should be incurably broken.

Note,

First, There are things dispersed throughout all the scriptures concerning Christ, which it is of great advantage to have collected and put together. You cannot go far in any part of scripture but you meet with something that has reference to Christ, some prophecy, some promise, some prayer, some type or other; for he is the true treasure his in the field of the Old

Testament. A golden thread of gospel grace runs through the whole web of the Old Testament. There is an eye of that white to be discerned in every place.

Secondly, The things concerning Christ need to be expounded. The eunuch, though a scholar, would not pretend to understand them, except some man should guide him (Ac 8:31); for they were delivered darkly, according to that dispensation: but now that the veil is taken away the New Testament expounds the Old.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is himself the best expositor of scripture, particularly the scriptures concerning himself; and even after his resurrection it was in this way that he led people into the knowledge of the mystery concerning himself; not by advancing new notions independent upon the scripture, but by showing how the scripture was fulfilled, and turning them over to the study of it. Even the Apocalypse itself is but a second part of the Old-Testament prophecies, and has continually an eye to them. If men believe not Moses and the prophets, they are incurable. Fourthly, In studying the scriptures, it is good to be methodical, and to take them in order; for the Old-Testament light shone gradually to the perfect day, and it is good to observe how at sundry times, and in divers manners (subsequent predictions improving and giving light to the preceding ones), God spoke to the fathers concerning his Son, by whom he has now spoken to us. Some begin their bible at the wrong end, who study the Revelation first; but Christ has here taught us to begin at Moses. Thus far the conference between them.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

Here is the discovery which Christ at length made of himself to them. One would have given a great deal for a copy of the sermon Christ preached to them by the way, of that exposition of the bible which he gave them; but it is not thought fit that we should have it, we have the substance of it in other scriptures. The disciples are so charmed with it, that they think they are come too soon to their journey's end; but so it is: They drew nigh to the village whither they went (Lu 24:28), where, it should seem, they determined to take up for that night. And now,

They courted his stay with them: He made as though he would have gone further; he did not say that he would, but he seemed to them to be going further, and did not readily turn into their friend's house, which it would not be decent for a stranger to do unless he were invited. He would have gone further if they had not courted his stay; so that here was nothing like dissimulation in the case. If a stranger be shy, every one knows the meaning of it; he will not thrust himself rudely upon your house or company; but, if you make it appear that you are freely desirous of him for your guest or companion, he knows not but he may accept your invitation, and this was all that Christ did when he made as though he would have gone further. Note, Those that would have Christ dwell with them must invite him, and be importunate with him; though he is often found of those that seek him not, yet those only that seek can be sure to find; and, if he seem to draw off from us, it is but to draw out our importunity; as here, they constrained him; both of them laid hold on him, with a kind and friendly violence, saying, Abide with us. Note, Those that have experienced the pleasure and profit of communion with Christ cannot but covet more of his company, and beg of him, not only to walk with them all day, but to abide with them at night. When the day is far spent, and it is towards evening, we begin to think of retiring for our repose, and then it is proper to have our eye to Christ, and to beg of him to abide with us, to manifest himself to us and to fill our minds with good thoughts of him and good affections to him. Christ yielded to their importunity: He went in, to tarry with them. Thus ready is Christ to give further instructions and comforts to those who improve what they have received. He has promised that if any man open the door, to bid him welcome, he will come in to him, Re 3:20.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

He manifested himself to them, Lu 24:30,31. We may suppose that he continued his discourse with them, which he began upon the road; for thou must talk of the things of God when thou sittest in the house as well as when thou walkest by the way. While supper was getting ready (which perhaps was soon done, the provision was so small and mean), it is probable that he entertained them with such communications as were

good and to the use of edifying; and so likewise as they sat at meat his lips fed them. But still they little thought that it was Jesus himself that was all this while talking with them, till at length he was pleased to throw off his disguise, and then to withdraw.

(a) They began to suspect it was he, when, as they sat down to meat, he undertook the office of the Master of the feast, which he performed so like himself, and like what he used to do among his disciples, that by it they discerned him: He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. This he did with his usual air both of authority and affection, with the same gestures and mien, with the same expressions perhaps in craving a blessing and in giving the bread to them. This was not a miraculous meal like that of the five loaves, nor a sacramental meal like that of the eucharist, but a common meal; yet Christ here did the same as he did in those, to teach us to keep up our communion with God through Christ in common providences as well as in special ordinances, and to crave a blessing and give thanks at every meal, and to see our daily bread provided for us and broken to us by the hand of Jesus Christ, the Master, not only of the great family, but of all our families. Wherever we sit down to eat, let us set Christ at the upper end of the table, take our meat as blessed to us by him, and eat and drink to his glory, and receive contentedly and thankfully what he is pleased to carve out to us, be the fare ever so coarse and mean. We may well receive it cheerfully, if we can by faith see it coming to us from Christ's hand, and with his blessing.

(b) Presently their eyes were opened, and then they saw who it was, and knew him well enough. Whatever it was which had hitherto concealed him from them, it was now taken out of the way; the mists were scattered, the veil was taken off, and then they made no question but it was their Master. He might, for wise and holy ends, put on the shape of another, but no other could put on his; and therefore it must be he. See how Christ by his Spirit and grace makes himself known to the souls of his people.

[1.] He opens the scriptures to them, for they are they which testify of him to those who search them, and search for him in them.

[2.] He meets them at his table, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and commonly there makes further discoveries of himself to them, is known to them in the breaking of bread. But,

[3.] The work is completed by the opening of the eyes of their mind, and causing the scales to fall off from them, as from Paul's in his conversion. If he that gives the revelation do not give the understanding, we are in the dark still.

He immediately disappeared: He vanished out of their sight. Aphantos egeneto--He withdrew himself from them, slipped away of a sudden, and went out of sight. Or, he became not visible by them, was made inconspicuous by them. It should seem that though Christ's body, after his resurrection, was the very same body in which he suffered and died, as appeared by the marks in it, yet it was so far changed as to become either visible or not visible as he thought fit to make it, which was a step towards its being made a glorious body. As soon as he had given his disciples one glimpse of him he was gone presently. Such short and transient views have we of Christ in this world; we see him, but in a little while lose the sight of him again. When we come to heaven the vision of him will have no interruptions.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

Here is the reflection which these disciples made upon this conference, and the report which they made of it to their brethren at Jerusalem.

1 The reflection they each of them made upon the influence which Christ's discourse had upon them (Lu 24:32): They said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us? "I am sure mine did," saith one; "And so did mine," saith the other, "I never was so affected with any discourse in all my life." Thus do they not so much compare notes as compare hearts, in the review of the sermon Christ had preached to them. They found the preaching powerful, even when they knew not the preacher. It

made things very plain and clear to them; and, which was more, brought a divine heat with a divine light into their souls, such as put their hearts into a glow, and kindled a holy fire of pious and devout affections in them. Now this they take notice of, for the confirming of their belief, that it was indeed, as at last they saw, Jesus himself that had been talking with them all along. "What fools were we, that we were not sooner aware who it was! For none but he, no word but his, could make our hearts burn within us as they did; it must be he that has the key of the heart; it could be no other."

See here,

(a) What preaching is likely to do good--such as Christ's was, plain preaching, and that which is familiar and level to our capacity--he talked with us by the way; and scriptural preaching--he opened to us the scriptures, the scriptures relating to himself. Ministers should show people their religion in their bibles, and that they preach no other doctrine to them than what is there; they must show that they make that the fountain of their knowledge and the foundation of their faith. Note, The expounding of those scriptures which speak of Christ has a direct tendency to warm the hearts of his disciples, both to quicken and to comfort them.

(b) What hearing is likely to do good--that which makes the heart burn; when we are much affected with the things of God, especially with the love of Christ in dying for us, and have our hearts thereby drawn out in love to him, and drawn up in holy desires and devotions, then our hearts burn within us; when our hearts are raised and elevated, and are as the sparks which fly upwards towards God, and when they are kindled and carried out with a holy zeal and indignation against sin, both in others and in ourselves, and we are in some measure refined and purified from it by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then we may say, "Through grace our hearts are thus inflamed."

2 The report they brought of this to their brethren at Jerusalem (Lu 24:33): They rose up the same hour, so transported with joy at the

discovery Christ had made of himself to them that they could not stay to make an end of their supper, but returned with all speed to Jerusalem, though it was towards evening. If they had had any thoughts of quitting their relation to Christ, this soon banished all such thoughts out of their mind, and there needed no more to send them back to his flock. It should seem that they intended at least to take up their quarters to-night at Emmaus; but now that they had seen Christ they could not rest till they had brought the good news to the disciples, both for the confirmation of their trembling faith and for the comfort of their sorrowful spirits, with the same comforts wherewith they were comforted of God. Note, It is the duty of those to whom Christ has manifested himself to let others know what he has done for their souls. When thou art converted, instructed, comforted, strengthen thy brethren. These disciples were full of this matter themselves, and must go to their brethren, to give vent to their joys, as well as to give them satisfaction that their Master was risen.

Observe,

(a) How they found them, just when they came in among them, discoursing on the same subject, and relating another proof of the resurrection of Christ. They found the eleven, and those that were their usual companions, gathered together late in the night, to pray together, it may be, and to consider what was to be done in this juncture; and they found them saying among themselves (legontas it is the saying of the eleven, not of the two, as is plain by the original), and when these two came in, they repeated to them with joy and triumph, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon, Lu 24:34. That Peter had a sight of him before the rest of the disciples had appears 1Co 15:5, where it is said, He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. The angel having ordered the women to tell Peter of it particularly (Mk 16:7), for his comfort, it is highly probable that our Lord Jesus did himself presently the same day appear to Peter, though we have no particular narrative of it, to confirm the word of his messengers. This he had related to his brethren; but, observe, Peter does not here proclaim it, and boast of it, himself (he thought this did not become a penitent), but the other disciples speak of it with exultation, The Lord is risen indeed, ontos--really; it is now past

dispute, no room is left to doubt it, for he has appeared not only to the women, but to Simon.

(b) How they seconded their evidence with an account of what they had seen (Lu 24:35): They told what things were done in the way. The words that were spoken by Christ to them in the way, having a wonderful effect and influence upon them, are here called the things that were done in the way; for the words that Christ speaks are not an empty sound, but they are spirit and they are life, and wondrous things are done by them, done by the way, by the by as it were, where it is not expected. They told also how he was at length known to them in the breaking of bread; then, when he was carving out blessings to them, God opened their eyes to discern who it was. Note, It would be of great use for the discovery and confirmation of truth if the disciples of Christ would compare their observations and experiences, and communicate to each other what they know and have felt in themselves.

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

Five times Christ was seen the same day that he rose: by Mary Magdalene alone in the garden (Joh 20:14), by the women as they were going to tell the disciples (Mt 28:9), by Peter alone, by the two disciples going to Emmaus, and now at night by the eleven, of which we have an account in these verses, as also Joh 20:19. Observe,

The great surprise which his appearing gave them. He came in among them very seasonably, as they were comparing notes concerning the proofs of his resurrection: As they thus spoke, and were ready perhaps to put it to the question whether the proofs produced amounted to evidence

sufficient of their Master's resurrection or no, and how they should proceed, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and put it out of question.

Note, Those who make the best use they can of their evidences for their comfort may expect further assurances, and that the Spirit of Christ will witness with their spirits (as Christ here witnessed with the disciples, and confirmed their testimony) that they are the children of God, and risen with Christ.

Observe,

1 The comfort Christ spoke to them: Peace be unto you. This intimates in general that it was a kind visit which Christ now paid them, a visit of love and friendship. Though they had very unkindly deserted him in his sufferings, yet he takes the first opportunity of seeing them together; for he deals not with us as we deserve. They did not credit those who had seen him; therefore he comes himself, that they might not continue in their disconsolate incredulity. He had promised that after his resurrection he would see them in Galilee; but so desirous was he to see them, and satisfy them, that he anticipated the appointment and sees them at Jerusalem.

Note, Christ is often better than his word, but never worse. Now his first word to them was, Peace be to you; not in a way of compliment, but of consolation. This was a common form of salutation among the Jews, and Christ would thus express his usual familiarity with them, though he had now entered into his state of exaltation. Many, when they are advanced, forget their old friends and take state upon them; but we see Christ as free with them as ever. Thus Christ would at the first word intimate to them that he did not come to quarrel with Peter for denying him and the rest for running away from him; no, he came peaceably, to signify to them that he had forgiven them, and was reconciled to them.

2 The fright which they put themselves into upon it (Lu 24:37): They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, because he came in among them without any noise, and was in the midst of them ere they

were aware. The word used (Mt 14:26), when they said It is a spirit, is phantasma, it is a spectre, an apparition; but the word here used is pneuma, the word that properly signifies a spirit; they supposed it to be a spirit not clothed with a real body. Though we have an alliance and correspondence with the world of spirits, and are hastening to it, yet while we are here in this world of sense and matter it is a terror to us to have a spirit so far change its own nature as to become visible to us, and conversable with us, for it is something, and bodes something, very extraordinary.

37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled ? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

The great satisfaction which his discourse gave them, wherein we have,

The reproof he gave them for their causeless fears: Why are you troubled, and why do frightful thoughts arise in your hearts? Lu 24:38.

Observe here,

(1.) That when at any time we are troubled, thoughts are apt to rise in our hearts that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts; our griefs and fears take rise from those things that are the creatures of our own fancy. Sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart are the effect of the trouble, without are fightings and then within are fears. Those that are melancholy and troubled in mind have thoughts arising in their hearts which reflect dishonour upon God, and create disquiet to themselves. I am cut off from thy sight. The Lord has forsaken and forgotten me.

(2.) That many of the troublesome thoughts with which our minds are disquieted arise from our mistakes concerning Christ. They here thought that they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright. We forget that Christ is our elder brother, and look upon him to be at as great a distance from us as the world of spirits is from this world, and therewith terrify ourselves. When Christ is by his Spirit

convincing and humbling us, when he is by his providence trying and converting us, we mistake him, as if he designed our hurt, and this troubles us.

(3.) That all the troublesome thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time are known to the Lord Jesus, even at the first rise of them, and they are displeasing to him. He chid his disciples for such thoughts, to teach us to chide ourselves for them. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou troubled? Why do thoughts arise that are neither true nor good, that have neither foundation nor fruit, but hinder our joy in God, unfit us for our duty, give advantage to Satan, and deprive us of the comforts laid up for us?

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

The proof he gave them of his resurrection, both for the silencing of their fears by convincing them that he was not a spirit, and for the strengthening of their faith in that doctrine which they were to preach to the world by giving them full satisfaction concerning his resurrection. Two proofs he gives them:--

He shows them his body, particularly his hands and his feet. They saw that he had the shape, and features, and exact resemblance, of their Master; but is it not his ghost? "No," saith Christ, "behold my hands and my feet; you see I have hands and feet, and therefore have a true body; you see I can move these hands and feet, and therefore have a living body; and you see the marks of the nails in my hands and feet, and therefore it is my own body, the same that you saw crucified, and not a borrowed one." He lays down this principle--that a spirit has not flesh and bones; it is not compounded of gross matter, shaped into various members, and consisting of divers heterogeneous parts, as our bodies are. He does not tell us what a spirit is (it is time enough to know that when we go to the world of spirits), but what it is not: It has not flesh and bones. Now hence he infers, "It is I myself, whom you have been so intimately acquainted with, and have had such familiar conversation with; it is I myself, whom you have reason to rejoice in, and not to be afraid of." Those who know Christ aright, and know him as theirs, will have no reason to be terrified at his appearances, at his approaches.

[1.] He appeals to their sight, shows them his hands and his feet, which were pierced with the nails. Christ retained the marks of them in his glorified body, that they might be proofs that it was he himself; and he was willing that they should be seen. He afterwards showed them to Thomas, for he is not ashamed of his sufferings for us; little reason then have we to be ashamed of them, or of ours for him. As he showed his wounds here to his disciples, for the enforcing of his instructions to them, so he showed them to his Father, for the enforcing of his intercessions with him. He appears in heaven as a Lamb that had been slain (Re 5:6); his blood speaks, Heb 12:24. He makes intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction; he says to the Father, as here to the disciples, Behold my hands and my feet, Zec 13:6,7.

[2.] He appeals to their touch: Handle me, and see. He would not let Mary Magdalene touch him at that time, Joh 20:17. But the disciples here are entrusted to do it, that they who were to preach his resurrection, and to suffer for doing so, might be themselves abundantly satisfied concerning it. He bade them handle him, that they might be convinced that he was not a spirit. If there were really no spirits, or apparitions of spirits (as by this and other instances it is plain that the disciples did believe there were), this had been a proper time for Christ to have undeceived them, by telling them there were no such things; but he seems to take it for granted that there have been and may be apparitions of spirits, else what need was there of so much pains to prove that he was not one? There were many heretics in the primitive times, atheists I rather think they were, who said that Christ had never any substantial body, but that it was a mere phantasm, which was neither really born nor truly suffered. Such wild notions as these, we are told, the Valentinians and Manichees had, and the followers of Simon Magus; they were called Doketai and Phantysiastai. Blessed be God, these heresies have long since been buried; and we know and are sure that Jesus Christ was no spirit or apparition, but had a true and real body, even after his resurrection.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb.

He eats with them, to show that he had a real and true body, and that he was willing to converse freely and familiarly with his disciples, as one friend with another. Peter lays a great stress upon this (Ac 10:41): We did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

[1.] When they saw his hands and his feet, yet they knew not what to say, They believed not for joy, and wondered, Lu 24:41. It was their infirmity that they believed not, that yet they believed not, eti apistounton auton--they as yet being unbelievers. This very much corroborates the truth of Christ's resurrection that the disciples were so slow to believe it. Instead of stealing away his body, and saying, He is risen, when he is not, as the chief priests suggested they would do, they are ready to say again and again, He is not risen, when he is. Their being incredulous of it at first, and insisting upon the utmost proofs of it, show that when afterwards they did believe it, and venture their all upon it, it was not but upon the fullest demonstration of the thing that could be. But, though it was their infirmity, yet it was an excusable one; for it was not from any contempt of the evidence offered them that they believed not: but, First, They believed not for joy, as Jacob, when he was told that Joseph was alive; they thought it too good news to be true. When the faith and hope are therefore weak because the love and desires are strong, that weak faith shall be helped, and not rejected. Secondly, They wondered; they thought it not only too good, but too great, to be true, forgetting both the scriptures and the power of God.

[2.] For their further conviction and encouragement, he called for some meat. He sat down to meat with the two disciples at Emmaus, but it is not said that he did eat with them; now, lest that should be made an objection, he here did actually eat with them and the rest, to show that his body was really and truly returned to life, though he did not eat and drink, and converse constantly, with them, as he had done (and as Lazarus did after his resurrection, who not only returned to life, but to his former state of life, and to die again), because it was not agreeable to the economy of the state he was risen to. They gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a

honey-comb, Lu 24:42. The honey-comb, perhaps, was used as sauce to the broiled fish, for Canaan was a land flowing with honey. This was mean fare; yet, if it be the fare of the disciples, their Master will fare as they do, because in the kingdom of our Father they shall fare as he does, shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom.

43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

The insight he gave them into the word of God, which they had heard and read, by which faith in the resurrection of Christ is wrought in them, and all the difficulties are cleared.

(a) He refers them to the word which they had heard from him when he was with them, and puts them in mind of that as the angel had done (Lu 24:44): These are the words which I said unto you in private, many a time, while I was yet with you. We should better understand what Christ does, if we did but better remember what he hath said, and had but the art of comparing them together.

(b) He refers them to the word they had read in the Old Testament, to which the word they had heard from him directed them: All things must be fulfilled which were written. Christ had given them this general hint for the regulating of their expectations--that whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled in him, what was written concerning his sufferings as well as what was written concerning his kingdom; these God had joined together in the prediction, and it could not be thought that they should be put asunder in the event. All things must be fulfilled, even the hardest, even the heaviest, even the vinegar; he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, It is finished. The several parts of the Old Testament are here mentioned, as containing each of them things concerning Christ: The law of Moses, that is, the Pentateuch, or the five books written by Moses,--the prophets, containing not only the books that are purely prophetical, but those historical books that were written by prophetical men,--the Psalms, containing the other writings, which they called the

Hagiographa. See in what various ways of writing God did of old reveal his will; but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who by them gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; for to him bore all the prophets witness.

(c) By an immediate present work upon their minds, of which they themselves could not but be sensible, he gave them to apprehend the true intent and meaning of the Old-Testament prophecies of Christ, and to see them all fulfilled in him: Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, Lu 24:45. In his discourse with the two disciples he took the veil from off the text, by opening the scriptures; here he took the veil from off the heart, by opening the mind.

Observe here,

[1.] That Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men, on the minds of all that are his. He has access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. It is observable how he did now after his resurrection give a specimen of those two great operations of his Spirit upon the spirits of men, his enlightening the intellectual faculties with a divine light, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, and his invigorating the active powers with a divine heat, when he made their hearts burn within them.

[2.] Even good men need to have their understandings opened; for though they are not darkness, as they were by nature, yet in many things they are in the dark. David prays, Open mine eyes. Give me understanding. And Paul, who knows so much of Christ, sees his need to learn more.

[3.] Christ's way of working faith in the soul, and gaining the throne there, is by opening the understanding to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed. Thus he comes into the soul by the door, while Satan, as a thief and a robber, climbs up some other way.

[4.] The design of opening the understanding is that we may understand the scriptures; not that we may be wise above what is written, but that we

may be wiser in what is written, and may be made wise to salvation by it. The Spirit in the word and the Spirit in the heart say the same thing. Christ's scholars never learn above their bibles in this world; but they need to be learning still more and more out of their bibles, and to grow more ready and mighty in the scriptures. That we may have right thoughts of Christ, and have our mistakes concerning him rectified, there needs no more than to be made to understand the scriptures.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,

46 and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

The instructions he gave them as apostles, who were to be employed in setting up his kingdom in the world. They expected, while their Master was with them, that they should be preferred to posts of honour, of which they thought themselves quite disappointed when he was dead. "No," saith, he, "you are now to enter upon them; you are to be witnesses of these things (Lu 24:48), to carry the notice of them to all the world; not only to report them as matter of news, but to assert them as evidence given upon the trial of the great cause that has been so long depending between God and Satan, the issue of which must be the casting down and casting out of the prince of this world. You are fully assured of these things yourselves, you are eye and ear-witnesses of them; go, and assure the world of them; and the same Spirit that has enlightened you shall go along with you for the enlightening of others." Now here they are told,

What they must preach. They must preach the gospel, must preach the New Testament as the full accomplishment of the Old, as the continuation and conclusion of divine revelation. They must take their bibles along with them (especially when they preached to the Jews; nay, and Peter, in his first sermon to the Gentiles, directed them to consult the prophets, Ac 10:43), and must show people how it was written of old concerning the Messiah, and the glories and graces of his kingdom, and then must tell them how, upon their certain knowledge, all this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

The great gospel truth concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be published to the children of men (Lu 24:46): Thus it was

written in the sealed book of the divine counsels from eternity, the volume of that book of the covenant of redemption; and thus it was written in the open book of the Old Testament, among the things revealed; and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer, for the divine counsels must be performed, and care taken that no word of God fall to the ground. "Go, and tell the world," First, "That Christ suffered, as it was written of him. Go, preach Christ crucified; be not ashamed of his cross, not ashamed of a suffering Jesus. Tell them what he suffered, and why he suffered, and how all the scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled in his sufferings. Tell them that it behoved him to suffer, that it was necessary to the taking away of the sin of the world, and the deliverance of mankind from death and ruin: nay, it became him to be perfected through sufferings," Heb 2:10. Secondly, "That he rose from the dead on the third day, by which not only all the offence of the cross was rolled away, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and in this also the scriptures were fulfilled (see 1Co 15:3,4); go, tell the world how often you saw him after he rose from the dead, and how intimately you conversed with him. Your eyes see" (as Joseph said to his brethren, when his discovering himself to them was as life from the dead) "that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you, Ge 45:12. Go, and tell them, then, that he that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave,"

47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The great gospel duty of repentance must be pressed upon the children of men. Repentance for sin must be preached in Christ's name, and by his authority, Lu 24:47. All men every where must be called and commanded to repent, Ac 17:30. "Go, and tell all people that the God that made them, and the Lord that bought them, expects and requires that, immediately upon this notice given, they turn from the worship of the gods that they have made to the worship of the God that made them; and not only so, but from serving the interests of the world and the flesh; they must turn to the service of God in Christ, must mortify all sinful habits, and forsake all sinful practices. Their hearts and lives must be changed, and they must be universally renewed and reformed."

The great gospel privilege of the remission of sins must be proposed to all, and assured to all that repent, and believe the gospel. "Go, tell a guilty world, that stands convicted and condemned at God's bar, that an act of indemnity has passed the royal assent, which all that repent and believe shall have the benefit of, and not only be pardoned, but preferred by. Tell them that there is hope concerning them."

To whom they must preach. Whither must they carry these proposals, and how far does their commission extend? They are here told,

[1.] That they must preach this among all nations. They must disperse themselves, like the sons of Noah after the flood, some one way and some another, and carry this light along with them wherever they go. The prophets had preached repentance and remission to the Jews, but the apostles must preach them to all the world. None are exempted from the obligations the gospel lays upon men to repent, nor are any excluded from those inestimable benefits which are included in the remission of sins, but those that by their unbelief and impenitency put a bar in their own door.

[2.] That they must begin at Jerusalem There they must preach their first gospel sermon; there the gospel church must be first formed; there the gospel day must dawn, and thence that light shall go forth which must take hold on the ends of the earth. And why must they begin there? First, Because thus it was written, and therefore it behoved them to take this method. The word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem, Isa 2:3. And see Joe 2:32,3:16,Ob 1:21,Zec 14:8. Secondly, Because there the matters of fact on which the gospel was founded were transacted; and therefore there they were first attested, where, if there had been any just cause for it, they might be best contested and disproved. So strong, so bright, is the first shining forth of the glory of the risen Redeemer that it dares face those daring enemies of his that had put him to an ignominious death, and sets them at defiance. "Begin at Jerusalem, that the chief priests may try their strength to crush the gospel, and may rage to see themselves disappointed." Thirdly, Because he would give us a further example of forgiving enemies. Jerusalem had put the greatest affronts imaginable upon him (both the rulers and the multitude), for which that city might

justly have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity; but no, so far from that, the first offer of gospel grace is made to Jerusalem, and thousands there are in a little time brought to partake of that grace.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

What assistance they should have in preaching. It is a vast undertaking that they are here called to, a very large and difficult province, especially considering the opposition this service would meet with, and the sufferings it would be attended with. If therefore they ask, Who is sufficient for these things? here is an answer ready: Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and you shall be endued with power from on high, Lu 24:49. He here assures them that in a little time the Spirit should be poured out upon them in greater measures than ever, and they should thereby be furnished with all those gifts and graces which were necessary to their discharge of this great trust; and therefore they must tarry at Jerusalem, and not enter upon it till this be done.

Note,

[1.] Those who receive the Holy Ghost are thereby endued with a power from on high, a supernatural power, a power above any of their own; it is from on high, and therefore draws the soul upward, and makes it to aim high.

[2.] Christ's apostles could never have planted his gospel, and set up his kingdom in the world, as they did, if they had not been endued with such a power; and their admirable achievements prove that there was an excellency of power going along with them.

[3.] This power from on high was the promise of the Father, the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of the coming of Christ was of the Old Testament. And, if it be the promise of the Father, we may be sure that the promise is inviolable and the thing promised invaluable.

[4.] Christ would not leave his disciples till the time was just at hand for the performing of this promise. It was but ten days after the ascension of Christ that there came the descent of the Spirit.

[5.] Christ's ambassadors must stay till they have their powers, and not venture upon their embassy till they have received full instructions and credentials. Though, one would think, never was such haste as now for the preaching of the gospel, yet the preachers must tarry till they be endued with power from on high, and tarry at Jerusalem, though a place of danger, because there this promise of the Father was to find them, Joe 2:28.

The Ascension

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

Amen.

The Gospel According To St. John

[John]

John-1

The Word Made Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In the beginning. This expression is used also in Gen 1:1. To that place John evidently has allusion here, and means to apply to "the Word" an expression which is there applied to God. In both places it clearly means "before creation," "before the world was made," "when as yet there was nothing." The meaning is, that the Word had an existence before the world was created. This is not spoken of the man Jesus, but of that which became a man, or was incarnate, Jn 1:14. The Hebrews, by expressions like this, commonly denoted eternity. Thus the eternity of God is described (Ps 90:2): Before the mountains were brought forth, &c.; and eternity is commonly expressed by the phrase, before the foundation of the world. Whatever is meant by the term "Word," it is clear that it had an existence before creations. It is not, then, a creature or created being, and must be, therefore, uncreated and eternal. There is but one Being that is uncreated, and Jesus must be therefore divine. Compare the Saviour's own declarations respecting himself in the following places: Jn 8:58, 17:5, 6:62, 3:13, 6:46, 8:14, 16:28.

Was the Word. Greek, "was the Logos." This name is given to him who afterward became flesh, or was incarnate (Jn 1:14)--that is, to the Messiah. Whatever is meant by it, therefore, is applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ. There have been many opinions about the reason why this name was given to the Son of God. Those opinions it is unnecessary to repeat. The opinion which seems most plausible may be expressed as follows:

1st. A word is that by which we communicate our will; by which we convey our thoughts;

2nd. The Son of God may be called "the Word," because he is the medium by which God promulgates his will and issues his commandments. See Heb 1:1-3.

3rd. This term was in use before the time of John.

(a) It was used in the Chaldee translation of the Old Testament, as, e.g., Is 45:12: "I have made the earth, and created man upon it." In the Chaldee it is, "I, by my word, have made," &c. Isa 48:13: "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth." In the Chaldee, "By my word I have founded the earth." And so in many other places.

(b) This term was used by the Jews as applicable to the Messiah. In their writings he was commonly known by the term "Mimra "--that is, "Word;" and no small part of the interpositions of God in defence of the Jewish nation were declared to be by "the Word of God." Thus, in their Targum on De 26:17,18, it is said, "Ye have appointed THE WORD OF GOD a king over you this day, that he may be your God."

(c) The term was used by the Jews who were scattered among the Gentiles, and especially those who were conversant with the Greek philosophy.

(d) It is possible that the doctrines of the Gnostics had begun to spread in the time of John. They were an Oriental sect, and held that the Logos or Word was one of the AEons that had been created, and that this one had been united to the man Jesus. If that doctrine had begun then to prevail, it was of the more importance for John to settle the truth in regard to the rank of the Logos or Word. This he has done in such a way that there need be no doubt about its meaning.

Was with God. This expression denotes friendship or intimacy. Comp. Mk 9:19. John affirms that he was with God in the beginning-- that is, before the world was made. It implies, therefore, that he was partaker of the divine glory; that he was blessed and happy with God. It proves that he was intimately united with the Father, so as to partake of his glory and to be

appropriately called by the name God. He has himself explained it. See Jn 17:5: And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. See also Jn 1:18: No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, which IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, he hath declared him. See also Jn 3:13: The Son of man, which is in heaven. Comp. Php 2:6,7.

Was God. In the previous phrase John had said that the Word was with God. Lest it should be supposed that he was a different and inferior being, he here states that he was God. There is no more unequivocal declaration in the Bible than this, and there could be no stronger proof that the sacred writer meant to affirm that the Son of God was equal with the Father; for,

1st. There is no doubt that by the Logos is meant Jesus Christ.

2nd. This is not an attribute or quality of God, but is a real subsistence, for it is said that the Logos was made flesh--that is, became a man.

3rd. There is no variation here in the manuscripts, and critics have observed that the Greek will bear no other construction than what is expressed in our translation-that the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Was in the beginning with God. This seems to be a repetition of what was said in the first verse; but it is stated over again to guard the doctrine, and to prevent the possibility of a mistake. John had said that he existed before the creation, and that he was with God; but he had not said in the first verse that the union with God existed in the beginning. He now expresses that idea, and assures us that that union was not one which was commenced in time, and which might be, therefore, a mere union of feeling, or a compact, like that between any other beings, but was one which existed in eternity, and which was therefore a union of nature or essence.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

All things. The universe. The expression cannot be limited to any part of the universe. It appropriately expresses everything which exists--all the vast

masses of material worlds, and all the animals and things, great or small, that compose those worlds. See Rev 4:11, Heb 1:2, Col 1:16.

By him. In this place it is affirmed that creation was effected by the Word, or the Son of God. In Gen 1:1, it is said that the Being who created the heavens and the earth was God. In Ps 102:25-28, this work is ascribed to Jehovah. The Word, or the Son of God, is therefore appropriately called God. The work of creation is uniformly ascribed in the Scriptures to the second person of the Trinity. See Col 1:16, Heb 1:2. By this is meant, evidently, that he was the agent, or the efficient cause, by which the universe was made. There is no higher proof of omnipotence than the work of creation; and hence God often appeals to that work to prove that he is the true God, in opposition to idols. See Isa 40:18-28 Jer 10:3-16, Ps 24:2, 39:11, Prov 3:19. It is absurd to say that God can invest a creature with omnipotence. If he can make a creature omnipotent, he can make him omniscient, and can in the same way make him omnipresent, and infinitely wise and good; that is, he can invest a creature with all his own attributes, or make another being like himself, or, which is the same thing, there could be two Gods, or as many Gods as he should choose to make. But this is absurd. The Being, therefore, that created all things must be divine; and as this work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, and as it is uniformly in the Scriptures declared to be the work of God, Jesus Christ is therefore equal with the Father.

Without him. Without his agency; his notice; the exertion of his power. Comp. Mt 10:29. This is a strong way of speaking, designed to confirm, beyond the possibility of doubt, what he had just said. He says, therefore, in general, that all things were made by Christ. In this part of the verse he shuts out all doubt, and affirms that there was no exceptions; that there was not a single thing, however minute or unimportant, which was not made by him. In this way he confirms what he said in the first verse. Christ was not merely called God, but he did the works of God, and therefore the name is used in its proper sense as implying supreme divinity. To this same test Jesus himself appealed as proving that he was divine. Jn 10:37: If I do not THE WORKS of my Father, believe me not. Jn 5:17: MY FATHER worketh hitherto, and I work.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

In him was life. The evangelist had just affirmed Jn 1:3 that by the Logos or Word the world was originally created. One part of that creation consisted in breathing into man the breath of life, Gen 2:7. God is declared to be life, or the living God, because he is the source or fountain of life. This attribute is here ascribed to Jesus Christ. He not merely made the material worlds, but he also gave life. He was the agent by which the vegetable world became animated; by which brutes live; and by which man became a living soul, or was endowed with immortality. This was a higher proof that the "Word was God," than the creation of the material worlds; but there is another sense in which he was life. The new creation, or the renovation of man and his restoration from a state of sin, is often compared with the first creation; and as the Logos was the source of life then, so, in a similar but higher sense, he is the source of life to the soul dead in trespasses and sins, Eph 2:1. And it is probably in reference to this that he is so often called life in the writings of John. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself," Jn 5:26; "He giveth life unto the world," Jn 6:33; "I am the resurrection and the life," Jn 11:25; "This is the true God and eternal life," 1Jn 5:20. See also 1Jn 1:1,2, 5:11, Acts 3:15, Col 3:4. The meaning is, that he is the source or the fountain of both natural and spiritual life. Of course he has the attributes of God.

The life was the light of men. Light is that by which we see objects distinctly. The light of the sun enables us to discern the form, the distance, the magnitude, and the relation of objects, and prevents the perplexities and dangers which result from a state of darkness. Light is in all languages, therefore, put for knowledge --for whatever enables us to discern our duty, and that saves us from the evils of ignorance and error. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light," Eph 5:13. See Isa 8:20, 9:2 The Messiah was predicted as the light of the world, Isa 9:2, compared with Mt 4:15,16; Isa 60:1. See Jn 8:12, "I am the light of the world;" Jn 12:35, 36, 46 "I am come a light into the world." The meaning is, that the Logos or Word of God is the instructor or teacher of man-kind. This was done before his advent by his direct agency in giving man reason or understanding, and in giving his law, for the "law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal 3:19); after his advent by his personal ministry when on earth, by his Spirit (Jn 14:16,26), and by his ministers since, Eph 4:11, 1Cor 12:28.

The original of life and light that is in him: In him was life, Joh 1:4. This further proves that he is God, and every way qualified for his undertaking; for,

(1.) He has life in himself; not only the true God, but the living God. God is life; he swears by himself when he saith, As I live.

(2.) All living creatures have their life in him; not only all the matter of the creation was made by him, but all the life too that is in the creation is derived from him and supported by him. It was the Word of God that produced the moving creatures that had life, Ge 1:20,Ac 17:25. He is that Word by which man lives more than by bread, Mt 4:4.

(3.) Reasonable creatures have their light from him; that life which is the light of men comes from him. Life in man is something greater and nobler than it is in other creatures; it is rational, and not merely animal. When man became a living soul, his life was light, his capacities such as distinguished him from, and dignified him above, the beasts that perish. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, and it was the eternal Word that lighted this candle. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This proves him fit to undertake our salvation; for life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things that fallen man, who lies so much under the power of death and darkness, has need of. From whom may we better expect the light of divine revelation than from him who gave us the light of human reason? And if, when God gave us natural life, that life was in his Son, how readily should we receive the gospel-record, that he hath given us eternal life, and that life too is in his Son!

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Barnes Commentary:

The light shineth in darkness. Darkness, in the Bible, commonly denotes ignorance, guilt, or misery. See Is 9:1, 2, Mt 4:16, Acts 26:18, Eph 5:8, 11, Rev 13:12. It refers here to a wicked and ignorant people. When it is said that "the light shineth in darkness," it is meant that the Lord Jesus came to

teach an ignorant, benighted, and wicked world: This has always been the case. It was so when he sent his prophets; so during his own ministry; and so in every age since. His efforts to enlighten and save men have been like light struggling to penetrate a thick, dense cloud; and though a few rays may pierce the gloom, yet the great mass is still an impenetrable shade.

Comprehended it not. This word means admitted it not, or received it not. The word comprehend, with us, means to understand. This is not the meaning of the original. The darkness did not receive or admit the rays of light; the shades were so thick that the light could not penetrate them; or, to drop the figure, men were so ignorant, so guilty, so debased, that they did not appreciate the value of his instructions; they despised and rejected him. And so it is still. The great mass of men, sunk in sin, will not receive his teachings, and be enlightened and saved by him. Sin always blinds the mind to the beauty and excellency of the character of the Lord Jesus. It indisposes the mind to receive his instructions, just as darkness has no affinity for light; and if the one exists, the other must be displaced.

MH commentary:

The manifestation of him to the children of men. It might be objected, If this eternal Word was all in all thus in the creation of the world, whence is it that he has been so little taken notice of and regarded? To this he answers (Joh 1:5), The light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not. Observe,

(a) The discovery of the eternal Word to the lapsed world, even before he was manifested in the flesh: The light shineth in darkness. Light is self-evidencing, and will make itself known; this light, whence the light of men comes, hath shone, and doth shine. [1.] The eternal Word, as God, shines in the darkness of natural conscience. Though men by the fall are become darkness, yet that which may be known of God is manifested in them; see Ro 1:19,20. The light of nature is this light shining in darkness. Something of the power of the divine Word, both as creating and as commanding, all mankind have an innate sense of; were it not for this, earth would be a hell, a place of utter darkness; blessed be God, it is not so yet. [2.] The eternal Word, as Mediator, shone in the darkness of the Old-Testament types and

figures, and the prophecies and promises which were of the Messiah from the beginning. He that had commanded the light of this world to shine out of darkness was himself long a light shining in darkness; there was a veil upon this light, 2Co 3:13.

(b) The disability of the degenerate world to receive this discovery: The darkness comprehended it not; the most of men received the grace of God in these discoveries in vain.

[1.] The world of mankind comprehended not the natural light that was in their understandings, but became vain in their imaginations concerning the eternal God and the eternal Word, Ro 1:21,28. The darkness of error and sin overpowered and quite eclipsed this light. God spoke once, yea twice, but man perceived it not, Job 33:14.

[2.] The Jews, who had the light of the Old Testament, yet comprehended not Christ in it. As there was a veil upon Moses's face, so there was upon the people's hearts. In the darkness of the types and shadows the light shone; but such as the darkness of their understandings that they could not see it. It was therefore requisite that Christ should come, both to rectify the errors of the Gentile world and to improve the truths of the Jewish church.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

That all men, &c. It was the object of John's testimony that all men might believe. He designed to prepare them for it; to announce that the Messiah was about to come, to direct the minds of men to him, and thus to fit them to believe on him when he came. Thus he baptized them, saying "That they should believe on him who should come after him" (Acts 19:4), and thus he produced a very general expectation that the Messiah was about to come. The testimony of John was peculiarly valuable on the following accounts:

1st. It was made when he had no personal acquaintance with Jesus of Nazareth, and of course there could have been no collusion or agreement to deceive them,

2nd. It was sufficiently long before he came to excite general attention, and to fix the mind on it.

3rd. It was that of a man acknowledged by all to be a prophet of God--"for all men held John to be a prophet," Mt 21:26.

4th. It was for the express purpose of declaring beforehand that he was about to appear.

5th. It was disinterested. He was himself extremely popular. Many were disposed to receive him as the Messiah. It was evidently in his power to form a large party, and to be regarded extensively as the Christ. This was the highest honour to which a Jew could aspire; and it shows the value of John's testimony, that he was willing to lay all his honours at the feet of Jesus, and to acknowledge that he was unworthy to perform for him the office of the humblest servant, Mt 3:11.

Was not that Light. Was not the Messiah. This is an explicit declaration designed to satisfy the disciples of John. The evidence that he was not the Messiah he states in the following verses.

From the conduct of John here we may learn,

1st. The duty of laying all our honours at the feet of Jesus.

2nd. As John came that all might believe, so it is no less true of the ministry of Jesus himself. He came for a similar purpose, and we may ALL, therefore, trust in him for salvation.

3rd. We should not rely too much on ministers of the gospel. They cannot save us any more than John could; and their office, as his was, is simply to direct men to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Christ was the true Light (Joh 1:9); not as if John Baptist were a false light, but, in comparison with Christ, he was a very small light. Christ is the great light that deserves to be called so. Other lights are but figuratively and equivocally called so: Christ is the true light. The fountain of all knowledge and of all comfort must needs be the true light. He is the true light, for proof of which we are not referred to the emanations of his glory in the invisible world (the beams with which he enlightens that), but to those rays of his light which are darted downwards, and with which this dark world of ours is enlightened. But how does Christ enlighten every man that comes into the world?

(1.) By his creating power he enlightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the comfort it gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, are from Christ.

(2.) By the publication of his gospel to all nations he does in effect enlighten every man. John Baptist was a light, but he enlightened only Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about Jordan, like a candle that enlightens one room; but Christ is the true light, for he is a light to enlighten the Gentiles. His everlasting gospel is to be preached to every nation and language, Re 14:6. Like the sun which enlightens every man that will open his eyes, and receive its light (Ps 19:6), to which the preaching of the gospel is compared. See Ro 10:18. Divine revelation is not now to be confined, as it had been, to one people, but to be diffused to all people, Mt 5:15.

(3.) By the operation of his Spirit and grace he enlightens all those that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him perish in darkness. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is said to be in the face of Jesus Christ, and is compared with that light which was at the beginning commanded to shine out of darkness, and which enlightens every man that comes into the world. Whatever light any man has, he is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He was in the world. This refers, probably, not to his pre-existence, but to the fact that he became incarnate; that he dwelt among men.

And the world was made by him. This is a repetition of what is said in Jn 1:3. Not only men, but all material things, were made by him. These facts are mentioned here to make what is said immediately after more striking, to wit, that men did not receive him. The proofs which he furnished that they ought to receive him were,

1st. Those given while he was in the world--the miracles that he wrought and his instructions; and,

2nd. The fact that the world was made by him, It was remarkable that the world did not know or approve its own maker.

The world knew him not. The word knew is sometimes used in the sense of approving or loving, Ps 1:6, Mt 7:23. In this sense it may be used here. The world did not love or approve him, but rejected him and put him to death. Or it may mean that they did not understand or know that he was the Messiah; for had the Jews known and believed that he was the Messiah, they would not have put him to death, 1Cor 2:8: "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Yet they might have known it, and therefore they were not the less to blame.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

He came unto his own. His own land or country. It was called his land because it was the place of his birth, and also because it was the chosen land where God delighted to dwell and to manifest his favour. See Isa 5:1-7. Over that land the laws of God had been extended, and that land had been regarded as peculiarly his, Ps 147:19,20.

His own. His own people. There is a distinction here in the original words which is not preserved in the translation. It may be thus expressed: "He came to his own land and his own people received him not." They were his people, because God had chosen them to be his above all other nations; had given to them his laws; and had signally protected and favoured them, De 7:6, 14:2.

Received him not. Did not acknowledge him to be the Messiah. They rejected him and put him to death, agreeably to the prophecy, Isa 53:3,4. From this we learn,

1st. That it is reasonable to expect that those who have been peculiarly favoured should welcome the message of God. God had a right to expect, after all that had been done for the Jews, that they would receive the message of eternal life. So he has a right to expect that we should embrace him and be saved. Yet,

2nd. It is not the abundance of mercies that incline men to seek God. The Jews had been signally favoured, but they rejected him. So, many in Christian lands live and die rejecting the Lord Jesus.

3rd. Men are alike in every age. All would reject the Saviour if left to themselves. All men are by nature wicked. There is no more certain and universal proof of this than the universal rejection of the Lord Jesus.

13 which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

That yet there was a remnant who owned him, and were faithful to him. Though his own received him not, yet there were those that received him (Joh 1:12): But as many as received him. Though Israel were not gathered, yet Christ was glorious. Though the body of that nation persisted and perished in unbelief, yet there were many of them that were wrought upon to submit to Christ, and many more that were not of that fold. Observe here,

[1.] The true Christian's description and property; and that is, that he receives Christ, and believes on his name; the latter explains the former. Note, First, To be a Christian indeed is to believe on Christ's name; it is to assent to the gospel discovery, and consent to the gospel proposal, concerning him. His name is the Word of God; the King of kings, the Lord our righteousness; Jesus a Saviour. Now to believe on his name is to acknowledge that he is what these great names bespeak him to be, and to acquiesce in it, that he may be so to us. Secondly, Believing in Christ's name is receiving him as a gift from God. We must receive his doctrine as true

and good; receive his law as just and holy; receive his offers as kind and advantageous; and we must receive the image of his grace, and impressions of his love, as the governing principle of our affections and actions.

[2.] The true Christian's dignity and privilege are twofold:--

First, The privilege of adoption, which takes them into the number of God's children: To them gave he power to become the sons of God. Hitherto, the adoption pertained to the Jews only (Israel is my son, my first-born); but now, by faith in Christ, Gentiles are the children of God, Ga 3:26. They have power, exousian--authority; for no man taketh this power to himself, but he who is authorized by the gospel charter. To them gave he a right; to them gave he this pre-eminence. This power have all the saints. Note, 1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all good Christians, that they are become the children of God. They were by nature children of wrath, children of this world. If they be the children of God, they become so, are made so Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani--Persons are not born Christians, but made such.--Tertullian. Behold what manner of love is this, 1Jo 3:1. God calls them his children, they call him Father, and are entitled to all the privileges of children, those of their way and those of their home. 2 The privilege of adoption is entirely owing to Jesus Christ; he gave this power to them that believe on his name. God is his Father, and so ours; and it is by virtue of our espousals to him, and union with him, that we stand related to God as a Father. It was in Christ that we were predestinated to the adoption; from him we receive both the character and the Spirit of adoption, and he is the first-born among many brethren. The Son of God became a Son of man, that the sons and daughters of men might become the sons and daughters of God Almighty.

Secondly, The privilege of regeneration (Joh 1:13): Which were born. Note, All the children of God are born again; all that are adopted are regenerated. This real change evermore attends that relative one. Wherever God confers the dignity of children, he creates the nature and disposition of children. Men cannot do so when they adopt. Now here we have an account of the original of this new birth.

1. Negatively.

(a) It is not propagated by natural generation from our parents. It is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of corruptible seed, 1Pe 1:23. Man is called flesh and blood, because thence he has his original: but we do not become the children of God as we become the children of our natural parents. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, as corruption does. Man polluted begat a son in his own likeness (Ge 5:3); but man sanctified and renewed does not beget a son in that likeness. The Jews gloried much in their parentage, and the noble blood that ran in their veins: We are Abraham's seed; and therefore to them pertained the adoption because they were born of that blood; but this New-Testament adoption is not founded in any such natural relation.

(b) It is not produced by the natural power of our own will. As it is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, so neither is it of the will of man, which labours under a moral impotency of determining itself to that which is good; so that the principles of the divine life are not of our own planting, it is the grace of God that makes us willing to be his. Nor can human laws or writings prevail to sanctify and regenerate a soul; if they could, the new birth would be by the will of man.

But,

2. Positively:

it is of God. This new birth is owing to the word of God as the means (1Pe 1:23), and to the Spirit of God as the great and sole author. True believers are born of God, 1Jo 3:9,5:1. And this is necessary to their adoption; for we cannot expect the love of God if we have not something of his likeness, nor claim the privileges of adoption if we be not under the power of regeneration.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.

ohn bare witness of him. The evangelist now returns to the testimony of John the Baptist. He had stated that the Word became incarnate, and he now appeals to the testimony of John to show that, thus incarnate, he was the Messiah.

Is preferred before me. Is superior to me. Most critics have supposed that the words translated "is preferred" relate to time, and not to dignity; meaning that though he came after him publicly, being six months younger than John, as well as entering on his work after John, yet that he had existed long before him. Most, however, have understood it more correctly, as our translators seem to have done, as meaning, He was worthy of more honour than I am.

He was before me. This can refer to nothing but his preexistence, and can be explained only on the supposition that he existed before John, or, as the evangelist had before shown, from the beginning. He came after John in his public ministry and in his human nature, but in his divine nature he had existed long before John had a being--from eternity. We may learn here that it is one mark of the true spirit of a minister of Christ to desire and feel that Christ is always to be preferred to ourselves. We should keep ourselves out of view. The great object is to hold up the Saviour; and however much ministers may be honoured or blessed, yet they should lay all at the feet of Jesus, and direct all men to him as the undivided object of affection and honour. It is the business of every Christian, as well as of every Christian minister, to be a witness for Christ, and to endeavour to convince the world that he is worthy of confidence and love.

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

Of his fullness. In Jn 1:14 the evangelist has said that Christ was full of grace and truth. Of that fulness he now says that all the disciples had received; that is, they derived from his abundant truth and mercy grace to understand the plan of salvation, to preach the gospel, to live lives of holiness; they partook of the numerous blessings which he came to impart by his instructions and his death. These are undoubtedly not the words of John the Baptist, but of the evangelist John, the writer of this gospel. They are a continuation of what he was saying in the 14th verse, the 15th verse being evidently thrown in as a

parenthesis. The declaration had not exclusive reference, probably, to the apostles, but it is extended to all Christians, for all believers have received of the fulness of grace and truth that is in Christ. Comp. Eph 1:23, 3:19, Col 1:19, 2:9. In all these places our Saviour is represented as the fulness of God--as abounding in mercy, as exhibiting the divine attributes, and as possessing in himself all that is necessary to fill his people with truth, and grace, and love.

Grace for grace. Many interpretations of this phrase have been proposed. The chief are briefly the following:

1st. "We have received, under the gospel, grace or favour, instead of those granted under the law; and God has added by the gospel important favours to those which he gave under the law." This was first proposed by Chrysostom.

2nd. "We, Christians, have received grace answering to, or corresponding to that which is in Jesus Christ. We are like him in meekness, humility," &c.

3rd. "We have received grace as grace--that is, freely. We have not purchased it nor deserved it, but God has conferred it on us freely" (Grotius).

4th. The meaning is, probably, simply that we have received through him abundance of grace or favour. The Hebrews, in expressing the him. He knew him intima superlative degree of comparison, used simply to repeat the word--thus, "pits, pits," meaning many pits (Hebrew in Gen 14:10). So here grace for grace may mean much grace; superlative favours bestowed on man; favours superior to all that had been under the law --superior to all other things that God can confer on men. These favours consist in pardon, redemption, protection, sanctification, peace here, and heaven hereafter.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

es. By Moses, as the servant of God. He was the great legislator of the Jews, by whom, under God, their polity was formed. The law worketh wrath (Rom 4:15); it was attended with many burdensome rites and ceremonies (Acts 15:10); it was preparatory to another state of things. The gospel succeeded

that and took its place, and thus showed the greatness of the gospel economy, as well as its grace and truth.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. A system of religion full of favours, and the true system, was revealed by him. The old system was one of law, and shadows, and burdensome rites; this was full of mercy to mankind, and was true in all things. We may learn from these verses--

1st. That all our mercies come from Jesus Christ.

2nd. "All true believers receive from Christ's fulness the best and greatest saints cannot live without him, the meanest and weakest may live by him. This excludes proud boasting that we have nothing but we have received it, and silenceth perplexing fears that we want nothing but we may receive it."

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

No man hath seen God at any time. This declaration is probably made to show the superiority of the revelation of Jesus above that of any previous dispensation. It is said, therefore, that Jesus had an intimate knowledge of God, which neither Moses nor any of the ancient prophets had possessed. God is invisible; no human eyes have seen him; but Christ had a knowledge of God which might be expressed to our apprehension by saying that he saw him intimately and completely, and was therefore fitted to make a fuller manifestation of him. See Jn 5:37, 6:46, 1Jn 4:12, Ex 33:20, Jn 14:9. This passage is not meant to deny that men had witnessed manifestations of God, as when he appeared to Moses and the prophets (comp. Nu 12:8, Is 6:1-13); but it is meant that no one has seen the essence of God, or has fully known God. The prophets delivered what they heard God speak; Jesus what he knew of God as his equal, and as understanding fully his nature.

The only-begotten Son. Jn 1:14. This verse shows John's sense of the meaning of that phrase, as denoting an intimate and full knowledge of God.

In the bosom of the Father. This expression is taken from the custom among the Orientals of reclining at their meals. Mt 23:6. It denotes intimacy, friendship, affection. Here it means that Jesus had a knowledge of God such

as one friend has of another-- knowledge of his character, designs, and nature which no other one possesses, and which renders him, therefore, qualified above all others to make him known.

Hath declared him. Hath fully revealed him or made him known. Comp. Heb 1:1,4. This verse proves that, Jesus had a knowledge of God above that which any of the ancient prophets had, and that the fullest revelations of his character are to be expected in the gospel. By his Word and Spirit he can enlighten and guide us, and lead us to the true knowledge of God; and there is no true and full knowledge of God which is not obtained through his Son. Comp. Jn 14:6, 1Jn 2:22,23.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

When the Jews sent. John's fame was great. See Mt 3:5. It spread from the region of Galilee to Jerusalem, and the nation seemed to suppose, from the character of his preaching, that he was the Messiah, Lk 3:15. The great council of the nation, or the Sanhedrim, had, among other things, the charge of religion. They felt it to be their duty, therefore, to inquire into the character and claims of John, and to learn whether he was the Messiah. It is not improbable that they wished that he might be the long-expected Christ, and were prepared to regard him as such.

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered, No.

What was the answer he gave them, and his account, both concerning himself and concerning his baptism, in both which he witnessed to Christ.

Concerning himself, and what he professed himself to be. They asked him, Sy tis ei--Thou, who art thou? John's appearing in the world was surprising. He was in the wilderness till the day of his showing unto Israel. His spirit, his converse, he doctrine, had something in them which commanded and gained respect; but he did not, as seducers do, give out himself to be some

great one. He was more industrious to do good than to appear great; and therefore waived saying any thing of himself till he was legally interrogated. Those speak best for Christ that say least of themselves, whose own works praise them, not their own lips. He answers their interrogatory,

Negatively. He was not that great one whom some took him to be. God's faithful witnesses stand more upon their guard against undue respect than against unjust contempt. Paul writes as warmly against those that overvalued him, and said, I am of Paul, as against those that undervalued him, and said that his bodily presence was weak; and he rent his clothes when he was called a god.

[1.] John disowns himself to be the Christ (Joh 1:20): He said, I am not the Christ, who was now expected and waited for. Note, The ministers of Christ must remember that they are not Christ, and therefore must not usurp his powers and prerogatives, nor assume the praises due to him only. They are not Christ, and therefore must not lord it over God's heritage, nor pretend to a dominion over the faith of Christians. They cannot created grace and peace; they cannot enlighten, convert, quicken, comfort; for they are not Christ. Observe how emphatically this is here expressed concerning John: He confessed, and denied not, but confessed; it denotes his vehemence and constancy in making this protestation. Note, Temptations to pride, and assuming that honour to ourselves which does not belong to us, ought to be resisted with a great deal of vigour and earnestness. When John was taken to be the Messiah, he did not connive at it with a Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur--If the people will be deceived, let them; but openly and solemnly, without any ambiguities, confessed, I am not the Christ; hoti ouk eimi ego ho Christos--I am not the Christ, not I; another is at hand, who is he, but I am not. His disowning himself to be the Christ is called his confessing and not denying Christ. Note, Those that humble and abase themselves thereby confess Christ, and give honour to him; but those that will not deny themselves do in effect deny Christ,

[2.] He disowns himself to be Elias, Joh 1:21. The Jews expected the person of Elias to return from heaven, and to live among them, and promised themselves great things from it. Hearing of John's character, doctrine, and baptism, and observing that he appeared as one dropped from heaven, in the

same part of the country from which Elijah was carried to heaven, it is no wonder that they were ready to take him for this Elijah; but he disowned this honour too. He was indeed prophesied of under the name of Elijah (Mal 4:5), and he came in the spirit and power of Elias (Lu 1:17), and was the Elias that was to come (Mt 11:14); but he was not the person of Elias, not that Elias that went to heaven in the fiery chariot, as he was that met Christ in his transfiguration. He was the Elias that God had promised, not the Elias that they foolishly dreamed of. Elias did come, and they knew him not (Mt 17:12); nor did he make himself known to them as the Elias, because they had promised themselves such an Elias as God never promised them.

[3.] He disowns himself to be that prophet, or the prophet. First, He was not that prophet which Moses said the Lord would raise up to them of their brethren, like unto him. If they meant this, they needed not ask that question, for that prophet was no other than the Messiah, and he had said already, I am not the Christ. Secondly, He was not such a prophet as they expected and wished for, who, like Samuel and Elijah, and some other of the prophets, would interpose in public affairs, and rescue them from under the Roman yoke. Thirdly, He was not one of the old prophets raised from the dead, as they expected one to come before Elias, as Elias before the Messiah. Fourthly, Though John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, yet he had his revelation, not by dreams and visions, as the Old-Testament prophets had theirs; his commission and work were of another nature, and belonged to another dispensation. If John had said that he was Elias, and was a prophet, he might have made his words good; but ministers must, upon all occasions, express themselves with the utmost caution, both that they may not confirm people in any mistakes, and particularly that they may not give occasion to any to think of them above what is meet.

22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am

the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.

Affirmatively. The committee that was sent to examine him pressed for a positive answer (Joh 1:22), urging the authority of those that sent them, which they expected he should pay a deference to: "Tell us, What art thou? not that we may believe thee, and be baptized by three, but that we may give

an answer to those that sent us, and that it may not be said we were sent on a fool's errand." John was looked upon as a man of sincerity, and therefore they believed he would not give an evasive ambiguous answer; but would be fair and above-board, and give a plain answer to a plain question: What sayest thou of thyself? And he did so, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Observe,

[1.] He gives his answer in the words of scripture, to show that the scripture was fulfilled in him, and that his office was supported by a divine authority. What the scripture saith of the office of the ministry should be often thought of by those of that high calling, who must look upon themselves as that, and that only, which the word of God makes them.

[2.] He gives in his answer in very humble, modest, self-denying expressions. He chooses to apply that scripture to himself which denotes not his dignity, but his duty and dependence, which bespeaks him little: I am the voice, as if he were vox et præterea nihil--mere voice.

[3.] He gives such an account of himself as might be profitable to them, and might excite and awaken them to hearken to him; for he was the voice (see Isa 40:3), a voice to alarm, an articulate voice to instruct. Ministers are but the voice, the vehicle, by which God is pleased to communicate his mind. What are Paul and Apollos but messengers? Observe, First, He was a human voice. The people were prepared to receive the law by the voice of thunders, and a trumpet exceedingly loud, such as made them tremble; but they were prepared for the gospel by the voice of a man like ourselves, a still small voice, such as that in which God came to Elijah, 1Ki 19:12. Secondly, He was the voice of one crying, which denotes,

1. His earnestness and importunity in calling people to repentance; he cried aloud, and did not spare. Ministers must preach as those that are in earnest, and are themselves affected with those things with which they desire to affect others. Those words are not likely to thaw the hearers' hearts that freeze between the speaker's lips.

2. His open publication of the doctrine he preached; he was the voice of one crying, that all manner of persons might hear and take notice. Doth not

wisdom cry? Pr 8:1. Thirdly, It was in the wilderness that this voice was crying; in a place of silence and solitude, out of the noise of the world and the hurry of its business; the more retired we are from the tumult of secular affairs the better prepared we are to hear from God. Fourthly, That which he cried was, Make straight the way of the Lord; that is,

a. He came to rectify the mistakes of people concerning the ways of God; it is certain that they are right ways, but the scribes and Pharisees, with their corrupt glosses upon the law, had made them crooked. Now John Baptist calls people to return to the original rule.

b. He came to prepare and dispose people for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel. It is an allusion to the harbingers of a prince or great man, that cry, Make room. Note, When God is coming towards us, we must prepare to meet him, and let the word of the Lord have free course. See Ps 24:7.

24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet?

The enquiry which the committee made about it: Why baptizest thou, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet? Joh 1:25.

[1.] They readily apprehended baptism to be fitly and properly used as a sacred rite or ceremony, for the Jewish church had used it with circumcision in the admission of proselytes, to signify the cleansing of them from the pollutions of their former state. That sign was made use of in the Christian church, that it might be the more passable. Christ did not affect novelty, nor should his ministers.

[2.] They expected it would be used in the days of the Messiah, because it was promised that then there should be a fountain opened (Zec 13:1), and clean water sprinkled, Eze 36:25. It is taken for granted that Christ, and Elias, and that prophet, would baptize, when they came to purify a polluted world. Divine justice drowned the old world in its filth, but divine grace has provided for the cleansing of this new world from its filth.

[3.] They would therefore know by what authority John baptized. His denying himself to be Elias, or that prophet, subjected him to this further question, Why baptizest thou? Note, It is no new thing for a man's modesty to be turned against him, and improved to his prejudice; but it is better that men should take advantage of our low thoughts of ourselves, to trample upon us, than the devil take advantage of our high thoughts of ourselves, to tempt us to pride and draw us into his condemnation.

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoelatchet I am not worthy to unloose.

The account he gave of it, Joh 1:26,27.

[1.] He owned himself to be only the minister of the outward sign: "I baptize with water, and that is all; I am no more, and do no more, than what you see; I have no other title than John the Baptist; I cannot confer the spiritual grace signified by it." Paul was in care that none should think of him above what they saw him to be (2Co 12:6); so was John Baptist. Ministers must not set up for masters.

[2.] He directed them to one who was greater than himself, and would do that for them, if they pleased, which he could not do: "I baptize with water, and that is the utmost of my commission; I have nothing to do but by this to lead you to one that comes after me, and consign you to him." Note, The great business of Christ's ministers is to direct all people to him; we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. John gave the same account to this committee that he had given to the people (Joh 1:15): This as he of whom I spoke. John was constant and uniform in his testimony, not as a reed shaken with the wind. The sanhedrim were jealous of his interest in the people, but he is not afraid to tell them that there is one at the door that will go beyond him. First, He tells them of Christ's presence among them now at this time: There stands one among you, at this time, whom you know not. Christ stood among the common people, and was as one of them.

Note,

1. Much true worth lies hid in this world; obscurity is often the lot of real excellency. Saints are God's hidden ones, therefore the world knows them not.

2. God himself is often nearer to us than we are aware of. The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. They were gazing, in expectation of the messiah: Lo he is here, or he is there, when the kingdom of God was abroad and already among them, Lu 17:21. Secondly, He tells them of Christ's preference above himself: He comes after me, and yet is preferred before me. This he had said before; he adds here, "Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to loose; I am not fit to be named the same day with him; it is an honour too great for me to pretend to be in the meanest office about him," 1Sa 25:41. Those to whom Christ is precious reckon his service, even the most despised instances of it, an honour to them. See Ps 84:10. If so great a man as John accounted himself unworthy of the honour of being near Christ, how unworthy then should we account ourselves! Now, one would think, these chief priests and Pharisees, upon this intimation given concerning the approach of the Messiah, should presently have asked who, and where, this excellent person was; and who more likely to tell them than he who had given them this general notice? No, they did not think this any part of their business or concern; they came to molest John, not to receive any instructions from him: so that their ignorance was wilful; they might have known Christ, and would not.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Lastly, Notice is taken of the place where all this was done: In Bethabara beyond Jordan, Joh 1:28. Bethabara signifies the house of passage; some think it was the very place where Israel passed over Jordan into the land of promise under the conduct of Joshua; there was opened the way into the gospel state by Jesus Christ. It was at a great distance from Jerusalem, beyond Jordan; probably because what he did there would be least offensive to the government. Amos must go prophesy in the country, not near the court; but it was sad that Jerusalem should put so far from her the things that belonged to her peace. He made this confession in the same place where he was baptizing, that all those who attended his baptism might be witnesses of it, and none might say that they knew not what to make of him.

Behold the Lamb of God

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !

Behold the Lamb of God. A lamb, among the Jews, was killed and eaten at the Passover to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt, Ex 12:3-11. A lamb was offered in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple, every morning and evening, as a part of the daily worship, Ex 29:38,39. The Messiah was predicted as a lamb led to the slaughter, to show his patience in his sufferings, and readiness to die for man, Isa 53:7. A lamb, among the Jews, was also an emblem of patience, meekness, gentleness. On all these accounts, rather than on any one of them alone, Jesus was called the Lamb. He was innocent (1Pet 2:23-25); he was a sacrifice for sin--the substance represented by the daily offering of the lamb, and slain at the usual time of the evening sacrifice (Lk 23:44-46); and he was what was represented by the Passover, turning away the anger of God, and saving sinners by his blood from vengeance and eternal death, 1Cor 5:7.

Which taketh away. This denotes his bearing the sins of the world, or the sufferings which made an atonement for sin. Comp. Isa 53:4, 1Jn 3:5, 1Pet 2:24. He takes away sin by bearing in his own body the sufferings which God appointed to show his sense of the evil of sin, thus magnifying the law, and rendering it consistent for him to pardon. Rom 3:24, Rom 3:25.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

I knew him not. John was not personally acquainted with Jesus. Though they were remotely related to each other, yet it seems that they had had heretofore no personal acquaintance. John had lived chiefly in the hill country of Judea. Jesus had been employed with Joseph at Nazareth. Until Jesus came to be baptized (Mt 3:13,14), it seems that John had no

acquaintance with him. He understood that he was to announce that the Messiah was about to appear. He was sent to proclaim his coming, but he did not personally know Jesus, or that he was to be the Messiah. This proves that there could have been no collusion or agreement between them to impose on the people.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

The same said, &c. This was the sign by which he was to know the Messiah. He was to see the Spirit descending like a dove and abiding on him. It does not follow, however, that he had no intimation before this that Jesus was the Christ, but it means that by this he should infallibly know it. From Mt 3:13,14, it seems that John supposed, before the baptism of Jesus, that he claimed to be the Messiah, and that he believed it; but the infallible, certain, testimony in the case was the descent of the Holy Spirit on him at his baptism.

That this is the Son of God. This was distinctly declared by a voice from heaven at his baptism, Mt 3:17. This John heard, and he testified that he had heard it.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

The First Disciples

35 Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God !

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

They followed Jesus. They had been the disciples of John. His office was to point out the Messiah. When that was done, they left at once their master and teacher, John, and followed the long-expected Messiah. This shows that John was sincere; that he was not desirous of forming a party or of building up a sect; that he was willing that all those whom he had attracted to himself

by his ministry should become followers of Christ. The object of ministers should not be to build up their own interests or to extend their own fame. It is to point men to the Saviour. Ministers, however popular or successful, should be willing that their disciples should look to Christ rather than to them; nay, should forget them and look away from them, to tread in the footsteps of the Son of God; and the conduct of these disciples shows us that we should forsake all and follow Jesus when he is pointed out to us as the Messiah. We should not delay nor debate the matter, but leave at once all our old teachers, guides and companions, and follow the Lamb of God. And we should do that, too, though to the world the Lord Jesus may appear, as he did to the multitude of the Jews, as poor, unknown, and despised. Reader, have you left all and followed him? Have you forsaken the guides of false philosophy and deceit, of sin and infidelity, and committed yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

What seek ye? This was not asked to obtain information. Comp. Jn 1:48. It was not a harsh reproof, forbidding them to follow him. Comp. Mt 11:28-30. It was a kind inquiry respecting their desires; an invitation to lay open their minds, to state their wishes, and to express all their feelings respecting the Messiah and their own salvation. We may learn,

1st. That Jesus regards the first inclinations of the soul to follow him. He turned toward these disciples, and he will incline his ear to all who begin to approach him for salvation.

2nd. Jesus is ready to hear their requests and to answer them.

3rd. Ministers of the gospel, and all other Christians, should be accessible, kind, and tender toward all who are inquiring the way to life. In conformity with their Master, they should be willing to aid all those who look to them for guidance and help in the great work of their salvation. Rabbi. This was a Jewish title conferred somewhat as literary degrees now are, and meaning literally a great one, and was applied to a teacher or master in the Jewish schools. It corresponded with the title Doctor. Our Saviour solemnly forbade his disciples to wear that title. Mt 23:8. The fact that John

interpreted this word shows that he wrote his gospel not for the Jews only, but for those who did not understand the Hebrew language. It is supposed to have been written at Ephesus.

Where dwellest thou? This question they probably asked him in order to signify their wish to be with him and to be instructed by him. They desired more fully to listen to him than they could now by the wayside. They were unwilling to interrupt him in his travelling. Religion teaches men true politeness, or a disposition to consult the convenience of others, and not improperly to molest them, or to break in upon them when engaged. It also teaches us to desire to be with Christ; to seek every opportunity of coremration with him, and chiefly to desire to be with him where he is when we leave this world. Comp. Php 1:23.

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ [the anointed].

We have found the Messias. They had learned from the testimony of John, and now had been more fully convinced from conversation with Jesus, that he was the Messiah. The word Messiah, or Messias, is Hebrew, and means the same as the Greek word Christ, anointed. Mt 1:1. From the conduct of Andrew we may learn that it is the nature of religion to desire that others may possess it. It does not lead us to monopolize it or to hide it under a bushel, but it seeks that others also may be brought to the Saviour. It does not wait for them to come, but it goes for them; it seeks them out, and tells them that a Saviour is found. Young converts should seek their friends and neighbours, and tell them of a Saviour; and not only their relatives, but all others as far as possible, that all may come to Jesus and be saved.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone [or, Peter].

Cephas. This is a Syriac word, meaning the same as the Greek word Peter, a stone. Mt 16:17. The stone, or rock, is a symbol of firmness and steadiness of character--a trait in Peter's character after the ascension of Jesus that was

very remarkable. Before the death of Jesus he was rash, headlong, variable; and it is one proof of the omniscience of Jesus that he saw that Peter would possess a character that would be expressed appropriately by the word stone or rock. The word Jonas is a Hebrew word, whose original signification is a dove. It may be that Jesus had respect to that when he gave Simon the name Peter. "You now bear a name emblematic of timidity and inconstancy. You shall be called by a name denoting firmness and constancy."

MH Commentary:

The entertainment which Jesus Christ gave to Peter, who was never the less welcome for his being influenced by his brother to come, Joh 1:42. Observe,

(a) Christ called him by his name: When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona. It should seem that Peter was utterly a stranger to Christ, and if so,

[1.] It was a proof of Christ's omniscience that upon the first sight, without any enquiry, he could tell the name both of him and of his father. The Lord knows them that are his, and their whole case. However,

[2.] It was an instance of his condescending grace and favour, that he did thus freely and affably call him by his name, though he was of mean extraction, and vir mullius nominis--a man of no name. It was an instance of God's favour to Moses that he knew him by name, Ex 33:17. Some observe the signification of these names: Simon--obedient, Jona--a dove. An obedient dove-like spirit qualifies us to be the disciples of Christ.

(b) He gave him a new name: Cephas.

[1.] His giving him a name intimates Christ's favour to him. A new name denotes some great dignity, Re 2:17,Isa 62:2. By this Christ not only wiped off the reproach of his mean and obscure parentage, but adopted him into his family as one of his own.

[2.] The name which he gave him bespeaks his fidelity to Christ: Thou shalt be called Cephas (that is Hebrew for a stone), which is by interpretation Peter; so it should be rendered, as Ac 9:36. Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas; the former Hebrew, the latter Greek, for a young roe. Peter's natural temper was stiff, and hardy, and resolute, which I take to be the principal reason why Christ called him Cephas--a stone. When Christ afterwards prayed for him, that his faith might not fail, that so he might be firm to Christ himself, and at the same time bade him strengthen his brethren, and lay out himself for the support of others, then he made him what he here called him, Cephas--a stone. Those that come to Christ must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, like a stone, solid and stedfast; and it is by his grace that they are so. His saying, Be thou steady, makes them so. Now this does no more prove that Peter was the singular or only rock upon which the church is built than the calling of James and John Boanerges proves them the only sons of thunder, or the calling of Joses Barnabas proves him the only son of consolation.

The Call of Philip and Nathanael

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

The last person mentioned in this chapter, who was called to own and embrace Christ for the Messiah, is Nathanael: who this Nathanael was, doth not certainly appear; but it is evident, he was a sincere, good man, though prejudiced for the present against Christ, because of the place of his supposed birth and residence, Nazareth: Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? That is, can any worthy or excellent person, much less the promsied and long-expected Messias, come out of such an obscure place as Nazareth is? Whereas Almighty God, whenever he pleases, can raise worthy persons out of contemptible places.

Observe farther, How mercifully and meekly Christ passes over the mistakes and failings, the prepossessions and prejudices, of Nathanael; but takes notice of and publicly proclaims his sincerity: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile! that is, no guile imputed, no guile concealed, no prevailing guile. It being only true of Christ, in a strict and

absolute sense, that there was no guile found in his lips; but, in a qualified sense, it is true of Nathanael, and every upright man: they are true Israelites, like their father Jacob, plain men; men of great sincerity and uprightness of heart, both in the sight of God and man. And whereas our Saviour speaks of him with a sort of admiration, Behold an Israelite in whom is no guile!

We learn, 1. That a person of great sincerity and uprightness of heart towards God and man, a true Nathanael, an Israelite indeed, is a rare and worthy sight, Behold an Israelite indeed!

Learn, 2. That such indeed as are Nathanaels, need not commend themselves; Christ will be sure to do it for them. Nathanael conceals his own worth: Christ publishes and proclaims it, and calls upon others to take notice of it. Behold, &c.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

The joyful news that Philip brought to Nathanael, Joh 1:45. As Andrew before, so Philip here, having got some knowledge of Christ himself, rests not till he has made manifest the savour of that knowledge. Philip, though newly come to an acquaintance with Christ himself, yet steps aside to seek Nathanael.

Note, When we have the fairest opportunities of getting good to our own souls, yet ever then we must seek opportunities of doing good to the souls of others, remembering the words of Christ, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Ac 20:35. O, saith Philip, we have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write,

Observe here,

[1.] What a transport of joy Philip was in, upon this new acquaintance with Christ: "We have found him whom we have so often talked of, so long wished and waited for; at last, he is come he is come, and we have found him!"

[2.] What an advantage it was to him that he was so well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which prepared his mind for the reception of evangelical light, and made the entrance of it much the more easy: Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write. What was written entirely and from eternity in the book of the divine counsels was in part, at sundry times and in divers manners, copied out into the book of the divine revelations. Glorious things were written there concerning the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, Shiloh, the prophet like Moses, the Son of David, Emmanuel, the Man, the Branch, Messiah the Prince. Philip had studied these things, and was full of them, which made him readily welcome Christ.

[3.] What mistakes and weaknesses he laboured under: he called Christ Jesus of Nazareth, whereas he was of Bethlehem; and the Son of Joseph, whereas he as but his supposed Son. Young beginners in religion are subject to mistakes, which time and the grace of God will rectify. It was his weakness to say, We have found him, for Christ found them before they found Christ. He did not yet apprehend, as Paul did, how he was apprehended of Christ Jesus, Php 3:12.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

(a) The objection which Nathanael made against this, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Joh 1:46. Here,

[1] His caution was commendable, that he did not lightly assent to every thing that was said, but took it into examination; our rule is, Prove all things.

But,

[2.] His objection arose from Ignorance. If he meant that no good thing could come out of Nazareth it was owing to his ignorance of the divine grace, as if that were less affected to one place than another, or tied itself to men's foolish and ill-natured observations. If he meant that the Messiah, that great good king, could not come out of Nazareth, so far he was right (Moses, in the law, said that he should come out of Judah, and the prophets had assigned Bethlehem for the place of his nativity); but then he was ignorant of the matter of fact, that this Jesus was born at Bethlehem; so that the blunder Philip made, in calling him Jesus of Nazareth, occasioned this

objection. Note, The mistakes of preachers often give rise to the prejudices of hearers.

(b) The short reply which Philip gave to this objection: Come and see.

[1.] It was his weakness that he could not give a satisfactory answer to it; yet it is the common case of young beginners in religion. We may know enough to satisfy ourselves, and yet not be able to say enough to silence the cavils of a subtle adversary.

[2.] It was his wisdom and zeal that, when he could not answer the objection himself, he would have him go to one that could: Come and see. Let us not stand arguing here, and raising difficulties to ourselves which we cannot get over; let us go and converse with Christ himself, and these difficulties will all vanish presently. Note, It is folly to spend that time in doubtful disputation which might be better spent, and to much better purpose, in the exercises of piety and devotion. Come and see; not, Go and see, but, "Come, and I will go along with thee;" as Isa 2:3,Jer 1:5. From this parley between Philip and Nathanael, we may observe, First, That many people are kept from the ways of religion by the unreasonable prejudices they have conceived against religion, upon the account of some foreign circumstances which do not at all touch the merits of the case. Secondly, The best way to remove the prejudices they have entertained against religion is to prove themselves, and make trial of it. Let us not answer this matter before we hear it.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

What passed between Nathanael and our Lord Jesus. He came and saw, not in vain.

Our Lord Jesus bore a very honourable testimony to Nathanael's integrity: Jesus saw him coming, and met him with favourable encouragement; he said of him to those about him, Nathanael himself being within hearing, Behold an Israelite indeed. Observe,

[1.] That he commended him; not to flatter him, or puff him up with a good conceit of himself, but perhaps because he knew him to be a modest man, if not a melancholy man, one that had hard and mean thoughts of himself, was ready to doubt his own sincerity; and Christ by this testimony put the matter out of doubt. Nathanael had, more than any of the candidates, objected against Christ; but Christ hereby showed that he excused it, and was not extreme to mark what he had said amiss, because he knew his heart was upright. He did not retort upon him, Can any good thing come out of Cana (Joh 21:2), an obscure town in Galilee? But kindly gives him this character, to encourage us to hope for acceptance with Christ, notwithstanding our weakness, and to teach us to speak honourably of those who without cause have spoken slightly of us, and to give them their due praise.

[2.] That he commended him for his integrity. First, Behold an Israelite indeed. It is Christ's prerogative to know what men are indeed; we can but hope the best. The whole nation were Israelites in name, but all are not Israel that are of Israel (Ro 9:6); here, however, was an Israelite indeed. A sincere professor of the faith of Israel; he was true to the religion he professed, and lived up to it: he was really as good as he seemed, and his practice was of a piece with his profession. He is the Jew that is one inwardly (Ro 2:29), so is he the Christian.

Secondly, He is one in whom is no guile--that is the character of an Israelite indeed, a Christian indeed: no guile towards men; a man without trick or design; a man that one may trust; no guile towards God, that is, sincere in his repentance for sin; sincere in his covenanting with God; in whose spirit is no guile, Ps 32:2. He does not say without guilt, but without guile. Though in many things he is foolish and forgetful, yet in nothing false, nor wickedly departing from God: there is no allowed approved guilt in him; not painted, though he have his spots: "Behold this Israelite indeed."

1. "Take notice of him, that you may learn his way, and do like him."

2. "Admire him; behold, and wonder." The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees had so leavened the Jewish church and nation, and their religion

was so degenerated into formality or state-policy, that an Israelite indeed was a man wondered at, a miracle of divine grace, like Job, Joh 1:8.

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Whence knowest thou me? Nathanael was not yet acquainted with the divinity of Christ, and supposed that he had been a stranger to him. Hearing him express a favourable opinion of him, he naturally inquired by what means he had any knowledge of him. His conscience testified to the truth of what Jesus said--that he had no guile, and he was anxious to know whence he had learned his character.

When thou wast under the fig tree. It is evident that it was from something that had occurred under the fig-tree that Jesus judged of his character. What that was is not recorded. It is not improbable that Nathanael was accustomed to retire to the shade of a certain tree, perhaps in his garden or in a grove, for the purpose of meditation and prayer. The Jews were much in the habit of selecting such places for private devotion, and in such scenes of stillness and retirement there is something peculiarly favourable for meditation and prayer. Our Saviour also worshipped in such places. Comp. Jn 18:2, Lk 6:12. In that place of retirement it is not improbable that Nathanael was engaged in private devotion.

I saw thee. It is clear, from the narrative, that Jesus did not mean to say that he was bodily present with Nathanael and saw him; but he knew his thoughts, his desires, his secret feelings and wishes. In this sense Nathanael understood him. We may learn--

1st. That Jesus sees what is done in secret, and is therefore divine.

2nd. That he sees us when we little think of it.

3rd. That he sees us especially in our private devotions, hears our prayers, and marks our meditations. And

4th. That he judges of our character chiefly by our private devotions. Those are secret; the world sees them not; and in our closets we show what we are. How does it become us, therefore, that our secret prayers and meditations should be without guile and hypocrisy, and such as Jesus will approve!

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

The King of Israel. This was one of the titles by which the Messiah was expected, and this was the title which was affixed to his cross, Jn 19:18. This case of Nathanael John adduces as another evidence that Jesus was the Christ. The great object he had in view in writing this gospel was to collect the evidence that he was the Messiah, Mt 20:31. A case, therefore, where Jesus searched the heart, and where his knowledge of the heart convinced a pious Jew that he was the Christ, is very properly adduced as important testimony.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Verily, verily. In the Greek, Amen, amen. The word amen means truly, certainly, so be it--from the verb to confirm, to establish, to be true. It is often used in this gospel. When repeated it expresses the speaker's sense of the importance of what he is saying, and the certainty that it is as he affirms.

Ye shall see. Not, perhaps, with the bodily eyes, but you shall have evidence that it is so. The thing shall take place, and you shall be a witness of it.

Heaven open. This is a figurative expression, denoting the conferring of favours. Ps 78:23,24: "He opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna." It also denotes that God was about to work a miracle in attestation of a particular thing. See Mt 3:16. In the language, here, there is an evident allusion to the ladder that Jacob saw in a dream, and to the

angels ascending and descending on it, Gen 18:12. It is not probable that Jesus referred to any particular instance in which Nathanael should literally see the heavens opened, The baptism of Jesus had taken place, and no other instance occurred in his life in which it is said that the heavens were opened.

Angels of God. Those pure and holy beings that dwell in heaven, and that are employed as ministering spirits to our world, Heb 1:14. Good men are represented in the Scriptures as being under their protection, Ps 91:11,12, Gen 28:12. They are the agents by which God often expressed his will to men, Heb 2:2, Gal 3:19. They are represented as strengthening the Lord Jesus, and ministering unto him. Thus they aided him in the wilderness (Mk 1:13), and in the garden (Lk 22:43), and they were present when he rose from the dead, Mt 28:2-4, Jn 20:12,13. By their ascending and descending upon him it is probable that he meant that Nathanael would have evidence that they came to his aid, and that he would have the KIND of protection and assistance from God which would show more fully that he was the Messiah. Thus his life, his many deliverances from dangers, his wisdom to confute his skilled and cunning adversaries, the scenes of his death, and the attendance of angels at his resurrection, may all be represented by the angels descending upon him, and all would show to Nathanael and the other disciples most clearly that he was the Son of God.

The Son of man. A term by which he often describes himself. It shows his humility, his love for man, his willingness to be esteemed as a man, Php 2:6,7. From this interview with Nathanael we may learn,

1st. That Jesus searches the heart.

2nd. That he was truly the Messiah.

3rd. That he was under the protection of God.

4th. That if we have faith in Jesus, it will be continually strengthened--the evidence will grow brighter and brighter.

5th. That if we believe his word, we shall yet see full proof that his word is true.

6th. As Jesus was under the protection of God, so will all his friends be. God will defend and save us also if we put our trust in him.

7th. Jesus applied to himself terms expressive of humility. He was not solicitous even to be called by titles which he might claim. So we should not be ambitious of titles and honours. Ministers of the gospel must resemble him when they seek for the fewest titles, and do not aim at distinctions from each other or their brethren. Mt 23:8.

John-2

The Wedding at Cana

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:
2 and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.
3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.
4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.
5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.
6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

In this miracle of our Saviour's turning water into wine, Observe, 1. The reality of the miracle, and the sincerity of Christ in the working of it. The evidencce there was no deceit in the miracle, not wine-casks, but water-pots, are called for; wine-vessels, in which some lees were remaining might have given both a vinous colour and taste to the water; but stonepots could contribute nothing of this nature; and being open pots, there was not stealing wine into them without observation.

Again, our Saviour's employing the servants, and not his disciples, takes off any suspicion of collusion; and his sending it to the ruler or governor of the feast, was an evidence that the miracle would bear examination. Our Saviour's miracles were real and beneficial; they were obvious to sense, not lying wonders, nor fictitious miracles, which the jugglers in the church of Rome cheat the people with. The greatest miracle which they boast of, transubstantiation, is so far from being obvious to sense, that it conrtradicts the sense and reason of mankind, and is the greatest affront to human nature that ever the world was acquainted with.

Observe, 2. Though Christ wrought a real miracle, yet he would not work more of miracle than needed; he would not create wine out of nothing, but turned water into wine. Thus he multiplied the bread, changed the water, restored withered limbs, raised dead bodies, still working upon that which was, and not creating that which was not: Christ never wrought a miracle but when needful, and then wrought no more of miracles than he needed.

Observe, 3. The liberality and bounty of Christ in the miracle here wrought; six water-pots are filled with wine! Enough, says some writers, for an hundred and fifty men; had he turned but one of those large vessels into wine, it had been a sufficient proof of his power; but to fill so many, was an instance both of his power and mercy.

The Lord of the family furnishes his household not barely for necessity, but for delight, giving richly all things to enjoy. And as the bounty of Christ appeared in quantity, so in the excellency, of the wine; Thou hast kept the best wine until now, says the governor of the feast. It was fit that Christ's miraculous wine should be more perfect than the natural.

Observe, 4. The double effects of this miracle; Christ hereby manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him.

The first effect of this miracle was that He manifested forth his glory; that is, the glory of his godhead, as doing this by his own power. Here shined

forth his omnipotence, his bounty and liberality, every thing that might bespeak him both a great and good God.

The second effect of this miracle was, that the disciples believed on him. The great end of miracles is the confirmation of faith; God never sets the seals of his omnipotence to a lie; all the miracles then that Christ and his apostles did, were as so many seals that the doctrine of the gospel is true. If you believe not me, says Christ, believe the works which I do, for they bear witness of me, Joh 5:36

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

With water. This was done by the servants employed at the feast. It was done by them, so that there might be no opportunity of saying that the disciples of Jesus had filled them with wine to produce the appearance of a miracle. In this case there could be no deception. The quantity was very considerable. The servants would know whether the wine or water had been put in these vessels. It could not be believed that they had either the power or the disposition to impose on others in this manner, and the way was therefore clear for the proof that Jesus had really changed what was known to be water into wine.

To the brim. To the top. So full that no wine could be poured in to give the appearance of a mixture. Farther, vessels were used for this miracle in which wine had not been kept. These pots were never used to put wine in, but simply to keep water in for the various purposes of ablution. A large number was used on this occasion, because there were many guests.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

Draw out now. This command was given to the servants. It showed that the miracle had been immediately wrought. As soon as they were filled the servants were directed to take to the governor of the feast. Jesus made no parade about it, and it does not even appear that he approached the water-pots. He willed it, and it was done. This was a clear exertion of divine power, and made in such a manner as to leave no doubt of its reality.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

And knew not whence it was. This is said, probably, to indicate that his judgment was not biased by any favour, or any want of favour, toward Jesus. Had he known what was done, he would have been less likely to have judged impartially. As it is, we have his testimony that this was real wine, and of so fine a body and flavour as to surpass that which had been provided for the occasion. Everything in this miracle shows that there was no collusion or understanding between Jesus and any of the persons at the feast.

10 and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

When men have well drunk. This word does not of necessity mean that they were intoxicated, though it is usually employed in that sense. It may mean when they have drunk sufficient, or to satiety; or have drunk so much as to produce hilarity, and to destroy the keenness of their taste, so that they could not readily distinguish the good from that which was worse. But this cannot be adduced in favour of drunkenness, even if it means to be intoxicated; for,

1st. It is not said of those who were present at that feast, but of what generally occurred. For anything that appears, at that feast all were perfectly temperate and sober.

2nd. It is not the saying of Jesus that is here recorded, but of the governor of the feast, who is declaring what usually occurred as a fact.

3rd. There is not any expression of opinion in regard to its propriety, or in approval of it, even by that governor.

4th. It does not appear that our Saviour even heard the observation.

5th. Still less is there any evidence that he approved such a state of things, or that he designed that it should take place here. Farther, the word translated "well drunk" cannot be shown to mean intoxication; but it may mean when they had drunk as much as they judged proper or as they desired, then the other was presented. It is clear that neither our Saviour, nor the sacred writer, nor the speaker here expresses any approbation of intemperance, nor is there the least evidence that anything of the kind occurred here. It is not proof that

we approve of intemperance when we mention, as this man did, what occurs usually among men at feasts.

The good wine. This shows that this had all the qualities of real wine. We should not be deceived by the phrase "good wine." We often use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength and its power to intoxicate; but no such sense is to be attached to the word here. Pliny, Plutarch, and Horace describe wine as good, or mention that as the best wine, which was harmless or innocent--poculo vini innocentis. The most useful wine -- utilissimum vinum-- was that which had little strength; and the most wholesome wine-- saluberrimum vinum-- was that which had not been adulterated by "the addition of anything to the must or juice." Pliny expressly says that a "good wine" was one that was destitute of spirit (lib. iv. c. 13). It should not be assumed, therefore, that the "good wine" was stronger than the other: it is rather to be presumed that it was milder. The wine referred to here was doubtless such as was commonly drunk in Palestine. That was the pure juice of the grape. It was not brandied wine, nor drugged wine, nor wine compounded of various substances, such as we drink in this land. The common wine drunk in Palestine was that which was the simple juice of the grape. We use the word wine now to denote the kind of liquid which passes under that name in this country--always containing a considerable portion of alcohol --not only the alcohol produced by fermentation, but alcohol added to keep it or make it stronger. But we have no right to take that sense of the word, and go with it to the interpretation of the Scriptures. We should endeavour to place ourselves in the exact circumstances of those times, ascertain precisely what idea the word would convey to those who used it then, and apply that sense to the word in the interpretation of the Bible; and there is not the slightest evidence that the word so used would have conveyed any idea but that of the pure juice of the grape, nor the slightest circumstance mentioned in this account that would not be fully met by such a supposition. No man should adduce this instance in favour of drinking wine unless he can prove that the wine made in the" water-pots" of Cana was just like the wine which he proposes to drink. The Saviour's example may be always pleaded JUST AS IT WAS; but it is a matter of obvious and simple justice that we should find out exactly what the example was before we plead it. There is, moreover, no evidence that any other part of the water was converted into wine than that which was

drawn out of the water-casks for the use of the guests. On this supposition, certainly, all the circumstances of the case are met, and the miracle would be more striking. All that was needed was to furnish a supply when the wine that had been prepared was nearly exhausted. The object was not to furnish a large quantity for future use. The miracle, too, would in this way be more apparent and impressive. On this supposition, the casks would appear to be filled with water only; as it was drawn out, it was pure wine. Who could doubt, then, that there was the exertion of miraculous power? All, therefore, that has been said about the Redeemer's furnishing a large quantity of wine for the newly-married pair, and about his benevolence in doing it, is wholly gratuitous. There is no evidence of it whatever; and it is not necessary to suppose it in order to an explanation of the circumstances of the case.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

This beginning of miracles. This his first public miracle. This is declared by the sacred writer to be a miracle-- that is, an exertion of divine power, producing a change of the substance of water into wine, which no human power could do.

His glory. His power, and proper character as the Messiah; showed that he had divine power, and that God had certainly commissioned him. This is shown to be a real miracle by the following considerations:

1st. Real water was placed in the vessels. This the servants believed, and there was no possibility of deception.

2nd. The water was placed where it was not customary to keep wine. It could not be pretended that it was merely a mixture of water and wine.

3rd. It was judged to be wine without knowing whence it came. There was no agreement between Jesus and the governor of the feast to impose on the guests.

4th. It was a change which nothing but divine power could effect. He that can change water into a substance like the juice of the grape must be clothed with divine power.

Believed on him. This does not mean that they did not before believe on him, but that their faith was confirmed or strengthened. They saw a miracle, and it satisfied them that he was the Messiah. Before this they believed on the testimony of John, and from conversation with Jesus (Jn 1:35-51); now they saw that he was invested with almighty power, and their faith was established. From this narrative we may learn,

1st. That marriage is honourable, and that Jesus, if sought, will not refuse his presence and blessing on such an occasion.

2nd. On such an occasion the presence and approbation of Christ should be sought. No compact formed on earth is more important; none enters so deeply into our comfort in this world; perhaps none will so much affect our destiny in the world to come. It should be entered into, then, in the fear of God.

3rd. On all such occasions our conduct should be such that the presence of Jesus would be no interruption or disturbance. He is holy. He is always present in every place; and on all festival occasions our deportment should be such as that we should welcome the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not a proper state of feeling or employment which would be interrupted by the presence of the Saviour.

4th. Jesus delighted to do good. In the very beginning of his ministry he worked a miracle to show his benevolence. This was the appropriate commencement of a life in which he was to go about doing good. He seized every opportunity of doing it; and at a marriage feast, as well as among the sick and poor, he showed the character which he always sustained --that of a benefactor of mankind.

5th. An argument cannot be drawn from this instance in favour of intemperate drinking. There is no evidence that any who were present on that occasion drank too freely.

6th. Nor can an argument be drawn from this case in favour even of drinking wine such as we have. The common wine of Judea was the pure juice of the grape, without any mixture of alcohol, and was harmless. It was the common drink of the people, and did not tend to produce intoxication. Our wines are a mixture of the juice of the grape and of brandy, and often of infusions of various substances to give it colour and taste, and the appearance of wine. Those wines are little less injurious than brandy, and the habit of drinking them should be classed with the drinking of all other liquid fires.

It follows that a man who drinks two glasses of most of the wines used has taken as much alcohol as if he had taken one glass of brandy or whisky, and why should he not as well drink the alcohol in the brandy as in the Wine? What difference can it make in morals? What difference in its effects on his system? The experience of the world has shown that water, pure water, is the most wholesome, safe, and invigorating drink for man.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples; and they continued there not many days.

The Cleansing of the Temple

13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

And Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Every male among the Jews was required to appear at this feast. Jesus, in obedience to the law, went up to observe it. This is the first Passover on which he attended after he entered on the work of the ministry. It is commonly supposed that he observed three others-- one recorded Lk 6:1, another Jn 6:4, and the last one on the night before he was crucified, Jn 11:55. As his baptism when he entered on his ministry had taken place some time before this --probably not far from six months-- it follows that the period of his ministry was not far from three years and a half, agreeably to the prophecy in Dan 9:27.

14 and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

Found in the temple, &c. The transaction here recorded is in almost all respects similar to that which has been explained in the Mt 21:12. This took

place at the commencement of his public ministry; that at the close. On each occasion he showed that his great regard was for the pure worship of his Father; and one great design of his coming was to reform the abuses which had crept into that worship, and to bring man to a proper regard for the glory of God. If it be asked how it was that those engaged in this traffic so readily yielded to Jesus of Nazareth, and that they left their gains and their property, and fled from the temple at the command of one so obscure as he was, it may be replied,

1st. That their consciences reproved them for their impiety, and they could not set up the appearance of self-defence.

2nd. It was customary in the nation to cherish a profound regard for the authority of a prophet; and the appearance and manner of Jesus--so fearless, so decided, so authoritative--led them to suppose he was a prophet, and they were afraid to resist him.

3rd. He had even then a wide reputation among the people, and it is not improbable that many supposed him to be the Messiah.

4th. Jesus on all occasions had a most wonderful control over men. None could resist him. There was something in his manner, as well as in his doctrine, that awed men, and made them tremble at his presence. Comp. Jn 18:5,6. On this occasion he had the manner of a prophet, the authority of God, and the testimony of their own consciences, and they could not, therefore, resist the authority by which he spoke.

Though Jesus thus purified the temple at the commencement of his ministry, yet in three years the same scene was to be repeated. See Mt 21:12. And from this we may learn,

1st. How soon men forget the most solemn reproofs, and return to evil practices.

2nd. That no sacredness of time or place will guard them from sin. In the very temple, under the very eye of God, these men soon returned to practices

for which their consciences reproved them, and which they knew God disapproved.

3rd. We see here how strong is the love of gain--the ruling passion of mankind. Not even the sacredness of the temple, the presence of God, the awful ceremonials of religion, deterred them from this unholy traffic. So wicked men and hypocrites will always turn religion, if possible, into gain; and not even the sanctuary, the Sabbath, or the most awful and sacred scenes, will deter them from schemes of gain. Comp. Amos 8:5. So strong is this grovelling passion, and so deep is that depravity which fears not God, and regards not his Sabbaths, his sanctuary, or his law.

15 and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

Of small cords. This whip was made as an emblem of authority, and also for the purpose of driving from the temple the cattle which had been brought there for sale. There is no evidence that he used any violence to the men engaged in that unhallowed traffic. The original word implies that these cords were made of twisted rushes or reeds-- probably the ancient material for making ropes.

16 and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

It was written, &c. This is recorded in Ps 69:9. Its meaning is, that he was affected with great zeal or concern for the pure worship of God.

The zeal of thine house. Zeal is intense ardour in reference to any object. The zeal of thine house means extraordinary concern for the temple of God; intense solicitude that the worship there should be pure, and such as God would approve.

Hath eaten me up. Hath absorbed me, or engaged my entire attention and affection; hath surpassed all other feelings, so that it may be said to be the one great absorbing affection and desire of the mind. Here is an example set for ministers and for all Christians. In Jesus this was the great commanding

sentiment of his life. In us it should be also. In this manifestation of zeal he began and ended his ministry. In this we should begin and end our lives. We learn, also, that ministers of religion should aim to purify the church of God. Wicked men, conscience-smitten, will tremble when they see proper zeal in the ministers of Jesus Christ; and there is no combination of wicked men, and no form of depravity, that can stand before the faithful, zealous, pure preaching of the gospel. The preaching of every minister should be such that wicked men will feel that they must either become Christians or leave the house of God, or spend their lives there in the consciousness of guilt and the fear of hell.

18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

What sign, &c. What miracle dost thou work? He assumed the character of a prophet. He was reforming, by his authority, the temple. It was natural to ask by what authority this was done; and as they had been accustomed to miracles in the life of Moses, and Elijah, and the other prophets, so they demanded evidence that he had authority thus to cleanse the house of God.

Seeing that thou doest. Rather "by what title or authority thou doest these things." Our translation is ambiguous. They wished to know by what miracle he had shown, or could show, his right to do those things.

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Destroy this temple. The evangelist informs us (Jn 2:21) that by temple, here, he meant his body. It is not improbable that he pointed with his finger to his body as he spoke. The word destroy, used here in the imperative, has rather the force of the future. Its meaning may thus be expressed:

"You are now profaners of the temple of God. You have defiled the sanctuary; you have made it a place of traffic. You have also despised my authority, and been unmoved by the miracles which I have already wrought. But your wickedness will not end here. You will oppose me more and more; you will reject and despise me, until in your wickedness you will take my life and destroy my body."

Here was therefore a distinct prediction both of his death and the cause of it. The word temple, or dwelling, was not unfrequently used by the Jews to denote the body as being the residence of the spirit, 2Cor 5:1. Christians are not unfrequently called the temple of God, as being those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells on earth, 1Cor 3:16,17; 1Cor 6:19, 2Cor 6:16. Our Saviour called his body a temple in accordance with the common use of language, and more particularly because in him the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, Col 2:9. The temple at Jerusalem was the appropriate dwelling-place of God. His visible presence was there peculiarly manifested, 2Chr 36:15, Ps 76:2. As the Lord Jesus was divine--as the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him--so his body might be called a temple.

In three days I will raise it up. The Jews had asked a miracle of him in proof of his authority--that is, a proof that he was the Messiah. He tells them that a full and decided proof of that would be his resurrection from the dead. Though they would not be satisfied by any other miracle, yet by this they ought to be convinced that he came from heaven, and was the long-expected Messiah. To the same evidence that he was the Christ he refers them on other occasions. See Mt 12:38,39. Thus early did he foretell his death and resurrection, for at the beginning of his work he had a clear foresight of all that was to take place. This knowledge shows clearly that he came from heaven, and it evinces, also, the extent of his love--that he was willing to come to save us, knowing clearly what it would cost him. Had he come without such an expectation of suffering, his love might have been far less; but when he fully knew all that was before him, when he saw that it would involve him in contempt and death, it shows compassion "worthy of a God" that he was willing to endure the load of all our sorrows, and die to save us from death everlasting. When Jesus says, "I will raise it up," it is proof, also, of divine power. A mere man could not say this. No deceased man can have such power over his body; and there must have been, therefore, in the person of Jesus a nature superior to human to which the term "I" could be applied, and which had power to raise the dead--that is, which was divine.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days ?

Then said the Jews, &c. The Jews, either from the ambiguity of his language, or more probably from a design to cavil, understood him as speaking of the temple at Jerusalem. What he said here is all the evidence

that they could adduce on his trial (Mt 26:61, Mk 14:58), and they reproached him with it when on the cross, Mt 27:40. The Jews frequently perverted our Saviour's meaning. The language which he used was often that of parables or metaphor; and as they sought to misunderstand him and pervert his language, so he often left them to their own delusions, as he himself says, "that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand," Mt 13:13. This was a case which they might, if they had been disposed, have easily understood. They were in the temple; the conversation was about the temple; and though he probably pointed to his body, or designated it in some plain way, yet they chose to understand him as referring to the temple itself; and as it appeared so improbable that he could raise up that in three days, they sought to pervert his words and pour ridicule on his pretensions.

Forty and six years, &c. The temple in which they then were was that which was commonly called the second temple, built after the return of the Jews from Babylon. Mt 21:12. This temple Herod the Great commenced repairing, or began to rebuild, in the eighteenth year of his reign--that is, sixteen years before the birth of Christ (Jos. Ant., b. xv. 1). The main body of the temple he completed in nine years and a half (Jos. Ant., xv. 5, 6), yet the temple, with its outbuildings, was not entirely complete in the time of our Saviour. Herod continued to ornament it and to perfect it even till the time of Agrippa (Jos. Ant., b. xx. ch. viii. 11). As Herod began to rebuild the temple sixteen years before the birth of Jesus, and as what is here mentioned happened in the thirtieth year of the age of Jesus, so the time which had been occupied in it was forty-six years. This circumstance is one of the many in the New Testament which show the accuracy of the evangelists, and which prove that they were well acquainted with what they recorded. It demonstrates that their narration is true. Impostors do not trouble themselves to be very accurate about names and dates, and there is nothing in which they are more liable to make mistakes.

Wilt thou, &c. This is an expression of contempt. Herod, with all his wealth and power, had been engaged in this work almost half a century. Can you, an obscure and unknown Galilean, accomplish it in three days? The thing, in their judgment, was ridiculous, and showed, as they supposed, that he had no authority to do what he had done in the temple.

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

When he was risen from the dead, &c. This saying of our Saviour at that time seemed obscure and difficult. The disciples did not understand it, but they treasured it up in their memory, and the event showed what was its true meaning. Many prophecies are obscure when spoken which are perfectly plain when the event takes place. We learn from this, also, the importance of treasuring up the truths of the Bible now, though we may not perfectly understand them. Hereafter they may be plain to us. It is therefore important that children should learn the truths of the sacred Scriptures. Treasured up in their memory, they may not be understood now, but hereafter they may be clear to them. Every one engaged in teaching a Sunday-school, therefore, may be imparting instruction which may be understood, and may impart comfort, long after the teacher has gone to eternity.

Jesus Knows All Men

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

Observe here, What influence the sight of our Saviour's miracles had upon many of the common people, They believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did; that is, they were convinced by the works which our Saviour wrought that he came from God, and what he said and did was really true, and no imposture. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. Our Saviour did not, and would not trust them who yet believed on his name.

Thence note, That a naked assent to the history of the gospel is not sufficient to entitle us to saving faith. We may assent to the truth of all that we find there, and yet be far from the kingdom of God.

Saving faith implies more than the assent of the understanding to the truths of the gospel. We cannot believe or disbelieve what we please, but must needs assent to what is evident to our understanding; so that it is possible for a man to assent to the truth of Christianity and yet remain in a state of of damnation.

If he doth not embrace it as good, as well as assent to it as true; if our faith be not the parent and principle of obedience; if our belief doth not influence our practice; though we pass for believers amongst men, we are no better than unbelievers in the account of Christ.

If we believe Jesus to be the true Messiah, and do not receive him in all his office; if we commit ourselves to his saving mercy, but do not submit ourselves to his ruling power; if we desire him for our Saviour, but disown him for our sovereign; if we expect salvation by him, and do not yield subjection to him; we put a cheat upon ourselves: for he only believes as he should, that lives as he does believe.

St. John's design in writing of this gospel being to assert the divinity of Christ, he scatters evidences of it in almost every chapter. Here he declares his omniscience, He knew what was in man; that is, being God blessed for ever, he had an exact knowledge of the hearts of men, not by any revelation of men's hearts from God, but by immediate intuition from himself. He knows all men, and all that is in men. See here an ample testimony of the divinity of Christ, his knowledge of the secrets of the hearts of all men, which is declared to be the undoubted property of God alone, Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men. 1Kgs 8:39

24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

25 and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.

John-3

Jesus and Nicodemus

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. One of the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. He is twice mentioned after this as being friendly to our Saviour; in

the first instance as advocating his cause, and defending him against the unjust suspicion of the Jews Jn 7:50, and in the second instance as one who came to aid in embalming his body, Jn 19:39. It will be recollected that the design of John in writing this gUospel was to show that Jesus was the Messiah. To do this he here adduces the testimony of one of the rulers of the Jews, who early became convinced of it, and who retained the belief of it until the death of Jesus.

2 the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

The same came to Jesus. The design of his coming seems to have been to inquire more fully of Jesus what was the doctrine which he came to teach. He seems to have been convinced that he was the Messiah, and desired to be farther instructed in private respecting his doctrine. It was not usual for a man of rank, power, and riches to come to inquire of Jesus in this manner; yet we may learn that the most favourable opportunity for teaching such men the nature of personal religion is when they are alone. Scarcely any man, of any rank, will refuse to converse on this subject when addressed respectfully and tenderly in private. In the midst of their companions, or engaged in business, they may refuse to listen or may cavil. When alone, they will hear the voice of entreaty and persuasion, and be willing to converse on the great subjects of judgment and eternity. Thus Paul says (Gal 2:2), "privately to them which are of reputations;" evincing his consummate prudence, and his profound knowledge of human nature.

Consider him, secondly, as a ruler of the Jews, as a person of place and power, making a figure in the world. Though they were generally the poor which followed Christ, yet some of the great and rich men of the world, as Nicodemus, a master of Israel, and Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, are called to Christ, and received by him: lest, if he had admitted illiterate and simple men only, the world might have thought that they were deceived through their simplicity.

By night. It is not mentioned why he came by night. It might have been that, being a member of the Sanhedrim, he was engaged all the day; or it may have been because the Lord Jesus was occupied all the day in teaching publicly and in working miracles, and that there was no opportunity for conversing

with him as freely as he desired; or it may have been that he was afraid of the ridicule and contempt of those in power, and fearful that it might involve him in danger if publicly known; or it may have been that he was afraid that if it were publicly known that he was disposed to favour the Lord Jesus, it might provoke more opposition against him and endanger his life. As no bad motive is imputed to him, it is most in accordance with Christian charity to suppose that his motives were such as God would approve, especially as the Saviour did not reprove him. We should not be disposed to blame men where Jesus did not, and we should desire to find goodness in every man rather than be ever on the search for evil motives. 1Cor 13:4-7.

We may learn here,

1st. That our Saviour, though engaged during the day, did not refuse to converse with an inquiring sinner at night. Ministers of the gospel at all times should welcome those who are asking the way to life.

2nd. That it is proper for men, even those of elevated rank, to inquire on the subject of religion. Nothing is so important as religion, and no temper of mind is more lovely than a disposition to ask the way to heaven. At all times men should seek the way of salvation, and especially in times of great religious excitement they should make inquiry. At Jerusalem, at the time referred to here, there was great solicitude. Many believed on Jesus. He wrought miracles, and preached, and many were converted. There was what would now be called a revival off religion, having all the features of a work of grace. At such a season it was proper, as it is now, that not only the poor, but the rich and great, should inquire the path to life.

Rabbi. This was a title of respect conferred on distinguished Jewish teachers, somewhat in the way that the title doctor of divinity is now conferred. Jn 1:38. Our Saviour forbade his disciples to wear that title (Jn 1:38), though it was proper for him to do it, as being the great Teacher of mankind. It literally signifies great, and was given by Nicodemus, doubtless, because Jesus gave distinguished proofs that he came as a teacher from God.

We know. I know, and those with whom I am connected. Perhaps he was acquainted with some of the Pharisees who entertained the same opinion about Jesus that he did, and he came to be more fully confirmed in the belief.

Come from God. Sent by God. This implies his readiness to hear him, and his desire to be instructed. He acknowledges the divine mission of Jesus, and delicately asks him to instruct him in the truth of religion. When we read the words of Jesus in the Bible, it should be with a belief that he came from God, and was therefore qualified and authorized to teach us the way of life.

Except God be with him. Except God aid him, and except his instructions are approved by God. Miracles show that a prophet or religious teacher comes from God, because God would not work a miracle in attestation of a falsehood or to give countenance to a false teacher. If God gives a man power to work a miracle, it is proof that he approves the teaching of that man, and the miracle is the proof or the credential that he came from God.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Verily, verily. An expression of strong affirmation, denoting the certainty and the importance of what he was about to say. Jesus proceeds to state one of the fundamental and indispensable doctrines of his religion. It may seem remarkable that he should introduce this subject in this manner; but it should be remembered that Nicodemus acknowledged that he was a teacher come from God; that he implied by that his readiness and desire to receive instruction; and that it is not wonderful, therefore, that Jesus should commence with one of the fundamental truths of his religion. It is no part of Christianity to conceal anything. Jesus declared to every man, high or low, rich or poor, the most humbling truths of the gospel. Nothing was kept back for fear of offending men of wealth or power; and for them, as well as the most poor and lowly, it was declared to be indispensable to experience, as the first thing in religion, a change of heart and of life.

Except a man. This is a universal form of expression designed to include all mankind. Of each and every man it is certain that unless he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. It includes, therefore, men of every character and rank, and nation, moral and immoral, rich and poor, in office and out of office, old and young, bond and free, the slave and his master, Jew and

Gentile. It is clear that our Saviour intended to convey to Nicodemus the idea, also, that he must be born again. It was not sufficient to be a Jew, or to acknowledge him to be a teacher sent by God--that is, the Messiah; it was necessary, in addition to this, to experience in his own soul that great change called the new birth or regeneration.

Be born again. The word translated here again means also from above, and is so rendered in the margin. It is evident, however, that Nicodemus understood it not as referring to a birth from above, for if he had he would not have asked the question in Jn 3:4. It is probable that in the language which he used there was not the same ambiguity that there is in the Greek. The ancient versions all understood it as meaning again, or the second time. Our natural birth introduces us to light, is the commencement of life, throws us amid the works of God, and is the beginning of our existence; but it also introduces us to a world of sin. We early go astray. All men transgress. The imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil from the youth up. We are conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, and there is none that doeth good, no, not one. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins, Gen 8:21, Ps 14:2,3; Ps 51:5, Rom 1:29-32, 3:10-20, 8:7. All sin exposes men to misery here and hereafter. To escape from sin, to be happy in the world to come, it is necessary that man should be changed in his principles, his feelings, and his manner of life. This change, or the beginning of this new life, is called the new birth, or regeneration. It is so called because in many respects it has a striking analogy to the natural birth. It is the beginning of spiritual life. It introduces us to the light of the gospel. It is the moment when we really begin to live to any purpose. It is the moment when God reveals himself to us as our reconciled Father, and we are adopted into his family as his sons. And as every man is a sinner, it is necessary that each one should experience this change, or he cannot be happy or saved. This doctrine was not unknown to the Jews, and was particularly predicted as a doctrine that would be taught in the times of the Messiah. See De 10:16, Jer 4:4, 31:4,33, Eze 11:19, 36:25 Ps 51:12. The change in the New Testament is elsewhere called the new creation (2Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15), and life from the dead, or a resurrection, Eph 2:1, Jn 5:21,24.

The kingdom of God. Either in this world or in that which is to come--that is, heaven. Mt 3:2 The meaning is, that the kingdom which Jesus was about to

set up was so pure and holy that it was indispensable that every man should experience this change, or he could not partake of its blessings. This is solemnly declared by the Son of God by an affirmation equivalent to an oath, and there can be no possibility, therefore, of entering heaven without experiencing the change which the Saviour contemplated by the new birth. And it becomes every man, as in the presence of a holy God before whom he must soon appear, to ask himself whether he has experienced this change, and if he has not, to give no rest to his eyes until he has sought the mercy of God, and implored the aid of his Spirit that his heart may be renewed.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old ? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

How can a man, &c. It may seem remarkable that Nicodemus understood the Saviour literally, when the expression to be born again was in common use among the Jews to denote a change from Gentilism to Judaism by becoming a proselyte by baptism. The word with them meant a change from the state of a heathen to that of a Jew. But they never used it as applicable to a Jew, because they supposed that by his birth every Jew was entitled to all the privileges of the people of God. When, therefore, our Saviour used it of a Jew, when he affirmed its necessity of every man, Nicodemus supposed that there was an absurdity in the doctrine, or something that surpassed his comprehension, and he therefore asked whether it was possible that Jesus could teach so absurd a doctrine--as he could conceive no other sense as applicable to a Jew--as that he should, when old, enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. And we may learn from this--

1st. That prejudice leads men to misunderstand the plainest doctrines of religion.

2nd. That things which are at first incomprehensible or apparently absurd, may, when explained, become clear. The doctrine of regeneration, so difficult to Nicodemus, is plain to a child that is born of the Spirit.

3rd. Those in high rank in life, and who are learned, are often most ignorant about the plainest matters of religion. It is often wonderful that they exhibit so little acquaintance with the most simple subjects pertaining to the soul, and so much absurdity in their views.

4th. A doctrine is not to be rejected because the rich and the great do not believe or understand it. The doctrine of regeneration was not false because Nicodemus did not comprehend it.

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Be born of water. By water, here, is evidently signified baptism. Thus the word is used in Eph 5:26, Tit 3:5. Baptism was practised by the Jews in receiving a Gentile as a proselyte. It was practised by John among the Jews; and Jesus here says that it is an ordinance of his religion, and the sign and seal of the renewing influences of his Spirit. So he said (Mk 16:16), "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is clear from these places, and from the example of the apostles (Acts 2:38,41, 8:12, 13, 36, 38, 9:18 Acts 10:47, 48, 16:15, 33, 18:8, 22:16, Gal 3:27), that they considered this ordinance as binding on all who professed to love the Lord Jesus. And though it cannot be said that none who are not baptized can be saved, yet Jesus meant, undoubtedly, to be understood as affirming that this was to be the regular and uniform way of entering into his church; that it was the appropriate mode of making a profession of religion; and that a man who neglected this, when the duty was made known to him, neglected a plain command of God. It is clear, also, that any other command of God might as well be neglected or violated as this, and that it is the duty of everyone not only to love the Saviour, but to make an acknowledgment of that love by being baptized, and by devoting himself thus to his service. But, lest Nicodemus should suppose that this was all that was meant, he added that it was necessary that he should be born of the Spirit also. This was predicted of the Saviour, that he should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, Mt 3:11. By this is clearly intended that the heart must be changed by the agency of the Holy Spirit; that the love of sin must be abandoned; that man must repent of crime and turn to God; that he must renounce all his evil propensities, and give himself to a life of prayer and holiness, of meekness, purity, and benevolence. This great change is in the Scripture ascribed uniformly to the Holy Spirit, Tit 3:5, 1Thes 1:6 Ro 5:5 1Pe 1:22.

Cannot enter into. This is the way, the appropriate way, of entering into the kingdom of the Messiah here and hereafter. He cannot enter into the true church here, or into heaven in the world to come, except in connection with

a change of heart, and by the proper expression of that change in the ordinances appointed by the Saviour.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

That which is born of the flesh. To show the necessity of this change, the Saviour directs the attention of Nicodemus to the natural condition of man. By that which is born of the flesh he evidently intends man as he is by nature, in the circumstances of his natural birth. Perhaps, also, he alludes to the question asked by Nicodemus, whether a man could be born when he was old? Jesus tells him that if this could be, it would not answer any valuable purpose; he would still have the same propensities and passions. Another change was therefore indispensable.

Is flesh. Partakes of the nature of the parent. Comp. Gen 5:3. As the parents are corrupt and sinful, so will be their descendants. See Job 14:4. And as the parents are wholly corrupt by nature, so their children will be the same. The word flesh here is used as meaning corrupt, defiled, sinful. The flesh in the Scriptures is often used to denote the sinful propensities and passions of our nature, as those propensities are supposed to have their seat in the animal nature.

"The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness," &c.,
Gal 5:19,20. See also Eph 2:3, 1Pet 3:21, 2:18, 1Jn 2:16, Rev 8:5

Is born of the Spirit. Of the Spirit of God, or by the agency of the Holy Ghost.

Is spirit. Is spiritual, like the spirit, that is, holy, pure. Here we learn,

1st. That all men are by nature sinful.

2nd. That none are renewed but by the Spirit of God. If man did the work himself, it would be still carnal and impure.

3rd. That the effect of the new birth is to make men holy. And,

4th. That no man can have evidence that he is born again who is not holy, and just in proportion as he becomes pure in his life will be the evidence that he is born of the Spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

The wind bloweth, &c. Nicodemus had objected to the doctrine because he did not understand how it could be. Jesus shows him that he ought not to reject it on that account, for he constantly believed things quite as difficult. It might appear incomprehensible, but it was to be judged of by its effects. As in this case of the wind, the effects were seen, the sound was heard, important changes were produced by it, trees and clouds were moved, yet the wind is not seen, nor do we know whence it comes, nor by what laws it is governed; so it is with the operations of the Spirit. We see the changes produced, Men just now sinful become holy; the thoughtless become serious; the licentious become pure; the vicious, moral; the moral, religious; the prayerless, prayerful; the rebellious and obstinate, meek, and mild, and gentle. When we see such changes, we ought no more to doubt that they are produced by some cause--by some mighty agent, than when we see the trees moved, or the waters of the ocean piled on heaps, or feel the cooling effects of a summer's breeze. In those cases we attribute it to the wind, though we see it not, and though we do not understand its operations. We may learn, hence, 1st. That the proper evidence of conversion is the effect on the life.

2nd. That we are not too curiously to search for the cause or manner of the change.

3rd. That God has power over the most hardened sinner to change him, as he has power over the loftiest oak, to bring it down by a sweeping blast.

4th. That there may be great variety in the modes of the operation of the Spirit. As the wind sometimes sweeps with a tempest, and prostrates all before it, and sometimes breathes upon us in a mild evening zephyr, so it is with the operations of the Spirit. The sinner sometimes trembles and is

prostrate before the truth, and sometimes is sweetly and gently drawn to the cross of Jesus.

Where it listeth. Where it wills or pleases. So is every one, &c. Every one that is born of the Spirit is, in some respects, like the effects of the wind. You see it not, you cannot discern its laws, but you see its effects, and you know therefore that it does exist and operate. Nicodemus's objection was, that he could not see this change, or perceive how it could be. Jesus tells him that he should not reject a doctrine merely because he could not understand it. Neither could the wind be seen, but its effects were well known, and no one doubted the existence or the power of the agent. Comp. Eccl 11:5.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

How can these things be? Nicodemus was still unwilling to admit the doctrine unless he understood it; and we have here an instance of a man of rank stumbling at one of the plainest doctrines of religion, and unwilling to admit a truth because he could not understand how it could be, when he daily admitted the truth of facts in other things which he could as little comprehend. And we may learn,

1st. That men will often admit facts on other subjects, and be greatly perplexed by similar facts in religion.

2nd. That no small part of men's difficulties are because they cannot understand how or why a thing is.

3rd. That men of rank and learning are as likely to be perplexed by these things as those in the obscurest and humblest walks of life.

4th. That this is one reason why such men, particularly, so often reject the truths of the gospel. And,

5th. That this is a very unwise treatment of truth, and a way which they do not apply to other things. If the wind cools and refreshes me in summer--if it prostrates the oak or lashes the sea into foam--if it destroys my house or my grain, it matters little how it does this; and so of the Spirit. If it renews my

heart, humbles my pride, subdues my sin, and comforts my soul, it is a matter of little importance how it does all this. Sufficient for me is it to know that it is done, and to taste the blessings which flow from the renewing and sanctifying grace of God.

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things ?

A master of Israel. A teacher of Israel; the same word that in the second verse is translated teacher. As such a teacher he ought to have understood this doctrine. It was not new, but was clearly taught in the Old Testament. See particularly Ps 51:10, 16, 17, Eze 11:19, 36:26. It may seem surprising that a man whose business it was to teach the people should be a stranger to so plain and important a doctrine; but when worldly-minded men are placed in offices of religion--when they seek those offices for the sake of ease or reputation, it is no wonder that they are strangers to the plain truths of the Bible; and there have been many, and there are still, who are in the ministry itself, to whom the plainest doctrines of the gospel are obscure. No man can understand the Bible fully unless he is a humble Christian, and the easiest way to comprehend the truths of religion is to give the heart to God and live to his glory. A child thus may have more real knowledge of the way of salvation than many who are pretended masters and teachers of Israel, Jn 7:17, Mt 11:25, Ps 8:2 compared with Mt 21:16.

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

We speak. Jesus here speaks in the plural number, including himself and those engaged with him in preaching the gospel. Nicodemus had said (Jn 3:2), "We know that thou art," &c., including himself and those with whom he acted. Jesus in reply said, We, who are engaged in spreading the new doctrines about which you have come to inquire, speak what we know. We do not deliver doctrines which we do not practically understand. This is a positive affirmation of Jesus, which he had a right to make about his new doctrine. He knew its truth, and those who came into his kingdom knew it also.

That we have seen. Jesus had seen by his omniscient eye all the operations of the Spirit on the hearts of men. His ministers have seen its effects as we see the effects of the wind, and, having seen men changed from sin to holiness, they are qualified to bear witness to the truth and reality of the

change. Every successful minister of the gospel thus becomes a witness of the saving power of the gospel.

Ye receive not. Ye Pharisees. Though we give evidence of the truth of the new religion; though miracles axe wrought, and proof is given that this doctrine came from heaven, yet you reject it. Our witness. Our testimony. The evidence which is furnished by miracles and by the saving power of the gospel. Men reject revelation though it is attested by the strongest evidence, and though it is constantly producing the most desirable changes in the hearts and lives of men.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ?

If I have told you earthly things. Things which occur on earth. Not sensual or worldly things, for Jesus had said nothing of these; but he had told him of operations of the Spirit which had occurred on earth, whose effects were visible, and which might be, therefore, believed. These were the plainest and most obvious of the doctrines of religion.

Heavenly things. Things pertaining to the government of God and his doings in the heavens; things which are removed from human view, and which cannot be subjected to human sight; the more profound and inscrutable things pertaining to the redemption of men.

Learn hence,

1st. The height and depth of the doctrines of religion. There is much that we cannot yet understand.

2nd. The feebleness of our understandings and the corruptions of our hearts are the real causes why doctrines of religion are so little understood by us.

3rd. There is before us a vast eternity, and there are profound wonders of God's government, to be the study of the righteous, and to be seen and admired by them for ever and ever.

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

KJV "13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, [even] the Son of man which is in heaven."

And no man hath ascended into heaven. No man, therefore, is qualified to speak of heavenly things, Jn 3:12. To speak of those things requires intimate acquaintance with them--demands that we have seen them; and as no one has ascended into heaven and returned, so no one is qualified to speak of them but He who came down from heaven. This does not mean that no one had gone to heaven or had been saved, for Enoch and Elijah had been borne there (Gen 5:24; comp. Heb 11:5, 2Kgs 2:11), and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others were there; but it means that no one had ascended and returned, so as to be qualified to speak of the things there.

But he that came down, &c. The Lord Jesus. He is represented as coming down, because, being equal with God, he took upon himself our nature, Jn 1:14, Php 2:6,7. He is represented as sent by the Father, Jn 3:17, 34, Gal 4:4, 1Jn 4:9, 10.

The Son of man. Called thus from his being a man; from his interest in man; and as expressive of his regard for man. It is a favourite title which the Lord Jesus gives to himself.

Which is in heaven. This is a very remarkable expression. Jesus, the Son of man, was then bodily on earth conversing with Nicodemus; yet he declares that he is at the same time in heaven. This can be understood only as referring to the fact that he had two natures--that his divine nature was in heaven, and his human nature on earth. Our Saviour is frequently spoken of in this manner. Comp. Jn 6:62; Jn 6:62, 17:5, 2Cor 8:9. As Jesus was in heaven--as his proper abode was there--he was fitted to speak of heavenly things, and to declare the will of God to man.

And we may learn,

1st. That the truth about the deep things of God is not to be learned of men. No one has ascended to heaven and returned to tell us what is there; and no infidel, no mere man, no prophet, is qualified of himself to speak of them.

2nd. That all the light which we are to expect on those subjects is to be sought in the Scriptures. It is only Jesus and his inspired apostles and evangelists that can speak of those things.

3rd. It is not wonderful that some things in the Scriptures are mysterious. They are about things which we have not seen, and we must receive them on the testimony of one who has seen them.

4th. The Lord Jesus is divine. He was in heaven while on earth. He had, therefore, a nature far above the human, and is equal with the Father, Jn 1:1.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

And as Moses. Jesus proceeds in this and the following verses to state the reason why he came into the world; and, in order to this, he illustrates his design, and the efficacy of his coming, by a reference to the case of the brazen serpent, recorded in Nu 21:8,9. The people were bitten by flying fiery serpents. There was no cure for the bite. Moses was directed to make an image of the serpent, and place it in sight of the people, that they might look on it and be healed. There is no evidence that this was intended to be a type of the Messiah, but it is used by Jesus as strikingly illustrating his work. Men are sinners. There is no cure by human means for the maladies of the soul; and as the people who were bitten might look on the image of the serpent and be healed, so may sinners look to the Saviour and be cured of the moral maladies of our nature.

Lifted up. Erected on a pole. Placed on high, so that it might be seen by the people.

The serpent. The image of a serpent made of brass.

In the wilderness. Near the land of Edom. In the desert and desolate country to the south of Mount Hor, Nu 21:4.

Even so. In a similar manner and with a similar design. He here refers, doubtless, to his own death. Comp. Jn 12:32, 8:28. The points of

resemblance between his being lifted up and that of the brazen serpent seem to be these:

1st. In each case those who are to/be benefited can be aided in no other way. The bite of the serpent was deadly, and could be healed only by looking on the brazen serpent; and sin is deadly in its nature, and can be removed only by looking on the cross.

2nd. The mode of their being lifted up. The brazen serpent was in the sight of the people, So Jesus was exalted from the earth--raised on a tree or cross.

3rd. The design was similar. The one was to save the life, the other the soul; the one to save from temporal, the other from eternal death.

4th. The manner of the cure was similar. The people of Israel were to look on the serpent and be healed, and so sinners are to look on the Lord Jesus that they may be saved.

Must. It is proper; necessary; indispensable, if men are saved. Comp. Lk 24:26, 22:42.

15 that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

That whosoever. This shows the fulness and freeness of the gospel. All may come and be saved.

Believeth in him. Whosoever puts confidence in him as able and willing to save. All who feel that they are sinners, that they have no righteousness of their own, and are willing to look to him as their only Saviour.

Should not perish. They are in danger, by nature, of perishing--that is, of sinking down to the pains of hell; of "being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power," 2Thes 1:9. All who believe on Jesus shall be saved from this condemnation and be raised up to eternal life. And from this we learn,

1st. That there is salvation in no other.

2nd. That salvation is here full and free for all who will come.

3rd. That it is easy. What was more easy for a poor, wounded, dying Israelite, bitten by a poisonous serpent, than to look up to a brazen serpent? So with the poor, lost, dying sinner. And what more foolish than for such a wounded, dying man to refuse to look on a remedy so easy and effectual? So nothing is more foolish than for a lost and dying sinner to refuse to look on God's only Son, exalted on a cross to die for the sins of men, and able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

God So Loved the World

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God so loved. This does not mean that God approved the conduct of men, but that he had benevolent feelings toward them, or was earnestly desirous of their happiness. God hates wickedness, but he still desires the happiness of those sinners. He hates the sin, but loves the sinner. A parent may love his child and desire his welfare, and yet be strongly opposed to the conduct of that child. When we approve the conduct of another, this is the love of complacency; when we desire simply their happiness, this is the love of benevolence.

The world. All mankind. It does not mean any particular part of the world, but man as man--the race that had rebelled and that deserved to die. See Jn 6:33, 17:21. His love for the world, or for all mankind, in giving his Son, was shown by these circumstances:

1st. All the world was in ruin, and exposed to the wrath of God.

2nd. All men were in a hopeless condition.

3rd. God gave his Son. Man had no claim on him; it was a gift--an undeserved gift.

4th. He gave him up to extreme sufferings, even the bitter pains of death on the cross.

5th. It was for all the world. He tasted "death for every man," He 2:9. He "died for all," 2Cor 5:15. "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world," 1Jn 2:2.

That he gave. It was a free and unmerited gift. Man had no claim; and when there was no eye to pity or arm to save, it pleased God to give his Son into the hands of men to die in their stead, Gal 1:4; Rom 8:32, Lk 22:19. It was the mere movement of love; the expression of eternal compassion, and of a desire that sinners should not perish forever.

His only-begotten Son. Jn 1:14. This is the highest expression of love of which we can conceive. A parent who should give up his only son to die for others who are guilty--if this could or might be done--would show higher love than could be manifested in any other way. So it shows the depth of the love of God, that he was willing to give his only Son into the hands of sinful men that he might be slain, and thus redeem them from eternal sorrow.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Observe here, That the salvation of sinners was the intentional end, and the condemnation of them only the accidental event, of Christ's coming into the world. The design of Christ's first coming into the world. The design of Christ's first coming into the world was to save it. The end of his second coming will be to judge the unbelieving part of it.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

He that believeth. He that has confidence in him; that relies on him; that trusts to his merits and promises for salvation. To believe on him is to feel and act according to truth--that is, to go as lost sinners, and act toward him as a Saviour from sins; relying on him, and looking to him only for salvation. Mk 16:16.

Is not condemned. God pardons sin, and delivers us from deserved punishment, because we believe on him. Jesus died in our stead; he suffered for us, and by his sufferings our sins are expiated, and it is consistent for God to forgive. When a sinner, therefore, believes on Jesus, he trusts in him as having died in his place, and God having accepted the offering which Christ made in our stead, as being an equivalent for our sufferings in hell, there is now no farther condemnation, Rom 8:1.

He that believeth not. All who do not believe, whether the gospel has come to them or not. All men by nature.

Is condemned already. By conscience, by law, and in the judgment of God. God disapproves of their character, and this feeling of disapprobation, and the expression of it, is the condemnation. There is no condemnation so terrible as this--that God disapproves our conduct, and that he will express his disapprobation. He will judge according to truth, and woe to that man whose conduct God cannot approve.

Because. This word does not imply that the ground or reason of their condemnation is that they have not believed, or that they are condemned because they do not believe on him, for there are millions of sinners who have never heard of him; but the meaning is this: There is but one way by which men can be freed from condemnation. All men without the gospel are condemned. They who do not believe are still under this condemnation, not having embraced the only way by which they can be delivered from it. The verse may be thus paraphrased:

"All men are by nature condemned. There is but one way of being delivered from this state--by believing on the Son of God. They who do not believe or remain in that state are still condemned, FOR they have not embraced the only way in which they can be freed from it."

Nevertheless, those to whom the gospel comes greatly heighten their guilt and condemnation by rejecting the offers of mercy, and trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God, Lk 12:47, Mt 11:23, Heb 10:29 Prov 1:24-30. And there are thousands going to eternity under this double condemnation--

1st. For positive, open sin; and,

2nd. For rejecting God's mercy, and despising the gospel of his Son. This it is which will make the doom of sinners in Christian lands so terrible.

Observe, That unbelief is the cause of the sinner's damnation; it is that sin which doth bind all other sins upon the sinner, and consigns him over to damnation; it is that sin which doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it; which is intimated in the next verse.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

This is the condemnation. This is the cause of condemnation; or this is the reason why men are punished.

That light is come. Light often denotes instruction, teaching, doctrine, as that by which we see clearly the path of duty. All the instruction that God gives us by conscience, reason, or revelation may thus be called light; but this word is used peculiarly to denote the Messiah or the Christ, who is often spoken of as the light. See Isa 60:1, 9:2. Compare Mt 4:16; also Jn 1:4. It was doubtless this light to which Jesus had particular reference here.

Men loved darkness. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, iniquity, error, superstition--whatever is opposite to truth and piety. Men are said to love darkness more than they do light when they are better pleased with error than truth, with sin than holiness, with Belial than Christ.

Because their deeds are evil. Men who commit crime commonly choose to do it in the night, so as to escape detection. So men who are wicked prefer false doctrine and error to the truth. Thus the Pharisees cloaked their crimes under the errors of their system; and, amid their false doctrines and superstitions, they attempted to convince others that they had great zeal for God.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

Hateth the light. This is true of all wicked men. They choose to practise their deeds of wickedness in darkness. They are afraid of the light, because they could be easily detected. Hence most crimes are committed in the night. So with the sinner against God. He hates the gospel, for it condemns his conduct, and his conscience would trouble him if it were enlightened.

His deeds should be reproved. To reprove here means not only to detect or make manifest, but also includes the idea of condemnation when his deeds are detected. The gospel would make his wickedness manifest, and his conscience would condemn him. We learn from this verse,

1st. That one design of the gospel is to reprove men. It convicts them of sin in order that it may afford consolation.

2nd. That men by nature hate the gospel. No man who is a sinner loves it; and no man by nature is disposed to come to it, any more than an adulterer or thief is disposed to come to the daylight, and do his deeds of wickedness there.

3rd. The reason why the gospel is hated is that men are sinners. "Christ is hated because sin is loved."

4th. The sinner must be convicted or convinced of sin. If it be not in this world, it will be in the next. There is no escape for him; and the only way to avoid condemnation in the world to come is to come humbly and acknowledge sin here, and seek for pardon.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

He that doeth truth. He who does right, or he that obeys the truth. Truth here is opposed to error and to evil. The sinner acts from falsehood and error. The good man acts according to truth. The sinner believes a lie that God will not punish, or that there is no God, or that there is no eternity and no hell. The Christian believes all these, and acts as if they were true. This is the difference between a Christian and a sinner.

Cometh to the light. Loves the truth, and seeks it more and more. By prayer and searching the Scriptures he endeavours to as certain the truth, and yield his mind to it.

May be made manifest. May be made clear or plain; or that it may be made plain that his deeds are wrought in God. He searches for truth and light that he may have evidence that his actions are right.

Wrought in God. That they are performed according to the will of God, or perhaps by the assistance of God, and are such as God will approve. The actions of good men are performed by the influence and aid of God, Php 2:12. Of course, if they are performed by his aid, they are such as he will approve. Here is presented the character of a good man and a sincere Christian.

We learn respecting that character,

1st. He does truth. He loves it, seeks it, follows it.

2nd. He comes to the light. He does not attempt to deceive himself or others.

3rd. He is willing to know himself, and aims to do it. He desires to know the true state of his heart before God.

4th. An especial object of his efforts is that his deeds may be wrought in God. He desires to be a good man; to receive continual aid from God, and to perform such actions as he will approve. This is the close of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus--a discourse condensing the gospel, giving the most striking exhibition and illustration of truth, and representing especially the fundamental doctrine of regeneration and the evidence of the change. It is clear that the Saviour regarded this as lying at the foundation of religion. Without it we cannot possibly be saved. And now it becomes every reader, as in the presence of God, and in view of the judgment-seat of Christ, solemnly to ask himself whether he has experienced this change? whether he knows by experience what it is to be

born of that Spirit? If he does he will be saved. If not, he is in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and should give no sleep to his eyes till he has made his peace with God.

He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

For John was not yet cast into prison. See Lk 3:20. The mention of this shows that John was not imprisoned till some time after our Lord entered on his ministry. The design of John was to call men to repentance, and to prepare them for the Messiah, and this he continued to do after our Saviour commenced his work. It shows that a minister of religion should be industrious to the day of his death. John still toiled in his work not the less because the Messiah had come. So ministers should not labour less when Christ appears by his Spirit, and takes the work into his own hands, and turns many to himself.

25 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

John's disciples. Those who had been baptized by him, and who attached great efficacy and importance to the teaching of their master. Comp. Acts 19:1, also Acts 19:2-5.

And the Jews. Many manuscripts, some of the fathers, and the ancient Syriac version, read this in the singular number-- "with a Jew," one who, it is commonly supposed, had been baptized by the disciples of Jesus.

About purifying. What the precise subject of this dispute was we do not know. From what follows, it would seem probable that it was about the comparative value and efficacy of the baptism performed by John and by the disciples of Jesus. The word purifying may be applied to baptism, as it was an emblem of repentance and purity, and was thus used by the Jews, by John, and by Jesus. About this subject it seems that a dispute arose, and was

carried to such a length that complaint was made to John. From this we may learn,

1st. That even in the time of Jesus, when the gospel began to be preached, there was witnessed--what has been ever since --unhappy disputings on the subject of religion. Even young converts may, by overheated zeal and ignorance, fall into angry discussion.

2nd. That such discussions are commonly about some unimportant matter of religion--something which they may not yet be qualified to understand, and which does not materially affect them if they could.

3rd. That such disputes are often connected with a spirit of proselytism--with boasting of the superior excellence of the sect with which we are connected, or in connection with whom we have been converted, and often with a desire to persuade others to join with us.

4th. That such a spirit is eminently improper on such occasions. Love should characterize the feelings of young converts; a disposition to inquire and not to dispute; a willingness that all should follow the dictates of their own consciences, and not a desire to proselyte them to our way of thinking or to our church. It may be added that there is scarcely anything which so certainly and effectually arrests a revival of religion as such a disposition to dispute, and to make proselytes to particular modes of faith, and of administering the ordinances of the gospel.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

Came unto John. Came to him with their complaint; envious and jealous at the success of Jesus, and evidently irritated from the discussion, as if their master was about to lose his popularity.

Rabbi. Master. Mt 23:7. Acknowledging him as their master and teacher.

That was with thee. Who was baptized by thee.

Thou barest witness. See Jn 1:29-35.

All men come to him. This was the source of their difficulty. It was that Jesus was gaining popularity; that the people flocked to him; that they feared that John would be forsaken, and his followers be diminished in numbers and influence. Thus many love their sect more than they do Christ, and would be more rejoiced that a man became a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist, than that he became a sincere and humble Christian. This is not the spirit of the gospel. True piety teaches us to rejoice that sinners turn to Christ and become holy, whether they follow us or not. See Mk 9:38,39. Let Jesus be exalted, and let men turn to him, is the language of religion, whatever denomination they may feel it their duty to follow.

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

John answered, &c. John did not enter into their feelings or sympathize with their love of party. He came to honour Jesus, not to build up a sect. He rejoiced at the success of the Messiah, and began to teach them to rejoice in it also.

A man can receive nothing, &c. All success is from heaven. All my success was from God. All the success of Jesus is from God. As success comes from the same source, we ought not to be envious. It is designed to answer the same end, and, by whomsoever accomplished, the hand of God is in it, and we should rejoice. If Jesus and his disciples are successful, if all men flee to him, it is proof that God favours him, and you should rejoice.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

Bear me witness. You remember that at first I told you I was not the Messiah. As he had been witness to Jesus--as he came for no other end but to point him out to the Jews, they ought not to suppose that he was his superior. It was but reasonable to expect that Christ himself would be more successful than his forerunner. "I came, not to form a separate party, a peculiar sect, but to prepare the way that he might be more successful, and that the people might be ready for his coming, and that he might have the success which he has actually met with. You should rejoice, therefore, at that success, and not enter it, for his success is the best proof of the greatness of my word, and of its success also."

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

He that hath the bride, &c. This is an illustration drawn from marriage. The bride belongs to her husband. So the church, the bride of the Messiah, belongs to him. It is to be expected, therefore, and desired, that the people should flock to him.

But the friend of the bridegroom. He whose office it is to attend him on the marriage occasion. This was commonly the nearest friend, and was a high honour.

Rejoiceth greatly. Esteems himself highly honoured by the proof of friendship.

The bridegroom's voice. His commands, requests, or conversation.

This is my joy, &c.

"I sustain to the Messiah the relation which a groomsman does to the groom. The chief honour and the chief joy is not mine, but his. It is to be expected, therefore, that the people will come to him, and that his success will be great."

The relation of Christ to the church is often compared with the marriage relation, denoting the tenderness of the union, and his great love for his people. Comp. Isa 62:5, Rev 21:2,9, 22:17, Eph 5:26,27,32 2Cor 11:2.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

He must increase. His authority and influence among the people must grow. His doctrine shall continue to spread till it extends through all the earth.

I must decrease.

"The purpose of my ministry is to point men to him. When that is done my work is done. I came not to form a party of my own, nor to set up a religion of my own; and my teaching must cease when he is fully established, as the

light of the morning star fades away and is lost in the beams of the rising sun."

This evinced John's humility and willingness to be esteemed as nothing if he could honour Christ. It shows us, also, that it is sufficient honour for man if he may be permitted to point sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ. No work is so honourable and joyful as the ministry of the gospel; none are so highly honoured as those who are permitted to stand near the Son of God, to hear his voice, and to lead perishing men to his cross. Comp. Dan 12:3.

The Testimony from Heaven

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

He that cometh from above. The Messiah, represented as coming down from heaven. See Jn 3:13, 6:33, 8:23. It has been doubted whether the remainder of this chapter contains the words of John the Baptist or of the evangelist. The former is the more probable opinion, but it is difficult to decide it, and it is of very little consequence.

Is above all. In nature, rank, and authority. Is superior to all prophets (Heb 1:1,2); to all angels (Heb 1:4-14), and is over all the universe as its sovereign Lord, Rev 9:5; Eph 1:21, 22, Col 1:15-19, 1Cor 15:25.

He that is of the earth. He who has no higher nature than the human nature. The prophets, apostles, and John were men like others, born in the same way, and sinking, like others, to the dust. See Acts 14:15. Jesus had a nature superior to man, and ought, therefore, to be exalted above all.

Is earthly. Is human. Is inferior to him who comes from heaven. Partakes of his origin, which is inferior and corrupt.

Speaketh of the earth. His teaching is inferior to that of him who comes from heaven. It is comparatively obscure and imperfect, not full and clear, like the

teaching of him who is from above. This was the case with all the prophets, and even with John the Baptist, as compared with the teaching of Christ.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

No man receiveth his testimony. The words no man are here to be under stood in the sense of few. Though his doctrine is pure, plain, sublime, yet few, comparatively, received it in faith. Though multitudes came to him, drawn by various motives (Jn 6:26), yet few became his real disciples, Mt 26:56, 7:22.

His testimony. His doctrine. The truth to which he bears witness as having seen and known it, Jn 3:11. Often many persons appear for a time to become the followers of Christ, who in the end are seen to have known nothing of religion, Mt 13:6; Lk 8:13.

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

He that hath received his testimony. Hath received and fully believed his doctrine. Hath yielded his heart to its influence.

Hath set to his seal. To seal an instrument is to make it sure; to acknowledge it as ours; to pledge our veracity that it is true and binding, as when a man seals a bond, a deed, or a will. Believing a doctrine, therefore, in the heart, is expressed by sealing it, or by believing it we express our firm conviction that it is true, and that God who has spoken it is true. We vouch for the veracity of God, and assume as our own the proposition that it is the truth of God.

God is true. Is faithful; is the author of the system of doctrines, and will fulfil all that he has promised. We learn here,

1st. That to be a true believer is something more than to hold a mere speculative belief of the truth.

2nd. That to be a believer is to pledge ourselves for the truth, to seal it as our own, to adopt it, to choose it, and solemnly assent to it, as a man does in regard to an instrument of writing that is to convey his property, or that is to dispose of it when he dies.

3rd. Every Christian is a witness for God, and it is his business to show by his life that he believes that God is true to his threatenings and to his promises. Barnes "Is 43:10".

4th. It is a solemn act to become a Christian. It is a surrender of all to God, or giving away body, soul, and spirit to him, with a belief that he is true, and alone is able to save.

5th. The man that does not do this-- that is not willing to pledge his belief that God is true, sets to his seal that God is a liar and unworthy of confidence, 1Jn 5:10.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

It is recommended to us as a divine doctrine; not his own, but his that sent him (Joh 3:34): For he whom God hath sent speaketh the word of God, which he was sent to speak, and enabled to speak; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The prophets were as messengers that brought letters from heaven; but Christ came under the character of an ambassador, and treats with us as such;

for,

1. He spoke the words of God, and nothing he said savoured of human infirmity; both substance and language were divine. He proved himself sent of God (Joh 3:2), and therefore his words are to be received as the words of God. By this rule we may try the spirits: those that speak as the oracles of God, and prophesy according to the proportion of faith, are to be received as sent of God.

2. He spoke as no other prophet did; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him. None can speak the words of God without the Spirit of God, 1Co 2:10,11. The Old-Testament prophets had the Spirit, and in different degrees, 2Ki 2:9,10. But, whereas God gave them the Spirit by measure (1Co 12:4), he gave him to Christ without measure; all fulness dwelt in him, the fulness of the Godhead, an immeasurable fulness. The Spirit was not in

Christ as in a vessel, but as in a fountain, as in a bottomless ocean. "The prophets that had the Spirit in a limited manner, only with respect to some particular revelation, sometimes spoke of themselves; but he that had the Spirit always residing in him, without stint, always spoke the words of God." So Dr. Whitby.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

[1.] He is the beloved Son of the Father (Joh 3:35): The Father loveth the Son. The prophets were faithful as servants, but Christ as a Son; they were employed as servants, but Christ beloved as a son, always his delight, Pr 8:30. The Father was well pleased in him; not only he did love him, but he doth love him; he continued his love to him even in his estate of humiliation, loved him never the less for his poverty and sufferings.

[2.] He is Lord of all. The Father, as an evidence of his love for him, hath given all things into his hand. Love is generous. The Father took such a complacency and had such a confidence in him that he constituted him the great feoffee in trust for mankind. Having given him the Spirit without measure, he gave him all things; for he was hereby qualified to be master and manager of all. Note, It is the honour of Christ, and the unspeakable comfort of all Christians, that the Father hath given all things into the hands of the Mediator. First, All power; so it is explained, Mt 28:18. All the works of creation being put under his feet, all the affairs of redemption are put into his hand; he is Lord of all. Angels are his servants; devils are his captives. He has power over all flesh, the heathen given him for his inheritance. The kingdom of providence is committed to his administration. He has power to settle the terms of the covenant of peace as the great plenipotentiary, to govern his church as the great lawgiver, to dispense divine favours as the great almoner, and to call all to account as the great Judge. Both the golden sceptre and the iron rod are given into his hand. Secondly, All grace is given into his hand as the channel of conveyance; all things, all those good things which God intended to give to the children of men; eternal life, and all its preliminaries. We are unworthy that the Father should give those things into our hands, for we have made ourselves the children of his wrath; he hath therefore appointed the Son of his love to be trustee for us, and the things he intended for us he gives into his hands, who is worthy, and has merited both honours for himself and favours for us. They are given into his hands, by him to be given into ours. This is a great encouragement to faith, that the

riches of the new covenant are deposited in so sure, so kind, so good a hand, the hand of him that purchased them for us, and us for himself, who is able to keep all that which both God and believers have agreed to commit to him.

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

He is the object of that faith which is made the great condition of eternal happiness, and herein he has the pre-eminence above all others: He that believeth on the Son, hath life, Joh 3:36. We have here the application of what he had said concerning Christ and his doctrine; and it is the conclusion of the whole matter. If God has put this honour upon the Son, we must by faith give honour to him. As God offers and conveys good things to us by the testimony of Jesus Christ, whose word is the vehicle of divine favours, so we receive and partake of those favours by believing the testimony, and entertaining that word as true and good; this way of receiving fitly answers that way of giving. We have here the sum of that gospel which is to be preached to every creature, Mk 16:16. Here is,

The blessed state of all true Christians: He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life.

Note,

1. It is the character of every true Christian that he believes on the Son of God; not only believes him, that what he saith is true, but believes on him, consents to him, and confides in him. The benefit of true Christianity is no less than everlasting life; this is what Christ came to purchase for us and confer upon us; it can be no less than the happiness of an immortal soul in an immortal God.

2. True believers, even now, have everlasting life; not only they shall have it hereafter, but they have it now.

For,

(1.) They have very good security for it. The deed by which it passeth is sealed and delivered to them, and so they have it; it is put into the hands of

their guardian for them, and so they have it, though the use be not yet transferred into possession. They have the Son of God, and in him they have life; and the Spirit of God, the earnest of this life.

(2.) They have the comfortable foretastes of it, in present communion with God and the tokens of his love. Grace is glory begun.

John-4

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

The Lord knew. When Jesus knew. How he knew this we are not informed; whether by that power of omniscience by which he knew all things, or whether some person had informed him of it.

How the Pharisees had heard. The Pharisees, here, seem to denote either the members of the Sanhedrim or those who were in authority. They claimed the authority to regulate the rites and ceremonies of religion, and hence they supposed they had a right to inquire into the conduct of both John and our Lord. They had on a former occasion sent to inquire of John to know by what authority he had introduced such a rite into the religion of the Jewish people. Jn 1:25.

More disciples than John. Though many of the Pharisees came to his baptism-(Matthew Chapter 3.), yet those who were in authority were displeased with the success of John, Jn 1:25. The reasons of this were, probably, the severity and justness of his reproofs Mt 3:7, and the fact that by drawing many after him he weakened their authority and influence. As they were displeased with John, so they were with Jesus, who was doing the same thing on a larger scale--not only making disciples, but baptizing also without their authority, and drawing away the people after him.

2 (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

He left Judea. The envy and malice of the Pharisees he might have known were growing so rapidly as to endanger his life. As his time to die had not yet come, he retired to Galilee, a country farther from Jerusalem, and much less under their control than Judea. See Mk 2:22, Lk 3:1. Though he feared not death and did not shrink from suffering, yet he did not needlessly throw himself into danger or provoke opposition. He could do as much good in Galilee, probably, as in Judea, and he therefore withdrew himself from immediate danger.

3 he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

And he must needs go through Samaria. Samaria was between Judea and Galilee. The direct and usual way was to pass through Samaria. Sometimes, however, the Jews took a circuitous route on the east side of the Jordan, Mt 2:22.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.

5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Sychar. This city stood about eight miles south-east of the city called Samaria, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It was one of the oldest cities of Palestine, and was formerly known by the name of Shechem, or Sichem, Gen 33:18, 12:6. The city was in the tribe of Ephraim, Josh 21:21. It was at this place that Joshua assembled the people before his death, and here they renewed their covenant with the Lord, Joshua chapter 24. After the death of Gideon it became a place of idolatrous worship, the people worshipping Baal-berith, Jud 9:46. It was destroyed by Abimelech, who beat down the city and sowed it with salt, Jud 9:45. It was afterward rebuilt, and became the residence of Jeroboam, the King of Israel, 1Kgs 12:25. It was called by the Romans Flavia Neapolis, and this has been corrupted by the Arabs into Nablus, its present name. It is still a considerable place, and its site is remarkably pleasant and productive.

That Jacob gave, &c. Jacob bought one piece of ground near to Shalem, a city of Shechem, of the children of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver, Gen 33:19. In this place the bones of Joseph were buried when they were brought up from Egypt, Josh 24:32. He also gave to Joseph an additional piece of ground which he took from the hand of the Arnorite by his own valour, "with his sword and his bow," as a portion above that which was given to his brethren, Gen 48:22. Possibly these pieces

of ground lay near together, and were a part of the homestead of Jacob. The well was "near" to this. There is now, the Rev. E. Smith mentioned to me in conversation, a place near this well called Shalem.

6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

Jacob's well. This is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It was called Jacob's well, probably, either because it was handed down by tradition that he dug it, or because it was near to the land which he gave to Joseph. There is still a well a few miles to the east of Nablus, which is said by the people there to be the same. The Rev. Eli Smith, missionary to Syria, stated that he had visited this well. It is about 100 feet deep. It is cut through solid rock of limestone. It is now dry, probably from having been partly filled with rubbish, or perhaps because the water has been diverted by earthquakes. The well is covered with a large stone, which has a hole in the centre large enough to admit a man. It is at the foot of Mount Gerizim, and has a plain on the east.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

Of Samaria. Not of the city of Samaria, for this was at a distance of 8 miles, but a woman who was a Samaritan, and doubtless from the city of Sychar.

Give me to drink. This was in the heat of the day, and when Jesus was weary with his journey. The request was also made that it might give him occasion to discourse with her on the subject of religion, and in this instance we have a specimen of the remarkably happy manner in which he could lead on a conversation so as to introduce the subject of religion.

8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

The woman, though she does not deny his request, yet quarrels with him because he did not carry on the humour of his own nation (Joh 4:9): How is it? Observe, First, What a mortal feud there was between the Jews and the Samaritans: The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. The Samaritans were the adversaries of Judah (Ezr 4:1), were upon all occasions mischievous to them. The Jews were extremely malicious against the Samaritans, "looked upon them as having no part in the resurrection,

excommunicated and cursed them by the sacred name of God, by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment, with this law, That no Israelite eat of any thing that is a Samaritan's, for it is as if he should eat swine's flesh." So Dr. Lightfoot, out of Rabbi Tanchum. Note, Quarrels about religion are usually the most implacable of all quarrels. Men were made to have dealing one with another; but if men, because one worships at one temple and another at another, will deny the offices of humanity, and charity, and common civility, will be morose and unnatural, scornful and censorious, and this under colour of zeal for religion, they plainly show that however their religion may be true they are not truly religious; but, pretending to stickle for religion, subvert the design of it. Secondly, How ready the woman was to upbraid Christ with the haughtiness and ill nature of the Jewish nation: How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me? By his dress or dialect, or both, she knew him to be a Jew, and thinks it strange that he runs not to the same excess of riot against the Samaritans with other Jews. Note, Moderate men of all sides are, like Joshua and his fellows (Zec 3:8), men wondered at. Two things this woman wonders at, 1. That he should ask this kindness; for it was the pride of the Jews that they would endure any hardship rather than be beholden to a Samaritan. It was part of Christ's humiliation that he was born of the Jewish nation, which was now not only in an ill state, subject to the Romans, but in an ill name among the nations. With what disdain did Pilate ask, Am I a Jew? Thus he made himself not only of no reputation, but of ill reputation; but herein he has set us an example of swimming against the stream of common corruptions. We must, like our master, put on goodness and kindness, though it should be ever so much the genius of our country, or the humour of our party, to be morose and ill-natured. This woman expected that Christ should be as other Jews were; but it is unjust to charge upon every individual person even the common faults of the community: no rule but has some exceptions. 2. She wonders that he should expect to receive this kindness from her that was a Samaritan: "You Jews could deny it to one of our nation, and why should we grant it to one of yours?" Thus quarrels are propagated endlessly by revenge and retaliation.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things: If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked, Joh 4:10. Observe,

First, He waives her objection of the feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and takes no notice of it. Some differences are best healed by being slighted, and by avoiding all occasions of entering into dispute about them. Christ will convert this woman, not by showing her that the Samaritan worship was schismatical (though really it was so), but by showing her her own ignorance and immoralities, and her need of a Saviour.

Secondly, He fills her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity (a fairer opportunity than she was aware of) of gaining that which would be of unspeakable advantage to her. She had not the helps that the Jews had to discern the signs of the times, and therefore Christ tells her expressly that she had now a season of grace; this was the day of her visitation.

1. He hints to her what she should know, but was ignorant of: If thou knewest the gift of God, that is, as the next words explain it, who it is that saith, Give me to drink. If thou knewest who I am. She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveller; but he would have her know something more concerning him that did yet appear.

Note,

(a.) Jesus Christ is the gift of God, the richest token of God's love to us, and the richest treasure of all good for us; a gift, not a debt which we could demand from God; not a loan, which he will demand from us again, but a gift, a free gift, Joh 3:16.

(b.) It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us; to have an opportunity of embracing it: "He who is the gift of God is now set before thee, and addresses himself to thee; it is he that saith, Give me to drink; this gift comes a begging to thee."

(c.) Though Christ is set before us, and sues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that know him not. They know not who it is that speaks

to them in the gospel, that saith, Give me to drink; they perceive not that it is the Lord that calls them.

2. He hopes concerning her, what she would have done if she had known him; to be sure she would not have given him such a rude and uncivil answer; nay, she would have been so far from affronting him that she would have made her addresses to him: Thou wouldest have asked.

Note,

(a.) Those that would have any benefit by Christ must ask for it, must be earnest in prayer to God for it.

(b.) Those that have a right knowledge of Christ will seek to him, and if we do not seek unto him it is a sign that we do not know him, Ps 9:10.

(c.) Christ knows what they that want the means of knowledge would have done if they had had them, Mt 11:21.

3. He assures her what he would have done for her if she had applied to him: "He would have given thee (and not have upbraided thee as thou doest me) living water." By this living water is meant the Spirit, who is not like the water in the bottom of the well, for some of which he asked, but like living or running water, which was much more valuable.

Note,

(a.) The Spirit of grace is as living water; see Joh 7:38. Under this similitude the blessings of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament, Isa 12:3,35:7,44:4,55:1,Zec 14:8. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity.

(b.) Jesus Christ can and will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; for he received that he might give.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water ?

The woman objects against and cavils at the gracious intimation which Chri her (Joh 4:11,12): Thou hast nothing to draw with; and besides, Art thou than our father Jacob? What he spoke figuratively, she took literally; Nico did so too. See what confused notions they have of spiritual things who are taken up with the things that are sensible. Some respect she pays to this per calling him Sir, or Lord; but little respect to what he said, which she does but

First, She does not think him capable of furnishing her with any water, no, not this in the well that is just at hand: Thou has nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. This she said, not knowing the power of Christ, for he who causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth needs nothing to draw. But there are those who will trust Christ no further than they can see him, and will not believe his promise, unless the means of the performance of it be visible; as if he were tied to our methods, and could not draw water without our buckets. She asks scornfully, "Whence hast thou this living water? I see not whence thou canst have it." Note, The springs of that living water which Christ has for those that come to him are secret and undiscovered. The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ has enough for us, though we see not whence he has it.

Secondly, She does not think it possible that he should furnish her with any better water than this which she could come at, but he could not: Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well?

1. We will suppose the tradition true, that Jacob himself, and his children, and cattle, did drink of this well. And we may observe from it,

(a.) The power and providence of God, in the continuance of the fountains of water from generation to generation, by the constant circulation of the rivers, like the blood in the body (Ec 1:7), to which circulation perhaps the flux and reflux of the sea, like the pulses of the heart, contribute.

(b.) The plainness of the patriarch Jacob; his drink was water, and he and his children drank of the same well with his cattle.

2. Yet, allowing that to be true, she was out in several things; as,

(a.) In calling Jacob father. What authority had the Samaritans to reckon themselves of the seed of Jacob? They were descended from that mixed multitude which the king of Assyria had placed in the cities of Samaria; what have they to do then with Jacob? Because they were the invaders of Israel's rights, and the unjust possessors of Israel's lands, were they therefore the inheritors of Israel's blood and honour? How absurd were those pretensions!

(b.) She is out in claiming this well as Jacob's gift, whereas he did no more give it than Moses gave the manna, Joh 6:32. But thus we are apt to call the messengers of God's gifts the donors of them, and to look so much at the hands they pass through as to forget the hand they come from. Jacob gave it to his sons, not to them. Yet thus the church's enemies not only usurp, but monopolize, the church's privileges.

(c.) She was out in speaking of Christ as not worthy to be compared with our father Jacob. An over-fond veneration for antiquity makes God's graces, in the good people of our own day, to be slighted.

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle ?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

Christ answers this cavil, and makes it out that the living water he had to give was far better than that of Jacob's well, Joh 4:13,14. Though she spoke perversely, Christ did not cast her off, but instructed and encouraged her. He shows her,

First, That the water of Jacob's well yielded but a transient satisfaction and supply: "Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again. It is no better than other water; it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much need, and as much desire, of water as ever he had."

This intimates,

1 The infirmities of our bodies in this present state; they are still necessitous, and ever craving. Life is a fire, a lamp, which will soon go out, without continual supplies of fuel and oil. The natural heat preys upon itself.

2 The imperfections of all our comforts in this world; they are not lasting, nor our satisfaction in them remaining. Whatever waters of comfort we drink of, we shall thirst again. Yesterday's meat and drink will not do to-day's work.

Secondly, That the living waters he would give should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss, Joh 4:14. Christ's gifts appear most valuable when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between them. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the everlasting gospel,

1. He shall never thirst, he shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires; they are longing, but not languishing. A desiring thirst he has, nothing more than God, still more and more of God; but not a despairing thirst.

2. Therefore he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives shall be in him a well of water. He can never be reduced to extremity that has in himself a fountain of supply and satisfaction.

(a.) Ever ready, for it shall be in him. The principle of grace planted in him is the spring of his comfort; see Joh 7:38. A good man is satisfied from himself, for Christ dwells in his heart. The anointing abides in him; he needs not sneak to the world for comfort; the work and the witness of the Spirit in the heart furnish him with a firm foundation of hope and an overflowing fountain of joy.

(b.) Never failing, for it shall be in him a well of water. He that has at hand only a bucket of water needs not thirst as long as this lasts, but it will soon be exhausted; but believers have in them a well of water, overflowing, ever flowing. The principles and affections which Christ's holy religion forms in

the souls of those that are brought under the power of it are this well of water.

[1.] It is springing up, ever in motion, which bespeaks the actings of grace strong and vigorous. If good truths stagnate in our souls, like standing water, they do not answer the end of our receiving them. If there be a good treasure in the heart, we must thence bring forth good things.

[2.] It is springing up unto everlasting life; which intimates, First, The aims of gracious actings. A sanctified soul has its eye upon heaven, means this, designs this, does all for this, will take up with nothing short of this. Spiritual life springs up towards its own perfection in eternal life. Secondly, The constancy of those actings; it will continue springing up till it come to perfection. Thirdly, The crown of them, eternal life at last. The living water rises from heaven, and therefore rises towards heaven; see Ec 1:7. And now is not this water better than that of Jacob's well?

14 but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

The woman (whether in jest or earnest is hard to say) begs of him to give her some of this water (Joh 4:15): Give me this water, that I thirst not. First, Some think that she speaks tauntingly, and ridicules what Christ had said as mere stuff; and, in derision of it, not desires, but challenges him to give her some of this water: "A rare invention; it will save me a great deal of pains if I never come hither to draw." But, Secondly, Others think that it was a well-meant but weak and ignorant desire. She apprehended that he meant something very good and useful, and therefore saith Amen, at a venture. Whatever it be, let me have it; who will show me any good? Ease, or saving of labour, is a valuable good to poor labouring people.

Note,

1. Even those that are weak and ignorant may yet have some faint and fluctuating desires towards Christ and his gifts, and some good wishes of grace and glory.

2. Carnal hearts, in their best wishes, look no higher than carnal ends. "Give it to me," saith she, "not that I may have everlasting life" (which Christ proposed), "but that I come not hither to draw."

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

The next subject of discourse with this woman in concerning her husband, Joh 4:16-18. It was not to let fall the discourse of the water of life that Christ started this, as many who will bring in any impertinence in conversation that they may drop a serious subject; but it was with a gracious design that Christ mentioned it. What he had said concerning his grace and eternal life he found had made little impression upon her, because she had not been convinced of sin: therefore, waiving the discourse about the living water, he sets himself to awaken her conscience, to open the wound of guilt, and then she would more easily apprehend the remedy by grace. And this is the method of dealing with souls; they must first be made weary and heavy-laden under the burden of sin, and then brought to Christ for rest; first pricked to the heart, and then healed. This is the course of spiritual physic; and if we proceed not in this order we begin at the wrong end.

Observe,

(a.) How discreetly and decently Christ introduces this discourse (Joh 4:16): Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

Now,

[1.] The order Christ gave her had a very good colour: "Call thy husband, that he may teach thee, and help thee to understand these things, which thou art so ignorant of" The wives that will learn must ask their husbands (1Co 14:35), who must dwell with them as men of knowledge, 1Pe 3:7. "Call thy husband, that he may learn with thee; that then you may be heirs together of

the grace of life. Call thy husband, that he may be witness to what passes between us." Christ would thus teach us to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and to study that which is of good report.

[2.] As it had a good colour, so it had a good design; for hence he would take occasion to call her sin to remembrance. There is need of art and prudence in giving reproofs; to fetch a compass, as the woman of Tekoa, 2Sa 14:20.

(b.) How industriously the woman seeks to evade the conviction, and yet insensibly convicts herself, and, ere she is aware, owns her fault; she said, I have no husband. Her saying this intimated no more than that she did not care to have her husband spoken of, nor that matter mentioned any more. She would not have her husband come thither, lest, in further discourse, the truth of the matter should come out, to her shame; and therefore, "Pray go on to talk of something else, I have no husband;" she would be thought a maid or a widow, whereas, though she had no husband, she was neither. The carnal mind is very ingenious to shift off convictions, and to keep them from fastening, careful to cover the sin.

(c.) How closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience. It is probable that he said more than is here recorded, for she thought that he told her all that ever she did (Joh 4:29), but that which is here recorded is concerning her husbands.

Here is,

[1.] A surprising narrative of her past conversation: Thou has had five husbands. Doubtless, it was not her affliction (the burying of so many husbands), but her sin, that Christ intended to upbraid her with; either she had eloped (as the law speaks), had run away from her husbands, and married others, or by her undutiful, unclean, disloyal conduct, had provoked them to divorce her, or by indirect means had, contrary to law, divorced them. Those who make light of such scandalous practices as these, as no

more than nine days' wonder, and as if the guilt were over as soon as the talk is over, should remember that Christ keeps account of all.

[2.] A severe reproof of her present state of life: He whom thou now hast is not thy husband. Either she was never married to him at all, or he had some other wife, or, which is most probable, her former husband or husbands were living: so that, in short, she lived in adultery. Yet observe how mildly Christ tells her of it; he doth not call her strumpet, but tells her, He with whom thou livest is not thy husband: and then leaves it to her own conscience to say the rest. Note, Reproofs are ordinarily most profitable when they are least provoking.

[3.] Yet in this he puts a better construction than it would well bear upon what she said by way of shuffle and evasion: Thou has well said I have no husband; and again, In that saidst thou truly. What she intended as a denial of the fact (that she had none with whom she lived as a husband) he favourably interpreted, or at least turned upon her, as a confession of the fault. Note, Those who would win souls should make the best of them, whereby they may hope to work upon their good-nature; for, if they make the worst of them, they certainly exasperate their ill-nature.

18 for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

A case of conscience proposed to Christ by the woman, concerning the place of worship, Joh 4:19,20.

[1.] The inducement she had to put this case: Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. She does not deny the truth of what he had charged her with, but by her silence owns the justice of the reproof; nor is she put into a passion by it, as many are when they are touched in a sore place, does not impute his censure to the general disgust the Jews had to the Samaritans, but (which is a rare thing) can bear to be told of a fault.

But this is not all; she goes further:

First, She speaks respectfully to him, calls him Sir. Thus should we honour those that deal faithfully with us. This was the effect of Christ's meekness in reproving her; he gave her no ill language, and then she gave him none.

Secondly, She acknowledges him to be a prophet, one that had a correspondence with Heaven. Note, The power of the word of Christ in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret sins, is a great proof of its divine authority, 1Co 14:24,25.

Thirdly, She desires some further instruction from him. Many that are not angry at their reprovers, nor fly in their faces, yet are afraid of them and keep out of their way; but this woman was willing to have some more discourse with him that told her of her faults.

[2.] The case itself that she propounded concerning the place of religious worship in public. Some think that she started this to shift off further discourse concerning her sin. Controversies in religion often prove great prejudices to serious godliness; but, it should seem, she proposed it with a good design; she knew she must worship God, and desired to do it aright; and therefore, meeting with a prophet, begs his direction.

Note, It is our wisdom to improve all opportunities of getting knowledge in the things of God. When we are in company with those that are fit to teach, let us be forward to learn, and have a good question ready to put to those who are able to give a good answer. It was agreed between the Jews and the Samaritans that God is to be worshipped (even those who were such fools as to worship false gods were not such brutes as to worship none), and that religious worship is an affair of great importance: men would not contend about it if they were not concerned about it. But the matter in variance was where they should worship God. Observe how she states the case:--

First, As for the Samaritans: Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, near to this city and this well; there the Samaritan temple was built by Sanballat, in favour of which she insinuates,

1. That whatever the temple was the place was holy; it was mount Gerizim, the mount in which the blessings were pronounced; and some think the same on which Abraham built his altar (Ge 12:6,7), and Jacob his, Ge 33:18-20.

2. That it might plead prescription: Our fathers worshipped here. She thinks they have antiquity, tradition, and succession, on their side. A vain conversation often supports itself with this, that it was received by tradition from our fathers. But she had little reason to boast of their fathers; for, when Antiochus persecuted the Jews, the Samaritans, for fear of sharing with them in their sufferings, not only renounced all relation to the Jews, but surrendered their temple to Antiochus, with a request that it might be dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, and called by his name. Joseph. Antiq. 12. 257-264.

Secondly, As to the Jews: You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. The Samaritans governed themselves by the five books of Moses, and (some think) received only them as canonical. Now, though they found frequent mention there of the place God would choose, yet they did not find it named there; and they saw the temple at Jerusalem stripped of many of its ancient glories, and therefore thought themselves at liberty to set up another place, altar against altar.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Christ's answer to this case of conscience, Joh 4:21, &c. Those that apply themselves to Christ for instruction shall find him meek, to teach the meek his way. Now here,

He puts a slight upon the question, as she had proposed it, concerning the place of worship (Joh 4:21): "Woman, believe me as a prophet, and mark what I say. Thou art expecting the hour to come when either by some divine revelation, or some signal providence, this matter shall be decided in favour either of Jerusalem or of Mount Gerizim; but I tell thee the hour

is at hand when it shall be no more a question; that which thou has been taught to lay so much weight on shall be set aside as a thing indifferent."

Note, It should cool us in our contests to think that those things which now fill us, and which we make such a noise about, shall shortly vanish, and be no more: the very things we are striving about are passing away: The hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.

First, The object of worship is supposed to continue still the same--God, as a Father; under this notion the very heathen worshipped God, the Jews did so, and probably the Samaritans.

Secondly, But a period shall be put to all niceness and all differences about the place of worship. The approaching dissolution of the Jewish economy, and the erecting of the evangelical state, shall set this matter at large, and lay all in common, so that it shall be a thing perfectly indifferent whether in either of these places or any other men worship God, for they shall not be tied to any place; neither here nor there, but both, and any where, and every where.

Note, The worship of God is not now, under the gospel, appropriated to any place, as it was under the law, but it is God's will that men pray every where. 1Ti 2:8,Mal 1:11. Our reason teaches us to consult decency and convenience in the places of our worship: but our religion gives no preference to one place above another, in respect to holiness and acceptableness to God. Those who prefer any worship merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed (though it were as magnificent and as solemnly consecrated as ever Solomon's temple was) forget that the hour is come when there shall be no difference put in God's account: no, not between Jerusalem, which had been so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which had been so infamous for impiety.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.

He lays a stress upon other things, in the matter of religious worship. When he made so light of the place of worship he did not intend to lessen our

concern about the thing itself, of which therefore he takes occasion to discourse more fully.

As to the present state of the controversy, he determines against the Samaritan worship, and in favour of the Jews, Joh 4:22. He tells here,

1. That the Samaritans were certainly in the wrong; not merely because they worshipped in this mountain, though, while Jerusalem's choice was in force, that was sinful, but because they were out in the object of their worship. If the worship itself had been as it should have been, its separation from Jerusalem might have been connived at, as the high places were in the best reigns: But you worship you know not what, or that which you do not know. They worshipped the God of Israel, the true God (Ezr 4:2,2Ki 17:32); but they were sunk into gross ignorance; they worshipped him as the God of that land (2Ki 17:27,33), as a local deity, like the gods of the nations, whereas God must be served as God, as the universal cause and Lord.

Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion that it is the murderer of it. Those that worship God ignorantly offer the blind for sacrifice, and it is the sacrifice of fools.

2. That the Jews were certainly in the right. For,

(a) "We know what we worship. We go upon sure grounds in our worship, for our people are catechised and trained up in the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in the scripture." Note, Those who by the scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God (a certain though not a perfect knowledge) may worship him comfortably to themselves, and acceptably to him, for they know what they worship. Christ elsewhere condemns the corruptions of the Jews' worship (Mt 15:9), and yet here defends the worship itself; the worship may be true where yet it is not pure and entire. Observe, Our Lord Jesus was pleased to reckon himself among the worshippers of God: We worship. Though he was a Son (and then are the children free), yet learned he this obedience, in the days of his humiliation. Let not the greatest of men think the worship of God below them, when the Son of God himself did not.

(b) Salvation is of the Jews; and therefore they know what they worship, and what grounds they go upon in their worship. Not that all the Jews were saved, nor that it was not possible but that many of the Gentiles and Samaritans might be saved, for in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him; but,

[1.] The author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, appears among them (Ro 9:5), and is sent first to bless them.

[2.] The means of eternal salvation are afforded to them. The word of salvation (Ac 13:26) was of the Jews. It was delivered to them, and other nations derived it through them. This was a sure guide to them in their devotions, and they followed it, and therefore knew what they worshipped. To them were committed the oracles of God (Ro 3:2), and the service of God, (Ro 9:4). The Jews therefore being thus privileged and advanced, it was presumption for the Samaritans to vie with them.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

He describes the evangelical worship which alone God would accept and be well pleased with. Having shown that the place is indifferent, he comes to show what is necessary and essential--that we worship God in spirit and in truth, Joh 4:23,24. The stress is not to be laid upon the place where we worship God, but upon the state of mind in which we worship him.

Note, The most effectual way to take up differences in the minor matters of religion is to be more zealous in the greater. Those who daily make it the matter of their care to worship in the spirit, one would think, should not make it the matter of their strife whether he should be worshipped here or there. Christ had justly preferred the Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he intimates the imperfection of that. The worship was ceremonial, Heb 9:1,10. The worshippers were generally carnal, and strangers to the inward part of divine worship. Note, It is possible that we may be better than our neighbours, and yet not so good as we should be. It concerns us to be right, not only in the object of our worship, but in the manner of it; and it is this which Christ here instructs us in. Observe,

1. The great and glorious revolution which should introduce this change: The hour cometh, and now is--the fixed stated time, concerning which it was of old determined when it should come, and how long it should last. The time of its appearance if fixed to an hour, so punctual and exact are the divine counsels; the time of its continuance is limited to an hour, so close and pressing is the opportunity of divine grace, 2Co 6:2. This hour cometh, it is coming in its full strength, lustre, and perfection, it now is in the embryo and infancy. The perfect day is coming, and now it dawns.

2. The blessed change itself. In gospel times the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. As creatures, we worship the Father of all: as Christians, we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus. Now the change shall be,

(a.) In the nature of the worship. Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, but in spiritual ordinances, consisting less in bodily exercise, and animated and invigorated more with divine power and energy. The way of worship which Christ has instituted is rational and intellectual, and refined from those external rites and ceremonies with which the Old-Testament worship was both clouded and clogged. This is called true worship, in opposition to that which was typical. The legal services were figures of the true, Heb 9:3,24. Those that revolted from Christianity to Judaism are said to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, Ga 3:3. Such was the difference between Old-Testament and New-Testament institutions.

(b.) In the temper and disposition of the worshippers; and so the true worshippers are good Christians, distinguished from hypocrites; all should, and they will, worship God in spirit and in truth. It is spoken of (Joh 4:23) as their character, and (Joh 4:24) as their duty. Note, It is required of all that worship God that they worship him in spirit and in truth. We must worship God,

[1] In spirit, Php 3:3. We must depend upon God's Spirit for strength and assistance, laying our souls under his influences and operations; we must devote our own spirits to, and employ them in, the service of God (Ro 1:9),

must worship him with fixedness of thought and a flame of affection, with all that is within us. Spirit is sometimes put for the new nature, in opposition to the flesh, which is the corrupt nature; and so to worship God with our spirits is to worship him with our graces, Heb 12:28.

[2] In truth, that is, in sincerity. God requires not only the inward part in our worship, but truth in the inward part, Ps 51:6. We must mind the power more than the form, must aim at God's glory, and not to be seen of men; draw near with a true heart, Heb 10:22.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

He intimates the reasons why God must be thus worshipped.

1. Because in gospel times they, and they only, are accounted the true worshippers. The gospel erects a spiritual way of worship, so that the professors of the gospel are not true in their profession, do not live up to gospel light and laws, if they do not worship God in spirit and in truth.

2. Because the Father seeketh such worshippers of him. This intimates,

(a.) That such worshippers are very rare, and seldom met with, Jer 30:21. The gate of spiritual worshipping is strait.

(b.) That such worship is necessary, and what the God of heaven insists upon. When God comes to enquire for worshippers, the question will not be, "Who worshipped at Jerusalem?" but, "Who worshipped in spirit?" That will be the touchstone.

(c.) That God is greatly well pleased with and graciously accepts such worship and such worshippers. I have desired it, Ps 132:13,14,So 2:14.

(d.) That there has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshippers; his seeking such worshippers implies his making them such. God is in all ages gathering in to himself a generation of spiritual worshippers.

3. Because God is a spirit. Christ came to declare God to us (Joh 1:18), and this he has declared concerning him; he declared it to this poor Samaritan woman, for the meanest are concerned to know God; and with this design, to rectify her mistakes concerning religious worship, to which nothing would contribute more than the right knowledge of God.

Note,

(a.) God is a spirit, for he is an infinite and eternal mind, an intelligent being, incorporeal, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. It is easier to say what God is not than what he is; a spirit has not flesh and bones, but who knows the way of a spirit? If God were not a spirit, he could not be perfect, nor infinite, nor eternal, nor independent, nor the Father of spirits.

(b.) The spirituality of the divine nature is a very good reason for the spirituality of divine worship. If we do not worship God, who is a spirit, in the spirit, we neither give him the glory due to his name, and so do not perform the act of worship, nor can we hope to obtain his favour and acceptance, and so we miss of the end of worship, Mt 15:8,9.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

The last subject of discourse with this woman is concerning the Messiah, Joh 4:25,26. Observe here,

The faith of the woman, by which she expected the Messiah: I know that Messias cometh--and he will tell us all things. She had nothing to object against what Christ had said; his discourse was, for aught she knew, what might become the Messiah then expected; but from him she would receive it, and in the mean time she thinks it best to suspend her belief. Thus many have no heart to the price in their hand (Pr 17:16), because they think they have a better in their eye, and deceive themselves with a promise that they will learn that hereafter which they neglect now. Observe here,

[1.] Whom she expects: I know that Messias cometh. The Jews and Samaritans, though so much at variance, agreed in the expectation of the messiah and his kingdom. The Samaritans received the writings of Moses,

and were no strangers to the prophets, nor to the hopes of the Jewish nation; those who knew least knew this, that Messias was to come; so general and uncontested was the expectation of him, and at this time more raised than ever (for the sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were near expiring), so that she concludes not only, He will come, but erchetai--"He comes, he is just at hand:" Messias, who is called Christ. The evangelist, though he retains the Hebrew word Messias (which the woman used) in honour to the holy language, and to the Jewish church, that used it familiarly, yet, writing for the use of the Gentiles, he takes care to render it by a Greek word of the same signification, who is called Christ-Anointed, giving an example to the apostle's rule, that whatever is spoken in an unknown or less vulgar tongue should be interpreted, 1Co 14:27,28.

[2.] What she expects from him: "He will tell us all things relating to the service of God which it is needful for us to know, will tell us that which will supply our defects, rectify our mistakes, and put an end to all our disputes. He will tell us the mind of God fully and clearly, and keep back nothing." Now this implies an acknowledgement, First, Of the deficiency and imperfection of the discovery they now had of the divine will, and the rule they had of the divine worship; it could not make the comers thereunto perfect, and therefore they expected some great advance and improvement in matters of religion, a time of reformation. Secondly, Of the sufficiency of the Messiah to make this change: "He will tell us all things which we want to know, and about which we wrangle in the dark. He will introduce peace, by leading us into all truth, and dispelling the mists of error." It seems, this was the comfort of good people in those dark times that light would arise; if they found themselves at a loss, and run aground, it was a satisfaction to them to say, When Messias comes, he will tell us all things; as it may be to us now with reference to his second coming: now we see through a glass, but then face to face.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marveled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou ? or, Why talkest thou with her?

Marvelled. Wondered. They wondered because the Jews had no intercourse with the Samaritans, and they were surprised that Jesus was engaged with her in conversation.

Yet no man said. No one of the disciples. They had such respect and reverence for him that they did not dare to ask him the reason of his conduct, or even to appear to reprove him. We should be confident that Jesus is right, even if we cannot fully understand all that he does.

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

Left her water-pot. Her mind was greatly excited. She was disturbed, and hastened to the city in great agitation to make this known. She seems to have been convinced that he was the Messiah, and went immediately to make it known to others. Our first business, when we have found the Saviour, should be to make him known also to others.

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Is not this the Christ? Though she probably believed it, yet she proposed it modestly, lest she should appear to dictate in a case which was so important, and which demanded so much attention. The evidence on which she was satisfied that he was the Messiah was that he had told her all things that she had done--perhaps much more than is here recorded. The question which she submitted to them was whether this was not satisfactory proof that he was the Messiah.

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

My meat, &c. Jesus here explains what he said in Jn 4:32. His great object--the great design of his life--was to do the will of God. He came to that place weary and thirsty, and at the usual time of meals, probably an hungered; yet an opportunity of doing good presented itself, and he forgot his fatigue and hunger, and found comfort and joy in doing good--in seeking to save a soul. This one great object absorbed all his powers, and made him forget his weariness and the wants of nature. The mind may be so absorbed in doing the will of God as to forget all other things. Intent on

this, we may rise above fatigue, and hardship, and want, and bear all with pleasure in seeing the work of God advance. See Job 23:12: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." We may learn, also, that the main business of life is not to avoid fatigue or to seek the supply of our temporal wants, but to do the will of God. The mere supply of our temporal necessities, though most men make it an object of their chief solicitude, is a small consideration in the sight of him who has just views of the great design of human life.

The will of him that sent me. The will of God in regard to the salvation of men. See Jn 6:38.

To finish his work. To complete or fully to do the work which he has commanded in regard to the salvation of men. It is his work to provide salvation, and his to redeem, and his to apply the salvation to the heart. Jesus came to do it by teaching, by his example, and by his death as an expiation for sin. And he shows us that we should be diligent. If he was so diligent for our welfare, if he bore fatigue and want to benefit us, then we should be diligent, also, in regard to our own salvation, and also in seeking the salvation of others.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Four months and, &c. The common time from sowing the seed to the harvest, in Judea, was about four months. The meaning of this passage may be thus expressed:

"The husband-man, when he sows his seed, is compelled to wait a considerable period before it produces a crop. He is encouraged in sowing it; he expects fruit; his labour is lightened by that expectation; but it is not immediate--it is remote. But it is not so with my preaching. The seed has already sprung up. Scarce was it sown before it produced an abundant harvest. The gospel was just preached to a woman, and see how many of the Samaritans come to hear it also. There is therefore more encouragement to labour in this field than the farmer has to sow his grain."

Lift your eyes. See the Samaritans coming to hear the gospel.

They are white. Grain, when ripe, turns from a green to a yellow or light colour, indicating that it is time to reap it. So here were indications that the gospel was effectual, and that the harvest was to be gathered in.

Hence we may learn,

1st. That there is as much encouragement to attempt to save souls as the farmer has to raise a crop.

2nd. That the gospel is fitted to make an immediate impression on the minds of men. We are to expect that it will. We are not to wait to some future period, as if we could not expect immediate results. This wicked and ignorant people--little likely, apparently, to be affected--turned to God, heard the voice of the Saviour, and came in multitudes to him.

3rd. We are to expect revivals of religion. Here was one instance of it under the Saviour's own preaching. Multitudes were excited, moved, and came to learn the way of life.

4th. We know not how much good may be done by conversation with even a single individual. This conversation with a woman resulted in a deep interest felt throughout the city, and in the conversion of many of them to God. So a single individual may often be the means, in the hand of God, of leading many to the cross of Jesus.

5th. What evils may follow from neglecting to do our duty! How easily might Jesus have alleged, if he had been like many of his professed disciples, that he was weary, that he was hungry, that it was esteemed improper to converse with a woman alone, that she was an abandoned character, and there could be little hope of doing her good! How many consciences of ministers and Christians would have been satisfied with reasoning like this? Yet Jesus, in spite of his fatigue and thirst, and all the difficulties of the case, seriously set about seeking the conversion of this woman. And behold what a glorious result! The city was moved, and a great

harvest was found ready to be gathered in! Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

He that reapeth. He that gathers the harvest, or he who so preaches that souls are converted to Christ.

Receiveth wages. The labourer in the harvest receives his hire. Jesus says it shall be thus with those who labour in the ministry--he will not suffer them to go unrewarded. See Dan 12:3, Mt 19:28.

Gathereth fruit unto life eternal. Converts souls, who shall inherit eternal life. The harvest is not temporary, like gathering grain, but shall result in eternal life.

That both he that soweth, &c. It is a united work. It matters little whether we sow the seed or whether we reap the harvest. It is part of the same work, and whatever part we may do, we should rejoice. God gives the increase, while Paul may plant and Apollos water. The teacher in the Sunday-school, who sows the seed in early life, shall rejoice with the minister of the gospel who may gather in the harvest, and both join in giving all the praise to God.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

That saying. That proverb. This proverb is found in some of the Greek writers (Grotius). Similar proverbs were in use among the Jews. See Isa 65:21, 22, Lev 26:16, Mic 6:15.

38 I sent you to reap that whereupon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.

I sent you. In the commission given you to preach the gospel. You have not labored or toiled in preparing the way for the great harvest which is now to be gathered in.

Other men labored.

(1.) The prophets, who long labored to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

(2.) The teachers among the Jews, who have read and explained the law and taught the people.

(3.) John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way. And,

(4.) The Saviour himself, who by his personal ministry taught the people, and prepared them for the success which was to attend the preaching of the apostles. Especially did Jesus lay the foundation for the rapid and extensive spread of the gospel. He saw comparatively little fruit of his ministry. He confined his labours to Judea, and even there he was occupied in sowing seed which chiefly sprang up after his death. From this we may learn,

1st. That the man who is crowned with eminent success has no cause of boasting over others, any more than the man who reaps a field of grain should boast over the man who sowed it. The labour of both is equally necessary, and the labour of both would be useless if GOD did not give the increase. Comp. 1Cor 3:6.

2nd. We should not be discouraged if we do not meet with immediate success. The man that sows is not disheartened because he does not see the harvest immediately spring up. We are to sow our seed in the morning, and in the evening we are not to withhold our hand, for we know not whether shall prosper, this or that; and we are to go forth bearing precious seed, though weeping, knowing that we shall come again rejoicing, bearing our sheaves with us, Eccl 11:4, Ps 126:6

3rd. Every part of the work of the ministry and of teaching men is needful, and we should rejoice that we are permitted to bear any part, however humble, in bringing sinners to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 1Cor 12:21-24.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

Verses 39-42

Here an account is given of the conversion of more of the Samaritans from the city of Sichar. Some believed on him, upon the full report which the woman had made, That, He had told her all that ever she did; but others were brought to believe by his own word.

Now from the woman's being an instrument to bring her acquaintance to Christ by her own experience of what she had heard from him:

Learn, 1. That very weak instruments, when they employ themselves for Christ, desiring to extol his praise, and set forth his glory, are sometimes richly blessed with great success. Many of the Samaritans believed for the saying of this poor woman.

Learn, 2. That when a person can say but little of Christ, yet if it be spoken from experience and sensible feeling, it will be more successful and persuasive, than much more that which is spoken from notional knowledge. Such was this woman's testimony concerning Christ, Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? She spake what she found, yea, what she felt within herself, and speaking her own experience, many believed on him for her saying.

But farther, These Samaritans believed Christ to be a prophet upon the testimony of this woman: but they believed him afterwards to be the Messias, or the Saviour of the world, upon the credit and authority of his own word, ver, 41. And many more believed because of his own word.

Thence learn, That although instruments speaking may be a mean to draw persons to give some assent to truth, yet it is Christ himself that must work a full persuasion, and his own word is the surest foundation for faith to build and depend upon: Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his own word;

42 and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Jesus Heals a Nobleman's Son

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.

> For Jesus himself testified, &c. Mt 13:57. The connection of this verse with the preceding may be thus explained: "Jesus went to Galilee, but not to Nazareth, for he testified," &c. Or, "Jesus went to Galilee, although he had said that a prophet had no honour in his own country; yet, because he foreknew that the Galileans would many of them believe on him, he went at this time."

45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

> A certain nobleman. One who was of the royal family, connected by birth with Herod Antipas; or one of the officers of the court, whether by birth allied to him or not. It seems that his ordinary residence was at Capernaum. Capernaum was about a day's journey from Cana, where Jesus then was.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

> He went unto him. Though high in office, yet he did not refuse to go personally to Jesus to ask his aid. He felt as a father; and believing, after all that Jesus had done, that he could cure his son, he travelled to meet him. If men receive benefits of Christ, they must come in the same manner. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, must come personally as humble suppliants, and must be willing to bear all the reproach that may be cast on them for thus coming to him. This man showed strong faith in being willing

thus to go to Jesus, but he erred in supposing that Jesus could heal only by his being present with his son.

Would come down. It is probable that the miracles of Jesus heretofore had been performed only on those who were present with him, and this nobleman seems to have thought that this was necessary. One design of Jesus in working this miracle was to show him that this was not necessary. Hence he did not go down to Capernaum, but healed him where he was.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

Except ye see signs, &c. This was spoken not to the nobleman only, but to the Galileans generally. The Samaritans had believed without any miracle. The Galileans, he said, were less disposed to believe him than even they were; and though he had wrought miracles enough to convince them, yet, unless they continually saw them, they would not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

Come down, &c. The earnestness of the nobleman evinces the deep and tender anxiety of a father. So anxious was he for his son that he was not willing that Jesus should delay a moment --not even to address the people. He still seems to have supposed that Jesus had no power to heal his son except he was present with him.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

The man believed. The manner in which Jesus spoke it, and the assurance which he gave, convinced the man that he could heal him there as well as to go to Capernaum to do it. This is an instance of the power of Jesus to convince the mind, to soothe doubts, to confirm faith, and to meet our desires. He blesses not always in the manner in which we ask, but he grants us our main wish. The father wished his son healed by Jesus going down to Capernaum. Jesus healed him, but not in the way in which he asked it to be done. God will hear our prayers and grant our requests, but often not in the precise manner in which we ask it. It is his to judge of the best way of doing us good.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52 Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

The same hour. The very time when Jesus spoke. The fever left him. It seems that it left him suddenly and entirely; so much so that his friends went to inform the father, and to comfort him, and also, doubtless, to apprise him that it was not necessary to ask aid from Jesus.

From this miracle we may learn,

1st. That Jesus has an intimate knowledge of all things. He knew the case of this son-the extent of his disease--where he was--and thus had power to heal him.

2nd. That Jesus has almighty power. Nothing else could have healed this child. Nor could it be pretended that he did it by any natural means. He was far away from him, and the child knew not the source of the power that healed him. It could not be pretended that there was any collusion or jugglery. The father came in deep anxiety. The servants saw the cure. Jesus was at a distance. Everything in the case bears the mark of being the simple energy of God--put forth with equal ease to heal, whether far or near. Thus he can save the sinner.

3rd. We see the benevolence of Jesus. Ever ready to aid, to heal, or to save, he may be called on at all times, and will never be called on in vain.

Himself believed. This miracle removed all his doubts, and he became a real disciple and friend of Jesus.

His whole house. His whole family. We may learn from this,

1st. That sickness or any deep affliction is often the means of great good. Here the sickness of the son resulted in the faith of all the family. God often takes away earthly blessings that he may impart rich spiritual mercies.

2nd. The father of a family may be the means of the salvation of his children. Here the effort of a parent resulted in their conversion to Christ.

3rd. There is great beauty and propriety when sickness thus results in piety. For that it is sent. God does not willingly grieve or afflict the children of men; and when afflictions thus terminate, it will be cause of eternal joy, of ceaseless praise.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

John-5

The Healing at the Pool

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

A feast. Probably the Passover, though it is not certain. There were two other feasts--the Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles--at which all the males were required to be present, and it might have been one of them. It is of no consequence, however, which of them is intended.

2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

The sheep-market. This might have been rendered the sheep-gate, or the gate through which the sheep were taken into the city for sacrifice. The marginal rendering is gate, and the word "market" is not in the original, nor is a "sheep-market" mentioned in the Scriptures or in any of the Jewish writings. A sheep-gate is repeatedly mentioned by Nehemiah (Neh 3:1,32, 12:39) being that by which sheep and oxen were brought into the city. As these were brought mainly for sacrifice, the gate was doubtless near the temple, and near the present place which is shown as the pool of Bethesda.

Bethesda. The house of mercy. It was so called on account of its strong healing properties--the property of restoring health to the sick and infirm.

Five porches. The word porch commonly means a covered place surrounding a building, in which people can walk or sit in hot or wet weather. Here it probably means that there were five covered places, or apartments, in which the sick could remain, from each one of which they could have access to the water. This "pool" is thus described by Professor Hackett (Illustrations of Scripture, p. 291, 292)

"Just to the east of the Turkish garrison, and under the northern wall of the mosque, is a deep excavation, supposed by many to be the ancient pool of Bethesda, into which the sick descended `after the troubling of the water,' and were healed, Jn 5:1, sq. It is 360 feet long, 130 feet wide, and 75 deep. The evangelist says that this pool was near the sheep-gate, as the Greek probably signifies, rather than sheep-market, as rendered in the English version. That gate, according to Neh 3:1, sq., was on the north side of the temple, and hence the situation of this reservoir would agree with that of Bethesda. The present name, Birket Israil, Pool of Israil, indicates the opinion of the native inhabitants in regard to the object of the excavation. The general opinion of the most accurate travellers is that the so-called pool was originally part of a trench or fosse which protected the temple on the north. Though it contains no water at present except a little which trickles through the stones at the west end, it has evidently been used at some period as a reservoir. It is lined with cement, and adapted in other respects to hold water."

Dr. Robinson established by personal inspection the fact of the subterranean connection of the pool of Siloam with the Fountain of the Virgin, and made it probable that the fountain under the mosque of Omar is connected with them. This spring is, as he himself witnessed, an intermittent one, and there may have been some artificially constructed basin in connection with this spring to which was given the name of Bethesda. He supposes, however, that there is not the slightest evidence that the place or reservoir now pointed out as Bethesda was the Bethesda of the New Testament (Bib. Res., i. 501,506, 509). In the time of Sandys (1611) the spring was found running, but in small quantities; in the time of Maundrell (1697) the stream did not run. Probably in his time, as now, the water which had formerly filtered through the rocks was dammed up by the rubbish.

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

Rise, take up, &c. Jesus not only restored him to health, but he gave evidence to those around him that this was a real miracle, and that he was really healed. For almost forty years he had been afflicted. He was not even able to walk. Jesus commanded him not only to walk, but to take up his bed also, and carry that as proof that he was truly made whole.

In regard to this we may observe,

1st. That it was a remarkable command. The poor man had been long infirm, and it does not appear that he expected to be healed except by being put into the waters. Yet Jesus, when he gives a commandment, can give strength to obey it.

2nd. It is our business to obey the commands of Jesus, however feeble we feel ourselves to be. His grace will be sufficient for us, and his burden will be light.

3rd. The weak and helpless sinner should put forth his efforts in obedience to the command of Jesus. Never was a sinner more helpless than was this man. If God gave him strength to do his will, so he can all others; and the

plea that we can do nothing could have been urged with far more propriety by this man than it can be by any impenitent sinner.

4th. This narrative should not be abused. It should not be supposed as intended to teach that a sinner should delay repentance, as if waiting for God. The narrative neither teaches nor implies any such thing. It is a simple record of a fact in regard to a man who had no power to heal himself, and who was under no obligation to heal himself. There is no reference in the narrative to the difficulties of a sinner-- no intimation that it was intended to refer to his condition; and to make this example an excuse for delay, or an argument for waiting, is to abuse and pervert the Bible. Seldom is more mischief done than by attempting to draw from the Bible what it was not intended to teach, and by an effort to make that convey spiritual instruction which God has not declared designed for that purpose.

10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

The Sabbath. To carry burdens on the Sabbath was forbidden in the Old Testament, Jer 17:21, Neh 13:15, Ex 20:8-10. If it be asked, then, why Jesus commanded a man to do on the Sabbath what was understood to be a violation of the day, it may be answered,

1st. That the Son of man was Lord of the Sabbath, and had a right to declare what might be done, and even to dispense with a positive law of the Jews, Mt 12:8, Jn 5:17.

2nd. This was a poor man, and Jesus directed him to secure his property.

3rd. The Jews extended the obligation of the Sabbath beyond what was intended by the appointment. They observed it superstitiously, and Jesus took every opportunity to convince them of their error, and to restore the day to its proper observance, Mt 12:6-11, Lk 6:9; Lk 13:14, 14:5. This method he took to show them what the law of God really permitted on that day, and that works of necessity and mercy were lawful. How unjustly the Jews tax the cripple that was healed with the breach of the sabbath, for taking up his bed, and walking on the sabbath-day? whereas the law only forbade carrying burthens on the sabbath-day for profit, in way of trade:

but this man's carrying his bed, was a testimony of God's goodness and mercy towards him, and of his gratitude and thankfulness towards God.

11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

The man justified himself in what he did by a warrant that would bear him out, Joh 5:11. "I do not do it in contempt of the law and the sabbath, but in obedience to one who, by making me whole, has given me an undeniable proof that he is greater than either. He that could work such a miracle as to make me whole no doubt might give me such a command as to carry my bed; he that could overrule the powers of nature no doubt might overrule a positive law, especially in an instance not of the essence of the law. He that was so kind as to make me whole would not be so unkind as to bid me do what is sinful." Christ, by curing another paralytic, proved his power to forgive sin, here to give law; if his pardons are valid, his edicts are so, and his miracles prove both.

The man reasoned correctly. If Jesus had power to work so signal a miracle, he had a right to explain the law. If he had conferred so great a favour on him, he had a right to expect obedience; and we may learn that the mercy of God in pardoning our sins, or in bestowing any signal blessing, imposes the obligation to obey him. We should yield obedience to him according to what we know to be his will, whatever may be the opinions of men, or whatever interpretation they may put on the law of God. Our business is a simple, hearty, child-like obedience, let the men of the world say or think of us as they choose.

12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

What man is he, &c. In this verse there is a remarkable instance of the perverseness of men, of their want of candour, and of the manner in which they often look at a subject. Instead of looking at the miracle, and at the man's statement of the manner in which he was healed, they look only at what they thought to be a violation of the law. They assumed it as certain that nothing could make his conduct, in carrying his bed on the Sabbath-day, proper; and they meditated vengeance, not only on the man who was carrying his bed, but on him, also, who had told him to do it. Thus men often assume that a certain course or opinion is proper, and when anyone differs from them they look only at the difference, but not at the reasons

for it. One great source of dispute among men is that they look only at the points in which they differ, but are unwilling to listen to the reasons why others do not believe as they do. It is always enough to condemn one in the eyes of a bigot that he differs from him, and he looks upon him who holds a different opinion, as the Jews did at this man, as certainly wrong; and such a bigot looks at the reasons why others differ from him just as the Jews did at the reason why this man bore his bed on the Sabbath--as not worth regarding or hearing, or as if they could not possibly be right.

13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Had conveyed himself away. Was lost in the crowd. He had silently mingled with the multitude, or had passed on with the crowd unobserved, and the man had been so rejoiced at his cure that he had not even inquired the name of his benefactor.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

In the temple. The man seems to have gone at once to the temple--perhaps a privilege of which he had been long deprived. They who are healed from sickness should seek the sanctuary of God and give him thanks for his mercy. Comp. Is 38:20. There is nothing more improper, when we are raised up from a bed of pain, than to forget God our benefactor, and neglect to praise him for his mercies.

What he said to him. When Christ has cured us, he has not done with us; he now applies himself to the healing of his soul, and this by the word too.

[1.] He gives him a memento of his cure: Behold thou art made whole. He found himself made whole, yet Christ calls his attention to it. Behold, consider it seriously, how sudden, how strange, how cheap, how easy, the cure was: admire it; behold, and wonder: Remember it; let the impressions of it abide, and never be lost, Isa 38:9.

[2.] He gives him a caution against sin, in consideration hereof, Being made whole, sin no more. This implies that his disease was the punishment of sin; whether of some remarkably flagrant sin, or only of sin in general, we cannot tell, but we know that sin is the procuring cause of sickness, Ps

107:17,18. Some observe that Christ did not make mention of sin to any of his patients, except to this impotent man, and another who was in like manner diseased, Mk 2:5. While those chronical diseases lasted, they prevented the outward acts of many sins, and therefore watchfulness was the more necessary when the disability was removed.

Christ intimates that those who are made whole, who are eased of the present sensible punishment of sin, are in danger of returning to sin when the terror and restraint are over, unless divine grace dry up the fountain. When the trouble which only dammed up the current is over, the waters will return to their old course; and therefore there is great need of watchfulness, lest after healing mercy we return again to folly. The misery we were made whole from warns us to sin no more, having felt the smart of sin; the mercy we were made whole by is an engagement upon us not to offend him who healed us. This is the voice of every providence, Go and sin no more. This man began his new life very hopefully in the temple, yet Christ saw it necessary to give him this caution; for it is common for people, when they are sick, to promise much, when newly recovered to perform something, but after awhile to forget all.

[3.] He gives him warning of his danger, in case he should return to his former sinful course: Lest a worse thing come to thee. Christ, who knows all men's hearts, knew that he was one of those that must be frightened from sin. Thirty-eight years' lameness, one would think, was a thing bad enough; yet there is something worse that will come to him if he relapse into sin after God has given him such a deliverance as this, Ezr 9:13,14. The hospital where he lay was a melancholy place, but hell is much more so: the doom of apostates is a worse thing than thirty-eight years' lameness.

15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

Now, after this interview between Christ and his patient, observe in the Joh 5:15,16, 1 The notice which the poor simple man gave to the Jews concerning Christ, Joh 5:15. He told them it was Jesus that had made him whole. We have reason to think that he intended this for the honour of Christ and the benefit of the Jews, little thinking that he who had so much power and goodness could have any enemies; but those who wish well to Christ's kingdom must have the wisdom of the serpent, lest they do more hurt than

good with their zeal, and must not cast pearls before swine. 2 The rage and enmity of the Jews against him: Therefore did the rulers of the Jews persecute Jesus.

See,

(1.) How absurd and unreasonable their enmity to Christ was. Therefore, because he had made a poor sick man well, and so eased the public charge, upon which, it is likely, he had subsisted; therefore they persecuted him, because he did good in Israel.

(2.) How bloody and cruel it was: They sought to slay him; nothing less than his blood, his life, would satisfy them.

(3.) How it was varnished over with a colour of zeal for the honour of the sabbath; for this was the pretended crime, Because he had done these things on the sabbath day, as if that circumstance were enough to vitiate the best and most divine actions, and to render him obnoxious whose deeds were otherwise most meritorious. Thus hypocrites often cover their real enmity against the power of godliness with a pretended zeal for the form of it.

16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

Barnes commentary:

Worketh hitherto. Worketh until now, or till this time. God has not ceased to work on the Sabbath. He makes the sun to rise; he rolls the stars; he causes the grass, the tree, the flower to grow. He has not suspended his operations on the Sabbath, and the obligation to rest on the Sabbath does not extend to him. He created the world in six days, and ceased the work of creations; but he has not ceased to govern it, and to carry forward, by his providence, his great plans on the Sabbath.

And I work. "As God does good on that day; as he is not bound by the law which requires his creatures to rest on that day, so I do the same. The law

on that subject may be dispensed with, also, in my case, for the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."

In this reply it is implied that he was equal with God from two circumstances:

1st. Because he called God his Father, Jn 5:18.

2nd. Because he claimed the same exemption from law which God did, asserting that the law of the Sabbath did not bind him or his Father, thus showing that he had a right to impose and repeal laws in the same manner as God. He that has a right to do this must be God.

Burkitt commentary:

From this verse to the end of the chapter, we have our Saviour's apology for his working the foregoing cure on the impotent man on the sabbath day. And the chief argument he insists upon, is drawn from his unity and eqaulity in nature and operation with his Father; As the Father worketh, says he, so I work. Here he speaks of himself, not as a servant, or instrument in the Father's hand, but as the fellow-worker with the Father, both in the works of creation, and in the works of providence, and preservation also.

Learn hence, 1. That though Almighty God has long since ceased from the work of creation, yet not from the work of preservation. My father worketh hitherto; not by creating new kinds of creatures but by upholding and preserving what he has already created.

Learn, 2. That Christ the Son of God, is joined with, and undivided from the Father, in working. As the Father created all things by him (not as a man, and as an instrument in his Father's hand; for then he was not such) but as his fellow-worker, being equal in nature and power with the Father: in like manner as the Father preserveth, sustaineth, governeth, and

upholdeth all things, so doth Christ; the Father's actions and his being the same, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

MHC:

The doctrine laid down, by which he justified what he did on the sabbath day (Joh 5:17): He answered them. This supposes that he had something laid to his charge: or what they suggested one to another, when they sought to slay him (Joh 5:16), he knew, and gave this reply to, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. At other times, in answer to the like charge, he had pleaded the example of David's eating the show-bread, of the priests' slaying the sacrifices, and of the people's watering their cattle on the sabbath day; but here he goes higher and alleges the example of his Father and his divine authority; waiving all other pleas, he insists upon that which was instar omnium--equivalent to the whole, and abides by it, which he had mentioned, Mt 12:8. The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day; but he here enlarges on it.

1. He pleads that he was the Son of God, plainly intimated in his calling God his Father; and, if so, his holiness was unquestionable and his sovereignty incontestable; and he might make what alterations he pleased of the divine law. Surely they will reverence the Son, the heir of all things.

2. That he was a worker together with God.

(1.) My Father worketh hitherto. The example of God's resting on the seventh day from all his work is, in the fourth commandment, made the ground of our observing it as a sabbath or day of rest. Now God rested only from such work as he had done the six days before; otherwise he worketh hitherto, he is every day working, sabbath days and week-days, upholding and governing all the creatures, and concurring by his common providence to all the motions and operations of nature, to his own glory; therefore, when we are appointed to rest on the sabbath day, yet we are not restrained from doing that which has a direct tendency to the glory of God, as the man's carrying his bed had.

(2.) I work; not only therefore I may work, like him, in doing good on sabbath days as well as other days, but I also work with him. As God created all things by Christ, so he supports and governs all by him, Heb 1:3. This sets what he does above all exception; he that is so great a worker must needs be an uncontrollable governor; he that does all is Lord of all, and therefore Lord of the sabbath, which particular branch of his authority he would now assert, because he was shortly to show it further, in the change of the day from the seventh to the first.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Barnes:

The more to kill him. The answer of Jesus was fitted greatly to irritate them. He did not deny what he had done, but he added to that what he well knew would highly, offend them. That he should claim the right of dispensing with the law, and affirm that, in regard to its observance, he was in the same condition with God, was eminently fitted to enrage them, and he doubtless knew that it might endanger his life. We may learn from his answer, That we are not to keep back truth because it may endanger us.

2nd. That we are not to keep back truth because it will irritate and enrage sinners. The fault is not in the truth, but in the sinner.

3rd. That when any one portion of truth enrages hypocrites, they will be enraged the more they hear.

Making himself equal with God. This shows that, in the view of the Jews, the name Son of God, or that calling God his Father, implied equality with God. The Jews were the best interpreters of their own language, and as Jesus did not deny the correctness of their interpretations, it follows that he meant to be so understood. See Jn 10:29-38. The interpretation of the Jews was a very natural and just one. He not only said that God was his Father, but he said that he had the same right to work on the Sabbath that God had; that by

the same authority, and in the same manner, he could dispense with the obligation of the day. They had now two pretences for seeking to kill him--one for making himself equal with God, which they considered blasphemy, and the other for violating the Sabbath. For each of these the law denounced death, Nu 15:35, Lev 24:11-14.

Burkitt:

Observe here, The Jews instead of being satisfied, were the more enraged; not only because he had violated the sabbath (as they pretended) by healing the cripple on the sabbath-day, but because Christ had asserted that God was his Father in a peculiar manner, and made himself equal with God, our Saviour therefore goes on to assert his equality and conjunction with the Father in his operations and workings; which doth at once justify his work on the Sabbath-day, and prove him to be truly and really God. Now our holy Lord, to prove himself equal with God the Father produces first many arguments, to verse 31, and then alledges the testimony of many witnesses to the end of the chapter.

Our Saviour's first argument to prove himself equal with the Father in essence and nature, is this, that the Father and he are equal in operation, in will and consent for working; that the Son doth all that the Father doth, and the Father doth nothing without the Son, ver 19. The Son can do nothing of himself; that is, as man, as the Messias, and as Mediator, he could do nothing of himself. His perfect obedience to, and compliance with, the will of his Father that sent him, would not suffer him to do any thing without him: but as God, he could do all things of himself.

Learn hence, That it is an undeniable proof that the Father and Son are one in nature, essence, and being; in that they are inseparable in operation and working; What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise; and the Son doth nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: therefore Father and Son being equal in operation and working, are equal in nature and being; and consequently, both essentially, truly and really, God: Therefore the Arians of old, and the Socinians at this day, are wide when they produce this text? The Son can do nothing of himself, to prove that Christ is not equal with God the Father, They forget or neglect to

distinguish between his divine nature, which could do all things, and his mediatorial office: which could not do, but what the Father that sent him had appointed him to do.

MHC:

The offence that was taken at his doctrine (Joh 5:18): The Jews sought the more to kill him. His defence was made his offence, as if by justifying himself he had made bad worse. Note, Those that will not be enlightened by the word of Christ will be enraged and exasperated by it, and nothing more vexes the enemies of Christ than his asserting his authority; see Ps 2:3-5. They sought to kill him,

1. Because he had broken the sabbath; for, let him say what he would in his own justification, they are resolved, right or wrong, to find him guilty of sabbath breaking. When malice and envy sit upon the bench, reason and justice may even be silent at the bar, for whatever they can say will undoubtedly be over-ruled.

2. Not only so, but he had said also that God was his Father. Now they pretend a jealousy for God's honour, as before for the sabbath day, and charge Christ with it as a heinous crime that he made himself equal with God; and a heinous crime it had been if he had not really been so. It was the sin of Lucifer, I will be like the Most High. Now,

(a) This was justly inferred from what he said, that he was the Son of God, and that God was his Father, patera idion--his own Father; his, so as he was no one's else. He had said that he worked with his Father, by the same authority and power, and hereby he made himself equal with God. Ecce intelligunt Judæi, quod non intelligunt Ariani--Behold, the Jews understand what the Arians do not.

(b) Yet it was unjustly imputed to him as an offence that he equalled himself with God, for he was and is God, equal with the Father (Php 2:6); and therefore Christ, in answer to this charge, does not except against the

innuendo as strained or forced, makes out his claim and proves that he is equal with God in power and glory.

The Authority of the Son

19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

The Son can do nothing of himself. Jesus, having stated the extent of his authority, proceeds here to show its source and nature, and to prove to them that what he had said was true. The first explanation which he gives is in these words: The Son--whom he had just impliedly affirmed to be equal with God-- did nothing of himself; that is, nothing without the appointment of the Father; nothing contrary to the Father, as he immediately explains it. When it is said that he CAN do nothing OF HIMSELF, it is meant that such is the union subsisting between the Father and the Son that he can do nothing independently or separate from the Father. Such is the nature of this union that he can do nothing which has not the concurrence of the Father, and which he does not command. In all things he must, from the necessity of his nature, act in accordance with the nature and will of God. Such is the intimacy of the union, that the fact that he does anything is proof that it is by the concurring agency of God. There is no separate action--no separate existence; but, alike in being and in action, there is the most perfect oneness between him and the Father. Comp. Jn 10:30; 17:21.

What he seeth the Father do. In the works of creation and providence, in making laws, and in the government of the universe. There is a peculiar force in the word seeth here. No man can see God acting in his works; but the word here implies that the Son sees him act, as we see our fellow-men act, and that he has a knowledge of him, therefore, which no mere mortal could possess.

What things soever. In the works of creation and of providence, and in the government of the worlds. The word is without limit--ALL that the Father does the Son likewise does. This is as high an assertion as possible of his being equal with God. If one does all that another does or can do, then there

must be equality. If the Son does all that the Father does, then, like him, he must be almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and infinite in every perfection; or, in other words, he must be God. If he had this power, then he had authority, also, to do on the Sabbath-day what God did.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

The Father loveth the Son. This authority he traces to the love which the Father has for him--that peculiar, ineffable, infinite love which God has for his only-begotten Son, feebly and dimly illustrated by the love which an earthly parent has for an only child.

Showeth him. Makes him acquainted with. Conceals nothing from him. From apostles, and prophets no small part of the doings of God are concealed i.e. He showeth only little part of His doings or He showeth almost nothing. From the Son nothing is Concealed. And as God shows him all that he does, he must be possessed of omniscience, for to no finite mind could be imparted a knowledge of all the works of God.

Will show Him. Will appoint and direct him to do greater works than these.

Greater works than these. Than healing the impotent man, and commanding him to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day. The greater works to which he refers are those which he proceeds to specify--he will raise the dead and judge the world, &c.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

As the Father raiseth up the dead. God has power to raise the dead. By his power it had been done in at least two instances--by the prophet Elijah, in the case of the son of the widow of Sarepta (1Kgs 17:22), and by the prophet Elisha, in the case of the Shunamite's son, 2Kgs 4:32-35. The Jews did not doubt that God had power to raise the dead. Jesus here expressly affirms it, and says he has the same power.

Even so. In the same manner. By the same authority and power. The power of raising the dead must be one of the highest attributes of the divinity. As

Jesus affirms that he has the power to do this in the same manner as the Father, so it follows that he must be equal with God.

The Son quickeneth. Gives life to. This may either refer to his raising the dead from their graves, or to his giving spiritual life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The former he did in the case of Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain, Jn 11:43,44; Lk 7:14,15. The latter he did in the case of all those who were converted by his power, and still does it in any instance of conversion. Whom he will. It was in the power of Jesus to raise up any of the dead as well as Lazarus. It depended on his will whether Lazarus and the widow's son should come to life. So it depends on his will whether sinners shall live. He has power to renew them, and the renewing of the heart is as much the result of his will as the raising of the dead.

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

Judgeth no man. Jesus in these verses is showing his equality with God. He affirmed (Jn 5:17) that he had the same power over the Sabbath that his Father had; in Jn 5:19 that he did the same things as the Father; in Jn 5:21 particularly that he had the same power to raise the dead. He now adds that God has given him the authority to judge men. The Father pronounces judgment on no one. This office he has committed to the Son. The power of judging the world implies ability to search the heart, and omniscience to understand the motives of all actions. This is a work which none but a divine being can do, and it shows, therefore, that the Son is equal to the Father.

Hath committed, Hath appointed him to be the judge of the world. In the previous verse he had said that he had power to raise the dead; he here adds that it will be his, also, to judge them when they are raised. See Mt 25:31-46, Acts 17:31.

That all men should honour, &c. To honour is to esteem, reverence, praise, do homage to. We honour one when we ascribe to him in our hearts, and words, and actions the praise and obedience which are due to him. We honour God when we obey him and worship him aright. We honour the Son when we esteem him to be as he is; when we have right views and feelings toward him. As he is declared to be God (Jn 1:1), as he here says he has power and authority equal with God, so we honour him when we regard him

as such. The primitive Christians are described by Pliny, in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, as meeting together to sing hymns to Christ as God. So we honour him aright when we regard him as possessed of wisdom, goodness, power, eternity, omniscience -- equal with God.

Even as. To the same extent; in the same manner. Since the Son is to be honoured EVEN AS the Father, it follows that he must be equal with the Father. To honour the Father must denote religious homage, or the rendering of that honour which is due to God; so to honour the Son must also denote religious homage. If our Saviour here did not intend to teach that he ought to be worshipped, and to be esteemed as equal with God, it would be difficult to teach it by any language which we could use.

He that honoureth not the Son. He that does not believe on him, and render to him the homage which is his due as the equal of God.

Honoureth not the Father. Does not worship and obey the Father, the first person of the Trinity--that is, does not worship God. He may imagine that he worships God, but there is no God but the God subsisting as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He that withholds proper homage from one, withholds it from all. He that should refuse to honour the Father, could not be said to honour God; and in the like manner, he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father. This appears farther from the following considerations:--

1st. The Father wills that the Son should be honoured. He that refuses to do it disobeys the Father.

2nd. They are equal. He that denies the one denies also the other.

3rd. The same feeling that leads us to honour the Father will also lead us to honour the Son, for he is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Heb 1:3.

4th. The evidence of the existence of the Son is the same as that of the Father. He has the same wisdom, goodness, omnipresence, truth, power.

And from these verses we may learn --

1st. That those who do not render proper homage to Jesus Christ do not worship the true God.

2nd. There is no such God as the infidel professes to believe in. There can be but one God; and if the God of the Bible be the true God, then all other gods are false gods.

3rd. Those who withhold proper homage from Jesus Christ, who do not honour him EVEN AS they honour the Father, cannot be Christians.

4th. One evidence of piety is when we are willing to render proper praise and homage to Jesus Christ --to love him, and serve and obey him, with all our hearts.

5th. As a matter of fact, it may be added that they who do not honour the Son do not worship God at all. The infidel has no form of worship; he has no place of secret prayer, no temple of worship, no family altar. Who ever yet heard of an infidel that prayed? Where do such men build houses of worship? Where do they meet to praise God? Nowhere. As certainly as we hear the name infidel, we are certain at once that we hear the name of a man who has no form of religion in his family, who never prays in secret, and who will do nothing to maintain the public worship of God. Account for it as men may, it is a fact that no one can dispute, that it is only they who do honour to the Lord Jesus that have any form of the worship of God, or that honour him; and their veneration for God is just in proportion to their love for the Redeemer--just as they honour him.

23 that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.
He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

He that heareth my word. To hear, in this place, evidently denotes not the outward act of hearing, but to receive in a proper manner; to suffer it to

make its proper impression on the mind; to obey. The word hear is often used in this sense, Mt 11:15, Jn 8:47, Acts 3:23. Many persons outwardly hear the gospel who neither understand nor obey it.

My word. My doctrine, my teaching. All that Jesus taught about himself, as well as about the Father.

On him that sent me. On the Father, who, in the plan of redemption, is represented as sending his Son to save men. See Jn 3:17. Faith in God, who sent his Son, is here represented as being connected with everlasting life; but there can be no faith in him who sent his Son, without faith also in him who is sent. The belief of one of the true doctrines of religion is connected with, and will lead to, the belief of all.

Hath everlasting life. The state of man by nature is represented as death in sin, Eph 2:1. Religion is the opposite of this, or is life. The dead regard not anything. They are unaffected by the cares, pleasures, amusements of the world. They hear neither the voice of merriment nor the tread of the living over their graves. So with sinners. They are unmoved with the things of religion. They hear not the voice of God; they see not his loveliness; they care not for his threatenings. But religion is life. The Christian lives with God, and feels and acts as if there was a God. Religion, and its blessings here and hereafter, are one and the same. The happiness of heaven is living unto God--being sensible of his presence, and glory, and power--and rejoicing in that. There shall be no more death there, Rev 21:4. This life, or this religion, whether on earth or in heaven, is the same--the same joys extended and expanded for ever. Hence, when a man is converted, it is said that he has everlasting life; not merely shall have, but is already in possession of that life or happiness which shall be everlasting. It is life begun, expanded, ripening for the skies. He has already entered on his inheritance--that inheritance which is everlasting.

Shall not come into condemnation. He was by nature under condemnation. See Jn 3:18. Here it is declared that he shall not return to that state, or he will not be again condemned. This promise is sure; it is made by the Son of God, and there is no one that can pluck them out of his hand, Jn 10:28. Comp. Rev 8:1.

But is passed from death unto life. Has passed over from a state of spiritual death to the life of the Christian. The word translated is passed would be better expressed by has passed. It implies that he has done it voluntarily; that none compelled him; and that the passage is made unto everlasting life. Because Christ is the author of this life in the soul, he is called the life (Jn 1:4); and as he has always existed, and is the source of all life, he is called the eternal life, 1Jn 5:20.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

the spiritually dead, as is clear from Joh 5:28. Here He rises from the calmer phrase "hearing his word" (Joh 5:24), to the grander expression, "hearing the voice of the Son of God," to signify that as it finds men in a dead condition, so it carries with it a resurrection-power.

The voice of the Son of God. The voice is that by which we give command. Jesus raised up the dead by his command, or by his authority. When he did it he spoke, or, commanded it to be done. Mk 5:41, "He took the damsel by the hand, and said, `Talitha cumi.'" Lk 7:14: "And he came and touched the bier, and said, `Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.'" Jn 11:43: "He cried with a loud voice, `Lazarus, come forth.'" So it is by his command that those who are dead in sins are quickened or made alive, Jn 5:21. And so at the day of judgment the dead will be raised by his command or voice, though there is no reason to think that his voice will be audibly heard, Jn 5:28.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

27 and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Hath given him authority. Hath appointed him to do this. Has made him to be judge of all. This is represented as being the appointment of the Father, Acts 17:31. The word authority here (commonly rendered power) implies all that is necessary to execute judgment--all the physical power to raise the dead, and to investigate the actions and thoughts of the life; and all the moral right or authority to sit in judgment on the creatures of God, and to pronounce their doom.

To execute judgment. To do judgment--that is, to judge. He has appointment to do justice; to see that the universe suffers no wrong, either by the escape of the guilty or by the punishment of the innocent.

Because he is the Son of man. The phrase Son of man here seems to be used in the sense of "because he is a man," or because he has human nature. The term is one which Jesus often gives to himself, to show his union with man and his interest in man. Mt 8:19,20. It is to be remarked here that the word son has not the article before it in the original: "Because he is a Son of man"--that is, because he is a man. It would seem from this that there is a propriety that one in our nature should judge us. What this propriety is we do not certainly know. It may be,

1st. Because one who has experienced our infirmities, and who possesses our nature, may be supposed by those who are judged to be better qualified than one in a different nature.

2nd. Because he is to decide between man and God, and it is proper that our feelings, and nature, and views should be represented in the judge, as well as those of God.

3rd. Because Jesus has all the feelings of compassion we could ask--all the benevolence we could desire in a judge; because he has shown his disposition to defend us by giving his life, and it can never be alleged by those who are condemned that their judge was a distant, cold, and unfriendly being. Some have supposed that the expression Son of man here means the same as Messiah Dan 7:13,14, and that the meaning is that God hath made him judge because he was the Messiah. Some of the ancient versions and fathers connected this with the following verse, thus: "Marvel not because I am a man, or because this great work is committed to a man apparently in humble life. You shall see greater things than these." Thus the Syriac version reads it, and Chrysostom, Theophylact, and some others among the fathers.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

Our Saviour, finding the Jews amazed and astonished at his declaring his sovereign and supreme authority and power to quicken and raise whom he pleased from the dead, doth in these verses assure them that there should be a general resurrection, and an universal day of judgment both of the righteous and the wicked, and a future distribution of rewards and punishments in another life, according to men's actions here in this life. All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

Here observe, 1. The certainty and universality of the resurrection of the dead declared: The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall come forth.

Observe, 2. The powerful and efficacious means, by which this great and sudden change shall be effected and accomplished in the morning of the resurrection; namely, the omnipotent voice of Christ: All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

3. Here are the different ends of the resurrection declared, according to the difference of persons which shall then be raised, good and bad; Those that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.

Learn, 1. That there shall certainly be a resurrection of the body.

2. That all in the graves shall be raised, though not all alike: the wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ, as their judge; the righteous shall be raised by virtue of their union with Christ, as their head.

3. According as men live in this world, and go out of it, so will they be found at the resurrection, without any change of their estate; there will be then only two sorts of persons, good and bad. All that have done good, how small soever the degree of their goodness hath been, shall be rewarded: and all that have done evil, shall be everlastingly punished; for all persons shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable in the other world, accordingly as

they manage their deportment and behaviour in this life; They that have done good, shall go, &c.

Resurrection of life. Religion is often called life, and everlasting life. Jn 5:24. In the resurrection the righteous will be raised up to the full enjoyment and perpetual security of that life. It is also called the resurrection of life, because there shall be no more death, Rev 21:4. The enjoyment of God himself and of his works; of the society of the angels and of the redeemed; freedom from sickness, and sin, and dying, will constitute the life of the just in the resurrection. The resurrection is also called the resurrection of the just (Lk 14:14), and the first resurrection, Rev 20:5,6.

The resurrection of damnation. The word damnation means the sentence passed on one by a judge--judgment or condemnation. The word, as we use it, applies only to the judgment pronounced by God on the wicked; but this is not its meaning always in the Bible. Here it has, however, that meaning. Those who have done evil will be raised up to be condemned or damned. This will be the object in raising them up--this the sole design. It is elsewhere said that they shall then be condemned to everlasting punishment (Mt 25:46), and that they shall be punished with everlasting destruction (2Thes 1:8,9); and it is said of the unjust that they are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished, 2Pet 2:9. That this refers to the future judgment--to the resurrection then, and not to anything that takes place in this life-- is clear from the following considerations:

1st. Jesus had just spoken of what would be done in this life--of the power of the gospel, Jn 5:25. He adds here that something still more wonderful--something beyond this--would take place. All that are in the graves shall hear his voice.

2nd. He speaks of those who are in their graves, evidently referring to the dead. Sinners are sometimes said to be dead in sin. This is applied in the Scriptures only to those who are deceased.

3rd. The language used here of the righteous cannot be applied to anything in this life. When God converts men, it is not because they have been good.

4th. Nor is the language employed of the evil applicable to anything here. In what condition among men can it be said, with any appearance of sense, that they are brought forth from their graves to the resurrection of damnation? The doctrine of those Universalists who hold that all men will be saved immediately at death, therefore, cannot be true. This passage proves that at the day of judgment the wicked will be condemned. Let it be added that if then condemned they will be lost for ever. Thus (Mt 25:46) it is said to be everlasting punishment; 2Thes 1:8,9, it is called everlasting destruction. There is no account of redemption in hell--no Saviour, no Holy Spirit, no offer of mercy there.

29 and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Witnesses to Jesus

30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

Of mine own self. See Jn 5:19. The Messiah, the Mediator, does nothing without the concurrence and the authority of God. Whatever he does, he does according to the will of God.

As I hear I judge. To hear expresses the condition of one who is commissioned or instructed. Thus (Jn 8:26), "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him;" Jn 8:18, "As the father hath taught me, I speak those things." Jesus here represents himself as commissioned, taught, or sent of God. When he says, "as I hear," he refers to those things which the Father had showed him Jn 5:20--that is, he came to communicate the will of God; to show to man what God wished man to know.

I judge. I determine or decide. This was true respecting the institutions and doctrines of religion, and it will be true respecting the sentence which he will

pass on mankind at the day of judgment. He will decide their destiny according to what the Father will and wishes--that is, according to justice.

Because I seek, &c. This does not imply that his own judgment would be wrong if he sought his own will, but that he had no private ends, no selfish views, no improper bias. He came not to aggrandize himself, or to promote his own views, but he came to do the will of God. Of course his decision would be impartial and unbiased, and there is every security that it will be according to truth. See Lk 22:42 where he gave a memorable instance, in the agony of the garden, of his submission to his Father's will.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

If I bear witness of myself. If I have no other evidence than my own testimony about myself. My witness. My testimony; my evidence, The proof would not be decisive.

Is not true. The word true. here, means worthy of belief, or established by suitable evidence. See Mt 22:16: "We know that thou art true"--that is, worthy of confidence, or that thou hast been truly sent from God, Lk 20:21; Jn 8:13,17. The law did not admit a man to testify in his own case, but required two witnesses, De 17:6. Though what Jesus said true Jn 8:13,17, yet he admitted it was not sufficient testimony alone to claim their belief. They had a right to expect that his statement that he came from God would be confirmed by other evidence. This evidence he gave in the miracles which he wrought as proof that God had sent him.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

He bare witness, &c. This testimony of John ought to have satisfied them. John was an eminent man; many of the Pharisees believed on him; he was candid, unambitious, sincere, and his evidence was impartial. On this Jesus might have rested the proof that he was the Messiah, but he was willing, also, to adduce evidence of a higher order.

34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

I receive not testimony from men. I do not depend for proof of my Messiahship on the testimony of men, nor do I pride myself on the commendations or flattery of men.

But these thing, &c. "This testimony of John I adduce that you might be convinced. It was evidence of your own seeking. It was clear, full, explicit. You sent to make inquiry, and he gave you a candid and satisfactory answer. Had you believed that, you would have believed in the Messiah and been saved."

Men are often dissatisfied with the very evidence of the truth of religion which they sought, and on which they professed themselves willing to rely.

35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

He was. It is probable that John had been cast into prison before this, Hence his public ministry had ceased, and our Saviour says he was such a light.

Light. The word in the original properly means a lamp, and is not the same which in Jn 1:4,5 is translated light. That is a word commonly applied to the sun, the fountain of light; this means a lamp, or a light that is lit up or kindled artificially from oil or tallow. A teacher is often called a light, because he guides or illuminates the minds of others. Rom 2:19. "Thou art confident that thou art a guide of the blind, a light of them that sit in darkness;" Jn 8:12, 12:46, Mt 5:14.

A burning. A lamp lit up that burns with a steady lustre.

Shining. Not dim, not indistinct. The expression means that he was an eminent teacher; that his doctrines were clear, distinct, consistent.

Ye were willing. You willed, or you chose; you went out voluntarily. This shows that some of those whom Jesus was now addressing were among the great multitudes of Pharisees that came unto John in the wilderness, Mt 3:7. As they had at one time admitted John to be a prophet, so Jesus might with great propriety adduce his testimony in his favour.

For a season. In the original, for an hour--denoting only a short time. They did it, as many others do, while he was popular, and it was the fashion to follow him.

To rejoice in his light. To rejoice in his doctrines, and in admitting that he was a distinguished prophet; perhaps, also, to rejoice that he professed to be sent to introduce the Messiah, until they found that he bore testimony to Jesus of Nazareth.

36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

The works. The miracles--healing the sick and raising the dead. Hath given me. Hath committed to me, or appointed me to do. Certain things he intrusted in his hands to accomplish.

To finish. To do or to perform until the task is completed. the word is applied to the termination of anything, as we say a task is ended or a work is completed. So Jesus said, when he expired, It is "finished," Jn 19:30. From this it appears that Jesus came to accomplish a certain work; and hence we see the reason why he so often guarded his life and sought his safety until the task was fully completed. These works or miracles bore witness of him; that is, they showed that he was sent from god, because none but God could perform them, and because God would not give such power to any whose life and doctrines he did not approve. They were more decisive proof than the testimony of John, because,

1st. John worked no miracles Jn 10:41

2nd. It was possible that a man might be deceived or be an imposter. It was not possible for God to deceive.

3rd. The miracles which Jesus wrought were such as no man could work, and no angel. He that could raise the dead must have all power, and he who commissioned Jesus, therefore, must be God

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

The Father himself--hath borne witness of me. This God had done,

1st. By the miracles which Jesus had wrought, and of which he was conversing.

2nd. At the baptism of Jesus, where he said, "This is my beloved Son," Mt 3:17.

3rd. In the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is not easy to say here to which of these he refers. Perhaps he has reference to all.

Ye have neither heard his voice. This difficult passage has been interpreted in various ways. The main design of it seems to be clear--to reprove the Jews for not believing the evidence that he was the Messiah. In doing this he says that they were indisposed to listen to the testimony of God. He affirmed that God had given sufficient evidence of his divine mission, but they had disregarded it. The first thing that he notices is that they had not heard his voice. The word hear, in this place, is to be understood in the sense of obey or listen to. Jn 5:25. The voice of God means his commands or his declarations, however made; and the Saviour said that it had been the characteristic of the Jews that they had not listened to the voice or command of God. As this had been their general characteristic, it was not wonderful that they disregarded now his testimony in regard to the Messiah. The voice of God had been literally heard on the mount. See De 4:12: "Ye heard the voice of the words." At any time. This has been the uniform characteristic of the nation that they have disregarded and perverted the testimony of God, and it was as true of that generation as of their fathers.

Nor seen his shape. No man hath seen God at any time, Jn 1:18. But the word shape, here, does not mean God himself. It refers to the visible manifestation of himself; to the appearance which he assumed. It is applied in the Septuagint to his manifesting himself to Moses, Nu 12:8: "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently;" in Greek, in a form or shape--the word used here. It is applied to the visible symbol of God that appeared in the cloud and that rested on the tabernacle, Nu 9:15,16. It is the same word that is applied to the Holy Spirit appearing in bodily shape like a dove,

Lk 3:22. Jesus does not here deny that God had appeared in this manner, but he says they had not seen--that is, had not paid attention to, or regarded, the appearance of God. He had manifested himself, but they disregarded it, and, in particular, they had disregarded his manifestations in attestation of the Messiah. As the word hear means to obey, to listen to, so the word see means to pay attention to, to regard (2Jn 1:8, 1Jn 3:6), and thus throws light on Jn 14:9: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I am a manifestation of God--God appearing in human flesh, as he appeared formerly in the symbol of the cloud; and he that regards me, or attends to me, regards the Father."

38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

His word abiding in you. His law does not abide in you--that is, you do not regard or obey it. This was the third thing that he charged them with.

1st. They had not obeyed the command of God.

2nd. They had not regarded his manifestations, either in the times of the old dispensation, or now through the Messiah.

3rd. They did not yield to what he had said in the revelation of the Old Testament.

For whom he hath sent. God had foretold that the Messiah would come. He had now given evidence that Jesus was he; but now they rejected him, and this was proof that they did not regard the word of God.

39 Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

The last witness he calls is the Old Testament, which witnessed of him, and to it he appeals (Joh 5:39, &c.): Search the scriptures, ereunate.

(a) This may be read, either,

[1.] "You search the scriptures, and you do well to do so; you read them daily in your synagogues, you have rabbies, and doctors, and scribes, that make it their business to study them, and criticize upon them." The Jews boasted of the flourishing of scripture-learning in the days of Hillel, who

died about twelve years after Christ's birth, and reckoned some of those who were then members of the sanhedrim the beauties of their wisdom and the glories of their law; and Christ owns that they did indeed search the scriptures, but it was in search of their own glory: "You search the scriptures, and therefore, if you were not wilfully blind, you would believe in me."

Note, It is possible for men to be very studious in the letter of the scripture, and yet to be strangers to the power and influence of it. Or,

[2.] As we read it: Search the scriptures; and so, First, It was spoken to them in the nature of an appeal: "You profess to receive and believe the scripture; here I will join issue with you, let this be the judge, provided you will not rest in the letter" (hærere in cortice), "but will search into it."

Note, when appeals are made to the scriptures, they must be searched. Search the whole book of scripture throughout, compare one passage with another, and explain one by another. We must likewise search particular passages to the bottom, and see not what they seem to say prima facie--at the first appearance, but what they say indeed. Secondly, It is spoken to us in the nature of an advice, or a command to all Christians to search the scriptures.

Note, All those who would find Christ must search the scriptures; not only read them, and hear them, but search them, which denotes,

1. Diligence in seeking, labour, and study, and close application of mind.

2. Desire and design of finding. We must aim at some spiritual benefit and advantage in reading and studying the scripture, and often ask, "What am I now searching for?" We must search as for hidden treasures (Pr 2:4), as those that sink for gold or silver, or that dive for pearl, Job 28:1-11. This ennobled the Bereans, Ac 17:11.

(b) Now there are two things which we are here directed to have in our eye, in our searching the scripture: heaven our end, and Christ our way.

[1.] We must search the scriptures for heaven as our great end: For in them you think you have eternal life. The scripture assures us of an eternal state set before us, and offers to us an eternal life in that state: it contains the chart that describes it, the charter that conveys it, the direction in the way that leads to it, and the foundation upon which the hope of it is built; and this is worth searching for where we are sure to find it. But to the Jews Christ saith only, You think you have eternal life in the scriptures, because, though they did retain the belief and hope of eternal life, and grounded their expectations of it upon the scriptures, yet herein they missed it, that they looked for it by the bare reading and studying of the scripture. It was a common but corrupt saying among them, He that has the words of the law has eternal life; they thought they were sure of heaven if they could say by heart, or rather by rote, such and such passages of scripture as they were directed to by the tradition of the elders; as they thought all the vulgar cursed because they did not thus know the law (Joh 7:49), so they concluded all the learned undoubtedly blessed.

[2.] We must search the scriptures for Christ, as the new and living way that leads to this end. These are they, the great and principal witnesses, that testify of me.

Note,

First, The scriptures, even those of the Old Testament, testify of Christ, and by them God bears witness to him. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets testified beforehand of him (1Pe 1:11), the purposes and promises of God concerning him, and the previous notices of him. The Jews knew very well that the Old Testament testified of the Messiah, and were critical in their remarks upon the passages that looked that way; and yet were careless, and wretchedly overseen, in the application of them.

Secondly, Therefore we must search the scriptures, and may hope to find eternal life in that search, because they testify of Christ; for this is life eternal, to know him; see 1Jo 5:11. Christ is the treasure hid in the field of the scriptures, the water in those wells, the milk in those breasts.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

41 I receive not honor from men.

To this testimony he annexes a reproof of their infidelity and wickedness in four instances; particularly,

[1.] Their neglect of him and his doctrine: "You will not come tome, that you might have life, Joh 5:40. You search the scriptures, you believe the prophets, who you cannot but see testify of me; and yet you will not come to me, to whom they direct you." Their estrangement from Christ was the fault not so much of their understandings as of their wills. This is expressed as a complaint; Christ offered life, and it was not accepted.

Note,

First, There is life to be had with Jesus Christ for poor souls; we may have life, the life of pardon and grace, and comfort and glory: life is the perfection of our being, and inclusive of all happiness; and Christ is our life.

Secondly, Those that would have this life must come to Jesus Christ for it; we may have it for the coming for. It supposes an assent of the understanding to the doctrine of Christ and the record given concerning him; it lies in the consent of the will to his government and grace, and it produces an answerable compliance in the affections and actions.

Thirdly, The only reason why sinners die is because they will not come to Christ for life and happiness; it is not because they cannot, but because they will not. They will neither accept the life offered, because spiritual and divine, nor will they agree to the terms on which it is offered, nor apply themselves to the use of the appointed means: they will not be cured, for they will not observe the methods of cure.

Fourthly, The wilfulness and obstinacy of sinners in rejecting the tenders of grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and what he complains of. Those words (Joh 5:41), I receive not honour from men, come in a parenthesis, to obviate an objection against him, as if he sought his own glory, and made himself the head of a party, in obliging all to come to him, and applaud him.

Note,

1. He did not covet nor court the applause of men, did not in the least affect that worldly pomp and splendour in which the carnal Jews expected their Messiah to appear. He charged those whom he cured not to make him known, and withdrew from those that would have made him king.

2. He had not the applause of men. Instead of receiving honour from men, he received a great deal of dishonour and disgrace from men, for he made himself of no reputation.

3. He needed not the applause of men; it was no addition to his glory whom all the angels of God worship, nor was he any otherwise pleased with it than as it was according to his Father's will, and for the happiness of those who, in giving honour to him, received much greater honour from him.

Their want of the love of God (Joh 5:42): "I know you very well, that you have not the love of God in you. Why should I wonder that you do not come to me, when you want even the first principle of natural religion, which is the love of God?"

Note, The reason why people slight Christ is because they do not love God; for, if we did indeed love God, we should love him who is his express image, and hasten to him by whom only we may be restored to the favour of God. He charged them (Joh 5:37) with ignorance of God, and here with want of love to him; therefore men have not the love of God because they desire not the knowledge of him.

Observe,

First, The crime charged upon them: You have not the love of God in you. They pretended a great love to God, and thought they proved it by their zeal for the law, the temple, and the sabbath; and yet they were really without the love of God.

Note, There are many who make a great profession of religion who yet show they want the love of God by their neglect of Christ and their contempt of his commandments; they hate his holiness and undervalue his goodness. It is the love of God in us, that love seated in the heart, a living active principle there, that God will accept; the love shed abroad there, Ro 5:5.

Secondly, The proof of this charge, by the personal knowledge of Christ, who searches the heart (Re 2:23) and knows what is in man: I know you. Christ sees through all our disguises, and can say to each of us, I know thee.

1. Christ knows men better than their neighbours know them. The people thought that the scribes and Pharisees were very devout and good men, but Christ knew that they had not the love of God in them.

2. Christ knows men better than they know themselves. These Jews had a very good opinion of themselves, but Christ knew how corrupt their inside was, notwithstanding the speciousness of their outside; we may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive him.

3. Christ knows men who do not, and will not, know him; he looks on those who industriously look off from him, and calls by their own name, their true name, those who have not known him.

42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

I am come in my Father's name. By the authority of God; or giving proof that I am sent by him. If another shall come in his own name. A false teacher setting up himself, and not even pretending to have a divine commission. The Jews were much accustomed to receive and follow particular teachers. In the time of Christ they were greatly divided between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, two famous teachers. Ye will receive. You will follow, or obey him as a teacher.

Another crime charged upon them is their readiness to entertain false Christs and false prophets, while they obstinately opposed him who was the true Messias (Joh 5:43): I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me

not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. Be astonished, O heavens, at this (Jer 2:12,13); for my people have committed two evils, great evils indeed.

First, They have forsaken the fountain of living waters, for they would not receive Christ, who came in his Father's name, had his commission from his Father, and did all for his glory.

Secondly, They have hewn out broken cisterns, they hearken to every one that will set up in his own name. They forsake their own mercies, which is bad enough; and it is for lying vanities, which is worse.

Observe here,

1. Those are false prophets who come in their own name, who run without being sent, and set up for themselves only.

2. It is just with God to suffer those to be deceived with false prophets who receive not the truth in the love of it. 2Th 2:10,11. The errors of antichrist are the just punishment of those who obey not the doctrine of Christ. They that shut their eyes against the true light are by the judgment of God given up to wander endlessly after false lights, and to be led aside after every ignis fatuus.

3. It is the gross folly of many that, while they nauseate ancient truths, they are fond of upstart errors; they loathe manna, and at the same time feed upon ashes. After the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel, they were continually haunted with spectres, with false Christs and false prophets (Mt 24:24), and their proneness to follow such occasioned those distractions and seditions that hastened their ruin.

44 How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?

They are here charged with pride and vain-glory, and unbelief, the effect of them, Joh 5:44. Having sharply reproved their unbelief, like a wise physician, he here searches into the cause, lays the axe to the root. They

therefore slighted and undervalued Christ because they admired and overvalued themselves. Here is,

First, Their ambition of worldly honour. Christ despised it, Joh 5:41. They set their hearts upon it: You receive honour one of another; that is, "You look for a Messiah in outward pomp, and promise yourselves worldly honour by him." You receive honour:--

1. "You desire to receive it, and aim at this in all you do."

2. "You give honour to others, and applaud them, only that they may return it, and may applaud you." Petimus dabimusque vicissim--We ask and we bestow. It is the proud man's art to throw honour upon others only that it may rebound upon himself.

3. "You are very careful to keep all the honours to yourselves, and confine them to your own party, as if you had the monopoly of that which is honourable."

4. "What respect is shown to you you receive yourselves, and do not transmit to God, as Herod." Idolizing men and their sentiments, and affecting to be idolized by them and their applauses, are pieces of idolatry as directly contrary to Christianity as any other.

Secondly, Their neglect of spiritual honour, called here the honour that comes from God only; this they sought not, nor minded.

Note,

1. True honour is that which comes from God only, that is real and lasting honour; those are honourable indeed whom he takes into covenant and communion with himself.

2. This honour have all the saints. All that believe in Christ, through him receive the honour that comes from God. He is not partial, but will give glory wherever he gives grace.

3. This honour that comes from God we must seek, must aim at it, and act for it, and take up with nothing short of it (Ro 2:29); we must account it our reward, as the Pharisees accounted the praise of men.

4. Those that will not come to Christ, and those that are ambitious of worldly honour, make it appear that they seek not the honour that comes from God, and it is their folly and ruin.

Thirdly, The influence this had upon their infidelity. How can you believe who are thus affected?

Observe here,

1 The difficulty of believing arises from ourselves and our own corruption; we make our work hard to ourselves, and then complain it is impracticable.

2 The ambition and affectation of worldly honour are a great hindrance to faith in Christ. How can they believe who make the praise and applause of men their idol? When the profession and practice of serious godliness are unfashionable, are every where spoken against,--when Christ and his followers are men wondered at, and to be a Christian is to be like a speckled bird (and this is the common case),--how can they believe the summit of whose ambition is to make a fair show in the flesh?

45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

Do not think that I will accuse you. Do not suppose that I intend to follow your example. They had accused Jesus of breaking the law of God, Jn 5:16. He says that he will not imitate their example, though he implies that he might accuse them.

There is one that accuseth you. Moses might be said to accuse or reprove them. He wrote of the Messiah, clearly foretold his coming, and commanded them to hear him. As they did not do it, it might be said that

they had disregarded his command; and as Moses was divinely commissioned and had a right to be obeyed, so his command reproved them: they were disobedient and rebellious.

46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

If ye believe not his writings. If you do not credit what he has written which you profess to believe, it is not to be expected that you will believe my declarations.

And from this we may learn,

1st. That many men who profess to believe the Bible have really no regard for it when it crosses their own views and inclinations.

2nd. It is our duty to study the Bible, that we may be established in the belief that Jesus is the Messiah.

3rd. The prophecies of the Old Testament are conclusive proofs of the truth of the Christian religion.

4th. He that rejects one part of the Bible, will, for the same reason, reject all.

5th. The Saviour acknowledged the truth of the writings of Moses, built his religion upon them, appealed to them to prove that he was the Messiah, and commanded men to search them. We have the testimony of Jesus, therefore, that the Old Testament is a revelation from God. He that rejects his testimony on this subject must reject his authority altogether; and it is vain for any man to profess to believe in the New Testament, or in the Lord Jesus, without also acknowledging the authority of the Old Testament and of Moses.

John-6

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

See notes on Mt 14:13-21

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

16 And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

> See notes on Mt 14:22-31

17 and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum.
And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.
18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.
19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.
20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.
21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

The People Seek Jesus

22 The day following, when the people, which stood on the other side of the sea, saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone;

> The people which stood on the other side of the sea. That is, on the east side, or on the same side with Jesus. The country was called the region beyond or on the other side of the sea, because the writer and the people lived on the west side.

23 (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)
24 when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

Jesus the Bread of Life

25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?
26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

Ye seek me, not because, &c. The miracles which Jesus wrought were proofs that he came from God. To seek him because they had seen them, and were convinced by them that he was the Messiah, would have been proper; but to follow him simply because their wants were supplied was mere selfishness of a gross kind. Yet, alas! many seek religion from no better motive than this. They suppose that it will add to their earthly happiness, or they seek only to escape from suffering or from the convictions of conscience, or they seek for heaven only as a place of enjoyment, and regard religion as valuable only for this. All this is mere selfishness. Religion does not forbid our regarding our own happiness, or seeking it in any proper way; but when this is the only or the prevailing motive, it is evident that we have never yet sought God aright. We are aiming at the loaves and fishes, and not at the honour of God and the good of his kingdom; and if this is the only or the main motive of our entering the church, we cannot be Christians.

27 Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Labour not. This does not mean that we are to make no effort for the supply of our wants (comp. 1Timm 5:1, 2Thes 3:10), but that we are not to manifest anxiety, we are not to make this the main or supreme object of our desire. Mt 6:25.

The meat that perisheth. The food for the supply of your natural wants. It perishes. The strength you derive from it is soon exhausted, and your wasted powers need to be reinvigorated.

That meat which endureth. The supply of your spiritual wants; that which supports, and nourishes, and strengthens the soul; the doctrines of the gospel, that are to a weak and guilty soul what needful food is to the weary and decaying body.

To everlastingly life. The strength derived from the doctrines of the gospel is not exhausted. It endures without wasting away. It nourishes the soul to everlasting life. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint," Isa 40:31.

Him hath God the Father sealed. To seal is to confirm or approve as ours. This is done when we set our seal to a compact, or deed, or testament, by which we ratify it as our act. So God the Father, by the miracles which had been wrought by Jesus, had shown that he had sent him, that he approved his doctrines, and ratified his works. The miracles were to his doctrine what a seal is to a written instrument. Jn 3:33.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

Verses 28 & 29:

What shall we do, that we might work the work's of God? That is, such things as God will approve. This was the earnest inquiry of men who were seeking to be saved. They had crossed the Sea of Tiberias to seek him; they supposed him to be the Messiah, and they sincerely desired to be taught the way of life; yet it is observable that they expected to find that way as other sinners commonly do--by their works. The idea of doing something. to merit salvation is one of the last that the sinner ever surrenders.

Here the Jews, who were strict observers of the ceremonial law of Moses, and rested thereupon for salvation, inquire of our Saviour what they should do that they might please God? Christ directs them to the great duty of believing on himself to own and acknowledge him to be the true Messiah, and as such to rely upon him alone for salvation; This is the work of God, that ye believe, &c.

Learn hence, That for a penitent humble sinner to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a work highly pleasing and acceptable unto God. Christ calls faith the work of God, upon a threefold account; it is the work of his efficiency and operation; it is the work of his commanding; and it is the work of his approbation and acceptation, a work that God is highly pleased with, and greatly delighted in; This is the work of God.

This is the work of God. This is the thing that will be acceptable to God, or which you are to do in order to be saved. Jesus did not tell them they had nothing to do, or that they were to sit down and wait, but that there was a

work to perform, and that was a duty that was imperative. It was to believe on the Messiah. This is the work which sinners are to do; and doing this they will be saved, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom 10:4.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

What sign showest thou? On the word sign compare Is 7:14. What miracle dost thou work to prove that thou art the Messiah? They had just seen the miracle of the loaves in the desert, which was sufficient to show that he was the Messiah, and it would seem from the preceding narrative that those who crossed the lake to see him supposed that he was the Christ. It seems wonderful that they should so soon ask for farther evidence that he was sent from God. As Jesus claimed the right of teaching them, and as it was manifest that he would teach them differently from what they supposed Moses to teach, it was natural to ask him by what authority he claimed the right to be heard.

Did eat manna. This was the name given by the Jews to the food which was furnished to them by God in their journey. It means literally, "What is this?" and was the question which they asked when they first saw it, Ex 16:14,15. It was small like frost, and of the size of coriander-seed, and had a sweetish taste like honey. It fell in great quantities, and was regarded by the Jews as proof of a continued miracle during forty years, and was incontestable evidence of the interposition of God in favour of their fathers. The manna which is sold in the shops of druggists is a different substance from this. It is obtained from the bark of certain trees in Armenia, Georgia, Persia, and Arabia. It is procured, as resin is, by making an incision in the bark, and it flows out or distils from the tree.

Here the Jews tell our Saviour, that, before they will believe in him, they must see some sign from him, to confirm his doctrine, and prove him to be the Messias; they acknowledge Christ had wrought a great miracle in feeding five thousand persons with five barley loaves; but Moses fed their fathers in the wilderness, who were no less than six hundred thousand persons, with excellent manna from heaven, and this for forty years

together; from whence they would seem to conclude, that they had more reason to believe Moses than Christ: not considering that Moses was but an instrument to obtain, by prayer the manna at the hands of God: but Christ was an agent, and that, by a creating power inherent in himself, he multiplied the five loaves to the feeding of five thousand.

Note, here, From the Jews requring a sign before they would believe, that he who publishes a new doctrine to the world, ought to confirm his mission by some miraculous operation.

2. That God honoured moses, his messenger, very much, and Christ his minister much more, in that both of them wrought great and special miracles for the confirmation of their mission.

3. That the Jews not believing Christ to be the true Messias, upon so many attestations, and after his divine mission was confirmed by such miraculous operations, rendered their infidelity inexcusable, and their obstinacy invincible.

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

Moses gave you not that bread from heaven. This might be translated, "Moses gave you not the bread of heaven." The word "that," which makes some difference in the sense, is not necessary to express the meaning of the original. It does not appear that Jesus intended to call in question the fact that their fathers were fed by the instrumentality of Moses, but to state that he did not give them the true bread that was adapted to the wants of the soul. He fed the body, although his food did not keep the body alive (Jn 6:59), but he did not give that which would preserve the soul from death. God gave, in his Son Jesus, the true bread from heaven which was fitted to man, and of far more value than any supply of their temporal wants, He tells them, therefore, that they are not to seek from him any such supply of their temporal wants as they had supposed. A better gift had been furnished in his being given for the life of the world.

My father giveth you. In the gospel; in the gift of his Son.

The true bread. The true or real support which is needed to keep the soul from death. It is not false, deceitful, or perishing. Christ is called bread, because, as bread supports life, so his doctrine supports, preserves, and saves the soul from death. He is the true support, not only in opposition to the mere supply of temporal wants such as Moses furnished, but also in opposition to all false religion which deceives and destroys the soul.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

He here defines the marks of the true bread: (1) It comes from heaven; (2) it bestows life upon the soul and sustains it; (3) it is for the world, not for a single race.

Our Lord does not yet say, I am that bread; else the Jews would not have given him so respectful an answer, John 6:34.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Observe here, 1. How the carnal Jews hearing of the bread which Christ had commended so highly, and conceiving of it carnally, desire they may partake of it constantly; Lord, evermore give us this bread. The commendation of spiritual things may move the affections, and quicken the desires, of natural persons: but if their desires be not spiritual and serious, diligent and laborious, constant and abiding, they are no evidence of the truth of grace.

Observe, 2. Christ discovers another excellent effect of this bread of life, which he had been recommending; that such as feed of it shall never hunger more; that is, inordinately; after the perishing satisfactions of this world; but shall find an all-sufficient fulness in him, and complete refreshment from him, for the preserving and perpetuating of their spiritual life: He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, &c.

Observe, 3. How justly Christ upbraids the Jews for their obstinate infidelity: Ye have seen me, says our Saviour, yet ye believe not. Ye have seen me in the flesh, you have heard my doctrine, you have seen my miracles: I have done amongst you those works which never any man did, to convince you that I am the Messiah, yet you will not own me to be such, nor believe on me; Oh the strength of infidelity to be such, nor believe on me; Oh the strength of infidelity and unbelief! The devil has as great an advantage upon men by making them strong in unbelief, as God hath by making his people strong in faith.

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Our blessed Saviour having lamented the obstinate infidelity of the Jews in the foregoing verse, who, though they had seen him, would not believe on him; he doth in this verse comfort himself with the assured expectation, that there would be a number, which should certainly and infallibly come unto him; All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, &c.

Here observe,

1. An account of the persons that shall come to Christ: All that the Father hath given him. There is a double gift of us to Christ.

a. In God's eternal purpose and counsel.

b. In our effectual vocation and calling, when our hearts are by the Holy Spirit of God persuaded and enabled to accept of Christ, as he is freely tendered to us in the gospel.

2. The gracious entertainment which Christ gives to those that come unto him: He will in no wise cast them out; that is, I will kindly receive, and graciously entertain them.

Learn hence,

a. That both God the Father, and Christ his Son, are unfeignedly willing, and cordially desirous of the salvation of lost sinners. The federal

transaction which was betwixt the Father and the Son from everlasting about the salvation of lost sinners, evidently declares this.

b. That the merciful and compassionate Jesus will in no wise cast out or reject, but kindly entertain and receive, every penitent sinner that doth believingly apply unto him for pardon of sin and eternal life; I will in no wise cast out; that is, I will not cast them out of my pity and compassion, out of my love and affection, out of my prayer and intercession, out of my care and protection; I will not cast them out of my covenant; I will never cast them out of my kingdom: for my nature inclines me, my promise binds me, and my office, as Mediator, engages me, to the contrary.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Jn 6:38

In these words our Saviour gives us the confirmation of the foregoing promise, that he will in no wise cast out those that come unto him, by assuring us, that it was the great end for which he came into the world. His Father sent him to do his will, and not his own: that is, not to do his own will without his Father's, but to do his own will and his Father's. For Christ, as God, had a co-ordinate will with his Father's, and as man, a will subordinate to the will of his Father. Now, it is the will of both Father and Son, that such as believe in him should be preserved from perishing, and be raised up by Christ at the last day.

Learn hence,

1. That the Lord Jesus Christ stands not only inclined by his own mercy and goodness to save repenting and believing sinners, but doth also stand obliged thereunto by virtue of a trust, committed to him from the Father. Therefore Christ mentions the will of him that sent him, as a reason of his fidelity in this matter.

2. That the Father's will and good pleasure is the original source the fountain and first spring, from whence the salvation of believers doth proceed and

flow. It is the Father's will that sent me, that every one that seeth the son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.

3. That such as are given to Christ by the Father, and put as his trust into his keeping, he looks upon them as his charge, and stands engaged for the preservation of them. This is my Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I shall lose nothing. Yet hath the Father so committed the care of believers to his Son, as that he keeps them still in his own hand. My Father which gave them to me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. Joh 10:28,29

4. From those words, I will raise him up at the last day, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly, essentially, and really God. That person who can by his own almighty power raise the dead, must certainly be God. And this power Christ had. He raised others from the dead, and his own dead body from the grave also, by his own power; and therefore Christ says, I am the resurrection and the life; and I will raise him up at the last day. Doubtless he that spake these words and made these promises, knew his own power to perform them; and that power must be omnipotent, and that act of omnipotence doth prove him to be God. It is true, the disciples raised the dead, who yet were no God, by with this difference, they raised the dead by Christ's power; but Christ raised others and himself also by his own power.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven ?

Although Christ had in the foregoing verses plainly asserted himself to be the true bread that came down from heaven, for the benefit of the world; yet the Jews understanding his words carnally, are offended with him, for pretending to come down from heaven, when they knew him to be the son of Joseph and Mary. They understood nothing of his divine nature, nor of his miraculous conception by the over-shadowing of the Holy Ghost, and therefore were highly offended at him.

Thence learn, That ignorance of Christ's divine nature was the ground and occasion of that contempt which was cast upon his person.

Observe farther, The proof which Christ gave of his divine nature, in his knowing the hearts and thoughts of these murmuring Jews; Jesus said, Murmur not among yourselves. Christ knows and observes the most secret murmurings and repinings that are found in the breasts of the children of men: and this his knowledge is an evidence and proof of his divinity, that he is truly and really God.

43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In which words we have something necessarily implied, and something positively expressed. The misery of man in his natural and unsanctified state is here implied; he is far distant from Christ, and unable of himself to come unto him. By nature we are strangers, yea, enemies, unto God; enemies to the holiness of his nature, and to the righteousness of his laws; and as the state of unregeneracy is a state of enmity, so consequently must it be a state of impotency; Without me, therefore says Christ, ye can do nothing, that is, without interest in me, and influences of grace derived from me. Joh 15:5

Again, the truth we have expressed are these:

1. That all those who come unto Christ are drawn unto him.

2. That the drawing of sinful souls unto Jesus Christ is the special and peculiar work of God. This drawing is a powerful act, but not a compulsory act; God doth not draw any against their wills to Christ, but he inclines the wills of sinners to come unto him. He draws by effectual persuasion, and not by violent compulsion.

3. That all those who are drawn to Christ here, shall be raised up gloriously by him hereafter: I will raise him up at the last day. Such as are brought to Christ by the Father, Christ shall never abandon them, till he has raised them up at the last day, and presented them blameless and complete before his Father; where they shall ever be with the Lord.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.
Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the
Father, cometh unto me.

In these words our blessed Saviour confirms his former assertion, concerning his Father's drawing, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, which, speaking of the days of the Messias, foretold, that persons should be taught of God to embrace the Messias; whence Christ inferreth, that every one who is thus taught, shall come upon him, and believe in him.

Learn hence,

1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ in the way of faith,

2. That such shall not miscarry in the way of faith, who are under the special teachings and instructions of God; They shall be all taught of God, and he teacheth to profit, and that not only authoritatively, but efficaciously and effectually. Those whom God undertakes to teach, receive from him both an ear to hear, and an heart to understand. They shall be all taught of God, and they that are taught, have heard and learned of the Father.

46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Not that any man hath seen the Father. Jesus added this, evidently, to guard against mistake. He had said that all who came to him were taught of God. The teacher was commonly seen and heard by the pupil; but, lest it should be supposed that he meant to say that a man to come to him must see and hear God, visibly and audibly, he adds that he did not intend to affirm this. It was still true that no man had seen God at any time. They were not, therefore, to expect to see God, and his words were not to be perverted as if he meant to teach that.

Save he which is of God. Jesus here evidently refers to himself as the Son of God. He had just said that no man had seen the Father. When he affirms that he has seen the Father, it implies that he is more than man. He is the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, Jn 1:18; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb 1:3; God over all, blessed for ever, Rev 9:5. By his being of God is meant that he is the only-begotten Son of God, and sent as the Messiah into the world.

Hath seen. Hath intimately known or perceived him. He knows his nature, character, plans. This is a claim to knowledge superior to what man possesses, and it cannot be understood except by supposing that Jesus is equal with God.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

I am that bread of life. My doctrines and the benefits of my mediation are that real support of spiritual life of which the manna in the wilderness was the faint emblem. See Jn 6:32, 33.

In these verses our blessed Saviour resumes his former doctrine, namely, that he is the object of saving faith, and the bread of life, which he compares with the manna, the bread of Israel. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, which manna was an illustrious type of Christ. Thus both came down from heaven; both were freely given of God without any merit or desert of men; both in a miraculous manner; both at first unknown what they were, and whence they came; both equally belonging to all: both sufficient for all, poor and rich.

The manna, white in colour, so clear is our Lord's innocence; pleasant like honey, so sweet are his benefits: beaten and broken before eaten, Christ on his cross, bleeding and dying; giving only in the wilderness, and ceasing as soon as they came in to the land of promise, as sacraments shall vanish, when

we enjoy the substance, in heaven. But though manna was thus excellent, yet the eaters of it were dead; but such as feed upon Christ, the bread of life, shall live eternally in bliss and glory. I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man may eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.

Here we learn,

1. What a miserable creature man naturally is, in a pining and starved condition, under the want of soul food.

2. That Jesus Christ is the food of souls, which quickens them that are dead, and is unto the needy soul all that it can need; such spiritual food as will prove a remedy and preservative against death, both spiritual and eternal. I am the living bread.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Observe the degrees: the Jews are tried here; the disciples, John 6:60 - 66, the apostles, John 6:67.

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life;

and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

Observe here, How the Jews, understanding Christ after a carnal manner, were offended at what he had said: for they thought it was inhuman to eat man's flesh, and could not understand how the body of Christ could in such a sense be food to all the world.

Hence note, That carnal persons put a carnal sense upon Christ's spiritual words, and so occasion their own stumbling. But yet notwithstanding the Jews stumbling at our Saviour's expression, he doth not alter his words, but presseth more and more the necessity of feeding upon him by faith, in order to eternal life; Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
Learn from hence,

1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the true spiritual food of all believers.

2. That those, and only those, who do by faith feed upon him, shall obtain a life of grace, and glory from him; if we do not by faith feed upon him, we can have no evidence for a life of grace, no title to a life of glory. This place some papists produce to countenance the doctrine of transubstantiation, a bodily eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament. But it is evident that Christ treats not of the sacrament in this chapter, for the sacrament was not now instituted; therefore it is not a sacramental, but a spiritual, feeding upon Christ by faith, that is here meant. For this eating gives life to the eater; all that eat are saved, and all that do not eat are damned; but this is not true of a sacramental eating; besides, this eating which Christ speaks of, he makes absolutely necessary to salvation; but some are saved that never fed upon Christ in the sacrament, as John the Baptist, and the thief on the cross.

Lastly, If it be understood of the sacramental eating and drinking, woe be to the church of Rome, for denying the cup to the laity; because drinking of Christ's blood is here made as necessary, as eating of his flesh, in order to eternal life. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Observe farther, The close and intimate union which is betwixt Christ himself, and those that feed upon him: He that eateth me, dwelleth within me, and I in him. As meat is turned into the eater's substance, so believers and Christ become one; and by feeding on him, that is, by believing in him, there followeth a mutual inhabitation; Christ dwelling in them, and they in him: this is true of a spiritual feeding upon Christ, but not of a sacramental eating. Nay, Christ carries it higher still, and tells us, that as there is a real union

between the Father and him, and as the Father lives who sent him, having an eternal fountain of life in himself: and the Son lives by the Father, having the same life communicated to him with his essence from the Father: in like manner, says Christ, he that eateth me, the same shall live by me. All which is certainly true of our spiritual feeding upon Christ by faith; but cannot be applied to a corporal feeding on him in the sacrament, as the papists would have it.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

The Words of Eternal Life

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?

Many of his disciples. The word disciple means learner. It was applied to the followers of Christ because they were taught by him. It does not imply, of necessity, that those to whom it was given were real Christians, but simply that they were under his teaching, and were professed learners in his school. See Mt 17:16; Mk 2:18, Jn 9:28, Mt 10:24. It is doubtless used in this sense here. It is, however, often applied to those who are real Christians.

This is an hard saying. The word hard here means offensive, disagreeable -- that which they could not bear. Some have understood it to mean "difficult to be understood," but this meaning does not suit the connection. The doctrine which he delivered was opposed to their prejudices; it seemed to be absurd, and they therefore rejected it.

Saying. Rather doctrine or speech--Greek, logos. It does not refer to any particular part of the discourse, but includes the whole.

Who can hear it? That is, who can hear it patiently--who can stay and listen to such doctrine or believe it. The effect of this is stated in Jn 6:66. The doctrines which Jesus taught that were so offensive appear to have been,

1st. That he was superior to Moses.

2nd. That God would save all that he had chosen, and those only.

3rd. That he said he was the bread that came from heaven.

4th. That it was necessary to partake of that; or that it was necessary that an atonement should be made, and that they should be saved by that. These doctrines have always been among the most offensive that men have been called on to believe, and many, rather than trust in them, have chosen to draw back to perdition.

61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you ?

62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

What and if, &c. Jesus does not say that those who were then present would see him ascend, but he implies that he would ascend. They had taken offence because he said he came down from heaven. Instead of explaining that away, he proceeds to state another doctrine quite as offensive to them--that he would reascend to heaven. The apostles only were present at his ascension, Acts 1:9. As Jesus was to ascend to heaven, it was clear that he could not have intended literally that they should eat his flesh.

63 It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

It is the Spirit that quickeneth. These words have been understood in different ways. The word "Spirit," here, evidently does not refer to the Holy Ghost, for he adds, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit." He refers here, probably, to the doctrine which he had been teaching in opposition to their notions and desires. "My doctrine is spiritual; it is fitted to quicken and nourish the soul. It is from heaven. Your doctrine or your views are earthly, and may be called flesh, or fleshly, as pertaining only to the support of the body. You place a great value on the doctrine that Moses fed the body; yet

that did not permanently profit, for your fathers are dead. You seek also food from me, but your views and desires are gross and earthly."

The flesh. Your carnal views and desires, and the literal understanding of my doctrine. By this Jesus shows them that he did not intend that his words should be taken literally. Profiteth nothing. Would not avail to the real wants of man. The bread that Moses gave, the food which you seek, would not be of real value to man's highest wants.

They are spirit. They are spiritual. They are not to be understood literally, as if you were really to eat my flesh, but they are to be understood as denoting the need of that provision for the soul which God has made by my coming into the world. Are life. Are fitted to produce or give life to the soul dead in sins.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Our blessed Saviour having thus cleared his doctrine, that he was the bread of life which came down from heaven, and that he is not to be carnally, but spiritually, fed upon: he plainly tells the Jews, That the true cause of their stumbling at his doctrine, was their ignorance and unbelief; There are some of you that believe not. Upon which plain dealing of our blessed Saviour's, many unsound professors did wholly forsake him, and accompanied no longer with him.

Learn hence,

1. That multitudes, who have long professed Christ and his holy religion, may draw back, and fall from their profession, and finally revolt from him.

2. That it is an evil heart of unbelief, which causes men to depart from Christ, and to make shipwreck of their profession.

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Will ye also go away? Many apostatized, and it was natural now for Jesus to submit the question to the twelve. "Will you, whom I have chosen, on whom I have bestowed the apostleship, and who have seen the evidence of my Messiahship, will you now also leave me?" This was the time to try them; and it is always a time to try real Christians when many professed disciples become cold and turn back; and then we may suppose Jesus addressing us, and saying, Will ye ALSO go away? Observe here, it was submitted to their choice. God compels none to remain with him against their will, and the question in such trying times is submitted to every man whether he will or will not go away.

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Simon Peter answered him. With characteristic ardour and promptness. Peter was probably one of the oldest of the apostles, and it was his character to be first and most ardent in his professions.

To whom shall we go? This implied their firm conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he alone was able to save them. It is one of Peter's noble confessions--the instinctive promptings of a pious heart and of ardent love. There was no one else who could teach them. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes were corrupt, and unable to guide them aright; and, though the doctrines of Jesus were mysterious, yet they were the only doctrines that could instruct and save them.

Thou hast, &c. The meaning of this is, thou teachest the doctrines which lead to eternal life. And from this we may learn,

1st. That we are to expect that some of the doctrines of the Bible will be mysterious.

2nd. That, though they are difficult to be understood, yet we should not therefore reject them.

3rd. That nothing would be gained by rejecting them. The atheist, the infidel--nay, the philosopher, believes, or professes to believe, propositions quite as mysterious as any in the Bible.

4th. That poor, lost, sinful man has nowhere else to go but to Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and if the sinner betakes himself to any other way he will wander and die.

5th. We should, therefore, on no account forsake the teachings of the Son of God. The words that he speaks are spirit and are life.

We are sure, &c. See a similar confession of Peter in Mt 16:16. Peter says we are sure, in the name of the whole of the apostles. Jesus immediately cautions him, as he did on other occasions, not to be too confident, for one of them actually had no such feelings, but was a traitor.

70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

Have not I chosen you twelve? There is much emphasis in these words. Have not I--I, the Saviour, the Messiah, chosen you in mercy and in love, and therefore it will be a greater sin to betray me? Chosen. Chosen to the apostolic office; conferred on you marks of peculiar favour, and treason is therefore the greater sin. You twelve. So small a number. Out of such a multitude as follow for the loaves and fishes, it is to be expected there should be apostates; but when the number is so small, chosen in such a manner, then it becomes every one, however confident he. may be, to be on his guard and examine his heart.

Is a devil. Has the spirit, the envy, the malice, and the treasonable designs of a devil. The word devil here is used in the sense of an enemy, or one hostile to him.

71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

He spake of Judas, &c. There is no evidence that Jesus designated Judas so that the disciples then understood that it was he. It does not appear that the apostles even suspected Judas, as they continued to treat him afterward with the same confidence, for he carried the bag, or the purse containing their little

property (Jn 12:6, 13:29); and at the table, when Jesus said that one of them would betray him, the rest did not suspect Judas until Jesus pointed him out particularly, Jn 13:26. Jesus spoke of one, to put them on their guard, to check their confidence, and to lead them to self-examination. So in every church, or company of professing Christians, we may know that it is probable that there may be some one or more deceived; but we may not know who it may be, and should therefore inquire prayerfully and honestly, "Lord, is it I?"

Should betray. Would betray. If it be asked why Jesus called a man to be an apostle who he knew had no love for him, who would betray him, and who had from the beginning the spirit of a "devil," we may reply,

1st. It was that Judas might be an important witness for the innocence of Jesus, and for the fact that he was not an impostor. Judas was with him more than three years. He was treated with the same confidence as the others, and in some respects even with superior confidence, as he had "the bag" (Jn 12:6), or was the treasurer. He saw the Saviour in public and in private, heard his public discourses and his private conversation, and he would have been just the witness which the high-priests and Pharisees would have desired, if he had known any reason why he should be condemned. Yet he alleged nothing against him. Though he betrayed him, yet he afterward said that he was innocent, and, under the convictions of conscience, committed suicide. If Judas had known anything against the Saviour he would have alleged it. If he had known that he was an impostor, and had alleged it, he would have saved his own life and been rewarded. If Jesus was an impostor, he ought to have made it known, and to have been rewarded for it.

2nd. It may have been, also, with a foresight of the necessity of having such a man among his disciples, in order that his own death might be brought about in the manner in which it was predicted. There were several prophecies which would have been unfulfilled had there been no such man among the apostles.

3rd. It showed the knowledge which the Saviour had of the human heart, that he could thus discern character before it was developed, and was able so distinctly to predict that he would betray him.

4th. We may add, what benevolence did the Saviour evince--what patience and forbearance-that he had with him for more than three years a man who he knew hated him at heart, and who would yet betray him to be put to death on a cross, and that during all that time he treated him with the utmost kindness!

John-7

The Unbelief of Jesus' Brethren

1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

The Jews' feast of tabernacles. Or the feast of tents. This feast was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the month Tisri, answering to the last half of our month September and the first half of October, Nu 29:12, De 16:13-15. It was so called from the tents or tabernacles which on that occasion were erected in and about Jerusalem, and was designed to commemorate their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, Neh 8:16-18. During the continuance of this feast they dwelt in booths or tents, as their fathers did in the wilderness, Lev 23:42,43. The feast was continued eight days, and the eighth or last day was the most distinguished, and was called the great day of the feast, Jn 7:37, Nu 29:35. The Jews on this occasion not only dwelt in booths, but they carried about the branches of palms, willows, and other trees which bore a thick foliage, and also branches of the olive-tree, myrtle, &c., Neh 8:15. Many sacrifices were offered on this occasion (Nu 29:12-39, De 16:14-16), and it was a time of general joy. It is called by Josephus and Philo the greatest feast, and was one of the three feasts which every male among the Jews was obliged to attend.

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

Their ambition and vain-glory in urging him to make a more public appearance than he did: "Depart hence," said they, "and go into Judea (Joh 7:3), where thou wilt make a better figure than thou canst here."

(1.) They give two reasons for this advice:

[1.] That it would be an encouragement to those in and about Jerusalem who had a respect for him; for, expecting his temporal kingdom, the royal seat of which they concluded must be at Jerusalem, they would have had the disciples there particularly countenanced, and thought the time he spent among his Galilean disciples wasted and thrown away, and his miracles turning to no account unless those at Jerusalem saw them. Or, "That thy disciples, all of them in general, who will be gathered at Jerusalem to keep the feast, may see thy works, and not, as here, a few at one time and a few at another."

[2.] That it would be for the advancement of his name and honour: There is no man that does any thing in secret if he himself seeks to be known openly. They took it for granted that Christ sought to make himself known, and therefore thought it absurd for him to conceal his miracles: "If thou do these things, if thou be so well able to gain the applause of the people and the approbation of the rulers by thy miracles, venture abroad, and show thyself to the world. Supported with these credentials, thou canst not fail of acceptance, and therefore it is high time to set up for an interest, and to think of being great."

4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

One would not think there was any harm in this advice, and yet the evangelist noted it is an evidence of their infidelity: For neither did his brethren believe in him (Joh 7:5), if they had, they would not have said this.

Observe,

[1.] It was an honour to be of the kindred of Christ, but no saving honour; they that hear his word and keep it are the kindred he values. Surely grace runs in no blood in the world, when not in that of Christ's family.

[2.] It was a sign that Christ did not aim at any secular interest, for then his kindred would have struck in with him, and he would have secured them first.

[3.] There were those who were akin to Christ according to the flesh who did believe in him (three of the twelve were his brethren), and yet others, as nearly allied to him as they, did not believe in him. Many that have the same external privileges and advantages do not make the same use of them.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

My time, &c. The proper time for my going up to the feast. We know not why it was not yet a proper time for him to go. It might be because if he went then, in their company, while multitudes were going, it would have too much the appearance of parade and ostentation; it might excite too much notice, and be more likely to expose him to the envy and opposition of the rulers.

Your time, &c. It makes no difference to you when you go up. Your going will excite no tumult or opposition; it will not attract attention, and will not endanger your lives. Jesus therefore chose to go up more privately, and to remain until the multitude had gone. They commonly travelled to those feasts in large companies, made up of most of the families in the neighbourhood. Lk 2:44.

Here we have Christ's answer and refusal returned to his brethren's desire: he tells them, That they might go up to the feast of Jerusalem, when they pleased, and as publicly; but it was not fit for him to appear so publicly, because the doctrine which he taught was odious to the pharisees, and the prevailing power at Jerusalem: he therefore resolves to go up privately, that he might not stir up the jealousy of the sanhedrim: but for them, they were out of danger of the world's hatred: for, being the children of it, the world would love its own; but him it hated because he reproved its sins.

Where we may remark, That though our Lord Jesus Christ was most freely willing, and ready, to lay down his life for sinners, when the time was come that God the Father called for it; yet he would not expose his life to hazard and danger unseasonalby. Teaching us by his example, as not to decline sufferings when God calls us to them: so not to tempt God by running into them, when we may inoffensively avoid them. Your time is always ready, mine is not yet come.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

> The world cannot hate you. You profess no principles in opposition to the world. You do not excite its envy, or rouse against you the civil rulers. As you possess the same spirit and principles with the men of the world, they cannot be expected to hate you.
>
> I testify of it. I bear witness against it. This was the main cause of the opposition which was made to him. He proclaimed that men were depraved, and the result was that they hated him. We may expect that all who preach faith- fully against the wickedness of men will excite opposition. Yet this is not to deter us from doing our duty, and, after the example of Jesus, from proclaiming to men their sins, whatever may be the result.

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.

> I go not up yet. Jesus remained until about the middle of the feast, Jn 7:14. That is, he remained about four days after his brethren had departed, or until the mass of the people had gone up, so that his going might excite no attention, and that it might not be said he chose such a time to excite a tumult. We have here a signal instance of our Lord's prudence and opposition to parade. Though it would have been lawful for him to go up at that time, and though it would have been a favourable period to make himself known, yet he chose to forego these advantages rather than to afford an occasion of envy and jealousy to the rulers, or to appear even to excite a tumult among the people.

9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

> How our blessed Saviour, who came to fulfil the law, goes to Jerusalem at the Jewish feast, according to the command of God, Three times a year shall all thy males appear before me. Exod 23:17 Christ being made under the law, sheweth a punctual obedience to the law, and fulfilled it in his own person.

11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.

The people differed much in their sentiments concerning him (Joh 7:12): There was much murmuring, or muttering rather, among the people concerning him. The enmity of the rulers against Christ, and their enquiries after him, caused him to be so much the more talked of and observed among the people. This ground the gospel of Christ has got by the opposition made to it, that it has been the more enquired into, and, by being every where spoken against, it has come to be every where spoken of, and by this means has been spread the further, and the merits of his cause have been the more searched into. This murmuring was not against Christ, but concerning him; some murmured at the rulers, because they did not countenance and encourage him: others murmured at them, because they did not silence and restrain him. Some murmured that he had so great an interest in Galilee; others, that he had so little interest in Jerusalem. Note, Christ and his religion have been, and will be, the subject of much controversy and debate, Lu 12:51,52. If all would agree to entertain Christ as they ought, there would be perfect peace; but, when some receive the light and others resolve against it, there will be murmuring. The bones in the valley, while they were dead and dry, lay quiet; but when it was said unto them, Live, there was a noise and a shaking, Eze 37:7. But the noise and rencounter of liberty and business are preferable, surely, to the silence and agreement of a prison. Now what were the sentiments of the people concerning him?

[1.] Some said, he is a good man. This was a truth, but it was far short of being the whole truth. He was not only a good man, but more than a man, he was the Son of God. Many who have no ill thoughts of Christ have yet low thoughts of him, and scarcely honour him, even when they speak well of him, because they do not say enough; yet indeed it was his honour, and the reproach of those who persecuted him, that even those who would not believe him to be the Messiah could not but own he was a good man.

[2.] Others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people; if this had been true, he had been a very bad man. The doctrine he preached was sound, and could not be contested; his miracles were real, and could not be disproved; his conversation was manifestly holy and good; and yet it must be taken for

granted, notwithstanding, that there was some undiscovered cheat at the bottom, because it was the interest of the chief priests to oppose him and run him down. Such murmuring as there was among the Jews concerning Christ there is still among us: the Socinians say, He is a good man, and further they say not; the deists will not allow this, but say, He deceived the people. Thus some depreciate him, others abuse him, but great is the truth.

13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

They were frightened by their superiors from speaking much of him (Joh 7:13): No man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews. Either, First, They durst not openly speak well of him. While any one was at liberty to censure and reproach him, none durst vindicate him. Or, Secondly, They durst not speak at all of him openly. Because nothing could justly be said against him, they would not suffer any thing to be said of him. It was a crime to name him. Thus many have aimed to suppress truth, under colour of silencing disputes about it, and would have all talk of religion hushed, in hopes thereby to bury in oblivion religion itself.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

Christ's public preaching in the temple (Joh 7:14): He went up into the temple, and taught, according to his custom when he was at Jerusalem. His business was to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and he did it in every place of concourse. His sermon is not recorded, because, probably, it was to the same purport with the sermons he had preached in Galilee, which were recorded by the other evangelists. For the gospel is the same to the plain and to the polite. But that which is observable here is that it was about the midst of the feast; the fourth or fifth day of the eight.

But why did he appear thus publicly now? Surely it was to shame his persecutors, the chief priests and elders. (1.) By showing that, though they were very bitter against him, yet he did not fear them, nor their power. See Isa 50:7,8. (2.) By taking their work out of their hands. Their office was to teach the people in the temple, and particularly at the feast of tabernacles, Ne 8:17,18. But they either did not teach them at all or taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and therefore he goes up to the temple and teaches the people. When the shepherds of Israel made a prey of the flock it was time for the chief Shepherd to appear, as was promised. Eze 34:22,23,Mal 3:1.

15 And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?

Knoweth this man letters. The Jewish letters or science consisted in the knowledge of their Scriptures and traditions. Jesus exhibited in his discourses such a profound acquaintance with the Old Testament as to excite their amazement and admiration.

Having never learned. The Jews taught their law and tradition in celebrated schools. As Jesus had not been instructed in those schools, they were amazed at his learning. What early human teaching the Saviour had we have no means of ascertaining, farther than that it was customary for the Jews to teach their children to read the Scriptures. 2Ti 3:15: "From a child thou (Timothy) hast known the holy scriptures."

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

My doctrine. My teaching, or what I teach. This is the proper meaning of the word doctrine. It is what is taught us, and, as applied to religion, it is what is taught us by God in the holy Scriptures.

Is not mine. It is not originated by me. Though I have not learned in your schools, yet you are not to infer that the doctrine which I teach is devised or invented by me. I teach nothing that is contrary to the will of God, and which he has not ap- pointed me to teach.

His that sent me. God's. It is such as he approves, and such as he has commissioned me to teach. The doctrine is divine in its origin and in its nature.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

That the most competent judges of the truth and divine authority of Christ's doctrine are those that with a sincere and upright heart desire and endeavour to do the will of God (Joh 7:17): If any man be willing to do the will of God, have his will melted into the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself. Observe here, First, What the question is, concerning the doctrine of Christ, whether it be of God or no; whether the gospel be a divine revelation or an imposture. Christ himself was willing to have his doctrine enquired into, whether it were of God or no, much

more should his ministers; and we are concerned to examine what grounds we go upon, for, if we be deceived, we are miserably deceived. Secondly, Who are likely to succeed in this search: those that do the will of God, at least are desirous to do it.

Now see,

1. Who they are that will do the will of God. They are such as are impartial in their enquiries concerning the will of God, and are not biassed by any lust or interest, and such as are resolved by the grace of God, when they find out what the will of God is, to conform to it. They are such as have an honest principle of regard to God, and are truly desirous to glorify and please him.

2. Whence it is that such a one shall know of the truth of Christ's doctrine.

(a) Christ has promised to give knowledge to such; he hath said, He shall know, and he can give an understanding. Those who improve the light they have, and carefully live up to it, shall be secured by divine grace from destructive mistakes.

(b) They are disposed and prepared to receive that knowledge. He that is inclined to submit to the rules of the divine law is disposed to admit the rays of divine light. To him that has shall be given; those have a good understanding that do his commandments, Ps 111:10. Those who resemble God are most likely to understand him.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

That hereby it appeared that Christ, as a teacher, did not speak of himself, because he did not seek himself, Joh 7:18.

First, See here the character of a deceiver: he seeketh his own glory, which is a sign that he speaks of himself, as the false Christs and false prophets did. Here is the description of the cheat: they speak of themselves, and have no commission nor instructions from God; no warrant but their own will, no inspiration but their own imagination, their own policy and artifice.

Ambassadors speak not of themselves; those ministers disclaim that character who glory in this that they speak of themselves. But see the discovery of the cheat; by this their pretensions are disproved, they consult purely their own glory; self-seekers are self-speakers. Those who speak from God will speak for God, and for his glory; those who aim at their own preferment and interest make it to appear that they had no commission from God.

Secondly, See the contrary character Christ gives of himself and his doctrine: He that seeks his glory that sent him, as I do, makes it to appear that he is true.

1. He was sent of God. Those teachers, and those only, who are sent of God, are to be received and entertained by us. Those who bring a divine message must prove a divine mission, either by special revelation or by regular institution.

2. He sought the glory of God. It was both the tendency of his doctrine and the tenour of his whole conversation to glorify God.

3. This was a proof that he was true, and there was no unrighteousness in him. False teachers are most unrighteous; they are unjust to God whose name they abuse, and unjust to the souls of men whom they impose upon. There cannot be a greater piece of unrighteousness than this. But Christ made it appear that he was true, that he was really what he said he was, that there was no unrighteousness in him, no falsehood in his doctrine, no fallacy nor fraud in his dealings with us.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law ? Why go ye about to kill me?

He argues against them by way of recrimination, convicting them of far worse practices, Joh 7:19. How could they for shame censure him for a breach of the law of Moses, when they themselves were such notorious breakers of it? Did not Moses give you the law? And it was their privilege that they had the law, no nation had such a law; but it was their wickedness that none of them kept the law, that they rebelled against it, and lived

contrary to it. Many that have the law given them, when they have it do not keep it. Their neglect of the law was universal: None of you keepeth it: neither those of them that were in posts of honour, who should have been most knowing, nor those who were in posts of subjection, who should have been most obedient. They boasted of the law, and pretended a zeal for it, and were enraged at Christ for seeming to transgress it, and yet none of them kept it; like those who say that they are for the church, and yet never go to church. It was an aggravation of their wickedness, in persecuting Christ for breaking the law, that they themselves did not keep it: "None of you keepeth the law, why then go ye about to kill me for not keeping it?"

Note, Those are commonly most censorious of others who are most faulty themselves. Thus hypocrites, who are forward to pull a mote out of their brother's eye, are not aware of a beam in their own. Why go ye about to kill me? Some take this as the evidence of their not keeping the law: "You keep not the law; if you did, you would understand yourselves better than to go about to kill me for doing a good work." Those that support themselves and their interest by persecution and violence, whatever they pretend (though they may call themselves custodes utriusque tabulæ--the guardians of both tables), are not keepers of the law of God. Chemnitius understands this as a reason why it was time to supersede the law of Moses by the gospel, because the law was found insufficient to restrain sin: "Moses gave you the law, but you do not keep it, nor are kept by it from the greatest wickedness; there is therefore need of a clearer light and better law to be brought in; why then do you aim to kill me for introducing it?"

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

Here the people rudely interrupted him in his discourse, and contradicted what he said (Joh 7:20): Thou has a devil; who goes about to kill thee?

This intimates,

[1.] The good opinion they had of their rulers, who, they think, would never attempt so atrocious a thing as to kill him; no, such a veneration they had for their elders and chief priests that they would swear for them they would do no harm to an innocent man. Probably the rulers had their little emissaries

among the people who suggested this to them; many deny that wickedness which at the same time they are contriving.

[2.] The ill opinion they had of our Lord Jesus: "Thou hast a devil, thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and art a bad man for saying so;" so some: or rather, "Thou art melancholy, and art a weak man; thou frightenest thyself with causeless fears, as hypochondriacal people are apt to do." Not only open frenzies, but silent melancholies, were then commonly imputed to the power of Satan. "Thou art crazed, has a distempered brain." Let us not think it strange if the best of men are put under the worst of characters. To this vile calumny our Saviour returns no direct answer, but seems as if he took no notice of it.

Note, Those who would be like Christ must put up with affronts, and pass by the indignities and injuries done them; must not regard them, much less resent them, and least of all revenge them. I, as a deaf man, heard not. When Christ was reviled, he reviled not again, He argues by way of appeal and vindication.

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

[1.] He appeals to their own sentiments of this miracle: "I have done one work, and you all marvel, Joh 7:21. You cannot choose but marvel at it as truly great, and altogether supernatural; you must all own it to be marvellous." Or, "Though I have done but one work that you have any colour to find fault with, yet you marvel, you are offended and displeased as if I had been guilty of some heinous or enormous crime."

[2.] He appeals to their own practice in other instances: "I have done one work on the sabbath, and it was done easily, with a word's speaking, and you all marvel, you make a mighty strange thing of it, that a religious man should dare do such a thing, whereas you yourselves many a time do that which is a much more servile work on the sabbath day, in the case of circumcision; if it be lawful for you, nay, and your duty, to circumcise a child on the sabbath day, when it happens to be the eighth day, as no doubt

it is, much more was it lawful and good for me to heal a diseased man on that day." Observe,

First, The rise and origin of circumcision: Moses gave you circumcision, gave you the law concerning it.

Here,

1. Circumcision is said to be given, and (Joh 7:23) they are said to receive it; it was not imposed upon them as a yoke, but conferred upon them as a favour. Note, The ordinances of God, and particularly those which are seals of the covenant, are gifts given to men, and are to be received as such.

2. Moses is said to give it, because it was a part of that law which was given by Moses; yet, as Christ said of the manna (Joh 6:32), Moses did not give it them, but God; nay, and it was not of Moses first, but of the fathers, Joh 7:22. Though it was incorporated into the Mosaic institution, yet it was ordained long before, for it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and therefore commenced with the promise four hundred and thirty years before, Ga 3:17. The church membership of believers and their seed was not of Moses or his law, and therefore did not fall with it; but was of the fathers, belonged to the patriarchal church, and was part of that blessing of Abraham which was to come upon the Gentiles, Ga 3:14.

Secondly, The respect paid to the law of circumcision above that of the sabbath, in the constant practice of the Jewish church. The Jewish casuists frequently take notice of it, Circumcisio et ejus sanatio pellit sabbbatum--Circumcision and its cure drive away the sabbath; so that if a child was born one sabbath day it was without fail circumcised the next. If then, when the sabbath rest was more strictly insisted on, yet those works were allowed which were in ordine ad spiritualia--for the keeping up of religion, much more are they allowed now under the gospel, when the stress is laid more upon the sabbath work.

Thirdly, The inference Christ draws hence in justification of himself, and of what he had done (Joh 7:23): A man-child on the sabbath day receives circumcision, that the law of circumcision might not be broken; or, as the margin reads it, without breaking the law, namely, of the sabbath. Divine commands must be construed so as to agree with each other. "Now, if this be allowed by yourselves, how unreasonable are you, who are angry with me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day!" emoi cholate. The word is used only here, from choge--fel, gall. They were angry at him with the greatest indignation; it was a spiteful anger, anger with gall in it. Note, It is very absurd and unreasonable for us to condemn others for that in which we justify ourselves. Observe the comparison Christ here makes between their circumcising a child and his healing a man on the sabbath day.

1. Circumcision was but a ceremonial institution; it was of the fathers indeed, but not from the beginning; but what Christ did was a good work by the law of nature, a more excellent law than that which made circumcision a good work.

2. Circumcision was a bloody ordinance, and made sore; but what Christ did was healing, and made whole. The law works pain, and, if that work may be done on the sabbath day, much more a gospel work, which produces peace.

3. Especially considering that whereas, when they had circumcised a child, their care was only to heal up that part which was circumcised, which might be done and yet the child remain under other illnesses, Christ had made this man every whit whole, holon anthropon hygie--I have made the whole man healthful and sound. The whole body was healed, for the disease affected the whole body; and it was a perfect cure, such as left no relics of the disease behind; nay, Christ not only healed his body, but his soul too, by that admonition, Go, and sin no more, and so indeed made the whole man sound, for the soul is the man. Circumcision indeed was intended for the good of the soul, and to make the whole man as it should be; but they had perverted it, and turned it into a mere carnal ordinance; but Christ accompanied his

outward cures with inward grace, and so made them sacramental, and healed the whole man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

He concludes this argument with that rule (Joh 7:24): Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. This may be applied,

either,

First, In particular, to this work which they quarrelled with as a violation of the law. Be not partial in your judgment; judge not, kat opsin--with respect of persons; knowing faces, as the Hebrew phrase is, De 1:17. It is contrary to the law of justice, as well as charity, to censure those who differ in opinion from us as transgressors, in taking that liberty which yet in those of our own party, and way, and opinion, we allow of; as it is also to commend that in some as necessary strictness and severity which in others we condemn as imposition and persecution.

Or,

Secondly, In general, to Christ's person and preaching, which they were offended at and prejudiced against. Those things that are false, and designed to impose upon men, commonly appear best when they are judged of according to the outward appearance, they appear most plausible prima facie--at the first glance. It was this that gained the Pharisees such an interest and reputation, that they appeared right unto men (Mt 23:27,28), and men judged of them by that appearance, and so were sadly mistaken in them. "But," saith Christ, "be not too confident that all are real saints who are seeming ones." With reference to himself, his outward appearance was far short of his real dignity and excellency, for he took upon him the form of a servant (Php 2:7), was in the likeness of sinful flesh (Ro 8:3), had no form nor comeliness, Isa 53:2. So that those who undertook to judge whether he was the Son of God or no by his outward appearance were not likely to judge righteous judgment.

The Jews expected the outward appearance of the Messiah to be pompous and magnificent, and attended with all the ceremonies of secular grandeur; and, judging of Christ by that rule, their judgment was from first to last a continual mistake, for the kingdom of Christ was not to be of this world, nor to come with observation. If a divine power accompanied him, and God bore him witness, and the scriptures were fulfilled in him, though his appearance was ever so mean, they ought to receive him, and to judge by faith, and not by the sight of the eye. See Isa 11:3,1Sa 16:7.

Christ and his doctrine and doings desire nothing but righteous judgment; if truth and justice may but pass the sentence, Christ and his cause will carry the day. We must not judge concerning any by their outward appearance, not by their titles, the figure they make in the world, and their fluttering show, but by their intrinsic worth, and the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in them.

Is This the Christ?

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

The objection concerning this stated by some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who seem to have been of all others most prejudiced against him, Joh 7:25. One would think that those who lived at the fountain-head of knowledge and religion should have been most ready to receive the Messiah: but it proved quite contrary. Those that have plenty of the means of knowledge and grace, if they are not made better by them, are commonly made worse; and our Lord Jesus has often met with the least welcome from those that one would expect the best from. But it was not without some just cause that it came into a proverb, The nearer the church the further from God.

26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

These people of Jerusalem showed their ill-will to Christ, by their reflecting on the rulers, because they let him alone: Is not this he whom they seek to kill? The multitude of the people that came up out of the country to the feast did not suspect there was any design on foot against him, and therefore they said, Who goes about to kill thee? Joh 7:20. But those of Jerusalem knew

the plot, and irritated their rulers to put it into execution: "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? Why do they not do it then? Who hinders them? They say that they have a mind to get him out of the way, and yet, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" Joh 7:26. Here they slyly and maliciously insinuate two things, to exasperate the rulers against Christ, when indeed they needed to spur.

1. That by conniving at his preaching they brought their authority into contempt. "Must a man that is condemned by the sanhedrim as a deceiver be permitted to speak boldly, without any check or contradiction? This makes their sentence to be but brutem fulmen--a vain menace; if our rulers will suffer themselves to be thus trampled upon, they may thank themselves if none stand in awe of them and their laws." Note, The worst of persecutions have often been carried on under colour of the necessary support of authority and government.

2. That hereby they brought their judgment into suspicion. Do they know that this is the Christ? It is spoken ironically, "How came they to change their mind? What new discovery have they lighted on? They give people occasion to think that they believe him to be the Christ, and it behoves them to act vigorously against him to clear themselves from the suspicion." Thus the rulers, who had made the people enemies to Christ, made them seven times more the children of hell than themselves, Mt 23:15. When religion and the profession of Christ's name are out of fashion, and consequently out of repute, many are strongly tempted to persecute and oppose them, only that they may not be thought to favour them and incline to them. And for this reason apostates, and the degenerate offspring of good parents, have been sometimes worse than others, as it were to wipe off the stain of their profession. It was strange that the rulers, thus irritated, did not seize Christ; but his hour was not yet come; and God can tie men's hands to admiration, though he should not turn their hearts.

27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

These people of Jerusalem showed their ill-will to Christ, by their exception against his being the Christ, in which appeared more malice than matter, Joh 7:27. "If the rulers think him to be the Christ, we neither can

nor will believe him to be so, for we have this argument against it, that we know this man, whence he is; but when Christ comes no man knows whence he is." Here is a fallacy in the argument, for the propositions are not body ad idem--adapted to the same view of the subject.

1. If they speak of his divine nature, it is true that when Christ comes no man knows whence he is, for he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was without descent, and his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, Mic 5:2. But then it is not true that as for this man they knew whence he was, for they knew not his divine nature, nor how the Word was made flesh.

2. If they speak of his human nature, it is true that they knew whence he was, who was his mother, and where he was bred up; but then it is false that ever it was said of the Messiah that none should know whence he was, for it was known before where he should be born, Mt 2:4,5.

Observe,

(a) How they despised him, because they knew whence he was. Familiarity breeds contempt, and we are apt to disdain the use of those whom we know the rise of. Christ's own received him not, because he was their own, for which very reason they should the rather have loved him, and been thankful that their nation and their age were honoured with his appearance.

(b) How they endeavoured unjustly to fasten the ground of their prejudice upon the scriptures, as if they countenanced them, when there was no such thing. Therefore people err concerning Christ, because they know not the scripture.

28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

Christ's answer to this objection, Joh 7:28,29.

First, He spoke freely and boldly, he cried in the temple, as he taught, he spoke this louder than the rest of his discourse,

1. To express his earnestness, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. There may be a vehemency in contending for the truth where yet there is no intemperate heat nor passion. We may instruct gainsayers with warmth, and yet with meekness.

2 The priests and those that were prejudiced against him, did not come near enough to hear his preaching, and therefore he must speak louder than ordinary what he will have them to hear. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear this.

Secondly, His answer to their cavil is,

1. By way of concession, granting that they did or might know his origin as to the flesh: "You both know me, and you know whence I am. You know I am of your own nation, and one of yourselves." It is no disparagement to the doctrine of Christ that there is that in it which is level to the capacities of the meanest, plain truths, discovered even by nature's light, of which we may say, We know whence they are. "You know me, you think you know me; but you are mistaken; you take me to be the carpenter's son, and born at Nazareth, but it is not so."

2. By way of negation, denying that that which they did see in him, and know of him, was all that was to be known; and therefore, if they looked no further, they judged by the outward appearance only. They knew whence he came perhaps, and where he had his birth, but he will tell them what they knew not, from whom he came.

(1.) That he did not come of himself; that he did not run without sending, nor come as a private person, but with a public character.

(2.) That he was sent of his Father; this is twice mentioned: He hath sent me. And again, "He hath sent me, to say what I say, and do what I do." This he was himself well assured of, and therefore knew that his Father would bear him out; and it is well for us that we are assured of it too, that we may with holy confidence go to God by him.

(3.) That he was from his Father, par autou eimi--I am from him; not only sent from him as a servant from his master, but from him by eternal generation, as a son from his father, by essential emanation, as the beams from the sun.

(4.) That the Father who sent him is true; he had promised to give the Messiah, and, though the Jews had forfeited the promise, yet he that made the promise is true, and has performed it. He had promised that the Messiah should see his seed, and be successful in his undertaking; and, though the generality of the Jews reject him and his gospel, yet he is true, and will fulfil the promise in the calling of the Gentiles.

(5.) That these unbelieving Jews did not know the Father: He that sent me, whom you know not. There is much ignorance of God even with many that have a form of knowledge; and the true reason why people reject Christ is because they do not know God; for there is such a harmony of the divine attributes in the work of redemption, and such an admirable agreement between natural and revealed religion, that the right knowledge of the former would not only admit, but introduce, the latter.

(6.) Our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with the Father that sent him: but I know him. He knew him so well that he was not at all in doubt concerning his mission from him, but perfectly assured of it; nor at all in the dark concerning the work he had to do, but perfectly apprized of it, Mt 11:27.

29 But I know him; for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

The provocation which this gave to his enemies, who hated him because he told them the truth, Joh 7:30. They sought therefore to take him, to lay violent hands on him, not only to do him a mischief, but some way or other to be the death of him; but by the restraint of an invisible power it was prevented; nobody touched him, because his hour was not yet come; this was not their reason why they did it not, but God's reason why he hindered them from doing it. Note,

First, The faithful preachers of the truths of God, though they behave themselves with ever so much prudence and meekness, must expect to be hated and persecuted by those who think themselves tormented by their testimony, Re 11:10.

Secondly, God has wicked men in a chain, and, whatever mischief they would do, they can do no more than God will suffer them to do. The malice of persecutors is impotent even when it is most impetuous, and, when Satan fills their hearts, yet God ties their hands.

Thirdly, God's servants are sometimes wonderfully protected by indiscernible unaccountable means. Their enemies do not do the mischief they designed, and yet neither they themselves nor any one else can tell why they do not.

Fourthly, Christ had his hour set, which was to put a period to his day and work on earth; so have all his people and all his ministers, and, till that hour comes, the attempts of their enemies against them are ineffectual, and their day shall be lengthened as long as their Master has any work for them to do; nor can all the powers of hell and earth prevail against them, until they have finished their testimony.

31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

The good effect which Christ's discourse had, notwithstanding this, upon some of his hearers (Joh 7:31): Many of the people believed on him. As he was set for the fall of some, so for the rising again of others. Even where the gospel meets with opposition there may yet be a great deal of good done, 1Th 2:2.

Observe here,

First, Who they were that believed; not a few, but many, more than one would have expected when the stream ran so strongly the other way. But these many were of the people, ek tou ochlou--of the multitude, the crowd, the inferior sort, the mob, the rabble, some would have called them. We

must not measure the prosperity of the gospel by its success among the great ones; nor much ministers say that they labour in vain, though none but the poor, and those of no figure, receive the gospel, 1Co 1:26.

Secondly, What induced them to believe: the miracles which he did, which were not only the accomplishment of the Old-Testament prophecies (Isa 35:5,6), but an argument of a divine power. He that had an ability to do that which none but God can do, to control and overrule the powers of nature, no doubt had authority to enact that which none but God can enact, a law that shall bind conscience, and a covenant that shall give life.

Thirdly, How weak their faith was: they do not positively assert, as the Samaritans did, This is indeed the Christ, but they only argue, When Christ comes will he do more miracles than these? They take it for granted that Christ will come, and, when he comes, will do many miracles. "Is not this he then? In him we see, though not all the worldly pomp we have fancied, yet all the divine power we have believed the Messiah should appear in; and therefore why may not this be he?" They believe it, but have not courage to own it. Note, Even weak faith may be true faith, and so accounted, so accepted, by the Lord Jesus, who despises not the day of small things.

Officers Sent to Arrest Jesus

32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

The design of the Pharisees and chief priests against him, Joh 7:32.

First, The provocation given them was that they had information brought them by their spies, who insinuated themselves into the conversation of the people, and gathered stories to carry to their jealous masters, that the people murmured such things concerning him, that there were many who had a respect and value for him, notwithstanding all they had done to render him odious. Though the people did but whisper these things, and had not courage to speak out, yet the Pharisees were enraged at it. The

equity of that government is justly suspected by others which is so suspicious of itself as to take notice of, or be influenced by, the secret, various, uncertain mutterings of the common people. The Pharisees valued themselves very much upon the respect of the people, and were sensible that if Christ did thus increase they must decrease.

Secondly, The project they laid hereupon was to seize Jesus, and take him into custody: They sent officers to take him, not to take up those who murmured concerning him and frighten them; no, the most effectual way to disperse the flock is to smite the shepherd. The Pharisees seem to have been the ringleaders in this prosecution, but they, as such, had no power, and therefore they god the chief priests, the judges of the ecclesiastical court, to join with them, who were ready enough to do so. The Pharisees were the great pretenders to learning, and the chief priests to sanctify. As the world by wisdom knew not God, but the greatest philosophers were guilty of the greatest blunders in natural religion, so the Jewish church by their wisdom knew not Christ, but their greatest rabbin were the greatest fools concerning him, nay, they were the most inveterate enemies to him. Those wicked rulers had their officers, officers of their court, church-officers, whom they employed to take Christ, and who were ready to go on their errand, though it was an ill errand. If Saul's footmen will not turn and fall upon the priests of the Lord, he has a herdsman that will, 1Sa 22:17,18.

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

The discourse of our Lord Jesus hereupon (Joh 7:33,34): Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me; you shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither you cannot come. These words, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a bright side and a dark side.

First, They have a bright side towards our Lord Jesus himself, and speak abundance of comfort to him and all his faithful followers that are exposed to difficulties and dangers for his sake. Three things Christ here comforted himself with:--

1. That he had but a little time to continue here in this troublesome world. He sees that he is never likely to have a quiet day among them; but the best of it is his warfare will shortly be accomplished, and then he shall be no more in this world, Joh 17:11. Whomsoever we are with in this world, friends or foes, it is but a little while that we shall be with them; and it is a matter of comfort to those who are in the world, but not of it, and therefore are hated by it and sick of it, that they shall not be in it always, they shall not be in it long. We must be awhile with those that are pricking briars and grieving thorns; but thanks be to God, it is but a little while, and we shall be out of their reach. Our days being evil, it is well they are few.

2. That, when he should quit this troublesome world, he should go to him that sent him; I go. Not, "I am driven away by force," but, "I voluntarily go; having finished my embassy, I return to him on whose errand I came. When I have done my work with you, then, and not till then, I go to him that sent me, and will receive me, will prefer me, as ambassadors are preferred when they return." Their rage against him would not only not hinder him from, but would hasten him to the glory and joy that were set before him. Let those who suffer for Christ comfort themselves with this, that they have a God to go to, and are going to him, going apace, to be for ever with him.

3. That, though they persecuted him here, wherever he went, yet none of their persecutions could follow him to heaven: You shall seek me, and shall not find me. It appears, by their enmity to his followers when he was gone, that if they could have reached him they would have persecuted him: "But you cannot enter into that temple as you do into this." Where I am, that is, where I then shall be; but he expressed it thus because, even when he was on earth, by his divine nature and divine affections he was in heaven, Joh 3:13. Or it denotes that he should be so soon there that he was as good as there already. Note, It adds to the happiness of glorified saints that they are out of the reach of the devil and all his wicked instruments.

Secondly, These words have a black and dark side towards those wicked Jews that hated and persecuted Christ. They now longed to be rid of him, Away with him from the earth; but let them know,

1. That according to their choice so shall their doom be. They were industrious to drive him from them, and their sin shall be their punishment; he will not trouble them long, yet a little while and he will depart from them. It is just with God to forsake those that think his presence a burden. They that are weary of Christ need no more to make them miserable than to have their wish.

2. That they would certainly repent their choice when it was too late.

(a) They should in vain seek the presence of the Messiah: "You shall seek me, and shall not find me. You shall expect the Christ to come, but your eyes shall fail with looking for him, and you shall never find him." Those who rejected the true Messiah when he did come were justly abandoned to a miserable and endless expectation of one that should never come. Or, it may refer to the final rejection of sinners from the favours and grace of Christ at the great day: those who now seek Christ shall find him, but the day is coming when those who now refuse him shall seek him, and shall not find him. See Pr 1:28. They will in vain cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Or, perhaps, these words might be fulfilled in the despair of some of the Jews, who possibly might be convinced and not converted, who would wish in vain to see Christ, and to hear him preach again; but the day of grace is over (Lu 17:22); yet this is not all.

(b) They should in vain expect a place in heaven: Where I am, and where all believers shall be with me, thither ye cannot come. Not only because they are excluded by the just and irreversible sentence of the judge, and the sword of the angel at every gate of the new Jerusalem, to keep the way of the tree of life against those who have no right to enter, but because they are disabled by their own iniquity and infidelity: You cannot come, because you will not. Those who hate to be where Christ is, in his word and ordinances on earth, are very unfit to be where he is in his glory in heaven; for indeed heaven would be no heaven to them, such are the antipathies of an unsanctified soul to the felicities of that state.

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles [Greeks], and teach the Gentiles [Greeks]?

36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

Rivers of Living Water

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

That great day. The day of the holy convocation or solemn assembly, Lev 23:36. This seems to have been called the great day,

1st. Because of the solemn assembly, and because it was the closing scene.

2nd. Because, according to their traditions, on the previous days they offered sacrifices for the heathen nations as well as for themselves, but on this day for the Jews only (Lightfoot).

3rd. Because on this day they abstained from all servile labour (Lev 23:39), and regarded it as a holy day.

4th. On this day they finished the reading of the law, which they commenced at the beginning of the feast.

5th. Because on this day probably occurred the ceremony of drawing water from the pool of Siloam. On the last day of the feast it was customary to perform a solemn ceremony in this manner: The priest filled a golden vial with water from the fount of Siloam (Jn 9:7), which was borne with great solemnity, attended with the clangour of trumpets, through the gate of the temple, and being mixed with wine, was poured on the sacrifice on the altar. What was the origin of this custom is unknown. Some suppose, and not improbably, that it arose from an improper understanding of the passage in Isa 12:3: "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is certain that no such ceremony is commanded by Moses. It is supposed to be probable that Jesus stood and cried while they were performing this ceremony, that he might,

1st. illustrate the nature of his doctrine by this; and

2nd. call off their attention from a rite that was uncommanded, and that could not confer eternal life.

If any man thirst. Spiritually. If any man feels his need of salvation. See Jn 4:13,14, Mt 5:6, Rev 22:17. The invitation is full and free to all.

Let him come unto me, &c. Instead of depending on this ceremony of drawing water let him come to me, the Messiah, and he shall find an ever-abundant supply for all the wants of his soul.

38 He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

As the scripture hath said. This is a difficult expression, from the fact that no such expression as follows is to be found literally in the Old Testament. Some have proposed to connect it with what precedes--"He that believeth on me, as the Old Testament has commanded or required"-- but to this there are many objections. The natural and obvious meaning here is, doubtless, the true one; and Jesus probably intended to say, not that there was any particular place in the Old Testament that affirmed this in so many words, but that this was the substance of what the Scriptures taught, or this was the spirit of their declarations. Hence the Syriac translates it in the plural--the Scriptures. Probably there is a reference more particularly to Isa 58:11, than to any other single passage: "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." See also Isa 44:3,4, Joel 3:18.

Out of his belly. Out of his midst, or out of his heart. The word belly is often put for the midst of a thing, the centre, and the heart, Mt 12:40. It means here that from the man shall flow; that is, his piety shall be of such a nature that it will extend its blessings to others. It shall be like a running fountain--perhaps in allusion to statues or ornamented reservoirs in gardens, in which pipes were placed from which water was continually flowing. The Jews used the same figure: "His two reins are like fountains of water, from which the law flows." And again: "When a man turns himself to the Lord, he shall be as a fountain filled with living water, and his streams shall flow to all the nations and tribes of men" (Kuinoel).

Rivers. This word is used to express abundance, or a full supply. It means here that those who are Christians shall diffuse large, and liberal, and constant blessings on their fellow-men; or, as Jesus immediately explains it, that they shall be the instruments by which the Holy Spirit shall be poured down on the world.

Living water. Fountains, ever-flowing streams. That is, the gospel shall be constant and life-giving in its blessings. We learn here, 1st. That it is the nature of Christian piety to be diffusive.

2nd. That no man can believe on Jesus who does not desire that others should also, and who will not seek it.

3rd. That the desire is large and liberal--that the Christian desires the salvation of all the world.

4th. That the faith of the believer is to be connected with the influence of the Holy Spirit, and in that way Christians are to be like rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Of the Spirit. Of the Holy Spirit, that should be sent down to attend their preaching and to convert sinners.

For the Holy Ghost was not yet given. Was not given in such full and large measures as should be after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Certain measures of the influences of the Spirit had been always given in the conversion and sanctification of the ancient saints and prophets; but that abundant and full effusion which the apostles were permitted afterward to behold had not yet been given. See Acts 2:1-12, 10:44,45.

Jesus was not yet glorified. Jesus had not yet ascended to heaven--to the glory and honour that awaited him there. It was a part of the arrangement in the work of redemption that the influences of the Holy Spirit should descend chiefly after the death of Jesus, as that death was the procuring cause of this

great blessing. Hence he said (Jn 16:7), "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." See also Jn 16:8-12, 14:15,16,26. Comp. Eph 4:8-11.

Division among the People

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

In these verses an account is given of the various effects which our Lord's foregoing sermon had upon his hearers hearts: some were so affected with it, that they believed him to be the great prophet promised to Israel, Deut 18:18. Others apprehended him to be the Christ: others contradict both, supposing him to be born not at Bethlehem, but in Galilee. And upon this diversity of opinions, there arose a division amongst them: and some had a mind to have apprehended him, but, by an over-ruling providence, they were restrained from the doing of it at present.

Learn hence, That diversity of opinions in matters of religion, even concerning Christ himself, have been even from the beginning. Some accounted him a prophet, others the Messiah: some thought him neither; but a grand impostor and deceiver. Our dear Lord when here on earth, passed through evil report and good report; let his followers expect and prepare for the same: for innocence itself cannot protect him from slander and false accusation.

42 Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

The Unbelief of Those in Authority

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

Observe here, 1. How God restrained the rage and malice of Christ's enemies, till his hour was come: the officers of the chief priests, who were sent forth with a commission to apprehend him, returned without him: but with this honourable mention of him in their mouths, Never man spake like this man. Such is the power of Christ's doctrine, that even those that come unto it with prejudice and with a persecuting purpose, may be surprized by it, and though not converted, yet bridled and restrained: the preaching of the gospel doth sometimes restrain the violence of the hand, when it works no change in or upon the heart. Thus it was with these poor officers.

Observe, 2. That the Pharisees being more enraged at the reason which the officers gave for neglecting their office, than for the neglect itself, upbraid them, that they should suffer themselves to be so deceived, whereas none of the grandees, or learned rabbies, had owned him: only an accursed crew of ignorant people followed him, and doated on him.

Here note, That when Christ came into the world, the great ones of the world not only refused to believe on him, but boasted of their unbelief, as an argument of their wisdom. Have any of the rulers believed on him? Oh no, they were too wise to believe! Faith is left to fools, and accounted folly by those wise men. Nay, farther, they count the common people cursed, who did believe on Christ. Oh prodigious stupidity! to account them accursed who receive Jesus Christ, the chiefest blessing: great men have not always the wisdom of a man, but more seldom have they the wisdom of a real Christian. Great in honour, and wise in understanding, are a sweet couple, but seldom seen together.

48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him ?

49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

Who it was that appeared against them; it was Nicodemus, he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them, Joh 7:50.

Observe, concerning him,

[1.] That, though he had been with Jesus, and taken him for his teacher, yet he retained his place in the council, and his vote among them. Some impute this to his weakness and cowardice, and think it was his fault that he did not quit his place, but Christ had never said to him, Follow me, else he would have done as others that left all to follow him; therefore it seems rather to have been his wisdom not immediately to throw up his place, because there he might have opportunity of serving Christ and his interest, and stemming the tide of the Jewish rage, which perhaps he did more than we are aware of. He might there be as Hushai among Absalom's counsellors, instrumental to turn their counsels into foolishness. Though we must in no case deny our Master, yet we may wait for an opportunity of confessing him to the best advantage. God has his remnant among all sorts, and many times finds, or puts, or makes, some good in the worst places and societies. There was Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and Nehemiah in Artaxerxes's.

[2.] That though at first he came to Jesus by night, for fear of being known, and still continued in his post; yet, when there was occasion, he boldly appeared in defence of Christ, and opposed the whole council that were set against him. Thus many believers who at first were timorous, and ready to flee at the shaking of a leaf, have at length, by divine grace, grown courageous, and able to laugh at the shaking of a spear. Let none justify the disguising of their faith by the example of Nicodemus, unless, like him, they be ready upon the first occasion openly to appear in the cause of Christ, though they stand alone in it; for so Nicodemus did here, and Joh 19:39.

51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth ?

What he alleged against their proceedings (Joh 7:51): Doth our law judge any man before it hear him (akouse par autou--hear from himself) and know what he doeth? By no means, nor doth the law of any civilized nation allow it. Observe,

[1.] He prudently argues from the principles of their own law, and an incontestable rule of justice, that no man is to be condemned unheard. Had he urged the excellency of Christ's doctrine or the evidence of his miracles,

or repeated to them his divine discourse with him (Joh 3:1-21), it had been but to cast pearls before swine, who would trample them under their feet, and would turn again and rend him; therefore he waives them.

[2.] Whereas they had reproached the people, especially the followers of Christ, as ignorant of the law, he here tacitly retorts the charge upon themselves, and shows how ignorant they were of some of the first principles of the law, so unfit were they to give law to others.

[3.] The law is here said to judge, and hear, and know, when magistrates that govern and are governed by it judge, and hear, and know; for they are the mouth of the law, and whatsoever they bind and loose according to the law is justly said to be bound and loosed by the law.

[4.] It is highly fit that none should come under the sentence of the law, till they have first by a fair trial undergone the scrutiny of it. Judges, when they receive the complaints of the accuser, must always reserve in their minds room for the defence of the accused, for they have two ears, to remind them to hear both sides; this is said to be the manner of the Romans, Ac 25:18. The method of our law is Oyer and Terminer, first to hear and then to determine.

[5.] Persons are to be judged, not by what is said of them, but by what they do. Our law will not ask what men's opinions are of them, or out-cries against them, but, What have they done? What overt-acts can they be convicted of? Sentence must be given, secundum allegata et probata--according to what is alleged and proved. Facts, and not faces, must be known in judgment; and the scale of justice must be used before the sword of justice.

Now we may suppose that the motion Nicodemus made in the house upon this was, That Jesus should be desired to come and give them an account of himself and his doctrine, and that they should favour him with an impartial and unprejudiced hearing; but, though none of them could gainsay his maxim, none of them would second his motion.

52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

What was said to this objection. Here is no direct reply given to it; but, when they could not resist the force of his argument, they fell foul upon him, and what was to seek in reason they made up in railing and reproach.

Note, It is a sign of a bad cause when men cannot bear to hear reason, and take it as an affront to be reminded of its maxims. Whoever are against reason give cause to suspect that reason is against them. See how they taunt him: Art thou also of Galilee? Joh 7:52. Some think he was well enough served for continuing among those whom he knew to be enemies to Christ, and for his speaking no more on the behalf of Christ than what he might have said on behalf of the greatest criminal-that he should not be condemned unheard. Had he said, "As for this Jesus, I have heard him myself, and know he is a teacher come from God, and you in opposing him fight against God," as he ought to have said, he could not have been more abused than he was for this feeble effort of his tenderness for Christ. As to what they said to Nicodemus, we may observe,

(a) How false the grounds of their arguing were, for,

[1.] They suppose that Christ was of Galilee, and this was false, and if they would have been at the pains of an impartial enquiry they would have found it so.

[2.] They suppose that because most of his disciples were Galileans they were all such, whereas he had abundance of disciples in Judea.

[3.] They suppose that out of Galilee no prophet had risen, and for this appeal to Nicodemus's search; yet this was false too: Jonah was of Gath-hepher, Nahum an Elkoshite, both of Galilee. Thus do they make lies their refuge.

(b) How absurd their arguings were upon these grounds, such as were a shame to rulers and Pharisees.

[1.] Is any man of worth and virtue ever the worse for the poverty and obscurity of his country? The Galileans were the seed of Abraham; barbarians and Scythians are the seed of Adam; and have we not all one Father?

[2.] Supposing no prophet had risen out of Galilee, yet it is not impossible that any should arise thence. If Elijah was the first prophet of Gilead (as perhaps he was), and if the Gileadites were called fugitives, must it therefore be questioned whether he was a prophet or no?

The Woman Caught in Adultery

53 And every man went unto his own house.

The hasty adjournment of the court hereupon. They broke up the assembly in confusion, and with precipitation, and every man went to his own house. They met to take counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed, but they imagined a vain think; and not only he that sits in heaven laughed at them, but we may sit on earth and laugh at them too, to see all the policy of the close cabal broken to pieces with one plain honest word. They were not willing to hear Nicodemus, because they could not answer him. As soon as they perceived they had one such among them, they saw it was to no purpose to go on with their design, and therefore put off the debate to a more convenient season, when he was absent. Thus the counsel of the Lord is made to stand, in spite of the devices in the hearts of men.

John-8

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

His retirement in the evening out of the town (Joh 8:1): He went unto the mount of olives; whether to some friend's house, or to some booth pitched there, now at the feast of tabernacles, is not certain; whether he rested there, or, as some think, continued all night in prayer to God, we are not told. But he went out of Jerusalem, perhaps because he had no friend there that had either kindness or courage enough to give him a night's lodging; while his

persecutors had houses of their own to go to (Joh 7:53), he could not so much as borrow a place to lay his head on, but what he must go a mile or two out of town for. He retired (as some think) because he would not expose himself to the peril of a popular tumult in the night. It is prudent to go out of the way of danger whenever we can do it without going out of the way of duty. In the day-time, when he had work to do in the temple, he willingly exposed himself, and was under special protection, Isa 49:2. But in the night, when he had not work to do, he withdrew into the country, and sheltered himself there.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

His return in the morning to the temple, and to his work there, Joh 8:2. Observe,

1. What a diligent preacher Christ was: Early in the morning he came again, and taught. Though he had been teaching the day before, he taught again to-day. Christ was a constant preacher, in season and out of season. Three things were taken notice of here concerning Christ's preaching.

(a) The time: Early in the morning. Though he lodged out of town, and perhaps had spent much of the night in secret prayer, yet he came early. When a day's work is to be done for God and souls it is good to begin betimes, and take the day before us.

(b) The place: In the temple; not so much because it was a consecrated place (for then he would have chosen it at other times) as because it was now a place of concourse; and he would hereby countenance solemn assemblies for religious worship, and encourage people to come up to the temple, for he had not yet left it desolate.

(c) His posture: He sat down, and taught, as one having authority, and as one that intended to abide by it for some time.

2. How diligently his preaching was attended upon: All the people came unto him; and perhaps many of them were the country-people, who were this day to return home from the feast, and were desirous to hear one sermon

more from the mouth of Christ before they returned. They came to him, though he came early. They that seek him early shall find him. Though the rulers were displeased at those that came to hear him, yet they would come; and he taught them, though they were angry at him too. Though there were few or none among them that were persons of any figure, yet Christ bade them welcome, and taught them.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

They set the prisoner to the bar (Joh 8:3): they brought him a woman taken in adultery, perhaps now lately taken, during the time of the feast of tabernacles, when, it may be, their dwelling in booths, and their feasting and joy, might, by wicked minds, which corrupt the best things, be made occasions of sin. Those that were taken in adultery were by the Jewish law to be put to death, which the Roman powers allowed them the execution of, and therefore she was brought before the ecclesiastical court. Observe, She was taken in her adultery. Though adultery is a work of darkness, which the criminals commonly take all the care they can to conceal, yet sometimes it is strangely brought to light. Those that promise themselves secrecy in sin deceive themselves. The scribes and Pharisees bring her to Christ, and set her in the midst of the assembly, as if they would leave her wholly to the judgment of Christ, he having sat down, as a judge upon the bench.

4 they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

Burkitt commentary:

Our Saviour early in the morning entering upon the work of preaching;

Observe, 1. What a mixed auditory he had, of scribes, and Pharisees, and common people. All sorts of persons came to hear him, but not all with the same intentions. The common people came to learn, but the scribes and Pharisees came to cavil and carp; the latter came to tempt and ensnare him, the former to be taught and instructed by him.

It is not our bare attendance upon ordinances, but the purity of our aim, and the sincerity of our intentions, in waiting upon God in them, that is an evidence of our sincerity.

Observe, 2. How the hypocrisy of these Pharisees was gilded over with an appearance of sanctity: as if they were great lovers of chastity, and haters of uncleanness, they bring to Christ a woman taken in adultery, to be censured by him. One that had not known these Pharisees, would have concluded them very holy and honest, very conscionable and conscientious persons; but Christ, who saw into their bosoms, soon found that all this was done only to tempt him. Thus a smooth tongue and a false heart often accompany one another: when we see a glittering appearance, we have reason to suspect the inside.

Observe, 3. The punishment which the Pharisees sought to have inflicted on this adulteress: it is death: Let her be stoned. Sometimes the punishment of adultery was burning, sometimes stoning, always death.

Lord! how ought Christians to blush, who have slight thoughts of the sin of adultery, which both Jews and pagans held ever deadly!

Observe, 4. Their ensnaring question: Moses commanded that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? The Pharisees desire no better advantage against Christ, than a contradiction to Moses their lawgiver: it has been an old strategem to set Moses and Christ at variance; but they are fast friends; they are subordinate one to another, not opposed one against another. Moses brings us to Christ, and Christ to glory; fain would these colleaguing adversasries draw Christ to contradict Moses, that they might take advantage of the contradiction to condemn Christ.

Observe, 5. The wisdom and caution of our Lord's answer: he doth not excuse her crime, but bids her accusers look at home, and examine their own consciences, whether they were not guilty of the like, or as great a sin. He doth not say, "Let her be stoned;" this had been against the course of his mercy: he doth not say, "Let her not be stoned;" this had been against the law of Moses; but he so answers, that both his justice and his mercy are entire; she dismissed, and they ashamed. It is a false zeal that is eagle-eyed abroad, and blind at home. Such as are most wicked themselves, are oft-times most ready and skillful to spy out the faults and failings of others: we

stand too near ourselves to discern our own miscarriages. The eye that sees every thing, sees not itself.

Observe, 6. Though Christ abhorred the sin, yet he does not condemn the sinner. Hath no man condemned thee? neither do I condemn thee, says Christ. This Christ said, not to excuse the woman, or to connive at her offence; but to show that he declined the office of a civil judge, which was to pass sentencce on criminals. He therefore doth not say, No man ought to condemn thee, but Hath no man condemned thee? Christ doth not execute the office of a magistrate in judging her to death; but of a minister in calling her to repentance and reformation.

How ought every one of us to keep within the bounds of our calling, when our Saviour himself will not entrench upon the office and functions of others!

Observe, lastly, our Saviour's cautionary direction to this adulteress: Go, and sin no more.

Where note, Christ doth not say, Go, and commit adultery no more; but, Go, and sin no more. It is not a partial repentance, or a turning away from this or that particular sin, which will denominate us true penitents, or entitle us to the pardoning mercy of God, but a leaving off all sin of what kind soever; therefore says Christ, Go, and sin no more.

5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned:
but what sayest thou ?

Matthew Hennery Bible Commentary (MHC):

(a) They prefer an indictment against her: Master, this woman was taken in adultery, Joh 8:4. Here they call him Master whom but the day before they had called a deceiver, in hopes with their flatteries to have ensnared him, as those, Lu 20:20. But, though men may be imposed upon with compliments, he that searches the heart cannot.

[1.] The crime for which the prisoner stands indicted is no less than adultery, which even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses, was looked upon

as an iniquity to be punished by the judges, Job 31:9-11,Ge 38:24. The Pharisees, by their vigorous prosecution of this offender, seemed to have a great zeal against the sin, when it appeared afterwards that they themselves were not free from it; nay, they were within full of all uncleanness, Mt 23:27,28. Note, It is common for those that are indulgent to their own sin to be severe against the sins of others.

[2.] The proof of the crime was from the notorious evidence of the fact, an incontestable proof; she was taken in the act, so that there was no room left to plead not guilty. Had she not been taken in this act, she might have gone on to another, till her heart had been perfectly hardened; but sometimes it proves a mercy to sinners to have their sin brought to light, that they may do no more presumptuously. Better our sin should shame us than damn us, and be set in order before us for our conviction than for our condemnation.

(b) They produce the statute in this case made and provided, and upon which she was indicted, Joh 8:5. Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned. Moses commanded that they should be put to death (Le 20:10,De 22:22), but not that they should be stoned, unless the adulteress was espoused, not married, or was a priest's daughter, De 22:21. Note, Adultery is an exceedingly sinful sin, for it is the rebellion of a vile lust, not only against the command, but against the covenant, of our God. It is the violation of a divine institution in innocency, by the indulgence of one of the basest lusts of man in his degeneracy.

(c) They pray his judgment in the case: "But what sayest thou, who pretendest to be a teacher come from God to repeal old laws and enact new ones? What hast thou to say in this case?" If they had asked this question in sincerity, with a humble desire to know his mind, it had been very commendable. Those that are entrusted with the administration of justice should look up to Christ for direction; but this they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him, Joh 8:6.

[1.] If he should confirm the sentence of the law, and let it take its course, they would censure him as inconsistent with himself (he having received publicans and harlots) and with the character of the Messiah, who should be meek, and have salvation, and proclaim a year of release; and perhaps they

would accuse him to the Roman governor, for countenancing the Jews in the exercise of a judicial power. But,

[2.] If he should acquit her, and give his opinion that the sentence should not be executed (as they expected he would), they would represent him, First, As an enemy to the law of Moses, and as one that usurped an authority to correct and control it, and would confirm that prejudice against him which his enemies were so industrious to propagate, that he came to destroy the law and the prophets. Secondly, As a friend to sinners, and, consequently, a favourer of sin; if he should seem to connive at such wickedness, and let it go unpunished, they would represent him as countenancing it, and being a patron of offences, if he was a protector of offenders, than which no reflection could be more invidious upon one that professed the strictness, purity, and business of a prophet.

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.
But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground,
as though he heard them not.

He seemed to slight it, and turned a deaf ear to it: He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote; but this is the only mention made in the gospels of Christ's writing. Eusebius indeed speaks of his writing to Abgarus, king of Edessa. Some think they have a liberty of conjecture as to what he wrote here. Grotius says, It was some grave weighty saying, and that it was usual for wise men, when they were very thoughtful concerning any thing, to do so. Jerome and Ambrose suppose he wrote, Let the names of these wicked men be written in the dust. Others this, The earth accuses the earth, but the judgment is mine. Christ by this teaches us to be slow to speak when difficult cases are proposed to us, not quickly to shoot our bolt; and when provocations are given us, or we are bantered, to pause and consider before we reply; think twice before we speak once: The heart of the wise studies to answer. Our translation from some Greek copies, which add, me prospoioumenos (though most copies have it not), give this account of the reason of his writing on the ground, as though he heard them not. He did as it were look another way, to show that he was not willing to take notice of their address, saying, in effect, Who made me a judge or a divider? It is safe in many cases to be deaf to that which it is not safe to answer, Ps 38:13. Christ would not have his ministers to be entangled in secular affairs. Let them rather employ themselves in any lawful

studies, and fill up their time in writing on the ground (which nobody will heed), than busy themselves in that which does not belong to them. But, when Christ seemed as though he heard them not, he made it appear that he not only heard their words, but knew their thoughts.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

The method he took to resolve this case, and so to break this snare.

(I) He seemed to slight it, and turned a deaf ear to it: He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote; but this is the only mention made in the gospels of Christ's writing. Eusebius indeed speaks of his writing to Abgarus, king of Edessa. Some think they have a liberty of conjecture as to what he wrote here. Grotius says, It was some grave weighty saying, and that it was usual for wise men, when they were very thoughtful concerning any thing, to do so. Jerome and Ambrose suppose he wrote, Let the names of these wicked men be written in the dust. Others this, The earth accuses the earth, but the judgment is mine. Christ by this teaches us to be slow to speak when difficult cases are proposed to us, not quickly to shoot our bolt; and when provocations are given us, or we are bantered, to pause and consider before we reply; think twice before we speak once: The heart of the wise studies to answer. Our translation from some Greek copies, which add, me prospoioumenos (though most copies have it not), give this account of the reason of his writing on the ground, as though he heard them not. He did as it were look another way, to show that he was not willing to take notice of their address, saying, in effect, Who made me a judge or a divider? It is safe in many cases to be deaf to that which it is not safe to answer, Ps 38:13. Christ would not have his ministers to be entangled in secular affairs. Let them rather employ themselves in any lawful studies, and fill up their time in writing on the ground (which nobody will heed), than busy themselves in that which does not belong to them. But, when Christ seemed as though he heard them not, he made it appear that he not only heard their words, but knew their thoughts.

(II) When they importunately, or rather impertinently, pressed him for an answer, he turned the conviction of the prisoner upon the prosecutors, Joh 8:7.

[1.] They continued asking him, and his seeming not to take notice of them made them the more vehement; for now they thought sure enough that they had run him aground, and that he could not avoid the imputation of contradicting either the law of Moses, if he should acquit the prisoner, or his own doctrine of mercy and pardon, if he should condemn her; and therefore they pushed on their appeal to him with vigour; whereas they should have construed his disregard of them as a check to their design, and an intimation to them to desist, as they tendered their own reputation.

[2.] At last he put them all to shame and silence with one word: He lifted up himself, awaking as one out of sleep (Ps 78:65), and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

First, Here Christ avoided the snare which they had laid for him, and effectually saved his own reputation. He neither reflected upon the law nor excused the prisoner's guilt, nor did he on the other hand encourage the prosecution or countenance their heat; see the good effect of consideration. When we cannot make our point by steering a direct course, it is good to fetch a compass.

Secondly, In the net which they spread is their own foot taken. They came with design to accuse him, but they were forced to accuse themselves. Christ owns it was fit the prisoner should be prosecuted, but appeals to their consciences whether they were fit to be the prosecutors.

1. He here refers to that rule which the law of Moses prescribed in the execution of criminals, that the hand of the witnesses must be first upon them (De 17:7), as in the stoning of Stephen, Ac 7:58. The scribes and Pharisees were the witnesses against this woman. Now Christ puts it to them whether, according to their own law, they would dare to be the executioners. Durst they take away that life with their hands which they were now taking away with their tongues? would not their own consciences fly in their faces if they did?

2. He builds upon an uncontested maxim in morality, that it is very absurd for men to be zealous in punishing the offences of others, while they are every

whit as guilty themselves, and they are not better than self-condemned who judge others, and yet themselves do the same thing: "If there be any of you who is without sin, without sin of this nature, that has not some time or other been guilty of fornication or adultery, let him cast the first stone at her." Not that magistrates, who are conscious of guilt themselves, should therefore connive at others' guilt. But therefore,

(a.) Whenever we find fault with others, we ought to reflect upon ourselves, and to be more severe against sin in ourselves than in others.

(b.) We ought to be favourable, though not to the sins, yet to the persons, of those that offend, and to restore them with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves and our own corrupt nature. Aut sumus, aut fuimus, vel possumus esse quod hic est--We either are, or have been, or may be, what he is. Let this restrain us from throwing stones at our brethren, and proclaiming their faults. Let him that is without sin begin such discourse as this, and then those that are truly humbled for their own sins will blush at it, and be glad to let it drop.

(c.) Those that are any way obliged to animadvert upon the faults of others are concerned to look well to themselves, and keep themselves pure (Mt 7:5), Qui alterum incusat probri, ipsum se intueri oportet. The snuffers of the tabernacle were of pure gold.

3. Perhaps he refers to the trial of the suspected wife by the jealous husband with the waters of jealousy. The man was to bring her to the priest (Nu 5:15), as the scribes and Pharisees brought this woman to Christ. Now it was a received opinion among the Jews, and confirmed by experience, that if the husband who brought his wife to that trial had himself been at any time guilty of adultery, Aquæ non explorant ejus uxorem--The bitter water had no effect upon the wife. "Come then," saith Christ, "according to your own tradition will I judge you; if you are without sin, stand to the charge, and let the adulteress be executed; but if not, though she be guilty, while you that present her are equally so, according to your own rule she shall be free."

4. In this he attended to the great work which he came into the world about, and that was to bring sinners to repentance; not to destroy, but to save. He aimed to bring, not only the prisoner to repentance, by showing her his mercy,

but the prosecutors too, by showing them their sins. They sought to ensnare him; he sought to convince and convert them. Thus the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

Having given them this startling word, he left them to consider of it, and again stooped down, and wrote on the ground, Joh 8:8. As when they made their address he seemed to slight their question, so now that he had given them an answer he slighted their resentment of it, not caring what they said to it; nay, they needed not to make any reply; the matter was lodged in their own breasts, let them make the best of it there. Or, he would not seem to wait for an answer, lest they should on a sudden justify themselves, and then think themselves bound in honour to persist in it; but gives them time to pause, and to commune with their own hearts. God saith, I hearkened and heard, Jer 8:6. Some Greek copies here read, He wrote on the ground, enos hekastou auton tas hamartias--the sins of every one of them; this he could do, for he sets our iniquities before him; and this he will do, for he will set them in order before us too; he seals up our transgressions, Job 14:17. But he does not write men's sins in the sand; no, they are written as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond (Jer 17:1), never to be forgotten till they are forgiven.

9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

The scribes and Pharisees were so strangely thunderstruck with the words of Christ that they let fall their persecution of Christ, whom they durst no further tempt, and their prosecution of the woman, whom they durst no longer accuse (Joh 8:9): They went out one by one.

First, Perhaps his writing on the ground frightened them, as the hand-writing on the wall frightened Belshazzar. They concluded he was writing bitter things against them, writing their doom. Happy they who have no reason to be afraid of Christ's writing!

Secondly, What he said frightened them by sending them to their own consciences; he had shown them to themselves, and they were afraid if they should stay till he lifted up himself again his next word would show them to the world, and shame them before men, and therefore they thought it best to withdraw. They went out one by one, that they might go out softly, and not

by a noisy flight disturb Christ; they went away by stealth, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle, 2Sa 19:3. The order of their departure is taken notice of, beginning at the eldest, either because they were most guilty, or first aware of the danger they were in of being put to the blush; and if the eldest quit the field, and retreat ingloriously, no marvel if the younger follow them.

Now see here,

1 The force of the word of Christ for the conviction of sinners: They who heard it were convicted by their own consciences. Conscience is God's deputy in the soul, and one word from him will set it on work, Heb 4:12. Those that had been old in adulteries, and long fixed in a proud opinion of themselves, were here, even the oldest of them, startled by the word of Christ; even scribes and Pharisees, who were most conceited of themselves, are by the power of Christ's word made to retire with shame.

2 The folly of sinners under these convictions, which appears in these scribes and Pharisees.

(a) It is folly for those that are under convictions to make it their principal care to avoid shame, as Judah (Ge 38:23), lest we be shamed. Our care should be more to save our souls than to save our credit. Saul evidenced his hypocrisy when he said, I have sinned, yet now honour me, I pray thee. There is no way to get the honour and comfort of penitents, but by taking the shame of penitents.

(b) It is folly for those that are under convictions to contrive how to shift off their convictions, and to get rid of them. The scribes and Pharisees had the wound opened, and now they should have been desirous to have it searched, and then it might have been healed, but this was the thing they dreaded and declined.

(c) It is folly for those that are under convictions to get away from Jesus Christ, as these here did, for he is the only one that can heal the wounds of conscience, and speak peace to us. Those that are convicted by their

consciences will be condemned by their Judge, if they be not justified by their Redeemer; and will they then go from him? To whom will they go?

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee?

When the self-conceited prosecutors quitted the field, and fled for the same, the self-condemned prisoner stood her ground, with a resolution to abide by the judgment of our Lord Jesus: Jesus was left alone from the company of the scribes and Pharisees, free from their molestations, and the woman standing in the midst of the assembly that were attending on Christ's preaching, where they set her, Joh 8:3. She did not seek to make her escape, though she had opportunity for it; but her prosecutors had appealed unto Jesus, and to him she would go, on him she would wait for her doom. Note, Those whose cause is brought before our Lord Jesus will never have occasion to remove it into any other court, for he is the refuge of penitents. The law which accuses us, and calls for judgment against us, is by the gospel of Christ made to withdraw; its demands are answered, and its clamours silenced, by the blood of Jesus. Our cause is lodged in the gospel court; we are left with Jesus alone, it is with him only that we have now to deal, for to him all judgment is committed; let us therefore secure our interest in him, and we are made for ever. Let his gospel rule us, and it will infallibly save us.

Here is the conclusion of the trial, and the issue it was brought to: Jesus lifted up himself, and he saw none but the woman, Joh 8:10,11. Though Christ may seem to take no notice of what is said and done, but leave it to the contending sons of men to deal it out among themselves, yet, when the hour of his judgment is come, he will no longer keep silence. When David had appealed to God, he prayed, Lift up thyself, Ps 7:6,94:2 The woman, it is likely, stood trembling at the bar, as one doubtful of the issue. Christ was without sin, and might cast the first stone; but though none more severe than he against sin, for he is infinitely just and holy, none more compassionate than he to sinners, for he is infinitely gracious and merciful, and this poor malefactor finds him so, now that she stands upon her deliverance. Here is the method of courts of judicature observed.

First, The prosecutors are called: Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? Not but that Christ knew where they were; but he

asked, that he might shame them, who declined his judgment, and encourage her who resolved to abide by it. St. Paul's challenge is like this, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Where are those their accusers? The accuser of the brethren shall be fairly cast out, and all indictments legally and regularly quashed.

Secondly, They do not appear when the question is asked: Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. She speaks respectfully to Christ, calls him Lord, but is silent concerning her prosecutors, says nothing in answer to that question which concerned them, Where are those thine accusers? She does not triumph in their retreat nor insult over them as witnesses against themselves, not against her. If we hope to be forgiven by our Judge, we must forgive our accusers; and if their accusations, how invidious soever, were the happy occasion of awakening our consciences, we may easily forgive them this wrong. But she answered the question which concerned herself, Has no man condemned thee? True penitents find it enough to give an account of themselves to God, and will not undertake to give an account of other people.

Thirdly, The prisoner is therefore discharged: Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more. Consider this,

1. As her discharge from the temporal punishment: "If they do not condemn thee to be stoned to death, neither do I." Not that Christ came to disarm the magistrate of his sword of justice, nor that it is his will that capital punishments should not be inflicted on malefactors; so far from this, the administration of public justice is established by the gospel, and made subservient to Christ's kingdom: By me kings reign. But Christ would not condemn this woman,

(a.) Because it was none of his business; he was no judge nor divider, and therefore would not intermeddle in secular affairs. His kingdom was not of this world. Tractent fabrilia fabri--Let every one act in his own province.

(b.) Because she was prosecuted by those that were more guilty than she and could not for shame insist upon their demand of justice against her. The law appointed the hands of the witnesses to be first upon the criminal, and

afterwards the hands of all the people, so that if they fly off, and do not condemn her, the prosecution drops. The justice of God, in inflicting temporal judgments, sometimes takes notice of a comparative righteousness, and spares those who are otherwise obnoxious when the punishing of them would gratify those that are worse than they, De 32:26,27. But, when Christ dismissed her, it was with this caution, Go, and sin no more. Impunity emboldens malefactors, and therefore those who are guilty, and yet have found means to escape the edge of the law, need to double their watch, lest Satan get advantage; for the fairer the escape was, the fairer the warning was to go and sin no more. Those who help to save the life of a criminal should, as Christ here, help to save the soul with this caution.

2. As her discharge from the eternal punishment. For Christ to say, I do not condemn thee is, in effect, to say, I do forgive thee; and the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins, and could upon good grounds give this absolution; for as he knew the hardness and impenitent hearts of the prosecutors, and therefore said that which would confound them, so he knew the tenderness and sincere repentance of the prisoner, and therefore said that which would comfort her, as he did to that woman who was a sinner, such a sinner as this, who was likewise looked upon with disdain by a Pharisee (Lu 7:48,50): Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace. So here, Neither do I condemn thee. Note,

(a.) Those are truly happy whom Christ doth not condemn, for his discharge is a sufficient answer to all other challenges; they are all coram non judice--before an unauthorized judge.

(b.) Christ will not condemn those who, though they have sinned, will go and sin no more, Ps 85:8,Isa 55:7. He will not take the advantage he has against us for our former rebellions, if we will but lay down our arms and return to our allegiance.

(c.) Christ's favour to us in the remission of the sins that are past should be a prevailing argument with us to go and sin no more, Ro 6:1,2. Will not Christ condemn thee? Go then and sin no more.

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Jesus the Light of the World

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The rest of the chapter is taken up with debates between Christ and contradicting sinners, who cavilled at the most gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. It is not certain whether these disputes were the same day that the adulteress was discharged; it is probable they were, for the evangelist mentions no other day, and takes notice (Joh 8:2) how early Christ began that day's work. Though those Pharisees that accused the woman had absconded, yet there were other Pharisees (Joh 8:13) to confront Christ, who had brass enough in their foreheads to keep them in countenance, though some of their party were put to such a shameful retreat; nay perhaps that made them the more industrious to pick quarrels with him, to retrieve, if possible, the reputation of their baffled party.

A great doctrine laid down, with the application of it.

1 The doctrine is, That Christ is the light of the world (Joh 8:12): Then spoke Jesus again unto them; though he had spoken a great deal to them to little purpose, and what he had said was opposed, yet he spoke again, for he speaketh once, yea, twice. They had turned a deaf ear to what he said, and yet he spoke again to them, saying, I am the light of the world. Note, Jesus Christ is the light of the world. One of the rabbies saith, Light is the name of the Messiah, as it is written, Da 2:22, And light dwelleth with him. God is light, and Christ is the image of the invisible God; God of gods, Light of lights. He was expected to be a light to enlighten the Gentiles (Lu 2:32), and so the light of the world, and not of the Jewish church only. The visible light of the world is the sun, and Christ is the Sun of righteousness. One sun enlightens the whole world, so does one Christ, and there needs no more.

Christ in calling himself the light expresses,

(a) What he is in himself--most excellent and glorious.

(b) What he is to the world--the fountain of light, enlightening every man. What a dungeon would the world be without the sun! So would it be without Christ by whom light came into the world, Joh 3:19.

2 The inference from this doctrine is, He that followeth me, as a traveller follows the light in a dark night, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. If Christ be the light, then,

(a) It is our duty to follow him, to submit ourselves to his guidance, and in every thing take directions from him, in the way that leads to happiness. Many follow false lights--ignes fatui, that lead them to destruction; but Christ is the true light. It is not enough to look at this light, and to gaze upon it, but we must follow it, believe in it, and walk in it, for it is a light to our feet, not our eyes only.

(b) It is the happiness of those who follow Christ that they shall not walk in darkness. They shall not be left destitute of those instructions in the way of truth which are necessary to keep them from destroying error, and those directions in the way of duty which are necessary to keep them from damning sin. They shall have the light of life, that knowledge and enjoyment of God which will be to them the light of spiritual life in this world and of everlasting life in the other world, where there will be no death nor darkness. Follow Christ, and we shall undoubtedly be happy in both worlds. Follow Christ, and we shall follow him to heaven.

13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.

The objection which the Pharisees made against this doctrine, and it was very trifling and frivolous: Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true, Joh 8:13. In this objection they went upon the suspicion which we commonly have of men's self-condemnation, which is concluded to be the native language of self-love, such as we are all ready to condemn in others, but few are willing to own in themselves.

But in this case the objection was very unjust, for,

1. They made that his crime, and a diminution to the credibility of his doctrine, which in the case of one who introduced a divine revelation was necessary and unavoidable. Did not Moses and all the prophets bear witness of themselves when they avouched themselves to be God's messengers? Did not the Pharisees ask John Baptist, What sayest thou of thyself?

2. They overlooked the testimony of all the other witnesses, which corroborated the testimony he bore of himself. Had he only borne record of himself, his testimony had indeed been suspicious, and the belief of it might have been suspended; but his doctrine was attested by more than two or three credible witnesses, enough to establish every word of it.

14 Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

That he was conscious to himself of his own authority, and abundantly satisfied in himself concerning it. He did not speak as one at uncertainty, nor propose a disputable notion, about which he himself hesitated, but declared a decree, and gave such an account of himself as he would abide by: I know whence I came, and whither I go. He was fully apprised of his own undertaking from first to last; knew whose errand he went upon, and what his success would be. He knew what he was before his manifestation to the world, and what he should be after; that he came from the Father, and was going to him (Joh 16:28), came from glory, and was going to glory, (Joh 17:5). This is the satisfaction of all good Christians, that though the world know them not, as it knew him not, yet they know whence their spiritual life comes, and whither it tends, and go upon sure grounds.

15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

That they are very incompetent judges of him, and of his doctrine, and not to be regarded.

(1.) Because they were ignorant, willingly and resolvedly ignorant: You cannot tell whence I came, and whither I go. To what purpose is it to talk with those who know nothing of the matter, nor desire to know? He had told them of his coming from heaven and returning to heaven, but it was foolishness to them, they received it not; it was what the brutish man knows not, Ps 92:6. They took upon them to judge of that which they did not understand, which lay quite out of the road of their acquaintance. Those that

despise Christ's dominions and dignities speak evil of what they know not, Jude 1:8,10.

(2.) Because they were partial (Joh 8:15): You judge after the flesh. When fleshly wisdom gives the rule of judgment, and outward appearances only are given in evidence, and the case decided according to them, then men judge after the flesh; and when the consideration of a secular interest turns the scale in judging of spiritual matters, when we judge in favour of that which pleases the carnal mind, and recommends us to a carnal world, we judge after the flesh; and the judgment cannot be right when the rule is wrong. The Jews judged of Christ and his gospel by outward appearances, and, because he appeared so mean, thought it impossible he should be the light of the world; as if the sun under a cloud were no sun.

(3.) Because they were unjust and unfair towards him, intimated in this: "I judge no man; I neither make nor meddle with your political affairs, nor does my doctrine or practice at all intrench upon, or interfere with, your civil rights or secular powers." He thus judged no man. Now, if he did not war after the flesh, it was very unreasonable for them to judge him after the flesh, and to treat him as an offender against the civil government. Or, "I judge no man," that is, "not now in my first coming, that is deferred till I come again," Joh 3:17. Prima dispensatio Christi medicinalis est, non judicialis--The first coming of Christ was for the purpose of administering, not justice, but medicine.

16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

As a judge, and his own judgment was valid: "If I judge, I who have authority to execute judgments, I to whom all things are delivered, I who am the Son of God, and have the Spirit of God, if I judge, my judgment is true, of incontestable rectitude and uncontrollable authority, Ro 2:2. If I should judge, my judgment must be true, and then you would be condemned; but the judgment-day is not yet come, you are not yet to be condemned, but spared, and therefore now I judge no man;" so Chrysostom. Now that which makes his judgment unexceptionable is,

[1.] His Father's concurrence with him: I am not alone, but I and the Father. He has the Father's concurring counsels to direct; as he was with the Father

before the world in forming the counsels, so the Father was with him in the world in prosecuting and executing those counsels, and never left him inops consilii--without advice, Isa 11:2. All the counsels of peace (and of war too) were between them both, Zec 6:13. He had also the Father's concurring power to authorize and confirm what he did; see Ps 89:21,Isa 42:1. He did not act separately, but in his own name and his Father's, and by the authority aforesaid, Joh 5:17,14:9,10.

[2.] His Father's commission to him: "It is the Father that sent me." Note, God will go along with those that he sends; see Ex 3:10,12: Come, and I will send thee, and certainly I will be with thee. Now, if Christ had a commission from the Father, and the Father's presence with him in all his administrations, no doubt his judgment was true and valid; no exception lay against it, no appeal lay from it.

17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

He quotes a maxim of the Jewish law, Joh 8:17. That the testimony of two men is true. Not as if it were always true in itself, for many a time hand has been joined in hand to bear a false testimony, 1Ki 21:10. But it is allowed as sufficient evidence upon which to ground a verdict (verum dictum), and if nothing appear to the contrary it is taken for granted to be true. Reference is here had to that law (De 17:6), At the mouth of two witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death. And see De 9:15,Nu 35:30. It was in favour of life that in capital cases two witnesses were required, as with us in case of treason. See Heb 6:18.

18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

He applies this to the case in hand (Joh 8:18): I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me. Behold two witnesses! Though in human courts, where two witnesses are required, the criminal or candidate is not admitted to be a witness for himself; yet in a matter purely divine, which can be proved only by a divine testimony, and God himself must be the witness, if the formality of two or three witnesses be insisted on, there can be no other than the eternal Father, the eternal Son of the Father, and the eternal Spirit. Now if the testimony of two distinct persons, that are men, and therefore may deceive or be deceived, is conclusive, much more ought the testimony of the Son of God concerning

himself, backed with the testimony of his Father concerning him, to command assent; see 1Jo 5:7,9-11.

19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

How their tongues were let loose (such was the malice of hell) to cavil at his discourse, Joh 8:19. Though in what he said there appeared nothing of human policy or artifice, but a divine security, yet they set themselves to cross questions with him. None so incurably blind as those that resolve they will not see. Observe,

1. How they evaded the conviction with a cavil: Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? They might easily have understood, by the tenour of this and his other discourses, that when he spoke of his Father he meant no other than God himself; yet they pretend to understand him of a common person, and, since he appeals to his testimony, they bid him call his witness, and challenge him, if he can, to produce him: Where is thy Father? Thus, as Christ said of them (Joh 8:15), they judge after the flesh. Perhaps they hereby intend a reflection upon the meanness and obscurity of his family: Where is thy Father, that he should be fit to give evidence in such a case as this? Thus they turned it off with a taunt, when they could not resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke.

2. How he evaded the cavil with a further conviction; he did not tell them where his Father was, but charged them with wilful ignorance: "You neither know me nor my Father. It is to no purpose to discourse to you about divine things, who talk of them as blind men do of colours. Poor creatures! you know nothing of the matter."

(a.) He charges them with ignorance of God: "You know not my Father." In Judah was God known (Ps 76:1); they had some knowledge of him as the God that made the world, but their eyes were darkened that they could not see the light of his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ. The little children of the Christian church know the Father, know him as a Father (1Jo 2:13); but these rulers of the Jews did not, because they would not so know him.

(b.) He shows them the true cause of their ignorance of God: If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. The reason why men are ignorant of God is because they are unacquainted with Jesus Christ. Did we know Christ,

[1.] In knowing him we should know the Father, of whose person he is the express image, Joh 14:9. Chrysostom proves hence the Godhead of Christ, and his equality with his Father. We cannot say, "He that knows a man knows an angel," or, "He that knows a creature knows the Creator;" but he that knows Christ knows the Father.

[2.] By him we should be instructed in the knowledge of God, and introduced into an acquaintance with him. If we knew Christ better, we should know the Father better; but, where the Christian religion is slighted and opposed, natural religion will soon be lost and laid aside. Deism makes way for atheism. Those become vain in their imaginations concerning God that will not learn of Christ.

20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

See how their hands were tied, though their tongues were thus let loose; such was the power of Heaven to restrain the malice of hell. These words spoke Jesus, these bold words, these words of conviction and reproof, in the treasury, an apartment of the temple, where, to be sure, the chief priests, whose gain was their godliness, were mostly resident, attending the business of the revenue. Christ taught in the temple, sometimes in one part, sometimes in another, as he saw occasion. Now the priests who had so great a concern in the temple, and looked upon it as their demesne, might easily, with the assistance of the janizaries that were at their beck, either have seized him and exposed him to the rage of the mob, and that punishment which they called the beating of the rebels; or, at least, have silenced him, and stopped his mouth there, as Amos, though tolerated in the land of Judah, was forbidden to prophesy in the king's chapel, Am 7:12,13. Yet even in the temple, where they had him in their reach, no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come.

See here,

1 The restraint laid upon his persecutors by an invisible power; none of them durst meddle with him. God can set bounds to the wrath of men, as he does to the waves of the sea. Let us not therefore fear danger in the way of duty; for God hath Satan and all his instruments in a chain.

2 The reason of this restraint: His hour was not yet come. The frequent mention of this intimates how much the time of our departure out of the world depends upon the fixed counsel and decree of God. It will come, it is coming; not yet come, but it is at hand. Our enemies cannot hasten it any sooner, nor our friends delay it any longer, than the time appointed of the Father, which is very comfortable to every good man, who can look up and say with pleasure, My times are in thy hands; and better there than in our own. His hour was not yet come, because his work was not done, nor his testimony finished. To all God's purposes there is a time.

Whither I Go Ye Cannot Come

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

The wrath threatened (Joh 8:21): Jesus said again unto them that which might be likely to do them good. He continued to teach, in kindness to those few who received his doctrine, though there were many that resisted it, which is an example to ministers to go on with their work, notwithstanding opposition, because a remnant shall be saved. Here Christ changes his voice; he had piped to them in the offers of his grace, and they had not danced; now he mourns to them in the denunciations of his wrath, to try if they would lament. He said, I go my way, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Whither I go you cannot come. Every word is terrible, and bespeaks spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all judgments; worse than war, pestilence, and captivity, which the Old-Testament prophets denounced. Four things are here threatened against the Jews.

1. Christ's departure from them: I go my way, that is, "It shall not be long before I go; you need not take so much pains to drive me from you, I shall go of myself." They said to him, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; and he takes them at their word; but woe to those from whom Christ departs. Ichabod, the glory is gone, our defence is departed, when Christ goes. Christ frequently warned them of his departure before he left them: he bade often farewell, as one loth to depart, and willing to be invited, and that would have them stir up themselves to take hold on him.

2. Their enmity to the true Messiah, and their fruitless and infatuated enquiries after another Messiah when he was gone away, which were both their sin and their punishment: You shall seek me, which intimates either,

(a) Their enmity to the true Christ: "You shall seek to ruin my interest, by persecuting my doctrine and followers, with a fruitless design to root them out." This was a continual vexation and torment to themselves, made them incurably ill-natured, and brought wrath upon them (God's and their own) to the uttermost. Or,

(b) Their enquiries after false Christs: "You shall continue your expectations of the Messiah, and be the self-perplexing seekers of a Christ to come, when he is already come;" like the Sodomites, who, being struck with blindness, wearied themselves to find the door. See Ro 9:31,32.

3. Their final impenitency: You shall die in your sins. Here is an error in all our English Bibles, even the old bishops' translation, and that of Geneva (the Rhemists only excepted), for all the Greek copies have it in the singular number, en te hamartia hymon--in your sin, so all the Latin versions; and Calvin has a note upon the difference between this and Joh 8:24, where it is plural, tais hamartiais, that here it is meant especially of the sin of unbelief, in hoc peccato vestro--in this sin of yours. Note, Those that live in unbelief are for ever undone if they die in unbelief. Or, it may be understood in general, You shall die in your iniquity, as Eze 3:19,33:9. Many that have long lived in sin are, through grace, saved by a timely repentance from dying in sin; but for those who go out of this world of

probation into that of retribution under the guilt of sin unpardoned, and the power of sin unbroken, there remaineth no relief: salvation itself cannot save them, Job 20:11,Eze 32:27.

4. Their eternal separation from Christ and all happiness in him: Whither I go you cannot come. When Christ left the world, he went to a state of perfect happiness; he went to paradise. Thither he took the penitent thief with him, that did not die in his sins; but the impenitent not only shall not come to him, but they cannot; it is morally impossible, for heaven would not be heaven to those that die unsanctified and unmeet for it. You cannot come, because you have no right to enter into that Jerusalem, Re 22:14. Whither I go you cannot come, to fetch me thence, so Dr. Whitby; and the same is the comfort of all good Christians, that, when they get to heaven, they will be out of the reach of their enemies' malice.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

The jest they made of this threatening. Instead of trembling at this word, they bantered it, and turned it into ridicule (Joh 8:22): Will he kill himself?

See here,

1. What slight thoughts they had of Christ's threatenings; they could make themselves and one another merry with them, as those that mocked the messengers of the Lord, and turned the burden of the word of the Lord into a by-word, and precept upon precept, line upon line, into a merry song, Isa 28:13. But be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.

2. What ill thoughts they had of Christ's meaning, as if he had an inhuman design upon his own life, to avoid the indignities done him, like Saul. This is indeed (say they) to go whither we cannot follow him, for we will never kill ourselves. Thus they make him not only such a one as themselves, but worse; yet in the calamities brought by the Romans upon the Jews many of them in discontent and despair did kill themselves. They had put a much more favourable construction upon this word of his (Joh 7:34,35): Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles? But see how indulged malice grows more and more malicious.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

He had said, Whither I go you cannot come, and here he gives the reason for this (Joh 8:23): You are from beneath, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. You are ek ton kato--of those things which are beneath; noting, not so much their rise from beneath as their affection to these lower things: "You are in with these things, as those that belong to them; how can you come where I go, when your spirit and disposition are so directly contrary to mine?"

See here,

(1.) What the spirit of the Lord Jesus was--not of this world, but from above. He was perfectly dead to the wealth of the world, the ease of the body, and the praise of men, and was wholly taken up with divine and heavenly things; and none shall be with him but those who are born from above and have their conversation in heaven.

(2.) How contrary to this their spirit was: "You are from beneath, and of this world." The Pharisees were of a carnal worldly spirit; and what communion could Christ have with them?

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

He had said, You shall die in your sins, and here he stand to it: "Therefore I said, You shall die in your sins, because you are from beneath;" and he gives this further reason for it, If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins, Joh 8:24.

See here,

(a) What we are required to believe: that I am he, hoti ego eimi--that I am, which is one of God's names, Ex 3:14. It was the Son of God that there said, Ehejeh asher Ehejeh--I will be what I will be; for the deliverance of Israel was but a figure of good things to come, but now he saith, "I am he; he that should come, he that you expect the Messias to be, that you would have me to be to you. I am more than the bare name of the Messiah; I do

not only call myself so, but I am he." True faith does not amuse the soul with an empty sound of words, but affects it with the doctrine of Christ's mediation, as a real thing that has real effects.

(b) How necessary it is that we believe this. If we have not this faith, we shall die in our sins; for the matter is so settled that without this faith,

[1.] We cannot be saved from the power of sin while we live, and therefore shall certainly continue in it to the last. Nothing but the doctrine of Christ's grace will be an argument powerful enough, and none but the Spirit of Christ's grace will be an agent powerful enough, to turn us from sin to God; and that Spirit is given, and that doctrine given, to be effectual to those only who believe in Christ: so that, if Satan be not by faith dispossessed, he has a lease of the soul for its life; if Christ do not cure us, our case is desperate, and we shall die in our sins.

[2.] Without faith we cannot be saved from the punishment of sin when we die, for the wrath of God remains upon them that believe not, Mk 16:16. Unbelief is the damning sin; it is a sin against the remedy. Now this implies the great gospel promise: If we believe that Christ is he, and receive him accordingly, we shall not die in our sins. The law saith absolutely to all, as Christ said (Joh 8:21), You shall die in your sins, for we are all guilty before God; but the gospel is a defeasance of the obligation upon condition of believing. The curse of the law is vacated and annulled to all that submit to the grace of the gospel. Believers die in Christ, in his love, in his arms, and so are saved from dying in their sins.

25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

The question which the Jews put to him (Joh 8:25): Who art thou? This they asked tauntingly, and not with any desire to be instructed. He had said, You must believe that I am he. By his not saying expressly who he was, he plainly intimated that in his person he was such a one as could not be described by any, and in his office such a one as was expected by all that looked for redemption in Israel; yet this awful manner of speaking, which had so much significancy in it, they turned to his reproach, as if he knew not what to say of himself: "Who art thou, that we must with an implicit

faith believe in thee, that thou art some mighty HE, we know not who or what, nor are worthy to know?"

26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

(a) He refers them to what he had said all along: "Do you ask who I am? Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." The original here is a little intricate, ten archen ho ti kai lalo hymin which some read thus: I am the beginning, which also I speak unto you. So Austin takes it. Christ is called Arche--the beginning (Col 1:18,Re 1:8,21:6,Re 3:14), and so it agrees with Joh 8:24, I am he. Compare Isa 41:4: I am the first, I am he. Those who object that it is the accusative case, and therefore not properly answering to tis ei, must undertake to construe by grammar rules that parallel expression, Re 1:8, ho en. But most interpreters agree with our version, Do you ask who I am?

[1.] I am the same that I said to you from the beginning of time in the scriptures of the Old-Testament, the same that from the beginning was said to be the Seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, the same that in all the ages of the church was the Mediator of the covenant, and the faith of the patriarchs.

[2.] From the beginning of my public ministry. The account he had already given of himself he resolved to abide by; he had declared himself to be the Son of God (Joh 5:17), to be the Christ (Joh 4:26), and the bread of life, and had proposed himself as the object of that faith which is necessary to salvation, and to this he refers them for an answer to their question. Christ is one with himself; what he had said from the beginning, he saith still. His is an everlasting gospel.

(b) He refers them to his Father's judgment, and the instructions he had from him (Joh 8:26): "I have many things, more than you think of, to say, and in them to judge of you. But why should I trouble myself any further with you? I know very well that he who sent me is true, and will stand by me, and bear me out, for I speak to the world (to which I am sent as an ambassador) those things, all those and those only, which I have heard of him." Here,

[1.] He suppresses his accusation of them. He had many things to charge them with, and many evidences to produce against them; but for the present he had said enough. Note, Whatever discoveries of sin are made to us, he that searches the heart has still more to judge of us, 1Jo 3:20. How much soever God reckons with sinners in this world there is still a further reckoning yet behind, De 32:34. Let us learn hence not to be forward to say all we can say, even against the worst of men; we may have many things to say, by way of censure, which yet it is better to leave unsaid, for what is it to us?

[2.] He enters his appeal against them to his Father: He that sent me. Here two things comfort him:--First, That he had been true to his Father, and to the trust reposed in him: I speak to the world (for his gospel was to be preached to every creature) those things which I have heard of him. Being given for a witness to the people (Isa 55:4), he was Amen, a faithful witness, Re 3:14. He did not conceal his doctrine, but spoke it to the world (being of common concern, it was to be of common notice); nor did he change or alter it, nor vary from the instructions he received from him that sent him. Secondly, That his Father would be true to him; true to the promise that he would make his mouth like a sharp sword; true to his purpose concerning him, which was a decree (Ps 2:7); true to the threatenings of his wrath against those that should reject him. Though he should not accuse them to his Father, yet the Father, who sent him, would undoubtedly reckon with them, and would be true to what he had said (De 18:19), that whosoever would not hearken to that prophet whom God would raise up he would require it of him. Christ would not accuse them; "for," saith he, "he that sent me is true, and will pass judgment on them, though I should not demand judgment against them." Thus, when he lets fall the present prosecution, he binds them over to the judgment-day, when it will be too late to dispute what they will not now be persuaded to believe. I, as a deaf man, heard not; for thou wilt hear, Ps 38:13,15. Upon this part of our Saviour's discourse the evangelist has a melancholy remark (Joh 8:27): They understood not that he spoke to them of the Father.

See here,

1 The power of Satan to blind the minds of those who believe not. Though Christ spoke so plainly of God as his Father in heaven, yet they did not understand whom he meant, but thought he spoke of some father he had in Galilee. Thus the plainest things are riddles and parables to those who are resolved to hold fast their prejudices; day and night are alike to the blind.

2 The reason why the threatenings of the word make so little impression upon the minds of sinners; it is because they understand not whose the wrath is that is revealed in them. When Christ told them of the truth of him that sent him, as a warning to them to prepare for his judgment, which is according to truth, they slighted the warning, because they understood not to whose judgment it was that they made themselves obnoxious.

27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

He refers them to their own convictions hereafter, Joh 8:28,29. He finds they will not understand him, and therefore adjourns the trial till further evidence should come in; they that will not see shall see, Isa 26:11. Now observe here,

[1.] What they should ere long be convinced of: "You shall know that I am he, that Jesus is the true Messiah. Whether you will own it or no before men, you shall be made to know it in your own consciences, the convictions of which, though you may stifle, yet you cannot baffle: that I am he, not that you represent me to be, but he that I preach myself to be, he that should come!" Two things they should be convinced of, in order to this:--First, That he did nothing of himself, not of himself as man, of himself alone, of himself without the Father, with whom he was one. He does not hereby derogate from his own inherent power, but only denies their charge against him as a false prophet; for of false prophets it is said that they prophesied out of their own hearts, and followed their own spirits. Secondly, That as his Father taught him so he spoke these things, that he was not autodidaktos--self-taught, but Theodidaktos--taught of God. The doctrine he preached was the counterpart of the counsels of God, with which he was intimately acquainted; kathos edidaxe, tauta lalo--I speak

those things, not only which he taught me, but as he taught me, with the same divine power and authority.

[2.] When they should be convinced of this: When you have lifted up the Son of man, lifted him up upon the cross, as the brazen serpent upon the pole (Joh 3:14), as the sacrifices under the law (for Christ is the great sacrifice), which, when they were offered, were said to be elevated, or lifted up; hence the burnt-offerings, the most ancient and honourable of all, were called elevations (Gnoloth from Gnolah, asendit--he ascended), and in many other offerings they used the significant ceremony of heaving the sacrifice up, and moving it before the Lord; thus was Christ lifted up. Or the expression denotes that his death was his exaltation. They that put him to death thought thereby for ever to have sunk him and his interest, but it proved to be the advancement of both, Joh 12:24. When the Son of man was crucified, the Son of man was glorified. Christ had called his dying his going away; here he calls it his being lifted up; thus the death of the saints, as it is their departure out of this world, so it is their advancement to a better.

Observe, He speaks of those he is now talking with as the instruments of his death: when you have lifted up the Son of man; not that they were to be the priests to offer him up (no, that was his own act, he offered up himself), but they would be his betrayers and murderers; see Ac 2:23. They lifted him up to the cross, but then he lifted up himself to his Father. Observe with what tenderness and mildness Christ here speaks to those who he certainly knew would put him to death, to teach us not to hate or seek the hurt of any, though we may have reason to think they hate us and seek our hurt. Now, Christ speaks of his death as that which would be a powerful conviction of the infidelity of the Jews. When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know this. And why then?

First, Because careless and unthinking people are often taught the worth of mercies by the want of them, Lu 17:22.

Secondly, The guilt of their sin in putting Christ to death would so awaken their consciences that they would be put upon serious enquiries after a Saviour, and then would know that Jesus was he who alone could save

them. And so it proved, when, being told that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Son of God, they cried out, What shall we do? and were made to know assuredly that this Jesus was Lord and Christ, Ac 2:36.

Thirdly, There would be such signs and wonders attending his death, and the lifting of him up from death in his resurrection, as would give a stronger proof of his being the Messiah than any that had been yet given: and multitudes were hereby brought to believe that Jesus is the Christ, who had before contradicted and opposed him.

Fourthly, By the death of Christ the pouring out of the Spirit was purchased, who would convince the world that Jesus is he, Joh 16:7,8.

Fifthly, The judgments which the Jews brought upon themselves, by putting Christ to death, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, were a sensible conviction to the most hardened among them that Jesus was he. Christ had often foretold that desolation as the just punishment of their invincible unbelief, and when it came to pass (lo, it did come) they could not but know that the great prophet had been among them, Eze 33:33.

29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone;
for I do always those things that please him.

What supported our Lord Jesus in the mean time (Joh 8:29): He that sent me is with me, in my whole undertaking; for the Father (the fountain and first spring of this affair, from whom as its great cause and author it is derived) hath not left me alone, to manage it myself, hath not deserted the business nor me in the prosecution of it, for do I always those things that please him. Here is,

First, The assurance which Christ had of his Father's presence with him, which includes both a divine power going along with him to enable him for his work, and a divine favour manifested to him to encourage him in it. He that sent me is with me, Isa 42:1,Ps 89:21. This greatly emboldens our faith in Christ and our reliance upon his word that he had, and knew he had, his Father with him, to confirm the word of his servant, Isa 44:26. The King of kings accompanied his own ambassador, to attest his mission and assist his management, and never left him alone, either solitary or weak; it

also aggravated the wickedness of those that opposed him, and was an intimation to them of the premunire they ran themselves into by resisting him, for thereby they were found fighters against God. How easily soever they might think to crush him and run him down, let them know he had one to back him with whom it is the greatest madness that can be to contend.

Secondly, The ground of this assurance: For I do always those things that please him. That is,

1. That great affair in which our Lord Jesus was continually engaged was an affair which the Father that sent him was highly well pleased with. His whole undertaking is called the pleasure of the Lord (Isa 53:10), because of the counsels of the eternal mind about it, and the complacency of the eternal mind in it.

2. His management of that affair was in nothing displeasing to his Father; in executing his commission he punctually observed all his instructions, and did in nothing vary from them. No mere man since the fall could say such a word as this (for in many things we offend all) but our Lord Jesus never offended his Father in any thing, but, as became him, he fulfilled all righteousness. This was necessary to the validity and value of the sacrifice he was to offer up; for if he had in any thing displeased the Father himself, and so had had any sin of his own to answer for, the Father could not have been pleased with him as a propitiation for our sins; but such a priest and such a sacrifice became us as was perfectly pure and spotless. We may likewise learn hence that God's servants may then expect God's presence with them when they choose and do those things that please him, Isa 66:4,5.

30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

Here is the good effect which this discourse of Christ's had upon some of his hearers (Joh 8:30): As he spoke these words many believed on him.

Note,

1. Though multitudes perish in their unbelief, yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace, who believe to the saving of the soul. If Israel, the whole body of the people, be not gathered, yet there are those of them in whom Christ will be glorious, Isa 49:5. This the apostle insists upon, to reconcile the Jews' rejection with the promises made unto their fathers. There is a remnant, Ro 11:5.

2 The words of Christ, and particularly his threatening words, are made effectual by the grace of God to bring in poor souls to believe in him. When Christ told them that if they believed not they should die in their sins, and never get to heaven, they thought it was time to look about them, Ro 1:16,18.

3. Sometimes there is a wide door opened, and an effectual one, even where they are many adversaries. Christ will carry on his work, though the heathen rage. The gospel sometimes gains great victories where it meets with great opposition. Let this encourage God's ministers to preach the gospel, though it be with much contention, for they shall not labour in vain. Many may be secretly brought home to God by those endeavours which are openly contradicted and cavilled at by men of corrupt minds.

The Truth Shall Make You Free

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

A comfortable doctrine laid down concerning the spiritual liberty of Christ's disciples, intended for the encouragement of those Jews that believed. Christ, knowing that his doctrine began to work upon some of his hearers, and perceiving that virtue had gone out of him, turned his discourse from the proud Pharisees, and addressed himself to those weak believers. When he had denounced wrath against those that were hardened in unbelief, then he spoke comfort to those few feeble Jews that believed in him. See here,

1. How graciously the Lord Jesus looks to those that tremble at his word, and are ready to receive it; he has something to say to those who have

hearing ears, and will not pass by those who set themselves in his way, without speaking to them.

2. How carefully he cherishes the beginnings of grace, and meets those that are coming towards him. These Jews that believed were yet but weak; but Christ did not therefore cast them off, for he gathers the lambs in his arms. When faith is in its infancy, he has knees to prevent it, breasts for it to suck, that it may not die from the womb. In what he said to them, we have two things, which he saith to all that should at any time believe:--

The character of a true disciple of Christ: If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed. When they believed on him, as the great prophet, they gave up themselves to be his disciples. Now, at their entrance into his school, he lays down this for a settled rule, that he would own none for his disciples but those that continued in his word.

[1.] It is implied that there are many who profess themselves Christ's disciples who are not his disciples indeed, but only in show and name.

[2.] It highly concerns those that are not strong in faith to see to it that they be sound in the faith, that, though not disciples of the highest form, they are nevertheless disciples indeed.

[3.] Those who seem willing to be Christ's disciples ought to be told that they had as good never come to him, unless they come with a resolution by his grace to abide by him. Let those who have thoughts of covenanting with Christ have no thoughts of reserving a power of revocation. Children are sent to school, and bound apprentices, only for a few years; but those only are Christ's who are willing to be bound to him for the term of life.

[4.] Those only that continue in Christ's word shall be accepted as his disciples indeed, that adhere to his word in every instance without partiality, and abide by it to the end without apostasy. It is menein--to dwell in Christ's word, as a man does at home, which is his centre, and rest, and refuge. Our converse with the word and conformity to it must be constant.

If we continue disciples to the last, then, and not otherwise, we approve ourselves disciples indeed.

32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

The privilege of a true disciple of Christ. Here are two precious promises made to those who thus approve themselves disciples indeed, Joh 8:32.

[1.] "You shall know the truth, shall know all that truth which it is needful and profitable for you to know, and shall be more confirmed in the belief of it, shall know the certainty of it."

Note, First, Even those who are true believers, and disciples indeed, yet may be, and are, much in the dark concerning many things which they should know. God's children are but children, and understand and speak as children. Did we not need to be taught, we should not need to be disciples.

Secondly, It is a very great privilege to know the truth, to know the particular truths which we are to believe, in their mutual dependences and connections, and the grounds and reasons of our belief,--to know what is truth and what proves it to be so. Thirdly, It is a gracious promise of Christ, to all who continue in his word, that they shall know the truth as far as is needful and profitable for them. Christ's scholars are sure to be well taught.

[2.] The truth shall make you free; that is,

First, The truth which Christ teaches tends to make men free, Isa 61:1. Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin, by which we were bound over to the judgment of God, and bound under amazing fears; sanctification makes us free from the bondage of corruption, by which we were restrained from that service which is perfect freedom, and constrained to that which is perfect slavery. Gospel truth frees us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the more grievous burdens of the traditions of the elders. It makes us free from our spiritual enemies, free in the service of God, free to the privileges of sons, and free of the Jerusalem which is from above, which is free.

Secondly, The knowing, entertaining, and believing, of this truth does actually make us free, free from prejudices, mistakes, and false notions, than which nothing more enslaves and entangles the soul, free from the dominion of lust and passion; and restores the soul to the government of itself, by reducing it into obedience to its Creator. The mind, by admitting the truth of Christ in the light and power, is vastly enlarged, and has scope and compass given it, is greatly elevated and raised above things of sense, and never acts with so true a liberty as when it acts under a divine command, 2Co 3:17. The enemies of Christianity pretend to free thinking, whereas really those are the freest reasonings that are guided by faith, and those are men of free thought whose thoughts are captivated and brought into obedience to Christ.

JFB:

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man, &c.—Who said this? Not surely the very class just spoken of as won over by His divine words, and exhorted to continue in them. Most interpreters seem to think so; but it is hard to ascribe such a petulant speech to the newly gained disciples, even in the lowest sense, much less persons so gained as they were. It came, probably, from persons mixed up with them in the same part of the crowd, but of a very different spirit. The pride of the Jewish nation, even now after centuries of humiliation, is the most striking feature of their character. "Talk of freedom to us? Pray when or to whom were we ever in bondage?" This bluster sounds almost ludicrous from such a nation. Had they forgotten their long and bitter bondage in Egypt? their dreary captivity in Babylon? their present bondage to the Roman yoke, and their restless eagerness to throw it off? But probably they saw that our Lord pointed to something else—freedom, perhaps, from the leaders of sects or parties—and were not willing to allow their subjection even to these. Our Lord, therefore, though He knew what slaves they were in this sense, drives the ploughshare somewhat deeper than this, to a bondage they little dreamt of.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

Matthew Hennery Bible Commentary (MHC):

The offence which the carnal Jews took at this doctrine, and their objection against it. Though it was a doctrine that brought glad tidings of liberty to the captives, yet they cavilled at it, Joh 8:33. The Pharisees grudged this comfortable word to those that believed, the standers by, who had no part nor lot in this matter; they thought themselves reflected upon and affronted by the gracious charter of liberty granted to those that believed, and therefore with a great deal of pride and envy they answered him, "We Jews are Abraham's seed, and therefore are free-born, and have not lost our birthright-freedom; we were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou then, to us Jews, You shall be made free?" See here,

1. What it was that they were grieved at; it was an innuendo in those words, You shall be made free, as if the Jewish church and nation were in some sort of bondage, which reflected on the Jews in general, and as if all that did not believe in Christ continued in that bondage, which reflected on the Pharisees in particular. Note, The privileges of the faithful are the envy and vexation of unbelievers, Ps 112:10.

2. What it was that they alleged against it; whereas Christ intimated that they needed to be made free, they urge, (1.) "We are Abraham's seed, and Abraham was a prince and a great man; though we live in Canaan, we are not descended from Canaan, nor under his doom, a servant of servants shall he be; we hold in frank-almoign--free alms, and not in villenage--by a servile tenure." It is common for a sinking decaying family to boast of the glory and dignity of its ancestors, and to borrow honour from that name to which they repay disgrace; so the Jews here did. But this was not all. Abraham was in covenant with God, and his children by his right, Ro 11:28. Now that covenant, no doubt, was a free charter, and invested them with privileges not consistent with a state of slavery, Ro 9:4. And therefore they thought they had no occasion with so great a sum as they reckoned faith in Christ to be to obtain this freedom, when they were thus free-born. Note, It is the common fault and folly of those that have pious parentage and education to trust to their privilege and boast of it, as if it would atone for the want of real holiness. They were Abraham's seed, but what would this avail them, when we find one in hell that could call Abraham father? Saving benefits are not, like common privileges, conveyed by entail to us and our issue, nor can a title to heaven be made by descent, nor may we claim as heirs at law, by making out our pedigree; our title is purely by purchase, not our own but our Redeemer's for us, under certain provisos

and limitations, which if we do not observe it will not avail us to be Abraham's seed. Thus many, when they are pressed with the necessity of regeneration, turn it off with this, We are the church's children; but they are not all Israel that are of Israel. (2.) We were never in bondage to any man. Now observe, [1.] How false this allegation was. I wonder how they could have the assurance to say a thing in the face of a congregation which was so notoriously untrue. Were not the seed of Abraham in bondage to the Egyptians? Were they not often in bondage to the neighbouring nations in the time of the judges? Were they not seventy years captives in Babylon? Nay, were they not at this time tributaries to the Romans, and, though not in a personal, yet in a national bondage to them, and groaning to be made free? And yet, to confront Christ, they have the impudence to say, We were never in bondage. Thus they would expose Christ to the ill-will both of the Jews, who were very jealous for the honour of their liberty, and of the Romans, who would not be thought to enslave the nations they conquered. [2.] How foolish the application was. Christ had spoken of a liberty wherewith the truth would make them free, which must be meant of a spiritual liberty, for truth as it is the enriching, so it is the enfranchising of the mind, and the enlarging of that from the captivity of error and prejudice; and yet they plead against the offer of spiritual liberty that they were never in corporal thraldom, as if, because they were never in bondage to any man, they were never in bondage to any lust. Note, Carnal hearts are sensible of no other grievances than those that molest the body and injure their secular affairs. Talk to them of encroachments upon their civil liberty and property,--tell them of waste committed upon their lands, or damage done to their houses,--and they understand you very well, and can give you a sensible answer; the thing touches them and affects them. But discourse to them of the bondage of sin, a captivity to Satan, and a liberty by Christ,--tell them of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare,--and you bring certain strange things to their ears; they say of it (as those did, Eze 20:49), Doth he not speak parables? This was much like the blunder Nicodemus made about being born again.

They answered him. Not those who believed on him, but some who stood by and heard him.

We be Abraham's seed. We are the children or descendants of Abraham. Abraham was not a slave, and they pretended that they were his real descendants, inheriting his freedom as well as his spirit. They meant that they were the direct descendants of Abraham by Isaac, his heir. Ishmael, also Abraham's son, was the son of a bond-woman (Gal 4:21-23), but they were descended in a direct line from the acknowledged heir of Abraham.

Were never in bondage to any man. This is a most remarkable declaration, and one evidently false. Their fathers had been slaves in Egypt; their nation had been enslaved in Babylon; it had repeatedly been subject to the Assyrians; it was enslaved by Herod the Great; and was, at the very time they spoke, groaning under the grievous and insupportable bondage of the Romans. But we see here,

1st. That Jesus was right when he said (Jn 8:44), "Ye are of your father the devil; he is a liar, and the father of it."

2nd. Men will say anything, however false or ridiculous, to avoid and oppose the truth.

3rd. Men groaning under the most oppressive bondage are often unwilling to acknowledge it in any manner, and are indignant at being charged with it. This is the case with all sinners.

4th. Sin, and the bondage to sin, produces passion, irritation, and a troubled soul; and a man under the influence of passion regards little what he says, and is often a liar.

5th. There is need of the gospel. That only can make men free, calm, collected, meek, and lovers of truth; and as every man is by nature the servant of sin, he should without delay seek an interest in that gospel which can alone make him free.

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

He shows that, notwithstanding their civil liberties and their visible church-membership, yet it was possible that they might be in a state of bondage

(Joh 8:34): Whosoever commits sin, though he be of Abraham's seed, and was never in bondage to any man, is the servant of sin. Observe, Christ does not upbraid them with the falsehood of their plea, or their present bondage, but further explains what he had said for their edification. Thus ministers should with meekness instruct those that oppose them, that they may recover themselves, not with passion provoke them to entangle themselves yet more. Now here,

(1.) The preface is very solemn: Verily, verily, I say unto you; an awful asseveration, which our Saviour often used, to command a reverent attention and a ready assent. The style of the prophets was, Thus saith the Lord, for they were faithful as servants; but Christ, being a Son, speaks in his own name: I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful witness; he pawns his veracity upon it. "I say it to you, who boast of your relation to Abraham, as if that would save you."

(2.) The truth is of universal concern, though here delivered upon a particular occasion: Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin, and sadly needs to be made free. A state of sin is a state of bondage.

[1.] See who it is on whom this brand is fastened--on him that commits sin, pas ho poion hamartian--every one that makes sin. There is not a just man upon earth, that lives, and sins not; yet every one that sins is not a servant of sin, for then God would have no servants; but he that makes sin, that makes choice of sin, prefers the way of wickedness before the way of holiness (Jer 44:16,17),-- that makes a covenant with sin, enters into league with it, and makes a marriage with it,--that makes contrivances of sin, makes provision for the flesh, and devises iniquity,--and that makes a custom of sin, who walks after the flesh, and makes a trade of sin.

[2.] See what the brand is which Christ fastens upon those that thus commit sin. He stigmatizes them, gives them a mark of servitude. They are servants of sin, imprisoned under the guilt of sin, under an arrest, in hold for it, concluded under sin, and they are subject to the power of sin. He is a servant of sin, that is, he makes himself so, and is so accounted; he has sold himself to work wickedness; his lusts give law to him, he is at their beck,

and is not his own master. He does the work of sin, supports its interest, and accepts its wages, Ro 6:16.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

He shows them that, being in a state of bondage, their having a place in the house of God would not entitle them to the inheritance of sons; for (Joh 8:35) the servant, though he be in the house for awhile, yet, being but a servant, abideth not in the house for ever. Services (we say) are no inheritances, they are but temporary, and not for a perpetuity; but the son of the family abideth ever.

Now,

(1.) This points primarily at the rejection of the Jewish church and nation. Israel had been God's son, his first-born; but they wretchedly degenerated into a servile disposition, were enslaved to the world and the flesh, and therefore, though by virtue of their birthright they thought themselves secure of their church membership, Christ tells them that having thus made themselves servants they should not abide in the house for ever. Jerusalem, by opposing the gospel of Christ, which proclaimed liberty, and adhering to the Sinai-covenant, which gendered to bondage, after its term was expired came to be in bondage with her children (Ga 4:24,25), and therefore was unchurched and disfranchised, her charter seized and taken away, and she was cast out as the son of the bond-woman, Ge 21:14. Chrysostom gives this sense of this place: "Think not to be made free from sin by the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, for Moses was but a servant, and had not that perpetual authority in the church which the Son had; but, if the Son make you free, it is well," Joh 8:36. But,

(2.) It looks further, to the rejection of all that are the servants of sin, and receive not the adoption of the sons of God; though those unprofitable servants may be in God's house awhile, as retainers to his family, yet there is a day coming when the children of the bond-woman and of the free shall be distinguished. True believers only, who are the children of the promise and of the covenant, are accounted free, and shall abide for ever in the house, as Isaac: they shall have a nail in the holy place on earth (Ezr 9:8) and mansions in the holy place in heaven, Joh 14:2.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

He shows them the way of deliverance out of the state of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Ro 8:21. The case of those that are the servants of sin is sad, but thanks be to God it is not helpless, it is not hopeless. As it is the privilege of all the sons of the family, and their dignity above the servants, that they abide in the house for ever; so he who is the Son, the first-born among many brethren, and the heir of all things, has a power both of manumission and of adoption (Joh 8:36): If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. Note,

(a) Jesus Christ in the gospel offers us our freedom; he has authority and power to make free.

[1.] To discharge prisoners; this he does in justification, by making satisfaction for our guilt (on which the gospel offer is grounded, which is to all a conditional act of indemnity, and to all true believers, upon their believing, an absolute charter of pardon), and for our debts, for which we were by the law arrested and in execution. Christ, as our surety, or rather our bail (for he was not originally bound with us, but upon our insolvency bound for us), compounds with the creditor, answers the demands of injured justice with more than an equivalent, takes the bond and judgment into his own hands, and gives them up cancelled to all that by faith and repentance give him (if I may so say) a counter-security to save his honour harmless, and so they are made free; and from the debt, and every part thereof, they are for ever acquitted, exonerated, and discharged, and a general release is sealed of all actions and claims; while against those who refuse to come up to these terms the securities lie still in the Redeemer's hands, in full force.

[2.] He has a power to rescue bond-slaves, and this he does in sanctification; by the powerful arguments of his gospel, and the powerful operations of his Spirit, he breaks the power of corruption in the soul, rallies the scattered forces of reason and virtue, and fortifies God's interest against sin and Satan, and so the soul is made free.

[3.] He has a power to naturalize strangers and foreigners, and this he does in adoption. This is a further act of grace; we are not only forgiven and healed, but preferred; there is a charter of privileges as well as pardon; and thus the Son makes us free denizens of the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the new Jerusalem.

(b) Those whom Christ makes free are free indeed. It is not alethos, the word used (Joh 8:31) for disciples indeed, but ontos--really.

It denotes,

[1.] The truth and certainty of the promise, the liberty which the Jews boasted of was an imaginary liberty; they boasted of a false gift; but the liberty which Christ gives is a certain thing, it is real, and has real effects. The servants of sin promise themselves liberty, and fancy themselves free, when they have broken religion's bands asunder; but they cheat themselves. None are free indeed but those whom Christ makes free.

[2.] It denotes the singular excellency of the freedom promised; it is a freedom that deserves the name, in comparison with which all other liberties are no better than slaveries, so much does it turn to the honour and advantage of those that are made free by it. It is a glorious liberty. It is that which is (so ontos signifies); it is substance (Pr 8:21); while the things of the world are shadows, things that are not.

37 I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

He applies this to these unbelieving cavilling Jews, in answer to their boasts of relation to Abraham (Joh 8:37): "I know very well that you are Abraham's seed, but now you seek to kill me, and therefore have forfeited the honour of your relation to Abraham, because my word hath no place in you." Observe here,

(a) The dignity of their extraction admitted: "I know that you are Abraham's seed, every one knows it, and it is your honour." He grants them

what was true, and in what they said that was false (that they were never in bondage to any) he does not contradict them, for he studied to profit them, and not to provoke them, and therefore said that which would please them: I know that you are Abraham's seed. They boasted of their descent from Abraham, as that which aggrandized their names, and made them exceedingly honourable; whereas really it did but aggravate their crimes, and make them exceedingly sinful. Out of their own mouths will he judge vain-glorious hypocrites, who boast of their parentage and education: "Are you Abraham's seed? Why then did you not tread in the steps of his faith and obedience?"

(b) The inconsistency of their practice with this dignity: But you seek to kill me. They had attempted it several times, and were now designing it, which quickly appeared (Joh 8:59), when they took up stones to cast at him. Christ knows all the wickedness, not only which men do, but which they seek, and design, and endeavour to do. To seek to kill any innocent man is a crime black enough, but to compass and imagine the death of him that was King of kings was a crime the heinousness of which we want words to express.

(c) The reason of this inconsistency. Why were they that were Abraham's seed so very inveterate against Abraham's promised seed, in whom they and all the families of the earth should be blessed? Our Saviour here tells them, It is because my word hath no place in you, ou chorei en hymin, Non capit in vobis, so the Vulgate. "My word does not take with you, you have no inclination to it, no relish of it, other things are more taking, more pleasing." Or, "It does not take hold of you, it has no power over you, makes no impression upon you." Some of the critics read it, My word does not penetrate into you; it descended as the rain, but it came upon them as the rain upon the rock, which it runs off, and did not soak into their hearts, as the rain upon the ploughed ground. The Syriac reads it, "Because you do not acquiesce in my word; you are not persuaded of the truth of it, nor pleased with the goodness of it." Our translation is very significant: It has no place in you. They sought to kill him, and so effectually to silence him, not because he had done they any harm, but because they could not bear the convincing, commanding power of his word.

Note,

[1.] The words of Christ ought to have a place in us, the innermost and uppermost place,--a dwelling place, as a man at home, and not as a stranger or sojourner,--a working place; it must have room to operate, to work sin out of us, and to work grace in us; it must have a ruling place, its place must be upon the throne, it must dwell in us richly.

[2.] There are many that make a profession of religion in whom the word of Christ has no place; they will not allow it a place, for they do not like it; Satan does all he can to displace it; and other things possess the place it should have in us. [3.] Where the word of God has no place no good is to be expected, for room is left there for all wickedness. If the unclean spirit find the heart empty of Christ's word, he enters in, and dwells there.

Your Father the Devil

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

He here traces the difference between his sentiments and theirs to a different rise and origin (Joh 8:38): I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have seen with your father. Here are two fathers spoken of, according to the two families into which the sons of men are divided--God and the devil, and without controversy these are contrary the one to the other.

1. Christ's doctrine was from heaven; it was copied out of the counsels of infinite wisdom, and the kind intentions of eternal love.

(1.) I speak that which I have seen. The discoveries Christ has made to us of God and another world are not grounded upon guess and hearsay, but upon ocular inspection; so that he was thoroughly apprized of the nature, and assured of the truth, of all he said. He that is given to be a witness to the people is an eye-witness, and therefore unexceptionable.

(2.) It is what I have seen with my Father. The doctrine of Christ is not a plausible hypothesis, supported by probable arguments, but it is an exact counterpart of the incontestable truths lodged in the eternal mind. It was not only what he had heard from his Father, but what he had seen with him when the counsel of peace was between them both. Moses spoke what he heard from God, but he might not see the face of God; Paul had been in the third heaven, but what he had seen there he could not, he must not, utter; for it was Christ's prerogative to have seen what he spoke, and to speak what he had seen.

2. Their doings were from hell: "You do that which you have seen with your father. You do, by your own works, father yourselves, for it is evident whom you resemble, and therefore easy to find out your origin." As a child that is trained up with his father learns his father's words and fashions, and grows like him by an affected imitation as well as by a natural image, so these Jews, by their malicious opposition to Christ and the gospel, made themselves as like the devil as if they had industriously set him before them for their pattern.

They pleaded relation to Abraham, and he replies to this plea. They said, Abraham is our father, Joh 8:39.

In this they intended,

(1.) To do honour to themselves, and to make themselves look great. They had forgotten the mortification given them by that acknowledgement prescribed them (De 26:5), A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and

the charge exhibited against their degenerate ancestors (whose steps they trod in, and not those of the first founder of the family), Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite, Eze 16:3. As it is common for those families that are sinking and going to decay to boast most of their pedigree, so it is common for those churches that are corrupt and depraved to value themselves upon their antiquity and the eminence of their first planters. Fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium--We have been Trojans, and there once was Troy.

(2.) They designed to cast an odium upon Christ as if he reflected upon the patriarch Abraham, in speaking of their father as one they had learned evil from. See how they sought an occasion to quarrel with him. Now Christ overthrows this plea, and exposes the vanity of it by a plain and cogent argument: "Abraham's children will do the works of Abraham, but you do not do Abraham's works, therefore you are not Abraham's children."

The proposition is plain: "If you were Abraham's children, such children of Abraham as could claim an interest in the covenant made with him and his seed, which would indeed put an honour upon you, then you would do the works of Abraham, for to those only of Abraham's house who kept the way of the Lord, as Abraham did, would God perform what he had spoken," Ge 18:19. Those only are reckoned the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise belongs, who tread in the steps of his faith and obedience, Ro 4:12. Though the Jews had their genealogies, and kept them exact, yet they could not by them make out their relation to Abraham, so as to take the benefit of the old entail (performam doni--according to the form of the gift), unless they walked in the same spirit; good women's relation to Sarah is proved only by this--whose daughters you are as long as you do well, and no longer, 1Pe 3:6. Note, Those who would approve themselves Abraham's seed must not only be of Abraham's faith, but do Abraham's works (Jam 2:21,22),-- must come at God's call, as he did,-- must resign their dearest comforts to him,--must be strangers and sojourners in this world,--must keep up the worship of God in their families, and always walk before God in their uprightness; for these were the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

The assumption is evident likewise: But you do not do the works of Abraham, for you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham, Joh 8:40.

First, He shows them what their work was, their present work, which they were now about; they sought to kill him; and three things are intimated as an aggravation of their intention:--

1. They were so unnatural as to seek the life of a man, a man like themselves, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, who had done them no harm, nor given them any provocation. You imagine mischief against a man, Ps 62:3.

2. They were so ungrateful as to seek the life of one who had told them the truth, had not only done them no injury, but had done them the greatest kindness that could be; had not only not imposed upon them with a lie, but had instructed them in the most necessary and important truths; was he therefore become their enemy?

3. They were so ungodly as to seek the life of one who told them the truth which he had heard from God, who was a messenger sent from God to them, so that their attempt against him was quasi deicidium--an act of malice against God. This was their work, and they persisted in it.

Secondly, He shows them that this did not become the children of Abraham; for this did not Abraham.

1. "He did nothing like this." He was famous for his humanity, witness his rescue of the captives; and for his piety, witness his obedience to the heavenly vision in many instances, and some tender ones. Abraham believed God; they were obstinate in unbelief: Abraham followed God; they fought against him; so that he would be ignorant of them, and would not acknowledge them, they were so unlike him, Isa 63:16. See Jer 22:15-17.

2. "He would not have done thus if he had lived now, or I had lived then." Hoc Abraham non fecisset--He would not have done this; so some read it. We should thus reason ourselves out of any way of wickedness; would Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob have done so? We cannot expect to be ever with them, if we be never like them.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

The conclusion follows of course (Joh 8:41): "Whatever your boasts and pretensions be, you are not Abraham's children, but father yourselves upon another family (Joh 8:41); there is a father whose deeds you do, whose spirit you are of, and whom you resemble." He does not yet say plainly that he means the devil, till they by their continued cavils forced him so to explain himself, which teaches us to treat even bad men with civility and respect, and not to be forward to say that of them, or to them, which, though true, sounds harsh. He tried whether they would suffer their own consciences to infer from what he said that they were the devil's children; and it is better to hear it from them now that we are called to repent, that is, to change our father and change our family, by changing our spirit and way, than to hear it from Christ in the great day.

So far were they from owning their unworthiness of relation to Abraham that they pleaded relation to God himself as their Father: "We are not born of fornication, we are not bastards, but legitimate sons; we have one Father, even God."

(1.) Some understand this literally. They were not the sons of the bondwoman, as the Ishmaelites were; nor begotten in incest, as the Moabites and Ammonites were (De 23:3); nor were they a spurious brood in Abraham's family, but Hebrews of the Hebrews; and, being born in lawful wedlock, they might call God Father, who instituted that honourable estate in innocency; for a legitimate seed, not tainted with divorces nor the plurality of wives, is called a seed of God, Mal 2:15.

(2.) Others take it figuratively. They begin to be aware now that Christ spoke of a spiritual not a carnal father, of the father of their religion; and so,

[1.] They deny themselves to be a generation of idolaters: "We are not born of fornication, are not the children of idolatrous parents, nor have been bred up in idolatrous worships." Idolatry is often spoken of as spiritual whoredom, and idolaters as children of whoredoms, Ho 2:4,Isa 57:3. Now, if they meant that they were not the posterity of idolaters, the allegation was false, for no nation was more addicted to idolatry than the Jews before the captivity; if they meant no more than that they themselves were not idolaters, what then? A man may be free from idolatry, and yet perish in another iniquity, and be shut out of Abraham's covenant. If thou commit no idolatry (apply it to this spiritual fornication), yet if thou kill thou art become a transgressor of the covenant. A rebellious prodigal son will be disinherited, though he be not born of fornication.

[2.] They boast themselves to be true worshippers of the true God. We have not many fathers, as the heathens had, gods many and lords many, and yet were without God, as filius populi--a son of the people, has many fathers and yet none certain; no, the Lord our God is one Lord and one Father, and therefore it is well with us. Note, Those flatter themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls, who imagine that their professing the true religion and worshipping the true God will save them, though they worship not God in spirit and in truth, nor are true to their profession. Now our Saviour gives a full answer to this fallacious plea (Joh 8:42,43), and proves, by two arguments, that they had no right to call God Father.

They did not love Christ: If God were your Father, you would love me. He had disproved their relation to Abraham by their going about to kill him (Joh 8:40), but here he disproves their relation to God by their not loving and owning him. A man may pass for a child of Abraham if he do not appear an enemy to Christ by gross sin; but he cannot approve himself a child of God unless he be a faithful friend and follower of Christ. Note, All that have God for their Father have a true love to Jesus Christ, and esteem of his person, a grateful sense of his love, a sincere affection to his cause and kingdom, a complacency in the salvation wrought out by him and in

the method and terms of it, and a care to keep his commandments, which is the surest evidence of our love to him. We are here in a state of probation, upon our trial how we will conduct ourselves towards our Maker, and accordingly it will be with us in the state of retribution. God has taken various methods to prove us, and this was one: he sent his Son into the world, with sufficient proofs of his sonship and mission, concluding that all that called him Father would kiss his Son, and bid him welcome who was the first-born among many brethren; see 1Jo 5:1. By this our adoption will be proved or disproved--Did we love Christ, or no? If any man do not, he is so far from being a child of God that he is anathema, accursed, 1Co 16:22. Now our Saviour proves that if they were God's children they would love him; for, saith he, I proceeded forth and came from God.

They will love him; for,

1. He was the Son of God: I proceeded forth from God. Exelthon this means his divine exeleusis, or origin from the Father, by the communication of the divine essence, and also the union of the divine logos to his human nature; so Dr. Whitby. Now this could not but recommend him to the affections of all that were born of God. Christ is called the beloved, because, being the beloved of the Father, he is certainly the beloved of all the saints, Eph 1:6.

2. He was sent of God, came from him as an ambassador to the world of mankind. He did not come of himself, as the false prophets, who had not either their mission or their message from God, Jer 23:21. Observe the emphasis he lays upon this: I came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. He had both his credentials and his instructions from God; he came to gather together in one the children of God (Joh 11:51), to bring many sons to glory, Heb 2:10. And would not all God's children embrace with both arms a messenger sent from their Father on such errands? But these Jews made it appear that they were nothing akin to God, by their want of affection to Jesus Christ.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

They did not understand him. It was a sign they did not belong to God's family that they did not understand the language and dialect of the family:

You do not understand my speech (Joh 8:43), ten lalian ten emen. Christ's speech was divine and heavenly, but intelligible enough to those that were acquainted with the voice of Christ in the Old Testament. Those that had made the word of the Creator familiar to them needed no other key to the dialect of the Redeemer; and yet these Jews make strange of the doctrine of Christ, and find knots in it, and I know not what stumbling stones. Could a Galilean be known by his speech? An Ephraimite by his sibboleth? And would any have the confidence to call God Father to whom the Son of God was a barbarian, even when he spoke the will of God in the words of the Spirit of God? Note, Those who are not acquainted with the divine speech have reason to fear that they are strangers to the divine nature.

Christ spoke the words of God (Joh 3:34) in the dialect of the kingdom of God; and yet they, who pretended to belong to the kingdom, understood not the idioms and properties of it, but like strangers, and rude ones too, ridiculed it. And the reason why they did not understand Christ's speech made the matter much worse: Even because you cannot hear my word, that is, "You cannot persuade yourselves to hear it attentively, impartially, and without prejudice, as it should be heard." The meaning of this cannot is an obstinate will not; as the Jews could not hear Stephen (Ac 7:57) nor Paul, Ac 23:22.

Note, The rooted antipathy of men's corrupt hearts to the doctrine of Christ is the true reason of their ignorance of it, and of their errors and mistakes about it. They do not like it nor love it, and therefore they will not understand it; like Peter, who pretended he knew not what the damsel said (Mt 26:70), when in truth he knew not what to say to it. You cannot hear my words, for you have stopped your ears (Ps 58:4,5), and God, in a way of righteous judgment, has made your ears heavy, Isa 6:10.

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Having thus disproved their relation both to Abraham and to God, he comes next to tell them plainly whose children they were: You are of your father the devil, Joh 8:44. If they were not God's children, they were the devil's, for God and Satan divide the world of mankind; the devil is

therefore said to work in the children of disobedience, Eph 2:2. All wicked people are the devil's children, children of Belial (2Co 6:15), the serpent's seed (Ge 3:15), children of the wicked one, Mt 13:38. They partake of his nature, bear his image, obey his commands, and follow his example. Idolaters said to a stock, Thou art our father, Jer 2:27.

This is a high charge, and sounds very harsh and horrid, that any of the children of men, especially the church's children, should be called children of the devil, and therefore our Saviour fully proves it.

1. By a general argument: The lusts of your father you will do, thelete poiein.

(a) "You do the devil's lusts, the lusts which he would have you to fulfil; you gratify and please him, and comply with his temptation, and are led captive by him at his will: nay, you do those lusts which the devil himself fulfils." Fleshly lusts and worldly lusts the devil tempts men to; but, being a spirit, he cannot fulfil them himself. The peculiar lusts of the devil are spiritual wickedness; the lusts of the intellectual powers, and their corrupt reasonings; pride and envy, and wrath and malice; enmity to that which is good, and enticing others to that which is evil; these are lusts which the devil fulfils, and those who are under the dominion of these lusts resemble the devil, as the child does the parent. The more there is of contemplation, and contrivance, and secret complacency, in sin, the more it resembles the lusts of the devil.

(b) You will do the devil's lusts. The more there is of the will in these lusts, the more there is of the devil in them. When sin is committed of choice and not by surprise, with pleasure and not with reluctancy, when it is persisted in with a daring presumption and a desperate resolution, like theirs that said, We have loved strangers and after them we will go, then the sinner will do the devil's lusts. "The lusts of your father you delight to do;" so Dr. Hammond; they are rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel.

2. By two particular instances, wherein they manifestly resembled the devil--murder and lying. The devil is an enemy to life, because God is the

God of life and life is the happiness of man; and an enemy to truth, because God is the God of truth and truth is the bond of human society.

(a) He was a murderer from the beginning, not from his own beginning, for he was created an angel of light, and had a first estate which was pure and good, but from the beginning of his apostasy, which was soon after the creation of man. He was anthropoktonos--homicida, a man-slayer.

[1.] He was a hater of man, and so in affection an disposition a murderer of him. He has his name, Satan, from sitnah--hatred. He maligned God's image upon man, envied his happiness, and earnestly desired his ruin, was an avowed enemy to the whole race.

[2.] He was man's tempter to that sin which brought death into the world, and so he was effectually the murderer of all mankind, which in Adam had but one neck. He was a murderer of souls, deceived them into sin, and by it slew them (Ro 7:11), poisoned man with the forbidden fruit, and, to aggravate the matter, made him his own murderer. Thus he was not only at the beginning, but from the beginning, which intimates that thus he has been ever since; as he began, so he continues, the murderer of men by his temptations. The great tempter is the great destroyer. The Jews called the devil the angel of death.

[3.] He was the first wheel in the first murder that ever was committed by Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, 1Jo 3:12. If the devil had not been very strong in Cain, he could not have done such an unnatural thing as to kill his own brother. Cain killing his brother by the instigation of the devil, the devil is called the murderer, which does not speak Cain's personal guilt the less, but the devil's the more, whose torments, we have reason to think, will be the greater, when the time comes, for all that wickedness into which he has drawn men. See what reason we have to stand upon our guard against the wiles of the devil, and never to hearken to him (for he is a murderer, and certainly aims to do us mischief, even when he speaks fair), and to wonder that he who is the murderer of the children of men should yet be, by their own consent, so much their master. Now herein these Jews were followers of him, and were murderers, like him; murderers of souls, which they led blindfold into the

ditch, and made the children of hell; sworn enemies of Christ, and now ready to be his betrayers and murderers, for the same reason that Cain killed Abel. These Jews were that seed of the serpent that were to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman; Now you seek to kill me.

(b) He was a liar. A lie is opposed to truth (1Jo 2:21), and accordingly the devil is here described to be,

[1.] An enemy to truth, and therefore to Christ. First, He is a deserter, from the truth; he abode not in the truth, did not continue in the purity and rectitude of his nature wherein he was created, but left his first state; when he degenerated from goodness, he departed from truth, for his apostasy was founded in a lie. The angels were the hosts of the Lord; those that fell were not true to their commander and sovereign, they were not to be trusted, being charged with folly and defection, Job 4:18. By the truth here we may understand the revealed will of God concerning the salvation of man by Jesus Christ, the truth which Christ was now preaching, and which the Jews opposed; herein they did like their father the devil, who, seeing the honour put upon the human nature in the first Adam, and foreseeing the much greater honour intended in the second Adam, would not be reconciled to that counsel of God, nor stand in the truth concerning it, but, from a spirit of pride and envy, set himself to resist it, and to thwart the designs of it; and so did these Jews here, as his children and agents. Secondly, He is destitute of the truth: There is no truth in him. His interest in the world is supported by lies and falsehoods, and there is no truth, nothing you can confide in, in him, nor in any thing he says or does. The notions he propagates concerning good and evil are false and erroneous, his proofs are lying wonders, his temptations are all cheats; he has great knowledge of the truth, but having no affection to it, but on the contrary being a sworn enemy to it, he is said to have no truth in him.

[2.] He is a friend and patron of lying: When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own. Three things are here said of the devil with reference to the sin of lying:--

First, That he is a liar; his oracles were lying oracles, his prophets lying prophets, and the images in which he was worshipped teachers of lies. He tempted our first parents with a downright lie. All his temptations are carried on by lies, calling evil good and good evil, and promising impunity in sin; he knows them to be lies, and suggests them with an intention to deceive, and so to destroy. When he now contradicted the gospel, in the scribes and Pharisees, it was by lies; and when afterwards he corrupted it, in the man of sin, it was by strong delusions, and a great complicated lie.

Secondly, That when he speaks a lie he speaks of his own, ek ton idion. It is the proper idiom of his language; of his own, not of God; his Creator never put it into him. When men speak a lie they borrow it from the devil, Satan fills their hearts to lie (Ac 5:3); but when the devil speaks a lie the model of it is of his own framing, the motives to it are from himself, which bespeaks the desperate depth of wickedness into which those apostate spirits are sunk; as in their first defection they had no tempter, so their sinfulness is still their own.

Thirdly, That he is the father of it, autou.

1. He is the father of every lie; not only of the lies which he himself suggests, but of those which others speak; he is the author and founder of all lies. When men speak lies, they speak from him, and as his mouth; they come originally from him, and bear his image.

2. He is the father of every liar; so it may be understood. God made men with a disposition to truth. It is congruous to reason and natural light, to the order of our faculties and the laws of society, that we should speak truth; but the devil, the author of sin, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, has so corrupted the nature of man that the wicked are said to be estranged from the womb, speaking lies (Ps 58:3); he has taught them with their tongues to use deceit, Ro 3:13. He is the father of liars, who begat them, who trained them up in the way of lying, whom they resemble and obey, and with whom all liars shall have their portion for ever.

45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

Christ, having thus proved all murderers and all liars to be the devil's children, leaves it to the consciences of his hearers to say, Thou art the man. But he comes in the Joh 8:45-58 to assist them in the application of it to themselves; he does not call them liars, but shows them that they were no friends to truth, and therein resembled him who abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Two things he charges upon them:--

1. That they would not believe the word of truth (Joh 8:45), hoti ten aletheian lego, ou pisteuete moi.

Two ways it may be taken;--

[1.] "Though I tell you the truth, yet you will not believe me (hoti), that I do so." Though he gave abundant proof of his commission from God, and his affection to the children of men, yet they would not believe that he told them the truth. Now was truth fallen in the street, Isa 59:14,15. The greatest truths with some gained not the least credit; for they rebelled against the light, Job 24:13. Or,

[2.] Because I tell you the truth (so we read it) therefore you believe me not. They would not receive him, nor entertain him as a prophet, because he told them some unpleasing truths which they did not care to hear, told them the truth concerning themselves and their own case, showed them their faces in a glass that would not flatter them; therefore they would not believe a word he said. Miserable is the case of those to whom the light of divine truth is become a torment.

46 Which of you convinceth me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

Now, to show them the unreasonableness of their infidelity, he condescends to put the matter to this fair issue, Joh 8:46. He and they being contrary, either he was in an error or they were. Now take it either way.

[1.] If he were in an error, why did they not convince him? The falsehood of pretended prophets was discovered either by the ill tendency of their doctrines (De 13:2), or by the ill tenour of their conversation: You shall

know them by their fruits; but (saith Christ) which of you, you of the sanhedrim, that take upon you to judge of prophets, which of you convinceth me of sin? They accused him of some of the worst of crimes--gluttony, drunkenness, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, confederacy with Satan, and what not. But their accusations were malicious groundless calumnies, and such as every one that knew him knew to be utterly false. When they had done their utmost by trick and artifice, subornation and perjury, to prove some crime upon him, the very judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him. The sin he here challenges them to convict him of is, First, An inconsistent doctrine. They had heard his testimony; could they show any thing in it absurd or unworthy to be believed, any contradiction either of himself or of the scriptures, or any corruption of truth or manners insinuated by his doctrine? Joh 18:20. Or, Secondly, An incongruous conversation: "Which of you can justly charge me with any thing, in word or deed, unbecoming a prophet?" See the wonderful condescension of our Lord Jesus, that he demanded not credit any further than the allowed motives of credibility supported his demands. See Jer 2:5,31,Mic 6:3. Ministers may hence learn,

1. To walk so circumspectly as that it may not be in the power of their most strict observers to convince them of sin, that the ministry be not blamed. The only way not to be convicted of sin is not to sin.

2. To be willing to admit a scrutiny; though we are confident in many things that we are in the right, yet we should be willing to have it tried whether we be not in the wrong. See Job 6:24.

[2.] If they were in an error, why were they not convinced by him? "If I say the truth, why do you not believe me? If you cannot convince me of error, you must own that I say the truth, and why do you not then give me credit? Why will you not deal with me upon trust?" Note, If men would but enquire into the reason of their infidelity, and examine why they do not believe that which they cannot gainsay, they would find themselves reduced to such absurdities as they could not but be ashamed of; for it will be found that the reason why we believe not in Jesus Christ is because we are not willing to part with our sins, and deny ourselves, and serve God faithfully; that we are

not of the Christian religion, because we would not indeed be of any, and unbelief of our Redeemer resolves itself into a downright rebellion against our Creator.

47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Another thing charged upon them is that they would not hear the words of God (Joh 8:47), which further shows how groundless their claim of relation to God was. Here is,

(1.) A doctrine laid down: He that is of God heareth God's words; that is,

[1.] He is willing and ready to hear them, is sincerely desirous to know what the mind of God is, and cheerfully embraces whatever he knows to be so. God's words have such an authority over, and such an agreeableness with all that are born of God, that they meet them, as the child Samuel did, with, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Let the word of the Lord come.

[2.] He apprehends and discerns them, he so hears them as to perceive the voice of God in them, which the natural man does not, 1Co 2:14. He that is of God is soon aware of the discoveries he makes of himself of the nearness of his name (Ps 75:1), as they of the family know the master's tread, and the master's knock, and open to him immediately (Lu 12:36), as the sheep know the voice of their shepherd from that of a stranger, Joh 10:4,5,So 2:8.

(2.) The application of this doctrine, for the conviction of these unbelieving Jews: You therefore hear them not; that is, "You heed not, you understand not, you believe not, the words of God, nor care to hear them, because you are not of God. Your being thus deaf and dead to the words of God is a plain evidence that you are not of God." It is in his word that God manifests himself and is present among us; we are therefore reckoned to be well or ill affected to his word; see 2Co 4:4,1Jo 4:6. Or, their not being of God was the reason why they did not profitably hear the words of God, which Christ spoke; they did not understand and believe him, not because the things themselves were obscure or wanted evidence, but because the hearers were

not of God, were not born again. If the word of the kingdom do not bring forth fruit, the blame is to be laid upon the soil, not upon the seed, as appears by the parable of the sower, Mt 13:3.

Before Abraham Was, I Am

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

The malice of hell breaking out in the base language which the unbelieving Jews gave to our Lord Jesus. Hitherto they had cavilled at his doctrine, and had made invidious remarks upon it; but, having shown themselves uneasy when he complained (Joh 8:43,47) that they would not hear him, now at length they fall to downright railing, Joh 8:48. They were not the common people, but, as it should seem, the scribes and Pharisees, the men of consequence, who, when they saw themselves convicted of an obstinate infidelity, scornfully turned off the conviction with this: Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? See here, see it and wonder, see it and tremble,

1. What was the blasphemous character commonly given of our Lord Jesus among the wicked Jews, to which they refer.

(a) That he was a Samaritan, that is, that he was an enemy to their church and nation, one that they hated and could not endure. Thus they exposed him to the ill will of the people, with whom you could not put a man into a worse name than to call him a Samaritan. If he had been a Samaritan, he had been punishable, by the beating of the rebels (as they called it), for coming into the temple. They had often enough called him a Galilean--a mean man; but as if that were not enough, though it contradicted the other, they will have him a Samaritan--a bad man. The Jews to this day call the Christians, in reproach, Cuthæi-Samaritans. Note, Great endeavours have in all ages been used to make good people odious by putting them under black characters, and it is easy to run that down with a crowd and a cry which is once put into an ill name. Perhaps because Christ justly inveighed against the pride and tyranny of the priests and elders, they hereby suggest that he aimed at the ruin of their church, in aiming at its reformation, and was falling away to the Samaritans.

(b) That he had a devil. Either,

[1.] That he was in league with the devil. Having reproached his doctrine as tending to Samaritanism, here they reflect upon his miracles as done in combination with Beelzebub. Or, rather

[2.] That he was possessed with a devil, that he was a melancholy man, whose brain was clouded, or a mad man, whose brain was heated, and that which he said was no more to be believed than the extravagant rambles of a distracted man, or one in a delirium. Thus the divine revelation of those things which are above the discovery of reason have been often branded with the charge of enthusiasm, and the prophet was called a mad fellow, 2Ki 9:11,Ho 9:7. The inspiration of the Pagan oracles and prophets was indeed a frenzy, and those that had it were for the time beside themselves; but that which was truly divine was not so. Wisdom is justified of her children, as wisdom indeed.

2. How they undertook to justify this character, and applied it to the present occasion: Say we not well that thou art so? One would think that his excellent discourses should have altered their opinion of him, and have made them recant; but, instead of this, their hearts were more hardened and their prejudices confirmed. They value themselves on their enmity to Christ, as if they had never spoken better than when they spoke the worst they could of Jesus Christ. Those have arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness who avow their impiety, repeat what they should retract, and justify themselves in that for which they ought to condemn themselves. It is bad to say and do ill, but it is worse to stand to it; I do well to be angry. When Christ spoke with so much boldness against the sins of the great men, and thereby incensed them against him, those who were sensible of no interest but what is secular and sensual concluded him beside himself, for they thought none but a madman would lose his preferment, and hazard his life, for his religion and conscience.

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me.

1. He denies their charge against him: I have not a devil; as Paul (Ac 26:25), I am not mad. The imputation is unjust; "I am neither actuated by a devil,

nor in compact with one;" and this he evidenced by what he did against the devil's kingdom. He takes no notice of their calling him a Samaritan, because it was a calumny that disproved itself, it was a personal reflection, and not worth taking notice of: but saying he had a devil reflected on his commission, and therefore he answered that. St. Augustine gives this gloss upon his not saying any thing to their calling him a Samaritan--that he was indeed that good Samaritan spoken of in the parable, Lu 10:33.

2. He asserts the sincerity of his own intentions: But I honour my Father. They suggested that he took undue honours to himself, and derogated from the honour due to God only, both which he denies here, in saying that he made it his business to honour his Father, and him only. It also proves that he had not a devil; for, if he had, he would not honour God. Note, Those who can truly way that they make it their constant care to honour God are sufficiently armed against the censures and reproaches of men.

3. He complains of the wrong they did him by their calumnies: You do dishonour me. By this it appears that, as man, he had a tender sense of the disgrace and indignity done him; reproach was a sword in his bones, and yet he underwent it for our salvation. It is the will of God that all men should honour the Son, yet there are many that dishonour him; such a contradiction is there in the carnal mind to the will of God. Christ honoured his Father so as never man did, and yet was himself dishonoured so as never man was; for, though God has promised that those who honour him he will honour, he never promised that men should honour them.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

He clears himself from the imputation of vain glory, in saying this concerning himself, Joh 8:50.

See here,

(a) His contempt of worldly honour: I seek not mine own glory. He did not aim at this in what he had said of himself or against his persecutors; he did not court the applause of men, nor covet preferment in the world, but industriously declined both. He did not seek his own glory distinct from his Father's, nor had any separate interest of his own. For men to search their own glory is not glory indeed (Pr 25:27), but rather their shame to be so

much out in their aim. This comes in here as a reason why Christ made so light of their reproaches: "You do dishonour me, but cannot disturb me, shall not disquiet me, for I seek not my own glory." Note, Those who are dead to men's praise can safely bear their contempt.

(b) His comfort under worldly dishonour: There is one that seeketh and judgeth. In two things Christ made it appear that he sought not his own glory; and here he tells us what satisfied him as to both.

[1.] He did not court men's respect, but was indifferent to it, and in reference to this he saith, "There is one that seeketh, that will secure and advance, my interest in the esteem and affections of the people, while I am in no care about it." Note, God will seek their honour that do not seek their own; for before honour is humility.

[2.] He did not revenge men's affronts, but was unconcerned at them, and in reference to this he saith, "There is one that judgeth, that will vindicate my honour, and severely reckon with those that trample upon it." Probably he refers here to the judgments that were coming upon the nation of the Jews for the indignities they did to the Lord Jesus. See Ps 37:13-15. I heard not, for thou wilt hear. If we undertake to judge for ourselves, whatever damage we sustain, our recompence is in our own hands; but if we be, as we ought to be, humble appellants and patient expectants, we shall find, to our comfort, there is one that judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

The doctrine of the immortality of believers laid down, Joh 8:51. It is ushered in with the usual solemn preface, Verily, verily, I say unto you, which commands both attention and assent, and this is what he says, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death.

Here we have,

1 The character of a believer: he is one that keeps the sayings of the Lord Jesus, ton logon ton emon--my word; that word of mine which I have delivered to you; this we must not only receive, but keep; not only have, but

hold. We must keep it in mind and memory, keep it in love and affection, so keep it as in nothing to violate it or go contrary to it, keep it without spot (1Ti 6:14), keep it as a trust committed to us, keep in it as our way, keep to it as our rule.

2 The privilege of a believer: He shall by no means see death for ever; so it is in the original. Not as if the bodies of believers were secured from the stroke of death. No, even the children of the Most High must die like men, and the followers of Christ have been, more than other men, in deaths often, and killed all the day long; how then is this promise made good that they shall not see death?

Answer,

(1.) The property of death is so altered to them that they do not see it as death, they do not see the terror of death, it is quite taken off; their sight does not terminate in death, as theirs does who live by sense; no, they look so clearly, so comfortably, through death, and beyond death, and are so taken up with their state on the other side death, that they overlook death, and see it not.

(2.) The power of death is so broken that though there is no remedy, but they must see death, yet they shall not see death for ever, shall not be always shut up under its arrests, the day will come when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

(3.) They are perfectly delivered from eternal death, shall not be hurt of the second death. That is the death especially meant here, that death which is for ever, which is opposed to everlasting life; this they shall never see, for they shall never come into condemnation; they shall have their everlasting lot where there will be no more death, where they cannot die any more, Lu 20:36. Though now they cannot avoid seeing death, and tasting it too, yet they shall shortly be there where it will be seen no more for ever, Ex 14:13.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

"Thou art now self-convicted; only a demoniac could speak so; the most illustrious of our fathers are dead, and Thou promisest exemption from death to anyone who will keep Thy saying! pray, who art Thou?"

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

In his answer he insists not upon his own testimony concerning himself, but waives it as not sufficient nor conclusive (Joh 8:54): If I honour myself, my honour is nothing, ean ego doxazo--if I glorify myself. Note, Self-honour is no honour; and the affectation of glory is both the forfeiture and the defeasance of it: it is not glory (Pr 25:27), but so great a reproach that there is no sin which men are more industrious to hide than this; even he that most affects praise would not be thought to do it. Honour of our own creating is a mere chimera, has nothing in it, and therefore is called vain-glory. Self-admirers are self-deceivers. Our Lord Jesus was not one that honoured himself, as they represented him; he was crowned by him who is the fountain of honour, and glorified not himself to be made a high priest, Heb 5:4,5.

He refers himself to his Father, God; and to their father, Abraham.

To his Father, God: It is my Father that honoureth me. By this he means,

[1.] That he derived from his Father all the honour he now claimed; he had commanded them to believe in him, to follow him, and to keep his word, all which put an honour upon him; but it was the Father that laid help upon him, that lodged all fulness in him, that sanctified him, and sealed him, and sent him into the world to receive all the honours due to the Messiah, and this justified him in all these demands of respect.

[2.] That he depended upon his Father for all the honour he further looked for. He courted not the applauses of the age, but despised them; for his eye

and heart were upon the glory which the Father had promised him, and which he had with the Father before the world was.

First, He here takes occasion to show the reason of their incredulity, notwithstanding this testimony--and this was their unacquaintedness with God; as if he had said, "But why should I talk to you of my Father's honouring me, when he is one you know nothing of? You say of him that he is your God, yet you have not known him." Here observe,

a. The profession they made of relation to God: "You say that he is your God, the God you have chosen, and are in covenant with; you say that you are Israel; but all are not so indeed that are of Israel," Ro 9:6. Note, Many pretend to have an interest in God, and say that he is theirs, who yet have no just cause to say so. Those who called themselves the temple of the Lord, having profaned the excellency of Jacob, did but trust in lying words. What will it avail us to say, He is our God, if we be not in sincerity his people, nor such as he will own? Christ mentions here their profession of relation to God, as that which was an aggravation of their unbelief. All people will honour those whom their God honours; but these Jews, who said that the Lord was their God, studied how to put the utmost disgrace upon one upon whom their God put honour. Note, The Profession we make of a covenant relation to God, and an interest in him, if it be not improved by us will be improved against us.

b. Their ignorance of him, and estrangement from him, notwithstanding this profession: Yet you have not known him.

(1) You know him not at all. These Pharisees were so taken up with the study of their traditions concerning things foreign and trifling that they never minded the most needful and useful knowledge; like the false prophets of old, who caused people to forget God's name by their dreams, Jer 23:27.

(2) You know him not aright, but mistake concerning him; and this is as bad as not knowing him at all, or worse. Men may be able to dispute subtly concerning God, and yet may think him such a one as themselves, and not know him. You say that he is yours, and it is natural to us to desire to know

our own, yet you know him not. Note, There are many who claim-kindred to God who yet have no acquaintance with him. It is only the name of God which they have learned to talk of, and to hector with; but for the nature of God, his attributes and perfections, and relations to his creatures, they know nothing of the matter; we speak this to their shame, 1Co 15:34. Multitudes satisfy themselves, but deceive themselves, with a titular relation to an unknown God. This Christ charges upon the Jews here,

[a.] To show how vain and groundless their pretensions of relation to God were. "You say that he is yours, but you give yourselves the lie, for it is plain that you do not know him;" and we reckon that a cheat is effectually convicted if it be found that he is ignorant of the persons he pretends alliance to.

[b.] To show the true reason why they were not wrought upon by Christ's doctrine and miracles. They knew not God; and therefore perceived not the image of God, nor the voice of God in Christ. Note, The reason why men receive not the gospel of Christ is because they have not the knowledge of God. Men submit not to the righteousness of Christ because they are ignorant of God's righteousness, Ro 10:3. They that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ, are put together, 2Th 1:8.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

That is, "Abraham having received a promise, that the Messias should come of his seed, he exceedingly rejoiced to see the day of my coming in the flesh, though afar off, with the eye of his faith, and in a figure, in his sacrificed son Isaac: and this sight of his faith was so transporting, that he leaped for joy."
Learn hence, That a strong faith gives such a clear sight of Christ (though at a distance) as produceth an holy delight and rejoicing in him.

Christ refers them to their father, whom they boasted so much of a relation to, and that was Abraham, and this closes the discourse.

Christ asserts Abraham's prospect of him, and respect to him: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad, Joh 8:56. And

by this he proves that he was not at all out of the way when he made himself greater than Abraham. Two things he here speaks of as instances of that patriarch's respect to the promised Messiah:--

First, The ambition he had to see his day: He rejoiced, egalliasto--he leaped at it. The word, though it commonly signifies rejoicing, must here signify a transport of desire rather than of joy, for otherwise the latter part of Joh 8:56 would be a tautology; he saw it, and was glad. He reached out, or stretched himself forth, that he might see my day; as Zaccheus, that ran before, and climbed the tree, to see Jesus. The notices he had received of the Messiah to come had raised in him an expectation of something great, which he earnestly longed to know more of. The dark intimation of that which is considerable puts men upon enquiry, and makes them earnestly ask Who? and What? and Where? and When? and How? And thus the prophets of the Old Testament, having a general idea of a grace that should come, searched diligently (1Pe 1:10), and Abraham was as industrious herein as any of them. God told him of a land that he would give his posterity, and of the wealth and honour he designed them (Ge 15:14); but he never leaped thus to see that day, as he did to see the day of the Son of man. He could not look with so much indifferency upon the promised seed as he did upon the promised land; in that he was, but to the other he could not be, contentedly a stranger.

Note, Those who rightly know any thing of Christ cannot but be earnestly desirous to know more of him. Those who discern the dawning of the light of the Sun of righteousness cannot but wish to see his rising. The mystery of redemption is that which angels desire to look into, much more should we, who are more immediately concerned in it. Abraham desired to see Christ's day, though it was at a great distance; but this degenerate seed of his discerned not his day, nor bade it welcome when it came. The appearing of Christ, which gracious souls love and long for, carnal hearts dread and loathe.

Secondly, The satisfaction he had in what he did see of it: He saw it, and was glad. Observe here,

1. How God gratified the pious desire of Abraham; he longed to see Christ's day, and he saw it. Though he saw it not so plainly, and fully, and distinctly as we now see it under the gospel, yet he saw something of it, more afterwards than he did at first. Note, To him that has, and to him that asks, shall be given; to him that uses and improves what he has, and that desires and prays for more of the knowledge of Christ, God will give more. But how did Abraham see Christ's day?

(a.) Some understand it of the sight he had of it in the other world. The separate soul of Abraham, when the veil of flesh was rent, saw the mysteries of the kingdom of God in heaven. Calvin mentions this sense of it, and does not much disallow it. Note, The longings of gracious souls after Jesus Christ will be fully satisfied when they come to heaven, and not till then. But,

(b.) It is more commonly understood of some sight he had of Christ's day in this world. They that received not the promises, yet saw them afar off, Heb 11:13. Balaam saw Christ, but not now, not nigh. There is room to conjecture that Abraham had some vision of Christ and his day, for his own private satisfaction, which is not, nor must be, recorded in his story, like that of Daniel's, which must be shut up, and sealed unto the time of the end, Da 12:4. Christ knew what Abraham saw better than Moses did. But there are divers things recorded in which Abraham saw more of that which he longed to see than he did when the promise was first made to him. He saw in Melchizedek one made like unto the Son of God, and a priest for ever; he saw an appearance of Jehovah, attended with two angels, in the plains of Mamre. In the prevalency of his intercession for Sodom he saw a specimen of Christ's intercession; in the casting out of Ishmael, and the establishment of the covenant with Isaac, he saw a figure of the gospel day, which is Christ's day; for these things were an allegory. In offering Isaac, and the ram instead of Isaac, he saw a double type of the great sacrifice; and his calling the place Jehovah-jireh--It shall be seen, intimates that he saw something more in it than others did, which time would produce; and in making his servant put his hand under his thigh, when he swore, he had a regard to the Messiah.

2. How Abraham entertained these discoveries of Christ's day, and bade them welcome: He saw, and was glad. He was glad of what he saw of God's

favour to himself, and glad of what he foresaw of the mercy God had in store for the world. Perhaps this refers to Abraham's laughing when God assured him of a son by Sarah (Ge 17:16,17), for that was not a laughter of distrust as Sarah's but of joy; in that promise he saw Christ's day, and it filled him with joy unspeakable. Thus he embraced the promises. Note, A believing sight of Christ and his day will put gladness into the heart. No joy like the joy of faith; we are never acquainted with true pleasure till we are acquainted with Christ.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

The Jews cavil at this, and reproach him for it (Joh 8:57): Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Here, First, They suppose that if Abraham saw him and his day he also had seen Abraham, which yet was not a necessary innuendo, but this turn of his words would best serve to expose him; yet it was true that Christ had seen Abraham, and had talked with him as a man talks with his friend. Secondly, They suppose it a very absurd thing for him to pretend to have seen Abraham, who was dead so many ages before he was born. The state of the dead is an invisible state; but here they ran upon the old mistake, understanding that corporally which Christ spoke spiritually. Now this gave them occasion to despise his youth, and to upbraid him with it, as if he were but of yesterday, and knew nothing: Thou art not yet fifty years old. They might as well have said, Thou art not forty; for he was now but thirty-two or thirty-three years old. As to this, Irenæus, one of the first fathers, with this passage supports the tradition which he says he had from some that had conversed with St. John, that our Saviour lived to be fifty years old, which he contends for, Advers. Hæres. lib. 2, cap. 39, 40. See what little credit is to be given to tradition; and, as to this here, the Jews spoke at random; some year they would mention, and therefore pitched upon one that they thought he was far enough short of; he did not look to be forty, but they were sure he could not be fifty, much less contemporary with Abraham. Old age is reckoned to begin at fifty (Nu 4:47), so that they meant no more than this, "Thou art not to be reckoned an old man; many of us are much thy seniors, and yet pretend not to have seen Abraham." Some think that his countenance was so altered, with grief and watching, that, together with the gravity of his aspect, it made him look like a man of fifty years old: his visage was so marred, Isa 52:14.

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Verily, verily. This is an expression used only in John. It is a strong affirmation denoting particularly the great importance of what was about to be affirmed. Jn 3:5.

Before Abraham was. Before Abraham lived.

I am. In Ps 90:2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Applied to God, it denotes continued existence without respect to time, so far as he is concerned. We divide time into the past, the present, and the future. The expression, applied to God, denotes that he does not measure his existence in this manner, but that the word by which we express the present denotes his continued and unchanging existence. Hence he assumes it as his name, "I AM," and "I AM THAT I AM," Ex 3:14. Comp. Isa 44:6, 47:8. There is a remarkable similarity between the expression employed by Jesus in this place and that used in Exodus to denote the name of God. The manner in which Jesus used it would strikingly suggest the application of the same language to God. The question here was about his pre-existence.

The objection of the Jews was that he was not fifty years old, and could not, therefore, have seen Abraham. Jesus replied to that that he existed before Abraham. As in his human nature he was not yet fifty years old, and could not, as a man, have existed before Abraham, this declaration must be referred to another nature; and the passage proves that, while he was a man, he was also endowed with another nature existing before Abraham, and to which he applied the term (familiar to the Jews as expressive of the existence of God) I AM; and this declaration corresponds to the affirmation of John (Jn 1:1), that he was in the beginning with God, and was God. This affirmation of Jesus is one of the proofs on which John relies to prove that he was the Messiah (Jn 20:31), to establish which was the design of writing this book.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

This great word ended the dispute abruptly, and put a period to it: they could bear to hear no more from him, and he needed to say no more to them,

having witnessed this good confession, which was sufficient to support all his claims. One would think that Christ's discourse, in which shone so much both of grace and glory, should have captivated them all; but their inveterate prejudice against the holy spiritual doctrine and law of Christ, which were so contrary to their pride and worldliness, baffled all the methods of conviction. Now was fulfilled that prophecy (Mal 3:1,2), that when the messenger of the covenant should come to his temple they would not abide the day of his coming, because he would be like a refiner's fire. Observe here,

First, How they were enraged at Christ for what he said: They took up stones to cast at him, Joh 8:59. Perhaps they looked upon him as a blasphemer, and such were indeed to be stoned (Le 24:16); but they must be first legally tried and convicted. Farewell justice and order if every man pretend to execute a law at his pleasure. Besides, they had said but just now that he was a distracted crack-brained man, and if so it was against all reason and equity to punish him as a malefactor for what he said. They took up stones. Dr. Lightfoot will tell you how they came to have stones so ready in the temple; they had workmen at this time repairing the temple, or making some additions, and the pieces of stone which they hewed off served for this purpose. See here the desperate power of sin and Satan in and over the children of disobedience. Who would think that ever there should be such wickedness as this in men, such an open and daring rebellion against one that undeniably proved himself to be the Son of God? Thus every one has a stone to throw at his holy religion, Ac 28:22.

Secondly, How he made his escape out of their hands. 1. He absconded; Jesus hid himself; ekrybe--he was hid, either by the crowd of those that wished well to him, to shelter him (he that ought to have been upon a throne, high and lifted up, is content to be lost in a crowd); or perhaps he concealed himself behind some of the walls or pillars of the temple (in the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me, Ps 27:5); or by a divine power, casting a mist before their eyes, he made himself invisible to them. When the wicked rise a man is hidden, a wise and good man, Pr 28:12,28. Not that Christ was afraid or ashamed to stand by what he had said, but his hour was not yet

come, and he would countenance the flight of his ministers and people in times of persecution, when they are called to it. The Lord hid Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer 36:26. 2. He departed, he went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, undiscovered, and so passed by. This was not a cowardly inglorious flight, nor such as argued either guilt or fear. It was foretold concerning him that he should not fail nor be discouraged, Isa 42:4. But,

(1.) It was an instance of his power over his enemies, and that they could do no more against him than he gave them leave to do; by which it appears that when afterwards he was taken in their pits he offered himself, Joh 10:18. They now thought they had made sure of him and yet he passed through the midst of them, either their eyes being blinded or their hands tied, and thus he left them to fume, like a lion disappointed of his prey.

(2.) It was an instance of his prudent provision for his own safety, when he knew that his work was not done, nor his testimony finished; thus he gave an example to his own rule, When they persecute you in one city flee to another; nay, if occasion be, to a wilderness, for so Elijah did (1Ki 19:3,4), and the woman, Re 12:6. When they took up loose stones to throw at Christ, he could have commanded the fixed stones, which did cry out of the wall against them, to avenge his cause, or the earth to open and swallow them up; but he chose to accommodate himself to the state he was in, to make the example imitable by the prudence of his followers, without a miracle.

(3.) It was a righteous deserting of those who (worse than the Gadarenes, who prayed him to depart) stoned him from among them. Christ will not long stay with those who bid him be gone. Christ did again visit the temple after this; as one loth to depart, he bade oft farewell; but at last he abandoned it for ever, and left it desolate. Christ now went through the midst of the Jews, and none of them courted his stay, nor stirred up himself to take hold of him, but were even content to let him go.

Note, God never forsakes any till they have first provoked him to withdraw, and will have none of him.

Note, Christ's departures from a church, or a particular soul, are often secret, and not soon taken notice of. As the kingdom of God comes not, so it goes

not, with observation. See Jdg 16:20. Samson wist not that the Lord was departed from him. Thus it was with these forsaken Jews, God left them, and they never missed him.

John-9

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

Jesus Heals the Man Born Blind

1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

The notice which our Lord Jesus took of the piteous case of this poor blind man (Joh 9:1): As Jesus passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth. The first words seem to refer to the last of the foregoing chapter, and countenance the opinion of those who in the harmony place this story immediately after that. There it was said, paregen--he passed by, and here, without so much as repeating him name (though our translators supply it) kai parago--and as he passed by.

1. Though the Jews had so basely abused him, both by word and deed gave him the highest provocation imaginable, yet he did not miss any opportunity of doing good among them, nor take up a resolution, as justly he might have done, never to have favoured them with any good offices. The cure of this blind man was a kindness to the public, enabling him to work for his living who before was a charge and burden to the neighbourhood. It is noble, and generous, and Christ-like, to be willing to serve the public, even when we are slighted and disobliged by them, or think ourselves so. Though he was in his flight from a threatening danger, and escaping for his life, yet he willingly halted and staid awhile to show mercy to this poor man. We make more haste than good speed when we out-run opportunities of doing good.

3. When the Pharisees drove Christ from them, he went to this poor blind beggar. Some of the ancients make this a figure of the bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles, who sat in darkness, when the Jews had rejected it, and driven it from them.

4. Christ took this poor blind man in his way, and cured him in transitu--as he passed by. Thus should we take occasions of doing good, even as we pass by, wherever we are.

Now,

(a) The condition of this poor man was very sad. He was blind, and had been so from his birth. If the light is sweet, how melancholy must it needs be for a man, all his days, to eat in darkness! He that is blind has no enjoyment of the light, but he that is born blind has no idea of it. Methinks such a one would give a great deal to have his curiosity satisfied with but one day's sight of light and colours, shapes and figures, though he were never to see them more. Why is the light of life given to one that is in this misery, that is deprived of the light of the sun, whose way is thus hid, and whom God hath thus hedged in? Job 3:20. Let us bless God that it was not our case. The eye is one of the most curious parts of the body, its structure exceedingly nice and fine. In the formation of animals, it is said to be the first part that appears distinctly discernible. What a mercy is it that there was no miscarriage in the making of ours! Christ cured many that were blind by disease or accident, but here he cured one that was born blind.

[1.] That he might give an instance of his power to help in the most desperate cases, and to relieve when none else can.

[2.] That he might give a specimen of the work of his grace upon the souls of sinners, which gives sight to those that were by nature blind.

(b) The compassions of our Lord Jesus towards him were very tender. He saw him; that is, he took cognizance of his case, and looked upon him with concern. When God is about to work deliverance, he is said to see the affliction; so Christ saw this poor man. Others saw him, but not as he did. This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him, and anticipated both his prayers and expectations with a surprising cure. Christ is often found of those that seek him not, nor see him, Isa 65:1. And, if we know or apprehend

any thing of Christ, it is because we were first known of him (Ga 4:9) and apprehended by him.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

The discourse between Christ and his disciples concerning this man. When he departed out of the temple they went along with him: for these were they that continued with him in his temptations, and followed him whithersoever he went; and they lost nothing by their adherence to him, but gained experience abundantly. Observe,

1 The question which the disciples put to their Master upon this blind man's case, Joh 9:2. When Christ looked upon him, they had an eye to him too; Christ's compassion should kindle ours. It is probable that Christ told them this poor man was born blind, or they knew it by common fame; but they did not move Christ to heal him. Instead of this, they started a very odd question concerning him: Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Now this question of theirs was,

(a) Uncharitably censorious. They take it for granted that this extraordinary calamity was the punishment of some uncommon wickedness, and that this man was a sinner above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem, Lu 13:4. For the barbarous people to infer, Surely this man is a murderer, was not so strange; but it was inexcusable in them, who knew the scriptures, who had read that all things come alike to all, and knew that it was adjudged in Job's case that the greatest sufferers are not therefore to be looked upon as the greatest sinners. The grace of repentance calls our own afflictions punishments, but the grace of charity calls the afflictions of others trials, unless the contrary is very evident.

(b) It was unnecessarily curious. Concluding this calamity to be inflicted for some very heinous crime, they ask, Who were the criminals, this man or his parents? And what was this to them? Or what good would it do them to know it? We are apt to be more inquisitive concerning other people's sins than concerning our own; whereas, it is more our concern to know wherefore God contends with us than wherefore he contends with others; for to judge ourselves is our sin. They enquire,

[1.] Whether this man was punished thus for some sin of his own, either committed or foreseen before his birth. Some think that the disciples were tainted with the Pythagorean notion of the pre-existence of souls, and their transmigration from one body to another. Was this man's soul condemned to the dungeon of this blind body to punish it for some great sin committed in another body which it had before animated? The Pharisees seem to have had the same opinion of his case when they said, Thou wast altogether born in sin (Joh 9:34), as if all those, and those only, were born in sin whom nature had stigmatized. Or,

[2.] Whether he was punished for the wickedness of his parents, which God sometimes visits upon the children. It is a good reason why parents should take heed of sin, lest their children smart for it when they are gone. Let not us thus be cruel to our own, as the ostrich in the wilderness. Perhaps the disciples asked this, not as believing that this was the punishment of some actual sin of his own or his parents, but Christ having intimated to another patient that his sin was the cause of this impotency (Joh 5:14), "Master," say they, "whose sin is the cause of this impotency?" Being at a loss what construction to put upon this providence, they desire to be informed. The equity of God's dispensations is always certain, for his righteousness is as the great mountains, but not always to be accounted for, for his judgments are a great deep.

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Christ's answer to this question. He was always apt to teach, and to rectify his disciples' mistakes.

He gives the reason of this poor man's blindness: "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but he was born blind, and has continued so to this day, that now at last the works of God should be made manifest in him," Joh 9:3. Here Christ, who perfectly knew the secret springs of the divine counsels, told them two things concerning such uncommon calamities:--

[1.] That they are not always inflicted as punishments of sin. The sinfulness of the whole race of mankind does indeed justify God in all the miseries of human life; so that those who have the least share of them must say that God is kind, and those who have the largest share must not

say that he is unjust; but many are made much more miserable than others in this life who are not at all more sinful. Not but that this man was a sinner, and his parents sinners, but is was not any uncommon guilt that God had an eye to in inflicting this upon him. Note, We must take heed of judging any to be great sinners merely because they are great sufferers, lest we be found, not only persecuting those whom God has smitten (Ps 69:26), but accusing those whom he has justified, and condemning those for whom Christ died, which is daring and dangerous, Ro 8:33,34.

[2.] That they are sometimes intended purely for the glory of God, and the manifesting of his works. God has a sovereignty over all his creatures and an exclusive right in them, and may make them serviceable to his glory in such a way as he thinks fit, in doing or suffering; and if God be glorified, either by us or in us, we were not made in vain. This man was born blind, and it was worth while for him to be so, and to continue thus long dark, that the works of God might be manifest in him.

That is, First, That the attributes of God might be made manifest in him: his justice in making sinful man liable to such grievous calamities; his ordinary power and goodness in supporting a poor man under such a grievous and tedious affliction, especially that his extraordinary power and goodness might be manifested in curing him. Note, The difficulties of providence, otherwise unaccountable, may be resolved into this--God intends in them to show himself, to declare his glory, to make himself to be taken notice of. Those who regard him not in the ordinary course of things are sometimes alarmed by things extraordinary. How contentedly then may a good man be a loser in his comforts, while he is sure that thereby God will be one way or other a gainer in his glory!

Secondly, That the counsels of God concerning the Redeemer might be manifested in him. He was born blind that our Lord Jesus might have the honour of curing him, and might therein prove himself sent of God to be the true light to the world. Thus the fall of man was permitted, and the blindness that followed it, that the works of God might be manifest in opening the eyes of the blind. It was now a great while since this man was born blind, and yet it never appeared till now why he was so.

Note, The intentions of Providence commonly do not appear till a great while after the event, perhaps many years after. The sentences in the book of providence are sometimes long, and you must read a great way before you can apprehend the sense of them.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

He gives the reason of his own forwardness and readiness to help and heal him, Joh 9:4,5. It was not for ostentation, but in pursuance of his undertaking: I must work the works of him that sent me (of which this is one), while it is day, and working time; the night cometh, the period of that day, when no man can work. This is not only a reason shy Christ was constant in doing good to the souls and bodies of men, but why particularly he did this, though it was the sabbath day, on which works of necessity might be done, and he proves this to be a work of necessity.

[1.] It was his Father's will: I must work the works of him that sent me. Note, First, The Father, when he sent his Son into the world, gave him work to do; he did not come into the world to take state, but to do business; whom God sends he employs, for he sends none to be idle. Secondly, The works Christ had to do were the works of him that sent him, not only appointed by him, but done for him; he was a worker together with God. Thirdly, He was pleased to lay himself under the strongest obligations to do the business he was sent about: I must work. He engaged his heart, in the covenant of redemption, to draw near, and approach to God as Mediator, Jer 30:21. Shall we be willing to be loose, when Christ was willing to be bound? Fourthly, Christ, having laid himself under obligations to do his work, laid out himself with the utmost vigour and industry in his work. He worked the works he had to do; did ergazesthai ta erga--made a business of that which was his business. It is not enough to look at our work, and talk over it, but we must work it.

[2.] Now was his opportunity: I must work while it is day, while the time lasts which is appointed to work in, and while the light lasts which is given to work by. Christ himself had his day. First, All the business of the mediatorial kingdom was to be done within the limits of time, and in this world; for at the end of the world, when time shall be no more, the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, and the mystery

of God finished. Secondly, all the work he had to do in his own person here on earth was to be done before his death; the time of his living in this world is the day here spoken of. Note, The time of our life is our day, in which it concerns us to do the work of the day. Day-time is the proper season for work (Ps 104:22,23); during the day of life we must be busy, not waste day-time, nor play by day-light; it will be time enough to rest when our day is done, for it is but a day.

[3.] The period of his opportunity was at hand, and therefore he would be busy; The night comes when no man can work. Note, The consideration of our death approaching should quicken us to improve all the opportunities of life, both for doing and getting good. The night comes, it will come certainly, may come suddenly, is coming nearer and nearer. We cannot compute how nigh our sun is, it may go down at noon; nor can we promise ourselves a twilight between the day of life and the night of death. When the night comes we cannot work, because the light afforded us to work by is extinguished; the grave is a land of darkness, and our work cannot be done in the dark. And, besides, our time allotted us for our work will then have expired; when our Master tied us to duty he tied us to time too; when night comes, call the labourers; we must then show our work, and receive according to the things done. In the world of retribution we are no longer probationers; it is too late to bid when the inch of candle is dropped. Christ uses this as an argument with himself to be diligent, though he had no opposition from within to struggle with; much more need have we to work upon our hearts these and the like considerations to quicken us.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

His business in the world was to enlighten it (Joh 9:5): As long as I am in the world, and that will not be long, I am the light of the world. He had said this before, Joh 8:12. He is the Sun of righteousness, that has not only light in his wings for those that can see, but healing in his wings, or beams, for those that are blind and cannot see, therein far exceeding in virtue that great light which rules by day. Christ would cure this blind man, the representative of a blind world, because he came to be the light of the world, not only to give light, but to give sight. Now this gives us,

First, A great encouragement to come to him, as a guiding, quickening, refreshing light. To whom should we look but to him? Which way should we turn our eyes, but to the light? We partake of the sun's light, and so we may of Christ's grace, without money and without price.

Secondly, A good example of usefulness in the world. What Christ saith of himself, he saith of his disciples: You are lights in the world, and, if so, Let your light shine. What were candles made for but to burn?

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

The manner of the cure of the blind man, Joh 9:6,7. The circumstances of the miracle are singular, and no doubt significant. When he had thus spoken for the instruction of his disciples, and the opening of their understandings, he addressed himself to the opening of the blind man's eyes. He did not defer it till he could do it either more privately, for his greater safety, or more publicly, for his greater honour, or till the sabbath was past, when it would give less offence. What good we have opportunity of doing we should do quickly; he that will never do a good work till there is nothing to be objected against it will leave many a good work for ever undone, Ec 11:4. In the cure observe,

1 The preparation of the eye-salve. Christ spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle. He could have cured him with a word, as he did others, but he chose to do it in this way to show that he is not tied to any method. He made clay of his own spittle, because there was no water near; and he would teach us not to be nice or curious, but, when we have at any time occasion, to be willing to take up with that which is next hand, if it will but serve the turn. Why should we go about for that which may as well be had and done a nearer way? Christ's making use of his own spittle intimates that there is healing virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ; clay made of Christ's spittle was much more precious than the balm of Gilead.

2 The application of it to the place: He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. Or, as the margin reads it, He spread (epechrise), he daubed the clay upon the eyes of the blind man, like a tender physician; he did it himself with his own hand, though the patient was a beggar. Now Christ did this,

(a) To magnify his power in making a blind man to see by that method which one would think more likely to make a seeing man blind. Daubing clay on the eyes would close them up, but never open them. Note, The power of God often works by contraries; and he makes men feel their own blindness before he gives them sight.

(b) To give an intimation that it was his mighty hand, the very same that at first made man out of the clay; for by him God made the worlds, both the great world, and man the little world. Man was formed out of the clay, and moulded like the clay, and here Christ used the same materials to give sight to the body that at first he used to give being to it.

(c) To represent and typify the healing and opening of the eyes of the mind by the grace of Jesus Christ. The design of the gospel is to open men's eyes, Ac 26:18. Now the eye-salve that does the work is of Christ's preparing; it is made up, not as this, of his spittle, but of his blood, the blood and water that came out of his pierced side; we must come to Christ for the eye-salve, Re 3:18. He only is able, and he only is appointed, to make it up, Lu 4:18. The means used in this work are very weak and unlikely, and are made effectual only by the power of Christ; when a dark world was to be enlightened, and nations of blind souls were to have their eyes opened, God chose the foolish things, and weak, and despised, for the doing of it. And the method Christ takes is first to make men feel themselves blind, as this poor man did whose eyes were daubed with clay, and then to give them sight. Paul in his conversion was struck blind for three days, and then the scales fell from his eyes. The way prescribed for getting spiritual wisdom is, Let a man become a fool, that he may be wise, 1Co 3:18. We must be made uneasy with our blindness, as this man here, and then healed.

7 and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The directions given to the patient, Joh 9:7. His physician said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. Not that this washing was needful to effect the cure; but,

(a) Christ would hereby try his obedience, and whether he would with an implicit faith obey the orders of one he was so much a stranger to.

(b) He would likewise try how he stood affected to the tradition of the elders, which taught, and perhaps had taught him (for many that are blind are very knowing), that it was not lawful to wash the eyes, no not with spittle medicinally, on the sabbath day, much less to go to a pool of water to wash them.

(c) He would hereby represent the method of spiritual healing, in which, though the effect is owing purely to his power and grace, there is duty to be done by us. Go, search the scriptures, attend upon the ministry, converse with the wise; this is like washing in the pool of Siloam. Promised graces must be expected in the way of instituted ordinances. The waters of baptism were to those who had been trained up in darkness like the pool of Siloam, in which they might not only wash and be clean, but wash, and have their eyes opened. Hence they that were baptized are said to be photisthentes--enlightened; and the ancients called baptism photismos--illumination. Concerning the pool of Siloam observe,

[1.] That it was supplied with water from mount Zion, so that these were the waters of the sanctuary (Ps 46:4), living waters, which were healing, Eze 47:9.

[2.] That the waters of Siloam had of old signified the throne and kingdom of the house of David, pointing at the Messiah (Isa 8:6), and the Jews who refused the waters of Shiloa, Christ's doctrine and law, and rejoiced in the tradition of the elders. Christ would try this man, whether he would cleave to the waters of Siloam or no.

[3.] The evangelist takes notice of the signification of the name, its being interpreted sent. Christ is often called the sent of God, the Messenger of the covenant (Mal 3:1); so that when Christ sent him to the pool of Siloam he did in effect send him to himself; for Christ is all in all to the healing of souls. Christ as a prophet directs us to himself as a priest. Go, wash in the fountain opened, a fountain of life, not a pool.

The cure effected: He came seeing. There is more glory in this concise narrative, He went and washed, and came seeing, than in Cæsar's Veni, vidi, vici--I came, I saw, I conquered. When the clay was washed off from his eyes, all the other impediments were removed with it; so when the pangs and struggles of the new birth are over, and the pains and terrors of conviction past, the bands of sin fly off with them, and a glorious light and liberty succeed. See here an instance,

(1.) Of the power of Christ. What cannot he do who could not only do this, but do it thus? With a lump of clay laid on either eye, and washed off again, he couched those cataracts immediately which the most skilful oculist, with the finest instrument and the most curious hand, could not remove. No doubt this is he that should come, for by him the blind receive their sight.

(2.) It is an instance of the virtue of faith and obedience. This man let Christ do what he pleased, and did what he appointed him to do, and so was cured. Those that would be healed by Christ must be ruled by him. He came back from the pool to his neighbours and acquaintance, wondering and wondered at; he came seeing. This represents the benefit gracious souls find in attending on instituted ordinances, according to Christ's appointment; they have gone to the pool of Siloam weak, and have come away strengthened; have gone doubting, and come away satisfied; have gone mourning, and come away rejoicing; have gone trembling, and come away triumphing; have gone blind, and come away seeing, come away singing, Isa 52:8.

8 The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

This controversy was soon decided by the man himself: He said, I am he, the very man that so lately sat and begged; "I am he that was blind, and was an object of the charity of men, but now see, and am a monument of the mercy and grace of God." We do not find that the neighbours appealed to him in this matter, but he, hearing the debate, interposed, and put an end to it. It is a piece of justice we owe to our neighbours to rectify their mistakes, and to set things before them, as far as we are able, in a true light. Applying it spiritually, it teaches us that those who are savingly

enlightened by the grace of God should be ready to own what they were before that blessed change was wrought, 1Ti 1:13,14.

10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened ?

11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

The manner of the cure: How were thine eyes opened? The works of the Lord being great, they ought to be sought out, Ps 111:2. It is good to observe the way and method of God's works, and they will appear the more wonderful. We may apply it spiritually; it is strange that blind eyes should be opened, but more strange when we consider how they are opened; how weak the means are that are used, and how strong the opposition that is conquered. In answer to this enquiry the poor man gives them a plain and full account of the matter: A man that is called Jesus made clay,--and I received sight. Joh 9:11. Note, Those who have experienced special instances of God's power and goodness, in temporal or spiritual things, should be ready upon all occasions to communicate their experiences, for the glory of God and the instruction and encouragement of others. See David's collection of his experiences, his own and others', Ps 34:4-6. It is a debt we owe to our benefactor, and to our brethren. God's favours are lost upon us, when they are lost with us, and go no further.

12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

The author of it (Joh 9:12): Where is he? Some perhaps asked this question out of curiosity. "Where is he, that we may see him?" A man that did such cures as these might well be a show, which one would go a good way for the sight of. Others, perhaps, asked out of ill-will. "Where is he, that we may seize him?" There was a proclamation out for the discovering and apprehending of him (Joh 11:57); and the unthinking crowd, in spite of all reason and equity, will have ill thoughts of those that are put into an ill name. Some, we hope, asked this question out of good-will. "Where is he, that we may be acquainted with him? Where is he, that we may come to him, and share in the favours he is so free of?" In answer to this, he could say nothing: I know not. As soon as Christ had sent him to the pool of Siloam, it should seem, he withdrew immediately (as he did, Joh 5:13), and did not stay till the man returned, as if he either doubted of the effect or waited for the man's thanks. Humble souls take more pleasure in doing

good than in hearing of it again; it will be time enough to hear of it in the resurrection of the just. The man had never seen Jesus, for by the time that he had gained his sight he had lost his Physician; and he asked, it is probable, Where is he? None of all the new and surprising objects that presented themselves could be so grateful to him as one sight of Christ, but as yet he knew no more of him than that he was called, and rightly called, Jesus--a Saviour. Thus in the work of grace wrought upon the soul we see the change, but see not the hand that makes it; for the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind, which thou hearest the sound of, but canst not tell whence it comes nor whither it goes.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

Here is the information that was given in to the Pharisees concerning this matter: They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind, Joh 9:13. They brought him to the great sanhedrim, which consisted chiefly of Pharisees, at least the Pharisees in the sanhedrim were most active against Christ. 1. Some think that those who brought this man to the Pharisees did it with a good design, to show them that this Jesus, whom they persecuted, was not what they represented him, but really a great man, and one that gave considerable proofs of a divine mission. What hath convinced us of the truth and excellency of religion, and hath removed our prejudices against it, we should be forward, as we have opportunity, to offer to others for their conviction. 2. It should seem, rather, that they did it with an ill design, to exasperate the Pharisees the more against Christ, and there was no need of this, for they were bitter enough of themselves. They brought him with such a suggestion as that in Joh 11:47,48, If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him. Note, Those rulers that are of a persecuting spirit shall never want ill instruments about them, that will blow the coals, and make them worse.

14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

The ground which was pretended for this information, and the colour given to it. That which is good was never maligned but under the imputation of something evil. And the crime objected here (Joh 9:14) was that it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. The

profanation of the sabbath day is certainly wicked, and gives a man a very ill character; but the traditions of the Jews had made that to be a violation of the law of the sabbath which was far from being so. Many a time this matter was contested between Christ and the Jews, that it might be settled for the benefit of the church in all ages. But it may be asked, "Why would Christ not only work miracles on the sabbath day, but work them in such a manner as he knew would give offence to the Jews? When he had healed the impotent man, why should he bid him carry his bed? Could he not have cured this blind man without making clay?" I answer, He would not seem to yield to the usurped power of the scribes and Pharisees. Their government was illegal, their impositions were arbitrary, and their zeal for the rituals consumed the substantials of religion; and therefore Christ would not give place to them, by subjection, no not for an hour. Christ was made under the law of God, but not under their law.

15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

The trial and examination of this matter by the Pharisees, Joh 9:15. So much passion, prejudice, and ill-humour, and so little reason, appear here, that the discourse is nothing but crossing questions. One would think, when a man in these circumstances was brought before them, they would have been so taken up in admiring the miracle, and congratulating the happiness of the poor man, that they could not have been peevish with him. But their enmity to Christ had divested them of all manner of humanity, and divinity too. Let us see how they teased this man.

16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles ? And there was a division among them.

This man is not of God. Is not sent by God, or cannot be a friend of God.

Because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. They assumed that their views of the Sabbath were correct, and by those views they judged others. It did not occur to them to inquire whether the interpretation which they put on the law might not be erroneous. Men often assume their own interpretations of the Scriptures to be infallible, and then judge and condemn all others by those interpretations.

A sinner. A deceiver; an impostor. They reasoned conclusively that God would not give the power of working such miracles to an impostor. The miracles were such as could not be denied, nor did even the enemies of Jesus attempt to deny them or to explain them away. They were open, public, frequent. And this shows that they could not deny their reality. Had it been possible, they would have done it; but the reality and power of those miracles had already made a party in favour of Jesus, even in the Sanhedrim (Jn 7:50, 12:42), and those opposed to them could not deny their reality. It may be added that the early opponents of Christianity never denied the reality of the miracles performed by the Saviour and his apostles. Celsus, Porphyry, and Julianas acute foes of the gospel as perhaps have ever lived--never call this in question. They attempted to show that it was by some evil influence, or to account for the miracles in some other way than by admitting the divine origin of the Christian religion, but about the facts they had no question. Were they not as well qualified to judge about those facts as men are now? They lived near the time; had every opportunity to examine the evidence; were skilful and talented disputants; and if they could have denied the reality of the miracles they would have done it. It is scarcely possible to conceive of more conclusive proof that those miracles were really performed, and, if so, then the Lord Jesus was sent by God.

Others spoke in his favour, and very pertinently urged, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? It seems that even in this council of the ungodly there were some that were capable of a free thought, and were witnesses for Christ, even in the midst of his enemies. The matter of fact was plain, that this was a true miracle, the more it was searched into the more it was cleared; and this brought his former similar works to mind, and gave occasion to speak magnificently of them, toiauta semeia--such great signs, so many, so evident. And the inference from it is very natural: Such things as these could never be done by a man that is a sinner, that is, not by any mere man, in his own name, and by his own power; or, rather, not by one that is a cheat or an imposter, and in that sense a a sinner; such a one may indeed show some signs and lying wonders, but not such signs and true wonders as Christ wrought. How could a man produce such divine credentials, if he had not a divine commission? Thus there was a division among them, a schism, so the word is; they clashed in their opinion, a warm

debate arose, and the house divided upon it. Thus God defeats the counsels of his enemies by dividing them; and by such testimonies as these given against the malice of persecutors, and the rubs they meet with, their designs against the church are sometimes rendered ineffectual and always inexcusable.

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

Matthew Hennery Bible Commentary(MHC):

What the man said of him, in answer to their enquiry. They ask him (Joh 9:17), "What sayest thou of him, seeing that he has opened thine eyes? What dost thou think of his doing this? And what idea hast thou of him that did it?" If he should speak slightly of Christ, in answer to this, as he might be tempted to do, to please them, now that he was in their hands, as his parents had done--if he should say, "I know not what to make of him; he may be a conjuror for aught I know, or some mountebank"--they would have triumphed in it. Nothing confirms Christ's enemies in their enmity to him so much as the slights put upon him by those that have passed for his friends. But, if he should speak honourably of Christ, they would prosecute him upon their new law, which did not except, no, not his own patient; they would make him an example, and so deter others from applying to Christ for cures, for which, though they came cheap from Christ, yet they would make them pay dearly. Or perhaps Christ's friends proposed to have the man's own sentiments concerning his physician, and were willing to know, since he appeared to be a sensible man, what he thought of him. Note, Those whose eyes Christ has opened know best what to say of him, and have great reason, upon all occasions, to say well of him. What think we of Christ? To this question the poor man makes a short, plain, and direct answer: "He is a prophet, he is one inspired and sent of God to preach, and work miracles, and deliver to the world a divine message." There had been no prophets among the Jews for three hundred years; yet they did not conclude that they should have no more, for they knew that he was yet to come who should seal up vision and prophecy, Da 9:24. It should seem, this man had not any thoughts that Christ was the Messiah, the great prophet, but one of the same rank with the other prophets. The woman of Samaria concluded he was a prophet before she had any thought of his being the Messiah (Joh 4:19); so this blind man thought well of Christ

according to the light he had, though he did not think well enough of him; but, being faithful in what he had already attained to, God revealed even that unto him. This poor blind beggar had a clearer judgment of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and saw further into the proofs of a divine mission, than the masters in Israel, that assumed an authority to judge of prophets.

Barnes Commentary:
What sayest thou of him? &c. The translation here expresses the sense obscurely. The meaning is, "What sayest thou of him for giving thee sight ?" (Campbell); or, "What opinion of him hath this work of power and mercy to thee wrought in thee?" (Hammond). He is a prophet. That is, "I think that the power to work such a miracle proves that he is sent from God. And though this has been done on the Sabbath, yet it proves that he must have been sent by God, for such a power could never have proceeded from man."

We see here,

1st. A noble confession made by the man who was healed, in the face of the rulers of the people, and when he doubtless knew that they were opposed to Jesus. We should never be ashamed, before any class of men, to acknowledge the favours which we have received from Christ, and to express our belief of his power and of the truth of his doctrine.

2nd. The works of Jesus were such as to prove that he came from God, however much he may have appeared to oppose the previous notions of men, the interpretation of the law by the Pharisees, or the deductions of reason. Men should yield their own views of religion to the teachings of God, and believe that he that could open the eyes of the blind and raise the dead was fitted to declare his will.

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

They doubted whether he had indeed been born blind, and demanded proof of that which even the prosecutors had acknowledged (Joh 9:18): They did

not believe, that is, they would not, that he was born blind. Men that seek occasion to quarrel with the clearest truths may find it if they please; and they that resolve to hold fast deceit will never want a handle to hold it by. This was not a prudent caution, but a prejudiced infidelity. However, it was a good way that they took for the clearing of this: They called the parents of the man who had received his sight. This they did in hopes to disprove the miracle. These parents were poor and timorous, and if they had said that they could not be sure that this was their son, or that it was only some weakness or dimness in his sight that he had been born with, which if they had been able to get help for him might have been cured long since, or had otherwise prevaricated, for fear of the court, the Pharisees had gained their point, had robbed Christ of the honour of this miracle, which would have lessened the reputation of all the rest. But God so ordered and overruled this counsel of theirs that it turned to the more effectual proof of the miracle, and left them under a necessity of being either convinced or confounded.

19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind ? how then doth he now see?

They asked them in an imperious threatening way, "Is this your son? Dare you swear to it? Do you say he was born blind? Are you sure of it? Or did he but pretend to be so, to have an excuse for his begging? How then doth he now see? That is impossible, and therefore you had better unsay it." Those who cannot bear the light of truth do all they can to eclipse it, and hinder the discovery of it. Thus the managers of evidence, or mismanagers rather, lead witnesses out of the way, and teach them how to conceal or disguise the truth, and so involve themselves in a double guilt, like that of Jeroboam, who sinned, and made Israel to sin.

Observe, how far they go to attempt to disgrace Jesus. Had they been searching for truth, they could call the family of Jesus, particularly His mother Marry, and prudently search out about his birth; how, when and where He was born.

20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

They fully attest that which they could safely say in this matter; safely, that is, upon their own knowledge, and safely, that is, without running themselves into a premunire (Joh 9:20): We know that this is our son (for they were daily conversant with him, and had such a natural affection to

him as the true mother had, 1Ki 3:26, which made them know it was their own); and we know that he was born blind. They had reason to know it, inasmuch as it had cost them many a sad thought, and many a careful troublesome hour, about him. How often had they looked upon him with grief, and lamented their child's blindness more than all the burdens and inconveniences of their poverty, and wished he had never been born, rather than be born to such an uncomfortable life! Those who are ashamed of their children, or any of their relations, because of their bodily infirmities, may take a reproof from these parents, who freely owned, This is our son, though he was born blind, and lived upon alms.

21 but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

They cautiously decline giving any evidence concerning his cure; partly because they were not themselves eye-witnesses of it, and could say nothing to it of their own knowledge; and partly because they found it was a tender point, and would not bear to be meddled with. And therefore, having owned that he was their son and was born blind, further these deponents say not.

a. Observe how warily they express themselves (Joh 9:21): "By what means he now seeth we know not, or who has opened his eyes we know not, otherwise than by hearsay; we can give no account either by what means or by whose hand it was done." See how the wisdom of this world teaches men to trim the matter in critical junctures. Christ was accused as a sabbath-breaker, and as an imposter. Now these parents of the blind man, though they were not eye-witnesses of the cure, were yet fully assured of it, and were bound in gratitude to have borne their testimony to the honour of the Lord Jesus, who had done their son so great a kindness; but they had not courage to do it, and then thought it might serve to atone for their not appearing in favour of him that they said nothing to his prejudice; whereas, in the day of trial, he that is not apparently for Christ is justly looked upon as really against him, Lu 11:23,Mk 8:38. That they might not be further urged in this matter, they refer themselves and the court to him: He is of age, ask him, he shall speak for himself. This implies that while children are not of age (while they are infants, such as cannot speak) it is incumbent upon their parents to speak for them, speak to God for them in prayer, speak to the church for them in baptism; but, when they are of age, it is fit that they should be asked whether they be willing to stand to that which

their parents did for them, and let them speak for themselves. This man, though he was born blind, seems to have been of quick understanding above many, which enabled him to speak for himself better than his friends could speak for him. Thus God often by a kind providence makes up in the mind what is wanting in the body, 1Co 12:23,24. His parents turning them over to him was only to save themselves from trouble, and expose him; whereas they that had so great an interest in his mercies had reason to embark with him in his hazards for the honour of that Jesus who had done so much for them.

22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

See the reason why they were so cautious (Joh 9:22,23): Because they feared the Jews. It was not because they would put an honour upon their son, by making him his own advocate, or because they would have the matter cleared by the best hand, but because they would shift trouble off from themselves, as most people are in care to do, no matter on whom they throw it. Near is my friend, and near is my child, and perhaps near is my religion, but nearer is myself--Proximus egomet mihi. But Christianity teaches another lesson, 1Co 10:24,Es 8:6. Here is,

The late law which the sanhedrim had made. It was agreed and enacted by their authority that, if any man within their jurisdiction did confess that Jesus was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Observe,

The crime designed to be punished, and so prevented, by this statute, and that was embracing Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, and manifesting this by any overt-act, which amounted to a confessing of him. They themselves did expect a Messiah, but they could by no means bear to think that this Jesus should be he, nor admit the question whether he were or no, for two reasons:--

First, Because his precepts were all so contrary to their traditional laws. The spiritual worship he prescribed overthrew their formalities; nor did any thing more effectually destroy their singularity and narrow-spiritedness than that universal charity which he taught; humility and

mortification, repentance and self-denial, were lessons new to them, and sounded harsh and strange in their ears.

Secondly, Because him promises and appearances were so contrary to their traditional hopes. They expected a Messiah in outward pomp and splendour, that should not only free the nation from the Roman yoke, but advance the grandeur of the sanhedrim, and make all the members of it princes and peers: and now to hear of a Messiah whose outward circumstances were all mean and poor, whose first appearance and principal residence were in Galilee, a despised province, who never made his court to them, nor sought their favour, whose followers were neither sword-men nor gown-men, nor any men of honour, but contemptible fishermen, who proposed and promised no redemption but from sin, no consolation of Israel but what is spiritual and divine, and at the same time bade his followers expect the cross, and count upon persecution; this was such a reproach to all the ideas they had formed and filled the minds of their people with, such a blow to their power and interest, and such a disappointment to all their hopes, that they could never be reconciled to it, nor so much as give it a fair or patient hearing, but, right or wrong, it must be crushed.

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

The penalty to be inflicted for this crime. If any should own himself a disciple of Jesus, he should be deemed and taken as an apostate from the faith of the Jewish church, and a rebel and traitor against the government of it, and should therefore be put out of the synagogue, as one that had rendered himself unworthy of the honours, and incapable of the privileges, of their church; he should be excommunicated, and expelled the commonwealth of Israel. Nor was this merely an ecclesiastical censure, which a man that made no conscience of their authority might slight, but it was, in effect, an outlawry, which excluded a man from civil commerce and deprived him of his liberty and property. Note,

First, Christ's holy religion, from its first rise, has been opposed by penal laws made against the professors of it; as if men's consciences would otherwise naturally embrace it, this unnatural force has been put upon them.

Secondly, The church's artillery, when the command of it has fallen into ill hands, has often been turned against itself, and ecclesiastical censures have been made to serve a carnal secular interest. It is no new thing to see those cast out of the synagogue that were the greatest ornaments and blessings of it, and to hear those that expelled them say, The Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5. Now of this edict it is said,

1. That the Jews had agreed it, or conspired it. Their consultation and communion herein were a perfect conspiracy against the crown and dignity of the Redeemer, against the Lord and his Anointed.

2. That they had already agreed it. Though he had been but a few months in any public character among them, and, one would think, in so short a time could not have made them jealous of him, yet thus early were they aware of his growing interest, and already agreed to do their utmost to suppress it. He had lately made his escape out of the temple, and, when they saw themselves baffled in their attempts to take him, they presently took this course, to make it penal for any body to own him. Thus unanimous and thus expeditious are the enemies of the church, and their counsels; but he that sits in heaven laughs at them, and has them in derision, and so may we.

The influence which this law had upon the parents of the blind man. They declined saying any thing of Christ, and shuffled it off to their son, because they feared the Jews. Christ had incurred the frowns of the government to do their son a kindness, but they would not incur them to do him any honour. Note, The fear of man brings a snare (Pr 29:25), and often makes people deny and disown Christ, and his truths and ways, and act against their consciences. Well, the parents have thus disentangled themselves, and are discharged from any further attendance; let us now go on with the examination of the man himself; the doubt of the Pharisees, whether he was born blind, was put out of doubt by them;

24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

What they said of him, in reply to the man's testimony. Having in vain attempted to invalidate the evidence of the fact, and finding that indeed a notable miracle was wrought, and they could not deny it, they renew their

attempt to banter it, and run it down, and do all they can to shake the good opinion the man had of him that opened his eyes, and to convince him that Christ was a bad man (Joh 9:24): Give God the praise, we know that this man is a sinner. Two ways this is understood: [1.] By way of advice, to take heed of ascribing the praise of his cure to a sinful man, but to give it all to God, to whom it was due. Thus, under colour of zeal for the honour of God, they rob Christ of his honour, as those do who will not worship Christ as God, under pretence of zeal for this great truth, that there is but one God to be worshipped; whereas this is his declared will, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father; and in confessing that Christ is Lord we give glory to God the Father. When God makes use of men that are sinners as instruments of good to us, we must give God the glory, for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be; and yet there is gratitude owing to the instruments. It was a good word, Give God the praise, but here it was ill used; and there seems to be this further in it, "This man is a sinner, a bad man, and therefore give the praise so much the more to God, who could work by such an instrument." [2.] By way of adjuration; so some take it. "We know (though thou dost not, who hast but lately come, as it were, into a new world) that this man is a sinner, a great impostor, and cheats the country; this we are sure of, therefore give God praise" (as Joshua said to Achan) "by making an ingenuous confession of the fraud and collusion which we are confident there is in this matter; in God's name, man, tell the truth." Thus is God's name abused in papal inquisitions, when by oaths, ex officio, they extort accusations of themselves from the innocent, and of others from the ignorant. See how basely they speak of the Lord Jesus: We know that this man is a sinner, is a man of sin. In which we may observe, First, Their insolence and pride. They would not have it thought, when they asked the man what he thought of him, that they needed information; nay, they know very well that he is a sinner, and nobody can convince them of the contrary. He had challenged them to their faces (Joh 8:46) to convince him of sin, and they had nothing to say; but now behind his back they speak of him as a malefactor, convicted upon the notorious evidence of the fact. Thus false accusers make up in confidence what is wanting in proof. Secondly, The injury and indignity hereby done to the Lord Jesus. When he became man, he took upon him the form not only of a servant, but of a sinner (Ro 8:3), and passed for a sinner in common with the rest of mankind. Nay, he was represented as a sinner of the first

magnitude, a sinner above all men; and, being made sin for us, he despised even this shame.

25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not:
one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

The debate that arose between the Pharisees and this poor man concerning Christ. They say, He is a sinner; he says, He is a prophet. As it is an encouragement to those who are concerned for the cause of Christ to hope that it shall never be lost for want of witnesses, when they find a poor blind beggar picked up from the way-side, and made a witness for Christ, to the faces of his most impudent enemies; so it is an encouragement to those who are called out to witness for Christ to find with what prudence and courage this man managed his defence, according to the promise, It shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. Though he had never seen Jesus, he had felt his grace. Now in the parley between the Pharisees and this poor man we may observe three steps:--

He sticks to the certain matter of fact the evidence of which they endeavour to shake. That which is doubtful is best resolved into that which is plain, and therefore,

[1.] He adheres to that which to himself at least, and to his own satisfaction, was past dispute (Joh 9:25): "Whether he be a sinner or no I know not, I will not now stand to dispute, nor need I, the matter is plain, and though I should altogether hold my peace would speak for itself;" or, as it might better be rendered, "If he be a sinner, I know it not, I see no reason to say so, but the contrary; for this one thing I know, and can be more sure of than you can be of that of which you are so confident, that whereas I was blind, now I see, and therefore must not only say that he has been a good friend to me, but that he is a prophet; I am both able and bound to speak well of him." Now here, First, He tacitly reproves their great assurance of the ill character they gave of the blessed Jesus: "You say that you know him to be a sinner; I, who know him as well as you do, cannot give any such character." Secondly, He boldly relies upon his own experience of the power and goodness of the holy Jesus, and resolves to abide by it. There is no disputing against experience, nor arguing a man out of his senses; here is one that is properly an eyewitness of the power and grace of Christ, though he had never seen him. Note, As Christ's mercies are most valued

by those that have felt the want of them, that have been blind and now see, so the most powerful and durable affections to Christ are those that arise from an experimental knowledge of him, 1Jo 1:1,Ac 4:20. The poor man does not here give a nice account of the method of the cure, nor pretend to describe it philosophically, but in short, Whereas I was blind, now I see. Thus in the work of grace in the soul, though we cannot tell when and how, by what instruments and by what steps and advances, the blessed change was wrought, yet we may take the comfort of it if we can say, through grace, "Whereas I was blind, now I see. I did live a carnal, worldly, sensual life, but, thanks be to God, it is now otherwise with me," Eph 5:8.

[2.] They endeavour to baffle and stifle the evidence by a needless repetition of their enquiries into it (Joh 9:26): What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes? They asked these questions, First, Because they wanted something to say, and would rather speak impertinently than seem to be silenced or run a-ground. Thus eager disputants, that resolve they will have the last word, by such vain repetitions, to avoid the shame of being silenced, make themselves accountable for many idle words. Secondly, Because they hoped, by putting the man upon repeating his evidence, to catch him tripping in it, or wavering, and then they would think they had gained a good point.

26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee ? how opened he thine eyes?

The man boldly upbraids them with their wilful and unreasonable opposition to the evidence of this miracle, Joh 9:27. He would not gratify them with a repetition of the story, but bravely replied, I have told you already, and you did not hear, wherefore would you hear it again, will you also be his disciples? Some think that he spoke seriously, and really expecting that they would be convinced. "He had many disciples, I will be one, will you also come in among them?" Some zealous young Christians see so much reason for religion that they are ready to think every one will presently be on their mind. But it rather seems to be spoken ironically: "Will you be his disciples? No, I know you abhor the thoughts of it; why then should you desire to hear that which will either make you his disciples or leave you inexcusable if you be not?" Those that wilfully shut their eyes against the light, as these Pharisees here did, First, Make themselves contemptible and base, as these here did, who were justly exposed by this

poor man for denying the conclusion, when they had nothing to object against either of the premises. Secondly, They forfeit all the benefit of further instructions and means of knowledge and conviction: they that have been told once, and would not hear, why should they be told it again? Jer 51:9. See Mt 10:14. Thirdly, They hereby receive the grace of God in vain. This implied in that, "Will you be his disciples? No, you resolve you will not; why then would you hear it again, only that you may be his accusers and persecutors?" Those who will not see cause to embrace Christ, and join with his followers, yet, one would think, should see cause enough not to hate and persecute him and them.

27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

For this they scorn and revile him, Joh 9:28. When they could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke, they broke out into a passion, and scolded him, began to call names, and give him ill language. See what Christ's faithful witnesses must expect from the adversaries of his truth and cause; let them count upon all manner of evil to be said of them, Mt 5:11. The method commonly taken by unreasonable man is to make out with railing what is wanting in truth and reason.

First, They taunted this man for his affection to Christ; they said, Thou art his disciple, as if that were reproach enough, and they could not say worse of him. "We scorn to be his disciples, and will leave that preferment to thee, and such scoundrels as thou art." They do what they can to put Christ's religion in an ill name, and to represent the profession of it as a contemptible scandalous thing. They reviled him. The Vulgate reads it, maledixerunt eum--they cursed him; and what was their curse? It was this, Be thou his disciple. "May such a curse" (saith St. Augustine here) "ever be on us and on our children!" If we take our measures of credit and disgrace from the sentiment or rather clamours of a blind deluded world, we shall glory in our shame, and be ashamed of our glory. They had no reason to call this man a disciple of Christ, he had neither seen him nor heard him preach, only he had spoken favourably of a kindness Christ had done him, and this they could not bear.

Secondly, They gloried in their relation to Moses as their Master: "We are Moses's disciples, and do not either need or desire any other teacher."

Note, 1. Carnal professors of religion are very apt to trust to, and be proud of, the dignities and privileges of their profession, while they are strangers to the principles and powers of their religion. These Pharisees had before boasted of their good parentage: We are Abraham's seed; here they boast of their good education, We are Moses's disciples; as if these would save them.

2. It is sad to see how much one part of religion is opposed, under colour of zeal for another part. There was a perfect harmony between Christ and Moses; Moses prepared for Christ, and Christ perfected Moses, so that they might be disciples of Moses, and become the disciples of Christ too; and yet they here put them in opposition, nor could they have persecuted Christ but under the shelter of the abused name of Moses. Thus those who gainsay the doctrine of free grace value themselves as promoters of man's duty, We are Moses's disciples; while, on the other hand, those that cancel the obligation of the law value themselves as the assertors of free grace, and as if none were the disciples of Jesus but they; whereas, if we rightly understand the matter, we shall see God's grace and man's duty meet together and kiss and befriend each other.

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

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29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

They gave some sort of reason for their adhering to Moses against Christ (Joh 9:29): We know that God spoke unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not whence he is. But did they not know that among other things which God spoke unto Moses this was one, that they must expect another prophet, and further revelation of the mind of God? yet, when our Lord

Jesus, pursuant to what God said to Moses, did appear, and gave sufficient proofs of his being that prophet, under pretence of sticking to the old religion, and the established church, they not only forfeited, but forsook, their own mercies. In this argument of their observe,

1. How impertinently they allege, in defence of their enmity to Christ, that which none of his followers ever denied: We know that God spoke unto Moses, and, thanks be to God, we know it too, more plainly to Moses than to any other of the prophets; but what then? God spoke to Moses, and does it therefore follow that Jesus is an impostor? Moses was a prophet also? Moses spoke honourably of Jesus (Joh 5:46), and Jesus spoke honourably of Moses (Lu 16:29); they were both faithful in the same house of God, Moses as a servant, Christ as a Son; therefore their pleading Moses' divine warrant in opposition to Christ's was an artifice, to make unthinking people believe it was as certain that Jesus was a false prophet as that Moses was a true one; whereas they were both true.

2. How absurdly they urge their ignorance of Christ as a reason to justify their contempt of him: As for this fellow. Thus scornfully do they speak of the blessed Jesus, as if they did not think it worth while to charge their memories with a name so inconsiderable; they express themselves with as much disdain of the Shepherd of Israel as if he had not been worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock: As for this fellow, this sorry fellow, we know not whence he is. They looked upon themselves to have the key of knowledge, that none must preach without a license first had and obtained from them, under the seal of their court. They expected that all who set up for teachers should apply to them, and give them satisfaction, which this Jesus had never done, never so far owned their power as to ask their leave, and therefore they concluded him an intruder, and one that came not in by the door: They knew not whence nor what he was, and therefore concluded him a sinner; whereas those we know little of we should judge charitably of; but proud and narrow souls will think none good but themselves, and those that are in their interest. It was not long ago that the Jews had made the contrary to this an objection against Christ (Joh 7:27): We know this man whence he is, but when Christ comes no man knows whence he is. Thus they could with the greatest assurance either affirm or deny the same

thing, according as they saw it would serve their turn. They knew not whence he was; and whose fault was that?

(a) It is certain that they ought to have enquired. The Messiah was to appear about this time, and it concerned them to look about them, and examine every indication; but these priests, like those, Jer 2:6, said not, Where is the Lord?

(b) It is certain that they might have known whence he was, might not only have known, by searching the register, that he was born in Bethlehem; but by enquiring into his doctrine, miracles, and conversation, they might have known that he was sent of God, and had better orders, a better commission, and far better instructions, than any they could give him. See the absurdity of infidelity. Men will not know the doctrine of Christ because they are resolved they will not believe it, and then pretend they do not believe it because they do not know it. Such ignorance and unbelief, which support one another, aggravate one another.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

He wonders at their obstinate infidelity (Joh 9:30); not at all daunted by their frowns, nor shaken by their confidence, he bravely answered, "Why, herein is a marvelous thing, the strangest instance of wilful ignorance that ever was heard of among men that pretend to sense, that you know not whence he is, and yet he has opened mine eyes." Two things he wonders at:--

1. That they should be strangers to a man so famous. He that could open the eyes of the blind must certainly be a considerable man, and worth taking notice of. The Pharisees were inquisitive men, had a large correspondence and acquaintance, thought themselves the eyes of the church and its watchmen, and yet that they should talk as if they thought it below them to take cognizance of such a man as this, and have conversation with him, this is a strange thing indeed. There are many who pass for learned and knowing men, who understand business, and can talk sensibly in other things, who yet are ignorant, to a wonder, of the doctrine of Christ, who have no concern, no, not so much as a curiosity, to acquaint themselves with that which the angels desire to look into.

2. That they should question the divine mission of one that had undoubtedly wrought a divine miracle. When they said, We know not whence he is, they meant, "We know not any proof that his doctrine and ministry are from heaven." "Now this is strange," saith the poor man, "that the miracle wrought upon me has not convinced you, and put the matter out of doubt,--that you, whose education and studies give you advantages above others of discerning the things of God, should thus shut your eyes against the light." It is a marvelous work and wonder, when the wisdom of the wise thus perisheth (Isa 29:14), that they deny the truth of that of which they cannot gainsay the evidence. Note,

(a) The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of knowledge and conviction is indeed a marvelous thing, Mk 6:6.

(b) Those who have themselves experienced the power and grace of the Lord Jesus do especially wonder at the wilfulness of those who reject him, and, having such good thoughts of him themselves, are amazed that others have not. Had Christ opened the eyes of the Pharisees, they would not have doubted his being a prophet.

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

He argues strongly against them, Joh 9:31-33. They had determined concerning Jesus that he was not of God (Joh 9:16), but was a sinner (Joh 9:24), in answer to which the man here proves not only that he was not a sinner (Joh 9:31), but that he was of God, Joh 9:33.

1. He argues here,

(a.) With great knowledge. Though he could not read a letter of the book, he was well acquainted with the scripture and the things of God; he had wanted the sense of seeing, yet had well improved that of hearing, by which faith cometh; yet this would not have served him if he had not had an

extraordinary presence of God with him, and special aids of his Spirit, upon this occasion.

(b.) With great zeal for the honour of Christ, whom he could not endure to hear run down, and evil spoken of.

(c.) With great boldness, and courage, and undauntedness, not terrified by the proudest of his adversaries. Those that are ambitious of the favours of God must not be afraid of the frowns of men. "See here," saith Dr. Whitby, "a blind man and unlearned judging more rightly of divine things than the whole learned council of the Pharisees, whence we learn that we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, popes, or bishops; and that it is not absurd for laymen sometimes to vary from their opinions, these overseers being sometimes guilty of great oversights."

2. His argument may be reduced into form, somewhat like that of David, Ps 66:18-20. The proposition in David's argument is, If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me; here it is to the same purport, God heareth not sinners: the assumption there is, But verily God hath heard me; here it is, Verily God hath heard Jesus, he hath been honoured with the doing of that which was never done before: the conclusion there is to the honour, Blessed be God; here to the honour of the Lord Jesus, He is of God.

(a.) He lays it down for an undoubted truth that none but good men are the favourites of heaven (Joh 9:31): Now we know, you know it as well as I, that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he heareth. Here,

[1.] The assertions, rightly understood, are true. First, Be it spoken to the terror of the wicked, God heareth not sinners, that is, such sinners as the Pharisees meant when they said of Christ, He is a sinner, one that, under the shelter of God's name, advanced the devil's interest. This bespeaks no discouragement to repenting returning sinners, but to those that go on still in their trespasses, that make their prayers not only consistent with, but subservient to, their sins, as the hypocrites do; God will not hear them, he will not own them, nor give an answer of peace to their prayers. Secondly, Be it spoken to the comfort of the righteous, If any man be a worshipper of

God, and does his will, him he heareth. Here is, 1 The complete character of a good man: he is one that worships God, and does his will; he is constant in his devotions at set times, and regular in his conversation at all times. He is one that makes it his business to glorify his Creator by the solemn adoration of his name and a sincere obedience to his will and law; both must go together. 2 The unspeakable comfort of such a man: him God hears; hears his complaints, and relieves him; hears his appeals, and rights him; hears his praises, and accepts them; hears his prayers, and answers them, Ps 34:15.

[2.] The application of these truths is very pertinent to prove that he, at whose word such a divine power was put forth as cured one born blind, was not a bad man, but, having manifestly such an interest in the holy God as that he heard him always (Joh 9:31,32), was certainly a holy one.

(b.) He magnifies the miracles which Christ had wrought, to strengthen the argument the more (Joh 9:32): Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. This is to show either,

[1.] That it was a true miracle, and above the power of nature; it was never heard that any man, by the use of natural means, had cured one that was born blind; no doubt, this man and his parents had been very inquisitive into cases of this nature, whether any such had been helped, and could hear of none, which enabled him to speak this with the more assurance. Or,

[2.] That it was an extraordinary miracle, and beyond the precedents of former miracles; neither Moses nor any of the prophets, though they did great things, ever did such things as this, wherein divine power and divine goodness seem to strive which should outshine. Moses wrought miraculous plagues, but Christ wrought miraculous cures. Note, First, The wondrous works of the Lord Jesus were such as the like had never been done before. Secondly, It becomes those who have received mercy from God to magnify the mercies they have received, and to speak honourably of them; not that thereby glory may redound to themselves, and they may seem to be extraordinary favourites of Heaven, but that God may have so much the more glory.

(c.) He therefore concludes, If this man were not of God, he could do nothing, that is, nothing extraordinary, no such thing as this; and therefore, no doubt, he is of God, notwithstanding his nonconformity to your traditions in the business of the sabbath day. Note, What Christ did on earth sufficiently demonstrated what he was in heaven; for, if he had not been sent of God, he could not have wrought such miracles. It is true the man of sin comes with lying wonders, but not with real miracles; it is likewise supposed that a false prophet might, by divine permission, give a sign or a wonder (De 13:1,2), yet the case is so put as that it would carry with it its own confutation, for it is to enforce a temptation to serve other gods, which was to set God against himself. It is true, likewise, that many wicked people have in Christ's name done many wonderful works, which did not prove those that wrought them to be of God, but him in whose name they were wrought. We may each of us know by this whether we are of God or no: What do we? What do we for God, for our souls, in working out our salvation? What do we more than others?

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

The Pharisees, finding themselves unable either to answer his reasonings or to bear them, fell foul upon him, and with a great deal of pride and passion broke off the discourse, Joh 9:34. Here we are told,

What they said. Having nothing to reply to his argument, they reflected upon his person: Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us? They take that amiss which they had reason to take kindly, and are cut to the heart with rage by that which should have pricked them to the heart with penitence. Observe,

1. How they despised him, and what a severe censure they passed upon him: "Thou wast not only born in sin, as every man is, but altogether so, wholly corrupt, and bearing about with thee in thy body as well as in thy soul the marks of that corruption; thou wast one whom nature stigmatized." Had he still continued blind, it had been barbarous to upbraid him with it, and thence to gather that he was more deeply tainted with sin than other people; but it was most unjust to take notice of it now that the cure had not only rolled away the reproach of his blindness, but had signalized him as

a favourite of Heaven. Some take it thus: "Thou hast been a common beggar, and such are too often common sinners, and thou hast, no doubt, been as bad as any of them;" whereas by his discourse he had proved the contrary, and had evinced a deep tincture of piety. But when proud imperious Pharisees resolve to run a man down, any thing shall serve for a pretence.

2. How they disdain to learn of him, or to receive instruction from him: Dost thou teach us? A mighty emphasis must be laid here upon thou and us. "What! wilt thou, a silly sorry fellow, ignorant and illiterate, that hast not seen the light of the sun a day to an end, a beggar by the way-side, of the very dregs and refuse of the town, wilt thou pretend to teach us, that are the sages of the law and grandees of the church, that sit in Moses's chair and are masters in Israel?"

Note, Proud men scorn to be taught, especially by their inferiors, whereas we should never think ourselves too old, nor too wise, nor too good, to learn. Those that have much wealth would have more; and why not those that have much knowledge? And those are to be valued by whom we may improve in learning. What a poor excuse was this for the Pharisees' infidelity, that it would be a disparagement to them to be instructed, and informed, and convinced, by such a silly fellow as this!

Spiritual Blindness

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

The tender care which our Lord Jesus took of this poor man (Joh 9:35): When Jesus heard that they had cast him out (for it is likely the town rang of it, and everybody cried out shame upon them for it), then he found him, which implies his seeking him and looking after him, that he might encourage and comfort him,

1. Because he had, to the best of his knowledge, spoken so very well, so bravely, so boldly, in defence of the Lord Jesus. Note, Jesus Christ will be sure to stand by his witnesses, and own those that own him and his truth

and ways. Earthly princes neither do, nor can, take cognizance of all that vindicate them and their government and administration; but our Lord Jesus knows and observes all the faithful testimonies we bear to him at any time, and a book of remembrance is written, and it shall redound not only to our credit hereafter, but our comfort now.

2. Because the Pharisees had cast him out and abused him. Besides the common regard which the righteous Judge of the world has to those who suffer wrongfully (Ps 103:6), there is a particular notice taken of those that suffer in the cause of Christ and for the testimony of a good conscience. Here was one poor man suffering for Christ, and he took care that as his afflictions abounded his consolations should much more abound. Note,

(1.) Though persecutors may exclude good men from their communion, yet they cannot exclude them from communion with Christ, nor put them out of the way of his visits. Happy are they who have a friend from whom men cannot debar them.

(2.) Jesus Christ will graciously find and receive those who for his sake are unjustly rejected and cast out by men. He will be a hiding place to his outcasts, and appear, to the joy of those whom their brethren hated and cast out.

36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him ?

The comfortable converse Christ had with him, wherein he brings him acquainted with the consolation of Israel. He had well improved the knowledge he had, and now Christ gives him further instruction; for he that is faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more, Mt 13:12.

1. Our Lord Jesus examines his faith: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Dost thou give credit to the promises of the Messiah? Dost thou expect his coming, and art thou ready to receive and embrace him when he is manifested to thee?" This was that faith of the Son of God by which the saints lived before his manifestation. Observe,

(1.) The Messiah is here called the Son of God, and so the Jews had learned to call him from the prophecies, Ps 2:7,89:27. See Joh Joh 1:49, Thou art the Son of God, that is, the true Messiah. Those that expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah delighted rather in calling him the Son of David, which gave more countenance to that expectation, Mt 22:42. But Christ, that he might give us an idea of his kingdom, as purely spiritual and divine, calls himself the Son of God, and rather Son of man in general than of David in particular.

(2.) The desires and expectations of the Messiah, which the Old-Testament saints had, guided by and grounded upon the promise, were graciously interpreted and accepted as their believing on the Son of God. This faith Christ here enquires after: Dost thou believe? Note, The great thing which is now required of us (1Jo 3:23), and which will shortly be enquired after concerning us, is our believing on the Son of God, and by this we must stand or fall for ever.

2 The poor man solicitously enquires concerning the Messiah he was to believe in, professing his readiness to embrace him and close with him (Joh 9:36): Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?

(1.) Some think he did know that Jesus, who cured him, was the Son of God, but did not know which was Jesus, and therefore, supposing this person that talked with him to be a follower of Jesus, desired him to do him the favour to direct him to his master; not that he might satisfy his curiosity with the sight of him, but that he might the more firmly believe in him, and profess his faith, and know whom he had believed. See So 5:6,7,So 3:2,3. It is Christ only that can direct us to himself.

(2.) Others think he did know that this person who talked with him was Jesus, the same that cured him, whom he believed a great and good man and a prophet, but did not yet know that he was the Son of God and the true Messiah. "Lord, I believe there is a Christ to come; thou who hast given me bodily sight, tell me, O tell me, who and where this Son of God is." Christ's question intimated that the Messiah was come, and was now among them, which he presently takes the hint of, and asks, Where is he, Lord? The question was rational and just: Who is he, Lord, that I may

believe on him? For how could he believe in one of whom he had not heard; the work of ministers is to tell us who the Son of God is, that we may believe on him, Joh 20:31.

37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

Our Lord Jesus graciously reveals himself to him as that Son of God on whom he must believe: Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee, Joh 9:37. Thou needest not go far to find out the Son of God, Behold the Word is nigh thee. We do not find that Christ did thus expressly, and in so many words, reveal himself to any other as to this man here and to the woman of Samaria: I that speak unto thee am he. He left others to find out by arguments who he was, but to these weak and foolish things of the world he chose to manifest himself, so as not to the wise and prudent. Christ here describes himself to this man by two things, which express his great favour to him:--

(1.) Thou hast seen him; and he was much indebted to the Lord Jesus for opening his eyes, that he might see him. Now he was made sensible, more than ever, what an unspeakable mercy it was to be cured of his blindness, that he might see the Son of God, a sight which rejoiced his heart more than that of the light of this world. Note, The Greatest comfort of bodily eyesight is its serviceableness to our faith and the interests of our souls. How contentedly might this man have returned to his former blindness, like old Simeon, now that his eyes had seen God's salvation! If we apply this to the opening of the eyes of the mind, it intimates that spiritual sight is given principally for this end, that we may see Christ, 2Co 4:6. Can we say that by faith we have seen Christ, seen him in his beauty and glory, in his ability and willingness to save, so seen him as to be satisfied concerning him, to be satisfied in him? Let us give him the praise, who opened our eyes.

(2.) It is he that talketh with thee; and he was indebted to Christ for condescending to do this. He was not only favoured with a sight of Christ, but was admitted into fellowship and communion with him. Great princes are willing to be seen by those whom yet they will not vouchsafe to talk with. But Christ, by his word and Spirit, talks with those whose desires are towards him, and in talking with them manifests himself to them, as he did

to the two disciples, when he talked their hearts warm, Lu 24:32. Observe, This poor man was solicitously enquiring after the Saviour, when at the same time he saw him, and was talking with him. Note, Jesus Christ is often nearer the souls that seek him than they themselves are aware of. Doubting Christians are sometimes saying, Where is the Lord? and fearing that they are cast out from his sight when at the same time it is he that talks with them, and puts strength into them.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

The poor man readily entertains this surprising revelation, and, in a transport of joy and wonder, he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him. (1.) He professed his faith in Christ: Lord, I believe thee to be the Son of God. He would not dispute any thing that he said who had shown such mercy to him, and wrought such a miracle for him, nor doubt of the truth of a doctrine which was confirmed by such signs. Believing with the heart, he thus confesses with the mouth; and now the bruised reed was become a cedar. (2.) He paid his homage to him: He worshipped him, not only gave him the civil respect due to a great man, and the acknowledgments owing to a kind benefactor, but herein gave him divine honour, and worshipped him as the Son of God manifested in the flesh. None but God is to be worshipped; so that in worshipping Jesus he owned him to be God. Note, True faith will show itself in a humble adoration of the Lord Jesus. Those who believe in him will see all the reason in the world to worship him. We never read any more of this man; but, it is very likely, from henceforth he became a constant follower of Christ.

39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

Christ, having spoken comfort to the poor man that was persecuted, here speaks conviction to his persecutors, a specimen of the distributions of trouble and rest at the great day, 2Th 1:6,7. Probably this was not immediately after his discourse with the man, but he took the next opportunity that offered itself to address the Pharisees. Here is,

The account Christ gives of his design in coming into the world (Joh 9:39): "For judgment I am come to order and administer the great affairs of the kingdom of God among men, and am invested with a judicial power in order thereunto, to be executed in conformity to the wise counsels of God, and in pursuance of them." What Christ spoke, he spoke not as a preacher in the pulpit, but as a king upon the throne, and a judge upon the bench.

1. His business into the world was great; he came to keep the assizes and general goal-delivery. He came for judgment, that is,

(a) To preach a doctrine and a law which would try men, and effectually discover and distinguish them, and would be completely fitted, in all respects, to be the rule of government now and of judgment shortly.

(b) To put a difference between men, by revealing the thoughts of many hearts, and laying open men's true characters, by this one test, whether they were well or ill affected to him.

(c) To change the face of government in his church, to abolish the Jewish economy, to take down that fabric, which, though erected for the time by the hand of God himself, yet by lapse of time was antiquated, and by the incurable corruptions of the managers of it was become rotten and dangerous, and to erect a new building by another model, to institute new ordinances and offices, to abrogate Judaism and enact Christianity; for this judgment he came into the world, and it was a great revolution.

2. This great truth he explains by a metaphor borrowed from the miracle which he had lately wrought. That those who see not might see, and that those who see might be made blind. Such a difference of Christ's coming is often spoken of; to some his gospel is a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

(a) This is applicable to nations and people, that the Gentiles, who had long been destitute of the light of divine revelation, might see it; and the Jews, who had long enjoyed it, might have the things of their peace hid from their eyes, Ho 1:10,2:23. The Gentiles see a great light, while blindness is happened unto Israel, and their eyes are darkened.

(b) To particular sons. Christ came into the world,

[1.] Intentionally and designedly to give sight to those that were spiritually blind; by his word to reveal the object, and by his Spirit to heal the organ,

that many precious souls might be turned from darkness to light. He came for judgment, that is, to set those at liberty from their dark prison that were willing to be released, Isa 61:1.

[2.] Eventually, and in the issue, that those who see might be made blind; that those who have a high conceit of their own wisdom, and set up that in contradiction to divine revelation, might be sealed up in ignorance and infidelity. The preaching of the cross was foolishness, and an infatuating think, to those who by wisdom knew not God. Christ came into the world for this judgment, to administer the affairs of a spiritual kingdom, seated in men's minds. Whereas, in the Jewish church, the blessings and judgments of God's government were mostly temporal, now the method of administration should be changed; and as the good subjects of his kingdom should be blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly things, such as arise from a due illumination of the mind, so the rebels should be punished with spiritual plagues, not war, famine, and pestilence, as formerly, but such as arise from a judicial infatuation, hardness of heart, terror of conscience, strong delusions, vile affections. In this way Christ will judge between cattle and cattle, Eze 34:17,22.

40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

The Pharisees' cavil at this. They were with him, not desirous to learn any good from him, but to form evil against him; and they said, Are we blind also? When Christ said that those who saw should by his coming be made blind, they apprehended that he meant them, who were the seers of the people, and valued themselves on their insight and foresight. "Now," say they, "we know that the common people are blind; but are we blind also? What we? The rabbin, the doctors, the learned in the laws, the graduates in the schools, are we blind too?" This is scandalum magnatum--a libel on the great. Note, Frequently those that need reproof most, and deserve it best, though they have wit enough to discern a tacit one, have not grace enough to bear a just one. These Pharisees took this reproof for a reproach, as those lawyers (Lu 11:45): "Are we blind also? Darest thou say that we are blind, whose judgment every one has such a veneration for, values, and yields to?" Note, Nothing fortifies men's corrupt hearts more against the convictions of the word, nor more effectually repels them, than the good opinion, especially if it be a high opinion, which others have of them; as if

all that had gained applause with men must needs obtain acceptance with God, than which nothing is more false and deceitful, for God sees not as man sees.

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Christ's answer to this cavil, which, if it did not convince them, yet silenced them: If you were blind you should have no sin; but now you say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth. They gloried that they were not blind, as the common people, were not so credulous and manageable as they, but would see with their own eyes, having abilities, as they thought, sufficient for their own guidance, so that they needed not any body to lead them. This very thing which they gloried in, Christ here tells them, was their shame and ruin. For,

1. If you were blind, you would have no sin.

(a) "If you had been really ignorant, your sin had not been so deeply aggravated, nor would you have had so much sin to answer for as now you have. If you were blind, as the poor Gentiles are, and many of your own poor subjects, from whom you have taken the key of knowledge, you would have had comparatively no sin." The times of ignorance God winked at; invincible ignorance, though it does not justify sin, excuses it, and lessens the guilt. It will be more tolerable with those that perish for lack of vision than with those that rebel against the light.

(b) "If you had been sensible of your own blindness, if when you would see nothing else you could have seen the need of one to lead you, you would soon have accepted Christ as your guide, and then you would have had no sin, you would have submitted to an evangelical righteousness, and have been put into a justified state." Note, Those that are convinced of their disease are in a fair way to be cured, for there is not a greater hindrance to the salvation of souls than self-sufficiency.

2. "But now you say, We see; now that you have knowledge, and are instructed out of the law, your sin is highly aggravated; and now that you have a conceit of that knowledge, and think you see your way better than any body can show it you, therefore your sin remains, your case is

desperate, and your disease incurable." And as those are most blind who will not see, so their blindness is most dangerous who fancy they do see. No patients are so hardly managed as those in a frenzy who say that they are well, and nothing ails them. The sin of those who are self-conceited and self-confident remains, for they reject the gospel of grace, and therefore the guilt of their sin remains unpardoned; and they forfeit the Spirit of grace, and therefore the power of their sin remains unbroken. Seest thou a wise man in his own conceit? Hearest thou the Pharisees say, We see? There is more hope of a fool, of a publican and a harlot, than of such.

John-10

The Parable of the Sheepfold

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

The Pharisees supported themselves in their opposition to Christ with this principle, that they were the pastors of the church, and that Jesus, having no commission from them, was an intruder and an impostor, and therefore the people were bound in duty to stick to then, against him. In opposition to this, Christ here describes who were the false shepherds, and who the true, leaving them to infer what they were.

The church of God in the world is a sheepfold, into which the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered together (Joh 11:52), and in which they are united and incorporated; it is a good fold, Eze 34:14. See

Mic 2:12. This fold is well fortified, for God himself is as a wall of fire about it, Zec 2:5

The evidence of a thief and robber, that comes to do mischief to the flock, and damage to the owner, Joh 10:1. He enters not by the door, as having no lawful cause of entry, but climbs up some other way, at a window, or some breach in the wall. How industrious are wicked people to do mischief! What plots will they lay, what pains will they take, what hazards will they run, in their wicked pursuits! This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of God.

This sheepfold lies much exposed to thieves and robbers; crafty seducers that debauch and deceive, and cruel persecutors that destroy and devour; grievous wolves (Ac 20:29); thieves that would steal Christ's sheep from him, to sacrifice them to devils, or steal their food from them, that they might perish for lack of it; wolves in sheep's clothing, Mt 7:15.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

The character that distinguishes the rightful owner, who has a property in the sheep, and a care for them: He enters in by the door, as one having authority (Joh 10:2), and he comes to do them some good office or other, to bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick, Eze 34:16. Sheep need man's care, and, in return for it, are serviceable to man (1Co 9:7); they clothe and feed those by whom they are coted and fed.

That good men are fitly compared to sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called the sheep of his pasture. Good men, as new creatures, have the good qualities of sheep, harmless and inoffensive as sheep; meek and quiet, without noise; patient as sheep under the hand both of the shearer and of the butcher; useful and profitable, tame and tractable, to the shepherd, and sociable one with another, and much used in sacrifices.

The great Shepherd of the sheep takes wonderful care of the flock and of all that belong to it. God is the great Shepherd, Ps 23:1. He knows those that are his calls them by name, marks them for himself, leads them out to fat pastures, makes them both feed and rest there, speaks comfortably to them, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, to set them in the way of his steps.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

The ready entrance that the shepherd finds: To him the porter openeth, Joh 10:3. Anciently they had their sheepfolds within the outer gates of their houses, for the greater safety of their flocks, so that none could come to them the right way, but such as the porter opened to or the master of the house gave the keys to.

The under-shepherds, who are entrusted to feed the flock of God, ought to be careful and faithful in the discharge of that trust; magistrates must defend them, and protect and advance all their secular interests; ministers must serve them in their spiritual interests, must feed their souls with the word of God faithfully opened and applied, and with gospel ordinances duly administered, taking the oversight of them. They must enter by the door of a regular ordination, and to such the porter will open; the Spirit of Christ will set before them an open door, give them authority in the church, and assurance in their own bosoms. They must know the members of their flocks by name, and watch over them; must lead them into the pastures of public ordinances, preside among them, be their mouth to God and God's to them; and in their conversation must be examples to the believers.

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

The care he takes and the provision he makes for his sheep. The sheep hear his voice, when he speaks familiarly to them, when they come into the fold, as men now do to their dogs and horses; and, which is more, he calls his own sheep by name, so exact is the notice he takes of them, the account he keeps of them; and he leads them our from the fold to the green pastures; and (Joh 10:4,5) when he turns them out to graze he does not drive them, but (such was the custom in those times) he goes before them, to prevent any mischief or danger that might meet them, and they, being used to it, follow him, and are safe.

Those who are truly the sheep of Christ will be very observant of their Shepherd, and very cautious and shy of strangers. They follow their Shepherd, for they know his voice, having both a discerning ear, and an obedient heart.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.

The strange attendance of the sheep upon the shepherd: They know his voice, so as to discern his mind by it, and to distinguish it from that of a stranger (for the ox knows his owner, Isa 1:3), and a stranger will they not follow, but, as suspecting some ill design, will flee from him, not knowing his voice, but that it is not the voice of their own shepherd. This is the parable; we have the key to it, Eze 34:31: You my flock are men, and I am your God.

They flee from a stranger, and dread following him, because they know not his voice. It is dangerous following those in whom we discern not the voice of Christ, and who would draw us from faith in him to fancies concerning him. And those who have experienced the power and efficacy of divine truths upon their souls, and have the savour and relish of them, have a wonderful sagacity to discover Satan's wiles, and to discern between good and evil.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

The Jew's ignorance of the drift and meaning of this discourse (Joh 10:6): Jesus spoke this parable to them, this figurative, but wise, elegant, and instructive discourse, but they understood not what the things were which he spoke unto them, were not aware whom he meant by the thieves and robbers and whom by the good Shepherd. It is the sin and shame of many who hear the word of Christ that they do not understand it, and they do not because they will not, and because they will mis-understand it. They have no acquaintance with, nor taste of, the things themselves, and therefore do not understand the parables and comparisons with which they are illustrated. The Pharisees had a great conceit of their own knowledge, and could not bear that it should be questioned, and yet they had not sense enough to understand the things that Jesus spoke of; they were above their capacity. Frequently the greatest pretenders to knowledge are most ignorant in the things of God.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I

am the door of the sheep.

Christ's explication of this parable, opening the particulars of it fully. Whatever difficulties there may be in the sayings of the Lord Jesus, we shall find him ready to explain himself, if we be but willing to understand him. We shall find one scripture expounding another, and the blessed Spirit interpreter to the blessed Jesus. Christ, in the parable, had distinguished the shepherd from the robber by this, that he enters in by the door. Now, in the explication of the parable, he makes himself to be both the door by which the shepherd enters and the shepherd that enters in by the door. Though it may be a solecism in rhetoric to make the same person to be both the door and the shepherd, it is no solecism in divinity to make Christ to have his authority from himself, as he has life in himself; and himself to enter by his own blood, as the door, into the holy place.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

1. Christ is the door. This he saith to those who pretended to seek for righteousness, but, like the Sodomites, wearied themselves to find the door, where it was not to be found. He saith it to the Jews, who would be thought God's only sheep, and to the Pharisees, who would be thought their only shepherds: I am the door of the sheepfold; the door of the church.

(a) In general,

[1.] He is as a door shut, to keep out thieves and robbers, and such as are not fit to be admitted. The shutting of the door is the securing of the house; and what greater security has the church of God than the interposal of the Lord Jesus, and his wisdom, power, and goodness, betwixt it and all its enemies?

[2.] He is as a door open for passage and communication.

First, By Christ, as the door, we have our first admission into the flock of God, Joh 14:6.

Secondly, We go in and out in a religious conversation, assisted by him, accepted in him; walking up and down in his name, Zec 10:12. Thirdly, By him God comes to his church, visits it, and communicates himself to it.

Fourthly, By him, as the door, the sheep are at last admitted into the heavenly kingdom, Mt 25:34.

(b) More particularly,

Christ is the door of the shepherds, so that none who come not in by him are to be accounted pastors, but (according to the rule laid down, Joh 10:1) thieves and robbers (though they pretended to be shepherds); but the sheep did not hear them. This refers to all those that had the character of shepherds in Israel, whether magistrates or ministers, that exercised their office without any regard to the Messiah, or any other expectations of him than what were suggested by their own carnal interest. Observe,

First, The character given of them: they are thieves and robbers (Joh 10:8); all that went before him, not in time, many of them were faithful shepherds, but all that anticipated his commission, and went before he sent them (Jer 23:21), that assumed a precedency and superiority above him, as the antichrist is said to exalt himself, 2Th 2:4. "The scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests, all, even as many as have come before me, that have endeavoured to forestal my interest, and to prevent my gaining any room in the minds of people, by prepossessing them with prejudices against me, they are thieves and robbers, and steal those hearts which they have no title to, defrauding the right owner of his property." They condemned our Saviour as a thief and a robber, because he did not come in by them as the door, nor take out a license from them; but he shows that they ought to have received their commission from him, to have been admitted by him, and to have come after him, and because they did not, but stepped before him, they were thieves and robbers. They would not come in as his disciples, and therefore were condemned as usurpers, and their pretended commissions vacated and superseded. Note, Rivals with Christ are robbers of his church, however they pretend to be shepherds, nay, shepherds of shepherds.

Secondly, The care taken to preserve the sheep from them: But the sheep did not hear them. Those that had a true savour of piety, that were spiritual and heavenly, and sincerely devoted to God and godliness, could by no means approve of the traditions of the elders, nor relish their formalities. Christ's disciples, without any particular instructions from their Master,

made no conscience of eating with unwashen hands, or plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day; for nothing is more opposite to true Christianity than Pharisaism is, nor any thing more disrelishing to a soul truly devout than their hypocritical devotions.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Christ is the door of the sheep (Joh 10:9): By me (di emou--through me as the door) if any man enter into the sheepfold, as one of the flock, he shall be saved; shall not only by safe from thieves and robbers, but he shall be happy, he shall go in and out. Here are, First, Plain directions how to come into the fold: we must come in by Jesus Christ as the door. By faith in him, as the great Mediator between God and man, we come into covenant and communion with God. There is no entering into God's church but by coming into Christ's church; nor are any looked upon as members of the kingdom of God among men but those that are willing to submit to the grace and government of the Redeemer. We must now enter by the door of faith (Ac 14:27), since the door of innocency is shut against us, and that pass become unpassable, Ge 3:24. Secondly, Precious promises to those who observe this direction. 1. They shall be saved hereafter; this is the privilege of their home. These sheep shall be saved from being distrained and impounded by divine justice for trespass done, satisfaction being made for the damage by their great Shepherd, saved from being a prey to the roaring lion; they shall be for ever happy. 2. In the mean time they shall go in and out and find pasture; this is the privilege of their way. They shall have their conversation in the world by the grace of Christ, shall be in his fold as a man at his own house, where he has free ingress, egress, and regress. True believers are at home in Christ; when they go out, they are not shut out as strangers, but have liberty to come in again; when they come in, they are not shut in as trespassers, but have liberty to go out. They go out to the field in the morning, they come into the fold at night; and in both the Shepherd leads and keeps them, and they find pasture in both: grass in the field, fodder in the fold. In public, in private, they have the word of God to converse with, by which their spiritual life is supported and nourished, and out of which their gracious desires are satisfied; they are replenished with the goodness of God's house.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Christ is the shepherd, Joh 10:11, &c. He was prophesied of under the Old Testament as a shepherd, Isa 40:11,Eze 34:23,37:24,Zec 13:7. In the New Testament he is spoken of as the great Shepherd (Heb 13:20), the chief Shepherd (1Pe 5:4), the Shepherd and bishop of our souls, 1Pe 2:25. God, our great owner, the sheep of whose pasture we are by creation, has constituted his Son Jesus to be our shepherd; and here again and again he owns the relation. He has all that care of his church, and every believer, that a good shepherd has of his flock; and expects all that attendance and observance from the church, and every believer, which the shepherds in those countries had from their flocks.

Christ is a shepherd, and not as the thief, not as those that came not in by the door. Observe,

[1.] The mischievous design of the thief (Joh 10:10): The thief cometh not with any good intent, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. First, Those whom they steal, whose hearts and affections they steal from Christ and his pastures, they kill and destroy spiritually; for the heresies they privily bring in are damnable. Deceivers of souls are murderers of souls. Those that steal away the scripture by keeping it in an unknown tongue, that steal away the sacraments by maiming them and altering the property of them, that steal away Christ's ordinances to put their own inventions in the room of them, they kill and destroy; ignorance and idolatry are destructive things. Secondly, Those whom they cannot steal, whom they can neither lead, drive, nor carry away, from the flock of Christ, they aim by persecutions and massacres to kill and destroy corporally. He that will not suffer himself to be robbed is in danger of being slain.

[2.] The gracious design of the shepherd; he is come,

To give life to the sheep. In opposition to the design of the thief, which is to kill and destroy (which was the design of the scribes and Pharisees) Christ saith, I am come among men,

1. That they might have life. He came to put life into the flock, the church in general, which had seemed rather like a valley full of dry bones than like

a pasture covered over with flocks. Christ came to vindicate divine truths, to purify divine ordinances, to redress grievances, and to revive dying zeal, to seek those of his flock that were lost, to bind up that which was broken (Eze 34:16), and this to his church is as life from the dead. He came to give life to particular believers. Life is inclusive of all good, and stands in opposition to the death threatened (Ge 2:17); that we might have life, as a criminal has when he is pardoned, as a sick man when he is cured, a dead man when he is raised; that we might be justified, sanctified, and at last glorified.

2. That they might have it more abundantly, kai perisson echosin. As we read it, it is comparative, that they might have a life more abundant than that which was lost and forfeited by sin, more abundant than that which was promised by the law of Moses, length of days in Canaan, more abundant than could have been expected or than we are able to ask or think. But it may be construed without a note of comparison, that they might have abundance, or might have it abundantly. Christ came to give life and perisson ti--something more, something better, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice. Life in abundance is eternal life, life without death or fear of death, life and much more.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

To give his life for the sheep, and this that he might give life to them (Joh 10:11): The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

It is the property of every good shepherd to hazard and expose his life for the sheep. Jacob did so, when he would go through such a fatigue to attend them, Ge 31:40. So did David, when he slew the lion and the bear. Such a shepherd of souls was St. Paul, who would gladly spend, and be spent, for their service, and counted not his life dear to him, in comparison with their salvation. But, 2. It was the prerogative of the great Shepherd to give his life to purchase his flock (Ac 20:28), to satisfy for their trespass, and to shed his blood to wash and cleanse them.

Christ is a good shepherd, and not as a hireling. There were many that were not thieves, aiming to kill and destroy the sheep, but passed for shepherds,

yet were very careless in the discharge of their duty, and through their neglect the flock was greatly damaged; foolish shepherds, idle shepherds, Zec 11:15,17. In opposition to these,

Christ here calls himself the good shepherd (Joh 10:11), and again (Joh 10:14) ho poimen ho kalos--that shepherd, that good Shepherd, whom God had promised. Note, Jesus Christ is the best of shepherds, the best in the world to take the over-sight of souls, none so skilful, so faithful, so tender, as he, no such feeder and leader, no such protector and healer of souls as he.

12 But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

He proves himself so, in opposition to all hirelings, Joh 10:12-14. Where observe,

The carelessness of the unfaithful shepherd described (Joh 10:12,13); he that is a hireling, that is employed as a servant and is paid for his pains, whose own the sheep are not, who has neither profit nor loss by them, sees the wolf coming, or some other danger threatening, and leaves the sheep to the wolf, for in truth he careth not for them. Here is plain reference to that of the idol-shepherd, Zec 11:17. Evil shepherds, magistrates and ministers, are here described both by their bad principles and their bad practices.

1. Their bad principles, the root of their bad practices. What makes those that have the charge of souls in trying times to betray their trust, and in quiet times not to mind it? What makes them false, and trifling, and self-seeking? It is because they are hirelings, and care not for the sheep. That is,

(a.) The wealth of the world is the chief of their good; it is because they are hirelings. They undertook the shepherds' office, as a trade to live and grow rich by, not as an opportunity of serving Christ and doing good. It is the love of money, and of their own bellies, that carries them on in it. Not that those are hirelings who, while they serve at the altar, live, and live comfortably, upon the altar. The labourer is worthy of his meat; and a scandalous maintenance will soon make a scandalous ministry. But those are hirelings that love the wages more than the work, and set their hearts upon that, as the hireling is said to do, De 24:15. See 1Sa 2:29,Isa 56:11,Mic 3:5,11.

(b.) The work of their place is the least of their care. They value not the sheep, are unconcerned in the souls of others; their business is to be their brothers' lords, not their brothers' keepers or helpers; they seek their own things, and do not, like Timothy, naturally care for the state of souls. What can be expected but that they will flee when the wolf comes. He careth not for the sheep, for he is one whose own the sheep are not. In one respect we may say of the best of the under-shepherds that the sheep are not their own, they have not dominion over them not property in them (feed my sheep and my lambs, saith Christ); but in respect of dearness and affection they should be their own. Paul looked upon those as his own whom he called his dearly beloved and longed for. Those who do not cordially espouse the church's interests, and make them their own, will not long be faithful to them.

2. Their bad practices, the effect of these bad principles, Joh 10:12. See here,

(a.) How basely the hireling deserts his post; when he sees the wolf coming, though then there is most need of him, he leaves the sheep and flees. Note, Those who mind their safety more than their duty are an easy prey to Satan's temptations.

(b.) How fatal the consequences are! the hireling fancies the sheep may look to themselves, but it does not prove so: the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep, and woeful havoc is made of the flock, which will all be charged upon the treacherous shepherd. The blood of perishing souls is required at the hand of the careless watchmen.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

See here the grace and tenderness of the good Shepherd set over against the former, as it was in the prophecy (Eze 34:21,22, &c.): I am the good Shepherd. It is matter of comfort to the church, and all her friends, that, however she may be damaged and endangered by the treachery and mismanagement of her under-officers, the Lord Jesus is, and will be, as he ever has been, the good Shepherd. Here are two great instances of the shepherd's goodness.

His acquainting himself with his flock, with all that belong or in any wise appertain to his flock, which are of two sorts, both known to him:--

(a.) He is acquainted with all that are now of his flock (Joh 10:14,15), as the good Shepherd (Joh 10:3,4): I know my sheep and am known of mine. Note, There is a mutual acquaintance between Christ and true believers; they know one another very well, and knowledge notes affection.

[1] Christ knows his sheep. He knows with a distinguishing eye who are his sheep, and who are not; he knows the sheep under their many infirmities, and the goats under their most plausible disguises. He knows with a favourable eye those that in truth are his own sheep; he takes cognizance of their state, concerns himself for them, has a tender and affectionate regard to them, and is continually mindful of them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; he visits them graciously by his Spirit, and has communion with them; he knows them, that is, he approves and accepts of them, as Ps 1:6,37:18,Ex 33:17.

[2] He is known of them. He observes them with an eye of favour, and they observe him with an eye of faith. Christ's knowing his sheep is put before their knowing him, for he knew and loved us first (1Jo 4:19), and it is not so much our knowing him as our being known of him that is our happiness, Ga 4:9. Yet it is the character of Christ's sheep that they know him; know him from all pretenders and intruders; they know his mind, know his voice, know by experience the power of his death. Christ speaks here as if he gloried in being known by his sheep, and thought their respect an honour to him. Upon this occasion Christ mentions (Joh 10:15) the mutual acquaintance between his Father and himself: As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father. Now this may be considered, either, First, As the ground of that intimate acquaintance and relation which subsist between Christ and believers. The covenant of grace, which is the bond of this relation, is founded in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, which, we may be sure, stands firm; for the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter, and there could be no mistake, which might leave the matter at any uncertainty, or bring it into any hazard. The Lord Jesus knows whom he hath chosen, and is sure of

them (Joh 13:18), and they also know whom they have trusted, and are sure of him (2Ti 1:12), and the ground of both is the perfect knowledge which the Father and the Son had of one another's mind, when the counsel of peace was between them both. Or, Secondly, As an apt similitude, illustrating the intimacy that is between Christ and believers. It may be connected with the foregoing words, thus: I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; compare Joh 17:21.

1. As the Father knew the Son, and loved him, and owned him in his sufferings, when he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, so Christ knows his sheep, and has a watchful tender eye upon them, will be with them when they are left alone, as his Father was with him.

2. As the Son knew the Father, loved and obeyed him, and always did those things that pleased him, confiding in him as his God even when he seemed to forsake him, so believers know Christ with an obediential fiducial regard.

He declares his purpose of dying for his flock (Joh 10:15): I lay down my life for the sheep. He not only ventured his life for them (in such a case, the hope of saving it might balance the fear of losing it), but he actually deposited it, and submitted to a necessity of dying for our redemption; tithemi--I put it as a pawn or pledge; as purchase-money paid down. Sheep appointed for the slaughter, ready to be sacrificed, were ransomed with the blood of the shepherd. He laid down his life, hyper ton probaton, not only for the good of the sheep, but in their stead. Thousands of sheep had been offered in sacrifice for their shepherds, as sin-offerings, but here, by a surprising reverse, the shepherd is sacrificed for the sheep. When David, the shepherd of Israel, was himself guilty, and the destroying angel drew his sword against the flock for his sake, with good reason did he plead, These sheep, what evil have they done? Let thy hand be against me, 2Sa 24:17. But the Son of David was sinless and spotless; and his sheep, what evil have they not done? Yet he saith, Let thine hand be against me. Christ here seems to refer to that prophecy, Zec 13:17, Awake, O sword, against my shepherd; and, though the smiting of the shepherd be for the present the scattering of the flock, it is in order to the gathering of them in.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

He is acquainted with those that are hereafter to be of this flock (Joh 10:16): Other sheep I have, have a right to and an interest in, which are not of this fold, of the Jewish church; them also I must bring. Observe,

[a.] The eye that Christ had to the poor Gentiles. He had sometimes intimated his special concern for the lost sheep of the house of Israel; to them indeed his personal ministry was confined; but, saith he, I have other sheep. Those who in process of time should believe in Christ, and be brought into obedience to him from among the Gentiles, are here called sheep, and he is said to have them, though as yet they were uncalled, and many of them unborn, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ in the counsels of divine love from eternity. Christ has a right, by virtue of the Father's donation and his own purchase, to many a soul of which he has not yet the possession; thus he had much people in Corinth, when as yet it lay in wickedness, Ac 18:10. "Those other sheep I have," saith Christ, "I have them on my heart, have them in my eye, am as sure to have them as if I had them already." Now Christ speaks of those other sheep, First, To take off the contempt that was put upon him, as having few followers, as having but a little flock, and therefore, if a good shepherd, yet a poor shepherd: "But," saith he, "I have more sheep than you see." Secondly, To take down the pride and vain-glory of the Jews, who thought the Messiah must gather all his sheep from among them. "No," saith Christ, "I have others whom I will set with the lambs of my flock, though you disdain to set them with the dogs of your flock."

[b.] The purposes and resolves of his grace concerning them: "Them also I must bring, bring home to God, bring into the church, and, in order to this, bring off from their vain conversation, bring them back from their wanderings, as that lost sheep," Lu 15:5. But why must he bring them? What was the necessity? First, The necessity of their case required it: "I must bring, or they must be left to wander endlessly, for, like sheep, they will never come back of themselves, and no other can or will bring them." Secondly, The necessity of his own engagements required it; he must bring them, or he would not be faithful to his trust, and true to his

undertaking. "They are my own, bought and paid for, and therefore I must not neglect them nor leave them to perish." He must in honour bring those with whom he was entrusted.

[c.] The happy effect and consequence of this, in two things:--First, "They shall hear my voice. Not only my voice shall be heard among them (whereas they have not heard, and therefore could not believe, now the sound of the gospel shall go to the ends of the earth), but it shall be heard by them; I will speak, and give to them to hear." Faith comes by hearing, and our diligent observance of the voice of Christ is both a means and an evidence of our being brought to Christ, and to God by him. Secondly, There shall be one fold and one shepherd. As there is one shepherd, so there shall be one fold. Both Jews and Gentiles, upon their turning to the faith of Christ, shall be incorporated in one church, be joint and equal sharers in the privileges of it, without distinction. Being united to Christ, they shall unite in him; two sticks shall become one in the hand of the Lord. Note, One shepherd makes one fold; one Christ makes one church. As the church is one in its constitution, subject to one head, animated by one Spirit, and guided by one rule, so the members of it ought to be one in love and affection, Eph 4:3-6.

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

That his laying down his life for the sheep was the condition, the performance of which entitled him to the honours and powers of his exalted state (Joh 10:17): "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life. Upon these terms I am, as Mediator, to expect my Father's acceptance and approbation, and the glory designed me--that I become a sacrifice for the chosen remnant." Not but that, as the Son of God, he was beloved of his Father from eternity, but as God-man, as Immanuel, he was therefore beloved of the Father because he undertook to die for the sheep; therefore God's soul delighted in him as his elect because herein he was his faithful servant (Isa 42:1); therefore he said, This is my beloved Son. What an instance is this of God's love to man, that he loved his Son the more for loving us! See what a value Christ puts upon his Father's love, that, to recommend himself to that, he would lay down his life for the sheep. Did he think God's love recompence sufficient for all his services and sufferings, and shall we think it too little for ours,

and court the smiles of the world to make it up? Therefore doth my Father love me, that is, me, and all that by faith become one with me; me, and the mystical body, because I lay down my life.

That his laying down his life was in order to his resuming it: I lay down my life, that I may receive it again. First, This was the effect of his Father's love, and the first step of his exaltation, the fruit of that love. Because he was God's holy one, he must not see corruption, Ps 16:10. God loved him too well to leave him in the grave. Secondly, This he had in his eye, in laying down his life, that he might have an opportunity of declaring himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection, Ro 1:4. By a divine stratagem (like that before Ai, Jos 8:15) he yielded to death, as if he were smitten before it, that he might the more gloriously conquer death, and triumph over the grave. He laid down a vilified body, that he might assume a glorified one, fit to ascend to the world of spirits; laid down a life adapted to this world, but assumed one adapted to the other, like a corn of wheat, Joh 12:24.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

That he was perfectly voluntary in his sufferings and death (Joh 10:18): "No one doth or can force my life from me against my will, but I freely lay it down of myself, I deliver it as my own act and deed, for I have (which no man has) power to lay it down, and to take it again."

1st, See here the power of Christ, as the Lord of life, particularly of his own life, which he had in himself. 1. He had power to keep his life against all the world, so that it could not be wrested from him without his own consent. Though Christ's life seemed to be taken by storm, yet really it was surrendered, otherwise it had been impregnable, and never taken. The Lord Jesus did not fall into the hands of his persecutors because he could not avoid it, but threw himself into their hands because his hour was come. No man taketh my life from me. This was such a challenge as was never given by the most daring hero. 2. He had power to lay down his life.

(a) He had ability to do it. He could, when he pleased, slip the knot of union between soul and body, and, without any act of violence done to himself, could disengage them from each other: having voluntarily taken up a body, he could voluntarily lay it down again, which appeared when he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

(b) He had authority to do it, exousian. Though we could find instruments of cruelty, wherewith to make an end of our own lives, yet Id possumus quod jure possumus--we can do that, and that only, which we can do lawfully. We are not at liberty to do it; but Christ had a sovereign authority to dispose of his own life as he pleased. He was no debtor (as we are) either to life or death, but perfectly sui juris.

(c) He had power to take it again; we have not. Our life, once laid down, is as water spilt upon the ground; but Christ, when he laid down his life, still had it within reach, within call, and could resume it. Parting with it by a voluntary conveyance, he might limit the surrender at pleasure, and he did it with a power of revocation, which was necessary to preserve the intentions of the surrender.

2ndly, See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of him by law, or extort it by force, he laid it down of himself, for our redemption. He offered himself to be the Saviour: Lo, I come; and then, the necessity of our case calling for it, he offered himself to be a sacrifice: Here am I, let these go their way; by which will we are sanctified, Heb 10:10. He was both the offerer and the offering, so that his laying down his life was his offering up himself.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him ?

21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?

Not the words, &c. His words are sober, grave, pious, full of wisdom. The preaching of Jesus always produced effect. It made bitter enemies or decided friends. So will all faithful preaching. It is not the fault of the gospel that there are divisions, but of the unbelief and mad passions of men.

22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

The feast of the dedication. Literally, the feast of the renewing, or of the renovation. This feast was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus, in the year 164 B.C. The temple and city were taken by Antiochus Epiphanes in the year 167 B.C. He slew forty thousand inhabitants, and sold forty thousand more as slaves. In addition to this, he sacrificed a sow on the altar of burnt-offerings, and a broth being made of this, he sprinkled it all over the temple. The city and temple were recovered three years afterward by Judas Maccabaeus, and the temple was purified with great pomp and solemnity. The ceremony of purification continued through eight days, during which Judas presented magnificent victims, and celebrated the praise of God with hymns and psalms (Josephus, Ant., b. xii. ch. 11). "They decked, also, the forefront of the temple with crowns of gold and with shields, and the gates and chambers they renewed and hanged doors upon them," 1 Mac. iv. 52-59. On this account it was called the feast of renovation or dedication. Josephus calls it the feast of lights, because the city was illuminated, as expressive of joy. The feast began on the twenty-fifth day of Chisleu, answering to the fifteenth day of December. The festival continued for eight days, with continued demonstrations of joy.

It was winter. The feast was celebrated in the winter. The word here implies that it was cold and inclement, and it is given as a reason why he walked in Solomon's porch.

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

A weighty question put to him by the Jews, Joh 10:24. They came round about him, to tease him; he was waiting for an opportunity to do them a kindness, and they took the opportunity to do him a mischief. Ill-will for good-will is no rare and uncommon return. He could not enjoy himself, no, not in the temple, his Father's house, without disturbance. They came about him, as it were, to lay siege to him: encompassed him about like bees. They came about him as if they had a joint and unanimous desire to be satisfied; came as one man, pretending an impartial and importunate

enquiry after truth, but intending a general assault upon our Lord Jesus; and they seemed to speak the sense of their nation, as if they were the mouth of all the Jews: How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us.

(1.) They quarrel with him, as if he had unfairly held them in suspense hitherto. Ten psychen hemon aireis--How long dost thou steal away our hearts? Or, take away our souls? So some read it; basely intimating that what share he had of the people's love and respect he did not obtain fairly, but by indirect methods, as Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; and as seducers deceive the hearts of the simple, and so draw away disciples after them, Ro 16:18,Ac 20:30. But most interpreters understand it as we do: "How long dost thou keep us in suspense? How long are we kept debating whether thou be the Christ or no, and not able to determine the question?" Now,

[1.] It was the effect of their infidelity, and powerful prejudices, that after our Lord Jesus had so fully proved himself to be the Christ they were still in doubt concerning it; this they willingly hesitated about, when they might easily have been satisfied. The struggle was between their convictions, which told them he was Christ, and their corruptions, which said, No, because he was not such a Christ as they expected. Those who choose to be sceptics may, if they please, hold the balance so that the most cogent arguments may not weigh down the most trifling objections, but scales may still hang even.

[2.] It was an instance of their impudence and presumption that they laid the blame of their doubting upon Christ himself, as if he made them to doubt by inconsistency with himself, whereas in truth they made themselves doubt by indulging their prejudices. If Wisdom's sayings appear doubtful, the fault is not in the object, but in the eye; they are all plain to him that understands. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves to doubt.

(2.) They challenge him to give a direct and categorical answer whether he was the Messiah or no: "If thou be the Christ, as many believe thou

art, tell us plainly, not by parables, as, I am the light of the world, and the good Shepherd, and the like, but totidem verbis--in so many words, either that thou art the Christ, or, as John Baptist, that thou art not," Joh 1:20. Now this pressing query of theirs was seemingly good; they pretended to be desirous to know the truth, as if they were ready to embrace it; but it was really bad, and put with an ill design; for, if he should tell them plainly that he was the Christ, there needed no more to make him obnoxious to the jealousy and severity of the Roman government. Every one knew the Messiah was to be a king, and therefore whoever pretended to be the Messiah would be prosecuted as a traitor, which was the thing they would have been at; for, let him tell them ever so plainly that he was the Christ, they would have this to say presently, Thou bearest witness of thyself, as they had said, Joh 8:13.

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

He justifies himself as not at all accessary to their infidelity and skepticism, referring them,

[1.] To what he had said: I have told you. He had told them that he was the Son of God, the Son of man, that he had life in himself, that he had authority to execute judgment, &c. And is not this the Christ then? These things he had told them, and they believed not; why then should they be told them again, merely to gratify their curiosity? You believed not. They pretended that they only doubted, but Christ tells them that they did not believe. Skepticism in religion is no better than downright infidelity. It is now for us to teach God how he should teach us, nor prescribe to him how plainly he should tell us his mind, but to be thankful for divine revelation as we have it. If we do not believe this, neither should we be persuaded if it were ever so much adapted to our humour.

[2.] He refers them to his works, to the example of his life, which was not only perfectly pure, but highly beneficent, and of a piece with his doctrine; and especially to his miracles, which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine. It was certain that no man could do those miracles except God were with him, and God would not be with him to attest a forgery.

He condemns them for their obstinate unbelief, notwithstanding all the most plain and powerful arguments used to convince them: "You believed not; and again, You believed not. You still are what you always were, obstinate in your unbelief." But the reason he gives is very surprising: "You believed not, because you are not of my sheep: you believe not in me, because you belong not to me."

[1.] "You are not disposed to be my followers, are not of a tractable teachable temper, have no inclination to receive the doctrine and law of the Messiah; you will not herd yourselves with my sheep, will not come and see, come and hear my voice." Rooted antipathies to the gospel of Christ are the bonds of iniquity and infidelity.

[2.] "You are not designed to be my followers; you are not of those that were given me by my Father, to be brought to grace and glory. You are not of the number of the elect; and your unbelief, if you persist in it, will be a certain evidence that you are not." Note, Those to whom God never gives the grace of faith were never designed for heaven and happiness. What Solomon saith of immorality is true of infidelity, It is a deep ditch, and he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein, Pr 22:14. Non esse electum, non est causa incredulitatis propriè dicta, sed causa per accidens. Fides autem est donum Dei et effectus prædestinationis--The not being included among the elect is not the proper cause of infidelity, but merely the accidental cause. But faith is the gift of God, and the effect of predestination. So Jansenius distinguishes well here.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

He takes this occasion to describe both the gracious disposition and the happy state of those that are his sheep; for such there are, though they be not.

[1.] To convince them that they were not his sheep, he tells them what were the characters of his sheep.

First, They hear his voice (Joh 10:27), for they know it to be his (Joh 10:4), and he has undertaken that they shall hear it, Joh 10:16. They

discern it, It is the voice of my beloved, So 2:8. They delight in it, are in their element when they are sitting at his feet to hear his word. They do according to it, and make his word their rule. Christ will not account those his sheep that are deaf to his calls, deaf to his charms, Ps 58:5.

Secondly, They follow him; they submit to his guidance by a willing obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful conformity to his spirit and pattern. The word of command has always been, Follow me. We must eye him as our leader and captain, and tread in his steps, and walk as he walked--follow the prescriptions of his word, the intimations of his providence, and the directions of his Spirit--follow the Lamb (the dux gregis--the leader of the flock) whithersoever he goes. In vain do we hear his voice if we do not follow him.

[2.] To convince them that it was their great unhappiness and misery not to be of Christ's sheep, he here describes the blessed state and case of those that are, which would likewise serve for the support and comfort of his poor despised followers, and keep them from envying the power and grandeur of those that were not of his sheep.

Our Lord Jesus takes cognizance of his sheep: They hear my voice, and I know them. He distinguishes them from others (2Ti 2:19), has a particular regard to every individual (Ps 34:6); he knows their wants and desires, knows their souls in adversity, where to find them, and what to do for them. He knows others afar off, but knows them near at hand.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

He has provided a happiness for them, suited to them: I give unto them eternal life, Joh 10:28.

1 The estate settled upon them is rich and valuable; it is life, eternal life. Man has a living soul; therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul: therefore the happiness provided is eternal life, running parallel with his duration. Life eternal is the felicity and chief good of a soul immortal.

2 The manner of conveyance is free: I give it to them; it is not bargained and sold upon a valuable consideration, but given by the free grace of Jesus Christ. The donor has power to give it. He who is the fountain of life, and Father of eternity, has authorized Christ to give eternal life, Joh 17:2. Not I will give it, but I do give it; it is a present gift. He gives the assurance of it, the pledge and earnest of it, the first-fruits and foretastes of it, that spiritual life which is eternal life begun, heaven in the seed, in the bud, in the embryo.

He has undertaken for their security and preservation to this happiness.

1. They shall be saved from everlasting perdition. They shall by no means perish for ever; so the words are. As there is an eternal life, so there is an eternal destruction; the soul not annihilated, but ruined; its being continued, but its comfort and happiness irrecoverably lost. All believers are saved from this; whatever cross they may come under, they shall not come into condemnation. A man is never undone till he is in hell, and they shall not go down to that. Shepherds that have large flocks often lose some of the sheep and suffer them to perish; but Christ has engaged that none of his sheep shall perish, not one.

2. They cannot be kept from their everlasting happiness; it is in reserve, but he that gives it to them will preserve them to it.

(a.) His own power is engaged for them: Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. A mighty contest is here supposed about these sheep. The Shepherd is so careful of their welfare that he has them not only within his fold, and under his eye, but in his hand, interested in his special love and taken under his special protection (all his saints are in thy hand, De 33:3); yet their enemies are so daring that they attempt to pluck them out of his hand--his whose own they are, whose care they are; but they cannot, they shall not, do it. Note, Those are safe who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are preserved in Christ Jesus: and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. The Pharisees and rulers did all they could to frighten the disciples of

Christ from following him, reproving and threatening them, but Christ saith that they shall not prevail.

(b.) His Father's power is likewise engaged for their preservation, Joh 10:29. He now appeared in weakness, and, lest his security should therefore be thought insufficient, he brings in his Father as a further security. Observe,

[1] The power of the Father: My Father is greater than all; greater than all the other friends of the church, all the other shepherds, magistrates or ministers, and able to do that for them which they cannot do. Those shepherds slumber and sleep, and it will be easy to pluck the sheep out of their hands; but he keeps his flock day and night. He is greater than all the enemies of the church, all the opposition given to her interests, and able to secure his own against all their insults; he is greater than all the combined force of hell and earth. He is greater in wisdom than the old serpent, though noted for subtlety; greater in strength than the great red dragon, though his name be legion, and his title principalities and powers. The devil and his angels have had many a push, many a pluck for the mastery, but have never yet prevailed, Re 12:7,8. The Lord on high is mightier.

[2] The interest of the Father in the sheep, for the sake of which this power is engaged for them: "It is my Father that gave them to me, and he is concerned in honour to uphold his gift." They were given to the Son as a trust to be managed by him, and therefore God will still look after them. All the divine power is engaged for the accomplishment of all the divine counsels.

[3] The safety of the saints inferred from these two. If this be so, then none (neither man nor devil) is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand, not able to deprive them of the grace they have, nor to hinder them from the glory that is designed them; not able to put them out of God's protection, nor get them into their own power. Christ had himself experienced the power of his Father upholding and strengthening him, and therefore puts all his followers into his hand too.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

Christ's tender expostulation with them upon occasion of this outrage (Joh 10:32): Jesus answered what they did, for we do not find that they said any thing, unless perhaps they stirred up the crown that they had gathered about him to join with them, crying, Stone him, stone him, as afterwards, Crucify him, crucify him. When he could have answered them with fire from heaven, he mildly replied, Many good works have I shown you from my Father: for which of those works do you stone me? Words so very tender that one would think they should have melted a heart of stone. In dealing with his enemies he still argued from his works (men evidence what they are by what they do), his good works--kala erga excellent, eminent works. Opera eximia vel præclara; the expression signifies both great works and good works.

1 The divine power of his works convicted them of the most obstinate infidelity. They were works from his Father, so far above the reach and course of nature as to prove him who did them sent of God, and acting by commission from him. These works he showed them; he did them openly before the people, and not in a corner. His works would bear the test, and refer themselves to the testimony of the most inquisitive and impartial spectators. He did not show his works by candle-light, as those that are concerned only for show, but he showed them at noon-day before the world, Joh 18:20. See Ps 111:6. His works so undeniably demonstrated that they were an incontestable demonstration of the validity of his commission.

2 The divine grace of his works convicted them of the most base ingratitude. The works he did among them were not only miracles, but mercies; not only works of wonder to amaze them, but works of love and kindness to do them good, and so make them good, and endear himself to them. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, which were favours, not only to the persons concerned, but to the public; these

he had repeated, and multiplied: "Now for which of these do you stone me? You cannot say that I have done you any harm, or given you any just provocation; if therefore you will pick a quarrel with me, it must be for some good work, some good turn done you; tell me for which." Note,

(1.) The horrid ingratitude that there is in our sins against God and Jesus Christ is a great aggravation of them, and makes them appear exceedingly sinful. See how God argues to this purpose, De 32:6,Jer 2:5,Mic 6:3.

(2.) We must not think it strange if we meet with those who not only hate us without cause, but are our adversaries for our love, Ps 35:12,41:9. When he asks, For which of these do you stone me? as he intimates the abundant satisfaction he had in his own innocency, which gives a man courage in a suffering day, so he puts his persecutors upon considering what was the true reason of their enmity, and asking, as all those should do that create trouble to their neighbour, Why persecute we him? As Job advises his friends to do, Job 19:28.

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

Their vindication of the attempt they made upon Christ, and the cause upon which they grounded their prosecution, Joh 10:33. What sin will want fig-leaves with which to cover itself, when even the bloody persecutors of the Son of God could find something to say for themselves?

1. They would not be thought such enemies to their country as to persecute him for a good work: For a good work we stone thee not. For indeed they would scarcely allow any of his works to be so. His curing the impotent man (Joh 5:1-46) and the blind man (Joh 9:1-41) were so far from being acknowledged good services to the town, and meritorious, that they were put upon the score of his crimes, because done on the sabbath day. But, if he had done any good works, they would not own that they stoned him for them, though these were really the things that did most exasperate them, Joh 11:47. Thus, though most absurd, they could not be brought to own their absurdities.

2. They would be thought such friends to God and his glory as to prosecute him for blasphemy: Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Here is,

(1.) A pretended zeal for the law. They seem mightily concerned for the honour of the divine majesty, and to be seized with a religious horror at that which they imagined to be a reproach to it. A blasphemer was to be stoned, Le 24:16. This law, they thought, did not only justify, but sanctify, what they attempted, as Ac 26:9. Note, The vilest practices are often varnished with plausible pretences. As nothing is more courageous than a well-informed conscience, so nothing is more outrageous than a mistaken one. See Isa 66:5,Joh 16:2.

(2.) A real enmity to the gospel, on which they could not put a greater affront than by representing Christ as a blasphemer. It is no new thing for the worst of characters to be put upon the best of men, by those that resolve to give them the worst of treatment.

[1.] The crime laid to his charge is blasphemy, speaking reproachfully and despitefully of God. God himself is out of the sinner's reach, and not capable of receiving any real injury; and therefore enmity to God spits its venom at his name, and so shows its ill-will.

[2.] The proof of the crime: Thou, being a man, makest thyself God. As it is God's glory that he is God, which we rob him of when we make him altogether such a one as ourselves, so it is his glory that besides him there is no other, which we rob him of when we make ourselves, or any creature, altogether like him. Now,

First, Thus far they were in the right, that what Christ said of himself amounted to this--that he was God, for he had said that he was one with the Father and that he would give eternal life; and Christ does not deny it, which he would have done if it had been a mistaken inference from his words. But,

secondly, They were much mistaken when they looked upon him as a mere man, and that the Godhead he claimed was a usurpation, and of his own making. They thought it absurd and impious that such a one as he, who appeared in the fashion of a poor, mean, despicable man, should profess himself the Messiah, and entitle himself to the honours confessedly due to the Son of God. Note,

1. Those who say that Jesus is a mere man, and only a made God, as the Socinians say, do in effect charge him with blasphemy, but do effectually prove it upon themselves.

2. He who, being a man, a sinful man, makes himself a god as the Pope does, who claims divine powers and prerogatives, is unquestionably a blasphemer, and that antichrist.

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

Christ's reply to their accusation of him (for such their vindication of themselves was), and his making good those claims which they imputed to him as blasphemous (Joh 10:34, &c.), where he proves himself to be no blasphemer, by two arguments:--

By an argument taken from God's word. He appeals to what was written in their law, that is, in the Old Testament; whoever opposes Christ, he is sure to have the scripture on his side. It is written (Ps 82:6), I have said, You are gods. It is an argument a minore ad majus--from the less to the greater. If they were gods, much more am I.

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken;

How he explains the text (Joh 10:35): He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken. The word of God's commission came to them, appointing them to their offices, as judges, and therefore they are called gods, Ex 22:28. To some the word of God came immediately, as to Moses; to others in the way of an instituted ordinance. Magistracy is a divine institution; and magistrates are God's delegates, and therefore the scripture calleth them gods; and we are sure that the scripture cannot be broken, or broken in upon, or found fault with.

Every word of God is right; the very style and language of scripture are unexceptionable, and not to be corrected, Mt 5:18.

36 say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

How he applies it. Thus much in general is easily inferred, that those were very rash and unreasonable who condemned Christ as a blasphemer, only for calling himself the Son of God, when yet they themselves called their rulers so, and therein the scripture warranted them. But the argument goes further (Joh 10:36): If magistrates were called Gods, because they were commissioned to administer justice in the nation, say you of him whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest? We have here two things concerning the Lord Jesus:--

[1.] The honour done him by the Father, which he justly glories in: He sanctified him, and sent him into the world. Magistrates were called the sons of God, though the word of God only came to them, and the spirit of government came upon them by measure, as upon Saul; but our Lord Jesus was himself the Word, and had the Spirit without measure. They were constituted for a particular country, city, or nation; but he was sent into the world, vested with a universal authority, as Lord of all. They were sent to, as persons at a distance; he was sent forth, as having been from eternity with God. The Father sanctified him, that is, designed him and set him apart to the office of Mediator, and qualified and fitted him for that office. Sanctifying him is the same with sealing him, Joh 6:27.

Note, Whom the Father sends he sanctifies; whom he designs for holy purposes he prepares with holy principles and dispositions. The holy God will reward, and therefore will employ, none but such as he finds or makes holy. The Father's sanctifying and sending him is here vouched as a sufficient warrant for his calling himself the Son of God; for because he was a holy thing he was called the Son of God, Lu 1:35. See Ro 1:4.

[2.] The dishonour done him by the Jews, which he justly complains of--that they impiously said of him, whom the Father had thus dignified, that he was a blasphemer, because he called himself the Son of God: "Say you of him so and so? Dare you say so? Dare you thus set your mouths against the heavens? Have you brow and brass enough to tell the God of truth

that he lies, or to condemn him that is most just? Look me in the face, and say it if you can. What! say you of the Son of God that he is a blasphemer?" If devils, whom he came to condemn, had said so of him, it had not been so strange; but that men, whom he came to teach and save, should say so of him, be astonished, O heavens! at this. See what is the language of an obstinate unbelief; it does, in effect, call the holy Jesus a blasphemer. It is hard to say which is more to be wondered at, that men who breathe in God's air should yet speak such things, or that men who have spoken such things should still be suffered to breathe in God's air. The wickedness of man, and the patience of God, as it were, contend which shall be most wonderful.

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

By an argument taken from his own works, Joh 10:37,38. In the former he only answered the charge of blasphemy by an argument ad hominem--turning a man's own argument against himself; but he here makes out his own claims, and proves that he and the Father are one (Joh 10:37,38): If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. Though he might justly have abandoned such blasphemous wretches as incurable, yet he vouchsafes to reason with them. Observe,

From what he argues--from his works, which he had often vouched as his credentials, and the proofs of his mission. As he proved himself sent of God by the divinity of his works, so we must prove ourselves allied to Christ by the Christianity of ours.

The argument is very cogent; for the works he did were the works of his Father, which the Father only could do, and which could not be done in the ordinary course of nature, but only by the sovereign over-ruling power of the God of nature. Opera Deo propria--works peculiar to God, and Opera Deo Digna--works worthy of God--the works of a divine power. He that can dispense with the laws of nature, repeal, altar, and overrule them at his pleasure, by his own power, is certainly the sovereign prince who first instituted and enacted those laws. The miracles which the apostles wrought in his name, by his power, and for the confirmation of his doctrine, corroborated this argument, and continued the evidence of it when he was gone.

38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

It is proposed as fairly as can be desired, and put to a short issue. First, If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. He does not demand a blind and implicit faith, nor an assent to his divine mission further than he gave proof of it. He did not wind himself into the affections of the people, nor wheedle them by sly insinuations, nor impose upon their credulity by bold assertions, but with the greatest fairness imaginable quitted all demands of their faith, further than he produced warrants for these demands. Christ is no hard master, who expects to reap in assents where he has not sown in arguments. None shall perish for the disbelief of that which was not proposed to them with sufficient motives of credibility, Infinite Wisdom itself being judge. Secondly, "But if I do the works of my Father, if I work undeniable miracles for the confirmation of a holy doctrine, though you believe not me, though you are so scrupulous as not to take my word, yet believe the works: believe your own eyes, your own reason; the thing speaks itself plainly enough." As the invisible things of the Creator are clearly seen by his works of creation and common providence (Ro 1:20), so the invisible things of the Redeemer were seen by his miracles, and by all his works both of power and mercy; so that those who were not convinced by these works were without excuse.

For what he argues--that you may know and believe, may believe it intelligently, and with an entire satisfaction, that the Father is in me and I in him; which is the same with what he had said (Joh 10:30): I and my Father are one. The Father was so in the Son as that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and it was by a divine power that he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father as that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole of his mind, not by communication, but by consciousness, having lain in his bosom.

39 Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand,

How they attacked him by force. Therefore they sought again to take him, Joh 10:39. Therefore, 1. Because he had fully answered their charge of blasphemy, and wiped off that imputation, so that they could not for shame go on with their attempts to stone him, therefore they contrived to

seize him, and prosecute him as an offender against the state. When they were constrained to drop their attempt by a popular tumult, they would try what they could do under colour of a legal process. See Re 12:13. Or, 2. Because he persevered in the same testimony concerning himself, they persisted in their malice against him. What he had said before he did in effect say again, for the faithful witness never departs from what he has once said; and therefore, having the same provocation, they express the same resentment, and justify their attempt to stone him by another attempt to take him. Such is the temper of a persecuting spirit, and such its policy, malè facta malè factis tegere ne perpluant--to cover one set of bad deeds with another, lest the former should fall through.

40 and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

How he disposed of himself in his retirement: He went away again beyond Jordan, Joh 10:40. The bishop of our souls came not to be fixed in one see, but to go about from place to place, doing good. This great benefactor was never out of his way, for wherever he came there was work to be done. Though Jerusalem was the royal city, yet he made many a kind visit to the country, not only to his own country Galilee, but to other parts, even those that lay most remote beyond Jordan. Now observe,

1. What shelter he found there. He went into a private part of the country, and there he abode; there he found some rest and quietness, when in Jerusalem he could find none. Note, Though persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, they cannot drive him or it out of the world. Though Jerusalem was not gathered, nor would be, yet Christ was glorious, and would be. Christ's going now beyond Jordan was a figure of the taking of the kingdom of God from the Jews, and bringing it to the Gentiles. Christ and his gospel have often found better entertainment among the plain country-people than among the wise, the mighty, the noble, 1Co 1:26,27.

2. What success he found there. He did not go thither merely for his own security, but to do good there; and he chose to go thither, where John at first baptized (Joh 1:28), because there could not but remain some impressions of John's ministry and baptism thereabouts, which would dispose them to receive Christ and his doctrine; for it was not three years

since John was baptizing, and Christ was himself baptized here at Bethabara. Christ came hither now to see what fruit there was of all the pains John Baptist had taken among them, and what they retained of the things they then heard and received.

41 And many resorted unto him and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

The event in some measure answered expectation; for we are told,

(a) That they flocked after him (Joh 10:41): Many resorted to him. The return of the means of grace to a place, after they have been for some time intermitted, commonly occasions a great stirring of affections. Some think Christ chose to abide at Bethabara, the house of passage, where the ferry-boats lay by which they crossed the river Jordan, that the confluence of people thither might give an opportunity of teaching many who would come to hear him when it lay in their way, but who would scarcely go a step out of the road for an opportunity of attending on his word.

(b) That they reasoned in his favour, and sought arguments to induce them to close with him as much as those at Jerusalem sought objections against him. They said very judiciously, John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this man were true. Two things they considered, upon recollecting what they had seen and heard from John, and comparing it with Christ's ministry.

[1.] That Christ far exceeded John Baptist's power, for John did no miracle, but Jesus does many; whence it is easy to infer that Jesus is greater than John. And, if John was so great a prophet, how great then is this Jesus! Christ is best known and acknowledged by such a comparison with others as sets him superlatively above others. Though John came in the spirit and power of Elias, yet he did not work miracles, as Elias did, lest the minds of people should be made to hesitate between him and Jesus; therefore the honour of working miracles was reserved for Jesus as a flower of his crown, that there might be a sensible demonstration, and undeniable one, that though he came after John, yet he was preferred far before him.

[2.] That Christ exactly answered John Baptist's testimony. John not only did no miracle to divert people from Christ, but he said a great deal to direct them to Christ, and to turn them over as apprentices to him, and this came to their minds now: all things that John said of this man were true, that he should be the Lamb of God, should baptize with Holy Ghost and with fire. Great things John had said of him, which raised their expectations; so that though they had not zeal enough to carry them into his country to enquire after him, yet, when he came into theirs, and brought his gospel to their doors, they acknowledged him as great as John had said he would be. When we get acquainted with Christ, and come to know him experimentally, we find all things that the scripture saith of him to be true; nay, and that the reality exceeds the report, 1Ki 10:6,7. John Baptist was now dead and gone, and yet his hearers profited by what they had heard formerly, and, by comparing what they heard then with what they saw now, they gained a double advantage; for,

First, They were confirmed in their belief that John was a prophet, who foretold such things, and spoke of the eminency to which this Jesus would arrive, though his beginning was so small.

Secondly, They were prepared to believe that Jesus was the Christ, in whom they saw those things accomplished which John foretold. By this we see that the success and efficacy of the word preached are not confined to the life of the preacher, nor do they expire with his breath, but that which seemed as water spilt upon the ground may afterwards be gathered up again. See Zec 1:5,6.

(c) That many believed on him there. Believing that he who wrought such miracles, and in whom John's predictions were fulfilled, was what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, they gave up themselves to him as his disciples, Joh 10:42. An emphasis is here to be laid,

[1.] Upon the persons that believed on him; they were many. While those that received and embraced his doctrine at Jerusalem were but as the grape-gleanings of the vintage, those that believed on him in the country, beyond the Jordan, were a full harvest gathered in to him.

[2.] Upon the place where this was; it was where John had been preaching and baptizing and had had great success; there many believed on the Lord Jesus. Where the preaching of the doctrine of repentance has had success, as desired, there the preaching of the doctrine of reconciliation and gospel grace is most likely to be prosperous. Where John has been acceptable, Jesus will not be unacceptable.

42 And many believed on him there.

John-11

The Death of Lazarus

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

A certain man was sick. The resurrection of Lazarus has been recorded only by John. Various reasons have been conjectured why the other evangelists did not mention so signal a miracle. The most probable is, that at the time they wrote Lazarus was still living. The miracle was well known, and yet to have recorded it might have exposed Lazarus to opposition and persecution from the Jews. See Jn 12:10,11. Besides, John wrote for Christians who were out of Palestine. The other gospels were written chiefly for those who were in Judea. There was the more need, therefore, that he should enter minutely into the account of the miracle, while the others did not deem it necessary or proper to record an event so well known.

Bethany. A village on the eastern declivity of the Mount of Olives. Mt 21:1.

The town of Mary. The place where she lived. At that place also lived Simon the leper (Mt 26:6), and there our Lord spent considerable part of his time when he was in Judea. The transaction recorded in this chapter occurred nearly four months after those mentioned in the previous chapter. Those occurred in December, and these at the approach of the Passover in April.

2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

Whom thou lovest, Jn 11:5. The members of this family were among the few peculiar and intimate friends of our Lord. He was much with them, and showed them marks of special friendship Lk 10:38-42, and they bestowed upon him peculiar proof of affection in return. This shows that special attachments are lawful for Christians, and that those friendships are peculiarly lovely which are tempered and sweetened with the spirit of Christ. Friendships should always be cemented by religion, and one main end of those attachments should be to aid one another in the great business of preparing to die.

Sent unto him. They believed that he had power to heal him (Jn 11:21), though they did not then seem to suppose that he could raise him if he died. Perhaps there were two reasons why they sent for him; one, because they supposed he would be desirous of seeing his friend; the other, because they supposed he could restore him. In sickness we should implore the aid and presence of Jesus. He only can restore us and our friends; he only can perform for us the office of a friend when all other friends fail; and he only can cheer us with the hope of a blessed resurrection.

4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

This sickness is not unto death. The word death here is equivalent to remaining render death, Rom 6:23: "The wages of sin is death"---

permanent or unchanging death, opposed to eternal life. Jesus evidently did not intend to deny that he would die. The words which he immediately adds show that he would expire, and that he would raise him up to show forth the power and glory of God. Comp. Jn 11:11. Those words cannot be understood on any other supposition than that he expected to raise him up. The Saviour often used expressions similar to this to fix the attention on what he was about to say in explanation. The sense may be thus expressed: "His sickness is not fatal. It is not designed for his death, but to furnish an opportunity for a signal display of the glory of God, and to furnish a standing proof of the truth of religion. It is intended to exhibit the power of the Son of God, and to be a proof at once of the truth of his mission; of his friendship for this family; of his mild, tender, peculiar love as a man; of his power and glory as the Messiah; and of the great doctrine that the dead will rise."

For the glory of God. That God may be honoured See Jn 9:3.

That the Son of God, &c. The glory of God and of his Son is the same. That which promotes the one promotes also the other. Few things could do it more than the miracle which follows, evincing at once the lovely and tender character of Jesus as a man and a friend, and his power as the equal with God.

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

He deferred visiting his patient, Joh 11:5,6. They had pleaded, Lord, it is he whom thou lovest, and the plea is allowed (Joh 11:5): Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. Thus the claims of faith are ratified in the court of heaven. Now one would think it should follow, When he heard therefore that he was sick he made all the haste that he could to him; if he loved them, now was a time to show it by hastening to them, for he knew they impatiently expected him. But he took the contrary way to show his love: it is not said, He loved them and yet he lingered; but he loved them and therefore he lingered; when he heard that his friend was sick, instead of coming post to him, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

(1.) He loved them, that is, had a great opinion of Martha and Mary, of their wisdom and grace, of their faith and patience, above others of his disciples, and therefore he deferred coming to them, that he might try them, that their trial might at last be found to praise and honour.

(2.) He loved them, that is, he designed to do something great and extraordinary for them, to work such a miracle for their relief as he had not wrought for any of his friends; and therefore he delayed coming to them, that Lazarus might be dead and buried before he came. If Christ had come presently, and cured the sickness of Lazarus, he had done no more than he did for many; if he had raised him to life when newly dead, no more than he had done for some: but, deferring his relief so long, he had an opportunity of doing more for him than for any. Note, God hath gracious intentions even in seeming delays, Isa 54:7,8,49:14, &c. Christ's friends at Bethany were not out of his thoughts, though, when he heard of their distress, he made no haste to them. When the work of deliverance, temporal or spiritual, public or personal, stands at a stay, it does but stay the time, and every thing is beautiful in its season.

7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.

Here is the notice which Christ gave his disciples of his purpose to go into Judea towards Jerusalem. His disciples were the men of his counsel, and to them he saith (Joh 11:7), "Let us go into Judea again, though those of Judea are unworthy of such a favour." Thus Christ repeats the tenders of his mercy to those who have often rejected them. Now this may be considered, [1.] As a purpose of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whose affliction, and all the aggravating circumstances of it, he knew very well, though no more expresses were sent to him; for he was present in spirit, though absent in body. When he knew they were brought to the last extremity, when the brother and sisters had given and taken a final farewell, "Now," saith he, "let us go to Judea." Christ will arise in favour of his people when the time to favour them, yea, the set time, is come; and the worst time is commonly the set time--when our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts; then they shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened the graves, Eze 37:11,13. In the depths of affliction, let this therefore keep us out of the depths of despair, that man's extremity is God's opportunity, Jehovah-jireh. Or, [2.] As a trial of the courage of the disciples, whether they would venture to follow him thither, where they

had so lately been frightened by an attempt upon their Master's life, which they looked upon as an attempt upon theirs too. To go to Judea, which was so lately made too hot for them, was a saying that proved them. But Christ did not say, "Go you into Judea, and I will stay and take shelter here;" no, Let us go. Note, Christ never brings his people into any peril but he accompanies them in it, and is with them even when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

Their objection against this journey (Joh 11:8): Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? Here,

[1.] They remind him of the danger he had been in there not long since. Christ's disciples are apt to make a greater matter of sufferings than their Master does, and to remember injuries longer. He had put up with the affront, it was over and gone, and forgotten, but his disciples could not forget it; of late, nyn--now, as if it were this very day, they sought to stone thee. Though it was at least two months ago, the remembrance of the fright was fresh in their minds.

[2.] They marvel that he will go thither again. "Wilt thou favour those with thy presence that have expelled thee out of their coasts?" Christ's ways in passing by offences are above our ways. "Wilt thou expose thyself among a people that are so desperately enraged against thee? Goest thou thither again, where thou hast been so ill used?" Here they showed great care for their Master's safety, as Peter did, when he said, Master, spare thyself; had Christ been inclined to shift off suffering, he did not want friends to persuade him to it, but he had opened his mouth to the Lord, and he would not, he could not, go back. Yet, while the disciples show a concern for his safety, they discover at the same time,

First, A distrust of his power; as if he could not secure both himself and them now in Judea as well as he had done formerly. Is his arm shortened? When we are solicitous for the interests of Christ's church and kingdom in the world, we must yet rest satisfied in the wisdom and power of the Lord Jesus, who knows how to secure a flock of sheep in the midst of a herd of wolves.

Secondly, A secret fear of suffering themselves; for they count upon this if he suffer. When our own private interests happen to run in the same channel with those of the public, we are apt to think ourselves zealous for the Lord of hosts, when really we are only zealous for our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, and seek our own things, under colour of seeking the things of Christ; we have therefore need to distinguish upon our principles.

9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

This Christ applies to his case, and shows why he must go to Judea, because he had a clear call to go. For the opening of this,

He shows the comfort and satisfaction which a man has in his own mind while he keeps in the way of his duty, as it is in general prescribed by the word of God, and particularly determined by the providence of God: If any man walk in the day, he stumbles not; that is, If a man keep close to his duty, and mind that, and set the will of God before him as his rule, with an impartial respect to all God's commandments, he does not hesitate in his own mind, but, walking uprightly, walks surely, and with a holy confidence. As he that walks in the day stumbles not, but goes on steadily and cheerfully in his way, because he sees the light of this world, and by it sees his way before him; so a good man, without any collateral security or sinister aims, relies upon the word of God as his rule, and regards the glory of God as his end, because he sees those two great lights, and keeps his eye upon them; thus he is furnished with a faithful guide in all his doubts, and a powerful guard in all his dangers, Ga 6:4,Ps 119:6. Christ, wherever he went, walked in the day, and so shall we, if we follow his steps.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

He shows the pain and peril a man is in who walks not according to this rule (Joh 11:10): If a man walk in the night, he stumbles; that is, If a man walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and according to the course of this world,--if he consult his own carnal reasonings more than the will and glory of God,--he falls into temptations and snares, is liable to great uneasiness and frightful apprehensions, trembles at the

shaking of a leaf, and flees when none pursues; while an upright man laughs at the shaking of the spear, and stands undaunted when ten thousand invade. See Isa 33:14-16, he stumbles, because there is no light in him, for light in us is that to our moral actions which light about us is to our natural actions. He has not a good principle within; he is not sincere; his eye is evil. Thus Christ not only justifies his purpose of going into Judea, but encourages his disciples to go along with him, and fear no evil.

11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

The notice Christ gave his disciples of death of Lazarus, and an intimation that his business into Judea was to look after him, Joh 11:11. After he had prepared his disciples for this dangerous march into an enemy's country, he then gives them,

[1.] Plain intelligence of the death of Lazarus, though he had received no advice of it: Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. See here how Christ calls a believer and a believer's death.

First, He calls a believer his friend: Our friend Lazarus. Note, 1. There is a covenant of friendship between Christ and believers, and a friendly affection and communion pursuant to it, which our Lord Jesus will own and not be ashamed of. His secret is with the righteous. 2. Those whom Christ is pleased to own as his friends all his disciples should take for theirs. Christ speaks of Lazarus as their common friend: Our friend. 3. Death itself does not break the bond of friendship between Christ and a believer. Lazarus is dead, and yet he is still our friend.

Secondly, He calls the death of a believer a sleep: he sleepeth. It is good to call death by such names and titles as will help to make it more familiar and less formidable to us. The death of Lazarus was in a peculiar sense a sleep, as that of Jairus's daughter, because he was to be raised again speedily; and, since we are sure to rise again at last, why should that make any great difference? And why should not the believing hope of that resurrection to eternal life make it as easy to us to put off the body and die as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep? A good Christian, when he dies, does but sleep: he rests from the labours of the day past, and is

refreshing himself for the next morning. Nay, herein death has the advantage of sleep, that sleep is only the parenthesis, but death is the period, of our cares and toils. The soul does not sleep, but becomes more active; but the body sleeps without any toss, without any terror; not distempered nor disturbed. The grave to the wicked is a prison, and its grave-clothes as the shackles of a criminal reserved for execution; but to the godly it is a bed, and all its bands as the soft and downy fetters of an easy quiet sleep. Though the body corrupt, it will rise in the morning as if it had never seen corruption; it is but putting off our clothes to be mended and trimmed up for the marriage day, the coronation day, to which we must rise. See Isa 57:2,1Th 4:14. The Greeks called their burying-places dormitories--koimeteria.

[2.] Particular intimations of his favourable intentions concerning Lazarus: but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. He could have done it, and yet have staid where he was: he that restored at a distance one that was dying (Joh 4:50) could have raised at a distance one that was dead; but he would put this honour upon the miracle, to work it by the grave side: I go, to awake him. As sleep is a resemblance of death, so a man's awaking out of sleep when he is called, especially when he is called by his own name, is an emblem of the resurrection (Job 14:15): Then shalt thou call. Christ had no sooner said, Our friend sleeps, but presently he adds, I go, that I may awake him. When Christ tells his people at any time how bad the case is he lets them know in the same breath how easily, how quickly, he can mend it. Christ's telling his disciples that this was his business to Judea might help to take off their fear of going with him thither; he did not go up on a public errand to the temple, but a private visit, which would not so much expose him and them; and, besides, it was to do a kindness to a family to which they were all obliged.

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

They said, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. This intimates,

[1.] Some concern they had for their friend Lazarus; they hoped he would recover; sothesetai--he shall be saved from dying at this time. Probably they had understood, by the messenger who brought news of his illness, that one of the most threatening symptoms he was under was that he was restless, and could get no sleep; and now that they heard he slept they

concluded the fever was going off, and the worst was past. Sleep is often nature's physic, and reviving to its weak and weary powers. This is true of the sleep of death; if a good Christian so sleep, he shall do well, better than he did here.

[2.] A greater concern for themselves; for hereby they insinuate that it was now needless for Christ to go to him, and expose himself and them. "If he sleep, he will be quickly well, and we may stay where we are." Thus we are willing to hope that the good work which we are called to do will do itself, or will be done by some other hand, if there be peril in the doing of it.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

This mistake of theirs rectified (Joh 11:13): Jesus spoke of his death. See here,

[1.] How dull of understanding Christ's disciples as yet were. Let us not therefore condemn all those as heretics who mistake the sense of some of Christ's sayings. It is not good to aggravate our brethren's mistakes; yet this was a gross one, for it had easily been prevented if they had remembered how frequently death is called a sleep in the Old Testament. They should have understood Christ when he spoke scripture language. Besides, it would sound oddly for their Master to undertake a journey of two or three days only to awake a friend out of a natural sleep, which any one else might do. What Christ undertakes to do, we may be sure, is something great and uncommon, and a work worthy of himself.

[2.] How carefully the evangelist corrects this error: Jesus spoke of his death. Those that speak in an unknown tongue, or use similitudes, should learn hence to explain themselves, and pray that they may interpret, to prevent mistakes.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

The plain and express declaration which Jesus made to them of the death of Lazarus, and his resolution to go to Bethany, Joh 11:14,15.

[1.] He gives them notice of the death of Lazarus; what he had before said darkly he now says plainly, and without a figure: Lazarus is dead, Joh 11:14. Christ takes cognizance of the death of his saints, for it is precious in his sight (Ps 116:15), and he is not pleased if we do not consider it, and lay it to heart. See what a compassionate teacher Christ is, and how he condescends to those that are out of the way, and by his subsequent sayings and doings explains the difficulties of what went before.

[2.] He gives them the reason why he had delayed so long to go and see him: I am glad for your sakes that I was not there. If he had been there time enough, he would have healed his disease and prevented his death, which would have been much for the comfort of Lazarus's friends, but then his disciples would have seen no further proof of his power than what they had often seen, and, consequently, their faith had received no improvement; but now that he went and raised him from the dead, as there were many brought to believe on him who before did no (Joh 11:45), so there was much done towards the perfecting of what was lacking in the faith of those that did, which Christ aimed at: To the intent that you may believe.

[3.] He resolves now to go to Bethany, and take his disciples along with him: Let us go unto him. Not, "Let us go to his sisters, to comfort them" (which is the utmost we can do), but, Let us go to him; for Christ can show wonders to the dead. Death, which will separate us from all our other friends, and cut us off from correspondence with them, cannot separate us from the love of Christ, nor put us out of the reach of his calls; as he will maintain his covenant with the dust, so he can make visits to the dust. Lazarus is dead, but let us go to him; though perhaps those who said, If he sleep there is no need to go, were ready to say, If he be dead it is to no purpose to go.

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Thomas exciting his fellow-disciples cheerfully to attend their Master's motions (Joh 11:16): Thomas, who is called Didymus. Thomas in Hebrew and Didymus in Greek signify a twin; it is said of Rebekah (Ge 25:24) that there were twins in her womb; the word is Thomim. Probably Thomas was

a twin. He said to his fellow-disciples (who probably looked with fear and concern upon one another when Christ had said so positively, Let us go to him), very courageously, Let us also go that we may die with him; with him, that is,

[1.] "Let us go and die with our Master, who is now exposing himself to death by venturing into Judea;" and so I rather think it is meant. "If he will go into danger, let us also go and take our lot with him, according to the command we received, Follow me." Thomas knew so much of the malice of the Jews against Christ, and the counsels of God concerning him, which he had often told them of, that it was no foreign supposition that he was now going to die. And now Thomas manifests, First, A gracious readiness to die with Christ himself, flowing from strong affections to him, though his faith was weak, as appeared afterwards, Joh 14:5,20:25. Where thou diest I will die, Ru 1:17. Secondly, A zealous desire to help his fellow-disciples into the same frame: "Let us go, one and all, and die with him; if they stone him, let them stone us; who would desire to survive such a Master?" Thus, in difficult times, Christians should animate one another. We may each of us say, Let us die with him. Note, The consideration of the dying of the Lord Jesus should make us willing to die whenever God calls for us.

[2.] With Lazarus, who was now dead; so some take it. Lazarus was a dear and loving friend both to Christ and his disciples, and perhaps Thomas had a particular intimacy with him. Now if he be dead, saith he, let us even go and die with him. For,

First, "If we survive, we know not how to live without him." Probably Lazarus had done them many good offices, sheltered them, and provided for them, and been to them instead of eyes; and now that he was gone they had no man like-minded, and "Therefore," saith he, "we had as good die with him." Thus we are sometimes ready to think our lives bound up in the lives of some that were dear to us: but God will teach us to live, and to live comfortably, upon himself, when those are gone without whom we thought we could not live. But this is not all.

Secondly, "If we die, we hope to be happy with him." Such a firm belief he has of a happiness on the other side death, and such good hope through grace of their own and Lazarus's interest in it, that he is willing they should all go and die with him. It is better to die, and go along with our Christian friends to that world which is enriched by their removal to it, than stay behind in a world that is impoverished by their departure out of it. The more of our friends are translated hence, the fewer cords we have to bind us to this earth, and the more to draw our hearts heavenwards. How pleasantly does the good man speak of dying, as if it were but undressing and going to bed!

Resurrection and the Life

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

The matter being determined, that Christ will go to Judea, and his disciples with him, they address themselves to their journey; in this journey some circumstances happened which the other evangelists record, as the healing of the blind man at Jericho, and the conversion of Zaccheus. We must not reckon ourselves out of our way, while we are in the way of doing good; nor be so intent upon one good office as to neglect another.

At length, he comes near to Bethany, which is said to be about fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, about two measured miles or about three and half kilometers, Joh 11:18. Notice is taken of this, that this miracle was in effect wrought in Jerusalem, and so was put to her score. Christ's miracles in Galilee were more numerous, but those in or near Jerusalem were more illustrious; there he healed one that had been diseased thirty-eight years, another that had been blind from his birth, and raised one that had been dead four days. To Bethany Christ came, and observe,

What posture he found his friends there in. When he had been last with them it is probable that he left them well, in health and joy; but when we part from our friends (though Christ knew) we know not what changes may affect us or them before we meet again.

He found his friend Lazarus in the grave, Joh 11:17. When he came near the town, probably by the burying-place belonging to the town, he was told by the neighbours, or some persons whom he met, that Lazarus had been four days buried. Some think that Lazarus died the same day that the messenger came to Jesus with the tidings of his sickness, and so reckon two days for his abode in the same place and two days for his journey. I rather think that Lazarus died at the very instant that Jesus, "Our friend sleepeth, he is now newly fallen asleep;" and that the time between his death and burial (which among the Jews was but short), with the four days of his lying in the grave, was taken up in this journey; for Christ travelled publicly, as appears by his passing through Jericho, and his abode at Zaccheus's house took up some time. Promised salvations, though they always come surely, yet often come slowly.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs [or, about two miles] off:

19 and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

He found his friends that survived in grief. Martha and Mary were almost swallowed up with sorrow for the death of their brother, which is intimated where it is said that many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them. Note,

(1.) Ordinarily, where death is there are mourners, especially when those that were agreeable and amiable to their relations, and serviceable to their generation, are taken away. The house where death is called the house of mourning, Ec 7:2. When man goes to his long home the mourners go about the streets (Ec 12:5), or rather sit alone, and keep silence. Here was Martha's house, a house where the fear of God was, and on which his blessing rested, yet made a house of mourning. Grace will keep sorrow from the heart (Joh 14:1), not from the house.

(2.) Where there are mourners there ought to be comforters. It is a duty we owe to those that are in sorrow to mourn with them, and to comfort them; and our mourning with them will be some comfort to them. When we are under the present impressions of grief, we are apt to forget those things which would minister comfort to us, and therefore have need of remembrancers. It is a mercy to have remembrancers when we are in

sorrow, and our duty to be remembrancers to those who are in sorrow. The Jewish doctors laid great stress upon this, obliging their disciples to make conscience of comforting the mourners after the burial of the dead. They comforted them concerning their brother, that is, by speaking to them of him, not only of the good name he left behind, but of the happy state he was gone to. When godly relations and friends are taken from us, whatever occasion we have to be afflicted concerning ourselves, who are left behind and miss them, we have reason to be comforted concerning those who are gone before us to a happiness where they have no need of us. This visit which the Jews made to Martha and Mary is an evidence that they were persons of distinction, and made a figure; as also that they behaved obligingly to all; so that though they were followers of Christ, yet those who had no respect for him were civil to them. There was also a providence in it, that so many Jews, Jewish ladies it is probable, should come together, just at this time, to comfort the mourners, that they might be unexceptionable witnesses of the miracle, and see what miserable comforters they were, in comparison with Christ. Christ did not usually send for witnesses to his miracles, and yet had none been by but relations this would have been excepted against; therefore God's counsel so ordered it that these should come together accidentally, to bear their testimony to it, that infidelity might stop her mouth.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

We are told that she went and met him, Joh 11:20.

[1.] It should seem that Martha was earnestly expecting Christ's arrival, and enquiring for it. Either she had sent out messengers, to bring her tidings of his first approach, or she had often asked, Saw you him whom my soul loveth? so that the first who discovered him ran to her with the welcome news. However it was, she heard of his coming before he arrived. She had waited long, and often asked, Is he come? and could hear no tidings of him; but long-looked-for came at last. At the end the vision will speak, and not lie.

[2.] Martha, when the good news was brought that Jesus was coming, threw all aside, and went and met him, in token of a most affectionate welcome. She waived all ceremony and compliment to the Jews who came

to visit her, and hastened to go and meet Jesus. Note, When God by his grace or providence is coming towards us in ways of mercy and comfort, we should go forth by faith, hope, and prayer to meet him. Some suggest that Martha went out of the town to meet Jesus, to let him know that there were several Jews in the house, who were no friends to him, that if he pleased he might keep out of the way of them.

[3.] When Martha went to meet Jesus, Mary sat still in the house. Some think she did not hear the tidings, being in her drawing-room, receiving visits of condolence, while Martha who was busied in the household-affairs had early notice of it. Perhaps Martha would not tell her sister that Christ was coming, being ambitious of the honour of receiving him first. Sancta est prudentia clam fratribus clam parentibus ad Christum esse conferre--Holy prudence conducts us to Christ, while brethren and parents know not what we are doing.--Maldonat. in locum. Others think she did hear that Christ was come, but was so overwhelmed with sorrow that she did not care to stir, choosing rather to indulge her sorrow, and to sit poring upon her affliction, and saying, I do well to mourn. Comparing this story with that in Lu 10:38, &c., we may observe the different tempers of these two sisters, and the temptations and advantages of each. Martha's natural temper was active and busy; she loved to be here and there, and at the end of every thing; and this had been a snare to her when by it she was not only careful and cumbered about many things, but hindered from the exercises of devotion: but now in a day of affliction this active temper did her a kindness, kept the grief from her heart, and made her forward to meet Christ, and so she received comfort from him the sooner. On the other hand, Mary's natural temper was contemplative and reserved. This had been formerly an advantage to her, when it placed her Christ's feet, to hear his word, and enabled her there to attend upon him without those distractions with which Martha was cumbered; but now in the day of affliction that same temper proved a snare to her, made her less able to grapple with her grief, and disposed her to melancholy: But Mary sat still in the house. See here how much it will be our wisdom carefully to watch against the temptations, and improve the advantages, of our natural temper.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

Here is fully related the discourse between Christ and Martha.

Martha's address to Christ, Joh 11:21,22.

First, She complains of Christ's long absence and delay. She said it, not only with grief for the death of her brother, but with some resentment of the seeming unkindness of the Master: Lord if you hadst been here, my brother had not died. Here is,

1. Some evidence of faith. She believed Christ's power, that, though her brother's sickness was very grievous, yet he could have cured it, and so have prevented his death. She believed his pity, that if he had but seen Lazarus in his extreme illness, and his dear relations all in tears about him, he would have had compassion, and have prevented so sad a breach, for his compassions fail not. But,

2. Here are sad instances of unbelief. Her faith was true, but weak as a bruised reed, for she limits the power of Christ, in saying, If thou hadst been here; whereas she ought to have known that Christ could cure at a distance, and that his gracious operations were not limited to his bodily presence. She reflects likewise upon the wisdom and kindness of Christ, that he did not hasten to them when they sent for him, as if he had not timed his business well, and now might as well have staid away, and not have come at all, as to come too late; and, as for any help now, she can scarcely entertain the thought of it.

Secondly, Yet she corrects and comforts herself with the thoughts of the prevailing interest Christ had in heaven; at least, she blames herself for blaming her Master, and for suggesting that he comes too late: for I know that even now, desperate as the case is, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee. Observe,

1. How willing her hope was. Though she had not courage to ask of Jesus that he should raise him to life again, there having been no precedent as

yet of any one raised to life that had been so long dead, yet, like a modest petitioner, she humbly recommends the case to the wise and compassionate consideration of the Lord Jesus. When we know not what in particular to ask or expect, let us in general refer ourselves to God, let him do as seemeth him good. Judicii tui est, non præsumptionis meæ--I leave it to thy judgment, not to my presumption.--Aug. in locum. When we know not what to pray for, it is our comfort that the great Intercessor knows what to ask for us, and is always heard.

2. How weak her faith was. She should have said, "Lord, thou canst do whatsoever thou wilt;" but she only says, "Thou canst obtain whatsoever thou prayest for." She had forgotten that the Son had life in himself, that he wrought miracles by his own power. Yet both these considerations must be taken in for the encouragement of our faith and hope, and neither excluded: the dominion Christ has on earth and his interest and intercession in heaven. He has in the one hand the golden sceptre, and in the other the golden censer; his power is always predominant, his intercession always prevalent.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

The comfortable word which Christ gave to Martha, in an answer to her pathetic address (Joh 11:23): Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha, in her complaint, looked back, reflecting with regret that Christ was not there, for then, thinks she, my brother had been now alive. We are apt, in such cases, to add to our own trouble, by fancying what might have been. "If such a method had been taken, such a physician employed, my friend had not died;" which is more than we know: but what good does this do? When God's will is done, our business is to submit to him. Christ directs Martha, and us in her, to look forward, and to think what shall be, for that is a certainty, and yields sure comfort: Thy brother shall rise again.

First, This was true of Lazarus in a sense peculiar to him: he was now presently to be raised; but Christ speaks of it in general as a thing to be done, not which he himself would do, so humbly did our Lord Jesus speak of what he did. He also expresses it ambiguously, leaving her uncertain at first whether he would raise him presently or not till the last day, that he might try her faith and patience.

Secondly, It is applicable to all the saints, and their resurrection at the last day. Note, It is a matter of comfort to us, when we have buried our godly friends and relations, to think that they shall rise again. As the soul at death is not lost, but gone before, so the body is not lost, but laid up. Think you hear Christ saying, "Thy parent, thy child, thy yoke-fellow, shall rise again; these dry bones shall live."

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

The faith which Martha mixed with this word, and the unbelief mixed with this faith, Joh 11:24.

First, She accounts it a faithful saying that he shall rise again at the last day. Though the doctrine of the resurrection was to have its full proof from Christ's resurrection, yet, as it was already revealed, she firmly believed it, Ac 24:15. 1. That there shall be a last day, with which all the days of time shall be numbered and finished. 2. That there shall be a general resurrection at that day, when the earth and sea shall give up their dead. 3. That there shall be a particular resurrection of each one: "I know that I shall rise again, and this and the other relation that was dear to me." As bone shall return to his bone in that day, so friend to his friend.

Secondly, Yet she seems to think this saying not so well worthy of all acceptation as really it was: "I know he shall rise again at the last day; but what are we the better for that now?" As if the comforts of the resurrection to eternal life were not worth speaking of, or yielded not satisfaction sufficient to balance her affliction. See our weakness and folly, that we suffer present sensible things to make a deeper impression upon us, both of grief and joy, than those things which are the objects of faith. I know that he shall rise again at the last day; and is not this enough? She seems to think it is not. Thus, by our discontent under present crosses, we greatly undervalue our future hopes, and put a slight upon them, as if not worth regarding.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

What the promises are (Joh 11:25): Though he die, yet shall he live, nay, he shall never die, Joh 11:26. Man consists of body and soul, and provision is made for the happiness of both.

(a.) For the body; here is the promise of a blessed resurrection. Though the body be dead because of sin (there is no remedy but it will die), yet it shall live again. All the difficulties that attend the state of the dead are here overlooked, and made nothing of. Though the sentence of death was just, though the effects of death be dismal, though the bands of death be strong, though he be dead and buried, dead and putrefied, though the scattered dust be so mixed with common dust that no art of man can distinguish, much less separate them, put the case as strongly as you will on that side, yet we are sure that he shall live again: the body shall be raised a glorious body.

(b.) For the soul; here is the promise of a blessed immortality. He that liveth and believeth, who, being united to Christ by faith, lives spiritually by virtue of that union, he shall never die. That spiritual life shall never be extinguished, but perfected in eternal life. As the soul, being in its nature spiritual, is therefore immortal; so if by faith it live a spiritual life, consonant to its nature, its felicity shall be immortal too. It shall never die, shall never be otherwise than easy and happy, and there is not any intermission or interruption of its life, as there is of the life of the body. The mortality of the body shall at length be swallowed up of life; but the life of the soul, the believing soul, shall be immediately at death swallowed up of immortality. He shall not die, eis ton aiona, for ever--Non morietur in æternum; so Cyprian quotes it. The body shall not be for ever dead in the grave; it dies (like the two witnesses) but for a time, times, and the dividing of time; and when time shall be no more, and all the divisions of it shall be numbered and finished, a spirit of life from God shall enter into it. But this is not all; the souls shall not die that death which is for ever, shall not die eternally, Blessed and holy, that is, blessed and happy, is he that by faith has part in the first resurrection, has part in Christ, who is that resurrection; for on such the second death, which is a death for ever, shall have no power; see Joh 6:40. Christ asks her, "Believest thou this? Canst thou assent to it with application? Canst thou take my word for it?" Note, When we have read or heard the word of Christ, concerning the great things of the other world, we should seriously put it to ourselves, "Do we

believe this, this truth in particular, this which is attended with so many difficulties, this which is suited to my case? Does my belief of it realize it to me, and give my soul an assurance of it, so that I can say not only this I believe, but thus I believe it?" Martha was doting upon her brother's being raised in this world; before Christ gave her hopes of this, he directed her thoughts to another life, another world: "No matter for that, but believest thou this that I tell thee concerning the future state?" The crosses and comforts of this present time would not make such an impression upon us as they do if we did but believe the things of eternity as we ought.

26 and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Martha's unfeigned assent yielded to what Christ said, Joh 11:27. We have here Martha's creed, the good confession she witnessed, the same with that for which Peter was commended (Mt 16:16,17), and it is the conclusion of the whole matter.

First, Here is the guide of her faith, and that is the word of Christ; without any alteration, exception, or proviso, she takes it entire as Christ had said it: Yea, Lord, whereby she subscribes to the truth of all and every part of that which Christ had promised, in his own sense: Even so. Faith is an echo to divine revelation, returns the same words, and resolves to abide by them: Yea, Lord, As the word did make it so I believe and take it, said queen Elizabeth.

Secondly, The ground of her faith, and that is the authority of Christ; she believes this because she believes that he who saith it is Christ. She has recourse to the foundation for the support of the superstructure. I believe, pepisteuka, "I have believed that thou art Christ, and therefore I do believe this." Observe here,

1. What she believed and confessed concerning Jesus; three things, all to the same effect:--

(a.) That he was the Christ, or Messiah, promised and expected under this name and notion, the anointed one.

(b.) That he was the Son of God; so the Messiah was called (Ps 2:7), not by office only, but by nature.

(c.) That it was he who should come into the world, the ho erchomenos. That blessing of blessings which the church had for so many ages waited for as future, she embraced as present.

2. What she inferred hence, and what she alleged this for. If she admits this, that Jesus is the Christ, there is no difficulty in believing that he is the resurrection and the life; for if he be the Christ, then,

(a.) He is the fountain of light and truth, and we may take all his sayings for faithful and divine, upon his own word. If he be the Christ, he is that prophet whom we are to hear in all things.

(b.) He is the fountain of life and blessedness, and we may therefore depend upon his ability as well as upon his veracity. How shall bodies, turned to dust, live again? How shall souls, clogged and clouded as ours are, live for ever? We could not believe this, but that we believe him that undertakes it to be the Son of God, who has life in himself, and has it for us.

Jesus Weeps

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

The notice which Martha gave her of Christ's coming (Joh 11:28): When she had so said, as one that needed to say no more, she went her way, easy in her mind, and called Mary her sister.

[1.] Martha, having received instruction and comfort from Christ herself, called her sister to share with her. Time was when Martha would have drawn Mary from Christ, to come and help her in much serving (Lu

10:40); but, to make her amends for this, here she is industrious to draw her to Christ.

[2.] She called her secretly, and whispered it in her ear, because there was company by, Jews, who were no friends to Christ. The saints are called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ by an invitation that is secret and distinguishing, given to them and not to others; they have meat to eat that the world knows not of, joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with.

[3.] She called her by order from Christ; he bade her go call her sister. This call that is effectual, whoever brings it, is sent by Christ. The Master is come, and calleth for thee. First, She calls Christ the Master, didaskalos, a teaching master; by that title he was commonly called and known among them. Mr. George Herbert took pleasure in calling Christ, my Master. Secondly, She triumphs in his arrival: The Master is come. He whom we have long wished and waited for, he is come, he is come; this was the best cordial in the present distress. "Lazarus is gone, and our comfort in him is gone; but the Master is come, who is better than the dearest friend, and has that in him which will abundantly make up all our losses. He is come who is our teacher, who will teach us how to get good by our sorrow (Ps 94:12), who will teach, and so comfort." Thirdly, She invites her sister to go and meet him: "He calls for thee, enquires what is become of thee, and would have thee sent for."

Note, When Christ our Master comes, he calls for us. He comes in his word and ordinances, calls us to them, calls us by them, calls us to himself. He calls for thee in particular, for thee by name (Ps 27:8); and, if he call thee, he will cure thee, he will comfort thee.

29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

The haste which Mary made to Christ upon this notice given her (Joh 11:29): As soon as she heard this good news, that the Master was come, she arose quickly, and came to him. She little thought how near he was to her, for he is often nearer to them that mourn in Zion than they are aware of; but, when she knew how near he was, she started up, and in a transport of joy ran to meet him. The least intimation of Christ's gracious approaches is enough to a lively faith, which stands ready to take the hint, and answer the first call. When Christ was come,

[1.] She did not consult the decorum of her mourning, but, forgetting ceremony, and the common usage in such cases, she ran through the town, to meet Christ. Let no nice punctilios of decency and honour deprive us at any time of opportunities of conversing with Christ.

[2.] She did not consult her neighbours, the Jews that were with her, comforting her; she left them all, to come to him, and did not only not ask their advice, but not so much as ask their leave, or beg their pardon for her rudeness.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

We are told (Joh 11:30) where she found the Master; he was not yet come into Bethany, but was at the town's end, in that place where Martha met him. See here,

[1.] Christ's love to his work. He staid near the place where the grave was, that he might be ready to go to it. He would not go into the town, to refresh himself after the fatigue of his journey, till he had done the work he came to do; nor would he go into the town, lest it should look like ostentation, and a design to levy a crowd to be spectators of the miracle.

[2.] Mary's love to Christ; still she loved much. Though Christ had seemed unkind in his delays, yet she could take nothing amiss from him. Let us go thus to Christ without the camp, Heb 13:13.

31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

The misconstruction which the Jews that were with Mary made of her going away so hastily (Joh 11:31): They said, She goes to the grave, to weep there. Martha bore up better under this affliction than Mary did, who was a woman of a tender and sorrowful spirit; such was her natural temper. Those that are so have need to watch against melancholy, and ought to be pitied and helped. These comforters found that their formalities did her no service, but that she hardened herself in sorrow:

and therefore concluded when she went out, and turned that way, it was to go to the grave and weep there. See,

[1.] What often is the folly and fault of mourners; they contrive how to aggravate their own grief, and to make bad worse. We are apt in such cases to take a strange pleasure in our own pain, and to say, We do well to be passionate in our grief, even unto death; we are apt to fasten upon those things that aggravate the affliction, and what good does this do us, when it is our duty to reconcile ourselves to the will of God in it? Why should mourners go to the grave to weep there, when they sorrow not as those that have no hope? Affliction of itself is grievous; why should we make it more so?

[2.] What is the wisdom and duty of comforters; and that is, to prevent as much as may be, in those who grieve inordinately, the revival of the sorrow, and to divert it. Those Jews that followed Mary were thereby led to Christ, and became the witnesses of one of his most glorious miracles. It is good cleaving to Christ's friends in their sorrows, for thereby we may come to know him better.

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Mary's address to our Lord Jesus (Joh 11:32): She came, attended with her train of comforters, and fell down at his feet, as one overwhelmed with a passionate sorrow, and said with many tears (as appears Joh 11:33), Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died, as Martha said before, for they had often said it to one another. Now here,

[1.] Her posture is very humble and submissive: She fell down at his feet, which was more than Martha did, who had a greater command of her passions. She fell down not as a sinking mourner, but fell down at his feet as a humble petitioner. This Mary had sat at Christ's feet to hear his word (Lu 10:39), and here we find her there on another errand.

Note, Those that in a day of peace place themselves at Christ's feet, to receive instructions from him, may with comfort and confidence in a day of trouble cast themselves at his feet with hope to find favour with

him. She fell at his feet, as one submitting to his will in what was done, and referring herself to his good-will in what was now to be done. When we are in affliction we must cast ourselves at Christ's feet in a penitent sorrow and self-abasement for sin, and a patient resignation of ourselves to the divine disposal. Mary's casting herself at Christ's feet was in token of the profound respect and veneration she had for him. Thus subjects were wont to give honour to their kings and princes; but, our Lord Jesus not appearing in secular glory as an earthly prince, those who by this posture of adoration gave honour to him certainly looked upon him as more than man, and intended hereby to give him divine honour. Mary hereby made profession of the Christian faith as truly as Martha did, and in effect said, I believe that thou art the Christ; bowing the knee to Christ, and confessing him with the tongue, are put together as equivalent, Ro 14:11,Php 2:10,11. This she did in presence of the Jews that attended her, who, though friends to her and her family, yet were bitter enemies to Christ; yet in their sight she fell at Christ's feet, as one that was neither ashamed to own the veneration she had for Christ nor afraid of disobliging her friends and neighbours by it. Let them resent it as they pleased, she falls at his feet; and, if this be to be vile, she will be yet more vile; see So 8:1. We serve a Master of whom we have no reason to be ashamed, and whose acceptance of our services is sufficient to balance the reproach of men and all their revilings.

[2.] Her address is very pathetic: Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Christ's delay was designed for the best, and proved so; yet both the sisters very indecently cast the same in his teeth, and in effect charge him with the death of their brother. This repeated challenge he might justly have resented, might have told them he had something else to do than to be at their beck and to attend them; he must come when his business would permit him: but not a word of this; he considered the circumstances of their affliction, and that losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore overlooked the rudeness of this welcome, and gave us an example of mildness and meekness in such cases. Mary added no more, as Martha did; but it appears, by what follows, that what she fell short in words she made up in tears; she said less than Martha, but wept more; and tears of devout affection have a voice, a loud prevailing voice, in the ears of Christ; no rhetoric like this.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

By the inward groans and troubles of his spirit (Joh 11:33): Jesus saw Mary weeping for the loss of a loving brother, and the Jews that came with her weeping for the loss of a good neighbour and friend; when he saw what a place of weepers, a bochim, this was, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. See here,

(1.) The griefs of the sons of men represented in the tears of Mary and her friends. What an emblem was here of this world, this vale of tears! Nature itself teaches us to weep over our dear relations, when they are removed by death; Providence thereby calls to weeping and mourning. It is probable that Lazarus's estate devolved upon his sisters, and was a considerable addition to their fortunes; and in such a case people say, now-a-days, though they cannot wish their relations dead (that is, they do not say they do), yet, if they were dead, they would not wish them alive again; but these sisters, whatever they got by their brother's death, heartily wished him alive again. Religion teaches us likewise to weep with them that weep, as these Jews wept with Mary, considering that we ourselves also are in the body. Those that truly love their friends will share with them in their joys and griefs; for what is friendship but a communication of affections? Job 16:5.

(2.) The grace of the Son of God and his compassion towards those that are in misery. In all their afflictions he is afflicted, Isa 63:9,Jdg 10:16. When Christ saw them all in tears,

[1.] He groaned in the spirit. He suffered himself to be tempted (as we are when we are disturbed by some great affliction), yet without sin. This was an expression, either,

First, Of his displeasure at the inordinate grief of those about him, as Mk 5:39: "Why make ye this ado and weep? What a hurry is here! does this become those that believe in a God, a heaven, and another world?" Or,

Secondly, Of his feeling sense of the calamitous state of human life, and the power of death, to which fallen man is subject. Having now to make a vigorous attack upon death and the grave, he thus stirred up himself to the encounter, put on the garments of vengeance, and his fury it upheld him; and that he might the more resolutely undertake the redress of our grievances, and the cure of our griefs, he was pleased to make himself sensible of the weight of them, and under the burden of them he now groaned in spirit. Or,

Thirdly, It was an expression of his kind sympathy with his friends that were in sorrow. Here was the sounding of the bowels, the mercies which the afflicted church so earnestly solicits, Isa 63:15. Christ not only seemed concerned, but he groaned in the spirit; he was inwardly and sincerely affected with the case. David's pretended friends counterfeited sympathy, to disguise their enmity (Ps 41:6); but we must learn of Christ to have our love and sympathy without dissimulation. Christ's was a deep and hearty sigh.

[2.] He was troubled. He troubled himself; so the phrase is, very significantly. He had all the passions and affections of the human nature, for in all things he must be like to his brethren; but he had a perfect command of them, so that they were never up, but when and as they were called; he was never troubled, but when he troubled himself, as he saw cause. He often composed himself to trouble, but was never discomposed or disordered by it. He was voluntary both in his passion and in his compassion. He had power to lay down his grief, and power to take it again.

34 and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see.

His concern for them appeared by his kind enquiry after the poor remains of his deceased friend (Joh 11:34): Where have you laid him? He knew where he was laid, and yet asks, because,

(1.) He would thus express himself as a man, even when he was going to exert the power of a God. Being found in fashion as a man, he accommodates himself to the way and manner of the sons of men: Non

nescit, sed quasi nescit--He is not ignorant, but he makes as if he were, saith Austin here.

(2.) He enquired where the grave was, lest, if he had gone straight to it of his own knowledge, the unbelieving Jews should have thence taken occasion to suspect a collusion between him and Lazarus, and a trick in the case. Many expositors observe this from Chrysostom.

(3.) He would thus divert the grief of his mourning friends, by raising their expectations of something great; as if he had said, "I did not come hither with an address of condolence, to mingle a few fruitless insignificant tears with yours; no, I have other work to do; come, let us adjourn to the grave, and go about our business there."

Note, A serious address to our work is the best remedy against inordinate grief.

(4.) He would hereby intimate to us the special care he takes of the bodies of the saints while they lie in the grave; he takes notice where they are laid, and will look after them. There is not only a covenant with the dust, but a guard upon it.

35 Jesus wept.

As he was going to the grave, as if he had been following the corpse thither, Jesus wept, Joh 11:35. A very short verse, but it affords many useful instructions.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was really and truly man, and partook with the children, not only of flesh and blood, but of a human soul, susceptible of the impressions of joy, and grief, and other affections. Christ gave this proof of his humanity, in both senses of the word; that, as a man, he could weep, and, as a merciful man, he would weep, before he gave this proof of his divinity.

[2.] That he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, as was foretold, Isa 53:3. We never read that he laughed, but more than once we have him in tears. Thus he shows not only that a mournful state will

consist with the love of God, but that those who sow to the Spirit must sow in tears.

[3.] Tears of compassion well become Christians, and make them most to resemble Christ. It is a relief to those who are in sorrow to have their friends sympathize with them, especially such a friend as their Lord Jesus.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

Some made a kind and candid interpretation of it, and what was very natural (Joh 11:36): Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! They seem to wonder that he should have so strong an affection for one to whom he was not related, and with whom he had not had any long acquaintance, for Christ spent most of his time in Galilee, a great way from Bethany. It becomes us, according to this example of Christ, to show our love to our friends, both living and dying. We must sorrow for our brethren that sleep in Jesus as those that are full of love, though not void of hope; as the devout men that buried Stephen, Ac 8:2. Though our tears profit not the dead, they embalm their memory. These tears were indications of his particular love to Lazarus, but he has given proofs no less evident of his love to all the saints, in that he died for them. When he only dropped a tear over Lazarus, they said, See how he loved him! Much more reason have we to say so, for whom he hath laid down his life: See how he loved us! Greater love has no man than this

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

Others made a peevish unfair reflection upon it, as if these tears bespoke his inability to help his friend (Joh 11:37): Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have prevented the death of Lazarus? Here it is slyly insinuated,

First, That the death of Lazarus being (as it seemed by his tears) a great grief to him, if he could have prevented it he would, and therefore because he did not they incline to think that he could not; as, when he was dying, they concluded that he could not, because he did not, save himself, and come down from the cross; not considering that divine power is always directed in its operations by divine wisdom, not merely according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, wherein it becomes us to acquiesce. If Christ's friends, whom he loves, die,--if his church, whom

he loves, be persecuted and afflicted,--we must not impute it to any defect either in his power or love, but conclude that it is because he sees it for the best.

Secondly, That therefore it might justly be questioned whether he did indeed open the eyes of the blind, that is, whether it was not a sham. His not working this miracle they thought enough to invalidate the former; at least, it should seem that he had limited power, and therefore not a divine one. Christ soon convinced these whisperers, by raising Lazarus from the dead, which was the greater work, that he could have prevented his death, but therefore did not because he would glorify himself the more

Lazarus Brought to Life

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

1. Christ repeats his groans upon his coming near the grave (Joh 11:38): Again groaning in himself, he comes to the grave: he groaned,

(1.) Being displeased at the unbelief of those who spoke doubtingly of his power, and blamed him for not preventing the death of Lazarus; he was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. He never groaned so much for his own pains and sufferings as for the sins and follies of men, particularly Jerusalem's, Mt 23:37.

(2.) Being affected with the fresh lamentations which, it is likely, the mourning sisters made when they came near the grave, more passionately and pathetically than before, his tender spirit was sensibly touched with their wailings.

(3.) Some think that he groaned in spirit because, to gratify the desire of his friends, he was to bring Lazarus again into this sinful troublesome world, from that rest into which he was newly entered; it would be a kindness to Martha and Mary, but it would be to him like thrusting one out to a stormy sea again who was newly got into a safe and quiet harbour.

If Lazarus had been let alone, Christ would quickly have gone to him into the other world; but, being restored to life, Christ quickly left him behind in this world.

(4.) Christ groaned as one that would affect himself with the calamitous state of the human nature, as subject to death, from which he was now about to redeem Lazarus. Thus he stirred up himself to take hold on God in the prayer he was to make, that he might offer it up with strong crying, Heb 5:7. Ministers, when they are sent by the preaching of the gospel to raise dead souls, should be much affected with the deplorable condition of those they preach to and pray for, and groan in themselves to think of it.

2 The grave wherein Lazarus lay is here described: It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. The graves of the common people, probably, were dug as ours are; but persons of distinction were, as with us, interred in vaults, so Lazarus was, and such was the sepulchre in which Christ was buried. Probably this fashion was kept up among the Jews, in imitation of the patriarchs, who buried their dead in the cave of Machpelah, Ge 23:19. This care taken of the dead bodies of their friends intimates their expectation of their resurrection; they reckoned the solemnity of the funeral ended when the stone was rolled to the grave, or, as here, laid upon it, like that on the mouth of the den into which Daniel was cast (Da 6:17), that the purpose might not be changed; intimating that the dead are separated from the living, and gone the way whence they shall not return. This stone was probably a gravestone, with an inscription upon it, which the Greeks called mnemeion--a memorandum, because it is both a memorial of the dead and a memento to the living, putting them in remembrance of that which we are all concerned to remember. It is called by the Latins, Monumentum, à monendo, because it gives warning.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

1. Orders are given to remove the stone (Joh 11:39): Take away the stone. He would have this stone removed that all the standersby might see the body lie dead in the sepulchre, and that way might be made for its coming out, and it might appear to be a true body, and not a ghost or spectre. He

would have some of the servants to remove it, that they might be witnesses, by the smell of the putrefaction of the body, and that therefore it was truly dead. It is a good step towards the raising of a soul to spiritual life when the stone is taken away, when prejudices are removed and got over, and way made for the word to the heart, that it may do its work there, and say what it has to say.

2. An objection made by Martha against the opening of the grave: Lord, by this time he stinketh, or is become noisome, for he has been dead four days, tetartaios gar esti, quatriduanus est; he is four days old in the other world; a citizen and inhabitant of the grave of four days' standing. Probably Martha perceived the body to smell, as they were removing the stone, and therefore cried out thus.

(a.) It is easy to observe hence the nature of human bodies: four days are but a little while, yet what a great change will this time make with the body of man, if it be but so long without food, much more if so long without life! Dead bodies (saith Dr. Hammond) after a revolution of the humours, which is completed in seventy-two hours, naturally tend to putrefaction; and the Jews say that by the fourth day after death the body is so altered that one cannot be sure it is such a person; so Maimonides in Lightfoot. Christ rose the third day because he was not to see corruption.

(b.) It is not so easy to say what was Martha's design in saying this.

[1.] Some think she said it in a due tenderness, and such as decency teaches to the dead body; now that it began to putrefy, she did not care it should be thus publicly shown and made a spectacle of.

[2.] Others think she said it out of a concern for Christ, lest the smell of the dead body should be offensive to him. That which is very noisome is compared to an open sepulchre, Ps 5:9. If there were any thing noisome she would not have her Master near it; but he was none of those tender and delicate ones that cannot bear as ill smell; if he had, he would not have visited the world of mankind, which sin had made a perfect dunghill, altogether noisome, Ps 14:3.

[3.] It should seem, by Christ's answer, that it was the language of her unbelief and distrust: "Lord, it is too late now to attempt any kindness to him; his body begins to rot, and it is impossible that this putrid carcase should live." She gives up his case as helpless and hopeless, there having been no instances, either of late or formerly, of any raised to life after they had begun to see corruption. When our bones are dried, we are ready to say, Our hope is lost. Yet this distrustful word of hers served to make the miracle both the more evident and the more illustrious; by this it appeared that he was truly dead, and not in a trance; for, though the posture of a dead body might be counterfeited, the smell could not. Her suggesting that it could not be done puts the more honour upon him that did it.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

The gentle reproof Christ gave to Martha for the weakness of her faith (Joh 11:40): Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God? This word of his to her was not before recorded; it is probable that he said it to her when she had said (Joh 11:27), Lord, I believe: and it is enough that it is recorded here, where it is repeated. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus has given us all the assurances imaginable that a sincere faith shall at length be crowned with a blessed vision: "If thou believe, thou shalt see God's glorious appearances for thee in this world, and to thee in the other world." If we will take Christ's word, and rely on his power and faithfulness, we shall see the glory of God, and be happy in the sight. (2.) We have need to be often reminded of these sure mercies with which our Lord Jesus hath encouraged us. Christ does not give a direct answer to what Martha had said, nor any particular promise of what he would do, but orders her to keep hold of the general assurances he had already given: Only believe. We are apt to forget what Christ has spoken, and need him to put us in mind of it by his Spirit: "Said I not unto thee so and so? And dost thou think that he will ever unsay it?"

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

The opening of the grave, in obedience to Christ's order, notwithstanding Martha's objection (Joh 11:41): Then they took away the stone. When Martha was satisfied, and had waived her objection, then they proceeded.

If we will see the glory of God, we must let Christ take his own way, and not prescribe but subscribe to him. They took away the stone, and this was all they could do; Christ only could give life. What man can do is but to prepare the way of the Lord, to fill the valleys, and level the hills, and, as here, to take away the stone.

(a) The gesture he used was very significant: He lifted up his eyes, an outward expression of the elevation of his mind, and to show those who stood by whence he derived his power; also to set us an example; this outward sign is hereby recommended to our practice; see Joh 17:1. Look how those will answer it who profanely ridicule it; but that which is especially charged upon us hereby is to lift up our hearts to God in the heavens; what is prayer, but the ascent of the soul to God, and the directing of its affections and motions heavenward? He lifted up his eyes, as looking above, looking beyond the grave where Lazarus lay, and overlooking all the difficulties that arose thence, that he might have his eyes fixed upon the divine omnipotence; to teach us to do as Abraham, who considered not his own body now dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb, never took these into his thoughts, and so gained such a degree of faith as not to stagger at the promise, Ro 4:20.

(b) His address to God was with great assurance, and such a confidence as became him: Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

[1.] He has here taught us, by his own example, First, In prayer to call God Father, and to draw nigh to him as children to a father, with a humble reverence, and yet with a holy boldness. Secondly, In our prayers to praise him, and, when we come to beg for further mercy, thankfully to acknowledge former favours. Thanksgivings, which bespeak God's glory (not our own, like the Pharisee's God, I thank thee), are decent forms into which to put our supplications.

[2.] But our Saviour's thanksgiving here was intended to express the unshaken assurance he had of the effecting of this miracle, which he had in his own power to do in concurrence with his Father: "Father, I thank thee that my will and thine are in this matter, as always, the same." Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, as servants, by entreaty; but Christ, as a Son,

by authority, having life in himself, and power to quicken whom he would; and he speaks of this as his own act (Joh 11:11): I go, that I may awake him; yet he speaks of it as what he had obtained by prayer, for his Father heard him: probably he put up the prayer for it when he groaned in spirit once and again (Joh 11:33,38), in a mental prayer, with groanings which could not be uttered.

First, Christ speaks of this miracle as an answer to prayer, 1. Because he would thus humble himself; though he was a Son, yet learned he this obedience, to ask and receive. His mediatorial crown was granted him upon request, though it is of right, Ps 2:8,Joh 17:5. He prays for the glory he had before the world was, though, having never forfeited it, he might have demanded it. 2. Because he was pleased thus to honour prayer, making it the key wherewith even he unlocked the treasures of divine power and grace. Thus he would teach us in prayer, by the lively exercise of faith, to enter into the holiest.

Secondly, Christ, being assured that his prayer was answered, professes,

His thankful acceptance of this answer: I thank thee that thou hast heard me. Though the miracle was not yet wrought, yet the prayer was answered, and he triumphs before the victory. No other can pretend to such an assurance as Christ had; yet we may by faith in the promise have a prospect of mercy before it be actually given in, and may rejoice in that prospect, and give God thanks for it. In David's devotions, the same psalm which begins with prayer for a mercy closes with thanksgivings for it. Note,

(a.) Mercies in answer to prayer ought in a special manner to be acknowledged with thankfulness. Besides the grant of the mercy itself, we are to value it as a great favour to have our poor prayers taken notice of.

(b.) We ought to meet the first appearances of the return of prayer with early thanksgivings. As God answers us with mercy, even before we call, and hears while we are yet speaking, so we should answer him with praise

even before he grants, and give him thanks while he is yet speaking good words and comfortable words.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

His cheerful assurance of a ready answer at any time (Joh 11:42): And I know that thou hearest me always. Let none think that this was some uncommon favour granted him now, such as he never had before, nor should ever have again; no, he had the same divine power going along with him in his whole undertaking, and undertook nothing but what he knew to be agreeable to the counsel of God's will. "I gave thanks" (saith he) "for being heard in this, because I am sure to be heard in every thing." See here,

(a.) The interest our Lord Jesus had in heaven; the Father heard him always, he had access to the Father upon every occasion, and success with him in every errand. And we may be sure that his interest is not the less for his going to heaven, which may encourage us to depend upon his intercession, and put all our petitions into his hand, for we are sure that him the Father hears always.

(b.) The confidence he had of that interest: I knew it. He did not in the least hesitate or doubt concerning it, but had an entire satisfaction in his own mind of the Father's complacency in him and concurrence with him in every thing. We cannot have such a particular assurance as he had; but this we know, that whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us, 1Jo 5:14,15.

But why should Christ give this public intimation of his obtaining this miracle by prayer? He adds, It is because of the people who stand by, that they may believe that thou hast sent me; for prayer may preach.

1. It was to obviate the objections of his enemies, and their reflections. It was blasphemously suggested by the Pharisees, and their creatures, that he wrought his miracles by compact with the devil; now, to evidence the contrary, he openly made his address to God, using prayers, and not charms, not peeping and muttering as those did that used familiar spirits

(Isa 8:19), but, with elevated eyes and voice professing his communication with Heaven, and dependence on Heaven.

2. It was to corroborate the faith of those that were well inclined to him: That they may believe that thou hast sent me, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Moses, to show that God sent him, made the earth open and swallow men up (Nu 16:31); Elijah, to show that God sent him, made fire come from heaven and devour men; for the law was a dispensation of terror and death but Christ proves his mission by raising to life one that was dead. Some give this sense: had Christ declared his doing it freely by his own power, some of his weak disciples, who as yet understood not his divine nature, would have thought he took too much upon him, and have been stumbled at it. These babes could not bear that strong meat, therefore he chooses to speak of his power as received and derived he speaks self-denyingly of himself, that he might speak the more plainly to us. Non ita respexit ad swam dignitatem atque ad nostram salutem--In what he said, he consulted not so much his dignity as our salvation.--Jansenius.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

He now applies himself to his dead friend in the earth. He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth.

(a) He could have raised Lazarus by a silent exertion of his power and will, and the indiscernible operations of the Spirit of life; but he did it by a call, a loud call,

[1.] To be significant of the power then put forth for the raising of Lazarus, how he created this new thing; he spoke, and it was done. He cried aloud, to signify the greatness of the work, and of the power employed in it, and to excite himself as it were to this attack upon the gates of death, as soldiers engage with a shout. Speaking to Lazarus, it was proper to cry with a loud voice; for,

First, The soul of Lazarus, which was to be called back, was at a distance, not hovering about the grave, as the Jews fancied, but removed to Hades,

the world of spirits; now it is natural to speak loud when we call to those at a distance.

Secondly, The body of Lazarus, which was to be called up, was asleep, and we usually speak loud when we would awake any out of sleep. He cried with a loud voice that the scripture might be fulfilled (Isa 45:19), I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.

[2.] To be typical of other works of wonder, and particularly other resurrections, which the power of Christ was to effect. This loud call was a figure,

First, Of the gospel call, by which dead souls were to be brought out of the grave of sin, which resurrection Christ had formerly spoken of (Joh 5:25), and of his word as the means of it (Joh 6:63), and now he gives a specimen of it. By his word, he saith to souls, Live, yea, he saith to them, Live, Eze 16:6. Arise from the dead, Eph 5:14. The spirit of life from God entered into those that had been dead and dry bones, when Ezekiel prophesied over them, Eze 37:10. Those who infer from the commands of the word to turn and live that man has a power of his own to convert and regenerate himself might as well infer from this call to Lazarus that he had a power to raise himself to life.

Secondly, Of the sound of the archangel's trumpet at the last day, with which they that sleep in the dust shall be awakened and summoned before the great tribunal, when Christ shall descend with a shout, a call, or command, like this here, Come forth, Ps 50:4. He shall call both to the heavens for their souls, and to the earth for their bodies, that he may judge his people.

(b) This loud call was but short, yet mighty through God to the battering down of the strongholds of the grave.

[1.] He calls him by name, Lazarus, as we call those by their names whom we would awake out of a fast sleep. God said to Moses, as a mark of his favour, I know thee by name. The naming of him intimates that the same

individual person that died shall rise again at the last day. He that calls the stars by their names can distinguish by name his stars that are in the dust of the earth, and will lose none of them.

[2.] He calls him out of the grave, speaking to him as if he were already alive, and had nothing to do but to come out of his grave. He does not say unto him, Live; for he himself must give life; but he saith to him, Move, for when by the grace of Christ we live spiritually we must stir up ourselves to move; the grave of sin and this world is no place for those whom Christ has quickened, and therefore they must come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

The event was according to the intention: He that was dead came forth, Joh 11:44. Power went along with the word of Christ to reunite the soul and the body of Lazarus, and then he came forth. The miracle is described, not by its invisible springs, to satisfy our curiosity, but by its visible effects, to conform our faith. Do any ask where the soul of Lazarus was during the four days of its separation? We are not told, but have reason to think it was in paradise; in joy and felicity; but you will say, "Was it not then really an unkindness to it to cause it to return into the prison of the body?" And if it were, yet, being for the honour of Christ and the serving of the interests of his kingdom, it was no more an injury to him than it was to St. Paul to continue in the flesh when he knew that to depart to Christ was so much better. If any ask whether Lazarus, after he was raised, could give an account or description of his soul's removal out of the body or return to it, or what he saw in the other world, I suppose both those changes were so unaccountable to himself that he must say with Paul, Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; and of what he saw and heard, that it was not lawful nor possible to express it. In a world of sense we cannot frame to ourselves, much less communicate to others, any adequate ideas of the world of spirits and the affairs of that world. Let us not covet to be wise above what is written, and this is all that is written concerning the resurrection of that Lazarus, that he that was dead came forth. Some have observed that though we read of many who were raised from the dead, who no doubt conversed familiarly with men afterwards, yet the scripture has

not recorded one word spoken by any of them, except by our Lord Jesus only.

This miracle was wrought,

[1.] Speedily. Nothing intervenes between the command, Come forth, and the effect, He came forth; dictum factum--no sooner said than done; let there be life, and there was life. Thus the change in the resurrection will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, 1Co 15:52. The almighty power that can do it can do it in an instant: Then shalt thou call and I will answer; will come at the call, as Lazarus, Here am I.

[2.] Perfectly. He was so thoroughly revived that he got up out of his grave as strongly as ever he got up out of his bed, and returned not only to life, but health. He was not raised to serve a present turn, but to live as other men.

[3.] With this additional miracle, as some reckon it, that he came out of his grave, though he was fettered with his grave-clothes, with which he was bound hand and foot, and his face bound about with a napkin (for so the manner of the Jews was to bury); and he came forth in the same dress wherein he was buried, that it might appear that it was he himself and not another, and that he was not only alive, but strong, and able to walk, after a sort, even in his grave-clothes. The binding of his face with a napkin proved that he had been really dead, for otherwise, in less than so many days' time, that would have smothered him. And the standers-by, in unbinding him, would handle him, and see him, that it was he himself, and so be witnesses of the miracle. Now see here,

First, How little we carry away with us, when we leave the world--only a winding-sheet and a coffin; there is no change of raiment in the grave, nothing but a single suit of grave-clothes.

Secondly, What condition we shall be in in the grave. What wisdom or device can there be where the eyes are hoodwinked, or what working where the hands and feet are fettered? And so it will be in the grave,

whither we are going. Lazarus being come forth, hampered and embarrassed with his grave-clothes, we may well imagine that those about the grave were exceedingly surprised and frightened at it; we should be so if we should see a dead body rise; but Christ, to make the thing familiar, sets them to work: "Loose him, slacken his grave-clothes, that they may serve for day-clothes till he comes to his house, and then he will go himself, so clad, without guide or supporter to his own house." As, in the Old Testament, the translations of Enoch and Elias were sensible demonstrations of an invisible and future state, the one about the middle of the patriarchal age, the other of the Mosaic economy, so the resurrection of Lazarus, in the New Testament, was designed for the confirmation of the doctrine of the resurrection.

The Plot against Jesus

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

We have here an account of the consequences of this glorious miracle, which were as usual; to some it was a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

Some were invited by it, and induced to believe. Many of the Jews, when they saw the things that Jesus did, believed on him, and well they might, for it was an incontestable proof of his divine mission. They had often heard of his miracles, and yet evaded the conviction of them, by calling in question the matter of fact; but now that they had themselves seen this done their unbelief was conquered, and they yielded at last. But blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. The more we see of Christ the more cause we shall see to love him and confide in him. These were some of those Jews that came to Mary, to comfort her. When we are doing good offices to others we put ourselves in the way of receiving favours from God, and have opportunities of getting good when we are doing good.

46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

The informers were so (Joh 11:46): Some of them, who were eye-witnesses of the miracle, were so far from being convinced that they went to the Pharisees, whom they knew to be his implacable enemies, and told

them what things Jesus had done; not merely as a matter of news worthy their notice, much less as an inducement to them to think more favourably of Christ, but with a spiteful design to excite those who needed no spur the more vigorously to prosecute him. Here is a strange instance,

(1.) Of a most obstinate infidelity, refusing to yield to the most powerful means of conviction; and it is hard to imagine how they could evade the force of this evidence, but that the god of this world had blinded their minds.

(2.) Of a most inveterate enmity. If they would not be satisfied that he was to be believed in as the Christ, yet one would think they should have been mollified, and persuaded not to persecute him; but, if the water be not sufficient to quench the fire, it will inflame it. They told what Jesus had done, and told no more than what was true; but their malice gave a tincture of diabolism to their information equal to that of lying; perverting what is true is as bad as forging what is false. Doeg is called a false, lying, and deceitful tongue (Ps 52:2-4.120:2,3), though what he said was true.

47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we ? for this man doeth many miracles.

48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

The judges, the leaders, the blind leaders, of the people were no less exasperated by the report made to them, and here we are told what they did.

(1.) A special council is called and held (Joh 11:47): Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council, as was foretold, Ps 2:2, The rulers take counsel together against the Lord. Consultations of the sanhedrim were intended for the public good; but here, under colour of this, the greatest injury and mischief are done to the people. The things that belong to the nation's peace were hid from the eyes of those that were entrusted with its counsels. This council was called, not only for joint advice, but for mutual irritation; that as iron sharpens iron, and as coals are to burning coals and wood to fire, so they might exasperate and inflame one another with enmity and rage against Christ and his doctrine.

(2.) The case is proposed, and shown to be weighty and of great consequence.

The matter to be debated was what course they should take with this Jesus, to stop the growth of his interest; they said What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. The information given about the raising of Lazarus was produced, and the men, brethren, and fathers were called in to help as solicitously as if a formidable enemy had been with an army in the heart of their country.

First, They own the truth of Christ's miracles, and that he had wrought many of them; they are therefore witnesses against themselves, for they acknowledge his credentials and yet deny his commission.

Secondly, They consider what is to be done, and chide themselves that they have not done something sooner effectually to crush him. They do not take it at all into their consideration whether they shall not receive him and own him as the Messiah, though they profess to expect him, and Jesus gave pregnant proofs of his being so; but they take it for granted that he is an enemy, and as such is to be run down: "What do we? Have we no care to support our church? Is it nothing to us that a doctrine so destructive to our interest spreads thus? Shall we tamely yield up the ground we have got in the affections of the people? Shall we see our authority brought into contempt, and the craft by which we get our living ruined, and not bestir ourselves? What have we been doing all this while? And what are we now thinking of? Shall we be always talking, and bring nothing to pass?"

That which made this matter weighty was the peril they apprehended their church and nation to be in from the Romans (Joh 11:48): "If we do not silence him, and take him off, all men will believe on him; and, this being the setting up of a new king, the Romans will take umbrage at it, and will come with an army, and take away our place and nation, and therefore it is no time to trifle." See what an opinion they have,

First, Of their own power. They speak as if they thought Christ's progress and success in his work depended upon their connivance; as if he could not go on to work miracles, and make disciples, unless they let him alone; as if it were in their power to conquer him who had conquered death, or as if they could fight against God, and prosper. But he that sits in heaven laughs at the fond conceit which impotent malice has of its own omnipotence.

Secondly, Of their own policy. They fancy themselves to be men of mighty insight and foresight, and great sagacity in their moral prognostications.

1. They take on them to prophecy that, in a little time, if he have liberty to go on, all men will believe on him, hereby owning, when it was to serve their purpose, that his doctrine and miracles had a very convincing power in them, such as could not be resisted, but that all men would become his proselytes and votaries. Thus do they now make his interest formidable, though, to serve another turn, these same men strove to make it contemptible, Joh 7:48, Have any of the rulers believed on him? This was the thing they were afraid of, that men would believe on him, and then all their measures were broken. Note, The success of the gospel is the dread of its adversaries; if souls be saved, they are undone.

2. They foretel that if the generality of the nation be drawn after him, the rage of the Romans will be drawn upon them. They will come and take away our place; the country in general, especially Jerusalem, or the temple, the holy place, and their place, their darling, their idol; or, their preferments in the temple, their places of power and trust. Now it was true that the Romans had a very jealous eye upon them, and knew they wanted nothing but power and opportunity to shake off their yoke. It was likewise true that if the Romans should pour an army in upon them it would be very hard for them to make any head against it; yet here appeared a cowardice which one would not have found in the priests of the Lord if they had not by their wickedness forfeited their interest in God and all good men. Had they kept their integrity, they needed not to have feared the Romans; but they speak like a dispirited people, as the men of Judah when they basely said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us? Jdg 15:11. When men lose their piety they lose their courage. But,

(a.) It was false that there was any danger of the Romans' being irritated against their nation by the progress of Christ's gospel, for it was no way hurtful to kings nor provinces, but highly beneficial. The Romans had no jealousy at all of his growing interest; for he taught men to give tribute to Cæsar, and not to resist evil, but to take up the cross. The Roman governor, at his trial, could find no fault in him. There was more danger of the Romans' being incensed against the Jewish nation by the priests than by Christ. Note, Pretended fears are often the colour of malicious designs.

(b.) Had there really been some danger of displeasing the Romans by tolerating Christ's preaching, yet this would not justify their hating and persecuting a good man. Note,

[1.] The enemies of Christ and his gospel have often coloured their enmity with a seeming care for the public good and the common safety, and, in order to this, have branded his prophets and ministers as troublers of Israel, and men that turn the world upside down.

[2.] Carnal policy commonly sets up reasons of state, in opposition to rules of justice. When men are concerned for their own wealth and safety more than for truth and duty, it is wisdom from beneath, which is earthly, sensual, and devilish. But see what was the issue; they pretended to be afraid that their tolerating Christ's gospel would bring desolation upon them by the Romans, and therefore, right or wrong, set themselves against it; but it proved that their persecuting the gospel brought upon them that which they feared, filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the Romans came and took away their place and nation, and their place knows them no more.

Note, That calamity, which we seek to escape by sin we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; and those who think by opposing Christ's kingdom to secure or advance their own secular interest will find Jerusalem a more burdensome stone than they think it is, Zec 12:3. The fear of the wicked it shall come upon them, Pr 10:24.

49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

Caiaphas makes a malicious but mystical speech in the council on this occasion.

[1.] The malice of it appears evident at first view, Joh 11:49,50. He, being the high priest, and so president of the council, took upon him to decide the matter before it was debated: "You know nothing at all, your hesitating betrays your ignorance, for it is not a thing that will bear a dispute, it is soon determined, if you consider that received maxim, That it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people." Here,

First, The counsellor was Caiaphas, who was high priest that same year. The high priesthood was by divine appointment settled upon the heir male of the house of Aaron, for and during the term of his natural life, and then to his heir male; but in those degenerate times it was become, though not an annual office, like a consulship, yet frequently changed, as they could make an interest with the Roman powers. Now it happened that this year Caiaphas wore the mitre.

Secondly, The drift of the advice was, in short, this, That some way or other must be found out to put Jesus to death. We have reason to think that they strongly suspected him to be indeed the Messiah; but his doctrine was so contrary to their darling traditions and secular interest, and his design did so thwart their notions of the Messiah's kingdom, that they resolve, be he who he will, he must be put to death. Caiaphas does not say, Let him be silenced, imprisoned, banished, though amply sufficient for the restraint of one they thought dangerous; but die he must. Note, Those that have set themselves against Christianity have commonly divested themselves of humanity, and been infamous for cruelty.

Thirdly, This is plausibly insinuated, with all the subtlety as well as malice of the old serpent.

1. He suggests his own sagacity, which we must suppose him as high priest to excel in, though the Urim and Thummim were long since lost. How scornfully does he say, "You know nothing, who are but common priests; but you must give me leave to see further into things than you do!" Thus it

is common for those in authority to impose their corrupt dictates by virtue of that; and, because they should be the wisest and best, to expect that every body should believe they are so.

2. He takes it for granted that the case is plain and past dispute, and that those are very ignorant who do not see it to be so. Note, Reason and justice are often run down with a high hand. Truth is fallen in the streets, and, when it is down, down with it; and equity cannot enter, and, when it is out, out with it, Isa 59:14.

3. He insists upon a maxim in politics, That the welfare of communities is to be preferred before that of particular persons. It is expedient for us as priests, whose all lies at stake, that one man die for the people. Thus far it holds true, that it is expedient, and more than so, it is truly honourable, for a man to hazard his life in the service of his country (Php 2:17,1Jo 3:16); but to put an innocent man to death under colour of consulting the public safety is the devil's policy. Caiaphas craftily insinuates that the greatest and best man, though major singulis--greater than any one individual, is minor universis--less than the collected mass, and ought to think his life well spent, nay well lost, to save his country from ruin. But what is this to the murdering of one that was evidently a great blessing under pretence of preventing an imaginary mischief to the country? The case ought to have been put thus: Was it expedient for them to bring upon themselves and upon their nation the guilt of blood, a prophet's blood, for the securing of their civil interests from a danger which they had no just reason to be afraid of? Was it expedient for them to drive God and their glory from them, rather than venture the Romans' displeasure, who could do them no harm if they had God on their side?

Note, Carnal policy, which steers only by secular considerations, while it thinks to save all by sin, ruins all at last.

50 nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

The mystery that was in this counsel of Caiaphas does not appear at first view, but the evangelist leads us into it (Joh 11:51,52): This spoke he not

of himself, it was not only the language of his own enmity and policy, but in these words he prophesied, though he himself was not aware of it, that Jesus should die for that nation. Here is a precious comment upon a pernicious text; the counsel of cursed Caiaphas so construed as to fall in with the counsels of the blessed God. Charity teaches us to put the most favourable construction upon men's words and actions that they will fear; but piety teaches us to make a good improvement of them, even contrary to that for which they were intended. If wicked men, in what they do against us, are God's hand to humble and reform us, why may they not in what they say against us be God's mouth to instruct and convince us? But in this of Caiaphas there was an extraordinary direction of Heaven prompting him to say that which was capable of a very sublime sense. As the hearts of all men are in God's hand, so are their tongues. Those are deceived who say, "Our tongues are our own, so that either we may say what we will, and are not accountable to God's judgment, or we can say what we will, and are not restrainable by his providence and power." Balaam could not say what he would, when he came to curse Israel, nor Laban when he pursued Jacob.

The evangelist explains and enlarges upon Caiaphas's words.

[1.] He explains what he said, and shows how it not only was, but was intended to be, accommodated to an excellent purpose. He did not speak it of himself. As it was an artifice to stir up the council against Christ, he spoke it of himself, or of the devil rather; but as it was an oracle, declaring it the purpose and design of God by the death of Christ to save God's spiritual Israel from sin and wrath, he did not speak it of himself, for he knew nothing of the matter, he meant not so, neither did his heart think so, for nothing was in his heart but to destroy and cut off, Isa 10:7.

First, He prophesied, and those that prophesied did not, in their prophesying, speak of themselves. But is Caiaphas also among the prophets? He is so, pro hâc vice--this once, though a bad man, and an implacable enemy to Christ and his gospel. Note, 1. God can and often does make wicked men instruments to serve his own purposes, even contrary to their own intentions; for he has them not only in a chain, to restrain them from doing the mischief they would, but in a bridle, to lead

them to do the service they would not. 2. Words of prophecy in the mouth are no infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? will be rejected as a frivolous plea.

Secondly, He prophesied, being high priest that year; not that his being high priest did at all dispose or qualify him to be a prophet; we cannot suppose the pontifical mitre to have first inspired with prophecy the basest head that ever wore it; but,

1. Being high priest, and therefore of note and eminence in the conclave, God was pleased to put this significant word into his mouth rather than into the mouth of any other, that it might be the more observed or the non-observance of it the more aggravated. The apophthegms of great men have been thought worthy of special regard: A divine sentence is in the lips of the king; therefore this divine sentence was put into the lips of the high priest, that even out of his mouth this word might be established, That Christ died for the good of the nation, and not for any iniquity in his hands. He happened to be high priest that year which was fixed to be the year of the redeemed, when Messiah the prince must be cut off, but not for himself (Da 9:26), and he must own it.

2. Being high priest that year, that famous year, in which there was to be such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, more than had ever been yet, according to the prophecy (Joe 2:28,29, compared with Ac 2:17), some drops of the blessed shower light upon Caiaphas, as the crumbs (says Dr. Lightfoot) of the children's bread, which fall from the table among the dogs. This year was the year of the expiration of the Levitical priesthood; and out of the mouth of him who was that year high priest was extorted an implicit resignation of it to him who should not (as they had done for many ages) offer beasts for that nation, but offer himself, and so make an end of the sin-offering. This resignation he made inwittingly, as Isaac gave the blessing to Jacob.

Thirdly, The matter of his prophecy was that Jesus should die for that nation, the very thing to which all the prophets bore witness, who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ (1Pe 1:11), that the death of Christ must be the life and salvation of Israel; he meant by that nation those in it that

obstinately adhered to Judaism, but God meant those in it that would receive the doctrine of Christ, and become followers of him, all believers, the spiritual seed of Abraham. The death of Christ, which Caiaphas was now projecting, proved the ruin of that interest in the nation of which he intended it should be the security and establishment, for it brought wrath upon them to the uttermost; but it proved the advancement of that interest of which he hoped it would have been the ruin, for Christ, being lifted up from the earth, drew all men unto him. It is a great thing that is here prophesied: That Jesus should die, die for others, not only for their good, but in their stead, dies for that nation, for they had the first offer made them of salvation by his death. If the whole nation of the Jews had unanimously believed in Christ, and received his gospel, they had been not only saved eternally, but saved as a nation from their grievances. The fountain was first opened to the house of David, Zec 13:1. He so died for that nation as that the whole nation should not perish, but that a remnant should be saved, Ro 11:5.

52 and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

The evangelist enlarges upon this word of Caiaphas (Joh 11:52), not for that nation only, how much soever it thought itself the darling of Heaven, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Observe here,

First, The persons Christ died for: Not for the nation of the Jews only (it would have been comparatively but a light thing for the Son of God to go through so vast an undertaking only to restore the preserved of Jacob, and the outcasts of Israel); no, he must be salvation to the ends of the earth, Isa 49:6. He must die for the children of God that were scattered abroad.

1. Some understand it of the children of God that were then in being, scattered abroad in the Gentile world, devout men of every nation (Ac 2:5), that feared God (Ac 10:2), and worshipped him (Ac 17:4), proselytes of the gate, who served the God of Abraham, but submitted not to the ceremonial law of Moses, persons that had a savour of natural religion, but were dispersed in the nations, had no solemn assemblies of their own, nor any peculiar profession to unite in or distinguish themselves by. Now Christ died to incorporate these in one great society, to be denominated

from him and governed by him; and this was the setting up of a standard, to which all that had a regard to God and a concern for their souls might have recourse, and under which they might enlist themselves.

2. Others take in with these all that belong to the election of grace, who are called the children of God, though not yet born, because they are predestinated to the adoption of children, Eph 1:5. Now these are scattered abroad in several places of the earth, out of all kindreds and tongues (Re 7:9), and in several ages of the world, to the end of time; there are those that fear him throughout all generations, to all these he had an eye in the atonement he made by his blood; as he prayed, so he died, for all that should believe on him.

Secondly, The purpose and intention of his death concerning those persons; he died to gather in those who wandered, and to gather together in one those who were scattered; to invite those to him who were at a distance from him, and to unite those in him who were at a distance from each other. Christ's dying is,

1 The great attractive of our hearts; for this end he is lifted up, to draw men to him. The conversion of souls is the gathering to them in to Christ as their ruler and refuge, as the doves to their windows; and he died to effect this. By dying he purchased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them; his love in dying for us is the great loadstone of our love.

2 The great centre of our unity. He gathers them together in one, Eph 1:10. They are one with him, one body, one spirit, and one with each other in him. All the saints in all places and ages meet in Christ, as all the members in the head, and all the branches in the root. Christ by the merit of his death recommended all the saints in one to the grace and favour of God (Heb 2:11-13), and by the motive of his death recommends them all severally to the love and affection one of another, Joh 13:34.

53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

The result of this debate is a resolve of the council to put Jesus to death (Joh 11:53): From that day they took counsel together, to put him to death. They now understood one another's minds, and so each was fixed in his

own, that Jesus must die; and, it should seem, a committee was appointed to sit, de die in diem--daily, to consider of it, to consult about it, and to receive proposals for effecting it. Note, The wickedness of the wicked ripens by degrees, Jam 1:15,Eze 7:10. Two considerable advances were now made in their accursed design against Christ. [1.] What before they had thought of severally now they jointly concurred in, and so strengthened the hands one of another in this wickedness, and proceeded with the greater assurance. Evil men confirm and encourage themselves and one another in evil practices, by comparing notes; men of corrupt minds bless themselves when they find others of the same mind: then the wickedness which before seemed impracticable appears not only possible, but easy to be effected, vis unita fortior--energies, when united, become more efficient. [2.] What before they wished done, but wanted a colour for, now they are furnished with a plausible pretence to justify themselves in, which will serve, if not to take off the guilt (that is the least of their care), yet to take off the odium, and so satisfy, if not the personal, yet the political conscience, as some subtly distinguish. Many will go on very securely in doing an evil thing as long as they have but something to say in excuse for it. Now this resolution of theirs to put him to death, right or wrong, proves that all the formality of a trial, which he afterwards underwent, was but show and pretence; they were before determined what to do.

54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

Christ hereupon absconded, knowing very well what was the vote of their close cabal, Joh 11:54.

[1.] He suspended his public appearances: He walked no more openly among the Jews, among the inhabitants of Judea, who were properly called Jews, especially those at Jerusalem; ou periepatei--he did not walk up and down among them, did not go from place to place, preaching and working miracles with the freedom and openness that he had done, but while he staid in Judea, he was there incognito. Thus the chief priests put the light of Israel under a bushel.

[2.] He withdrew into an obscure part of the country, so obscure that the name of the town he retired to is scarcely met with any where else. He went to a country near the wilderness, as if he were driven out from among men, or rather wishing, with Jeremiah, that he might have in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, Jer 9:2. He entered into a city called Ephraim, some think Ephratah, that is, Bethlehem, where he was born, and which bordered upon the wilderness of Judah; others think Ephron, or Ephraim, mentioned 2Ch 13:19. Thither his disciples went with him; neither would they leave him in solitude, nor would he leave them in danger. There he continued, dietribe, there he conversed, he knew how to improve this time of retirement in private conversation, when he had not an opportunity of preaching publicly. He conversed with his disciples, who were his family, when he was forced from the temple, and his diatribai, or discourses there, no doubt, were very edifying. We must do the good we can, when we cannot do the good we would. But why would Christ abscond now? It was not because he either feared the power of his enemies or distrusted his own power; he had many ways to save himself, and was neither averse to suffering nor unprepared for it; but he retired,

First, To put a mark of his displeasure upon Jerusalem and the people of the Jews. They rejected him and his gospel; justly therefore did he remove himself and his gospel from them. The prince of teachers was now removed into a corner (Isa 30:20); there was no open vision of him; and it was a sad presage of that thick darkness which was shortly to come upon Jerusalem, because she knew not the day of her visitation.

Secondly, To render the cruelty of his enemies against him the more inexcusable. If that which was grievous to them, and thought dangerous to the public, was his public appearance, he would try whether their anger would be turned away by his retirement into privacy; when David had fled to Gath, Saul was satisfied, and sought no more for him, 1Sa 27:4. But it was the life, the precious life, that these wicked men hunted after.

Thirdly, His hour was not yet come, and therefore he declined danger, and did it in a way common to men, both to warrant and encourage the flight of his servants in time of persecution and to comfort those who are forced from their usefulness, and buried alive in privacy and obscurity; the

disciple is not better than his Lord. Fourthly, His retirement, for awhile, was to make his return into Jerusalem, when his hour was come, the more remarkable and illustrious. This swelled the acclamations of joy with which his well-wishers welcomed him at his next public appearance, when he rode triumphantly into the city.

55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

The occasion of it was the approach of the passover, at which they expected his presence, according to custom (Joh 11:55): The Jews' passover was nigh at hand; a festival which shone bright in their calendar, and which there was great expectation of for some time before. This was Christ's fourth and last passover, since he entered upon his public ministry, and it might truly be said (as, 2Ch 35:18), There never was such a passover in Israel, for in it Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. Now the passover being at hand, many went out of all parts of the country to Jerusalem, to purify themselves. This was either,

First, A necessary purification of those who had contracted any ceremonial pollution; they came to be sprinkled with the water of purification, and to perform the other rites of cleansing according to the law, for they might not eat the passover in their uncleanness, Nu 9:6. Thus before our gospel passover we must renew our repentance, and by faith wash in the blood of Christ, and so compass God's altar. Or,

Secondly, A voluntary purification, or self-sequestration, by fasting and prayer, and other religious exercises, which many that were more devout than their neighbours spent some time in before the passover, and chose to do it at Jerusalem, because of the advantage of the temple-service. Thus must we by solemn preparation set bounds about the mount on which we expect to meet with God.

56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

The enquiry was very solicitous: They said, What think you, that he will not come to the feast? Joh 11:56.

First, Some think this was said by those who wished well to him, and expected his coming, that they might hear his doctrine and see his miracles. Those who came early out of the country, that they might purify themselves, were very desirous to meet with Christ, and perhaps came up the sooner with that expectation, and therefore as they stood in the temple, the place of their purification, they enquired what news of Christ? Could any body give them hopes of seeing him? If there were those, and those of the most devout people, and best affected to religion, who showed this respect to Christ, it was a check to the enmity of the chief priests, and a witness against them.

Secondly, It should rather seem that they were his enemies who made this enquiry after him, who wished for an opportunity to lay hands on him. They, seeing the town begin to fill with devout people out of the country, wondered they did not find him among them. When they should have been assisting those that came to purify themselves, according to the duty of their place, they were plotting against Christ. How miserably degenerate was the Jewish church, when the priests of the Lord were become like the priests of the calves, a snare upon Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor, and were profound to make slaughter (Ho 5:1,2), --when, instead of keeping the feast with unleavened bread, they were themselves soured with the leaven of the worst malice! Their asking, What think you? Will he not come up to the feast? implies,

1. An invidious reflection upon Christ, as if he would omit his attendance on the feast of the Lord for fear of exposing himself. If others, through irreligion, be absent, they are not animadverted upon; but if Christ be absent, for his own preservation (for God will have mercy, and not sacrifice), it is turned to his reproach, as it was to David's that his seat was empty at the feast, though Saul wanted him only that he might have an opportunity of nailing him to the wall with his javelin, 1Sa 20:25-27, &c. It is sad to see holy ordinances prostituted to such unholy purposes.

2. A fearful apprehension that they had of missing their game: "Will he not come up to the feast? If he do not, our measures are broken, and we are all

undone; for there is no sending a pursuivant into the country, to fetch him up."

57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.

The orders issued out by the government for the apprehending of him were very strict, Joh 11:57. The great sanhedrim issued out a proclamation, strictly charging and requiring that if any person in city or country knew where he was (pretending that he was a criminal, and had fled from justice) they should show it, that he might be taken, probably promising a reward to any that would discover him, and imposing a penalty on such as harboured him; so that hereby he was represented to the people as an obnoxious dangerous man, an outlaw, whom any one might have a blow at. Saul issued out such a proclamation for the apprehending of David, and Ahab of Elijah. See, First, How intent they were upon this prosecution, and how indefatigably they laboured in it, now at a time when, if they had had any sense of religion and the duty of their function, they would have found something else to do. Secondly, How willing they were to involve others in the guilt with them; if any man were capable of betraying Christ, they would have him think himself bound to do it. Thus was the interest they had in the people abused to the worst purposes. Note, It is an aggravation of the sins of wicked rulers that they commonly make those that are under them instruments of their unrighteousness. But notwithstanding this proclamation, though doubtless many knew where he was, yet such was his interest in the affections of some, and such God's hold of the consciences of others, that he continued undiscovered, for the Lord hid him.

John-12

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the prudential care of Christ in withdrawing from the fury of his enemies in and about Jerusalem, who were consulting his destruction: his time not being fully

come, he gets out of the way of his persecutors: but now the passover being at hand, which was the time that this Lamb of God was to die as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, our Lord comes forth, first to Bethany, and then to Jerusalem, not fearing the teeth of his enemies, but with a fixed resolution to encounter death and danger for the salvation of his people.

His example teacheth us, That although we are bound by all lawful means and prudential methods to preserve ourselves from the unjust violence of our persecutors yet when God's time for our sufferings is come, and we evidently see that it is his will that we suffer for his sake, we ought to set our faces very cheerfully towards it, and resign up ourselves to the wisdom and will of God.

Thus did Christ here, Joh 11:54, we find he withdrew from suffering, his hour not being then come: but now when the passover was nigh at hand, which was the time when he was to suffer, he sets his face towards Jerusalem, and withdraws no more.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Verses 2-8. See this passage explained Mt 26:3, also Mt 26:4-16.

Lazarus was, &c. The names of Martha and Lazarus are mentioned because it was not in their own house, but in that of Simon. Lazarus is particularly mentioned, since it was so remarkable that one who had been once dead should be enjoying again the endearments of friendship. This shows, also, that his resurrection was no illusion--that he was really restored to the blessings of life and friendship. Calmet thinks that this was about two months after his resurrection, and it is the last that we hear of him. How long he lived is unknown, nor is it recorded that he made any communication about the world of spirits. It is remarkable that none who have been restored to life from the dead have made any communications respecting that world. See Lk 16:31, and 2Cor 12:4.

3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

The detection and discovery of Judas's hypocrisy herein, Joh 12:6. Here is the evangelist's remark upon it, by the direction of him who searches the heart: This he said, not that he cared for the poor, as he pretended, but because he was a thief, and had the bag.

(a.) It did not come from a principle of charity: Not that he cared for the poor. He had no compassion towards them, no concern for them: what were the poor to him any further than he might serve his own ends by being overseer of the poor? Thus some warmly contend for the power of the church, as others for its purity, when perhaps it may be said, Not that they care for the church; it is all one to them whether its true interest sink or swim, but under the pretence of this they are advancing themselves. Simeon and Levi pretended zeal for circumcision, not that they cared for the seal of the covenant, any more than Jehu for the Lord of hosts, when he said, Come see my zeal.

(b.) It did come from a principle of covetousness. The truth of the matter was, this ointment being designed for his Master, he would rather have had it in money, to be put in the common stock with which he was entrusted, and then he knew what to do with it. Observe,

[1.] Judas was treasurer of Christ's household, whence some think he was called Iscariot, the bag-bearer. First, See what estate Jesus and his disciples had to live upon. It was but little; they had neither farms nor merchandise, neither barns nor storehouses, only a bag; or, as some think the word signifies, a box, or coffer, wherein they kept just enough for their subsistence, giving the overplus, if any were, to the poor; this they carried about with them, wherever they went. Omnia mea mecum porto--I carry all my property about me. This bag was supplied by the contributions of good people, and the Master and his disciples had all in common; let this lessen our esteem of worldly wealth, and deaden us to the punctilios of state and ceremony, and reconcile us to a mean and despicable way of living, if this be our lot, that it was our Master's lot; for our sakes he became

poor. Secondly, See who was the steward of the little they had; it was Judas, he was purse-bearer. It was his office to receive and pay, and we do not find that he gave any account what markets he made. He was appointed to this office, either,

1. Because he was the least and lowest of all the disciples; it was not Peter nor John that was made steward (though it was a place of trust and profit), but Judas, the meanest of them. Note, Secular employments, as they are a digression, so they are a degradation to a minister of the gospel; see 1Co 6:4. The prime-ministers of state in Christ's kingdom refused to be concerned in the revenue, Ac 6:2.

2. Because he was desirous of the place. He loved in his heart to be fingering money, and therefore had the moneybag committed to him, either,

(a.) As a kindness, to please him, and thereby oblige him to be true to his Master. Subjects are sometimes disaffected to the government because disappointed of their preferment; but Judas had no cause to complain of this; the bag he chose, and the bag he had. Or,

(b.) In judgment upon him, to punish him for his secret wickedness; that was put into his hands which would be a snare and trap to him. Note, Strong inclinations to sin within are often justly punished with strong temptations to sin without. We have little reason to be fond of the bag, or proud of it, for at the best we are but stewards of it; and it was Judas, one of an ill character, and born to be hanged (pardon the expression), that was steward of the bag. The prosperity of fools destroys them.

[2.] Being trusted with the bag, he was a thief, that is, he had a thievish disposition. The reigning love of money is heart-theft as much as anger and revenge are heart-murder. Or perhaps he had been really guilty of embezzling his Master's stores, and converting to his own use what was given to the public stock. And some conjecture that he was now contriving to fill his pockets, and then run away and leave his Master, having heard him speak so much of troubles approaching, to which he could by no means reconcile himself.

Note, Those to whom the management and disposal of public money is committed have need to be governed by steady principles of justice and honesty, that no blot cleave to their hands; for though some make a jest of cheating the government, or the church, or the country, if cheating be thieving, and, communities being more considerable than particular persons, if robbing them be the greater sin, the guilt of theft and the portion of thieves will be found no jesting matter. Judas, who had betrayed his trust, soon after betrayed his Master.

7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

Christ's justification of what Mary did (Joh 12:7,8): Let her alone. Hereby he intimated his acceptance of her kindness (though he was perfectly mortified to all the delights of sense, yet, as it was a token of her goodwill, he signified himself well-pleased with it), and his care that she should not be molested in it: Pardon her, so it may be read; "excuse her this once, if it be an error it is an error of her love." Note, Christ would not have those censured nor discouraged who sincerely design to please him, though in their honest endeavours there be not all the discretion that may be, Ro 14:3. Though we would not do as they do, yet let them alone. For Mary's justification,

1. Christ puts a favourable construction upon what she did, which those that condemned it were not aware of: Against the day of my burying she has kept this. Or, She has reserved this for the day of my embalming; so Dr. Hammond. "You do not grudge the ointment used for the embalming of your dead friends, nor say that it should be sold, and given to the poor. Now this anointing either was so intended, or at least may be so interpreted; for the day of my burying is now at hand, and she has anointed a body that is already as good as dead." Note,

(a.) Our Lord Jesus thought much and often of his own death and burial; it would be good for us to do so too.

(b.) Providence does often so open a door of opportunity to good Christians, and the Spirit of grace does so open their hearts, that the expressions of their pious zeal prove to be more seasonable, and more beautiful, than any foresight of their own could make them.

(c.) The grace of Christ puts kind comments upon the pious words and actions of good people, and not only makes the best of what is amiss, but makes the most of what is good.

2. He gives a sufficient answer to Judas's objection, Joh 12:8.

(a.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of Providence that the poor we have always with us, some or other that are proper objects of charity (De 15:11); such there will be as long as there are in this lapsed state of mankind so much folly and so much affliction.

(b.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of grace that the church should not always have the bodily presence of Jesus Christ: "Me you have not always, but only nor for a little time." Note, We need wisdom, when two duties come in competition, to know which to give the preference to, which must be determined by the circumstances. Opportunities are to be improved, and those opportunities first and most vigorously which are likely to be of the shortest continuance, and which we see most speedily hastening away. That good duty which may be done at any time ought to give way to that which cannot be done but just now.

The Plot against Lazarus

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

The public notice which was taken of our Lord Jesus here at this supper in Bethany (Joh 12:9): Much people of the Jews knew that he was there, for he was the talk of the town, and they came flocking thither; the more because he had lately absconded, and now broke out as the sun from behind a dark cloud.

1. They came to see Jesus, whose name was very much magnified, and made considerable by the late miracle he had wrought in raising Lazarus. They came, not to hear him, but to gratify their curiosity with a sight of him here at Bethany, fearing he would not appear publicly, as he used to do, this passover. They came, not to seize him, or inform against him, though the government had prosecuted him to an outlawry, but to see him and show him respect. Note, There are some in whose affections Christ will have an interest, in spite of all the attempts of his enemies to misrepresent him. It being known where Christ was, multitudes came to him. Note, Where the king is there is the court; where Christ is there will the gathering of the people be, Lu 17:37.

2. They came to see Lazarus and Christ together, which was a very inviting sight. Some came for the confirmation of their faith in Christ, to have the story perhaps from Lazarus's own mouth. Others came only for the gratifying of their curiosity, that they might say they had seen a man who had been dead and buried, and yet lived again; so that Lazarus served for a show, these holy-days, to those who, like the Athenians, spent their time in telling and hearing new things. Perhaps some came to put curious questions to Lazarus about the state of the dead, to ask what news from the other world; we ourselves have sometimes said, it may be, We would have gone a great way for one hour's discourse with Lazarus. But if any came on this errand it is probable that Lazarus was silent, and gave them no account of his voyage; at least, the scripture is silent, and gives us no account of it; and we must not covet to be wise above what is written. But our Lord Jesus was present, who was a much fitter person for them to apply to than Lazarus; for if we hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, if we heed not what they tell us concerning another world, neither should we be persuaded though Lazarus rose from the dead. We have a more sure word of prophecy.

10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

The indignation of the chief priests at the growing interest of our Lord Jesus, and their plot to crush it (Joh 12:10,11): They consulted (or decreed) how they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him

(of what was done to him, not of any thing he said or did) many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus. Here observe,

1. How vain and unsuccessful their attempts against Christ had hitherto been. They had done all they could to alienate the people from him, and exasperate them against him, and yet many of the Jews, their neighbours, their creatures, their admirers, were so overcome by the convincing evidence of Christ's miracles that they went away from the interest and party of the priests, went off from obedience to their tyranny, and believed on Jesus; and it was by reason of Lazarus; his resurrection put life into their faith, and convinced them that this Jesus was undoubtedly the Messiah, and had life in himself, and power to give life. This miracle confirmed them in the belief of his other miracles, which they had heard he wrought in Galilee: what was impossible to him that could raise the dead?

2. How absurd and unreasonable this day's vote was--that Lazarus must be put to death. This is an instance of the most brutish rage that could be; they were like a wild bull in a net, full of fury, and laying about them without any consideration. It was a sign that they neither feared God nor regarded man. For,

(a.) If they had feared God, they would not have done such an act of defiance to him. God will have Lazarus to live by miracle, and they will have him to die by malice. They cry, Away with such a fellow, it is not fit he should live, when God had so lately sent him back to the earth, declaring it highly fit he should live; what was this but walking contrary to God? They would put Lazarus to death, and challenge almighty power to raise him again, as if they could contend with God, and try titles with the King of kings. Who has the keys of death and the grave, he or they? O cæca malitia! Christus qui suscitare potuit mortuum, non possit occisum.--Blind malice, to suppose that Christ, who could raise one that had died a natural death, could not raise one that had been slain!--Augustine in loc. Lazarus is singled out to be the object of their special hatred, because God has distinguished him by the tokens of his peculiar love, as if they had made a league offensive and defensive with death and hell, and resolved to be severe upon all deserters. One would think that they should rather have consulted how they might have joined in friendship with Lazarus and his

family, and by their mediation have reconciled themselves to this Jesus whom they had persecuted; but the god of this world had blinded their minds.

(b.) If they had regarded man, they would not have done such an act of injustice to Lazarus, an innocent man, to whose charge they could not pretend to lay any crime. What bands are strong enough to hold those who can so easily break through the most sacred ties of common justice, and violate the maxims which even nature itself teaches? But the support of their own tyranny and superstition was thought sufficient, as in the church of Rome, not only to justify, but to consecrate the greatest villanies, and make them meritorious.

11 because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

see Mt 21:1-11.

13 took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna:

Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

The reason which induced the people to pay this respect to our Lord Jesus upon his coming into Jerusalem, though the government was so much set against him. It was because of the illustrious miracle he had lately wrought in raising Lazarus.

1. See here what account and what assurance they had of this miracle; no doubt, the city rang of it, the report of it was in all people's mouths. But those who considered it as a proof of Christ's mission, and a ground of their faith in him, that they might be well satisfied of the matter of fact, traced the report to those who were eye-witnesses of it, that they might know the certainty of it by the utmost evidence the thing was capable of: The people therefore that stood by when he called Lazarus out of his grave, being found out and examined, bore record, Joh 12:17. They unanimously averred the thing to be true, beyond dispute or contradiction, and were ready, if called to it, to depose it upon oath, for so much is implied in the word Emartyrei. Note, The truth of Christ's miracles was evidenced by incontestable proofs. It is probable that those who had seen this miracle did not only assert it to those who asked them, but published it unasked, that this might add to the triumphs of this solemn day; and Christ's coming in now from Bethany, where it was done, would put them in mind of it. Note, Those who wish well to Christ's kingdom should be forward to proclaim what they know that may redound to his honour.

2. What improvement they made of it, and what influence it had upon them (Joh 12:18): For this cause, as much as any other, the people met him.

(a.) Some, out of curiosity, were desirous to see one that had done such a wonderful work. Many a good sermon he had preached in Jerusalem, which drew not such crowds after him as this one miracle did. But,

(b.) Others, out of conscience, studied to do him honour, as one sent of God. This miracle was reserved for one of the last, that it might confirm those which went before, and might gain him this honour just before his sufferings; Christ's works were all not only well done (Mk 7:7) but well timed.

18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

The indignation of the Pharisees at all this; some of them, probably, saw, and they all soon heard of, Christ's public entry. The committee appointed to find out expedients to crush him thought they had gained their point when he had retired unto privacy, and that he would soon be forgotten in Jerusalem, but they now rage and fret when they see they imagined but a vain thing.

1. They own that they had got no ground against him; it was plainly to be perceived that they prevailed nothing. They could not, with all their insinuations, alienate the people's affections from him, nor with their menaces restrain them from showing their affection to him. Note, Those who oppose Christ, and fight against his kingdom, will be made to perceive that they prevail nothing. God will accomplish his own purposes in spite of them, and the little efforts of their impotent malice. You prevail nothing, ouk opheleite--you profit nothing. Note, There is nothing got by opposing Christ.

2. They own that he had got ground: The world is gone after him; there is a vast crowd attending him, a world of people: an hyperbole common in most languages. Yet here, like Caiaphas, ere they were aware, they prophesied that the world would go after him; some of all sorts, some from all parts; nations shall be discipled. But to what intent was this said?

(a.) Thus they express their own vexation at the growth of his interest; their envy makes them fret. If the horn of the righteous be exalted with honour, the wicked see it, and are grieved (Ps 112:9,10); considering how great these Pharisees were, and what abundance of respect was paid them, one would think they needed not grudge Christ so inconsiderable a piece of honour as was now done him; but proud men would monopolize honour, and have none share with them, like Haman.

(b.) Thus they excite themselves and one another, to a more vigorous carrying on of the war against Christ. As if they should say, "Dallying and delaying thus will never do. We must take some other and more effectual course, to put a stop to this infection; it is time to try our utmost skill and force, before the grievance grows past redress." Thus the enemies of religion are made more resolute and active by being baffled; and shall its

friends be disheartened with every disappointment, who know its cause is righteous and will at last be victorious?

Some Greeks Seek Jesus

20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:

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21 the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

What was the honour they paid him: they desired to be acquainted with him, Joh 12:21. Having come to worship at the feast, they desired to make the best use they could of their time, and therefore applied to Philip, desiring that he would put them in a way to get some personal converse with the Lord Jesus.

1. Having a desire to see Christ, they were industrious in the use of proper means. They did not conclude it impossible, because he was so much crowded, to get to speak with him, nor rest in bare wishes, but resolved to try what could be done. Note, Those that would have the knowledge of Christ must seek it.

2. They made their application to Philip, one of his disciples. Some think that they had acquaintance with him formerly, and that they lived near Bethsaida in Galilee of the Gentiles; and then it teaches us that we should improve our acquaintance with good people, for our increase in the knowledge of Christ. It is good to know those who know the Lord. But if these Greeks had been near Galilee it is probable that they would have attended Christ there, where he mostly resided; therefore I think that they applied to him only because they saw him a close follower of Christ, and he was the first they could get to speak with. It was an instance of the veneration they had for Christ that they made an interest with one of his

disciples for an opportunity to converse with him, a sign that they looked upon him as some great one, though he appeared mean. Those that would see Jesus by faith now that he is in heaven must apply to his ministers, whom he had appointed for this purpose, to guide poor souls in their enquiries after him. Paul must send for Ananias, and Cornelius for Peter. The bringing of these Greeks to the knowledge of Christ by the means of Philip signified the agency of the apostles, and the use made of their ministry in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith and the discipling of the nations.

3. Their address to Philip was in short this: Sir, we would see Jesus. They gave him a title of respect, as one worthy of honour, because he was in relation to Christ. Their business is, they would see Jesus; not only see his face, that they might be able to say, when they came home, they had seen one that was so much talked of (it is probable they had seen him when he appeared publicly); but they would have some free conversation with him, and be taught by him, for which it was no easy thing to find him at leisure, his hands were so full of public work. Now that they were come to worship at the feast, they would see Jesus.

Note, In our attendance upon holy ordinances, and particularly the gospel passover, the great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus; to have our acquaintance with him increased, our dependence on him encouraged, our conformity to him carried on; to see him as ours, to keep up communion with him, and derive communications of grace from him: we miss of our end in coming if we do not see Jesus.

4. Here is the report which Philip made of this to his Master, Joh 12:22. He tells Andrew, who was of Bethsaida likewise, and was a senior fellow in the college of the apostles, contemporary with Peter, and consults him what was to be done, whether he thought the motion would be acceptable or no, because Christ had sometimes said that he was not sent but to the house of Israel. They agree that it must be made; but then he would have Andrew go along with him, remembering the favourable acceptance Christ had promised them, in case two of them should agree touching any thing they should ask, Mt 18:19.

Note, Christ's ministers should be helpful to one another and concur in helping souls to Christ: Two are better than one. It should seem that Andrew and Philip brought this message to Christ when he was teaching in public, for we read (Joh 12:29) of the people that stood by; but he was seldom alone.

23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

Christ's acceptance of this honour paid him, signified by what he said to the people hereupon, Joh 12:23, &c., where he foretels both the honour which he himself should have in being followed (Joh 12:23,24) and the honour which those should have that followed him, Joh 12:25,26. This was intended for the direction and encouragement of these Greeks, and all others that desired acquaintance with him.

He foresees that plentiful harvest, in the conversion of the Gentiles, of which this was as it were the first-fruits, Joh 12:23. Christ said to the two disciples who spoke a good word for these Greeks, but doubted whether they should speed or no, The hour is come when the Son of Man shall be glorified, by the accession of the Gentiles to the church, and in order to that he must be rejected of the Jews. Observe,

The end designed hereby, and that is the glorifying of the Redeemer: "And is it so? Do the Gentiles begin to enquire after me? Does the morning-star appear to them? and that blessed say-spring, which knows its place and time too, does that begin to take hold of the ends of the earth? Then the hour is come for the glorifying of the Son of man." This was no surprise to Christ, but a paradox to those about him. Note,

[1.] The calling, the effectual calling, of the Gentiles into the church of God greatly redounded to the glory of the Son of man. The multiplying of the redeemed was the magnifying of the Redeemer.

[2.] there was a time, a set time, an hour, a certain hour, for the glorifying of the Son of man, which did come at last, when the days of his humiliation were numbered and finished, and he speaks of the approach of it with exultation and triumph: The hour is come.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

The strange way in which this end was to be attained, and that was by the death of Christ, intimated in that similitude (Joh 12:24): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, you to whom I have spoken of my death and sufferings, except a corn of wheat fall not only to, but into, the ground, and die, and be buried and lost, it abideth alone, and you never see any more of it; but if it die according to the course of nature (otherwise it would be a miracle) it bringeth forth much fruit, God giving to every seed its own body." Christ is the corn of wheat, the most valuable and useful grain. Now here is,

[1.] The necessity of Christ's humiliation intimated. He would never have been the living quickening head and root of the church if he had not descended from heaven to this accursed earth and ascended from earth to the accursed tree, and so accomplished our redemption. He must pour out his soul unto death, else he cannot divide a portion with the great, Isa 53:12. He shall have a seed given him, but he must shed his blood to purchase them and purify, must win them and wear them. It was necessary likewise as a qualification for that glory which he was to have by the accession of multitudes to his church; for if he had not by his sufferings made satisfaction for sin, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness, he would not have been sufficiently provided for the entertainment of those that should come to him, and therefore must abide alone.

[2.] The advantage of Christ's humiliation illustrated. He fell to the ground in his incarnation, seemed to be buried alive in this earth, so much was his glory veiled; but this was not all: he died. This immortal seed submitted to the laws of mortality, he lay in the grave like seed under the clods; but as the seed comes up again green, and fresh, and flourishing, and with a great increase, so one dying Christ gathered to himself thousands of living Christians, and he became their root. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is all owing to the dying of this corn of wheat. Hereby the Father and the Son are glorified,

the church is replenished, the mystical body is kept up, and will at length be completed; and, when time shall be no more, the Captain of our salvation, bringing many sons to glory by the virtue of his death, and being so made perfect by sufferings, shall be celebrated for ever with the admiring praises of saints and angels, Heb 2:10,13.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

He foretels and promises an abundant recompence to those who should cordially embrace him and his gospel and interest, and should make it appear that they do so by their faithfulness in suffering for him or in serving him.

In suffering for him (Joh 12:25): He that loves his life better than Christ shall lose it; but he that hates his life in this world, and prefers the favour of God and an interest in Christ before it, shall keep it unto life eternal. This doctrine Christ much insisted on, it being the great design of his religion to wean us from this world, by setting before us another world.

[1.] See here the fatal consequences of an inordinate love of life; many a man hugs himself to death, and loses his life by over-loving it. He that so loves his animal life as to indulge his appetite, and make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, shall thereby shorten his days, shall lose the life he is so fond of, and another infinitely better. He that is so much in love with the life of the body, and the ornaments and delights of it, as, for fear of exposing it or them, to deny Christ, he shall lose it, that is, lose a real happiness in the other world, while he thinks to secure an imaginary one in this.

[2.] See also the blessed recompence of a holy contempt of life. He that so hates the life of the body as to venture it for the preserving of the life of his soul shall find both, with unspeakable advantage, in eternal life. Note,

First, It is required of the disciples of Christ that they hate their life in this world; a life in this world supposes a life in the other world, and this is hated when it is loved less than that. Our life in this world includes all the enjoyments of our present state, riches, honours, pleasures, and long life

in the possession of them; these we must hate, that is, despise them as vain and insufficient to make us happy, dread the temptations that are in them, and cheerfully part with them whenever they come in competition with the service of Christ, Ac 20:24,21:13,Re 12:11. See here much of the power of godliness--that it conquers the strongest natural affections; and much of the mystery of godliness--that it is the greatest wisdom, and yet makes men hate their own lives.

Secondly, Those who, in love to Christ, hate their own lives in this world, shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just. He that hateth his life shall keep it; he puts it into the hands of one that will keep it to life eternal, and restore it with as great an improvement as the heavenly life can make of the earthly one.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.

In serving him (Joh 12:26): If any man profess to serve me, let him follow me, as a servant follows his master; and where I am, ekei kai ho diakonos ho emos estai--there let my servant be; so some read it, as part of the duty, there let him be, to attend upon me; we read it as part of the promise, there shall he be in happiness with me. And, lest this should seem a small matter, he adds, If any man serve me, him will my Father honour; and that is enough, more than enough. The Greeks desired to see Jesus (Joh 12:21), but Christ lets them know that it was not enough to see him, they must serve him. He did not come into the world, to be a show for us to gaze at, but a king to be ruled by. And he says this for the encouragement of those who enquired after him to become his servants. In taking servants it is usual to fix both the work and the wages; Christ does both here.

[1.] Here is the work which Christ expects from his servants; and it is very easy and reasonable, and such as becomes them.

First, Let them attend their Master's movements: If any man serve me, let him follow me. Christians must follow Christ, follow his methods and prescriptions, do the things that he says, follow his example and pattern, walk as he also walked, follow his conduct by his providence and Spirit. We must go whither he leads us, and in the way he leads us; must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes before us. "If any man serve me, if he

put himself into that relation to me, let him apply himself to the business of my service, and be always ready at my call." Or, "If any man do indeed serve me, let him make an open and public profession of his relation to me, by following me, as the servant owns his Master by following him in the streets."

Secondly, Let them attend their Master's repose: Where I am, there let my servant be, to wait upon me. Christ is where his church is, in the assemblies of his saints, where his ordinances are administered; and there let his servants be, to present themselves before him, and receive instructions from him. Or, "Where I am to be in heaven, whither I am now going, there let the thoughts and affections of my servants be, there let their conversation be, where Christ sitteth." Col 3:1,2.

[2.] Here are the wages which Christ promises to his servants; and they are very rich and noble.

First, They shall be happy with him: Where I am, there shall also my servant be. To be with him, when he was here in poverty and disgrace, would seem but poor preferment, and therefore, doubtless, he means being with him in paradise, sitting with him at his table above, on his throne there; it is the happiness of heaven to be with Christ there, Joh 17:24. Christ speaks of heaven's happiness as if he were already in it: Where I am; because he was sure of it, and near to it, and it was still upon his heart, and in his eye. And the same joy and glory which he thought recompence enough for all his services and sufferings are proposed to his servants as the recompence of theirs. Those that follow him in the way shall be with him in the end.

Secondly, They shall be honoured by his Father; he will make them amends for all their pains and loss, by conferring an honour upon them, such as becomes a great God to give, but far beyond what such worthless worms of the earth could expect to receive. The rewarder is God himself, who takes the services done to the Lord Jesus as done to himself. The reward is honour, true lasting honour, the highest honour; it is the honour that comes from God. It is said (Pr 27:18), He that waits on his Master (humbly and diligently) shall be honoured. Those that wait on Christ God

will put honour upon, such as will be taken notice of another day, though now under a veil. Those that serve Christ must humble themselves, and are commonly vilified by the world, in recompence of both which they shall be exalted in due time.

Thus far Christ's discourse has reference to those Greeks who desired to see him, encouraging them to serve him. What became of those Greeks we are not told, but are willing to hope that those who thus asked the way to heaven with their faces thitherward, found it, and walked in it.

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

Honour is here done to Christ by his Father in a voice from heaven, occasioned by the following part of his discourse, and which gave occasion to a further conference with the people. In these verses we have,

Christ's address to his Father, upon occasion of the trouble which seized his spirit at this time: Now is my soul troubled, Joh 12:27. A strange word to come from Christ's mouth, and at this time surprising, for it comes in the midst of divers pleasing prospects, in which, one would think, he should have said, Now is my soul pleased. Note, Trouble of soul sometimes follows after great enlargements of spirit. In this world of mixture and change we must expect damps upon our joy, and the highest degree of comfort to be the next degree to trouble. When Paul had been in the third heavens, he had a thorn in the flesh. Observe,

1. Christ's dread of his approaching sufferings: Now is my soul troubled. Now the black and dismal scene began, now were the first throes of the travail of his soul, now his agony began, his soul began to be exceedingly sorrowful. Note,

(a.) The sin of our soul was the trouble of Christ's soul, when he undertook to redeem and save us, and to make his soul an offering for our sin.

(b.) The trouble of his soul was designed to ease the trouble of our souls; for, after this, he said to his disciples (Joh 14:1), "Let not your hearts be troubled; why should yours be troubled and mine too?" Our Lord Jesus went on cheerfully in his work, in prospect of the joy set before him, and yet submitted to a trouble of soul. Holy mourning is consistent with spiritual joy, and the way to eternal joy. Christ was now troubled, now in sorrow, now in fear, now for a season; but it would not be so always, it would not be so long. The same is the comfort of Christians in their troubles; they are but for a moment, and will be turned into joy.

2 The strait he seems to be in hereupon, intimated in those words, And what shall I say? This does not imply his consulting with any other, as if he needed advice, but considering with himself what was fit to be said now. When our souls are troubled we must take heed of speaking unadvisedly, but debate with ourselves what we shall say. Christ speaks like one at a loss, as if what he should choose he wot not. There was a struggle between the work he had taken upon him, which required sufferings, and the nature he had taken upon him, which dreaded them; between these two he here pauses with, What shall I say? He looked, and there was none to help, which put him to a stand. Calvin observes this as a great instance of Christ's humiliation, that he should speak thus like one at a loss. Quo se magis exinanivit gloriæ Dominus, eo luculentius habemus erga nos amoris specimen--The more entirely the Lord of glory emptied himself, the brighter is the proof of the love he bore us. Thus he was in all points tempted like as we are, to encourage us, when we know not what to do, to direct our eyes to him.

3. His prayer to God in this strait: Father, save me from this hour, ek tes oras tautes--out of this hour, praying, not so much that it might not come as that he might be brought through it. Save me from this hour; this was the language of innocent nature, and its feelings poured forth in prayer. Note, It is the duty and interest of troubled souls to have recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and in prayer to eye him as a Father. Christ

was voluntary in his sufferings, and yet prayed to be saved from them. Note, Prayer against a trouble may very well consist with patience under it and submission to the will of God in it. Observe, He calls his suffering this hour, meaning the expected events of the time now at hand. Hereby he intimates that the time of his suffering was,

(a.) A set time, set to an hour, and he knew it. It was said twice before that his hour was not yet come, but it was now so near that he might say it was come.

(b.) A short time. An hour is soon over, so were Christ's sufferings; he could see through them to the joy set before him.

4. His acquiescence in his Father's will, notwithstanding. He presently corrects himself, and, as it were, recalls what he had said: But for this cause came I to this hour. Innocent nature got the first word, but divine wisdom and love got the last. Note, those who would proceed regularly must go upon second thoughts. The complainant speaks first; but, if we would judge righteously, we must hear the other side. With the second thought he checked himself: For this cause came I to this hour; he does not silence himself with this, that he could not avoid it, there was no remedy; but satisfies himself with this, that he would not avoid it, for it was pursuant to his own voluntary engagement, and was to be the crown of his whole undertaking; should he now fly off, this would frustrate all that had been done hitherto. Reference is here had to the divine counsels concerning his sufferings, by virtue of which it behoved him thus to submit and suffer. Note, This should reconcile us to the darkest hours of our lives, that we were all along designed for them; see 1Th 3:3.

28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

His regard to his Father's honour herein. Upon the withdrawing of his former petition, he presents another, which he will abide by: Father, glorify thy name, to the same purport with Father, thy will be done; for God's will is for his own glory. This expresses more than barely a submission to the will of God; it is a consecration of his sufferings to the glory of God. It was a mediatorial word, and was spoken by him as our surety, who had undertaken to satisfy divine justice for our sin. The

wrong which by sin we have done to God is in his glory, his declarative glory; for in nothing else are we capable of doing him injury. We were never able to make him satisfaction for this wrong done him, nor any creature for us; nothing therefore remained but that God should get him honour upon us in our utter ruin. Here therefore our Lord Jesus interposed, undertook to satisfy God's injured honour, and he did it by his humiliation; he denied himself in, and divested himself of, the honours due to the Son of God incarnate, and submitted to the greatest reproach. Now here he makes a tender of this satisfaction as an equivalent: "Father, glorify thy name; let thy justice be honoured upon the sacrifice, not upon the sinner; let the debt be levied upon me, I am solvent, the principal is not." Thus he restored that which he took not away.

29 The people therefore that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

The Father's answer to this address; for he heard him always, and does still. Observe, 1. How this answer was given. By a voice from heaven. The Jews speak much of a Bath-kôl--the daughter of a voice, as one of those divers manners by which God in time past spoke to the prophets; but we do not find any instance of his speaking thus to any but to our Lord Jesus; it was an honour reserved for him (Mt 3:17,17:5), and here, probably, this audible voice was introduced by some visible appearance, either of light or darkness, for both have been used as vehicles of the divine glory. 2. What the answer was. It was an express return to that petition, Father, glorify thy name: I have glorified it already, and I will glorify it yet again. When we pray as we are taught, Our Father, hallowed be thy name, this is a comfort to us, that is it an answered prayer; answered to Christ here, and in him to all true believers.

(1.) The name of God had been glorified in the life of Christ, in his doctrine and miracles, and all the examples he gave of holiness and goodness.

(2.) It should be further glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ. His wisdom and power, his justice and holiness, his truth and goodness, were greatly glorified; the demands of a broken law were fully answered; the affront done to God's government satisfied for; and God accepted the satisfaction, and declared himself well pleased. What God has done for

the glorifying of his own name is an encouragement to us to expect what he will yet further do. He that has secured the interests of his own glory will still secure them.

The opinion of the standers-by concerning this voice, Joh 12:29. We may hope there were some among them whose minds were so well prepared to receive a divine revelation that they understood what was said and bore record of it. But notice is here taken of the perverse suggestion of the multitude: some of them said that it thundered: others, who took notice that there was plainly an articulate intelligible voice, said that certainly an angel spoke to him. Now this shows,

1. That it was a real thing, even in the judgment of those that were not at all well affected to him.

2. That they were loth to admit so plain a proof of Christ's divine mission. They would rather say that it was this, or that, or any thing, than that God spoke to him in answer to his prayer; and yet, if it thundered with articulate sounds (as Re 10:3,4), was not that God's voice? Or, if angels spoke to him, are not they God's messengers? But thus God speaks once, yea twice, and man perceives it not.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

Why it was sent (Joh 12:30): "It came not because of me, not merely for my encouragement and satisfaction" (then it might have been whispered in his ear privately), "but for your sakes."

(1.) "That all you who heard it may believe that the Father hath sent me." What is said from heaven concerning our Lord Jesus, and the glorifying of the Father in him, is said for our sakes, that we may be brought to submit to him and rest upon him.

(2.) "That you my disciples, who are to follow me in sufferings, may therein be comforted with the same comforts that carry me on." Let this encourage them to part with life itself for his sake, if they be called to it, that it will redound to the honour of God. Note, The promises and

supports granted to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings were intended for our sakes. For our sakes he sanctified himself, and comforted himself.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

What was the meaning of it. He that lay in the Father's bosom knew his voice, and what was the meaning of it; and two things God intended when he said that he would glorify his own name:--

(1.) That by the death of Christ Satan should be conquered (Joh 12:31): Now is the judgment. He speaks with a divine exultation and triumph. "Now the year of my redeemed is come, and the time prefixed for breaking the serpent's head, and giving a total rent to the powers of darkness; now for that glorious achievement: now, now, that great work is to be done which has been so long thought of in the divine counsels, so long talked of in the written word, which has been so much the hope of saints and the dread of devils." The matter of the triumph is,

[1.] That now is the judgment of the world; krisis, take it as a medical term: "Now is the crisis of this world." The sick and diseased world is now upon the turning point; this is the critical day upon which the trembling scale will turn for life or death, to all mankind; all that are not recovered by this will be left helpless and hopeless. Or, rather, it is a law term, as we take it: "Now, judgment is entered, in order to the taking out of execution against the prince of this world."

Note, The death of Christ was the judgment of this world.

First, It is a judgment of discovery and distinction--judicium discretionis; so Austin. Now is the trial of this world, for men shall have their character according as the cross of Christ is to them; to some it is foolishness and a stumbling-block, to others it is the wisdom and power of God; of which there was a figure in the two thieves that were crucified with him. By this men are judged, what they think of the death of Christ.

Secondly, It is a judgment of favour and absolution to the chosen ones that are in the world. Christ upon the cross interposed between a righteous

God and a guilty world as a sacrifice for sin and a surety for sinners, so that when he was judged, and iniquity laid upon him, and he was wounded for our transgressions, it was as it were the judgment of this world, for an everlasting righteousness was thereby brought in, not for Jews only, but the whole world, 1Jo 2:1,2,Da 9:24.

Thirdly, It is a judgment of condemnation given against the powers of darkness; see Joh 16:11. Judgment is put for vindication and deliverance, the asserting of an invaded right. At the death of Christ there was a famous trial between Christ and Satan, the serpent and the promised seed; the trial was for the world, and the lordship of it; the devil had long borne sway among the children of men, time out of mind; he now pleads prescription, grounding his claim also upon the forfeiture incurred by sin. We find him willing to have come to a composition (Lu 4:6,7); he would have given the kingdoms of this world to Christ, provided he would hold them by, from, and under him. But Christ would try it out with; by dying he takes off the forfeiture to divine justice, and then fairly disputes the title, and recovers it in the court of heaven. Satan's dominion is declared to be a usurpation, and the world adjudged to the Lord Jesus as his right, Ps 2:6,8. The judgment of this world is, that it belongs to Christ, and not to Satan; to Christ therefore let us all atturn tenants.

[2.] That now is the prince of this world cast out.

First, It is the devil that is here called the prince of this world, because he rules over the men of the world by the things of the world; he is the ruler of the darkness of this world, that is, of this dark world, of those in it that walk in darkness, 2Co 4:4,Eph 4:12.

Secondly, He is said to be cast out, to be now cast out; for, whatever had been done hitherto towards the weakening of the devil's kingdom was done in the virtue of a Christ to come, and therefore is said to be done now. Christ, reconciling the world to God by the merit of his death, broke the power of death, and cast out Satan as a destroyer; Christ, reducing the world to God by the doctrine of his cross, broke the power of sin, and cast out Satan as a deceiver. The bruising of his heel was the breaking of the serpent's head, Ge 3:15. When his oracles were silenced, his temples

forsaken, his idols famished, and the kingdoms of the world became Christ's kingdoms, then was the prince of the world cast out, as appears by comparing this with John's vision (Re 12:8-11), where it is said to be done by the blood of the Lamb. Christ's frequent casting of devils out of the bodies of people was an indication of the great design of his whole undertaking. Observe, With what assurance Christ here speaks of the victory over Satan; it is as good as done, and even when he yields to death he triumphs over it.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

That by the death of Christ souls should be converted, and this would be the casting out of Satan (Joh 12:32): If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. Here observe two things:--

The great design of our Lord Jesus, which was to draw all men to him, not the Jews only, who had been long in a profession a people near to God, but the Gentiles also, who had been afar off; for he was to be the desire of all nations (Hag 2:7), and to him must the gathering of the people be. That which his enemies dreaded was that the world would go after him; and he would draw them to him, notwithstanding their opposition. Observe here how Christ himself is all in all in the conversion of a soul. First, It is Christ that draws: I will draw. It is sometimes ascribed to the Father (Joh 6:44), but here to the Son, who is the arm of the Lord. He does not drive by force, but draws with the cords of a man (Ho 11:4,Jer 31:3), draws as the loadstone; the soul is made willing, but it is in a day of power. Secondly, It is to Christ that we are drawn: "I will draw them to me as the centre of their unity." The soul that was at a distance from Christ is brought into an acquaintance with him, he that was shy and distrustful of him is brought to love him and trust in him,--drawn up to his terms, into his arms. Christ was now going to heaven, and he would draw men's hearts to him thither.

The strange method he took to accomplish his design by being lifted up from the earth. What he meant by this, to prevent mistake, we are told (Joh 12:33): This he spoke signifying by what death he should die, the death of the cross, though they had designed and attempted to stone him to death. He that was crucified was first nailed to the cross, and then lifted up upon it. He was lifted up as a spectacle to the world; lifted up between

heaven and earth, as unworthy of either; yet the word here used signifies an honourable advancement, ean hypsotho--If I be exalted; he reckoned his sufferings his honour. Whatever death we die, if we die in Christ we shall be lifted up out of this dungeon, this den of lions, into the regions of light and love. We should learn of our Master to speak of dying with a holy pleasantness, and to say, "We shall then be lifted up." Now Christ's drawing all men to him followed his being lifted up from the earth.

First, It followed after it in time. The great increase of the church was after the death of Christ; while Christ lived, we read of thousands at a sermon miraculously fed, but after his death we read of thousands at a sermon added to the church. Israel began to multiply in Egypt after the death of Joseph.

Secondly, It followed upon it as a blessed consequence of it. Note, There is a powerful virtue and efficacy in the death of Christ to draw souls to him. The cross of Christ, though to some a stumbling-stone, is to others a loadstone. Some make it an allusion to the drawing of fish into a net; the lifting up of Christ was as the spreading of the net (Mt 13:47,48); or to the setting up of a standard, which draws soldiers together; or, rather, it refers to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, which drew all those to it who were stung with fiery serpents, as soon as ever it was known that it was lifted up, and there was healing virtue in it. O what flocking was there to it! So there was to Christ, when salvation through him was preached to all nations; see Joh 3:14,15. Perhaps it has some reference to the posture in which Christ was crucified, with his arms stretched out, to invite all to him, and embrace all that come. Those that put Christ to that ignominious death thought thereby to drive all men from him; but the devil was outshot in his own bow. Out of the eater came forth meat.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

The people's exception against what he said, and their cavil at it, Joh 12:34. Though they had heard the voice from heaven, and the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, yet they object, and pick quarrels

with him. Christ had called himself the Son of man (Joh 12:23), which they knew to be one of the titles of the Messiah, Da 7:13. He had also said that the Son of man must be lifted up, which they understood of his dying, and probably he explained himself so, and some think he repeated what he said to Nicodemus (Joh 3:14), So must the Son of man be lifted up. Now against this,

1. They alleged those scriptures of the Old Testament which speak of the perpetuity of the Messiah, that he should be so far from being cut off in the midst of his days that he should be a priest for ever (Ps 110:4), and a king for ever (Ps 89:29, &c.), that he should have length of days for ever and ever, and his years as many generations (Ps 21:4,61:6), from all which they inferred that the Messiah should not die. Thus great knowledge in the letter of the scripture, if the heart be unsanctified, is capable of being abused to serve the cause of infidelity, and to fight against Christianity with its own weapons. Their perverseness in opposing this to what Jesus had said will appear if we consider,

(a.) That, when they vouched the scripture to prove that the Messiah abideth for ever, they took no notice of those texts which speak of the Messiah's death and sufferings: they had heard out of the law that Messiah abideth for ever; and had they never heard out of the law that Messiah should be cut off (Da 9:26), and that he should pour out his soul unto death (Isa 53:12), and particularly that his hands and feet should be pierced? Why then do they make so strange of the lifting up of the Son of man? Note, We often run into great mistakes, and then defend them with scripture arguments, by putting those things asunder which God in his word has put together, and opposing one truth under pretence of supporting another. We have heard out of the gospel that which exalts free grace, we have heard also that which enjoins duty, and we just cordially embrace both, and not separate them, nor set them at variance.

(b.) That, when they opposed what Christ said concerning the sufferings of the Son of man, they took no notice of what he had said concerning his glory and exaltation. They had heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever; and had they not heard our Lord Jesus say that he should be glorified, that he should bring forth much fruit, and draw all men to him?

Had he not just now promised immortal honours to his followers, which supposed his abiding for ever? But this they overlooked. Thus unfair disputants oppose some parts of the opinion of an adversary, to which, if they would but take it entire, they could not but subscribe; and in the doctrine of Christ there are paradoxes, which to men of corrupt minds are stones of stumbling--as Christ crucified, and yet glorified; lifted up from the earth, and yet drawing all men to him.

2. They asked hereupon, Who is the Son of man? This they asked, not with a desire to be instructed, but tauntingly and insultingly, as if now they had baffled him, and run him down. "Thou sayest, The Son of man must die; we have proved the Messiah must not, and where is then thy Messiahship? This Son of man, as thou callest thyself, cannot be the Messiah, thou must therefore think of something else to pretend to." Now that which prejudiced them against Christ was his meanness and poverty; they would rather have no Christ than a suffering one.

35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you.
Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

What Christ said to this exception, or rather what he said upon it. The objection was a perfect cavil; they might, if they pleased, answer it themselves: man dies, and yet is immortal, and abideth for ever, so the Son of man. Therefore, instead of answering these fools according to their folly, he gives them a serious caution to take heed of trifling away the day of their opportunities in such vain and fruitless cavils as these (Joh 12:35,36): "Yet a little while, and but a little while, is the light with you; therefore be wise for yourselves, and walk while you have the light."

1. In general, we may observe here,

(a.) The concern Christ has for the souls of men, and his desire of their welfare. With what tenderness does he here admonish those to look well to themselves who were contriving ill against him! Even when he endured the contradiction of sinners, he sought their conversion. See Pr 29:10.

(b.) The method he takes with these objectors, with meekness instructing those that opposed themselves, 2Ti 2:25. Were but men's consciences awakened with a due concern about their everlasting state, and did they consider how little time they have to spend, and none to spare, they would not waste precious thoughts and time in trifling cavils.

2. Particularly we have here,

(a.) The advantage they enjoyed in having Christ and his gospel among them, with the shortness and uncertainty of their enjoyment of it: Yet a little while is the light with you. Christ is this light; and some of the ancients suggest that, in calling himself the light, he gives a tacit answer to their objection. His dying upon the cross was as consistent with his abiding for ever as the setting of the sun every night is with his perpetuity. The duration of Christ's kingdom is compared to that of the sun and moon, Ps 72:17,89:36,37. The ordinances of heaven are unchangeably fixed, and yet the sun and moon set and are eclipsed; so Christ the Sun of righteousness abides for ever, and yet was eclipsed by his sufferings, and was but a little while within our horizon. Now,

[1.] The Jews at this time had the light with them; they had Christ's bodily presence, heard his preaching, saw his miracles. The scripture is to us a light shining in a dark place.

[2.] It was to be but a little while with them; Christ would shortly leave them, their visible church state would soon after be dissolved and the kingdom of God taken from them, and blindness and hardness would happen unto Israel. Note, It is good for us all to consider what a little while we are to have the light with us. Time is short, and perhaps opportunity not so long. The candlestick may be removed; at least, we must be removed shortly. Yet a little while is the light of life with us; yet a little while is the light of the gospel with us, the day of grace, the means of grace, the Spirit of grace, yet a very little while.

(b.) The warning given them to make the best of this privilege while they enjoyed it, because of the danger they were in of losing it: Walk while

you have the light; as travellers who make the best of their way forward, that they may not be benighted in their journey, because travelling in the night is uncomfortable and unsafe. "Come," say they, "let us mend our pace, and get forward, while we have day-light." Thus wise should we be for our souls who are journeying towards eternity. Note,

[1.] It is our business to walk, to press forward towards heaven, and to get nearer to it by being made fitter for it. Our life is but a day, and we have a day's journey to go.

[2.] The best time of walking is while we have the light. The day is the proper season for work, as the night is for rest. The proper time for getting grace is when we have the word of grace preached to us, and the Spirit of grace striving with us, and therefore then is the time to be busy.

[3.] We are highly concerned thus to improve our opportunities, for fear lest our day be finished before we have finished our day's work and our day's journey: "Lest darkness come upon you, lest you lose your opportunities, and can neither recover them nor despatch the business you have to do without them." Then darkness comes, that is, such an utter incapacity to make sure the great salvation as renders the state of the careless sinner quite deplorable; so that, if his work be undone then, it is likely to be undone for ever.

(c.) The sad condition of those who have sinned away the gospel, and are come to the period of their day of grace. They walk in darkness, and know neither where they go, nor whither they go; neither the way they are walking in, nor the end they are walking towards. He that is destitute of the light of the gospel, and is not acquainted with its discoveries and directions, wanders endlessly in mistakes and errors, and a thousand crooked paths, and is not aware of it. Set aside the instructions of the Christian doctrine, and we know little of the difference between good and evil. He is going to destruction, and knows not his danger, for he is either sleeping or dancing at the pit's brink.

36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

The great duty and interest of every one of us inferred from all this (Joh 12:36): While you have light, believe in the light. The Jews had now Christ's presence with them, let them improve it; afterwards they had the first offers of the gospel made to them by the apostles wherever they came; now this is an admonition to them not to out-stand their market, but to accept the offer when it was made to them: the same Christ saith to all who enjoy the gospel. Note,

[1.] It is the duty of every one of us to believe in the gospel light, to receive it as a divine light, to subscribe to the truths it discovers, for it is a light to our eyes, and to follow its guidance, for it is a light to our feet. Christ is the light, and we must believe in him as he is revealed to us; as a true light that will not deceive us, a sure light that will not misguide us.

[2.] We are concerned to do this while we have the light, to lay hold on Christ while we have the gospel to show us the way to him and direct us in that way. [3.] Those that believe in the light shall be the children of light; they shall be owned as Christians, who are called children of light (Lu 16:8,Eph 5:8) and of the day, 1Th 5:5. Those that have God for their Father are children of light, for God is light; they are born from above, and heirs of heaven, and children of light, for heaven is light.

Christ's retiring from them, hereupon: These things spoke Jesus, and said no more at this time, but left this to their consideration, and departed, and did hide himself from them. And this he did,

1. For their conviction and awakening. If they will not regard what he hath said, he will have nothing more to say to them. They are joined to their infidelity, as Ephraim to idols; let them alone. Note, Christ justly removes the means of grace from those that quarrel with him, and hides his face from a froward generation, De 32:20.

2. For his own preservation. He hid himself from their rage and fury, retreating, it is probable, to Bethany, where he lodged. By this it appears that what he said irritated and exasperated them, and they were made worse by that which should have made them better.

The Unbelief of the Jews

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

We have here the honour done to our Lord Jesus by the Old-Testament prophets, who foretold and lamented the infidelity of the many that believed not on him. It was indeed a dishonour and grief to Christ that his doctrine met with so little acceptance and so much opposition; but this takes off the wonder and reproach, makes the offence of it to cease, and made it no disappointment to Christ, that herein the scriptures were fulfilled. Two things are here said concerning this untractable people, and both were foretold by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, that they did not believe, and that they could not believe.

They did not believe (Joh 12:37): Though he had done so many miracles before them, which, one would think, should have convinced them, yet they believed not, but opposed him. Observe,

1 The abundance of the means of conviction which Christ afforded them: He did miracles, so many miracles; tosauta semeia signifying both so many and so great. This refers to all the miracles he had wrought formerly; nay, the blind and lame now came to him into the temple, and he healed them, Mt 21:14. His miracles were the great proof of his mission, and on the evidence of them he relied. Two things concerning them he here insists upon:-- (1.) The number of them; they were many,--various and of divers kinds; numerous and often repeated; and every new miracle confirmed the reality of all that went before. The multitude of his miracles was not only a proof of his unexhausted power, but gave the greater opportunity to examine them; and, if there had been a cheat in them, it was morally impossible but that in some or other of them it would have been discovered; and, being all miracles of mercy, the more there were the more good was done. (2.) The notoriety of them. He wrought these miracles before them, not at a distance, not in a corner, but before many witnesses, appearing to their own eyes.

2 The inefficacy of these means: Yet they believed not on him. They could not gainsay the premises, and yet would not grant the conclusion. Note, The most plentiful and powerful means of conviction will not of themselves work faith in the depraved prejudiced hearts of men. These saw, and yet believed not.

3. The fulfilling of the scripture in this (Joh 12:38): That the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled. Not that these infidel Jews designed the fulfilling of the scripture (they rather fancied those scriptures which speak of the church's best sons to be fulfilled in themselves), but the event exactly answered the prediction, so that (ut for ita ut) this saying of Esaias was fulfilled. The more improbable any event is, the more does a divine foresight appear in the prediction of it. One could not have imagined that the kingdom of the Messiah, supported with such pregnant proofs, should have met with so much opposition among the Jews, and therefore their unbelief is called a marvellous work, and a wonder, Isa 29:14. Christ himself marvelled at it, but it was what Isaiah foretold (Isa 53:1), and now it is accomplished. Observe,

(a.) The gospel is here called their report: Who has believed, te akon hemon--our hearing, which we have heard from God, and which you have heard from us. Our report is the report that we bring, like the report of a matter of fact, or the report of a solemn resolution in the senate.

(b.) It is foretold that a few comparatively of those to whom this report is brought will be persuaded to give credit to it. Many hear it, but few heed it and embrace it: Who hath believed it? Here and there one, but none to speak of; not the wise, not the noble; it is to them but a report which wants confirmation.

(c.) It is spoken of as a thing to be greatly lamented that so few believe the report of the gospel. Lord is here prefixed from the LXX., but is not in the Hebrew, and intimates a sorrowful account brought to God by the messengers of the cold entertainment which they and their report had; as the servant came, and showed his lord all these things, Lu 14:21.

(d.) The reason why men believe not the report of the gospel is because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them, that is, because they do not acquaint themselves with, and submit themselves to, the grace of God; they do not experimentally know the virtue and fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, in which the arm of the Lord is revealed. They saw Christ's miracles, but did not see the arm of the Lord revealed in them.

38 that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake,

Lord, who hath believed our report?

and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart;

that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart,

and be converted, and I should heal them.

They could not believe. See Mk 6:5. "He could there do no mighty works," &c. The words can and could are often used in the Bible to denote the existence of such obstacles as to make a result certain, or as affirming that while one thing exists another thing cannot follow. Thus, Jn 5:44: "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another." That is, while this propensity to seek for honour exists, it will effectually prevent your believing. Thus (Gen 37:4) it is said of the brethren of Joseph that they "could not speak peaceably unto him." That is, while their hatred continued so strong, the other result would follow. See also Mt 12:34, Rom 8:7, Jn 6:60, Amos 3:3. In this case it means that there was some obstacle or difficulty that made it certain that while it existed they would not believe. What that was is stated in the next verse; and while that blindness of mind and that hardness of heart existed, it was impossible that they should believe, for the two things were incompatible. But this determines nothing about their power of removing that blindness, or of yielding their heart to the gospel. It simply affirms that while one exists the other cannot follow. Chrysostom and Augustine understand this of a moral inability, and not of any natural want of power. "They could not, because they would not" (Chrysostom in loco). So on Jer 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin," &c., he says, "he does not say it is impossible for a wicked man to do well, but, BECAUSE they will not, therefore they cannot." Augustine says on this place: "If I be asked why they could not

believe, I answer without hesitation, because they would not: because God foresaw their evil will, and he announced it beforehand by the prophet."

He hath blinded their eyes. The expression in Isaiah is, "Go, make the heart of this people fat, and shut their eyes." That is, go and proclaim truth to them--truth that will result in blinding their eyes. Go and proclaim the law and the will of God, and the effect will be, owing to the hardness of their heart, that their eyes will be blinded and their hearts hardened. As God knew that this would be the result--as it was to be the effect of the message, his commanding Isaiah to go and proclaim it was the same in effect, or in the result, as if he had commanded him to blind their eyes and harden their hearts. It is this effect or result to which the evangelist refers in this place. He states that God did it--that is, he did it in the manner mentioned in Isaiah, for we are limited to that in our interpretation of the passage. In that case it is clear that the mode specified is not a direct agency on the part of God in blinding the mind--which we cannot reconcile with any just notions of the divine character--but in suffering the truth to produce a regular effect on sinful minds, without putting forth any positive supernatural influence to prevent it. The effect of truth on such minds is to irritate, to enrage, and to harden, unless counteracted by the grace of God. See Rom 7:8,9,11; 2Cor 2:15, 16. And as God knew this, and, knowing it, still sent the message, and suffered it to produce the regular effect, the evangelist says "he hath blinded their minds," thus retaining the substance of the passage in Isaiah without quoting the precise language; but in proclaiming the truth there was nothing wrong on the part of God or of Isaiah, nor is there any indication that God was unwilling that they should believe and be saved.

41 These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

When he saw his glory, Isa 6:1-10. Isaiah saw the LORD (in Hebrew, JEHOVAH) sitting on a throne and surrounded with the seraphim. This is perhaps the only instance in the Bible in which Jehovah is said to have been seen by man, and for this the Jews affirm that Isaiah was put to death. God had said (Ex 33:20), "No man shall see me and live;" and as Isaiah affirmed that he had seen Jehovah, the Jews, for that and other reasons, put him to death by sawing him asunder. Is 1:1. In the prophecy Isaiah is said expressly to have seen JEHOVAH (Isa 6:1); and in Isa 6:5, "Mine eyes

have seen the King JEHOVAH of hosts." By his glory is meant the manifestation of him--the shechinah, or visible cloud that was a representation of God, and that rested over the mercy-seat. This was regarded as equivalent to seeing God, and John here expressly applies this to the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is not affirming that the people did not believe in God, but is assigning the reason why they believed not on Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The whole discourse has respect to the Lord Jesus, and the natural construction of the passage requires us to refer it to him. John affirms that it was the glory of the Messiah that Isaiah saw, and yet Isaiah affirms that it was JEHOVAH; and from this the inference is irresistible that John regarded Jesus as the Jehovah whom Isaiah saw. The name Jehovah is never, in the Scriptures, applied to a man, or an angel, or to any creature. It is the peculiar, incommunicable name of God. So great was the reverence of the Jews for that name that they would not even pronounce it. This passage is therefore conclusive proof that Christ is equal with the Father.

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

Some honour was done to Christ by these rulers: for they believed on him, were convinced that he was sent of God, and received his doctrine as divine; but they did not do him honour enough, for they had not courage to own their faith in him. Many professed more kindness for Christ than really they had; these had more kindness for him than they were willing to profess. See here what a struggle was in these rulers between their convictions and their corruptions.

See the power of the word in the convictions that many of them were under, who did not wilfully shut their eyes against the light. They believed on him as Nicodemus, received him as a teacher come from God. Note, The truth of the gospel has perhaps a better interest in the consciences of men than we are aware of. Many cannot but approve of that in their hearts which yet outwardly they are shy of. Perhaps these chief rulers were true believers, though very weak, and their faith like smoking flax. Note, It may be, there are more good people than we think there are. Elijah thought he was left alone, when God had seven thousand faithful worshippers in Israel. Some are really better than they seem to be. Their faults are known,

but their repentance is not; a man's goodness may be concealed by a culpable yet pardonable weakness, which he himself truly repents of. The kingdom of God comes not in all with a like observation; nor have all who are good the same faculty of appearing to be so.

43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

See the power of the world in the smothering of these convictions. They believed in Christ, but because of the Pharisees, who had it in their power to do them a diskindness, they durst not confess him for fear of being excommunicated. Observe here,

1. Wherein they failed and were defective; They did not confess Christ. Note, There is cause to question the sincerity of that faith which is either afraid or ashamed to show itself; for those who believe with the heart ought to confess with the mouth, Ro 10:9.

2. What they feared: being put out of the synagogue, which they thought would be a disgrace and damage to them; as if it would do them any harm to be expelled from a synagogue that had made itself a synagogue of Satan, and from which God was departing.

3. What was at the bottom of this fear: They loved the praise of men, chose it as a more valuable good, and pursued it as a more desirable end, than the praise of God; which was an implicit idolatry, like that (Ro 1:25) of worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator. They set these two in the scale one against the other, and, having weighed them, they proceeded accordingly.

(a.) They set the praise of men in one scale, and considered how good it was to give praise to men, and to pay a deference to the opinion of the Pharisees, and receive praise from men, to be commended by the chief priests and applauded by the people as good sons of the church, the Jewish church; and they would not confess Christ, lest they should thereby derogate from the reputation of the Pharisees, and forfeit their own, and thus hinder their own preferment. And, besides, the followers of Christ were put into an ill name, and were looked upon with contempt, which those who had been used to honour could not bear. Yet perhaps if they had known one another's minds they would have had more courage; but each

one thought that if he should declare himself in favour of Christ he should stand alone, and have nobody to back him; whereas, if any one had had resolution to break the ice, he would have had more seconds than he thought of.

(b.) They put the praise of God in the other scale. They were sensible that by confessing Christ they should both give praise to God, and have praise from God, that he would be pleased with them, and say, Well done; but,

(c.) They gave the preference to the praise of men, and this turned the scale; sense prevailed above faith, and represented it as more desirable to stand right in the opinion of the Pharisees than to be accepted of God. Note, Love of the praise of men is a very great prejudice to the power and practice of religion and godliness. Many come short of the glory of God by having a regard to the applause of men, and a value for that. Love of the praise of men, as a by-end in that which is good, will make a man a hypocrite when religion is in fashion and credit is to be got by it; and love of the praise of men, as a base principle in that which is evil, will make a man an apostate when religion is in disgrace, and credit is to be lost for it, as here. See Ro 2:29.

The Judgment of Jesus' Word

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

We have here the honour Christ not assumed, but asserted, to himself, in the account he gave of his mission and his errand into the world. Probably this discourse was not at the same time with that before (for them he departed, Joh 12:36), but some time after, when he made another public appearance; and, as this evangelist records it, it was Christ's farewell sermon to the Jews, and his last public discourse; all that follows was private with his disciples. Now observe how our Lord Jesus delivered this parting word: he cried and said. Doth not wisdom cry (Pr 8:1), cry without? Pr 1:20. The raising of his voice and crying intimate,

1. His boldness in speaking. Though they had not courage openly to profess faith in his doctrine, he had courage openly to publish it; if they were ashamed of it, he was not, but set his face as a flint, Isa 50:7.

2. His earnestness in speaking. He cried as one that was serious and importunate, and in good earnest in what he said, and was willing to impart to them, not only the gospel of God, but even his own soul. 3. It denotes his desire that all might take notice of it. This being the last time of the publication of his gospel by himself in person, he makes proclamation, "Whoever will hear me, let them come now." Now what is the conclusion of the whole matter, this closing summary of all Christ's discourses? It is much like that of Moses (De 30:15): See, I have set before you life and death. So Christ here takes leave of the temple, with a solemn declaration of three things:--

The privileges and dignities of those that believe; this gives great encouragement to us to believe in Christ and to profess that faith. It is a thing of such a nature that we need not be shy either of doing it or of owning it; for,

1. By believing in Christ we are brought into an honourable acquaintance with God (Joh 12:44,45): He that believes on me, and so sees me, believes on him that sent me, and so sees him. He that believes on Christ,

(a.) He does not believe in a mere man, such a one as he seemed to be, and was generally taken to be, but he believes in one that is the Son of God and equal in power and glory with the Father. Or rather,

(b.) His faith does not terminate in Christ, but through him it is carried out to the Father, that sent him, to whom, as our end, we come by Christ as our way. The doctrine of Christ is believed and received as the truth of God. The rest of a believing soul is in God through Christ as Mediator; for its resignation to Christ is in order to being presented to God. Christianity is made up, not of philosophy nor politics, but pure divinity. This is illustrated, Joh 12:45. He that sees me (which is the same with believing

in him, for faith is the eye of the soul) sees him that sent me; in getting an acquaintance with Christ, we come to the knowledge of God. For,

[1.] God makes himself known in the face of Christ (2Co 4:6), who is the express image of his person, Heb 1:3.

[2.] All that have a believing sight of Christ are led by him to the knowledge of God, whom Christ has revealed to us by his word and Spirit. Christ, as God, was the image of his Father's person; but Christ, as Mediator, was his Father's representative in his relation to man, the divine light, law, and love, being communicated to us in and through him; so that in seeing him (that is, in eying him as our Saviour, Prince, and Lord, in the right of redemption), we see and eye the Father as our owner, ruler, and benefactor, in the right of creation: for God is pleased to deal with fallen man by proxy.

45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

We are hereby brought into a comfortable enjoyment of ourselves (Joh 12:46): I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes in me, Jew or Gentile, should not abide in darkness. Observe,

(a.) The character of Christ: I am come a light into the world, to be a light to it. This implies that he had a being, and a being as light, before he came into the world, as the sun is before it rises; the prophets and apostles were made lights to the world, but it was Christ only that came a light into this world, having before been a glorious light in the upper world, Joh 3:19.

(b.) The comfort of Christians: They do not abide in darkness.

[1.] They do not continue in that dark condition in which they were by nature; they are light in the Lord. They are without any true comfort, or joy, or hope, but do not continue in that condition; light is sown for them.

[2.] Whatever darkness of affliction, disquietment, or fear, they may afterwards be in, provision is made that they may not long abide in it. [3.]

They are delivered from that darkness which is perpetual, and which abideth for ever, that utter darkness where there is not the least gleam of light nor hope of it.

47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not:
for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

The peril and danger of those that believe not, which gives fair warning to take heed of persisting in unbelief (Joh 12:47,48): "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not, not I only, or not now, lest I should be looked upon as unfair in being judge in my own cause; yet let not infidelity think therefore to go unpunished, though I judge him not, there is one that judgeth him." So that we have here the doom of unbelief. Observe,

1. Who they are whose unbelief is here condemned: those who hear Christ's words and yet believe them not. Those shall not be condemned for their infidelity that never had, nor could have, the gospel; every man shall be judged according to the dispensation of light he was under: Those that have sinned without law shall be judged without law. But those that have heard, or might have heard, and would not, lie open to this doom.

2. What is the constructive malignity of their unbelief: not receiving Christ's word; it is interpreted (Joh 12:48) a rejecting of Christ, ho atheton eme. It denotes a rejection with scorn and contempt. Where the banner of the gospel is displayed, no neutrality is admitted; every man is either a subject or an enemy.

3. The wonderful patience and forbearance of our Lord Jesus, exercised towards those who slighted him when he was come here upon earth: I judge him not, not now. Note, Christ was not quick or hasty to take advantage against those who refused the first offers of his grace, but continued waiting to be gracious. He did not strike those dumb or dead who contradicted him, never made intercession against Israel, as Elias did; though he had authority to judge, he suspended the execution of it, because he had work of another nature to do first, and that was to save the world.

(a.) To save effectually those that were given him before he came to judge the degenerate body of mankind.

(b.) To offer salvation to all the world, and thus far to save them that it is their own fault if they be not saved. He was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now the executing of the power of a judge was not congruous with that undertaking, Ac 8:33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, it was suspended for a time.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

The certain and unavoidable judgment of unbelievers at the great day, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God: unbelief will certainly be a damning sin. Some think when Christ saith, I judge no man, he means that they are condemned already. There needs no process, they are self-judged; no execution, they are self-ruined; judgment goes against them of course, Heb 2:3. Christ needs not appear against them as their accuser, they are miserable if he do not appear for them as their advocate; however, he tells them plainly when and where they will be reckoned with.

(a.) There is one that judgeth them. Nothing is more dreadful than abused patience, and grace trampled on; though for awhile mercy rejoiceth against judgment, yet there will be judgment without mercy.

(b.) Their final judgment is reserved to the last day; to that day of judgment Christ here binds over all unbelievers, to answer then for all the contempts they have put upon him. Divine justice has appointed a day, and adjourns the sentence to that day, as Mt 26:64.

(c.) The word of Christ will judge them then: The words that I have spoken, how light soever you have made of them, the same shall judge the unbeliever in the last day; as the apostles, the preachers of Christ's word, are said to judge, Lu 22:30. Christ's words will judge unbelievers two ways:--

[1.] As the evidence of their crime, they will convict them. Every word Christ spoke, every sermon, every argument, every kind offer, will be produced as a testimony against those who slighted all he said.

[2.] As the rule of their doom, they will condemn them; they shall be judged according to the tenour of that covenant which Christ procured and published. That word of Christ, He that believes not shall be damned, will judge all unbelievers to eternal ruin; and there are many such like words.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

The commission which our Lord Jesus received from the Father to deliver his doctrine to the world (Joh 12:49): I have not spoken myself, as a mere man, much less as a common man; but the Father gave me a commandment what I should say. This is the same with what he said Joh 7:16. My doctrine is,

(a.) Not mine, for I have not spoken of myself. Christ, as Son of man, did not speak that which was of human contrivance or composure; as Son of God, he did not act separately, or by himself alone, but what he said was the result of the counsels of peace; as Mediator, his coming into the world was voluntary, and with his full consent, but not arbitrary, and of his own head. But,

(b.) It was his that sent him. God the Father gave him,

[1.] His commission. God sent him as his agent and plenipotentiary, to concert matters between him and man, to set a treaty of peace on foot, and to settle the articles.

[2.] His instructions, here called a commandment, for they were like those given to an ambassador, directing him not only what he may say, but what he must say. The messenger of the covenant was entrusted with an errand which he must deliver.

Note, Our Lord Jesus learned obedience himself, before he taught it to us, though he was a Son. The Lord God commanded the first Adam, and he

by his disobedience ruined us; he commanded the second Adam, and he by his obedience saved us. God commanded him what he should say and what he should speak, two words signifying the same thing, to denote that every word was divine.

The Old-Testament prophets sometimes spoke of themselves; but Christ spoke by the Spirit at all times. Some make this distinction: He was directed what he should say in his set sermons, and what he should speak in his familiar discourses. Others this: He was directed what he should say in his preaching now, and what he should speak in his judging at the last day; for he had commission and instruction for both.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

1. The scope, design, and tendency of this commission: I know that his commandment is life everlasting, Joh 12:50. The commission given to Christ had a reference to the everlasting state of the children of men, and was in order to their everlasting life and happiness in that state: the instructions given to Christ as a prophet were to reveal eternal life (1Jo 5:11); the power, given to Christ as a king was to give eternal life, Joh 17:2. Thus the command given him was life everlasting. This Christ says he knew: "I know it is so," which intimates how cheerfully and with what assurance Christ pursued his undertaking, knowing very well that he went upon a good errand, and that which would bring forth fruit unto life eternal. It intimates likewise how justly those will perish who reject Christ and his word. Those who disobey Christ despise everlasting life, and renounce it; so that not only Christ's words will judge them, but even their own; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it; and who can except against it?

2. Christ's exact observance of the commission and instructions given him, and his steady acting in pursuance of them: Whatsoever I speak, it is as the Father said unto me. Christ was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God, and was faithful in discovering so much of them to the children of men as it was agreed should be discovered, and kept back nothing that was profitable. As the faithful witness delivers souls, so did he, and spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Note,

(a.) This is a great encouragement to faith; the sayings of Christ, rightly understood, are what we may venture our souls upon.

(b.) It is a great example of obedience. Christ said as he was bidden, and so must we, communicated what the Father had said to him, and so must we. See Ac 4:20. In the midst of all the respect paid to him, this is the honour he values himself upon, that what the Father had said to him that he spoke, and in the manner as he was directed so he spoke. This was his glory, that, as a Son, he was faithful to him that appointed him; and, by an unfeigned belief of every word of Christ, and an entire subjection of soul to it, we must give him the glory due to his name.

John-13

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

In Joh 13:1-17 we have the story of Christ's washing his disciples' feet; it was an action of a singular nature; no miracle, unless we call it a miracle of humility. Mary had just anointed his head; now, lest his acceptance of this should look like taking state, he presently balances it with this act of abasement. But why would Christ do this? If the disciples' feet needed washing, they could wash them themselves; a wise man will not do a thing that looks odd and unusual, but for very good causes and considerations. We are sure that it was not in a humour or a frolic that this was done; no, the transaction was very solemn, and carried on with a great deal of seriousness; and four reasons are here intimated why Christ did this:--

1. That he might testify his love to his disciples, Joh 13:1,2.

2. That he might give an instance of his own voluntary humility and condescension, Joh 13:3-5.

3. That he might signify to them spiritual washing, which is referred to in his discourse with Peter, Joh 13:6-11.

4. That he might set them an example, Joh 13:12-17. And the opening of these four reasons will take in the exposition of the whole story.

1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

Christ washed his disciples' feet that he might give a proof of that great love wherewith he loved them; loved them to the end, Joh 13:1,2.

1. It is here laid down as an undoubted truth that our Lord Jesus, having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end, Joh 13:1.

(a) This is true of the disciples that were his immediate followers, in particular the twelve. These were his own in the world, his family, his school, his bosom-friends. Children he had none to call his own, but he adopted them, and took them as his own. He had those that were his own in the other world, but he left them for a time, to look after his own in this world. These he loved, he called them into fellowship with himself, conversed familiarly with them, was always tender of them, and of their comfort and reputation. He allowed them to be very free with him, and bore with their infirmities. He loved them to the end, continued his love to them as long as he lived, and after his resurrection; he never took away his loving kindness. Though there were some persons of quality that espoused his cause, he did not lay aside his old friends, to make room for new ones, but still stuck to his poor fishermen. They were weak and defective in knowledge and grace, dull and forgetful; and yet, though he reproved them often, he never ceased to love them and take care of them.

(b) It is true of all believers, for these twelve patriarchs were the representatives of all the tribes of God's spiritual Israel. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus has a people in the world that are his own,--his own, for they were given him by the Father, he has purchased them, and paid dearly for them, and he has set them apart for himself,--his own, for they have devoted themselves to him as a peculiar people. His own; where his own were spoken of that received him not, it is tous idious--his own persons, as a man's wife and children are his own, to whom he stands in a constant relation.

[2.] Christ has a cordial love for his own that are in the world. He did love them with a love of goodwill when he gave himself for their redemption. He does love them with a love of complacency when he admits them into communion with himself. Though they are in this world, a world of darkness and distance, of sin and corruption, yet he loves them. He was now going to his own in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect there; but he seems most concerned for his own on earth, because they most needed his care: the sickly child is most indulged.

[3.] Those whom Christ loves he loves to the end; he is constant in his love to his people; he rests in his love. He loves with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3), from everlasting in the counsels of it to everlasting in the consequences of it. Nothing can separate a believer from the love of Christ; he loves his own, eis telos--unto perfection, for he will perfect what concerns them, will bring them to that world where love is perfect.

2. Christ manifested his love to them by washing their feet, as that good woman (Lu 7:38) showed her love to Christ by washing his feet and wiping them. Thus he would show that as his love to them was constant so it was condescending,-- that in prosecution of the designs of it he was willing to humble himself,--and that the glories of his exalted state, which he was now entering upon, should be no obstruction at all to the favour he bore to his chosen; and thus he would confirm the promise he had made to all the saints that he would make them sit down to meat, and would come forth and serve them (Lu 12:37), would put honour upon them as great and surprising as for a lord to serve his servants. The disciples had just now betrayed the weakness of their love to him, in grudging the ointment that was poured upon his head (Mt 26:8), yet he presently gives this proof of

his love to them. Our infirmities are foils to Christ's kindnesses, and set them off.

3. He chose this time to do it, a little before his last passover, for two reasons:--

Because now he knew that his hour was come, which he had long expected, when he should depart out of this world to the Father. Observe here,

[1.] The change that was to pass over our Lord Jesus; he must depart. This began at his death, but was completed at his ascension. As Christ himself, so all believers, by virtue of their union with him, when they depart out of the world, are absent from the body, go to the Father, are present with the Lord. It is a departure out of the world, this unkind, injurious world, this faithless, treacherous world--this world of labour, toil, and temptation--this vale of tears; and it is a going to the Father, to the vision of the Father of spirits, and the fruition of him as ours.

[2.] The time of this change: His hour was come. It is sometimes called his enemies' hour (Lu 22:53), the hour of their triumph; sometimes his hour, the hour of his triumph, the hour he had had in his eye all along. The time of his sufferings was fixed to an hour, and the continuance of them but for an hour.

[3.] His foresight of it: He knew that his hour was come; he knew from the beginning that it would come, and when, but now he knew that it was come. We know not when our hour will come, and therefore what we have to do in habitual preparation for it ought never to be undone; but, when we know by the harbingers that our hour is come, we must vigorously apply ourselves to an actual preparation, as our Master did, 2Pe 3:14. Now it was in the immediate foresight of his departure that he washed his disciples' feet; that, as his own head was anointed just now against the day of his burial, so their feet might be washed against the day of their consecration by the descent of the Holy Ghost fifty days after, as the priests were washed, Le 8:6. When we see our day approaching, we should do what good we can to those we leave behind.

2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of

Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

Because the devil had now put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, Joh 13:2. These words in a parenthesis may be considered,

[1.] As tracing Judas's treason to its origin; it was a sin of such a nature that it evidently bore the devil's image and superscription. What way of access the devil has to men's hearts, and by what methods he darts in his suggestions, and mingles them undiscerned with those thoughts which are the natives of the heart, we cannot tell. But there are some sins in their own nature so exceedingly sinful, and to which there is so little temptation from the world and the flesh, that it is plain Satan lays the egg of them in a heart disposed to be the nest to hatch them in. For Judas to betray such a master, to betray him so cheaply and upon no provocation, was such downright enmity to God as could not be forged but by Satan himself, who thereby thought to ruin the Redeemer's kingdom, but did in fact ruin his own.

[2.] As intimating a reason why Christ now washed his disciples' feet.

First, Judas being now resolved to betray him, the time of his departure could not be far off; if this matter be determined, it is easy to infer with St. Paul, I am now ready to be offered. Note, The more malicious we perceive our enemies to be against us, the more industrious we should be to prepare for the worst that may come.

Secondly, Judas being now got into the snare, and the devil aiming at Peter and the rest of them (Lu 22:31), Christ would fortify his own against him. If the wolf has seized one of the flock, it is time for the shepherd to look well to the rest. Antidotes must be stirring, when the infection is begun. Dr. Lightfoot observes that the disciples had learned of Judas to murmur at the anointing of Christ; compare Joh 12:4,Mt 26:8. Now, lest those that had learned that of him should learn worse, he fortifies them by a lesson of humility against his most dangerous assaults. Thirdly, Judas, who was now plotting to betray him, was one of the twelve. Now Christ would hereby show that he did not design to cast them all off for the faults of one. Though one of their college had a devil, and was a traitor, yet they should fare never the worse for that. Christ loves his church though there are

hypocrites in it, and had still a kindness for his disciples though there was a Judas among them and he knew it.

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

Christ washed his disciples' feet that he might give an instance of his own wonderful humility, and show how lowly and condescending he was, and let all the world know how low he could stoop in love to his own. This is intimated, Joh 13:3-5. Jesus knowing, and now actually considering, and perhaps discoursing of, his honours as Mediator, and telling his friends that the Father had given all things into his hand, rises from supper, and, to the great surprise of the company, who wondered what he was going to do, washed his disciples' feet.

Here is the rightful advancement of the Lord Jesus. Glorious things are here said of Christ as Mediator.

(a.) The Father had given all things into his hands; had given him a propriety in all, and a power over all, as possessor of heaven and earth, in pursuance of the great designs of his undertaking; see Mt 11:27. The accommodation and arbitration of all matters in variance between God and man were committed into his hands as the great umpire and referee; and the administration of the kingdom of God among men, in all the branches of it, was committed to him; so that all acts, both of government and judgment, were to pass through his hands; he is heir of all things.

(b.) He came from God. This implies that he was in the beginning with God, and had a being and glory, not only before he was born into this world, but before the world itself was born; and that when he came into the world he came as God's ambassador, with a commission from him. He came from God as the son of God, and the sent of God. The Old-Testament prophets were raised up and employed for God, but Christ came directly from him.

(c.) He went to God, to be glorified with him with the same glory which he had with God from eternity. That which comes from God shall go to God; those that are born from heaven are bound for heaven. As Christ came from God to be an agent for him on earth, so he went to God to be an agent

for us in heaven; and it is a comfort to us to think how welcome he was there: he was brought near to the Ancient of days, Da 7:13. And it was said to him, Sit thou at my right hand, Ps 110:1.

(d.) He knew all this; was not like a prince in the cradle, that knows nothing of the honour he is born to, or like Moses, who wist not that his face shone; no, he had a full view of all the honours of his exalted state, and yet stooped thus low. But how does this come in here?

[1.] As an inducement to him now quickly to leave what lessons and legacies he had to leave to his disciples, because his hour was now come when he must take his leave of them, and be exalted above that familiar converse which he now had with them, Joh 13:1.

[2.] It may come in as that which supported him under his sufferings, and carried him cheerfully through this sharp encounter. Judas was now betraying him, and he knew it, and knew what would be the consequence of it; yet, knowing also that he came from God and went to God, he did not draw back, but went on cheerfully.

[3.] It seems to come in as a foil to his condescension, to make it the more admirable. The reasons of divine grace are sometimes represented in scripture as strange and surprising (as Isa 57:17,18,Ho 2:13,14); so here, that is given as an inducement to Christ to stoop which should rather have been a reason for his taking state; for God's thoughts are not as ours. Compare with this those passages which preface the most signal instances of condescending grace with the displays of divine glory, as Ps 68:4,5,Isa 57:15,66:1,2.

4 he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Here is the voluntary abasement of our Lord Jesus notwithstanding this. Jesus knowing his own glory as God, and his own authority and power as Mediator, one would think it should follow, He rises from supper, lays

aside his ordinary garments, calls for robes, bids them keep their distance, and do him homage; but no, quite the contrary, when he considered this he gave the greatest instance of humility. Note, A well-grounded assurance of heaven and happiness, instead of puffing a man up with pride, will make and keep him very humble. Those that would be found conformable to Christ, and partakers of his Spirit, must study to keep their minds low in the midst of the greatest advancements. Now that which Christ humbled himself to was to wash his disciples' feet.

(a.) The action itself was mean and servile, and that which servants of the lowest rank were employed in. Let thine handmaid (saith Abigail) be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord; let me be in the meanest employment, 1Sa 25:41. If he had washed their hands or faces, it had been great condescension (Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah, 2Ki 3:11); but for Christ to stoop to such a piece of drudgery as this may well excite our admiration. Thus he would teach us to think nothing below us wherein we may be serviceable to God's glory and the good of our brethren.

(b.) The condescension was so much the greater that he did this for his own disciples, who in themselves were of a low and despicable condition, not curious about their bodies; their feet, it is likely, were seldom washed, and therefore very dirty. In relation to him, they were his scholars, his servants, and such as should have washed his feet, whose dependence was upon him, and their expectations from him. Many of great spirits otherwise will do a mean thing to curry favour with their superiors; they rise by stooping, and climb by cringing; but for Christ to do this to his disciples could be no act of policy nor complaisance, but pure humility.

(c.) He rose from supper to do it. Though we translate it (Joh 13:2) supper being ended, it might be better read, there being a supper made, or he being at supper, for he sat down again (Joh 13:12), and we find him dipping a sop (Joh 13:26), so that he did it in the midst of his meal, and thereby taught us, [1.] Not to reckon it a disturbance, nor any just cause of uneasiness, to be called from our meal to do God or our brother any real service, esteeming the discharge of our duty more than our necessary food, Joh 4:34. Christ would not leave his preaching to oblige his nearest relations

(Mk 3:33), but would leave his supper to show his love to his disciples. [2.] Not to be over nice about our meat. It would have turned many a squeamish stomach to wash dirty feet at supper-time; but Christ did it, not that we might learn to be rude and slovenly (cleanliness and godliness will do well together), but to teach us not to be curious, not to indulge, but mortify, the delicacy of the appetite, giving good manners their due place, and no more.

(d.) He put himself into the garb of a servant, to do it: he laid aside his loose and upper garments, that he might apply himself to this service the more expeditely. We must address ourselves to duty as those that are resolved not to take state, but to take pains; we must divest ourselves of every thing that would either feed our pride or hang in our way and hinder us in what we have to do, must gird up the loins of our mind, as those that in earnest buckle to business.

(e.) He did it with all the humble ceremony that could be, went through all the parts of the service distinctly, and passed by none of them; he did it as if he had been used thus to serve; did it himself alone, and had none to minister to him in it. He girded himself with the towel, as servants throw a napkin on their arm, or put an apron before them; he poured water into the basin out of the water-pots that stood by (Joh 2:6), and then washed their feet; and, to complete the service, wiped them. Some think that he did not wash the feet of them all, but only four or five of them, that being thought sufficient to answer the end; but I see nothing to countenance this conjecture, for in other places where he did make a difference it is taken notice of; and his washing the feet of them all, without exception, teaches us a catholic and extensive charity to all Christ's disciples, even the least.

(f.) Nothing appears to the contrary but that he washed the feet of Judas among the rest, for he was present, Joh 13:26. It is the character of a widow indeed that she had washed the saints' feet (1Ti 5:10), and there is some comfort in this; but the blessed Jesus here washed the feet of a sinner, the worst of sinners, the worst to him, who was at this time contriving to betray him.

Many interpreters consider Christ's washing his disciples' feet as a representation of his whole undertaking. He knew that he was equal with God, and all things were his; and yet he rose from his table in glory, laid aside his robes of light, girded himself with our nature, took upon him the form of a servant, came not to be ministered to, but to minister, poured out his blood, poured out his soul unto death, and thereby prepared a laver to wash us from our sins, Re 1:5.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

The surprise Peter was in when he saw his Master go about this mean service (Joh 13:6): Then cometh he to Simon Peter, with his towel and basin, and bids him put out his feet to be washed. Chrysostom conjectures that he first washed the feet of Judas, who readily admitted the honour, and was pleased to see his Master so disparage himself. It is most probable that when he went about this service (which is all that is meant by his beginning to wash, Joh 13:5) he took Peter first, and that the rest would not have suffered it, if they had not first heard it explained in what passed between Christ and Peter. Whether Christ came first to Peter or no, when he did come to him, Peter was startled at the proposal: Lord (saith he) dost thou wash my feet? Here is an emphasis to be laid upon the persons, thou and me; and the placing of the words is observable, sy mou--what, thou mine? Tu mihi lavas pedes? Quid est tu? Quid est mihi? Cogitanda sunt potius quam dicenda--Dost thou wash my feet? What is it thou? What to me? These things are rather to be contemplated than uttered.--Aug. in loc. What thou, our Lord and Master, whom we know and believe to be the Son of God, and Saviour and ruler of the world, do this for me, a worthless worm of the earth, a sinful man, O Lord? Shall those hands wash my feet which with a touch have cleansed lepers, given sight to the blind, and raised the dead? So Theophylact, and from him Dr. Taylor. Very willingly would Peter have taken the basin and towel, and washed his Master's feet, and been proud of the honour, Lu 17:7,8. "This had been natural and regular; for my Master to wash my feet is such a solecism as never was; such a paradox as I cannot understand. Is this the manner of men?" Note, Christ's condescensions, especially his condescensions to us, wherein we find ourselves taken notice of by his grace, are justly the matter of our admiration, Joh 14:22. Who am I, Lord God? And what is my father's house?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

The immediate satisfaction Christ gave to this question of surprise. This was at least sufficient to silence his objections (Joh 13:7): What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Here are two reasons why Peter must submit to what Christ was doing:--

(a.) Because he was at present in the dark concerning it, and ought not to oppose what he did not understand, but acquiesce in the will and wisdom of one who could give a good reason for all he said and did. Christ would teach Peter an implicit obedience: "What I do thou knowest not now, and therefore art no competent judge of it, but must believe it is well done because I do it." Note, Consciousness to ourselves of the darkness we labour under, and our inability to judge of what God does, should make us sparing and modest in our censures of his proceedings; see Heb 11:8.

(b.) Because there was something considerable in it, of which he should hereafter know the meaning: "Thou shalt know hereafter what need thou hast of being washed, when thou shalt be guilty of the heinous sin of denying me;" so some. "Thou shalt know, when, in the discharge of the office of an apostle, thou wilt be employed in washing off from those under thy charge the sins and defilements of their earthly affections;" so Dr. Hammond. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus does many things the meaning of which even his own disciples do not for the present know, but they shall know afterwards. What he did when he became man for us and what he did when he became a worm and no man for us, what he did when he lived our life and what he did when he laid it down, could not be understood till afterwards, and then it appeared that it behoved him, Heb 2:17. Subsequent providences explain preceding ones; and we see afterwards what was the kind tendency of events that seemed most cross; and the way which we thought was about proved the right way.

[2.] Christ's washing his disciples' feet had a significancy in it, which they themselves did not understand till afterwards, when Christ explained it to be a specimen of the laver of regeneration, and till the Spirit was poured

out upon them from on high. We must let Christ take his own way, both in ordinances and providences, and we shall find in the issue it was the best way.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

1. Peter's peremptory refusal, notwithstanding this, to let Christ wash his feet (Joh 13:8): Thou shalt by no means wash my feet; no, never. So it is in the original. It is the language of a fixed resolution. Now,

(a.) Here was a show of humility and modesty. Peter herein seemed to have, and no doubt he really had, a great respect for his Master, as he had, Lu 5:8. Thus many are beguiled of their reward in a voluntary humility (Col 2:18,23), such a self-denial as Christ neither appoints nor accepts; for,

(b.) Under this show of humility there was a real contradiction to the will of the Lord Jesus: "I will wash thy feet," saith Christ; "But thou never shalt," saith Peter, "it is not a fitting thing;" so making himself wiser than Christ. It is not humility, but infidelity, to put away the offers of the gospel, as if too rich to be made to us or too good news to be true.

2. Christ's insisting upon his offer, and a good reason given to Peter why he should accept it: If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. This may be taken,

(a.) As a severe caution against disobedience: "If I wash thee not, if thou continue refractory, and wilt not comply with thy Master's will in so small a matter, thou shalt not be owned as one of my disciples, but be justly discarded and cashiered for not observing orders." Thus several of the ancients understand it; if Peter will make himself wiser than his Master, and dispute the commands he ought to obey, he does in effect renounce his allegiance, and say, as they did, What portion have we in David, in the Son of David? And so shall his doom be, he shall have no part in him. Let him use no more manners than will do him good, for to obey is better than sacrifice, 1Sa 15:22. Or,

(b.) As a declaration of the necessity of spiritual washing; and so I think it is to be understood: "If I wash not thy soul from the pollution of sin, thou hast no part with me, no interest in me, no communion with me, no benefit by me." Note, All those, and those only, that are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ.

[1.] To have a part in Christ, or with Christ, has all the happiness of a Christian bound up in it, to be partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), to share in those inestimable privileges which result from a union with him and relation to him. It is that good part the having of which is the one thing needful.

[2.] It is necessary to our having a part in Christ that he wash us. All those whom Christ owns and saves he justifies and sanctifies, and both are included in his washing them. We cannot partake of his glory if we partake not of his merit and righteousness, and of his Spirit and grace.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Peter's more than submission, his earnest request, to be washed by Christ, Joh 13:9. If this be the meaning of it, Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. How soon is Peter's mind changed! When the mistake of his understanding was rectified, the corrupt resolution of his will was soon altered. Let us therefore not be peremptory in any resolve (except in our resolve to follow Christ), because we may soon see cause to retract it, but cautious in taking up a purpose we will be tenacious of. Observe,

(a.) How ready Peter is to recede from what he had said: "Lord, what a fool was I to speak such a hasty word!" Now that the washing of him appeared to be an act of Christ's authority and grace he admits it; but disliked when it seemed only an act of humiliation. Note,

[1.] Good men, when they see their error, will not be loth to recant it.

[2.] Sooner or later, Christ will bring all to be of his mind.

(b.) How importunate he is for the purifying grace of the Lord Jesus, and the universal influence of it, even upon his hands and head. Note, A divorce from Christ, and an exclusion from having a part in him, is the most formidable evil in the eyes of all that are enlightened, for the fear of which they will be persuaded to any thing. And for fear of this we should be earnest with God in prayer, that he will wash us, will justify and sanctify us. "Lord, that I may not be cut off from thee, make me fit for thee, by the washing of regeneration. Lord, wash not my feet only from the gross pollutions that cleave to them, but also my hands and my head from the spots which they have contracted, and the undiscerned filth which proceeds by perspiration from the body itself." Note, Those who truly desire to be sanctified desire to be sanctified throughout, and to have the whole man, with all its parts and powers, purified, 1Th 5:23.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

With reference to his disciples that were faithful to him (Joh 13:10): He that is washed all over in the bath (as was frequently practised in those countries), when he returns to his house, needeth not save to wash his feet, his hands and head having been washed, and he having only dirtied his feet in walking home. Peter had gone from one extreme to the other. At first he would not let Christ wash his feet; and now he overlooks what Christ had done for him in his baptism, and what was signified thereby, and cries out to have his hands and head washed. Now Christ directs him into the meaning; he must have his feet washed, but not his hands and head.

[1.] See here what is the comfort and privilege of such as are in a justified state; they are washed by Christ, and are clean every whit, that is, they are graciously accepted of God, as if they were so; and, though they offend, yet they need not, upon their repentance, be again put into a justified state, for then should they often be baptized. The evidence of a justified state may be clouded, and the comfort of it suspended, when yet the charter of it is not vacated or taken away. Though we have occasion to repent daily, God's gifts and callings are without repentance. The heart may be swept and garnished, and yet still remain the devil's palace; but, if it be washed, it belongs to Christ, and he will not lose it.

[2.] See what ought to be the daily care of those who through grace are in a justified state, and that is to wash their feet; to cleanse themselves from the guilt they contract daily through infirmity and inadvertence, by the renewed exercise of repentance, with a believing application of the virtue of Christ's blood. We must also wash our feet by constant watchfulness against every thing that is defiling, for we must cleanse our way, and cleanse our feet by taking heed thereto, Ps 119:9. The priests, when they were consecrated, were washed with water; and, though they did not need afterwards to be so washed all over, yet, whenever they went in to minister, they must wash their feet and hands at the laver, on pain of death, Ex 30:19,20. The provision made for our cleansing should not make us presumptuous, but the more cautious. I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? From yesterday's pardon, we should fetch an argument against this day's temptation.

With reflection upon Judas: And you are clean, but not all, Joh 13:10,11. He pronounces his disciples clean, clean through the word he had spoken to them, Joh 15:3. He washed them himself, and then said, You are clean; but he excepts Judas: not all; they were all baptized, even Judas, yet not all clean; many have the sign that have not the thing signified. Note,

[1.] Even among those who are called disciples of Christ, and profess relation to him, there are some who are not clean, Pr 30:12.

[2.] The Lord knows those that are his, and those that are not, 2Ti 2:19. The eye of Christ can separate between the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean.

[3.] When those that have called themselves disciples afterwards prove traitors, their apostasy at last is a certain evidence of their hypocrisy all along. [4.] Christ sees it necessary to let his disciples know that they are not all clean; that we may all be jealous over ourselves (Is it I? Lord, is it I that am among the clean, yet not clean?) and that, when hypocrites are discovered, it may be no surprise nor stumbling to us.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you ?

With what solemnity he gave an account of the meaning of what he had done (Joh 13:12): After he had washed their feet, he said, Know you what I have done?

(a.) He adjourned the explication till he had finished the transaction,

[1.] To try their submission and implicit obedience. What he did they should not know till afterwards, that they might learn to acquiesce in his will when they could not give a reason for it.

[2.] Because it was proper to finish the riddle before he unriddled it. Thus, as to his whole undertaking, when his sufferings were finished, when he had resumed the garments of his exalted state and was ready to sit down again, then he opened the understandings of his disciples, and poured out his Spirit, Lu 24:45,46.

(b.) Before he explained it, he asked them if they could construe it: Know you what I have done to you? He put this question to them, not only to make them sensible of their ignorance, and the need they had to be instructed (as Zec 4:5,13, Knowest thou not what these be? and I said, No, my Lord), but to raise their desires and expectations of instruction: "I would have you know, and, if you will give attention, I will tell you." Note, It is the will of Christ that sacramental signs should be explained, and that his people should be acquainted with the meaning of them; otherwise, though ever so significant, to those who know not the thing signified they are insignificant. Hence they are directed to ask, What mean you by this service? Ex 12:26.

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

Upon what he grounds that which he had to say (Joh 13:13): "You call me Master and Lord, you give me those titles, in speaking of me, in speaking to me, and you say well, for so I am; you are in the relation of scholars to me, and I do the part of a master to you." Note,

(1.) Jesus Christ is our Master and Lord; he that is our Redeemer and Saviour is, in order to that, our Lord and Master. He is our Master, didaskalos--our teacher and instructor in all necessary truths and rules, as a prophet revealing to us the will of God. He is our Lord, kyrios--our ruler and owner, that has authority over us and propriety in us.

(2.) It becomes the disciples of Christ to call him Master and Lord, not in compliment, but in reality; not by constraint, but with delight. Devout Mr. Herbert, when he mentioned the name of Christ, used to add, my Master; and thus expresses himself concerning it in one of his poems:

How sweetly doth my Master sound, my Master! As ambergris leaves a rich scent unto the taster, So do these words a sweet content, an oriental fragrancy, my Master.

(3.) Our calling Christ Master and Lord is an obligation upon us to receive and observe the instruction he gives us. Christ would thus pre-engage their obedience to a command that was displeasing to flesh and blood. If Christ be our Master and Lord, be so by our own consent, and we have often called him so, we are bound in honour and honesty to be observant of him.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

The lesson which he hereby taught: You also ought to wash one another's feet, Joh 13:14.

(a.) Some have understood this literally, and have thought these words amount to the institution of a standing ordinance in the church; that Christians should, in a solemn religious manner, wash one another's feet, in token of their condescending love to one another. St. Ambrose took it so, and practised it in the church of Milan. St. Austin saith that those Christians who did not do it with their hands, yet (he hoped) did it with their hearts in humility; but he saith, It is much better to do it with the hands also, when there is occasion, as 1Ti 5:10. What Christ has done Christians should not disdain to do. Calvin saith that the pope, in the

annual observance of this ceremony on Thursday in the passion week, is rather Christ's ape than his follower, for the duty enjoined, in conformity to Christ, was mutual: Wash one another's feet. And Jansenius saith, It is done, Frigidè et dissimiliter--Frigidly, and unlike the primitive model.

(b.) But doubtless it is to be understood figuratively; it is an instructive sign, but not sacramental, as the eucharist. This was a parable to the eye; and three things our Master hereby designed to teach us:--

[1.] A humble condescension. We must learn of our Master to be lowly in heart (Mt 11:29), and walk with all lowliness; we must think meanly of ourselves and respectfully of our brethren, and deem nothing below us but sin; we must say of that which seems mean, but has a tendency to the glory of God and our brethren's good, as David (2Sa 6:22), If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile. Christ had often taught his disciples humility, and they had forgotten the lesson; but now he teaches them in such a way as surely they could never forget.

[2.] A condescension to be serviceable. To wash one another's feet is to stoop to the meanest offices of love, for the real good and benefit one of another, as blessed Paul, who, though free from all, made himself servant of all; and the blessed Jesus, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. We must not grudge to take care and pains, and to spend time, and to diminish ourselves for the good of those to whom we are not under any particular obligations, even of our inferiors, and such as are not in a capacity of making us any requital. Washing the feet after travelling contributes both to the decency of the person and to his ease, so that to wash one another's feet is to consult both the credit and the comfort one of another, to do what we can both to advance our brethren's reputation and to make their minds easy. See 1Co 10:24,Heb 6:10. The duty is mutual; we must both accept help from our brethren and afford help to our brethren.

[3.] A serviceableness to the sanctification one of another: You ought to wash one another's feet, from the pollutions of sin. Austin takes it in this sense, and many others. We cannot satisfy for one another's sins, this is peculiar to Christ, but we may help to purify one another from sin. We

must in the first place wash ourselves; this charity must begin at home (Mt 7:5), but it must not end there; we must sorrow for the failings and follies of our brethren, much more for their gross pollutions (1Co 5:2), must wash our brethren's polluted feet in tears. We must faithfully reprove them, and do what we can to bring them to repentance (Ga 6:1), and we must admonish them, to prevent their falling into the mire; this is washing their feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

I am your Master, and you are my disciples, and therefore you ought to learn of me (Joh 13:15); for in this, as in other things, I have given you an example, that you should do to others as I have done to you. Observe,

[1.] What a good teacher Christ is. He teaches by example as well as doctrine, and for this end came into this world, and dwelt among us, that he might set us a copy of all those graces and duties which his holy religion teaches; and it is a copy without one false stroke. Hereby he made his own laws more intelligible and honourable. Christ is a commander like Gideon, who said to his soldiers, Look on me, and do likewise (Jdg 7:17); like Abimelech, who said, What you have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done (Jdg 9:48);

[2.] What good scholars we must be. We must do as he hath done; for therefore he gave us a copy, that we should write after it, that we might be as he was in this world (1Jo 4:17), and walk as he walked, 1Jo 2:6. Christ's example here in is to be followed by ministers in particular, in whom the graces of humility and holy love should especially appear, and by the exercise thereof they effectually serve the interests of their Master and the ends of their ministry. When Christ sent his apostles abroad as his agents, it was with this charge, that they should not take state upon them, nor carry things with a high hand, but become all things to all men, 1Co 9:22. What I have done to your dirty feet that do you to the polluted souls of sinners; wash them. Some who suppose this to have been done at the passover supper think it intimates a rule in admitting communicants to the Lord's-supper, to see that they be first washed and cleansed by reformation and a blameless conversation, and then take them in to compass God's altar. But all Christians likewise are here taught to

condescend to each other in love, and to do it as Christ did it, unasked, unpaid; we must not be mercenary in the services of love, nor do them with reluctancy.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

I am your Master, and you are my disciples, and therefore you cannot think it below you to do that, how mean soever it may seem, which you have seen me do, for (Joh 13:16) the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent, though sent with all the pomp and power of an ambassador, greater than he that sent him. Christ had urged this (Mt 10:24,25) as a reason why they should not think it strange if they suffered as he did; here he urges it as a reason why they should not think it much to humble themselves as he did. What he did not think a disparagement to him, they must not think a disparagement to them. Perhaps the disciples were inwardly disgusted at this precept of washing one another's feet, as inconsistent with the dignity they expected shortly to be preferred to. To obviate such thoughts, Christ reminds them of their place as his servants; they were not better men than their Master, and what was consistent with his dignity was much more consistent with theirs. If he was humble and condescending, it ill became them to be proud and assuming. Note,

[1.] We must take good heed to ourselves, lest Christ's gracious condescensions to us, and advancements of us, through the corruption of nature occasion us to entertain high thoughts of ourselves or low thoughts of him. We need to be put in mind of this, that we are not greater than our Lord.

[2.] Whatever our Master was pleased to condescend to in favour to us, we should much more condescend to in conformity to him. Christ, by humbling himself, has dignified humility, and put an honour upon it, and obliged his followers to think nothing below them but sin.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

He gives them a reason why he told them beforehand of the treachery of Judas (Joh 13:19): "Now I tell you before it come, before Judas has begun to put his wicked plot in execution, that when it is come to pass you may, instead of stumbling at it, be confirmed in your belief that I am he, he that should come."

1. By his clear and certain foresight of things to come, of which in this, as in other instances, he gave incontestable proof, he proved himself to be the true God, before whom all things are naked and open. Christ foretold that Judas would betray him when there was no ground to suspect such a thing, and so proved himself the eternal Word, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The prophecies of the New Testament concerning the apostasy of the latter times (which we have, 2Th 2:1-17,1Ti 4:1-16, and in the Apocalypse) being evidently accomplished is a proof that those writings were divinely inspired, and confirms our faith in the whole canon of scripture.

2. By this application of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament to himself, he proved himself to be the true Messiah, to whom all the prophets bore witness. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and he suffered just as it was written, Lu 24:25,26,Joh 8:28.

We have here the discovery of Judas's plot to betray his Master. Christ knew it from the beginning; but now first he discovered it to his disciples, who did not expect Christ should be betrayed, though he had often told them so, much less did they suspect that one of them should do it. Now here,

Christ gives them a general intimation of it (Joh 13:18): I speak not of you all, I cannot expect you will all do these things, for I know whom I have chosen, and whom I have passed by; but the scripture will be fulfilled (Ps 41:9), He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. He does not yet speak out, either of the crime or the criminal, but raises their expectations of a further discovery.

1. He intimates to them that they were not all right. He had said (Joh 13:10), You are clean, but not all. So here, I speak not of you all. Note, What is said of the excellencies of Christ's disciples cannot be said of all that are called so. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, which separates between cattle and cattle, and will distinguish thousands into hell who flattered themselves with hopes that they were going to heaven. I speak not of you all; you my disciples and followers. Note, There is a mixture of bad with good in the best societies, a Judas among the apostles; it will be so till we come to the blessed society into which shall enter nothing unclean or disguised.

2. That he himself knew who were right, and who were not: I know whom I have chosen, who the few are that are chosen among the many that are called with the common call. Note,

(a.) Those that are chosen, Christ himself had the choosing of them; he nominated the persons he undertook for.

(b.) Those that are chosen are known to Christ, for he never forgets any whom he has once had in his thoughts of love, 2Ti 2:19.

3. That in the treachery of him that proved false to him the scripture was fulfilled, which takes off very much both the surprise and offence of the thing. Christ took one into his family whom he foresaw to be a traitor, and did not by effectual grace prevent his being so, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Let it not therefore be a stumbling-block to any; for, though it do not at all lessen Judas's offence, it may lessen our offence at it. The scripture referred to is David's complaint of the treachery of some of his enemies; the Jewish expositors, and ours from them generally understand it of Ahithophel: Grotius thinks it intimates that the death of Judas would be like that of Ahithophel. But because that psalm speaks of David's sickness, of which we read nothing at the time of Ahithophel's deserting him, it may better be understood of some other friend of his, that proved false to him. This our Saviour applies to Judas.

(a.) Judas, as an apostle, was admitted to the highest privilege: he did eat bread with Christ. He was familiar with him, and favoured by him, was one of his family, one of those with whom he was intimately conversant. David saith of his treacherous friend, He did eat of my bread; but Christ, being poor, had no bread he could properly call his own. He saith, He did eat bread with me; such as he had by the kindness of his friends, that ministered to him, his disciples had their share of, Judas among the rest. Wherever he went, Judas was welcome with him, did not dine among servants, but sat at table with his Master, ate of the same dish, drank of the same cup, and in all respects fared as he fared. He ate miraculous bread with him, when the loaves were multiplied, ate the passover with him. Note, All that eat bread with Christ are not his disciples indeed. See 1Co 10:3-5.

(b.) Judas, as an apostate, was guilty of the basest treachery: he lifted up the heel against Christ.

[1.] He forsook him, turned his back upon him, went out from the society of his disciples, Joh 13:30.

[2.] He despised him, shook off the dust of his feet against him, in contempt of him and his gospel. Nay,

[3.] He became an enemy to him; spurned at him, as wrestlers do at their adversaries, whom they would overthrow. Note, It is no new thing for those that were Christ's seeming friends to prove his real enemies. Those who pretended to magnify him magnify themselves against him, and thereby prove themselves guilty, not only of the basest ingratitude, but the basest treachery and perfidiousness.

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

He gives a word of encouragement to his apostles, and all his ministers whom he employs in his service (Joh 13:20): He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me. The purport of these words is the same with what we have in other scriptures, but it is not easy to make out their coherence here. Christ had told his disciples that they must humble and

abase themselves. "Now," saith he, "though there may be those that will despise you for your condescension, yet there will be those that will do you honour, and shall be honoured for so doing." Those who know themselves dignified by Christ's commission may be content to be vilified in the world's opinion. Or, he intended to silence the scruples of those who, because there was a traitor among the apostles, would be shy of receiving any of them; for, if one of them was false to his Master, to whom would any of them be true? Ex uno disce omnes--They are all alike. No, as Christ will think never the worse of them for Judas's crime, so he will stand by them, and own them, and will raise up such as shall receive them. Those that had received Judas when he was a preacher, and perhaps were converted and edified by his preaching, were never the worse, nor should reflect upon it with any regret, though he afterwards proved a traitor; for he was one whom Christ sent. We cannot know what men are, much less what they will be, but those who appear to be sent of Christ we must receive, till the contrary appear. Though some, by entertaining strangers, have entertained robbers unawares, yet we must still be hospitable, for thereby some have entertained angels. The abuses put upon our charity, though ordered with ever so much discretion, will neither justify our uncharitableness, nor lose us the reward of our charity.

1. We are here encouraged to receive ministers as sent of Christ: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send, though weak and poor, and subject to like passions as others (for as the law, so the gospel, makes men priests that have infirmity), yet if he deliver my message, and be regularly called and appointed to do so, and as an officer give himself to the word and prayer, he that entertains him shall be owned as a friend of mine." Christ was now leaving the world, but he would leave an order of men to be his agents, to deliver his word, and those who receive this, in the light and love of it, receive him. To believe the doctrine of Christ, and obey his law, and accept the salvation offered upon the terms proposed; this is receiving those whom Christ sends, and it is receiving Christ Jesus the Lord himself.

2. We are here encouraged to receive Christ as sent of God: He that thus receiveth me, that receiveth Christ in his ministers, receiveth the Father also, for they come upon his errand likewise, baptizing in the name of the

Father, as well as of the Son. Or, in general, He that receiveth me as his prince and Saviour receiveth him that sent me as his portion and felicity. Christ was sent of God, and in embracing his religion we embrace the only true religion.

Jesus Foretells His Betrayal

21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Christ more particularly notifies to them the plot which one of their number was now hatching against him (Joh 13:21): When Jesus had thus said in general, to prepare them for a more particular discovery, he was troubled in spirit, and showed it by some gesture or sign, and he testified, he solemnly declared it (cum animo testandi--with the solemnity of a witness on oath), "One of you shall betray me; one of you my apostles and constant followers." None indeed could be said to betray him but those in whom he reposed a confidence, and who were the witnesses of his retirements. This did not determine Judas to the sin by any fatal necessity; for, though the event did follow according to the prediction, yet not from the prediction. Christ is not the author of sin; yet as to this heinous sin of Judas,

1. Christ foresaw it; for even that which is secret and future, and hidden from the eyes of all living, naked and open before the eyes of Christ. He knows what is in men better than they do themselves (2Ki 8:12), and therefore sees what will be done by them. I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, Isa 48:8.

2. He foretold it, not only for the sake of the rest of the disciples, but for the sake of Judas himself, that he might take warning, and recover himself out of the snare of the devil. Traitors proceed not in their plots when they find they are discovered; surely Judas, when he finds that his Master knows his design, will retreat in time; if not, it will aggravate his condemnation.

3. He spoke of it with a manifest concern; he was troubled in spirit when he mentioned it. He had often spoken of his own sufferings and death, without any such trouble of spirit as he here manifested when he spoke of the ingratitude and treachery of Judas. This touched him in a tender part. Note, The falls and miscarriages of the disciples of Christ are a great trouble of spirit to their Master; the sins of Christians are the grief of Christ. "What! One of you betray me? You that have received from me such distinguishing favours; you that I had reason to think would be firm to me, that have professed such a respect for me; what iniquity have you found in me that one of you should betray me?" This went to his heart, as the undutifulness of children grieves those who have nourished and brought them up, Isa 1:2. See Ps 95:10,Isa 63:10.

22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

The disciples quickly take the alarm. They knew their Master would neither deceive them nor jest with them; and therefore looked one upon another, with a manifest concern, doubting of whom he spake. 1. By looking one upon another they evinced the trouble they were in upon this notice given them; it struck such a horror upon them that they knew not well which way to look, nor what to say. They saw their Master troubled, and therefore they were troubled. This was at a feast where they were cheerfully entertained; but hence we must be taught to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not. When David wept for his son's rebellion, all his followers wept with him (2Sa 15:30); so Christ's disciples here. Note, That which grieves Christ is, and should be, a grief to all that are his, particularly the scandalous miscarriages of those that are called by his name: Who is offended, and I burn not? 2. Hereby they endeavoured to discover the traitor. They looked wistfully in one another's face, to see who blushed, or, by some disorder in the countenance, manifested guilt in the heart, upon this notice; but, while those who were faithful had their consciences so clear that they could lift up their faces without spot, he that was false had his conscience so seared that he was not ashamed, neither could he blush, and so no discovery could be made in this way. Christ thus perplexed his disciples for a time, and put them into confusion, that he might humble them, and prove them, might excite in them a jealousy of themselves, and an indignation at the

baseness of Judas. It is good for us sometimes to be put to a gaze, to be put to a pause.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

Of all the disciples John was most fit to ask, because he was the favourite, and sat next his Master (Joh 13:23): There was leaning on Jesus's bosom one of the disciples whom Jesus loved. It appears that this was John, by comparing Joh 21:20,24. Observe,

(1.) The particular kindness which Jesus had for him; he was known by this periphrasis, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He loved them all (Joh 13:1), but John was particularly dear to him. His name signifies gracious. Daniel, who was honoured with the revelations of the Old Testament, as John of the New, was a man greatly beloved, Da 9:23. Note, Among the disciples of Christ some are dearer to him than others.

(2.) His place and posture at this time: He was leaning on Jesus's bosom. Some say that it was the fashion in those countries to sit at meat in a leaning posture, so that the second lay in the bosom of the first, and so on, which does not seem probable to me, for in such a posture as this they could neither eat nor drink conveniently; but, whether this was the case or not, John now leaned on Christ's bosom, and it seems to be an extraordinary expression of endearment used at this time. Note, There are some of Christ's disciples whom he lays in his bosom, who have more free and intimate communion with him than others. The Father loved the Son, and laid him in his bosom (Joh 1:18), and believers are in like manner one with Christ, Joh 17:21. This honour all the saints shall have shortly in the bosom of Abraham. Those who lay themselves at Christ's feet, he will lay in his bosom.

(3.) Yet he conceals his name, because he himself was the penman of the story. He put this instead of his name, to show that he was pleased with it; it is his title of honour, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, as in David's and Solomon's court there was one that was the king's friend; yet he does not put his name down, to show that he was not proud of it, nor would seem to boast of it. Paul in a like case saith, I knew a man in Christ.

24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

25 He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

Judas himself, instead of being convinced hereby of his wickedness, was the more confirmed in it, and the warning given him was to him a savour of death unto death; for it follows,

The devil hereupon took possession of him (Joh 13:27): After the sop, Satan entered into him: not to make him melancholy, nor drive him distracted, which was the effect of his possessing some; not to hurry him into the fire, nor into the water; happy had it been for him if that had been the worst of it, or if with the swine he had been choked in the sea; but Satan entered into him to possess him with a prevailing prejudice against Christ and his doctrine, and a contempt of him, as one whose life was of small value, to excite in him a covetous desire of the wages of unrighteousness and a resolution to stick at nothing for the obtaining of them. But,

(a.) Was not Satan in him before? How then is it said that now Satan entered into him? Judas was all along a devil (Joh 6:70), a son of perdition, but now Satan gained a more full possession of him, had a more abundant entrance into him. His purpose to betray his Master was now ripened into a fixed resolution; now he returned with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, Lu 11:26. Note,

[1.] Though the devil is in every wicked man that does his works (Eph 2:2), yet sometimes he enters more manifestly and more powerfully than at other times, when he puts them upon some enormous wickedness, which humanity and natural conscience startle at.

[2.] Betrayers of Christ have much of the devil in them. Christ speaks of the sin of Judas as greater than that of any of his persecutors.

(b.) How came Satan to enter into him after the sop? Perhaps he was presently aware that it was the discovery of him, and it made him desperate in his resolutions. Many are made worse by the gifts of Christ's bounty, and are confirmed in their impenitency by that which should have led them to repentance. The coals of fire heaped upon their heads, instead of melting them, harden them.

2. Christ hereupon dismissed him, and delivered him up to his own heart's lusts: Then said Jesus unto him, What thou doest, do quickly. This is not to be understood as either advising him to his wickedness or warranting him in it; but either,

(a.) As abandoning him to the conduct and power of Satan. Christ knew that Satan had entered into him, and had peaceable possession; and now he gives him up as hopeless. The various methods Christ had used for his conviction were ineffectual; and therefore, "What thou doest thou wilt do quickly; if thou art resolved to ruin thyself, go on, and take what comes." Note, When the evil spirit is willingly admitted, the good Spirit justly withdraws. Or,

(b.) As challenging him to do his worst: "Thou art plotting against me, put thy plot in execution and welcome, the sooner the better, I do not fear thee, I am ready for thee." Note, our Lord Jesus was very forward to suffer and die for us, and was impatient of delay in the perfecting of his undertaking. Christ speaks of Judas's betraying him as a thing he was now doing, though he was only purposing it. Those who are contriving and designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief. Judas himself, instead of being convinced hereby of his wickedness, was the more confirmed in it, and the warning given him was to him a savour of death unto death; for it follows,

The devil hereupon took possession of him (Joh 13:27): After the sop, Satan entered into him: not to make him melancholy, nor drive him distracted, which was the effect of his possessing some; not to hurry him into the fire, nor into the water; happy had it been for him if that had been the worst of it, or if with the swine he had been choked in the sea; but Satan entered into him to possess him with a prevailing prejudice against Christ and his doctrine, and a contempt of him, as one whose life was of small value, to excite in him a covetous desire of the wages of unrighteousness and a resolution to stick at nothing for the obtaining of them. But,

(a.) Was not Satan in him before? How then is it said that now Satan entered into him? Judas was all along a devil (Joh 6:70), a son of perdition, but now Satan gained a more full possession of him, had a more abundant entrance into him. His purpose to betray his Master was now ripened into a fixed resolution; now he returned with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, Lu 11:26. Note,

[1.] Though the devil is in every wicked man that does his works (Eph 2:2), yet sometimes he enters more manifestly and more powerfully than at other times, when he puts them upon some enormous wickedness, which humanity and natural conscience startle at.

[2.] Betrayers of Christ have much of the devil in them. Christ speaks of the sin of Judas as greater than that of any of his persecutors.

(b.) How came Satan to enter into him after the sop? Perhaps he was presently aware that it was the discovery of him, and it made him desperate in his resolutions. Many are made worse by the gifts of Christ's bounty, and are confirmed in their impenitency by that which should have led them to repentance. The coals of fire heaped upon their heads, instead of melting them, harden them.

2. Christ hereupon dismissed him, and delivered him up to his own heart's lusts: Then said Jesus unto him, What thou doest, do quickly. This is not

to be understood as either advising him to his wickedness or warranting him in it; but either,

(a.) As abandoning him to the conduct and power of Satan. Christ knew that Satan had entered into him, and had peaceable possession; and now he gives him up as hopeless. The various methods Christ had used for his conviction were ineffectual; and therefore, "What thou doest thou wilt do quickly; if thou art resolved to ruin thyself, go on, and take what comes." Note, When the evil spirit is willingly admitted, the good Spirit justly withdraws. Or,

(b.) As challenging him to do his worst: "Thou art plotting against me, put thy plot in execution and welcome, the sooner the better, I do not fear thee, I am ready for thee." Note, our Lord Jesus was very forward to suffer and die for us, and was impatient of delay in the perfecting of his undertaking. Christ speaks of Judas's betraying him as a thing he was now doing, though he was only purposing it. Those who are contriving and designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief.

28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

Those that were at table understood not what he meant, because they did not hear what he whispered to John (Joh 13:28,29): No man at table, neither the disciples nor any other of the guests, except John, knew for what intent he spoke this to him.

(a.) They did not suspect that Christ said it to Judas as a traitor, because it did not enter into their heads that Judas was such a one, or would prove so. Note, It is an excusable dulness in the disciples of Christ not to be quick-sighted in their censures. Most are ready enough to say, when they hear harsh things spoken in general, Now such a one is meant, and now such a one; but Christ's disciples were so well taught to love one another that they could not easily learn to suspect one another; charity thinks no evil.

(b.) They therefore took it for granted that he said it to him as a trustee, or treasurer of the household, giving him order for the laying out of some money. Their surmises in this case discover to us for what uses and purposes our Lord Jesus commonly directed payments out of that little

stock he had, and so teach us how to honour the Lord with our substance. They concluded something was to be laid out, either,

[1.] In works of piety: Buy those things that we have need of against the feast. Though he borrowed a room to eat the passover in, yet he bought in provision for it. That is to be reckoned well bestowed which is laid out upon those things we have need of for the maintenance of God's ordinances among us; and we have the less reason to grudge that expense now because our gospel-worship is far from being so chargeable as the legal worship was.

[2.] Or in works of charity: That he should give something to the poor. By this it appears, First, That our Lord Jesus, though he lived upon alms himself (Lu 8:3), yet gave alms to the poor, a little out of a little. Though he might very well be excused, not only because he was poor himself, but because he did so much good in other ways, curing so many gratis; yet, to set us an example, he gave, for the relief of the poor, out of that which he had for the subsistence of his family; see Eph 4:28. Secondly, That the time of a religious feast was thought a proper time for works of charity. When he celebrated the passover he ordered something for the poor. When we experience God's bounty to us, this should make us bountiful to the poor.

29 For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

30 He then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night.

Judas hereupon sets himself vigorously to pursue his design against him: He went away. Notice is taken,

(a.) Of his speedy departure: He went out presently, and quitted the house,

[1.] For fear of being more plainly discovered to the company, for, if he were, he expected they would all fall upon him, and be the death of him, or at least of his project.

[2.] He went out as one weary of Christ's company and the society of his apostles. Christ needed not to expel him, he expelled himself. Note, Withdrawing from the communion of the faithful is commonly the first overt-act of a backslider, and the beginning of an apostasy.

[3.] He went out to prosecute his design, to look for those with whom he was to make his bargain, and to settle the agreement with them. Now that Satan had got into him he hurried him on with precipitation, lest he should see his error and repent of it.

(b.) Of the time of his departure: It was night.

[1.] Though it was night, an unseasonable time for business, yet, Satan having entered into him, he made no difficulty of the coldness and darkness of the night. This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of Christ, that the devil's servants are so earnest and venturous in his service.

[2.] Because it was night, and this gave him advantage of privacy and concealment. He was not willing to be seen treating with the chief priests, and therefore chose the dark night as the fittest time for such works of darkness. Those whose deeds are evil love darkness rather than light. See Job 24:13, &c.

The New Commandment

31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

This and what follows, to the end of Joh 13:31-14:33, was Christ's table-talk with his disciples. When supper was done, Judas went out; but what did the Master and his disciples do, whom he left sitting at table? They applied themselves to profitable discourse, to teach us as much as we can to make conversation with our friends at table serviceable to religion. Christ begins this discourse. The more forward we are humbly to promote that communication which is good, and to the use of edifying, the more like we are to Jesus Christ. Those especially that by their place,

reputation, and gifts, command the company, to whom men give ear, ought to use the interest they have in other respects as an opportunity of doing them good. Now our Lord Jesus discourses with them (and probably discourses much more largely than is here recorded),

Concerning the great mystery of his own death and sufferings, about which they were as yet so much in the dark that they could not persuade themselves to expect the thing itself, much less did they understand the meaning of it; and therefore Christ gives them such instructions concerning it as made the offence of the cross to cease. Christ did not begin this discourse till Judas was gone out, for he was a false brother. The presence of wicked people is often a hindrance to good discourse. When Judas was gone out, Christ said, now is the Son of man glorified; now that Judas is discovered and discarded, who was a spot in their love-feast and a scandal to their family, now is the Son of man glorified. Note, Christ is glorified by the purifying of Christian societies: corruptions in his church are a reproach to him; the purging out of those corruptions rolls away the reproach. Or, rather, now Judas was gone to set the wheels a-going, in order to his being put to death, and the thing was likely to be effected shortly: Now is the Son of man glorified, meaning, Now he is crucified.

1. Here is something which Christ instructs them in, concerning his sufferings, that was very comforting.

(a) That he should himself be glorified in them. Now the Son of man is to be exposed to the greatest ignominy and disgrace, to be despitefully used to the last degree, and dishonoured both by the cowardice of his friends and the insolence of his enemies; yet now he is glorified; For,

[1.] Now he is to obtain a glorious victory over Satan and all the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and triumph over them. He is now girding on the harness, to take the field against these adversaries of God and man, with as great an assurance as if he had put it off.

[2.] Now he is to work out a glorious deliverance for his people, by his death to reconcile them to God, and bring in an everlasting righteousness

and happiness for them; to shed that blood which is to be an inexhaustible fountain of joys and blessings to all believers. [3.] Now he is to give a glorious example of self-denial and patience under the cross, courage and contempt of the world, zeal for the glory of God, and love to the souls of men, such as will make him to be for ever admired and had in honour. Christ had been glorified in many miracles he had wrought, and yet he speaks of his being glorified now in his sufferings, as if that were more than all his other glories in his humble state.

(b) That God the Father should be glorified in them. The sufferings of Christ were,

[1.] The satisfaction of God's justice, and so God was glorified in them. Reparation was thereby made with great advantage for the wrong done him in his honour by the sin of man. The ends of the law were abundantly answered, and the glory of his government effectually asserted and maintained.

[2.] They were the manifestation of his holiness and mercy. The attributes of God shine brightly in creation and providence, but much more in the work of redemption; see 1Co 1:24,2Co 4:6. God is love, and herein he hath commended his love.

32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

That he should himself be greatly glorified after them, in consideration of God's being greatly glorified by them, Joh 13:32. Observe how he enlarges upon it.

[1.] He is sure that God will glorify him; and those whom God glorifies are glorious indeed. Hell and earth set themselves to vilify Christ, but God resolved to glorify him, and he did it. He glorified him in his sufferings by the amazing signs and wonders, both in heaven and earth, which attended them, and extorted even from his crucifiers an acknowledgment that he was the Son of God. But especially after his sufferings he glorified him, when he set him at his own right hand, gave him a name above every name.

[2.] That he will glorify him in himself--en heauto. Either, First, In Christ himself. He will glorify him in his own person, and not only in his kingdom among men. This supposes his speedy resurrection. A common person may be honoured after his death, in his memory or posterity, but Christ was honoured in himself. Or, secondly, in God himself. God will glorify him with himself, as it is explained, Joh 17:5. He shall sit down with the Father upon his throne, Re 3:21. This is true glory.

[3.] That he will glorify him straightway. He looked upon the joy and glory set before him, not only as great, but as near; and his sorrows and sufferings short and soon over. Good services done to earthly princes often remain long unrewarded; but Christ had his preferments presently. It was but forty hours (or not so much) from his death to his resurrection, and forty days thence to his ascension, so that it might well be said that he was straightway glorified, Ps 16:10.

[4.] All this in consideration of God's being glorified in and by his sufferings: Seeing God is glorified in him, and receives honour from his sufferings, God shall in like manner glorify him in himself, and give honour to him. Note, first, In the exaltation of Christ there was a regard had to his humiliation, and a reward given for it. Because he humbled himself, therefore God highly exalted him. If the Father be so great a gainer in his glory by the death of Christ, we may be sure that the Son shall be no loser in his. See the covenant between them, Isa 53:12. Secondly, Those who mind the business of glorifying God no doubt shall have the happiness of being glorified with him.

33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

Here is something that Christ instructs them in, concerning his sufferings, which was awakening, for as yet they were slow of heart to understand it (Joh 13:33): Little children, yet a little while I am with you, &c. Two things Christ here suggests, to quicken his disciples to improve their present opportunities; two serious words:--

(a) That his stay in this world, to be with them here, they would find to be very short. Little children. This compellation does not bespeak so much their weakness as his tenderness and compassion; he speaks to them with the affection of a father, now that he is about to leaven them, and to leave blessings with them. Know this, then, that yet a little while I am with you. Whether we understand this as referring to his death or his ascension it comes much to one; he had but a little time to spend with them, and therefore,

[1.] Let them improve the advantage they now had. If they had any good question to ask, if they would have any advice, instruction, or comfort, let them speak quickly; for yet a little while I am with you. We must make the best of the helps we have for our souls while we have them, because we shall not have them long; they will be taken from us, or we from them.

[2.] Let them not doat upon his bodily presence, as if their happiness and comfort were bound up in that; no, they must think of living without it; not be always little children, but go alone, without their nurses. Ways and means are appointed but for a little while, and are not to be rested in, but pressed through to our rest, to which they have a reference.

(b) That their following him to the other world, to be with him there, they would find to be very difficult. What he had said to the Jews (Joh 7:34) he saith to his disciples; for they have need to be quickened by the same considerations that are propounded for the convincing and awakening of sinners. Christ tells them here,

[1.] That when he was gone they would feel the want of him; You shall seek me, that is "you shall wish you had me again with you." We are often taught the worth of mercies by the want of them. Though the presence of the Comforter yielded them real and effectual relief in straits and difficulties, yet it was not such a sensible satisfaction as his bodily presence would have been to those who had been used to it. But observe, Christ said to the Jews, You shall seek me and not find me; but to the disciples he only saith, You shall seek me, intimating that though they should not find his bodily presence any more than the Jews, yet they should find that which was tantamount, and should not seek in vain.

When they sought his body in the sepulchre, though they did not find it, yet they sought to good purpose.

[2.] That whither he went they could not come, which suggests to them high thoughts of him, who was going to an invisible inaccessible world, to dwell in that light which none can approach unto; and also low thoughts of themselves, and serious thoughts of their future state. Christ tells them that they could not follow him (as Joshua told the people that they could not serve the Lord) only to quicken them to so much the more diligence and care. They could not follow him to his cross, for they had not courage and resolution; it appeared that they could not when they all forsook him and fled. Nor could they follow him to his crown, for they had not a sufficiency of their own, nor were their work and warfare yet finished.

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

He discourses with them concerning the great duty of brotherly love (Joh 13:34,35): You shall love one another. Judas was now gone out, and had proved himself a false brother; but they must not therefore harbour such jealousies and suspicions one of another as would be the bane of love: though there was one Judas among them, yet they were not all Judases. Now that the enmity of the Jews against Christ and his followers was swelling to the height, and they must expect such treatment as their Master had, it concerned them by brotherly love to strengthen one another's hands. Three arguments for mutual love are here urged:--

1 The command of their Master (Joh 13:34): A new commandment I give unto you. He not only commends it as amiable and pleasant, not only counsels it as excellent and profitable, but commands it, and makes it one of the fundamental laws of his kingdom; it goes a-breast with the command of believing in Christ, 1Jo 3:23,1Pe 1:22. It is the command of our ruler, who has a right to give law to us; it is the command of our Redeemer, who gives us this law in order to the curing of our spiritual diseases and the preparing of us for our eternal bliss. It is a new commandment; that is,

(1.) It is a renewed commandment; it was a commandment from the beginning (1Jo 2:7), as old as the law of nature, it was the second great

commandment of the law of Moses; yet, because it is also one of the great commandments of the New Testament, of Christ the new Lawgiver, it is called a new commandment; it is like an old book in a new edition corrected and enlarged. This commandment has been so corrupted by the traditions of the Jewish church that when Christ revived it, and set it in a true light, it might well be called a new commandment. Laws of revenge and retaliation were so much in vogue, and self-love had so much the ascendant, that the law of brotherly love was forgotten as obsolete and out of date; so that as it came from Christ new, it was new to the people.

(2.) It is an excellent command, as a new song is an excellent song, that has an uncommon gratefulness in

(3.) It is an everlasting command; so strangely new as to be always so; as the new covenant, which shall never decay (Heb 8:13); it shall be new to eternity, when faith and hope are antiquated.

(4.) As Christ gives it, it is new. Before it was, Thou shalt love thy neighbour; now it is, You shall love one another; it is pressed in a more winning way when it is thus pressed as mutual duty owing to one another.

2 The example of their Saviour is another argument for brotherly love: As I have loved you. It is this that makes it a new commandment--that this rule and reason of love (as I have loved you) is perfectly new, and such as had been hidden from ages and generations. Understand this,

(1.) Of all the instances of Christ's love to his disciples, which they had already experienced during the time he went in and out among them. He spoke kindly to them, concerned himself heartily for them, and for their welfare, instructed, counselled, and comforted them, prayed with them and for them, vindicated them when they were accused, took their part when they were run down, and publicly owned them to be dearer to him that his mother, or sister, or brother. He reproved them for what was amiss, and yet compassionately bore with their failings, excused them, made the best of them, and passed by many an oversight. Thus he had loved them, and just now washed their feet; and thus they must love one another, and love to the end. Or,

(2.) It may be understood of the special instance of love to all his disciples which he was now about to give, in laying down his life for them. Greater love hath no man than this, Joh 15:13. Has he thus loved us all? Justly may he expect that we should be loving to one another. Not that we are capable of doing any thing of the same nature for each other (Ps 49:7), but we must love one another in some respects after the same manner; we must set this before us as our copy, and take directions from it. Our love to one another must be free and ready, laborious and expensive, constant and persevering; it must be love to the souls one of another. We must also love one another from this motive, and upon this consideration--because Christ has loved us. See Ro 15:1,3,Eph 5:2,25,Php 2:1-5.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The reputation of their profession (Joh 13:35): By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. Observe, We must have love, not only show love, but have it in the root and habit of it, and have it when there is not any present occasion to show it; have it ready. "Hereby it will appear that you are indeed my followers by following me in this." Note, Brotherly love is the badge of Christ's disciples. By this he knows them, by this they may know themselves (1Jo 2:14), and by this others may know them. This is the livery of his family, the distinguishing character of his disciples; this he would have them noted for, as that wherein they excelled all others--their loving one another. This was what their Master was famous for; all that ever heard of him have heard of his love, his great love; and therefore, if you see any people more affectionate one to another than what is common, say, "Certainly these are the followers of Christ, they have been with Jesus." Now by this it appears,

(1.) That the heart of Christ was very much upon it, that his disciples should love one another. In this they must be singular; whereas the way of the world is to be every one for himself, they should be hearty for one another. He does not say, By this shall men know that you are my disciples--if you work miracles, for a worker of miracles is but a cypher without charity (1Co 13:1,2); but if you love one another from a principle

of self-denial and gratitude to Christ. This Christ would have to be the proprium of his religion, the principal note of the true church.

(2.) That it is the true honour of Christ's disciples to excel in brotherly love. Nothing will be more effectual than this to recommend them to the esteem and respect of others. See what a powerful attractive it was, Ac 2:46,47. Tertullian speaks of it as the glory of the primitive church that the Christians were known by their affection to one another. Their adversaries took notice of it, and said, See how these Christians love one another, Apol. cap. 39.

(3.) That, if the followers of Christ do not love one another, they not only cast an unjust reproach upon their profession, but give just cause to suspect their own sincerity. O Jesus! are these thy Christians, these passionate, malicious, spiteful, ill-natured people? Is this thy son's coat? When our brethren stand in need of help from us, and we have an opportunity of being service able to them, when they differ in opinion and practice from us, or are any ways rivals with or provoking to us, and so we have an occasion to condescend and forgive, in such cases as this it will be known whether we have this badge of Christ's disciples.

Peter's Denial Foretold

36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward.

Christ's answer was instructive. He did not gratify him with any particular account of the world he was going to, nor ever foretold his glories and joys so distinctly as he did his sufferings, but said what he had said before (Joh 13:36): Let this suffice, thou canst not follow me now, but shalt follow me hereafter,

(1.) We may understand it of his following him to the cross: "Thou hast not yet strength enough of faith and resolution to drink of my cup;" and it appeared so by his cowardice when Christ was suffering. For this reason, when Christ was seized, he provided for the safety of his disciples.

Let these go their way, because they could not follow him now. Christ considers the frame of his disciples, and will not cut out for them that work and hardship which they are not as yet fit for; the day shall be as the strength is. Peter, though designed for martyrdom, cannot follow Christ now, not being come to his full growth, but he shall follow him hereafter; he shall be crucified at last, like his Master. Let him not think that because he escapes suffering now he shall never suffer. From our missing the cross once, we must not infer that we shall never meet it; we may be reserved for greater trials than we have yet known.

(2.) We may understand it of his following him to the crown. Christ was now going to his glory, and Peter was very desirous to go with him: "No," saith Christ, "thou canst not follow me now, thou art not yet ripe for heaven, nor hast thou finished thy work on earth. The forerunner must first enter to prepare a place for thee, but thou shalt follow me afterwards, after thou hast fought the good fight, and at the time appointed." Note, Believers must not expect to be glorified as soon as they are effectually called, for there is a wilderness between the Red Sea and Canaan.

37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Peter makes a daring protestation of his constancy. He is not content to be left behind, but asks, "Lord why cannot I follow thee now? Dost thou question my sincerity and resolution? I promise thee, if there be occasion, I will lay down my life for thy sake." Some think Peter had a conceit, as the Jews had in a like case (Joh 7:35), that Christ was designing a journey or voyage into some remote country, and that he declared his resolution to go along with him wherever he went; but, having heard his Master so often speak of his own sufferings, surely he could not understand him any otherwise than of his going away by death; and he resolves as Thomas did that he will go and die with him; and better die with him than live without him. See here,

(1.) What an affectionate love Peter had to our Lord Jesus: "I will lay down my life for thy sake, and I can do no more." I believe Peter spoke as he thought, and though he was inconsiderate he was not insincere, in his resolution. Note, Christ should be dearer to us than our own lives,

which therefore, when we are called to it, we should be willing to lay down for his sake, Ac 20:24.

(2.) How ill he took it to have it questioned, intimated in that expostulation, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? Dost thou suspect my fidelity to thee?" 1Sa 29:8. Note, It is with regret that true love hears its own sincerity arraigned, as Joh 21:17. Christ had indeed said that one of them was a devil, but he was discovered, and gone out, and therefore Peter thinks he may speak with the more assurance of his own sincerity; "Lord, I am resolved I will never leave thee, and therefore why cannot I follow thee?" We are apt to think that we can do any thing, and take it amiss to be told that this and the other we cannot do, whereas without Christ we can do nothing.

38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Christ gives him a surprising prediction of his inconstancy, Joh 13:38. Jesus Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves whom he loves, and will hide pride from.

(a) He upbraids Peter with his confidence: Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Me thinks, he seems to have said this with a smile: "Peter, thy promises are too large, too lavish to be relied on; thou dost not consider with what reluctancy and struggle a life is laid down, and what a hard task it is to die; not so soon done as said." Christ hereby puts Peter upon second thoughts, not that he might retract his resolution, or recede from it, but that he might insert into it that necessary proviso, "Lord, thy grace enabling me, I will lay down my life for thy sake." "Wilt thou undertake to die for me? What! thou that trembledst to walk upon the water to me? What! thou that, when sufferings were spoken of, criedst out, Be it far from thee, Lord? It was an easy thing to leave thy boats and nets to follow me, but not so easy to lay down thy life." His Master himself struggled when it came to his, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Note, It is good for us to shame ourselves out of our presumptuous confidence in ourselves. Shall a bruised reed set up for a

pillar, or a sickly child undertake to be a champion? What a fool am I to talk so big.

(b) He plainly foretels his cowardice in the critical hour. To stop the mouth of his boasting, lest Peter should say it again, Yea Master, that I will, Christ solemnly asserts it with, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. He does not say as afterwards, This night, for it seems to have been two nights before the passover; but, "Shortly thou wilt have denied me thrice within the space of one night; nay, within so short a space as between the first and last crowing of the cock: The cock shall not crow, shall not have crowed his crowing out, till thou has again and again denied me, and that for fear of suffering." The crowing of the cock is mentioned,

[1.] To intimate that the trial in which he would miscarry thus should be in the night, which was an improbable circumstance, but Christ's foretelling it was an instance of his infallible foresight.

[2.] Because the crowing of the cock was to be the occasion of his repentance, which of itself would not have been if Christ had not put this into the prediction. Christ not only foresaw that Judas would betray him though he only in heart designed it, but he foresaw that Peter would deny him though he did not design it, but the contrary. He knows not only the wickedness of sinners, but the weakness of saints. Christ told Peter,

First, That he would deny him, would renounce and abjure him: "Thou wilt not only not follow me still, but wilt be ashamed to own that ever thou didst follow me."

Secondly, That he would do this not once only by a hasty slip of the tongue, but after he had paused would repeat it a second and third time; and it proved too true. We commonly give it as a reason why the prophecies of scripture are expressed darkly and figuratively, because, if they did plainly describe the event, the accomplishment would thereby either be defeated or necessitated by a fatality inconsistent with human liberty; and yet this plain and express prophecy of Peter's denying Christ did neither, nor did in the least make Christ accessary to Peter's sin. But

we may well imagine what a mortification it was to Peter's confidence of his own courage to be told this, and to be told it in such a manner that he durst not contradict it, else he would have said as Hazael, What! is thy servant a dog? This could not but fill him with confusion.

Note, The most secure are commonly the least safe; and those most shamefully betray their own weakness that most confidently presume upon their own strength, 1Co 10:12. Christ gives him a surprising prediction of his inconstancy, Joh 13:38. Jesus Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves whom he loves, and will hide pride from.

(a) He upbraids Peter with his confidence: Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Me thinks, he seems to have said this with a smile: "Peter, thy promises are too large, too lavish to be relied on; thou dost not consider with what reluctancy and struggle a life is laid down, and what a hard task it is to die; not so soon done as said." Christ hereby puts Peter upon second thoughts, not that he might retract his resolution, or recede from it, but that he might insert into it that necessary proviso, "Lord, thy grace enabling me, I will lay down my life for thy sake." "Wilt thou undertake to die for me? What! thou that trembledst to walk upon the water to me? What! thou that, when sufferings were spoken of, criedst out, Be it far from thee, Lord? It was an easy thing to leave thy boats and nets to follow me, but not so easy to lay down thy life." His Master himself struggled when it came to his, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Note, It is good for us to shame ourselves out of our presumptuous confidence in ourselves. Shall a bruised reed set up for a pillar, or a sickly child undertake to be a champion? What a fool am I to talk so big.

(b) He plainly foretels his cowardice in the critical hour. To stop the mouth of his boasting, lest Peter should say it again, Yea Master, that I will, Christ solemnly asserts it with, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. He does not say as afterwards, This night, for it seems to have been two nights before the passover; but, "Shortly thou wilt have denied me thrice within the space of one night; nay, within so short a space as between the first and last

crowing of the cock: The cock shall not crow, shall not have crowed his crowing out, till thou has again and again denied me, and that for fear of suffering." The crowing of the cock is mentioned,

[1.] To intimate that the trial in which he would miscarry thus should be in the night, which was an improbable circumstance, but Christ's foretelling it was an instance of his infallible foresight.

[2.] Because the crowing of the cock was to be the occasion of his repentance, which of itself would not have been if Christ had not put this into the prediction. Christ not only foresaw that Judas would betray him though he only in heart designed it, but he foresaw that Peter would deny him though he did not design it, but the contrary. He knows not only the wickedness of sinners, but the weakness of saints. Christ told Peter,

First, That he would deny him, would renounce and abjure him: "Thou wilt not only not follow me still, but wilt be ashamed to own that ever thou didst follow me."

Secondly, That he would do this not once only by a hasty slip of the tongue, but after he had paused would repeat it a second and third time; and it proved too true. We commonly give it as a reason why the prophecies of scripture are expressed darkly and figuratively, because, if they did plainly describe the event, the accomplishment would thereby either be defeated or necessitated by a fatality inconsistent with human liberty; and yet this plain and express prophecy of Peter's denying Christ did neither, nor did in the least make Christ accessary to Peter's sin. But we may well imagine what a mortification it was to Peter's confidence of his own courage to be told this, and to be told it in such a manner that he durst not contradict it, else he would have said as Hazael, What! is thy servant a dog? This could not but fill him with confusion.

Note, The most secure are commonly the least safe; and those most shamefully betray their own weakness that most confidently presume upon their own strength, 1Co 10:12.

John-14

Jesus the Way to the Father

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

A general caution which Christ gives to his disciples against trouble of heart (Joh 14:1): Let not your heart be troubled. They now began to be troubled, were entering into this temptation. Now here see,

How Christ took notice of it. Perhaps it was apparent in their looks; it was said (Joh 13:22), They looked one upon another with anxiety and concern, and Christ looked upon them all, and observed it; at least, it was intelligible to the Lord Jesus, who is acquainted with all our secret undiscovered sorrows, with the wound that bleeds inwardly; he knows not only how we are afflicted, but how we stand affected under our afflictions, and how near they lie to our hearts; he takes cognizance of all the trouble which his people are at any time in danger of being overwhelmed with; he knows our souls in adversity. Many things concurred to trouble the disciples now.

(1.) Christ had just told them of the unkindness he should receive from some of them, and this troubled them all. Peter, no doubt, looked very sorrowful upon what Christ said to him, and all the rest were sorry for him and for themselves too, not knowing whose turn it should be to be told next of some ill thing or other they should do. As to this, Christ comforts them; though a godly jealousy over ourselves is of great use to keep us humble and watchful, yet it must not prevail to the disquieting of our spirits and the damping of our holy joy.

(2.) He had just told them of his own departure from them, that he should not only go away, but go away in a cloud of sufferings. They must shortly hear him loaded with reproaches, and these will be as a sword in their bones; they must see him barbarously abused and put to death, and this also will be a sword piercing through their own souls, for they had loved him, and chosen him, and left all to follow him. When we now look upon Christ pierced, we cannot but mourn and be in bitterness,

though we see the glorious issue and fruit of it; much more grievous must the sight be to them, who could then look no further. If Christ depart from them

[1.] They will think themselves shamefully disappointed; for they looked that this had been he that should have delivered Israel, and should have set upon his kingdom in secular power and glory, and, in expectation of this, had lost all to follow him. Now, if he leave the world in the same circumstances of meanness and poverty in which he had lived, and worse, they are quite defeated.

[2.] They will think themselves sadly deserted and exposed. They knew by experience what little presence of mind they had in difficult emergencies, that they could count upon nothing but being ruined and run down if they part with their Master. Now, in reference to all these, Let not your heart be troubled. Here are three words, upon any of which the emphasis may significantly be laid. First, Upon the word troubled, me tarassestho. Be not so troubled as to be put into a hurry and confusion, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. He does not say, "Let not your hearts be sensible of the griefs, or sad because of them" but, "Be not ruffled and discomposed, be not cast down and disquieted," Ps 42:5. Secondly, Upon the word heart: "Though the nation and city be troubled, though your little family and flock be troubled, yet let not your heart be troubled. Keep possession of your own souls when you can keep possession of nothing else." The heart is the main fort; whatever you do, keep trouble from this, keep this with all diligence. The spirit must sustain the infirmity, therefore, see that this be not wounded. Thirdly, Upon the word your: "You that are my disciples and followers, my redeemed, chosen, sanctified ones, however others are overwhelmed with the sorrows of this present time, be not you so, for you know better; let the sinners in Zion tremble, but let the sons of Zion be joyful in their king." Herein Christ's disciples should do more than others, should keep their minds quiet, when every thing else is unquiet.

The remedy he prescribes against this trouble of mind, which he saw ready to prevail over them; in general, believe--pisteuete.

(1.) Some read it in both parts imperatively, "Believe in God, and his perfections and providence, believe also in me, and my mediation. Build with confidence upon the great acknowledged principles of natural religion: that there is a God, that he is most holy, wise, powerful, and good; that he is the governor of the world, and has the sovereign disposal of all events; and comfort yourselves likewise with the peculiar doctrines of that holy religion which I have taught you." But,

(2.) We read the former as an acknowledgment that they did believe in God, for which he commends them: "But, if you would effectually provide against a stormy day, believe also in me." Through Christ we are brought into covenant with God, and become interested in his favour and promise, which otherwise as sinners we must despair of, and the remembrance of God would have been our trouble; but, by believing in Christ as the Mediator between God and man, our belief in God becomes comfortable; and this is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, by believing in the Son as they believe in the Father. Those that rightly believe in God will believe in Jesus Christ, whom he has made known to them; and believing in God through Jesus Christ is an excellent means of keeping trouble from the heart. The joy of faith is the best remedy against the griefs of sense; it is a remedy with a promise annexed to it; the just shall live by faith; a remedy with a probatum est annexed to it. I had fainted unless I had believed.

2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Believe and consider that really there is such a happiness: In my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, Joh 14:2.

(1.) See under what notion the happiness of heaven is here represented: as mansions, many mansions in Christ's Father's house.

[1.] Heaven is a house, not a tent or tabernacle; it is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

[2.] It is a Father's house: my Father's house; and his Father is our Father, to whom he was now ascending; so that in right of their elder brother all true believers shall be welcome to that happiness as to their home. It is his house who is King of kings and Lord of lords, dwells in light, and inhabits eternity.

[3.] There are mansions there; that is, First, Distinct dwellings, an apartment for each. Perhaps there is an allusion to the priests' chambers that were about the temple. In heaven there are accommodations for particular saints; though all shall be swallowed up in God, yet our individuality shall not be lost there; every Israelite had his lot in Canaan, and every elder a seat, Re 4:4. Secondly, Durable dwellings. Monai, from mneio, maneo, abiding places. The house itself is lasting; our estate in it is not for a term of years, but a perpetuity. Here we are as in an inn; in heaven we shall gain a settlement. The disciples had quitted their houses to attend Christ, who had not where to lay his head, but the mansions in heaven will make them amends.

[4.] There are many mansions, for there are many sons to be brought to glory, and Christ exactly knows their number, nor will be straitened for room by the coming of more company than he expects. He had told Peter that he should follow him (Joh 13:36), but let not the rest be discouraged, in heaven there are mansions for them all. Rehoboth, Ge 26:22.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

See what assurance we have of the reality of the happiness itself, and the sincerity of the proposal of it to us: "If it were not so, I would have told you. If you had deceived yourselves, when you quitted your livelihoods, and ventured your lives for me, in prospect of a happiness future and unseen, I would soon have undeceived you." The assurance is built,

[1.] Upon the veracity of his word. It is implied, "If there were not such a happiness, valuable and attainable, I would not have told you that there was."

[2.] Upon the sincerity of his affection to them. As he is true, and would not impose upon them himself, so he is kind, and would not suffer them to be imposed upon. If either there were no such mansions, or none designed for them, who had left all to follow him, he would have given them timely notice of the mistake, that they might have made an honourable retreat to the world again, and have made the best they could of it.

Note, Christ's good-will to us is a great encouragement to our hope in him. He loves us too well, and means us too well, to disappoint the expectations of his own raising, or to leave those to be of all men most miserable who have been of him most observant.

Believe and consider that the design of Christ's going away was to prepare a place in heaven for his disciples. "You are grieved to think of my going away, whereas I go on your errand, as the forerunner; I am to enter for you." He went to prepare a place for us; that is,

(a.) To take possession for us, as our advocate or attorney, and so to secure our title as indefeasible. Livery of seisin was given to Christ, for the use and behoof of all that should believe on him.

(b.) To make provision for us as our friend and father. The happiness of heaven, though prepared before the foundation of the world, yet must be further fitted up for man in his fallen state. It consisting much in the presence of Christ there, it was therefore necessary that he should go before, to enter into that glory which his disciples were to share in. Heaven would be an unready place for a Christian if Christ were not there. He went to prepare a table for them, to prepare thrones for them, Lu 22:30. Thus Christ declares the fitness of heaven's happiness for the saints, for whom it is prepared.

3. Believe and consider that therefore he would certainly come again in due time, to fetch them to that blessed place which he was now going to possess for himself and prepare for them (Joh 14:3): "If I go and prepare

a place for you, if this be the errand of my journey, you may be sure, when every thing is ready, I will come again, and receive you to myself, so that you shall follow me hereafter, that where I am there you may be also." Now these are comfortable words indeed.

(a.) That Jesus Christ will come again; erchomai--I do come, intimating the certainty of it, that he will come and that he is daily coming. We say, We are coming, when we are busy in preparing for our coming, and so he is; all he does has a reference and tendency to his second coming.

Note, The belief of Christ's second coming, of which he has given us the assurance, is an excellent preservative against trouble of heart, Php 4:5,Jam 5:8.

(b.) That he will come again to receive all his faithful followers to himself. He sends for them privately at death, and gathers them one by one; but they are to make their public entry in solemn state all together at the last day, and then Christ himself will come to receive them, to conduct them in the abundance of his grace, and to welcome them in the abundance of his love. He will hereby testify the utmost respect and endearment imaginable. The coming of Christ is in order to our gathering together unto him, 2Th 2:1.

(c.) That where he is there they shall be also. This intimates, what many other scriptures declare, that the quintessence of heaven's happiness is being with Christ there, Joh 17:24,Php 1:23,1Th 4:17. Christ speaks of his being there as now present, that where I am; where I am to be shortly, where I am to be eternally; there you shall be shortly, there you shall be eternally: not only there, in the same place; but here, in the same state: not only spectators of his glory, as the three disciples on the mount, but sharers in it.

(d.) That this may be inferred from his going to prepare a place for us, for his preparations shall not be in vain. He will not build and furnish lodgings, and let them stand empty. He will be the finisher of that of which he is the author. If he has prepared the place for us, he will prepare us for it, and in due time put us in possession of it. As the resurrection

of Christ is the assurance of our resurrection, so his ascension, victory, and glory, are an assurance of ours.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

He said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, to what place or what state, and how can we know the way in which we must follow thee? We can neither guess at it, nor enquire it out, but must still be at a loss." Christ's testimony concerning their knowledge made them more sensible of their ignorance, and more inquisitive after further light. Thomas here shows more modesty than Peter, who thought he could follow Christ now. Peter was the more solicitous to know whither Christ went. Thomas here, though he complains that he did not know this, yet seems more solicitous to know the way. Now,

(1.) His confession of his ignorance was commendable enough. If good men be in the dark, and know but in part, yet they are willing to own their defects. But,

(2.) The cause of his ignorance was culpable. They knew not whither Christ went, because they dreamed of a temporal kingdom in external pomp and power, and doted upon this, notwithstanding what he had said again and again to the contrary. Hence it was that, when Christ spoke of going away and their following him, their fancy ran upon his going to some remarkable city or other, Bethlehem, or Nazareth, or Capernaum, or some of the cities of the Gentiles, as David to Hebron, there to be anointed king, and to restore the kingdom to Israel; and which way this place lay, where these castles in the air were to be built, east, west, north, or south, they could not tell, and therefore knew not the way. Thus still we think ourselves more in the dark than we need be concerning the future state of the church, because we expect its worldly prosperity, whereas it is spiritual advancement that the promise points at. Had Thomas understood, as he might have done, that Christ was going to the invisible world, the world of spirits, to which spiritual things only have a reference, he would not have said, Lord, we do not know the way.

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Now to this complaint of their ignorance, which included a desire to be taught, Christ gives a full answer, Joh 14:6,7. Thomas had enquired both whither he went and what was the way, and Christ answers both these enquiries and makes good what he had said, that they would have needed no answer if they had understood themselves aright; for they knew him, and he was the way; they knew the Father, and he was the end; and therefore, whither I go you know, and the way you know. Believe in God as the end, and in me as the way (Joh 14:1), and you do all you should do.

He speaks of himself as the way, Joh 14:6. Dost thou not know the way? I am the way, and I only, for no man comes to the Father but by me. Great things Christ here saith of himself, showing us,

[1.] The nature of his mediation: He is the way, the truth, and the life.

First, Let us consider these first distinctly.

1. Christ is the way, the highway spoken of, Isa 35:8. Christ was his own way, for by his own blood he entered into the holy place (Heb 9:12), and he is our way, for we enter by him. By his doctrine and example he teaches us our duty, by his merit and intercession he procures our happiness, and so he is the way. In him God and man meet, and are brought together. We could not get to the tree of life in the way of innocency; but Christ is another way to it. By Christ, as the way an intercourse is settled and kept up between heaven and earth; the angels of God ascend and descend; our prayers go to God, and his blessings come to us by him; this is the way that leads to rest, the good old way. The disciples followed him, and Christ tells them that they followed the road, and, while they continued following him, they would never be out of their way.

2. He is the truth.

(1.) As truth is opposed to figure and shadow. Christ is the substance of all the Old-Testament types, which are therefore said to be figures of the

true, Heb 9:24. Christ is the true manna (Joh 6:32), the true tabernacle, Heb 8:2.

(2.) As truth is opposed to falsehood and error; the doctrine of Christ is true doctrine. When we enquire for truth, we need learn no more than the truth as it is in Jesus.

(3.) As truth is opposed to fallacy and deceit; he is true to all that trust in him, as true as truth itself, 2Co 1:20. 3. He is the life; for we are alive unto God only in and through Jesus Christ, Ro 6:11. Christ formed in us is that to our souls which our souls are to our bodies. Christ is the resurrection and the life.

Secondly, Let us consider these jointly, and with reference to each other. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; that is, 1. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end. In him we must set out, go on, and finish. As the truth, he is the guide of our way; as the life, he is the end of it. 2. He is the true and living way (Heb 10:20); there are truth and life in the way, as well as at the end of it. 3. He is the true way to life, the only true way; other ways may seem right, but the end of them is the way of death.

[2.] The necessity of his mediation: No man cometh to the Father but by me. Fallen man must come to God as a Judge, but cannot come to him as a Father, otherwise than by Christ as Mediator. We cannot perform the duty of coming to God, by repentance and the acts of worship, without the Spirit and grace of Christ, nor obtain the happiness of coming to God as our Father without his merit and righteousness; he is the high priest of our profession, our advocate.

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

He speaks of his Father as the end (Joh 14:7): "If you had known me aright, you would have known my Father also; and henceforth, by the glory you have seen in me and the doctrine you have heard from me, you know him and have seen him." Here is,

[1.] A tacit rebuke to them for their dulness and carelessness in not acquainting themselves with Jesus Christ, though they had been his constant followers and associates: If you had known me--. They knew him, and yet did not know him so well as they might and should have known him. They knew him to be the Christ, but did not follow on to know God in him. Christ had said to the Jews (Joh 8:19): If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; and here the same to his disciples; for it is hard to say which is more strange, the wilful ignorance of those that are enemies to the light, or the defects and mistakes of the children of light, that have had such opportunities of knowledge. If they had known Christ aright, they would have known that his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; that he came down from heaven, and therefore must return to heaven; and then they would have known his Father also, would have known whither he designed to go, when he said, I go to the Father, to a glory in the other world, not in this. If we knew Christianity better, we should better know natural religion.

[2.] A favourable intimation that he was well satisfied concerning their sincerity, notwithstanding the weakness of their understanding: "And henceforth, from my giving you this hint, which will serve as a key to all the instructions I have given you hitherto, let me tell you, you know him, and have seen him, inasmuch as you know me, and have seen me;" for in the face of Christ we see the glory of God, as we see a father in his son that resembles him. Christ tells his disciples that they were not so ignorant as they seemed to be; for, though little children, yet they had known the Father, 1Jo 2:13. Note, Many of the disciples of Christ have more knowledge and more grace than they think they have, and Christ takes notice of, and is well pleased with, that good in them which they themselves are not aware of; for those that know God do not all at once know that they know him, 1Jo 2:3.

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Philip's request for some extraordinary discovery of the Father. He was not so forward to speak as some others of them were, and yet, from an earnest desire of further light, he cries out, Show us the Father. Philip listened to what Christ said to Thomas, and fastened upon the last words, You have seen him. "Nay," says Philip, "that is what we want, that is what we would have: Show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

(a.) This supposes an earnest desire of acquaintance with God as a Father. The petition is, "Show us the Father; give us to know him in that relation to us;" and this he begs, not for himself only, but for the rest of the disciples. The plea is, It sufficeth us. He not only professes it himself, but will pass his word for his fellow-disciples. Grant us but one sight of the Father, and we have enough. Jansenius saith, "Though Philip did not mean it, yet the Holy Ghost, by his mouth, designed here to teach us that the satisfaction and happiness of a soul consist in the vision and fruition of God," Ps 16:11,17:15. In the knowledge of God the understanding rests, and is at the summit of its ambition; in the knowledge of God as our Father the soul is satisfied; a sight of the Father is a heaven upon earth, fills us with joy unspeakable.

(b.) As Philip speaks it here, it intimates that he was not satisfied with such a discovery of the Father as Christ thought fit to give them, but he would prescribe to him, and press upon him, something further and no less than some visible appearance of the glory of God, like that to Moses (Ex 33:22), and to the elders of Israel, Ex 24:9-11. "Let us see the Father with our bodily eyes, as we see thee, and it sufficeth us; we will trouble thee with no more questions, Whither goest thou?" And so it manifests not only the weakness of his faith, but his ignorance of the gospel way of manifesting the Father, which is spiritual, and not sensible. Such a sight of God, he thinks, would suffice them, and yet those who did thus see him were not sufficed, but soon corrupted themselves, and made a graven image. Christ's institutions have provided better for the confirmation of our faith than our own inventions would.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

He refers him to what he had seen, Joh 14:9. He upbraids him with his ignorance and inadvertency: "Have I been so long time with you, now above three years intimately conversant with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? Now, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Wilt thou ask for that which thou hast already?" Now here,

[1.] He reproves him for two things:

First, For not improving his acquaintance with Christ, as he might have done, to a clear and distinct knowledge of him: "Hast thou not known me, Philip, whom thou hast followed so long, and conversed with so much?" Philip, the first day he came to him, declared that he knew him to be the Messiah (Joh 1:45), and yet to this day did not know the Father in him. Many that have good knowledge in the scripture and divine things fall short of the attainments justly expected from them, for want of compounding the ideas they have, and going on to perfection. Many know Christ, who yet do not know what they might know of him, nor see what they should see in him. That which aggravated Philip's dulness was that he had so long an opportunity of improvement: I have been so long time with thee.

Note, The longer we enjoy the means of knowledge and grace, the more inexcusable we are if we be found defective in grace and knowledge. Christ expects that our proficiency should be in some measure according to our standing, that we should not be always babes. Let us thus reason with ourselves: "Have I been so long a hearer of sermons, a student in the scripture, a scholar in the school of Christ, and yet so weak in the knowledge of Christ, and so unskilful in the word of righteousness?"

Secondly, He reproves him for his infirmity in the prayer made, Show us the Father. Note, Herein appears much of the weakness of Christ's disciples that they know not what to pray for as they ought (Ro 8:26), but often ask amiss (Jam 4:3), for that which either is not promised or is already bestowed in the sense of the promise, as here.

[2.] He instructs him, and gives him a maxim which not only in general magnifies Christ and leads us to the knowledge of God in him, but justifies what Christ had said (Joh 14:7): You know the Father, and have seen him; and answered what Philip had asked, Show us the Father. Why, saith Christ, the difficulty is soon over, for he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

First, All that saw Christ in the flesh might have seen the Father in him, if Satan had not blinded their minds, and kept them from a sight of Christ, as the image of God, 2Co 4:4.

Secondly, All that saw Christ by faith did see the Father in him, though they were not suddenly aware that they did so. In the light of Christ's doctrine they saw God as the father of lights; in the miracles they saw God as the God of power, the finger of God. The holiness of God shone in the spotless purity of Christ's life, and his grace in all the acts of grace he did.

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

He refers him to what he had reason to believe (Joh 14:10,11): "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and therefore that in seeing me thou hast seen the Father? Hast thou not believed this? If not, take my word for it, and believe it now."

[1.] See here what it is which we are to believe: That I am in the Father, and the Father in me; that is, as he had said (Joh 10:30), I and my Father are one. He speaks of the Father and himself as two persons, and yet so one as never any two were or can be. In knowing Christ as God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, and as being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, we know the Father; and in seeing him thus we see the Father. In Christ we behold more of the glory of God than Moses did at Mount Horeb.

[2.] See here what inducements we have to believe this; and they are two:--We must believe it,

First, For his word's sake: The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself. See Joh 7:16, My doctrine is not mine. What he said seemed to them careless as the word of man, speaking his own thought at his own pleasure; but really it was the wisdom of God that indited it and the will of God that enforced it. He spoke not of himself only, but the mind of God according to the eternal counsels.

Secondly, For his works' sake: The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth them; and therefore believe me for their sake. Observe,

1 The Father is said to dwell in him ho en emoi menon--he abideth in me, by the inseparable union of the divine and human nature: never had God such a temple to dwell in on earth as the body of the Lord Jesus, Joh 2:21. Here was the true Shechinah, of which that in the tabernacle was but a type. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, Col 2:9. The Father so dwells in Christ that in him he may be found, as a man where he dwells. Seek ye the Lord, seek him in Christ, and he will be found, for in him he dwells.

2. He doeth the works. Many words of power, and works of mercy, Christ did, and the Father did them in him; and the work of redemption in general was God's own work. 3. We are bound to believe this, for the very works' sake. As we are to believe the being and perfections of God for the sake of the works of creation, which declare his glory; so we are to believe the revelation of God to man in Jesus Christ for the sake of the works of the Redeemer, those mighty works which, by showing forth themselves (Mt 14:2), Show forth him, and God in him. Note, Christ's miracles are proofs of his divine mission, not only for the conviction of infidels, but for the confirmation of the faith of his own disciples, Joh 2:11,5:36,10:37.

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

The disciples, as they were full of grief to think of parting with their Master, so they were full of care what would become of themselves when he was gone; while he was with them, he was a support to them, kept them in countenance, kept them in heart; but, if he leave them, they will be as sheep having no shepherd, an easy prey to those who seek to run them down. Now, to silence these fears, Christ here assures them that they should be clothed with powers sufficient to bear them out. As Christ has all power, they, in his name, should have great power, both in heaven and in earth.

Great power on earth (Joh 14:12): He that believeth on me (as I know you do), the works that I do shall he do also. This does not weaken the argument Christ had taken from his works, to prove himself one with the Father (that others should do as great works), but rather strengthens it; for the miracles which the apostles wrought were wrought in his name, and by faith in him; and this magnifies his power more than any thing, that he not only wrought miracles himself, but gave power to others to do so too.

1. Two things he assures them of:--

(a.) That they should be enabled to do such works as he had done, and that they should have a more ample power for the doing of them than they had had when he first sent them forth, Mt 10:8. Did Christ heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead? So should they. Did he convince and convert sinners, and draw multitudes to him? So should they. Though he should depart, the work should not cease, nor fall to the ground, but should be carried on as vigorously and successfully as ever; and it is still in the doing.

(b.) That they should do greater works than these.

[1.] In the kingdom of nature they should work greater miracles. No miracle is little, but some to our apprehension seem greater than others. Christ had healed with the hem of his garment, but Peter with his shadow (Ac 5:15), Paul by the handkerchief that had touched him, Ac 19:12. Christ wrought miracles for two or three years in one country, but his followers wrought miracles in his name for many ages in divers countries. You shall do greater works, if there be occasion, for the glory of God. The prayer of faith, if at any time it had been necessary, would have removed mountains.

[2.] In the kingdom of grace. They should obtain greater victories by the gospel than had been obtained while Christ was upon earth. The truth is, the captivating of so great a part of the world to Christ, under such outward disadvantages, was the miracle of all. I think this refers

especially to the gift of tongues; this was the immediate effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, which was a constant miracle upon the mind, in which words are framed, and which was made to serve so glorious an intention as that of spreading the gospel to all nations in their own language. This was a greater sign to them that believed not (1Co 14:22), and more powerful for their conviction, than any other miracle whatever.

2 The reason Christ gives for this is, Because I go unto my Father,

(a.) "Because I go, it will be requisite that you should have such a power, lest the work suffer damage by my absence."

(b.) "Because I go to the Father, I shall be in a capacity to furnish you with such a power, for I go to the Father, to send the Comforter, from whom you shall receive power," Ac 1:8. The wonderful works which they did in Christ's name were part of the glories of his exalted state, when he ascended on high, Eph 4:8. The disciples, as they were full of grief to think of parting with their Master, so they were full of care what would become of themselves when he was gone; while he was with them, he was a support to them, kept them in countenance, kept them in heart; but, if he leave them, they will be as sheep having no shepherd, an easy prey to those who seek to run them down. Now, to silence these fears, Christ here assures them that they should be clothed with powers sufficient to bear them out. As Christ has all power, they, in his name, should have great power, both in heaven and in earth.

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13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Great power in heaven: "Whatsoever you shall ask, that will I do (Joh 14:13,14), as Israel, who was a prince with God. Therefore you shall do such mighty works, because you have such an interest in me, and I in my Father." Observe,

1. In what way they were to keep up communion with him, and derive power from him, when he was gone to the Father--by prayer. When dear friends are to be removed to a distance from each other, they provide for the settling of a correspondence; thus, when Christ was going to his Father, he tells his disciples how they might write to him upon every occasion, and send their epistles by a safe and ready way of conveyance, without danger of miscarrying, or lying by the way: "Let me hear from you by prayer, the prayer of faith, and you shall hear from me by the Spirit." This was the old way of intercourse with Heaven, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord; but Christ by his death has laid it more open, and it is still open to us. Here is,

(a.) Humility prescribed: You shall ask. Though they had quitted all for Christ, they could demand nothing of him as a debt, but must be humble supplicants, beg or starve, beg or perish.

(b.) Liberty allowed: "Ask any thing, any thing that is good and proper for you; any thing, provided you know what you ask, you may ask; you may ask for assistance in your work, for a mouth and wisdom, for preservation out of the hands of your enemies, for power to work miracles when there is occasion, for the success of the ministry in the conversion

of souls; ask to be informed, directed, vindicated." Occasions vary, but they shall be welcome to the throne of grace upon every occasion.

2. In what name they were to present their petitions: Ask in my name. To ask in Christ's name is,

(a.) To plead his merit and intercession, and to depend upon that plea. The Old-Testament saints had an eye to this when they prayed for the Lord's sake (Da 9:17), and for the sake of the anointed (Ps 84:9), but Christ's mediation is brought to a clearer light by the gospel, and so we are enabled more expressly to ask in his name. When Christ dictated the Lord's prayer, this was not inserted, because they did not then so fully understand this matter as they did afterwards, when the Spirit was poured out. If we ask in our own name, we cannot expect to speed, for, being strangers, we have no name in heaven; being sinners, we have an ill name there; but Christ's is a good name, well known in heaven, and very precious.

(b.) It is to aim at his glory and to seek this as our highest end in all our prayers.

3. What success they should have in their prayers: "What you ask, that will I do," Joh 14:13. And again (Joh 14:14), "I will do it. You may be sure I will: not only it shall be done, I will see it done, or give orders for the doing of it, but I will do it;" for he has not only the interest of an intercessor, but the power of a sovereign prince, who sits at the right hand of God, the hand of action, and has the doing of all in the kingdom of God. By faith in his name we may have what we will for the asking.

4. For what reason their prayers should speed so well: That the Father may be glorified in the Son. That is,

(a.) This they ought to aim at, and have their eye upon, in asking. In this all our desires and prayers should meet as in their centre; to this they must all be directed, that God in Christ may be honoured by our services, and in our salvation. Hallowed be thy name is an answered prayer, and is put

first, because, if the heart be sincere in this, it does in a manner consecrate all the other petitions.

(b.) This Christ will aim at in granting, and for the sake of this will do what they ask, that hereby the glory of the Father in the Son may be manifested. The wisdom, power, and goodness of God were magnified in the Redeemer when by a power derived from him, and exerted in his name and for his service, his apostles and ministers were enabled to do such great things, both in the proofs of their doctrine and in the successes of it.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

He premises to this a memento of duty (Joh 14:15): If you love me, keep my commandments. Keeping the commandments of Christ is here put for the practice of godliness in general, and for the faithful and diligent discharge of their office as apostles in particular. Now observe,

1. When Christ is comforting them, he bids them keep his commandments; for we must not expect comfort but in the way of duty. The same word (parakaleo) signifies both to exhort and to comfort.

2. When they were in care what they should do, now that their Master was leaving them, and what would become of them now, he bids them keep his commandments, and then nothing could come amiss to them. In difficult times our care concerning the events of the day should be swallowed up in a care concerning the duty of the day.

3. When they were showing their love to Christ by their grieving to think of his departure, and the sorrow which filled their hearts upon the foresight of that, he bids them, if they would show their love to him, do it, not by these weak and feminine passions, but by their conscientious care to perform their trust, and by a universal obedience to his commands; this is better than sacrifice, better than tears. Lovest thou me? Feed my lambs.

4. When Christ has given them precious promises, of the answer of their prayers and the coming of the Comforter, he lays down this as a limitation of the promises, "Provided you keep my commandments, from a principle of love to me." Christ will not be an advocate for any but those that will be ruled and advised by him as their counsel. Follow the conduct of the Spirit, and you shall have the comfort of the Spirit.

1. It is promised that they shall have another comforter. This is the great New-Testament promise (Ac 1:4), as that of the Messiah was of the Old Testament; a promise adapted to the present distress of the disciples, who were in sorrow, and needed a comforter. Observe here,

(1.) The blessing promised: allon parakleton. The word is used only here in these discourses of Christ's, and 1Jo 2:1, where we translate it an advocate. The Rhemists, and Dr. Hammond, are for retaining the Greek word Paraclete; we read, Ac 9:31, of the paraklesis tou hagiou pneumatos, the comfort of the Holy Ghost, including his whole office as a paraclete.

[1.] You shall have another advocate. The office of the Spirit was to be Christ's advocate with them and others, to plead his cause, and take care of his concerns, on earth; to be vicarius Christi--Christ's Vicar, as one of the ancients call him; and to be their advocate with their opposers. When Christ was with them he spoke for them as there was occasion; but now that he is leaving them they shall not be run down, the Spirit of the Father shall speak in them, Mt 10:19,20. And the cause cannot miscarry that is pleaded by such an advocate.

[2.] You shall have another master or teacher, another exhorter. While they had Christ with them he excited and exhorted them to their duty; but now that he is going he leaves one with them that shall do this as effectually, though silently. Jansenius thinks the most proper word to render it by is a patron, one that shall both instruct and protect you. [3.] Another comforter. Christ was expected as the consolation of Israel. One of the names of the Messiah among the Jews was Menahem--the Comforter. The Targum calls the days of the Messiah the years of consolation. Christ comforted his disciples when he was with them, and

now that he was leaving them in their greatest need he promises them another.

(2.) The giver of this blessing: The Father shall give him, my Father and your Father; it includes both. The same that gave the Son to be our Saviour will give his Spirit to be our comforter, pursuant to the same design. The Son is said to send the Comforter (Joh 15:26), but the Father is the prime agent.

(3.) How this blessing is procured--by the intercession of the Lord Jesus: I will pray the Father. He said (Joh 14:14) I will do it; here he saith, I will pray for it, to show not only that he is both God and man, but that he is both king and priest. As priest he is ordained for men to make intercession, as king he is authorized by the Father to execute judgment. When Christ saith, I will pray the Father, it does not suppose that the Father is unwilling, or must be importuned to it, but only that the gift of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's mediation, purchased by his merit, and taken out by his intercession.

(4.) The continuance of this blessing: That he may abide with you for ever. That is,

[1.] "With you, as long as you live. You shall never know the want of a comforter, nor lament his departure, as you are now lamenting mine."

Note, It should support us under the loss of those comforts which were designed us for a time that there are everlasting consolations provided for us. It was not expedient that Christ should be with them for ever, for they who were designed for public service, must not always live a college-life; they must disperse, and therefore a comforter that would be with them all, in all places alike, wheresoever dispersed and howsoever distressed, was alone fit to be with them for ever.

[2.] "With your successors, when you are gone, to the end of time; your successors in Christianity, in the ministry."

[3.] If we take for ever in its utmost extent, the promise will be accomplished in those consolations of God which will be the eternal joy of all the saints, pleasures for ever.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

This comforter is the Spirit of truth, whom you know, Joh 14:16,17. They might think it impossible to have a comforter equivalent to him who is the Son of God: "Yea," saith Christ, "you shall have the Spirit of God, who is equal in power and glory with the Son."

(a.) The comforter promised is the Spirit, one who should do his work in a spiritual way and manner, inwardly and invisibly, by working on men's spirits.

(b.) "He is the Spirit of truth." He will be true to you, and to his undertaking for you, which he will perform to the utmost. He will teach you the truth, will enlighten your minds with the knowledge of it, will strengthen and confirm your belief of it, and will increase your love to it. The Gentiles by their idolatries, and the Jews by their traditions, were led into gross errors and mistakes; but the Spirit of truth shall not only lead you into all truth, but others by your ministry. Christ is the truth, and he is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit that he was anointed with.

(c.) He is one whom the world cannot receive; but you know him. Therefore he abideth with you.

[1.] The disciples of Christ are here distinguished from the world, for they are chosen and called out of the world that lies in wickedness; they are the children and heirs of another world, not of this.

[2.] It is the misery of those that are invincibly devoted to the world that they cannot receive the Spirit of truth. The spirit of the world and of God are spoken of as directly contrary the one to the other (1Co 2:12); for

where the spirit of the world has the ascendant, the Spirit of God is excluded. Even the princes of this world, though, as princes, they had advantages of knowledge, yet, as princes of this world, they laboured under invincible prejudices, so that they knew not the things of the Spirit of God, 1Co 2:8.

[3.] Therefore men cannot receive the Spirit of truth because they see him not, neither know him. The comforts of the Spirit are foolishness to them, as much as ever the cross of Christ was, and the great things of the gospel, like those of the law, are counted as a strange thing. These are judgments far above out of their sight. Speak to the children of this world of the operations of the Spirit, and you are as a barbarian to them.

[4.] The best knowledge of the Spirit of truth is that which is got by experience: You know him, for he dwelleth with you. Christ had dwelt with them, and by their acquaintance with him they could not but know the Spirit of truth. They had themselves been endued with the Spirit in some measure. What enabled them to leave all to follow Christ, and to continue with him in his temptations? What enabled them to preach the gospel, and work miracles, but the Spirit dwelling in them? The experiences of the saints are the explications of the promises; paradoxes to others are axioms to them.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

When friends are parting, it is a common request they make to each other, "Pray let us hear from you as often as you can:" this Christ engaged to his disciples, that out of sight they should not be out of mind.

He promises that he would continue his care of them (Joh 14:18): "I will not leave you orphans, or fatherless; for, though I leave you, yet I leave you this comfort, I will come to you." His departure from them was that which grieved them; but it was not so bad as they apprehended, for it was neither total nor final.

1. Not total. "Though I leave you without my bodily presence, yet I do not leave you without comfort." Though children, and left little, yet they had received the adoption of sons, and his Father would be their Father, with whom those who otherwise would be fatherless find mercy. Note,

The case of true believers, though sometimes it may be sorrowful, is never comfortless, because they are never orphans: for God is their Father, who is an everlasting Father.

2. Not final: I will come to you, erchomai--I do come; that is,

(a.) "I will come speedily to you at my resurrection, I will not be long away, but will be with you again in a little time." He had often said, The third day I will rise again.

(b.) "I will be coming daily to you in my Spirit;" in the tokens of his love, and visits of his grace, he is still coming.

(c.) "I will come certainly at the end of time; surely I will come quickly to introduce you into the joy of your Lord." Note, The consideration of Christ's coming to us saves us from being comfortless in his removals from us; for, if he depart for a season, it is that we may receive him for ever. Let this moderate our grief, The Lord is at hand.

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

He promises that they should continue their acquaintance with him and interest in him (Joh 14:19,20): Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more, that is, Now I am no more in the world. After his death, the world saw him no more, for, though he rose to life, he never showed himself to all the people, Ac 10:41. The malignant world thought they had seen enough of him, and cried, Away with him; crucify him; and so shall their doom be; they shall see him no more. Those only that see Christ with an eye of faith shall see him for ever. The world sees him no more till his second coming; but his disciples have communion with him in his absence.

1. You see me, and shall continue to see me, when the world sees me no more. They saw him with their bodily eyes after his resurrection, for he showed himself to them by many infallible proofs, Ac 1:8. And then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. They saw him with an eye of

faith after his ascension, sitting at God's right hand, as Lord of all; saw that in him which the world saw not.

2. Because I live, you shall live also. That which grieved them was, that their Master was dying, and they counted upon nothing else but to die with him. No, saith Christ,

(a.) I live; this the great God glories in, I live, saith the Lord, and Christ saith the same; not only, I shall live, as he saith of them, but, I do live; for he has life in himself, and lives for evermore. We are not comfortless, while we know that our Redeemer lives.

(b.) Therefore you shall live also. Note, The life of Christians is bound up in the life of Christ; as sure and as long as he lives, those that by faith are united to him shall live also; they shall live spiritually, a divine life in communion with God. This life is hid with Christ; if the head and root live, the members and branches live also. They shall live eternally; their bodies shall rise in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; it will be well with them in the world to come. It cannot but be well with all that are his, Isa 26:19.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

You shall have the assurance of this (Joh 14:20): At that day, when I am glorified, when the Spirit is poured out, you shall know more clearly and certainly than you do now that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

(a.) These glorious mysteries will be fully known in heaven; At that day, when I shall receive you to myself, you shall know perfectly that which now you see through a glass darkly. Now it appears not what we shall be, but then it will appear what we were.

(b.) They were more fully known after the pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles; at that day divine light should shine, and their eyes should see more clearly, their knowledge should greatly advance and increase then, would become more extensive and more distinct, and like the blind

man's at the second touch of Christ's hand, who at first only saw men as trees walking.

(c.) They are known by all that receive the Spirit of truth, to their abundant satisfaction, for in the knowledge of this is founded their fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. They know,

[1.] That Christ is in the Father, is one with the Father, by their experience of what he has wrought for them and in them; they find what an admirable consent and harmony there is between Christianity and natural religion, that that is grafted into this, and so they know that Christ is in the Father.

[2.] That Christ is in them; experienced Christians know by the Spirit that Christ abides in them, 1Jo 3:24.

[3.] That they are in Christ, for the relation is mutual, and equally near on both sides, Christ in them and they in Christ, which speaks an intimate and inseparable union; in the virtue of which it is that because he lives they shall live also. Note, First, Union with Christ is the life of believers; and their relation to him, and to God through him, is their felicity. Secondly, The knowledge of this union is their unspeakable joy and satisfaction; they were now in Christ, and he in them, but he speaks of it as a further act of grace that they should know it, and have the comfort of it. An interest in Christ and the knowledge of it are sometimes separated.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Who they are whom Christ will look upon, and accept, as lovers of him; those that have his commandments, and keep them. By this Christ shows that the kind things he here said to his disciples were intended not for those only that were now his followers, but for all that should believe in him through their word. Here is,

(a.) The duty of those who claim the dignity of being disciples. Having Christ's commandments, we must keep them; as Christians in name and profession we have Christ's commandments, we have them sounding in our ears, written before our eyes, we have the knowledge of them; but this is not enough; would we approve ourselves Christians indeed, we must keep them. Having them in our heads, we must keep them in our hearts and lives.

(b.) The dignity of those that do the duty of disciples. They are looked upon by Christ to be such as love him. Not those that have the greatest wit and know how to talk for him, but those that keep his commandments. Note, The surest evidence of our love to Christ is obedience to the laws of Christ. Such is the love of a subject to his sovereign, a dutiful, respectful, obediential love, a conformity to his will, and satisfaction in his wisdom.

What returns he will make to them for their love; rich returns; there is no love lost upon Christ.

(a.) They shall have the Father's love: He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father. We could not love God if he did not first, out of his good-will to us, give us his grace to love him; but there is a love of complacency promised to those that do love God, Pr 8:17. He loves them, and lets them know that he loves them, smiles upon them, and embraces them. God so loves the Son as to love all those that love him.

(b.) They shall have Christ's love: And I will love him, as God-man, as Mediator. God will love him as a Father, and I will love him as a brother, an elder brother. The Creator will love him, and be the felicity of his being; the Redeemer will love him, and be the protector of his well-being. In the nature of God, nothing shines more brightly than this, that God is love. And in the undertaking of Christ nothing appears more glorious than this, that he loved us. Now both these loves are the crown and comfort, the grace and glory, which shall be to all those that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Christ was now leaving his disciples, but promises to continue his love to them; for he not only retains a kindness for believers,

though absent, but is doing them kindness while absent, for he bears them on his heart, and ever lives interceding for them.

(c.) They shall have the comfort of that love: I will manifest myself to him. Some understand it of Christ's showing himself alive to his disciples after his resurrection; but, being promised to all that love him and keep his commandments, it must be construed so as to extend to them. There is a spiritual manifestation of Christ and his love made to all believers. When he enlightens their minds to know his love, and the dimensions of it (Eph 3:18,19), enlivens their graces, and draws them into exercise, and thus enlarges their comforts in himself--when he clears up the evidences of their interest in him, and gives them tokens of his love, experience of his tenderness, and earnests of his kingdom and glory,--then he manifests himself to them; and Christ is manifested to none but those to whom he is pleased to manifest himself.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world ?

One of the disciples expresses his wonder and surprise at it, Joh 14:22. Observe,

[1.] Who it was that said this--Judas, not Iscariot. Judah, or Judas, was a famous name; the most famous tribe in Israel was that of Judah; two of Christ's disciples were of that name: one of them was the traitor, the other was the brother of James (Lu 6:16), one of those that were akin to Christ, Mt 13:55. He is called Lebbeus and Thaddeus, was the penman of the last of the epistles, which in our translation, for distinction's sake, we call the epistle of Jude. This was he that spoke here. Observe,

First, There was a very good man, and a very bad man, called by the same name; for names commend us not to God, nor do they make men worse. Judas the apostle was never the worse, nor Judas the apostate ever the better, for being namesakes. But,

Secondly, The evangelist carefully distinguishes between them; when he speaks of this pious Judas, he adds, not Iscariot. Take heed of mistaking; let us not confound the precious and the vile.

[2.] What he said--Lord how is it? which intimates either, First, the weakness of his understanding. So some take it. He expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, that it should appear in external pomp and power, such as all the world would wonder after. "How, then," thinks he, "should it be confined to us only?" ti gegonen--"what is the matter now, that thou wilt not show thyself openly as is expected, that the Gentiles may come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising?"

Note, We create difficulties to ourselves by mistaking the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of this world. Or, Secondly, as expressing the strength of his affections, and the humble and thankful sense he had of Christ's distinguishing favours to them: Lord, how is it? He is amazed at the condescensions of divine grace, as David, 2Sa 7:18. What is there in us to deserve so great a favour? Note,

1. Christ's manifesting himself to his disciples is done in a distinguishing way-to them, and not to the world that sits in darkness; to the base, and not to the mighty and noble; to babes, and not to the wise and prudent. Distinguishing favours are very obliging; considering who are passed by, and who are pitched upon.

2. It is justly marvellous in our eyes; for it is unaccountable, and must be resolved into free and sovereign grace. Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

[1.] He further explains the condition of the promise, which was loving him, and keeping his commandments. And, as to this, he shows what an inseparable connection there is between love and obedience; love is the root, obedience is the fruit.

First, Where a sincere love to Christ is in the heart, there will be obedience: "If a man love me indeed, that love will be such a commanding constraining principle in him, that, no question, he will keep

my words." Where there is true love to Christ there is a value for his favour, a veneration for his authority, and an entire surrender of the whole man to his direction and government. Where love is, duty follows of course, is easy and natural, and flows from a principle of gratitude.

Secondly, On the other hand, where there is no true love to Christ there will be no care to obey him: He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings, Joh 14:24. This comes in here as a discovery of those that do not love Christ; whatever they pretend, certainly those do not love him that believe not his truths, and obey not his laws, to whom Christ's sayings are but as idle tales, which he heeds not, or hard sayings, which he likes not. It is also a reason why Christ will not manifest himself to the world that doth not love him, because they put this affront upon him, not to keep his sayings; why should Christ be familiar with those that will be strange to him?

[2.] He further explains the promise (Joh 14:23): If a man thus love me, I will manifest myself to him.

First, My Father will love him; this he had said before (Joh 14:21), and here repeats it for the confirming of our faith; because it is hard to imagine that the great god should make those the objects of his love that had made themselves vessels of his wrath. Jude wondered that Christ should manifest himself to them; but this answers it, "If my Father love you, why should not I be free with you?"

Secondly, We will come unto him, and make our abode with him. This explains the meaning of Christ's manifesting himself to him, and magnifies the favour.

1. Not only,I will, but, We will, I and the Father, who, in this, are one. See Joh 14:9. The light and love of God are communicated to man in the light and love of the Redeemer, so that wherever Christ is formed the image of God is stamped.

2. Not only, "I will show myself to him at a distance," but, "We will come to him, to be near him, to be with him," such are the powerful influences of divine graces and comforts upon the souls of those that love Christ in sincerity.

3. Not only, "I will give him a transient view of me, or make him a short and running visit," but, We will take up our abode with him which denotes complacency in him and constancy to him. God will not only love obedient believers, but he will take a pleasure in loving them, will rest in love to them, Zep 3:17. He will be with them as at his home.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

He gives a good reason both to bind us to observe the condition and encourage us to depend upon the promise. The word which you hear is not mine, but his that sent me, Joh 14:24. To this purport he had often spoken (Joh 7:16,8:28,12:44), and here it comes in very pertinently.

First, the stress of duty is laid upon the precept of Christ as our rule, and justly, for that word of Christ which we are to keep is the Father's word, and his will the Father's will.

Secondly, The stress of our comfort is laid upon the promise of Christ. But forasmuch as, in dependence upon that promise, we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and quit all, it concerns us to enquire whether the security be sufficient for us to venture our all upon; and this satisfies us that it is, that the promise is not Christ's bare word, but the Father's which sent him, which therefore we may rely upon.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

The reflection Christ would have them make upon the instructions he had given them: These things have I spoken unto you (referring to all the good lessons he had taught them, since they entered themselves into his school), being yet present with you. This intimates,

(1.) That what he had said he did not retract nor unsay, but ratify it, or stand to it. What he had spoken he had spoken, and would abide by it.

(2.) That he had improved the opportunity of his bodily presence with them to the utmost: "As long as I have been yet present with them, you know I have lost no time." Note, When our teachers are about to be removed from us we should call to mind what they have spoken, being yet present with us.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The encouragement given them to expect another teacher, and that Christ would find out a way of speaking to them after his departure from them, Joh 14:26. He had told them before that the Father would give them this other comforter (Joh 14:16), and here he returns to speak of it again; for as the promise of the Messiah had been, so the promise of the Spirit now was, the consolation of Israel. Two things he here tells them further concerning the sending of the Holy Ghost:--

(1.) On whose account he should be sent: "The Father will send him in my name; that is, for my sake, at my special instance and request:" or, "as my agent and representative." He came in his Father's name, as his ambassador: the Spirit comes in his name, as resident in his absence, to carry on his undertaking, and to ripen things for his second coming. Hence he is called the Spirit of Christ, for he pleads his cause, and does his work.

(2.) On what errand he should be sent; two things he shall do:--

[1.] He shall teach you all things, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation Christ was a teacher to his disciples; if he leave them now that they have made so little proficiency, what will become of them? Why, the Spirit shall teach them, shall be their standing tutor. He shall teach them all things necessary for them either to learn themselves, or to teach others. For those that would teach the things of God must first themselves be taught of God; this is the Spirit's work. See Isa 59:21.

[2.] He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. Many a good lesson Christ had taught them, which they had

forgotten, and which would be to seek when they had occasion for it. Many things they did not retain the remembrance of, because they did not rightly understand the meaning of them. The Spirit shall not teach them a new gospel, but bring to their minds that which they had been taught, by leading them into the understanding of it. The apostles were all of them to preach, and some of them to write, the things that Jesus did and taught, to transmit them to distant nations and future ages; now, if they had been left to themselves herein, some needful things might have been forgotten, others misrepresented, through the treachery of their memories; therefore the Spirit is promised to enable them truly to relate and record what Christ said unto them. And to all the saints the Spirit of grace is given to be a remembrancer, and to him by faith and prayer we should commit the keeping of what we hear and know.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

That they should be under the influence of his peace (Joh 14:27): Peace I leave with you. When Christ was about to leave the world he made his will. His soul he committed to his Father; his body he bequeathed to Joseph, to be decently interred; his clothes fell to the soldiers; his mother he left to the care of John: but what should he leave to his poor disciples, that had left all for him? Silver and gold he had none; but he left them that which was infinitely better, his peace. "I leave you, but I leave my peace with you. I not only give you a title to it, but put you in possession of it." He did not part in anger, but in love; for this was his farewell, Peace I leave with you, as a dying father leaves portions to his children; and this is a worthy portion. Observe,

1 The legacy that is here bequeathed Peace, my peace. Peace is put for all good, and Christ has left us all needful good, all that is really and truly good, as all the purchased promised good. Peace is put for reconciliation and love; the peace bequeathed is peace with God, peace with one another; peace in our own bosoms seems to be especially meant; a tranquillity of mind arising from a sense of our justification before God. It is the counterpart of our pardons, and the composure of our minds. This Christ calls his peace, for he is himself our peace, Eph 2:14. It is the peace

he purchased for us and preached to us, and on which the angels congratulated men at his birth, Lu 2:14.

2. To whom this legacy is bequeathed: "To you, my disciples and followers, that will be exposed to trouble, and have need of peace; to you that are the sons of peace, and are qualified to receive it." This legacy was left to them as the representatives of the church, to them and their successors, to them and all true Christians in all ages.

3. In what manner it is left: Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. That is,

(1.) "I do not compliment you with Peace be unto you; no, it is not a mere formality, but a real blessing."

(2.) "The peace I give is of such a nature that the smiles of the world cannot give it, nor the frowns of the world take it away." Or,

(3.) "The gifts I give to you are not such as this world gives to its children and votaries, to whom it is kind." The world's gifts concern only the body and time; Christ's gifts enrich the soul for eternity: the world gives lying vanities, and that which will cheat us; Christ gives substantial blessings, which will never fail us: the world gives and takes; Christ gives a good part that shall never be taken away.

(4.) The peace which Christ gives is infinitely more valuable than that which the world gives. The world's peace begins in ignorance, consists with sin, and ends in endless troubles; Christ's peace begins in grace, consists with no allowed sin, and ends at length in everlasting peace. As is the difference between a killing lethargy and a reviving refreshing sleep, such is the difference between Christ's peace and the world's.

4. What use they should make of it: Let not your heart be troubled, for any evils past or present, neither let it be afraid of any evil to come. Note, Those that are interested in the covenant of grace, and entitled to the peace

which Christ gives, ought not to yield to overwhelming griefs and fears. This comes in here as the conclusion of the whole matter; he had said (Joh 14:1), Let not your heart be troubled, and here he repeats it as that for which he had now given sufficient reason.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

Christ here gives his disciples another reason why their hearts should not be troubled for his going away; and that is, because his heart was not. And here he tells them what it was that enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame, that they might look unto him, and run with patience. He comforted himself,

I. That, though he went away, he should come again: "You have heard how I have said, and now I say it again, I go away, and come again." Note, What we have heard of the doctrine of Christ, especially concerning his second coming, we have need to be told again and again. When we are under the power of any transport of passion, grief, or fear, or care, we forget that Christ will come again. See Php 4:5. Christ encouraged himself with this, in his sufferings and death, that he should come again, and the same should comfort us in our departure at death; we go away to come again; the leave we take of our friends at that parting is only a good night, not a final farewell. See 1Th 4:13,14.

II. That he went to his Father: "If you loved me, as by your sorrow you say you do, you would rejoice instead of mourning, because, though I leave you, yet I said, I go unto the Father, not only mine, but yours, which will be my advancement and your advantage; for my Father is greater than I." Observe here,

1. It is matter of joy to Christ's disciples that he is gone to the Father, to take possession for orphans, and make intercession for transgressors. His departure had a bright side as well as a dark side. Therefore he sent this message after his resurrection (Joh 20:17), I ascend to my Father and your Father, as most comfortable.

2 The reason of this is, because the Father is greater than he, which, if it be a proper proof of that for which it is alleged (as no doubt it is), must be understood thus, that his state with his Father would be much more excellent and glorious than his present state; his returning to his Father (so Dr. Hammond) would be the advancing of him to a much higher condition than that which he was now in. Or thus, His going to the Father himself, and bringing all his followers to him there, was the ultimate end of his undertaking, and therefore greater than the means. Thus Christ raises the thoughts and expectations of his disciples to something greater than that in which now they thought all their happiness bound up. The kingdom of the Father, wherein he shall be all in all, will be greater than the mediatorial kingdom.

3. The disciples of Christ should show that they love him by their rejoicing in the glories of his exaltation, rather than by lamenting the sorrows of his humiliation, and rejoicing that he is gone to his Father, where he would be, and where we shall be shortly with him. Many that love Christ, let their love run out in a wrong channel; they think if they love him they must be continually in pain because of him; whereas those that love him should dwell at ease in him, should rejoice in Christ Jesus.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

That his going away, compared with the prophecies which went before of it, would be a means of confirming the faith of his disciples (Joh 14:29): "I have told you before it come to pass that I must die and rise again, and ascend to the Father, and send the Comforter, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe." See this reason, Joh 13:19,16:4. Christ told his disciples of his death, though he knew it would both puzzle them and grieve them, because it would afterwards redound to the confirmation of their faith in two things:--

1. That he who foretold these things had a divine prescience, and knew beforehand what day would bring forth. When St. Paul was going to Jerusalem, he knew not the things that did abide him there, but Christ did.

2. That the things foretold were according to the divine purpose and designation, not sudden resolves, but the counterparts of an eternal

counsel. Let them therefore not be troubled at that which would be for the confirmation of their faith, and so would redound to their real benefit; for the trial of our faith is very precious, though it cost us present heaviness, through manifold temptations, 1Pe 1:6.

30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

That he was sure of a victory over Satan, with whom he knew he was to have a struggle in his departure (Joh 14:30): "Henceforth I will not talk much with you, having not much to say, but what may be adjourned to the pouring out of the Spirit." He had a great deal of good talk with them after this (Joh 15:1-16:33), but, in comparison with what he had said, it was not much. His time was now short, and he therefore spoke largely to them now, because the opportunity would soon be over.

Note, We should always endeavour to talk to the purpose, because perhaps we may not have time to talk much. We know not how soon our breath may be stopped, and therefore should be always breathing something that is good. When we come to be sick and die, perhaps we may not be capable of talking much to those about us; and therefore what good counsel we have to give them, let us give it while we are in health. One reason why he would not talk much with them was because he had now other work to apply himself to: The prince of this world comes. He called the devil the prince of this world, Joh 12:31. The disciples dreamed of their Master being the prince of this world, and they worldly princes under him. But Christ tells them that the prince of this world was his enemy, and so were the princes of this world, that were actuated and ruled by him, 1Co 2:8. But he has nothing in me. Observe here,

1 The prospect Christ had of an approaching conflict, not only with men, but with the powers of darkness. The devil had set upon him with his temptations (Mt 4:1-11), had offered him the kingdoms of this world, if he would hold them as tributary to him, with an eye to which Christ calls him, in disdain, the prince of this world. Then the devil departed from him for a season; "But now," says Christ, "I see him rallying again, preparing to make a furious onset, and so to gain by terrors that which he could not gain by allurements;" to frighten from his undertaking, when he could not entice from it. Note, The foresight of a temptation gives us

great advantage in our resistance of it; for, being fore-warned, we should be fore-armed. While we are here, we may see Satan continually coming against us, and ought therefore to be always upon our guard.

2 The assurance he had of good success in the conflict: He hath nothing in me, ouk echei ouden--He hath nothing at all.

(a.) There was no guilt in Christ to give authority to the prince of this world in his terrors. The devil is said to have the power of death (Heb 2:14); the Jews called him the angel of death, as an executioner. Now Christ having done no evil, Satan had no legal power against him, and therefore, though he prevailed to crucify him, he could not prevail to terrify him; though he hurried him to death, yet not to despair. When Satan comes to disquiet us, he has something in us to perplex us with, for we have all sinned; but, when he would disturb Christ, he found no occasion against him.

(b.) There was no corruption in Christ, to give advantage to the prince of this world in his temptations. He could not crush his undertaking by drawing him to sin, because there was nothing sinful in him, nothing irregular for his temptations to fasten upon, no tinder for him to strike fire into; such was the spotless purity of his nature that he was above the possibility of sinning. The more Satan's interest in us is crushed and decays, the more comfortably may we expect sufferings and death.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

That his departure was in compliance with, and obedience to, his Father. Satan could not force his life from him, and yet he would die: that the world may know that I love the Father, Joh 14:31. We may take this,

1. As confirming what he had often said, that his undertaking, as Mediator, was a demonstration to the world,

(a.) Of his compliance with the Father; hereby it appeared that he loved the Father. As it was an evidence of his love to man that he died for his salvation, so it was of his love to God that he died for his glory and the

accomplishing of his purposes. Let the world know that between the Father and the Son there is not love lost. As the Father loved the Son, and gave all things into his hands; so the Son loved the Father, and gave his spirit into his hand.

(b.) Of his obedience to his Father: "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I did--did the thing commanded me in the manner commanded." Note, The best evidence of our love to the Father is our doing as he hath given us commandment. As Christ loved the Father, and obeyed him, even to the death, so we must love Christ, and obey him. Christ's eye to the Father's commandment, obliging him to suffer and die, bore him up with cheerfulness, and overcame the reluctancies of nature; this took off the offence of the cross, that what he did was by order from the Father. The command of God is sufficient to bear us out in that which is most disputed by others, and therefore should be sufficient to bear us up in that which is most difficult to ourselves: This is the will of him that made me, that sent me.

2. As concluding what he had now said; having brought it to this, here he leaves it: that the world may know that I love the Father. You shall see how cheerfully I can meet the appointed cross: "Arise, let us go hence to the garden;" so some; or, to Jerusalem. When we talk of troubles at a distance, it is easy to say, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; but when it comes to the pinch, when an unavoidable cross lies in the way of duty, then to say, "Arise, let us go to meet it," instead of going out of our way to miss it, this lets the world know that we love the Father. If this discourse was at the close of the passover-supper, it should seem that at these words he arose from the table, and retired into the drawing-room, where he might the more freely carry on the discourse with his disciples in the following chapters, and pray with them. Dr. Goodwin's remark upon this is, that Christ mentioning the great motive of his sufferings, his Father's commandment, was in all haste to go forth to suffer and die, was afraid of slipping the time of Judas's meeting him: Arise, says he, let us go hence but he looks upon the glass, as it were, sees it not quite out, and therefore sits down again, and preaches another sermon. Now,

(a.) In these words he gives his disciples an encouragement to follow him. He does not say, I must go; but, Let us go. He calls them out to no hardships but what he himself goes before them in as their leader. They had promised they would not desert him: "Come," says he, "let us go then; let us see how you will make the words good."

(b.) He gives them an example, teaching them at all times, especially in suffering times, to sit loose to all things here below, and often to think and speak of leaving them. Though we sit easy, and in the midst of the delights of an agreeable conversation, yet we must not think of being here always: Arise, let us go hence. If it was at the close of the paschal and eucharistical supper, it teaches us that the solemnities of our communion with God are not to be constant in this world. When we sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and say, It is good to be here; yet we must think of rising and going hence; going down from the mount.

John-15

Jesus the True Vine

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

1. That Jesus Christ is the vine, the true vine. It is an instance of the humility of Christ that he is pleased to speak of himself under low and humble comparisons. He that is the Sun of righteousness, and the bright and morning Star, compares himself to a vine. The church, which is Christ mystical, is a vine (Ps 80:8), so is Christ, who is the church seminal. Christ and his church are thus set forth.

(a.) He is the vine, planted in the vineyard, and not a spontaneous product; planted in the earth, for his is the Word made flesh. The vine has an unsightly unpromising outside; and Christ had no form nor comeliness, Isa 53:2 The vine is a spreading plant, and Christ will be known as salvation to the ends of the earth. The fruit of the vine honours God and cheers man (Jdg 9:13), so does the fruit of Christ's mediation; it is better than gold, Pr 8:19.

(b.) He is the true vine, as truth is opposed to pretence and counterfeit; he is really a fruitful plant, a plant of renown. He is not like that wild vine which deceived those who gathered of it (2Ki 4:39), but a true vine. Unfruitful trees are said to lie (Hab 3:17. marg.), but Christ is a vine that will not deceive. Whatever excellency there is in any creature, serviceable to man, it is but a shadow of that grace which is in Christ for his people's good. He is that true vine typified by Judah's vine, which enriched him with the blood of the grape (Ge 49:11), by Joseph's vine, the branches of which ran over the wall (Ge 49:22), by Israel's vine, under which he dwelt safely, 1Ki 4:25.

2. That believers are branches of this vine, which supposes that Christ is the root of the vine. The root is unseen, and our life is hid with Christ; the root bears the tree (Ro 11:18), diffuses sap to it, and is all in all to its flourishing and fruitfulness; and in Christ are all supports and supplies. The branches of the vine are many, some on one side of the house or wall, others on the other side; yet, meeting in the root, are all but one vine; thus all good Christians, though in place and opinion distant from each other, yet meet in Christ, the centre of their unity. Believers, like the branches of the vine, are weak, and insufficient to stand of themselves, but as they are borne up. See Eze 15:2.

3. That the Father is the husbandman, georgos--the land-worker. Though the earth is the Lord's, it yields him no fruit unless he work it. God has not only a propriety in, but a care of, the vine and all the branches. He hath planted, and watered, and gives the increase; for we are God's husbandry, 1Co 3:9. See Isa 5:1,2,27:2,3. He had an eye upon Christ, the root, and upheld him, and made him to flourish out of a dry ground. He has an eye upon all the branches, and prunes them, and watches over them, that nothing hurt them. Never was any husbandman so wise, so watchful, about his vineyard, as God is about his church, which therefore must needs prosper.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

1. We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes (Isa 5:2), and from a Christian we look for Christianity; this is the fruit, a Christian temper and disposition, a Christian life and conversation, Christian devotions and

Christian designs. We must honour God, and do good, and exemplify the purity and power of the religion we profess; and this is bearing fruit. The disciples here must be fruitful, as Christians, in all the fruits of righteousness, and as apostles, in diffusing the savour of the knowledge of Christ. To persuade them to this, he urges,

(a.) The doom of the unfruitful (Joh 15:2): They are taken away.

[1.] It is here intimated that there are many who pass for branches in Christ who yet do not bear fruit. Were they really united to Christ by faith, they would bear fruit; but being only tied to him by the thread of an outward profession, though they seem to be branches, they will soon be seen to be dry ones. Unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; professors, and no more. It might be read, Every branch that beareth not fruit in me, and it comes much to one; for those that do not bear fruit in Christ, and in his Spirit and grace, are as if they bore no fruit at all, Ho 10:1.

[2.] It is here threatened that they shall be taken away, in justice to them and in kindness to the rest of the branches. From him that has not real union with Christ, and fruit produced thereby, shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have, Lu 8:18. Some think this refers primarily to Judas.

(b.) The promise made to the fruitful: He purgeth them, that they may bring forth more fruit. Note,

[1.] Further fruitfulness is the blessed reward of forward fruitfulness. The first blessing was, Be fruitful; and it is still a great blessing.

[2.] Even fruitful branches, in order to their further fruitfulness, have need of purging or pruning; kathairei--he taketh away that which is superfluous and luxuriant, which hinders its growth and fruitfulness. The best have that in them which is peccant, aliquid amputandum--something which should be taken away; some notions, passions, or humours, that want to be purged away, which Christ has promised to do by his word, and Spirit,

and providence; and these shall be taken off by degrees in the proper season.

[3.] The purging of fruitful branches, in order to their greater fruitfulness, is the care and work of the great husbandman, for his own glory.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

The benefits which believers have by the doctrine of Christ, the power of which they should labour to exemplify in a fruitful conversation: Now you are clean, Joh 15:3.

[1.] Their society was clean, now that Judas was expelled by that word of Christ, What thou doest, do quickly; and till they were got clear of him they were not all clean. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, and separates between the precious and the vile; it will purify the church of the first-born in the great dividing day.

[2.] They were each of them clean, that is, sanctified, by the truth of Christ (Joh 17:17); that faith by which they received the word of Christ purified their hearts, Ac 15:9. The Spirit of grace by the word refined them from the dross of the world and the flesh, and purged out of them the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees, from which, when they saw their inveterate rage and enmity against their Master, they were now pretty well cleansed. Apply it to all believers. The word of Christ is spoken to them; there is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works grace, and works out corruption. It cleanses as fire cleanses the gold from its dross, and as physic cleanses the body from its disease. We then evidence that we are cleansed by the word when we bring forth fruit unto holiness. Perhaps here is an allusion to the law concerning vineyards in Canaan; the fruit of them was as unclean, and uncircumcised, the first three years after it was planted, and the fourth year it was to be holiness of praise unto the Lord; and then it was clean, Le 19:23,24. The disciples had now been three years under Christ's instruction; and now you are clean.

The glory that will redound to God by our fruitfulness, with the comfort and honour that will come to ourselves by it, Joh 15:8. If we bear much fruit,

[1.] Herein our Father will be glorified. The fruitfulness of the apostles, as such, in the diligent discharge of their office, would be to the glory of God in the conversion of souls, and the offering of them up to him, Ro 15:9,16. The fruitfulness of all Christians, in a lower or narrower sphere, is to the glory of God. By the eminent good works of Christians many are brought to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

[2.] So shall we be Christ's disciples indeed, approving ourselves so, and making it to appear that we are really what we call ourselves. So shall we both evidence our discipleship and adorn it, and be to our Master for a name and a praise, and a glory, that is, disciples indeed, Jer 13:11. So shall we be owned by our Master in the great day, and have the reward of disciples, a share in the joy of our Lord. And the more fruit we bring forth, the more we abound in that which is good, the more he is glorified.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

The duty enjoined (Joh 15:4): Abide in me, and I in you. Note, It is the great concern of all Christ's disciples constantly to keep up a dependence upon Christ and communion with him, habitually to adhere to him, and actually to derive supplies from him. Those that are come to Christ must abide in him: "Abide in me, by faith; and I in you, by my Spirit; abide in me, and then fear not but I will abide in you;" for the communion between Christ and believers never fails on his side. We must abide in Christ's word by a regard to it, and it in us as a light to our feet. We must abide in Christ's merit as our righteousness and plea, and it in us as our support and comfort. The knot of the branch abides in the vine, and the sap of the vine abides in the branch, and so there is a constant communication between them.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

The necessity of our abiding in Christ, in order to our fruitfulness (Joh 15:4,5): "You cannot bring forth fruit, except you abide in me; but, if you do, you bring forth much fruit; for, in short, without me, or separate from me, you can do nothing." So necessary is it to our comfort and happiness that we be fruitful, that the best argument to engage us to abide in Christ is, that otherwise we cannot be fruitful.

[1.] Abiding in Christ is necessary in order to our doing much good. He that is constant in the exercise of faith in Christ and love to him, that lives upon his promises and is led by his Spirit, bringeth forth much fruit, he is very serviceable to God's glory, and his own account in the great day. Note, Union with Christ is a noble principle, productive of all good. A life of faith in the Son of God is incomparably the most excellent life a man can live in this world; it is regular and even, pure and heavenly; it is useful and comfortable, and all that answers the end of life.

[2.] It is necessary to our doing any good. It is not only a means of cultivating ad increasing what good there is already in us, but it is the root and spring of all good: "Without me you can do nothing: not only no great thing, heal the sick, or raise the dead, but nothing." Note, We have as necessary and constant a dependence upon the grace of the Mediator for all the actions of the spiritual and divine life as we have upon the providence of the Creator for all the actions of the natural life; for, as to both, it is in the divine power that we live, move, and have our being. Abstracted from the merit of Christ, we can do nothing towards our justification; and from the Spirit of Christ nothing towards our sanctification. Without Christ we can do nothing aright, nothing that will be fruit pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves, 2Co 3:5. We depend upon Christ, not only as the vine upon the wall, for support; but, as the branch on the root, for sap.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

The fatal consequences of forsaking Christ (Joh 15:6): If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch. This is a description of the fearful state of hypocrites that are not in Christ, and of apostates that abide not in Christ.

[1.] They are cast forth as dry and withered branches, which are plucked off because they cumber the tree. It is just that those should have no benefit by Christ who think they have no need of him; and that those who reject him should be rejected by him. Those that abide not in Christ shall be abandoned by him; they are left to themselves, to fall into scandalous sin, and then are justly cast out of the communion of the faithful.

[2.] They are withered, as a branch broken off from the tree. Those that abide not in Christ, though they may flourish awhile in a plausible, at least a passable profession, yet in a little time wither and come to nothing. Their parts and gifts wither; their zeal and devotion wither; their credit and reputation wither; their hopes and comforts wither, Job 8:11-13. Note, Those that bear no fruit, after while will bear no leaves. How soon is that fig-tree withered away which Christ has cursed!

[3.] Men gather them. Satan's agents and emissaries pick them up, and make an easy prey of them. Those that fall off from Christ presently fall in with sinners; and the sheep that wander from Christ's fold, the devil stands ready to seize them for himself. When the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, an evil spirit possessed him.

[4.] They cast them into the fire, that is, they are cast into the fire; and those who seduce them and draw them to sin do in effect cast them there; for they make them children of hell. Fire is the fittest place for withered branches, for they are good for nothing else, Eze 15:2-4.

[5.] They are burned; this follows of course, but it is here added very emphatically, and makes the threatening very terrible. They will not be consumed in a moment, like thorns under a pot (Ec 7:6), but kaietai, they are burning for ever in a fire, which not only cannot be quenched, but will never spend itself. This comes of quitting Christ, this is the end of barren trees. Apostates are twice dead (Jude 1:12), and when it is said, They are cast into the fire and are burned, it speaks as if they were twice damned. Some apply men's gathering them to the ministry of the angels in the great day, when they shall gather out of Christ's kingdom all things that offend, and shall bundle the tares for the fire.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

The blessed privilege which those have that abide in Christ (Joh 15:7): If my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will of my Father in my name, and it shall be done. See here,

[1.] How our union with Christ is maintained--by the word: If you abide in me; he had said before, and I in you; here he explains himself, and my words abide in you; for it is in the word that Christ is set before us, and offered to us, Ro 10:6-8. It is in the word that we receive and embrace him; and so where the word of Christ dwells richly there Christ dwells. If the word be our constant guide and monitor, if it be in us as at home, then we abide in Christ, and he in us.

[2.] How our communion with Christ is maintained--by prayer: You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done to you. And what can we desire more than to have what we will for the asking? Note, Those that abide in Christ as their heart's delight shall have, through Christ, their heart's desire. If we have Christ, we shall want nothing that is good for us. Two things are implied in this promise:--

First, That if we abide in Christ, and his word in us, we shall not ask any thing but what is proper to be done for us. The promises abiding in us lie ready to be turned into prayers; and the prayers so regulated cannot but speed.

Secondly, That if we abide in Christ and his word we shall have such an interest in God's favour and Christ's mediation that we shall have an answer of peace to all our prayers.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

Concerning the Father's love to him; and concerning this he here tells us,

1. That the Father did love him (Joh 15:9): As the Father hath loved me. He loved him as Mediator: This is my beloved Son. He was the Son of his love. He loved him, and gave all things into his hand; and yet so loved the world as to deliver him up for us all. When Christ was entering upon his sufferings he comforted himself with this, that his Father loved him. Those whom God loves as a Father may despise the hatred of all the world.

2. That he abode in his Father's love, Joh 15:10. He continually loved his Father, and was beloved of him. Even when he was made sin and a curse for us, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him, yet he abode in his Father's love. See Ps 89:33. Because he continued to love his Father, he went cheerfully through his sufferings, and therefore his Father continued to love him.

3. That therefore he abode in his Father's love because he kept his Father's law: I have kept my Father's commandments, as Mediator, and so abide in his love. Hereby he showed that he continued to love his Father, that he went on, and went through, with his undertaking, and therefore the Father continued to love him. His soul delighted in him, because he did not fail, nor was discouraged, Isa 42:1-4. We having broken the law of creation, and thereby thrown ourselves out of the love of God; Christ satisfied for us by obeying the law of redemption, and so he abode in his love, and restored

The pattern of this love: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. A strange expression of the condescending grace of Christ! As the Father loved him, who was most worthy, he loved them, who were most unworthy. The Father loved him as his Son, and he loves them as his children. The Father gave all things into his hand; so, with himself, he freely giveth us all things. The Father loved him as Mediator, as head of the church, and the great trustee of divine grace and favour, which he had not for himself only, but for the benefit of those for whom he was entrusted; and, says he, "I have been a faithful trustee. As the Father has committed his love to me, so I transmit it to you." Therefore the Father was well pleased with him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and loved him, that in him, as beloved, he might make us accepted, Eph 1:6.

To continue in his love, Joh 15:9. "Continue in your love to me, and in mine to you." Both may be taken in. We must place our happiness in the continuance of Christ's love to us, and make it our business to give continued proofs of our love to Christ, that nothing may tempt us to withdraw from him, or provoke him to withdraw from us. Note, All that

love Christ should continue in their love to him, that is, be always loving him, and taking all occasions to show it, and love to the end. The disciples were to go out upon service for Christ, in which they would meet with many troubles; but, says Christ, "Continue in my love. Keep up your love to me, and then all the troubles you meet with will be easy; love made seven years' hard service easy to Jacob. Let not the troubles you meet with for Christ's sake quench your love to Christ, but rather quicken it.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

To evidence their love to him by keeping his commandments: "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, Joh 15:10. This will be an evidence of the fidelity and constancy of your love to me, and then you may be sure of the continuance of my love to you." Observe here,

(1.) The promise "You shall abide in my love as in a dwelling place, at home in Christ's love; as in a resting place, at ease in Christ's love; as in a stronghold, safe in it. You shall abide in my love, you shall have grace and strength to persevere in loving me." If the same hand that first shed abroad the love of Christ in our hearts did not keep us in that love, we should not long abide in it, but, through the love of the world, should go out of love with Christ himself.

(2.) The condition of the promise: If you keep my commandments. The disciples were to keep Christ's commandments, not only by a constant conformity to them themselves, but by a faithful delivery of them to others; they were to keep them as trustees, in whose hands that great depositum was lodged, for they were to teach all things that Christ had commanded, Mt 28:20. This commandment they must keep without spot (1Ti 6:14), and thus they must show that they abide in his love.

To induce them to keep his commandments, he urges,

[1.] His own example: As I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. Christ submitted to the law of mediation, and so preserved the honour and comfort of it, to teach us to submit to the laws

of the Mediator, for we cannot otherwise preserve the honour and comfort of our relation to him.

[2.] The necessity of it to their interest in him (Joh 15:14): "You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you and not otherwise." Note,

First, Those only will be accounted Christ's faithful friends that approve themselves his obedient servants; for those that will not have him to reign over them shall be treated as his enemies. Idem velle et idem nolle ea demum vera est amicitia--Friendship involves a fellowship of aversions and attachments.--Sallust.

Secondly, It is universal obedience to Christ that is the only acceptable obedience; to obey him in every thing that he commands us, not excepting, much less excepting against, any command.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

To let his joy remain in them, and fill them, Joh 15:11. This he designed in those precepts and promises given them.

(a.) That his joy might remain in them. The words are so placed, in the original, that they may be read either,

[1.] That my joy in you may remain. If they bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, he will continue to rejoice in them as he had done. Note, Fruitful and faithful disciples are the joy of the Lord Jesus; he rests in his love to them, Zep 3:17. As there is a transport of joy in heaven in the conversion of sinners, so there is a remaining joy in the perseverance of saints. Or,

[2.] That my joy, that is, your joy in me, may remain. It is the will of Christ that his disciples should constantly and continually rejoice in him, Php 4:4. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, but the joy of those who abide in Christ's love is a continual feast. The word of the Lord enduring for ever, the joys that flow from it, and are founded on it, do so too.

(b.) That your joy might be full; not only that you might be full of joy, but that your joy in me and in my love may rise higher and higher, till it come to perfection, when you enter into the joy of your Lord." Note,

[1.] Those and those only that have Christ's joy remaining in them have their joy full; worldly joys are empty, soon surfeit but never satisfy. It is only wisdom's joy that will fill the soul, Ps 36:8.

[2.] The design of Christ in his world is to fill the joy of his people; see 1Jo 1:4. This and the other he hath said, that our joy might be fuller and fuller, and perfect at last.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Concerning the disciples' love one to another, enjoined as an evidence of their love to Christ, and a grateful return for his love to them. We must keep his commandments, and this is his commandment, that we love one another, Joh 15:12,17. No one duty of religion is more frequently inculcated, nor more pathetically urged upon us, by our Lord Jesus, than that of mutual love, and for good reason.

1. It is here recommended by Christ's pattern (Joh 15:12): as I have loved you. Christ's love to us should direct and engage our love to each other; in this manner, and from this motive, we should love one another, as, and because, Christ has loved us. He here specifies some of the expressions of his love to them; he called them friends, communicated his mind to them, was ready to give them what they asked. Go you and do likewise.

2. It is required by his precept. He interposes his authority, has made it one of the statute-laws of his kingdom. Observe how differently it is expressed in Joh 15:12,17, and both very emphatic.

(a.) This is my commandment (Joh 15:12), as if this were the most necessary of all the commandments. As under the law the prohibition of idolatry was the commandment more insisted on than any other, foreseeing the people's addictedness to that sin, so Christ, foreseeing the

addictedness of the Christian church to uncharitableness, has laid most stress upon this precept.

(b.) These things I command you, Joh 15:17. He speaks as if he were about to give them many things in charge, and yet names this only, that you love one another; not only because this includes many duties, but because it will have a good influence upon all.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Christ loved his disciples, for he laid down his life for them (Joh 15:13): Greater proof of love hath no man to show than this, to lay down his life for his friend. And this is the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, he is our antipsychos--bail for us, body for body, life for life, though he knew our insolvency, and foresaw how much the engagement would cost him. Observe here,

[1.] The extent of the love of the children of men to one another. The highest proof of it is laying down one's life for a friend, to save his life, and perhaps there have been some such heroic achievements of love, more than plucking out one's own eyes, Ga 4:15. If all that a man has he will give for his life, he that gives this for his friend gives all, and can give no more; this may sometimes be our duty, 1Jo 3:16. Paul was ambitious of the honour (Php 2:17); and for a good man some will even dare to die, Ro 5:7. It is love in the highest degree, which is strong as death.

[2.] The excellency of the love of Christ beyond all other love. He has not only equaled, but exceeded, the most illustrious lovers. Others have laid down their lives, content that they should be taken from them; but Christ gave up his, was not merely passive, but made it his own act and deed. The life which others have laid down has been but of equal value with the life for which it was laid down, and perhaps less valuable; but Christ is infinitely more worth than ten thousand of us. Others have thus laid down their lives for their friends, but Christ laid down his for us when we were enemies, Ro 5:8,10. Plusquam ferrea aut lapidea corda esse oportet, quæ non emolliet tam incomparabilis divini amoris suavitas--Those hearts must be harder than iron or stone which are not softened by such incomparable sweetness of divine love.--Calvin.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Christ loved his disciples, for he took them into a covenant of friendship with himself, Joh 15:14,15. "If you approve yourselves by your obedience my disciples indeed, you are my friends, and shall be treated as friends." Note, The followers of Christ are the friends of Christ, and he is graciously pleased to call and account them so. Those that do the duty of his servants are admitted and advanced to the dignity of his friends. David had one servant in his court, and Solomon one in his, that was in a particular manner the king's friend (2Sa 15:37,1Ki 4:5); but this honour have all Christ's servants. We may in some particular instance befriend a stranger; but we espouse all the interests of a friend, and concern ourselves in all his cares: thus Christ takes believers to be his friends. He visits them and converses with them as his friends, bears with them and makes the best of them, is afflicted in their afflictions, and takes pleasure in their prosperity; he pleads for them in heaven and takes care of all their interests there. Have friends but one soul? He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1Co 6:17. Though they often show themselves unfriendly, he is a friend that loves at all times. Observe how endearingly this is expressed here.

[1.] He will not call them servants, though they call him Master and Lord. Those that would be like Christ in humility must not take a pride in insisting upon all occasions on their authority and superiority, but remember that their servants are their fellow-servants. But,

[2.] He will call them his friends; he will not only love them, but will let them know it; for in his tongue is the law of kindness. After his resurrection he seems to speak with more affectionate tenderness of and to his disciples than before. Go to my brethren, Joh 20:17. Children, have you any meat? Joh 21:5. But observe, though Christ called them his friends, they called themselves his servants: Peter, a servant of Christ (1Pe 1:1), and so James, Jam 1:1 The more honour Christ puts upon us, the more honour we should study to do him; the higher in his eyes, the lower in our own.

Christ loved his disciples, for he was very free in communicating his mind to them (Joh 15:15): "Henceforth you shall not be kept so much in the dark as you have been, like servants that are only told their present work; but, when the Spirit is poured out, you shall know your Master's designs as friends. All things that I have heard of my Father I have declared unto you." As to the secret will of God, there are many things which we must be content not to know; but, as to the revealed will of God, Jesus Christ has faithfully handed to us what he received of the Father, Joh 1:18,Mt 11:27. The great things relating to man's redemption Christ declared to his disciples, that they might declare them to others; they were the men of his counsel, Mt 13:11.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Christ loved his disciples, for he chose and ordained them to be the prime instruments of his glory and honour in the world (Joh 15:16): I have chosen you, and ordained you, His love to them appeared,

[1.] In their election, their election to their apostleship (Joh 6:70): I have chosen you twelve. It did not begin on their side: You have not chosen me, but I first chose you. Why were they admitted to such an intimacy with him, employed in such an embassy for him, and endued with such power from on high? It was not owing to their wisdom and goodness in choosing him for their Master, but to his favour and grace in choosing them for his disciples. It is fit that Christ should have the choosing of his own ministers; still he does it by his providence and Spirit. Though ministers make that holy calling their own choice, Christ's choice is prior to theirs and directs and determines it. Of all that are chosen to grace and glory it may be said, They have not chosen Christ, but he had chosen them, De 7:7,8.

[2.] In their ordination: I have ordained you; hetheka hymas--"I have put you into the ministry (1Ti 1:12), put you into commission." By this it appeared that he took them for his friends when he crowned their heads with such an honour, and filled their hands with such a trust. It was a mighty confidence he reposed in them, when he made them his ambassadors to negotiate the affairs of his kingdom in this lower world,

and the prime ministers of state in the administration of it. The treasure of the gospel was committed to them,

First, That it might be propagated: that you should go, hina hymeis hypagete--"that you should go as under a yoke or burden, for the ministry is a work, and you that go about it must resolve to undergo a great deal; that you may go from place to place all the world over, and bring forth fruit." They were ordained, not to sit still, but to go about, to be diligent in their work, and to lay out themselves unweariedly in doing good. They were ordained, not to beat the air, but to be instrumental in God's hand for the bringing of nations into obedience to Christ, Ro 1:13.

Note, Those whom Christ ordains should and shall be fruitful; should labour, and shall not labour in vain.

Secondly, That it might be perpetuated; that the fruit may remain, that the good effect of their labours may continue in the world from generation to generation, to the end of time. The church of Christ was not to be a short-lived thing, as many of the sects of the philosophers, that were a nine days' wonder; it did not come up in a night, nor should it perish in a night, but be as the days of heaven. The sermons and writings of the apostles are transmitted to us, and we at this day are built upon that foundation, ever since the Christian church was first founded by the ministry of the apostles and seventy disciples; as one generation of ministers and Christians has passed away, still another has come. By virtue of that great charter (Mt 28:19), Christ has a church in the world, which, as our lawyers say of bodies corporate, does not die, but lives in a succession; and thus their fruit remains to this day, and shall do while the earth remains.

[3.] His love to them appeared in the interest they had at the throne of grace: Whatsoever you shall ask of my Father, in my name, he will give it you. Probably this refers in the first place to the power of working miracles which the apostles were clothed with, which was to be drawn out by prayer. "Whatever gifts are necessary to the furtherance of your labours, whatever help from heaven you have occasion for at any time, it is but ask and have." Three things are here hinted to us for our encouragement in prayer, and very encouraging they are.

First, That we have a God to go to who is a Father; Christ here calls him the Father, both mine and yours; and the Spirit in the word and in the heart teaches us to cry, Abba, Father.

Secondly, That we come in a good name. Whatever errand we come upon to the throne of grace according to God's will, we may with a humble boldness mention Christ's name in it, and plead that we are related to him, and he is concerned for us.

Thirdly, That an answer of peace is promised us. What you come for shall be given you. This great promise made to that great duty keeps up a comfortable and gainful intercourse between heaven and earth.

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

The World's Hatred

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

Who they are in whom this hatred is found--the world, the children of this world, as distinguished from the children of God; those who are in the interests of the god of this world, whose image they bear, and whose power they are subject to; all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who would not come into the church of Christ, which he audibly called, and visibly separates from this evil world. The calling of these the world intimates,

1. Their number; there were a world of people that opposed Christ and Christianity. Lord, how were they increased that troubled the Son of David! I fear, if we should put it to the vote between Christ and Satan, Satan would out-poll us quite.

2. Their confederacy and combination; these numerous hosts are embodied, and are as one, Ps 83:5. Jews and Gentiles, that could agree in nothing else, agreed to persecute Christ's minister.

3. Their spirit and disposition; they are men of the world (Ps 16:13,14), wholly devoted to this world and the things of it, and never thinking of another world. The people of God, though they are taught to hate the sins of sinners, yet not their persons, but to love and do good to all men. A malicious, spiteful, envious spirit, is not the spirit of Christ, but of the world.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

1 The world hates the disciples of Christ: The world hateth you (Joh 15:19); and he speaks of it as that which they must expect and count upon, Joh 15:18, as 1Jo 3:13.

(a.) Observe how this comes in here.

[1.] Christ had expressed the great kindness he had for them as friends; but, lest they should be puffed up with this, there was given them, as there was to Paul, a thorn in the flesh, that is, as it is explained there, reproaches and persecutions for Christ's sake, 2Co 12:7,10.

[2.] He had appointed them their work, but tells them what hardships they should meet with in it, that it might not be a surprise to them, and that they might prepare accordingly.

[3.] He had charged them to love one another, and need enough they had to love one another, for the world would hate them; to be kind to one another, for they would have a great deal of unkindness and ill-will from those that were without. "Keep peace among yourselves, and this will fortify you against the world's quarrels with you." Those that are in the midst of enemies are concerned to hold together.

(b.) Observe what is here included.

[1.] The world's enmity against the followers of Christ: it hateth them. Note, Whom Christ blesseth the world curseth. The favourites and heirs of heaven have never been the darlings of this world, since the old enmity

was put between the seed of the woman and of the serpent. Why did Cain hate Abel, but because his works were righteous? Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing; Joseph's brethren hated him because his father loved him; Saul hated David because the Lord was with him; Ahab hated Micaiah because of his prophecies; such are the causeless causes of the world's hatre

Because they do not belong to it (Joh 15:19): "If you were of the world, of its spirit, and in its interests, if you were carnal and worldly, the world would love you as its own; but, because you are called out of the world, it hates you, and ever will." Note,

1. We are not to wonder if those that are devoted to the world are caressed by it as its friends; most men bless the covetous, Ps 10:3,49:18.

2. Nor are we to wonder if those that are delivered from the world are maligned by it as its enemies; when Israel is rescued out of Egypt, the Egyptians will pursue them. Observe, The reason why Christ's disciples are not of the world is not because they have by their own wisdom and virtue distinguished themselves from the world, but because Christ hath chosen them out of it, to set them apart for himself; and this is the reason why the world hates them; for,

(a.) The glory which by virtue of this choice they are designed for sets them above the world, and so makes them the objects of its envy. The saints shall judge the world, and the upright have dominion, and therefore they are hated.

(b.) The grace which by virtue of this choice they are endued with sets them against the world; they swim against the stream of the world, and are not conformed to it; they witness against it, and are not conformed to it. This would support them under all the calamities which the world's hatred would bring upon them, that they were hated because they were the choice and the chosen ones of the Lord Jesus, and were not of the world. Now,

[1.] This was no just cause for the world's hatred of them. If we do any thing to make ourselves hateful, we have reason to lament it; but, if men hate us for that for which they should love and value us, we have reason to pity them, but no reason to perplex ourselves. Nay,

[2.] This was just cause for their own joy. He that is hated because he is rich and prospers cares not who has the vexation of it, while he has the satisfaction of it.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

The fruits of that enmity, two of which we have here, Joh 15:20.

First, They will persecute you, because they hate you, for hatred is a restless passion. It is the common lot of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus to suffer persecution, 2Ti 3:12. Christ foresaw what ill usage his ambassadors would meet with in the world, and yet, for the sake of those few that by their ministry were to be called out of the world, he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

Secondly, Another fruit of their enmity is implied, that they would reject their doctrine. When Christ says, If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours, he means, They will keep yours, and regard yours, no more than they have regarded and kept mine.

Note, The preachers of the gospel cannot but take the despising of their message to be the greatest injury that can be done to themselves; as it was a great affront to Jeremiah to say, Let us not give heed to any of his words, Jer 18:18.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

[1] "Another cause of the world's hating you will be because you do belong to Christ (Joh 15:21): For my name's sake." Here is the core of the controversy; whatever is pretended, this is the ground of the quarrel, they hate Christ's disciples because they bear his name, and bear up his name in the world. Note,

1. It is the character of Christ's disciples that they stand up for his name. The name into which they were baptized is that which they will live and die by.

2. It has commonly been the lot of those that appear for Christ's name to suffer for so doing, to suffer many things, and hard things, all these things. It is matter of comfort to the greatest sufferers if they suffer for Christ's name's sake. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you (1Pe 4:14), happy indeed, considering not only the honour that is imprinted upon those sufferings (Ac 5:41), but the comfort that is infused into them, and especially the crown of glory which those sufferings lead to. If we suffer with Christ, and for Christ, we shall reign with him.

[2] After all, it is the world's ignorance that is the true cause of its enmity to the disciples of Christ (Joh 15:21): Because they know not him that sent me. 1. They know not God. If men had but a due acquaintance with the very first principles of natural religion, and did but know God, though they did not embrace Christianity, yet they could not hate and persecute it. Those have no knowledge who eat up God's people, Ps 14:4. 2. They know not God as he that sent our Lord Jesus, and authorized him to be the great Mediator of the peace. We do not rightly know God if we do not know him in Christ, and those who persecute those whom he sends make it to appear that they know not that he was sent of God. See 1Co 2:8.

2 The world hates Christ himself. And this is spoken of here for two ends:--

To mitigate the trouble of his followers, arising from the world's hatred, and to make it the less strange, and the less grievous (Joh 15:18): You know that it hated me before you, proton hymon. We read it as signifying priority of time; he began in the bitter cup of suffering, and then left us to pledge him; but it may be read as expressing his superiority over them: "You know that it hated me, your first, your chief and captain, your leader and commander."

[1.] If Christ, who excelled in goodness, and was perfectly innocent and universally beneficent, was hated, can we expect that any virtue or merit of ours should screen us from malice?

[2.] If our Master, the founder of our religion, met with so much opposition in the planting of it, his servants and followers can look for no other in propagating and professing it. For this he refers them (Joh 15:20) to his own word, at their admission into discipleship: Remember the word that I said unto you. It would help us to understand Christ's latter sayings to compare them with his former sayings. Nor would any thing contribute more to the making of us easy than remembering the words of Christ, which will expound his providences. Now in this word there is,

First, A plain truth: The servant is not greater than his Lord. This he had said to them. Mt 10:24. Christ is our Lord, and therefore we must diligently attend all his motions, and patiently acquiesce in all his disposals, for the servant is inferior to his lord. The plainest truths are sometimes the strongest arguments for the hardest duties; Elihu answers a multitude of Job's murmurings with this one self-evident truth, that God is greater than man, Job 33:12. So here is,

Secondly, A proper inference drawn from it: "If they have persecuted men, as you have seen, and are likely to see much more, they will also persecute you; you may expect it and count upon it: for,"

1. "You will do the same that I have done to provoke them; you will reprove them for their sins, and call them to repentance, and give them strict rules of holy living, which they will not bear."

2. "You cannot do more than I have done to oblige them; after so great an instance, let none wonder if they suffer ill for doing well." He adds, "If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also; as there have been a few, and but a few, that have been wrought upon by my preaching, so there will be by yours a few, and but a few." Some give another sense of this, making eteresan to be put for pareteresan. "If they have lain in wait for my

sayings, with a design to ensnare me, they will in like manner lie in wait to entangle you in your talk."

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.

To aggravate the wickedness of this unbelieving world, and to discover its exceeding sinfulness; to hate and persecute the apostles was bad enough, but in them to hate and persecute Christ himself was much worse. The world is generally in an ill name in scripture, and nothing can put it into a worse name than this, that it hated Jesus Christ. There is a world of people that are haters of Christ. Two things he insists upon to aggravate the wickedness of those that hated him:--

That there was the greatest reason imaginable why they should love him; men's good words and good works usually recommend them; now as to Christ,

First, His words were such as merited their love (Joh 15:22): "If I had not spoken unto them, to court their love, they had not had sin, their opposition had not amounted to a hatred of me, their sin had been comparatively no sin. But now that I have said so much to them to recommend myself to their best affections they have no pretence, no excuse for their sin." Observe here,

1 The advantage which those have that enjoy the gospel; Christ in it comes and speaks to them; he spoke in person to the men of that generation, and is still speaking to us by our Bibles and ministers, and as one that has the most unquestionable authority over us, and affection for us. Every word of his is pure, carries with it a commanding majesty, and yet a condescending tenderness, able, one would think, to charm the deafest adder.

2 The excuse which those have that enjoy not the gospel: "If I had not spoken to them, if they had ever heard of Christ and of salvation by him, they had not had sin."

(a.) Not this kind of sin. They had not been chargeable with a contempt of Christ if he had not come and made a tender of his grace to them. As sin is

not imputed where there is no law, so unbelief is not imputed where there is no gospel; and, where it is imputed, it is thus far the only damning sin, that, being a sin against the remedy, other sin would not damn if the guilt of them were not bound on with this.

(b.) Not such a degree of sin. If they had not had the gospel among them, their other sins had not been so bad; for the times of ignorance God winked at, Lu 12:47,48. 3. The aggravated guilt which those lie under to whom Christ has come and spoken in vain, whom he has called and invited in vain, with whom he has reasoned and pleaded in vain; They have no cloak for their sin; they are altogether inexcusable, and in the judgment day will be speechless, and will not have a word to say for themselves.

Note, The clearer and fuller the discoveries are which are made to us of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, the more is said to us that is convincing and endearing, the greater is our sin if we do not love him and believe in him. The word of Christ strips sin of its cloak, that it may appear sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

His works were such as merited their love, as well as his words (Joh 15:24): "If I had not done among them, in their country, and before their eyes, such works as no other man ever did, they had not had sin; their unbelief and enmity had been excusable, and they might have had some colour to say that my word was not to be credited, if not otherwise confirmed;" but he produced satisfactory proofs of his divine mission, works which no other man did. Note,

1. As the Creator demonstrates his power and Godhead by his works (Ro 1:20), so doth the Redeemer. His miracles, his mercies, works of wonder and works of grace, prove him sent of God, and sent on a kind errand.

2. Christ's works were such as no man ever did. No common person that had not a commission from heaven, and God with him, could work miracles, Joh 3:2. And no prophet ever wrought such miracles, so many,

so illustrious. Moses and Elias wrought miracles as servants, by a derived power; but Christ, as a Son, by his own power. This was it that amazed the people, that with authority he commanded diseases and devils (Mk 1:27); they owned they never saw the like, Mk 2:12. They were all good works, works of mercy; and this seems especially intended here, for he is upbraiding them with this, that they hated him. One that was so universally useful, more than ever any man was, one would think, should have been universally beloved, and yet even he is hated.

3. The works of Christ enhance the guilt of sinners' infidelity and enmity to him, to the last degree of wickedness and absurdity. If they had only heard his words, and not seen his works,--if we had only his sermons upon record, and not his miracles, unbelief might have pleaded want of proof; but now it has no excuse. Nay, the rejecting of Christ, both by them and us, has in it the sin, not only of obstinate unbelief, but of base ingratitude. They saw Christ to be most amiable, and studious to do them a kindness; yet they hated him, and studied to do him mischief. And we see in his word that great love wherewith he loved us, and yet are not wrought upon by it.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

That there was no reason at all why they should hate him. Some that at one time will say and do that which is recommending, yet at another time will say and do that which is provoking and disobliging; but our Lord Jesus not only did much to merit men's esteem and good-will, but never did any thing justly to incur their displeasure; this he pleads by quoting a scripture for it (Joh 15:25): "This comes to pass, this unreasonable hatred of me, and of my disciples for my sake, that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law" (that is, in the Old Testament, which is a law, and was received by them as a law), "They hated me without a cause;" this David speaks of himself as a type of Christ, Ps 35:19,69:4. Not,

First, Those that hate Christ hate him without any just cause; enmity to Christ is unreasonable enmity. We think those deserve to be hated that are haughty and froward, but Christ is meek and lowly, compassionate and tender; those also that under colour of complaisance are malicious, envious, and revengeful, but Christ devoted himself to the service of those that used him, nay, and of those that abused him; toiled for others' ease,

and impoverished himself to enrich us. Those we think hateful that are hurtful to kings and provinces, and disturbers of the public peace; but Christ, on the contrary, was the greatest blessing imaginable to his country, and yet was hated. He testified indeed that their works were evil, with a design to make them good, but to hate him for this cause was to hate him without cause.

Secondly, Herein the scripture was fulfilled, and the antitype answered the type. Saul and his courtiers hated David without cause, for he had been serviceable to him with his harp, and with his sword; Absalom and his party hated him, though to him he had been an indulgent father, and to them a great benefactor. Thus was the Son of David hated, and hunted most unjustly. Those that hated Christ did not design there in to fulfil the scripture; but God, in permitting it, had that in his eye; and it confirms our faith in Christ as the Messiah that even this was foretold concerning him, and, being foretold, was accomplished in him. And we must not think it strange or hard if it have a further accomplishment in us. We are apt to justify our complaints of injuries done us with this, that they are causeless, whereas the more they are so the more they are like the sufferings of Christ, and may be the more easily borne.

In Christ the world hates God himself; this is twice said here (Joh 15:23): He that hateth me, though he thinks his hatred goes no further, yet really he hates my Father also. And again, Joh 15:24, They have seen and hated both me and my Father. Note,

(a.) There are those that hate God, notwithstanding the beauty of his nature and the bounty of his providence; they are enraged at his justice, as the devils that believe it and tremble, are vexed at his dominion, and would gladly break his bands asunder. Those who cannot bring themselves to deny that there is a God, and yet wish there were none, they see and hate him.

(b.) Hatred of Christ will be construed and adjudged hatred of God, for he is in his person his Father's express image, and in his office his great agent and ambassador. God will have all men to honour the Son as they honour the Father, and therefore what entertainment the Son has, that the Father

has. Hence it is easy to infer that those who are enemies to the Christian religion, however they may cry up natural religion, are really enemies to all religion. Deists are in effect atheists, and those that ridicule the light of the gospel would, if they could, extinguish even natural light, and shake off all obligations of conscience and the fear of God. Let an unbelieving malignant world know that their enmity to the gospel of Christ will be looked upon in the great day as an enmity to the blessed God himself; and let all that suffer for righteousness' sake, according to the will of God, take comfort from this; if God himself be hated in them, and struck at through him, they need not be either ashamed of their cause or afraid of the issue.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

27 and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

It is here promised that the apostles also, by the Spirit's assistance, should have the honour of being Christ's witnesses (Joh 15:27): And you also shall bear witness of me, being competent witnesses, for you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry. Observe here,

1. That the apostles were appointed to be witnesses for Christ in the world. When he had said, The Spirit shall testify, he adds, And you also shall bear witness. Note, The Spirit's working is not to supersede, but to engage and encourage ours. Though the Spirit testify, ministers also must bear their testimony, and people attend to it; for the Spirit of grace witnesses and works by the means of grace. The apostles were the first witnesses that were called in the famous trial between Christ and the prince of this world, which issued in the ejectment of the intruder. This intimates,

(a.) The work cut out for them; they were to attest the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, concerning Christ, for the recovering of his just right, and the maintaining of his crown and dignity. Though Christ's disciples fled when they should have been witnesses for him upon his trial before the high priest and Pilate, yet after the Spirit was poured out upon them they appeared courageous in vindication of the cause of Christ against the accusations it was loaded with. The truth of the Christian religion was to be proved very much by the evidence of matter of fact,

especially Christ's resurrection, of which the apostles were in a particular manner chosen witnesses (Ac 10:41), and they bore their testimony accordingly, Ac 3:15,5:32. Christ's ministers are his witnesses.

(b.) The honour put upon them hereby--that they should be workers together with God. "The Spirit shall testify of me, and you also, under the conduct of the Spirit, and in concurrence with the Spirit (who will preserve you from mistaking in that which you relate on your own knowledge, and will inform you of that which you cannot know but by revelation), shall bear witness." This might encourage them against the hatred and contempt of the world, that Christ had honoured them, and would own them.

2. That they were qualified to be so: You have been with me from the beginning. They not only heard his public sermons, but had constant private converse with him. He went about doing good, and, while others saw the wonderful and merciful works that he did in their own town and country only, those that went about with him were witnesses of them all. They had likewise opportunity of observing the unspotted purity of his conversation, and could witness for him that they never saw in him, nor heard from him, any thing that had the least tincture of human frailty. Note.

(a.) We have great reason to receive the record which the apostles gave of Christ, for they did not speak by hearsay, but what they had the greatest assurance of imaginable, 2Pe 1:16,1Jo 1:1,3.

(b.) Those are best able to bear witness for Christ that have themselves been with him, by faith, hope, and love, and by living a life of communion with God in him. Ministers must first learn Christ, and then preach him. Those speak best of the things of God that speak experimentally. It is particularly a great advantage to have been acquainted with Christ from the beginning, to understand all things from the very first, Lu 1:3. To have been with him from the beginning of our days. An early acquaintance and constant converse with the gospel of Christ will make a man like a good householder.

1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

He gives them a reason why he alarmed them thus with the expectation of trouble: These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended, or scandalized, Joh 16:1.

1 The disciples of Christ are apt to be offended at the cross; and the offence of the cross is a dangerous temptation, even to good men, to turn back from the ways of God, or turn aside out of them, or drive on heavily in them; to quit either their integrity or their comfort. It is not for nothing that a suffering time is called an hour of temptation.

2. Our Lord Jesus, by giving us notice of trouble, designed to take off the terror of it, that it might not be a surprise to us. Of all the adversaries of our peace, in this world of troubles, none insult us more violently, nor put our troops more into disorder, than disappointment does; but we can easily welcome a guest we expect, and being fore-warned are fore-armed--Præmoniti, præmuniti.

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

He foretels particularly what they should suffer (Joh 16:2): "Those that have power to do it shall put you out of their synagogues; and this is not the worst, they shall kill you." Ecce duo-gladii--Behold two swords drawn against the followers of the Lord Jesus.

1 The sword of ecclesiastical censure; this is drawn against them by the Jews, for they were the only pretenders to church-power. They shall cast you out of their synagogues; aposynagogous poiesousin hymas--they shall make you excommunicates.

(a.) "They shall cast you out of the particular synagogues you were members of." At first, they scourged them in their synagogues as contemners of the law (Mt 10:17), and at length cast them out as incorrigible.

(b.) "They shall cast you out of the congregation of Israel in general, the national church of the Jews; shall debar you from the privileges of that, put you into the condition of an outlaw," qui caput gerit lupinum--to be knocked on the head, like another wolf; "they will look upon you as Samaritans, as heathen men and publicans." Interdico tibi aqua et igne--I forbid you the use of water and fire. And were it not for the penalties, forfeitures, and incapacities, incurred hereby, it would be no injury to be thus driven out of a house infected and falling. Note, It has often been the lot of Christ's disciples to be unjustly excommunicated. Many a good truth has been branded with an anathema, and many a child of God delivered to Satan.

2 The sword of civil power: "The time cometh, the hour is come; now things are likely to be worse with you than hitherto they have been; when you are expelled as heretics, they will kill you, and think they do God service, and others will think so too."

(a.) You will find them really cruel: They will kill you. Christ's sheep have been accounted as sheep for the slaughter; the twelve apostles (we are told) were all put to death, except John. Christ had said (Joh 15:27), You shall bear witness, martyreite--you shall be martyrs, shall seal the truth with your blood, your heart's blood.

(b.) You will find them seemingly conscientious; they will think they do God service; they will seem latreian prospherein--to offer a good sacrifice to God; as those that cast out God's servants of old, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5. Note,

[1.] It is possible for those that are real enemies to God's service to pretend a mighty zeal for it. The devil's work has many a time been done in God's livery, and one of the most mischievous enemies Christianity ever had sits in the temple of God. Nay,

[2.] It is common to patronise an enmity to religion with a color of duty to God, and service to his church. God's people have suffered the greatest hardships from conscientious persecutors. Paul verily thought he ought to

do what he did against the name of Jesus. This does not at all lessen the sin of the persecutors, for villanies will never be consecrated by putting the name of God to them; but it does enhance the sufferings of the persecuted, to die under the character of being enemies to God; but there will be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies at the great day.

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

He gives them the true reason of the world's enmity and rage against them (Joh 16:3): "These things will they do unto you, not because you have done them any harm, but because they have not known the Father, nor me. Let this comfort you, that none will be your enemies but the worst of men." Note,

1. Many that pretend to know God are wretchedly ignorant of him. Those that pretend to do him service thought they knew him, but it was a wrong notion they had of him. Israel transgressed the covenant, and yet cried, My God, we know thee. Ho 8:1,2.

2. Those that are ignorant of Christ cannot have any right knowledge of God. In vain do men pretend to know God and religion, while they slight Christ and Christianity. 3. Those are very ignorant indeed of God and Christ that think it an acceptable piece of service to persecute good people. Those that know Christ know that he came not into the world to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that he rules by the power of truth and love, not of fire and sword. Never was such a persecuting church as that which makes ignorance the mother of devotion.

4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.

And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

1. Why he told them of it now (Joh 16:4), not to discourage them, or add to their present sorrow; nor did he tell them of their danger that they might contrive how to avoid it, but that "when the time shall come (and you may be sure it will come), you may remember that I told you." Note, When suffering times come it will be of use to us to remember what Christ has told us of sufferings.

(a.) That our belief of Christ's foresight and faithfulness may be confirmed; and,

(b.) That the trouble may be the less grievous, for we were told of it before, and we took up our profession in expectation of it, so that it ought not to be a surprise to us, nor looked upon as a wrong to us. As Christ in his sufferings, so his followers in theirs, should have an eye to the fulfilling of the scripture.

2. Why he did not tell them of it sooner: "I spoke not this to you from the beginning when you and I came to be first acquainted, because I was with you."

(a.) While he was with them, he bore the shock of the world's malice, and stood in the front of the battle; against him the powers of darkness levelled all their force, not against small or great, but only against the king of Israel, and therefore he did not need to say so much to them of suffering, because it did not fall much to their share; but we do find that from the beginning he bade them prepare for sufferings; and therefore,

(b.) It seems rather to be meant of the promise of another comforter. This he had said little of to them at the beginning, because he was himself with them to instruct, guide, and comfort them, and then they needed not the promise of the Spirit's extraordinary presence. The children of the bride-chamber would not have so much need of a comforter till the bridegroom should be taken away.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ?

He expresses a very affectionate concern for the present sadness of his disciples, upon occasion of what he had said to them (Joh 16:5,6): "Now I am to be no longer with you, but go my way to him that sent me, to repose

there, after this fatigue; and none of you asketh me, with any courage, Whither goest thou? But, instead of enquiring after that which would comfort you, you pore upon that which looks melancholy, and sorrow has filled your heart."

1. He had told them that he was about to leave them: Now I go my way. He was not driven away by force, but voluntarily departed; his life was not extorted from him, but deposited by him. He went to him that sent him, to give an account of his negotiation. Thus, when we depart out of this world, we go to him that sent us into it, which should make us all solicitous to live to good purposes, remembering we have a commission to execute, which must be returned at a certain day.

2. He had told them what hard times they must suffer when he was gone, and that they must not expect such an easy quiet life as they had had. Now, if these were the legacies he had to leave to them, who had left all for him, they would be tempted to think they had made a sorry bargain of it, and were, for the present, in a consternation about it, in which their master sympathizes with them, yet blames them,

That they were careless of the means of comfort, and did not stir up themselves to seek it: None of you asks me, Whither goest thou? Peter had started this question (Joh 13:36), and Thomas had seconded it (Joh 14:5), but they did not pursue it, they did not take the answer; they were in the dark concerning it, and did not enquire further, nor seek for fuller satisfaction; they did not continue seeking, continue knocking. See what a compassionate teacher Christ is, and how condescending to the weak and ignorant. Many a teacher will not endure that the learner should ask the same question twice; if he cannot take a thing quickly, let him go without it; but our Lord Jesus knows how to deal with babes, that must be taught with precept upon precept. If the disciples here would have found that his going away was for his advancement, and therefore his departure from them should not inordinately trouble them (for why should they be against his preferment?) and for their advantage, and therefore their sufferings for him should not inordinately trouble them; for a sight of Jesus at the right hand of God would be an effectual support to them, as it was to Stephen.

Note, A humble believing enquiry into the design and tendency of the darkest dispensations of Providence would help to reconcile us to them, and to grieve the less, and fear the less, because of them; it will silence us to ask, Whence came they? but will abundantly satisfy us to ask, Whither go they? for we know they work for good, Ro 8:28.

6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

That they were too intent, and pored too much, upon the occasions of their grief: Sorrow has filled their hearts. Christ had said enough to fill them with joy (Joh 15:11); but by looking at that only which made against them, and overlooking that which made for them, they were so full of sorrow that there was no room left for joy. Note, It is the common fault and folly of melancholy Christians to dwell upon the dark side of the cloud, to meditate nothing but terror, and turn a deaf ear to the voice of joy and gladness. That which filled the disciples' hearts with sorrow, and hindered the operation of the cordials Christ administered, was too great an affection to this present life. They were big with hopes of their Master's external kingdom and glory, and that they should shine and reign with him: and now, instead of that, to hear of nothing but bonds and afflictions, this filled them with sorrow. Nothing is a greater prejudice to our joy in God than the love of the world; and the sorrow of the world, the consequence of it.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

As it was usual with the Old Testament prophets to comfort the church in its calamities with the promise of the Messiah (Isa 9:6,Mic 5:6,Zec 3:8); so, the Messiah being come, the promise of the Spirit was the great cordial, and is still.

Three things we have here concerning the Comforter's coming:--

That Christ's departure was absolutely necessary to the Comforter's coming, Joh 16:7. The disciples were so loth to believe this that Christ saw cause to assert it with a more than ordinary solemnity: I tell you the truth. We may be confident of the truth of everything that Christ told us; he has no design to impose upon us. Now, to make them easy, he here tells them,

1. In general, It was expedient for them that he should go away. This was strange doctrine, but if it was true it was comfortable enough, and showed them how absurd their sorrow was. It is expedient, not only for me, but for you also, that I go away; though they did not see it, and are loth to believe it, so it is. Note,

(a.) Those things often seem grievous to us that are really expedient for us; and particularly our going away when we have finished our course.

(b.) Our Lord Jesus is always for that which is most expedient for us, whether we think so or no. He deals not with us according to the folly of our own choice, but graciously over-rules it, and gives us the physic we are loth to take, because he knows it is good for us.

2. It was therefore expedient because it was in order to the sending of the Spirit. Now observe,

(A.) That Christ's going was in order to the Comforter's coming.

[1.] This is expressed negatively: If I go not away, the Comforter will not come. And why not?

First, So it was settled in the divine counsels concerning this affair, and the measure must not be altered; shall the earth be forsaken for them? He that gives freely may recall one gift before he bestows another, while we would fondly hold all.

Secondly, It is congruous enough that the ambassador extraordinary should be recalled, before the envoy come, that is constantly to reside.

Thirdly, The sending of the Spirit was to be the fruit of Christ's purchase, and that purchase was to be made by his death, which was his going away.

Fourthly, It was to be an answer to his intercession within the veil. See Joh 14:16. Thus must this gift be both paid for, and prayed for, by our Lord Jesus, that we might learn to put the greater value upon it.

Fifthly, The great argument the Spirit was to use in convincing the world must be Christ's ascension into heaven, and his welcome here. See Joh 16:10,Joh 7:39. Lastly, The disciples must be weaned from his bodily presence, which they were too apt to dote upon, before they were duly prepared to receive the spiritual aids and comforts of a new dispensation.

[2.] It is expressed positively: If I depart I will send him to you; as though he had said, "Trust me to provide effectually that you shall be no loser by my departure." The glorified Redeemer is not unmindful of his church on earth, nor will ever leave it without its necessary supports. Though he departs, he sends the Comforter, nay, he departs on purpose to send him. Thus still, though one generation of ministers and Christians depart, another is raised up in their room, for Christ will maintain his own cause.

(B.) That the presence of Christ's Spirit in his church is so much better, and more desirable, than his bodily presence, that it was really expedient for us that he should go away, to send the Comforter. His corporal presence could be put in one place at one time, but his Spirit is every where, in all places, at all times, wherever two or three are gathered in his name. Christ's bodily presence draws men's eyes, his Spirit draws their hearts; that was the letter which kills, his Spirit gives life.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

3. That the coming of the Spirit was absolutely necessary to the carrying on of Christ's interests on earth (Joh 16:8): And when he is come, elthon ekeinos. He that is sent is willing of himself to come, and at his first coming he will do this, he will reprove, or, as the margin reads it, he will convince the world, by your ministry, concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

1. See here what the office of the Spirit is, and on what errand he is sent.

(a.) To reprove. The Spirit, by the word and conscience, is a reprover; ministers are reprovers by office, and by them the Spirit reproves.

(b.) To convince. It is a law-term, and speaks the office of the judge in summing up the evidence, and setting a matter that has been long canvassed in a clear and true light. He shall convince, that is, "He shall put to silence the adversaries of Christ and his cause, by discovering and demonstrating the falsehood and fallacy of that which they have maintained, and the truth and certainty of that which they have opposed."

Note, Convincing work is the Spirit's work; he can do it effectually, and none but he; man may open the cause, but it is the Spirit only that can open the heart. The Spirit is called the Comforter (Joh 16:7), and here it is said, He shall convince. One would think this were cold comfort, but it is the method the Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort; first to lay open the wound, and then to apply healing medicines. Or, taking conviction more generally, for a demonstration of what is right, it intimates that the Spirit's comforts are solid, and grounded upon truth.

2. See who they are whom he is to reprove and convince: The world, both Jew and Gentile.

(a.) He shall give the world the most powerful means of conviction, for the apostles shall go into all the world, backed by the Spirit, to preach the gospel, fully proved.

(b.) He shall sufficiently provide for the taking off and silencing of the objections and prejudices of the world against the gospel. Many an infidel was convinced of all and judged of all, 1Co 14:24.

(c.) He shall effectually and savingly convince many in the world, some in every age, in every place, in order to their conversion to the faith of Christ. Now this was an encouragement to the disciples, in reference to the difficulties they were likely to meet with,

[1.] That they should see good done, Satan's kingdom fall like lightning, which would be their joy, as it was his. Even this malignant world the Spirit shall work upon; and the conviction of sinners is the comfort of faithful ministers.

[2.] That this would be the fruit of their services and sufferings, these should contribute very much to this good work.

9 of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of sin (Joh 16:9), because they believe not on me.

[1.] The Spirit is sent to convince sinners of sin, not barely to tell them of it; in conviction there is more than this; it is to prove it upon them, and force them to own it, as they (Joh 8:9) that were convicted of their own consciences. Make them to know their abominations. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin, that we have done so and so; of the fault of sin, that we have done ill in doing so; of the folly of sin, that we have acted against right reason, and our true interest; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become odious to God; of the fountain of sin, the corrupt nature; and lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Spirit demonstrates the depravity and degeneracy of the whole world, that all the world is guilty before God.

[2.] The Spirit, in conviction, fastens especially upon the sin of unbelief, their not believing in Christ,

First, As the great reigning sin. There was, and is, a world of people, that believe not in Jesus Christ, and they are not sensible that it is their sin. Natural conscience tells them that murder and theft are sin; but it is a supernatural work of the spirit to convince them that it is a sin to suspend their belief of the gospel, and to reject the salvation offered by it. Natural religion, after it has given us its best discoveries and directions, lays and leaves us under this further obligation, that whatever divine revelation shall be made to us at any time, with sufficient evidence to prove it divine, we accept it, and submit to it. This law those transgress who, when God speaketh to us by his Son, refuse him that speaketh; and therefore it is sin.

Secondly, As the great ruining sin. Every sin is so in its own nature; no sin is so to them that believe in Christ; so that it is unbelief that damns sinners. It is because of this that they cannot enter into rest, that they cannot escape the wrath of God; it is a sin against the remedy. Thirdly, As that which is at the bottom of all sin; so Calvin takes it. The Spirit shall convince the world that the true reason why sin reigns among them is because they are not by faith united to Christ.

10 of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more, Joh 16:10. We may understand this,

[1.] Of Christ's personal righteousness. He shall convince the world that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ the righteous (1Jo 2:1), as the centurion owned (Lu 23:47), Certainly this was a righteous man. His enemies put him under the worst of characters, and multitudes were not or would not be convinced but that he was a bad man, which strengthened their prejudices against his doctrine; but he is justified by the spirit (1Ti 3:16), he is proved to be a righteous man, and not, a deceiver; and then the point is in effect gained; for he is either the great Redeemer or a great cheat; but a cheat we are sure he is not. Now by what medium or argument will the Spirit convince men of the sincerity of the Lord Jesus? Why,

First, Their seeing him no more will contribute something towards the removal of their prejudices; they shall see him no more in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the form of a servant, which made them slight him. Moses was more respected after his removal than before. But,

Secondly, His going to the Father would be a full conviction of it. The coming of the Spirit, according to the promise, was a proof of Christ's exaltation to God's right hand (Ac 2:33), and this was a demonstration of his righteousness; for the holy God would never set a deceiver at his right hand.

[2.] Of Christ's righteousness communicated to us for our justification and salvation; that everlasting righteousness which Messiah was to bring in, Da 9:24. Now,

First, The Spirit shall convince men of this righteousness. Having by convictions of sin shown them their need of a righteousness, lest this should drive them to despair he will show them where it is to be had, and how they may, upon their believing, be acquitted from guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight. It was hard to convince those of this righteousness that went about to establish their own (Ro 10:3), but the Spirit will do it.

Secondly, Christ's ascension is the great argument proper to convince men of this righteousness: I go to the Father, and, as an evidence of my welcome with him, you shall see me no more. If Christ had left any part of his undertaking unfinished, he had been sent back again; but now that we are sure he is at the right hand of God, we are sure of being justified through him.

11 of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, Joh 16:11. Observe here,

[1.] The devil, the prince of this world, was judged, was discovered to be a great deceiver and destroyer, and as such judgment was entered against him, and execution in part done. He was cast out of the Gentile world when his oracles were silenced and his altars deserted, cast out of the bodies of many in Christ's name, which miraculous power continued long in the church; he was cast out of the souls of people by the grace of God working with the gospel of Christ; he fell as lightning from heaven.

[2.] This is a good argument wherewith the Spirit convinces the world of judgment, that is,

First, Of inherent holiness and sanctification, Mt 12:18. By the judgment of the prince of this world, it appears that Christ is stronger than Satan, and can disarm and dispossess him, and set up his throne upon the ruin of his.

Secondly, Of a new and better dispensation of things. He shall show that Christ's errand into the world was to set things to right in it, and to introduce times of reformation and regeneration; and he proves it by this, that the prince of this world, the great master of misrule, is judged and expelled. All will be well when his power is broken who made the mischief.

Thirdly, Of the power and dominion of the Lord Jesus. He shall convince the world that all judgment is committed to him, and that he is the Lord of all, which is evident by this, that he has judged the prince of this world, has broken the serpent's head, destroyed him that had the power of death, and spoiled principalities; if Satan be thus subdued by Christ, we may be sure no other power can stand before him.

Fourthly, Of the final day of judgment: all the obstinate enemies of Christ's gospel and kingdom shall certainly be reckoned with at last, for the devil, their ringleader, is judged.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

That the coming of the Spirit would be of unspeakable advantage to the disciples themselves. The Spirit has work to do, not only on the enemies of Christ, to convince and humble them, but upon his servants and agents, to instruct and comfort them; and therefore it was expedient for them that he should go away.

He intimates to them the tender sense he had of their present weakness (Joh 16:12): I have yet many things to say unto you (not which should have been said, but which he could and would have said), but you cannot bear them now. See what a teacher Christ is.

(1.) None like him for copiousness; when he has said much, he has still many things more to say; treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him, if we be not straitened in ourselves.

(2.) None like him for compassion; he would have told them more of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, particularly of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, but they could not bear it, it would

have confounded and stumbled them, rather than have given them any satisfaction. When, after his resurrection, they spoke to him of restoring the kingdom to Israel, he referred them to the coming of the Holy Ghost, by which they should receive power to bear those discoveries which were so contrary to the notions they had received that they could not bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

Will guide you into all truth. That is, truth which pertained to the establishment of the Christian system, which they were not then prepared to hear. We may here remark that this is a full promise that they would be inspired and guided in founding the new church; and we may observe that the plan of the Saviour was replete with wisdom. Though they had been long with him, yet they were not prepared then to hear of the changes that were to occur; but his death would open their eyes, and the Holy Spirit, making use of the striking and impressive scenes of his death and ascension, would carry forward with vast rapidity their views of the nature of the Christian scheme. Perhaps in the few days that elapsed, of which we have a record in the first and second chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, they learned more of the true nature of the Christian plan than they would have done in months or years even under the teaching of Jesus himself. The more we study the plan of Christ, the more shall we admire the profound wisdom of the Christian scheme, and see that it was eminently fitted to the great design of its Founder --to introduce it in such a manner as to make on man the deepest impression of its wisdom and its truth.

Whatsoever he shall hear. What he shall receive of the Father and the Son; represented by hearing, because in this way instruction is commonly received. Jn 5:30.

Things to come. Probably this means the meaning of things which were to take place after the time when he was speaking to them --to wit, the design of his death, and the nature of the changes which were to take place in the Jewish nation. It is also true that the apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit to predict future events which would take place in the

church and the world. See Acts 11:28; Acts 20:29, 21:11, 1Timm 4:1-3; 2Ti 3:1, 2Pet 1:14; and the whole book of Revelation.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

The Spirit undertook to glorify Christ, Joh 16:14,15.

[1.] Even the sending of the Spirit was the glorifying of Christ. God the Father glorified him in heaven, and the Spirit glorified him on earth. It was the honour of the Redeemer that the Spirit was both sent in his name and sent on his errand, to carry on and perfect his undertaking. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, all the preaching and all the writing of the apostles, under the influence of the Spirit, the tongues, and miracles, were to glorify Christ.

[2.] The Spirit glorified Christ by leading his followers into the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph 4:21. He assures them,

First, that the Spirit should communicate the things of Christ to them: He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. As in essence he proceeded from the Son, so in influence and operation he derived from him. He shall take ek tou emou--of that which is mine. All that the Spirit shows us, that is, applies to us, for our instruction and comfort, all that he gives us for our strength and quickening, and all that he secures and seals to us, did all belong to Christ, and was had and received from him. All was his, for he bought it, and paid dearly for it, and therefore he had reason to call it his own; his, for he first received it; it was given him as the head of the church, to be communicated by him to all his members. The Spirit came not to erect a new kingdom, but to advance and establish the same kingdom that Christ had erected, to maintain the same interest and pursue the same design; those therefore that pretend to the Spirit, and vilify Christ, give themselves the lie, for he came to glorify Christ.

Secondly, That herein the things of God should be communicated to us. Lest any should think that the receiving of this would not make them much the richer, he adds, All things that the Father hath are mine. As God, all that self-existent light and self-sufficient happiness which the Father

has, he has; as Mediator, all things are delivered to him of the Father (Mt 11:27); all that grace and truth which God designed to show us he lodged in the hands of the Lord Jesus, Col 1:19. Spiritual blessings in heavenly things are given by the Father to the Son for us, and the Son entrusts the Spirit to convey them to us. Some apply it to that which goes just before: He shall show you things to come, and so it is explained by Re 1:1. God gave it to Christ, and he signified it to John, who wrote what the Spirit said, Re 1:1.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

Sorrow to Turn into Joy

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

Verse 16-22: In these words our holy Lord proceeds to comfort his disciples with a promise, that, however he was now to be removed from them, yet they should shortly see him again, namely, after his resurrection; it being impossible that he should be held by death, but must arise and go to his Father. His disciples, not understanding what he meant, but labouring under the prejudices of their national errors, concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messias, knew not what to make of those words. A little while and ye shall not see me.

Our Saviour therefore explains himself to his disciples, telling them that they shall have a time of sad sorrow and grief of heart, during the time of his sufferings and absence from them, but their sadness shall soon be turned into joy, when they shall see him alive again after his resurrection.

This he illustrates by the similitude of a travailing woman, who soon forgets her sorrow after she hath brought forth a child. Thus will their

revive upon the sight of him risen from the grave; and no man shall be able to take their joy away from them, because he shall die no more, but go to heaven, and there live for ever, to make intercession for them.

Learn hence,

1. From the apostles not understanding Christ's words concerning his departure, though so often inculcated upon them, A little while and ye shall not see me, because I go to the Father, hence note, how unreasonable it is to arrogate to man's understanding a power to comprehend spiritual mysteries, yea, to understand the plainest truth, till Christ enlightens the understanding; let the doctrine be delivered ever so plainly, and repeated ever so frequently, yet will men continue ignorant, without divine illumination.

How often had this plain doctrine of Christ's departure to the Father been preached to the disciples by Christ's own mouth! Yet still they say, What is it that he saith? We cannot tell what he saith.

Learn, 2. The different effects which Christ's absence should have upon the world, and upon his disciples; the world will rejoice but ye shall weep and lament.

Note,

1. That it is the wretched disposition of the world to rejoice in the absence and want of Christ out of the world. When I am gone, the world will rejoice.

2. That nothing is the cause of so much sorrow and sadness to sincere disciples, as Christ's absence and removal from them: such is their estimation of the worth of him, so great is the apprehension of the want of him, that there is no loss comparable to his absence and removal from them: ye shall weep and lament at my departure, though the world will rejoice.

Learn, 3. That the believer's sorrow for Christ's absence, though it be very great, yet it shall not be perpetual: Ye have now sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you. The joy of the saints may be interrupted, it shall never be totally extinguished; it is a permanent joy, of which they shall never be totally deprived, till they enter into the ocean of eternal joy: Your joy no man taketh from you.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

By way of enquiry, they should not need to ask (Joh 16:23): "In that day you shall ask me nothing;" ouk erotesete ouden--you shall ask no questions; "you shall have such a clear knowledge of gospel mysteries, by the opening of your understandings, that you shall not need to enquire" (as Heb 8:11, they shall not teach); "you shall have more knowledge on a sudden than hitherto you have had by diligent attendance." They had asked some ignorant questions (as Joh 9:2), some ambitious questions (as Mt 18:1), some distrustful ones (as Mt 19:27), some impertinent ones, (as Joh 21:21), some curious ones (as Ac 1:6); but after the Spirit was poured out, nothing of all this. In the story of the apostles' Acts we seldom find them asking questions, as David, Shall I do this? Or, Shall I go thither? For they were constantly under a divine guidance. In that weighty case of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, Peter went, nothing doubting, Ac 10:20. Asking questions supposes us at a loss, or at least at a stand, and the best of us have need to ask questions; but we should aim at such a full assurance of understanding that we may not hesitate, but be constantly led in a plain path both of truth and duty.

Here is an express promise of a grant, Joh 16:23. The preface to this promise is such as makes it inviolably sure, and leaves no room to question it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I pledge my veracity upon it." The promise itself is incomparably rich and sweet; the golden sceptre is here held out to us, with the word, What is thy petition, and it shall be granted? For he says, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. We had it before, Joh 14:13. What would we more? The promise is as express as we can desire.

(a.) We are here taught how to seek; we must ask the Father in Christ's name; we must have an eye to God as a Father, and come as children to him; and to Christ as Mediator, and come as clients. Asking of the Father includes a sense of spiritual blessings, with a conviction that they are to be had from God only. It included also humility of address to him, with a believing confidence in him, as a Father able and ready to help us. Asking in Christ's name includes an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness to receive any favour from God, a complacency in the method God has taken of keeping up a correspondence with us by his Son, and an entire dependence upon Christ as the Lord our Righteousness.

(b.) We are here told how we shall speed: He will give it to you. What more can we wish for than to have what we want, nay, to have what we will, in conformity to God's will, for the asking? He will give it to you from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift. What Christ purchased by the merit of his death, he needed not for himself, but intended it for, and consigned it to, his faithful followers; and having given a valuable consideration for it, which was accepted in full, by this promise he draws a bill as it were upon the treasury in heaven, which we are to present by prayer, and in his name to ask for that which is purchased and promised, according to the true intent of the new covenant. Christ had promised them great illumination by the Spirit, but they must pray for it, and did so, Ac 1:14. God will for this be enquired of. He had promised them perfection hereafter, but what shall they do in the mean time? They must continue praying. Perfect fruition is reserved for the land of our rest; asking and receiving are the comfort of the land of our pilgrimage.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Here is an invitation for them to petition. It is thought sufficient if great men permit addresses, but Christ calls upon us to petition, Joh 16:24.

(a.) He looks back upon their practice hitherto: Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name. This refers either

[1.] To the matter of their prayers: "You have asked nothing comparatively, nothing to what you might have asked, and will ask when the Spirit is poured out." See what a generous benefactor our Lord Jesus is, above all benefactors; he gives liberally, and is so far from upbraiding us with the frequency and largeness of his gifts that he rather upbraids us with the seldomness and straitness of our requests: "You have asked nothing in comparison of what you want, and what I have to give, and have promised to give." We are told to open our mouth wide. Or,

[2.] To the name in which they prayed. They prayed many a prayer, but never so expressly in the name of Christ as now he was directing them to do; for he had not as yet offered up that great sacrifice in the virtue of which our prayers were to be accepted, nor entered upon his intercession for us, the incense whereof was to perfume all our devotions, and so enable us to pray in his name. Hitherto they had cast out devils, and healed diseases, in the name of Christ, as a king and a prophet, but they could not as yet distinctly pray in his name as a priest.

(b.) He looks forward to their practice for the future: Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. Here,

[1.] He directs them to ask for all that they needed and he had promised.

[2.] He assures them that they shall receive. What we ask from a principle of grace God will graciously give: You shall receive it. There is something more in this than the promise that he will give it. He will not only give it, but give you to receive it, give you the comfort and benefit of it, a heart to eat of it, Ec 6:2.

[3.] That hereby their joy shall be full. This denotes,

First. The blessed effect of the prayer of faith; it helps to fill up the joy of faith. Would we have our joy full, as full as it is capable of being in this world, we must be much in prayer. When we are told to rejoice evermore, it follows immediately, Pray without ceasing. See how high we are to aim in prayer--not only at peace, but joy, a fulness of joy. Or,

Secondly, The blessed effects of the answer of peace: "Ask, and you shall receive that which will fill your joy." God's gifts, through Christ, fill the treasures of the soul, they fill its joy, Pr 8:21. "Ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and you shall receive it; and whereas other knowledge increaseth sorrow (Ec 1:18), the knowledge he gives will increase, will fill, your joy."

I Have Overcome the World

25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.

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26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

We have an advocate; as to this, Christ saw cause at present not to insist upon it, only to make the following encouragement shine the brighter: "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you. Suppose I should not tell you that I will intercede for you, should not undertake to solicit every particular cause you have depending there, yet it may be a general ground of comfort that I have settled a correspondence between you and God, have erected a throne of grace, and consecrated for you a new and living way into the holiest." He speaks as if they needed not any favours, when he had prevailed for the gift of the Holy Ghost to make intercession within them, as Spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father; as if they had no further need of him to pray for them now, but we shall find that he does more for us than he says he will. Men's performances often come short of their promises, but Christ's go beyond them.

27 for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

We have to do with a Father, which is so great an encouragement that it does in a manner supersede the other: "For the Father himself loveth you, philei hymas, he is a friend to you, and you cannot be better befriended." Note, The disciples of Christ are the beloved of God himself. Christ not only turned away God's wrath from us, and brought us into a covenant of peace and reconciliation, but purchased his favour for us, and brought us into a covenant of friendship. Observe what an emphasis is laid upon this "The Father himself loveth you, who is perfectly happy in the enjoyment of himself, whose self-love is both his infinite rectitude and his infinite blessedness; yet he is pleased to love you." The Father himself, whose favour you have forfeited, and whose wrath you have incurred, and with whom you need an advocate, he himself now loves you. Observe,

[1.] Why the Father loved the disciples of Christ: Because you have loved me, and have believed that I am come from God, that is, because you are my disciples indeed: not as if the love began on their side, but when by his grace he has wrought in us a love to him he is well pleased with the work of his own hands. See here,

First, What is the character of Christ's disciples; they love him, because they believe he came out from God, is the only-begotten of the Father, and his high-commissioner to the world. Note, Faith in Christ works by

love to him, Ga 5:6. If we believe him to be the Son of God, we cannot but love him as infinitely lovely in himself; and if we believe him to be our Saviour, we cannot but love him as the most kind to us. Observe with what respect Christ is pleased to speak of his disciples' love to him, and how kindly he took it; he speaks of it as that which recommended them to his Father's favour: "You have loved me and believed in me when the world has hated and rejected me; and you shall be distinguished yourselves."

Secondly, See what advantage Christ's faithful disciples have, the Father loves them, and that because they love Christ; so well pleased is he in him that he is well pleased with all his friends.

[2.] What encouragement this gave them in prayer. They need not fear speeding when they came to one that loved them, and wished them well. First, This cautions us against hard thoughts of God. When we are taught in prayer to plead Christ's merit and intercession, it is not as if all the kindness were in Christ only, and in God nothing but wrath and fury; no, the matter is not so, the Father's love and good-will appointed Christ to be the Mediator; so that we owe Christ's merit to God's mercy in giving him for us. Secondly, Let it cherish and confirm in us good thoughts of God. Believers, that love Christ, ought to know that God loves them, and therefore to come boldly to him as children to a loving Father.

28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

If we ask concerning the Redeemer whence he came, and whither he went, we are told,

[1.] That he came from the Father, who sanctified and sealed him; and he came into this world, this lower world, this world of mankind, among whom by his incarnation he was pleased to incorporate himself. Here his business lay, and hither he came to attend it. He left his home for this strange country; his palace for this cottage; wonderful condescension!

[2.] That, when he had done his work on earth, he left the world, and went back to his Father at his ascension. He was not forced away, but made it

his own act and deed to leave the world, to return to it no more till he comes to put an end to it; yet still he is spiritually present with his church, and will be to the end.

29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

The gentle rebuke Christ gave the disciples for their confidence that they now understood him, Joh 16:31,32. Observing how they triumphed in their attainments, he said, "Do you now believe? Do you now look upon yourselves as advanced and confirmed disciples? Do you now think you shall make no more blunders? Alas! you know not your own weakness; you will very shortly be scattered every man to his own," &c. Here we have,

(a.) A question, designed to put them upon consideration: Do you now believe?

[1.] "If now, why not sooner? Have you not heard the same things many a time before?" Those who after many instructions and invitations are at last persuaded to believe have reason to be ashamed that they stood it out so long.

[2.] "If now, why not ever? When an hour of temptation comes, where will your faith be then?" As far as there is inconstancy in our faith there is cause to question the sincerity of it, and to ask, "Do we indeed believe?"

(b.) A prediction of their fall, that, how confident soever they were now of their own stability, in a little time they would all desert him, which was fulfilled that very night, when, upon his being seized by a party of the

guards, all his disciples forsook him and fled, Mt 26:56. They were scattered,

[1.] From one another; they shifted every one for his own safety, without any care or concern for each other. Troublous times are times of scattering to Christian societies; in the cloudy and dark day the flock of Christ is dispersed, Eze 34:12. So Christ, as a society, is not visible.

[2.] Scattered for him: You shall leave me alone. They should have been witnesses for him upon his trial, should have ministered to him in his sufferings; if they could have given him no comfort they might have done him some credit; but they were ashamed of his chain, and afraid of sharing with him in his sufferings, and left him alone. Note, Many a good cause, when it is distressed by its enemies, is deserted by its friends. The disciples had continued with Christ in his other temptations and yet turned their back upon him now; those that are tried, do not always prove trusty. If we at any time find our friends unkind to us, let us remember that Christ's were so to him. When they left him alone, they were scattered every man to his own; not to their own possessions or habitations, these were in Galilee; but to their own friends and acquaintance in Jerusalem; every one went his own way, where he fancied he should be most safe. Every man to secure his own; himself and his own life.

Note, Those will not dare to suffer for their religion that seek their own things more than the things of Christ, and that look upon the things of this world as their ta idia--their own property, and in which their happiness is bound up. Now observe here,

First, Christ knew before that his disciples would thus desert him in the critical moment, and yet he was still tender of them, and in nothing unkind. We are ready to say of some, "If we could have foreseen their ingratitude, we would not have been so prodigal of our favours to them;" Christ did foresee theirs, and yet was kind to them.

Secondly, He told them of it, to be a rebuke to their exultation in their present attainments: "Do you now believe? Be not high-minded, but fear;

for you will find your faith so sorely shaken as to make it questionable whether it be sincere or no, in a little time."

Note, even when we are taking the comfort of our graces, it is good to be reminded of our dangers from our corruptions. When our faith is strong, our love flaming, and our evidences are clear, yet we cannot infer thence that to-morrow shall be as this day. Even when we have most reason to think we stand, yet we have reason enough to take heed lest we fall.

Thirdly, He spoke of it as a thing very near. The hour was already come, in a manner, when they would be as shy of him as ever they had been fond of him.

Note, A little time may produce great changes, both concerning us and in us.

(c.) An assurance of his own comfort notwithstanding: Yet I am not alone. He would not be thought to complain of their deserting him, as if it were any real damage to him; for in their absence he should be sure of his Father's presence, which was instar omnium--every thing: The Father is with me. We may consider this,

[1.] As a privilege peculiar to the Lord Jesus; the Father was so with him in his sufferings as he never was with any, for still he was in the bosom of the Father. The divine nature did not desert the human nature, but supported it, and put an invincible comfort and an inestimable value into his sufferings. The Father had engaged to be with him in his whole undertaking (Ps 89:21, &c.), and to preserve him (Isa 49:8); this emboldened him, Isa 50:7. Even when he complained of his Father's forsaking him, yet he called him My God, and presently after was so well assured of his favourable presence with him as to commit his Spirit into his hand. This he had comforted himself with all along (Joh 8:29), He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone, and especially now at last. This assists our faith in the acceptableness of Christ's satisfaction;

no doubt, the Father was well pleased in him, for he went along with him in his undertaking from first to last.

[2.] As a privilege common to all believers, by virtue of their union with Christ; when they are alone, they are not alone, but the Father is with them. First, When solitude is their choice, when they are alone, as Isaac in the field, Nathanael under the fig-tree, Peter upon the house-top, meditating and praying, the Father is with them. Those that converse with God in solitude are never less alone than when alone. A good God and a good heart are good company at any time. Secondly, When solitude is their affliction, their enemies lay them alone, and their friends leave them so, their company, like Job's, is made desolate; yet they are not so much alone as they are thought to be, the Father is with them, as he was with Joseph in his bonds and with John in his banishment. In their greatest troubles they are as one whom his father pities, as one whom his mother comforts. And, while we have God's favourable presence with us, we are happy, and ought to be easy, though all the world forsake us. Non deo tribuimus justum honorem nisi solus ipse nobis sufficiat--We do not render due honour to God, unless we deem him alone all-sufficient.--Calvin.

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

He comforts them with a promise of peace in him, by virtue of his victory over the world, whatever troubles they might meet with in it (Joh 16:33): "These things have I spoken, that in me you might have peace; and if you have it not in me you will not have it at all, for in the world you shall have tribulation; you must expect no other, and yet may cheer up yourselves, for I have overcome the world." Observe,

1 The end Christ aimed at in preaching this farewell sermon to his disciples: That in him they might have peace. He did not hereby intend to give them a full view of that doctrine which they were shortly to be made masters of by the pouring out of the Spirit, but only to satisfy them for the present that his departure from them was really for the best. Or, we may take it more generally: Christ had said all this to them that by enjoying him they might have the best enjoyment of themselves. Note,

(a.) It is the will of Christ that his disciples should have peace within, whatever their troubles may be without.

(b.) Peace in Christ is the only true peace, and in him alone believers have it, for this man shall be the peace, Mic 5:5. Through him we have peace with God, and so in him we have peace in our own minds.

(c.) The word of Christ aims at this, that in him we may have peace. Peace is the fruit of the lips, and of his lips, Isa 57:19.

2 The entertainment they were likely to meet with in the world: "You shall not have outward peace, never expect it." Though they were sent to proclaim peace on earth, and good-will towards men, they must expect trouble on earth, and ill-will from men. Note, It has been the lot of Christ's disciples to have more or less tribulation in this world. Men persecute them because they are so good, and God corrects them because they are no better. Men design to cut them off from the earth, and God designs by affliction to make them meet for heaven; and so between both they shall have tribulation.

3. The encouragement Christ gives them with reference hereto: But be of good cheer, tharseite. "Not only be of good comfort, but be of good courage; have a good heart on it, all shall be well." Note, In the midst of the tribulations of this world it is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples to be of good cheer, to keep up their delight in God whatever is pressing, and their hope in God whatever is threatening; as sorrowful indeed, in compliance with the temper of the climate, and yet always rejoicing, always cheerful (2Co 6:10), even in tribulation, Ro 5:3.

4. The ground of that encouragement: I have overcome the world. Christ's victory is a Christian triumph. Christ overcame the prince of this world, disarmed him, and cast him out; and still treads Satan under our feet. He overcame the children of this world, by the conversion of many to the faith and obedience of his gospel, making them the children of his kingdom. When he sends his disciples to preach the gospel to all the

world, "Be of good cheer," says he, "I have overcome the world as far as I have gone, and so shall you; though you have tribulation in the world, yet you shall gain your point, and captivate the world," Re 6:2. He overcame the wicked of the world, for many a time he put his enemies to silence, to shame; "And be you of good cheer, for the Spirit will enable you to do so too." He overcame the evil things of the world by submitting to them; he endured the cross, despising it and the shame of it; and he overcame the good things of it by being wholly dead to them; its honours had no beauty in his eye, its pleasures no charms. Never was there such a conqueror of the world as Christ was, and we ought to be encouraged by it,

(a.) Because Christ has overcome the world before us; so that we may look upon it as a conquered enemy, that has many a time been baffled. Nay,

(b.) He has conquered it for us, as the captain of our salvation. We are interested in his victory; by his cross the world is crucified to us, which bespeaks it completely conquered and put into our possession; all is yours, even the world. Christ having overcome the world, believers have nothing to do but to pursue their victory, and divide the spoil; and this we do by faith, 1Jo 5:4. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

John-17

Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Here we have, I The circumstances of this prayer, Joh 17:1. Many a solemn prayer Christ made in the days of his flesh (sometimes he continued all night in prayer), but none of his prayers are recorded so fully as this. Observe,

1 The time when he prayed this prayer; when he had spoken these words, had given the foregoing farewell to his disciples, he prayed this prayer in their hearing; so that,

(a.) It was a prayer after a sermon; when he had spoken from God to them, he turned to speak to God for them. Note, Those we preach to we must pray for. He that was to prophesy upon the dry bones was also to pray, Come, O breath, and breathe upon them. And the word preached should be prayed over, for God gives the increase.

(b.) It was a prayer after sacrament; after Christ and his disciples had eaten the passover and the Lord's supper together, and he had given them a suitable exhortation, he closed the solemnity with this prayer, that God would preserve the good impressions of the ordinance upon them.

(c.) It was a family-prayer. Christ's disciples were his family, and, to set a good example before the masters of families, he not only, as the son of Abraham, taught his household (Ge 18:19), but, as a son of David, blessed his household (2Sa 6:20), prayed for them and with them.

(d.) It was a parting prayer. When we and our friends are parting, it is good to part with prayer, Ac 20:36. Christ was parting by death, and that parting should be sanctified and sweetened by prayer. Dying Jacob blessed the twelve patriarchs, dying Moses the twelve tribes, and so, here, dying Jesus the twelve apostles.

(e.) It was a prayer that was a preface to his sacrifice, which he was now about to offer on earth, specifying the favours and blessings designed to be purchased by the merit of his death for those that were his; like a deed leading the uses of a fine, and directing to what intents and purposes it shall be levied. Christ prayed then as a priest now offering sacrifice, in the virtue of which all prayers were to be made.

(f.) It was a prayer that was a specimen of his intercession, which he ever lives to make for us within the veil. Not that in his exalted state he addresses himself to his Father by way of humble petition, as when he

was on earth. No, his intercession in heaven is a presenting of his merit to his Father, with a suing out of the benefit of it for all his chosen ones.

He prayed for himself first. Though Christ, as God, was prayed to, Christ, as man, prayed; thus it became him to fulfill all righteousness. It was said to him, as it is said to us, Ask, and I will give thee, Ps 2:8. What he had purchased he must ask for; and shall we expect to have what we never merited, but have a thousand times forfeited, unless we pray for it? This puts an honour upon prayer, that it was the messenger Christ sent on his errands, the way in which even he corresponded with Heaven. It likewise gives great encouragement to praying people, and cause to hope that even the prayer of the destitute shall not be despised; time was when he that is advocate for us had a cause of his own to solicit, a great cause, on the success of which depended all his honour as Mediator; and this he was to solicit in the same method that is prescribed to us, by prayers and supplications (Heb 5:7), so that he knows the heart of a petitioner (Ex 23:9), he knows the way. Now observe, Christ began with prayer for himself, and afterwards prayed for his disciples; this charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. We must love and pray for our neighbor as ourselves, and therefore must in a right manner love and pray for ourselves first. Christ was much shorter in his prayer for himself than in his prayer for his disciples. Our prayers for the church must not be crowded into a corner of our prayers; in making supplication for all saints, we have room enough to enlarge, and should not straiten ourselves. Now here are two petitions which Christ puts up for himself, and these two are one--that he might be glorified. But this one petition, Glorify thou me, is twice put up, because it has a double reference. To the prosecution of his undertaking further: Glorify me, that I may glorify thee, in doing what is agreed upon to be yet done, Joh 17:1-3. And to the performance of his undertaking hitherto: "Glorify me, for I have glorified thee. I have done my part, and now, Lord, do thine," Joh 17:4,5.

Christ here prays to be glorified, in order to his glorifying God (Joh 17:1): Glorify thy Son according to thy promise, that thy Son may glorify thee according to his understanding. Here observe,

[1.] What he prays for--that he might be glorified in this world: "The hour is come when all the powers of darkness will combine to vilify thy Son; now, Father, glorify him." The Father glorified the Son upon earth,

First, Even in his sufferings, by the signs and wonders which attended them. When they that came to take him were thunder-struck with a word,--when Judas confessed him innocent, and sealed that confession with his own guilty blood,--when the judge's wife asleep, and the judge himself awake, pronounced him righteous,--when the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple rent, then the Father not only justified, but glorified the Son. Nay,

Secondly, Even by his sufferings; when he was crucified, he was magnified, he was glorified, Joh 13:31. It was in his cross that he conquered Satan and death; his thorns were a crown, and Pilate in the inscription over his head wrote more than he thought. But, Thirdly, Much more after his sufferings. The Father glorified the Son when he raised him from the dead, showed him openly to chosen witnesses, and poured out the Spirit to support and plead his cause, and to set up his kingdom among men, then he glorified him. This he here prays for, and insists upon.

[2.] What he pleads to enforce this request.

First, He pleads relation: Glorify thy Son; thy Son as God, as Mediator. It is in consideration of this that the heathen are given him for his inheritance; for thou art my Son, Ps 2:7,8. The devil had tempted him to renounce his sonship with an offer of the kingdoms of this world; but he rejected the offer with disdain, and depended upon his Father for his preferment, and here applies himself to him for it. Note, Those that have received the adoption of sons may in faith pray for the inheritance of sons; if sanctified, then glorified: Father, glorify thy Son.

Secondly, He pleads the time: The hour is come; the season prefixed to an hour. The hour of Christ's passion was determined in the counsel of God. He had often said his hour was not yet come; but now it was come, and he knew it. Man knows not his time (Ec 9:12), but the Son of man

did. He calls it this hour (Joh 12:27), and here, the hour; compare Mk 14:35,Joh 16:21. For the hour of the Redeemer's death, which was also the hour of the Redeemer's birth, was the most signal and remarkable hour, and, without doubt, the most critical, that ever was since the clock of time was first set a going. Never was there such an hour as that, nor did ever any hour challenge such expectations of it before, nor such reflections upon it after.

1. "The hour is come in the midst of which I need to be owned." Now is the hour when this grand affair is come to a crisis; after many a skirmish the decisive battle between heaven and hell is now to be fought, and that great cause in which God's honour and man's happiness are together embarked must now be either won or lost for ever. The two champions David and Goliath, Michael and the dragon, are now entering the lists; the trumpet sounds for an engagement that will be irretrievably fatal either to the one or to the other: "Now glorify thy Son, now give him victory over principalities and powers, now let the bruising of his heel be the breaking of the serpent's head, now let thy Son be so upheld as not to fail nor be discouraged." When Joshua went forth conquering and to conquer, it is said, The Lord magnified Joshua; so he glorified his Son when he made the cross his triumphant chariot.

2. "The hour is come in the close of which I expect to be crowned; the hour is come when I am to be glorified, and, set at thy right hand." Betwixt him and that glory there intervened a bloody scene of suffering; but, being short, he speaks as if he made little of it: The hour is come that I must be glorified; and he did not expect it till then. Good Christians in a trying hour, particularly a dying hour, may thus plead: "Now the hour is come, stand by me, appear for me, now or never: now the earthly tabernacle is to be dissolved, the hour is come that I should be glorified." 2Co 5:1.

Thirdly, He pleads the Father's own interest and concern herein: That thy Son may also glorify thee; for he had consecrated his whole undertaking to his Father's honour. He desired to be carried triumphantly through his sufferings to his glory, that he might glorify the Father two ways:--

1. By the death of the cross, which he was now to suffer. Father, glorify thy name, expressed the great intention of his sufferings, which was to retrieve his Father's injured honour among men, and, by his satisfaction, to come up to the glory of God, which man, by his sin, came short of: "Father, own me in my sufferings, that I may honour thee by them."

2. By the doctrine of the cross, which was now shortly to be published to the world, by which God's kingdom was to be re-established among men. He prays that his Father would so grace his sufferings, and crown them, as not only to take off the offence of the cross, but to make it, to those that are saved, the wisdom of God and the power of God. If God had not glorified Christ crucified, by raising him from the dead, his whole undertaking had been crushed; therefore glorify me, that I may glorify thee. Now thereby he hath taught us,

(a.) What to eye and aim at in our prayers, in all our designs and desires--and that is, the honour of God. It being our chief end to glorify God, other things must be sought and attended to in subordination and subserviency to the Lord. "Do this and the other for thy servant, that thy servant may glorify thee. Give me health, that I may glorify thee with my body; success, that I may glorify thee with my estate," &c. Hallowed be thy name must be our first petition, which must fix our end in all our other petitions, 1Pe 4:11.

(b.) He hath taught us what to expect and hope for. If we sincerely set ourselves to glorify our Father, he will not be wanting to do that for us which is requisite to put us into a capacity of glorifying him, to give us the grace he knows sufficient, and the opportunity he sees convenient. But, if we secretly honour ourselves more than him, it is just with him to leave us in the hand of our own counsels, and then, instead of honouring ourselves, we shall shame ourselves.

2 as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

He pleads his commission (Joh 17:2,3); he desires to glorify his Father, in conformity to, and in pursuance of, the commission given him: "Glorify thy Son, as thou hast given him power, glorify him in the execution of the powers thou hast given him," so it is connected with the

petition; or, that thy Son may glorify thee according to the power given him, so it is connected with the plea. Now see here the power of the Mediator.

1. The origin of his power: Thou hast given him power; he has it from God, to whom all power belongs. Man, in his fallen state, must, in order to his recovery, be taken under a new model of government, which could not be erected but by a special commission under the broad seal of heaven, directed to the undertaker of that glorious work, and constituting him sole arbitrator of the grand difference that was, and sole guarantee of the grand alliance that was to be, between God and man; so as to this office, he received his power, which was to be executed in a way distinct from his power and government as Creator. Note, The church's king is no usurper, as the prince of this world is; Christ's right to rule is incontestable.

2. The extent of his power: He has power over all flesh.

(a.) Over all mankind. He has power in and over the world of spirits, the powers of the upper and unseen world are subject to him (1Pe 3:22); but, being now mediating between God and man, he here pleads his power over all flesh. They were men whom he was to subdue and save; out of that race he had a remnant given him, and therefore all that rank of beings was put under his feet.

(b.) Over mankind considered as corrupt and fallen, for so he is called flesh, Ge 6:3. If he had not in this sense been flesh, he had not needed a Redeemer. Over this sinful race the Lord Jesus has all power; and all judgment, concerning them, is committed to him; power to bind or loose, acquit or condemn; power on earth to forgive sins or not. Christ, as Mediator, has the government of the whole world put into his hand; he is king of nations, has power even over those that know him not, nor obey his gospel; whom he does not rule, he over-rules, Ps 22:28,72:8,Mt 28:18,Joh 3:35.

3. The grand intention and design of this power: That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Here is the mystery of our salvation laid open.

(a.) Here is the Father making over the elect to the Redeemer, and giving them to him as his charge and trust; as the crown and recompence of his undertaking. He has a sovereign power over all the fallen race, but a peculiar interest in the chosen remnant; all things were put under his feet, but they were delivered into his hand.

(b.) Here is the Son undertaking to secure the happiness of those that were given him, that he would give eternal life to them. See how great the authority of the Redeemer is. He has lives and crowns to give, eternal lives that never die, immortal crowns that never fade. Now consider how great the Lord Jesus is, who has such preferments in his gift; and how gracious he is in giving eternal life to those whom he undertakes to save.

[1.] He sanctifies them in this world, gives them the spiritual life which is eternal life in the bud and embryo, Joh 4:14. Grace in the soul is heaven in that soul.

[2.] He will glorify them in the other world; their happiness shall be completed in the vision and fruition of God. This only is mentioned, because it supposes all the other parts of his undertaking, teaching them, satisfying for them, sanctifying them, and preparing them for that eternal life; and indeed all the other were in order to this; we are called to his kingdom and glory, and begotten to the inheritance. What is last in execution was first in intention, and that is eternal life.

(c.) Here is the subserviency of the Redeemer's universal dominion to this: He has power over all flesh, on purpose that he might give eternal life to the select number. Note, Christ's dominion over the children of men is in order to the salvation of the children of God. All things are for their sakes, 2Co 4:15. All Christ's laws, ordinances, and promises, which are given to all, are designed effectually to convey spiritual life, and

secure eternal life, to all that were given to Christ; he is head over all things to the church. The administration of the kingdoms of providence and grace are put into the same hand, that all things may be made to concur for good to the called.

Before the world was. There could not be a more distinct and clear declaration of the pre-existence of Christ than this. It means before the creation of the world; before there was any world. Of course, the speaker here must have existed then, and this is equivalent to saying that he existed from eternity. See Jn 1:1,2, 6:62, 3:13 Jn 16:28. The glory which he had then was that which was proper to the Son of God, represented by the expression being in the bosom of the Father (Jn 1:18), denoting intimacy, friendship, united felicity. The Son of God, by becoming incarnate, is represented as humbling himself (Greek, he "emptied himself"), Php 2:8. He laid aside for a time the external aspect of honour, and consented to become despised, and to assume the form of a servant. He now prays that God would raise him up to the dignity and honour which he had before his incarnation. This is the state to which he is now exalted, with the additional honour of having made atonement for sin, and having opened the way to save a race of rebels from eternal death. The lowest condition on earth is frequently connected with the highest honours of heaven. Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks to him that is humble and of a contrite spirit.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Here is a further explication of this grand design (Joh 17:3): "This is life eternal, which I am empowered and have undertaken to give, this is the nature of it, and this the way leading to it, to know thee the only true God, and all the discoveries and principles of natural religion, and Jesus Christ whom, thou has sent, as Mediator, and the doctrines and laws of that holy religion which he instituted for the recovery of man out of his lapsed state." Here is,

(a.) The great end which the Christian religion sets before us, and that is, eternal life, the happiness of an immortal soul in the vision and fruition of an eternal God. This he was to reveal to all, and secure to all that were given him. By the gospel life and immortality are brought to light, are

brought to hand, a life which transcends this as much in excellency as it does in duration.

(b.) The sure way of attaining this blessed end, which is, by the right knowledge of God and Jesus Christ: "This is life eternal, to know thee," which may be taken two ways--

[1.] Life eternal lies in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ; the present principle of this life is the believing knowledge of God and Christ; the future perfection of that life will be the intuitive knowledge of God and Christ. Those that are brought into union with Christ, and live a life of communion with God in Christ, know, in some measure, by experience, what eternal life is, and will say, "If this be heaven, heaven is sweet." See Ps 17:15.

[2.] The knowledge of God and Christ leads to life eternal; this is the way in which Christ gives eternal life, by the knowledge of him that has called us (2Pe 1:3), and this is the way in which we come to receive it. The Christian religion shows us the way to heaven,

First, By directing us to God, as the author and felicity of our being; for Christ died to bring us to God. To know him as our Creator, and to love him, obey him, submit to him, and trust in him, as our owner ruler, and benefactor,--to devote ourselves to him as our sovereign Lord, depend upon him as our chief good, and direct all to his praise as our highest end,--this is life eternal. God is here called the only true God, to distinguish him from the false gods of the heathen, which were counterfeits and pretenders, not from the person of the Son, of whom it is expressly said that he is the true God and eternal life (1Jo 5:20), and who in this text is proposed as the object of the same religious regard with the Father. It is certain there is but one only living and true God and the God we adore is he. He is the true God, and not a mere name or notion; the only true God, and all that ever set up as rivals with him are vanity and a lie; the service of him is the only true religion.

Secondly, By directing us to Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. If man had continued

innocent, the knowledge of the only true God would have been life eternal to him; but now that he is fallen there must be something more; now that we are under guilt, to know God is to know him as a righteous Judge, whose curse we are under; and nothing is more killing than to know this. We are therefore concerned to know Christ as our Redeemer, by whom alone we can now have access to God; it is life eternal to believe in Christ; and this he has undertaken to give to as many as were given him. See Joh 6:39,40. Those that are acquainted with God and Christ are already in the suburbs of life eternal.

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

With what comfort Christ reflects on the life he had lived on earth: I have glorified thee, and finished my work; it is as good as finished. He does not complain of the poverty and disgrace he had lived in, what a weary life he had upon earth, as ever any man of sorrows had. He overlooks this, and pleases himself in reviewing the service he had done his Father, and the progress he had made in his understanding. This is here recorded,

First, For the honour of Christ, that his life upon earth did in all respects fully answer the end of his coming into the world. Note,

1. Our Lord Jesus had work given him to do by him that sent him; he came not into the world to live at ease, but to go about doing good, and to fulfill all righteousness. His Father gave him his work, his work in the vineyard, both appointed him to it and assisted him in it.

2. The work that was given him to do he finished. Though he had not, as yet, gone through the last part of his undertaking, yet he was so near being made perfect through sufferings that he might say, I have finished it; it was as good as done, he was giving it its finishing stroke eteleiosa--I have finished. The word signifies his performing every part of his undertaking in the most complete and perfect manner.

3. Herein he glorified his Father; he pleased him, he praised him. It is the glory of God that his work is perfect, and the same is the glory of the Redeemer; what he is the author of he will be the finisher of. It was a strange way for the Son to glorify the Father by abasing himself (this

looked more likely to disparage him), yet it was contrived that so he should glorify him: "I have glorified thee on the earth, in such a way as men on earth could bear the manifestation of thy glory."

Secondly, It is recorded for example to all, that we may follow his example.

1. We must make it our business to do the work God has appointed us to do, according to our capacity and the sphere of our activity; we must each of us do all the good we can in this world.

2. We must aim at the glory of God in all. We must glorify him on the earth, which he has given unto the children of men, demanding only this quit-rent; on the earth, where we are in a state of probation and preparation for eternity.

3. We must persevere herein to the end of our days; we must not sit down till we have finished our work, and accomplished as a hireling our day.

Thirdly, It is recorded for encouragement to all those that rest upon him. If he has finished the work that was given him to do, then he is a complete Saviour, and did not do his work by the halves. And he that finished his work for us will finish it in us to the day of Christ.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

With thine own self. In heaven, granting me a participation of the same honour which the Father has. He had just said that he had glorified God on the earth; he now prays that God would glorify him in heaven.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Have manifested thy name. The word name here includes the attributes or character of God. Jesus had made known his character, his law, his will, his plan of mercy--or, in other words, he had revealed GOD to them. The word name is often used to designate the person, Jn 15:21, Mt 10:22, Rom 2:24, 1Timm 6:1.

Which thou gavest me. God gave them to him in his purpose. He gave them by his providence. He so ordered affairs that they heard him preach and saw his miracles; and he gave them by disposing them to follow him when he called them.

Thine they were. All men are God's by creation and by preservation, and he has a right to do with them as seemeth good in his sight. These men he chose to designate to be the apostles of the Saviour; and he committed them to him to be taught, and then commissioned them to carry his gospel, though amid persecutions, to the ends of the world. God has a right to the services of all; and he has a right to appoint us to any labour, however humble, or hazardous, or wearisome, where we may promote his glory and honour his name.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

Observe here,

1. The faithfulness of Christ in revealing the whole will of his Father to his disciples.

2. The proficiency of his disciples in the school of Christ: They knew all the things which Christ had told them; namely, that whatsoever he had, was given him of the Father, and that he had these things from him to be a mediator.

1. Learn hence, that Christ hath approved himself a faithful prophet to his church; a faithful messenger from his Father to his people, in that he hath added nothing to his message, nor taken nothing from it.

2. That it is our duty to know and believe on Christ, as the only messenger and mediator sent of God: Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

As if Christ had said, "The message by thee my Father committed to me, I have communicated to them my disciples, and they have received it, and will communicate it from thee to the world; being sufficiently assured that my coming and preaching was all by commission from thee."

Hence learn,

1. That the doctrine of the gospel, which was revealed by Christ, was received from the Father.

2. That faith is a receiving of the word of Christ, and of Christ in and by the word. Receiving is a relative term, and presupposes an offer. God offers on his part, and we receive on our part, the whole word with the whole heart. That the ministers of the gospel are to preach that, and only that, which they have out of the word of God: I have given them the word which thou gavest me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

That is, "I now offer up a prayer particularly,

1. For my apostles, designed for so great a work as the preaching of the everlasting gospel to the obstinate Jews and obdurate Gentiles.

2. I intercede also for all believers at this time, for their perseverance in the faith, and constancy in persecution, but I do not now intercede for the wicked and impenitent world, they not being capable (whilst such) of these mercies and blessings;" though at other times we find him praying for the world, yea, for his very crucifiers: Father, forgive them, &c.

Nay, in this very prayer, at the 20th verse, he prays for the world; that is, for the Gentile world; all those that, by the preaching of the apostles and their successors, should be brought to believe on him to the end of the world.

Learn hence,

1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great and gracious intercessor.

2. That all believers, all the children of God in general, are under the fruit and benefit of Christ's intercession.

3. That as all the members of Christ in general, so the ministers and ambassadors of Christ in special, have a particular interest in Christ's intercession: and great are the advantages of his intercession for them.

1. From the person interceding, Christ: consider the dignity of his person, God-man: the dearness of his person, God's son.

2. From the manner of his intercession: not by way of entreaty, but meritorious claim.

3. From the sublimity of his office: our intercessor is near to God, even at his right hand.

4. From the fruits of his intercession: it procures the acceptance and justification of our persons, the hearing and answering of our prayers, the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, our preservation in grace, and our hopes of eternal glory.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

We may understand this two ways;

1. Of all persons; all my friends, all my disciples, are thine as well as mine.
Thence learn, that the Father and the Son have a like share and property in all believers.

2. The words in the original, being of the neuter gender, signify, all thy things are mine, and all my things are thine.

Christ and his Father are one, and they agree in one; they have the same essence and nature, the same attributes and will; Christ hath all things that the Father hath, willeth all things that the Father willeth, and doeth all things that the Father doeth; he is therefore really and essentially God. It followeth, And I am glorified in them: that is, I am made glorious by their owning and receiving me, by their believing in me, and accepting of me for their Lord and Saviour.

Thence note, that the Lord Jesus Christ is eminently glorified in and by all those that believe in him, and belong unto him.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Through thine own name. Our translators seem to have understood this expression as meaning "keep by thy power," but this probably is not its meaning. It is literally "keep in thy name." And if the term name be taken to denote God himself and his perfections (Jn 17:6), it means "keep in the knowledge of thyself. Preserve them in obedience to thee and to thy cause. Suffer them not to fall away from thee and to become apostates."

As we are. This refers not to a union of nature, but of feeling, plan, purpose. Any other union between Christians is impossible; but a union of affection is what the Saviour sought, and this he desired might be so strong as to be an illustration of the unchanging love between the Father and the Son. See Jn 17:21-23.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Those that thou gavest me, &c. The word "gavest" is evidently used by the Saviour to denote not only to give to him to be his real followers, but also as apostles, It is here used, probably, in the sense of giving as apostles. God had so ordered it by his providence that they had been given to him to be his apostles and followers; but the terms "thou gavest me" do not of necessity prove that they were true believers. Of Judas Jesus knew that he was a deceiver and a devil, Jn 6:70: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Judas is there represented as having been chosen by the Saviour to the apostleship, and this is equivalent to

saying that he was given to him for this work; yet at the same time he knew his character, and understood that he had never been renewed. None of them. None of those chosen to the apostolic office.

But the son of perdition. Mt 1:1 The term son was given by the Hebrews to those who possessed the character described by the word or name following. Thus, sons of Belial-those who possessed his character; children of wisdom -those who were wise, Mt 11:19. Thus Judas is called a son of perdition because he had the character of a destroyer. He was a traitor and a murderer. And this shows that he who knew the heart regarded his character as that of a wicked man--one whose appropriate name was that of a son of perdition.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

In these words our Saviour declares the great reason why he did at this time so publicly and solemnly pray for his disciples; it was to fill them with joy and comfort, that their joy might not be diminished by Christ's departure, but rather increased by the coming of the Comforter: That they may have my joy fulfilled in them: that is, the joy which they take in me, and the joy which they have from me.

There is a double care which Christ takes of his people; namely, a care of their graces, and a care of their joy and comfort; how solicitious was he to leave his disciples joyful before he departed from them! He delights to see his people cheerful; and he knows of what great use spiritual joy is in the Christian's course, both to enable us for doing, and to fit us for suffering.

Learn hence,

1. That Christ is the author and orignal of the joy of his people: My joy.

2. That it is Christ's will and desire, that his people might be full of holy joy: That my joy may be fulfilled in them.

3. That the great end of Christ's prayer and intercession was, and is, that his peoples' heart may be full of joy: These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

I have given them thy word, partly by external revelation, and partly by internal illumination; and for thy word's sake the world hates them, as also because they are not of the world.

Learn,

1. That Christians, especially ministers to whom Christ has given his word, must expect the world's hatred. Few of the prophets or apostles died a natural death: as their calling is eminent, so must their sufferings be exemplary. The best ministers, and the best men, are usually most hated. There is an antipathy against the power of godliness; or a cruel, causeless, implacable, and irreconcilable hatred against the saints, because of their strictness in religion, and contrariety to the world.

2. That it is to the honour of believers that they are like unto Christ, in being the object of the world's hatred: The world hates them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world.

This Christ adds both for information and consolation; for information, that they should look for such hatred, misery, and trouble, as they saw him grapple with; and for consolation, to think that the world can never hate us so bad as it hated Christ.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Sanctify them. This word means to render pure, or to cleanse from sins, 1Thes 5:20, 1Cor 6:11. Sanctification in the heart of a Christian is progressive. It consists in his becoming more like God and less attached to the world; in his getting the ascendancy over evil thoughts, and passions, and impure desires; and in his becoming more and more weaned

from earthly objects, and attached to those things which are unseen and eternal. The word also means to consecrate, to set apart to a holy office or purpose. See Jn 17:19; also Jn 10:36. When Jesus prayed here that God would sanctify them, he probably included both these ideas, that they might be made personally more holy, and might be truly consecrated to God as the ministers of his religion. Ministers of the gospel will be really devoted to the service of God just in proportion as they are personally pure.

Through thy truth. Truth is a representation of things as they are. The Saviour prayed that through those just views of God and of themselves they might be made holy. To see things as they are is to see God to be infinitely lovely and pure; his commands to be reasonable and just; heaven to be holy and desirable; his service to be easy, and religion pleasant, and sin odious; to see that life is short, that death is near; that the pride, pomp, pleasures, wealth, and honours of this world are of little value, and that it is of infinite importance to be prepared to enter on the eternal state of being. He that sees all this, or that looks on things as they are, will desire to be holy. He will make it his great object to live near to God and to glorify his name. In the sanctification of the soul God makes use of all truth, or of everything fitted to make a representation of things as they are to the mind. His Word states that and no more; his Spirit and his providence do it. The earth and the heavens, the seasons, the sunshine and the rain, are all fitted to teach us his goodness and power, and lead us to him. His daily mercies tend to the same end, and afflictions have the same design. Our own sickness teaches us that we are soon to die. The death of a friend teaches us the instability of all earthly comforts, and the necessity of seeking better joys. All these things are fitted to make just representations to the mind, and thus to sanctify the soul. As the Christian is constantly amid these objects, so he should be constantly growing in grace, and daily and hourly gaining new and deeper impressions of the great truths of religion.

Thy word is truth. All that thou hast spoken--that is, all that is contained in the Bible. All the commands and promises of God; his representations of his own character and that of man; his account of the mission and death of his Son; of the grave, the resurrection, judgment, and eternity, all tend

to represent things as they are, and are thus fitted to sanctify the soul. We have here also the testimony of the Saviour that the revelation which God has given is true. All that God has spoken is true, and the Christian should rejoice and the sinner should tremble. See Ps 19:7-14.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

I sanctify myself. I consecrate myself exclusively to the service of God. The word sanctify does not refer here to personal sanctification, for he had no sin, but to setting himself apart entirely to the work of redemption.

1st. That they might have an example of the proper manner of labouring in the ministry, and might learn of me how to discharge its duties. Ministers will understand their work best when they most faithfully study the example of their great model, the Son of God.

2nd. That they might be made pure by the effect of my sanctifying myself--that is, that they might be made pure by the shedding of that blood which cleanses from all sin. By this only can men be made holy; and it was because the Saviour so sanctified himself, or set himself to this work so unreservedly as to shed his own blood, that any soul can be made pure and fit for the kingdom of God.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Verses 20,21. Neither pray I for these alone, &c. Not for the apostles only, but for all who shall be converted under the preaching of the gospel. They will all need similar grace and be exposed to similar trials. It is a matter of unspeakable joy that each Christian, however humble or unknown to men--however poor, unlearned, or despised, can reflect that he was remembered in prayer by him whom God heareth always. We value the prayers of pious friends. How much more should we value this petition of the Son of God! To that single prayer we who are Christians owe infinitely more real benefits than the world can ever bestow; and in the midst of any trials we may remember that the Son of God prayed for us, and that the prayer was assuredly heard, and will be answered in reference to all who truly believe.

All may be one. May be united as brethren. Christians are all redeemed by the same blood, and are going to the same heaven. They have the same wants, the same enemies, the same joys. Though they are divided into different denominations, yet they will meet at last in the same abodes of glory. Hence they should feel that they belong to the same family, and are children of the same God and Father. There are no ties so tender as those which bind us in the gospel. There is no friendship so pure and enduring as that which results from having the same attachment to the Lord Jesus. Hence Christians, in the New Testament, are represented as being indissolubly united--parts of the same body, and members of the same family, Acts 4:32-35. 1Cor 12:4-31, Eph 2:20-22, Rom 12:5. On the ground of this union they are exhorted to love one another, to bear one another's burdens, and to study the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another, Eph 4:3, Rom 12:5-16.

As thou, Father, art in me. See Jn 14:10 This does not affirm that the union between Christians should be in all respects like that between the Father and the Son, but only in the points in which they are capable of being compared. It is not the union of nature which is referred to, but the union of plan, of counsel, of purpose--seeking the same objects, and manifesting attachment to the same things, and a desire to promote the same ends.

That they also may be one in us. To be in God and in Christ is to be united to God and Christ. The expression is common in the New Testament. The phrase here used denotes a union among all Christians founded on and resulting from a union to the same God and Saviour.

That the world may believe, &c. That the world, so full of animosities and fightings, may see the power of Christian principle in overcoming the sources of contention and producing love, and may thus see that a religion that could produce this must be from heaven. Jn 13:34. This was done. Such was the attachment of the early Christians to each other, that a heathen was constrained to say, "See how these Christians love one another!"

21 that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

And the glory, &c. The honour which thou hast conferred on me by admitting me to union with thee, the same honour I have conferred on them by admitting them to like union with me.

May be one, even as we are one. Not in nature, or in the mode of existence-for this was not the subject of discourse, and would be impossible--but in feeling, in principle, in purpose. Evincing, as the Father and the Son had always done, the same great aim and plan; not pursuing different interests, or counteracting each other's purposes, or forming parties, but seeking the same ends by the same means. This is the union between the Father and the Son. Always, in the creation, preservation, and redemption of the world, the Father and the Son have sought the same object, and this is to be the model on which Christians should act.

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

May be made perfect in one. That their union may be complete. That there may be no jars, discords, or contentions. A machine is perfect or complete when it has all its parts and is in good order--when there is no portion of it wanting. So the union of Christians, for which the Saviour prayed, would be complete or perfect if there were no controversies, no envyings, no contentions, and no heart-burnings and jealousies. It is worthy of remark here how entirely the union of his people occupied the mind of Jesus as he drew near to death. He saw the danger of strifes and contentions in the church. He knew the imperfections of even the best of men. He saw how prone they would be to passion and ambition; how ready to mistake love of sect or party for zeal for pure religion; how selfish and worldly men in the church might divide his followers, and produce unholy feeling and contention; and he saw, also, how much this would do to dishonour religion. Hence he took occasion, when he was about to die, to impress the importance of union on his disciples. By

solemn admonition, and by most tender and affecting appeals to God in supplication, he showed his sense of the value of this union. He used the most sublime and impressive illustration; he adverted to the eternal union between the Father and himself; he reminded them of his love, and of the effect that their union would have on the world, to fix it more deeply in their hearts. The effect has shown the infinite wisdom of the Saviour. The contentions and strifes of Christians have shown his knowledge in foreseeing it. The effect of all this on religion has shown that he understood the value of union. Christians have contended long enough. It is time that they should hear the parting admonitions of their Redeemer, and go unitedly against their common foe. The world still lies in wickedness; and the friends of Jesus, bound by the cords of eternal love, should advance together against the common enemy, and spread the triumphs of the gospel around the globe. All that is needful now, under the blessing of God, to convince the world that God sent the Lord Jesus, is that very union among all Christians for which he prayed; and when that union of feeling, and purpose, and action shall take place, the task of sending the gospel to all nations will be soon accomplished, and the morning of the millennial glory will dawn upon the world.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

I will. This expression, though it commonly denotes command, is here only expressive of desire. It is used in prayer, and it was not the custom of the Saviour to use language of command when addressing God. It is often used to express strong and earnest desire, or a pressing and importunate wish, such as we are exceedingly anxious should not be denied, Mk 6:25, 10:35; Mt 12:38, 15:28.

Where I am. In heaven. The Son of God was still in the bosom of the Father, Jn 1:18. Jn 7:34. Probably the expression here means where I shall be.

My glory. My honour and dignity when exalted to the right hand of God. The word "behold" implies more than simply seeing; it means also to participate, to enjoy. Jn 3:3, Mt 5:8.

Thou lovedst me, &c. This is another of the numerous passages which prove that the Lord Jesus existed before the creation of the world. It is not possible to explain it on any other supposition.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

The respect he had to his Father, Joh 17:25. Observe,

(a.) The title he gives to God: O righteous Father. When he prayed that they might be sanctified, he called him holy Father; when he prays that they may be glorified, he calls him righteous Father; for it is a crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give. God's righteousness was engaged for the giving out of all that good which the Father had promised and the Son had purchased.

(b.) The character he gives of the world that lay in wickedness: The world has not known thee. Note, Ignorance of God overspreads the world of mankind; this is the darkness they sit in. Now this is urged here,

[1.] To show that these disciples need the aids of special grace, both because of the necessity of their work--they were to bring a world that knew not God to the knowledge of him; and also, because of the difficulty of their work--they must bring light to those that rebelled against the light; therefore keep them.

[2.] To show that they were qualified for further peculiar favours, for they had that knowledge of God which the world had not.

(c.) The plea he insists upon for himself: But I have known thee. Christ knew the Father as no one else ever did; knew upon what grounds he went in his undertaking, knew his Father's mind in every thing, and therefore, in this prayer, came to him with confidence, as we do to one we know. Christ is here suing out blessings for those that were his; pursuing this petition, when he had said, The world has not known thee, one would expect it should follow, but they have known thee; no, their knowledge was not to be boasted of, but I have known thee, which intimates that there is nothing in us to recommend us to God's favour, but all our interest

in him, and intercourse with him, result from, and depend upon, Christ's interest and intercourse. We are unworthy, but he is worthy.

(d.) The plea he insists upon for his disciples: And they have known that thou hast sent me; and,

[1.] Hereby they are distinguished from the unbelieving world. When multitudes to whom Christ was sent, and his grace offered, would not believe that God had sent him, these knew it, and believed it, and were not ashamed to own it. Note, To know and believe in Jesus Christ, in the midst of a world that persists in ignorance and infidelity, is highly pleasing to God, and shall certainly be crowned with distinguishing glory. Singular faith qualifies for singular favours.

[2.] Hereby they are interested in the mediation of Christ, and partake of the benefit of his acquaintance with the Father: "I have known thee, immediately and perfectly; and these, though they have not so known thee, nor were capable of knowing thee so, yet have known that thou hast sent me, have known that which was required of them to know, have known the Creator in the Redeemer." Knowing Christ as sent of God, they have, in him, known the Father, and are introduced to an acquaintance with him; therefore, "Father, look after them for my sake."

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

I in them. By my doctrines and the influences of my Spirit. That my religion may show its power, and produce its proper fruits in their minds, Gal 4:19. The discourse in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters is the most tender and sublime that was ever pronounced in our world. No composition can be found anywhere so fitted to sustain the soul in trial or to support it in death. This sublime and beautiful discourse is appropriately closed by a solemn and most affecting prayer--a prayer at once expressive of the profoundest reverence for God and the tenderest love for men--simple, grave, tender, sublime, and full of consolation. It is the model for our prayers, and with like reverence, faith, and love we should come before God. This prayer for the church will yet be fully answered; and he who loves the church and the world cannot but cast his eyes onward to that time when all believers shall be one; when

contentions, bigotry, strife, and anger shall cease; and when, in perpetual union and love, Christians shall show forth the power and purity of that holy gospel with which the Saviour came to bless mankind. Soon may that happy day arise!

John-18

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples.

see Mt 26:47-58. Compare Mr 14:43-54 Lu 22:47-54.

3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

As soon as he said, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground - How amazing is it, that they should renew the assault, after so sensible an experience both of his power and mercy! But probably the priests among them might persuade themselves and their attendants, that this also was done by Beelzebub; and that it was through the providence of God, This statement of John is omitted by the other gospels. As Christ answers them, either his majesty and their own terror so impressed them, that, awed, they fell backward to the earth, or his divine power was exerted to prostrate them. Then the Lord submitted himself "as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa 53:7 Jer 11:19 Ac 8:32), and his power is not again exerted

until he rises from the tomb, except to heal the smitten servant of the high priest.

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye ? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

9 that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?

Jesus Brought before the High Priest

12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

13 and led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Peter in the High Priest's Court

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

see notes on Mt 26:57-75. Compare Mr 14:53-72 Lu 22:54-71.

16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold; and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.
20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.
21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.
22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?
23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?
24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.
26 One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?
27 Peter then denied again; and immediately the cock crew.

Jesus before Pilate

28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

For notes on the trial before Pilate, see Mt 27:1-25. Compare Mr 15:1-15 Lu 23:1-25. The first examination was at the house of Annas (Joh 18:13),

where an officer had smitten Jesus (Joh 18:22). Then Annas sent him to Caiaphas (Joh 18:24). Still later he was tried before the Sanhedrin (Mt 27:1,2) and condemned. Then he was led from Caiaphas to Pilate's judgment hall (Joh 18:28). The judgment hall. The praetorium, or official hall of the Roman governor. Lest they should be defiled. These Jewish leaders, filled with the hate of Christ, and ready to secure his judicial murder by the foulest means, were yet so scrupulous that they would not enter the house of a Gentile lest "they should be defiled" (see De 16:4), so that they would not be able to eat the passover. The Pharisees held that contact with a Gentile, or to enter his house was a source of defilement. Hence, this deputation of the Sanhedrin waited without, and Pilate "went out unto them" to ascertain their business. Men can be very religious and yet great sinners.

29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

The Jews being now under the power of the Romans, though they had a power of judging and censuring criminals in smaller matters, yet not in capital cases; they could not pronounce a sentence of death upon any person, say some; they might, and did, say others, punish blasphemers by stoning them to death; but then their sentence is to be ratified by the Roman power. Accordingly, here they had in their ecclessiastical court condemned Christ for blasphemy, now they bring him to Pilate the Roman governor, to confirm the sentence of death.

From hence it appears, that Christ was the true Messias, being sent into the world when the sceptre was departed from Judah, according to that ancient prophecy of Jacob, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come Gen 49:10.

The Jews had no power absolutely to condemn any man, or put him to death; but his power the Roman emperor reserved to his own deputy. This contributed towards the fulfilling of our Saviour's words, That he should

be delivered to the Gentiles, and should be crucified Matt 20:19: which was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment.

Had the Jews put him to death, they had stoned him. But Christ was to be made a curse for us by hanging upon a tree; and accordingly the Jews execute the counsel of God, though they knew it not, by refusing to put him to death themselves.

Learn hence, how willing Christ was to undergo a shameful, painful, and accursed death, that he might testify his love unto, and procure a blessing for, his people. Thus the saying of Jesus was fulfilled; when he spake, signifying what death he should die.

32 that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

That the saying of Jesus, &c. To wit, that he would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles and be crucified, Mt 20:19. Neither of these things would have happened if he had been put to death in the way that the Jews first contemplated, Mt 26:4. Though it should be admitted that they had the power, in religious cases, to do this, yet in such a case it would not have been done, as Jesus predicted, by the Gentiles; and even if it should be admitted that they had the right to take life, yet they had not the right to do it by crucifixion. This was particularly a Roman punishment. And thus it was ordered, in the providence of God, that the prediction of Jesus in both these respects was fulfilled.

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews ?

34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

It would be hard for Pilate to form any conception of a kingdom not of this world, a kingdom of which the subjects did not fight with carnal weapons to defend its king, or to extend its borders. He was a soldier and the

representative of a monarch whose power rested on the sword. But such a kingdom was Christ's. It was not of this world, did not spring from it, was heavenly in its origin, and hence his servants would not fight that he should not be delivered to the Jews. (1) Christ's kingdom is supernatural, not of human origin. It is in the world, but not worldly. (2) It is maintained, not by carnal weapons, but by spiritual and moral means.

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate asks him again directly and expressly, Art thou a king or not?

Our Saviour answers, "Thou sayest that I am a king, and so it is indeed as thou sayest, I am a king, and the king of the Jews too; but not a temporal king, to rule over them after the manner of earthly kings with temporal power, and worldly pomp and splendour: but I am a spiritual king, to rule and govern, not only the Jews, but my whole church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, after a spiritual manner."

Observe here, 1. The dominion and sovereignty of Jesus Christ; he has a kingdom: My kingdom.

Observe, 2. The condition and qualification of this kingdom, negatively expressed: My kingdom is not of this world.

Observe, 3. The use and end of this kingdom: that the truth may have place among the children of men for their salvation: To this end was I born, and came into the world, to bear witness unto the truth.

Observe, 4. The subjects of Christ's kingdom declared: Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice; that is, every one who is by divine grace disposed to believe and love the truth, will hear and obey Christ's doctrine.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Observe here, 1. The question Pilate put to Christ, What is truth? A most noble and important question, had it been put forth with an honest heart,

with a mind fairly disposed for information and satisfaction: but it is evident, Pilate's enquiry was not serious; nay, it is generally thought, that Pilate asked this question in scorn, contempt and derision: for he stays not for our Lord's answer but as soon as he started this query, went off the bench in haste.

Learn hence, that this question, what is truth? or how may we come to the knowledge of the truth? is of unspeakable use and importance, and a question, whereon the whole frame and constitution of religion depends: because truth is claimed by all parties of men, by all professors of religion.

Ask the different parties from the old gentleman at Rome to the poorest Quaker and Muggletonian, Where is truth? and they will all tell you.

They are in the possession of it: Every sect hath thus much of popery with it, that the professors of it think themselves infallible, and every one cries out, Here is truth.

But God has given us a two-fold light to search for truth: namely, the light of reason, and the light of scripture, or divine revelation.
The former Solomon calls the candle of the Lord, set up in our breasts by God, on purpose to discover truth unto us. God allows us, yea, enjoins us, the free and impartial use of our understandings and judgments, in order to the finding out of divine truth; but because nature's light or the light of natural reason is not clear and bright enough to give us a prospect of supernatural truths, (for nature and reason can never dictate those things which depend only upon God's free grace and good pleasure; such as the doctrines of a Saviour and Redeemer, and the method of man's salvation by the sufferings of the Son of God,) it had been blasphemy once to have supposed such things, had not God revealed them in scripture: therefore the second standard of divine truth, is the infallible word of God.

The gospel of Christ is the way, and the truth; Truth came by Jesus Christ. And would men be ruled and conducted by these unalterable standards of truth, namely, right reason and divine revelation, they would easily agree in their judgments what is to be believed, and all duties and controversies

would vanish. Right reason and inspired scriptures are the best judges of controversies; they being the fixed standards and measures of divine truth, can best resolve Pilate's question here, and tell us What is truth.

Observe, 2. How unwilling, how very unwilling Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death: he came forth three several times, and tells the Jews that he finds no fault in him; he bids them take him, and judge him according to their law. Pilate, a Pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, do condemn him.

Observe, 3. Pilate having absolved Christ, I find no fault in him, endeavours next to release him, and takes occasion from their custom of having a prisoner released to them at their feast, to insinuate his desire that they should choose Christ: Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover.

Observe, lastly, how the Jews prefer Barabbas, a robber, before the holy and innocent Jesus: They all cried out, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas.

Learn hence, that no persons, how wicked and vile soever, are so odious in the eyes of the enemies of God, as Christ himself was, and his friends and followers now are: Christ did find it thus in his own person when on earth: Barabbas, a robber, was preferred before him: and now he is in heaven, he suffers in the members, the filth of the world being preferred before them.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews ?

See Mt 27:15

40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

John-19

1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

see Mt 27:19-22

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

3 and said, Hail, King of the Jews ! and they smote him with their hands.

4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

We have a law. The law respecting blasphemy, Lev 24:16; De 13:1-5. They had arraigned Jesus on that charge before the Sanhedrim, and condemned him for it, Mt 26:63-65. But this was not the charge on which they had arraigned him before Pilate. They had accused him of sedition, Lk 23:2. On this charge they were now convinced that they could not get Pilate to condemn him. He declared him innocent. Still bent on his ruin, and resolved to gain their purpose, they now, contrary to their first intention, adduced the original accusation on which they had already pronounced him guilty. If they could not obtain his condemnation as a rebel, they now sought it as a blasphemer, and they appealed to Pilate to sanction what they believed was required in their law. Thus to Pilate himself it became more manifest that he was innocent, that they had attempted to deceive HIM, and that the charge on which they had arraigned him was a mere pretence to obtain his sanction to their wicked design.

8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

When Pilate therefore heard that saying. That they had accused him of blasphemy. As this was not the charge on which they had arraigned him before his bar, he had not before heard it, and it now convinced him more of their malignity and wickedness.

He was the more afraid. What was the ground of his fear is not declared by the evangelist. It was probably, however, the alarm of his conscience, and the fear of vengeance if he suffered such an act of injustice to be done as to put an innocent man to death. He was convinced of his innocence. He saw more and more clearly the design of the Jews; and it is not improbable that a heathen, who believed that the gods often manifested themselves to men, dreaded their vengeance if he suffered one who claimed to be divine, and who might be, to be put to death. It is clear that Pilate was convinced that Jesus was innocent; and in this state of agitation between the convictions of his own conscience, and the clamours of the Jews, and the fear of vengeance, and the certainty that he would do wrong if he gave him up, he was thrown into this state of alarm, and resolved again to question Jesus, that he might obtain satisfaction on the subjects that agitated his mind.

9 and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou ? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Whence art thou? Jn 7:27. Pilate knew that he was a Galilean, but this question was asked to ascertain whether he claimed to be the Son of God--whether a mere man, or whether divine. Jesus gave him no answer. Probably for the following reasons:

1st. He had already told him his design, and the nature of his kingdom, Jn 18:36,37.

2nd. He had said enough to satisfy him of his innocence. Of that Pilate was convinced. His duty was clear, and if he had had firmness to do it, he would not have asked this. Jesus, by his silence, there- fore rebuked him for his want of firmness, and his unwillingness to do what his conscience told him was right.

3rd. It is not probable that Pilate would have understood him if he had declared to him the truth about his origin, and about his being the Son of God. 4th. After what had been done --after he had satisfied Pilate of his innocence, and then had been beaten and mocked by his permission--he had no reason to expect justice at his hands, and therefore properly declined to make any farther defence. By this the prophecy Isa 53:7 was remarkably fulfilled.

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me ? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Speakest thou not, &c. This is the expression of a man of pride. He was not accustomed to be met with silence like this. He endeavoured, therefore, to address the fears of Jesus, and to appall him with the declaration that his life was at his disposal, and that his safety depended on his favour. This arrogance called forth the reply of the Saviour, and he told him that he had no power except what was given him from above. Jesus was not, therefore, to be intimidated by any claim of power in Pilate. His life was not in his hands, and he could not stoop to ask the favour of a man.

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Except it were given thee. It has been conceded or granted to you. God has ordered your life, your circumstances, and the extent of your dominion. This was a reproof of a proud man in office, who was forgetful of the great Source of his authority, and who supposed that by his own talents or fortune he had risen to his present place. Alas! how many men in office forget that God gives them their rank, and vainly think that it is owing to their own talents or merits that they have risen to such an elevation. Men of office and talent, as well as others, should remember that God gives them what they have, and that they have no influence except as it is conceded to them from on high.

From above. From God, or by his direction, and by the arrangements of his providence. Rom 13:1: "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." The words "from above" often refer to God or to heaven, Jas 1:17; 3:15,17, Jn 3:3 (in the Greek). The providence of God was remarkable in so ordering affairs that a man, flexible and yielding like Pilate, should be intrusted with power in Judea. Had it been a man firm and unyielding in his duty--one who could not be terrified or awed by the multitude-- Jesus would not have been delivered to be crucified, Acts 2:23. God thus brings about his wise ends; and while Pilate was free, and acted out his nature without compulsion, yet the purposes of God, long before predicted, were fulfilled, and Jesus made an atonement for the sins of the world. Thus God overrules the wickedness and folly of men. He so orders

affairs that the true character of men shall be brought out, and makes use of that character to advance his own great purposes.

This does not mean that their sin was greater than that of Pilate, though that was true; but their sin was greater on account of the fact that they perseveringly and malignantly endeavoured to obtain the sanction of the magistrate to their wicked proceedings. Nor does it mean, because God had purposed his death (Acts 2:23), and given power to Pilate, that therefore their sin was greater, for God's purpose in the case made it neither more nor less. It did not change the nature of their free acts. This passage teaches no such doctrine, but that their sin was aggravated by malignantly endeavouring to obtain the sanction of a magistrate who was invested with authority by God, and who wielded the power that God gave him. By this Pilate ought to have been convinced, and was convinced, of their wickedness, and hence he sought more and more to release him.

He that delivered me. The singular here is put for the plural, including Judas, the high-priests, and the Sanhedrim.

12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

Sought to release him. He was more and more convinced of his innocence, and more unwilling to yield him to mere malice and envy in the face of justice. But the Jews cried out, &c. This moved Pilate to deliver Jesus into their hands. He feared that he would be accused of unfaithfulness to the interests of the Roman emperor if he did not condemn a man whom his own nation had accused of sedition. The Roman emperor then on the throne was exceedingly jealous and tyrannical, and the fear of losing his favour induced Pilate to deliver Jesus into their hands. Caesar's friend. The friend of the Roman emperor. The name of the reigning emperor was Tiberius. After the time of Julius Caesar all the emperors were called Caesar, as all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh. This emperor was, during the latter part of his reign, the most cruel, jealous, and wicked that ever sat on the Roman throne.

13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.~~~

14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him.

Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

The Crucifixion

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

> See notes on Mt 27:33-66.

18 where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Naz areth the King of the Jews.

20 This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

> What I have written, &c. This declaration implied that he would make no change. He was impatient, and weary of their solicitations. He had yielded to them contrary to the convictions of his own conscience, and he now declared his purpose to yield no farther.

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith,

They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Jesus' Side Pierced

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Another truth illustrated by the remarkable events connected with Jesus' death was that he was the true Passover lamb. He died on the afternoon of Passover day, at the same time as the Jews back in Jerusalem were killing their lambs in preparation for the meal that night. And because he was the true Passover lamb, not a bone in his body was broken. Normally, the soldiers broke the victims' legs to hasten their death, but they had no need to do this to Jesus, because he was already dead. Instead, one of the soldiers plunged his spear deep into Jesus' body (Joh_19:31-37).

A double Sabbath, both the weekly Sabbath and a passover Sabbath. It was usual Roman custom to leave crucified bodies on the cross, but out of deference to their wishes Pilate consents that the legs of the victims should be broken in order to hasten death, so that the bodies might be taken down and buried. The legs were crushed with a hammer like a sledge and the shock would bring speedy death.

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

34 but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

> Forthwith there came out blood and water - It was strange, seeing he was dead, that blood should come out; more strange, that water also; and most strange of all, that both should come out immediately, at one time, and yet distinctly. It was pure and true water, as well as pure and true blood. The asseveration of the beholder and testifier of it, shows both the truth and greatness of the miracle and mystery.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

36 For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

> That the scripture should be fulfilled. See Ex 12:46. John here regards the paschal lamb as an emblem of Christ; and as in the law it was commanded that a bone of that lamb should not be broken, so, in the providence of God, it was ordered that a bone of the Saviour should not be broken. The Scripture thus received a complete fulfillment respecting both the type and the antitype. Some have supposed, however, that John referred to Ps 34:20.

37 And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

> Another scripture, Zech 12:10. We must here be struck with the wonderful providence of God, that so many scriptures were fulfilled in his death. All these things happened without any such design on the part of the men engaged in these scenes; but whatever was done by Jew or Gentile tended to the fulfillment of prophecies long on record, and with which the Jews themselves ought to have been familiar. Little did they suppose, when delivering him to Pilate--when he was mocked--when they parted his garments--when they pierced him--that they were fulfilling ancient predictions, But in this way God had so ordered it that the firmest foundation should be laid for the belief that he was the true Messiah, and that the designs of wicked men should all be overruled to the fulfillment of the great plans which God had in sending his Son.

The Burial of Jesus

38 And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

see Mt 27:57-66

Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate - And Nicodemus also came - Acknowledging Christ, when even his chosen disciples forsook him. In that extremity Joseph was no longer afraid, Nicodemus no longer ashamed.

39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight.

This is the third mention of him. See Joh 3:1 7:50. Both he and Joseph were members of the Sanhedrin. Only John mentions that he aided Joseph in the burial.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

John-20

The Resurrection

1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

For notes on the Resurrection, see Mt 28:1-8

2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.
4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.
5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.
6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
7 and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.
8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.
9 For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.
10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,
12 and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.
13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.
14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.
15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.
17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20 And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

> The Lord showed his wounds to convince them beyond a doubt that it was not a fantasy or an apparition. A week later he shows his wounds to Thomas. The resurrected body still bore these proofs of his suffering and love. Sixty years later, when John, at Patmos, saw the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, he beheld "a Lamb as it had been slain" (Re 5:6). Perhaps our Lord in glory continues to bear the marks of the cross. Perhaps these will forever, as we gaze in glory, remind us of the story of our redemption.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

> This is the Great Commission, more fully developed in Galilee a little later (Mt 28:16-20), and finally completed on Mt. Olivet (Ac 1:4-9), just before the Lord ascended. The Lord had trained the apostles for three years in order to fit them for this important work.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

23 whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

> PNT Bilble Commentator:
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> Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, etc. It will be seen at once, by a comparison with Mt 16:19, that the keys they promised to Peter are now given to all the apostles, and all have similar power to open and shut, to remit sin, and to bind. The meaning is plain when we consider, first, the charge that the Savior was making, and, secondly, look forward and see how that charge was carried out; or, in other words,

observe the apostles "remitting sins" and retaining them. It is the Great Commission to preach the gospel that the Savior gives for the first time in Joh 20:21. It is with reference to carrying out that Commission that he speaks in Joh 20:23. It was in order that they might present the terms of that Commission infallibly to the world that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was imparted, of which there is a foreshadowing in Joh 20:22. The great end of that Commission was to declare to men "repentance and remission of sins" (Lu 24:47) in the name of Christ. The following facts are manifest: (1) The Savior gave to his apostles his Commission that they might make known his will. (2) He bade them preach "remission of sins" (Lu 24:47). (3) He gave them a measure of the Holy Spirit, and bade them wait until "endued with power from on high" (Lu 24:49). (4) When the Holy Spirit fell, they spoke as it "gave them utterance" (Ac 2:4). (5) They then declared, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the terms on which "sins could be remitted". To anxious sinners they answer, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, 'for the remission of sins'" (Ac 2:38). Here, then, they, directed by the Holy Spirit, "remit" and "retain" sins by declaring the terms on which Christ will pardon. Thus, also, they do in their preaching recorded through the Acts of the Apostles the very thing that the Savior gave them power to do. This power was not imparted to a hierarchy, nor to any ecclesiastical body, but to the apostles, and was fulfilled by them in declaring to the world the conditions of pardon and condemnation under the Commission of our Lord.

Barnes Bible Commentator:

Whose soever sins, &c. Mt 16:19 Mt 18:18. It is worthy of remark here that Jesus confers the same power on all the apostles. He gives to no one of them any peculiar authority. If Peter, as the Papists pretend, had been appointed to any peculiar authority, it is wonderful that the Saviour did not here hint at any such pre-eminence. This passage conclusively proves that they were invested with equal power in organizing and governing the church. The authority which he had given Peter to preach the gospel first to the Jews and the Gentiles, does not militate against this. Mt 16:18, Mt 16:19. This authority given them was full proof that they were inspired. The meaning of the passage is not that man can forgive sins--that belongs only to God (Isa 43:23), but that they should be inspired; that in founding

the church, and in declaring the will of God, they should be taught by the Holy Ghost to declare on what terms, to what characters, and to what temper of mind God would extend forgiveness of sins. It was not authority to forgive individuals, but to establish in all the churches the terms and conditions on which men might be pardoned, with a promise that God would confirm all that they taught; that all might have assurance of forgiveness who would comply with those terms; and that those who did not comply should not be forgiven, but that their sins should be retained. This commission is as far as possible from the authority which the Roman Catholic claims of remitting sin and of pronouncing pardon.

JFB Bible Commentator:

In any literal and authoritative sense this power was never exercised by one of the apostles, and plainly was never understood by themselves as possessed by them or conveyed to them. (See on Mt 16:19). The power to intrude upon the relation between men and God cannot have been given by Christ to His ministers in any but a ministerial or declarative sense—as the authorized interpreters of His word, while in the actings of His ministers, the real nature of the power committed to them is seen in the exercise of church discipline.

The Unbelief of Thomas

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.
But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Except I shall see, &c. It is not known what was the ground of the incredulity of Thomas. It is probable, however, that it was, in part, at least, the effect of deep grief, and of that despondency which fills the mind when a long-cherished hope is taken away. In such a case it requires proof of uncommon clearness and strength to over- come the despondency, and to convince us that we may obtain the object of our desires. Thomas has been

much blamed by expositors, but he asked only for proof that would be satisfactory in his circumstances. The testimony of ten disciples should have been indeed sufficient, but an opportunity was thus given to the Saviour to convince the last of them of the truth of his resurrection. This incident shows, what all the conduct of the apostles proves, that they had not conspired together to impose on the world. Even they were slow to believe, and one of them refused to rely even on the testimony of ten of his brethren. How unlike this to the conduct of men who agree to impose a story on mankind! Many are like Thomas. Many now are unwilling to believe because they do not see the Lord Jesus, and with just as little reason as Thomas had. The testimony of those eleven men--including Thomas--who saw him alive after he was crucified; who were willing to lay down their lives to attest that they had seen him alive; who had nothing to gain by imposture, and whose conduct was removed as far as possible from the appearance of imposture, should be regarded as ample proof of the fact that he rose from the dead.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.

Turning to the skeptical Thomas, he asks him to apply the tests that he had declared would be necessary before he could believe. His compassion for the unbelief of Thomas shows the patient tenderness of the Savior with the difficulties of an honest seeker.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

The judgment of Christ upon the whole (Joh 20:29): "Thomas because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, and it is well thou art brought to it at last upon any terms; but blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed." Here,

(a.) Christ owns Thomas a believer. Sound and sincere believers, though they be slow and weak, shall be graciously accepted of the Lord Jesus. Those who have long stood it out, if at last they yield, shall find him ready

to forgive. No sooner did Thomas consent to Christ than Christ gives him the comfort of it, and lets him know that he believes.

(b.) He upbraids him with his former incredulity. He might well be ashamed to think,

[1.] That he had been so backward to believe, and came so slowly to his own comforts. Those that in sincerity have closed with Christ see a great deal of reason to lament that they did not do it sooner.

[2.] That it was not without much ado that he was brought to believe at last: "If thou hadst not seen me alive, thou wouldst not have believed;" but if no evidence must be admitted but that of our own senses, and we must believe nothing but what we ourselves are eye-witnesses of, farewell all commerce and conversation. If this must be the only method of proof, how must the world be converted to the faith of Christ? He is therefore justly blamed for laying so much stress upon this.

(c.) He commends the faith of those who believe upon easier terms. Thomas, as a believer, was truly blessed; but rather blessed are those that have not seen. It is not meant of not seeing the objects of faith (for these are invisible, Heb 11:1,2Co 4:18), but the motives of faith--Christ's miracles, and especially his resurrection; blessed are those that see not these, and yet believe in Christ. This may look, either backward, upon the Old-Testament saints, who had not seen the things which they saw, and yet believed the promise made unto the father, and lived by that faith; or forward, upon those who should afterwards believe, the Gentiles, who had never seen Christ in the flesh, as the Jews had. This faith is more laudable and praise-worthy than theirs who saw and believed; for,

[1.] It evidences a better temper of mind in those that do believe. Not to see and yet to believe argues greater industry in searching after truth, and greater ingenuousness of mind in embracing it. He that believes upon that sight has his resistance conquered by a sort of violence; but he that believes without it, like the Bereans, is more noble.

[2.] It is a greater instance of the power of divine grace. The less sensible the evidence is the more does the work of faith appear to be the Lord's doing. Peter is blessed in his faith, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to him, Mt 16:17. Flesh and blood contribute more to their faith that see and believe, than to theirs who see not and yet believe. Dr. Lightfoot quotes a saying of one of the rabbin, "That one proselyte is more acceptable to God than all the thousands of Israel that stood before mount Sinai; for they saw and received the law, but a proselyte sees not, and yet receives it."

The Purpose of the Book

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

He assures us that many other things occurred, which were all worthy to be recorded, but are not written in the book: many signs. Some refer this to all the signs that Jesus did during his whole life, all the wondrous words he spoke, and all the wondrous works he did. But it seems rather to be confined to the signs he did after his resurrection, for these were in the presence of the disciples only, who are here spoken of, Ac 10:41. Divers of his appearances are not recorded, as appears, 1Co 15:5-7. See Ac 1:3. Now,

(1.) We may here improve this general attestation, that there were other signs, many others, for the confirmation of our faith; and, being added to the particular narratives, they very much strengthen the evidence. Those that recorded the resurrection of Christ were not put to fish for evidence, to take up such short and scanty proofs as they could find, and make up the rest with conjecture. No, they had evidence enough and to spare, and more witnesses to produce than they had occasion for. The disciples, in whose presence these other signs were done, were to be preachers of Christ's resurrection to others, and therefore it was requisite they should have proofs of it ex abundanti--in abundance, that they might have a strong consolation, who ventured life and all upon it.

(2.) We need not ask why they were not all written, or why not more than these, or others than these; for it is enough for us that so it seemed good to

the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration this was given. Had this history been a mere human composition, it had been swelled with a multitude of depositions and affidavits, to prove the contested truth of Christ's resurrection and long argument drawn up for the demonstration of it; but, being a divine history, the penmen write with a noble security, relating what amounted to a competent proof, sufficient to convince those that were willing to be taught and to condemn those that were obstinate in their unbelief; and, if this satisfy not, more would not. Men produce all they have to say, that they may gain credit; but God does not, for he can give faith. Had this history been written for the entertainment of the curious, it would have been more copious, or every circumstance would have brightened and embellished the story; but it was written to bring men to believe, and enough is said to answer that intention, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

31 but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

He instructs us in the design of recording what we do find here (Joh 20:31): "These accounts are given in this and the following chapter, that you might believe upon these evidences; that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, declared with power to be so by his resurrection."

(a.) Here is the design of those that wrote the gospel. Some write books for their diversion, and publish them for their profit or applause, others to oblige the Athenian humour, others to instruct the world in arts and sciences for their secular advantage; but the evangelists wrote without any view of temporal benefit to themselves or others, but to bring men to Christ and heaven, and, in order to this, to persuade men to believe; and for this they took the most fitting methods, they brought to the world a divine revelation, supported with its due evidences.

(b.) The duty of those that read and hear the gospel. It is their duty to believe, to embrace, the doctrine of Christ, and that record given concerning him, 1Jo 5:11.

[1.] We are here told what the great gospel truth is which we are to believe--that Jesus is that Christ, that Son of God.

First, That he is the Christ, the person who, under the title of the Messiah, was promised to, and expected by, the Old-Testament saints, and who, according to the signification of the name, is anointed of God to be a prince and a Saviour.

Secondly, That he is the Son of God; not only as Mediator (for then he had not been greater than Moses, who was a prophet, intercessor, and lawgiver), but antecedent to his being the Mediator; for if he had not been a divine person, endued with the power of God and entitled to the glory of God, he had not been qualified for the undertaking-not fit either to do the Redeemer's work or to wear the Redeemer's crown.

[2.] What the great gospel blessedness is which we are to hope for--That believing we shall have life through his name. This is, First, To direct our faith; it must have an eye to the life, the crown of life, the tree of life set before us. Life through Christ's name, the life proposed in the covenant which is made with us in Christ, is what we must propose to ourselves as the fulness of our joy and the abundant recompence of all our services and sufferings. Secondly, To encourage our faith, and invite us to believe. Upon the prospect of some great advantage, men will venture far; and greater advantage there cannot be than that which is offered by the words of this life, as the gospel is called, Ac 5:20. It includes both spiritual life, in conformity to God and communion with him, and eternal life, in the vision and fruition of him. Both are through Christ's name, by his merit and power, and both indefeasibly sure to all true believers.

John-21

Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself.

The sea of Tiberias. Called also the Sea of Galilee, being situated in Galilee. Mt 4:18. In this place Jesus had promised to meet them, Mk 14:28, 16:7, Mt 26:32, 28:10. This interview of Jesus is but just mentioned by Matthew (Mt 28:16), and is omitted by both Mark and Luke. This is the

reason why John relates so particularly what occurred there. Galilee was a retired place where they would be free from danger, and was therefore a safe and convenient situation for Jesus to meet them, in order to give them his last instructions.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

There were together. Probably residing in the same place. While they were waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, they still found it proper to be usefully employed. Their Master had been taken away by death, and the promised Spirit had not descended on them. In the interval---before the promised Spirit was poured upon them-- they chose not to be idle, and therefore returned to their former employment. It is to be remarked, also, that they had no other means of support. While with Jesus, they were commonly supplied by the kindness of the people; but now, when the Saviour had died, they were cut off from this means of support, and returned to the honest labour of their early lives. Moreover, they had been directed by the Saviour to repair to a mountain in Galilee, where he would meet them, Mt 28:10. This was probably not far from the Sea of Galilee, so that, until he came to them, they would naturally be engaged in their old employment. Ministers of the gospel should be willing to labour, if necessary, for their own support, and should not esteem such labour dishonourable. God has made employment indispensable to man, and if the field of labour is not open in one way, they should seek it in another. If at any time the people withhold the supply of their wants, they should be able and willing to seek support in some other honest occupation.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore;

but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

He showed himself to them by an instance of his pity, Joh 21:5. He called to them, Children, paidia--"Lads, have you any meat? Have you caught any fish?" Here,

(1.) The compellation is very familiar; he speaks unto them as unto his sons, with the care and tenderness of a father: Children. Though he had now entered upon his exalted state, he spoke to his disciples with as much kindness and affection as ever. They were not children in age, but they were his children, the children which God had given him.

(2.) The question is very kind: Have you any meat? He asks as a tender father concerning his children whether they be provided with that which is fit for them, that if they be not, he may take care for their supply. Note, The Lord is for the body, 1Co 6:13. Christ takes cognizance of the temporal wants of his people, and has promised them not only grace sufficient, but food convenient. Verily they shall be fed, Ps 27:3. Christ looks into the cottages of the poor, and asks, Children, have you any meat? thereby inviting them to open their case before him, and by the prayer of faith to make their requests known to him: and then let them be careful for nothing; for Christ takes care of them, takes care for them. Christ has herein set us an example of compassionate concern for our brethren. There are many poor householders disabled for labour, or disappointed in it, that are reduced to straits, whom the rich should enquire after thus, Have you any meat? For the most necessitous are commonly the least clamorous. To this question the disciples gave a short answer, and, some think, with an air of discontent and peevishness. They said, No; not giving him any such friendly and respectful title as he had given them. So short do the best come in their returns of love to the Lord Jesus. Christ put the question to them, not because he did not know their wants, but because he would know them from them. Those that would have supplies from Christ must own themselves empty and needy.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

He showed himself to them by an instance of his power; and this perfected the discovery (Joh 21:6): he ordered them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, the contrary side to what they had been casting it on; and then they, who were going home empty-handed, were enriched with a great draught of fishes. Here we have,

(a.) The orders Christ gave them, and the promise annexed to those orders: Cast the net there in such a place, and you shall find. He from whom nothing is hid, no, not the inhabitants under the waters (Job 26:5), knew on what side of the ship the shoal of fishes was, and to that side he directs them. Note, Divine providence extends itself to things most minute and contingent; and they are happy that know how to take hints thence in the conduct of their affairs, and acknowledge it in all their ways.

(b.) Their obedience of these orders, and the good success of it. As yet they knew not that it was Jesus; however, they were willing to be advised by any body, and did not bid this supposed stranger mind his own business and not meddle with theirs, but took his counsel; in being thus observant of strangers, they were obedient to their Master unawares. And it sped wonderfully well; now they had a draught that paid them for all their pains. Note, Those that are humble, diligent, and patient (though their labours may be crossed) shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles and fruitless attempts. There is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders. Those are likely to speed well that follow the rule of the word, the guidances of the Spirit, and the intimations of Providence; for this is casting the net on the right side of the ship. Now the draught of fishes may be considered,

[1.] As a miracle in itself: and so it was designed to prove that Jesus Christ was raised in power, though sown in weakness, and that all things were put under his feet, the fishes of the sea not excepted. Christ manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things which they looked not for.

[2.] As a mercy to them; for the seasonable and abundant supply of their necessities. When their ingenuity and industry failed them, the power of Christ came in opportunely for their relief; for he would take care that those who had left all for him should not want any good thing. When we are most at a loss, Jehovah--jireh.

[3.] As the memorial of a former mercy, with which Christ had formerly recompensed Peter for the loan of his boat, Lu 5:4, &c. This miracle nearly resembled that, and could not but put Peter in mind of it, which helped him

to improve this; for both that and this affected him much, as meeting him in his own element, in his own employment. Latter favours are designed to bring to mind former favours, that eaten bread may not be forgotten.

[4.] As a mystery, and very significant of that work to which Christ was now with an enlarged commission sending them forth. The prophets had been fishing for souls, and caught nothing, or very little; but the apostles, who let down the net at Christ's word, had wonderful success. Many were the children of the desolate, Ga 4:27. They themselves, in pursuance of their former mission, when they were first made fishers of men, had had small success in comparison with what they should now have. When, soon after this, three thousand were converted in one day, then the net was cast on the right side of the ship. It is an encouragement to Christ's ministers to continue their diligence in their work. One happy draught, at length, may be sufficient to repay many years of toil at the gospel net.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

It is the Lord. He was convinced, perhaps, by the apparent miracle, and by looking more attentively on the person of one who had been the means of such unexpected and remarkable success.

He was naked. He was undressed, with nothing on but the under garment or tunic. The word does not require us to suppose a greater degree of nakedness than this. Mk 14:51, 1Sam 19:24. Did cast himself into the sea. With characteristic ardour, desirous of meeting again his Lord, and showing his affection for him.

8 And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

They saw a fire, &c. We have no knowledge whence this was produced--whether it was, as Grotius supposes, by a miracle, or whether it was a place occupied by other fishermen, where they also might cook the fish which they had caught. As no miracle is mentioned, however, there is no reason for supposing that any existed in the case.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

> An hundred and fifty and three. The number is mentioned because it seems to have been a very unusual draught, and it was particularly gratifying and striking to them after they had spent the whole night and had caught nothing. This convinced them that it was no other than the same Saviour who had so often worked wonders before them that was now with them.

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou ? knowing that it was the Lord.

> The disciples knew that it was the Lord, but there was something in his mien, his majesty, his altered appearance, that amazed them, filled them with awe, and prevented them from asking questions that they were curious to know.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

> Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, &c. It is not said that Jesus himself ate with them, but he gave them food. The design of this interview seems to have been to convince them that he had truly risen from the dead. Hence he performed a miracle before they suspected that it was he, that there might be no room to say that they had ascribed to him the power of the miracle through friendship and collusion with him. The miracle was such as to satisfy them of its truth, and was, in accordance with all his works, not for mere display, but for utility. He remained with them, was with them at their meal, conversed with them, and thus convinced them that he was the same Friend who had died.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

Feed My Sheep

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

Lovest thou me more than these? There is a slight ambiguity here in the original, as there is in our translation. The word these may be in the neuter gender, and refer to these things--his boat, his fishing utensils, and his employments; or it may be in the masculine, and refer to the apostles. In the former sense it would mean, "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these objects? Art thou now willing, from love to me, to forsake all these, and go and preach my gospel to the nations of the earth?" In the other sense, which is probably the true sense, it would mean, "Lovest thou me more than these other apostles love me?" In this question Jesus refers to the profession of superior attachment to him which Peter had made before his death (Mt 26:33): "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Comp. Jn 13:37. Jesus here slightly reproves him for that confident assertion, reminds him of his sad and painful denial, and now puts this direct and pointed question to him to know what was the present state of his feelings. After all that Peter had had to humble him, the Saviour inquired of him what had been the effect on his mind, and whether it had tended to prepare him for the arduous toils in which he was about to engage. This question we should all put to ourselves. It is a matter of much importance that we should ourselves know what is the effect of the dealings of divine Providence on our hearts, and what is our present state of feeling toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thou knowest that I love thee. Peter now made no pretensions to love superior to his brethren. His sad denial had convinced him of the folly of that claim; but still he could appeal to the Searcher of the heart, and say that he knew that he loved him. Here is the expression of a humbled soul--a soul made sensible of its weakness and need of strength, yet with evidence of true attachment to the Saviour. It is not the most confident pretensions that constitute the highest proof of love to Christ; and the happiest and best state of feeling is when we can with humility, yet with confidence, look to the Lord Jesus and say, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

Feed my lambs. The word here rendered feed means the care afforded by furnishing nutriment for the flock. In the next verse there is a change in the Greek, and the word rendered feed denotes rather the care, guidance, and protection which a shepherd extends to his flock. By the use of both these

words, it is supposed that our Saviour intended that a shepherd was both to offer the proper food for his flock and to govern it; or, as we express it, to exercise the office of a pastor. The expression is taken from the office of a shepherd, with which the office of a minister of the gospel is frequently compared. It means, as a good shepherd provides for the wants of his flock, so the pastor in the church is to furnish food for the soul, or so to exhibit truth that the faith of believers may be strengthened and their hope confirmed

My lambs. The church is often compared to a flock. See Jn 10:1-16. Here the expression my lambs undoubtedly refers to the tender and the young in the Christian church; to those who are young in years and in Christian experience. The Lord Jesus saw, what has been confirmed in the experience of the church, that the success of the gospel among men depended on the care which the ministry would extend to those in early life. It is in obedience to this command that Sunday-schools have been established, and no means of fulfilling this command of the Saviour have been found so effectual as to extend patronage to those schools. It is not merely, therefore, the privilege, it is the solemn duty of ministers of the gospel to countenance and patronize those schools.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Feed my sheep. The word here rendered feed, as has been remarked, is different from the word in the previous verse. It has the sense of governing, caring for, guiding, protecting --the kind of faithful vigilance which a shepherd uses to guide his flock, and to make provision against their wants and dangers. It may be implied here that the care needed for the young in the church is to instruct them, and for those in advanced years both to instruct and govern them.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

The third time. It is probable that Jesus proposed this question three times because Peter had thrice denied him. Thus he tenderly admonished him of his fault and reminded him of his sin, while he solemnly charged him to be

faithful and vigilant in the discharge of the duties of the pastoral office. The reason why the Saviour addressed Peter in this manner was doubtless because he had just denied him--had given a most melancholy instance of the instability and weakness of his faith, and of his liability to fall. As he had thus been prominent in forsaking him, he took this occasion to give to him a special charge, and to secure his future obedience. Hence he so administered the charge as to remind him of his fault; and he made him so prominent as to show the solicitude of the Saviour that henceforward he might not be left to dishonour his high calling. This same charge, in substance, he had on other occasions given to the apostles (Mt 18:18), and there is not the slightest evidence here that Christ intended, as the Papists pretend, to give Peter any peculiar primacy or eminence in the church. The charge to Peter arose, manifestly, from his prominent and melancholy act in denying him, and was the kind and tender means used by a faithful Saviour to keep him from similar acts in the future dangers and trials of life. It is worthy of remark that the admonition was effectual. Henceforward Peter was one of the most firm and unwavering of all the apostles, and thus fully justified the appellation of a rock, which the Saviour by anticipation had given him. Jn 1:42.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

Peter had denied his Master to save his own life. Now that he is reinstated in the old confidence and charged with the Master's work, he is told that he will be called on to die for it. He will be girded, not with a girdle, but with bonds, and he shall be led where he would not, unto death.

19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

These two verses can only be understood as declaring that Peter should die the death of a martyr. John wrote after Peter's death, and may be understood as affirming that he did thus "glorify God". The universal testimony of the ancient Church is that he did thus die. It is asserted that Peter was crucified, a fact that is probable, as he was not a Roman citizen.

Follow me. He had once forsaken Christ through fear of death. Now, with a prospect of violent death before him, he is bidden to resume the Master's work and to follow him. He did this, from this time, faithfully.

The Beloved Disciple

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

What shall this man do? This question probably means, "What death shall he die?" But it is impossible to ascertain certainly why Peter asked this question. John was a favourite disciple, and perhaps Peter suspected that he would have a happier lot, and not be put to death in this manner. Peter was grieved at the question of Jesus; he was probably deeply affected with the account of his own approaching sufferings; and, with perhaps a mixture of grief and envy, he asked what would be his lot. But it is possible, also, that it was from kindness to John--a deep solicitude about him, and a wish that he might not die in the same manner as one who had denied his Lord. Whatever the motive was, it was a curiosity which the Lord Jesus did not choose to gratify.

22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Till I come. Some have supposed this to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem; others to the day of judgment; others to signify that he would not die a violent death; but the plain meaning is, "If I will that he should not die at all, it is nothing to thee." In this way the apostles evidently understood it, and hence raised a report that he would not die. It is remarkable that John was the last of the apostles; that he lived to nearly the close of the first century, and then died a peaceful death at Ephesus, being the only one, as is supposed, of the apostles who did not suffer martyrdom. The testimony of antiquity is clear on this point; and though there have been many idle conjectures about this passage and about the fate of John, yet no fact of history is better attested than that John died and was buried at Ephesus. What is that to thee? From this passage we learn, 1st. That our main business is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. 2nd. That there are many subjects of religion on which a vain and impertinent curiosity is exercised.

All such curiosity Jesus here reproves. 3rd. That Jesus will take care of all his true disciples, and that we should not be unduly solicitous about them. 4th. That we should go forward to whatever he calls us--to persecution or death--not envying the lot of any other man, and anxious only to do the will of God.

23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

Then went this saying, &c. This mistake arose very naturally-- 1st. From the words of Jesus, which might be easily misunderstood to mean that he should not die; and, 2nd. It was probably confirmed when it was seen that John survived all the other apostles, had escaped all the dangers of persecution, and was leading a peaceful life at Ephesus. This mistake John deemed it proper to correct before he died, and has thus left on record what Jesus said and what he meant.

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

We know. That is, it is known; it is universally admitted. It was so decidedly his character that he always declared the truth, that it had become known, and was unquestioned, so that he himself might appeal to the universal testimony in his behalf. In this case, therefore, we have the testimony of a man whose character for nearly a century was that of a man of truth---so much so that it had become, in a manner, proverbial, and was put beyond a doubt. It is impossible to believe that such a man would sit down deliberately to impose on mankind, or to write a book which was false; and if not, then this book is true, and that is the same as saying that Christianity is a religion from heaven.

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

John being about to conclude the history of our Saviour's life asserts, that there were many other miracles and special deeds done by Christ, both before and after his passion, which he had not recorded or set down; because, should all that Christ did and said be committed to writing, it would even fill the world, the volumes would be so many.

From hence we gather,

1. The wonderful activity, industry, and diligence, of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was never idle, but that his whole life was spent in doing good; stances have been recorded, it would amount to an incredible bulk.

Learn, 2. That it is impossible to get all said, which might be said of Christ, and in his commendation: such is the transcendent excellency of his person, and the weakness of our apprehensions and judgments, that if all were written, which might be written concerning him, the world itself could not contain the books which should be written.

Learn lastly, that although many of Christ's sermons, conferences, miracles, and actions, be not recorded; yet it doth not follow, nor can it be inferred from thence, that any necessary doctrine is omitted, or not sufficiently confirmed: there being so much written as it pleased God we should know, and was necessary for us to know, in order to our improvement in faith and holiness. If then, after all the revelation and discovery which God hath made of his Son Christ Jesus, and of the way that leads to eternal salvation by him, persons remain willingly ignorant of him, and of their duty to him, "where shall they appear, and how shall they escape?"

Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: To him be glory and domination for ever and ever. Rev 1:5,6 Amen.

The Acts of the Apostles
[Acts]

Acts-1

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

> referring to the charge recorded in Mt 28:18-20,Mk 16:15-18,Lu 24:44-49. It is worthy of notice that nowhere else are such communications of the risen Redeemer said to have been given "through the Holy Ghost." In general, this might have been said of all He uttered and all He did in His official character; for it was for this very end that God "gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (Joh 3:34). But after His resurrection, as if to signify the new relation in which He now stood to the Church, He signalized His first meeting with the assembled disciples by breathing on them (immediately after dispensing to them His peace) and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (Joh 20:22) thus anticipating the donation of the Spirit from His hands (see on Joh2 0:21); and on the same principle His parting charges are here said to have been given "through the Holy Ghost," as if to mark that He was now all redolent with the Spirit; that what had been husbanded, during His suffering work, for His own necessary uses, had now been set free, was already overflowing from Himself to His disciples, and needed but His ascension and glorification to flow all forth. (See on Joh 7:39.)

2 until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

3 to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

showed himself alive—As the author is about to tell us that "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" was the great burden of apostolic preaching, so the subject is here filly introduced by an allusion to the primary evidence on which that great fact rests, the repeated and undeniable manifestations of Himself in the body to the assembled disciples, who, instead of being predisposed to believe it, had to be overpowered by the resistless evidence of their own senses, and were slow of yielding even to this (Mk 16:14).

4 and, being assembled together with *them,* commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he,* ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

The Ascension

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

They were earnest in asking about that which their Master never had directed or encouraged them to seek. Our Lord knew that his ascension and the teaching of the Holy Spirit would soon end these expectations, and therefore only gave them a rebuke; but it is a caution to his church in all ages, to take heed of a desire of forbidden knowledge.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into

heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven, &c.—"as if your now glorified Head were gone from you never to return: He is coming again; not another, but 'this same Jesus'; and 'as ye have seen Him go, in the like manner shall He come'—as personally, as visibly, as gloriously; and let the joyful expectation of this coming swallow up the sorrow of that departure."

Judas' Successor Chosen

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called
Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.
13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.
14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

knit by a bond stronger than death,
for the promised baptism, the need of which in their orphan state would be increasingly felt.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,)
16 Men *and* brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.
17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.
18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch
as that field is called, in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to
say, The field of blood.
20 For it is written in the book of
Psalms, Let his habitation be
desolate,
and let no man dwell therein:
and,
His bishopric let another take.
21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all
the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

How clearly is the primary office of the apostles here expressed: (1) to testify, from personal observation, to the one great fact of "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"; (2) to show how this glorified His whole previous life, of which they were constant observers, and established His divine claims.

22 beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he
was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with
us of his resurrection.
23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who
was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.
24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the
hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,

"The word 'Lord,' placed absolutely, denotes in the New Testament almost universally THE SON; and the words, 'Show whom Thou hast chosen,' are decisive. The apostles are just Christ's messengers: It is He that sends them, and of Him they bear witness. Here, therefore, we have the first example of a prayer offered to the exalted Redeemer; furnishing indirectly the strongest proof of His divinity" [OLSHAUSEN].

25 that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from
which
Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own
place.
26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias;
and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Acts-2

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival held on the Sunday fifty days after Passover, when Israelites presented the first portion of their harvest to God (Lev_23:15-21). It was therefore a fitting day to mark the birth of the Christian church.

We cannot forget how often, while their Master was with them there were strifes among the disciples which should be the greatest; but now all these strifes were at an end. They had prayed more together of late. Would we have the Spirit poured out upon us from on high, let us be all of one accord. And notwithstanding differences of sentiments and interests, as there were among those disciples, let us agree to love one another; for where brethren dwell together in unity, there the Lord commands his blessing.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

There was an appearance of something like flaming fire, lighting on every one of them, according to John Baptist's saying concerning Christ; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. The Spirit, like fire, melts the heart, burns up the dross, and kindles pious and devout affections in the soul; in which, as in the fire on the altar, the spiritual sacrifices are offered up.

they spoke words from God, and they did so in 'other tongues'. This means that their speech was in words that did not belong

to their own language and that they did not understand, unless someone interpreted them (2:1-4; cf. 1Co_14:13-19).

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to
speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out
of every nation under heaven.
6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together,
and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak
in his own language.
7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to
another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?
8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we
were born?
9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in
Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

not, it would seem, permanently settled there (see Ac 2:9), though the language seems to imply more than a temporary visit to keep this one feast.The thing uttered, probably the same by all, was "the wonderful works of God," perhaps in the inspired words of the Old Testament evangelical hymns; though it is next to certain that the speakers themselves understood nothing of what they uttered (see on 1Co1 4:1).

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about
Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues
the wonderful works of God.
12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one
to another, What meaneth this?
13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Peter's Address at Pentecost

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and
said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all *ye* that dwell at
Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
15 for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the
third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith
God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:
and your sons and your daughters shall
prophesy, and your young men shall see
visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams:

meaning, the days of the Messiah (Isa 2:2); as closing all preparatory arrangements, and constituting the final dispensation of God's kingdom on earth; without to be confined to the seed of Abraham; without distinction of sex, age, or rank.

Though Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, yet he did not think to set aside the Scriptures. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bible; and the Spirit is given, not to do away the Scriptures, but to enable us to understand, approve, and obey them.

18 and on my servants and on my handmaidens
I will pour out in those days of my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy:
19 and I will show wonders in heaven
above, and signs in the earth beneath;
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:
20 the sun shall be turned into
darkness, and the moon into
blood,
before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
21 and it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name
of the Lord shall be saved.
22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man
approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and
signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye
yourselves also know:
23 him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and
foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands
have crucified and slain:

God's fixed plan and perfect foresight of all the steps involved in it. How strikingly is the criminality of Christ's murderers here presented in harmony with the eternal purpose to surrender Him into their hands!

24 whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death:
because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Glorious saying! It was indeed impossible that "the Living One" should remain "among the dead" (Lu 24:5); but here, the impossibility seems to refer to the prophetic assurance that He should not see corruption.

25 For David speaketh concerning him,
I foresaw the Lord always before my face;
for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:
26 therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad;
moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:
27 because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.
29 Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.
30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;
31 he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, sees in this sixteenth Psalm, one Holy Man, whose life of high devotedness and lofty spirituality is crowned with the assurance, that though He taste of death, He shall rise again without seeing corruption, and be admitted to the bliss of God's immediate presence. Now as this was palpably untrue of David, it could be meant only of One other, even of Him whom David was taught to expect as the final Occupant of the throne of Israel. The Psalm is then affirmed to have had its only proper fulfillment in JESUS, of whose

resurrection and ascension they were witnesses, while the glorious effusion of the Spirit by the hand of the ascended One, setting an infallible seal upon all, was even then witnessed by the thousands who stood listening to Him. A further illustration of Messiah's ascension and session at God's right hand is drawn from Ps 110:1, in which David cannot be thought to speak of himself, seeing he is still in his grave.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having
received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath
shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.
34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith
himself, The Lord said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
35 until I make thy foes thy footstool.
36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God
hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord
and Christ.

"The sting is at the close" [BENGEL]. To prove to them merely that Jesus was the Messiah might have left them all unchanged in heart. But to convince them that He whom they had crucified had been by the right hand of God exalted, and constituted the "LORD" whom David in spirit adored, to whom every knee shall bow, and the CHRIST of God, was to bring them to "look on Him whom they had pierced and mourn for Him."

Through Him, the ways of life are made known; and we are encouraged to expect God's presence, and his favour for evermore. All this springs from assured belief that Jesus is the Lord, and the anointed Saviour.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart,
and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and*
brethren, what shall we do?

neither Peter's words, nor the miracle they witnessed, could have produced such effects, had not the Holy Spirit been given. Sinners, when their eyes are opened, cannot but be pricked to the heart for sin, cannot but feel an inward uneasiness. The

apostle exhorted them to repent of their sins, and openly to avow their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, by being baptized in his name. This is that beautiful spirit of genuine compunction and childlike docility, which, discovering its whole past career to have been one frightful mistake, seeks only to be set right for the future, be the change involved and the sacrifices required what they may. So Saul of Tarsus (Ac 9:6).

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The word denotes change of mind, and here includes the reception of the Gospel as the proper issue of that revolution of mind which they were then undergoing; and be baptized as the visible seal of that remission.Repentance and remission of sins are still preached to the chief of sinners, in the Redeemer's name; still the Holy Spirit seals the blessing on the believer's heart; still the encouraging promises are to us and our children; and still the blessings are offered to all that are afar off.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

as if Peter already foresaw the hopeless impenitence of the nation at large, and would have his hearers hasten in for themselves and secure their own salvation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Life among the Believers

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple,
and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat
with gladness and singleness of heart,
47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the
Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED (KJV)—rather, "the saved," or "those who were being saved." "The young Church had but few peculiarities in its outward form, or even in its doctrine: the single discriminating principle of its few members was that they all recognized the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. This confession would have been a thing of no importance, if it had only presented itself as a naked declaration, and would never in such a case have been able to form a community that would spread itself over the whole Roman empire. It acquired its value only through the power of the Holy Ghost, passing from the apostles as they preached to the hearers; for He brought the confession from the very hearts of men (1Co 12:3), and like a burning flame made their souls glow with love. By the power of this Spirit, therefore, we behold the first Christians not only in a state of active fellowship, but also internally changed: the narrow views of the natural man are broken through; they have their possessions in common, and they regard themselves as one family" [OLSHAUSEN].

Acts-3

A Lame Man Healed at the Gate of the Temple

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the
hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour.*
2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was
carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple
which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered
into the temple;
3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked
an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

These words, uttered with supernatural power, doubtless begat in this poor man the faith that sent healing virtue through his diseased members.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

The man had been lying at the gate that led from the outer public court to the inner courts where only Jews were allowed, but as soon as he was healed he followed the apostles into the temple, jumping and praising God (3:1-10)

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10 and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

Peter's Address in Solomon's Porch

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Neither the might nor the merit of the cure are due to us, observe the difference in the manner of working the miracles. Our Lord always spoke as having Almighty power, never

hesitated to receive the greatest honour that was given to him on account of his Divine miracles. But the apostles referred all to their Lord, and refused to receive any honour, except as his undeserving instruments. This shows that Jesus was one with the Father, and co-equal with Him; while the apostles knew that they were weak, sinful men, and dependent for every thing on Jesus, whose power effected the cure. Useful men must be very humble. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name, give glory. Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ.calling on helpless sinners to arise and walk in the way of holiness, by faith in Him. How sweet the thought to our souls, that in respect to all the crippled faculties of our fallen nature, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth can make us whole! With what holy joy and rapture shall we tread the holy courts, when God the Spirit causes us to enter therein by his strength!

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go.

With what heroic courage does Peter here charge his auditors with the heaviest of all conceivable crimes, and with what terrific strength of language are these charges clothed!

14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead;

whereof we are witnesses.

killed the Prince of life—Glorious paradox, but how piercing to the conscience of the auditors.With what skill does the apostle use the miracle both to glorify his ascended Lord and bring the guilt of His blood more resistlessly home to his audience!

16 And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

Our preacher, like his Master, "will not break the bruised reed." His heaviest charges are prompted by love, which now hastens to assuage the wounds it was necessary to inflict.

18 But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

The doctrine of a SUFFERING MESSIAH was totally at variance with the current views of the Jewish Church, and hard to digest even by the Twelve, up to the day of their Lord's resurrection. Our preacher himself revolted at it, and protested against it, when first nakedly announced, for which he received a terrible rebuke. Here he affirms it to be the fundamental truth of ancient prophecy realized unwittingly by the Jews themselves, yet by a glorious divine ordination. How great a change had the Pentecostal illumination wrought upon his views!

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers,
A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me;
him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Here is a powerful address to warn the Jews of the dreadful consequences of their unbelief, in the very words of Moses, their favourite prophet, out of pretended zeal for whom they were ready to reject Christianity, and to try to destroy it.

23 And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that Prophet,
shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

that is, "Hitherto we have all been looking too much for a Messiah who should shed outward blessings upon the nation generally, and through it upon the world. But we have learned other things, and now announce to you that the great blessing with which Messiah has come laden is the turning away of every one of you from his iniquities." With what divine skill does the apostle, founding on resistless facts, here drive home to the conscience of his auditors their guilt in crucifying the Lord of Glory; then soothe their awakened minds by assurances of forgiveness on turning to the Lord, and a glorious future as soon as this shall come to pass, to terminate with the Personal Return of Christ from the heavens whither He has ascended; ending all with warnings, from their own Scriptures, to submit to Him if they would not perish, and calls to receive from Him the blessings of salvation.

Acts-4

Peter and John before the Council

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

The Pharisees came mainly from the common people, and tried to preserve the Jewish way of life from the corruption of foreign ideas and political ambition. They were concerned with the outward show of religion, but not so concerned with correct attitudes of heart (Mat_12:1-2; 15:1-2; 23:5, 23-28). The Sadducees came mainly from the wealthy classes and were more concerned with exercising power in Jewish society than with following tradition. They were the high priestly party and had controlling power in the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council that sat in Jerusalem (Mat_16:11-12; 26:57, 59; Act_5:17). A

major difference of faith between the two parties was that the Pharisees believed in a physical resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees did not (Mat_22:23; Act_23:8).

irritated at the apostles "preaching through (rather, 'in') Jesus the resurrection from the dead"; for the resurrection of Christ, if a fact, effectually overthrew the Sadducean doctrine.

2 being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.
4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.
5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,
6 and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were
gathered together at Jerusalem.
7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?
8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,
9 if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;
10 be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.
11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.
12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The name of Jesus is given to men of every age and nation, as that whereby alone believers are saved from the wrath to come. But when covetousness, pride, or any corrupt passion, rules

within, men shut their eyes, and close their hearts, in enmity against the light; considering all as ignorant and unlearned, who desire to know nothing in comparison with Christ crucified.

How sublimely does the apostle, in these closing words, shut up these rulers of Israel to Jesus for salvation, and in what universal and emphatic terms does he hold up his Lord as the only one Hope of men!

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Like Peter and John, the followers of Christ should act so that all who converse with them, may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus. That makes them holy, heavenly, spiritual, and cheerful, and raises them above this world.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*.

Why should ye wish to deny it, O ye rulers, but that ye hate the light, and will not come to the light lest your deeds should be reproved? All the care of the rulers is, that the doctrine of Christ spread not among the people, yet they cannot say it is false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency; and they are ashamed to own the true reason; that it testifies against their hypocrisy, wickedness, and tyranny.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

Impotent device! Little knew they the fire that was burning in the bones of those heroic disciples

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be
right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto
God, judge ye.
20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and
heard.

There is here a wonderful union of sober, respectful appeal to the better reason of their judges, and calm, deep determination to abide the consequences of a constrained testimony, which betokens a power above their own resting upon them, according to promise. Those who know how to put a just value upon Christ's promises, know how to put just contempt upon the world's threatenings.

The apostles look with concern on perishing souls, and know they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, therefore they are faithful in warning, and showing the right way. None will enjoy peace of mind, nor act uprightly, till they have learned to guide their conduct by the fixed standard of truth, and not by the shifting opinions and fancies of men. Especially beware of a vain attempt to serve two masters, God and the world; the end will be, you can serve neither fully.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them
go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because
of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was
done.
22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle
of healing was showed.

The Believers Pray for Boldness

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and
reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto
them.
24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God
with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made
heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;
25 who by the mouth of thy servant David hast
said, Why did the heathen rage,

and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up,
and the rulers were gathered
together against the Lord, and
against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast
anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles,
and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined
before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto
thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy
word,

30 by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and
wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they
were assembled together; and they were all filled with the
Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, Isa 1. 7.

glorious token of the commotion which the Gospel was to make (Ac 17:6; compare Ac 16:26), and the overthrow of all opposing powers in which this was to issue. The Spirit rested upon the entire community, first, in the very way they had asked, so that they "spake the word with boldness" (Ac 4:29,31); next, in melting down all selfishness, and absorbing even the feeling of individuality in an intense and glowing realization of Christian unity.

All Things in Common

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

The disciples loved one another. This was the blessed fruit of Christ's dying precept to his disciples, and his dying prayer for them. Thus it was then, and it will be so again, when the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high. The doctrine preached was the resurrection of Christ; a matter of fact, which being duly explained, was a summary of all the duties, privileges, and comforts of Christians. There were evident fruits of Christ's grace in all they said and did. They were dead to this world. This was a great evidence of the grace of God in them. They did not take away others' property, but they were indifferent to it. They did not call it their own; because they had, in affection, forsaken all for Christ, and were expecting to be stripped of all for cleaving to him. No marvel that they were of one heart and soul, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world. In effect, they had all things common; for there was not any among them who lacked, care was taken for their supply.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 and laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,

37 having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

Acts-5

Ananias and Sapphira

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,
2 and kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.
3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?
4 While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

There was no rule that forced people to sell their property. When Ananias and Sapphira sold some property, their sin was not that they kept part of the money for themselves, but that they lied through saying they had handed over all the money. After the unbroken triumphs of the weeks since Pentecost, this entrance of deliberate sin into the church must have shocked the apostles. As often happened when there was deliberate sin at the start of a new stage in God's unfolding plan for his people, God emphasized the seriousness of sin in a dramatic judgment (5:1-10). (Comparable judgments on deliberate sin occurred in the Garden of Eden, at the establishment of the Levitical priesthood and upon Israel's entrance into Canaan; Gen_3:1-24; Lev_10:1-7; Jos_7:1-26.)

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was, that they were ambitious of being thought eminent disciples, when they were not true disciples. Hypocrites may deny themselves, may forego their worldly advantage in one instance, with a prospect of finding their account in something else. They were covetous of the wealth of the world, and distrustful of God and his providence. They thought they might serve both God and mammon. They thought to deceive the apostles. The Spirit of God in Peter discerned the principle of unbelief reigning in the heart of

Ananias. But whatever Satan might suggest, he could not have filled the heart of Ananias with this wickedness had he not been consenting. The falsehood was an attempt to deceive the Spirit of truth, who so manifestly spoke and acted by the apostles. The crime of Ananias was not his retaining part of the price of the land; he might have kept it all, had he pleased; but his endeavouring to impose upon the apostles with an awful lie, from a desire to make a vain show, joined with covetousness. But if we think to put a cheat upon God, we shall put a fatal cheat upon our own souls. How sad to see those relations who should quicken one another to that which is good, hardening one another in that which is evil! And this punishment was in reality mercy to vast numbers. It would cause strict self-examination, prayer, and dread of hypocrisy, covetousness, and vain-glory, and it should still do so. It would prevent the increase of false professors. Let us learn hence how hateful falsehood is to the God of truth, and not only shun a direct lie, but all advantages from the use of doubtful expressions, and double meaning in our speech.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost:
and great fear came on all them that heard these things.
6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.
7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.
9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.
10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.
11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Many Signs and Wonders Performed

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders
wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord
in Solomon's porch.
13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the
people magnified them.
14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both
of men and women;)
15 insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and
laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of
Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.
16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about
unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were
vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

The Apostles Persecuted

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with
him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled
with indignation,
18 and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the
common prison.
19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors,
and brought them forth, and said,
20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of
this life.
21 And when they heard *that,* they entered into the temple early
in the morning, and taught.
But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called
the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel,
and sent to the prison to have them brought.
22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison,
they returned, and told,
23 saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and
the keepers standing without before the doors: but when
we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

The apostles knew that, because of their widespread popular support, they could have successfully resisted arrest, but they chose not to. Instead they trusted in the overruling power of the sovereign God whom they served

27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

The Sadducees in particular were angry; for they, being the high priestly party, were the ones whom the apostles blamed for the death of Jesus (27-28; cf._4:6, 10; 5:17). Also this new movement was based on a belief in Jesus' physical resurrection, something that the Sadducees believed could not happen but that the apostles repeatedly claimed they had witnessed. The apostles refused to alter their message, but assured the Sanhedrin that forgiveness was available to the repentant (29-32). The Pharisees were pleased to see so many believing in the resurrection, for it gave support to their belief against the Sadducees'. They regarded the Christians as sincerely religious Jews who, though unusually enthusiastic, were orthodox enough to attend the temple daily to preach and pray (see_2:46; 3:1; 5:12, 25, 42). Gamaliel advised against opposing the new movement, in case it was from God. If it was not, it would collapse anyway (33-39).

They avoid naming Him whom Peter gloried in holding up [BENGEL]. In speaking thus, they seem to betray a disagreeable recollection of their own recent imprecation, His

blood be upon us," &c. (Mt 27:25), and of the traitor's words as he threw down the money, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Mt 27:4).

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

How gloriously is Christ here exhibited; not, as in other places, as the Medium, but as the Dispenser of all spiritual blessings! Had Christ been exalted to give dominion to Israel, the chief priests would have welcomed him. But repentance and remission of sins are blessings they neither valued nor saw their need of; therefore they, by no means, admitted his doctrine.

Christ gives repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work sorrow for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The giving of the Holy Ghost, is plain evidence that it is the will of God that Christ should be obeyed. And He will surely destroy those who will not have Him to reign over them.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

They as competent human witnesses to facts, and the Holy Ghost as attesting them by undeniable miracles.

33 When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.

How different this feeling and the effect of it from that "pricking of the heart" which drew from the first converts on the day of Pentecost the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Ac 2:37). The words used in the two places are strikingly different.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all

the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

in all probability one of that name celebrated in the Jewish writings for his wisdom, the son of Simeon (possibly the same who took the infant Saviour in his arms, Lu 2:25-35), and grandson of HILLEL, another celebrated rabbi. He died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem [LIGHTFOOT].

35 and said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

This neutral policy was true wisdom, in the then temper of the council. But individual neutrality is hostility to Christ, as He Himself teaches (Lu 11:23).

39 but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Acts-6

The Appointment of the Seven

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

In the Jerusalem church there were two types of Jews, those brought up in Palestine who spoke Aramaic and those brought up in other places (such as Jews of the Dispersion) who spoke only Greek. The Greek-speaking Jews were known as Hellenists. Throughout Palestine there was tension between the two groups, and this tension carried over into the church. The Hellenists complained that, when widows were given their daily share from the common pool, the Hellenist widows were being neglected (6:1).

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them,* and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

the election was vested in the Christian people, the appointment lay with the apostles, as spiritual rulers.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch;

This was the crowning triumph of the Gospel, whose peaceful prosperity was now at its greatest height. After Stephen's teaching and trial made it clear that sacerdotal interests could not stand with the Gospel, such priestly accessions became rare indeed. Note

(1) how easily misunderstandings may arise among the most loving and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus: but

(2) How quickly and effectually such misunderstandings may be healed, where honest intentions, love, and wisdom reign:

(3) What a beautiful model for imitation is furnished by the class here complained of, who, though themselves the majority, chose the new office-bearers from amongst the complaining minority!

(4) How superior to the lust of power do the apostles here show themselves to be, in not only divesting themselves of the immediate superintendence of temporal affairs in the Christian community, but giving the choice of those who were to be entrusted with it to the disciples at large!

(5) How little of formal organization did the apostles give to the Church at first, and when an emergency arose which demanded something more, how entirely was the remedy suggested by the reason of the thing!

(6) Though the new office-bearers are not expressly called Deacons here, it is universally admitted that this was the first institution of that order in the Church; the success of the expedient securing its permanency, and the qualifications for "the office of a Deacon" being laid down in one of the apostolical Epistles immediately after those of "a Bishop" (1Ti 3:8-13).

As Stephen and the following names are all Greek, it is likely they were all of the "Grecian" class, which would effectually restore mutual confidence.

6 whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

With the conversion of a large number of priests (not high priestly Sadducees, but ordinary temple officials), the Christians' ties with the temple might have become even stronger (7). But the preaching of Stephen quickly saw those ties broken decisively, at least in the case of the Hellenists.

The Arrest of Stephen

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

Jewish freedmen; manumitted Roman captives, or the children of such, expelled from Rome (as appears from JOSEPHUS and TACITUS), and now residing at Jerusalem.Jews of Cyrene, in Libya, on the coast of Africa. Cilicia—amongst whom may have been Saul of Tarsus (Ac 7:58,21:39).

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

blasphemous words against Moses—doubtless referring to the impending disappearance of the whole Mosaic system.

against God—This must refer to the supreme dignity and authority which he claimed for Christ, as the head of the new which was so speedily to supersede the old (compare Ac 7:56,59,60).

Wisdom and holiness make a man's face to shine, yet will not secure men from being treated badly. What shall we say of man, a rational being, yet attempting to uphold a religious system by false witness and murder! And this has been done in

numberless instances. But the blame rests not so much upon the understanding, as upon the heart of a fallen creature, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Yet the servant of the Lord, possessing a clear conscience, cheerful hope, and Divine consolations, may smile in the midst of danger and death.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

Stephen saw that Christianity and Judaism could not go hand in hand. With Jesus' death and resurrection, Judaism was finished. The Jewish religious system, along with its laws, ceremonies, priests and temple, had fulfilled its purpose and was now replaced by something new. When the Jews heard Stephen preaching these things in one of the Hellenists' synagogues in Jerusalem, they reported him to the Sanhedrin for preaching against Judaism (9-15). The Sadducees were pleased at last to have an accusation against the Christians that was certain to win popular support. They knew that the people would not tolerate this threat to their national religion (see v. 12).

13 and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Acts-7

Stephen's Defense

The defence that Stephen made before the Sanhedrin was not designed to win its approval. He outlined Israel's history to demonstrate two main points. First, God had never shown himself to be limited to one dwelling place, or even one locality (therefore the Jews were mistaken in attaching such importance to the temple in Jerusalem). Second, the people of Israel had always rejected the messengers of God (therefore their rejection of the Messiah Jesus was not surprising). Originally, God's symbolic dwelling place was a movable tent, something that could be set up anywhere at all, demonstrating that God was not limited to one place. When Solomon later built a permanent temple in Jerusalem, people developed the mistaken idea that this temple was the only place where God dwelt (44-50).

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?
2 And he said,
Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,
3 and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.
4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.
5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.
6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge,
said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in
this place.
8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham*
begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac
begat Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs.
9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but
God was with him,
10 and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor
and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made
him governor over Egypt and all his house.

Stephen reminds the Jews of their mean beginning as a check to priding themselves in the glories of that nation. Likewise of the wickedness of the patriarchs of their tribes, in envying their brother Joseph; and the same spirit was still working in them toward Christ and his ministers.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and
Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no
sustenance.
12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out
our fathers first.
13 And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren;
and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.
14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all
his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.
15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,
16 and were carried over into Shechem, and laid in the sepulchre
that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Hamor,
the father of Shechem.
17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God
had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in
Egypt,
18 till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.
19 The same dealt subtilely with our kindred, and evil entreated our
fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end
they might not live.
20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair,
and nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up,
and nourished him for her own son.
22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and
was mighty in words and in deeds.
23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart
to visit his brethren the children of Israel.
24 And seeing one *of them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and
avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:
25 for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that
God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.
26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove,
and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are
brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?
27 But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying,
Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?
28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?
29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of
Midian, where he begat two sons.
30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the
wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire
in a bush.
31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew
near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,
32 *saying*, I *am* the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham and
the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses
trembled, and durst not behold.
33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for
the place where thou standest is holy ground.
34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is
in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come
down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into
Egypt.
35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler
and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer
by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.
36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and
signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the
wilderness forty years.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel,
A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of
your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.
38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the
angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and *with* our
fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:
39 to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from
them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,
40 saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this
Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not
what is become of him.

Stephen was so far from blaspheming Moses, that really he honoured him, by showing how the prophecy of Moses was come to pass, which was so clear. God who gave them those customs by his servant Moses, might, no doubt, change the custom by his Son Jesus. But Israel thrust Moses from them, and would have returned to their bondage; so men in general will not obey Jesus, because they love this present evil world, and rejoice in their own works and devices.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto
the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.
42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of
heaven;
as it is written in the book of the
prophets, O ye house of Israel,
have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices
by the space of forty years in the wilderness?
43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of
Moloch, and the star of your god
Remphan,
figures which ye made to worship them:
and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

the well-known region of the captivity of Judah; while "Damascus" is used by the prophet (Am 5:27), whither the ten tribes were carried.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as
he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it
according to the fashion that he had seen.

Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness—which aggravated the guilt of that idolatry in which they indulged, with the tokens of the divine presence constantly in the midst of them.

Stephen upbraids the Jews with the idolatry of their fathers, to which God gave them up as a punishment for their early forsaking him. It was no dishonour, but an honour to God, that the tabernacle gave way to the temple; so it is now, that the earthly temple gives way to the spiritual one; and so it will be when, at last, the spiritual shall give way to the eternal one. The whole world is God's temple, in which he is every where present, and fills it with his glory; what occasion has he then for a temple to manifest himself in? And these things show his eternal power and Godhead. But as heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool, so none of our services can profit Him who made all things. Next to the human nature of Christ, the broken and spiritual heart is his most valued temple.

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon built him a house.

48 Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

as saith the prophet,

But Stephen's object in mentioning David is to hasten from the tabernacle which he set up, to the temple which his son built, in Jerusalem; and this only to show, from their own Scripture (Isa 66:1,2), that even that temple, magnificent though it was, was not the proper resting-place of Jehovah upon earth; as his audience and the nations had all along been prone to imagine. (What that resting-place was, even "the contrite heart, that trembleth at God's word," he leaves to be gathered from the prophet referred to).

49 Heaven *is* my throne,

and earth *is* my footstool:
what house will ye build me? saith the Lord:
or what *is* the place of my rest?
50 Hath not my hand made all these things?
51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do
always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

It has been thought that symptoms of impatience and irritation in the audience induced Stephen to cut short his historical sketch. But as little farther light could have been thrown upon Israel's obstinacy from subsequent periods of the national history on the testimony of their own Scriptures, we should view this as the summing up, the brief import of the whole Israelitish history—grossness of heart, spiritual deafness, continuous resistance of the Holy Ghost, down to the very council before whom Stephen was pleading.

The gospel was offered now, not by angels, but from the Holy Ghost; yet they did not embrace it, for they were resolved not to comply with God, either in his law or in his gospel. Their guilt stung them to the heart, and they sought relief in murdering their reprover, instead of sorrow and supplication for mercy.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and
they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the
Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and
murderers:
53 who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and
have not kept *it*.

The Stoning of Stephen

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart,
and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.
55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into
heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the
right hand of God,

Why "standing," and not sitting, the posture in which the glorified Saviour is elsewhere represented? Clearly, to express the eager interest with which He watched from the skies the scene in that council chamber, and the full tide of His Spirit which He was at that moment engaged in pouring into the heart of His heroical witness, till it beamed in radiance from his very countenance.

56 and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

This is the only time that our Lord is by human lips called THE SON OF MAN after His ascension (Re 1:13,14:14 are not instances). And why here? Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, speaking now not of himself at all (Ac 7:55), but entirely by the Spirit, is led to repeat the very words in which Jesus Himself, before this same council, had foretold His glorification (Mt 26:64), assuring them that that exaltation of the SON OF MAN which they should hereafter witness to their dismay, was already begun and actual [ALFORD].

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 and cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him:* and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Saul—How thrilling is this our first introduction to one to whom Christianity—whether as developed in the New Testament or as established in the world—owes more perhaps than to all the other apostles together! Here he is, having perhaps already a seat in the Sanhedrim, some thirty years of age, in the thick of this tumultuous murder of a distinguished witness for Christ, not only "consenting unto his death" (Ac 8:1), but doing his own part of the dark deed.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God,* and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

In presenting to Jesus the identical prayer which He Himself had on the cross offered to His Father, Stephen renders to his glorified Lord absolute divine worship, in the most sublime form, and at the most solemn moment of his life. In this commitment of his spirit to Jesus, Paul afterwards followed his footsteps with a calm, exultant confidence that with Him it was safe for eternity (2Ti 1:12).

Acts-8

And Saul was consenting unto his death.

His hand did not throw one stone at the holy martyr's head, but his will concurred with others in that bloody act: and this denominated him guilty.

That God chiefly inspects the heart, and if the vote be passed there, he looks upon the man as guilty, though he proceeds no farther. 'Tis easy to murder another by silent wish, or passionate desire. In all moral actions God values the will for the deed, and reckons that man an actor, that is an applauder. Consent unto the sins of others makes their guilt our own: Saul was consenting unto his death.

Something more concerning Stephen and his death; how people stood affected to it--variously, as generally in such cases, according to men's different sentiments of things. Christ had said to his disciples, when he was parting with them (Joh 16:20), You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. Accordingly here is, 1. Stephen's death rejoiced in by one--by many, no doubt, but by one in particular, and that was Saul, who was afterwards called Paul; he was consenting to his death, syneudokon--he consented to it with delight (so the word signifies); he was pleased with it. He fed his eyes with this bloody spectacle, in hopes it would put a stop to the growth of Christianity. We have reason to think that Paul ordered Luke

to insert this, for shame to himself, and glory to free grace. Thus he owns himself guilty of the blood of Stephen.

Saul Persecutes the Church

1 And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

They had become so embittered by the zeal and success of the apostles, and by their frequent charges of murder in putting the Son of God to death, that they resolved at once to put a period to their progress and success. This was the first persecution against Christians; the first in a series that terminated only when the religion which they wished to destroy was fully established on the ruins of both Judaism and Paganism.

Good thus came out of evil; and the first persecution resulted, as all others have done, in advancing the cause which was intended to be destroyed.

2 And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial,* and made great lamentation over him.

The apostles - having been, however, more fully instructed than the others, and having been taught their duty by the example and teaching of the Saviour, they resolved, it seems, to remain and brave the fury of the persecutors. For them to have fled then would have exposed them, as leaders and founders of the new religion, to the charge of timidity and weakness. They therefore resolved to remain in the midst of their persecutors; and a merciful Providence watched over them, and defended them from harm.

And they were all dispersed - Not all the Church: if so, who would have remained for the apostles to teach, or Saul to

persecute? But all the teachers except the apostles, who, though in the most danger, stayed with the flock.

Observe here, 1. How the spite and cruelty of the church's adversaries was not quenched, but rather inflamed by the blood of Stephen: From whence arose a bitter persecution against the church at Jerusalem, upon which the multitude of believers fled from thence. Persecution scatters the professors of religion; but God makes scattering the way to increasing, and what was intended for the hindrance, God over-ruled for the furtherance of the gospel: As God overpowers the devil, so he outwits him too. This scattering persecution at Jerusalem, which was designed to another and suppress the gospel, did propagate and spread it more and more.

Observe, 2. How God sets bounds and limits to this sharp persecution: though the believers were scattered, yet the apostles continued at Jerusalem; They were all scattered, except the apostles. The twelve stay there untouched in the midst of the fiery furnace of persecution, to comfort and cherish the church in that sad and doleful day, maugre the malice of angry men, and of enraged devils; and those who were scattered, carried the light of the gospel among the Gentiles. Thus out of the darkness of persecution, God bringeth forth the light of the gospel, providing at once for the safety of some by their flight, and for the calling home of others by their dispersion: They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

He made havoc. ελυμαινετο /KJVPCE/. This word is commonly applied to wild beasts, to lions, wolves, etc., and denotes the devastations which they commit. Saul raged against the church like a wild beast--a strong expression,

denoting the zeal and fury with which he engaged in persecution.

Committed them to prison. The sanhedrim had not power to put them to death, Jn 18:31, but they had power to imprison; and they resolved, it seems, to exercise this power to the utmost.

Women in all ages have been exempted from the insults of tyranny, but not always freed from the persecutor's fury. And blessed be God for that masculine courage and constancy which the feebler sex have shewn, when they have been called forth to bear their testimony for Christ; out of weakness they have been made strong. With what wisdom and courage have they answered their examiners, convicted their accusers, confuted their opposers, kissing the stake, hugging the faggots, embracing the flame! Thus can God help the weak things of the world to confound the strong: and teach the foolish to confute the wise.

He committed them to prison, in order to their being tried and put to death, unless they would renounce Christ; and some, we find, were compelled by him to blaspheme, Ac 26:11.

The Gospel Preached in Samaria

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

But God over-ruled this scattering for his church's increasing: he brought good out of evil, light out of darkness, order out of confusion. It is a great and certain truth, that the Holy God would suffer no sort of evil to be, did he not know how to bring some excellent good out of that evil.

Preaching the word. Greek, Evangelizing, or announcing the good news of the message of mercy, or the word of God. It is not the usual word which is rendered preach, but means simply announcing the good news of salvation. There is no evidence,

nor is there any probability, that all these persons were ordained to preach. They were manifestly common Christians who were scattered by the persecution; and the meaning is, that they communicated to their fellow-men in conversation, wherever they met them--and probably in the synagogues, where all Jews had a right to speak--the glad tidings that the Messiah had come. It is not said that they set themselves up for public teachers; or that they administered baptism; or that they founded churches; but they proclaimed everywhere the news that a Saviour had come. Their hearts were full of it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and they made the truth known to all whom they met. We may learn from this,

(1.) that persecution tends to promote the very thing which it would destroy.

(2.) That one of the best means to make Christians active and zealous is to persecute them.

(3.) That it is right for all Christians to make known the Paths of the gospel. When the heart is full, the lips will speak; and there is no more impropriety in their speaking of redemption than of anything else.

(4.) It should be the great object of all Christians to make the Saviour known everywhere. By their lives, conversation, and pious exhortations and entreaties, they should beseech dying sinners to be reconciled to God. And especially should this be done when they are travelling. Christians, when away from home, seem almost to imagine that they lay aside the obligations of religion. But the example of Christ and his early disciples has taught us that this is the very time to attempt to do good.

Samson's riddle is here again unriddled: Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness. The persecution that was designed to extirpate the church was by the overruling providence of God made an occasion of the enlargement of it.

Christ had said, I am come to send fire on the earth; and they thought, by scattering those who were kindled with that fire, to have put it out, but instead of this they did but help to spread it.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

Observe here, 1. Amongst the dispersed, who went to Samaria, Philip was one: not Philip the apostle, (for all of them remained at Jerusalem,) but Philip the deacon, who was the second in order after Stephen, among the seven deacons: He comes to Samaria, and preaches there.

Observe, 2. The doctrines which he preached: he preached Christ utno them; that is, Christianity, or the Christian religion; namely, The doctrine of Christ's incarnation, holy life and death, resurrection and ascension, together with remission of sins through faith in his name.

Observe, 3. The success of Philip's doctrine at Samaria; the people with one accord embrace the gospel, Giving heed to the things which he spake: The presence of the Holy Spirit accompanying his ministry, united his hearers' hearts, as well as their ears, to attend diligently to the doctrine of Christ delivered to them. This diligent attention was a blessed preparative to the Samaritans conversion, seeing faith comes by hearing: Yea, they did not only attend to, but acquiesce in all he spake.

Note thence, That were there a more reverent attention to the word, there would be more conversions by it than at this day there are.

Observe, 4. The external ground and reason of Philip's success in his ministry at Samaria; the miracles which he wrought. These were undeniable evidences of the truth of what he spake, and by which he shewed God's authority for what he did and said; he healed disease, and cast out devils, (called unclean spirits, because they delight in sin, that spiritual uncleanness of the soul,) who cried out with a loud voice, as very loath to leave

their lodgings, had they not been constrained to it. The miracles which Christ and his apostle wrought were heaven's broad-seal, to confirm the truth of what they taught: The people gave heed to what Philip spake, seeing the miracles which he did.

Observe, lastly, What joy and rejoicing there was among the Samaritans at their receiving and entertaining of the gospel: There was great joy in that city; not only for the cures wrought upon their bodies, but for the doctrine of reconciliation and salvation preached to their souls. As the gospel is in itself a message of joy and glad tidings, so it fills that soul with joy unspeakable, that cordially receives and entertains it. Joy in the Holy Ghost is one of the sweetest effects of the kingdom of God; that is, the gospel, The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost Rom 14:17.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which
Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Preached that the Messiah had come, and made known his doctrines. The same truths had been before stated in Samaria by the Saviour himself, Jn 4 and this was doubtless one of the reasons why they so gladly now received the word of God. The field had been prepared by the Lord Jesus; and he had said that it was white for the harvest, Jn 4:35 and into that field Philip now entered, and was signally blessed. His coming was attended with a remarkable revival of religion.

The people not only gave heed to what he said, but at length believed it, were fully convinced that it was of God and not of men, and gave up themselves to the direction and government of it. As to this mountain, on which they had hitherto worshipped God, and placed a great deal of religion in it, they were now as much weaned from it as every they had been wedded to it, and become the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and in the name of Christ, the true temple, Joh 4:20-23. Preached that the Messiah had come,

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7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them:* and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

the way being prepared perhaps by the fruits of our Lord's sojourn, as He Himself seems to intimate (see on Joh 4:31-38). But "we may mark the providence of God in sending a Grecian, or a Hellenistic Jew, to a people who from national antipathy would have been unlikely to attend to a native of Judea" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, Ps 67:4,1Th 1:6. The gospel of Christ does not make men

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

How strong the delusion of Satan was by which they were brought into the interests of this great deceiver. He had been for some time, nay, for a long time, in this city, using sorceries;

perhaps he came there by the instigation of the devil, soon after our Saviour had been there, to undo what he had been doing there; for it was always Satan's way to crush a good work in its bud and infancy

10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

He had no design to reform their lives, nor improve their worship and devotion, only to make them believe that he was, tis megas--some divine person. Justin Martyr says that he would be worshipped as proton theon--the chief god. He gave out himself to be the Son of God, the Messiah, so some think; or to be an angel, or a prophet. Perhaps he was uncertain within himself what title of honour to pretend to; but he would be thought some great one. Pride, ambition, and an affectation of grandeur, have always been the cause of abundance of mischief both to the world and to the church.

Secondly, The people ascribed to him what he pleased.

1. They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, both young and old, both poor and rich, both governors and governed. To him they had regard (Ac 8:10,11), and perhaps the more because the time fixed for the coming of the Messiah had now expired, which had raised a general expectation of the appearing of some great one about this time. Probably he was a native of their country, and therefore they embraced him the more cheerfully, that by giving honour to him they might reflect it upon themselves.

2. They said of him, This man is the great power of God--the power of God, that great power (so it might be read), that power which made the world. See how ignorant inconsiderate people mistake that which is done by the power of Satan, as if it were done by the power of God. Thus, in the Gentile world, devils pass for deities; and in the antichristian kingdom all the world wonders after a beast, to whom the dragon gives his power, and who opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, Re 13:2-5. 3.

They were brought to it by his sorceries: He bewitched the people of Samaria (Ac 8:9), bewitched them with sorceries (Ac 8:11), that is, either,

(1.) By his magic arts he bewitched the minds of the people, at least some of them, who drew in others. Satan, by God's permission, filled their hearts to follow Simon. O foolish Galatians, saith Paul, who hath bewitched you? Ga 3:1. These people are said to be bewitched by Simon, because they were so strangely infatuated to believe a lie. Or,

(2.) By his magic arts he did many signs and lying wonders, which seemed to be miracles, but really were not so: like those of the magicians of Egypt, and those of the man of sin, 2Th 2:9. When they knew no better, they were influenced by his sorceries; but, when they were acquainted with Philip's real miracles, they saw plainly that the one was real and the other a sham, and that there was as much difference as between Aaron's rod and those of the magicians. What is the chaff to the wheat? Jer 23:28.

Notorious for sorcery, for hypocrisy, for final apostacy, and avowed impiety. Ecclesiastical history informs us of the heresies he broached, of the divine honours he assumed, of the statues and images built to him and his strumpet Helen, which lewdly accompanied with him; of an altar erected to him with this blasphemous inscription, Simoni Deo sancto, "To Simon the holy God:" and of his tragical end, by breaking his neck, when attempting to fly up to heaven, because the people would no longer be cheated with his impostures here below.

From this example,

note, 1. That into the most eminent and populous cities do oft-times enter the greatest and vilest impostors, the most atheistical and diabolical sorcerers: There they lurk and lodge, there they seek to set up and play their prizes.

Note, 2. That the vilest impostors, and the worst seducers have yet many, very many followers: The silly multitude is soon deluded: To him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest.

Note, 3. That such vile deceivers have the confidence to brag, and the deluded multitude have the weakness to believe, that they are very extraordinary persons, and can do extraordinary things. Simon gave it out himself, that he was some great one; and the people cry him up as the great power of God.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Then Simon himself believed also. That is, he believed that Jesus had wrought miracles, and was raised from the dead, etc. All this he could believe in entire consistency with his own notions of the power of magic: and all that the connexion requires us to suppose is that he believed this--that Jesus had power of working miracles, etc.; and as he purposed to turn this to his own account, he was willing to profess himself to be his follower.

It might have injured his popularity, moreover, if he had taken a stand when so many were professing to become Christians. Men often profess religion because, if they do not, they fear they will lose their influence, and be left with the ungodly. That where the true knowledge of God comes, and the clear light of the gospel shines, their gross impieties and impostures, their cheats and delusions will be found out, detested and abhorred: When they believed Philip's preaching, they were baptized, both men and women. Where the light shines, Satan falls as lightning; magic vanishes. This Dragon cannot stand before the ark of God: When the people of Ephesus received the gospel; they soon made a bonfire of their magic books, Acts 19:19.

Simon was not a real Christian is apparent from the whole narrative, Acts 8:18,21-23. And when he was baptized. He was admitted to a profession of religion in the same way as the others. Philip did not pretend to know the heart; and Simon was admitted because he professed his belief. This is all the evidence that ministers can have; and it is no wonder that they, as well as Philip, are often deceived.Behold, the sorcerer is become a professor believer, a baptized person. The gospel preached may have a common operation upon a soul, where it never produced inward sanctification. All that are by the gospel proselyted are not savingly converted. All are not good fish that are enclosed in the gospel's net; but some fish, some trash. As there will be wheat and tares on the same field, chaff and corn on the same floor; so will there be some saints and some sinners in the purest earthly church. Upon a bare profession of faith, Simon Magus is baptized. Learn thence, that outward profession justly gains admission into the Christian congregation, and gives a person right to external ordinances; "The church's judgment is a judgment of charity, not of certainty;" of the outward, not of the inward man; of the life, not of the heart. The faith of Simon Magus was no other than a temporary, historical, yea, hypocritical faith: however, Philip baptizes him upon his making profession of it. An heart hypocrite is no hypocrite in the sight of the church, though most abominable in the sight of God. Simeon the unsound professor was more odious in the sight of God than Simon the sorcerer.

The reasons which influenced Simon to make a profession of religion seem to have been these:

(a.) An impression that Christianity was true. He seems to have been convinced of this by the miracles of Philip.

(b.) The fact that many others were becoming Christians; and he went in with the multitude. This is often the case in revivals of religion.

(c.) He had no religion; but it is clear Acts 8:20,21, that he was willing to make use of Christianity to advance his own power, influence, and popularity--a thing which multitudes of men of the same mind with Simon Magus have been willing since to do.

Simon himself believed also. He was convinced that Philip preached a true doctrine, because he saw it confirmed by real miracles, of which he was the better able to judge because he was conscious to himself of the trick of his own pretended ones.

[1.] The present conviction went so far that he was baptized, was admitted, as other believers were, into the church by baptism; and we have no reason to think that Philip did amiss in baptizing him, no, nor in baptizing him quickly. Though he had been a very wicked man, a sorcerer, a pretender to divine honours, yet, upon his solemn profession of repentance for his sin and faith in Jesus Christ, he was baptized. For, as great wickedness before conversion keeps not true penitents from the benefits of God's grace, so neither should it keep professing ones from church-fellowship. Prodigals, when they return, must be joyfully welcomed home, though we cannot be sure but that they will play the prodigal again. Nay, though he was now but a hypocrite, and really in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity all this while, and would soon have been found to be so if he had been tried awhile, yet Philip baptized him; for it is God's prerogative to know the heart. The church and its ministers must go by a judgment of charity, as far as there is room for it. It is a maxim in the law, Donec contrarium patet, semper præsumitur meliori parti--We must hope the best as long as we can. And it is a maxim in the discipline of the church, De secretis non judicat ecclesia--The secrets of the heart God only judges.

[2.] The present conviction lasted so long that he continued with Philip. Though afterwards he apostatized from Christianity, yet not quickly. He courted Philip's acquaintance, and now he that had given out himself to be some great one is content to sit at the

feet of a preacher of the gospel. Even bad men, very bad, may sometimes be in a good frame, very good; and those whose hearts still go after their covetousness may possibly not only come before God as his people come, but continue with them.

[3.] The present conviction was wrought and kept up by the miracles; he wondered to see himself so far outdone in signs and miracles. Many wonder at the proofs of divine truths who never experience the power of them.

Left without followers, he thinks it best to join the man who had fairly outstripped him, not without a touch of real conviction.

The wicked and the highly reprobate are often forced to taste the good gift of God, but they immediately spit it out again.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

They sent. That is, the apostles deputed two of their number. This shows conclusively that there was no chief or ruler among them.

Peter was ardent, bold, zealous, rash; John was mild, gentle, tender, persuasive. There was wisdom in uniting them in this work, as the talents of both were needed; and the excellencies in the character of the one would compensate for the defects of the other. It is observable that the apostles sent two together, as the Saviour had himself done. Mk 6:7. The reasons why this additional aid was sent to Samaria were probably these: (1.) To assist Philip in a great work--in the harvest which he was there collecting. (2.) To give the sanction of the authority of the apostles to what he was doing. (3.) To confer on the converts the gift of the Holy Ghost, Acts 8:17.

15 who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16 (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy

Ghost.

This was an act of prayer, expressing an invocation to God that he would impart the blessing to them. On how many they laid their hands is not said. It is evident that it was not on all, for they did not thus lay hands on Simon. Perhaps i.t was done on a few of the more prominent and leading persons, who were to be employed particularly in bearing witness to the truth of the gospel.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

From this act of Simon we have derived our word simony, to denote the buying and selling of ecclesiastical preferment, or church offices, where religion is supported by the state. This act of Simon shows conclusively that he was influenced by improper motives in becoming connected with the church.

19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

1 The wicked proposal that Simon made, by which his hypocrisy was discovered (Ac 8:18,19): When he saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given (which should have confirmed his faith in the doctrine of Christ, and increased his veneration for the apostles), it gave him a notion of Christianity as no other than an exalted piece of sorcery, in which he thought himself capable of being equal to the apostles, and therefore offered them money, saying, Give me also this power. He does not desire them to lay their hands on him, that he might receive the Holy Ghost himself (for he did not foresee that any thing was to be got by that), but that they would convey to him a power to bestow the gift upon others. He was ambitious to have the honour of an apostle, but not at all solicitous to have the spirit and disposition of a Christian. He was more desirous to gain honour to himself than to do good to others. Now, in making this motion,

(1.) He put a great affront upon the apostles, as if they were mercenary men, would do any thing for money, and loved it as

well as he did; whereas they had left what they had, for Christ, so far were they from aiming to make it more--

(2.) He put a great affront upon Christianity, as if the miracles that were wrought for the proof of it were done by magic arts, only of a different nature from what he himself had practised formerly.

(3.) He showed that, like Balaam, he aimed at the rewards of divination; for he would not have offered money for this power if he had not hoped to get money by it.

(4.) He showed that he had a very high conceit of himself, and that he had never his heart truly humbled. Such a wretch as he had been before his baptism should have asked, like the prodigal, to be made as one of the hired servants. But, as soon as he is admitted into the family, no less a place will serve him than to be one of the stewards of the household, and to be entrusted with a power which Philip himself had not, but the apostles only.

(1.) Peter shows him his crime (Ac 8:20): Thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money; and thus,

[1.] He had overvalued the wealth of this world, as if it were an equivalent for any thing, and as if, because, as Solomon saith, it answers all things, relating to the life that now is, it would answer all things relating to the other life, and would purchase the pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life.

[2.] He had undervalued the gift of the Holy Ghost and put it upon a level with the common gifts of nature and providence. He thought the power of an apostle might as well be had for a good fee as the advice of a physician or a lawyer, which was the greatest despite that could be done to the Spirit of grace. All the buying and selling of pardons and indulgences in the church of Rome is the product of this same wicked thought,

that the gift of God may be purchased with money, when the offer of divine grace so expressly runs, without money and without price.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

Our hearts can never rise too high in a just indignation against sin, and against all temptation unto sin; Thy money perish with thee; thou and thy money perish together. How plainly St. Peter deals with him; he searches him to the quick, to the heart, sounds the depths of sin: lays open the core of his hypocrisy before his face, and tells him to his teeth, that his heart was rotten and unsound; Thy heart is not right in the sight of God. The baptismal water had washed his outside, but his inwards were unclean. The heart is the worst part of man till it be mended, and then it is best: Where most evil lies, there we must first begin to be good; all will be good, if the heart, which the seat, the sink and seed-plot of all evil, be made good. The life would not be so bad, if the heart were not worse: All the obliquity of our lives proceeds from the impurity of our hearts and nature, as the muddiness of the stream form the foulness of the fountain.

How can we pay a price to God? All that we can give, the silver, and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills, belong to him already. We have nothing which we can present for his favours. And yet there are many who seek to purchase the favour of God. Some do it by alms and prayers; some by penance and fasting; some by attempting to make their own hearts better, and by self-righteousness; and some by penitence and tears. All these will not purchase his favour. Salvation, like every other blessing, will be his gift; and if ever received, we must be willing to accept it on his own terms, at his own time, and in his own way. We are without merit; and if saved, it will be by the sovereign grace of God.

They are the successors of Simon Magus, and not Simon Peter, who either buy or sell holy things.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

Neither part. You have no portion of the grace of God; that is, you are destitute of it altogether. This word commonly denotes the part of an inheritance which falls to one when it is divided. Nor lot. This word means, properly, a portion which falls to one when an estate, or when spoil in war, is divided into portions, according to the number of those who are to be partakers, and the part of each one is determined by lot. The two words denote emphatically that he was in no sense a partaker of the favour of God. In this matter. Greek, In this word, i.e. thing. That which is referred to here is the religion of Christ. He was not a Christian. It is remarkable that Peter judged him so soon, and when he had seen but one act of his. But it was an act which satisfied him that he was a stranger to religion. One act may sometimes bring out the whole character; it may evince the governing motives; it may show traits of character utterly inconsistent with true religion; and then it is as certain a criterion as any long series of acts. Thy heart. Your affections, or governing motives; your principle of conduct. Comp. 2Kgs 10:15. You love gold and popularity, and not the gospel for what it is. There is no evidence here that Peter saw this in a miraculous manner, or by any supernatural influence. It was apparent and plain that Simon was not influenced by the pure, disinterested motives of the gospel, but by the love of power and of the world. In the sight of God. That is, God sees or judges that your heart is not sincere and pure. No external profession is acceptable without the heart. Reader, is your heart right with God? Are your motives pure--and does God see there the exercise of holy, sincere, and benevolent affections towards him? God knows the motives; and with unerring certainty he will judge; and with unerring justice he will fix our doom, according to the affections of the heart.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Repent therefore. Here we may remark,

(1.) that Simon was at this time an unconverted sinner.

(2.) That the command was given to him as such.

(3.) That he was required to do the thing; not to wait or seek merely, but actually to repent.

(4.) That this was to be the first step in his conversion. He was not even directed to pray first; but his first indispensable work was to repent, that is, to exercise proper sorrow for this sin, and to abandon his plan or principle of action. And this shows,

(1.) that all sinners are to be exhorted to repent, as their first work. They are not to be told to wait, and read, and pray, in the expectation that repentance will be given them. With such helps they can obtain, they are to do the thing.

(2.) Prayer will not be acceptable, or heard, unless the sinner comes repenting, that is, unless he regrets his sin, and desires to forsake it. Then, and then only, will he be heard. When he comes loving his sins, and resolving still to practise them, God will not hear him. When he comes desirous of forsaking them, grieved that he is guilty, and feeling his need of help, God will hear his prayer. See Isa 1:15, Mic 3:4, Prov 1:28, Ps 66:18. And pray God. Having a desire to forsake the sin, and to be pardoned, then pray to God to forgive. It would be absurd to ask forgiveness until a man felt his need of it. This shows that a sinner ought to pray, and how he ought to do it. It should be with a desire and purpose to forsake sin, and in that state of mind God will hear the prayer. Comp. Dan 4:27. If perhaps. There was no certainty that God would forgive him; nor is there any evidence either that Simon prayed, or that he was forgiven. This direction of Peter presents another important principle in regard to the conduct of sinners. They are to be directed to repent, not because they have the promise of forgiveness, and

not because they hope to be forgiven, but because sin is a great evil, and because it is right and proper that they should repent, whether they are forgiven or not. That is to be left to the sovereign mercy of God. They are to repent of sin; and then they are to feel, not that they have any claim on God, but that they are dependent on him, and must be saved or lost at his will. They are not to suppose that their tears will purchase forgiveness, but that they lie at the foot of mercy, and that there is hope--not certainty--that God will forgive. The language of the humbled sinner is--

"Perhaps he will admit my plea, Perhaps will hear my prayer; But if I perish I will pray, And perish only there. "I can but perish if I go; I am resolved to try, For if I stay away, I know I shall for ever die."

The thought, etc. Your purpose, or wish. Thoughts may be, therefore, evil, and need forgiveness. It is not open sin only that needs to be pardoned; it is the secret purpose of the soul. (i) "if perhaps" Dan 4:27, 2Ti 2:25

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.

Observe here, 1. The odious character wherewith sin in general, hypocrisy in particular, is branded, it is bitterness and bondage; it is the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

Learn thence, 1. That sin is an exceeding bitter thing: It is bitter to God, it provokes him to bitter anger; it was bitter to Christ, it laid him under the bitter wrath of God; it was bitter to the angels, it turned them out of heaven, and banished them from the presence of God evermore; it is bitter to good men, it costs them bitter repentance, and it occasions them bitter chastisements: and it will be bitter, eternally bitter to the wicked and impenitent world. Now the bitterness of sin is not a medicinal and wholesome bitterness, but an intoxicating and stupifying bitterness, a poisonous and a baneful bitterness. Sin's bitter draught is a baneful draught.

Learn, 2. That not only bitterness, but bondage attends the service and servants of sin: As sin is the gall of bitterness, so it is the bond of iniquity, and the bondage of sin; it is a shameful and ignominious bondage, a fruitless and unprofitable bondage, a stupifying and insensible bondage, a restless and unwearied bondage, and endless and eternal bondage.

Learn, 3. That every soul before conversion is in and under this deplorable bondage; Thou art in the bond of iniquity.

Observe, 2. The means prescribed and directed to for the soul's delivery out of this deplorable bondage; namely, repentance and prayer. Repent of thy wickedness and pray to God.

1. Repent, Learn thence, That timely and sincere repentance is a special mean, prescribed and appointed by God, for the recovery of the worst sinners out of this deplorable bondage.

2. Pray. Here note,

1. A wicked man may pray, and ought to pray. As bad as Simon Magus was, St. Peter doth not drive him to despair, but directs him to his duty: Pray to God. Prayer is a part of natural worship, which we owe to God: it is the soul's motion Godward: therefore to say a wicked man should not pray, is to say, he should not turn to God.

Note, 2. That all the prayer in the world, without a man's own prayer to God for pardon and remission, will be ineffectual and unavailable to salvation. Simon Magus desired the apostles to pray for him, Acts 8:24. But St. Peter bids him to pray for himself, as ever he hopes for forgiveness with God: Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray to God.

3. The encouragement given to make use of the means prescribed; namely, a probability of forgiveness and acceptance with God. Repent and pray, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.

Learn thence, That the vilest and worst of sinners upon their repentance, accompanied with prayer and supplication unto God, have good ground of encouragement to hope for pardon of sin and acceptance with him.

Observe, 4. How St. Peter takes most notice of that, of which Simon Magus took least, and that was of the wickedness of his thoughts; That the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee. Thence learn, That wicked and evil thoughts, lodged and entertained in the heart, ought in a special manner to be repented of, and humbled for, by all that expect forgiveness with God; for sinful thoughts are radical and seminal evils; they were the root of the angels' apostacy and of Adam's apostacy also. A world of sin may be lodged in the thoughts

We must hope well even for the vilest sinners, as long as and as much as we can.

Peter calls the inward malice of the heart and the venomous and demonic wickedness with which the magician was wholly filled with the gall of bitterness: and he is said to be in the gall, as though he were wholly overwhelmed with gall, and buried in it. (h) Entangled in the bonds of iniquity.

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

For I perceive. That is, by the act which he had done. His offer had shown a state of mind that was wholly inconsistent with true religion. One single sin may as certainly show that there is

no true piety, as many acts of iniquity. It may be so decided, so malignant, so utterly inconsistent with just views, as at once to determine what the character is. The sin of Simon was of this character. Peter here does not appear to have claimed the power of judging the heart; but he judged, as all other men would, by the act. In the gall. This word denotes properly bile, or that bitter, yellowish-green fluid that is secreted in the liver. Hence it means anything very bitter; and also any bad passion of the mind, as anger, malice, etc. We speak of bitterness of mind, etc. Of bitterness. This is a Hebraism; the usual mode of expressing the superlative, and means excessive bitterness. The phrase is used respecting idolatry, De 29:18 "Lest there should be among, you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." A similar expression occurs in Heb 12:15, "Lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you," etc. Sin is thus represented as a bitter or poisonous thing; a thing not only unpleasant in its consequences, but ruinous in its character, as a poisonous plant would be in the midst of other plants. Jer 2:19, "It is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God;" Jer 4:18, Rom 3:14, "Whose mouth is full of cursings and bitterness;" Eph 4:31. The meaning here is, that the heart of Simon was full of dreadful, malignant sin. Bond of iniquity. Or, that thou art bound by iniquity. That is, that it has the rule over you, and binds you as a slave. Sin is often thus represented as bondage and captivity. Sinners are represented as chained to it, and kept in hard servitude, Ps 116:16, Prov 5:22, "He shall be holden with the cords of his sins;" Rom 7:23,24. These expressions prove conclusively that Simon was a stranger to religion. (a) "gall of bitterness" Jer 4:18, Heb 12:15 (b) "bond of iniquity" Ps 116:16, Prov 5:22, Isa 28:22

Pray ye, etc. Here remark, (1.) that Simon was directed to pray for himself, Acts 8:22, but he had no disposition to do that. Sinners will often ask others to pray for them, when they are too proud, or too much in love with sin, to pray for themselves. (2.) The main thing that Peter wished to impress on him was a sense of his sin. Simon did not regard this, but looked only to the punishment. He was terrified and alarmed; and he sought

to avoid future punishment; but he had no alarm about his sins. So it is often with sinners. So it was with Pharaoh, Ex 8:28,32 and with Jeroboam, 1Kgs 13:6. And so sinners often quiet their own consciences by asking ministers and Christian friends to pray for them, while they still purpose to persevere in iniquity. If men expect to be saved, they must pray for themselves; and pray, not chiefly to be freed from punishment, but from the sin which deserves hell. This is all that we hear of Simon in the New Testament; and the probability is, that, like many other sinners, he did not pray for himself, but continued to live in the gall of bitterness, and died in the bond of iniquity. The testimony of antiquity is decided on that point. Acts 8:9.

Peter had urged him to pray for himself: he asks those wonder-working men to do it for him; having no confidence in the prayer of faith, but thinking that those men possessed some peculiar interest with heaven. that none of these things dome upon me—not that the thought of his wicked heart might be forgiven him, but only that the evils threatened might be averted from him.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

The author or instrument converting, Philip, who was commanded by the angel in a vision to go to Gaza: but not the common way, or ordinary road, but by the way of the desert, a difficult, and perhaps a dangerous way, over mountains and through vallies: Philip knew not whither he was going; but God knew whither, and wherefore he sent him. O Philip! it was worth thy going many steps out of the way, to convert and save a soul: Happy for the eunuch that thou wentest out of the way, and that he as happily met with thee.

There was such a road, across Mount Hebron, which Philip might take without going to Jerusalem (as VON RAUMER'S'S Palæstina shows). The way; not Gaza itself, which was the southernmost city of Palestine, in the territory of the ancient Philistines. To go from a city, where his hands had been full of work, so far away on a desert road, could not but be staggering to the faith of Philip, especially as he was kept in ignorance of the object of the journey. But like Paul, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"; and like Abram, "he went out not knowing whither he went" (Ac 26:19; Heb 11:8).

A nobleman, a courtier, a treasurer to the queen; yet he concerns himself with religion, and, being a proselyte, travels in his chariot as far a Jerusalem, to worship God in a solemn manner. O how will this example rise up in judgment against ourfreat ones, who have more light, but less heat; more knowledge, but less love!

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

There were two Ethiopias, one in Arabia, but that lay east from Canaan; it should seem this was Ethiopia in Africa, which lay south, beyond Egypt, a great way off from Jerusalem; for in Christ those that were afar off were made nigh, according to the promise, that the ends of the earth should see the great salvation. The Ethiopians were looked upon as the meanest and most despicable of the nations, blackamoors, as if nature had stigmatized them; yet the gospel is sent to them, and divine grace looks upon them, though they are black, though the sun has looked upon them.

He was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, for he came to Jerusalem to worship. Some think that he was a proselyte of righteousness, who was circumcised, and kept the feasts; others that he was only a proselyte of the gate, a Gentile, but who had

renounced idolatry, and worshipped the God of Israel occasionally in the court of the Gentiles; but, if so, then Peter was not the first that preached the gospel to the Gentiles, as he says he was. Some think that there were remains of the knowledge of the true God in this country, ever since the queen of Sheba's time; and probably the ancestor of this eunuch was one of her attendants, who transmitted to his posterity what he learned at Jerusalem.

28 was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet.
29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.
30 And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

And Philip ran, etc. Indicating his haste, and his desire to obey the suggestions of the Spirit. A thousand difficulties might have been started in the mind of Philip if he had reflected a little. The eunuch was a stranger; he had the appearance of a man of rank; he was engaged in reading; he might be indisposed to be interrupted or to converse, etc. But Philip obeyed without any hesitation the monitions of the Spirit, and ran to him. It is well to follow the first suggestions of the Spirit; to yield to the clear indications of duty, and to perform it at once. Especially in a deed of benevolence, and in conversing with others on the subject of religion, our first thoughts are commonly safest and best. If we do not follow them, the calculations of avarice, or fear, or some worldly prudence, are very apt to come in. We become alarmed; we are afraid of the rich and the great; and we suppose that our conversation and admonitions will be unacceptable. We may learn from this case, (1.) to do our duty at once, without hesitation or debate. (2.) We shall often be disappointed in regard to subjects of this kind. We shall find candid, humble, Christian conversation far more acceptable to strangers, to the rich, and to the great, than we commonly suppose. If, as in this case, they are alone; if we approach them kindly; if we do not rudely and harshly address them, we shall find most men willing to talk on the subject of religion.

He finds him reading in his Bible, as he sat in his chariot (Ac 8:28): He ran to him, and heard him read; he read out, for the benefit of those that were with him, Ac 8:30. He not only relieved the tediousness of the journey, but redeemed time by reading, not philosophy, history, nor politics, much less a romance or a play, but the scriptures, the book of Esaias;

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

The wonderful modesty and humility of this great man, he thankfully accepts Philip's offer to instruct and teach him, (some would have huffed at it as a rude affront) but he condescends to learn of one beneath him. Such as are modest and thoroughly humble, are also truly docile and teachable, willing to learn, knowledge, although from the mouth of an inferior: He desired Philip to come up and sit with him.

He read the scripture, though there were many things in it which he did not understand. Though there are many things in the scriptures which are dark and hard to be understood, nay, which are often misunderstood, yet we must not therefore throw them by, but study them for the sake of those things that are easy, which is the likeliest way to come by degrees to the understanding of those things that are difficult: for knowledge and grace grow gradually.

To one so engaged this would be deemed no rude question, while the eager appearance of the speaker, and the question itself, would indicate a readiness to supply any want of insight that might be felt.

32 The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

Here note, How wonderfully the divine providence did work in a concurring tendency towards the eunuch's conversion. God moves his heart to read, to read the scriptures, to read this scripture, which informed him of the sufferings of the Lord

Jesus, and sends Philip out of his way to meet him, and he meets him just as he was regarding that portion of scripture which most concerned him: He wanted to be informed concerning Christ.

1 The chapter he was reading was the fifty-third of Isaiah, two verses of which are here quoted (Isa 53:7,8;Ac 8:32,33), part of the seventh and eighth verses; they are set down according to the Septuagint version, which in some things differs from the original Hebrew. Grotius thinks the eunuch read it in the Hebrew, but that Luke takes the Septuagint translation, as readier to the language in which he wrote; and he supposes that the eunuch had learned from the many Jews that were in Ethiopia both their religion and language. But, considering that the Septuagint version was made in Egypt, which was the next country adjoining to Ethiopia, and lay between it and Jerusalem, I rather think that translation was most familiar to him: it appears by Isa 20:4 that there was much communication between those two nations--Egypt and Ethiopia. The greatest variation from the Hebrew is that what in the original is, He was taken from prison and from judgment (hurried with the utmost violence and precipitation from one judgment-seat to another; or, From force and from judgment he was taken away; that is, It was from the fury of the people, and their continual clamours, and the judgment of Pilate thereupon, that he was taken away), is here read, In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. He appeared so mean and despicable in their eyes that they denied him common justice, and against all the rules of equity, to the benefit of which every man is entitled, they declared him innocent, and yet condemned him to die; nothing criminal can be proved upon him, but he is down, and down with him. Thus in his humiliation his judgment was taken away; so, the sense is much the same with that of the Hebrew.

33 in his humiliation his judgment was taken away:
and who shall declare his generation?
for his life is taken from the earth.

Meyer, De Wette, Robinson and Hackett all agree that this refers to portraying the wickedness of the generation which

slew him. Others insist that it means Christ's spiritual posterity, his followers.

And who shall declare his generation? The word generation, used here, properly denotes posterity; then an age of mankind, comprehending about thirty years, as we speak of this and the next generation; then it denotes the men of a particular age or time. Very various interpretations have been given of this expression. Lowth translates it, "His manner of life, who would declare?" referring, as he supposes, to the fact that when a prisoner was condemned and led to execution, it was customary for a proclamation to be made by a crier in these words, "Whoever knows anything about his innocence, let him come and declare it." This passage is taken from the Gemara of Babylon.--Kennicott, as quoted by Lowth. The same Gemara of Babylon on this passage adds, that "before the death of Jesus, this proclamation was made forty days; but no defence could be found"--a manifest falsehood; and a story strikingly illustrative of the character of the Jewish writings. The Gemara was written some time after Christ, perhaps not far from the year 180, Lardher, and is a collection of commentaries on the traditional laws of the Jews. That this custom existed is very probable; but it is certain that no such thing was done on the trim of the Saviour. But instances are wanting where the word "generation" has this meaning.

The Chaldee paraphrase translates the passage in Isaiah, "He shall collect our captivity from infirmities and vengeance; and who can declare what wonderful things shall be done for us in his days?" Others have referred this question to his Deity, or Divine generation; intimating that no one could explain the mystery of his eternal generation. But the word in the Scriptures has no such signification; and such a sense would not suit the connexion. (See Calvin, in loco.) Others have referred it to his own spiritual posterity, his disciples, his family: "The number of his friends and followers who could enumerate?"--Calvin, Beza, etc. But this as little suits the connexion. Another sense which the word has, is to denote the

men of any particular age or time, Mt 11:16, 23:36, Lk 16:8, etc. And it has been supposed that the question here means, "Who can describe the character and wickedness of the generation when he shall breathe enormous crime of that age, in putting him to death?' This, perhaps, is the most probable interpretation of the question, for these reasons:

(1.) It is the most usual signification of the word, (see Schleusner,) and would be its obvious meaning in any other connexion.

(2.) It suits the connexion here. For the prophet immediately adds as a reason for the fact that no one can describe that generation, that he was put to death--a deed so enormous, as to make it impossible to describe the wickedness of the generation that would do it. This was the sum, the crowning act of human guilt--a deed so enormous as to defy all attempt at description. The murder of the Messiah; the crucifixion of the Son of God; the killing of the highest Messenger that heaven could send, was the consummation of all earthly wickedness. There was no other deed so enormous that could be performed; and there were no words to describe this. The same thing is implied in what the Saviour himself said, Mt 23:37,38, Lk 13:34,35, 19:42, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," etc. The idea in these places is, that notwithstanding their sin in killing the prophets, and stoning those who had been sent to them, he would still have been willing to receive and pardon them, but for this enormous act of wickedness in putting the Messiah to death--a deed which they were about to accomplish, and which should be attended with the destruction of their state and nation. The Hebrew word "declare" Isa 53:8 means, properly, to meditate, to think of, and then to speak, to declare. It means probably in that place," Who can think of, who can conceive the enormity of the crimes of that age, so as fully to publish or declare them?"

That yet he should live for ever, to ages which cannot be numbered; for so I understand those words, Who shall declare his generation? The Hebrew word properly signifies the duration of one life, Ec 1:4. Now who can conceive or express how long he shall continue, notwithstanding this; for his life is taken only from the earth; in heaven he shall live to endless and innumerable ages, as it follows in Isa 53:10, He shall prolong his days.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

The eunuch's question upon this is, Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Ac 8:34. He does not desire Philip to give him some critical remarks upon the words and phrases, and the idioms of the language, but to acquaint him with the general scope and design of the prophecy, to furnish him with a key, in the use of which he might, by comparing one thing with another, be led into the meaning of the particular passage. Prophecies had usually in them something of obscurity, till they were explained by the accomplishment of them, as this now was. It is a material question he asks, and a very sensible one: "Does the prophet speak this of himself, in expectation of being used, being misused, as the other prophets were? or does he speak it of some other man, in his own age, or in some age to come?" Though the modern Jews will not allow it to be spoken of the Messiah, yet their ancient doctors did so interpret it; and perhaps the eunuch knew this, and did partly understand it so himself, only he proposed this question, to draw on discourse with Philip; for the way to improve in learning is to consult the learned. As they must enquire the law at the mouth of the priests (Mal 2:7), so they must enquire the gospel, especially that part of the treasure which is hid in the field of the Old Testament, at the mouth of the ministers of Christ. The way to receive good instructions is to ask good questions.

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

The eunuch is instructed before baptized, and he desireth baptism of Philip; it was not forced upon him by Philip against his will, The eunuch said, What hinders me to be baptized? To drive men to baptism, as they drive beasts to watering, and force Christianity upon them against their wills, to send forth booted apostles with javelins in their hand, and crosses on their breasts, as the Romish church doth to dragon men into Christianity, is the way to make hypocrites, but not proselytes; for it is not whole armies that can besiege my reason, nor cannons batter my will. It is conviction, not compulsion, that must induce assent.

He does not demand baptism, does not say, "Here is water and here I am resolved I will be baptized;" for, if Philip have any thing to offer to the contrary, he is willing to waive it for the present. If he think him not fit to be baptized, or if there be any thing in the institution of the ordinance which will not admit such a speedy administration of it, he will not insist upon it. The most forward zeal must submit to order and rule. But,

He does desire it, and, unless Philip can show cause why not, he desires it now, and is not willing to defer it. Note, In the solemn dedicating and devoting of ourselves to God, it is good to make haste, and not to delay; for the present time is the best time, Ps 119:60. Those who have received the thing signified by baptism should not put off receiving the sign. The eunuch feared lest the good affections now working in him should cool and abate, and therefore was willing immediately to bind his soul with the baptismal bonds unto the Lord, that he might bring the matter to an issue.

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.

And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Observe, Though Philip had very lately been deceived in Simon Magus, and had admitted him to baptism, though he afterwards appeared to be no true convert, yet he did not therefore scruple to baptize the eunuch upon his profession of faith immediately, without putting him upon a longer trial than usual. If some hypocrites crowd into the church, who afterwards prove a grief and scandal to us, yet we must not therefore make the door of admission any straiter than Christ has made it; they shall answer for their apostasy, and not we.

And Philip said, etc. This was then stated to be the proper qualification for making a profession of religion. The terms are:

(1.) Faith, that is, a reception of Jesus as a Saviour; yielding the mind to the proper influences of the truths of redemption. Mk 16:16.

(2.) There is required not merely the assent of the understanding, but a surrender of the heart, the will, the affections, to the truth of the gospel. As these were the proper qualifications then, so they are now. Nothing less is required; and nothing but this can constitute a proper qualification for the Lord's Supper. I believe, etc. This profession is more than a professed belief that Jesus was the Messiah. The name Christ implies that. "I believe that Jesus the Messiah" is, etc. In addition to this, he professed his belief that he was the Son of God--showing either that he had before supposed that the Messiah would be the Son of God, or that Philip had instructed him on that point. It was natural for Philip, in discoursing on the humiliation and poverty of Jesus, to add also that he sustained a higher rank of being than a man, and was the Son of God. What precise ideas the eunuch attached to this expression cannot be now determined. This verse is wanting in a very large number of manuscripts, (Mill,) and has been rejected by many of the ablest critics. It is also omitted in the

Syriac and Ethiopic versions. It is not easy to conceive why it has been omitted in almost all the Greek Mss., unless it is spurious. If it was not in the original copy of the Acts, it was probably inserted by some early transcriber, and was deemed so important to the connexion, to show that the eunuch was not admitted hastily to baptism, that it was afterwards retained. It contains, however, an important truth, elsewhere abundantly taught in the Scriptures, that faith is necessary to a proper profession of religion.

Profession of faith is required of those being baptized, and therefore it is evident that we are not first ingrafted into Christ when we are baptized, but are already ingrafted, and then are baptized. (Ed.) (n) The sum of the confession which is necessary for baptism.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Observe lastly, Philip was found at Azotus, or Ashdod, thirty-four miles from Gaza, so far had the ministry of the angels carried him, and there safely set him down.

Learn, How good it is to obey God in the most difficult command. Philip had a hard and tiresome journey from Samaria to Gaza, footing it through a desert, in untrodden paths, and running as fast as the eunuch's chariot, to join himself unto it at the command of God. But now from Gaza to Azotus he has a swifter and easier passage, he rides in an angelical flying chariot. When we attend the execution of God's commands, the holy angels shall attend us, and take care of us, and administer necessary help unto us; like tender nurses, they keep us fast whilst we live, and bring us home in their arms to our Father's house when we die. Blessed be God for the ministry of his holy angels.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

Acts-9

The Conversion of Saul

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

How restless and unwearied persecutors are in the prosecution of their bloody designs and purposes. Saul was now inquisitor haretica pravitatis: away he trots to the high priest for commission to bind heretics, who believed on Jesus, and opposed the traditions of the fathers; and having, as he thought, swept Jerusalem of saints, he resolved next to ransack Damascus, though it was five or six days journey from Jerusalem: However he spurs on, away he goes through fire and water to revenge his malice on the poor members of Jesus Christ. The high priest needed not to hire Saul to do his black work, he both offers himself, and sues for the office: No doubt the high priest and council highly applauded his zeal and towardness for extirpating heretics, commending the gallantry of his resolution, and the bravery of his mind; and having scaled his commission, sent him away with wishes of success.

2 and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Letters. Epistles; implying a commission to bring them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. From this, it seems that the sanhedrim at Jerusalem claimed jurisdiction over all synagogues everywhere. They claimed the authority of regulating everywhere the Jewish religion.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

The Christians are here said to be those of this way; those of the way, so it is in the original. Perhaps the Christians sometimes called themselves so, from Christ the Way; or,

because they looked on themselves as but in the way, and not yet at home; or, the enemies thus represented it as away by itself, a by-way, a party, a faction.

It was a light from Heaven, the fountain of light, from the God of heaven, the Father of lights. It was a light above the brightness of the sun (Ac 26:13), for it was visible at mid-day, and outshone the sun in his meridian strength and lustre, Isa 24:23.

4 and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

why persecutest thou me?—No language can express the affecting character of this question, addressed from the right hand of the Majesty on high to an infuriated, persecuting mortal. (See Mt 25:45, and that whole judgment scene).

The doubling of it, Saul, Saul, intimates, First, The deep sleep that Saul was in; he needed to be called again and again, as Jer 22:29, O earth, earth, earth. Secondly, The tender concern that the blessed Jesus had for him, and for his recovery. He speaks as one in earnest; it is like Martha, Martha (Lu 10:41), or Simon, Simon (Lu 22:31), or O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Mt 23:37. He speaks to him as to one in imminent danger, at the pit's brink, and just ready to drop in: "Saul, Saul, dost thou know whither thou art going, or what thou art doing?

The charge exhibited against him is, Why persecutest thou me? Observe here, First, Before Saul was made a saint, he was made to see himself a sinner, a great sinner, a sinner against Christ. Now he was made to see that evil in himself which he never saw before; sin revived and he died.

Note, A humbling conviction of sin is the first step towards a saving conversion from sin. Secondly, He is convinced of one particular sin, which he was most notoriously guilty of, and had justified himself in, and thereby way is made for his conviction of all the rest. Thirdly, The sin he is convinced of is

persecution: Why persecutest thou me? It is a very affectionate expostulation, enough to melt a heart of stone. Observe,

1 The person sinning: "It is thou; thou, that art not one of the ignorant, rude, unthinking crowd, that will run down any thing they hear put into an ill name, but thou that hast had a liberal learned education, has good parts and accomplishments, hast the knowledge of the scriptures, which, if duly considered, would show thee the folly of it. It is worse in thee than in another."

2 The person sinned against: "It is I, who never did thee any harm, who came from heaven to earth to do thee good, who was not long since crucified for thee; and was not that enough, but must I afresh be crucified by thee?"

3. The kind and continuance of the sin. It was persecution, and he was at this time engaged in it: "Not only thou hast persecuted, but thou persecutest, thou persistest in it." He was not at this time hauling any to prison, nor killing them; but this was the errand he came upon to Damascus; he was now projecting it, and pleasing himself with the thought of it. Note, Those that are designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief.

4. The question put to him upon it: "Why dost thou do it?"

(1.) It is complaining language. "Why dealest thou thus unjustly, thus unkindly, with my disciples?" Christ never complained so much of those who persecuted him in his own person as he did here of those who persecuted him in his followers. He complains of it as it was Saul's sin: "Why art thou such an enemy to thyself, to thy God?" Note, The sins of sinners are a very grievous burden to the Lord Jesus. He is grieved for them (Mk 3:5), he is pressed under them, Am 2:13.

(2.) It is convincing language: "Why dost thou thus: Canst thou give any good reason for it?" Note, It is good for us often to ask ourselves why we do so and so, that we may discern what an unreasonable thing sin is: and of all sins none so unreasonable, so unaccountable, as the sin of persecuting the disciples of Christ, especially when it is discovered to be, as certainly it is, persecuting Christ. Those have no knowledge who eat up God's people, Ps 14:4. Why persecutest thou me? He thought he was persecuting only a company of poor, weak, silly people, that were an offence and eye-sore to the Pharisees, little imagining that is was one in heaven that he was all this while insulting; for surely, if he had known, he would not have persecuted the Lord of glory. Note, Those who persecute the saints persecute Christ himself, and he takes what is done against them as done against himself, and accordingly will be the judgment in the great day, Mt 25:45.

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

It is not said, "the Christ", but Jesus, the crucified one against whom Saul was raging. Had the answer been "the Christ", or the Son of God, Saul might still have doubted whether this was Jesus.

The wonderful power of the heart-changing grace of God. Saul cries out, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Saul is no longer a lion, but a lamb; the wolf that hunted before for his prey, now gently couches like a sheep; hears and obeys the voice of Christ the great Shepherd; and of a persecutor of the church, becomes the great doctor of the Gentiles.

Behold! the tare is become wheat; the child of wrath, a chosen vessel; the prodigy of nature, the miracle of grace.

Lord! who can enough admire and magnify the sovereignty and omnipotent prevalency of divine grace, which could refine and did extract very precious gold from so rough, so coarse, and so base a metal?

Conversion is a work of wonder in all men, but a miracle in this man, and extraordinarily strange, and instantaneously sudden; and therefore is by no means to be made the measure and standard of every man's conversion.

Shall we think no man converted, unless he be struck down with a light and power immediately from heaven, and be taken with a fit of trembling, and frighted almost out of his wits?

How many by the benefit of a good education, others by the blessing of God upon some affliction, and upon calm consideration, without any great terrors and amazement, have been visibly changed and converted?

The effects and fruits of conversion are very visible in all, but the manner of conversion is not alike in all. Things may be very visible in their effects, which yet are not visible in their cause. If the fruits of our conversion be visible, the certainty of it is unquestionable, and the advantage of it will be unspeakable, although we cannot tell the time when, or the manner how, the Holy Spirit wrought it in us.

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks—The metaphor of an ox, only driving the goad deeper by kicking against it, is a classic one, and here forcibly expresses, not only the vanity of all his measures for crushing the Gospel, but the deeper wound which every such effort inflicted upon himself.

The cruel edict and decree he had with him drew near to be put in execution; and now it was happily prevented, which may be considered,

[1.] As a great kindness to the poor saints at Damascus, who had notice of his coming, as appears by what Ananias said (Ac 9:13,14), and were apprehensive of their danger from him, and trembled as poor lambs at the approach of a ravening wolf; Saul's conversion was their security for the present. Christ has many ways of delivering the godly out of temptation, and sometimes does it by a change wrought in their persecutors, either restraining their wrathful spirits (Ps 76:10) and

mollifying them for a time, as the Old-Testament Saul, who relented towards David more than once (1Sa 24:16,26:21), or renewing their spirits, and fixing upon them durable impressions, as upon the New-Testament Saul here.

[2.] It was also a very great mercy to Saul himself to be hindered from executing his wicked design, in which if he had now proceeded, perhaps it had been the filling up of the measure of his iniquity. Note, It is to be valued as a signal token of the divine favour if God, either by the inward operations of his grace or the outward occurrences of his providence, prevent us from prosecuting and executing a sinful purpose, 1Sa 25:32.

(1.) He makes enquiry concerning Christ: Who art thou, Lord? He gives no direct answer to the charge preferred against him, being convicted by his own conscience, and self-condemned. If God contend with us for our sins, we are not able to answer for one of a thousand, especially such a one as the sin of persecution. Convictions of sin, when they are set home with power upon the conscience, will silence all excuses and self-justifications. Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer. But he desires to know who is his judge; the compellation is respectful: Lord. He who had been a blasphemer of Christ's name now speaks to him as his Lord. The question is proper: Who art thou? This implies his present unacquaintedness with Christ; he knew not his voice as his own sheep do, but he desired to be acquainted with him; he is convinced by this light which encloses him that it is one from heaven that speaks to him, and he has a veneration for every thing that appears to him to come from heaven; and therefore, Lord, who art thou? What is thy name? Jdg 13:17,Ge 32:29. Note, there is some hope of people when they begin to enquire after Jesus Christ.

(2.) He has an answer immediately, in which we have,

[1.] Christ's gracious revelation of himself to him. He is always ready to answer the serious enquiries of those who covet an

acquaintance with him: I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. The name of Jesus was not unknown to him; his heart had risen against it many a time, and gladly would he bury it in oblivion. He knew it was the name that he persecuted, but little did he think to hear it from heaven, or from the midst of such a glory as now shone round about him. Note, Christ brings souls into fellowship with himself by manifesting himself to them. He said,

First, I am Jesus, a Saviour; I am Jesus of Nazareth, so it is, Ac 22:8. Saul used to call him so when he blasphemed him: "I am that very Jesus whom thou usedst to call in scorn Jesus of Nazareth." And he would show that now that he is in his glory he is not ashamed of his humiliation.

Secondly, "I am that Jesus whom thou persecutest, and therefore it will be at thy peril if thou persist in this wicked course." There is nothing more effectual to awaken and humble the soul than to see sin to be against Christ, an affront to him, and a contradiction to his designs.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

His address to Jesus Christ, when he was in this frame: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? This may be taken,

[1.] As a serious request for Christ's teachings: "Lord, I see I have hitherto been out of the way; thou hast shown me my error, set me to rights; thou hast discovered sin to me, discover to me the way to pardon and peace." It is like that, Men and brethren, what must we do? Note, A serious desire to be instructed by Christ in the way of salvation is an evidence of a good work begun in the soul. Or,

[2.] As a sincere resignation of himself to the direction and government of the Lord Jesus. This was the first word that grace spoke in Paul, and with this began a spiritual life: Lord

Jesus, What wilt thou have me to do? Did not he know what he had to do? Had he not his commission in his pocket? And what had he to do but to execute it? No, he had done enough of this work already, and resolves now to change his master, and employ himself better. Now it is not, What will the high priest and the elders have me to do? What will my own wicked appetites and passions have me to do? But, What wilt thou have me to do? The great change in conversion is wrought upon the will, and consists in the resignation of that to the will of Christ.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? This indicates a subdued soul; a humbled spirit. Just before he had sought only to do his own will; now he inquired what was the will of the Saviour. Just before he was acting under a commission from the sanhedrim; now he renounced their supreme authority, and asked what the Lord Jesus would have him to do. Just before he had been engaged in a career of opposition to the Lord Jesus; now he sought at once to do his will. This indicates the usual change in the sinner. The great controversy between him and God is, whose will shall be followed. The sinner follows his own; the first act of the Christian is to surrender his own will to that of God, and to resolve to do that which he requires. We may further remark here, that this indicates the true nature of conversion. It is decided, prompt, immediate. Paul did not debate the matter, Gal 1:16; he did not inquire what the scribes and Pharisees would say; he did not consult his own reputation; he did not ask what the world would think. With characteristic promptness--with a readiness which showed what he would yet be--he gave himself up at once and entirely to the Lord Jesus; evidently with a purpose to do his will alone. This was the case also with the jailer, at Philippi, Acts 16:30. Nor can there be real conversion where the heart and will are not given to the Lord Jesus, to be directed and moulded by him at his pleasure. We may test our conversion, then, by the example of the apostle Paul. If our hearts have been given up as his was, we are true friends of Christ.

The general direction Christ gave him, in answer to this: Arise, go into the city of Damascus, which thou art now near to, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. It is encouragement enough to have further instruction promised him, but,

[1.] He must not have it yet; it shall be told him shortly what he must do, but, for the present, he must pause upon what has been said to him, and improve that. Let him consider awhile what he has done in persecuting Christ, and be deeply humbled for that, and then he shall be told what he has further to do.

[2.] He must not have it in this way, by a voice from heaven, for it is plain that he cannot bear it; he trembles, and is astonished. He shall be told therefore what he must do by a man like himself, whose terror shall not make him afraid, nor his hand be heavy upon him, which Israel desired at mount Sinai. Or, it is an intimation that Christ would take some other time to manifest himself further to him, when he was more composed, and this fright pretty well over. Christ manifests himself to his people by degrees; and both what he does and would he have them to do, though they know not now, they shall know hereafter.

It is remarkable that he was thus directed. But we may learn from it,

(1.) that even in the most striking and remarkable cases of conversion, there is not at once a clear view of duty. What course of life should be followed; what should be done; nay, what should be believed, is not at once apparent.

(2.) The aid of others, and especially of ministers, and of experienced Christians, is often very desirable to aid even those who are converted in the most remarkable manner. Saul was converted by a miracle: the Saviour appeared to him in his glory; of the truth of his Messiahship he had no doubt; but still

he was dependent on a humble disciple in Damascus to be instructed in what he should do.

(3.) Those who are converted, in however striking a manner it may be, should be willing to seek the counsel of those who are in the church and in the ministry before them. The most striking evidence of their conversion will not prevent their deriving important direction and benefit from the aged, the experienced, and the wise in the Christian church.

(4.) Such remarkable conversions are fitted to induce the subjects of the change to seek counsel and direction. They produce humility, a deep sense of sin and of unworthiness; and a willingness to be taught and directed by any one who can point out the way of duty and of life.

(a) "What will thou have me to do?" Acts 16:30

(1) Saul (who is also Paul), persecuting Christ most cruelly, who did as it were flee before him, falls into Christ's hands, and is overcome: and with a singular example of the goodness of God, in place of punishment which he justly deserved for his cruelty, is not only kindly received, but is also even by the mouth of God appointed an apostle, and is confirmed by the ministry and witness of Ananias.

(a) This is a sign that Saul's stomach boiled and cast out great threats to murder the disciples.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

How far his fellow travellers were affected with this, and what impression it made upon them. They fell to the earth, as he did, but rose without being bidden, which he did not, but lay still till it was said to him, Arise; for he lay under a heavier load than any of them did; but when they were up,

They stood speechless, as men in confusion, and that was all, Ac 9:7. They were going on the same wicked errand that Paul was, and perhaps, to the best of their power, were as spiteful as he; yet we do not find that any of them were converted, though they saw the light, and were struck down and struck dumb by it. No external means will of themselves work a change in the soul, without the Spirit and grace of God, which distinguish between some and others; among these that journeyed together, one is taken, and the others left. They stood speechless; none of them said, Who art thou, Lord? or, What wilt thou have me to do? as Paul did, but none of God's children are born dumb.

And the men which journeyed with him. Why these men attended him is unknown. They might have been appointed to aid him, or they may have been travellers with whom Saul had accidentally fallen in. Stood speechless. In Acts 26:14, it is said that they all fell to the earth at the appearance of the light. But there is no contradiction. The narrative in that place refers to the immediate effect of the appearance of the light. They were immediately smitten to the ground together. This was before the voice spake to Saul, Acts 26:14. In this place Acts 9:7 the historian is speaking of what occurred after the first alarm. There is no improbability that they rose fro the ground immediately, and surveyed the scene with silent amazement and alarm. The word speechless--εννεοι-- properly denotes those who are so astonished or so stupified as to be unable to speak. In the Greek writers it means those who are deaf and dumb. Hearing a voice. Hearing a sound or noise. The word here rendered "voice" is thus frequently used, as in Gen 3:8, 1Sam 12:18, Ps 29:3,4; Mt 24:31, (Greek;) 1Thes 4:16. In Acts 22:9, it is said, "They which were with me (Paul) saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." In this place the words "heard not the voice" must be understood in the sense of understanding the words, of hearing the address, the distinct articulation, which Paul heard. They heard a noise, they were amazed and alarmed, but they did not hear the distinct words addressed to Saul. A similar instance we have in Jn 12:28,29, when the voice of God came

from heaven to Jesus: "The people who stood by and heard it, said that it thundered." They heard the sound, the noise; they did not distinguish the words addressed to him. See also Dan 10:7, and 1Kgs 19:11-13.

Lord, how many are there that come under thine ordinances, who hear only (like Saul's companions) a confused noise and empty sound! They do not hear the distinct voice of Christ speaking to their hearts with a strong hand, inwardly and effectually, and so remanin under the power of unbelief, in an unconverted state.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

His blindness and loss of sight: When his eyes were opened, he waw no man. Christ taught him, by his bodily blindness, the blindness of his soul in spiritual things, which till now he was insensible of. As Saul was, so all naturally are, spiritually blind, before regeneration and conversion: True, he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was a great proficient in human learning, but after his conversion he counted that knowledge no better than blindness, Phil 3:7-8.

His manuduction or leading by the hand into the city; Damascus. Who led him? Doubtless his companions that came along with him upon his bloody design from Jerusalem. Here the blind lead the blind; those very hands lead him to Damascus which should have haled the saints from Damascus to Jerusalem.

those with him would have lost their sight too; but it was a sight of Christ, whom the rest saw not, that had this effect upon Saul only. Thus a believing sight of the glory of God in the face of Christ dazzles the eyes to all things here below. Christ, in order to the further discovery of himself and his gospel to Paul, took him off from the sight of other things, which he must look off, that he may look unto Jesus, and to him only.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

The awful crime of fighting murderously against God and Christ was pressing upon his soul, and as yet he knew not what to do that he might obtain pardon. His Jewish education, if not his natural instinct, prompted him to pray, and this he was doing with all fervor (#Ac 9:11|); but the hands he lifted up were stained with blood--the blood of martyrs; and how could he hope to be heard? No penitent ever had greater cause for sorrow, or wept more bitterly than he.

The duration and continuance of Saul's blindness; He was three days without sight. This was a long night to him who persecuted the children of the day; a just time for him to be in darkness, who so implacably attempted to blow out the light of the gospel: But perhaps no less time would have been sufficient to humble him for his rage and madness against Christ and his members. Besides, there are some that think that, in these three days of his continued blindness, he had that rapture into the third heaven, which is mentioned, 2Cor 12:2. But however that be, doubtless in this time his mind was filled with divine contemplations; and that glorious gospel was taught him in three days, which he taught to others all his days.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here,* Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

The Lord Jesus is alone mentioned in all this transaction. And as he had commenced the work of converting Saul, it is evident that he is intended here. Acts 1:24.

12 and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

Beheld, he prayeth. This gives us a full indication of the manner in which Saul passed the three days mentioned in Acts

9:9. It is plain, from what follows, that Ananias regarded Saul as a foe to Christianity, and that he would have been apprehensive of danger if he were with him, Acts 9:13,14. This remark, "behold he prayeth," is made to him to silence his fears, and to indicate the change in the feelings and views of Saul. Before he was a persecutor; now his change is indicated by his giving himself to prayer. That Saul did not pray before, is not implied by this; for he fully accorded with the customs of the Jews, Php 3:4-6. But his prayers then were not the prayers of a saint. They were then the prayers of a Pharisee, (comp. Lk 18:10, etc.;) now they were the prayers of a broken-hearted sinner. Then he prayed depending on his own righteousness; now depending on the mercy of God in the Messiah. We may learn here,

(1,) that one indication of conversion to God is real prayer. A Christian may as well be characterized by that as by any single appellation--" a man of prayer."

(2.) It is always the attendant of true conviction for sin, that we pray. The convicted sinner feels his danger, and his need of forgiveness. Conscious that he has no righteousness himself, he now seeks that of another, and depends on the mercy of God. Before he was too proud to pray; now he is willing to humble himself through Jesus Christ, and ask for mercy.

(3.) It is a sufficient indication of the character of any man to say, "Behold, he prays." It at once tells us, better than volumes would without this, his real character. Knowing this, we know all about him. We at once confide in his piety, his honesty, his humility, his willingness to do good. It is at once the indication of his state with God, and the pledge that he will do his duty to men. We mean, of course, real prayer. Knowing that a man is sincere, and humble, and faithful in his private devotions, and in the devotions of his family, we confide in him, and are willing at once to trust to his readiness to do all that he is convinced that he ought to do. Ananias, apprized of this in

Saul, had full evidence of the change of his character, and was convinced that he ought to lay aside all his former views, and at once to seek him, and to acknowledge him as a brother.

Thus, as in the case of Cornelius and Peter afterwards, there was a mutual preparation of each for each.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

why does Ananias object this. Not, "Therefore I do not owe him so much service. Why should I do him a kindness who has done and designed us so much unkindness?" No, Christ has taught us another lesson, to render good for evil, and pray for our persecutors; but if he be such a persecutor of Christians, [1.] Will it be safe for Ananias to go to him? Will he not throw himself like a lamb into the mouth of a lion? And, if he thus bring himself into trouble, he will be blamed for his indiscretion. [2.] Will it be to any purpose to go to him? Can such a hard heart ever be softened, or such an Ethiopian ever change his skin?

14 and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Go thy way. This is often the only answer that we obtain to the suggestion of our doubts and hesitations about duty. God tells us still to do what he requires, with an assurance only that his commands are just, and that there are good reasons for them.

Before the Gentiles. The nations; all who were not Jews. This was the principal employment of Paul. He spent his life in this, and regarded himself as peculiarly called to be the apostle of the Gentiles, Rom 11.13, 15:16, Gal 2:8. And the children of Israel. The Jews. This was done. He immediately began to preach to them, @Ac 9:20-22. Wherever he went, he preached the gospel first to them, and then to the Gentiles, Acts 13:46, 28:17.

vessels are receptive instruments; they must take in before they can give out. What the ministers of the gospel have received of the Lord, that they deliver to their people; they give out what God gives in. like the oil in the widow's vessel, increased by pouring out. A minister, by communicating the treasure of his knowledge, enriches others without impoverishing himself.

16 for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Verse 16. For I will shew him, etc. This seems to be added to encourage Ananias. He had feared Saul. The Lord now informs him that Saul, hitherto his enemy, would ever after be his friend. He would not merely profess repentance, but would manifest the sincerity of it by encountering trials and reproaches for his sake. The prediction here was fully accomplished, Acts 20:23, 2Cor 11:23-27; 2Ti 1:11,12.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Ananias, though no apostle, no deacon, nor minister, that we read of, but an ordinary and private Christian only, yet he has power to heal Saul of his blindness, and to confer the Holy Ghost; Receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost: If so, undoubtedly he had an extraordinary warrant for this extraordinary work; for none but the apostles had power to confer the Holy ghost. No ordinary person ought to undertake any part of the ministrial functions without an extraordinary call and commission.

The title given by Anania to Saul, Brother Saul; they were now brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, united to the same Saviour, animated by the same Spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory. As the scripture speaks of a brotherhood betwixt Christ and his believers, He is not ashamed to call them

brethren; so it speaks of a brotherhood betwixt believers themselves, Love the brotherhood: that is, thw whole fraternity and society of Christians, who are sunguine Christi conglutinati, cemented by the blood of Christ, and united by the bond of love.

Saul came to lay violent hands upon the disciples at Damascus, but here a disciple lays a helping healing hand upon him. The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul. (2.) He called him brother, because he was made a partaker of the grace of God, though not yet baptized; and his readiness to own him as a brother intimated to him God's readiness to own him as a son, though he had been a blasphemer of God and a persecutor of his children.

Ananias might deliver his message to Saul very appositely in the prophet's words (Ho 6:1,2): Come and turn to the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal thee; he hath smitten, and he will bind thee up; now after two days he will revive thee, and the third day he will raise thee up, and thou shalt live in his sight.

Let not us then despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin; for Paul himself obtained mercy, that he might be a monument, 1Ti 1:13. He was in a wicked way, pursuing his design against the Christians at Damascus, and pleasing himself with the thought that he should devour this new-born child of Christianity there. Note, Sometimes the grace of God works upon sinners when they are at the worst, and hotly engaged in the most desperate sinful pursuits, which is much for the glory both of God's pity and of his power.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.

Saul Preaches at Damascus

Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

The time of his preaching, Straightaway: he fell presently to his Master's work, not consulting flesh and blood about the difficulties and dangers that might attend it; but performs his duty with such zeal and immediate application, as became a person of his holy character and profession.

21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Paul does not do battle only with his own authority, but also with the testimonies of the Prophets. (k) By conferring places of the Scripture together, as skilful craftsman do when they make something, they used to gather all parts together, to make them agree fitly one with another.

Saul Escapes from the Jews

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

And after that many days, etc. How long a time elapsed before this, is not recorded in this place; but it is evident that the writer means to signify that a considerable time intervened. There is, therefore, an interval here which Luke has not filled up; and if this were the only narrative which we had, we should be at a loss how to understand this. From all that we know now of the

usual conduct of the Jews towards the apostles, and especially towards Paul, it would seem highly improbable that this interval would be passed peaceably or quietly. Nay, it would be highly improbable that he would be allowed to remain in Damascus many days without violent persecution. Now it so happens that, by turning to another part of the New Testament, we are enabled to ascertain the manner which this interval was filled up. Turn then to Gal 1:17, and we learn from Paul himself that he went into Arabia, and spent some time there, and then returned again to Damascus. The precise time which would be occupied in such a journey is not specified; but it would not be performed under a period of some months. In Gal 1:18, we are informed that he did not go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion; and as there is reason to believe that he went up to Jerusalem directly after escaping from Damascus the second time, Acts 9:25,26 it seems probable that the three years were spent chiefly in Arabia. We have thus an account of the "many days" here referred to by Luke. And in this instance we have a striking example of the truth and honesty of the sacred writers. By comparing these two accounts together, we arrive at the whole state of the case. Neither seems to be complete without the other. Luke has left a chasm which he has nowhere else supplied. But that chasm we are enabled to fill up from the apostle himself, in a letter written long after, and without any design to amend or complete the history of Luke: for the introduction of this history into the epistle to the Galatians was for a very different purpose--to show that he received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus, and in a manner independent of the other apostles. The two accounts, therefore, are like the two parts of a tally; neither is complete without the other; and yet being brought together, they so exactly fit as to show that the one is precisely adjusted to the other. And as the two parts were made by different individuals, and without design of adapting them to each other, they show that the writers had formed no collusion or agreement to impose on the world; that they are separate and independent witnesses; that they are honest men; that their narratives are true records of what actually occurred; and the two narratives constitute,

therefore, a strong and very valuable proof of the correctness of the sacred narrative. If asked why Luke has omitted this in the Acts, it may be replied, that there are many circumstances and facts omitted in all histories from the necessity of the case. Comp. Jn 21:25. It is remarkable here, not that he has omitted this, but that he has left a chasm in his own history which can be so readily filled up. such a blank should occur in the Acts, and be filled up in Galatians, is not more remarkable than that the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, their stay there, and their return thence, recorded only by Matthew, should be so entirely passed over by Luke, that if we had only his Gospel, we should have supposed that they, Holy Family, returned to Nazareth immediately after the presentation in the temple.

24 but their laying wait was known of Saul. And they watched
the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the
wall in a basket.

In a basket. This word is used to denote commonly the basket in which food was carried, Mt 15:37, Mk 8:8,20. This conduct of Saul was in accordance with the direction of the Lord Jesus, Mt 10:23, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another," etc. Saul was certain of death if he remained; and as he could secure his life by flight without abandoning any principle of religion, or denying his Lord, it was his duty to do so. Christianity requires us to sacrifice our lives only when we cannot avoid it without denying the Saviour, or abandoning the principles of our holy religion.

Saul at Jerusalem

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join
himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and
believed not that he was a disciple.

He desired to be acquainted with them, and to be admitted into communion with them; but they looked strange upon him, shut the door against him, and would not go about any of their religious exercises if he were by, for they were afraid of him.

Now might Paul be tempted to think himself in an ill case, when the Jews had abandoned and persecuted him, and the Christians would not receive and entertain him. Thus does he fall into divers temptations, and needs the armour of righteousness, as we all do, both on the right hand and on the left, that we may not be discouraged either by the unjust treatment of our enemies or the unkind treatment of our friends.

(1.) See what was the cause of their jealousy of him: They believed not that he was a disciple, but only pretended to be so, and came among them as a spy or an informer. They knew what a bitter persecutor he had been, with what fury he went to Damascus some time ago; they had heard nothing of him since, and therefore thought he was but a wolf in sheep's clothing. The disciples of Christ had need to be cautious whom they admit into communion with them. Believe not every spirit. There is need of the wisdom of the serpent, to keep the mean between the extremes of suspicion on the one hand and credulity on the other; yet methinks it is safer to err on the charitable side, because it is an adjudged case that it is better the tares should be found among the wheat than that the wheat should any of it be rooted up and thrown out of the field.

(2.) See how it was removed (Ac 9:27): Barnabas took him to the apostles themselves, who were not so scrupulous as the inferior disciples, to whom he first assayed to join himself, and he declared to them,

[1.] What Christ had done for him: He had shown himself to him in the way and spoken to him; and what he said.

[2.] What he had since done for Christ: He had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. How Barnabas came to know this, more than the rest of them, we are not told; whether he had himself been at Damascus, or had had letters thence, or discoursed with some of that city, by which he came to the knowledge of this; or whether he had formerly been acquainted

with Paul in the Grecian synagogues, or at the feet of Gamaliel, and had such an account of his conversion from himself as he saw cause enough to give credit to: but so it was that, being satisfied himself, he gave satisfaction to the apostles concerning him, he having brought no testimonials from the disciples at Damascus, thinking he needed not, as some others, epistles of commendation, 2Co 3:1. Note, The introducing of a young convert into the communion of the faithful is a very good work, and one which, as we have opportunity, we should be ready to do. He desired to be acquainted with them, and to be admitted into communion with them; but they looked strange upon him, shut the door against him, and would not go about any of their religious exercises if he were by, for they were afraid of him. Now might Paul be tempted to think himself in an ill case, when the Jews had abandoned and persecuted him, and the Christians would not receive and entertain him. Thus does he fall into divers temptations, and needs the armour of righteousness, as we all do, both on the right hand and on the left, that we may not be discouraged either by the unjust treatment of our enemies or the unkind treatment of our friends.

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good work, and one which, as we have opportunity, we should be ready to do.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

But Barnabas, To the apostles. To Peter and James, Gal 1:18,19. Probably the other apostles were at that time absent from Jerusalem. And declared unto them, etc. It may seem remarkable that the apostles at Jerusalem had not before heard of the conversion of Saul. The following considerations may serve in some degree to explain this:

(1.) It is certain that intercourse between different countries was then much more difficult than it is now. There were no posts; no public conveyances; nothing that corresponded with our modes of intercourse between one part of the world and another.

(2.) There was at this time a state of animosity, amounting to hostility, subsisting between Herod and Aretas. Herod the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, and had put her away.--Josephus, Antiq. b. xviii. chap. v. 1, 2 The result of this was a long misunderstanding between them, and a war; and the effects of that war might have been to interrupt the communication very much throughout all that country.

(3.) Though the Jews at Jerusalem might have heard of the conversion of Saul, yet it was for their interest to keep it a secret, and not to mention it to Christians. But,

(4.) though the Christians who were there had heard of it, yet it is probable that they were not fully informed on the subject; that they had not had all the evidence of his conversion which they desired; and that they looked with suspicion on him. It was therefore proper that they should have a full statement of the evidence of his conversion; and this was made by Barnabas.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.
29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

But why did these men rather seek to kill Paul than Peter, James, or Barnabas?

Answer, Because he was formerly one of their own company, of their own college; a persecutor like themselves, and a persecutor with themsleves. This enraged them; they looked not upon him as an apostle, but as an apostate; one that had revolted from them,. a renegado, and as such they meditate his destruction night and day; insomuch, that it is probable, that never were so many sufferings heaped upon the head of any minster of the gospel throughout the world, as upon St. Paul, (see them reckoned up, 2Cor 11:23 &c.) partly through the hatred of the Jews, and partly through the fury of the blind Gentiles; yet the Lord delivered him out of all. Till his work was done, and his race run, and he had finished the course of his ministry, neither the malice of men, nor the rage of devils, could take him off.

Blessed be God, our times are in his hands, not in our enemies, nor yet in our own.

30 *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

But Paul had another reason than his own apprehension for quitting Jerusalem so soon. "While he was praying in the temple, he was in a trance," and received express injunctions to this effect. (See on Ac 22:17-21).

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Then had the churches rest. That is, the persecutions against Christians ceased. Those persecutions had been excited by the opposition made to Stephen, Ac 11:19 they had been greatly promoted by Saul, Acts 8:3 and had extended, doubtless,

throughout the whole land of Palestine. The precise causes of this cessation of the persecution are not known. Probably they were the following:

(1.) It is not improbable that the great mass of Christians had been driven into other regions by these persecutions.

(2.) He who had been most active in exciting the persecution, who was, in a sort, its leader, and who was best adapted to carry it on, had been converted. He had ceased his opposition; and even he now was removed from Judea. All this would have some effect in causing the persecution to subside.

(3.) But it is not improbable that the civil state of things in Judea contributed much to turn the attention of the Jews to other matters. Dr. Lardner accounts for this in the following manner:

"Soon after Caligula's accession, the Jews at Alexandria suffered very much from the Egyptians in that city, and at length their oratories there were all destroyed. In the third year of Caligula, A.D. 39, Petronius was sent into Syria, with orders to set up the emperor's statue in the temple at Jerusalem. This order from Caligula was, to the Jews, a thunderstroke. The Jews must have been too much engaged after this to mind anything else, as may appear from the accounts which Philo and Josephus have given us of this affair. Josephus says, that 'Caligula ordered Perronius to go with an army to Jerusalem, to set up his statue in the temple there; enjoining him, if the Jews opposed it, to put to death all who made any resistance, and to make all the rest of-the nation slaves. Petronius, therefore, marched from Antioch into Judea, with three legions and a large body of auxiliaries raised in Syria. All were hereupon filled with consternation, the army being come as far as Ptolemais.'"

See Lardner's Works, vol. i. pp. 101, 102; Lond. Ed. 1829. Philo gives the same account of the consternation as Josephus. Philo de legat, ad Cal. pp. 1024,1025. He describes the Jews "as abandoning their cities, villages, and open country, as going to Petronius in Phenicia, both men and women, the old, the young, the middle aged; as throwing themselves on the ground before Petronius with weeping and lamentation," etc.

The effect of this consternation in diverting their minds from the Christians can be easily conceived. The prospect that the images of the Roman emperor were about to be set up by violence in the temple, or that, in case of resistance, death or slavery was to be their portion; the advance of a large army to execute that purpose; all tended to throw the nation into alarm. By the providence of God, therefore, this event was permitted to occur to divert the attention of bloody-minded persecutors from a feeble and a bleeding church. Anxious for their own safety, the Jews would cease to persecute the Christians; and thus, by the conversion of the main instrument in persecution, and by the universal alarm for the welfare of the nation, the trembling and enfeebled church was permitted to obtain repose. Thus ended the first general persecution against Christians, and thus effectually did God show that he had power to guard and protect his chosen people. All Judea, etc. These three places included the land of Palestine. Mt 2:22. The formation of churches in Galilee is not expressly mentioned before this; but there is no improbability in supposing that Christians had travelled there, and had preached the gospel. Comp. Acts 11:19. The formation of churches in Samaria is expressly mentioned, Acts 8:5, etc. Were edified. Were built up, increased, and strengthened. See Rom 14:19, 15:2, 1Cor 8:1. And walking. Proceeding; living. The word is often used to denote Christian conduct, or manner of life, Col 1:10, Lk 1:6, 1Thes 4:1 1Jn 2:6. The idea is that of travellers who are going to any place, and who walk in the right path. Christians are thus travellers to another country, an heavenly. In the fear of the Lord. Fearing the Lord; with reverence for him and his commandments. This expression is often used to denote piety

in general, 2Chr 19:7, Job 28:28, Ps 19:9, 111:10, Prov 1:7, 9:10, 13:13. In the comfort of the Holy Ghost. In the consolations which the Holy Ghost produced, Jn 14:16,17, Rom 5:1-6. Were multiplied. Were increased. (b) "Then had the churches rest" Zech 9:1, Acts 8:1 (c) "throughout Judaea" Ps 94:13 (d) "were edified" Rom 14:19 (e) "walking in the fear" Jn 14:16,17 (f) "comfort of" Jn 14:16,17 (+) "Ghost" "Spirit" (g) "were multiplied" Zech 8:20,22

They made a good use of this lucid interval. Instead of growing more secure and wanton in the day of their prosperity, they abounded more in their duty, and made a good use of their tranquillity.

(1.) They were edified, were built up in their most holy faith; the more free and constant enjoyment they had of the means of knowledge and grace, the more they increased in knowledge and grace.

(2.) They walked in the fear of the Lord--were more exemplary themselves for a holy heavenly conversation. They so lived that all who conversed with them might say, Surely the fear of God reigns in those people.

(3.) They walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost--were not only faithful, but cheerful, in religion; they stuck to the ways of the Lord, and sang in those ways. The comfort of the Holy Ghost was their consolation, and that which they made their chief joy. They had recourse to the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and lived upon that, not only in days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity. The comforts of the earth, when they had the most free and full enjoyment of them, could not content them without the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Observe the connection of these two: when they walked in the fear of the Lord, then they walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Those are most likely to walk cheerfully that walk circumspectly.

God blessed it to them for their increase in number: They were multiplied. Sometimes the church multiplies the more for its being afflicted, as Israel in Egypt; yet if it were always so, the saints of the Most High would be worn out. At other times its rest contributes to its growth, as it enlarges the opportunity of ministers, and invites those in who at first are afraid of suffering. Or, then, when they walked in the fear of God and his comforts, they were multiplied. Thus those that will not be won by the word may be won by the conversation of professors.

Aeneas Healed

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole:
arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and turned to the
Lord.

The good influence this had upon many (Ac 9:35): All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord. We can scarcely think that every individual person in those countries took cognizance of the miracle, and was wrought upon by it; but many, the generality of the people in the town of Lydda and in the country of Saron, or Sharon, a fruitful plain or valley, of which it was foretold, Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, Isa 65:10. 1.

Dorcas Restored to Life

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas [doe, *or* roe]: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

It is promised to those who consider the poor, not that they shall never be sick, but that the Lord will strengthen them upon the bed of languishing, at least with strength in their souls, and so will make all their bed in their sickness, will make it easy, Ps 41:1,3. They cannot hope that they shall never die (merciful men are taken away, and merciful women too, witness Tabitha), but they may hope that they shall find mercy of the Lord in that day, 2Ti 1:18. 5.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

the one in imitation of his Master's way (Lu 8:54; and compare 2Ki 4:33); the other, in striking contrast with it. The kneeling became the lowly servant, but not the Lord Himself, of whom it is never once recorded that he knelt in the performance of a miracle.

41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

a trade regarded by the Jews as half unclean, and consequently disreputable, from the contact with dead animals and blood

which was connected with it. For this reason, even by other nations, it is usually carried on at some distance from towns; accordingly, Simon's house was "by the seaside" (Ac 10:6). Peter's lodging there shows him already to some extent above Jewish prejudice.

He tarried not in the house of Tabitha, though she was rich, lest he should seem to seek his own glory; but he took up his lodgings with one Simon a tanner, an ordinary tradesman, which is an instance of his condescension and humility: and hereby he has taught us not to mind high things, but to condescend to those of low estate, Ro 12:16. And, though Peter might seem to be buried in obscurity here in the house of a poor tanner by the sea-side, yet hence God fetched him to a noble piece of service, which is recorded in the next chapter; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted.

Acts-10

Peter and Cornelius

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,
2 *a* devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

He was, according to the measure of the light he had, a religious man. It is a very good character that is given of him, Ac 10:2. He was no idolater, no worshipper of false gods or images, nor allowed himself in any of those immoralities to which the greater part of the Gentile world were given up, to punish them for their idolatry.

(1.) He was possessed with a principle of regard to the true and living God. He was a devout man and one that feared God. He believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and had

a reverence for his glory and authority, and a dread of offending him by sin; and, though he was a soldier, it was no diminution to the credit of his valour to tremble before God.

(2.) He kept up religion in his family. He feared God with all his house. He would not admit any idolaters under his roof, but took care that not himself only, but all his, should serve the Lord. Every good man will do what he can that those about him may be good too.

(3.) He was a very charitable man: He gave much alms to the people, the people of the Jews, notwithstanding the singularities of their religion. Though he was a Gentile, he was willing to contribute to the relief of one that was a real object of charity, without asking what religion he was of.

(4.) He was much in prayer: He prayed to God always. He kept up stated times for prayer, and was constant to them. Note, Wherever the fear of God rules in the heart, it will appear both in works of charity and of piety, and neither will excuse us from the other

3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

He is assured that God accepts him in walking according to the light he had (Ac 10:4): Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Observe, Prayers and alms must go together. We must follow our prayers with alms; for the fast that God hath chosen is to draw out the soul to the hungry, Isa 58:6,7. It is not enough to pray that what we have may be sanctified to us, but we must give alms of such things as we have; and then, behold, all things are clean to us, Lu 11:41. And we must follow our alms with our prayers that God would graciously accept them, and that they may be blessed to those

to whom they are given. Cornelius prayed, and gave alms, not as the Pharisees, to be seen of men, but in sincerity, as unto God; and he is here told that they were come up for a memorial before God. They were upon record in heaven, in the book of remembrance that is written there for all that fear God, and shall be remembered to his advantage: "Thy prayers shall be answered, and thine alms recompensed." The sacrifices under the law are said to be for a memorial. See Le 2:9,16,5:12,6:15. And prayers and alms are our spiritual offerings, which God is pleased to take cognizance of, and have regard to.

Cornelius prays and gives alms in the fear of God, is religious himself and keeps up religion in his family, and all this so as to be accepted of God in it, and yet there is something further that he ought to do--he ought to embrace the Christian religion, now that God has established it among men. Not, He may do it if he pleases; it will be an improvement and entertainment to him. But, He must do it; it is indispensably necessary to his acceptance with God for the future, though he has been accepted in his services hitherto. He that believed the promise of the Messiah must now believe the performance of that promise. Now that God has given a further record concerning his Son than what had been given in the Old-Testament prophecies he requires that we receive this when it is brought to us; and now neither our prayers nor our alms can come up for a memorial before God unless we believe in Jesus Christ, for it is that further which we ought to do. This is his commandment, that we believe. Prayers and alms are accepted from those that believe that the Lord is God, and have not opportunity of knowing more; but, from those to whom it is preached that Jesus is Christ, it is necessary to the acceptance of their persons, prayers, and alms, that they believe this, and rest upon him alone for acceptance. [He is assured that God accepts him in walking according to the light he had (Ac 10:4): Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Observe, Prayers and alms must go together. We must follow our prayers with alms; for the fast that God hath chosen is to draw out the soul to the hungry, Isa 58:6,7. It is not enough

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from those that believe that the Lord is God, and have not opportunity of knowing more; but, from those to whom it is preached that Jesus is Christ, it is necessary to the acceptance of their persons, prayers, and alms, that they believe this, and rest upon him alone for acceptance. [

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon,
whose surname is Peter:
6 he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea
side:
he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.
7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed,
he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of
them that waited on him continually;

Observe, When this centurion had to choose some of his soldiers to attend his person, and to be always about him, he pitched upon such of them as were devout; they shall be preferred and countenanced, to encourage others to be so. He went by David's rule (Ps 101:6), Mine eye shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me. 3. What instructions he gave them (Ac 10:8): He declared all these things unto them, told them of the vision he had, and the orders given him to send for Peter, because Peter's coming was a thing in which they were concerned, for they had souls to save as well as he. Therefore he does not only tell them where to find Peter (which he might have thought it enough to do--the servant knows not what his Lord doeth), but he tells them on what errand he was to come, that they might importune him.

8 and when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent
them to Joppa.
9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew
nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray
about the sixth hour:
10 and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while
they made ready, he fell into a trance,
11 and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto
him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let
down to the earth:

12 wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.
13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.
14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

The reason he gives is, "For I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean; hitherto I have kept my integrity in this matter, and will still keep it." If God, by his grace, has preserved us from gross sin unto this day, we should use this as an argument with ourselves to abstain from all appearance of evil.

15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

No wonder then that Peter says it with so much pleasure, that his conscience could witness for him that he had never gratified his appetite with any forbidden food. 6. God, by a second voice from heaven, proclaimed the repeal of the law in this case (Ac 10:15): What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common. He that made the law might alter it when he pleased, and reduce the matter to its first state. God had, for reasons suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, restrained the Jews from eating such and such meats, to which, while that dispensation lasted, they were obliged in conscience to submit; but he has now, for reasons suited to the New-Testament dispensation, taken off that restraint, and set the matter at large--has cleansed that which was before polluted to us, and we ought to make use of, and stand fast in, the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and not call that common or unclean which God has now declared clean.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

But at last the vessel was received up into heaven. Those who make this vessel to represent the church, including both Jews and Gentiles, as this did both clean and unclean creatures, make this very aptly to signify the admission of the believing Gentiles into the church, and into heaven too, into the Jerusalem above. Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to

all believers, and there we shall find, besides those that are sealed out of all the tribes of Israel, an innumerable company out of every nation (Re 7:9); but they are such as God has cleansed.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

What Christ did, Peter knew not just then (Joh 13:7): He doubted within himself what this vision which he had seen should mean. He had no reason to doubt the truth of it, that it was a heavenly vision; all his doubt was concerning the meaning of it. Note, Christ reveals himself to his people by degrees, and not all at once; and leaves them to doubt awhile, to ruminate upon a thing, and debate it to and fro in their own minds, before he clears it up to them. 2. Yet he was made to know presently, for the men who were sent from Cornelius were just now come to the house, and were at the gate enquiring whether Peter lodged there; and by their errand it will appear what was the meaning of this vision.

18 and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*.
And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Note, It becomes Christians and ministers to be hospitable, and ready, according as their ability is, and there is occasion for it, to entertain strangers. Peter lodged them, though they were Gentiles, to show how readily he complied with the design of the vision in eating with Gentiles; for he immediately took them to eat with him. Though they were two of them servants, and the other a common soldier, yet Peter thought it not below him to take them into his house. Probably he did it that he might have some talk with them about Cornelius and his family; for the apostles, though they had instructions from the Spirit, yet made use of other information, as they had occasion for it.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*.

Here is the first interview between Peter and Cornelius, in which we have,

1 The profound and indeed undue respect and honour which Cornelius paid to Peter (Ac 10:25): He met him as he was coming in, and instead of taking him in his arms, and embracing him as a friend, which would have been very acceptable to Peter, he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him; some think, as a prince and a great man, according to the usage of the eastern countries; others think, as an incarnate deity, or as if he took him to be the Messiah himself. His worshipping a man was indeed culpable; but, considering his present ignorance, it was excusable, nay, and it was an evidence of something in him that was very commendable--and that was a great veneration for divine and heavenly things: no wonder if, till he was better informed, he took him to be the Messiah, and therefore worshipped him, whom he was ordered to send for by an angel from heaven. But the worshipping of his pretended successor, who is not only a man, but a sinful man, the man of sin himself, is altogether inexcusable, and such

an absurdity as would be incredible if we were not told before that all the world would worship the beast, Re 13:4.

2 Peter's modest and indeed just and pious refusal of this honour that was done him (Ac 10:26): He took him up into his arms, with his own hands (though time was when he little thought he should ever either receive so much respect from or show so much affection to an uncircumcised Gentile), saying, "Stand up, I myself also am a man, and therefore not to be worshipped thus." The good angels of the churches, like the good angels of heaven, cannot bear to have the least of that honour shown to them which is due to God only. See thou do it not, saith the angel to John (Re 19:10,22:9), and in like manner the apostle to Cornelius. How careful was Paul that no man should think of him above what he saw in him! 2Co 12:6. Christ's faithful servants could better bear to be vilified than to be deified. Peter did not entertain a surmise that his great respect for him, though excessive, might contribute to the success of his preaching, and therefore if he will be deceived let him be deceived; no, let him know that Peter is a man, that the treasure is in earthen vessels, that he may value the treasure for its own sake.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

Peter declares the direction God gave to him to come to those Gentiles, Ac 10:28,29. They knew it had never been allowed by the Jews, but always looked upon as an unlawful thing, athemiton--an abomination, for a man that is a Jew, a native

Jew as I am, to keep company or come unto one of another nation, a stranger, an uncircumcised Gentile. It was not made so by the law of God, but by the decree of their wise men, which they looked upon to be no less binding. They did not forbid them to converse or traffic with Gentiles in the street or shop, or upon the exchange, but to eat with them. Even in Joseph's time, the Egyptians and Hebrews could not eat together, Ge 43:32. The three children would not defile themselves with the king's meat, Da 1:8. They might not come into the house of a Gentile, for they looked upon it to be ceremonially polluted. Thus scornfully did the Jews look upon the Gentiles, who were not behindhand with them in contempt, as appears by many passages in the Latin poets. "But now," saith Peter, "God hath shown me, by a vision, that I should not call any man common or unclean, nor refuse to converse with any man for the sake of his country." Peter, who had taught his new converts to save themselves from the untoward generation of wicked men (Ac 2:40), is now himself taught to join himself with the towardly generation of devout Gentiles. Ceremonial characters were abolished, that more regard might be had to moral ones. Peter thought it necessary to let them know how he came to change his mind in this matter, and that it was by a divine revelation, lest he should be upbraided with it as having used lightness. God having thus taken down the partition-wall,

(1.) He assures them of his readiness to do them all the good offices he could; that, when he kept at a distance, it was not out of any personal disgust to them, but only because he wanted leave from heaven, and, having now received permission, he was at their service: "Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for, ready to preach the same gospel to you that I have preached to the Jews." The disciples of Christ could not but have some notion of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, but they imagined it must be only to those Gentiles that were first proselyted to the Jewish religion, which mistake Peter acknowledges was not rectified.

(2.) He enquires wherein he might be serviceable to them: "I ask, therefore, for what intent you have sent for me? What do you expect from me, or what business have you with me?" Note, Those that desire the help of God's ministers ought to look well to it that they propose right ends to themselves in it, and do it with a good intention.

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this
hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and,
behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,
31 and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had
in remembrance in the sight of God.
32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname
is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the
sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.
33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done
that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present
before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of
God.

Peter's Address in Cornelius' House

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that
God is no respecter of persons:
35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and
worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.
36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel,
preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)
37 that word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout
all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which
John preached;
38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and
with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that
were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.
39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land
of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a
tree:
40 him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly;

41 not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even*
to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.
42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify
that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick
and dead.
43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his
name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission
of sins.

The Gentiles Receive the Holy Ghost

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all
them which heard the word.
45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished,
as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also
was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.
46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.
Then answered Peter,
47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be
baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we
?
48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.
Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Acts-11

Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem

1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the
Gentiles had also received the word of God.

the apostles and the brethren there and in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God, that is, the gospel of Christ, which is not only a word of God, but the word of God; for it is the summary and centre of all divine revelation.

They received Christ; for his name is called the Word of God, Re 19:13.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

Contended with him. Disputed, or reproved him; charged him with being in fault. This is one of the circumstances which show conclusively that the apostles and early Christians did not regard Peter as having any particular supremacy over the church, or as being in any peculiar sense the vicar of Christ upon earth.

They charged it upon him as a crime that he went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them; and thereby they think he has stained, if not forfeited, the honour of his apostleship, and ought to come under the censure of the church: so far were they from looking upon him as infallible, or as the supreme head of the church that all were accountable to, and he to none.

The imperfect state of human nature strongly appears, when godly persons are displeased even to hear that the word of God has been received, because their own system has not been attended to. And we are too apt to despair of doing good to those who yet, when tried, prove very teachable. It is the bane and damage of the church, to shut out those from it, and from the benefit of the means of grace, who are not in every thing as we are.

3 saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

The Gentiles of Caesarea were the first uncircumcised persons admitted, the Samaritans being a circumcised people. The apostles and church generally seemed to understand that Jesus was the world's Savior, but thought that all who came to him must accept Judaism also and be circumcised before baptism. How deep-rooted their ideas were is shown by Peter's own case. It took (1) a vision, (2) the command of the Lord, (3) the call of Cornelius, and (4) the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, to remove his and his brethren's scruples about

baptizing the Gentiles. It is, therefore, no wonder that his course was called in question.

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded
it by order unto them, saying,

Peter stated the whole affair. We should at all times bear with the infirmities of our brethren; and instead of taking offence, or answering with warmth, we should explain our motives, and show the nature of our proceedings.

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision,
a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down
from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:
6 upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered,
and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and
creeping things, and fowls of the air.
7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.
8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean
hath at any time entered into my mouth.
9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God
hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.
10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again
into heaven.
11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come
unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.
12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting.
Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered
into the man's house:
13 and he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which
stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for
Simon, whose surname is Peter;
14 who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall
be saved.

Note the import of these words of the angel to Cornelius:

(1) Notwithstanding his prayers, alms, devotion, and justice, he was not yet saved. Only the gospel could save him. God's mercy was shown in bringing him the gospel.

(2) This is the first instance named in Acts of a household baptism.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?

God had indicated his will; He had showed his intention to save the Gentiles; and the prejudices of Peter were all overcome. One of the best means of destroying prejudice and false opinions, is a powerful revival of religion. More erroneous doctrines and unholy feelings are overcome in such scenes, than in all the angry controversies, and bigoted and fierce contentions, that have ever taken place. If men wish to root error out of the church, they should strive by all means to promote everywhere revivals of pure and undefiled religion. The Holy Spirit more easily and effectually silences false doctrine, and destroys heresy, than all the denunciations of fierce theologians; all the alarms of professed zeal for truth; and all the anathemas Which professed orthodoxy and love for the purity of the church ever uttered from the icebergs on which such champions usually seek their repose and their home.

While men are very zealous for their own regulations, they should take care that they do not withstand God; and those who love the Lord will glorify him, when made sure that he has given repentance to life to any fellow-sinners. Repentance is God's gift; not only his free grace accepts it, but his mighty grace works it in us, grace takes away the heart of stone, and gives us a heart of flesh. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution
that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, and
Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the
Jews only.

That Antioch becomes the Jerusalem of the Gentile Christians: That is, the chief place whither the Gentile converts resorted; as Jerusalem, before the dispersion by persecution, was resorted to by the Jews, and made the principal seat of their residence.

How the joyful tidings of the success of the gospel at Antioch, being heard and understood by the apostles that remained at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to confirm the new converts at Antioch in the Christian faith.

Learn thence, That the news of any sinner's, much more of many sinners, conversion unto God, by the preaching of the gospel, is matter of great delight and rejoicing to the ministers of Christ.

Antioch. The capital of the whole province of Syria, including Palestine, situated on the Orontes a short distance from the sea, at this time next after Rome and Alexandria of the cities of the world in greatness, commerce and wealth.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which,
when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians,
preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great
number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

The effect and evidence of this was that they turned unto the Lord. They could not be said to turn from the service of idols, for they were Jews, worshippers of the true God only; but they turned from a confidence in the righteousness of the law, to rely only upon the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which is by faith; they turned from a loose, careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life; they

turned from worshipping God in show and ceremony, to worship him in spirit and in truth. They turned to the Lord Jesus, and he became all in all with them. This was the work of conversion wrought upon them, and it must be wrought upon every one of us. It was the fruit of their faith. All that sincerely believe will turn to the Lord; for, whatever we profess or pretend, we do not really believe the gospel if we do not cordially embrace Christ offered to us in the gospel.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

A purpose, is a resolution of the mind, a plan, or intention, Rom 8:28, Eph 1:11, 3:11, 2Ti 1:9, 3:10. It is a resolution of the mind in regard to future conduct; and the doctrine of Barnabas here was, undoubtedly, that it should be a regular, fixed, determined plan, or design, in their minds, that they would henceforward adhere to God. This plan must be formed by all Christians in the beginning of their Christian life, and without such a plan there can be no evidence of piety. We may also remark that such a plan is one of the heart. It is not simply of the understanding, but is of the entire mind, including the will and affections. It is the leading principle; the strongest affection; the guiding purpose of the will to adhere to God. And unless this is the prevalent, governing desire of the heart, there can be no evidence of conversion.

To cleave to the Lord. Note, Those that have turned to the Lord are concerned to cleave unto the Lord, not to fall off from following him, not to flag and tire in following him. To cleave to the Lord Jesus is to live a life of dependence upon him and devotedness to him: not only to hold him fast, but to hold fast by him, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

[2.] To cleave to him with purpose of heart, with an intelligent, firm, and deliberate resolution, founded upon good grounds, and fixed upon that foundation, Ps 108:1. It is to bind our souls with a bond to be the Lord's, and to say as Ruth, Entreat me not to leave him, or to return from following after him. A purpose, is a resolution of the mind, a plan, or intention, Rom 8:28, Eph 1:11, 3:11, 2Ti 1:9, 3:10. It is a resolution of the mind in regard to future conduct; and the doctrine of Barnabas here was, undoubtedly, that it should be a regular, fixed, determined plan, or design, in their minds, that they would henceforward adhere to God. This plan must be formed by all Christians in the beginning of their Christian life, and without such a plan there can be no evidence of piety. We may also remark that such a plan is one of the heart. It is not simply of the understanding, but is of the entire mind, including the will and affections. It is the leading principle; the strongest affection; the guiding purpose of the will to adhere to God. And unless this is the prevalent, governing desire of the heart, there can be no evidence of conversion.

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24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

For he was a good man. This is given as a reason why he was so eminently successful. It is not said that he was a man of distinguished talents or learning; that he was a splendid or an

imposing preacher; but simply that he was a pious, humble man of God. He was honest, and devoted to his master's work. We should not undervalue talent, eloquence, or learning in the ministry; but we may remark, that humble piety will often do more in the conversion of souls than the most splendid talents. No endowments can be a substitute for this. The real power of a minister is concentrated in this; and without this his ministry will be barrenness and a curse. There is nothing on this earth so mighty as goodness. If a man wished to make-the most of his powers, the true secret would be found in employing them for a good object, and suffering them to be wholly under the direction of benevolence. John Howard's purpose to do good has made a more permanent impression on the interests of the world than the mad ambition of Alexander or Caesar. Perhaps the expression, "he was a good man," means that he was a man of a kind, amiable, and sweet disposition.

Full of the Holy Ghost. Was entirely under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He was eminently a pious man. This is the second qualification here mentioned of a good minister. He was not merely exemplary for mildness and kindness of temper, but he was eminently a man of God. He was filled with the influences of the sacred Spirit, producing zeal, love, peace, joy, etc. See Gal 5:22,23. Comp. Acts 2:4.

And of faith. Confidence in the truth and promises of God. This is the third qualification mentioned; and this was another cause of his success. He confided in God. He trusted to his promises. He depended not on his own strength, but on the strength of the arm of God. With these qualifications he engaged in his work, and he was successful. These qualifications should be sought by the ministry of the gospel. Others should not indeed be neglected, but a man's ministry will usually be successful only as he seeks to possess those endowments which distinguished Barnabas--a kind, tender, benevolent heart; devoted piety; the fulness of the Spirit's influence; and strong, unwavering confidence in the promises and power of God.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

Barnabas went to fetch Saul, to join with him in the work of the gospel at Antioch. The last news we heard of him was that, when his life was sought at Jerusalem, he was sent away to Tarsus, the city where he was born, and, it should seem, he continued there ever since, doing good, no doubt. But now Barnabas takes a journey to Tarsus on purpose to see what had become of him, to tell him what a door of opportunity was opened at Antioch, and to desire him to come and spend some time with him there, Ac 11:25,26. And here also it appears that Barnabas was a good sort of a man in two things--

(1.) That he would take so much pains to bring an active useful man out of obscurity. It was he that introduced Saul to the disciples at Jerusalem, when they were shy of him; and it was he that brought him out of the corner into which he was driven, into a more public station. It is a very good work to fetch a candle from under a bushel, and to set it in a candlestick.

(2.) That he would bring in Saul at Antioch, who, being a chief speaker (Ac 14:12), and probably a more popular preacher, would be likely to eclipse him there, by outshining him; but Barnabas is very willing to be eclipsed when it is for the public service. If God by his grace inclines us to do what good we can, according to the ability we have, we ought to rejoice if others that have also larger capacities have larger opportunities, and do more good than we can do. Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, though it might be the lessening of himself, to teach us to seek the things of Christ more than our own things.

26 and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Thus those who before their conversion had been distinguished by the names of Jews and Gentiles might after their conversion be called by one and the same name, which would help them to forget their former dividing names, and prevent their bringing their former marks of distinction, and with them the

seeds of contention, into the church. Let not one say, "I was a Jew;" nor the other, "I was a Gentile;" when both the one and the other must now say, "I am a Christian." [3.]

They took their denomination not from the name of his person, Jesus, but of his office, Christ-anointed, so putting their creed into their names, that Jesus is the Christ; and they were willing all the world should know that this is the truth they will live and die by.

Thus they now owned their dependence upon Christ, and their receivings from him; not only that they believed in him who is the anointed, but that through him they themselves had the anointing, 1Jo 2:20,27. And God is said to have anointed us in Christ, 2Co 1:21.

Thus they laid upon themselves, and all that should ever profess that name, a strong and lasting obligation to submit to the laws of Christ, to follow the example of Christ, and to devote themselves entirely to the honour of Christ--to be to him for a name and a praise. Are we Christians? Then we ought to think, and speak, and act, in every thing as becomes Christians, and to do nothing to the reproach of that worthy name by which we are called; that that may not be said to us which Alexander said to a soldier of his own name that was noted for a coward, Aut nomen, aut mores muta--Either change thy name or mend thy manners. And as we must look upon ourselves as Christians, and carry ourselves accordingly, so we must look upon others as Christians, and carry ourselves towards them accordingly. A Christian, though not in every thing of our mind, should be loved and respected for his sake whose name he bears, because he belongs to Christ. [6.] Thus the scripture was fulfilled, for so it was written (Isa 62:2) concerning the gospel-church, Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. And it is said to the corrupt and degenerate assembly or synagogues, of the Jews, The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name, Isa 65:15.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.
28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.
29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea:

The good use they made of this prediction. When they were told of a famine at hand, they did not do as the Egyptians, hoard up corn for themselves; but, as became Christians, laid by for charity to relieve others, which is the best preparative for our own sufferings and want. It is promised to those that consider the poor that God will preserve them, and keep them alive, and they shall be blessed upon the earth, Ps 41:1,2. And those who show mercy, and give to the poor, shall not be ashamed in the evil time, but in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, Ps 37:19,21. The best provision we can lay up against a dear time is to lay up an interest in these promises, by doing good, and communicating, Lu 12:33. Many give it as a reason why they should be sparing, but the scripture gives it as a reason why we should be liberal, to seven, and also to eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth, Ec 11:2. Observe,

Determined to send relief. This arose not merely from their general sense of their obligation to aid the poor, but they felt themselves particularly bound to aid their Jewish brethren. The obligation to aid the temporal wants of those from whom they had received so important spiritual mercies, is repeatedly enforced in the New Testament. Comp. Rom 15:25-27, 1Cor 16:1,2, 2Cor 9:1,2, Gal 2:10.

30 which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts-12

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned

1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.

Ever since the conversion of Paul, we have heard no more of the agency of the priests in persecuting the saints at Jerusalem; perhaps that wonderful change wrought upon him, and the disappointment it gave to their design upon the Christians at Damascus, had somewhat mollified them, and brought them under the check of Gamaliel's advice--to let those men alone, and see what would be the issue; but here the storm arises from another point. The civil power, not now, as usual (for aught that appears) stirred up by the ecclesiastics, acts by itself in the persecution. But Herod, though originally of an Edomite family, yet seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion; for Josephus says he was zealous for the Mosaic rites, a bigot for the ceremonies. He was not only (as Herod Antipas was) tetrarch of Galilee, but had also the government of Judea committed to him by Claudius the emperor, and resided most at Jerusalem, where he was at this time.

This Herod was a grandson of that Herod by whom the infants of Bethlehem were slaughtered [#Mt 2:16|], and a nephew of "Herod the Tetrarch," by whom John the Immerser was beheaded [#Mt 14:10|]. He grew up in Rome, where he wasted what fortune he had inherited in princely extravagance; but while doing so he acquired an intimacy with Caius Caesar, afterward the famous Caligula of history. When the latter ascended the throne, at the death of Tiberius, he elevated his friend Agrippa, as this Herod was most usually called, to a kingdom, which was subsequently enlarged by Claudius until it embraced all the territory ruled by his grandfather Herod the Great. He was now in the zenith of his power, and living in the utmost magnificence.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

He was one of the twelve who were commissioned to disciple all nations; and to take him off now, before he had removed from Jerusalem, was like Cain's killing Abel when the world was to be peopled, and one man was then more than many at another time. To kill an apostle now was killing he knew not how many.he was one of those whom Christ called Boanerges--Sons of thunder; and perhaps by his powerful awakening preaching he had provoked Herod, or those about him, as John Baptist did the other Herod, and that was the occasion of his coming into this trouble. He was one of those sons of Zebedee whom Christ told that they should drink of the cup that he was to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was to be baptized with, Mt 20:23.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

He killed james Violently, his cause not being heard at all.He was ambitious, vain, and fawning; he sought, as his great principle, popularity; and he was willing to sacrifice, like many others, truth and justice to obtain this end. But there was also a particular reason for this in his case. He held his appointment under the Roman emperor. This foreign rule was always unpopular among the Jews. In order, therefore, to secure a peaceful reign, and to prevent insurrection and tumult, it was necessary for him to court their favour; to indulge their wishes, and to fall in with their prejudices. Alas! how many monarchs and rulers there have been, who were governed by no better principle, and whose sole aim has been to secure popularity, even at the expense of law, and truth and justice. That this was the character of Herod, is attested by Josephus, Ant., b. xix., chap. 8, 3:

"This king (Herod Agrippa) was by nature very beneficent, and liberal in his gifts, and very ambitious to please the people with such large donations; and he made himself very illustrious by the many expensive presents he made them. He took delight in giving, and rejoiced in living with good reputation."

He did this because he saw it pleased the Jews. Observe, The Jews made themselves guilty of the blood of James by showing themselves well pleased with it afterwards, though they had not excited Herod to it. There are accessaries ex post facto--after the fact; and those will be reckoned with as persecutors who take pleasure in others' persecuting, who delight to see good men ill used, and cry, Aha, so would we have it, or at least secretly approve of it. For bloody persecutors, when they perceive themselves applauded for that which every one ought to cry shame upon them for, are encouraged to go on, and have their hands strengthened and their hearts hardened, and the checks of their own consciences smothered; nay, it is as strong a temptation to them to do the like as it was here to Herod, because he saw it pleased the Jews.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

To four quaternions of soldiers. A quaternion was a company of four; consequently the whole number employed here was sixteen. The Romans divided the night into four watches, so that the guards could be relieved; those who were on guard occupying three hours, and being then relieved. Of the four who were on guard, two were with Peter in the prison, Acts 12:6, and two kept watch before the door of the prison. The utmost precaution was thus taken that he should not escape; and Herod thus gave the most ample assurance to the Jews of his intention to secure Peter, and to bring him to trial.

Peter was bound to the two. His left hand was chained to the right hand of one of the soldiers, and his right hand to the left hand of the other. This was a common mode of securing prisoners among the Romans. See abundant authorities for this quoted in Lardner's Credibility, part i. chap. x. 9, Lond. ed. 1829, vol. i. pp. 242, 243, etc.

Intending after Easter. There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply after the Passover, μετατοπασχα. The word Easter now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honour of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that; nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book was written. The translation is not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the times of the apostles. The word Easter is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from Eostre, the goddess of love, or the Venus of the North, in honour of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April. (Webster.) As this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honour of the resurrection of Christ, the name came to be used to denote the latter. In the old Anglo-Saxon service-books the term Easter is used frequently to translate the word Passover. In the translation by Wicliffe, the word paske, i.e., passover, is used. But Tindal and Coverdale used the word Easter, and hence it has very improperly crept into our translation. (Clark.) To bring him forth to the people. That is, evidently, to put him publicly to death to gratify them. The providence of God, in regard to Peter, is thus remarkable. Instead of his being put suddenly to death, as was James, he was reserved for future trial; and thus an abundant opportunity was given for the prayers of the church, and for his consequent release.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

But prayer was made. The church was apprized of his imprisonment and danger; and had no resource but to apply to God by prayer. In scenes of danger there is no other refuge; and the result shows that, even in most discouraging circumstances, God can hear prayer. Without ceasing. Intense, steady, ardent prayer.

It should seem that now when the affair came near to a crisis, and the very next day was fixed for the determining of it, they were more fervent in prayer than before; and it was a good sign that God intended to deliver Peter when he thus stirred up a spirit of prayer for his deliverance, for he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.They gathered together for prayer on this occasion; though this would made them obnoxious to the government if they were discovered, yet they know what an encouragement Christ gave to joint-prayer, Mt 18:19,20.

Peter Delivered from Prison

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

Lord! how soft and secure a pillow is a good conscience, even in the confines of death, and in the very jaws of danger! That notwithstanding Peter's imminent and impending danger, he sleeps very soundly, resigning up himself into the hands of Christ, and resolving, if he may no longer live Christ's servant, that he will die his sacrifice. I question whether Herod that imprisoned him slept half so soundly.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals.

And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out
of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

"must have had a house of some pretensions to receive a large number; and, accordingly, we read that her brother Barnabas (Col 4:10) was a person of substance (Ac 4:37). She must also have been distinguished for faith and courage to allow such a meeting in the face of persecution" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

When it was now announced to them that the object of their prayers was granted, they deemed the messenger that announced it insane. Christians are often surprised even when their prayers are answered. They are overwhelmed and amazed at the success of their own petitions, and are slow to believe that the very thing for which they have sought could be granted. It shows, perhaps, with how little faith, after all, they pray; and how slow they are to believe that God can hear and answer prayer. In a revival of religion, in answer to prayer, Christians are often overwhelmed, and astonished when even their own petitions are granted, and when God manifests his own power in his own way and time. Prayer should be persevered in, and we should place ourselves in a waiting posture to catch the first indications that God has heard us with joy.

It is his angel. Any way of accounting for it rather than to admit the simple fact, or to ascertain the simple truth. All this was produced by the little hope which they had of his release, and their earnest desire that it should be so. It was just such a state of mind as is indicated when we say, "the news is too good to be believed." The expression it is his angel may mean, that they supposed the tutelary guardian, or angel appointed to attend Peter, had come to announce something respecting him, and that he had assumed the voice and form of Peter, in order to render them certain that he came from him. This notion arose from the common belief of the Jews, that each individual had assigned to him, at birth, a celestial spirit, whose office it was to guard and defend him through life. Mt 18:10. That the Jews entertained this opinion is clear from their writings. (See Kuin el.) Lightfoot thinks that they who were assembled supposed that this angel had assumed the voice and manner of Peter, in order to intimate to them that he was about to die, and to excite them to earnest prayer that he might die with constancy and firmness. Whatever their opinions were, however, it proves nothing on these points. There is no evidence that they were inspired in these opinions; nor are their notions countenanced by the Scriptures. They were the mere common traditions of the Jews, and prove nothing in regard to the truth of the opinion one way or the other.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door,*

and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

But he beckoning, etc. To prevent the noise, and tumult, and transport which was likely to be produced. His wish was, not that there should be clamorous joy, but that they should listen in silence to what God had done. It was sufficient to awe the soul, and produce deep, grateful feeling. A noise might excite the neighbouring Jews, and produce danger. But religion is

calm and peaceful; and its great scenes and surprising deliverances are rather fitted to awe the soul, to produce calm, sober, and grateful contemplation, than the noise of rejoicing, and the shoutings of exultation. The consciousness of the presence of God, and of his mighty power, does not produce rapturous disorder and tumult, but holy, solemn, calm, grateful emotion. How Peter gives God, and not the angel, the glory of his deliverance,

He could not think himself safe whilst Herod was so near, no more than a lamb could be safe near the lion's den. He knew he should be hunted for, therefore escapes for his life. And besides his own danger, he was not willing to endanger his friends, who did now entertain and harbour him: but both for his own and their preservation, he departs to another place.

Learn, That a prudential use of all lawful means for our own and others preservation, in subserviency to the divine providence, is our duty, our wisdom and interest, both as men and Christians.

Not the apostle, but the brother of the Lord, so conspicuous after this as the pastor of the church at Jerusalem. Peter's message seems to recognize the fact that he was a leading man. Perhaps the apostles had retired from the city for fear of Herod. For notices of James, see Ac 15:13 21:18 Ga 1:19 2:9,12.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and *there* abode.

The guard was undoubtedly put to death; and thus Herod used all his power to create the impression that Peter had escaped by their negligence; and this would undoubtedly be believed by the Jews. See Mt 28:15. He might himself perhaps be convinced, however, that the escape was by miracle, and be afraid to attempt any further persecutions; or the affairs of his

government might have called off his attention to other things; and thus, as in the case of the "persecution that arose about Stephen," the political changes and dangers might divert the attention from putting Christians to death. Acts 9:31. Thus by the Providence of God this persecution, that had been commenced, not by popular tumult, but by royal authority and power, and that was aimed at the very pillars of the church, ceased. The prayers of the church prevailed; and the monarch was overcome, disappointed, humbled, and by Divine judgment soon put to death. It is the voice of a god, etc. It is not probable that the Jews joined in this acclamation, but that it was made by the idolatrous Gentiles. Josephus gives a similar account of their feelings and conduct.

But why were not the people punished as well as the prince, seeing they were equally guilty of robbing God of his honour. True, Herod was the receiver, but they were the thieves: why then fell not the punishment on the whole multitude?

Ans. Because more discretion is expected from a prince, than from the rabble: Besides, what in them was but a blasphemous compliment, was by his acceptance of it made a reality, and was usurped by him, and assumed to him as due to his deserts. From the whole note,

1. That flattery, either given or taken, is a very dangerous sin, a God-provoking, and a wrath-procuring sin. If we flatter men, God will not flatter us, but deal plainly, yet severely, with us. One of the ancients said, he was afaid of praise and commendation as much as of a crack of thunder. When men give much glory to men, it is very hard for men to give that glory back again to God. Herod was so pleased and tickled with the glory which the people gave him, that he could not part with it; but by keeping that, he lost his life.

Note, 2. That though God bears long with many sorts of sinners, yet not with sinners of this sort: "Immediately the

angel of the Lord smote him:" Agreeably to that of Job 32:22. "I know not how to give flattering titles, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." The great God will admit of no corrivals; he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; he will be a swift witness against the flatterer, as well as against the false-swearer, Mal 3:5. He can destroy both flatterer and flattered with the twinkling of an eye, or with the turning of a hand; and those that are cried up as gods today, are as dung tomorrow. It is the voice of a god, etc. It is not probable that the Jews joined in this acclamation, but that it was made by the idolatrous Gentiles. Josephus gives a similar account of their feelings and conduct.

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The Death of Herod

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country.*

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

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commendation as much as of a crack of thunder. When men give much glory to men, it is very hard for men to give that glory back again to God. Herod was so pleased and tickled with the glory which the people gave him, that he could not part with it; but by keeping that, he lost his life.

Note, 2. That though God bears long with many sorts of sinners, yet not with sinners of this sort: "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him:" Agreeably to that of Job 32:22. "I know not how to give flattering titles, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." The great God will admit of no corrivals; he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; he will be a swift witness against the flatterer, as well as against the false-swearer, Mal 3:5. He can destroy both flatterer and flattered with the twinkling of an eye, or with the turning of a hand; and those that are cried up as gods today, are as dung tomorrow.

22 And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is* the voice of a god, and not of a man.

(1.) He made a speech to the men of Tyre and Sidon, a fine oration, in which, probably, after he had aggravated their fault, and commended their submission, he concluded with an assurance that he would pass by their offence and receive them into his favour again--proud enough that he had it in his power whom he would to keep alive, as well as whom he would to slay; and probably he kept them in suspense as to what their doom should be, till he made this oration to them, that the act of grace might come to them with the more pleasing surprise.

(2.) The people applauded him, the people that had a dependence upon him, and had benefit by his favour, they gave a shout; and this was what they shouted, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man, Ac 12:22. God is great and good, and they thought such was Herod's greatness in his apparel and throne, and such his goodness in forgiving them, that he was worthy to be called no less than a god; and perhaps his speech was

delivered with such an air of majesty, and a mixture of clemency with it, as affected the auditors thus. Or, it may be, it was not from any real impression made upon their minds, or any high or good thoughts they had indeed conceived of him; but, how meanly soever they thought of him, they were resolved thus to curry favour with him, and strengthen the new-made peace between him and them. Thus great men are made an easy prey to flatterers if they lend an ear to them, and encourage them. Grotius here observes that, though magistrates are called gods (Ps 82:1), yet kings or monarchs, that is, single persons, are not, lest countenance should thereby be given to the Gentiles, who gave divine honours to their kings alive and dead, as here; but they are a college of senators, or a bench of judges, that are called gods-

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts-13

Barnabas and Saul Begin Their First Missionary Journey

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

This was a great work, and not to be undertaken without a special call from God; therefore says the Holy Ghost, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them:" Which words prove both the Deity and personality of the Holy Ghost: He who calls ministers to the office, and unto

whose service they are separated, is both God and a distinct person in the Godhead; but this the Holy Ghost did: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul."

Note lastly, Though the office of the ministry be an honourable office, yet withal it is laborious work. Separate them for the work whereunto I have called them. It is a work that requires attendance, and zealous application, both in season and out of season. Praying, preaching, administering sacraments; guiding and governing the flock by private admonition, and public censure: These are weighty works, found so now by those that perform them faithfully, and will be found so at the great day, by the slothful and negligent.

How can that be esteemed by any slight and inconsiderable work, unto the faithful performance thereof so great a reward is promised, and to the omission whereof so dreadful a woe is denounced?

If Satan destroy men's souls, he shall answer for them as a murderer only, not as an officer intrusted with the care of them; but if the watchmen doth not warn, if the shepherd doth not feet, if the prophet doth not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an office neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully administered.

Lord! how unable shall we be at the making up our accounts, to endure the hideous outcries of distressed souls, saying, Parentes sensimus parricidas: Our guides have misled us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our stewards have defrauded us, and the following of their evil example has undone us.

Paul and Barnabas should go to the heathen, Ga 2:7-9. Barnabas, it is likely, knew himself designed for this service as well as Paul. Yet they would not thrust themselves into this harvest, though it appeared plenteous, till they received their orders from the Lord of the harvest: Thrust in thy sickle for the harvest is ripe, Re 14:15.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

This enterprise was a new one. The gospel had been preached to the Jews, to Cornelius, and to the Gentiles at Antioch. But there had been no solemn, and public, and concerted plan of sending it to the Gentiles, or of appointing a mission to the heathen. It was a new event, and was full of danger and hardships. The primitive church felt the need of Divine direction and aid in the great work. Two missionaries were to be sent forth amongst strangers, to be exposed to perils by sea and land; and the commencement of the enterprise demanded prayer. The church humbled itself; and this primitive missionary society sought, as all others should do, the Divine blessing, to attend the labours of those employed in this work. The result showed that the prayer was heard.

Observe, 1. They prayed for them. When good men are going forth about good work, they ought to be solemnly and particularly prayed for, especially by their brethren that are their fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers.

2. They joined fasting with their prayers, as they did in their other ministrations, Ac 13:3. Christ has taught us this by his abstaining from sleep (a night-fast, if I may so call it) the night before he sent forth his apostles, that he might spend it in prayer.

3. They laid their hands on them. Hereby,

(1.) They gave them their manumission, dismission, or discharge from the present service they were engaged in, in the church of Antioch, acknowledging that they went off not only fairly and with consent, but honourably and with a good report.

(2.) They implored a blessing upon them in their present undertaking, begged that God would be with them, and give them success; and, in order to this, that they might be filled with the Holy Ghost in their work. This very thing is explained Ac 14:26, where it is said, concerning Paul and Barnabas, that

from Antioch they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. As it was an instance of the humility of Barnabas and Saul that they submitted to the imposition of the hands of those that were their equals, or rather their inferiors; so it was of the good disposition of the other teachers that they did not envy Barnabas and Saul the honour to which they were preferred, but cheerfully committed it to them, with hearty prayers for them; and they sent them away with all expedition, out of a concern for those countries where they were to break up fallow ground.

The Apostles Preach in Cyprus

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

The apostles Barnabas and Saul having received their commission, set forth for their work to which they were designed; and their first journey was from Antioch to Cyprus, an island of the Gentiles, lewd and wicked; where Venus was worshipped: And much filthiness was committed by them in that abominable Pagan worship. Yet the free grace fo God cast a look of pity and love upon sinful Cyprus: The Holy Ghost directs these apostles thither, to reclaim them from sin, and reduce them to the obedience of the gospel.

Christ was the minister of circumcision, who was himself "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and accordingly sent his apostles out first, to feed and gather those poor scattered sheep; these were accounted the children of the house, and the Gentiles reckoned as dogs; but when those wanton and full-fed children began to waste their meat, and cast it under their table, then did the Gentile dogs gather up their leavings; Acts 13:46. "It was necessary," both by virtue of Christ's command and example also, "that the word of God should be first spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister.

"Four reasons may have induced them to turn in first to this island:

(1) Its nearness to the mainland;

(2) It was the native place of Barnabas,

(3) It could not be unnatural to suppose that the truth would be welcomed in Cyprus when brought by Barnabas and his kinsman Mark, to their own connections or friends. The Jews were numerous in Salamis. By sailing to that city, they were following the track of the synagogues; and though their mission was chiefly to the Gentiles, their surest course for reaching them was through the proselytes and Hellenizing Jews.

(4) Some of the Cypriotes were already Christians. Indeed, no one place out of Palestine, except Antioch, had been so honorably associated with the work of successful evangelization" [HOWSON].

the Grecian capital of the island, on the eastern side, and not many hours' sail from Seleucia. At this busy mercantile port immense numbers of Jews were settled, which accounts for what is here said, that they had more than one synagogue, in which Barnabas and Saul preached, while other cities had one only.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name *was* Barjesus:

nto Paphos. Paphos was a city at the western extremity of the island. It was the residence of the proconsul, and was distinguished for a splendid temple erected to Venus, who was worshipped throughout the island. Cyprus was fabled to be the place of the birth of this goddess. It had, besides Paphos and

Salamis, several towns of note--Citium, the birth-place of Zeno; Amathus, sacred to Venus, etc. Its present capital is Nicosia. Bar-jesus. The word Bar is Syriac, and means son. Jesus, or Joshua, was not an uncommon name among the Jews. The name was given from his father --son of Jesus, or Joshua; as Bar-jonas, son of Jonas.

7 which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Withstood them. Resisted them. He was sensible that if the influence of Saul and Barnabas should be extended over the proconsul, that he would be seen to be an impostor, and his power be at an end. His interest, therefore, led him to oppose the gospel, His own popularity was at stake; and being governed by this, he opposed the gospel of God. The love of popularity and power, the desire of retaining some political influence, is often a strong reason why men oppose the gospel.

9 Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there
fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

The hand of the Lord is upon thee. God shall punish thee. By this sudden and miraculous punishment, he would be awed and humbled; and the proconsul and others would be convinced that he was an impostor, and that the gospel was true. His wickedness deserved such a punishment; and at the same time that due punishment was inflicted, it was designed that the gospel should be extended by this means. In all this there was the highest evidence that Paul was under the

inspiration of God. He was full of the Holy Ghost; he detected the secret feelings and desires of the heart of Elymas, and he inflicted on him a punishment that could have proceeded from none but God. That the apostles had the power of inflicting punishment, in many cases, is apparent from various places in the New Testament, 1Cor 5:5, 1Timm 1:20. The punishment inflicted on Elymas, also, would be highly emblematic of the darkness and perverseness of his conduct.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Perga in Pamphylia was a noted place, especially for a temple there erected to the goddess Diana, yet nothing at all is related of what Paul and Barnabas did there, only that thither they came (Ac 13:13), and thence they departed, Ac 13:14.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

usually so called, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, from which they had started, though it actually lies in Phrygia, and almost due north from Perga. It was a long journey, and as it lay almost entirely through rugged mountain passes, while "rivers burst out at the base of huge cliffs, or dash down wildly through narrow ravines," it must have been a perilous one. The whole region was, and to this day is, infested by robbers, as ancient history and modern travels abundantly attest; and there can be but little doubt that to this very journey Paul many years after alludes, when he speaks amidst his "journeyings often," of his "perils of rivers" (as the word is), and his "perils of robbers" (2Co 11:26). If this journey were taken in May—and earlier than that the passes would have been blocked up with snow—it would account for their not staying at Perga, whose hot streets are then deserted; "men, women, and children,

flocks, herds, camels, and asses, all ascending at the beginning of the hot season from the plains to the cool basin-like hollows on the mountains, moving in the same direction with our missionaries" [HOWSON] and it seems that why Paul afterwards peremptorily refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey, because he "had departed [or 'fallen off'] from them and had not gone with them to the work" (Ac 15:38), there can be no doubt that he had either wearied of it or been deterred by the prospect of the dangers which lay before him. (But see on Ac 15:37, &c.)

They Went into the synagogue. Though Paul and Barnabas were on a special mission to the Gentiles, yet they availed themselves of every opportunity to offer the gospel to the Jews first.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye* men *and* brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

In the Synagogue of the Jews (according to the pattern of which Christian congregations were instituted) the Scriptures were read first, then those who were learned were licensed by the rulers of the Synagogue to speak and expound. (h) Literally, "If there is any word in you": this is a kind of speech taken from the Hebrews, by which is meant that the gifts of God's grace are in us, as it were in treasure houses, and that they are not ours, but God's. In the same way David says, "Thou hast put a new song in my mouth"; Ps 40:3.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it.

Ye that fear God /others who fear God/. Probably proselytes of the gate, who had not yet been circumcised, but who had renounced idolatry, and were accustomed to worship with them in their synagogues.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

Seven nations. The Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, De 7:1; Josh 3:10, Neh 9:8.

20 And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

(1.) How welcome should the preaching of the gospel of Christ be to the Jews, and how should they embrace it, as well worthy of all acceptation, when it brought them the tidings,

[1.] Of a Saviour, to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, as the judges of old, who were therefore called saviours; but this a Saviour to do that for them which, it appears by the history, those could not do--to save them from their sins, their worst enemies.

[2.] A Saviour of God's raising up, that has his commission from heaven.

[3.] Raised up to be a Saviour unto Israel, to them in the first place: He was sent to bless them; so far was the gospel from designing the gathering of them.

[4.] Raised up of the seed of David, that ancient royal family, which the people of Israel gloried so much in, and which at this

time, to the great disgrace of the whole nation, was buried in obscurity. It ought to be a great satisfaction to them that God had raised up this horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David, Lu 1:69.

[5.] Raised up according to his promise, the promise to David (Ps 132:11), the promise to the Old-Testament church in the latter times of it: I will raise unto David a righteous branch, Jer 23:5. This promise was it to which the twelve tribes hoped to come (Ac 26:7); why then should they entertain it so coldly, now that it was brought to them?

24 when John had first preached before his coming the baptism
of repentance to all the people of Israel.
25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I
am?
I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose
shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.
26 Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and
whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of
this salvation sent.

Learn thence, That the gospel is the doctrine or word of salvation sent by God unto a lost world. The gospel is a message of glad tidings; the glad tidings which the gospel brings, is salvation: and the way and manner how the gospel brings salvation, is threefold;

1. By way of patefaction and discovery; the gospel makes a discovery of salvation exclusively to any other way; no angel in heaven could have discovered it, if God had not first declared it in and by the gospel.

2. By way of tender and offer: Oh this joyful message of salvation is sent to every man's door! free grace falls upon its knees, and begs of every sinner to accept it.

3. By way of efficacy and power. The gospel brings with it a convincing and converting power, to put men into a state of

salvation; and hath also an establishing and confirming power, to preserve them in that estate.

Blessed be God, that to us, even to every one of us, is the word of this salvation sent. What monsters then are they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel? they are enemies to our salvation: The only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, and the only way to faith is by the word. It cometh by hearing.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

Which are read every sabbath day. In the synagogues. Though the Scriptures were read so constantly, yet they were ignorant of their true meaning. They were blinded by pride, and prejudice, and preconceived opinions. Men may often m this way read the Bible a good part of their lives, and, for want of attention, or of 1a humble mind, never understand it.

28 And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

And though they found, etc. They found no crime which deserved death. This is conclusively shown by the trial itself. After all their efforts; after the treason of Judas; after their employing false witnesses; still no crime was laid to his charge. The sanhedrim condemned him for blasphemy; and yet they knew that they could not substantiate this charge before Pilate, and they therefore endeavoured to procure his condemnation on the ground of sedition. And though they found, etc. They found no crime which deserved death. This is conclusively shown by the trial itself. After all their efforts; after the treason of Judas; after their employing false witnesses; still no crime was laid to his charge. The sanhedrim condemned him for blasphemy; and yet they knew that they could not substantiate this charge before Pilate, and they therefore endeavoured to procure his condemnation on the ground of sedition.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took
him down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.
30 But God raised him from the dead:
31 and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from
Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.
32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise
which was made unto the fathers,
33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he
hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second
psalm, Thou art my Son,
this day have I begotten thee.
34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now*
no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise,
I will give you the sure mercies of David.
35 Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*,
Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will
of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw
corruption:
37 but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.
38 Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that
through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of
sins:

Therefore, they ought to entertain and embrace the gospel, and not to adhere to the law in opposition to it, because the gospel is perfective, not destructive, of the law. Note,

1 The great concern of sinners it to be justified, to be acquitted from guilt and accepted as righteous in God's sight.

2. Those who are truly justified are acquitted from all their guilt; for if any be left charged upon the sinner he is undone.

3. It was impossible for a sinner to be justified by the law of Moses. Not by his moral law, for we have all broken it, and are

transgressing it daily, so that instead of justifying us it condemns us. Not by his remedial law, for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, should satisfy God's offended justice, or pacify the sinner's wounded conscience. It was but a ritual and typical institution. See Heb 9:9,10:1,4.

4. By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our Judge, but by him as our righteousness, the Lord our righteousness. 5. All that believe in Christ, that rely upon him and give up themselves to be ruled by him, are justified by him, and none but they. 6. What the law could not do for us, in that it was weak, that the gospel of Christ does; and therefore it was folly, out of a jealousy for the law of Moses and the honour of that institution, to conceive a jealousy of the gospel of Christ and the designs of that more perfect institution.

39 and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

In the prophets. In that part of the Scriptures called "the prophets." The Jews divided the Old Testament into three parts, of which "the book of the prophets" was one. Lk 24:44. The place where this is recorded is Hab 1:5. It is not taken from the Hebrew, but substantially from the Septuagint. The original design of the threatening was to announce the destruction that would come upon the nation by the Chaldeans. The original threatening was fulfilled. But it was as applicable to the Jews in the time of Paul as in the time of Habakkuk. The principle of the passage is, that if they held in contempt the doings of God, they would perish. The work which God was to do by means of the Chaldeans was so fearful, so unusual, and so remarkable, that they would not believe it in time to avoid the calamity. In the same way, that which God did in giving a Messiah so little in accordance with their expectation, the manner of the introduction of his kingdom by miracles, and the gift of his Spirit, was so much at variance with their

expectations, that they might see it, yet disbelieve it; they might have the fullest proof, and yet despise it; they might wonder, and be amazed and astonished, and unable to account for it, and yet refuse to believe it, and be destroyed.

Which ye shall in no wise believe. Which you will not believe. So remarkable, so unusual, so surpassing anything which had occurred. The original reference in Habakkuk is to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans--a thing which the Jews would not suppose could happen. The temple was so splendid; it had been built by the direction of God; it had been so long under his protection, that they would suppose that it could not be given into the hands of their enemies to be demolished. And even though it were predicted by a prophet of God, still they would not believe it. The same feelings the Jews would have respecting the temple and city in the time of Paul. Though it was foretold by the Messiah, yet they were so confident that it was protected by God, that they would not believe that it could possibly be destroyed. The same infatuation seems to have possessed them during the siege of the city by the Romans. Though a man, etc. Though it be plainly predicted. We may learn,

(1.) that men may see, and be amazed at the works of God, and yet be destroyed.

(2.) There may be a prejudice so obstinate that even a Divine revelation will not remove it.

(3.) The fancied security of sinners will not save them.

(4.) There are men who will not believe in the possibility of their being lost, though it be declared by the prophets, by apostles, by the Saviour, and by God. They will still remain in fancied security, and suffer nothing to alarm or rouse them. But

(5.) the fancied security of the Jews furnished no safety against the Babylonians or the Romans. Nor will the indifference and unconcern of sinners furnish any security against the dreadful wrath of God. Yet there are multitudes who live amidst the displays of God's power and mercy in the redemption of sinners; who witness the effects of his goodness and truth in revivals of religion, who live to despise it all; who are amazed and confounded by it; and who shall yet perish.

Though it should be in the most solemn manner declared unto them, yet they would in no wise believe it, Isa 53:1, Who hath believed our report? Though it was of God's working, to whom nothing is impossible, and of his declaring, who cannot lie, yet they would not give credit to it. Those that had the honour and advantage to have this work wrought in their days had not the grace to believe it; or, of their destruction.

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish:
for I work a work in your days,
a work which ye shall in no wise
believe, though a man declare it unto
you.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

The Old Version gives a different sense: "When the Jews were gone out", they were asked to speak again the next Sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

There was a cheerful attendance upon the preaching of the gospel the next sabbath day (Ac 13:44): Almost the whole city (the generality of whom were Gentiles) came together to hear the word of God. 1. It is probable that Paul and Barnabas were not idle in the week-days, but took all opportunities in the week

between (as some think the Gentiles desired) to bring them acquainted with Christ, and to raise their expectations from him. They did a great deal of service to the gospel in private discourse and conversation, as well as in their public sermons. Wisdom cried in the chief places of concourse, and the opening of the gates, as well as in the synagogues, Pr 1:20,21. 2.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

When men attached to sect and party, in religion or politics, have no good arguments to employ, they attempt to overwhelm their adversaries by bitter and reproachful words. Men in the heat of strife, and in professed zeal for peculiar doctrines, and for sect and party, more frequently utter blasphemy than they are aware. Precious and pure doctrines are often thus vilified, because we do not believe them; and the heart of the Saviour is pierced anew, and his cause bleeds by the wrath and wickedness of his professed friends. Comp. Acts 18:6.

Learn thence, That the gospel is the doctrine or word of salvation sent by God unto a lost world. The gospel is a message of glad tidings; the glad tidings which the gospel brings, is salvation: and the way and manner how the gospel brings salvation, is threefold;

1. By way of patefaction and discovery; the gospel makes a discovery of salvation exclusively to any other way; no angel in heaven could have discovered it, if God had not first declared it in and by the gospel.

2. By way of tender and offer: Oh this joyful message of salvation is sent to every man's door! free grace falls upon its knees, and begs of every sinner to accept it.

3. By way of efficacy and power. The gospel brings with it a convincing and converting power, to put men into a state of

salvation; and hath also an establishing and confirming power, to preserve them in that estate.

Blessed be God, that to us, even to every one of us, is the word of this salvation sent. What monsters then are they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel? they are enemies to our salvation: The only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, and the only way to faith is by the word. It cometh by hearing.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

And judge yourselves. By your conduct, by your rejecting it, you declare this. The word judge here does not mean they expressed such an opinion, or that they regarded themselves as unworthy of eternal life; for they thought just the reverse; but that by their conduct they CONDEMNED themselves. By such conduct they did in fact pass sentence on themselves, and show that they were unworthy of eternal life, and of having the offer any farther made to them. Sinners by their conduct do in fact condemn themselves, and show that they are not only unfit to be saved, but that they have advanced so far in wickedness that there is no hope of their salvation, and no propriety in offering them, any farther, eternal life. Mt 7:6.

Unworthy, etc. Unfit to be saved. They had deliberately and solemnly rejected the gospel, and thus shown that they were not fitted to enter into everlasting life. When men, even but once, deliberately and solemnly reject the offers of God's mercy, it greatly endangers their salvation. The probability is, that they then put the cup of salvation for ever away from themselves. The gospel produces an effect wherever it is preached. And when sinners are hardened, and spurn the gospel, it may often be the duty of ministers to turn their efforts towards others, where they may have more prospect of success. A man will not long labour on a rocky, barren, sterile soil, when

there is near him a rich and fertile valley that will abundantly reward the pains of cultivation.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*,
I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles,
that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Paul, as usual, appeals to the Scriptures in order to justify his course. He here appeals to the Old Testament, rather than to the command of the Saviour, because the Jews recognized the authority of their own Scriptures, while they would have turned in scorn from the command of Jesus of Nazareth.

"For I have set thee, not only raised thee up, but established thee, to be a light of the Gentiles, not only a shining light for a time, but a standing light, set thee for a light, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." Note,

(1.) Christ is not only the Saviour, but the salvation, is himself our righteousness, and life, and strength.

(2.) Wherever Christ is designed to be salvation, he is set up to be a light; he enlightens the understanding, and so saves the soul.

(3.) He is, and is to be, light and salvation to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth. Those of every nation shall be welcome to him, some of every nation have heard of him (Ro 10:18), and all nations shall at length become his kingdom. This prophecy has had its accomplishment in part in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in this island of ours, which lies, as it were, in the ends of the earth, a corner of the world, and shall be accomplished more and more when the time comes for the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles.

We read not any thing of their working miracles here, to confirm their doctrine, and to convince people of the truth of it; for, though God then did ordinarily make use of that method of conviction, yet he could, when he pleased, do his work

without it; and begetting faith by the immediate influence of his Spirit was itself the greatest miracle to those in whom it was wrought. Yet, it is probable that they did work miracles

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

And as many as were ordained. οσοιησαντεταγμενοι, Syriac, "Who were destined," or constituted. Vulgate, "As many as were foreordained (quotquot erant praeordinati) to eternal life believed." There has been much difference of opinion in regard to this expression. One class of commentators have supposed that it refers to the doctrine of election-- to God's ordaining men to eternal life; and another class, to their being disposed themselves to embrace the gospel--to those among them who did not reject and despise the gospel, but who were disposed and inclined to embrace it. The main inquiry is, what is the meaning of the word rendered ordained? The word is used but eight times in the New Testament. Mt 28:16, "Into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them," i.e., previously appointed, or commanded them--before his death. Lk 7:8. "For I also am a man set under authority"--appointed, or designated, as a soldier, to be under the authority of another. Acts 15:2. "They determined that Paul and Barnabas, etc., should go to Jerusalem." Acts 22:10, "It shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do;" Acts 28:23, "And when they had appointed him a day," etc. Rom 13:1, "The powers that be, are ordained of God." 1Cor 16:15, "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of saints." The word τασσω, or ταττω, properly means to place; to place in a certain rank or order. Its meaning is derived from arranging or disposing a body of soldiers in regular order; to arrange in military order. In the places which have been mentioned above, the word is used to denote the following things:

(1.) To command, or to designate, Mt 28:16, Acts 22:10, 28:23.

(2.) To institute, constitute, or appoint, Rom 13:1. Comp. 2Sam 7:11, 1Sam 22:7.

(3.) To determine, to take counsel, to resolve, Acts 15:2

(4.) To subject to the authority of another, Lk 7:8.

(5.) To addict to; to devote to, 1Cor 16:15. The meaning may be thus expressed:

(a.) The word is never used to denote an internal disposition or inclination arising from one's own self. It does not mean that they disposed themselves to embrace eternal life.

(b.) It has uniformly the notion of an ordering, disposing, or arrangement from without, i.e., from some other source than the individual himself; as of a soldier, who is arranged or classified according to the will of the proper officer. In relation to these persons it means, therefore, that they were disposed or inclined to this from some other source than themselves.

(c.) It does not properly refer to an eternal decree, or directly to the doctrine of election; though that may be inferred from it; but it refers to their being THEN IN FACT disposed to embrace eternal life. They were then inclined by an influence from without themselves, or so disposed as to embrace eternal life. It refers not to an eternal decree, but that then there was such an influence as to dispose them, or incline them, to lay hold on salvation. That this was done by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is clear from all parts of the New Testament, Tit 3:5,6, Jn 1:13. It was not a disposition or arrangement originating with themselves, but with God.

(d.) This implies the doctrine of election. It was in fact that doctrine expressed. It was nothing but God's disposing them to embrace eternal life. And that he does this according to a plan

in his own mind--a plan which is unchangeable as God himself is unchangeable--is clear from the Scriptures. Comp. Acts 18:10, Rom 8:28-30, 9:15,16,21,23 Eph 1:4,5,11. The meaning may be expressed in few words:-- who were THEN disposed, and in good earnest determined, to embrace eternal life, by the operation of the grace of God on their hearts.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

This passage has been used as a proof text for the extreme Calvinism that makes God arbitrarily select some for salvation and reject others, Wesley, on the other hand, says: ``The original word rendered "ordained" is not once used in the Scriptures to express eternal predestination of any kind. The sense if that those, and those only, now ordained, now believed. Not that God rejected the rest; it was his will that they also should be saved, but they thrust salvation from them. Nor were those who then believed "forced" to believe. Grace was offered to them and they did not thrust it away." It is God's ordination that those of humble, teachable, honest hearts, seeking the truth and life, shall come to life when it is offered, and such accepted the gospel on this occasion.

The controversy turns upon the meaning of the clause \~osoi hoan tetagmenoi eiv zwhn aiwniou\~, rendered, in the common version, "as many as were ordained to eternal life." The Calvinistic writers united in referring it to the eternal election and foreordination taught in their creeds. They contend, therefore, for the rendering "were ordained," or "were appointed." If their interpretation were admitted, it would involve the passage in some difficulties which none of them seem to have noticed. If it be true that "as many as were foreordained to eternal life believed," then there were some of the foreordained left in that community who did not believe. Hence, all those who did not then believe, whether adults or infants, were among the reprobate, who were predestinated to

everlasting punishment. Now it is certainly most singular that so complete a separation of the two parties should take place throughout a whole community at one time; and still more singular that Luke should so far depart from the custom of inspired writers as to state the fact. Again, the same statement implies that all who believed on that occasion were of the elect. For, if the parties who believed were those who had been foreordained to eternal life, then none of the non-elect could have been among the number. Here is another anomalous incident: that on this occasion all who believed were of the number who would finally be saved, and that Luke should be informed of the fact and make it known to his readers. Certainly we should not adopt an interpretation involving conclusions so anomalous, unless we are compelled to do so by the obvious force of the words employed. It is worthy of more that the efforts of Calvinistic writers to prove that this is the meaning of these words consist chiefly in strong assertions to that effect, and in attempts to answer the feebler class of the objections urged against it.

Thus Dr. Hackett asserts: "This is the only translation which the philology of the passage allows." But he makes no effort to prove that the New Testament usage of the principal word involved allows this translation. The word rendered ordained in this passage is \~tassw\~--a term which is not employed in a single instance in the New Testament in the sense of foreordained. Where that idea is to be expressed, other words are uniformly employed. The word in question is a generic term, having no single word in English to fully represent it. Its generic sense is best represented by our phrase, set in order. In its various specific applications, however, we have single terms which accurately represent it. Thus, when Jesus \~etaxato\~ set in order a certain mountain in Galilee as a place to meet his disciples (#Mt 28:16|), or the Jews in Rome \~taxamenoi\~ set in order a day to meet Paul (#Ac 28:23|), we best express the idea by appointed. (It expresses the same idea in #Lu 7:8 Ac 22:10|). But when Paul says of civil rulers that "the existing authorities \~tetagmenai eisin\~ were set in order by God" (#Ro

13:1|), he does not intend to affirm that God had appointed those rulers, but merely asserts his general providence in their existence and arrangement. The idea is best expressed in English by using the phrase set in order, or by saying they were arranged by God. When he asserts of the household of Stephanas, in Corinth, that \~etaxan eautouv\~ they set themselves in order for ministering to the saints (#1Co 16:15|), we would say they devoted themselves to ministering to the saints. But when the brethren in Antioch had been puzzled by the disputation between Paul and Barnabas and "certain men who came down from Judea," in reference to circumcision, and they finally \~etaxan\~, set in order, to send some of both parties to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for a decision, the common version very correctly renders it, "they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go" (#Ac 15:2|). In reference to the propriety of this last rendering, Dr. Hackett asserts that this term "was not used to denote an act of the mind";

{c} but the awkward translation of this passage to which the assertion forces him is evidence conclusive against it. He renders it, "They appointed that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem."

{d} This is an ungrammatical use of the word appointed. When a mission has been determined upon, we appoint the individuals who shall be sent, but we do not appoint that they shall go. Evidently, the state of the case was this: the brethren were at first undetermined what to do in reference to the question in dispute, but finally determined to send to Jerusalem for an authoritative decision of it. When a man is undetermined in reference to a pressing question, his mind is in confusion; but when he determines upon his course, it is no longer confusion, but is set in order. The term in question, therefore, meaning primarily to set in order, is most happily adapted to the expression of such a state of mind. Our English word dispose has a similar usage. It means to arrange in a certain order, and applies primarily to external objects; but when one's

mind is found arranged in accordance with a certain line of conduct, we say he is disposed to pursue it. We scarcely need observe, after the above remarks, that the specific meaning attached to the generic term in question, in any particular passage, is to be determined by the context. In the passage we are now considering, the context has no allusion to any thing like an appointment of one part, and a rejection of the other; but the writer draws a line of distinction between the conduct of certain Gentiles and that of the Jews addressed by Paul in the closing paragraph of his speech. To render the contrast between the two more conspicuous, he throws his words into antithesis with those of Paul. Paul had said to the Jews, "You put the word of God from you" [#Ac 13:46|]; Luke says of the Gentiles, "They glorified the word of the Lord." Paul said, "You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life"; Luke says, many of the Gentiles "were determined for everlasting life." It is an act of the mind to which Paul objects on the part of the Jews, and it is as clearly an act of mind in the Gentiles which Luke puts in contrast with it. At some previous time in their history, these Gentiles, like all others, had been undetermined in reference to everlasting life, either because they were not convinced that there was such a state, or because they hesitated to seek for it. But now their minds were set in order upon the subject, by being determined to labor for the eternal life which Paul preached. It now remains, in order to full eludication of the passage, that we account for the connection indicated between their being determined for everlasting life, and their believing. The former stands as a cause which led to the latter. Let it be noted that everlasting life is not contemplated as the object of their belief, for, if it was, they would have had to believe in it, before they could determine for it; so that the order of the two mental acts would be reversed.

But, in common with the Jews, who had been their religious instructors, they already believed in a future state, and what they now learned to believe by Paul's preaching was the gospel of Christ. Those of them who had, either through previous

religious instruction, or through the influence of Paul's preaching, heartily determined for eternal life, were in a better frame of mind to appreciate the evidence in favor of that Christ through whom alone it could be obtained, than the others who were so undetermined upon the subject that they appeared to judge themselves unworthy of such a destiny. Such was the difference between the two classes in the audience, and Luke's object is to declare the result of the difference in the fact that the one class believed, and the other thrust the word of God from them. To say that the difference had been wrought in them exclusively by divine agency would be to rob them of responsibility. Or to say that the favorably-disposed party had become so exclusively by their own self-determining energy would be to deny the influence of divine truth. Neither of these positions can be true; but, while it was an act of their own minds to determine for eternal life, it was God who had induced them to do so; at the same time, the other party determined against eternal life, in despite of the same divine influence exerted upon them.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

The emblematical action performed by the apostles to signify God's rejection of this miserable people; They shook off the dust of their feet against them.

This signified, 1. That the very earth was polluted where such refusers of the precious gospel did inhabit, nad was therefore to be shaken off as a filthy thing.

2. That they were a base people, vile as the dust, and that, as such, God had now shaken them off.

3. That the dust of the apostles' feet there left, might be as a witness against them, that the gospel had been preached to them. This action of shaking off the dust of their feet, was a dismal signification of a forsaken people.

When they went out of the city they used this ceremony in the sight of those that sat in the gate; or, when they went out of the

borders of their country, in the sight of those that were sent to see the country rid of them. Hereby,

(1.) They declared that they would have no more to do with them, would take nothing that was theirs; for they sought not theirs, but them. Dust they are, and let them keep their dust to themselves, it shall not cleave to them.

(2.) They expressed their detestation of their infidelity, and that, though they were Jews by birth, yet, having rejected the gospel of Christ, they were in their eyes no better than heathen and profane. As Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, are equally acceptable to God and good men; so, if they do not, they are equally abominable.

(3.) Thus they set them at defiance, and expressed their contempt of them and their malice, which they looked upon as impotent. It was as much as to say, "Do your worst, we do not fear you; we know whom we serve and whom we have trusted."

(4.) Thus they left a testimony behind them that they had had a fair offer made them of the grace of the gospel, which shall be proved against them in the day of judgment. This dust will prove that the preachers of the gospel had been among them, but were expelled by them. Thus Christ had ordered them to do, and for this reason, Mt 10:14,Lu 9:5. When they left them, they came to Iconium, not so much for safety, as for work.

Acts-14

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

Though the Jews at Antioch had used them barbarously, yet they did not therefore decline preaching the gospel to the Jews at Iconium, who perhaps might be better disposed. Let not those of any denomination be condemned in the gross, nor some suffer for others' faults; but let us do good to those who have done evil to us. How the apostles concurred herein. Notice is taken of this, that they went both together into the synagogue, to testify their unanimity and mutual affection, that people might say, See how they love one another, and might think the better of Christianity, and that they might strengthen one another's hands and confirm one another's testimony, and out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established. They did not go one one day and another another, nor one go at the beginning and the other some time after; but they went in both together.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Observe here, 1. That the gospel was now preached to Jews and Gentiles together, and those of each denomination that believed came together into the church. In the close of the foregoing chapter it was preached first to the Jews, and some of them believed, and then to the Gentiles, and some of them believed; but here they are put together, being put upon the same level. The Jews have not so lost their preference as to be thrown behind, only the Gentiles are brought to stand upon even terms with them; both are reconciled to God in one body (Eph 2:16), and both together admitted into the church without distinction.

The opposition that their preaching met with there, and the trouble that was created them; lest they should be puffed up with the multitude of their converts, there was given them this thorn in the flesh. 1. Unbelieving Jews were the first spring of their trouble here, as elsewhere (Ac 14:2): they stirred up the Gentiles.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

1. The manner of the apostles' preaching at Iconium: They spake boldly: that is, openly in the synagogues: and there with great freedom and plainness of speech asserted truth, condemned error, reproved sin, and denounced judgments against impenitent sinners; and this with a wise, but convincing boldness; with a meek, but zealous boldness; knowing, that if they had not now been bold for Christ, they could not at the great day be bold before him. That minister that is afraid to speak and plead for Christ now, will certainly be ashamed to look him in the face then. A serious thought of this, when we are going to preach, will make us shut all base fear out of the pulpit.

Note, 2. The time of their preaching at Iconium: it was not a single sermon or two, in transitu, but long time they abode, speaking boldly in the Lord. A constant course of preaching is needful to root that word which one or two sermons oft leaveth loose; the end of the ministry is to build up, as well as to bring in, and this is done by our constancy in preaching, and exemplariness in holy living.

Note, 3. How God honoured his word in the mouth of his ministers, confirming their doctrine by miracles: He gave testimony by the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. The miracles, which the apostles wrought, were the convincing cause of the credibility of the apostles' testimony.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

1. How upon the preaching of the gospel there follow great divisions; The multitude was divided. Not that the gospel is the cause of division, but the occasion only, and that by accident

too. The sacred institutions and ordinances of Christ, are not to be quarrelled with, or objected against, because through man's corruption they breed differences, discords, and divisions.

Observe, 2. How this division was the cause of persecution: The city was divided, and an attempt was made to use the apostles despitefully, and to stone them.

Lord! what ill usage have thine ambassadors met with from the first publication of the gospel! The unkind world has treated them as if they were not fit to live, driving them from place to place, and persecuting them from city to city.

But observe, 3. The prudential care which the apostles use for their own preservation: They were ware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe: according to Christ's command, When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another. Christ allows his ministers a liberty of flight in time of persecution, that they may preserve their lives for future service. We must not expect safety by a miracle, when we may have it in the use of means; yet probably it might not be fear, or a desire to save their lives, which made the apostles flee; but because they were unwilling to lose time there, when their ministry was obstructed, and when they saw the gospel was rejected. Accordingly they fled to Derbe and Lystra, and there preached the gospel.

From whence note, How greatly persecution, by scattering, tends to the increasing of the gospel. Thousands had never heard of Jesus Christ, if persecution had not driven the ministers of the gospel unto them. The wisdom of God well knows how to order those things which are designed for the prejudice, to tend to the furtherance, of the gospel. Phil 1:12

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and
also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and
to stone them,
6 they were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of
Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:
7 and there they preached the gospel.

Paul Stoned at Lystra

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet,
being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had
walked:
9 the same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him,
and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,
10 said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped
and walked.
11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up
their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are
come down to us in the likeness of men.

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter. Jupiter was represented as the most powerful of all the gods of the ancients. He was represented as the son of Saturn and Ops, and was educated in a cave on Mount Ida, in the island of Crete. The worship of Jupiter was almost universal. He was the Ammon of Africa, the Belus of Babylon, the Osiris of Egypt. His common appellation was, the father of gods and men. He was usually represented as sitting upon a golden or an ivory throne, holding in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a sceptre of cypress. His power was supposed to extend over other gods; and everything was subservient to his will, except the fates. There is the most abundant proof that he was worshipped in the region of Lycaonia, and throughout Asia Minor. There was, besides, a fable among the inhabitants of Lycaonia that Jupiter and Mercury had once visited that place, and had been received by Philemon. The whole fable is related by Ovid, (Metam. 8, 611, etc.) And Paul, Mercarius. Mercury, called by the Greeks Hermes, was a celebrated god of antiquity. No less than five of this name are mentioned by Cicero. The most celebrated was the son of Jupiter and Msia. He was the messenger of the gods, and of Jupiter in particular; he was the patron of travellers and shepherds; he conducted the souls of the dead into the infernal regions; and he presided over orators, and declaimers, and merchants; and he was also the god of thieves, pickpockets, and all dishonest persons. He was regarded as the god of eloquence; and as light, rapid, and quick in his movements. The conjecture

of Chrysostom is, that Barnabas was a large, athletic man, and was hence taken for Jupiter; and Paul was small in his person, and was hence supposed to be Mercury. Because he was the chief speaker. The office of Mercury was to deliver the messages of the gods; and as Paul only had been discoursing, he was supposed to be Mercury.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

The temple or image of Jupiter was in front of their city, or near the gates. Ancient cities were supposed to be under the protection of particular gods; and their image, or a temple for their worship, was placed commonly in a conspicuous place at the entrance of the city.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

When Christ, the Son of God, came down, and appeared in the likeness of men, and did many, very many miracles, yet they were so far from doing sacrifice to him that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice: He was in the world, and the world knew him not; he came to his own, and his own received him not; but Paul and Barnabas, upon the working of one miracle, are immediately deified.

14 *Which* when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of,* they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,
15 and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

This is an expression of solemn remonstrance at the folly of their conduct in worshipping those who were men. The abhorrence which they evinced at this may throw strong light on the rank and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. When an offer was made to worship Paul and Barnabas, they shrank from it with strong expressions of indignation and abhorrence. Yet when similar worship was offered to the Lord Jesus, when he was addressed by Thomas in the language of worship, "My

Lord and my God," (Jn 20:28,) he commended the disciple. For this act he uttered not the slightest reproof. Nay, he approved it, and expressed his approbation of others who should also do it, Jn 20:29; comp. Jn 5:23. How can this difference be accounted for, except on the supposition that the Lord Jesus was Divine? Would he, if a mere man, receive homage as God, when his disciples rejected it with horror? Of like passions with you. We are men like yourselves. We have no claim, no pretensions to anything more. The word "passions" here means simply that they had the common feelings and propensities of men; we have the nature of men; the affections of men. It does not mean that they were subject to any improper passions, to ill temper, etc.,as some have supposed; but that they did not pretend to be gods, We need food and drink; we are exposed to pain and sickness, and death." The Latin Vulgate renders it, "We are mortal like yourselves." The expression stands opposed to the proper conception of God, who is not subject to these affections, who is most blessed and immortal. Such a Being only is to be worshipped; and the apostles remonstrated strongly with them on Comp. Jas 5:17, "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are," etc. That ye should turn from these vanities. That you should cease to worship idols. Idols are often called vanities, or vain things, De 32:21, 2Kgs 17:15, 1Kgs 16:13,26; Jer 2:5, 8:19, 10:8, Jonah 2:8. They are called vanities, and often a lie, or lying vanities, as opposed to the living and true God, because they are unreal, because they have no power to help, because confidence in them is vain. Unto the living God. 1Thes 1:9. He is called the living God to distinguish him from idols. Mt 16:16. Which made heaven, etc. Who thus showed that he was the only proper object of worship. This doctrine, that there was one God, who had made all things, was new to them. They worshipped multitudes of divinities; and though they regarded Jupiter as the father of gods and men, yet they had no conception that all things had been formed from nothing by the will of one Infinite Being.

16 who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Who in times past. Previous to the gospel; in past ages. Suffered all nations. Permitted all nations; that is, all Gentiles.

Acts 17:30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at." To walk in their own ways. To conduct themselves without the restraints and instructions of a written law. They were permitted to follow their own reason and passions, and their own system of religion. He gave them no written laws, and sent to them no messengers. Why he did this, we cannot determine. It might have been, among other reasons, to show to the world conclusively,

(1.) the insufficiency of reason to guide men in the matters of religion. The experiment was made under the most favourable circumstances. The most enlightened nations, the Greeks and Romans, were left to pursue the inquiry, and failed no less than the most degraded tribes of men. The trial was made for four thousand years, and attended with the same results everywhere.

(2.) It showed the need of revelation to guide man.

(3.) It evinced, beyond the possibility of mistake, the depravity of man. In all nations, in all circumstances, men had shown the same alienation from God. By suffering them to walk in their own ways, it was seen that those ways were sin, and that some power more than human was necessary to bring men back to God. (a) "in times past" Ps 81:12, Acts 17:30 (*) "nations" "The Gentiles"

Yet not without guilt on their part was this privation (Ro 1:20) Observe, 1. How far Paganish superstition did transport and carry these men: they come to the gates of the house where the apostles had lodged, and bring oxen with them, trimmed with garlands of flowers, according to their heathenish rites, verily intending to offer sacrifice unto them.

Learn, How forward the devil is to put honour, much honour, yea, overmuch honour, upon the ministers of Christ, when it is to contradict their doctrine, and gain advantage to himself by it. The devil laughed to see the blind superstitious Lystrians

adore the apostles, and adorn them with the names of their heathen gods, hoping to make advantage thereby to himself.

Observe, 2. With what indignation and disdain, detestation and abhorrence, the apostles reject this vile idolatry: telling them that they were men of like passions, and in the same condition of mortality with themselves, and that their business was to turn them from their idols which were mere vanities and nothing, compared with the living and true God, who made them and all the world.

Learn hence, 1. That the worshipping of idols is the most senseless and irrational vanity that ever the devil put into the stupified heart of man.

2. That all good men hate idolatry in others, and abhor to be idolized themselves.

Observe, 3. The description which the holy apostle gives of the true God, to draw the people off from worshipping idols: he styles him the living God, that made the glorious fabric of heaven and earth, the sea, and all things therein. A good God, that giveth rain and fruitful seasons, filling his creatures' hearts with food and gladness.

Intimating, 1. That whatsoever concerns the happiness and felicity of man in this life, is wholly derived from God.

2. That there is no nation nor person under heaven, to whom God exhibits not the evident tokens of his goodness: The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Observe, 4. The character which the apostles give of the former times, in which the heathen world lived: In times past they were suffered to walk in their own ways. That is, of old God suffered all nations, except the Jewish nation to walk in their own ways; the meaning is, he did not check them in their sinful ways and courses, as he did his own people the Jews.

Yet we must not understand the apostle absolutely, but comparatively only; there never was any man, much less any nation, whom God suffered to go on in a course of sin without any stop. Every person and every nation, has had the stop of the light of nature at least; but every nation has not had the stop of the light of the gospel, the stop of ordinances, the preaching of the word, the motions of the Holy Spirit; these the Jews had, but the Gentiles had not.

In this sense God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; he did not give them his word, his statutes, or his judgments, to show them his ways, or to hinder them walking in their own ways; and this was a sore judgment. To suffer either nation or person to walk without control or check, from word or rod, from ordinances or providences, in the ways of sin and wickedness, is a very dreadful and tremendous judgment: In times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

And gave us rain from heaven. Rain from above, from the clouds, Mk 8:11, Lk 9:54, 17:29, 21:11, Jn 6:31,32. Rain is one of the evidences of his goodness. Man could not cause it; and without it, regulated at proper intervals of time, and in proper quantities, the earth would soon be one wide scene of desolation. There is scarcely anything that more certainly indicates unceasing care and wisdom than the needful and refreshing showers of rain. The sun and stars move by fixed laws, whose operation we can see and anticipate. The falling of rain and dew is regulated by laws which we cannot trace, and seems therefore to be poured, as it were, directly from God's hollow hand. Ps 147:8, "Who covereth the heaven with clouds; who prepareth rain for the earth."

"He sends his showers of blessings down, To cheer the plains below; He makes the grass the mountains crown, And corn in valleys grow. "The cheering wind, the flying cloud, Obey his mighty word: with songs and honours sounding loud, Praise ye the sovereign Lord."--WATTS

And fruitful seasons. Seasons when the earth produces abundance. It is remarkable, and a shining proof of the Divine goodness, that so few seasons are unfruitful. The earth yields her increase; and the labours of the husbandman are crowned with success; and the goodness of God demands the expressions of praise. His ancient covenant God does not forget, Gen 8:22, though man forgets it, and disregards his great Benefactor. Filling our hearts with food. The word hearts is here used as a Hebraism, to denote persons themselves; filling us with food, etc. Comp. Mt 12:40. Gladness. Joy; comfort--the comfort arising from the supply of our constantly returning wants. This is proof of ever watchful goodness. It is demonstration at once that there is a God, and that he is good. It would be easy for God to withdraw these blessings, and leave us to want. A single word, or a single deviation from the fullness of benevolence, would blast all these comforts, and leave us to lamentation, woe, and death, Ps 145:15,16.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee, And thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest thine hand, And satisfiest the desire of all the living."

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

In spite of this,and Peter's repudiation of all such honor (Ac 10:26), how soon idolatrous tendencies began to show themselves in the Christian Church, at length to be systematized and enjoined in the Church of Rome.

kneeing down for the so-called pastors, prophets, and so on

19 And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

"Our doctrine is directly against it. Must we be added to the number of your gods whose business it is to abolish the gods you have? We preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God. If we should suffer this, we should confirm you in that which it is our business to convert you from:" and so they take this occasion to show them how just and necessary it was that they should turn to God from idols, 1Th 1:9. When they preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had nothing to do but to preach the grace of God in Christ, and needed not, as the prophets in dealing with their fathers, to preach against idolatry: but, when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must rectify their mistakes in natural religion, and bring them off from the gross corruptions of that. See here what they preached to the Gentiles.

First, That the gods which they and their fathers worshipped, and all the ceremonies of their worship of them were vanities, idle things, unreasonable, unprofitable, which no rational account could be given of, nor any real advantage gained from. Idols are often called vanities in the Old Testament, De 32:21,1Ki 10:13.Jer 14:22. An idol is nothing in the world (1Co 8:4): it is not at all what it is pretended to be, it is a cheat, it is a counterfeit; it deceives those that trust to it and expect relief from it.

Secondly, That the God to whom they would have them turn is the living God. They had hitherto worshipped dead images, that were utterly unable to help them (Isa 64:9), or (as they now attempted) dying men, that would soon be disabled to help them; but now they are persuaded to worship a living God, who has life in himself, and life for us, and lives for evermore.

Thirdly, That this God is the creator of the world, the fountain of all being and power: "He made heaven and earth, and the

sea, and all things therein, even those things which you worship as gods, so that he is the God of your gods. You worship gods which you made, the creatures of your own fancy, and the work of your own hands. We call you to worship the true God, and cheat not yourselves with pretenders; worship the Sovereign Lord of all, and disparage not yourselves in bowing down to his creatures and subjects."

Fourthly, That the world owed it to his patience that he had not destroyed them long ere this for their idolatry (Ac 14:16): In times past, for many ages, unto this day, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. These idolaters, that were called from the service of other gods, might think, "Have we not served these gods hitherto, and our fathers before us, time out of mind; and why may we not as well go on to serve them still?"--No, your serving them was a trial of God's patience, and it was a miracle of mercy that you were not cut off for it. But, though he did not destroy you for it while you were in ignorance, and knew no better (Ac 17:30) yet now that he has sent his gospel into the world, and by it has made a clear discovery of himself and his will to all nations, and not to the Jews only, if you still continue in your idolatry he will not bear with you as he has done. All the nations that had not the benefit of divine revelation, that is, all but the Jews, he suffered to walk in their own ways, for they had nothing to check them, or control them, but their own consciences, their own thoughts (Ro 2:15), no scriptures, no prophets; and then they were the more excusable if they mistook their way: but now that God has sent a revelation into the world which is to be published to all nations the case is altered. We may understand it as a judgment upon all nations that God suffered them to walk in their own ways, gave them up to their own hearts' lusts; but now the time is come when the veil of the covering spread over all nations should be taken off (Isa 25:7), and now you will no longer be excused in these vanities, but must turn from them. Note, 1. God's patience with us hitherto should lead us to repentance, and not encourage us to presume upon the continuance of it, while we continue to provoke him. 2. Our

having done ill while we were in ignorance will not bear us out in doing ill when we are better taught.

Fifthly, That even when they were not under the direction and correction of the word of God, yet they might have known, and should have known, to do better by the works of God, Ac 14:17. Though the Gentiles had not the statutes and judgments that the Jews had to witness for God against all pretenders, no tables of testimony or tabernacle of testimony, yet he left not himself without witness; besides the witness for God within them (the dictates of natural conscience), they had witnesses for God round about them--the bounty of common providence. Their having no scriptures did in part excuse them, and therefore God did not destroy them for their idolatry, as he did the Jewish nation. This however did not wholly excuse them, but that notwithstanding this they were highly criminal and deeply guilty before God; for there were other witnesses for God, sufficient to inform them that he and he only is to be worshipped, and that to him they owed all their services from whom they received all their comforts, and therefore that they were guilty of the highest injustice and ingratitude imaginable, in alienating them from him. God, having not left himself without witness, has not left us without a guide, and so has left us without excuse; for whatever is a witness for God is a witness against us, if we give that glory to any other which is due to him only. 1 The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God, for they are all dispensed wisely and with design. The rain and fruitful seasons could not come by chance, nor are there any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain, neither can the heavens of themselves give showers, Jer 14:22. All the powers of nature witness to us a sovereign power in the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. It is not the heaven that gives us rain, but God that gives us rain from heaven, he is the Father of the rain, Job 38:28. 2 The benefits we have by these bounties witness to us that we ought to make our acknowledgments not to the creatures who are made serviceable to us, but to the Creator who makes them so. He left not himself without

witness, in that he did good. God seems to reckon the instances of his goodness to be more pregnant, cogent proofs of his title to our homage and adoration than the evidences of his greatness; for his goodness is his glory. The earth is full of his goodness; his tender mercies are over all his works; and therefore they praise him, Ps 145:9,10. God does us good, in preserving to us his air to breathe in, his ground to go upon, the light of his sun to see by; but, because the most sensible instance of the goodness of Providence to each of us in particular is that of the daily provision made by it of meat and drink for us, the apostle chooses to insist upon that, and shows how God does us good, (1.) In preparing it for us, and that by a long train of causes which depend upon him as the first cause: The heavens hear the earth; the earth hears the corn, and wine, and oil; and they hear Jezreel. Ho 2:21,22. He does us good in giving us rain from heaven--rain for us to drink, for if there were no rain there would be no springs of water and we should soon die for thirst--rain for our land to drink, for our meat as well as drink we have from the rain; in giving us this, he gives us fruitful seasons. If the heavens be as iron, the earth will soon be as brass, Le 26:19. This is the river of God which greatly enriches the earth, and by it God prepares us corn, Ps 65:9-13. Of all the common operations of providence, the heathen chose to form their notion of the supreme God by that which bespeaks terror, and is proper to strike an awe of him upon us, and this was the thunder; and therefore they called Jupiter the thunderer, and represented him with a thunderbolt in his hand; and it appears by Ps 29:3 that this ought not to be overlooked; but the apostle here, to engage us to worship God, sets before us his beneficence, that we may have good thoughts of him in every thing wherein we have to do with him--may love him and delight in him, as one that does good, does good to us, does good to all, in giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons; and if at any time rain be withheld, or the seasons be unfruitful, we may thank ourselves; it is our sin that turns away these good things from us which were coming to us, and stops the current of God's favours. (2.) In giving us the comforts of it. It is he that fills our hearts with food and gladness. God is rich in

mercy to all (Ro 10:12): he gives us richly all things to enjoy (1Ti 6:17), is not only a benefactor, but a bountiful one, not only gives us the things we need, but gives us to enjoy them (Ec 2:24): He fills our hearts with food, that is, he gives us food to our hearts' content, or according to our hearts' desire; not merely for necessity, but plenty, dainty, and variety. Even those nations that had lost the knowledge of him, and worshipped other gods, yet he filled their houses, filled their mouths, filled their bellies (Job 22:18,Ps 17:14) with good things. The Gentiles that lived without God in the world, yet lived upon God, which Christ urges as a reason why we should do good to those that hate us, Mt 5:44,45. Those heathen had their hearts filled with food; this was their felicity and satisfaction, they desired no more; but these things will not fill the soul (Eze 7:19), nor will those that know how to value their own souls be satisfied with them; but the apostles put themselves in as sharers in the divine beneficence. We must all own that God fills our hearts with food and gladness; not only food, that we may live, but gladness, that we may live cheerfully; to him we owe it that we do not all our days eat in sorrow. Note, We must thank God, not only for our food, but for our gladness--that he gives us leave to be cheerful, cause to be cheerful, and hearts to be cheerful. And, if our hearts be filled with food and gladness, they ought to be filled with love and thankfulness, and enlarged in duty and obedience, De 8:10,28:47.

The Jews stimulated this feeling by urging that Paul was an impostor, and that all the honorable women and chief men of Antioch and Iconium had united in driving him away from those cities. This enabled them to charge him with willful deception, and as their feelings were already keyed up to their utmost tension they were easily swayed to the opposite extreme, and at a nod from the Jews they were ready to dash him to pieces. That Paul, rather than Barnabas, was the victim of their wrath, resulted from the fact that both here and in the cities from which the Jews had come, he was the chief speaker. The same circumstance which had given him the inferior place in their idolatry, gave him, finally, the superior place in their

hatred. Barnabas they seem to have let alone; Paul, as the prominent actor and speaker, being the object of all their rage. The words seem to imply that it was the Jews who did this; and no doubt they took the lead (Ac 14:19), but it was the act of the instigated and fickle multitudes along with them.

And, having stoned Paul. Whom they were just before ready to worship as a god! What a striking instance of the fickleness and instability of idolaters! and what a striking instance of the instability and uselessness of mere popularity. Just before, they were ready to adore him; now they sought to put him to death. Nothing is more fickle than mere popular favour. The unbounded admiration of a man may soon be changed into unbounded indignation and contempt! It was well for Paul that he was not seeking this popularity, and that he did not depend on it for happiness. He had a good conscience; he was engaged in a good cause; he was under the protection of God; and his happiness was to be sought from a higher source than the applause of men, fluctuating and uncertain as the waves of the sea. To this transaction Paul referred when he enumerated his trials, in 2Cor 11:26, "Once was I stoned." Drew him out of the city. Probably in haste, and in popular rage, as if he was unfit to be in the city, and was unworthy of a decent burial; for it does not appear that they contemplated an interment, but indignantly dragged him beyond the walls of the city to leave him there. Such sufferings and trials it cost to establish that religion in the world which has shed so many blessings on man, and which now crowns us with comfort, and saves us from the abominations and degradations of idolatry here, and from the pains of hell hereafter.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Observe here, The great and good use which the apostle makes of his miraculous recovery: he is no sooner upon his legs, but he travels to Derbe, to preach the gospel. Nothing do the faithful ministers of Christ more fervently desire, and more

diligently endeavour, than to lay out their lives, their strength, their time, their all, for God, in his service, and to his glory.

Yet observe farther, That notwithstanding the apostles were persecuted at Lystra and Iconium, yet they returned thither again; having planted churches there, they go back to water their own plantations which they had newly made. It is not enough that the seed of the word be sown, it must be watered also, languish and die.

But what did the apostles do, when they returned to visit their newly-planted churches?

Ans. They confirmed and established them in the doctrine of the gospel; they exhorted them to steadfastness and perseverance in their holy religion, and armed them against their fears of affliction and persecution, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; acquainting them, that they must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Afflictions like the waters of Marah, must be met with in their way to the heavenly Canaan; there is no coming at the crown but by the cross: the Head having been crowned with thorns, it is unsuitable that the feet should tread on roses.

Christianity is the doctrine of the cross, which the ministers of Christ ought to let their people understand and know, that they may not "think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had befallen them; but rather rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ; that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1Pe 4:12,13

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and *to* Iconium, and Antioch,

And to Iconium, Acts 14:1. We have here a remarkable instance of the courage of the apostles. In these very places

they had been persecuted and stoned, and yet in the face of danger they ventured to return, The welfare of the infant churches they deemed of more consequence than their own safety; and they threw themselves again into the midst of danger, to comfort and strengthen those just converted to God. There are times when ministers should not count their own lives dear to them, Acts 20:24, but when they should fearlessly throw themselves into the midst of danger, confiding only in the protecting care of their God and Saviour.

Confirming. Strengthening--επιστηριζοντες. The expression, "to confirm," has in some churches a technical signification, denoting "to admit to the full privileges of a Christian, by the imposition of hands."--Johnson. It is scarcely necessary to say that the word here refers to no such rite. It has no reference to any imposition of hands, nor to the thing which is usually supposed to be denoted by the rite of "confirmation." It means simply, that they established, strengthened, made firm, or encouraged by the presentation of truth, and by the motives of the gospel. Whether the rite of confirmation, as practised by some churches, be founded on the authority of the New Testament or not, it is certain that it can receive no support from this passage. The truth was, that these were young converts; that they were surrounded by enemies, exposed to temptations and to dangers; that they had as yet but a slight acquaintance with the truths of the gospel, and that it was therefore important that they should be further instructed in the truth, and established in the faith of the gospel. This was what Paul and Barnabas returned to accomplish. There is not the slightest evidence that they had not been admitted to the full privileges of the church before, or that any ceremony was now performed in confirming or strengthening them.

22 confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

They returned, and went over their work again, watering what they had sown; and, having staid as long as they thought fit at Derbe, they came back to Lystra, to Iconium, and Antioch, the

cities where they had preached, Ac 14:21. Let us see what they did,

(a.) They confirmed the souls of the disciples; that is, they inculcated that upon them which was proper to confirm them, Ac 14:22. Young converts are apt to waver, and a little thing shocks them. Their old acquaintances beg they will not leave them. Those that they look upon to be wiser than themselves set before them the absurdity, indecency, and danger, of a change. They were allured, by the prospect of preferment, to stick to the traditions of their fathers; they are frightened with the danger of swimming against the stream. All this tempts them to think of making a retreat in time; but the apostles come and tell them that this is the true grace of God wherein they stand, and therefore they must stand to it that there is no danger like that of losing their part in Christ, no advantage like that of keeping their hold of him; that, whatever their trials may be, they shall have strength from Christ to pass through them; and, whatever their losses may be, they shall be abundantly recompensed. And this confirms the souls of the disciples; it fortifies their pious resolutions, in the strength of Christ, to adhere to Christ whatever it may cost them. Note,

[1.] Those that are converted need to be confirmed; those that are planted need to be rooted. Ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners. Non minor est virtus quam quoerere parta tueri--To retain is sometimes as difficult as to acquire. Those that were instructed in the truth must know the certainty of the things in which they have been instructed; and those that are resolved must be fixed in their resolutions.

[2.] True confirmation is confirmation of the soul; it is not binding the body by severe penalties on apostates, but binding the soul. The best ministers can do this only by pressing those things which are proper to bind the soul; it is the grace of God, and nothing less, that can effectually confirm the souls of the disciples, and prevent their apostasy.

(b.) They exhorted them to continue in the faith; or, as it may be read, they encouraged them. They told them it was both their duty and interest to persevere; to abide in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Note, Those that are in the faith are concerned to continue in the faith, notwithstanding all the temptations they may be under to desert it, from the smiles or frowns of this world. And it is requisite that they should often be exhorted to do so. Those that are continually surrounded with temptations to apostasy have need to be continually attended with pressing exhortations to perseverance.

(c.) That which they insisted most upon was that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Not only they must, but we must; it must be counted upon that all who will go to heaven must expect tribulation and persecution in their way thither. But is this the way to confirm the souls of the disciples, and to engage them to continue in the faith? One would think it would rather shock them, and make them weary. No, as the matter is fairly stated and taken entire, it will help to confirm them, and fix them for Christ. It is true they will meet with tribulation, with much tribulation; that is the worst of it: but then,

[1.] It is so appointed. They must undergo it, there is no remedy, the matter is already fixed, and cannot be altered. He that has the sovereign disposal of us has determined it to be our lot that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer persecution; and he that has the sovereign command over us has determined this to be our duty, that all that will be Christ's disciples must take up their cross. When we gave up our names to Jesus Christ it was what we agreed to; when we sat down and counted the cost, if we reckoned aright, it was what we counted upon; so that if tribulation and persecution arise

because of the word it is but what we had notice of before, it must be so: he performeth the thing that is appointed for us. The matter is fixed unalterably; and shall the rock be for us removed out of its place?

[2.] It is the lot of the leaders in Christ's army, as well as of the soldiers. It is not only you, but we, that (if it be thought a hardship) are subject to it; therefore, as your own sufferings must not be a stumbling-block to you, so neither must ours; see 1Th 3:3. Let none be moved by our afflictions, for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. As Christ did not put the apostles upon any harder service than what he underwent before them, so neither did the apostles put the ordinary Christians.

[3.] It is true we must count upon much tribulation, but this is encouraging, that we shall get through it; we shall not be lost and perish in it. It is a Red Sea, but the Lord has opened a way through it, for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over. We must go down to trouble, but we shall come up again.

[4.] We shall not only get through it, but get through it into the kingdom of God; and the joy and glory of the end will make abundant amends for all the difficulties and hardships we may meet with in the way. It is true we must go by the cross, but it is as true that if we keep in the way, and do not turn aside nor turn back, we shall go to the crown, and the believing prospect of this will make the tribulation easy and pleasant.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

And had prayed with fasting. With the church. They were about to leave them. They had entrusted the interests of the church to a body of men chosen for this purpose; and they now commended the church and its elders together to God. Probably they had no prospect of seeing them again; and they parted as ministers and people should part, and as Christian friends

should part, with humble prayer, commending themselves to the protecting care of God. They commended them, etc. They committed the infant church to the guardianship of the Lord. They were feeble, inexperienced, and exposed to dangers; but in his hands they were safe. The greatest and best thing that the ministers of God can do, either present with, or absent from their people, is to commit and commend them to the power and care of Christ, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to
Pamphylia.
25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went
down into Attalia:
26 and thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had
been recommended to the grace of God for the work
which they fulfilled.
27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church
together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and
how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

The subject matter of that report which they joyfully made to the church of Antioch; namely, how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; that is, given them an opportunity to know, nd ability to believe, the gospel, which like a door was formerly shut to them, but now mercifully opened; and which was the far greater mercy yet, Almighty God did not only open the door of the gospel to them, by bringing his word amongst them, but he opened the door of their hearts to receive it, and entertain it when brought. The opening the heart and mind of sinners effectually to receive the truths of the gospel, is the special work of the Holy Spirit of God.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

Long time. How long is not intimated; but we hear no more of them until the council at Jerusalem, mentioned in the next

chapter. If the transactions recorded in this chapter occurred, as is supposed, about A.D. 45 or 46, and the council at Jerusalem assembled A.D. 51 or 53, as is supposed, then here is an interval of from five to eight years in which we have no account of them. Where they were, or what was their employment in this interval, the sacred historian has not informed as. It is certain, however, that Paul made several journeys, of which we have no particular record in the New Testament; and it is possible that some of those journeys occurred during this interval. Thus he preached the gospel as far as Illyricum, Rom 15:19. And in 2Cor 11:23-27, there is an account of trials and persecutions, of many of which we have no distinct record, and which might have occurred during this interval. We may be certain that these holy men were not idle. And we may learn from their example to fill up our time with usefulness; to bear all persecutions and trials without a murmur; and to acknowledge the good hand of God in our preservation in our travels; in our defence when we are persecuted; in all the opportunities which may be open before us to do good; and in all the success which may attend our efforts. Christians should remember that it is God who opens doors of usefulness; and they should regard it as a matter of much rejoicing and thanksgiving that such doors are opened, and that they are permitted to spread the gospel, whatever toil it may cost, whatever persecution they may endure, whatever perils they may encounter.

Acts-15

The Council at Jerusalem

1 And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, *and said,* Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Hitherto they had been struggling against external foes. Violent persecutions had raged, and had fully occupied the attention of Christians. But now the churches were at peace. They enjoyed

great external prosperity in Antioch. And the great enemy of souls took occasion then, as he has often done in similar circumstances since, to excite contentions in the church itself; so that when external violence could not destroy it, an effort was made to secure the same object by internal dissension and strife.

Except ye be circumcised. This was the leading or principal rite of the Jewish religion. It was indispensable to the name and privileges of a Jew. Proselytes to their religion were circumcised as well as native-born Jews, and they held it to be indispensable to salvation. It is evident, from this, that Paul and Barnabas had dispensed with this rite in regard to the Gentile converts, and that they intended to found the Christian church on the principle that the Jewish ceremonies were to cease. When, however, it was necessary to conciliate the minds of the Jews and to prevent contention, Paul did not hesitate to practise circumcision, Acts 16:3.

Ye cannot be saved. The Jews regarded this as indispensable to salvation. The grounds on which they would press it on the attention of Gentile converts would be very plausible, and such as would produce much embarrassment. For,

(1.) it would be maintained that the laws of Moses were the laws of God, and were therefore unchangeable; and,

(2.) it would doubtless be maintained that the religion of the Messiah was only a completing and perfecting of the Jewish religion; that it was designed simply to carry out its principles according to the promises, and not to subvert and destroy anything that had been established by Divine authority. It is usually not difficult to perplex and embarrass young converts with questions of modes, and rites, and forms of religion; and it is not uncommon that a revival is followed by some contention just like this. Opposing sects urge the claims of their peculiar rites, and seek to make proselytes, and introduce

contention and strife into an otherwise peaceful and happy Christian community.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Even when things go on very smoothly and pleasantly in a state or in a church, it is folly to be secure, and to think the mountain stands strong and cannot be moved; some uneasiness or other will arise, which is not foreseen, cannot be prevented, but must be prepared for. If ever there was a heaven upon earth, surely it was in the church at Antioch at this time, when there were so many excellent ministers there, and blessed Paul among them, building up that church in her most holy faith. But here we have their peace disturbed, and differences arising. Here is,

A new doctrine started among them, which occasioned this division, obliging the Gentile converts to submit to circumcision and the ceremonial law, Ac 15:1. Many that had been proselytes to the Jewish religion became Christians; and they would have such as were proselyted to the Christian religion to become Jews.

1 The persons that urged this were certain men who came down from Judea; some think such as had been of the Pharisees (Ac 15:5), or perhaps of those priests who were obedient to the faith, Ac 6:7. They came from Judea, pretending perhaps to be sent by the apostles at Jerusalem, at least to be countenanced by them. Having a design to spread their notions, they came to Antioch, because that was the head-quarters of those that preached to the Gentiles, and the rendezvous of the Gentile converts; and, if they could but make an interest there, this leaven would soon be diffused to all the churches of the Gentiles. They insinuated themselves into an acquaintance with the brethren, pretended to be very glad that they had embraced the Christian faith, and congratulated them on their conversion; but tell them that yet one thing they lack, they must

be circumcised. Note, Those that are ever so well taught have need to stand upon their guard that they be not untaught again, or ill taught.

2 The position they laid down, the thesis they gave, was this, that except the Gentiles who turned Christians were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and thereby bound themselves to all the observances of the ceremonial law, they could not be saved. As to this,

(1.) Many of the Jews who embraced the faith of Christ, yet continued very zealous for the law, Ac 21:20. They knew it was from God and its authority was sacred, valued it for its antiquity, had been bred up in the observance of it, and it is probable had been often devoutly affected in their attendance on these observances; they therefore kept them up after they were by baptism admitted into the Christian church, kept up the distinction of meats, and used the ceremonial purifyings from ceremonial pollutions, attend the temple service, and celebrated the feasts of the Jews. Herein they were connived at, because the prejudices of education are not to be overcome all at once, and in a few years the mistake would be effectually rectified by the destruction of the temple and the total dissolution of the Jewish church, by which the observance of the Mosaic ritual would become utterly impracticable. But it did not suffice them that they were herein indulged themselves, they must have the Gentile converts brought under the same obligations. Note, There is a strange proneness in us to make our opinion and practice a rule and a law to every body else, to judge of all about us by our standard, and to conclude that because we do well all do wrong that do not just as we do.

(2.) Those Jews who believed that Christ was the Messiah, as they could not get clear of their affection to the law, so they could not get clear of the notions they had of the Messiah, that he should set up a temporal kingdom in favour of the Jewish nation, should make this illustrious and victorious; it was a

disappointment to them that there was as yet nothing done towards this in the way they expected. But now that they hear the doctrine of Christ is received among the Gentiles, and his kingdom begins to be set up in the midst of them, if they can but persuade those that embrace Christ to embrace the law of Moses too they hope their point will be gained, the Jewish nation will be made as considerable as they can wish, though in another way; and "Therefore by all means let the brethren be pressed to be circumcised and keep the law, and then with our religion our dominion will be extended, and we shall in a little time be able to shake off the Roman yoke; and not only so, but to put it on the necks of our neighbours, and so shall have such a kingdom of the Messiah as we promised ourselves." Note, It is no wonder if those who have wrong notions of the kingdom of Christ take wrong measures for the advancement of it, and such as really tend to the destruction of it, as these do.

(3.) The controversy about the circumcising of the Gentile proselytes had been on foot among the Jews long before this. This is observed by Dr. Whitby out of Josephus--Antiq. 20. 38-45: "That when Izates, the son of Helen queen of Adiabene, embraced the Jews' religion, Ananias declared he might do it without circumcision; but Eleazar maintained that it was a great impiety to remain uncircumcised." And when two eminent Gentiles fled to Josephus (as he relates in the history of his own life) "the zealots among the Jews were urgent for their circumcision; but Josephus dissuaded them from insisting upon it." Such has been the difference in all ages between bigotry and moderation.

(4.) It is observable what a mighty stress they laid upon it; they do not only say, "You ought to be circumcised after the manner of Moses, and it will be good service to the kingdom of the Messiah if you be; it will best accommodate matters between you and the Jewish converts, and we shall take it very kindly if you will, and shall converse the more familiarly with you;" but, "Except you be circumcised you cannot be saved. If you be not herein of our mind and way, you will never go to heaven, and

therefore of course you must go to hell." Note, it is common for proud impostors to enforce their own inventions under pain of damnation; and to tell people that unless they believe just as they would have them believe, and do just as they would have them do, they cannot be saved, it is impossible they should; not only their case is hazardous, but it is desperate. Thus the Jews tell their brethren that except they be of their church, and come into their communion, and conform to the ceremonies of their worship, though otherwise good men and believers in Christ, yet they cannot be saved; salvation itself cannot save them. None are in Christ but those that are within their pale. We ought to see ourselves well warranted by the word of God before we say, "Except you do so and so, you cannot be saved."

Had no small dissension and disputation. The word rendered dissension (στασεως) denotes sometimes sedition or intestine war, and sometimes earnest and violent disputation or controversy, Acts 23:7,10. In this place it clearly denotes that there was earnest and warm discussion; but it is not implied that there was any improper heat or temper on the part of Paul and Barnabas. Important principles were to be settled in regard to the organization of the church. Doctrines were advanced by the Judaizing teachers which were false, and which tended to great strife and disorder in the church. Those doctrines were urged with great zeal, were declared to be essential to salvation, and would therefore tend greatly to distract the minds of Christians, and to produce great anxiety. It became therefore necessary to meet them with a determined purpose, and to establish the truth on an immovable basis. And the case shows that it is right to "contend earnestly for the faith," (Jude 1:3;) and when similar cases occur, it is proper to resist the approach of error with all the arguments which may be at our command, and with all the weapons which truth can furnish. It is further implied here, that it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to defend the truth and to oppose error. Paul and Barnabas regarded themselves as set for this purpose, (comp. Php 1:17, "Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel;") and Christian ministers should be qualified to defend the truth; and

should be willing, with a proper spirit and with great earnestness, to maintain the doctrines revealed.

Elders - As in the synagogue it was customary to determine questions by the advice of a bench of elders, there is no improbability in the supposition that the apostles would imitate that custom, and appoint a similar arrangement in the Christian church. (Grotius.) It is generally agreed that this is the journey to which Paul refers in Gall 2:1-10. If so, it happened fourteen years after his conversion, Gall 2:1. It was done in accordance with the Divine command, "by revelation," Gall 2:2. And among those who went with him was Titus, who was afterwards so much distinguished as his companion, Gall 2:3.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

How that great but humble apostle, St. Paul, who had learned of his Master to be meek and lowly in spirit, was willing and content to be a servant and messenger of the church to the apostles, though he was nothing inferior to the chiefest apostle: Paul and Barnabas went up to the apostles that were at Jerusalem. The more holiness a Christian has, the more humility he has. Humility is a great part of our holiness, it is an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession; it is the great design of the gospel to make us humble, and keep us humble.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while

ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;

Peter rose up, and said. Peter was probably the most aged, and was most accustomed to speak, Acts 2:14, 3:6,12. Besides, there was a particular reason for his speaking here, as he had been engaged in similar scenes, and understood the case, and had had evidence that God had converted sinners without the Mosaic rites, and knew that it would have been inexpedient to have imposed these rites on those who had thus been converted. God thus knew whether they were true converts or not, and gave a demonstration that he acknowledged them as his.

9 and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

And put no difference, etc. Though they had not been circumcised, and though they did not conform to the law of Moses. Thus God showed that the observance of these rites was not necessary in order to the true conversion of men, and to acceptance with him. He did not give us, who are Jews, any advantage over them, but justified and purified all in the same manner. Purifying their hearts. Thus giving the best evidence that he had renewed them, and admitted them to favour with him. By faith. By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. This showed that the plan on which God was now about to show favour to men, was not by external rites and ceremonies, but by a scheme which required faith as the only condition of acceptance. It is further implied here, that there is no true faith which does not purify the heart.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Why tempt ye God? Why provoke him to displeasure? Why, since he has shown his determination to accept them without such rites, do you provoke him by attempting to impose on his own people rites without his authority, and against his manifest will? The argument is, that God had already accepted them. To

attempt to impose these rites would be to provoke him to anger; to introduce observances which he had shown it was his purpose should now be abolished. To put a yoke. That which would be burdensome and oppressive, or which would infringe on their just freedom, as the children of God. It is, called in Gal 5:1, "a yoke of bondage." Mt 23:4. A yoke is an emblem of slavery or bondage, 1Timm 6:1 or of affliction, Lam 3:27; or of punishment, Lam 1:14; or of oppressive and burdensome ceremonies, as in this place; or of the restraints of Christianity, Mt 11:29,30. In this place they are called a yoke, because,

(1.) they were burdensome and oppressive; and,

(2.) because they would be an infringement of Christian freedom. One design of the gospel was to set men free from such rites and ceremonies. The yoke here referred to is not the moral law, and the just restraints of religion; but the ceremonial laws and customs of the Jews.

They offered a very great wrong to the disciples: Christ came to proclaim liberty to the captives, and they go about to enslave those whom he has made free. See Ne 5:8. The ceremonial law was a heavy yoke; they and their fathers found it difficult to be borne, so numerous, so various, so pompous, were the institutions of it. The distinction of meats was a heavy yoke, not only as it rendered conversation less pleasant, but as it embarrassed conscience with endless scruples. The ado that was made about even unavoidable touch of a grave or a dead body, the pollution contracted by it, and the many rules about purifying from that pollution, were a heavy burden. This yoke Christ came to ease us of, and called those that were weary and heavy laden under it to come and take his yoke upon them, his easy yoke. Now for these teachers to go about to lay that yoke upon the neck of the Gentiles from which he came to free even the Jews was the greatest injury imaginable to them.

Observe here, 1. The council assembled, the first and most famous council of councils. In other councils were holy bishops; in this, inspired apostles, who could not err in matters of faith.

Observe, 2. The grand debate, or matter in controversy; namely, whether faith in Christ were not sufficient to justification, unless circumcision, and an observation of the ceremonial law, were joined with it?

Observe, 3. The persons managing this debate: the three great apostles, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. The first that speaks in the council is St. Peter; from whence the Papists would infer, that he, as head of the church, spake first; and consequently that the Pope, whom they will have to be St. Peter's successor, ought to have the first and chief voice in all general councils. But all this is but presumption: for we shall find at ver 13, St. James who was then bishop of Jerusalem, says, Hearken unto me; and at ver. 19, gives the definitive sentence, saying, My sentence is; or thus I judge and determine. Had St. Peter said this, it had been a better part of his pre-emminency, and made a louder noise, than Pasce Oves.

Observe, 4. St. Peter's argument to prove that the believing Gentiles might be justified and saved without circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law. The argument runs thus: "The way of justifucation for all men, both Jew and Gentile, is one and the same: but Cornelius, a Gentile, with his whole family, by the blessing of God upon my ministry, was converted and justified, without being circumcised; therefore circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, ought not to be imposed as necessary to justification and salvation."

Observe, 5. How St. Peter strengthens his argument, by declaring that what was done to Cornelius and his family, was by the special command of God; that God gave testimony of his approbation of Cornelius, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles,

by sending down the Holy Ghost upon him and his, as well as upon us and ours, by purifying their hearts by faith.

Where note,

1. That purifying begins at the heart. The head may be purified from false principles, the hands from false practices, and yet the heart remain unpurified, and continue a sink of pollution and uncleanness; therefore we must purify our hearts, as well as cleanse our hands; yea, first, begin with our hearts: Having purified their hearts by faith.

Note, 2. That as purifying begins at the heart, but must not end there; so faith is the instrumental cause of our purification. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin meritoriously, the Spirit of Christ efficiently; but faith is the instrument in the hand of the Spirit, which apprehends and applies the merit of that blood for pardon and purification.

Observe, 6. The character given by St. Peter of the ceremonial law; he calls it a yoke, an intolerable yoke, too heavy to be borne by the Jews themselves, much more the Gentiles, whose neck God never designed this yoke for, but for the seed of Abraham only.

Now the law of ceremonies, imposed upon the Jews might well be called a yoke, if we consider,

1. Their number and variety: there were a multitude of legal observations.

2. Their burden and difficulty; the ceremonial law was a most laborious adminstration of a very painful service.

3. They were very costly and chargeable; so many bullocks, rams, and lambs for sacrifice, that the misers of this age would think themselves undone with the expense.

4. Their insufficiency: they were only shadows of good things to come, and could not make the observers of them perfect.

Thus was the ceremonial law in itself a yoke and a burden; and the imposing of it upon the Gentiles is called a tempting of God; that is, a dangerous provoking of him, because it never belonged to them, but to the Jews only, which yet were never able to bear it; that is, so to observe it, as to be justified and saved by it.

Learn thence, That it was never the intent or design of God, that his people should be justified by their obedience to the ceremonial law: but that, being pressed with the weight, and pinched with the uneasiness of the yoke, they should seek unto Christ for righteousness and life, who alone was the fulfiller of it.

There was this difference between the ceremonial and moral law: the ceremonial law was therefore good because God commanded it; the moral law was therefore commanded, because good. Christ, by his death, abrogated the former, but, by the obedience of his life, fulfilled the latter.

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

You know I, Peter, was questioned about it and cleared myself to the universal satisfaction; every body rejoiced that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life, and nobody said a word of circumcising them, nor was there any thought of such a thing. See Ac 11:18. "Why should the Gentiles who hear the word of the gospel by Paul's mouth be compelled to submit to circumcision, any more than those that heard it by my mouth? Or why should the terms of their admission now be made harder than they were then?"Through the grace, etc. By the grace or mercy of Christ alone, without any of the rites and ceremonies of the Jews. We shall be saved, even as they. In the same manner, by the mere grace of Christ. So far from being necessary to their salvation, they are really of no use in ours.

We are to be saved not by these ceremonies, but by the mere mercy of God in the Redeemer. They should not, therefore, be imposed on others.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to
Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God
had wrought among the Gentiles by them.
13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men
and brethren, hearken unto me:
14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles,
to take out of them a people for his name.
15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

James confirms this with a quotation out of the Old Testament: he could not prove the calling of the Gentiles by a vision, as Peter could, nor by miracles wrought by his hand, as Paul and Barnabas could, but he would prove that it was foretold in the Old Testament, and therefore it must be fulfilled, Ac 15:15.

The words of the prophets. Amos 9:11,12. It was a very material point with them, as Jews, to inquire whether this was in accordance with the predictions of the Scriptures. The most powerful revivals of religion, and the most striking demonstrations of the Divine Presence, will be in accordance with the Bible, and should be tested by it. This habit was always manifested by the apostles and early Christians, and should be followed by Christians at all times. Unless a supposed work of grace accords with the Bible, and can be defended by it, it must be false, and should be opposed. Comp. Isa 8:20.

16 After this I will return,
and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen
down;
and I will build again the ruins
thereof, and I will set it up:

After this. This quotation is not made literally either from the Hebrew or the Septuagint, which differs also from the Hebrew. The 17th verse is quoted literally from the Septuagint; but in

the 16th the general sense only of the passage is retained. The main point of the quotation, as made by James, was to show that, according to the prophets, it was contemplated that the Gentiles should be introduced to the privileges of the children of God; and on this point the passage has a direct bearing. The prophet Amos Amos 9:8-10 had described the calamities that should come upon the nation of the Jews, by their being scattered and driven away. This implied that the city of Jerusalem, and the temple, and the walls of the city, should be destroyed. But after that (Heb. "on that day," Amos 9:11; that is, the day when he should revisit them, and recover them) he would restore them to their former privileges; would rebuild their temple, their city, and their walls, Amos 9:11. And not only so--not only should the blessing descend on the Jews, but it should also be extended to others. The "remnant of Edom," "the heathen upon whom" his "name would be called," (Amos 9:12,) should also partake of the mercy of God, and be subject to the Jewish people; and the time of general prosperity and of permanent blessings should follow, Amos 9:13-15. James understands this as referring to the times of the Messiah, and to the introduction of the gospel to the Gentiles. And so the passage (Amos 9:12)is rendered in the Septuagint. See Acts 15:17.

That the residue of men. This verse is quoted literally from the Septuagint, and differs in some respects from the Hebrew. The phrase, "the residue of men," here is evidently understood, both by the Seventy and by James, as referring to others than the Jews-- to the Gentiles. The rest of the world--implying that many of them would be admitted to the friendship and favour of God. The Hebrew is, "that they may possess the remnant of Edom." This change is made in the Septuagint by a slight difference in the reading of two Hebrew words. The Seventy, instead of the Hebrew shall inherit, read , shall seek of thee; and instead of Edom they read , Man, or mankind, i.e. men. Why this variation occurred, cannot be explained; but the sense is not materially different. In the Hebrew, the word Edom has undoubted reference to another nation than the Jewish; and the

expression means, that in the great prosperity of the Jews, after their return, they should extend the influence of their religion to other nations; that is, as James applies it, the Gentiles might be brought to the privileges of the children of God.

17 that the residue of men might seek after the
Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name
is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these
things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of
the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which
from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions
of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and
from blood.

That we write unto them. Expressing our judgment, or our views of the case. This verse has greatly perplexed commentators. The main grounds of difficulty have been,

(1.) why fornication--an offence against the moral law, and about which there could be no dispute--should have been included; and,

(2.) whether the prohibition to abstain from blood is still binding. That they abstain. That they refrain from these things, or wholly avoid them. Pollutions of idols. The word rendered pollutions means any kind of defilement. But here it is evidently used to denote the flesh of those animals that were offered in sacrifice to idols. See Acts 15:29. That flesh, after being offered in sacrifice, was often exposed for sale in the markets, or was served up at feasts, 1Cor 10:25-29. It became a very important question whether it was right for Christians to partake of it. The Jews would contend that it was, in fact, partaking of idolatry. The Gentile converts would allege that they did not eat it as a sacrifice to idols, or lend their countenance in any way to the idolatrous worship where it had been offered. See this subject discussed at length in 1Cor 8:4-

13. As idolatry was forbidden to the Jews in every form, and as partaking even of the sacrifices to idols, in their feasts, might seem to countenance idolatry, the Jews would be utterly opposed to it; and for the sake of peace, James advised that they be recommended to abstain from this. To partake of that food might not be morally wrong, (1Cor 8:4,) but it would give occasion for scandal and offence; and, therefore, as a matter of expediency, it was advised that they should abstain from it. And from fornication, The word used here--πορνειας-- is applicable to all illicit intercourse; and may refer to adultery, incest, and licentiousness in any form. There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to this expression.

Interpreters have been greatly perplexed to understand why this violation of the moral law has been introduced amidst the violations of the ceremonial law; and the question is naturally asked, whether this was a sin about which there could be any debate between the Jewish and Gentile converts? Were there any who would practise it, or plead that it was lawful? If not, why is it prohibited here? Various interpretations have been proposed. Some have supposed that James refers here to the offerings which harlots would make of their gains to the service of religion, and that James would prohibit the reception of it. Beza, Selden, and Schleusner, suppose the word is taken for idolatry, as it is often represented in the Scriptures as consisting in unfaithfulness to God, and as it is often called adultery. Heringius supposes that marriage between idolaters and Christians is here intended. But, after all, the usual interpretation of the word, as referring to illicit intercourse of the sexes of any kind, is undoubtedly here to be retained. There is no reason for departing from the ordinary and usual meaning of the word. If it be asked, then, why this was particularly forbidden, and was introduced in this connexion, we may reply,

(1.) that this vice prevailed everywhere among the Gentiles, and was that to which all were particularly exposed.

(2.) That it was not deemed by the Gentiles disgraceful. It was practised without shame, and without remorse.---Terence, Adelph. 1, 2, 21. See Grotius. It was important, therefore, that the pure laws of Christianity on this subject should be known, and that special pains should be taken to instruct the early converts from paganism in those laws. The same thing is necessary still in heathen lands.

(3.) This crime was connected with religion. It was the practice not only to introduce indecent pictures and emblems into their worship, but also for females to devote themselves to the service of particular temples, and to devote the avails of indiscriminate prostitution to the service of the god, or the goddess. The vice was connected with no small part of the pagan worship; and the images, the emblems, and the customs of idolatry, everywhere tended to sanction and promote it. A mass of evidence on this subject, which sickens the heart--but which would be too long and too indelicate to introduce here-may be seen in Tholuck's Nature and Moral Influence of Heathenism, in the Biblical Repository, for July, 1832, pp. 441--464. As this vice was almost universal; as it was practised without shame or disgrace; as there were no laws among the heathen to prevent it; as it was connected with all their views of idol worship and of religion, it, was important for the early Christians to frown upon and to oppose it, and to set a peculiar guard against it in all the churches. It was the sin to which, of all others, they were the most exposed, and which was most likely to bring scandal on the Christian religion. It is for this cause that it is so often and so pointedly forbidden in the New Testament, Rom 1:29, 1Cor 6:13,18, Gal 5:19, Eph 5:3, 1Thes 4:3. And from things strangled. That is, from animals or birds that were killed without shedding their brood. The reason why these were considered by the Jews unlawful to be eaten was, that thus they would be under a necessity of eating blood, which was positively forbidden by the law. Hence it was commanded in the law, that when any beast or fowl was taken in a snare, the blood should be poured out before it was lawful to be eaten, Lev 17:13. And from blood. The eating of blood

was strictly forbidden to the Jews. The reason of this was that it contained the life, Lev 17:11,14. Rom 3:25. The use of blood was common among the Gentiles. They drank it often at their sacrifices, and in making covenants or compacts. To separate the Jews from them in this respect was one design of the prohibition. See Spencer, De Leg. Hebrm. pp. 144, 145, 169, 235, 377, 381, 594, Ed. 1732. See also this whole passage examined at length in Spencer, pp. 588--626. The primary reason of the prohibition was, that it was thus used in the feasts and compacts of idolaters. That blood was thus drank by the heathens, particularly by the Sabians, in their sacrifices, is fully proved by Spencer, De Leg., pp. 377--380. But the prohibition specifies a higher reason, that the life is in the blood, and that therefore it should not be eaten. Rom 3:25. This reason existed before any ceremonial law; is founded in the nature of things; has no particular reference to any custom of the Jews; and therefore is as forcible in any other circumstances as in theirs. It was proper, therefore, to forbid it to the early Christian converts; and for the same reason its use should be abstained from everywhere. It adds to the force of these remarks, when we remember that the same principle was settled before the laws of Moses were given; and that God regarded the fact that the life was in the blood as of so much importance as to make the shedding of it worthy of death, Gen 9:4-6. It is supposed, therefore, that this law is still obligatory. Perhaps also there is no food more unwholesome than blood; and it is a further circumstance of some moment that all men naturally revolt from it as an article of food.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

For Moses hath of old those that preach him in every city, his writings (a considerable part of which is the ceremonial law) being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. "You cannot blame them if they have a great veneration for the law of Moses; for besides that they are very sure God spoke to Moses,"

(1.) "Moses is continually preached to them, and they are called upon to remember the law of Moses," Mal 4:4. Note, Even that word of God which is written to us should also be preached: those that have the scriptures have still need of ministers to help them to understand and apply the scriptures.

(2.) "His writings are read in a solemn religious manner, in their synagogues, and on the sabbath day, in the place and at the time of their meetings for the worship of God; so that from their childhood they have been trained up in a regard to the law of Moses; the observance of it is a part of their religion."

(3.) "This has been done of old time; they have received from their fathers an honour for Moses; they have antiquity for it."

(4.) "This had been done in every city, wherever there are any Jews, so that none of them can be ignorant what stress that law laid upon these things: and therefore, though the gospel has set us free from these things, yet they cannot be blamed if they are loth to part with them, and cannot of a sudden be persuaded to look upon those things as needless and indifferent which they, and their fathers before them, had been so long taught, and taught of God too, to place religion in. We must therefore give them time, must meet them half-way; they must be borne with awhile, and brought on gradually, and we must comply with them as far as we can without betraying our gospel liberty." Thus does this apostle show the spirit of a moderator, that is, a spirit of moderation, being careful to give no offence either to Jew or Gentile, and contriving, as much as may be, to please both sides and provoke neither.

Note, We are not to think it strange if people be wedded to customs which they have had transmitted to them from their fathers, and which they have been educated in an opinion of as sacred; and therefore allowances must be made in such cases, and not rigour used.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely,* Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

I The choice of the delegates that were to be sent with Paul and Barnabas on this errand; not as if they had any suspicion of the fidelity of these great men, and could not trust them with their letters, nor as if they thought that those to whom they sent them would suspect them to have altered any thing in their letter; no, their charity thought no such evil concerning men of such tried integrity; but,

1. They thought fit to send men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, Ac 15:22. This was agreed to by the apostles and elders, with the whole church, who, it is likely, undertook to bear their charges, 1Co 9:7. They sent these messengers,

(1.) To show their respect to the church at Antioch, as a sister-church, though a younger sister, and that they looked upon it as upon the same level with them; as also that they were desirous further to know their state.

(2.) To encourage Paul and Barnabas, and to make their journey home the more pleasant (for it is likely they travelled on foot) by sending such excellent men to bear them company; amicus pro vehiculo--a friend instead of a carriage.

(3.) To put a reputation upon the letters they carried, that it might appear a solemn embassy, and so much the more regard might be paid to the message, which was likely to meet with opposition from some.

(4.) To keep up the communion of the saints, and cultivate an acquaintance between churches and ministers that were at a distance from each other, and to show that, though they were many, yet they were one.

23 and they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no *such* commandment:

25 it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Men that have hazarded their lives, etc. See Acts 14. This was a noble testimony to the character of Barnabas and Paul. It was a commendation of them to the confidence of the churches, and an implied expression that they wished their authority to be regarded in the establishment and organization of the church.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost. This is a strong and undoubted claim to inspiration. It was with special reference to the organization of the church that the Holy Spirit had been promised to them by the Lord Jesus, Mt 18:18-20, Jn 14:26.

29 that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

31 *which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

They rejoiced for the consolation. They acquiesced in the decision of the apostles and elders, and rejoiced that they were not to be subjected to the burdensome rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. This closes the account of the first Christian council. It was conducted throughout on Christian

principles, in a mild, kind, conciliatory spirit; and is a model for all similar assemblages. It came together, not to promote, but to silence disputation; not to persecute the people of God, but to promote their peace; not to be a scene of harsh and angry recrimination, but to be an example of all that was mild, and tender, and kind. Those who composed it came together, not to carry a point, not to overreach their adversaries, not to be party men; but to mingle their sober counsels to inquire what was right, and to express, in a Christian manner, that which was proper to be done. Great and important principles were to be established, in regard to the Christian church; and they engaged in their work evidently with a deep sense of their responsibility, and with a just view of their dependence on the aid of the Holy Spirit. How happy would it have been if this spirit had been possessed by all professedly Christian councils! How happy, if all had really sought the peace and harmony of the churches; and if none had ever been convened to kindle the fires of persecution, to evince the spirit of party, or to rend and destroy the church of God! This council has been usually appealed to as the authority for councils in the church, as a permanent arrangement; and especially as an authority for courts of appeal and control. But it establishes neither, and should be brought as an authority for neither. For,

(1.) it was not a court of appeal in any intelligible sense. It was an assembly convened for a special purpose; designed to settle an inquiry which arose in a particular part of the church, and which required the collected wisdom of the apostles and elders to settle.

(2.) It had none of the marks or appendages of a court. The term court, or judicature, is nowhere applied to it, nor to any assembly of Christian men, in the New Testament. Nor should these terms be used now in the churches. Courts of judicature imply a degree of authority, which cannot be proved from the New Testament to have been conceded to any ecclesiastical body of men.

(3.) There is not the slightest intimation that anything like permanency was to be attached to this council; or that it would be periodically or regularly repeated. It will prove, indeed, that when cases of difficulty occur, when Christians are perplexed and embarrassed, or when contentions arise, it will be proper to refer to Christian men for advice and direction. Such was the case here; and such a course is obviously proper. If it should be maintained that it is well that Christian ministers and laymen should assemble periodically, at stated intervals, on the supposition that such cases may arise, this is conceded; but the example of the apostles and elders should not be pleaded as making such assemblies of Divine right and authority, or as being essential to the existence of the church of God. Such an arrangement has been deemed to be so desirable by Christians, that it has been adopted by Episcopalians in their regular annual and triennial conventions; by Methodists in their conferences; by Presbyterians in their general assembly; by Friends in their yearly meetings; by Baptists and Congregationalists in their associations, etc.

But the example of the council summoned on a special emergency at Jerusalem should not be pleaded as giving Divine authority to all, or to any, of these periodical assemblages. They are wise and prudent arrangements, contributing to the peace of the church; and the example of the council at Jerusalem can be adduced as furnishing as much Divine authority for one as for another; that is, it does not make all or either of them of Divine authority, or as obligatory on the church of God.

(4.) It should be added, that a degree of authority (compare Acts 16:4) would, of course, be attached to the decision of the apostles and elders of that time, which cannot be to any body of ministers and laymen now. Besides, it should never be forgotten--what, alas, it seems to have been the pleasure and the interests of ecclesiastics to forget--that neither the apostles

nor elders asserted any jurisdiction over the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia; that they did not claim a right to have these cases referred to them; that they did not attempt "to lord it" over their faith or their consciences. The case was a single, specific, definite question, referred to them; and they decided it as such. They asserted no abstract right of such jurisdiction; they sought not to intermeddle with it; they enjoined no future reference to them, to their successors, or to any ecclesiastical tribunal. They evidently regarded the churches as blessed with the most ample freedom; and evidently contemplated no arrangement of a permanent character, asserting a right to legislate on articles of faith, or to make laws for the direction of the Lord's freemen.

From whence we learn, That liberty from toilsome ceremonies, though originally of divine institution, much more a freedom from superstitious ceremonies has the church of Rome imposed upon her blind votaries! When in their worship they would be thought truly zealous, they are really ridiculous. They please themselves perhaps, but cannot please their Maker: all the acceptance they will find with God will be signified to them in that chiding question, "Who hath required these things at your hands?"

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted
the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*.
33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in
peace from the brethren unto the apostles.
34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.
35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching
and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others
also.

Paul Separates from Barnabas and Begins the Second Missionary Journey

36 And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and
visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word
of the Lord, *and see* how they do.

Observe here, The pious and prudential care which St. Paul, who had planted churches, takes to visit and inspect them; that he might see and understand how they did thrive and grow in the knowledge of Christ, and in their sincere obedience to him. This great apostle had been sowing the good seed of the word of God: his next care is, to examine and enquire whether the envious ones had not sowed tares in his absence.

A minister's work, and a husbandman's business, are never at an end, but run round in a circle: Redit labor actus in orbem; after ploughing and sowing, there must be weeding and watering, before reaping and ingathering.

Accordingly St. Paul resolves upon the visitation here mentioned; Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

Here note, 1. The visitors, Paul and Barnabas.

2. The visited, our brethren, both the elders and members of the church.

3. The action performed, visiting; the word imports a strict view, a most diligent and solicitous scrutiny, lest some errors in their absence might be crept into the doctrine and conversation of these new-planted churches.

4. The place where the visitation is to be held: In every city where they have preached the word of the Lord.

Where they had planted, they were obliged to water; and where they had begotten any to the Christian faith, they thought it their duty to nurture and nourish them: and therefore, though there were presbyters no doubt in every city, yet Paul and Barnabas challenged to themselves a power of visitation, where they had personally preached. The apostles who first

converted them, had a peculiar right to inspect and govern them. Converted souls, and planted churches, mist be farther visited, observed, and watered.

5. The end and design of the visitation: To see how they do, and what they do; to take an account of their faith and practice.

From the whole observe,

1. A disease which the churches of the apostles' own planting were supposed to be liable and obnoxious to: the purest of churches and best of men in this militant and mortal state, are apt to fall into distempers: witness this chapter. Where we find the Jews nauseating the bread of life, and making it their choice to pick and eat the rubbish off the partition-wall which Christ had demolished; I mean circumcision, and the legal ceremonies, which, though expired at the death of Christ, and by this time had an honourable burial, yet they attempt to pull out of their graves, and give a resurrection to them. Such distempers will be in the purest churches, if we consider the hereditary corruption which is in all by nature; the remains of it in those who are renewed by grace, and the endeavours of Satan to solicit these remains, and invite them forth into act and exercise.

Observe, 2. The remedy resolved upon for preventing and healing of this disease; namely, apostolical visitation, and episcopal inspection, as the word signifies. The constitution of the church is such, that it cannot continue long in repair, without inspection and government: for though the universal church is secure, being built upon a rock, yet particular churches are liable to dilapidations: and accordingly it is the duty of the governors of the church frequently to inspect the authority of those who preach, to examine their doctrines, to enquire into their lives, to give rules for preserving order, and to censure those who neglect those rules, and disturb that order.

In fine, we see the church of Christ must be governed; in that government there must be a superiority in some, and subordination in others: superiors must frequently visit, and narrowly inspect the doctrine, the lives, and manners, both of the ministers and members of the church, according to the practice and example of these two great apostles, Paul and Barnabas; who said, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word, and see how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

In regard to this unhappy contention between Paul and Barnabas, and their separation from each other, we may make the following remarks:

(1.) That no apology or vindication of it is offered by the sacred writer. It was undoubtedly improper and evil. It was a melancholy instance in which even apostles evinced an improper spirit, and engaged in improper strife.

(2.) In this contention it is probable that Paul was, in the main, right. Barnabas seems to have been influenced by attachment to a relative; Paul sought a helper who would not shrink from duty and danger. It is clear that Paul had the sympathies and prayers of the church in his favour, Acts 15:40, and it is more than probable that Barnabas departed without any such sympathy, Acts 15:39.

(3.) There is reason to think that this contention was overruled for the furtherance of the gospel. They went to different places, and preached to different people. It often happens that the unhappy and wicked strifes of Christians are the means of exciting their zeal, and of extending the gospel, and of establishing churches. But no thanks to their contention; nor is the guilt of their anger and strife mitigated by this.

(4.) This difference was afterwards reconciled, and Paul and Barnabas again became travelling companions, 1Cor 9:6, Gal 2:9.

(5.) There is evidence that Paul also became reconciled to John Mark, Col 4:10, Phm 1:24, 2Ti 4:11. How long this separation continued is not known; but perhaps in this journey with Barnabas, John gave such evidence of his courage and zeal as induced Paul again to admit him to his confidence as a travelling companion, and as to become a profitable fellow-labourer. See 2Ti 4:11, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

(6.) This account proves that there was no collusion or agreement among the apostles to impose upon mankind. Had there been such an agreement, and had the books of the New Testament been an imposture, the apostles would have been represented as perfectly harmonious, and as united in all their views and efforts. What impostor would have thought of the device of representing the early friends of the Christian religion as divided, and contending, and separating from each other? Such a statement has an air of candour and honesty, and at the same time is apparently so much again, st the truth of the system, that no impostor would have thought of resorting to it.

40 and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by
the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Acts-16

Timothy Accompanies Paul and Silas

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain
disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman,
which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek:
2 which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra
and
Iconium.
3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and
circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those
quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Him would Paul have, etc. This was an instance of Paul's selecting young men of piety for the holy ministry. It shows,

(1.) that he was disposed to look up and call forth the talent that might be in the church, that might be usefully employed. It is quite evident that Timothy would not have thought of this, had it not been suggested by Paul. The same thing education societies are attempting now to accomplish.

(2.) That Paul sought proper qualifications, and valued them. Those were,

(a.) that he had a good reputation for piety, etc., Acts 16:2 This he demanded as an indispensable qualification for a minister of the gospel. 1Timm 3:7. "Moreover he (a bishop) must have a good report of them which are without." Comp. Acts 22:12.

(b) Paul esteemed him to be a young man of talents and prudence. His admitting him to a partnership in his labours, and his entrusting to him the affairs of the church at Ephesus, prove this.

(c) He had been carefully trained in the Holy Scriptures. A foundation was thus laid for usefulness. And this qualification

seems to have been deemed by Paul of indispensable value for the right discharge of his duties in this holy office.

And he took and circumcised him. This was evidently done to avoid the opposition and reproaches of the Jews. It was a measure not binding in itself, (comp. Acts 15:1,28,29) but the neglect of which would expose to contention and opposition among the Jews, and greatly retard or destroy his usefulness. It was an act of expediency for the sake of peace, and was in accordance with Paul's uniform and avowed principle of conduct. 1Cor 9:20, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." Comp. Acts 21:23-26.

(g) "circumcised him, because" Gal 2:3-8, 5:1-3

(h) "Jews which were" 1Cor 9:20. But at the same time Titus, who was a Gentile, both by father and mother, him he would not circumcise; neither suffering the yoke of circumcision to be laid on the Gentiles, which God had never imposed, nor would be seen to countenance those who held circumcision necessary to salvation. O what an admirable pattern has this great and humble apostle left to posterity! he became all things to all men, and either used or refused indifferent things, according as the use or disuse of them tended to the church's education, and men's salvation.

From whence learn, That in things not absolutely necessary to salvation, Christians ought to act prudentially, and either do, or not do, some things of lesser moment, according as it may promote, and best conduce to the church's peace and edification.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

The sense is this, That as Paul and Silas passed through the cities in Syria and Cilicia, they delivered to the several churches, as they passed along, the decrees to observe, which

were ordained by the apostles and elders met in council at Jerusalem, whereby those churches were established in the faith, and many more every day converted unto Christ.

Here note, 1. The messengers which delivered these decrees, Paul and Silas, with a special regard unto the church's unity and peace. Behold here an excellent pattern for Christians in general, and the ministers of the gospel in particular; as to maintain truth, so to procure, promote, and preserve the church's peace. Truth and peace, which God hath joined together, Zech 8:19 let none dare to put asunder.

Note, 2. What it was that St. Paul here made the delivery of: the decrees made by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem; not the decrees made by the whole church, but by the ministers of the church only: none so fit to determine church-differences as church-officers.

Note, 3. To whom these decrees were delivered; namely, to the churches, as they passed along through the several cities; so many cities, so many churches: the whole company of Christians within a city and the adjacent territory, where wont to be framed into a Christian society or church, and several congregations made but one church. To set up churches in churches, and to gather churches out of churches, has no precedent, no warrant, no countenance from any phrase of scripture, or practice of the apostles' times.

Note, 4. The end for which these decrees were delivered; namely, to bring all the churches to unity and uniformity; to unity in judgment, and uniformity in practice, that they might be all of one heart, and one way.

Learn hence, That unity and uniformity among the churches of Christ is a thing to be earnestly desired and endeavoured; their unity is their strength and beauty both.

Note, lastly, The success and fruit of the delivery of these decrees to the churches, ver. 5. So were the churches established in the faith, and increasing in number daily.

Where observe, A double blessing accruing to the churches: the one of confirmation, So were the churches established: the other of augmentation. They increased in number daily.

Learn, 1. That as divisions do shake and unsettle, so unity and uniformity do establish, and confirm, the church of Christ: So were the churches established.

2. That it is a blessed thing to hear of the churches multiplying, by the number of converts increasing, is happy; but to multiply churches by breaking churches in pieces, is a sad multiplication.

The Lord keep his churches from such increases! and the Lord pardon those who for private interest have so increased churches by gathering churches out of churches, pretendedly for greater purity-sake, but really for advantage-sake!

Doctrines crying up purity to the ruin of unity, reject; for the gospel calls for unity as well as fo

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

Probably by a direct revelation. The reason of this was, doubtless, that it was the intention of God to extend the gospel farther into the regions of Greece than would have been done if they had remained in Asia Minor. This prohibition was the means of the first introduction of the gospel into Europe. In Asia. Acts 2:9. This was doubtless the region of proconsular Asia. This region was also called Ionia. Of this region Ephesus

was the capital; and here were situated also the cities of Smyrna, Thyatira, Philadelphia, etc., within which the seven churches, mentioned in Revelation chapters 1-3, were established. Cicero speaks of proconsular Asia as containing the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Carla, and Lydia. In all this region the gospel was afterwards preached with great success. But now a more important and wider field was opened before Paul and Barnabas, in the extensive country of Macedonia.

7 after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia:
but the Spirit suffered them not.
8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.
9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man
of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into
Macedonia, and help us.

It was the first region in Europe in which we have any record that the gospel was preached. And help us. That is, by preaching the gospel. This was a call to preach the gospel in an extensive heathen land, amidst many trials and dangers. To this call, notwithstanding all this prospect of danger, they cheerfully responded, and gave themselves to the work. Their conduct was thus an example to the church. From all portions of the earth a similar call is now coming to the churches. Openings of a similar character, for the introduction of the gospel, are presented in all lands. Appeals are coming from every quarter; and all that seems now necessary for the speedy conversion of the world, is for the church to enter into these vast fields with the self-denial, spirit, and zeal which characterized the apostle Paul.

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to
go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called
us for to preach the gospel unto them.

The Imprisonment at Philippi

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to
Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis;
12 and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part
of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding
certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither.*

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us:* whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

In this oratory, St. Paul preached to the women, they being both most numerous and most zealous; and God gives him the seal of his ministry in the conversion of Lydia.

In which famous conversion observe how particularly the Holy Ghost is in relating the several circumstances belonging to it; she is described by her person and sex, a certain woman; by her name Lydia; by her calling and employment, a seller of purple; by her city, Thyatira; by her pious disposition, she worshipped God.

Her conversion is described,

1. By the efficient cause of it; the Lord opened her heart.

2. By the instrumental cause of it; her attending to the things that were spoken of Paul.

Learn, 1. That the hearts of persons are naturally shut up and fast barred against Jesus Christ.

2. That the opening of the heart to receive Jesus Christ, is the peculiar effect of the sovereign power and omnipotent grace of God.

3. That till God opens the heart of a sinner, the preaching of the gospel little affecteth, though never so plainly and persuasuvely preached. That when once the heart is opened, the ear will not be shut, the person is truly attentive to the preaching of the gospel: The Lord opened Lydia's heart, and she attended. In this oratory, St. Paul preached to the women,

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15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

If ye have judged me to be faithful. If you deem me a Christian, or a believer. And she constrained us. She urged us. This was an instance of great hospitality, and also an evidence of her desire for further instruction in the doctrines of religion.

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

Possessed with a spirit of divination. Greek, Python. See the margin. Python, or Pythios, was one of the names of Apollo, the Grecian god of the fine arts, of music, poetry, medicine, and eloquence. Of these he was esteemed to have been the inventor. He was reputed to be the third son of Jupiter and Latona. He had a celebrated temple and oracle at Delphi, which was resorted to from all parts of the world, and which was perhaps the only oracle that was in universal repute. The name Python is said to have been given him, because, as soon as he was born, he destroyed with arrows a serpent of that name, that had been seen by Juno to persecute Latona; hence his common name was the Pythian Apollo. He had temples on Mount Parnassus, at Delphi, Delos, Claros, Tenedos, etc., and his worship was almost universal In the celebrated oracle at Delphi, the priestess of Apollo pretended to be inspired; became violently agitated during the periods of pretended inspiration; and during those periods gave such responses to inquirers as were regarded as the oracles of the god. Others would also make pretensions to such inspiration; and the art of fortune-telling, or of jugglery, was extensively practised, and was the source of much gain. Acts 8:8-10. What was the cause of this extensive delusion in regard to the oracle at Delphi, it is not necessary now to inquire. It is plain that Paul regarded this as a case of demoniacal possession, and treated it accordingly.

17 the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

The same followed Paul, etc. Why she did this, or under what pretence, the sacred writer has not informed us. Various conjectures have been formed of the reason why this was done. It may have been,

(1.) that as she prophesied for gain, she supposed that Paul and Silas would reward her if she publicly proclaimed that they were the servants of God. Or,

(2.) because she was conscious that an evil spirit possessed her, and that she feared that Paul and Silas would expel that spirit; and that, by proclaiming them to be the servants of God, she hoped to conciliate their favour. Or,

(3.) more probably, it was because she saw evident tokens of their being sent from God, and that their doctrine would prevail; and by proclaiming this she hoped to acquire more authority, and a higher reputation for being herself inspired. Comp. Mk 5:7.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

But Paul, being grieved. Being molested, troubled, offended. Paul was grieved, probably,

(1.) because her presence was troublesome to him;

(2.) because it might be said that he was in alliance with her, and that his pretensions were just like hers;

(3) because what she did was for the sake of gain, and was a base imposition;

(4.) because her state was one of bondage and delusion, and it was proper to free her from this demoniacal possession; and,

(5.) because the system under which she was acting was a part of a vast scheme of delusion and imposture, which had spread over a large portion of the pagan world, and which was then holding it in bondage. Throughout the Roman empire, the inspiration of the priestesses of Apollo was believed in; and

temples were everywhere reared to perpetuate and celebrate the delusion. Against this extensive system of imposture and fraud, Christianity must oppose itself; and this was a favourable instance to expose the delusion, and to show the power of the Christian religion over all the arts and powers of imposture. The mere fact that in a very few instances--of which this was one--they spoke the truth, did not make it improper for Paul to interpose. That fact would only tend to perpetuate the delusion, and to make his interposition more proper and necessary. The expulsion of the evil spirit would also afford a signal proof of the fact that the apostles were really from God. A far better proof than her noisy and troublesome proclamation of it would furnish.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the market place unto the rulers,

The hope of their gains was gone. It was this that troubled and enraged them. And this is as likely to enrage men as anything. Instead of regarding the act as proof of Divine power, they were intent only on their profits. And their indignation furnishes a remarkable illustration of the fixedness with which men will regard wealth; of the fact that the love of it will blind them to all the truths of religion, and all the proofs of the power and presence of God; and of the fact that any interposition of Divine power that destroys their hopes of gain, fills them with wrath and hatred and murmuring. Many a man has been opposed to God and his gospel, because, if religion should be extensively prevalent, the hopes of gain would be gone. Many a slave-dealer, and many a trafficker in ardent spirits, and many a man engaged in other unlawful modes of gain, have been unwilling to abandon their employments, simply because the hopes of their gain would be destroyed. No small part of the opposition to the gospel arises from the fact, that, if embraced, it would strike at so much of the dishonourable employments of men, and make them honest and conscientious.

20 and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

Do exceedingly trouble our city. In what way they did it, they specify in the next verse. The charge which they wished to substantiate was that of being disturbers of the public peace. All at once they became conscientious. They forgot the subject of their gains, and were greatly distressed about the violation of the laws. There is nothing that will make men more hypocritically conscientious, than to denounce, and detect, and destroy their unlawful and dishonest practices. Men who are thus exposed become suddenly filled with reverence for the law, or for religion; and they, who have heretofore cared nothing for either, become greatly alarmed lest the public peace should be disturbed. Men slumber quietly in sin, and pursue their wicked gains; they hate or despise all law and all forms of religion; but the moment their course of life is attacked and exposed, they become full of zeal for laws that they would not themselves hesitate to violate, and for the customs of religion, which in their hearts they thoroughly despise. Worldly-minded men often thus complain that their towns, and cities, and villages, are disturbed by revivals of religion; and the preaching of the truth, and attacking vice, often arouses this hypocritical conscientiousness, and makes them alarmed for the laws, and for religion, and for order, which they at other times are the first to disturb and disregard.

And teach customs. The word customs here (εθη) refers to religious rites or forms of worship. Acts 6:14. They meant to charge the apostles with introducing a new mode of worship and a new religion, which was unauthorized by the Roman laws. This was a cunning and artful accusation. It is perfectly evident that they cared nothing either for the religion of the Romans or of the Jews. Nor were they really concerned about any change of religion. Paul had destroyed their hopes of gain; and as they could not prevent that except by securing his punishment or expulsion, and as they had no way of revenge except by endeavouring to excite indignation against him and Silas for violating the laws, they endeavoured to convict them

of such violation. This is one, among many instances, where wicked and unprincipled men will endeavour to make religion the means of promoting their Own interest. If they can make money by it, they will become its professed friends; or if they can annoy Christians, they will at once have remarkable zeal for the laws and for the purity of religion. Many a man opposes revivals of religion and the real progress of evangelical piety, from professed zeal for truth and order. Which are not lawful for us to receive, There were laws of the Roman empire under which they might shield themselves in this charge, though it is evident that their zeal was not because they loved the laws more, but because they loved Christianity less. Thus Servius on Virgil, AEnead, viii. 181, says, "Care was taken among the Athenians and the Romans, that no one should introduce new religions. It was on this account that Socrates was condemned, and the Chaldeans or Jews were banished from the city." Cicero (de Legibus ii. 8) says, "No person shall have any separate gods, or new ones; nor shall he privately worship any strange gods, unless they be publicly allowed." Wetstein (in loco) says, "The Romans would indeed allow foreigners to worship their own gods, but not unless it were done secretly, so that the worship of foreign gods would not interfere with the allowed worship of the Romans, and so that occasion for dissension and controversy might be avoided. Neither was it lawful among the Romans to recommend a new religion to the citizens, contrary to that which was confirmed and established by the public authority, and to call off the people from that. It was on this account that there was such a hatred of the Romans against the Jews." (Kuin[illegible]el.) Tertullian says, that "there was a decree that no god should be consecrated, unless approved by the senate." (Grotius.) See many other authorities quoted in Bishop Watsoh's "Apology for Christianity."

22 And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely:

And when they had laid many stripes upon them. The Jews were by law prohibited from inflicting more than forty stripes, and usually inflicted but thirty-nine, 2Cor 11:24. But there was no such law among the Romans. They were unrestricted in regard to the number of lashes; and probably inflicted many more. Perhaps Paul refers to this when he says, (2Cor 11:23,) "In stripes above measure," i. e., beyond the usual measure among the Jews, or beyond moderation.

24 who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

Prayed. Though they had suffered much, yet they had reason to apprehend more. They sought, therefore, the sustaining grace of God. And sang praises. Nothing but religion would have enabled them to do this. They had endured much, but they had cause still for gratitude. A Christian may find more true joy in a prison, than the monarch on his throne. And the prisoners heard them. And doubtless with astonishment. Prayer and praise were not common in a prison. The song of rejoicing and the language of praise is not usual among men lying bound in a dungeon, From this narrative we may learn,

(1.) that the Christian has the sources of his happiness within him. External circumstances cannot destroy his peace and joy. In a dungeon he may find as real happiness as on a throne. On the cold earth, beaten and bruised, he may be as truly happy as on a bed of down.

(2.) The enemies of Christians cannot destroy their peace. They may incarcerate the body, but they cannot bind the spirit. They may exclude from earthly comforts, but they cannot shut them out from the presence and sustaining grace of God.

(3.) We see the value of a good conscience. Nothing else can give peace; and amidst the wakeful hours of the night, whether

in a dungeon or on a bed of sickness, it is of more value than all the wealth of the world.

(4.) We see the inestimable worth of the religion of Christ. It fits for all scenes; supports in all trims; upholds by day or by night; inspires the soul with confidence in God; and puts into the lips the songs of praise and thanksgiving.

(5.) We have here a sublime and holy scene, which sin and infidelity could never furnish. What more sublime spectacle has the earth witnessed than that of scourged and incarcerated men, suffering from unjust and cruel inflictions, and anticipating still greater sorrows; yet, with a calm mind, a pure conscience, a holy joy, pouring forth their desires and praises at midnight, into the ear of the God, who always hears prayer! The darkness, the stillness, the loneliness, all give sublimity to the scene, and teach us how invaluable is the privilege of access to the throne of mercy in this suffering world.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

For what purpose it was done is not recorded. Grotius supposes it was that they might know that the apostles might be useful to them and to others, and that by them their spiritual bonds might be loosed. Probably the design was to impress all the prisoners with the conviction of the presence and power of God, and thus to prepare them to receive the message of life from the lips of his servants Paul and Silas. They had just before heard them singing and praying; they were aware, doubtless, of the cause for which they were imprisoned; they saw evident tokens that they were the servants of the Most High, and under his protection; and their own minds were impressed and awed by the terrors of the earthquake, and by the fact of their own liberation. It renders this scene the more remarkable, that though the doors were opened, and the prisoners loosed, yet no one made any attempt to escape.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.
28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.
29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
30 and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

What must I do to be saved? Never was a more important question asked than this. It is evident that by this question he did not refer to any danger to which he might be exposed from what had happened. For,

(1.) the apostles evidently understood him as referring to his eternal salvation, as is manifest from their answer; since to believe on the Lord Jesus would have no effect in saving him from any danger of punishment to which he might be exposed from what had occurred.

(2.) He could scarcely consider himself as exposed to punishment by the Romans. The prisoners were all safe; none had escaped, or showed any disposition to escape: and besides, for the earthquake and its effects he could not be held responsible. It is not improbable that there was much confusion in his mind. There would be a rush of many thoughts; a state of agitation, and alarm, and fear; and in view of all he would naturally ask those whom he now saw to be men sent by God, and under his protection, what he should do to obtain the favour of that great Being under whose protection he saw that they manifestly were. Perhaps the following thoughts might have gone to produce this state of agitation and alarm:

(1.) They had been designated by the Pythoness Acts 16:17 as religious teachers sent from God, and appointed to "show the way of salvation;" and in her testimony he might have been

disposed to put confidence, or it might now be brought fresh to his recollection.

(2.) He manifestly saw that they were under the protection of God. A remarkable interposition--an earthquake--an event which all the heathen regarded as ominous of the presence of the Divinity--had showed this.

(3.) The guilt of their imprisonment might rush upon his mind; and he might suppose that he, the agent of the imprisonment of the servants of God, would be exposed to his displeasure.

(4.) His own guilt in attempting his own life might overwhelm him with alarm.

(5.) The whole scene was fitted to show him the need of the protection and friendship of the God that had thus interposed. In this state of agitation and alarm, the apostles directed him to the only source of peace and safety--the blood of the atonement. The feelings of an awakened sinner are often strikingly similar to those of this jailer. He is agitated, alarmed, and fearful; he sees that he is a sinner, and trembles; the sins of his life rush over his memory, and fill him with deep anxiety, and he inquires what he must do to be saved. Often too, as here, the Providence of God is the means of awakening the sinner, and of leading to this inquiry. Some alarming dispensation convinces him that God is near, and that the soul is in danger. The loss of health, property, or of a friend, may thus alarm the soul; or the presence of the pestilence, or any fearful judgment, may arrest the attention, and lead to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Reader, have you ever made this inquiry? Have you ever, like the heathen jailer at Philippi, seen yourself to be a lost sinner, and been willing to ask the way to life?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

And thy house. And thy family. That is, the same salvation is equally adapted to, and offered to your family. It does not mean

that his family would be saved simply by his believing; but that the offers had reference to them as well as to himself; that they might be saved as well as he. His attention was thus called at once, as every man's should be, to his family. He was reminded that they needed salvation; and he was presented with the assurance that they might unite with him in the peace and joy of redeeming mercy. Comp. Acts 2:39. It may be implied here that the faith of a father may be expected to be the means of the salvation of his family. It often is so, in fact. But the direct meaning of this is, that salvation was offered to his family as well as himself; implying that if they believed, they should also be saved.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

And washed their stripes. The wounds which had been inflicted by the severe scourging which they had received the night before. We have here a remarkable instance of the effect of religion in producing humanity and tenderness. This same man, a few hours before, had thrust them into the inner prison, and made them fast in the stocks. He evidently had then no concern about their stripes or their wounds. But no sooner was he converted, and his heart changed, than one of his first acts was an act of humanity. He saw them suffering; he pitied them, and hastened to minister to them, and to heal their wounds. Till the time of Christianity there never had been an hospital or an almshouse. Nearly all the hospitals for the sick since have been reared by Christians. They who are most ready to minister to the sick and dying are Christians. They who are willing to encounter the pestilential damps of dungeons to aid the prisoner, are, like Howard, Christians. Who ever saw an infidel attending a dying bed, if he could help it? and where has infidelity ever reared a hospital or an almshouse, or made provision for the widow and the fatherless? Often one of the most striking changes that occurs in conversion is seen in the disposition to be kind and humane to the suffering. Comp. Jas 1:27.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go.

And when it was day, etc. It is evident, from the narrative, that it was not contemplated at first to release them so soon, Acts 16:22-24. But it is not known what produced this change of purpose in the magistrates. It is probable, however, that they had been brought to reflection, somewhat as the jailer had, by the earthquake; and that their consciences had been troubled by the fact, that, in order to please the multitude, they had caused strangers to be beaten and imprisoned without trial, and contrary to the Roman laws. An earthquake is always fitted to alarm the guilty; and among the Romans it was regarded as an omen of the anger of the gods, and was therefore fitted to produce agitation and remorse. Their agitation and alarm were shown by the fact that they sent the officers as soon as it was day. The judgments of God are eminently adapted to alarm sinners. Two ancient Mss. read this, "The magistrates, who were alarmed by the earthquake, sent," etc.-- (Doddridge.) Whether this reading be genuine or not, it doubtless expresses the true cause of their sending to release the apostles.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

They have beaten us openly uncondemned. There are three aggravating circumstances mentioned, of which Paul complains.

(1.) That they had been beaten, contrary to the Roman laws.

(2.) That it had been public; the disgrace had been in the presence of the people, and the reparation ought to be as public. And

(3) that it had been done without a trial, and while they were uncondemned and therefore the magistrates ought themselves to come and release them, and thus publicly acknowledge their error. Paul knew the privileges of a Roman citizen; and at proper times, when the interests of justice and religion required it, he did not hesitate to assert them. In all this he understood and accorded with the Roman laws. The Valerian law declared, that if a citizen appealed from the magistrate to the people, it should not be lawful for the magistrate to beat him with rods, or to behead him. (Plutarch, Life of P. Valeflus Publicola. Livy, ii. 8.) By the Porcian law, it was expressly forbidden that a citizen should be beaten, (Livy, iv. 9.) Cicero (Pro. Rabir. chap. 4) says, that the body of every Roman citizen was inviolable. "The Porcian law," he adds, "has removed the rod from the body of every Roman citizen." And in his celebrated oration against Verres, he says, "A Roman citizen was beaten with rods in the forum, O judges; where, in the mean time, no groan, no other voice of this unhappy man was heard, except the cry, 'I am a Roman citizen'--Take away this hope," he says, "take away this defence from the Roman citizens--let there be no protection in the cry, I am a Roman citizen--and the praetor can with impunity inflict any punishment on him who declares himself a citizen of Rome," etc. Being Romans. Being Romans, or having the privilege of Roman citizens. They were born Jews, but they claimed that they were Roman citizens, and had a right to the privilege of citizenship. On the ground of this claim, and the reason why Paul claimed to be a Roman citizen, Acts 22:28. Privily. Privately. The release should be as public as the unjust act of imprisonment. As they have publicly attempted to disgrace us, so they should as publicly acquit us. This was a matter of mere justice; and as it was of great importance to their character and success, they insisted on it. Nay, verily; but let them come, etc. It was proper that they should be required to do this,

(1.) because they had been illegally imprisoned, and the injustice of the magistrates should be acknowledged.

(2.) Because the Roman laws had been violated, and the majesty of the Roman people thus insulted and honour should be done to the laws.

(3.) Injustice had been done to Paul and Silas, and they had a right to demand just treatment and protection.

(4.) Such a public act on the part of the magistrates would strengthen the young converts, and show them that the apostles were not guilty of a violation of the laws.

(5.) It would tend to the honour and to the furtherance of religion. It would be a public acknowledgment of their innocence; and would go far towards lending to them the sanction of the laws as religious teachers. We may learn from this also,

(1.) that though Christianity requires meekness in the reception of injuries, that there are occasions where Christians may insist on their rights according to the laws. Comp. Jn 18:23.

(2.) That this is to be done, particularly where the honour of religion is concerned, and where by it the gospel will be promoted. A Christian may bear much as a man in a private capacity, and may submit, without any effort to seek reparation; but where the honour of the gospel is concerned--where submission, without any effort to obtain justice, might be followed by disgrace to the cause of religion--a higher obligation may require him to seek a vindication of his character, and to claim the protection of the laws. His name, and character, and influence, belong to the church. The laws are designed as a protection to an injured name, or of violated

property and rights, and of an endangered life. And when that protection can be had only by an appeal to the laws, such an appeal, as in the case of Paul and Silas, is neither vindictive nor improper. My private interests I may sacrifice, if I choose; my public name, and character, and principles belong to the church and the world; and the laws, if necessary, may be called in for their protection.

38 And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

They feared, when they heard, etc. They were apprehensive of punishment for having imprisoned them in violation of the laws of the empire. To punish unjustly a Roman citizen was deemed an offence to the majesty of the Roman people, and was severely punished by the laws. Dionysius Hall. (Ant. Rom. ii.) says, that "the punishment appointed for those who abrogated or transgressed the Valerian law was death, and the confiscation of his property." The emperor Claudius deprived the inhabitants of Rhodes of freedom for having crucified some Roman citizens. Dio. Cuss. lib. 60. (See Kuin[illegible]el and Grotius.)

39 And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

And they came and besought them. A most humiliating act for Roman magistrates; but in this case it was unavoidable. The apostles had them completely in their power, and could easily effect their disgrace and ruin. Probably they besought them by declaring them innocent; by affirming that they were ignorant that they were Roman citizens, etc. And desired them to depart, etc. Probably,

(1.) to save their own character, and to secure from their taking any further steps to convict the magistrates of violating the laws; and;

(2.) to evade any further popular tumult on their account. This advice they saw fit to comply with, after they had seen and comforted the brethren, Acts 16:40. They had accomplished their main purpose in going to Philippi; they had preached the

gospel; had laid, the foundation of a flourishing church, (comp. the Epistle to the Philippians;) and they were now prepared to prosecute the purpose of their agency into surrounding regions. Thus the opposition of the people and the magistrates at Philippi was the occasion of the founding of the church there; and thus their unkind and inhospitable request that they should leave them, was the means of the extension of the gospel into adjacent regions.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of* Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Acts-17

The Uproar in Thessalonica

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
2 and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,
3 opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Jesus should suffer, this point, the Jews were unwilling to admit; but it was essential to his argument in proving that Jesus was the Messiah, to show that it was foretold that he should die for the sins of men. On the necessity of this, Lk 4:26. Have suffered. That he should die. And that this Jesus. And that this Jesus of Nazareth, who has thus suffered and risen, whom, said he, I preach to you, is the Messiah. The arguments by which Paul probably proved that Jesus was the Messiah were,

(1.) that he corresponded with the prophecies respecting him, in the following particulars:

(a.) He was born at Bethlehem, Mic 5.2

(b.) He was of the tribe of Judah, Gen 49:10

(c.) He was descended from Jesse, and of the royal line of David, Isa 11:1,10

(d.) He came at the time predicted Dan 9:24-27

(e.) His appearance, character, work, etc., corresponded with the predictions of Isa 53.

(2.) His miracles proved that he was the Messiah, for he professed to be, and God would not work a miracle to confirm the claims of an impostor.

(3.) For the same reason, his resurrection from the dead proved that he was the Messiah.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

And of the devout Greeks. Religious Greeks; or, of those who worshipped God. Those were so denoted who had renounced the worship of idols, and who attended on the worship of the synagogue, but who were not fully admitted to the privileges of Jewish proselytes. They were called, by the Jews, proselytes of the gate.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Thus afterwards, in the primitive times, whatever calamities came upon the state and kingdom, whatever commotions or tumults did arise in nations, presently Christianity was blamed, and instantly the Christians were cast to the lions; whereas it is not the gospel, but men's corruption, which breeds disturbances

Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort. This is an unhappy translation. The word lewd is not in the original. The Greek is, "And having taken certain wicked men of those who were about the forum," or market-place. The forum, or market-place, was the place where the idle assembled, and where those were gathered together that wished to be employed, Mt 20:3. Many of these would be of abandoned character --the idle, the dissipated, and the worthless; and, therefore, just the materials for a mob. It does not appear that they felt any particular interest in the subject; but they were, like other mobs, easily excited, and urged on to any acts of violence. The pretence on which the mob was excited was, that they had everywhere produced disturbance, and that they violated the laws of the Roman emperor, Acts 17:6,7. It may be observed, however, that a mob usually regards very little the cause in which they are engaged. They may be roused either for or against religion, and become as full of zeal for the insulted honour of religion as against it. The profane, the worthless, and the abandoned, thus often become violently enraged for the honour of religion, and fun of indignation and tumult against those who are accused of violating public peace and order.

These that have turned the world upside down. That have excited commotion and disturbance in other places. The charge has been often brought against the gospel, that it has been the occasion of confusion and disorder.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

7 whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar. The charge against them was that of sedition and rebellion against the Roman emperor. Grotius on this verse remarks, that the Roman people, and after them the emperors, would not permit the name of king to be mentioned in any of the vanquished

provinces, except by their permission. Saying that there is another king. This was probably a charge of mere malignity. They probably understood, that when the apostles spoke of Jesus as a king, they did not do it as of a temporal prince. But it was easy to pervert their words, and to give plausibility to the accusation. The same thing had occurred in regard to the Lord Jesus himself, Lk 23:2.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the others, they let them go.

And when they had taken security of Jason. This is an expression taken from courts, and means that Jason and the other gave satisfaction to the magistrates for the good conduct of Paul and Silas, and became responsible for it. Whether it was by depositing a sum of money, and by thus giving bail, is not quite Clear. The sense is, that they did it in accordance with the Roman usages, and gave sufficient security for the good conduct of Paul and Silas. Heuman supposes that the pledge given was, that they should leave the city. Michaelis thinks that they gave a pledge that they would no more harbour them; but that if they returned again to them, they would deliver them to the magistrates.

The Apostles at Beroea

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Beroea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Daily. Not only on the Sabbath, and in the synagogue; but they made it a daily employment. It is evident from this, that they had the Scriptures; and this is one proof that Jewish families would, if possible, obtain the oracles of God. Whether those things were so. Whether the doctrines stated by Paul and Silas

were in accordance with the Scriptures. The Old Testament they received as the standard of truth, and whatever could be shown to be in accordance with that they received. On this verse we may remark, (1.) that it is proof of true nobleness and liberality of mind to be willing to examine the proofs of the truth of religion. What the friends of Christianity have had most cause to lament and regret is, that so many are unwilling to examine its claims; that they spurn it as unworthy of serious thought, and condemn it without hearing. (2.) The Scriptures should be examined daily. If we wish to arrive at the truth, they should be the object of constant study. That man has very little reason to expect that he will grow in knowledge and grace, who does not peruse, with candour and With prayer, a portion of the Bible every day. (3.) The constant searching of the Scriptures is the best way to keep the mind from error. He who does not do it daily may expect to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine," and to have no settled opinions. (4) The preaching of ministers should be examined by the Scriptures. Their doctrines are of no value unless they accord with the Bible. Every preacher should expect his doctrines to be examined in this way, and to be rejected if they are not in accordance with the word of God. The church, in proportion to its increase in purity and knowledge, will feel this more and more; and it is an indication of advance in piety when men are increasingly disposed to examine everything by the Bible. How immensely important then is it, that the young should be trained up to diligent habits of searching the word of God. And how momentous is the duty of parents, and of Sabbath-school teachers, to inculcate just views of the interpretation of the Bible, and to form the habits of the rising generation so that they shall be disposed and enabled to examine every doctrine by the sacred oracles. The purity of the church depends on the extension of the spirit of the noble-minded Bereans; and that spirit is to be extended mainly by the instrumentality of Sabbath-schools.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Beroea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

As Christ sends his ministers, so the devil sends his messengers from place to place; and as the ministers of Christ are never weary of his service for the good of souls, so persecutors are restless, they will compass sea and land to harass and drive the faithful ambassadors of Christ from city to city, and if it were in their power, to banish them out of the world. Lord! help all thy faithful ministers to execute this piece of holy revenge upon Satan, that we may be even with him for all his malice and spite against us. O let us endeavour to do all the possible service, and the utmost good we can, wherever we come.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timothy abode there still.

It was good policy and great providence in the apostle and his friends to look one way and go another; to look towards the sea, and to go to Athens by land.

There is a wise and holy subtilty in foreseeing the evil, and hiding ourselves: a serpent's eye is a singular ornament in a dove's head.

Piety without policy, is too simple to be safe; and policy without piety, is too subtle to be good. The sagacity of the serpent, and the innocency of the dove, both may and ought to go together.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

Athens was the most celebrated city of Greece, and was distinguished for the military talents, learning, eloquence, and politeness of its inhabitants. No city of Greece, or of the ancient world, was so much distinguished for philosophy, learning, and the arts. The most celebrated warriors, poets, statesmen, and philosophers, were either born or flourished there. The most celebrated models of architecture and statuary were there; and for ages it held its pre-eminence in civilization, arts, and arms.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Now while Paul waited. How long he was there is not intimated; but doubtless some time would elapse before they could arrive. In the mean time, Paul had ample opportunity to observe the state of the city. His spirit was stirred in him. His mind was greatly excited. The word used here παρωξυνετο denotes any excitement, agitation, or paroxysm of mind, 1Cor 13:5. It here means that the mind of Paul was greatly concerned, or agitated, doubtless with pity and distress, at their folly and danger. The city wholly given to idolatry. Greek, κατειδωλον. It is well translated in the margin, "full of idols." The word is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. That this was the condition of the city is abundantly testified by profane writers. Thus Pausanias (in Attic. i. 24) says, "The Athenians greatly surpassed others in their zeal for religion" Lucian (T. i. Prometh. p. 180) says of the city of Athens," On every side there are altars, victims, temples, and festivals." Livy (45, 27) says, that Athens "was full of the images of gods and men, adorned with every variety of material, and with all the skill of art." And Petronius (Sat. xvii.) says humourously of the city, that "it was easier to find a god than a man there." See Kuin[illegible]el. In this verse we may see how a splendid, idolatrous city will strike a pious mind. Athens then had more that was splendid in architecture, more that was brilliant in science, and more that was beautiful in the arts, than any other city in the world; perhaps more than all the rest of the world united. Yet there is no account that the mind of Paul was filled with admiration; there is no record that he spent his time in examining the works of art; there is no evidence that he forgot his high purpose in an idle and useless contemplation of temples and statuary. His was a Christian mind; and he contemplated all this with a Christian heart. That heart was deeply affected in view of the amazing guilt of a people that were ignorant of the true God, and that had filled their city with idols reared to the honour of imaginary divinities; and who, in

the midst of all this splendour and luxury, were going down to the gates of death. So should every pious man feel who treads the streets of a splendid and guilty city. The Christian will not despise the productions of art; but he will feel, deeply feel, for the unhappy condition of those who, amidst wealth and splendour and adorning, are withholding their affections from the living God, bestowing them on the works of their own hands, or on objects degraded and polluting, and who are going unredeemed to eternal woe. Happy would it be if every Christian traveller who visits cities of wealth and splendour would, like Paul, be affected in view of their crimes and dangers; and happy if, like him, men could cease their unbounded admiration of magnificence and splendour in temples and palaces and statuary, to regard the condition of mind, not perishable like marble; and of the soul, more magnificent even in its ruins than all the works of Phidias or Praxiteles.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

Verse 18. Then certain philosophers. Athens was distinguished, among all the cities of Greece and the world, for the cultivation of a subtle and refined philosophy. This was their boast, and the object of their constant search and study, 1Cor 1:22. Of the Epicureans. This sect of philosophers was so named from Epicurus, who lived about 300 years before the Christian era. They denied that the world was created by God, and that the gods exercised any care or providence over human affairs, and also the immortality of the soul. Against these positions of the sect, Paul directed his main argument, in proving that the world was created and governed by God. One of the distinguishing doctrines of Epicurus was, that pleasure was the summum bonum, or chief good, and that virtue was to be practised only as it contributed to pleasure. By pleasure,

however, Epicurus did not mean sensual and grovelling appetites, and degraded vices, but rational pleasure, properly regulated and governed. See Good's Book of Nature. But whatever his views were, it is certain that his followers had embraced the doctrine that voluptuousness and the pleasures of sense were to be practised without restraint. Both in principle and practice, therefore, they devoted themselves to a life of gaiety and sensuality, and sought happiness only in indolence, effeminacy, and voluptuousness. Confident in the belief that the world was not under the administration of a God of justice; they gave themselves up to the indulgence of every passion; the infidels of their time, and the exact example of the gay and fashionable multitudes of all times, that live without God, and that seek pleasure as their chief good. And of the Stoics. These were a sect of philosophers, so named from the Greek στοα, stoa, porch, or portico, because Zeno, the founder of the sect, held his school and taught in a porch, in the city of Athens. Zeno was born in the island of Cyprus, but the greater part of his life was spent at Athena in teaching philosophy. After having taught publicly forty-eight years, he died at the age of ninety-six, two hundred and-sixty-four years before Christ. The doctrines of the sect were, that the Universe was created by God; that all things were fixed by fate; that even God was under the dominion of fatal necessity; that the fates were to be submitted to; that the passions and affections were to be suppressed and restrained; that happiness consisted in the insensibility of the soul to pain; and that a man should gain an absolute mastery over all the passions and affections of his nature. They were stern in their views of virtue, and, like the Pharisees prided themselves on their own righteousness. They supposed that matter was eternal, and that God was either the animating principal or soul of the world, or that all things were a part of God. They fluctuated much in their views of a future state; some of then holding that the soul would exist only until the destruction of the universe, and others that it would finally be absorbed into the Divine Essence, and become a part of God. It will be readily seen, therefore, with what pertinency and address Paul discoursed to them. The leading doctrines of both

sects were met by him. Encountered him. Contended with him; opposed themselves to him. And some said. This was said in scorn and contempt. He had excited attention; but they scorned the doctrines that should be delivered by an unknown foreigner from Judea. What will this babbler say? Margin, base fellow. Greek, σπερμολογος. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means one who collects seeds; and was applied by the Greeks to the poor persons who collected the scattered grain in the fields after harvest, or to gleaners; and also to the poor, who obtained a precarious subsistence around the markets and in the streets. It was also applied to birds that picked up the scattered seeds of grain in the field, or in the markets. The word came hence to have a two-fold signification. (1.) It denoted the poor, needy, and vile; the refuse and offscouring of society; and, (2,) from the birds which were thus employed, and which were troublesome by their continual unmusical sounds, it came to denote those who were talkative, garrulous, and opinionated; those who collected the opinions of others, or scraps of knowledge, and retailed them fluently, without order or method, It was a word, therefore, expressive of their contempt for an unknown foreigner who should pretend to instruct the learned men and philosophers of Greece. Doddridge renders it, "retailer of scraps." Syriac, "collector of words." Other some. Others. He seemeth to be a setter forth. He announces or declares the existence of strange gods. The reason why they supposed this was, that he made the capital points of his preaching to be Jesus and the resurrection, which they mistook for the names of divinities. Of strange gods. Of foreign gods, or demons. They worshipped many gods themselves; and as they believed that every country had its own peculiar divinities, they supposed that Paul had come to announce the existence of some such foreign, and to them unknown divinities. The word translated gods δαιμονιων, denotes, properly, the genii, or spirits who were superior to men, but inferior to the gods. It is, however, often employed to denote the gods themselves; and is evidently so used here. The gods among the Greeks were such as were supposed to have that rank by nature. The demons were such as had been exalted

to divinity from being heroes and distinguished men. He preached unto them Jesus. He proclaimed him as the Messiah. The mistake which they made, by supposing that he was a foreign divinity, was one which was perfectly natural for minds degraded like theirs by idolatry. They had no idea of a pure God; they knew nothing of the doctrine of the Messiah; and they naturally supposed, therefore, that he of whom Paul spoke so much must be a god of some other nation, of a rank similar to their own divinities. And the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus, and through him the resurrection of the dead. It is evident, I think, that by the resurrection (τηναναστασιν) they understood him to refer to the name of some goddess. Such was the interpretation of Chrysostom. The Greeks had erected altars to Shame, and Famine, and Desire, (Paus. i. 17,) and it is probable that they supposed "the resurrection," or the Anastasis, to be the name also of some unknown goddess who presided over the resurrection. Thus they regarded him as a setter forth of two foreign or strange gods.--Jesus, and the Anastasis, or resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus [Mars hill. *It was the highest court in Athens*], saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is?*

And brought him unto Areopagus. Margin, or Mars' hill (so called because the temple of mars stood upon it). This was the place or court in which the Areopagites, the celebrated supreme judges of Athens, assembled. It was on a hill almost in the middle of the city; but nothing now remains by which we can determine the form or construction of the tribunal. The hill is almost entirely a mass of stone, and is not easily accessible, its sides being steep and abrupt. On many accounts this was the most celebrated tribunal in the world. Its decisions were distinguished for justice and correctness; nor was there any court in Greece in which so much confidence was placed. This court took cognizance of murders, impieties, and immoralities; they punished vices of all kinds, including idleness; they rewarded the virtuous; they were peculiarly attentive to blasphemies against the gods, and to the performance of the sacred mysteries of religion. It was, therefore, with the greatest

propriety that Paul was questioned before this tribunal, as being regarded as a setter forth of strange gods, and as being supposed to wish to introduce a new mode of worship. See Potter's Antiquities of Greece, b. i. chap. 19; and Travels of Anacharsis, vol. i. pp. 136, 185; ii. pp. 292--295. May we know. We would know. This seems to have been a respectful inquiry; and it does not appear that Paul was brought there for the sake of trial. There are no accusations; no witnesses; none of the forms of trial. They seem to have resorted thither because it was the place where the subject of religion was usually discussed, and because it was a place of confluence of the citizens and judges and wise men of Athens, and of foreigners. The design seems to have been not to try him, but fairly to canvass the claims of his doctrines. See Acts 17:21. It was just an instance of the inquisitive spirit of the people of Athens, willing to hear before they condemned, and to examine before they approved.

The temper of the men of Athens described to us: they were great and greedy newsmongers, they spent their time in telling and hearing news of any sort. All which was the effect of an itching curiosity; a disease which has descended from age to age, from place to place, from person to person, occasioning a sinful expense of time, which can never be recalled; the neglect of our necessary affairs, which can never be redeemed; spreading false stories of others, and provoking displeasure against ourselves.

O how wise and happy were it, if we enquired after news, not as Athenians, but as Christians; that we might know the better how to manage our prayers and praises for the church and nation.

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

How wonderfully the overruling providence of God concerned itself for the apostle's preservation here at Athens: they hauled him away to their high court of judicature, which sat upon Mars'-hill, (so called because the temple of mars stood upon it,)

where the most learned men assembled, and hear and determine what new god was to be worshipped.

Here note, 1. How the providence of God brought St. Paul to a public place to preach in, Mars'-hill, where was a confluence of all the people, and a congregation of the most learned Gentile philosphers. This gave the apostle a mighty opportunity for the service of preaching.

And, 2 note, How tenderly the apostle was treated in this cruel court: although this court had condemned Diagoras, Protagoras, and Socrates himself, for undervaluing their gods, and bringing in new deities; yet the apostle's life is not only spared by these judges, but they speak candidly and kindly to the apostle, and court him to gratify their curiosity, by informing them of this novelty, which they were so inquisitive after, and desired to hear more of his divine discourse.

Thus the Lord eminently shows, how the hearts of men are in his hand, and that without his permission all the bitter enemies of his church shall not move a tongue, nor lift up a finger, against any of his ministers and members.

21 (For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill [*or,* the court of the Areopagites], and said, *Ye* men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

In the midst of Mars' hill. Greek, Areopagus. This should have been retained in the translation. Ye men of Athens. This language was perfectly respectful, notwithstanding his heart had been deeply affected by their idolatry. Everything about this discourse is calm, grave, cool, and argumentative. Paul understood the character of his auditors, and did not commence his discourse by denouncing them, or suppose that they would be convinced by mere dogmatical assertion. No happier

instance can be found, of cool, collected argumentation, than is furnished in this discourse. I perceive. He perceived this by his observations of their forms of worship, in passing through their city, Acts 17:23. In all things. In respect to all events. Ye are too superstitious. δεισιδαιμονεστερους.

This is a most unhappy translation. We use the word superstitious always in a bad sense, to denote being over scrupulous and rigid in religious observances, particularly in smaller matters; or to a zealous devotion to rites and observances which are not commanded. But the word here is designed to convey no such idea. It properly means reverence for the gods or demons. It is used in the classic writers in a good sense, to denote piety towards the gods, or suitable fear and reverence for them; and also in a bad sense, to denote improper fear or excessive dread of their anger; and in this sense it accords with our word superstitious. But it is altogether improbable that Paul should have used it in a bad sense. For,

(1.) it was not his custom needlessly to blame or offend his auditors.

(2.) It is not probable that he would commence his discourse in a manner that would only excite their prejudice and opposition.

(3.) In the thing which he specifies, Acts 17:23, as proof on the subject, he does not introduce it as a matter of blame, but rather as a proof of their devotedness to the cause of religion, and of their regard for God.

(4.) The whole speech is calm, dignified, and argumentative--such as became such a place, such a speaker, and such an audience. The meaning of the expression is, therefore, "I perceive that you are greatly devoted to reverence for religion; that it is a characteristic of the people to honour the gods, to rear altars to them, and to recognize the Divine agency in times of trial." The proof of this was the altar reared to the unknown

God; its bearing on his purpose was, that such a state of public sentiment must be favourable to an inquiry into the truth of what he was about to state.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions [*or*, gods that ye worship], I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

To the unknown God. αγνωστωθεω. Where this altar was reared, or on what occasion, has been a subject of much debate with expositors. That there was such an altar in Athens, though it may not have been specifically mentioned by the Greek writers, is rendered probable by the following circumstances:

(1.) It was customary to rear such altars. Minutius Felix says of the Romans, in his Philopatria, uses this form of an oath: "I swear by the unknown God at Athens"--the very expression used by the apostle. And again he says, (chap. xxix. 180,) "We have found out the unknown God at Athens, and worshipped him with our hands stretched up to heaven," etc.

(3.) There were altars at Athens inscribed to the unknown gods. Philostratus says, (in Vita. Apollo. vi. 3,) "And this at Athens, where there are even altars to the unknown gods," Thus Pausanina (in Attic. chap. 1) says, that at Athens there are altars of gods which are called the UNKNOWN ones." Jerome, in his commentary, (Epistle to Titus 1:12,) says that the whole inscription was, "to the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa; to the unknown and strange gods."

(4.) There was a remarkable altar reared in Athens in a time of pestilence, in honour of the unknown god which had granted them deliverance. Diogenes Laertius says that Epimenides restrained the pestilence in the following manner: "Taking white and black sheep, he led them to the Areopagus, and there permitted them to go where they would, commanding those who followed them to sacrifice (τωπροσηκοντιθεω) to the god to whom these things pertained, [or who had the power of

averting the plague, whoever he might be, without adding the name,] and thus to allay the pestilence. From which it has arisen, that at this day, through the villages of the Athenians, altars are found without any name. (Dioge. Laer. b. i. & 10.) This took place about 600 years before Christ, and it is not improbable that one or more of those altars remained until the time of Paul. It should be added, that the natural inscription on those altars would be, "To the unknown god." None of the gods to whom they usually sacrificed could deliver them from the pestilence. They therefore reared them to some unknown Being who had the power to free them from the plague. To the unknown God. αγνωστωθεω. Where this altar was reared, or on what occasion, has been a subject of much debate with expositors. That there was such an altar in Athens, though it may not have been specifically mentioned by the Greek writers, is rendered probable by the following circumstances:

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24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

God that made the world. The main object of this discourse of Paul is to convince them of the folly of idolatry, Acts 17:29, and thus to lead them to repentance. For this purpose he commences with a statement of the true doctrine respecting God as the Creator of all things. We may observe here,

(1.) that he speaks here of God as the Creator of the world--thus opposing indirectly their opinions that there were many gods.

(2.) He speaks of him as the Creator of the world, and thus opposes the opinion that matter was eternal; that all things were controlled by fate; and that he could be confined to temples. The Epicureans held that matter was eternal, and that the world was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms. To this opinion

Paul opposed the doctrine that all things were made by one God. Comp. Acts 14:15. Seeing that, etc. Gr., "He being Lord of heaven and earth." Lord of heaven and earth. Proprietor and Ruler of heaven and earth. It is highly absurd, therefore, to suppose that He who is present in heaven and in earth at the same time, and who rules over all, should be confined to a temple of an earthly structure, or dependent on man for anything.

25 neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed
any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Neither is worshipped with men's hands. The word here rendered worshipped--θεραπευεται--denotes to serve; to wait upon; and then to render religious service or homage. There is reference here, undoubtedly, to a notion prevalent among the heathen, that the gods were fed or nourished by the offerings made to them. The idea is prevalent among the Hindoos, that the sacrifices which are made, and which are offered in the temples, are consumed by the gods themselves. Perhaps, also, Paul had reference to the fact that so many persons were employed in their temples in serving them with their hands; that is, in preparing sacrifices and feasts in their honour. Paul affirms that the great Creator of all things cannot be thus dependent on his creatures for happiness; and consequently that that mode of worship must be highly absurd. The same idea occurs in Ps 50:10-12:

For every beast of the forest is mine; And the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountain; And the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Seeing he giveth. Gr., He having given to all, etc. Life. He is the Source of life; and therefore he cannot be dependent on that life which he has himself imparted. And breath. The power of breathing, by which life is sustained. He not only originally

gave life, but he gives it at each moment; he gives the power of drawing each breath by which life is supported. It is possible that the phrase "life and breath" may be the figure hendyades, by which one thing is expressed by two words. And it is highly probable that Paul here had reference to Gen 2:7: "And the LORD God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The same idea occurs in Job 12:10:

In whose hand is the life (margin) of every living thing; And the breath of all mankind.

And all things. All things necessary to sustain life. We may see here how dependent man is on God. There can be no more absolute dependence than that for every breath. How easy it would be for God to suspend our breathing! How incessant the care, how unceasing the providence by which, whether we sleep or wake --whether we remember or forget him--he heaves our chest, fills our lungs, restores the vitality of our blood, and infuses rigour into our frame! Comp. Rom 11:36.

26 and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

And hath made of one blood. All the families of men are descended from one origin, or stock. However different their complexion, features, language, etc., yet they are derived from a common parent. The word blood is often used to denote race, stock, kindred. This passage completely proves that all the human family are descended from the same ancestor; and that, consequently, all the variety of complexion, etc., is to be traced to some other cause than that there were originally different races created. See Gen 1; comp. Mal 2:10.

The design of the apostle in this affirmation was, probably, to convince the Greeks that he regarded them all as brethren; and that, although he was a Jew, yet he was not enslaved to any narrow notions or prejudices in reference to other men. It follows also from this, that no one nation, and no individual,

can claim any pre-eminence over others in virtue of birth or blood. All are in this respect equal; and the whole human family, however they may differ in complexion, customs, and laws, are to be regarded and treated as brethren. It follows, also, that no one part of the race has a right to enslave or oppress any other part, on account of difference of complexion.

The times before appointed. This evidently refers to the dispersion and migration of nations. And it means that God had, in his plan, fixed the times when each country should be settled; the time of the location, the rise, the prosperity, and the fall of each nation. It implies,

(1.) that these times had been before appointed; and,

(2.) that it was done in wisdom. It was his plan; and the different continents and islands had not, therefore, been settled by chance, but by a wise rule, and in accordance with his arrangement and design. And the bounds of their habitation. Their limits and boundaries as a people. He has designated the black man to Africa; the white man to northern regions; the American savage he fixed in the wilds of the western continent, etc. By customs, laws, inclinations, and habits, he fixed the boundaries of their habitations, and disposed them to dwell there.

We may learn,

(1.) that the revolutions and changes of nations are under the direction of infinite wisdom;

(2.) that men should not be restless and dissatisfied with the place where God has located them;

(3.) that God has given sufficient limits to all, so that it is not needful to invade others; and,

(4.) that wars of conquest are evil. God has given to men their places of abode, and we have no right to disturb those abodes, or to attempt to displace them in a violent manner. This strain of remark by the apostle was also opposed to all the notions of the Epicurean philosophers; and yet so obviously true and just, that they could not gainsay or resist it.

27 that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

The design of thus placing them on the earth--of giving them their habitation among his works--was that they should contemplate his wisdom in his works, and thus come to a knowledge of his existence and character.

They might feel after him. The word used here--ψηλαφησειαν means, properly, to touch, to handle, Lk 24:39, Heb 12:18; and then to ascertain the qualities of an object by the sense of touch. And as the sense of touch is regarded as a certain way of ascertaining the existence and qualities of an object, the word means to search diligently, that we may know distinctly and certainly. The word has this sense here. It means to search diligently and accurately for God, to learn his existence and perfections. The Syriac renders it, "that they may seek for God, and find him from his creatures."

Though he be not far, etc. This seems to be stated by the apostle to show that it was possible to find him; and that even those who were without a revelation need not despair of becoming acquainted with his existence and perfections. He is near to us,

(1.) because the proofs of his existence and power are round about us everywhere, Ps 19:1-6.

(2.) Because he fills all things in heaven and earth by his essential presence, Ps 139:7-10, Jer 23:23,24, Amos 9:2-4, 1Kgs 8:27. We should learn then,

(a.) to be afraid to sin. God is present with us, and sees all.

(b.) He can protect the righteous. He is ever with them.

(c.) He can detect and punish the wicked. He sees all their plans and thoughts, and records all their doings.

(d.) We should seek him continually. It is the design for which he has made us; and he has given us abundant opportunities to learn his existence and perfections.

28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said,
For we are also his offspring.

For in him we live. The expression "in him" evidently means by him; by his originally forming us, and continually sustaining us. No words can better express our constant dependence on him. He is the original Fountain of life; and he upholds us each moment. A similar sentiment is found in Plautus, (5, 4, 14:) "O Jupiter, who dost cherish and nourish the race of man; by whom we live, and with whom is the hope of the life of all men."--(Kui□nel.) It does not appear, however, that Paul intended this as a quotation; yet he doubtless intended to state a sentiment with which they were familiar, and with which they would agree.

For we are also his offspring. This precise expression is found in Aratus, (Phaenom. v. 5,) and in Cleanthus in a hymn to Jupiter. Substantially the same sentiment is found in several other Greek poets. Aratus was a Greek poet of Cilicia, the native place of Paul, and flourished about 277 years before Christ. As Paul was a native of the same country, it is highly probable he was acquainted with his writings. Aratus passed much of his time at the court of Antigonus Gonatas, king of Macedonia. His principal work was the Phaenomena, which is here quoted, and was so highly esteemed in Greece that many learned men wrote commentaries on it. The sentiment here

quoted was directly at variance with the views of the Epicureans; and it is proof of Patti's address and skill, as well as his acquaintance with his auditors, and with the Greek poets, that he was able to adduce a sentiment so directly in point, and that had the concurrent testimony of so many of the Greeks themselves. It is one instance among thousands where an acquaintance with profane learning may be of use to a minister of the gospel.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

We ought not to think. It is absurd to suppose. The argument of the apostle is this: "Since we are formed by God; since we are like him, living and intelligent beings; since we are more excellent in our nature than the most precious and ingenious works of art, it is absurd to suppose that the original Source of our existence can be like gold, and silver, and stone. Man himself is far more excellent than an image of wood or stone; how much more excellent still must be the great Fountain and Source of all our wisdom and intelligence!" See this thought pursued at length in Isa 40:18-23.

That the sin of idolatry is not only a very great sin, but a very unreasonable and absurd sin; it is not only sacrilegious but silly for a man to worship his own workmanship, and to fall down upon his knees to the work of his own hands.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

God winked at. υπεριδων. Overlooked, connived at; did not come forth to punish. In Acts 14:16, it is expressed thus: "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." The sense is, he passed over those times without punishing them, as if he did not see them. For wise purposes he suffered them to walk in ignorance, and to make the fair experiment to show what men would do; and how much necessity there was for a revelation to instruct them in the true knowledge of God. We are not to suppose that God regarded idolatry as innocent,

or the crimes and vices to which idolatry led as of no importance; but their ignorance was a mitigating circumstance, and he suffered the nations to live without coming forth in direct judgment against them. Comp. Acts 3:17; Acts 14:16.

The duty of the present time declared: to repent. This is a commanded duty, and an universally commanded duty: Now he commands all men every where to repent.

From the whole note,

1. That the times of paganism were times of ignorance.

2. That it is an unspeakable misery to be born and brought up in such times.

3. That to live impenitently in times of knowledge, is a sin that God will by no means wink at.

4. That the great purpose and design of the gospel wheresoever it is sent and preached, is to invite men to repentance: Now he commandeth all men every where to repent.

31 because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

These words are an argument or motive to enforce the foregoing duty of repentance; God requires every man, every where, and that now immediately, to forsake their idols and sinful ways; because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Christ Jesus, of which he hath already given assurance, by raising him from the dead.

Where note,

1. A judgment to come asserted: He (that is, God) will judge the world; he that hath now an observing eye, will hereafter have a rewarding hand.

Note,

2. That there not only is a judgment to come, but the day or time of it is determined and fixed: He hath appointed a day. As the precise time of Christ's first coming was fixed by an unalterable, though unknown, decree, so is also the time of his second coming: that not knowing the hour, we may be upon our watch every hour.

Note, 3. That as the day of judgment is determined, so the person of the judge is also constituted and ordained: He will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained. This is an act of justice to our Saviour, that he, having humbled himself to take our nature, should, as the reward of his humiliation, judge that world which he died to save. And an act of kindness towards us, that he should be our judge, who took upon him our nature, and had so much love to choose our own judge, what choice could we make better for ourselves, than that man whom God hath ordained?

Observe, 4. The assurance which God hath given us of having Christ for our judge; namely, his raising him from the dead.

But how doth that assure us of Christ being our judge?

Answer. Our blessed Saviour, when he was in the world, often declared that he was appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead, and appealed to his resurrection as the great proof of what he said.

Now when Almighty God did accordingly raise him insuch a wonderful manner, (as we know he did,) what is it less than

God's setting his seal to his commission, and openly proclaiming him to be the judge of all the world?

Observe, 5. The manner of this judgment, or the measures which this judge will proceed by, at the great day; and that is, according to righteousness: He will judge the world in righteousness. Not in rigour and severity, taking all the advantages that power can give him; nor yet arbitrarily and upon prerogative, but according to known laws; nor yet partially with respect to persons; but every man's doom shall depend upon the holiness or unholiness of his heart and life.

Farther, Our Judge will candidly interpret men's actions, and make the very best of things that the case will bear; principally looking at the sincerity of men's intentions, and making all favourable allowances for their failings and infirmities that can consist with justice; and will distribute his rewards and happiness and glory to good men in the other world. Now having this high and full assurance of a judgment to come, let us seriously believe it, daily expect it, and duly prepare for it; let neither profit tempt us, nor pleasure allure us, nor power embolden us, nor privacy encourage us, to do that thing which we cannot answer at the great tribunal.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter.*

Hath given assurance Has afforded evidence of this. That evidence consists,

(1.) in the fact that Jesus declared that he would judge the nations, Jn 5:25,26 Mt 25, and

(2.) God confirmed the truth of his declaration by raising him from the dead, or gave his sanction to what the Lord Jesus had said, for God would not work a miracle in favour of an imposter.

Some mocked. Some of the philosophers derided him. It was believed by none of the Greeks; it seemed incredible; and they regarded it as so absurd as not to admit of an argument. It has not been uncommon for even professed philosophers to mock at the doctrines of religion, and to meet the arguments of Christianity with a Sneer. The Epicureans particularly would be likely to deride this, as they denied altogether any future state. It is not improbable that this derision by the Epicureans produced such a disturbance as to break off Paul's discourse, as that of Stephen had been by the clamour of the Jews, Acts 7:54. And others said. Probably some of the Stoics. The doctrine of a future state was not denied by them; and the fact, affirmed by Paul, that one had been raised up from the dead, would appear more plausible to them, and it might be a matter worth inquiry to ascertain whether the alleged fact did not furnish a new argument for their views.

They, therefore, proposed to examine this further at some future time. That the inquiry was prosecuted any further does not appear probable; for,

(1.) no church was organized at Athens.

(2.) There is no account of any future interview with Paul.

(3.) He departed almost immediately from them, Acts 18:1. Men who defer inquiry on the subject of religion seldom find the favourable period arrive. Those who propose to examine its doctrines at a future time, often do it to avoid the inconvenience of becoming Christians now; and as a plausible and easy way of rejecting the gospel altogether, without appearing to be rude, or to give offence.

What reason can be assigned but this, That these grave philosophers, profound scholars, venerable senators and citizens, who had a name for wisdom throughout the world were too wise to be saved by the foolishness of preaching!

As the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, so the wisdom of God in the gospel is accounted foolishness by the wise men of the world; according to that of the apostle, 1Cor 1:21. "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.

We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

The Areopagite. Connected with the court of Areopagus, but in what way is not known. It is probable that he was one of the judges. The conversion of one man was worth the labour of Paul; and the secret influence of that conversion might have had an extensive influence on others. In regard to this interesting account of the visit of Paul to Athens --probably the only one which he made to that splendid capital-- we may remark,

(1.) that he was indefatigable and constant in his great work.

(2.) Christians, amidst the splendour and gaieties of such cities, should have their hearts deeply affected in view of the moral desolations of the people.

(3.) They should be willing to do their duty, and to bear witness to the pure and simple gospel in the presence of the great and the noble.

(4.) They should not consider it their main business to admire splendid temples, and statues, and paintings--the works of art; but their main business should be, to do good as they may have opportunity.

(5.) A discourse, even in the midst of much wickedness and idolatry, may be calm and dignified; not an appeal merely to the passions, but to the understanding. Paul reasoned with the philosophers of Athens; he did not denounce them; he endeavoured calmly to convince them, not harshly to censure them.

(6.) The example of Paul is a good one for all Christians. In all places --cities, towns, or country; amidst all people--philosophers, and the rich, and the poor; among friends and countrymen, or among strangers and foreigners, the great object should be to do good, to instruct mankind, and to seek to elevate the human character, and promote human happiness, by diffusing the mild and pure precepts of the gospel of Christ.

Acts-18

Paul at Corinth

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;
2 and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) and came unto them.

Suetonius, in the life of Claudius, speaks of this decree in the ninth year of his reign, and says, The reason was because the Jews were a turbulent people--assiduo tumultuantes; and that it was impulsore Christo--upon the account of Christ; some zealous for him, others bitter against him, which occasioned great heats, such as gave umbrage to the government, and

provoked the emperor, who was a timorous jealous man, to order them all to be gone. If Jews persecute Christians, it is not strange if heathens persecute them both.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers.)

The apostle being now come to Corinth, where he was altogether a stranger, and wanting money for his subsistence, the providence of God directed him to the house of Aquila and Priscilla; who being of the same trade with himself, tent-makers, he works with his own hands to maintain himself, that he might not be burthensome to others.

Here observe,

1. The occasion of Aquila's and Priscilla's coming to Corinth, with whom St. Paul lodged. The Roman emperor Claudius had banished them from Italy and Rome, ver. 2. Claudius commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome.

Thence note, That a wicked world is soon weary of the saints of God, and longs to worm them oft of their cities and societies, never considering that their own preservation from ruin is for the saints' sake; as the alleys in a garden are watered for the sake of the flowers, which otherwise would lie dry.

Observe, 2. That the apostle had learned a trade, tent-making, before he was called to the ministry, and he wrought upon it occasionally after he was a minister. The most learned among the Jews did always learn some handicraft trade, it being a tradition amongst them, "That he that doth not learn his child a trade, teaches him to be a thief." And another says, "He that has a trade in his hand is as a vineyard that is fenced." See how humble Paul was, and wonder that so great a man could stoop so low; but he had learned condescension of his Master, who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. See how industrious he was, and how willing to take pains. He that had

so much excellent work to do with his mind, yet, when there was occasion, did not think it below him to work with his hands. Even those that are redeemed from the curse of the law are not exempt from that sentence, In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread. See how careful Paul was to recommend his ministry, and to prevent prejudices against it, even the most unjust and unreasonable; he therefore maintained himself with his own labour that he might not make the gospel of Christ burdensome, 2Co 11:7,2Th 3:8,9. 3.An honest trade, by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon by any with contempt. So that although their children were designed for students, yet they did learn some trade.

Accordingly St. Paul having learned to make tents, (much used in those hot countries, by soldiers and others, to keep off the violence of the weather,) he works at Corinth, upon his trade for his own subsistence.

Men separated to the ministry of the gospel, may upon an exigency labour for their living; not but that the apostle had power and sufficient warrant to challenge maintenance for his preaching, as he often intimates in his epistle; but there was not yet any church at Corinth to maintain him; and when there was, they were mostly of the poorer and meaner sort of people, and he would give them a convincing demonstration that he sought not their's, but them.

He demands therefore no maintenance, lest it should hinder the success of his ministry; but being of the same trade with Aquila and Priscilla, he takes up his lodging with them at Corinth, and works at their trade.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5 And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *was* Christ.

He was yet more earnest in this matter when his fellow-labourers, his seconds, came up with him (Ac 18:5): When

Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, and had brought him good tidings from the churches there, and were ready to assist him here, and strengthened his hands, then Paul was more than before pressed in spirit, which made him more than ever pressing in his preaching. He was grieved for the obstinacy and infidelity of his countrymen the Jews, was more intent than ever upon their conversion, and the love of Christ constrained him to it (2Co 5:14): it is the word that is used here, it pressed him in spirit to it. And, being thus pressed, he testified to the Jews with all possible solemnity and seriousness, as that which he was perfectly well assured of himself, and attested to them as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

How the holy apostle clears himself of the blood of those Jews, whom he had now preached the gospel unto: He said, your blood be upon your own hands; I am clean.

The faithful ministers of Christ shall never have the blood of a perishing people laid to their charge; they having warned them of their damnable state, and discovered the way of life and salvation to them, deliver their own souls; whilst the people which they preached to, die in their sins, and for their sins.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

And Crispus. He is mentioned, in 1Cor 1:14, as having been one of the few whom Paul baptized with his own hands. The conversion of such a man must have tended greatly to exasperate the other Jews, and to further the progress of the Christian faith among the Corinthians. And many of the Corinthians. Many even in this voluptuous and wicked city.

Perhaps the power of the gospel was never more signal than in converting sinners in Corinth, and rearing a Christian church in a place so dissolute and abandoned. If it was adapted to such a place as Corinth --if a church, under the power of Christian truth, could be organized there--it is adapted to any city; and there is none so corrupt that the gospel cannot change and purify it.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

Be not afraid. Perhaps Paul might have been intimidated by the learning, refinement, and splendour of Corinth; perhaps embarrassed in view of his duty of addressing the rich, the polite, and the great. To this he may allude in 1Cor 2:3: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." In such circumstances it pleased God to meet him, and disarm his fears. This he did by assuring him of success. The fact that God had much people in that city, Acts 18:10, was employed to remove his apprehensions. The prospect of success in the ministry, and the certainty of the presence of God, will take away the fear of the rich, the learned, and the great.

No man shall set on thee. No one who shall rise up against thee shall be able to hurt thee. His life was in God's hands, and he would preserve him, in order that his people might be collected into the church. For I have. Greek, There is to me; i.e., I possess, or there belongs to me. Much people. Many who should be regarded as his true friends, and who should be saved. In this city. In that very city that was so voluptuous, so rich, so effeminate, and where there had been already so decided opposition shown to the gospel. This passage evidently means that God had a design or purpose to save many of that people; for it was given to Paul as all encouragement to him to labour there, evidently meaning that God would grant him success in his work. It cannot mean that the Lord meant to say that the great mass of the people, or that the moral and virtuous part, if there were any such, was then regarded as his people; but that he intended to convert many of those guilty and

profligate Corinthians to himself, and to gather a people for his own service there. We may learn from this,

(1.) that God has a purpose in regard to the salvation of sinners.

(2.) That that purpose is so fixed in the mind of God, that he can say that those in relation to whom it is formed are his. There is no chance; no hap-hazard; no doubt in regard to his gathering them to himself.

(3.) This is the ground of encouragement to the ministers of the gospel. Had God no purpose to save sinners, they could have no hope in their work.

(4.) This plan may have reference to the most gay, and guilty, and abandoned population; and ministers should not be deterred by the amount or the degree of wickedness from attempting to save them.

(5.) There may be more hope of success among a dissolute and profligate population, than among proud, and cold, and skeptical philosophers. Paul had little success in philosophic Athens; he had great success in dissolute Corinth. There is often more hope of converting a man openly dissolute and abandoned, than one who prides himself on his philosophy, and is confident in his own wisdom.

10 for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

That notwithstanding this good success which St. Paul had at Corinth, he seems, through human frailty, to be possessed with fear, and under an apprehension of danger from the Jews, and accordingly has thoughts of leaving the city; against which fears God antidotes him with a gracious promise of his presence with him: Be not afraid, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.

Hence learn, 1. That the best and holiest of God's saints and servants are sometimes under sad and slavish fears, and prone to be discouraged, when they meet with difficulties in the way of their duty.

2. That the promise and assurance of God's gracious presence with them, will raise them up above their fears, and be a sufficient encouragement to them, for their abiding in any place, and amongst any people, let the difficulty or danger be what it will: Be not afraid, for I am with thee, and none shall hurt thee.

1. Learn hence, That although the ingratitude and perverseness of a people do sadly discourage their ministers, and tempt them to remove from them, yet God encourages them to their duty; that for the malice of some, the salvation of others may not be neglected.

2. That no opposition must discourage the ministers of God in the way of their duty; God's servants must not suffer themselves to be outdone by the devil's slaves, but bear down all opposition made against them, with patience and joyfulness. And notwithstanding all the malicious opposition made by the Jews against the apostle, yet did he continue a year and six months to preach at Corinth.

11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of
God among them.

And he continued. etc. Paul was not accustomed to remain long in a place. At Ephesus, indeed, he remained three years, Acts 20:31; and his stay at Corinth was caused by his success, and by the necessity of placing a church, collected out of such corrupt and dissolute materials, on a firm foundation.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made
insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to
the judgment seat,

13 saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

They accuse the apostle before Gallio the deputy, for persuading men to worship God contrary to the law of Moses.

Who would not think but these men were truly pious, virtuous, and good, who were so zealous for the worship of God according to the law? and yet they were wicked men, and fiery persecutors. There is a noisy religion in the world? some men think, by crying the Church! the Church! and by pleading loud for the worship of God, as established by law, to atone for all their immoralities.

Praying is good, hearing and receiving the sacrament are good, if they be joined with holy walking; but if otherwise, the howling of wolves is as acceptable to Almighty God, as the prayers of those men who call Christ Master, and the church mother, but do not the things which they have commanded; yea, the very dogs which follow them to the public assemblies, shall as soon find acceptance as themselves, if they do not obey him whom they pretend to adore. It is no matter what church a wicked man is of, for it is certain he can be saved in none.

14 And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O *ye* Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 but if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your law, look ye *to it;* for I will be no judge of such *matters.*

Probably he had heard something of the nature of the controversy, and understood it to be a dispute about names; i.e., whether Jesus was to be called the Messiah or not. To him this would appear as a matter pertaining to the Jews alone, and to be ranked with their other disputes arising from the difference of sect and name. Of your law. A question respecting the proper interpretation of the law, or the rites and ceremonies which it commanded. The Jews had many such disputes, and Gallio did not regard them as coming under his cognizance as a magistrate. Look ye to it. Judge this among yourselves; settle

the difficulty as you can. Comp. Jn 18:31. For I will be no judge, etc. I do not regard such questions as pertaining to my office, or deem myself called on to settle them.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Probably while leaving the tribunal. Instead of "Greeks" in this verse, some Mss. read "Jews," but the former is probably the true reading. The Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic read it "the Gentiles." It is probable that this Sosthenes afterwards became a convert to the Christian faith, and a preacher of the gospel. See 1Cor 1:1,2: "Paul, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth."

18 And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchreae: for he
had a vow.

For he had a vow. A vow is a solemn promise made to God respecting anything. The use of vows is observable throughout the Scripture. Jacob, going into Mesopotamia, vowed the tenth of his estate, and promised to offer it at Bethel to the honour of God, Gen 28:22. Moses made many regulations in regard to vows. A man might devote himself or his children to the Lord. He might devote any part of his time or property to his service. The vow they were required sacredly to observe, (De 23:21,22) except in certain specified cases they were permitted to redeem that which had been thus devoted. The most remarkable vow among the Jews was that of the Nazarite; by which a man made a solemn promise to God to abstain from wine and all intoxicating liquors, to let the hair grow, and not to enter any house polluted by having a dead body in it, or to attend any funeral. This vow generally lasted eight days, sometimes a month, sometimes during a definite period fixed by themselves, and sometimes during their whole lives. When the vow expired, the priest made an offering of a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, a she-lamb for an expiatory sacrifice, and a ram

for a peace-offering. The priest then, or some other person, shaved the head of the Nazarite at the door of the tabernacle, and burnt the hair on the fire of the altar. Those who made the vow out of Palestine, and who could not come to the temple when the vow was expired, contented themselves with observing the abstinence required by the law, and cutting off the hair where they were. This I suppose to have been the case with Paul. His hair he cut off at the expiration of the vow at Cenchrea, though he delayed to perfect the vow by the proper ceremonies until he reached Jerusalem, Acts 21:23,24. Why Paul made this vow, or on what occasion, the sacred historian has not informed us, and conjecture perhaps is useless. We may observe, however,

(1,) that it was common for the Jews to make such vows to God, as an expression of gratitude or of devotedness to his service, when they had been raised up from sickness, or delivered from danger or calamity. See Josephus, b. i. 2, 15. Vows of this nature were also made by the Gentiles on occasions of deliverance from any signal calamity. Juvenal Sat. 12, 81. It is possible that Paul may have made such a vow in consequence of signal deliverance from some of the numerous perils to which he was exposed. But,

(2.) there is reason to think that it was mainly with a design to convince the Jews that he did not despise their law, and was not its enemy. See Acts 21:22-24. In accordance with the custom of the nation, and in compliance with the law which was not wrong in itself, he might have made this vow, not for a time-serving purpose, but in order to conciliate them, and to mitigate their anger against the gospel. But where nothing is recorded, conjecture is useless. Those who wish to see the subject discussed, may consult Grotius and Kuin el in loco, and Spencer de Legibus Hebrae. p. 862, and Calmet's Dic. art. Nazarite.

But having now accompolished his vow, he shore his head, and returned to the common way of living; where the wisdom and moderation of this great apostle, in complying in indifferent things, is to be noted and imitated: To the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews.

He willingly compiled with their weakness, to show that he was no contemner of their law; for which reason he caused Timothy to be circumcised, and purified himself in the temple at Jerusalem: and behold the success of this his compliance; for, by gratifying the Jews in this condescension to the prescription of the law, he brought over very many of them to the faith of Christ.

Let not any suspect this for a sinful compliance with the Jews, in observing a ceremony which the gospel had abolished, nor censure it for a low and mean stoop in so great a man to the humour of the people; for though the ceremonial rites died with Christ, yet they were a long time in burying, and the Jews were indulged in the observation of them till they came to a clearer sight of their Christian liberty; accordingly the apostle yielded to them for the present in indifferent tings, without dissimulation or blame.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

Keep this feast. Probably the passover is here referred to. Why he was so anxious to celebrate that feast at Jerusalem, the historian has not informed us. It is probable, however, that he wished to meet as many of his countrymen as possible, and to remove, if practicable, the prejudices which had everywhere been raised against him, Acts 21:20,21. Perhaps, also, he

supposed that there would be many Christian converts present, whom he might meet also.

Our apostle stays not long at Ephesus, but hastens to Jerusalem to keep the feast there, namely, the feast of the passover; not that he took himself obliged to observe the feasts, or any of the antiquated ceremonies: but because of the vast concourse which he knew would be at Jerusalem at the time of the feast, from all quarters, and which would give him an opportunity to make Christ known to a great multitude. The ministers of the gospel, without the imputation of vain-glory, or seeking popular applause, may warrantably desire, and occasionally lay hold upon, an opportunity of dispensing the word to a numerous auditory, in hope that casting the net among many, they may inclose some.

Observe, lastly, The incessant care, indefatigable diligence, and unwearied pains, of this great apostle, in travelling from place to place, and at such great distances, to preach the everlasting gospel to lost sinners. From Ephesus he sails to Cesarea, from Cesarea to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Antioch to Galatia and Phrygia. See how the care of all the churches was upon him, and how he laboured more abundantly than they all.

Paul Returns to Antioch and Begins the Third Missionary Journey

22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and
saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.
23 And after he had spent some time *there,* he departed, and went over
all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening
all the disciples.

Apollos Preaches at Ephesus

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Born at Alexandria. Alexandria was a celebrated city in Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great. There were large numbers of Jews resident there. Acts 6:9. An eloquent man. Alexandria was famous for its schools; and it is probable that Apollos, in addition to his natural endowments, had enjoyed the benefit of these schools. Mighty in the Scriptures. Well instructed, or able in the Old Testament. The foundation was thus laid for future usefulness in the Christian church. Lk 24:19.

Hence learn, That scripture knowledge is the choicest qualification and highest commendation of a gospel minister. Apollos, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures: without this, he can never truly and savingly make known and discover Jesus Christ: without this, he can never rightly divide the word of truth; without this, he can never convince gainsayers, either gainsayers in opinion, or gainsayers in practice; without this, he can never instruct the people fully in their duty, nor declare to them the whole council of God.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

In the right way of the Lord. The word way often refers to doctrine, Mt 21:32. It means here that he had been correctly taught in regard to the Messiah; yet his knowledge was imperfect, Acts 18:26. The amount of his knowledge seems to have been:

(1.) He had correct views of the Messiah to come--views which he had derived from the study of the Old Testament. He was expecting a Saviour that should be humble, obscure, and a sacrifice, in opposition to the prevailing notions of the Jews.

(2.) He had heard of John; had embraced his doctrine; and probably had been baptized with reference to him that was to

come. Comp. Mt 3:2, Acts 19:4. But it is clear that he had not heard that Jesus was the Messiah. With his correct views in regard to the coming of the Messiah, he was endeavouring to instruct and reform his countrymen. He was just in the state of mind to welcome the announcement that the Messiah had come, and to embrace Jesus of Nazareth as the hope of the nation.

Knowing only the baptism of John. Whether he had heard John, and been baptized by him, has been made a question, and cannot now be decided. It is not necessary, however, to suppose this, as it seems that the knowledge of John s preaching and baptism had been propagated extensively into other nations besides Judea, Acts 19:1-3. The Messiah was expected about that time. The foreign Jews would be waiting for him; and the news of John's ministry, doctrine, and success, would be rapidly propagated from synagogue to synagogue into the surrounding nations. John preached repentance, and baptized with reference to him that was to come after him, Acts 19:4; and this doctrine Apollos seems to have embraced.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them,* and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Finding him defective in his knowledge of Christianity, they took him to them, to lodge in the same house with them, and expounded to him the way of God, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, more perfectly. They did not take occasion from what they observed of his deficiency either to despise him themselves, or to disparage him to others; did not call him a young raw preacher, not fit to come into a pulpit, but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under, as knowing only the baptism of John; and, having themselves got great knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long intimate conversation with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him, and gave him a clear, distinct, and methodical account of those things which before he had but confused notions of.

[1.] See here an instance of that which Christ has promised, that to him that hath shall be given; he that has, and uses what he has, shall have more. He that diligently traded with the talent he had doubled it quickly.

[2.] See an instance of truly Christian charity in Aquila and Priscilla; they did good according to their ability. Aquila, though a man of great knowledge, yet did no undertake to speak in the synagogue, because he had not such gifts for public work as Apollos had; but he furnished Apollos with matter, and then left him to clothe it with acceptable words. Instructing young Christians and young ministers privately in conversation, who mean well, and perform well, as far as they go, is a piece of very good service, both to them and to the church.

[3.] See an instance of great humility in Apollos. He was a very bright young man, of great parts and learning, newly come from the university, a popular preacher, and one mightily cried up and followed; and yet, finding that Aquila and Priscilla were judicious serious Christians, that could speak intelligently and experimentally of the things of God, though they were but mechanics, poor tent-makers, he was glad to receive instructions from them, to be shown by them his defects and mistakes, and to have his mistakes rectified by them, and his deficiencies made up. Young scholars may gain a great deal by converse with old Christians, as young students in the law may by old practitioners. Apollos, though he was instructed in the way of the Lord, did not rest in the knowledge he had attained, nor thought he understood Christianity as well as any man (which proud conceited young men are apt to do), but was willing to have it expounded to him more perfectly. Those that know much should covet to know more, and what they know to know it better, pressing forward towards perfection.

[4.] Here is an instance of a good woman, though not permitted to speak in the church or in the synagogue, yet doing good with the knowledge God had given her in private converse. Paul will have the aged women to be teachers of good things Tit 2:3,4.The great humility of Apollos: although he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, yet he did not disdain farther instruction. Those that are most knowing, if humble, are most sensible of their ignorance: the knowledge of the best, while they are on this side heaven, is capable of improvements. Apollos knew much, yet Aquila and Priscilla catechize the great Apollos, and add something to the treasure of his knowledge.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

The brethren wrote. The brethren at Ephesus. Why he went, the historian does not inform us. But he had heard of the success of Paul there; of the church which he had established; of the opposition of the Jews; and it was doubtless with a desire to establish that church, and with a wish to convince his unbelieving countrymen that their views of the Messiah were erroneous, and that Jesus of Nazareth corresponded with the predictions of the prophets. Many of the Greeks at Corinth were greatly captivated with his winning eloquence, 1Cor 1:12, 3:4,5 and his going there was the occasion of some unhappy divisions that sprung up in the church. But in all this, he retained the confidence and love of Paul, 1Cor 1 1Cor 3. It was thus shown that Paul was superior to envy, and that great success by one minister need not excite the envy, or alienate the confidence and good-will of another.

28 for he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Acts-19

Paul at Ephesus

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,

2 he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost? Have ye received the extraordinary effusions and miraculo-us influences of the Holy Ghost Paul would not doubt that, if they had "believed," they had received the ordinary converting influences of the Holy Spirit--for it was one of his favourite doctrines, that the Holy Spirit renews the heart. But, besides this, the miraculous influences of the Spirit were conferred on most societies of believers. The power of speaking with tongues, or of working miracles, was imparted as an evidence of the presence of God, and of their acceptance with him, Acts 10:45,46 1Cor 15. It was natural for Paul to ask whether this evidence of the Divine favour had been granted to them.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

These are the words of Paul, explaining what John taught. He taught them to believe in the Messiah, and that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. The argument of Paul is, that it was highly proper for them now to profess publicly that Saviour to whom John had borne such explicit testimony. "Jesus is the Messiah for whom John came to prepare the way; and as you have embraced John's doctrine, you ought now publicly to acknowledge that Redeemer by baptism in his name."

5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord

Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

Separated the disciples. Removed them from the influence and society of those who were seeking to draw them away from the faith. This is often the best way to prevent the evil influence of others. Christians, if they wish to preserve their minds calm and peaceful; if they wish to avoid the agitations of conflict, and the temptations of those who would lead them astray, may often find it necessary to withdraw from their society, and should seek the fellowship of their Christian brethren.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

So that from his body. That is, these handkerchiefs which had been applied to his body, which he had used, or which he had touched. An instance somewhat similar to this occurs in the case of the woman who was healed by touching the hem of the Saviour's garment, Mt 9:20-22. Unto the sick. The sick who were at a distance, and who were unable to go where he was. If it be asked why this was done, it may be observed,

(1.) that the working of miracles in that region would greatly contribute to the spread of the gospel.

(2.) We are not to suppose that there was any efficacy in the aprons thus brought, or in the mere fact that they had touched the body of Paul, any more than there was in the hem of the Saviour's garment which the woman touched, or in the clay which he made use of to open the eyes of the blind man, Jn 8:6.

(3.) In this instance the fact, that the miracles were wrought in this manner by garments which had touched his body, was a mere sign, or an evidence to the persons concerned, that it was done by the instrumentality of Paul, as the fact that the Saviour put his fingers into the ears of a deaf man, and spit and touched his tongue, Mk 7:33, was an evidence to those who saw it, that the power of healing came from him. The bearing of these aprons to the sick was, therefore, a mere sign, or evidence to all concerned, that miraculous power was given to Paul. Handkerchiefs. The word used here--σουδαρια--is of Latin origin, and properly denotes a piece of linen with which sweat was wiped from the face; and then any piece of linen used for tying up, or containing anything, In Lk 19:20, it denotes the "napkin" in which the talent of the unprofitable servant was concealed; in Jn 11:44, 20:7, the "napkin" which was used to bind up the face of the dead, applied to Lazarus and to our Saviour. Or aprons. σιμικινθια. This also is a Latin word, and means, literally, a half-girdle--a piece of cloth which was girded round the waist to preserve the clothes of those who were engaged in any kind of work. The word aprons expresses the idea.

Thus, according to our Saviour's promise, his apostles did greater miracles than himself, Joh 14:12 not greater in regard of the manner, but in regard of the matter of them: Christ wrought his miracles in his own name, and by his own power; but the apostles wrought theirs in the name and by the power of Christ; yet it ought to be observed and considered, that although it pleased God, at the first plantation of the gospel by the apostles, to confirm Christianity by many special miracles,

(as new-set plants are well watered till they have taken fast rooting,) yet that church which wants miracles may be a true church: because,

1. There is no promise made in the scriptures to the church for her perpetual enjoying the gift of miracles. That promise, Mr 16:17 These signs shall follow them that believe, &c. was only a temporary promise.

2. We are forbidden to expect miracles, Joh 4:48 and forbidden to trust to miracles without scripture, or to regard such miracles as are wrought to confirm any doctrine that is contrary to scripture, Deut 13:3 because the miracles of the last times are declared to be the signs of Antichrist, 2Thess 3:9,10.

From all which it follows, that miracles are no infallible note of the true church, as the Papists would make it; who also produce St. Paul's handkerchiefs here, and St. Peter's shadow, Acts 5:15 as a warrant for their superstitious relics; but the text assures us, it was God that wrought the special miracles, not St. Paul, nor his handkerchiefs, but God by his hand. The miracles in the church of Rome, pretended to be wrought by the relics of saints and martyrs, are no better than lying wonders.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

The vagabond /itinerant/ Jews. Gr., Jews going about. περιερχομενων. The word vagabond with us is now commonly used in a bad sense, to denote a vagrant; a man who has no home; an idle, worthless fellow. The word, however, properly means one wandering from place to place, without any settled habitation, from whatever cause it may be. Here it denotes those Jews who wandered from place to place, practicing exorcism. Exorcists. εξορκιστων. This word properly denotes those who went about pretending to be able to expel evil spirits,

or to cure diseases by charms, incantations, etc, The word is derived from ορκος orkos, an oath, and from ορκιζω, to bind with an oath. It was applied in this sense, because those who pretended to be able to expel demons used the formula of an oath, or adjured them, to compel them to leave the possessed persons. Comp. Mt 12:27. They commonly used the name of God, or called on the demons in the name of God to leave the person. Here they used the name Jesus to command them to come out. To call over them. To name, or to use his name as sufficient to expel the evil spirit. The name of the Lord Jesus. The reasons why they attempted this were,

(1.) that Jesus had expelled many evil spirits; and,

(2.) that it was in his name that Paul had wrought his miracles. Perhaps they supposed there was some charm in this name to expel them. We adjure you. We bind you by an oath; we command you as under the solemnity of an oath, Mk 5:7, 1Thes 5:27. It is a form of putting one under oath, 1Kgs 2:43, Gen 24:37, 2Kgs 11:4, Neh 13:25. (Septuagint.) That this art was practised then, or attempted, is abundantly proved from Iraeneus, Origen, and Josephus. (Ant. b. viii. chap. 2, 5.) See Doddridge. The common name which was used was the incommunicable name of God, JEHOVAH, by pronouncing which, in a peculiar way, it was pretended they had the power of expelling demons.

The Jewish jugglers would by all means imitate the apostles in casting out devils; accordingly they use the name of Jesus as a charm; but saying the same word with the apostles signified nothing, without exercising the same faith and grace. These exorcists soon found that words without faith would not work to cast out devils, and that Christ would not give power to his name when used as a charm.

14 And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I

know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

Verse 17. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Acquired increasing honour. The transaction showed that the miracles performed in the name of the Lord Jesus, by Paul, were real, and were wrought in attestation of the truth of the doctrine which he taught. Impostors could not work such miracles; and they who pretended to be able to do it only exposed themselves to the rage of the evil spirits. It was thus shown that there was a real, vital difference between Paul and these impostors; and their failure only served to extend his reputation and the power of the gospel.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

Their deeds. Their actions; their evil course of life. Their deeds of iniquity in their former state. The direct reference here is to the magical arts which had been used, but the word may also be designed to denote iniquity in general. They who make a profession of religion will be willing to confess their transgressions. And no man can have evidence that he is truly renewed who is not willing to confess as well as to forsake his sins, Rom 10:10, Prov 28:13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy."

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men:* and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.

Curious arts. Arts or practices requiring skill, address, cunning. The word used here--περιεργα--denotes, properly, those things that require care or skill; and was thus applied to the arts of magic and jugglery, and sleight of hand, that were practised so extensively in eastern countries. That such arts were practised

at Ephesus is well known. The Ephesian letters, by which incantations and charms were supposed to be produced, were much celebrated. They seem to have consisted of certain combinations of letters or words, which, by being pronounced with certain intonations of voice, were believed to be effectual in expelling diseases or evil spirits; or which, by being written on parchment and worn, were supposed to operate as amulets, or charms, to guard from evil spirits or from danger. Thus Plutarch (Sympos 7) says, "The magicians compel those who are possessed with a demon to recite and pronounce the Ephesian letters, in a certain order, by themselves." Thus Clemens Alex. (Strom. ii.) says, "Androcydes, a Pythagorean, says that the letters which are called Ephesian, and which are so celebrated, are symbols," etc. Erasmus says, (Adagg. Cent. 2,) that there were certain marks and magical words among the Ephesians, by using which they succeeded in every undertaking. Eustha. ad Homer. Odys. τ, says, "that those letters were incantations which Croesus used when on the funeral pile, and which greatly befriended him." He adds, that in the war between the Milesians and Ephesians, the latter were thirteen times saved from ruin by the use of these letters. See Grotius and Kuin[illegible]el in loco. And burned them before all men. Publicly. Their arts and offences had been public, and they sought now to undo the evil, as much as lay in their power, as extensively as they had done it.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

So mightily. So powerfully. It had such efficacy and power in this wicked city. The power must have been mighty that would thus make them willing, not only to cease to practise imposition, but to give up all hopes of future gains, and to destroy their property. On this instructive narrative, we may remark,

(1.) that religion has power to break the hold of sinners on unjust and dishonest means of living.

(2.) That those who have been engaged in an unchristian and dishonourable practice, will abandon it when they become Christians.

(3.) That their abhorrence of their former course will be, and ought to be, expressed as publicly as was the offence.

(4.) That the evil practice will be abandoned at any sacrifice, however great. The only question will be, what is right; not, what will it cost. Property, in the view of a converted man, is nothing When compared with a good conscience.

(5.) This conduct of those who had used curious arts shows us what ought to be done by those who have been engaged in any evil course of life, and who are then converted. If their conduct was right--and who can doubt it?--it settles a great principle on which young converts should act. If a man has been engaged in the slave-trade, he will abandon it; and his duty will not be to sell his ship to one who he knows will continue the traffic. His property should be withdrawn from the business publicly, either by being destroyed, or by being converted to a useful purpose. If a man has been a distiller of ardent spirits as a drink, his duty will be to forsake his evil course. Nor will it be his duty to sell his distillery to one who will continue the business; but to withdraw his property from it publicly, either by destroying it, or converting it to some useful purpose. If a man has been engaged in traffic in ardent spirits, his duty is not to sell his stock to those who will continue the sale of the poison, but to withdraw it from public use; converting it to some useful purpose, if he can; if not, by destroying it. All that has ever been said by money- loving distillers, or vendors of ardent spirits, about the loss which they would sustain by abandoning the business, might have been said by these practitioners of curious arts in Ephesus. And if the excuses of rum-selling men are valid, their conduct was folly; and they should either have continued the business of practicing "curious arts," after they were converted, or have sold their "books" to those who would

have continued it. For assuredly it was not worse to practise jugglery and fortune-telling than it is to destroy the bodies and souls of men by the traffic in ardent spirits. And yet how few men there are in Christian lands who practise on the principle of these honest, but comparatively unenlightened men at Ephesus!

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

The Riot at Ephesus

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

How angry the devil grows at the success of the gospel, mentioned in the foregoing verses: there we read how the whole college of diabolical conjurors were brought over, by the apostles' preaching at Ephesus, to burn their books, and leave their wicked course of life.

Hereupon the devil bestirs him, and raises a persecution against the apostle. Those that will disturb Satan in the quiet and peaceable possession of his kingdom, shall be sure to meet with trouble and disquiet from him. Let not any of the saints of God in general, nor any of the faithful and zealous ministers of Christ in particular, expect any long continuance of their outward tranquility and peace in this world, where they are every day up in arms against Satan, and meditating the ruin of him and his kingdom; for which he will certainly seek revenge.

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Christ in particular, expect any long continuance of their outward tranquility and peace in this world, where they are every day up in arms against Satan, and meditating the ruin of him and his kingdom; for which he will certainly seek revenge.

24 For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

Silver shrines. ναους. Temples. The word shrine properly means a case, small chest, or box; particularly applied to a box in which sacred things are deposited. Hence we hear of the shrines for relics.--Webster. The word shrines here denotes small portable temples, or edifices, made of silver, so as to resemble the temple of Diana, and probably containing a silver image of the goddess. Such shrines would be purchased by devotees and by worshippers of the goddess, and by strangers, who would be desirous of possessing a representation of one of the seven wonders of the world. Acts 19:27. The great number of persons that came to Ephesus for her worship would constitute an ample sale for productions of this kind, and make the manufacture a profitable employment. It is well known that pagans everywhere are accustomed to carry with them small images, or representations of their gods, as an amulet, or charm. The Romans had such images in all their houses, called Penates, or household gods. A similar thing is mentioned as early as the time of Laban, Gen 31:19) whose images Rachel had stolen and taken with her. Comp. Jud 17:5, "The man Micah had an house of gods;" 1Sam 19:13, Hoss 3:4. These images were usually enclosed in a box, case, or chest, made of wood, iron, or silver; and probably, as here, usually made to resemble the temple where the idol was worshipped. Diana. This was a celebrated goddess of the heathen, and one of the twelve superior deities. In the heavens she was Luna, or Meni, (the moon;) on earth, Diana; and in hell, Hecate, She was sometimes represented with a crescent on her head, a bow in her hand, and dressed in a hunting-habit; at other times with a triple face, and with instruments of torture. She was commonly regarded as the goddess of hunting. She was also worshipped under the various names of Lucina, Proserpine, Trivia, etc. She

was also represented with a great number of breasts, to denote her being the fountain of blessings, or as distributing her benefits to each in their proper station. She was worshipped in Egypt, Athens, Cilicia, and among heathen nations generally; but the most celebrated place of her worship was Ephesus--a city peculiarly dedicated to her.

25 whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.
26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:
27 so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

We may here remark,

(1.) that the extensive prevalence of the Christian religion would destroy many kinds of business in which men now engage. It would put an end to all that now ministers to the pride, vanity, luxury, vice, and ambition of men. Let religion prevail, and wars would cease, and all the preparations for war which now employ so many hearts and hands would be useless. Let religion prevail, and temperance would prevail also; and consequently all the capital and labour now employed in distilling and vending ardent spirits would be withdrawn, and the business be broken up. Let religion prevail, and luxury ceases, and the arts which minister to licentiousness would be useless. Let Christianity prevail, and all that goes now to minister to idolatry, and the corrupt passions of men, would be destroyed. No small part of the talent, also, that is now worse than wasted in corrupting others by ballads and songs, by fiction and licentious tales, would be withdrawn. A vast amount of capital and talent would thus be at once set at liberty, to be employed in nobler and better purposes.

(2.) The effect of religion is often to bring the employments of men into shame and contempt. A revival of religion often makes the business of distilling an object of abhorrence. It pours shame on those who are engaged in ministering to the vices and luxuries of the world. Religion reveals the evil of such a course of life, and those vices are banished by the mere prevalence of better principles. Yet,

(3.)the talent and capital thus disengaged is not rendered useless. It may be directed to other channels and other employments. Religion does not make men idle. It devotes talents to useful employments, and opens fields in which all may toil usefully to themselves and to their fellow-men. If all the capital, and genius, and learning which are now wasted, and worse than wasted, were to be at once withdrawn from their present pursuits, they might be profitably employed. There is not now a useless man who might not be useful; there is not a farthing wasted which might not be employed to advantage in the great work of making the world better and happier.

28 And when they heard *these sayings,* they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater.

30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theater.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people.

And they drew Alexander. Who this Alexander was, is not known. Grotius supposes that it was "Alexander the coppersmith," who had in some way done Paul much harm, 2Ti 4:14; and whom, with Philetas, Paul had excommunicated. Paul told to Timothy that he did him much evil: if so, we find here he was first a proselyte, then a professor, next a confessor, almost a martyr; yet, after all, an apostate; making shipwreck of the faith, for which he was excommunicated by the apostle, of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan. 1Tim 1:19,20. This excommunication of the apostle probably was the provocation that occasioned him to do so much mischief to the apostle, of which he complains, Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; of whom be thou ware also. 2Tim 4:14He supposes that it was a device of the Jews to put forward one who had been of the Christian party, in order to accuse Paul, and to attempt to cast the odium of the tumult on him. But it is not clear that the Alexander whom Paul had excommunicated was the person concerned in this transaction. All that appears in this narrative is, that Alexander was one who was known to be a Jew; and who wished to defend the Jews from being regarded as the authors of this tumult. It would be supposed by the heathen that the Christians were only a sect of the Jews; and the Jews wished doubtless to show that they had not been concerned in giving occasion to this tumult, but that it was to be traced wholly to Paul and his friends. The Jews putting him forward. That he might have a convenient opportunity to speak to the people. Would have made his defence. Our translation, by the phrase "his defence," would seem to imply that he was personally accused. But it was not so. The Greek is simply, "was about to apologize to the people" that is, to make a defence, not of himself particularly, but of the Jews in general. The translation should have been "a defence."

Learn thence, 1. That it was possible for a glorious professor to turn a furious persecutor. This Alexander did not only withstand the apostle's person, but his doctrine also; for which being excommunicated, he sought revenge.

Learn, 2. That excommunication not only angers but enrages wicked and impenitent men; so that, instead of being reformed, they seek revenge: yet must the censures of the church be executed and inflicted without either fear or favour.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.

That he was a Jew. There was a general prejudice against the Jews. They were disposed to charge the whole difficulty on Jews-- esteeming Christians to be but a sect of the Jews. They were, therefore, indignant and excited, and indiscriminate in their wrath, and unwilling to listen to any defence.

note: Jews generally are abhorrence before heathens because of their sins and stubbornness; they could not either belong to this world or God.

35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, *Ye* men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter?

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

To be called in question. By the government; by the Roman authority. Such a tumult, continued for so long a time, would be likely to attract the attention of the magistrates, and expose them to their displeasure. Popular commotions were justly dreaded by the Roman government; and such an assembly as

this, convened without any good cause, would not escape their notice. There was a Roman law which made it capital for any one to be engaged in promoting a riot. Qui caetum, et concursum fecerit, capite puniatur: "He who raises a mob, let him be punished with death."

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Acts-20

Paul's Journey to Macedonia and Greece

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them,* and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

Into Greece. Into Greece Proper, of which Athens was the capital. While in Macedonia, he had great anxiety and trouble, but was at length comforted by the coming of Titus, who brought him intelligence of the liberal disposition of the churches of Greece in regard to the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, 2Cor 7:5-7. It is probable that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written during this time in Macedonia, and sent to them by Titus.

3 and *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Beroea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

Paul's Farewell Visit at Troas

7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came
together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to
depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until
midnight.
8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they
were gathered together.
9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named
Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long
preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the
third loft, and was taken up dead.
10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him*
said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.
11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread,
and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he
departed.
12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a
little comforted.

The Voyage from Troas to Miletus

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there
intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding
himself to go afoot.
14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to
Mitylene.
15 And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against
Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at
Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus.
16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would
not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for
him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of
the church.
18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

And when they were come to him. The discourse which follows is one of the most tender, affectionate, and eloquent, which is anywhere to be found. It is strikingly descriptive of the apostle's manner of life while with them; evinces his deep concern for their welfare; is full of tender and kind admonition; expresses the firm purpose of his soul to live to the glory of God, and his expectation to be persecuted still; and is a most affectionate and solemn farewell. No man can read it without being convinced that it came from a heart full of love and kindness; and that it evinces a great and noble purpose to be entirely employed in one great aim and object --the promotion of the glory of God, in the face of danger and of death. Ye know. From your own observation. He had been with them three years, and could make this solemn appeal to themselves, that he had led a faithful and devoted life. How happy is it when a minister can thus appeal to those with whom he has laboured, in proof of his own sincerity and fidelity! How comforting to himself, and how full of demonstration to a surrounding world, of the truth and power of the gospel which is preached! We may further remark, that this appeal furnishes strong proof of the purity and holiness of Paul's life. The elders at Ephesus must have had abundant opportunity to know him. They had seen him, and heard him publicly, and in their private dwellings. A man does not make such an appeal unless he has a consciousness of integrity, nor unless there is conclusive proof of his integrity. It is strong evidence of the holiness of the character of the apostles, and proof that they were not impostors, that they could thus appeal with the utmost assurance to those who had every opportunity of knowing them. From the first day. He was with them three years, Acts 20:31. Into Asia. Asia Minor. They would probably know, not only how he had demeaned himself while with them, but also how he had conducted [himself] in other places near them. After what manner I have been with you. How I have lived and acted. What has been my manner of life. What had been his

mode of life, he specifies in the following verses. At all seasons. At all times.

19 serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

Serving the Lord. In the discharge of the appropriate duties of his apostolic office, and in private life. To discharge aright our duties in any vocation is serving the Lord. Religion is often represented in the Bible as a service rendered to the Lord. With all humility. Without arrogance, pride, or a spirit of dictation; without a desire to "lord it over God's heritage ;" without being elated with the authority of the apostolic office, the variety of the miracles which he was enabled to perform, or the success which attended his labours. What an admirable model for all who are in the ministry, for all who are endowed with talents and learning, and for all who meet with remarkable success in their work. The proper effect of such success, and of such talent, will be to produce true humility. Eminent success in the work of the ministry tends to produce lowliness and humbleness of mind; and the greatest endowments are usually connected with the most simple and childlike humility. And with many tears. Paul not unfrequently gives evidence of the tenderness of his heart, and his regard for the souls of men, and his deep solicitude for the salvation of sinners, Acts 20:31; Php 3:18, 2Cor 2:4. The particular thing, however, here specified as producing weeping, was the opposition of the Jews. But it cannot be supposed that those tears were shed from an apprehension of personal danger. It was rather because the opposition of the Jews impeded his work, and retarded his progress in winning souls to Christ. A minister of the gospel will

(1.) feel, and deeply feel, for the salvation of his people. He will weep over their condition when he sees them going astray, and in danger of perishing, He will

(2.) be especially affected with opposition, because it will retard his work, and prevent the progress and the triumph of the gospel. It is not because it is a personal concern, but because it is the cause of his Master. And temptations. Trials, arising from their opposition. We use the word temptation, in a more limited sense, to denote inducements offered to one to lead him into sin. The word in the Scriptures most commonly denotes trials of any kind.

20 *and* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you,* but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

I kept back nothing, etc. No doctrine, no admonition, no labour. Whatever he judged would promote their salvation, he had faithfully and fearlessly delivered. A minister of the gospel must be the judge of what will be profitable to the people of his charge. His aim should be to promote their real welfare--to preach that which will be profitable. His object will not be to please their fancy, to gratify their taste, to flatter their pride, or to promote his own popularity. "All Scripture is profitable," 2Ti 3:16; and it will be his aim to declare that only which will tend to promote their real welfare. Even if it be unpalatable; if it be the language of reproof and admonition; if it be doctrine to which the heart is by nature opposed; if it run counter to the native prejudices and passions of men; yet, by the grace of God, it should be, and will be delivered. No doctrine that will be profitable should be kept back; no plan, no labour, that may promote the welfare of the flock, should be withheld. But have shewed you. Have announced or declared to you. The word here used--αναγγειλαι--is most commonly applied to preaching in public assemblies, or in a public manner. Have taught you publicly. In the public assembly; by public preaching. And from house to house. Though Paul preached in public, and though his time was much occupied in manual labour for his own support, Acts 20:34, yet he did not esteem his public preaching to be all that was required of him; nor his daily occupation to be an excuse for not visiting from house to house. We may observe here,

(1.) that Paul's example is a warrant and an implied injunction for family visitation by a pastor. If proper in Ephesus, It is proper still. If practicable in that city, it is in other cities. If it was useful there, it will be elsewhere. If it furnished to him consolation in the retrospect when he came to look over his ministry, and if it was one of the things which enabled him to say, "I am pure from the blood of all men," it will be so in other cases.

(2.) The design for which ministers should visit, should be a religious design, Paul did not visit for mere ceremony, nor for idle gossip, or chit-chat; nor to converse on the mere news or politics of the day. His aim was to show the way of salvation, and to teach in private what he taught in public.

(3.) How much of this is to be done, is of course to be left to the discretion of every minister. Paul, in private visiting, did not neglect public instruction. The latter he evidently considered to be his main or chief business. His high views of the ministry are evinced in his life, and in his letters to Timothy and Titus. Yet, while public preaching is the main, the prime, the leading business of a minister, and while his first efforts should be directed to preparation for that, he may and should find time to enforce his public instructions by going from house to house; and often he will find that his most immediate and apparent success will result from such family instructions.

(4.) If it is his duty to visit, it is the duty of his people to receive him as becomes an ambassador of Christ. They should be willing to listen to his instructions; to treat him with kindness, and to aid his endeavours in bringing a family under the influence of religion.

Testifying. Bearing witness to the necessity of repentance towards God. Or teaching them the nature of repentance, etc., and exhorting them to repent and believe. Perhaps the word testifying includes both ideas of giving evidence, and of urging

with great earnestness and affection that repentance and faith were necessary. See 1Timm 5:21; 2Ti 2:14; where the word here used, and here translated testify, is there translated correctly charge, in the sense of strongly urging, or entreating with great earnestness.

21 testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Not knowing the things that shall befall me there. He knew that calamities and trials of some kind awaited him, Acts 20:23, but he did not know

(1.) of what particular kind they would be; nor

(2.) their issue, whether it should be life or death. We should commit our way unto God, not knowing what trials may be before us in life; but knowing that, if we are found faithful at the post of duty, we have nothing to fear in the issue.

23 save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

In almost every city where Paul had been, he had been subjected to these trials. He had been persecuted, stoned, and scourged. So uniform was this, so constant had been his experience in this way, that he regarded it as his certain portion to be thus afflicted; and he approached Jerusalem, and every other city, with a confident expectation that such trials awaited him there.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Neither count I my life. I do not consider my life as so valuable as to be retained by turning away from bonds and persecutions. I am certain of bonds and afflictions; I am willing also, if it be necessary, to lay down my life in the prosecution of the same

purpose. Dear unto myself. So precious or valuable as to be retained at the sacrifice of duty. I am willing to sacrifice it, if it be necessary. This was the spirit of the Saviour, and of all the early Christians. Duty is of more importance than life; and when either duty or life is to be sacrificed, life is to be cheerfully surrendered. So that. This is my main object, to finish my course with joy. It is implied here,

(1.) that this was the great purpose which Paul had in view.

(2.) That if he should even lay down his life in this cause, it would be a finishing his course with joy. In the faithful discharge of duty, he had nothing to fear. Life would be ended with peace, whenever God should require him to finish his course.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men.*

I take you to record. Greek, I call you to witness; I appeal to you to testify. If any of you are lost, if you prove unfaithful to God, I appeal to yourselves that the fault is not mine. It is well when a minister can make this appeal, and call his hearers to bear testimony to his own faithfulness. Ministers who preach the gospel with fidelity, may thus appeal to their hearers; and in the day of judgment may call on them to witness that the fault of the ruin of the soul is not to be charged to them. That I am pure. I am not to be charged with the guilt of your condemnation, as owing to my unfaithfulness. This does not mean that he set up a claim to absolute perfection; but that, in the matter under consideration, he had a conscience void of offence. The blood of all men. The word blood is used often in the sense of death, of blood shed; and hence of the guilt or crime of putting one to death, or condemnation for it, Mt 23:35, 27:25, Acts 5:28, 18:6. It here means, that if they should die the second death, if they should be lost for ever, he would not

be to blame. He had discharged his duty, in faithfully warning and teaching them; and now, if they were lost, the fault would be their own, not his. All men. All classes of men--Jews and Gentiles. He had warned and instructed all alike. Ministers may have many fears that their hearers will be lost. Their aim, however, should be

(1.) to save them, if possible; and

(2.) if they are lost, that it should be by no neglect or fault of theirs.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

For. This verse contains a reason for what had been said in the previous verse. It shows why Paul regarded himself as innocent if they should be lost. I have not shunned. I have not kept back; I have not been deterred by fear, by the desire of popularity, by the fact that the doctrines of the gospel are unpalatable to men, from declaring them fully. The proper meaning of the word translated here, "I have not shunned," υπεστειλαμην is to disguise any important truth; to withdraw it from public view; to decline publishing it from fear, or an apprehension of the consequences. Paul means that he had not disguised any truth; he had not withdrawn or kept it from open view, by any apprehension of the effect which it might have on their minds. Truth may be disguised or kept back,

(1.) by avoiding the subject altogether from timidity, or an apprehension of giving offence if it is openly proclaimed; or,

(2.) by giving it too little prominency, so that it shall be lost in the multitude of other truths; or,

(3.) by presenting it amidst a web of metaphysical speculations, by entangling it with other subjects; or,

(4.) by making use of other terms than the Bible does, for the purpose of involving it in a mist, so that it cannot be understood. Men may resort to this course,

(1.) because the truth itself will be unpalatable;

(2.) because they may apprehend the loss of reputation or support;

(3.) because they may not love the truth themselves, and choose to conceal its prominent and offensive points;

(4.) because they may be afraid of the rich, the great, and the gay, and apprehend that they shall excite their indignation; and,

(5.) by a love of metaphysical philosophy, and a constant effort to bring everything to the test of their own reason. Men often preach a philosophical explanation of a doctrine instead of the doctrine itself. They deserve the credit of ingenuity, but not that of being open and bold proclaimers of the truth of God. All the counsel, πασαντηνβουλην. The word counsel (βουλη), denotes, properly, consultation, deliberation; and then will or purpose, Lk 23:51, Acts 2:23. It means here the will or purpose of God, as revealed in regard to the salvation of men. Paul had made a full statement of that plan--of the guilt of men, of the claims of the law, of the need of a Saviour, of the provisions of mercy, and of the state of future rewards and punishments. Ministers ought to declare all that counsel, because God commands it; because it is needful for the salvation of men; and because the message is not theirs, but God's, and they have no right to change, to disguise, or to withhold it. And if it is the duty of ministers to declare that counsel, it is the duty of a people to listen to it with respect and candour, and with a desire to know the truth, and to be saved by it. Declaring the counsel of God will do no good, unless it is received into honest and humble hearts, and with a disposition to know what God has revealed for salvation.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Take heed therefore. Attend to; be on your guard against the dangers which beset you, and seek to discharge your duty with fidelity. To yourselves. To your own piety, opinions, and mode of life. This is the first duty of a minister; for, without this, all his preaching will be vain. Compare Col 4:17, 1Timm 4:14. Ministers are beset with peculiar dangers and temptations, and against them they should be on their guard. In addition to the temptations which they have in common with other men, they are exposed to those peculiar to their office-- arising from flattery, and ambition, and despondency, and worldly-mindedness. And just in proportion to the importance of their office, is the importance of the injunction of Paul, to take heed to themselves. And to all the flock. The church; the charge entrusted to them. The church of Christ is often compared to a flock. Jn 10:1; and Jn 10:2-20; also Jn 21:16; and Jn 21:17. The word flock here refers particularly to the church, and not to the congregation in general, for it is represented to be that which was purchased with the blood of the atonement. The command here is,

(1.) to take heed to the church; i.e., to instruct, teach, and guide it; to guard it from enemies, Acts 20:29 and to make it their special object to promote its welfare.

(2.) To take heed to ALL the flock--the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the old and the young. It is the duty of ministers to seek to promote the welfare of each individual of their charge--not to pass by the poor because they are poor; and not to be afraid of the rich because they are rich. A shepherd regards the interest of the tenderest of the fold as much as the strongest; and a faithful minister will seek to advance the interest of all. To do this, he should know all his people; should be acquainted, as far as possible, with their peculiar wants, character, and dangers, and should devote himself to their

welfare as his first and main employment. Over the which the Holy Ghost. Though they had been appointed, doubtless, by the church, or by the apostles, yet it is here represented as having been done by the Holy Ghost. It is by him,

(1.) because he had called and qualified them for their work; and,

(2.) because they had been set apart in accordance with his direction and will. Overseers. επισκοπους. Bishops. The word properly denotes those who are appointed to oversee, or inspect anything. This passage proves that the name was applicable to elders; and that in the time of the apostles, the name bishop and presbyter, or elder, was given to the same class of officers, and, of course, that there was no distinction between them. One term was originally used to denote office, the other age, and both were applied to the same persons in the church. The same thing occurs in Tit 1:5-7, where those who in Acts 20:5 are called elders, are in Acts 20:7 called bishops. See also 1Timm 3:1-10, Php 1:1. To feed. ποιμαινειν. This word is properly applied to the care which a shepherd exercises over his flock. Jn 21:15,16. It applies not only to the act of feeding a flock, but also to that of protecting, guiding, and guarding it. It here denotes not merely the duty of properly instructing the church, but also of governing it; of securing it from enemies, Acts 20:29 and of directing its affairs so as to promote its edification and peace. The Church of God. This is one of the three passages in the New Testament, in regard to which there has been a long controversy among critics, which is not yet determined. The controversy is, whether this is the correct and genuine reading. The other two passages are, 1Timm 3:16, 1Jn 5:7. The Mss. and versions exhibit three readings: the church of GOD, τουθεου; the church OF THE LORD, τουκυριου; and the church of THE LORD and GOD, κυριουκαιθεου. The Latin vulgate reads it God; the Syriac, the Lord; the Arabic, the Lord God; the Ethiopic, the Christian family of God. The reading which now occurs in our text is found in no ancient Mss., except the Vatican codex; and occurs nowhere among the

writings of the fathers, except in Athanasius, in regard to whom also there is a various reading. It is retained, however, by Beza, Mill, and Whitby, as the genuine reading. The most ancient Mss. and the best, read the church of the Lord, and this probably was the genuine text. It has been adopted by Griesbach and Wetstein; and many important reasons may be given why it should be retained. See those reasons stated at length in Kuin[illegible]el, in loco; see also Griesbach and Wetstein. It may be remarked, that a change from Lord to God might easily be made in the transcribing, for in ancient MSS. the words are not written at length, but are abbreviated. Thus, the name Christ χριστος is written χοε; the name God θεος is written θοε; the name Lord κυριος is written κοε; and a mistake, therefore, of a single letter, would lead to the variations observable in the manuscripts. Compare in this place the Note of Mill in his Greek Testament, who thinks that the name God should be retained. The authority, however, is so doubtful, that it should not be used as a proof-text on the divinity of Christ; and is not necessary, as there are so many undisputed passages on that subject. Which he hath purchased. The word here used περιεποιησατο occurs but in one other place in the New Testament: 1Timm 3:13, "For they that have used the office of deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith." The word properly means, to acquire or gain anything; or to make it ours. This may be done by a price, or by labour, etc. The noun περιποιησις derived from this verb, is several times used in the New Testament, and denotes acquisition. 1Thes 5:9: "God hath appointed us to obtain [unto the obtaining or acquisition of] salvation." 2Thes 2:14: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1Pet 2:9, Tit 2:14, Eph 1:14. In this place it means that Christ had acquired, gained, or procured the church for himself, by paying his own life as the price. The church is often represented as having thus been bought with a price, 1Cor 6:20, 7:23, 2Pet 2:1. With his own blood. With the sacrifice of his own life; for blood is often put for life, and to shed the blood is equivalent to taking the life. Rom 3:25. The doctrines taught here are,

(1.) that the death of Christ was an atoning sacrifice; that he offered himself to purchase a people to his own service.

(2.) That the church is, therefore, of peculiar value-- a value to be estimated by the worth of the price paid for it. Comp. 1Pet 1:18,19.

(3.) That this fact should make the purity and salvation of the church an object of special solicitude with the ministers of the gospel. They should be deeply affected in view of that blood which has been shed for the church; and they should guard and defend it as having been bought with the highest price in the universe. The chief consideration that will make ministers faithful and self-denying is, that the church has been bought with a price. If the Lord Jesus so loved it--if he gave himself for it--they should be willing to deny themselves; to watch, and toil, and pray, that the great object of his death--the purity and the salvation of that church--may be obtained.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

For I know this. By what he had seen in other places; by his knowledge of human nature, and of the dangers to which they were exposed; and by the guidance of inspiration. After my departing. His presence had been the means of guarding the church, and preserving it from these dangers. Now that the founder and guide of the church was to be removed, they would be exposed to dissensions and dangers. Grievous wolves. Heavy, βαρεις, strong, mighty, dangerous wolves--so strong that the feeble flock would not be able to resist them. The term wolves is used to denote the enemies of the flock--false, and hypocritical, and dangerous teachers. Compare Mt 10:16; Acts 7:15. Enter in among you. From abroad; doubtless referring particularly to the Jews, who might be expected to distract and divide them. Not sparing the flock. Seeking to destroy the church. The Jews would regard it with peculiar hostility, and would seek to destroy it in every way. Probably they would

approach them with great professed friendship for them, and expressing a desire only to defend the laws of Moses.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Crooked, perverted, distracting doctrines, διεστραμμενα. Acts 13:10. They would proclaim doctrines tending to distract and divide the church. The most dangerous enemies which the church has had, have been nurtured in its own bosom, and have consisted of those who have perverted the true. doctrines of the gospel. Among the Ephesians, as among the Corinthians, 1Cor 1:11-13, there might be parties formed; there might be men influenced by ambition, like Diotrephes, 3Jn 1:9, or like Phygellus or Hermogenes, 2Ti 1:15, or like Hymeneus and Alexander, 1Timm 1:20. Men under the influence of ambition, or from the love of power or popularity, form parties in the church, produce divisions and distractions, and greatly retard its internal prosperity, and mar its peace. The church of Christ would have little to fear from external enemies if it nurtured no foes in its own bosom; and all the power of persecutors is not so much to be dreaded as the counsels and plans, the parties, strifes, heart-burnings, and contentions which are produced by those who have power, among the professed friends of Christ.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

And now, brethren. About to leave them, probably to see them no more, he committed them to the faithful care and keeping of God. Amidst all the dangers of the church, when human strength fails or is withdrawn, we may commit that church to the safe keeping and tender care of God. I commend you. I commit you; I place you παρατιθεμαι in his hands, and under his protection. Acts 14:23. And to the word of his grace. That is, to his gracious word; to his merciful promise. To his doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, which has been conferred on us by grace. Paul refers, doubtless, to the gospel --including its promises of support, its consoling truths, and its directions

to seek all needful help and comfort in God. Which is able. Which has power. τωδυναμενω. Which word, or gospel, has power to build you up. Heb 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, [living, life-giving, ζων,] and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," etc. Comp. Isa 49:2, Jer 23:29. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It is implied here, that the gospel is not a dead letter; that it has power to accomplish a great work; and that it is adapted to the end in view, the conversion and sanctification of the soul. There is no danger in representing the gospel as mighty, and as fitted by infinite wisdom to secure the renovation and salvation of man. Comp. Rom 1:16; 1Cor 1:18, 2Cor 10:4. To build you up. The word used here is properly applied to a house, which is reared and completed by slow degrees, and by toil. It here means to establish, make firm, or permanent; and hence to instruct, to establish in doctrine, and in hope. It here means that the word of God was able to confirm and establish them in the hopes of the gospel, amidst the dangers to which they would be exposed. And to give you an inheritance. To make you heirs; or to make you joint partakers with the saints of the blessings in reserve for the children of God. Those blessings are often represented as an inheritance, or heirship, which God will confer on his adopted children, Mt 19:29; Mt 25:34, Mk 10:17, Heb 6:12, Rev 21:7, Eph 1:11, 5:5, Col 1:12, 3:24 Rom 8:17, Gal 3:29.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

Yea, ye yourselves know. By your own acquaintance with my manner of life. In Corinth he had lived and laboured with Apollos, Acts 18:3; and he refers elsewhere to the fact that he had supported himself, in part at least, by his own labour, 1Cor 4:12 1Thes 2:9, 2Thes 3:8. We may hence learn that it is no discredit to a minister to labour. Whatever it may be to a people who put him under a necessity to toil for his support, yet the example of Paul shows that a man should rejoice in the privilege of preaching the gospel, even if it is done while he is obliged to resort to labour for his daily bread. It is well when a

minister of the gospel can make an appeal to his people like this of Paul, and say, "I have coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel." Every minister should so live that he can make this appeal to their own consciences of the sincerity and disinterestedness of his labours from the pulpit; or when called to separate from them as Paul did; or when on a dying bed. Every minister of the gospel, when he comes to lie down to die, will desire to be able to make this appeal, and to leave a solemn testimony there, that it was not for gold, or ease, or fame, that he toiled in the ministerial office. How much more influence can such a man have, than he who has been worldly-minded; who has sought to become rich; and the only memorials of whose life is, that he has sought "the fleece, not the flock," and that he has gained the property, not the souls of men. And every Christian, when he dies, should and will desire to leave a testimony as pure, that he has been disinterested, self-denying, and laborious in the cause of Jesus the Lord.

35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought
to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord
Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and
prayed with them all.
37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,
38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they
should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto
the ship.

Sorrowing most of all, etc. This was a most tender and affectionate parting scene. It can be more easily imagined than described. We may learn from it,

(1.) that the parting of ministers and people is a most solemn event, and should be one of much tenderness and affection.

(2.) The effect of true religion is to make the heart more tender; to make friendship more affectionate and sacred; and to unite more closely the bonds of love.

(3.) Ministers of the gospel should be prepared to leave their people with the same consciousness of fidelity, and the same kindness and love, which Paul evinced. They should live such lives as to be able to look back upon their whole ministry as pure and disinterested; and as having been employed in guarding the flock, and in making known to them the whole counsel of God. So parting, they may part in peace. And so living, and acting, they will be prepared to give up their account with joy, and not with grief. May God grant to every minister the spirit which Paul evinced at Ephesus, and enable each one, when called to leave his people by death or otherwise, to do it with the same consciousness of fidelity which Paul evinced, when he left his people to see their face no more!

Acts-21

Paul's Journey to Jerusalem

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:
2 and finding a ship sailing over unto Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.
3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.
4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

And finding disciples. Christians. This is the first mention of there being Christians at Tyre; but there is no improbability in supposing that the gospel had been preached there, though it is not expressly recorded by Luke. Who said to Paul. Comp. Acts 21:12. Their deep interest in his welfare, and their apprehension of his danger, was the reason why they admonished him not to go. Through the Spirit. There as some difficulty in understanding this. In solving this difficulty, we may remark,

(1.) that it is evident that the Holy Spirit is meant, and that Luke means to say that this was spoken by his inspiration. The Holy Spirit was bestowed on Christians at that time in large measures, and many appear to have been under his inspiring guidance.

(2.) It was not understood by Paul as a positive command that he should not go up to Jerusalem--for, had it been, it would not have been disobeyed. Paul evidently understood it as expressive of their earnest wish that he should not go, as apprizing him of danger, and as a kind expression in regard to his own welfare and safety. Comp. Acts 21:13. Paul was in better circumstances to understand this than we are, and his interpretation was doubtless correct.

(3.) It is to be understood, therefore, simply as an inspired prophetic warning, that if he went, he went at the risk of his life; a prophetic warning joined with their individual personal wishes, that he would not expose himself to this danger. The meaning evidently is, that they said by inspiration of the Spirit, that he should not go unless he was willing to encounter danger, and the hazard of life as a consequence, for they foresaw that the journey would be attended with this hazard. Grotius renders it, "that he should not go, unless he was willing to be bound." Michaelis and Stolzius, "They gave him prophetic warning, that he should not go to Jerusalem." Doddridge, "If he tendered his own liberty and safety, not to go up to Jerusalem, since it would certainly expose him to very great hazard." The inspiration in the case was that of admonition and warning, not of positive command. Paul was simply apprized of the danger; and then left to the free determination of his own will. He chose to encounter the danger of which he was thus apprized. He did not despise the intimations of the Spirit; but he judged that his duty to God called him thus to encounter the hazards of the journey. We may be apprized of danger in a certain course, either by our

friends or by the word of God, and still it may be our duty to meet it. Our duty is not to be measured by the fact that we shall experience dangers, in whatever way that may be made known to us. It is in following the will of God; and encountering whatever trials may be in our way.

It was happy for the apostle, and his great advantage, that the will of God was so plainly revealed to him, touching this his journey to Jerusalem; for no sooner did he prepare himself to obey the call of God, and to undertake the journey, but he is presently assaulted by many strong temptations to decline it. The first rub he met with in his way, was from the disciples at Tyre, who spake by the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

But did not the Spirit of God then contradict itself, in bidding the apostle go, and then speaking to him by those disciples not to go?

Not at all; St. Paul by extraordinary revelation was commanded to go to Jerusalem; these disciples by a spirit of prophecy, only foretold the difficulties and dangers that would attend him in his journey, and so, through kindness and human affection, they dissuaded him from undertaking it.

We must distinguish between the prediction of trouble, and the counsel of safety.

The prediction of trouble; so they said through the Spirit, that it would be dangerous for Paul to go to Jerusalem.

The counsel of safety proceeded from their private love and affection to him; whereby they dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem.

Learn from hence, 1. That divine precept, and not providence, is to rule our way to duty.

Learn, 2. That no discouragements or hindrances whatsoever will justify our neglect of a commanded duty. Whatever difficulties or discouragements lay in the way of the apostle's duty, he overcame them all with an heroic and truly Christian resolution, saying, ver. 13. I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of Jesus.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

On the shore. Any place may be proper for prayer. Jn 4:21, also Jn 4:22-24. God is everywhere, and can as easily hear the prayer of the humble on the sea-shore as in the most magnificent temple. This is an instance, as well as that in Acts 20:36, where the apostle evidently prayed with the church without a form of prayer. No man can believe that he thus poured forth the desires of his heart at parting, and commended them to God, in a prescribed form of words. Besides that, there is not the least evidence that such a form was then used in the Christian church: scenes like this show more clearly than abstract arguments could do, that such a form was not needed, and would not be used. Paul and his fellow Christians, on the sand of the sea-shore, would pour forth the gushing emotions of their souls in language such as their circumstances would suggest, and such as such a scene would demand. And it is presumed to be impossible that any man can read this narrative in a dispassionate manner without believing that they offered an extempore prayer.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him.

This Philip, who was driven out of his house by Paul, when a persecutor, gladly received him into his house, being now Paul a convert; and this without any upbraiding, yea, without the least mention of what he had formerly been or done. It is an ill office to rake in the filth which God has covered, and to reproach men with or for the sins which God has pardoned; it argues some degree of envy at the grace of God, to upbraid men with the sins committed before conversion.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

To afflict me, and distract my mind by alarms, and by the expressions of tenderness. His mind was fixed on going to Jerusalem; and he felt that he was prepared for whatever awaited him. Expressions of tenderness among friends are proper. Tears may be inevitable at parting from those whom we love; but such expressions of tenderness and love ought not to be allowed to interfere with the convictions of duty in their minds. If they have made up their minds that a certain course is proper, and have resolved to pursue it, we ought neither to attempt to divert them from it, nor to distract their minds by our remonstrances or our tears. We should resign them to their convictions of what is demanded of them, with affection and prayer, but with cheerfulness. We should lend them all the aid in our power, and then commend them to the blessing and protection of God. These remarks apply especially to those who are engaged in the missionary enterprise. It is trying to

part with a son, a daughter, or a beloved friend, in order that they may go to proclaim the gospel to the benighted and dying heathen. The act of parting--for life-- and the apprehension of the perils which they may encounter on the ocean, and in heathen lands, may be painful; but if they, like Paul, have looked at it calmly, candidly, and with much prayer--if they have come to the deliberate conclusion that it is the will of God that they should devote their lives to this service--we ought not to weep, and to break their hearts. We should cheerfully and confidently commit them to the protection of the God whom they serve, and remember that they are seeking his glory, and that the parting of Christians, though for life, will be short.

Get thee behind me, Satan, says Christ. It was Peter's tongue, but Satan tuned it. Who would have thought that Christ's disciples would have been Satan's instruments? We must not measure our friends' counsel by their good meaning, but by God's word; we must be deaf to all relations, that we may discharge our duty to God.

Learn hence, That no persuasions of friends, no apprehensions of danger, should ever be able to turn us out of the way of our duty. When Peter dissuaded Christ from suffering, our Saviour rebuked him with the same indignation as he did the devil tempting him to idolatry.

How the apostle lovingly and gently rebukes their fond and inordinate sorrow for his departure:

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

Paul Arrested in the Temple

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.
18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.
19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.
20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

They glorified the Lord. They gave praise to the Lord for what he had done. They saw new proofs of his goodness and mercy, and they rendered him thanks for all that had been accomplished. There was no jealousy that it had been done by the instrumentality of Paul. True piety will rejoice in the spread of the gospel, and in the conversion of sinners, by whatever instrumentality it may be effected.

and they are all zealous of the law. They still observe the law of Moses. The reference here is to the law respecting circumcision, sacrifices, distinctions of meats and days, festivals, etc. It may seem remarkable that they should still continue to observe those rites, since it was the manifest design of Christianity to abolish them. But we are to remember,

(1.) that those rites had been appointed by God, and that they were trained to their observance.

(2.) That the apostles conformed to them while they remained in Jerusalem, and did not deem it best to set themselves violently against them, Acts 3:1, Lk 24:53.

(3.) That the question about their observance had never been agitated at Jerusalem. It was only among the Gentile converts that the question had risen, and there it must arise, for if they

were to be observed, they must have been imposed upon them by authority.

(4.) The decision of the council Acts 15 related only to the Gentile converts. It did not touch the question, whether those rites were to be observed by the Jewish converts.

(5.) It was to be presumed, that as the Christian religion became better understood-- that as its large, free, and catholic nature became more and more developed, the peculiar institutions of Moses would be laid aside of course, without agitation and without tumult. Had the question been agitated at Jerusalem, it would have excited tenfold opposition to Christianity, and would have rent the Christian church into factions, and greatly retarded the advance of the Christian doctrine. We are to remember also,

(6.) that, in the arrangement of Divine Providence, the time was drawing near which was to destroy the temple, the city, and the nation; which was to put an end to sacrifices, and effectually to close for ever the observance of the Mosaic rites. As this destruction was so near, and as it would be so effectual an argument against the observance of the Mosaic rites, the Great Head of the church did not suffer the question of their obligation to be needlessly agitated among the disciples at Jerusalem.

21 and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

And they are informed of thee. Reports respecting the conduct of Paul would be likely to be in circulation among all at Jerusalem. His remarkable conversion; his distinguished zeal; his success among the Gentiles, would make his conduct a subject of special interest. Evil-minded men among the Jews, who came up to Jerusalem from different places where he had

been, would be likely to represent him as the decided enemy of the laws of Moses, and these reports would be likely to reach the ears of the Jewish converts. The reports, as they gained ground, would be greatly magnified, until suspicion might be excited among the Christians at Jerusalem, that he was, as he was reputed to be, the settled foe of the Jewish rites and customs. That thou teachest all the Jews, etc. From all the evidence which we have of his conduct, this report was incorrect and slanderous. The truth appears to have been, that he did not enjoin the observance of those laws on the Gentile converts; that the effect of his ministry on them was to lead them to suppose that their observance was not necessary--contrary to the doctrines of the Judaizing teachers, Acts 15 and that he argued with the Jews themselves, where it could be done, against the obligation of those laws and customs, since the Messiah had come. They depended on that observance for justification and salvation. This Paul strenuously opposed, and this he defended at length in the epistles which he wrote. See the epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews. Yet these facts might be easily misunderstood and perverted, so as to give rise to the slanderous report, that he was everywhere the enemy of Moses and the law.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

Must needs come together. There will be inevitably a tumultuous assemblage. It will be impossible to prevent that. The reasons were, because their minds were exceedingly agitated that one of their own countrymen had, as they understood, been advising apostasy from the religion of their fathers; because it had been extensively done in many parts of the world, and with great success; and because Paul, having, as they believed, himself apostatized from the national religion, had become very conspicuous, and his very presence in Jerusalem, as in other places, would be likely to excite a tumult. It was, therefore, the part of friendship to him, and to the cause, to devise some proper place to prevent, if possible, the anticipated excitement.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

Which have a vow on them. Which have made a vow. Acts 18:18. From the mention of shaving the head, Acts 21:24, it is evident that the vow which they had taken was that of the Nazarite; and that as the time of their vow was about expiring, they were about to be shaven, in accordance with the custom usual on such occasions. Acts 18:18. These persons Paul could join, and thus show decisively that he did not intend to undervalue or disparage the laws of Moses, when those laws were understood as mere ceremonial observances.

24 them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

the advice given by the church at Jerusalem to St. Paul, concerning the Jews which did believe in that place. It seems the Jews, though they had received the gospel, yet thought that the ceremonial law must still be observed; therefore, in condescension to their weakness, and to prevent their taking offence, they advise the apostle, not as a thing necessary in itself, but as an expediency in reference to their weakness, and to conform himself to some of the Jewish ceremonies and purifications; for though they were not then needful, yet they were not then unlawful; they might then be used, when the use of them would any ways conduce to the gaining and bringing over the Jews to a love of Christianity. The synagogue was not hastily to be cast out of the church, like the Heathenish superstitions; but to die by degrees, and be decently interred.

Here note, That the law of Moses, as to its moral part, Christ continued as his law: the ceremonial part, as to the use os types and ceremonies, signifying him that was to come, this was abrogated at Christ's coming; and the political part ceased, when the Jewish polity was dissolved: but the abrogation of the

whole was not fully made known at the first, but by degrees; and the exercise of it long tolerated to the Jews.

Observe, lastly, The particular advise which they give the apostle, to go into the temple, and perform the legal ceremony of purification: We have four men which have a vow; them take, and purify thyself, that all may know that thou walkest orderly, and keepest the law. That is, "Seeing we have four men here which have a Nazarite's vow upon them, the time of which vow is now expired, and they are to shave themselves ceremoniously in the temple; go thou with them, and perform the legal ceremony of purification there, that the people may know that the report of thee is not true; but thou, being a Jew, dost thyself keep the law."

Here we may observe the truth of what St. Paul elsewhere declared, that to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, yea, become all things to all men, that he might gain some. A noble pattern for the ministers of the gospel to write after, in yielding, so far as we may without sin or scandal, to the weakness of others, in order to the furtherance of the great ends of our ministry among our people: To the Jews I became as a Jew.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

And purify thyself with them. Join them in observing the forms of purification prescribed by the law of Moses in the observance of the vow of the Nazarite. The purifying here refers to the vows of sanctity which the Nazarites were to observe. They were to abstain from wine and strong drink; they were to eat no grapes, moist or dried; they were to come near no dead body, nor to make themselves "unclean"--for their father, mother, brother, or sister, when they died, Nu 6:3-7; and

they were to present an offering when the days of the vow were completed, Nu 6:13-21. And be at charges with them. Share with them the expense of the sacrifices and offerings required when the vow is completed. Those offerings were a ram of a year old for a burnt-offering, a sheep of the same age for a sin-offering, a ram for a thank-offering, a basket of unleavened cakes, and a libation of wine. See Nu 6:13-20. That they may shave their heads. The shaving of the head, or the cutting of the hair which had been suffered to grow during the continuance of the vow, Nu 6:5, was an observance indicating that the vow had been performed. Paul was requested to join with them in the expense of the sacrifices and offerings, that thus the whole of the ceremonies having been observed, their heads might be shaved as an indication that every part of the vow had been complied with. And all may know. By the fact of your observance of one of the rites of the Mosaic religion, all may have evidence that it is not your purpose or practice to speak contemptuously of those rites, or to undervalue the authority of Moses. Are nothing. Are untrue, or without any foundation. Walkest orderly. That you live in accordance with the real requirements of the law of Moses. To walk, in the Scriptures, often denotes to live, to act, to conduct, in a certain manner. All, probably, that they wished Paul to show by this was, that he was not an enemy of Moses. They who gave this counsel were Christians, and they could not wish him to do anything which would imply that he was not a Christian.

The request of James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem to Paul, or their advice rather, that he would gratify the believing Jews by showing some compliance with the ceremonial law, and appearing publicly in the temple to offer sacrifice, which was not a thing in itself sinful; for the ceremonial law, though it was by no means to be imposed upon the Gentile converts (as the false teachers would have it, and thereby endeavoured to subvert the gospel), yet it was not become unlawful as yet to those that had been bred up in the observance of it, but were far from expecting justification by it. It was dead, but not buried; dead, but not yet deadly. And,

being not sinful, they thought it was a piece of prudence in Paul to conform thus far. Observe the counsel they give to Paul herein, not as having authority over him, but an affection for him.

1. They desired him to take notice of the great numbers there were of the Jewish converts: Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are who believe. They called him brother, for they looked upon him as a joint-commissioner with them in gospel-work. Though they were of the circumcision and he the apostle of the Gentiles, though they were conformists and he a nonconformist, yet they were brethren, and owned the relation. Thou hast been in some of our assemblies, and seest how numerous they are: how many myriads of Jews believe. The word signifies, not thousands, but ten thousands. Even among the Jews, who were most prejudiced against the gospel, yet there were great multitudes that received it; for the grace of God can break down the strongest holds of Satan. The number of the names at first was but one hundred and twenty, yet now many thousands. Let none therefore despise the day of small things; for, though the beginning be small, God can make the latter end greatly to increase. Hereby it appeared that God had not quite cast away his people the Jews, for among them there was a remnant, an election, that obtained (see Ro 11:1,5,7): many thousands that believed. And this account which they could give to Paul of the success of the gospel among the Jews was, no doubt, as grateful to Paul as the account which he gave them of the conversion of the Gentiles was to them; for his heart's desire and prayer to God for the Jews was that they might be saved.

2. They informed him of a prevailing infirmity these believing Jews laboured under, of which they could not yet be cured: They are all zealous of the law. They believe in Christ as the true Messiah, they rest upon his righteousness and submit to his government; but they know the law of Moses was of God, they have found spiritual benefit in their attendance on the institutions of it, and therefore they can by no means think of

parting with it, no, nor of growing cold to it. And perhaps they urged Christ's being made under the law, and observing it (which was designed to be our deliverance from the law), as a reason for their continuance under it. This was a great weakness and mistake, to be so fond of the shadows when the substance was come, to keep their necks under a yoke of bondage when Christ had come to make them free. But see,

(a.) The power of education and long usage, and especially of a ceremonial law.

(b.) The charitable allowance that must be made in consideration of these. These Jews that believed were not therefore disowned and rejected as no Christians because they were for the law, nay, were zealous for it, while it was only in their own practice, and they did not impose it upon others. Their being zealous of the law was capable of a good construction, which charity would put upon it; and it was capable of a good excuse, considering what they were brought up in, and among whom they lived.

3. They gave him to understand that these Jews, who were so zealous of the law, were ill-affected to him, Ac 21:21. Paul himself, though as faithful a servant as any Christ ever had, yet could not get the good word of all that belonged to Christ's family: "They are informed of thee (and form their opinion of thee accordingly) that thou not only dost not teach the Gentiles to observe the law, as some would have had thee (we have prevailed with them to drop that), but dost teach all the Jews who are dispersed among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their children nor to walk after the customs of our nation, which were of divine appointment, so far as they might be observed even among the Gentiles, at a distance from the temple,--not to observe the fasts and feasts of the church, not to wear their phylacteries, nor abstain from unclean meats." Now,

(a.) It was true that Paul preached the abrogation of the law of Moses, taught them that it was impossible to be justified by it, and therefore we are not bound up any longer to the observance of it. But,

(b.) It was false that he taught them to forsake Moses; for the religion he preached tended not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He preached Christ (the end of the law for righteousness), and repentance and faith, in the exercise of which we are to make great use of the law. The Jews among the Gentiles whom Paul taught were so far from forsaking Moses that they never understood him better, nor ever embraced him so heartily as now when they were taught to make use of him as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. But even the believing Jews, having got this notion of Paul, that he was an enemy to Moses, and perhaps giving too much regard to the unbelieving Jews too, were much exasperated against him. Their ministers, the elders here present, loved and honoured him, and approved of what he did, and called him brother, but the people could hardly be induced to entertain a favourable thought of him; for it is certain the least judicious are the most censorious, the weak-headed are the hot-headed. They could not distinguish upon Paul's doctrine as they ought to have done, and therefore condemned it in the gross, through ignorance.

4. They therefore desired Paul that he would by some public act, now that he had come to Jerusalem, make it to appear that the charge against him was false, and that he did not teach people to forsake Moses and to break the customs of the Jewish church, for he himself retained the use of them.

(a.) They conclude that something of this kind must be done: "What is it therefore? What must be done? The multitude will hear that thou art come to town." This is an inconvenience that attends men of fame, that their coming and going are taken notice of more than other people's, and will be talked of, by some for good-will and by others for ill-will. "When they hear

thou art come, they must needs come together, they will expect that we call them together, to advise with them whether we should admit thee to preach among us as a brother or no; or, they will come together of themselves expecting to hear thee." Now something must be done to satisfy them that Paul does not teach the people to forsake Moses, and they think it necessary,

[1.] For Paul's sake, that his reputation should be cleared, and that so good a man may not lie under any blemish, nor so useful a man labour under any disadvantage which may obstruct his usefulness.

[2.] For the people's sake, that they may not continue prejudiced against so good a man, nor lose the benefit of his ministry by those prejudices.

[3.] For their own sake, that since they knew it was their duty to own Paul their doing it might not be turned to their reproach among those that were under their charge.

(b.) They produce a fair opportunity which Paul might take to clear himself: "Do this that we say unto thee, take our advice in this case. We have four men, Jews who believe, of our own churches, and they have a vow on them, a vow of Nazariteship for a certain time; their time has now expired (Ac 21:23), and they are to offer their offering according to the law, when they shave the head of their separation, a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, a ewe-lamb for a sin-offering, and a ram for a peace-offering, with other offerings pertinent to them, Nu 6:13-20. Many used to do this together, when their vow expired about the same time, either for the greater expedition or for the greater solemnity. Now Paul having so far of late complied with the law as to take upon him the vow of a Nazarite, and to signify the expiration of it by shaving his head at Cenchrea (Ac 18:18), according to the custom of those who lived at a distance from the temple, they desire him but to go a little further, and to join with these four in offering the sacrifices of a Nazarite:

'Purify thyself with them according to the law; and be willing not only to take that trouble, but to be at charges with them, in buying sacrifices for this solemn occasion, and to join with them in the sacrifice." This, they think, will effectually stop the mouth of calumny, and every one will be convinced that the report was false, that Paul was not the man he was represented to be, did not teach the Jews to forsake Moses, but that he himself, being originally a Jew, walked orderly, and kept the law; and then all would be well.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

As touching the Gentiles. In regard to the Gentile converts. It might be expedient for Paul to do what could not be enjoined on the Gentiles. They could not command the Gentile converts to observe those ceremonies; while yet it might be proper, for the sake of peace, that the converts to Christianity from among the Jews should regard them. The conduct of the Christians at Jerusalem in giving this advice, and of Paul in following it, may be easily vindicated. If it be objected, as it has been by infidels, that it looks like double-dealing--that it was designed to deceive the Jews in Jerusalem, and to make them believe that Paul actually conformed to the ceremonial law, when his conduct among the Gentiles showed that he did not--we may reply,

(1.) that the observance of that law was not necessary in order to justification.

(2.) That it would have been improper to have enjoined its observance on the Gentile converts as necessary, and therefore it was never done.

(3.) That when the Jews urged its observance as necessary to justification and salvation, Paul strenuously opposed this view of it everywhere.

(4.) Yet, that as a matter of expediency, he did not oppose its being observed either by the Jews, or by the converts made among the Jews. In fact, there is other evidence besides the case before us, that Paul himself continued to observe some at least of the Jewish rites, and his conduct in public at Jerusalem, was in strict accordance with his conduct in other places. See Acts 18:18. The sum of the whole matter is this, that when the observance of the Jewish ceremonial law was urged as necessary to justification and acceptance with God, Paul resisted it; when it was demanded that its observance should be enjoined on the Gentiles, he opposed it; in all other cases he made no opposition to it, and was ready himself to comply with it, and willing that others should also.

As touching the Gentiles. The duties of the Gentiles had been settled in the council described in 15:23-29. The advice of James was no doubt given from the best of motives. His position was a difficult one. The fanaticism of the Jewish nation, which broke out in war a few years later, was growing intense. The national feeling in the church had to be handled with great care. It would not do for the church to believe that Paul had become a renegade from their race. Paul, aware of all these difficulties, generously complied for the sake of peace and unity. We cannot be certain that the advice was just right, or that Paul did just right to comply, but these grand men acted according to their knowledge, and the record of Acts portrays both the shortcomings and the perfection of its great worthies. Concerning this advice of James and compliance of Paul, Pres. Milligan says: ``Three different view have been taken:

(1) that Paul in this case acted ignorantly, not being aware of the fact that the law of Moses was no longer binding;

(2) that, like Peter, he acted from fear of the Jewish brethren (Ga 2:11);

(3) that he acted in conformity with the law of Christian benevolence which requires us to respect even the weaknesses and prejudices of our brethren, so far as this can be done without in any way neglecting the requirements of the Gospel." The third hypothesis is the best, but some explanations are needful. The Jewish Christians were slowly emancipated from Judaism, and they did not reach the clear conviction, until after the temple was destroyed, that its sacrifices were obsolete. Gentiles were forbidden to sacrifice idols, but there was no such prohibition with regard to the altar of Jehovah. Even Paul evidently at this time thought of the sacrifices as, like circumcision, a matter of indifference. It was left for the next generation to learn that the inspired writings of Paul himself lead to the conclusion that all the sacrifices of the temple altar pointed to the Lamb of God, and that, from the time he was offered, they became obsolete.

Until that an offering, etc. The sacrifices required of all those who had observed this vow. Acts 21:24; Nu 6:13. It is a complete vindication of Paul in this case, that he did no more here than he had done in a voluntary manner, Acts 18:18, and as appears then in a secret manner, showing that he was still in the practice of observing this rite of the Mosaic institution. Nor can it be proved that Paul ever, in any way, or at any time, spoke against the vow of the Nazarite, or that a vow of a similar kind in spirit would be improper for a Christian in any circumstances.

This I confess to be the most difficult passage in Acts to fully understand, and to reconcile with the teaching of Paul on the subject of the Mosaic law. We shall have the exact state of the question before our minds, by inquiring,

first, What was the exact position of the Jerusalem brethren in reference to the law?

second, What had Paul actually taught upon the subject? and third, How can the course pursued by both be reconciled to the mature apostolic teaching? First. It is stated, in this speech, of which James was doubtless the author, that the disciples about Jerusalem were "all zealous for the law." They recognized the authority of Moses as still binding; for they complained that Paul taught "apostasy from Moses" [#Ac 21:21|]. The specifications of this apostasy were, first, neglect of circumcision; second, abandonment of the customs." By "the customs" are meant those imposed by the law, among which, as seen in their proposition to Paul, were the Nazarite vows, with their burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and meat-offerings (#Nu 6:13-17|), and, as seen in Paul's epistles, abstinence from unclean meats, and the observance of Sabbath-days, holy days, new moons, and Sabbatic years (#Ro 14:1-23 Ga 4:9,10 Col 2:16,17|). Second. Our iniquity into Paul's teaching on the subject must have separate reference to what he had taught before this time, and what he taught subsequently.

None of his oral teachings on the subject are preserved by Luke, hence we are dependent for a knowledge of his present teaching upon those of his epistles which were written previous to this time. In none of the specifications above enumerated did he fully agree with his Jewish brethren. True, he granted the perpetuity of circumcision; yet not because he acknowledged with them the continued authority of the law, but because of the covenant with Abraham which preceded the law (see TFG "Ac 16:3). As for the law, he taught that it had been "a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, but after faith is come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster" (#Ga 3:24,25|); that, "now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that in which we were held"; that we are "become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (#Ro 7:4-6|). In repudiating the authority of the law, he necessarily repudiated all obligation to observe "the customs." In reference to all these, he afterward said to the Colossians, that God had "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing

it to the cross." "Let no man, therefore, judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of Sabbaths; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ" (#Col 2:14,16,17|). While thus repudiating the obligation to observe the ordinances, he admitted the innocence of their observance, and forbade any breach of fellowship on account of it, laying down in reference to them all, this rule: "Let not him who eats, despise him who eats not; and let not him who eats not, judge him who eats" (#Ro 14:1-6|). In reference, therefore, to meats and days, he and the judaizers agreed that the Jews might observe them; and they differed as to the ground of this conclusion: the latter affirming that it was a matter of duty; the former holding that it was a matter of indifference. Thus far we have omitted special mention of one custom, because its importance demands for it a separate consideration. We refer to sacrifices. It is evident, from the transaction before us, as observed above, that James and the brethren in Jerusalem regarded the offering of sacrifices as at least innocent; for they approved the course of the four Nazarites, and urged Paul to join with them in the service, though it required them to offer sacrifices, and even sin-offerings. They could not, indeed, very well avoid this opinion, since they admitted the continued authority of the Mosaic law. Though disagreeing with them as to the ground of their opinion, as in reference to the other customs, Paul evidently admitted the opinion itself, for he adopted their advice, and paid the expense of the sacrifices which the four Nazarites offered [#Ac 21:23,24,26|].

Third. The commentators uniformly agree that Paul was right, and that the rites observed on this occasion are to be referred to that class which are indifferent, and in reference to which Paul acted upon the principle of being a Jew to the Jew, that he might win the Jew. {m} This would not be objectionable, if the proceeding had reference merely to meats and drinks, holy days, etc., to which it appears to be confined in their view; for all these were indifferent then, and are not less so at the present day. Who would say that it would now be sinful to abstain from

certain meats, and observe certain days as holy? But it is far different with bloody sacrifices. If disciples, either Jewish or Gentile, should now assemble in Jerusalem, construct an altar, appoint a priesthood, and offer sin-offerings, they could but be regarded as apostates from Christ. But why should it be regarded as a crime now, if it was innocent then? The truth is, that, up to this time, Paul had written nothing which directly conflicted with the service of the altar, and he did not yet understand the subject correctly. His mind, and those of all the brethren, were as yet in much the same condition on this subject that they were before the conversion of Cornelius, in reference to the reception of the uncircumcised into the Church. If we admit that the proposition above quoted from Galatians, affirming that "we are no longer under the law" [#Ga 3:24,25|], was, when fully understood, inconsistent with the continuance of the sacrifice, we make his case only the more likely like Peter's in regard to the Gentiles; for he announced propositions, on Pentecost, which were inconsistent with his subsequent course, until he was made to better understand the force of his own words. Peter finally discovered that he was wrong in that matter, and Paul at length discovered that he was wrong, in his connection with the offerings of these Nazarites.

Some years later, the whole question concerning the Aaronic priesthood and animal sacrifices was thrust more distinctly upon his mind, and the Holy Spirit made to him a more distinct revelation of the truth upon the subject, and caused him to develop it to the Churches, in Ephesians, Colossians, and especially in Hebrews. In the last-named Epistle, written during his imprisonment in Rome, he exhibited the utter inefficiency of animal sacrifices; the sacrifice of Christ, once for all, as the only sufficient sin offering; and the abrogation of the Aaronic priesthood by that of Christ, who was now the only high priest and mediator between God and man. After these developments, he could not, for any earthly consideration, have repeated the transaction with the Nazarites; for it would have been to insult the great High Priest over the house of God, by presenting, before a human priest, an offering which could not

take away sin, and which would proclaim the insufficiency of the blood of the atonement. We conclude, therefore, that the procedure described in the text was inconsistent with the truth as finally developed by the apostles, but not with so much of it as was then understood by Paul.

This conclusion presents but another proof that the Holy Spirit, in leading the apostles "into the truth," did so by a gradual development running through a series of years (see Commentary, #Ac 10:9-23-23 11:1-18|). When Paul finally was enabled to understand and develop the whole truth on this subject, no doubt the opinions and prejudices of the more liberal class of Jewish disciples yielded to his clear and conclusive arguments. But, doubtless, some still clung to the obsolete and unlawful service of the temple, assisting the unbelieving Jews to perpetuate it. Then came in the necessity for the destruction of their temple and city, so that it should be impossible for them to longer offer sacrifices which had been superseded. The destruction of the temple was not the legal termination of the Mosaic ritual; for it ceased to be legal with the death of Christ (#Eph 2:14-16 Col 2:14|); but this brought to an end its illegal continuance. Before we dismiss this passage, there are two more points claiming a moment's attention. First, the justness of the accusation which the brethren had heard against Paul. He had certainly taught the Jews that they were no longer under the law, and that "the customs" were no longer binding, and this was, in one sense, "apostasy from Moses." But he had not, as he was charged, taught them to abandon the customs; for he had insisted that they were innocent; and, in reference to circumcision, he had given no ground of offense whatever. Hence the charge, as understood by those who preferred it, was false; and it was with the utmost propriety that Paul consented to disabuse their minds, though the means he adopted for that purpose was improper. The last point claiming attention is the nature of the purification which Paul underwent. The statement which we have rendered, he "purified himself with them," is understood,

by some commentators, to mean that he took part in their vow of abstinence {n}.

But for this meaning of the term, \~agnizw\~, there is no authority in the New Testament; everywhere else it means to purify, and Paul's own statement to Felix, that "they found me purified in the temple" (#Ac 24:18|), in which he speaks of the same event, and uses the same word, is conclusive as to its meaning here. It will be remembered that no Jew who, like Paul, had been mingling with Gentiles, and disregarding the ceremonial cleanness of the law, was permitted to enter the outer court of the temple without being purified. This purification he must have undergone, and there is no evidence that he underwent any other. But it is said that he purified himself "with them," which shows that they, too, were unclean. Now, when a Nazarite became unclean within the period of his vow, it was necessary that he should purify himself, shear his head on the seventh day, and on the eighth day bring certain offerings. Then he lost the days of his vow which had preceded the uncleanness, and had to begin the count anew from the day that the offering was presented. This is fully stated in #Nu 6:1-27|, where the law of Nazarite is prescribed. Such was the condition of these Nazarites, as is further proved by the notice given of the "days of purification," and the mention, in #Ac 21:27|, of "the seven days," as of a period well known. Nazarites had no purification to perform except when they became unclean during their vow; and there was no period of seven days connected with their vow, except in the instance just mentioned. In this instance, as the head was to be sheared on the seventh day, and the offerings presented on the eighth, there were just seven whole days employed. Paul's part was to give notice to the priest of the beginning of these days, and to pay the expenses of the offerings; but he had to purify himself before he went in for this purpose. {m} Bloomfield, Olshausen, Neander, Hackett, Howson, etc. {n} Bloomfield, Olshausen.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

Whom they supposed, etc. This is a most striking illustration of the manner in which accusations are often brought against others. They had seen him with Paul in the city; they inferred, therefore, that he had been with him in the temple. They did not even pretend that they had seen him in the temple; but the inference was enough to inflame the angry and excitable passions of the multitude. So in the accusations which men now often make of others. They see one thing, they infer another; they could testify to one thing, but they conclude that another thing will also be true, and that other thing they charge on them as the truth. If men would state facts as they are, no small part of the slanderous accusations against others would cease. An end would be made of most of the charges of falsehood, and error, and heresy, and dishonesty, and double-dealing, and immorality. If a statement is made, it should be of the thing as it was. If we attempt to state what a man has done, it should not be what we suppose he has done. If we attempt to state what he believes, it should not be what we suppose he believes.

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

If Paul's own brethren in Jerusalem has become prejudiced against him on account of his teaching in reference to the law [#Ac 21:20,21|], it is not surprising that the hatred of the unbelieving Jews toward him should be intense. Their treasured wrath was like a magazine, ready to explode the moment a match should be applied; and to charge him with defiling the holy place, which they believed that he had already reviled in every nation, was enough to produce the explosion. It is not the custom of mobs to investigate the charges heaped upon their victims; hence, without knowing or caring to know,

whether he had really brought Trophimus into the temple (#Ac 21:29|), they seized him and dragged him out into the court of the Gentiles. The doors of the inner court were closed, to prevent the defilement of that holy place by the blood which was likely to be shed.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar:

32 who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

The inability of the mob to agree upon any charge against him shows the precipitancy with which they had rushed upon him, while the multiplicity of charges which they vociferated shows the intensity of their hatred.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

Paul's Defense before the People

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

That Egyptian was probably a Jew, who resided in Egypt. Josephus has given an account of this Egyptian, which

strikingly accords with the statement here recorded by Luke. See Josephus' Antiq. b. xx. chap. viii. 6, and Jewish War, b. ii. chap. xiii. 5. The account which he gives is, that this Egyptian, whose name he does not mention, came from Egypt to Jerusalem, and said that he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go with him to the Mount of Olives. He said further, that he would show them from thence how the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them that he would procure for them an entrance through those walls when they were fallen down. Josephus adds, (Jewish War,) that he got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him, "these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount, which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place." But Felix, who was apprized of his movements, marched against him with the Roman soldiers, and discomfited him, and slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. "But the Egyptian escaped himself out of the fight, but did not appear any more." It was natural that the Roman tribune should suppose that Paul was this Egyptian, and that his return had produced this commotion and excitement among the people.

39 But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Acts-22

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense *which I make* now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3 I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and*

taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

The law of the fathers. The law of our fathers; i.e., the law which they received and handed down to us. Paul was a Pharisee; and the law in which he had been taught was not only the written law of Moses, but the traditional law which had been handed down from former times. Mt 3:6.

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.
5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Paul Tells of His Conversion

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.
7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.
9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid;
but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.
10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.
11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.
12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,
13 came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

And see that Just One. The Messiah. Acts 3:14. As Paul was to be an apostle. and as it was the peculiar office of an apostle to bear witness to the person and deeds of the Lord Jesus, Acts 1:21; Acts 1:22, it was necessary that he should see him, that thus he might be a competent witness of the resurrection. Shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. Shouldest hear and obey his commands.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

And wash away thy sins. Receive baptism, as an act expressive of the washing away of sins. It cannot be intended that the external rite of baptism was sufficient to make the soul pure, but that it was an ordinance divinely appointed as expressive of the washing away of sins, or of purifying the heart. Comp. Heb 10:22. Sinners are represented in the Scriptures as defiled or polluted by sin. To wash away the sins denotes the purifying of the soul from this polluted influence, 1Cor 6:11, Rev 1:5, 7:14, Isa 1:16, Ps 51:2,7. Calling on the name of the Lord. For pardon and sanctification. Rom 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It was proper that this calling on the name of the Lord should be connected with the ordinance of baptism. That ordinance was expressive of a purifying which the Lord only could produce. It is proper that the rite of baptism should be attended with extraordinary prayer; and that he who is to be baptized should make it the occasion of peculiar and very solemn religious exercises. The external rite will avail nothing without the pardoning mercy of God.

Paul's Call to the Gentiles

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

While I prayed in the temple. Paul, like the other converts to Christianity from among the Jews, would naturally continue to offer his devotions in the temple. We meet with repeated instances of their continuing to comply with the customs of the Jewish people. I was in a trance. Greek, Ecstasy. Acts 10:10. Perhaps he here refers to what he elsewhere mentions, 2Cor 12:1-5, which he calls "visions and revelations of the Lord." In that place he mentions his being "caught up to the third heaven," 2Cor 12:2, and "into paradise," where he heard words which it was "not possible for a man to utter," 2Cor 12:4. It is not certain, however, that he refers in this place to that remarkable occurrence. The narrative would rather imply that the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the temple in a remarkable manner, in a vision, and gave him a direct command to go to the Gentiles. Paul had now stated the evidence of his conversion, which appears to have been satisfactory to them: at least they made no objection to his statement; he had shown by his being in the temple his respect for their institutions; and he now proceeds to show that in his other conduct he had been directed by the same high authority by which he had been called into the ministry, and that the command had been given to him in their own temple and in their own city.

18 and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

For they will not receive. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, probably including both Jews and Christians. The Jews would not listen to him, because he had become, in their view, an apostate, and they would hate and persecute him. The Christians would not be likely to receive him, for they would remember his former persecutions, and would be suspicious of him, because he had been so long in Arabia, and had not sooner connected himself with them. Acts 9:26, "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Paul in the Custody of the Chief Captain

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

Observe here, 1. With what patience the Jews heard the apostle's discourse until he made mention to preach to them. Upon which they brake forth into fury and passion, and expressed their fury by throwing dust into the air, and casting off their clothes, as if they would presently stone him, whom they looked upon as the worst of villains, and unworthy to live: where we may remark at once both what a vile opinion the Jews had of the Gentiles, whom they called and accounted dogs, and what an high esteem they had of themselves, and a proud conceit of their own deservings, as if the favours of heaven belonged to none but themselves, who yet trampled upon them, when they were tendered to them.

Observe, 2. What a vile esteem these wicked Jews had of the holy and innocent apostle, who desired above all things to preach the glad tidings of the gospel to them, and longed most affectionately for the conversion and salvation of them. They account him the greatest villain upon earth, and unworthy to live upon it; but the good man had learnt (and let all the faithful ministers of Christ learn it after him) to take pleasure in reproaches, in persecutions, in necessities and distresses, for Christ's sake. Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not meet that he should liveAway with such a fellow. Greek, Take such a man from the earth; i.e., put him to death. It is language of strong indignation and abhorrence. The reasons of their

indignation were not that they supposed that the Gentiles could not be brought into covenant with God, for they would themselves compass sea and land to make one proselyte; but they were,

(1.) that they believed that Paul taught that they might be saved without conforming to the law of Moses; and,

(2.) his speech implied that the Jews were more hardened than the Gentiles, and that he had a greater prospect of success in bringing them to God than he had in regard to the Jews.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard *that,* he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a
Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free*-born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

Paul before the Council

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Acts-23

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

The council. Greek, The sanhedrim, Acts 22:30. It was the great council composed of seventy elders, to whom was entrusted the affairs of the nation. Mt 2:4.I have lived in all good conscience. I have conducted myself so as to maintain a good conscience. I have done what I believed to be right. This was a bold declaration, after the tumult, and charges, and accusations of the previous day, Acts 22; and yet it was strictly true. His persecutions of the Christians had been conducted conscientiously. Acts 26:9, "I verily thought with myself," says he, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Of his conscientiousness and fidelity in their service, they could bear witness. Of his conscientiousness since, he could make a similar declaration. And he, doubtless, meant to say, that as he had been conscientious in persecution, so he had been in his conversion, and in his subsequent course. And as they knew that his former life had been with a good conscience, they ought to presume that he had maintained the same character still. This was a remarkably bold appeal to be made by an accused man, and it shows the strong consciousness which Paul had of his innocence. What would have been the drift of Paul's discourse in proving this, we can only conjecture. He was interrupted, Acts 23:2; but there can be no doubt that he would have pursued such a course of argument as should tend to establish his innocence.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

God shall smite thee. God shall punish thee. God is just; and he will not suffer such a manifest violation of all the laws of a fair trial to pass unavenged. This was a remarkably bold and

fearless declaration. Paul was surrounded by enemies. They were seeking his life; and he must have known that such declarations would have only excited their wrath, and made them more thirsty for his blood. That he could thus address the president of the council was not only strongly characteristic of the man, but was also a strong proof that he was conscious of innocence, and that justice was on his side. This expression of Paul, "God shall smite thee," is not to be regarded in the light of an imprecation, or as an expression of angry feeling, but of a prediction, or of a strong conviction on the mind of Paul, that a man so hypocritical and unjust as Ananias was, could not escape the vengeance of God. Ananias was slain, with Hezekiah his brother, during the agitation that occurred in Jerusalem, when the robbers, or Sicarii, under their leader Manahem, had taken possession of the city. He attempted to conceal himself in an aqueduct, but was drawn forth and killed. See Josephus, Jewish Wars, b. ii. chap. xvii. 8. Thus Paul's prediction was fulfilled.

Thou whited wall. This is evidently a proverbial expression, meaning thou hypocrite. His hypocrisy consisted in his pretending to sit there to do justice; and yet, in commanding the accused to be smitten in direct violation of the law, he thus showed that his character was not what, by his sitting there, he professed it to be, but that of one determined to carry the purposes of his party, and of his own feelings. Our Saviour used a similar expression, to describe the hypocritical character of the Pharisees, Mt 23:27, when he compares them to whited sepulchres.

Observe here, 1. How sad a state, and how bad a condition, was the Jewish church now in, when in the Sanhedrin, or great council, men had power and authority, who believed in no life but this; and what hypocrites were the Pharisees, who could thus incorporate and embody with damnable heretics, the Sadducees, and yet at the same time hated and persecuted the Christians. The Sadducees were so far from believing that there was any spirit, that they blasphemously maintained, that God

himself was no spiritual, but only corporeal being. When men sin with obstinacy against supernatural light, God justly withdraws from them even natural light, and suffers them to fall from one degree of error to another.

Observe, 2. How partiality will change men's judgments, according to the interest of a party or faction. The Pharisees were bitter enemies to the apostle; but, because he owned himself of their sect, they instantly took part with him, and cry, We find no fault with him. The feuds about religion are commonly the sharpest feuds; men are more fond of the notions of their brains, than they are of the issue of their bodies. Odia Religiosorum sunt acerbissima; "Religious hates are hottest."

Observe, 3. How the dissensions of God's adversaries oft-times become the deliverance of God's servants. Thus here the Pharisees and Sadducees quarrel about the resurrection: the Pharisees justify St. Paul, and tell them that oppose him, "They are in danger of fighting against God." Thus God when he pleaseth, can find or make patrons of his people, and raise up friends from amongst his very enemies, to defend his cause.

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Then said Paul, I wist not. I knew not; I was ignorant of the fact, that he was high priest. Interpreters have been greatly divided on the meaning of this expression. Some have supposed that Paul said it in irony; as if he had said, "Pardon me, brethren, I did not consider that this was the high priest. It did not occur to me, that a man who could conduct thus could be God's high priest." Others have thought (as Grotius) that Paul used these words for the purpose of mitigating their wrath, and as an acknowledgment that he had spoken hastily, and that it was contrary to his usual habit, which was not to speak evil of the ruler of the people. As if he had said, "I acknowledge my error and my haste. I did not consider that I was addressing him

whom God had commanded me to respect." But this interpretation is not probable, for Paul evidently did not intend to retract what he had said. Dr. Doddridge renders it, "I was not aware, brethren, that it was the high priest," and regards it as all apology for having spoken in haste. But the obvious reply to this interpretation is, that if Ananias was the high priest, Paul could not but be aware of it. Of so material a point, it is hardly possible that he could be ignorant. Others suppose, that as Paul had been long absent from Jerusalem, and had not known the changes which had occurred there, he was a stranger to the person of the high priest. Others suppose that Ananias did not occupy the usual seat which was appropriated to the high priest, and that he was not clothed in the usual robes of office, and that Paul did not recognize him the high priest. But these interpretations are not probable. It is wholly improbable that, on such an occasion, the high priest, who was the presiding officer in the sanhedrim, should not be known to the accused. The true interpretation, therefore, I suppose is, that which is derived from the fact that Ananias was not then properly the high priest; that there was a vacancy in the office, and that he presided by courtesy, or in virtue of his having been formerly invested with that office. The meaning then will be, "I did not regard or acknowledge him as the high priest. I did not address him as such, since that is not his true character. Had he been truly the high Priest, even if he had thus been guilty of manifest injustice, I would not have used the language which I did. The office, if not the man, would have claimed respect. But as he is not truly and properly clothed with that office, and as he was guilty of manifest injustice, I did not believe that he was to be shielded in his injustice by the law which commands me to show respect to the proper ruler of the people." If this be the true interpretation, it shows that Luke, in this account, accords entirely with the truth of history. The character of Ananias, as given by Josephus; the facts which he has stated in regard to him, all accord with the account here given, and show that the writer of the "Acts of the Apostles" was acquainted with the history of that time, and has correctly stated it. For it is written. Ex 22:28. Paul adduces this to show that it was his purpose to

observe the law; that he would not intentionally violate it; and that, if he had known Ananias to be high priest, he would have been restrained by his regard for the law from using the language which he did. Of the ruler of thy people. This passage had not any peculiar reference to the high priest, but it inculcated the general spirit of respect for those in office, whatever that office was. As the office of high priest was one of importance and authority, Paul declares here that he would not be guilty of showing disrespect for it, or of using reproachful language towards it. (+) "wist" "knew" (c) "written" Ex 22:28, Eccl 10:20, 2Pet 2:10, Jude 1:8

Other commentators says that: Several interpretations are given by expositors of these words, I wist not, brethern, that he was the high-priest.

1. Some think that St. Paul did not really know the high-priest, having been gone so long from Jerusalem; and the high-priest being made yearly.
Others say,

2. That there being a great throng about him, the apostle could not distinctly hear who it was that spake to him.

3. Some understand it of absolute denial, that any such office as that of high-priest ought then be in being. As if the apostle had said, "I do not own any man to be a lawful high-priest now, that function being abolished and disannulled at the coming of the Messias."
Again, 4. Others understand the words, as if the apostle denied him to be the lawful high-priest, and one of God's appointing, he being one of man's making, having purchased the place with money; for the power and coveteousness of the Romans put a new high-priest every year to officiate: accordingly, St. Paul, knowing this man to be none of the posterity of Aaron, but brought in by sordid gain, might justly disown him to be the high-priest.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Orobio charges this upon Paul as an artful manner of declining persecution, unworthy the character of an upright and honest man. Chubb, a British Deist of the seventeenth century, charges it upon Patti as an act of gross "dissimulation, as designed to conceal the true ground of all the troubles that he had brought upon himself; and as designed to deceive and impose upon the Jews." He affirms also, that "St. Paul probably invented this pretended charge against himself, to draw over a party of the unbelieving Jews unto him." See Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. ii. p. 238., Now, in reply to this we may observe,

(1.) that there is not the least evidence that Paul denied that he had been, or was then, a Christian. An attempt to deny this, after all that they knew of him, would have been vain; and there is not the slightest hint that he attempted it.

(2.) The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was the main and leading doctrine which he had insisted on, and which had been to him the cause of much of his persecution. Acts 17:31,32, 1Cor 15, Acts 13:34 Acts 26:6,7,23,25.

(3.) Paul defended this by an argument which he deemed invincible, and which constituted, in fact, the principal evidence of its truth--the fact that the Lord Jesus had been raised. That fact had given demonstration to the doctrine of the Pharisees, that the dead would rise. As Paul had everywhere proclaimed the fact that Jesus had been raised up, and as this had been the occasion of his being opposed, it was true that he had been persecuted on account of that doctrine.

(4.) The real ground of the opposition which the Sadducees made to him, and of their opposition to his doctrine, was the additional zeal with which he urged this doctrine, and the

additional argument which he brought far the resurrection of the dead. Perhaps the cause of the opposition of this great party among the Jews--the Sadducees--to Christianity, was the strong confirmation which the resurrection of Christ gave to the doctrine which they so much hated--the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. It thus gave a triumph to their opponents among the Pharisees; and Paul, as a leading and zealous advocate of that doctrine, would excite their special hatred.

(5.) All that Paul said, therefore, was strictly true. It was because he advocated this doctrine that he was opposed. That there were other causes of opposition to him might be true also; but still this was the main and prominent cause of the hostility.

(6.) With great propriety, therefore, he might address the Pharisees, and say, "Brethren, the great doctrine which has distinguished you from the Sadducees is at stake. The great doctrine which is at the foundation of all our hopes--the resurrection of the dead--the doctrine of our fathers, of the Scriptures, of our sect, is in danger. Of that doctrine I have been the advocate. I have never denied it. I have endeavoured to establish it, and have everywhere defended it, and have devoted myself to the work of putting it on an imperishable basis among the Jews and the Gentiles. For my zeal in that I have been opposed. I have excited the ridicule of the Gentile, and the hatred of the Sadducee. I have thus been persecuted and arraigned; and for my zeal in this, in urging the argument in defence of it, which I have deemed most irrefragable--the resurrection of the Messiah--I have been persecuted and arraigned, and now cast myself on your protection against the mad zeal of the enemies of the doctrine of our fathers. Not only, therefore, was this an act of policy and prudence in Paul, but what he affirmed was strictly true, and the effect was as he had anticipated.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between

Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

The scribes. The learned men. They would naturally be the chief speakers. Of the Pharisees' part. Who were Pharisees; or who belonged to that party. The scribes were not a distinct sect, but might be either Pharisees or Sadducees.

We find no evil in this man. No opinion which is contrary to the law of Moses; and no conduct in spreading the doctrine of the resurrection which we do not approve. The importance of this doctrine, in their view, was so great as to throw into the back ground all the other doctrines that Paul might hold; and provided this were propagated, they were willing, to vindicate and sustain him. A similar testimony was offered to the innocence of the Saviour by Pilate, Jn 19:6.

But if a spirit or an angel, etc. They here referred, doubtless, to what Paul had said in Acts 22:17,18. He had declared that he had gone among the Gentiles in obedience to a command which he received in a vision in the temple. As the Pharisees held to the belief of spirits and angels, and to the doctrine that the will of God was often delivered to men by their agency, they were ready now to admit that he had received such a communication, and that he had gone among the Gentiles in obedience to it, to defend their great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. We are not to suppose that the Pharisees had become the friends of Paul, or of Christianity. The true solution of their conduct doubtless is, that they were so inflamed with hatred against the Sadducees, that they were willing to make use of any argument against their doctrine. As the testimony of Paul might be turned to their account, they were willing to vindicate him. It is remarkable, too, that they perverted the statement of Paul in order to oppose the Sadducees. Paul had stated distinctly, Acts 22:17,18,) that he had been commanded to go by the Lord, meaning the Lord Jesus. He had said nothing of "a spirit, or an angel." Yet they would unite with the Sadducees so far as to maintain that he had received no such command from the Lord Jesus. But they might easily vary his

statements, and suppose that an "angel or a spirit" had spoken to him, and thus made use of his conduct as an argument against the Sadducees. Men are not always very careful about the exact correctness of their statements, when they wish to humble a rival. Let us not fight against God. Acts 5:39. These words are wanting in many MSS. and in some of the ancient versions. The Syriac reads it, "If a spirit or an angel have spoken to him, what is there in this?" i.e., what is there unusual or wrong.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

The appearance of the Lord in this case was a proof that he approved the course which Paul had taken before the sanhedrim.

The promise which was here made to Paul was not directly one of deliverance from the present persecution, but it implied that, and made it certain.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

It is evident, however, that the minds of the Jews were greatly inflamed against Paul; and as they saw him in the custody of the Roman tribune, and as there was no prospect that he would punish him, they resolved to take the matter into their own hands. Michaelis conjectures that they were of the number of the Sicarii, or cut-throats, with which Judea then abounded. Acts 21:38. It is needless to remark that this was a most wicked oath. It was a deliberate purpose to commit murder; and it

shows the desperate state of morals among the Jews at that time, and the infuriated malice of the people against the apostle.

O what a low ebb was the Jewish religion now at! What an high-priest and priesthood was there, that must head a conspiracy of murdering Sadducees! How great was the degeneracy of the Jewish church, when their chief priests were thus ready to comply with, and contribute their best assistance to, such a cruel crew of cut-throats and bloody assassins! but they had almost filled up the measure of their sins, and their final destruction was near approaching.

Observe, lastly, What craft and cruelty, what fraud and force, are here found and combined together in the church's enemies.

The Plot against Paul's Life

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.
13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.
14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.
15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

As though ye would enquire, etc. This request appeared so reasonable that they did not doubt that the tribune would grant it to the council. And though it was obviously a false and wicked pretence, yet these conspirators knew the character of the persons to whom they addressed themselves so well, that they did not doubt that they would prevail On the council to make the request. Public justice must have been deeply fallen,

when it was known that such an iniquitous request could be made with the certain prospect of success.

Before he comes near to the sanhedrim. The great council will thus not be suspected of being privy to the deed. We will waylay him, and murder him in the way. The plan was well laid; and nothing but the interposition of Providence could have prevented its execution. As though ye would enquire, etc. This request appeared so reasonable that they did not doubt that the tribune would grant it to the council. And though it was obviously a false and wicked pretence, yet these conspirators knew the character of the persons to whom they addressed themselves so well, that they did not doubt that they would prevail On the council to make the request. Public justice must have been deeply fallen, when it was known that such an iniquitous request could be made with the certain prospect of success.

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16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

Who might at that time have had special charge of the castle, or been on guard. Paul had the most positive assurance that his life would be spared, and that he would yet see Rome; but he always understood the Divine promises and purposes as being consistent with his own efforts, and with all proper measures of prudence and diligence in securing his own safety. He did not rest merely on the Divine promise without any effort of his own; but he took encouragement from those promises to put forth his own exertions for security and for salvation.

18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.
19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me?
20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul tomorrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.
21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.
22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him, See thou* tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.

How wonderfully God overruled the heart of the chief captain, in that he took care both of St. Paul, and the young man also

Paul Sent to Felix the Governor

23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;
24 and provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.
25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:
26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting.
27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.
28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:
29 whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.
31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.
32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:
33 who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.
34 And when the governor had read *the letter,* he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia;
35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

Acts-24

Paul's Defense before Felix

1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

With a certain orator named Tertullus. Appointed to accuse Paul. This is a Roman name, and this man was doubtless a Roman. As the Jews were, to a great extent, ignorant of the Roman customs and laws, and of their mode of administering justice, it is not improbable that they were in the habit of employing Roman lawyers to plead their causes.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him,*
saying,
Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,
3 we accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5 For we have found this man *a* pestilent *fellow,* and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

We have found this man a pestilent fellow. λοιμον. This word is commonly applied to a plague, or pestilence; and then to a man who corrupts the morals of others, or who is turbulent, and an exciter of sedition. Our translation somewhat weakens the force of the original expression. Tertullus did not say that he was a pestilent fellow, but that he was the very pestilence itself. In this he referred to their belief, that he had been the cause of extensive disturbances everywhere among the Jews.

An exciter of tumult. This they pretended he did by preaching doctrines contrary to the laws and customs of Moses, and exciting the Jews to tumult and disorder. Throughout the world. Throughout the Roman empire, and thus leading the Jews to violate the laws, and to produce tumults, riots, and disorder.

And a ringleader. πρωτοστατην. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is properly a military word, and denotes one who stands first in an army, a standard-bearer, a leader, or commander. The meaning is, that Paul had been so active, and so prominent in preaching the gospel, that he had been a leader, or the principal person, in extending the sect of the Nazarenes. Of the sect. The original word here αιρεσεως is the word from which we have derived the term heresy. It is, however, properly translated sect, or party, and should have been so translated in Acts 24:14. Acts 5:17. Of the Nazarenes. This was the name usually given to Christians by way of contempt. They were so called because Jesus was of Nazareth.

Here note, 1. What an heavy load of reproaches and false accusations our innocent apostle laboured under; he is accounted, and called, a walking pestilence. Thus the holy and

faithful servants of God are esteemed by the world, the plague and bane of the place and nation where they live: although it is really for their sakes that God staves off plagues and judgments from falling upon the world; We have found this man a pestilant fellow.

It is not the greatest holiness towards God, nor righteousness towards men, that can sufficiently shield and defend a saint from censure and slander, from calumny and false accusation.

Note, 2. Besides the general charge that the apostle was the very pest and plague of mankind; we have a threefold accusation brought against him, That he was a mover of sedition, a profaner of the temple, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Lord, how should thy faithful ministers and ambassadors prepare themselves for, and comfort themselves under, the most hellish reproaches, when we find the great apostle, (whom St. Chrysostom honours with this character, "That the earth never bare a better man since it bare our Redeemer,") yet thus miscalled and accounted a pest, a plague, the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things!

O why should such worthless worms as we murmur, when we meet with much less reproaches! Lord! help us in imitation of thy example, for the joy that is set before us, to despise the shame, as well as to endure the cross. The best men that ever the world had, have fallen under the lashes of envenomed tongues. What foul aspersions hath malice cast upon innocency itself! Our blessed Saviour, in the clearest act of innocency, his casting out of devils, suffered the most horrid imputation, even of casting out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils, Matt 9:34.

Now the servant must not expect to be above his master: if Christ thus suffered, needs must Christianity, needs must Christians, needs must ministers and ambassadors.

6 who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.
7 But the chief captain Lysias came *upon us*, and with great violence took *him* away out of our hands,
8 commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.
9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.
10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered,
Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:
11 because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.
12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:
13 neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.
14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

But this I confess, etc. The next specification in the charge of Tertullus was, Acts 24:5, that he was "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." To this, Paul replies in this and the two following verses. Of this reply we may observe,

(1.) that he does not stoop to notice the contempt implied in the use of the word Nazarenes. He was engaged in a more important business than to contend about the name which they chose to give to Christians.

(2.) He admits that he belonged to that sect or class of people. That he was a Christian he neither denied, nor was disposed to deny.

(3.) He maintains that in this way he is still worshipping the God of his fathers. Of this, the fact that he was engaged in worship in the temple, was sufficient proof.

(4.) He shows them that he believed only what was written in the law and the prophets; that this involved the main doctrine of their religion--the hope of the resurrection of the dead, Acts 24:15; and that it was his constant and earnest desire to keep a pure conscience in all things, Acts 24:16. These are the points of his defence to this second charge, and we shall see that they fully meet and dispose of the accusation. After the way. After the manner or mode of worship. Which they call heresy. This translation does not express to us the force of the original. We have attached to the word heresy an idea which is not conveyed by the Greek word, and now commonly understand by it, error of doctrine. In Paul's answer here, there is an explicit reference to their charge, which does not appear in our version. The charge of Tertullus was, that he was the ringleader of the sect τηςαιρεσεως of the Nazarenes, Acts 24:5. To this, Paul replies, "After the way which they call sect, (αιρεσιν, not error of doctrine, but after a way which they maintain is producing division or schism,) so worship I the God of my fathers." Paul was not ashamed to be called a follower of that sect or party among the Jewish people. Nor should we be ashamed to worship God in a mode that is called heresy or schism, if we do it in obedience to conscience and to God. So worship I. I continue to worship. I have not departed from the characteristic of the Jewish people, the proper and public acknowledgment of the God of the Jews. The God of my fathers. My fathers' God; Jehovah; the God whom my Jewish ancestors adored. There is something very touching in this, and fitted to find its way to the heart of a Jew. He had introduced no new object of worship, (comp. De 13:1-5;) he had not become a follower of a false or foreign God; and this fact was really a reply to their charge, that he was setting up a new sect in religion. The same thing Paul affirms of himself in 2Ti 1:3: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience." Believing all things, etc. Particularly respecting the Messiah. So he more

fully explains his meaning in his speech before king Agrippa, Acts 26:23. In the Law and in the Prophets. Commanded in the law of Moses, and foretold by the prophets. That Paul had ever disbelieved any of these things, they could not prove; and his whole course had shown that he fully credited the sacred records. Most of his arguments in defending Christianity had been drawn from the Jewish writings.

15 and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow,
that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and
unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void
of offense toward God, and *toward* men.

Do I exercise myself. ασκω. I accustom or employ myself; I make it my constant aim and endeavour. It is the purpose of my constant study. Paul often appeals to his conscientiousness as the leading habit of his life. Even before his conversion he endeavoured to act according to the dictates of conscience. See Acts 26:9. Comp. Php 3:5,6. To have always a conscience, etc. To do that which is right, so that my conscience shall approve of it, and never reproach me. Void of offence. αροσκοπον. That which is inoffensive, or which does not cause one to stumble or fall. lie means, that he endeavoured to keep his conscience so enlightened and pure in regard to duty, and that he acted according to its dictates in such a way, that his conduct should not be displeasing to God, or injurious to man. To have such a conscience implies two things:

(1.) That it be enlightened or properly informed in regard to truth and duty; and,

(2,) that that which is made known to be right should be honestly and faithfully performed. Without these two things, no man can have a conscience that shall be inoffensive and harmless. Toward God. In an honest endeavour to discharge all the duties of public and private worship, and to do constantly what he requires. In believing all that he has spoken; doing all that he requires; and offering to him the service which he

approves. Toward men. In endeavouring to meet all the demands of justice and mercy; to advance their knowledge, happiness, and salvation; so that I may look back on my life with the reflection that I have done all that I ought to have done, and all that I could do, to promote the welfare of the whole human family. What a noble principle of conduct was this! How devoted, and how pure! How unlike the conduct of those who live to gratify debasing sensual appetites, or for gold or honour; and who pass their lives in such a manner as to offer the grossest offence to God, and to do the most injury to man! The great and noble aim of Paul was to be pure; and no slander of his enemies, no trials, persecutions, or perils, and no pains of dying, could take away the approving voice of conscience. Alike in his travels, and in his persecutions; among friends and foes; when preaching in the synagogue, the city, or the desert; or when defending himself before governors and kings, he had this testimony of a self-approving mind. Happy they who thus frame their lives. And happy will be the end of a life where this has been the grand object of the journey through this world.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evildoing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

Having more perfect knowledge of that way. Our translation of this verse is very obscure, and critics are divided about the proper interpretation of the original. Many (Erasmus, Luther, Michaelis, Morus, etc.) render it, "Although he had a more

perfect knowledge of the Christian doctrine than Paul's accusers had, yet he deferred the hearing of the cause till Lysias had come down." They observe, that he might have obtained this knowledge, not only from the letter of Lysias, but from public rumour, as there were doubtless Christians at Caesarea. They suppose that he deferred the cause, either with the hope of receiving a bribe from Paul, (comp. Acts 24:26,) or to gratify the Jews with his being longer detained as a prisoner. Others, among whom are Beza, Grotius, Rosenmuller, and Doddridge, suppose that it should be rendered, "He deferred them, and said, After I have been more accurately informed concerning this way, when Lysias has come down, I will hear the cause." This is doubtless the true interpretation of the passage, and it is rendered more probable by the fact that Felix sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith of Christ, (Acts 24:24,) evidently with a design to make himself better acquainted with the charges against him, and the nature of his belief.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Felix came with his wife Drusilla. Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa the elder, and was engaged to be married to Epiphanes, the son of king Antiochus, on condition that he would embrace the Jewish religion; but as he afterwards refused to do that, the contract was broken off. Afterwards she was given in marriage, by her brother Agrippa the younger, to Azizus king of Emesa, upon his consent to be circumcised. When Felix was governor of Judea, he saw Drusilla, and fell in love with her, and sent to her Simon, one of his friends, a Jew, by birth a Cyprian, who pretended to be a magician, to endeavour to persuade her to forsake her husband, and to marry Felix. Accordingly, in order to avoid the envy of her sister Bernice, who treated her ill on account of her beauty, "she was prevailed on," says Josephus, "to transgress the laws of her forefathers, and to marry Felix." Josephus, Antiq. b. xx. chap.

vii. 1, 2. She was, therefore, living in adultery with him; and this was probably the reason why Paul dwelt in his discourse before Felix particularly on "temperance," or chastity. Acts 24:25. He sent for Paul, and heard him. Perhaps he did this in order to be more fully acquainted with the case which was submitted to him. It is possible, also, that it might have been to gratify his wife, who was a Jewess, and who doubtless had a desire to be acquainted with the principles of this new sect. It is certain also that one object which Felix had in this, was to let Paul see how dependent he was on him, and to induce him to purchase his liberty.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

And as he reasoned. Greek, "And he discoursing." διαλεγομενου δεαυτου No argument should be drawn from the word that is used here, to prove that Paul particularly appealed to reason, or that his discourse was argumentative. That it was so, is indeed not improbable, from all that we know of the man, and from the topics on which he discoursed. But the word used here means simply, as he discoursed, and is applied usually to making a public address, to preaching, etc., in whatever way it is done, Acts 17:2, 18:4,19, 19:8,9, 24:12. Felix and Drusilla intended this as a matter of entertainment or amusement. Paul readily obeyed their summons, as it gave him an opportunity to preach the gospel to them; and as they desired his sentiments in regard to the faith in Christ, he selected those topics which were adapted to their condition, and stated those principles of the Christian religion which were fitted to arrest their attention, and lead them to repentance. Paul seized every opportunity of making known the gospel; and whether a prisoner or at liberty, whether before princes, governors, kings, or common people, was equally prepared to defend the pure and holy doctrines of the cross. His boldness in this instance is the more remarkable, as he was dependent on Felix for his pardon. A timeserver or an impostor would have chosen such topics as would have conciliated the favour of the judge, and procured his pardon, he would have flattered his vanity, or palliated his vices. But such

an idea never seems to have occurred to Paul. His aim was to defend the truth, and to save, if possible, the souls of Drusilla and of Felix. Of righteousness, περιδικαιοσυνης. Of justice. Not of the justice of God particularly, but of the nature and requirements of justice in the relations of life, the relations which we sustain to God and to man. This was a proper topic with which to introduce his discourse, as it was the office of Felix to dispense justice between man and man; and as his administration was not remarkable for the exercise of that virtue. It is evident that he could be influenced by a bribe, (Acts 24:26;) and it was proper for Paul to dwell on this as designed to show him the guilt of his life, and his danger of meeting the justice of a Being who cannot be bribed, but who will dispense equal justice alike to the great and the mean. That Paul dwelt also on the justice of God, as the moral Governor of the world, may also be presumed. The apprehension of that justice, and the remembrance of his own guilty life, tended to produce the alarm of Felix, and to make him tremble.

And judgment to come. The universal judgment; the judgment that was to come on all transgressors. On this topic Paul also dwelt when he preached before the Areopagus at Athens, Acts 17:31. These topics were admirably adapted to excite the alarm of both Felix and Drusilla. It evinced great boldness and faithfulness in Paul to select them; and the result showed that he correctly judged of the kind of truth which was adapted to alarm the fears of his guilty auditor.

And answered, Go thy way, etc. How different is this answer from that of the jailer of Philippi when alarmed in a similar manner. He asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and was directed to Him in whom he found peace from a troubled conscience, Acts 16:30,31. Felix was troubled; but instead of asking what he should do, he sent the messenger of God away. He was evidently not prepared to break off his sins, and turn to God. He sought peace by sending away his reprover; and manifestly intended then to banish the subject from his mind. Yet, like others, he did not intend to banish it altogether. He

looked forward to a time when he should be more at leisure; when the cares of office should press less heavily on his attention; or when he should be more disposed to attend to it. Thus multitudes, when they are alarmed, and see their guilt and danger, resolve to defer it to a more convenient time. One man is engaged in a career of pleasure, and it is not now a convenient time to attend to his soul's salvation. Another is pressed with business; with the cares of life; with a plan of gain; with the labours of office, or of a profession, and it is not now a convenient time for him to attend to religion. Another supposes that his time of life is not the most convenient. His youth he desires to spend in pleasure, and waits for a more convenient time in middle age. His middle life he spends in business, and the toils of the world, and this is not a convenient time. Such a period he expects then to find in old age. But as age advances, he finds an increasing disposition to defer it; he is still indisposed to attend to it; still in love with the world. Even old age is seldom found to be a convenient time to prepare for heaven; and it is deferred from one period of life to another, till death closes the scene. It has been commonly supposed and said, that Felix never found that more convenient time to call for Paul. That he did not embrace the Christian religion, and forsake his sins, is probable, nay, almost certain. But it is not true that he did not take an opportunity of hearing Paul further on the subject; for it is said that he sent for him often, and communed with him. But though Felix found this opportunity, yet

(1) we have no reason to suppose that the main thing --the salvation of his soul-- ever again occupied his attention. There is no evidence that he was again alarmed or awakened, or that he had any further solicitude on the subject of his sins. He had passed for ever the favourable time; the golden moments when he might have secured the salvation of his soul.

(2.) Others have no right to suppose that their lives will be lengthened out that they may have any further opportunity to attend to the subject of religion.

(3.) When a sinner is awakened, and sees his past sins, if he rejects the appeal to his conscience then, and defers it to a more convenient opportunity, he has no reason to expect that his attention will ever be again called with deep interest to the subject. He may live; but he may live without the strivings of the Holy Spirit. When a man has once deliberately rejected the offers of mercy; when he has trifled with the influences of the Spirit of God, he has no right or reason to expect that that Spirit will ever strive with him again. Such, we have too much reason to fear was the case with Felix. Though he often saw Paul again, and "communed with him," yet there is no account that he was again alarmed or awakened. And thus sinners often attend on the means of grace after they have grieved the Holy Spirit; they listen to the doctrines of the gospel, they hear its appeals and its warnings, but they have no feeling, no interest, and die in their sins. A more convenient season. Greek, "Taking time." I will take a time for this. I will call for thee. To hear thee further on this subject. This he did, Acts 24:26. It is remarkable that Drusilla was not alarmed. She was as much involved in guilt as Felix; but she, being a Jewess, had been accustomed to hear of a future judgment, until it caused in her mind no alarm. Perhaps also she depended on the rites and ceremonies of her religion as a sufficient expiation for her sins. She might have been resting on those false dependencies which go to free the conscience from a sense of guilt, and which thus beguile and destroy the soul.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Left Paul bound. Left him in custody to the charge of his successor. His object in this was to conciliate the Jews; that is, to secure their favour, and to prevent them, if possible, from accusing him for the evils of his administration before the emperor. The account which Luke gives here coincides remarkably with that which Josephus has given. He says, that

Porcius Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero. He does not indeed mention Paul, or say that Felix sought to conciliate the favour of the Jews; but he gives such an account as to make the statement by Luke perfectly consistent with his character while in office. He informs us that Felix was unpopular, and that there was reason to apprehend that the Jews would accuse him before the emperor; and, therefore, the statement in the Acts, that he would be willing to show the Jews a favour, is in perfect keeping with his character and circumstances, and is one of those undesigned coincidences, which show that the author of the Acts was fully acquainted with the circumstances of the time, and that his history is true. The account in Josephus is, that

"when Porcine Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero, the principal inhabitants of Caesarea went up to Rome to accuse Felix; and he had been certainly brought to punishment, unless Nero had yielded to the importunate solicitations of his brother Pallas, who was at that time had in the greatest honour by him."

Antiq. b. xx. chap. viii. & 9. The plan of Felix, therefore, in suppressing the enmity of the Jews, and conciliating their favour by injustice to Paul, did not succeed; and is one of those instances, so numerous in the world, where a man gains nothing by wickedness. He sought money from Paul by iniquity, and failed; he sought by injustice to obtain the favour of the Jews, and failed in that also. And the inference from the whole transaction is, that "honesty is the best policy," and that man in any office should pursue a course of firm, and constant, and undeviating integrity.

Acts-25

Paul Appeals to Caesar

1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against
Paul, and besought him,

3 and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

Informed him of the accusation against him; and doubtless endeavoured to prejudice the mind of Festus against him. They thus showed their unrelenting disposition. It might have been supposed that after two years this unjust prosecution would be abandoned and forgotten. But malice does not thus forget its object; and the spirit of persecution is not thus satisfied. It is evident that there was here every probability that injustice would be done to Paul, and that the mind of Festus would be biassed against him. He was a stranger to Paul, and to the embittered feelings of the Jewish character, he would wish to conciliate their favour on entering on the duties of his office. And a strong representation therefore, made by the chief men of the nation, would be likely to prejudice him violently against Paul, and to unfit him for the exercise of impartial justice

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither.*

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me,* and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure. Desirous of securing their favour, as he had just entered on his administration. Comp. Acts 24:27. In this he evinced rather a desire, of popularity than an inclination to do justice, Had he been disposed to do right at once, he would have immediately discharged Paul.

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

I stand at Caesar's judgment seat. The Roman emperors, after Julius Caesar, were all called Caesar; thus, Augustus Caesar, Claudius Caesar, etc., as all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh, though they had each his proper name, as Pharaoh Necho, etc. The emperor at this time (A. D. 60) was Nero, one of the most cruel and impious men that ever sat on a throne. It was under him that Paul was afterwards beheaded. When Paul says, "I stand at Caesar's judgment-seat, he means to say that he regarded the tribunal before which he then stood, and on which Festus sat, as really the judgment-seat of Csesar. The procurator, or governor, held his commission from the Roman emperor, and it was, in fact, his tribunal.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

The reason why Paul made this appeal was, that he saw that justice would not be done him by the Roman governor. He had been tried by Felix, and justice had been denied him; and he was detained a prisoner in violation of law, to gratify the Jews. He had now been tried by Festus, and saw that he was pursuing the same course; and he resolved, therefore, to assert his rights,

and remove the cause, far from Jerusalem and from the prejudiced men in that city, at once to Rome. It was in this mysterious way that Paul's long-cherished desire to see the Roman church, and to preach the gospel there, was to be gratified. Rom 1:9, and Rom 1:10,11. For this he had prayed long, (Rom 1:10, 15:23,24;) and now at length this purpose was to be fulfilled. God answers prayer; but it is often in a way which we little anticipate. He so orders the train of events--he so places us amidst a press of circumstances--that the desire is granted in a way which we could never have anticipated, but which shows in the best manner that he is a hearer of prayer.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

When he had conferred with the council. With his associate judges, or with those who were his counsellors in the administratien of justice. They were made up ofthe chief persons, probably military as well as civil, who were about him, and who were his assistants in the administration of the affairs of the province.

Paul Brought before Agrippa and Bernice

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

He did this, probably, because Agrippa, being a Jew, would be supposed to be interested in the case. It was natural that this trial should be a topic of conversation, and perhaps Festus might be disposed to ask what was proper to be done in such cases.

15 about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring *to have* judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

It is not the manner, etc. He here states the reasons which he gave to the Jews for not delivering Paul into their hands. In Acts 25:4,5, we have an account of the fact that he would not accede to the requests of the Jews; and he here states that the reason of his refusal was, that it was contrary to the Roman law. Appian, in his Roman history, says, "It is not their custom to condemn men before they are heard." Philo de Preesi. Rom. says the same thing. In Tacitus (Annul. ii.) it is said, "A defendant is not to be prohibited from adducing all things, by which his innocence may be established." It was for this that the equity of the Roman jurisprudence was celebrated throughout the world.

We may remark, that it is a subject of sincere gratitude to the God of our nation, that this privilege is enjoyed in the highest perfection in this land. It is the privilege of every man here to be heard; to know the charges against him; to be confronted with the witnesses; to make his defence; and to be tried by the laws, and not by the passions and caprices of men. In this respect our jurisprudence surpasses all that Rome ever enjoyed; and is not inferior to that of the most favoured nation of the earth.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

This word properly denotes the worship or fear of demons; but was applied by the Greeks and Romans to the worship of their gods. It is the same word which is used in Acts 17:22, where it

is used in a good sense. Acts 17:22. There are two reasons for thinking that Festus used the word here in a good sense, and not in the sense in which we use the word superstition.

(1.) It was the word by which the worship of the Greeks and Romans, and therefore of Festus himself, was denoted, and he would naturally use it in a similar sense in applying it to the Jews. He would wish simply to describe their worship in such language as he was accustomed to use when speaking of religion.

(2.) He knew that Agrippa was a Jew. Festus would not probably speak of the religion of his royal guest as superstition, but would speak of it with respect. He meant, therefore, to say simply that they had certain inquiries about their own religion; but accused him of no crime against the Roman laws. And of one Jesus, which was dead. Gr., "Of one dead Jesus." It is evident that Festus had no belief that Jesus had been raised up; and in this he would expect that Agrippa would concur with him. Paul had admitted that Jesus had been put to death; but he maintained that he had been raised from the dead. As Festus did not believe this, he spoke of it with the utmost contempt. "They had a dispute about one dead Jesus, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." In this manner a Roman magistrate could speak of the glorious truth of the Christian religion; and this shows the spirit with which the great mass of philosophers and statesmen regarded its doctrines.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

Of Augustus. The reigning emperor at this time was Nero. The name Augustus--σεβαστου--properly denotes that which is venerable, or worthy of honour and reverence. It was first applied to Caesar Octavianus, who was the Roman emperor in

the time when our Saviour was born, and who is usually called Augustus Caesar. But the title continued to be used of his successors in office, as denoting the veneration or reverence which was due to the rank of emperor.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

Acts-26

Paul's Defense before Agrippa

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

This design in speaking before Agrippa was, doubtless,

(1.) to vindicate his character, and obtain Agrippa':s attestation to his innocence, that thus he might allay the anger of: the Jews;

(2.) to obtain a correct representation of the case to the emperor, as Festus had desired this, in order that Agrippa might enable him to make a fair statement of the case, (Acts 25:26,27;) and,

(3.) to defend his own conversion, and the truth of Christianity, and to preach the gospel in the hearing of Agrippa and the attendants, with a hope that their minds might be improved by the truth, and that they might be converted to God.

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

I esteem it a favour and a privilege to be permitted to make my defence before one acquainted with Jewish customs and opinions. His defence, on former occasions, had been before Roman magistrates, who had little acquaintance with the opinions and customs of the Jews, who were not disposed to listen to the discussion of the points of difference between him and them, and who looked upon all their controversies with contempt. See Acts 24, Acts 25. They were, therefore, little qualified to decide a question which was closely connected with the Jewish customs and doctrines; and Paul now rejoiced to know that he was before one who, from his acquaintance with the Jewish customs and belief, would be able to appreciate his arguments and motives. Paul was not now on his trial; but he was to defend himself, or state his cause, so that Agrippa might be able to aid Festus in transmitting a true account of the case to the Roman emperor. It was his interest and duty, therefore, to defend himself as well as possible; and to put him in possession of all the facts in the case. His defence is, consequently, made up chiefly of a most eloquent statement of the facts just as they had occurred.

Subjects of debate, and of various opinions. The inquiries which had existed between the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, etc. Paul could say this of Agrippa without falsehood or flattery. Agrippa was a Jew, and had passed much of his time

in the kingdom over which he presided; and though he had passed the early part of his life chiefly at Rome, yet it was natural that he should make himself acquainted with the religion of his fathers. Paul did not know how to flatter men; but he was not unwilling to state the simple truth, and to commend men as far as truth would permit. Wherefore. On this account; because you are acquainted with those customs. The Romans, who regarded those customs as superstitious, and those questions as matters to be treated with contempt, could not listen to their discussion with patience. Agrippa, who knew their real importance, would be disposed to lend to all inquiries respecting them a patient attention.

3 especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

the strictest sect of our religion. The most rigid, the most strict; not only in regard to the written law of God, but the traditions of the elders. Paul himself elsewhere testifies, Php 3:4-6, that he had enjoyed all the advantages of birth and training in the Jewish religion, and that he had early distinguished himself by his observance of its rites and customs.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

Of the promise, etc. It is not quite certain whether Paul refers here to the promise of the Messiah, or to the hope of the resurrection of the dead. When he stood before the Jewish sanhedrim, Acts 23:6, he said that he was called in question on account of holding the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. But it may be observed, that in Paul's view, the two things were closely united. He hoped that the Messiah would come, and he hoped therefore for the resurrection of the dead. He believed that he had come, and had risen; and therefore he believed that the dead would rise. He argued the one from the other. And as he believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he had risen

from the dead, and had thus furnished a demonstration that the dead would rise, it was evident that the subject of controversy between him and the Jews involved everything that was vital to their opinions and their hopes. See Acts 24:8.

Their hope of this promised mercy did cause them to serve God instantly day and night. Hope is the great exciter of industry and endeavor, expectation puts it upon action; hope of obtaining is the motive to every undertaking: the Christian's hope, or thing hoped for, is great and excellent in the esteem is high, the endeavor will be strong.

(1.) His religion is built upon the promise made of God unto the fathers. It is built upon divine revelation, which he receives and believes, and ventures his soul upon; it is built upon divine grace, and that grace manifested and conveyed by promise. The promise of God is the guide and ground of his religion, the promise made to the fathers, which was more ancient than the ceremonial law, that covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, and which the law, that was not till four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul, Ga 3:17. Christ and heaven are the two great doctrines of the gospel--that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Now these two are the matter of the promise made unto the fathers. It may look back as far as the promise made to father Adam, concerning the seed of the woman, and those discoveries of a future state which the first patriarchs acted faith upon, and were saved by that faith; but it respects chiefly the promise made to father Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, and that God would be a God to him, and to his seed after him: the former meaning Christ, the latter heaven; for, if God had not prepared for them a city, he would have been ashamed to have called himself their God. Heb 11:16.

(2.) His religion consists in the hopes of this promise. He places it not, as they did, in meats and drinks, and the observance of carnal ordinances (God had often shown what little account he

made of them), but in a believing dependence upon God's grace in the covenant, and upon the promise, which was the great charter by which the church was first incorporated.

[1.] He had hope in Christ as the promised seed; he hoped to be blessed in him, to receive the blessing of God and to be truly blessed.

[2.] He had hopes of heaven; this is expressly meant, as appears by comparing Ac 24:15, That there shall be a resurrection of the dead. Paul had no confidence in the flesh, but in Christ; no expectation at all of great things in this world, but of greater things in the other world than any this world can pretend to; he had his eye upon a future state.

7 unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Day and night. With unwearied zeal; with constancy and ardour, Lk 2:37. The ordinary Jewish services and sacrifices were in the morning and evening, and might be said to be performed day and night. Some of their services, as the paschal supper, were prolonged usually till late at night. The main idea is, that they kept up the worship of God with constant and untiring zeal and devotion.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Why should it be thought, etc. The force of this question will be better seen by an interrogation point after why, τι. "What! Is it to be thought a thing incredible?" etc. It intimates surprise that it should be thought incredible; or implies that no reason could be given why such a doctrine should be unworthy of belief. A thing incredible. A doctrine which cannot be credited or believed. Why should it be regarded as absurd? With you. This is in the plural number; and it is evident that Paul here addressed not Agrippa alone, but those who were with him. There is no evidence that Agrippa doubted that the dead could be raised; but Festus, and those who were with him, probably

did; and Paul, in the ardour of his speech, turned and addressed the entire assembly. It is very evident that we have only an outline of this argument, and there is every reason to suppose that Paul would dwell on each part of the subject at greater length than is here recorded. That God should raise the dead. Why should it be regarded as absurd that God--who has all power, who was the Creator of all, who was the Author of the human frame--should again restore man to life, and continue his future existence. The resurrection is no more incredible than the original creation of the human body, and it is attended with no greater difficulties. And as the perfections of God will be illustrated by his raising up the dead; as the future state is necessary to the purposes of justice in vindicating the just, and punishing the unjust; and as God is a righteous moral Governor, it should not be regarded as an absurdity that he will raise up those who have died, and bring them to judgment.

As if the apostle had said, "The great point in controversy between me and you is this, Whether the dead in general shall arise? and, Whether Christ in particular be risen from the dead? Now why should either seem incredible to you? Is it too hard for God, who made the world, and upholds the world, and gives life to all living; is it too hard or difficult for him to raise the dead? If not, why should it be thought incredible or impossible?" Learn hence, That the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, is neither incredible, nor impossible, neither against right reason nor true faith.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? This seems to come in somewhat abruptly; but it is probable Paul said much more than is here recorded, and that he explained the promise made to the fathers to be the promise of the resurrection and eternal life, and proved that he was in the right way of pursuing his hope of that happiness because he believed in Christ who had risen from the dead, which was a pledge and earnest of that resurrection which the fathers hoped for. Paul is therefore earnest to know the power of Christ's resurrection, that by it he might attain to the

resurrection of the dead; see Php 3:10,11. Now many of his hearers were Gentiles, most of them perhaps, Festus particularly, and we may suppose, when they heard him speak so much of Christ's resurrection, and of the resurrection from the dead, which the twelve tribes hoped for, that they mocked, as the Athenians did, began to smile at it, and whispered to one another what an absurd thing it was, which occasioned Paul thus to reason with them. What! is it thought incredible with you that God should raise the dead? So it may be read. If it be marvellous in your eyes, should it be marvellous in mine eyes, saith the Lord of hosts? Zec 8:6. If it be above the power of nature, yet it is not above the power of the God of nature. Note, There is no reason why we should think it at all incredible that God should raise the dead. We are not required to believe any thing that is incredible, any thing that implies a contradiction. There are motives of credibility sufficient to carry us through all the doctrines of the Christian religion, and this particularly of the resurrection of the dead. Has not God an infinite almighty power, to which nothing is impossible? Did not he make the world at first out of nothing, with a word's speaking? Did he not form our bodies, form them out of the clay, and breathe into us the breath of life at first? and cannot the same power form them again out of their own clay, and put life into them again? Do we not see a kind of resurrection in nature, at the return of every spring? Has the sun such a force to raise dead plants, and should it seem incredible to us that God should raise dead bodies?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

That I ought to do. That I was bound, or that it was a duty incumbent on me. δειν. "I thought that I owed it to my country, to my religion, and to my God, to oppose in every manner the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah." We here see that Paul was conscientious, and that a man may be conscientious even when engaged in enormous wickedness. It is no evidence that a man is right because he is conscientious. No small part of the crimes against human laws, and almost all the cruel persecutions against Christians, have been carried on

under the plea of conscience. Paul here refers to his conscientiousness in persecution, to show that it was no slight matter which could have changed his course. As he was governed in persecution by conscience, it could have been only by a force of demonstration, and by the urgency of conscience equally clear and strong, that could ever have induced him to abandon this course, and become a friend of that Saviour whom he had thus persecuted. Many things. As much as possible. He was not satisfied with a few things--a few words, or purposes, or arguments; but he felt bound to do as much as possible to put down the new religion. Contrary to the name, etc. In opposition to Jesus himself, or to his claims to be the Messiah. The name is often used to denote the person himself, Acts 3:6.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*.

And when they were put to death. In the history of those transactions there is no account of any Christian being put to death, except Stephen, Acts 7. But there is no improbability in supposing that the same thing which had happened to Stephen, had occurred in other cases. Stephen was the first martyr; and as he was a prominent man, his case is particularly recorded. I gave my voice. Paul was not a member of the sanhedrim, and this does not mean that he voted, but simply that he joined in the persecution; he approved it; he assented to the putting of the saints to death. Comp. Acts 22:20. The Syriac renders it, "I joined with those who condemned them." It is evident also that Paul instigated them in this persecution, and urged them on to deeds of blood and cruelty. And when they were put to death. In the history of those transactions there is no account of any Christian being put to death, except Stephen, Acts 7. But there is no improbability in supposing that the same thing which had happened to Stephen, had occurred in other cases. Stephen was the first martyr; and as he was a prominent man, his case is particularly recorded. I gave my voice. Paul was not a member of the sanhedrim, and this does not mean that he voted, but simply that he joined in the persecution; he approved it; he

assented to the putting of the saints to death. Comp. Acts 22:20. The Syriac renders it, "I joined with those who condemned them." It is evident also that Paul instigated them in this persecution, and urged them on to deeds of blood and cruelty.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

To blaspheme the name of Jesus, by denying that he was the Messiah, and by admitting that he was an impostor. This was the object which they had in view in the persecution. It was not to make them blaspheme or reproach God, but to deny that Jesus was the Messiah, and to reproach him as a deceiver and an impostor. It is not necessarily implied in the expression, "and compelled them to blaspheme," that he succeeded in doing it; but that he violently endeavoured to make them apostatize from the Christian religion, and deny the Lord Jesus. It is certainly not impossible that a few might thus have been induced by the authority of the sanhedrim, and by the threats of Paul to do it; but it is certain that the great mass of Christians adhered firmly to their belief that Jesus was the Messiah. And being exceedingly mad. Nothing could more forcibly express his rage and violence against the Christians. He raged like a madman; he was so indignant that he laid aside all appearance of reason; and with the fury and violence of a maniac, he endeavoured to exterminate them from the earth. None but a madman will persecute men on account of their religious opinions; and all persecutions have been conducted like this, with the violence, and fury, and ungovernable temper of maniacs.

That Paul, being a blasphemer himself, compelled the professors of the gospel to blaspheme. This he probably did two ways.

First, by his example; they imitated him in blaspheming, or speaking evil of the ways of Christ.

Or, secondly, by his cruelty: vexing them so in the professions of Christ, that some who were unsettled probably fell away, and blasphemed the name of Christ, which they had professed: He compelled them to blaspheme.

There is a compelling power and constraining force in example, especially in the example of persons in power and authority. Men sin with a kind of authority: Paul's blasphemous example compelled others to blaspheme.

Paul Tells of His Conversion

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

The particulars mentioned in this verse and the two following are not recorded in the account of Paul's conversion in Acts 9. But it is not improbable that many circumstances may have occurred which are not recorded. Paul dwells on them here at length, in order particularly to show his authority for doing what he had done in preaching to the Gentiles.

17 delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

From the dominion of Satan. Comp. Col 1:13, 1Pet 2:9; Jn 12:31; Jn 16:11. Satan is thus represented as the prince of this world; the ruler of the darkness of this world; the prince of the

power of the air, etc. The heathen world, lying in sin and superstition, is represented as under his control; and this passage teaches, doubtless, that the great mass of the people of this world are the subjects of the kingdom of Satan, and are led captive by him at his will.

18 to open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Paul's Witness to Jews and Gentiles

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

That Christ should {g} suffer, [and] that he should be the {h} first that should rise from the dead, and should shew {i} light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. (g) That Christ would not be such a king as the Jews dreamed of, but one appointed to bear our miseries, and the punishment of our sins. (h) The first of those who are raised from the dead. (i) Life, yea and that a most blessed life which will be endless: and this is set against darkness, which almost in all languages sometimes signifies death, and sometimes misery and calamity.

Should suffer. Should lead a painful life, and be put to death. Acts 17:3. Compare Dan 9:27, Isa 53. And that he should be the first, etc. This declaration contains two points:

(1.) That it was taught in the prophets that the Messiah should rise from the dead. On this, see the proof alleged in Acts 2:24-32; Acts 13:32-37.

(2.) That he should be the first that should rise. This cannot mean that the Messiah should be the first dead person who should be restored to life, for Elijah had raised the son of the Shunammite, and Jesus himself had raised Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain. But all of them were dead and buried again. It does not mean that he should be the first in the order of time that should rise, but first in eminence, the most distinguished, the chief, the head of those who should rise from the dead. πρωτοςεξαναστασεωςνεκρων. In accordance with this he is called Col 1:18 "the beginning, the first-born from the dead;" having, among all the dead who should be raised up, the rights and pre-eminence of the primogeniture, or which pertained to the first-born. In 1Cor 15:20, he is called "the first-fruits of them that slept." This declaration is, therefore, made of him by way of eminence:

(1.) As being chief, a prince among those raised from the dead;

(2.) as being raised by his own power, Jn 10:18

(3.) as, by his rising, securing a dominion over death and the grave, (1Cor 15:25,26;) and,

(4.) as bringing, by his rising, life and immortality to light. He rose to return to death no more. And he thus secured an ascendancy over death and the grave, and was thus, by way of eminence, first among those raised from the dead. And should shew light unto the people. To the Jews. Should be their instructor and prophet. This Moses had predicted, De 18:15. And to the Gentiles. This had often been foretold by the prophets, and particularly by Isaiah, Isa 9:1,2. Compare Mt 4:14-16 Isa 11:10, 42:1,4, 44:3, 60:3,5,11, 61:6, 62:2, 66:12.
(n) "the first" 1Cor 15:23

23 that Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Paul Appeals to Agrippa to Believe

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

Thou art beside thyself. Thou art deranged; thou art insane. The reasons why Festus thought Paul mad were, probably,

(1.) his great earnestness and excitement on the subject.

(2.) His laying such stress on the gospel of the despised Jesus of Nazareth, as if it were a matter of infinite moment. Festus despised it; and he regarded it as proof of derangement that so much importance was attached to it.

(3.) Festus regarded, probably, the whole story of the vision that Paul said had appeared to him, as the effect of an inflamed and excited imagination; and as the proof of delirium. This is not an uncommon charge against those who are Christians, and especially when they evince any unusual zeal. Sinners regard them as under the influence of delirium and fanaticism; as terrified by imaginary and superstitious fears; or as misguided by fanatical leaders. Husbands often thus think their wives deranged, and parents their children, and wicked men the ministers of the gospel. The gay think it proof of derangement that others are serious, and anxious, and prayerful; the rich, that others are willing to part with their property to do good; the ambitious and worldly, that others are willing to leave their country and home, to go among the Gentiles to spend their lives in making known the unsearchable riches of Christ. The really

sober and rational part of the world--they who fear God, and keep his commandments; who believe that eternity is before them, and who strive to live for it--are thus charged with insanity by those who are really deluded, and who are thus living lives of madness and folly. The tenants of a madhouse often think all others deranged but themselves; but there is no madness so great, no delirium so awful, as to neglect the eternal interest of the soul for the sake of the poor pleasures and honours which this life can give.

What it was that Festus said of him (Ac 26:24): He said with a loud voice, did not whisper it to those that sat next him; if so, it had been the more excusable, but (without consulting Agrippa, to whose judgment he had seemed to pay profound deference, Ac 25:26), said aloud, that he might oblige Paul to break off his discourse, and might divert the auditors from attending to it "Paul, thou art beside thyself, thou talkest like a madman, like one with a heated brain, that knowest not what thou sayest;" yet he does not suppose that a guilty conscience had disturbed his reason, nor that his sufferings, and the rage of his enemies against him, had given any shock to it; but he puts the most candid construction that could be upon his delirium: Much learning hath made thee mad, thou hast cracked thy brains with studying. This he speaks, not so much in anger, as in scorn and contempt. He did not understand what Paul said; it was above his capacity, it was all a riddle to him, and therefore he imputes it all to a heated imagination. Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi--If thou art not willing to be understood, thou oughtest to be neglected.

(1.) He owns Paul to be a scholar, and a man of learning, because he could so readily refer to what Moses and the prophets wrote, books that he was a stranger to; and even this is turned to his reproach. The apostles, who were fishermen, were despised because they had no learning; Paul, who was a university-man, and bred a Pharisee, is despised as having too much learning, more than did him good. Thus the enemies of

Christ's ministers will always have something or other to upbraid them with.

(2.) He reproaches him as a madman. The prophets of the Old Testament were thus stigmatized, to prejudice people against them by putting them into an ill-name: Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee? said the captains of the prophet, 2Ki 9:11,Ho 9:7. John Baptist and Christ were represented as having a devil, as being crazed. It is probable that Paul now spoke with more life and earnestness than he did in the beginning of his discourse, and used more gestures that were expressive of his zeal, and therefore Festus put this invidious character upon him, which perhaps never a one in the company but himself thought of. It is not so harmless a suggestion as some make it to say concerning those that are zealous in religion above others that they are crazed.

2. How Paul cleared himself from this invidious imputation, which whether he had ever lain under before is not certain; it should seem, it had been said of him by the false apostles, for he ways (2Co 5:13), If we be beside ourselves, as they say we are, it is to God; but he was never charged with this before the Roman governor, and therefore he must say something to this.

(1.) He denies the charge, with due respect indeed to the governor, but with justice to himself, protesting that there was neither ground nor colour for it (Ac 26:25): "I am not mad, most noble Festus, nor ever was, nor any thing like it; the use of my reason, thanks be to God, has been all my days continued to me, and at this time I do not ramble, but speak the words of truth and soberness, and know what I say."

Carnal minds pass very uncharitable censures upon spiritual persons and spiritual things. Christ's kindred said, he was beside himself, Mr 3:21. Festus here judged Paul to be mad, thinking that he had over-studied himself: by meddling with matters too high for his capacity, and too deep for his

understanding, he had brought himself into a deep melancholy; Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning hath made thee mad.

But observe with what meekness and due terms of respect the apostle replied to this reviling governor, I am not mad, most noble Festus. Titles of respect and honour, given to persons in place and power, are agreeable to the mind of God, and countenanced by Christianity.

Observe, 2. What an happy victory and conquest the apostle had over his own passions; he waives the reflections Festus had made upon him; and had learned of his master, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. It is an happy attainment for a man to be master of himself under a provocation, to be regulated by right reason, and not hurried by blind passion.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

Of truth. In accordance with the predictions of Moses and the prophets; and the facts which have occurred in the death and resurrection of the Messiah. In proof of this he appeals to Agrippa, Acts 26:26,27. Truth here stands opposed to delusion, imposture, and fraud. And soberness. Soberness (σωφροσυνης, wisdom) stands opposed here to madness, or derangement, and denotes sanity of mind. The words which I speak are those of a sane man, conscious of what he is saying, and impressed with its truth. They were the words, also, of a man who, under the charge of derangement, evinced the most perfect self-possession and command of his feelings; and who uttered sentiments deep, impressive, and worthy of the attention of mankind.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

These things. The things pertaining to the early persecutions of Christians; the spread of the gospel; and the remarkable

conversion of Paul. Though Agrippa might not have been fully informed respecting these things, yet he had an acquaintance with Moses and the prophets; he knew the Jewish expectation respecting the Messiah; and he could not be ignorant respecting the remarkable public events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and of his having been put to death by order of Pontius Pilate on the cross.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul. He could not deny that he believed the prophets. He could not deny that the argument was a strong one, that they had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. He could not deny that the evidence of the miraculous interposition of God in the conversion of Paul was overwhelming. And instead, therefore, of charging him as Festus had done with derangement, he candidly and honestly avows the impression which the proof had made on his mind. Almost. Except a very little. ενολιγω. Thou hast nearly convinced me that Christianity is true, and persuaded me to embrace it. The arguments of Paul had been so rational; the appeal which he had made to his belief of the prophets had been so irresistible, that he had been nearly convinced of the truth of Christianity. We are to remember,

(1.) that Agrippa was a Jew, and that he would look on this whole subject in a different manner from the Roman Festus.

(2.) That Agrippa does not appear to have partaken of the violent passions and prejudices of the Jews who had accused Paul.

(3.) His character, as given by Josephus, is that of a mild, candid, and ingenuous man. He had no particular hostility to Christians; he knew that they were not justly charged with sedition and crime; and he saw the conclusion to which a belief

of the prophets inevitably tended. Yet, as in thousands of other cases, he was not quite persuaded to be a Christian. What was included in the "almost"--what prevented his being quite persuaded--we know not. It may have been that the evidence was not so clear to his mind as he would profess to desire; or that he was not willing to give up his sins; or that he was too proud to rank himself with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth; or that, like Felix, he was willing to defer it to a more convenient season. There is every reason to believe that he was never quite persuaded to embrace the Lord Jesus; and that he was never nearer the kingdom of heaven than at this moment. It was the crisis, the turning point in Agrippa's life, and in his eternal destiny; and, like thousands of others, he neglected or refused to allow the full conviction of the truth on his mind, and died in his sins. Thou persuadest me. Thou dost convince me of the truth of the Christian religion, and persuadest me to embrace it. To be a Christian. On the name Christian, Acts 11:26. On this deeply interesting case, we may observe,

(1.) that there are many in the same situation as Agrippa-- many who are almost, but not altogether, persuaded to be Christians. They are found among

(a) those who have been religiously educated;

(b) those who are convinced by argument of the truth of Christianity;

(c) those whose consciences are awakened, and who feel their guilt, and the necessity of some better portion than this world can furnish.

(2.) Such persons are deterred from being altogether Christians by the following, among other causes:

(a) By the love of sin--the love of sin in general, or some particular sin which they are not willing to abandon.

(b) The fear of shame, persecution, or contempt, if they become Christians.

(c) By the temptations of the world--its cares, vanities, and allurements--which are often prosecuted most strongly in just this state of mind.

(d) The love of office, the pride of rank and power, as in the case of Agrippa.

(e) A disposition, like Felix, to delay to a more favourable time the work of religion, until life has wasted away, and death approaches, and it is too late; and the unhappy man dies ALMOST a Christian.

(3.) This state of mind is one of peculiar interest, and peculiar danger. It is not one of safety; and it is not one that implies any certainty that the "almost Christian" will ever be saved. There is no reason to believe that Agrippa ever became fully persuaded to become a Christian. To be almost persuaded to do a thing which we ought to do, and yet not to do it, is the very position of guilt and danger. And it is no wonder that many are brought to this point--the turning point, the crisis of life --and then lose their anxiety, and die in their sins. May the God of grace keep us from resting in being almost persuaded to be Christians. And may every one who shall read this account of Agrippa be admonished by his convictions, and be alarmed by the fact that he then paused, and that his convictions there ended! And may every one resolve, by the help of God, to forsake everything that prevents his becoming an entire believer, and without delay embrace the Son of God as his Saviour!

What an efficacy St. Paul's doctrine had upon Agrippa: though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced; his conscience was touched, though his heart was not renewed.

Learn hence, That there is certainly that in religion which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the consciences of ungodly men.

Observe, 2. How sad it is, when persons have enjoyed the scriptures, the preaching of the word, and all means of salvation, and yet are but almost Christians, and shall never enjoy the least salvation; they are within sight of heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God.

Observe, 3. That such as will be Christians indeed, must not only be almost, but altogether Christians: I would that you, and all that hear me, says the apostle, were altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Paul had no higher wish for them than that they might have the faith and consolations which he had himself enjoyed. He had so firm a conviction of the truth of Christianity, and had experienced so much of its consolations and supports amidst all his persecutions and trials, that his highest desire for them was, that they might experience the same inexpressibly pure and holy consolations. He well knew that there was neither happiness nor safety in being almost a Christian; and he desired, therefore, that they would give themselves, as he had done, entirely and altogether to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Except these bonds. These chains. This is an exceedingly happy and touching appeal. Probably Paul, when he said this, lifted up his arm with the chain attached to it. His wish was, that they might be partakers of the pure joys which religion had conferred on him; that in all other respects they might partake

of the effects of the gospel, except those chains. Those he did not wish them to bear. The persecutions, and unjust trials, and confinements which he had been called to suffer in the cause, he did not desire them to endure. True Christians wish others to partake of the full blessings of religion. The trials which they themselves experience from without, in unjust persecutions, ridicule, and slander, they do not wish them to endure. The trials which they themselves experience from an evil heart, from corrupt passions, and from temptations, they do not wish others to experience. But even with these, religion confers infinitely more pure joy than the world can give; and even though others should be called to experience severe trials for their religion, still Christians wish that all should partake of the pure consolations which Christianity alone can furnish in this world and the world to come.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31 and when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Acts-27

Paul Sails for Rome

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under
Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.
5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia,
we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.
6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing
into
Italy; and he put us therein.
7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were
come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we
sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;
8 and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the
Fair
Havens; nigh whereunto was the city *of* Lasea.
9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now
dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul
admonished *them*,
10 and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with
hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also
of our lives.
11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner
of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by
Paul.
12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the
more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they
might
attain to Phoenix, *and there* to winter; *which is* a haven of Crete,
and lieth toward the southwest and northwest.

The Storm at Sea

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they
had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by
Crete.
14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind,
called
Euroclydon.
15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into
the wind, we let *her* drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:
17 which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven.
18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship;
19 and the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.
20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.
21 But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.
22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.
23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,
24 saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

God hath given thee all, etc. That is, they shall all be preserved with thee. None of their lives shall be lost. It does not mean that they should be converted; but that their lives should be preserved. It is implied here that it was for the sake of Paul, or that the leading purpose of the Divine interposition to rescue them from danger was to save his life. The wicked often derive important benefits from being connected with Christians; and God often confers important favours on them in his general purposes to benefit his own people. The lives of impenitent men are often spared because God interposes to save his own people.

The encouragements that were given him in the vision, Ac 27:14.

[1.] He is forbidden to fear. Though all about him are at their wits' end, and lost in despair, yet, Fear not, Paul; fear not their fear, nor be afraid, Isa 8:12. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, but let not the saints be afraid, no, not at sea, in a storm; for the Lord of hosts is with them, and their place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, Isa 33:14-16.

[2.] He is assured that for his part he shall come safely to Rome: Thou must be brought before Cæsar. As the rage of the most potent enemies, so the rage of the most stormy sea, cannot prevail against God's witnesses till they have finished their testimony. Paul must be preserved in this danger, for he is reserved for further service. This is comfortable for the faithful servants of God in straits and difficulties, that as long as God has any work for them to do their lives shall be prolonged.

[3.] That for his sake all that were in the ship with him should be delivered too from perishing in this storm: God hath given thee all those that sail with thee. The angel that was ordered to bring him this message could have singled him out from this wretched crew, and those that were his friends too, and have carried them safely to shore, and have left the rest to perish, because they would not take Paul's counsel. But God chooses rather, by preserving them all for his sake, to show what great blessings good men are to the world, than by delivering him only to show how good men are distinguished from the world. God has given thee all those that sail with thee, that is, spares them in answer to thy prayers, or for thy sake. Sometimes good men deliver neither sons nor daughters, but their own souls only, Eze 14:18. But Paul here delivers a whole ship's crew, almost three hundred souls. Note, God often spares wicked people for the sake of the godly; as Zoar for Lot's sake, and as Sodom might have been, if there had been ten righteous persons in it. The good people are hated and persecuted in the world as if they were not worthy to live in it, yet really it is for their sakes that the world stands. If Paul had thrust himself needlessly into bad company, he might justly have been cast

away with them, but, God calling him into it, they are preserved with him. And it is intimated that it was a great favour to Paul, and he looked upon it to be so, that others were saved for his sake: They are given thee. There is no greater satisfaction to a good man than to know that he is a public blessing.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.
26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.
27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;
28 and sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms.
29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.
30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,
31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.
32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.
33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.
34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat; for this is for your health:
for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.
35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.
36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.
37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.
38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

The Shipwreck

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.
40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.
41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.
42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

Lord, what fools and madmen are the wicked, who seek the destruction of those for whose sake it is that they are not themselves destroyed!

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea,* and get to land:
44 and the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship.
And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

Acts-28

Paul on the Island of Melita

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.
2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.
3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.
4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.
6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was
a god.
7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.
8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.
9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:
10 who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

Paul Arrives at Rome

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.
12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.
13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to
Puteoli:
14 where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.
15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.
16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of
the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said
unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed
nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I
delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the
Romans:
18 who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go,
because there was no cause of death in me.
19 But when the Jews spake against *it,* I was constrained to
appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to accuse my
nation of.
20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you,* and to
speak with *you:* because that for the hope of Israel I am bound
with this chain.
21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of
Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came
showed or spake any harm of thee.
22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as
concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken
against.

This was the case then, and, to a great extent, is the case still. It has been the common lot of the followers of Christ to be spoken of with contempt. Comp. Acts 24:5.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to
him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified
the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both
out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from
morning till evening.
24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and
some believed not.
25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed,
after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy
Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers,
26 saying,
Go unto this people, and say,
Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;

and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:
27 for the heart of this people is waxed
gross, and their ears are dull of
hearing,
and their eyes have they closed;
lest they should see with *their*
eyes, and hear with *their* ears,
and understand with *their* heart,
and should be converted, and I should heal them.
28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent
unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.
29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had
great reasoning among themselves.
30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and
received all that came in unto him,

Paul dwelt two whole years. Doubtless in the custody of the soldiers. Why he was not prosecuted before the emperor during this time is not known. It is evident, however, Acts 28:21, that the Jews were not disposed to carry the case before Nero; and the matter, during this time, was suffered quietly to sleep. There is great probability that the Jews durst not prosecute him before the emperor. It is clear that they had never been in favour of the appeal to Rome, and that they had no hope of gaining their cause. Probably they might remember the former treatment of the Roman emperor of their people, Acts 18:2; they might remember that they were despised at the Roman capital, and not choose to encounter the scorn and indignation of the Roman court; and as there was no prosecution, Paul was suffered to live in quietness and safety. Lardner, however, supposes (vol. v. pp. 528, 529, Edit. 8vo. Lond. 1829) that the case of Paul was soon brought before Nero, and decided; and that the method of confinement was ordered by the emperor himself. Lightfoot also supposes that Paul's "accusers, who had come from Judea to lay their charge against him, would be urgent to get their business despatched, that they might be returning to their own home again, and so would bring him to trial as soon as they could." But nothing certain is known on the subject. It is evident, indeed, from 2Ti 4:16, that he was at

some time arraigned before the emperor; but when it was, or what was the decision, or why he was at last set at liberty, are all involved in impenetrable obscurity. In his own hired house. In a house which he was permitted to hire, and occupy as his own. Probably in this he was assisted by the kindness of his Roman friends. And received all, etc. Received all hospitably and kindly who came to him to show him kindness, or to listen to his instructions. It is evident from this, that he was still a prisoner, and was not permitted to go at large.

31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

The Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Romans
[Romans]

Romans-1
Salutation

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Hence he appeals here so often to the Old Testament; and defends every point by the authority of the Bible. The particular passages of the Old Testament on which he relied will come before us in the course of the epistle. See particularly chapters 3, 4, 9, 10, and 11. We may see here,

(1.) the reverence which Paul showed for the Old Testament. He never undervalued it. He never regarded it as obsolete, or useless. He manifestly studied it; and never fell into the impious opinion that the Old Testament is of little value.

(2.) If these things were promised--predicted in the Old Testament, then Christianity is true. Every passage which he adduces is therefore proof that it is from God.

2 (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures,)

3 concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 and declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

5 by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

6 among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints:
Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Called to be saints. So called, or influenced by God who had called them, as to become saints. The word saints--αγιοι--means those who are holy, or those who are devoted or consecrated to God. The radical idea of the word is that which is separated from a common to a sacred use, and answers to the Hebrew word --kadosh. It is applied to anything that is set apart to the service of God, to the temple, to the sacrifices, to the utensils about the temple, to the garments, etc., of the priests, and to the priests them- selves. It was applied to the Jews as a people separated from other nations, and devoted or consecrated to God; while other nations were devoted to the service of idols. It is also applied to Christians, as being a people devoted or set apart to the service of God. The radical idea, then, as applied to Christians is, that they are separated from other men, and other objects and pursuits, and consecrated to the service of God. This is the peculiar characteristic of the saints. And this characteristic the Roman Christians had shown. For the use of the word as stated above, see the following passages of Scripture: Lk 2:23, Ex 13:2, Rom 11:16, Mt 7:6; 1Pet 1:16, Acts 9:13, 1Pet 2:5, Acts 3:21, Eph 3:5, 1Pet 2:9, Php 2:15, 1Jn 3:1,2.

Grace. This word properly means, favour. It is very often used in the New Testament, and is employed in the sense of benignity or benevolence; felicity, or a prosperous state of affairs; the Christian religion, as the highest expression of the benevolence or favour of God; the happiness which Christianity confers on its friends in this and the future life; the apostolic office; charity, or alms; thanksgiving; joy, or pleasure; and the benefits produced on the Christian's heart and life by religion--the grace of meekness, patience, charity, etc. Schleusner. In this place, and in similar places in the beginning of the apostolic epistles, it seems to be a word including all those blessings that are applicable to Christians in common; denoting an ardent wish that all the mercies and favours of God for time and eternity, blended under the general name grace, may be conferred on them.

And peace. Peace is the state of freedom from war. As war conveys the idea of discord and numberless calamities and dangers, so peace is the opposite, and conveys the idea of concord, safety, and prosperity. Thus, to wish one peace was the same as to wish him all safety and prosperity. This form of salutation was common among the Hebrews. Gen 43:23, "Peace to you, fear not;" Jud 6:23, 19:20, Lk 24:36. But the word peace is also used in contrast with that state of agitation and conflict which a sinner has with his conscience, and with God. The sinner is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, Isa 57:20. The Christian is at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, Rom 5:1. By this word, denoting reconciliation with God, the blessings of the Christian religion are often described in the Scriptures, Rom 8:6, 14:17, 15:13, Gal 5:22, Php 4:7. A prayer for peace, therefore, in the epistles, is not a mere formal salutation, but has a special reference to those spiritual blessings which result from reconciliation with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Lord Jesus Christ. From him. The Lord Jesus Christ is especially regarded in the New Testament as the source of peace, and the procurer of it. See Lk 2:14, 19:38,42, Jn 14:27, 16:33, Acts 10:36; Rom 5:1, Eph 2:17. Each of these places will show with what propriety peace was invoked from the Lord Jesus. From thus connecting the Lord Jesus with the Father in this place, we may see,

(1.) that the apostle regarded him as the source of grace and peace as really as he did the Father.

(2.) He introduced them in the same connexion, and with reference to the bestowment of the same blessings.

(3.) If the mention of the Father in this connexion implies a prayer to him, or an act of worship, the mention of the Lord Jesus implies the same thing, and was an act of homage to him.

(4.) All this shows that his mind was familiarized to the idea that he was Divine. No man would introduce his name in such connexions if he did not believe that he was equal with God. Comp. Php 2:2-11. It is from this incidental and unstudied manner of expression, that we have one of the most striking proofs of the manner in which the sacred writers regarded the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Through Jesus Christ. The duty of presenting our thanks to God, through Christ, is often enjoined in the New Testament, Eph 5:20, Heb 13:15; comp. Jn 14:14. Christ is the Mediator between God and men; or the medium by which we are to present our prayers, and also our thanksgivings. We are not to approach God directly, but through a mediator at all times, depending on him to present our cause before the mercy-seat; to plead for us there; and to offer the desires of our souls to God. It is no less proper to present thanks in his name, or through him, than it is prayer, he has made the way to God accessible to us, whether it be by prayer or praise; and it is owing to his mercy and grace that any of our services are acceptable to God.

For you all. On account of you all, i.e., of the entire Roman church. This is one evidence that that church then was remarkably pure. How few churches have there been of whom a similar commendation could be expressed.

Is spoken of. Is celebrated, or known. They were in the capital of the Roman empire; in a city remarkable for its wickedness; and in a city whose influence extended everywhere. It was natural, therefore, that their remarkable conversion to God should be celebrated everywhere. The religious or irreligious influence of a great city will be felt far and wide; and this is

one reason why the apostles preached the gospel so much in such places.

Throughout the whole world. As we say, everywhere; or throughout the Roman empire. The term world is often thus limited in the Scriptures; and here it denotes those parts of the Roman empire where the Christian church was established. All the churches would hear of the work of God in the capital, and would rejoice in it. Comp. Col 1:6,23, Jn 12:19. It is not improper to commend Christians, and to remind them of their influence; and especially to call to their mind the great power which they may have on other churches and people.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

A prosperous journey. A safe, pleasant journey. It is right to regard all success in travelling as depending on God, and to pray for success and safety from danger. Yet all such prayers are not answered according to the letter of the petition. The prayer of Paul that he might see the Romans was granted, but in a remarkable way. He was persecuted by the Jews, and arraigned before king Agrippa. He appealed to the Roman emperor, and was taken there in chains as a prisoner. Yet the journey might in this way have a more deep effect on the Romans, than if he had gone in any other way. In so mysterious a manner does God often hear the prayers of his people; and though their prayers are answered, yet it is in his own time and way. See the last chapters of the Acts.

By the will of God. If God shall grant it; if God will, by his mercy, grant me the great favour of my coming to you. This is a proper model of a prayer, and is in accordance with the direction of the Bible. See Jas 4:14,15.

10 making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

Some spiritual gifts. Some have understood this as referring to miraculous gifts, which it was supposed the apostles had the power of conferring on others. But this interpretation is forced and unnatural. There is no instance where the expression denotes the power of working miracles. Besides, the apostle in the next verse explains his meaning-- "That I may be comforted together by the mutual faith," etc. From this it appears that he desired to be among them to exercise the office of the ministry, to establish them in the gospel, and to confirm their hopes. He expected that the preaching of the gospel would be the means of confirming them in the faith; and he desired to be the means of doing it. It was a wish of benevolence, and accords with what he says respecting his intended visit in Rom 15:29, "And I am sure that when I come, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." To make known to them more fully the blessings of the gospel, and thus to impart spiritual gifts, was the design he had in view.

Ye may be established. That is, that they might be confirmed in the truths of the gospel. This was one design of the ministry, that Christians may be established, or strengthened, Eph 4:13. It is not to have dominion over their faith, but to be "helpers of their joy," 2Cor 1:24. Paul did not doubt that this part of his office might be fulfilled among the Romans, and he was desirous there also of making full proof of his ministry.

12 that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

That I may be comforted, etc. It was not merely to confirm them that Paul wished to come. He sought the communion of saints; he expected to be himself edified and strengthened; and to be comforted by seeing their strength of faith, and their rapid growth in grace. We may remark here,

(1.) that one effect of religion is to produce the desire of the communion of saints. It is the nature of Christianity to seek the society of those who are the friends of Christ.

(2.) Nothing is better fitted to produce growth in grace than such communion. Every Christian should have one or more Christian friends to whom he may unbosom himself. No small part of the difficulties which young Christians experience would vanish if they should communicate their feelings and views to others. Feelings which they suppose no Christians ever had, which greatly distress them, they will find are common among those who are experienced in the Christian life.

(3.) There is nothing better fitted to excite the feelings, and confirm the hopes of Christian ministers, than the firm faith of young converts, of those just commencing the Christian life, 3Jn 1:4.

(4.) The apostle did not disdain to be taught by the humblest Christians. He expected to be strengthened himself by the faith of those just beginning the Christian life. "There is none so poor in the church of Christ, that he cannot make some addition of importance to our stores." Calvin. (1) "with you" or, "in you" (r) "mutual faith" 2Pet 1:1

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

One instance of his having purposed to go to Rome is recorded in Acts 19:21: "After these things were ended, (viz., at Ephesus,) Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem; saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome." This purpose expressed in this manner in the epistle, and the Acts of the Apostles, has been shown by Dr. Paley (Horae Paulinae on Rom 1:13) to be one of those undesigned coincidences which strongly show that both books are genuine.

That I might have some fruit among you. That I might be the means of the conversion of sinners, and of the edification of the church, in the capital of the Roman empire. It was not curiosity to see the splendid capital of the world that prompted this desire; it was not the love of travel, and of roaming from clime to clime; it was the

specific purpose of doing good to the souls of men. To have fruit means to obtain success in bringing men to the knowledge of Christ. Thus the Saviour said, (Jn 15:16) "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

I am debtor. This does not mean that they had conferred any favour on him, which bound him to make this return, but that he was under obligation to preach the gospel to all to whom it was possible. This obligation arose from the favour that God had shown him in appointing him to this work. He was specially chosen as a vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, (Acts 9:15; Rom 11:13) and he did not feel that he had discharged the obligation until he had made the gospel known as far as possible among all the nations of the earth.

The gospel claims to have power to instruct all mankind, and they who are called to preach it should be able to instruct those who esteem themselves to be wise, and who are endowed with science, learning, and talent; and they should be willing to labour to enlighten the most obscure, ignorant, and degraded portions of the race. This is the true spirit of the Christian ministry.

Here observe, How the apostle obviates an objection, and prevents a reflection upon himself: Some at Rome might be ready to say, If Paul had such a longing desire to see us as he expresses, why did he not come all this time and preach here, as he has done at Corinth and Ephesus, and elsewhere? He truly tells them, therefore, that it was not for want of inclination and will, but for want of opportunity; he had often intended it, and attempted it also, but was providentially hindered.

From whence I gather, That the ministers of God cannot always dispose of themselves and of their labours according to their own inclinations and desires, but both their persons and ministry are

directed and disposed of by the providence, and according to the pleasure of Almighty God.

Observe, 2. The great modesty and condescending humility of our apostle, in telling the Romans, that though he desired and intended to take this long journey to Rome, to preach the gospel to them, yet this was rather a debt than a gift: He doth not intimate to them, that his coming amongst them was an arbitrary favour, for which they should be indebted to him, but a bounden duty which he owed to them; I am a debtor both to Jew and Greek, and ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Here note, That the debt spoken of is the preaching of the gospel: St. Paul contracted this debt, and laid himself under an obligation to pay it then, (as every minister doth now) at his first entering upon the office of the ministry; by virtue of his mission, it was his duty to preach the gospel to all, both to the learned Greeks and unlearned Barbarians.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

The Power of the Gospel

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For I am not ashamed, etc. The Jews had cast him off, and regarded him as an apostate; and by the wise among the Gentiles he had been persecuted, and despised, and driven from place to place, and regarded as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, (1Cor 4:13) but still he was not ashamed of the gospel. He had so firm a conviction of its value and its truth; he had experienced so much of its consolations, and had seen so much of its efficacy, that he was so far from being ashamed of it that he gloried in it as the power of God unto salvation. Men should be ashamed of crime and folly. They are ashamed of their own offences, and of the follies of their conduct, when they come to reflect on it. But they are not

ashamed of that which they feel to be right, and of that which they know will contribute to their welfare, and to the benefit of their fellow-men. Such were the views of Paul about the gospel; and it is one of his favourite doctrines that they who believe on Christ shall not be ashamed, Rom 9:33 Rom 10:11, 5:5, 2Cor 7:14, 2Ti 1:12, Php 1:20, Rom 9:33, 2Ti 1:8; comp. Mk 8:38, 1Pet 4:16, 1Jn 2:28.

The power of God. This expression means, that it is the way in which God exerts his power in the salvation of men. It is the efficacious or mighty plan, by which power goes forth to save, and by which all the obstacles of man's redemption are taken away. This expression implies,

(1.) that it is God's plan, or his appointment. It is not the device of man.

(2.) It is adapted to the end. It is fitted to overcome the obstacles in the way. It is not merely the instrument by which God exerts his power, but it has an inherent adaptedness to the end, it is fitted to accomplish salvation to man, so that it may be denominated power.

(3.) It is mighty: hence it is called power, and the power of God. It is not a feeble and ineffectual instrumentality, but it is "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds," 2Cor 10:4,5. It has shown its power as applicable to every degree of sin, to every combination of wickedness. It has gone against the sins of the world, and evinced its power to save sinners of all grades, and to overcome and subdue every mighty form of iniquity. Comp. Jer 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" 1Cor 1:18, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

Unto salvation. This word means, complete deliverance from sin and death, and all the foes and dangers that beset man. It cannot imply anything less than eternal life.

All men know what faith is. It is exercised when we confide in a parent, a friend, a benefactor. It is such a reception of a promise, a truth, or a threatening, as to suffer it to make its appropriate impression on the mind, and such as to lead us to act under its influence, or to act as we should on the supposition that it is true. Thus a sinner credits the threatenings of God, and fears: this is faith. He credits his promises, and hopes: this is faith. He feels that he is lost, and relies on Jesus Christ for mercy: this is faith. And, in general, faith is such an impression on the mind made by truth as to lead us to feel and act as if it were true; to have the appropriate feelings, and views, and conduct, raider the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God. Mk 16:16.

Observe here, 1. The glorious description which the apostle gives of the gospel; It is the power of God unto salvation. That is, the preaching of it is attended by, and accompanied with, an almighty power, which renders it effectual to salvation, if we do not bolt our ears and hearts against it.

Learn, That the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, is the chosen instrument in God's hand, which he uses and honours for the conveyance of spiritual life into the souls of men, though it be despised and ridiculed by the men of the world. The gospel is powerful; it is the power, not of men or angels, but the power of God; not the essential, but instrumental power of God; it works as an instrument, yet not a natural, but as a moral instrument in God's hands; freely, not arbitrarily. The word gives out to us, as God gives in to that; the power of the gospel is not from the preachers of the gospel, therefore do not idolize them; but they are instruments in God's hand, their words are the vehicle, or organ, through which the vital power of the Spririt is conveyed; therefore do not vilify and think meanly of them.

Observe, 2. The solemn protestation and bold profession which the apostle makes of his not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ; I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Where note, 1. He doth not say, I am not afraid to preach the gospel; but I am not ashamed, because shame hinders our readiness more than fear; a man may be fit and ready to preach the gospel, and yet be afraid to undertake it; but he that is ashamed of the work, can never be fit for it.

Note, 2. That when the apostle says, he is not ahamed of the gospel, more is intended than expressed: I am so far from being ashamed, that I account it my glory; as if the apostle had said, "Verily I esteem it the highest honour that God can confer upon me, to preach the gospel at Rome, though it should cost me my life."

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:
as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

From faith to faith. This clause has caused much discussion. The generally received view is thus stated by Dr. Schaff: ``The righteousness is revealed from faith, or through means of faith, in order to produce faith in others." It is revealed to us by believing (faith), and the duty of the believer is to extend the gospel, or to extend the faith. Says Dr. Schaff, ``Believing includes knowledge and belief, assent and surrender, appropriation and application."

Is the righteousness of God--δικαιοσυνηθεου--. There is not a more important expression to be found in the epistle than this. It is capable of only the following interpretations.

(1.) Some have said that it means that the attribute of God, which is denominated righteousness or justice, is here displayed. It has been supposed that this was the design of the gospel to make this known; or to evince his justice in his way of saving men. There is an important sense in which this is true, (Rom 3:26.) But this does not seem to be the meaning in the passage before us. For

(a) the leading design of the gospel is not to evince the justice of God, or the attribute of justice, but the love of God. See Jn 3:16, Eph 2:4, 2Thes 2:16, 1Jn 4:8.

(b) The attribute of justice is not that which is principally evinced in the gospel. It is rather mercy, or mercy in a manner consistent with justice, or that does not interfere with justice.

(c) The passage, therefore, is not designed to teach simply that the righteousness of God, as an attribute, is brought forth in the gospel, or that the main idea is to reveal his justice.

(2.) A second interpretation which has been affixed to it is to make it the same as goodness, the benevolence of God is revealed, etc. But to this there are still stronger objections. For

(a) it does not comport with the design of the apostle's argument.

(b) It is a departure from the established meaning of the word justice, and the phrase "the righteousness of God."

(c) If this had been the design, it is remarkable that the usual words expressive of goodness or mercy had not been used. Another meaning, therefore, is to be sought as expressing the sense of the phrase.

(3.) The phrase, righteousness of God, is equivalent to God's plan of justifying men; his scheme of declaring them just in the sight of the law, or of acquitting them from punishment, and admitting them to favour. In this sense it stands opposed to man's plan of justification, i. e. by his own works. God's plan is by faith. The way in which that is done is revealed in the gospel. The object contemplated to be done is to treat men as if they were righteous. Man attempted to accomplish this by obedience to the law. The plan of God was to arrive at it by faith, here the two schemes differ; and the great design of this epistle is to show that man cannot be justified on his own plan--to wit, by works; and that the plan of God is the only way, and a wise and glorious way of making man just in the eye of the law. No small part of the perplexity usually attending this subject will be avoided if it is remembered that the discussion in this epistle pertains to the question, "How can mortal

man be just with God?" The apostle shows that it cannot be by works; and that it can be by faith. This latter is what he calls the righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel.

To see that this is the meaning, it is needful only to look at the connexion; and at the usual meaning of the words. The word to justify--δικαιοω--means, properly, to be just, to be innocent, to be righteous. It then means to declare or treat as righteous; as when a man is charged with an offence, and is acquitted. If the crime alleged is not proved against him, he is declared by the law to be innocent. It then means to treat as if innocent, to regard as innocent, that is, to pardon, to forgive, and consequently to treat as if the offence had not occurred. It does not mean that the man did not commit the offence; or that the law might not have held him answerable for it; but that the offence is forgiven; and it is consistent to receive the offender into favour, and treat him as if he had not committed it. In what way this may be done rests with him who has the pardoning power. And in regard to the salvation of man, it rests solely with God, and must be done in that way only which he appoints and approves. The design of Paul in this epistle is to show how this is done, or to show that it is done by faith. It may be remarked here, that the expression before us does not imply any particular manner in which it is done; it does not touch the question whether it is by imputed righteousness or not; it does not say that it is on legal principles; it simply affirms that the gospel contains God's plan of justifying men by faith.

It is called God's righteousness, because it is God's plan, in distinction from all the plans set up by men. It was originated by him; it differs from all others; and it claims him as its Author, and tends to his glory. It is called his righteousness, as it is the way by which he receives and treats men as righteous. This same plan was foretold in various places, where the word righteousness is nearly synonymous with salvation. Isa 51:5, "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth." 6, "My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." Isa 56:1, "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." Dan 9:24,

"To make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

In regard to this plan, it may be observed,

(1.) that it is not to declare that men are innocent and pure. That would not be true. The truth is just the reverse; and God does not esteem men to be different from what they are.

(2.) It is not to take part with the sinner, and to mitigate his offences. It admits them to their full extent; and makes him feel them also.

(3.) It is not that we become partakers of the essential righteousness of God. That is impossible.

(4.) It is not that his righteousness becomes ours. This is not true; and there is no intelligible sense in which that can be understood. But it is God's plan for pardoning sin, and for treating us as if we had not committed it; that is, adopting us as his children, and admitting us to heaven on the ground of what the Lord Jesus has done in our stead. This is God's plan. Men seek to save themselves by their own works. God's plan is to save them by the merits of Jesus Christ.

The just shall live by faith. "If any man shall draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him; but the just by my faith" (or by faith in me) "shall live." The very words are used by them which, are employed by the apostle, except they add the word "my, μου", my faith. The Syriac renders it in a similar manner, "The just by faith shall live." The meaning of the Hebrew in Habakkuk is the same. It does not refer originally to the doctrine of justification by faith; but its meaning is this, "The just man, or the righteous man, shall live by his confidence in God." The prophet is speaking of the woes attending the Babylonish captivity. The Chaldeans were to come upon the land and destroy it, and remove the nation, Hab 1:6-10. But this was not to be perpetual. It should have an end, Hab

2:3, and they who had confidence in God should live, Hab 2:4 that is, should be restored to their country, should be blessed and made happy. Their confidence in God should sustain them, and preserve them. This did not refer primarily to the doctrine of justification by faith, nor did the apostle so quote it; but it expressed a general principle that those who had confidence in God should be happy, and be preserved and blessed. This would express the doctrine which Paul was defending. It was not by relying on his own merit that the Israelite would be delivered, but it was by confidence in God, by his strength and mercy. On the same principle would men be saved under the gospel. It was not by reliance on their own works or merit; it was by confidence in God, by faith that they were to live. Shall live. In Habakkuk this means to be made happy, or blessed; shall find comfort, and support, and deliverance. So in the gospel the blessings of salvation are represented as life, eternal life. Sin is represented as death, and man by nature is represented as dead in trespasses and sins, Eph 2:1 The gospel restores to life and salvation, Jn 3:36, 5:29,40, 6:33,51,53, 20:31, Acts 2:28, Rom 5:18, 8:6. This expression, therefore, does not mean, as it is sometimes supposed, the justified by faith shall live; but it is expressive of a general principle in relation to men, that they shall be defended, preserved, made happy, not by their own merits or strength, but by confidence in God. This principle is exactly applicable to the gospel plan of salvation. Those who rely on God the Saviour shall be justified and saved.

The Guilt of Mankind

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

The wrath of God--οργηθεου. The word rendered wrath properly denotes that earnest appetite, or desire, by which we seek anything, or an intense effort to obtain it. And it is particularly applied to the desire which a man has to take vengeance who is injured, and who is enraged. It is thus synonymous with revenge. Eph 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath," etc. Col 3:8, "Anger, wrath, malice," etc. 1Timm 2:8; Jas 1:19. But it is also often applied to God and it is

clear that when we think of the word as applicable to him it must be divested of everything like human passion, and especially of the passion of revenge. As he cannot be injured by the sins of men, (Job 35:6-8,) he has no motive for vengeance, properly so called; and it is one of the most obvious rules of interpretation that we are not to apply to God passions and feelings which, among us, have their origin in evil. In making a revelation, it was indispensable to use words which men used; but it does not follow that when applied to God they mean precisely what they do when applied to man. When the Saviour is said (Mk 3:5) to have looked on his disciples with anger, (Greek, wrath, the same word is here,) it is not to be supposed that he had the feelings of an implacable man seeking vengeance. The nature of the feeling is to be judged of by the character of the person. So, in this place, the word denotes the Divine displeasure or indignation against sin; the Divine purpose to inflict punishment. It is the opposition of the Divine character against sin; and the determination of the Divine Mind to express that opposition in a proper way, by excluding the offender from the favours which he bestows on the righteous. It is not an unamiable or arbitrary principle of conduct. We all admire the character of a father who is opposed to disorder, and vice, and disobedience in his family, and who expresses his opposition in a proper way. We admire the character of a ruler who is opposed to all crime in the community, and who expresses those feelings in the laws. And the more he is opposed to vice and crime, the more we admire his character and his laws; and why shall we be not equally pleased with God, who is opposed to all crime in all parts of the universe, and who determines to express it in the proper way for the sake of preserving order and promoting peace. The word Divine displeasure or indignation, therefore, expresses the meaning of this phrase. See Mt 3:7, Lk 3:7, 21:23, Jn 3:36, Rom 2:5,8, 3:5, 4:15, 5:9, 9:22, 12:19; Rom 13:4,5, Eph 2:3, 5:6, 1Thes 1:10, 2:16, etc. The word occurs thirty-five times in the New Testament.

Against all ungodliness. This word properly means impiety failed to honour the true God, and had paid to idols the homage which was due to him. ασεβειαν. Multitudes also in every age refuse to

honour him, and neglect his worship, though they are not idolaters. Many men suppose that if they do not neglect their duty to their fellow-men, if they are honest and upright in their dealings, they are not guilty, even though they are not righteous, or do not do their duty to God; as though it were a less crime to dishonour God than man, and as though it were innocence to neglect and disobey our Maker and Redeemer. The apostle here shows that the wrath of God is as really revealed against the neglect of God as it is against positive iniquity; and that this is an offence of so consequence as to be placed first, and as deserving the Divine indignation more than the neglect of our duties towards men. Comp. Rom 11:26, 2Ti 2:16, Tit 2:12; Jude 1:15,18. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. Is revealed. That is, revealed to the Jews by their law; and to the Gentiles in their reason and conscience, as the apostle proceeds to show.

In unrighteousness. Or rather, by their iniquity. Their wickedness is the cause why the truth had had so little progress among them, and had exerted so little influence. This was done by their yielding to corrupt passions and propensities, and by their being therefore unwilling to retain the knowledge of a pure and holy God, who is opposed to such deeds, and who will punish them. As they were determined to practise iniquity, they chose to exclude the knowledge of a pure God, and to worship impure idols, by which they might give a sanction to their lusts. Their vice and tendency to iniquity was, therefore, the reason why they had so little knowledge of a holy God; and by the love of this, they held back the truth from making progress, and becoming diffused among them. The same thing is substantially true now. Men hold back or resist the the truth of the gospel by their sins in the following ways:

(1.) Men of influence and wealth employ both in directly opposing the gospel.

(2.) Men directly resist the doctrines of religion, since they know they could not hold to those doctrines without abandoning their sins.

(3.) Men who resolve to live in sin, of course, resist the gospel, and endeavour to prevent its influence.

(4.) Pride, and vanity, and the love of the world also resist the gospel, and oppose its advances.

(5.) Unlawful business--business that begins in evil, and progresses and ends in evil---has this tendency to hold back the gospel. Such is the effect of the traffic in ardent spirits, in the slave-trade, etc. They begin in the love of money, the root of all evil, (1Timm 6:10;) they progress in the tears and sorrows of the widow, the orphan, the wife, the sister, or the child; and they end in the deep damnation of multitudes in the world to come. Perhaps there has been nothing that has so much held back the influence of truth, and of the gospel, as indulgence in the vice of intemperance, and traffic in liquid fire.

(6.) Indulgence in vice, or wickedness of any kind, holds back the truth of God. Men who are resolved to indulge their passions will not yield themselves to this truth. And hence all the wicked, the proud, and vain, and worldly are responsible, not only for their own sins directly, but for hindering, by theft example and theft crimes, the effect of religion on others. They are answerable for standing in the way of God and his truth; and for opposing him in the benevolent design of doing good to all men. There is nothing that prevents the universal spread and influence of truth but sin. And men of wickedness are answerable for all the ignorance and woe which are spread over the community, and which have extended themselves over the world.

Our apostle having asserted and laid down a general proposition, that the justification of a sinner is only to be expected by the righteousness of the Mediator in a way of faith; he now undertakes the proof and demonstration of it thus; distributes the whole world into Gentiles and Jews; the former seeking righteousness by the dim light of nature; or the law written in their hearts; the latter by

the works of the law, that is, by their external conformity to what the law of Moses exacted and required of them.

Now his present business is to prove distinctly and fully, that neither Gentile nor Jew could ever find what they thus sought. He begins here with the Gentiles, and shews that indeed they had inbred notions of a God imprinted in their minds by nature, and also had the book of the creature before their eyes, in which much, very much of God, might be seen: yet these common notices of God, and of good and evil, they did not obey and put in practice but rebelled against the light and dictates of their natural consciences: for which cause, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against them.

Here observe, 1. A dreadful manifestation of divine wrath: The wrath of God is revealed from heaven. The wrath of God; that is, the indignation or vengeance of God: This the sinner shall feel who doth not fear it; for the fears of an incensed Deity are no bug-bears, nor the effects of ignorance and superstition, as the Atheists fancy. This wrath is said to be revealed from heaven; that is, discovered and made manifest by the God of heaven, partly by the light of nature, their own consciences giving them notice and warning of it; and partly by the examples of others, in the lashes of a divine severity on the back of sinners, by the hand of an incensed God: Thus the wrath of God was revealed to the Gentiles from heaven.

Observe, 2. The object or impulsive cause of his revealed and inflicted wrath; namely, All ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Ungodliness compriseth all sins against God, or neglect of the duties of the first table: Unrighteousness comprehends all sins against our neighbour, or the breaches of the second table.

Note here, That the abstract is put for the concrete, the sins for the sinners that commit them; the wrath of God is revealed against all

ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; that is, against all ungodly and unrighteous persons; the meaning is, that God will certainly punish these sins upon the persons of the sinners.

Observe, 3. The special aggravation of these their sins, or that which made them so very provoking to Almighty God; namely, that they held the truth in unrighteousness; that is, their natural convictions were kept down under the dominion and power of their corruptions. Lust in their wills and affections was too hard for the light in their understandings; they entertained the light of truth in their minds, but did not suffer it to have its proper effect and influence upon their hearts and lives; thus making that a prisoner which would have made them free.

Learn, 1. That it is a very great aggravation of sin, for men to offend against the light of their own minds, and to rebel against the convictions of their own consciences.

2. That the wrath of God is dreadfully incensed against all those that live in any course of sin, rebelling against the dictates and convictions of their own enlightened consciences.

Dread it then, as thou dreadest hell itself, to sin against knowledge, to rebel against the light of thy own mind, to slight the whispers, to stifle the voice of thy own conscience; but reverence and obey its dictates as the commands of God.

19 because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed *it* unto them.

That which may be known of God. That which is knowable concerning God. The expression implies that there may be many things concerning God which cannot be known. But there are also many things which may be ascertained. Such are his existence, and many of his attributes, his power, and wisdom, and justice, etc. The object of the apostle was not to say that everything pertaining to God could be known by them, or that they could have as clear a view of him as if they had possessed a revelation. We must interpret the expression according to the object which he had in view. That was, to show that so much might be known of God as

to prove that they had no excuse for their crimes; or that God would be just in punishing them for their deeds, for this it was needful only that his existence and his justice, or his determination to punish sin, should be known; and this, the apostle affirms, was known among them, and had been from the creation of the world. This expression, therefore, is not to be pressed as implying that they knew all that could be known about God, or that they knew as much as they who had a revelation; but that they knew enough to prove that they had no excuse for their sins. He had endowed them with reason and conscience, (Rom 2:14,15;) he had made them capable of seeing and investigating his works; he had spread before them the proofs of his wisdom, and goodness, and power, and had thus given them the means of learning his perfections and will.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world
are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,
even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without
excuse:

Things that are made. By his works. Comp. Heb 11:3. This means not by the original act of creation, but by the continual operations of God in his Providence, by his doings--ποιημασι--by what he is continually producing and accomplishing in the displays of his power and goodness in the heavens and the earth. What they were capable of understanding he immediately adds, and shows that he did not intend to affirm that every thing could be known of God by his works; but so much as to free them from excuse for their sins.

So that they are without excuse. God has given them so clear evidence of his existence and claims, that they have no excuse for their idolatry, and for hindering the truth by their iniquity. It is implied here, that in order that men should be responsible, they should have the means of knowledge; and that he does not judge them when their ignorance is involuntary, and the means of knowing the truth have not been communicated. But where men have these means within their reach, and will not avail themselves of them, all excuse is taken away. This was the case with the Gentile world. They had the means of knowing so much of God,

as to show the folly of worshipping dumb idols. Comp. Isa 44:8-20. They had also traditions respecting his perfections; and they could not plead for their crimes and folly that they had no means of knowing him. If this was true of the pagan world then, how much more is it true of the world now? And especially how true and fearful is this, respecting that great multitude in Christian lands who have the Bible, and who never read it; who are within the reach of the sanctuary, and never enter it; who are admonished by friends, and by the providences of God, and who regard it not; and who look upon the heavens, and even yet see no proof of the eternal power and Godhead of him who made them all! Nay, there are those who are apprized of the discoveries of modern astronomy, and who yet do not seem to reflect that all these glories are proof of the existence of an eternal God; and who live in ignorance of religion as really as the heathen, and in crimes as decided and malignant as disgraced the darkest ages of the world. For such there is no excuse, or shadow of excuse, to be offered m the day of doom. And there is no fact more melancholy in our history, and no one thing that more proves the stupidity of men, than this sad forgetfulness of Him that made the heavens, even amid all the wonders and glories that have come fresh from the hand of God, and that everywhere speak his praise.

Sinners are not willing to give honour to God as God. They are not pleased with his perfections; and therefore the mind becomes fixed on other objects, and the heart gives free indulgence to its own sinful desires. A willingness to honour God as God--to reverence, love, and obey him, would effectually restrain men from sin. Neither were thankful. The obligation to be thankful to God for his mercies, for the goodness which we experience, is plain and obvious. Thus we judge of favours received of our fellow-men. The apostle here clearly regards this unwillingness to render gratitude to God for his mercies as one of the causes of their subsequent corruption and idolatry. The reasons of this are the following.

(1.) The effect of ingratitude is to render the heart hard and insensible.

(2.) Men seek to forget the Being to whom they are unwilling to exercise gratitude.

(3.) To do this, they fix their affections on other things; and hence the heathen expressed their gratitude not to God,

But became vain. To become vain, with us, means to be elated, or self-conceited, or to seek praise from others. The meaning here seems to be, they became foolish, frivolous ill their thoughts and reasonings. They acted foolishly; they employed themselves in useless and frivolous questions, the effect of which was to lead the mind farther and farther from the truth respecting God.

Imaginations. This word means, properly, thoughts; then reasonings, and also disputations. Perhaps our word speculations, would convey its meaning here. It implies that they were unwilling to honour him, they commenced those speculations which resulted in all their vain and foolish opinions about idols, and the various rites of idolatrous worship. Many of the speculations and inquiries of the ancients were among the most vain and senseless which the mind can conceive.

Was darkened. Was rendered obscure, so that they did not perceive and comprehend the truth. The process which is stated in this verse is,

(1.) that men had the knowledge of God;

(2.) that they refused to honour him when they knew hun, and were opposed to his character and government;

(3) that they were ungrateful;

(4) that they then began to doubt, to reason, to speculate, and wandered far into darkness. This is substantially the process by

which men wander away from God now. They have the knowledge of God, but they do not love him; and being dissatisfied with his character and government, they begin to speculate, fall into error, and then "find no end in wandering mazes lost," and sink into the depths of heresy and of sin.

21 because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

From this verse to the end of the chapter, we have a large and black catalogue of the sins which the old Heathens or Gentiles were guilty of; some of which they voluntarily committed, and others were judiciously delivered up unto (for God, without any impeachment of his holiness, often punishes sin with sin.) Their sins voluntarily committed, are here recited, and the first of them is their sinning against light and knowledge. They had some natural notices of God implanted and imprinted in their minds, and such an additional knowledge of his being and attribute, as might be gained by an attentive study in the book of the creatures; but they rebelled against this light, and thereby contracted an aggravated guilt.

Learn thence, that to sin against light and knowledge, either in the omission of duty, or commission of sin, is the highest aggravation of sinfulness: As ignorance lesseneth, so knowledge aggravateth the malignity of sin.

The next sin charged upon them was, they did not glorify that God whom they had the knowledge of: That is, they did not conceive of him, and worship him as became his divine perfections and excellencies; they did not esteem so high of him as they ought, and pay that homage and honour, to the Deity which they should.

Learn thence, That the knowledge which we have of God and his attributes, if it do not engage us to honour, glorify, and worship him, suitable to his adorable perfections, it is vain and useless in God's account, and will but expose us to a more dreadful condemnation.

Another sin mentioned in this verse, which the Heathens were guilty of, was the sin of unthankfulness. They glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful: That is, they had not a due sense of the favours and benefits of God conferred upon them; but, ascribing the blessings of heaven to chance and fortune, to fate and destiny, to the influence of the stars and planets, to their own prudence and providence, they paid their thanks to blind fortune, for a favour which the eye of providence had bestowed upon them: It is impossible that God should receive the tribute of thankfulness, if we do not see all our mercies flowing from him.

Observe farther, the sad effect, fruit and consequence of the fore-mentioned sins. The Heathens which committed them, it is said,

1. That they became vain in their imaginations. That is, they had various opinions and vain conceptions of the Godhead. Some of them denied that there was a God, others doubted whether there was a God or no; some affirmed there was but one God, others owned a plurality, yea, a multiplicity of gods. Some acknowledge God's being, but denied his providence; others owned his providence, but confined it, in its exercise to secondary causes. Thus vain in their imaginations, thus absorbed in their notions, and thus sottish in their reasonings, were the Heathens concerning God, his nature and worship. Well might our apostle say, They became vain in their imaginations.

And, 2. That their foolish hearts were darkened: That is, for rebelling against the light received, their minds and understanding were more and more darkened; their natural reason obscured, but because not improved.

Lord, how dangerous is it not to improve our knowledge! how fatal to rebel against the light and convictions of our own minds! it provokes thee to deliver us up to he power of spiritual darkness on earth, and consigns us over to eternal darkness in hell, where is reserved the blackness of darkness forever, as the punishment and portion of those that rebel against the light, and sin against knowledge.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
23 and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.
24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:

Observe here, 1. Another infamous sin charged upon the Heathens; namely, the sin of uncleanness; yea, base, unnatural uncleanness, and pollutions of the most odious kinds.

Learn thence, That idolatry and uncleanness often go together. Solomon's uncleanness led him to idolatry, and his idolatry increased his uncleanness. The city of Rome at this day, which is a grove of idols, the chief seat of idolatry, is next to Sodom for uncleanness; witness their allowing of stews by public authority.

Learn, 2. That all kinds and degrees of pollutions both natural and unnatural, are to be detested and abhorred, as dishonouring the body. Our bodies are Christ's members, the Holy Ghost's temples; let us therefore glorify God with our bodies on earth, which shall be subjects capable of glory with himself in heaven.

Observe, 2. God's judiciary tradition of these idolatrous Heathens to the sin of uncleanness. Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness. Almighty God often doth, and always righteously may, punish sin with sin: God punished the idolatry of the Heathens here, by delivering them up to vile affections, to uncleanness, and unnatural lusts.

But how is this consistent with God's holiness and hatred of sin? Thus, God neither infuses sin into their hearts, nor excites to sin in their lives, but leaves sinners to themselves, to act without restraint, according to the inclination of their own lusts and corruptions: And also, gives them up to Satan, that unclean spirit, who will not fail to provoke them to such uncleanness as he knows their inclinations stand ready to comply with.

Lord, keep back thy servants from sinning against the light of nature, against the light of scripture, lest we be judicially darkened, and given up to a sottish and injudicious mind, to hardness of heart, and the vilest of affections.

25 who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

27 and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Wickedness. The word used here denotes a desire of injuring others; or, as we should express it, malice. It is that depravity and obliquity of mind which strives to produce injury on others. Calvin. Covetousness. Avarice, or the desire of obtaining that which belongs to others. This vice is common in the world; but it would be particularly so where the other vices enumerated here abounded, and men were desirous of luxury, and the gratification of their senses. Rome was particularly desirous of the wealth of other nations, and hence its extended wars, and the various evils of rapine and conquest. Licentiousness, κακια. This word denotes evil in general; rather the act of doing wrong than the desire, which was expressed before by the word wickedness. Full of envy. "Pain, uneasiness, mortification or discontent, excited by another's prosperity, accompanied with some degree of hatred or malignity, and often with a desire or an effort to depreciate the person, and with pleasure in seeing him depressed." Webster. This passion is so common still, that it is not necessary to attempt to prove that it was common among the ancients. It seems to be natural to the human heart, it is one of the most common manifestations of wickedness, and shows clearly the deep depravity of man. Benevolence rejoices at the happiness of others, and seeks to promote it. But envy exists almost everywhere, and in almost every human bosom:

"All human virtue, to its latest breath Finds envy never conquered but by death." Pope.

Murder. "The taking of human life, with premeditated malice, by a person of a sane mind." This is necessary to constitute murder now; but the word used here denotes all manslaughter, or taking human life, except that which occurs as the punishment of crime. It is scarcely necessary to show that this was common among the Gentiles. It has prevailed in all communities, but it was particularly prevalent in Rome. It is necessary only to refer the reader to the common events in the Roman history of assassinations, deaths by poison, and the destruction of slaves. But in a special manner the charge was properly alleged against them, on account of the inhuman

contests of the gladiators in the amphitheatres. These were common at Rome, and constituted a favorite amusement with the people. Originally, captives, slaves, and criminals were trained up for combat; but it afterwards became common for even Roman citizens to engage in these bloody combats; and Nero at one show exhibited no less than four hundred senators and six hundred knights as gladiators. The fondness for this bloody spectacle continued till the reign of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, by whom they were abolished about six hundred years after the original institution. "Several hundred, perhaps several thousand, victims were annually slaughtered in the great cities of the empire," Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. ,xxx., A.D. 404. As an instance of what might occur in this inhuman spectacle, we may refer to what took place on such an occasion in the reign of Probus, (A.D. 281.) During his triumph, near seven hundred gladiators were reserved to shed each other's blood for the amusement of the Roman people. But "disdaining to shed their blood for the amusement of the populace, they killed their keepers, broke from their place of confinement, and filled the streets of Rome with blood and confusion," Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xii. With such views and with such spectacles before them, it is not wonderful that murder was regarded as a matter of little consequence, and hence this crime prevailed throughout the world. Debate. Our word debate does not commonly imply evil. It denotes commonly discussion for elucidating truth; or for maintaining a proposition, as the debates in Congress, etc. But the word in the original meant also contention, strife, altercation, connected with anger and heated zeal, Rom 13:13, 1Cor 1:11, 3:3, 2Cor 12:20, Gal 5:20. Php 1:15, 1Timm 6:4, Tit 3:9. This contention and strife would, of course, follow from malice and covetousness, etc. Deceit. This denotes fraud, falsehood, etc. That this was common is also plain. The Cretians are testified by one of the Greek poets to have been always liars. (Tit 1:12.) Juvenal charges the same thing on the Romans. (Sat. iii. 41.) "What, says he, should I do at Rome? I cannot lie." Intimating that if he were there, it would follow, of course, that he would be expected to be false. The same thing

is still true. Writers on India tell us that the word of a Hindoo, even under oath, is not to be regarded; and the same thing occurs in most pagan countries. Malignity. This word signifies here, not malignity in general, but that particular species of it which consists in misinterpreting the words or actions of others, or putting the worst construction on their conduct. Whisperers. Those who secretly, and in a sly manner, by hints and innuendoes, detract from others, or excite suspicion of them. It does not mean those who openly calumniate, but that more dangerous class who give hints of evil in others, who affect great knowledge, and communicate the evil report under an injunction of secrecy, knowing that it will be divulged. This class of people abounds everywhere, and there is scarcely any one more dangerous to the peace or happiness of society.

Here the apostle sums up the sins which the Heathens committed against the second table, or against their neighbour; not that every particular person was guilty of all these black crimes, but all were guilty of some, and some perhaps were guilty of all or most of them.

Learn hence, That the heart of man doth natually swarm and abound with stange and monstrous lusts and abominations. Lord! what a swarm is here! and yet there are multitudes more in the depths of the heart. Whatever abominations were found in the hearts and lives of Heathens and Sodomites, and the most profligate wretches under heaven, are radically and seminally in our corrupt and degenerate natures, Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c. Matt 15:19 What are our lusts, but so many toads spitting of venom and spawning of poison? Oh deplorable degradation!

Learn, 2. How much sadder is the condition which unregenerate souls abide in, who remain in and under the power and dominion, the vassalage and slavery of these imperious lusts, which perpetually rage within them, and incessantly contest and scuffle for the throne.

Learn 3. To stand astonished at the heart-changing grace of God, which has delivered thee from so dismal a condition. Oh! fall down and kiss the feet of mercy: adore the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace, which stept in so seasonably to thy rescue. Lord! what black imaginations, what vile affections, what hellish desires, what monstrous abominations were lodged in my heart and nature, before regeneration wrought a change!

Oh that ever the Holy Ghost should set his eyes upon any of the sinful offspring of apostate Adam; in whom were legions of unclean lusts, and whose nature was become the sink and seed-plot of all sin.

Observe lastly, Two particular sins, which of all others seem most monstrous in these Heathens.

1. They were haters of God, not of his essence, being and goodness, but haters of his holiness, justice and providence.

2. They were without natural affection. This appeared by sacrificing their children to their idols; and exposing themselves and their dearest relations to ruin. No sooner did we fall out with God, but we fell out with ourselves and one another.

30 backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Backbiters. Those who calumniate, slander, or speak ill of those who are absent. Whisperers declare secretly, and with great reserve, the supposed faults of others. Backbiters proclaim them publicly and avowedly. Haters of God. There is no charge which can be brought against men more severe than this. It is the highest possible crime; yet it is a charge which the conduct of men will abundantly justify, and the truth of which all those experience who are brought to see their true character. To an awakened sinner there is often nothing more plain and

painful than that he is a hater of God. His heart rises up against Him, and his law, and his plan of saving men; and he deeply feels that nothing can subdue this but the mighty power of the Holy One. This is a charge which is not unfrequently brought against men in the Bible. See Jn 7:7,18,24,25; Jn 3:19,20. Surely, if this be the native character of man, then it is "far gone from original righteousness." No more striking proof of depravity could be given; and in no creed or confession of faith is there a more painful and humiliating representation given of human wickedness than in this declaration of an inspired apostle, that men are by nature HATERS OF GOD. Despiteful. This word denotes those who abuse, or treat with unkindness or disdain, those who are present. Whisperers and backbiters are those who calumniate those who are absent. Proud. Pride is well understood. It is an inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, etc. Webster. Of the existence of this everywhere there is abundant proof. And it was particularly striking among the ancients. The sect of the Stoics was distinguished for it, and this was the general character of their philosophers. Men will be proud where they suppose none are superior; and it is only the religion that reveals a great and infinite God, and that teaches that all blessings are his gift, and that he has given us the station which we occupy, that will produce true humility. We may add, that the system of heathenism did not disclose the wickedness of the heart, and that this was a main reason why they were elevated in self-esteem. Boasters. Those who arrogate to themselves that which they do not possess, and glory in it. This is closely connected with pride. A man who has an inordinate self-conceit, will not be slow to proclaim his own merits to those around him. Inventors of evil things. This doubtless refers to their seeking to find out new arts or plans to practise evil; new devices to gratify their lusts and passions; new forms of luxury and vice, etc. So intent were they on practicing evil, so resolved to gratify their passions, that the mind was excited to discover new modes of gratification. In cities of luxury and vice, this has always been done. Vices change their form, men become

satiated, and they are obliged to resort to some new form. The passions cease to be gratified with old forms of indulgence, and consequently men are obliged to resort to new devices to pamper their appetites, and to rekindle their dying passions to a flame. This was eminently true of ancient Rome; a place where all the arts of luxury, all the devices of passion, all the designs of splendid gratification, were called forth to excite and pamper the evil passions of men. Their splendid entertainments, their games, their theatres, their sports--cruel and bloody--were little else than new and ever- varying inventions of evil things to gratify the desires of lust and of pride. Disobedient to parents. This expresses the idea that they did not show to parents that honour, respect, and attention which was due. This has been a crime of paganism in every age; and though among the Romans the duty of honouring parents was enjoined by the laws, yet it is not improbable that the duty was often violated, and that parents were treated with great neglect and even contempt. "Disobedience to parents was punished by the Jewish law with death; and with the Hindoos it is attended with the loss of the child's inheritance. The ancient Greeks considered the neglect of it to be extremely impious, and attended with the most certain effects of Divine vengeance. Solon ordered all persons who refused to make due provision for their parents to be punished with infamy, and the same penalty was incurred for personal violence towards them." Kent's Commentaries on American Law, vol. ii. pg. 207. Comp. Virg. AEnid ix. 283. The feelings of pride and haughtiness would lead to disregard of parents. It might also be felt that to provide for them when aged and infirm was a burden; and hence there would arise disregard for their wants, and probably open opposition to their wishes, as being the demands of petulance and age. It has been one characteristic of heathenism everywhere, that it leaves children to treat their parents with neglect. Among the Sandwich islanders it was customary, when a parent was old, infirm, and sick beyond the hope of recovery, for his own children to bury him alive; and it has been the common custom in India for children to leave their aged parents to perish on the banks of the Ganges.

Covenantbreakers. Perfidious; false to their contracts. Without natural affection. This expression denotes the want of affectionate regard towards their children. The attachment of parents to children is one of the strongest in nature, and nothing can overcome it but the most confirmed and established wickedness. And yet the apostle charges on the heathen generally the want of this affection. He doubtless refers here to the practice so common among heathens of exposing their children, or putting them to death. This crime, so abhorrent to all the feelings of humanity, was common among the heathen, and is still. The Canaanites, we are told, Ps 106:37,38, "sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan." Manasseh, among the Jews, imitated their example, and introduced the horrid custom of sacrificing children to Moloch, and set the example by offering his own, 2Chr 33:6. Among the ancient Persians it was a common custom to bury children alive. In most of the Grecian states, infanticide was not merely permitted, but actually enforced by law. The Spartan lawgiver expressly ordained that every child that was born should be examined by the ancient men of the tribe, and that if found weak or deformed, should be thrown into a deep cavern at the foot of Mount Taygetus. Aristotle, in his work on government, enjoins the exposure of children that are naturally feeble and deformed, in order to prevent an excess of population. But among all the nations of antiquity, the Romans were the most unrelenting in their treatment of infants, Romulus obliged the citizens to bring up all their male children, and the eldest of the females-- proof that the others were to be destroyed. The Roman father had an absolute right over the life of his child, and we have abundant proof that that right was often exercised. Romulus expressly authorized the destruction of all children that were deformed, only requiring the parents to exhibit them to their five nearest neighbours, and to obtain their consent to theft death. The law of the Twelve Tables, enacted in the 301st year of Rome, sanctioned the same barbarous practice.

Minucius Felix thus describes the barbarity of the Romans in this respect: "I see you exposing your infants to wild beasts and birds, or strangling them after the most miserable manner," (chap. xxx.) Pliny, the elder, defends the right of parents to destroy their children, upon the ground of its being necessary in order to preserve the population within proper bounds. Tertullian, in his apology, expresses himself boldly on this subject. "How many of you (addressing himself to the Roman people, and to the governors of cities and provinces) might I deservedly charge with infant murder; and not only so, but among the different kinds of death, for choosing some of the cruellest for their own children, such as drowning, or starving with cold or hunger, or exposing to the mercy of dogs; dying by the sword being too sweet a death for children." Nor was this practice arrested in the Roman government until the time of Constantine, the first Christian prince. The Phenicians and Carthagenians were in the habit of sacrificing infants to the gods. It may be added, that the crime is no less common among modern pagan nations, no less than 9000 children are exposed in Pekin in China, annually. Persons are employed by the police to go through the city with carts every morning to pick up all the children that may have been thrown out during the night. The bodies are carried to a common pit without the walls of the city, into which all, whether dead or living, are promiscuously thrown. (Barrow's Travels in China, p. 113, Am. ed.) Among the Hindoos the practice is perhaps still more common. In the provinces of Cutch and Guzerat alone the number of infantile murders amounted, according to the lowest calculation in 1807, to 3000 annually; according to another calculation, to 30,000. Females are almost the only victims. (Buchanan's Researches in Asia, Eng. ed., p. 49. Ward's View of the Hindoos.) In Otaheite, previously to the conversion of the people to Christianity, it was estimated that at least two-thirds of the children were destroyed. (Turnbull's Voyage round the World in 1800, 2, 3, and 4.) The natives of New South Wales were in the habit of burying the child with its mother, if she should happen to die. (Collins' Account of the Colony of New South Wales, p. 124, 125.) Among the

Hottentots, infanticide is a common crime. "The altars of the Mexicans were continually drenched. in the blood of infants." In Peru, no less than two hundred infants were sacrificed on occasion of the coronation of the Inca. The authority for these melancholy statements may be seen in Beck's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. i. 184--197, ed. 1823. See also Robertson's History of America, p. 221, ed. 1821. This is a specimen of the views and feelings of the heathen world; and the painful narrative might be continued to almost any length. After this statement, it cannot surely be deemed a groundless charge when the apostle accused them of being destitute of natural affection. Implacable. This word properly denotes those who will not be reconciled where there is a quarrel; or who pursue the offender with unyielding revenge. It denotes an unforgiving temper; and was doubtless common among the ancients, as it is among all heathen people. The aborigines of this country have given the most striking manifestation of this that the world has known. It is well known that, among them, neither time nor distance will obliterate the memory of an offence; and that the avenger will pursue the offender over hills and streams, and through heat or snow, happy if he may at last, though at the expiration of years, bury the tomahawk in the head of his victim, though it may be at the expense of his own life. See Robertson's America, book iv. & lxxiii--lxxxi. Unmerciful. Destitute of compassion. As a proof of this we may remark, that no provisions for the poor or infirm were made among the heathen. The sick and the infirm were cast out, and doomed to depend on the stinted charity of individuals. Pure religion, only, opens the heart to the appeals of want; and nothing but Christianity has yet expanded the hearts of men to make public provisions for the poor, the ignorant, and the afflicted. (1) "natural affection" or, "unsociable"

Who knowing. That the Gentiles had a moral sense, or were capable of knowing the will of God in this case, is clear from Rom 2:14,15. The means which they had of arriving at the knowledge of God were, their own reason, their conscience, and an observation of the effects of depravity. The judgment of

God. The word judgment here denotes the declared sentiment of God, that such things deserved death. It does not mean his inflictions, or his statutes or precepts; but it means that God thought or judged that they which did such things ought to die. As they were aware of this, it showed their guilt in still persevering in the face of his Judgments, and his solemn purpose to inflict punishment. Are worthy of death. The word death, in the Scriptures, is often used to denote punishment. But it does not mean here that these deserved capital punishment from the civil magistrate, but that they knew they were evil, and offensive to God, and deserving of punishment from his hand. See Jn 8:51, Rom 5:12-19.

31 without understanding, covenant-breakers, without
natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
32 who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit
such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have
pleasure in them that do them.

Romans-2

The Righteous Judgment of God

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art
that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou
condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same
things.

Doest the same things. It is clearly implied here, that they were guilty of offences similar to those practised by the Gentiles. It would not be a just principle of interpretation to press this declaration as implying that precisely the same offences, and to the same extent, were chargeable on them. Thus they were not guilty, in the time of the apostle, of idolatry; but of the other crimes enumerated in the first chapter, the Jews might be guilty. The character of the nation, as given in the New Testament, is that they were "an evil and adulterous generation," Mt 12:39, Jn 8:7; that they were a "generation of vipers," Mt 3:7, 12:34; that they were wicked, Mt 12:45 that they were sinful, Mk 8:38; that they were proud, haughty,

hypocritical, etc., Mt 23:1. If such was the character of the Jewish nation in general, there is no improbability in supposing that they practised most of the crimes specified in ch 1. On this verse we may remark,

(1.) that men are prone to be severe judges of others.

(2.) This is often, perhaps commonly, done when the accusers themselves are guilty of the same offences. It often happens, too, that men are remarkably zealous in opposing those offences which they themselves secretly practise. A remarkable instance of this occurs in Jn 8:1, etc. Thus David readily condemned the supposed act of injustice mentioned by Nathan, 2Sam 12:1-6. Thus also kings and emperors have enacted severe laws against the very crimes which they have constantly committed themselves. Nero executed the laws of the Roman empire against the very crimes which he was constantly committing; and it was a common practice for Roman masters to commit offences which they punished with death in their slaves. (See instances in Grotius on this place.)

(3.) Remarkable zeal against sin may be no proof of innocence. Comp. Mt 7:3. The zeal of persecutors, and often of pretended reformers, may be far from proof that they are free from the very offences which they are condemning in others. It may all be the work of the hypocrite to conceal some base design; or of the man who seeks to show his hostility to one kind of sin, in order to be a salvo to his conscience for committing some other.

(4.) The heart is deceitful. When we judge others we should make it a rule to examine ourselves on that very point. Such an examination might greatly mitigate the severity of our judgment; or might turn the whole of our indignation against ourselves. (i) "for wherein thou" 2Sam 12:6,7

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

Which commit such things. The crimes enumerated in chap. i. The apostle is not to be understood as affirming that each and every individual among the Jews was guilty of the specific crimes charged on the heathen, but that they were, as a people, inclined to the same things. Even where they might be externally moral, they might be guilty of cherishing evil desires in their hearts, and thus be guilty of the offence, Mt 5:28. When men desire to do evil, and are prevented by the providence of God, it is right to punish them for their evil intentions. The fact that God prevents them from carrying their evil purposes into execution does not constitute a difference between their real character and the character of those who are suffered to act out their wicked designs.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

despisest properly means to contemn, or to treat with neglect. It does not mean here that they professedly treated God's goodness with neglect or contempt; but that they perverted and abused it; they did not make a proper use of it; they did not regard it as fitted to lead them to repentance; but they derived a practical impression, that because God had not come forth in judgment and cut them off, but had continued to follow them with blessings, that therefore he did not regard them as sinners, or they inferred that they were innocent and safe. This argument the Jews were accustomed to use, (comp. Lk 13:1-5, Jn 9:2;) and thus sinners still continue to abuse the goodness and mercy of God.

Long-suffering. This word denotes his slowness to anger; or his suffering them to commit sins long without punishing them. It does not differ essentially from forbearance. This is shown by his not coming forth, at the moment that sin is committed, to punish it. He might do it justly, but he spares men from day to day, and year to year, to give them opportunity to repent, and be saved. The way in

which men despise or abuse the goodness of God is to infer that he does not intend to punish sin; that they may do it safely; and instead of turning from it, to go on in committing it more constantly, as if they were safe. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," Eccl 8:11. The same thing was true in the time of Peter, 2Pet 3:3,4. And the same thing is true of wicked men in every age. Nor is there a more decisive proof of the wickedness of the human heart, than this disposition to abuse the goodness of God; and because he shows kindness and forbearance, to take occasion to plunge deeper into sin, to forget his mercy, and to provoke him to anger.

Leadeth thee, etc. Or the tendency, the design of the goodness of God, is to induce men to repent of their sins, and not to lead them to deeper and more aggravated iniquity. The same sentiment is expressed in 2Pet 3:9, "The Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." See also Isa 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you." Hos 5:15; Eze 18:23,32.

Repentance. Change of mind, and purpose, and life. The word here evidently means not merely sorrow, but a forsaking of sin, and turning from it. The tendency of God's goodness and forbearance to lead men to repentance is manifest in the following ways.

(1.) It shows the evil of transgression when it is seen to be committed against so kind and merciful a Being.

(2.) It is fitted to melt and soften the heart. Judgments often harden the sinner's heart, and make him obstinate. But if, while he does evil, God is as constantly doing him good; if the patience of God is seen from year to year, while the man is rebellious, it is adapted to melt and subdue the heart.

(3.) The great mercy of God in this often appears to men to be overwhelming; and so it would to all, if they saw it as it is. God

bears with men from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood; from manhood to old age; often while they violate every law, contemn his mercy, profane his name, and disgrace their species; and still, notwithstanding all this, his anger is turned away, and the sinner lives, and "riots in the beneficence of God." If there is any thing that can affect the heart of man, it is this; and when he is brought to see it, and contemplate it, it rushes over the soul, and overwhelms it with bitter sorrow.

(4.) The mercy and forbearance of God are constant. The manifestations of his goodness come in every form; in the sun, and light, and air; in the rain, the stream, the dew-drop; in food, and raiment, and home; in friends, and liberty, and protection; in health and peace; and in the gospel of Christ, and the offers of life; and in all these ways God is appealing to his creatures each moment, and setting before them the evils of ingratitude, and beseeching them to turn and live.

And from this passage we cannot but remark,

(1.) that the most effectual preaching is that which sets before men most of the goodness of God.

(2.) Every man is under obligation to forsake his sins, and turn to God. There is no man who has not seen repeated proofs of his mercy and love.

(3.) Sin is a stubborn and an amazing evil. Where it can resist all the appeals of God's mercy; where the sinner can make his way down to hell through all the proofs of God's goodness; where he can refuse to hear God speaking to him each day, and each hour, it shows an amazing extent of depravity to resist all this, and still remain a sinner. Yet there are thousands and millions who do it; and who can be won by no exhibition of love or mercy to forsake their sins, and turn to God. Happy is the man who is melted into contrition by the goodness of God, and who sees and mourns over the evil of sinning against so good a Being as is the Creator and

Parent of all. (k) "riches of his goodness" Rom 9:23 (l) "forbearance and longsuffering" Isa 30:18 (m) "not knowing" Jn 4:2 (n) "leadeth" Isa 30:18

Note, lastly, that the day of judgment will be a day of revelation, a day in which the righteousness of God's proceedings shall be universally manifested and magnified; then will all the divine attributes be conspiciously glorified; his wonderful clemency sweetly displayed; his exact justice terribyly demonstrated; his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded; all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved; all the mysterious depth of divine counsels fully discovered, and to the dreadful consternation and confusion of the wicked and impenitent world: Oh how well might the apostle call this day, The revelation of the righteous judgment of God!

5 but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

6 who will render to every man according to his deeds:

But after thy hardness. The word "after" here (κατα) means, in respect to; or, you act according to the direct tendency of a hard heart in treasuring up wrath. The word hardness is used to denote insensibility of mind. It properly means that which is insensible to the touch, or on which no impression is made by contact, as a stone, etc. Hence it is applied to the mind, to denote a state where no motives make an impression; which is insensible to all the appeals made to it. See Mt 25:24, 19:8, Acts 19:9. And here it expresses a state of mind where the goodness and forbearance of God have no effect. The man still remains obdurate, to use a word which has precisely the meaning of the Greek in this place. It is implied in this expression, that the direct tendency, or the inevitable result of that state of mind, was to treasure up wrath, etc. Impenitent heart. A heart which is not affected with sorrow for sin, in view of the mercy and goodness of God. This is an explanation of what he meant by hardness. Treasurest up. To treasure up, or to lay up treasure, commonly denotes a laying by in a place of security of property that may be of use to us at some future period. In this place it is used, however, in a more general sense, to

accumulate, to increase. It still has the idea of hoarding up, carries the thought beautifully and impressively onward to future times. Wrath, like wealth treasured up, is not exhausted at present, and hence the sinner becomes bolder in sin. But it exists for future use; it is kept in store (comp. 2Pet 3:7) against future times; and the man who commits sin is only increasing this by every act of transgression. The same sentiment is taught in a most solemn manner in De 32:34,35. It may be remarked here, that most men have an immense treasure of this kind in store, which eternal ages of pain will not exhaust or diminish! Stores of wrath are thus reserved for a guilty world, and in due time it "will come upon man to the uttermost," 1Thes 2:16. Unto thyself. For thyself, and not for another; to be exhausted on thee, and not on your fellow-man. This is the case with every sinner, as really and as certainly as though he were the only solitary mortal in existence. Wrath. Note, Rom 1:18. Day of wrath. The day when God shall show or execute his wrath against sinners. Comp. Rev 6:17, 1Thes 1:10, Jn 3:36, Eph 5:6. And revelation. Or the day when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed, or made known.

Here we learn,

(1.) that the punishment of the wicked will be just. It will not be a judgment of caprice or tyranny, but a righteous judgment; that is, such a judgment as it will be right to render, or as ought to be rendered, and THEREFORE such as God will render, for he will do right, 2Thes 1:6.

(2.) The punishment of the wicked is future. It is not exhausted in this life. It is treasured up for a future day, and that day is a day of wrath. How contrary to this text are the pretences of those who maintain that all punishment is executed in this life.

(3.) How foolish, as well as wicked, is it to lay up such a treasure for the future; to have the only inheritance in the eternal world, an inheritance of wrath and woe! (o) "treasurest up" De 32:34 (p) "and revelation" Eccl 12:14

Provoking the wrath of God, Ro 2:5. The rise of this provocation is a hard and impenitent heart; and the ruin of sinners is their walking after such a heart, being led by it. To sin is to walk in the way of the heart; and when that is a hard and impenitent heart (contracted hardness by long custom, besides that which is natural), how desperate must the course needs be! The provocation is expressed by treasuring up wrath. Those that go on in a course of sin are treasuring up unto themselves wrath. A treasure denotes abundance. It is a treasure that will be spending to eternity, and yet never exhausted; and yet sinners are still adding to it as to a treasure. Every wilful sin adds to the score, and will inflame the reckoning; it brings a branch to their wrath, as some read that (Eze 8:17), they put the branch to their nose. A treasure denotes secrecy. The treasury or magazine of wrath is the heart of God himself, in which it lies hid, as treasures in some secret place sealed up; see De 32:34,Job 14:17. But withal it denotes reservation to some further occasion; as the treasures of the hail are reserved against the day of battle and war, Job 38:22,23. These treasures will be broken open like the fountains of the great deep, Ge 7:11. They are treasured up against the day of wrath, when they will be dispensed by the wholesale, poured out by full vials. Though the present day be a day of patience and forbearance towards sinners, yet there is a day of wrath coming--wrath, and nothing but wrath. Indeed, every day is to sinners a day of wrath, for God is angry with the wicked every day (Ps 7:11), but there is the great day of wrath coming, Re 6:17. And that day of wrath will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. The wrath of God is not like our wrath, a heat and passion; no, fury is not in him (Isa 27:4): but it is a righteous judgment, his will to punish sin, because he hates it as contrary to his nature. This righteous judgment of God is now many times concealed in the prosperity and success of sinners, but shortly it will be manifested before all the world, these seeming disorders set to rights, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, Ps 50:6. Therefore judge nothing before the time.

7 to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for
glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:

Patient continuance. Who by perseverance in well doing, or in a good work. It means, that they who so continue or persevere in good works as to evince that they are disposed to obey the law of God. It does not mean those who perform one single act, but those who so live as to show that this is their character to obey God. It is the uniform doctrine of the Bible, that none will be saved but those who persevere in a life of holiness, Rev 5:10, Mt 10:22, Heb 10:38,39. No other conduct gives evidence of piety but that which continues in the ways of righteousness. Nor has God ever promised eternal life to men unless they so persevere in a life of holiness as to show that this is their character, their settled and firm rule of action. The words well doing here denote such conduct as shall be conformed to the law of God; not merely external conduct, but that which proceeds from a heart attached to God and his cause.

Seek for. This word properly denotes the act of endeavouring to find anything that is lost, Mt 18:12, Lk 2:48,49. But it also denotes the act when one earnestly strives, or desires to obtain anything; when he puts forth his efforts to accomplish it. Thus, Mt 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. Acts 16:10, 1Cor 10:24 Lk 13:24. In this place it denotes an earnest and intense desire to obtain eternal life. It does not mean simply the desire of a sinner to be happy, or the efforts of those who are not willing to forsake their sins and yield to God, but the intense effort of those who are willing to forsake all their crimes, and submit to God and obey his laws.

8 but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth,
but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Seek for. This word properly denotes the act of endeavouring to find anything that is lost, Mt 18:12, Lk 2:48,49. But it also denotes the act when one earnestly strives, or desires to obtain anything; when he puts forth his efforts to accomplish it. Thus, Mt 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. Acts 16:10, 1Cor 10:24 Lk 13:24. In this place it denotes an earnest and intense desire to obtain eternal life. It does not mean simply the desire of a sinner to be happy, or the efforts of those who are not willing to forsake their sins and yield to God, but the intense effort of those who are

willing to forsake all their crimes, and submit to God and obey his laws.

The truth here means all the correct representations which had been made of God, and his perfections, and law, and claims, whether by the light of nature or by revelation. The description thus included Gentiles and Jews; but particularly the latter, as they had been more signally favoured with the light of truth. It had been an eminent characteristic of the Jews that they had refused to obey the commands of the true God, Josh 5:6, Jud 2:2, 6:10, 2Kgs 18:12, Jer 3:13,25, 42:21, 43:4,7, 9:13

But obey unrighteousness. The expression means that they yielded themselves to iniquity, and thus became the servants of sin, Rom 6:13,16,17,19. Iniquity thus may be said to reign over men, as they follow the dictates of evil, make no resistance to it, and implicitly obey all its hard requirements.

Indignation and wrath. That is, these shall be rendered to those who are contentious, etc. The difference between indignation and wrath, says Ammonius, is that the former is of short duration, but the latter is a long-continued remembrance of evil. The one is temporary, the other denotes continued expressions of hatred of evil. Eustathius says, that the word indignation denotes the internal emotion, but wrath the external manifestation of indignation. Tholuck. Both words refer to the opposition which God will cherish and express against sin in the world of punishment.

In dispensing his frowns (Ro 2:8,9). Observe,

[1.] The objects of his frowns. In general those that do evil, more particularly described to be such as are contentious and do not obey the truth. Contentious against God. Every wilful sin is a quarrel with God, it is striving with our Maker (Isa 45:9), the most desperate contention. The Spirit of God strives with sinners (Ge 6:3), and impenitent sinners strive against the Spirit, rebel against the light (Job 24:13), hold fast deceit, strive to retain that sin which

the Spirit strives to part them from. Contentious, and do not obey the truth. The truths of religion are not only to be known, but to be obeyed; they are directing, ruling, commanding; truths relating to practice. Disobedience to the truth is interpreted a striving against it. But obey unrighteousness--do what unrighteousness bids them do. Those that refuse to be the servants of truth will soon be the slaves of unrighteousness.

[2.] The products or instances of these frowns: Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. These are the wages of sin. Indignation and wrath the causes--tribulation and anguish the necessary and unavoidable effects. And this upon the soul; souls are the vessels of that wrath, the subjects of that tribulation and anguish. Sin qualifies the soul for this wrath. The soul is that in or of man which is alone immediately capable of this indignation, and the impressions or effects of anguish therefrom. Hell is eternal tribulation and anguish, the product of wrath and indignation. This comes of contending with God, of setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa 27:4. Those that will not bow to his golden sceptre will certainly be broken by his iron rod. Thus will God render to every man according to his deeds.

9 tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil;
of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

10 but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good;
to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

Shall also perish. απολουνται. The Greek word used here occurs frequently in the New Testament. It means, to destroy, to lose, or to corrupt; and is applied to life, (Mt 10:39) to a reward of labour, (Mt 10:42) to wisdom, (1Cor 1:19) to bottles, Mt 9:17. It is also used to denote future punishment, or the destruction of soul and body in hell, (Mt 10:28, 18:14, Jn 3:15,) where it is opposed to eternal life, and therefore denotes eternal death. Rom 14:15, Jn 17:12. In this sense the word is evidently used in this verse. The connexion demands that the reference should be to a future judgment to be passed on the heathen. It will be remarked here, that the apostle does not say they shall be saved without law. He does not give even an intimation respecting their salvation. The strain of the argument, as well as this express declaration, shows

that they who had sinned--and in the first chapter he had proved that all the heathen were sinners--would be punished. If any of the heathen are saved, it will be, therefore, an exception to the general rule in regard to them. The apostles evidently believed that the great mass of them would be destroyed. On this ground they evinced such zeal to save them; on this ground the Lord Jesus commanded the gospel to be preached to them; and on this ground Christians are now engaged in the effort to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It may be added here, that all modern investigations have gone to confirm the position that the heathen are as degraded now as they were in the time of Paul.

Shall be judged by the law. This is an equitable and just rule; and to this the Jews could make no objection. Yet the admission of this would have led directly to the point to which Paul was conducting his argument, to show that they also were under condemnation, and needed a Saviour. It will be observed here, that the apostle uses a different expression in regard to the Jews from what he does of the Gentiles. He says of the former, that they "shall be judged;" of the latter, that they "shall perish."

Tribulation. This word commonly denotes affliction, or the situation of being pressed down by a burden, as of trials, calamities, etc.; and hence to be pressed down by punishment or pain inflicted for sins. As applied to future punishment, it denotes the pressure of the calamities that will come upon the soul as the just reward of sin. And anguish. στενοχωρια. This noun is used in but three other places in the New Testament, Rom 8:35, 2Cor 6:4, 12:10. The verb is used in 2Cor 4:8, 6:12. It means, literally narrowness of place, want of room; and then the anxiety and distress of mind which a man experiences who is pressed on every side by afflictions, and trials, and want, or by punishment, and who does not know where he may turn himself to find relief. Schleusner. It is thus expressive of the punishment of the wicked. It means that they shall be compressed with the manifestations of God's displeasure, so as to be in deep distress, and so as not to know where to find relief. These words, affliction and anguish, are often connected, Rom 8:35.

Upon every soul of man. Upon all men. In Hebrew the word soul often denotes the man himself. But still the apostle, by the use of this word here, meant perhaps to signify that the punishment should not be corporeal, but afflicting the soul. It should be a spiritual punishment, a punishment of mind.

Of the Jew first. Having stated the general principle of the Divine administration, he comes now to make the application. To the principle there could be no objection. And the apostle now shows that it was applicable to the Jew as well as the Greek, and to the Jew pre-eminently. It was applicable first, or in an eminent degree, to the Jew, because

(1) he had been peculiarly favoured with light and knowledge on all these subjects.

(2.) These principles were fully stated in his own law, and were in strict accordance with all the teaching of the prophets. Rom 2:6. Also Ps 7:11, 9:17, 139:19, Prov 14:32. Of the Gentile. That is, of all who were not Jews. On what principles God will inflict punishment on them, he states in Rom 2:12-16. It is clear that this refers to the future punishment of the wicked, for

(a) it stands in contrast with the eternal life of those who seek for glory, (Rom 2:7). If this description of the effect of sin refers to this life, then the effects spoken of in relation to the righteous refer to this life also. But in no place in the Scriptures is it said that men experience all the blessings of eternal life in this world; and the very supposition is absurd.

(b.) It is not true that there is a just and complete retribution to every man, according to his deeds, in this life. Many of the wicked are prospered in life, and "there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm," Ps 73:4. Many of the righteous pine in poverty and want and affliction, and die in the flames of persecution. Nothing is more clear than [that] there is not, in this

life, a full and equitable distribution of rewards and punishments; and as the proposition of the apostle here is, that God WILL render to every man ACCORDING to his deeds, (Rom 2:6) it follows that this must be accomplished in another world.

(c.) The Scriptures uniformly affirm, that for the very things specified here, God will consign men to eternal death. 2Thes 1:8, "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that OBEY NOT the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction," etc. 1Pet 4:17. We may remark, also, that there could be no more alarming description of future suffering than is specified in this passage. It is indignation; it is wrath; it is tribulation; it is anguish which the sinner is to endure for ever. Truly men exposed to this awful doom should be alarmed, and should give diligence to escape from the woe which is to come!

11 for there is no respect of persons with God.

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

The word when (οταν) does not imply that the thing shall certainly take place, but is one form of introducing a supposition, or of stating the connexion of one thing with another; Mt 5:11, 6:2,5,6,16, 10:19. It is, however, true that the main things contained in this verse, and the next, actually occurred, that the Gentiles did many things which the law of God required.

13 (for not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Though not revealed to them as to the Jews, yet they had obtained the knowledge of them by the light of nature, The word hearts here denotes the mind itself, as it does also frequently in the sacred Scriptures; not the heart, as the seat of the affections. It does not mean that they loved or even approved of the law, but that they had knowledge of it; and that knowledge was deeply engraven on

their minds. Their conscience. This word properly means the judgment of the mind respecting right and wrong; or the judgment which the mind passes on the morality or immorality of its own actions, when it instantly approves or condemns them. It has usually been termed the moral sense, and is a very important principle in a moral government. Its design is to answer the purposes of an ever-attendant witness of a man's conduct; to compel him to pronounce on his own doings, and thus to excite him to virtuous deeds, to give comfort and peace when he does right, to deter from evil actions by making him, whether he will or no, his own executioner. See Jn 8:9, Acts 23:1, 24:16, Rom 9:1, 1Timm 1:5. By nature every man thus approves or condemns his own acts; and there is not a profounder principle of the Divine administration, than thus compelling every man to pronounce on the moral character of his own conduct. Conscience may be enlightened or unenlightened; and its use may be greatly perverted by false opinions. Its province is not to communicate any new truth, it is simply to express judgment, and to impart pleasure or inflict pain for a man's own good or evil conduct. The apostle's argument does not require him to say that conscience revealed any truth, or any knowledge of duty, to the Gentiles, but that its actual exercise proved that they had a knowledge of the law of God. Thus it was a witness simply of that fact.

And their thoughts. The word thoughts (λογισμων) means, properly, reasonings, or opinions, sentiments, etc. Its meaning here may be expressed by the word reflections. Their reflections on their own conduct would be attended with pain or pleasure. It differs from conscience, inasmuch as the decisions of conscience are instantaneous, and without any process of reasoning. This supposes subsequent reflection, and it means that such reflections would only deepen and confirm the decisions of conscience.

15 which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

16 in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

A Jew: the name derived from the patriarch Judah, at first given to one belonging to the tribe of Judah or to the separate kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25; Jer. 32:12; 38:19; 40:11; 41:3), in contradistinction from those belonging to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were called Israelites.

During the Captivity, and after the Restoration, the name, however, was extended to all the Hebrew nation without distinction (Esther 3:6, 10; Dan. 3:8, 12; Ezra 4:12; 5:1, 5).

Originally this people were called Hebrews (Gen. 39:14; 40:15; Ex. 2:7; 3:18; 5:3; 1 Sam 4:6, 9, etc.), but after the Exile this name fell into disuse. But Paul was styled a Hebrew (2 Cor 11:22; Phil. 3:5).

There are three names used in the New Testament to designate this people, (1.) Jews, as regards their nationality, to distinguish them from Gentiles. (2.) Hebrews, with regard to their language and education, to distinguish them from Hellenists, i.e., Jews who spoke the Greek language. (3.) Israelites, as respects their sacred privileges as the chosen people of God. "To other races we owe the splendid inheritance of modern civilization and secular culture; but the religious education of mankind has been the gift of the Jew alone." It is clear that they regarded it as a name of honour, and valued themselves much on it. See Gal 2:15, Rev 2:9.

Makest thy boast of God. Thou dost boast, or glory, that thou hast the knowledge of the true God, while other nations are in darkness. On this account the Jew felt himself far elevated above all other people, and despised them. It was true that they only had the true knowledge of God, and that he had declared himself to be their God, (De 4:7; Ps 147:19,20;) but this was not a ground for boasting, but for gratitude. This passage know us that it is much more common to boast of privileges than to be thankful for them,

and that it is no evidence of piety for a man to boast of his knowledge of God. A humble, ardent thankfulness that we have that knowledge--a thankfulness which leads us not to despise others, but to desire that they may have the same privilege--is an evidence of piety.

18 and knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are
more excellent, being instructed out of the law;
19 and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a
light of them which are in darkness,

Of the foolish. The word foolish is used in the Scriptures in two significations--to denote those who are void of understanding, and to denote the wicked. Here it is clearly used in the former sense, signifying that the Jew esteemed himself qualified to instruct those without knowledge. Of babes. This is the literal meaning of the original word. The expression is figurative, and denotes those who were as ignorant as children--an expression which they would be likely to apply to all the Gentiles. It is evident that the character here given by Paul to the Jews is one which they claimed, and of which they were proud. They are often mentioned arrogating this prerogative to themselves, as being qualified to be guides and teachers of others, Mt 14:14, 23:2,16,24. It will be remembered, also, that the Jews considered themselves to be qualified to teach all the world, and hence evinced great zeal to make proselytes. And it is not improbable (Tholuck) that their rabbies were accustomed to give the names "foolish" and "babes" to the ignorant proselytes which they had made from the heathen.

Which hast the form of knowledge. The word here translated "form" properly denotes a delineation or picturing of a thing. It is commonly used to denote also the appearance of any object; that which we see, without reference to its internal character; the external figure. It sometimes denotes the external appearance as distinguished from that which is internal; or a hypocritical profession of religion without its reality, 2Ti 3:6, "Having the form of godliness, but denying its power." It is sometimes used in a good, and sometimes in a bad sense. Here it denotes, that in their teaching they retained the semblance, sketch, or outline of the true doctrines of the Old Testament. They had in the Scriptures a

correct delineation of the truth. Truth is the representation of things as they are; and the doctrines which the Jews had in the Old Testament were a correct representation or delineation of the objects of knowledge. Comp. 2Ti 1:13.

20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?

thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22 thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

Dost thou commit sacrilege? Sacrilege is the crime of violating or profaning sacred things; or of appropriating to common purposes what has been devoted to the service of religion. In this question, the apostle shows remarkable tact and skill, he could not accuse them of idolatry, for the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, had never fallen into it. But then, though they had not the form, they might have the spirit of idolatry. That spirit consisted in withholding from the true God that which was his due, and bestowing the affections upon something else. This the Jews did by perverting from their proper use the offerings which were designed for his honour; by withholding that which he demanded of tithes and offerings; and by devoting to other uses that which was devoted to him, and which properly belonged to his service. That this was a common crime among them is apparent from Mal 1:8,12-14, 3:8,9. It is also evident, from the New Testament, that the temple was, in many ways, desecrated and profaned in the time of our Saviour. Mt 21:12, Mt 21:13.

23 thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God?

That they dishonoured God by their sin, Ro 2:23,24. While God and his law were an honour to them, which they boasted of and prided themselves in, they were a dishonour to God and his law, by giving occasion to those that were without to reflect upon their religion, as if that did countenance and allow of such things, which, as it is their sin who draw such inferences (for the faults of professors are not to be laid upon professions), so it is their sin who

give occasion for those inferences, and will greatly aggravate their miscarriages. This was the condemnation in David's case, that he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, 2Sa 12:14. And the apostle here refers to the same charge against their forefathers: As it is written, Ro 2:24. He does not mention the place, because he wrote this to those that were instructed in the law (in labouring to convince, it is some advantage to deal with those that have knowledge and are acquainted with the scripture), but he seems to point at Isa 52:5,Eze 36:22,23,2Sa 12:14. It is a lamentation that those who were made to be to God for a name and for a praise should be to him a shame and dishonour. The great evil of the sins of professors is the dishonour done to God and religion by their profession. "Blasphemed through you; that is, you give the occasion for it, it is through your folly and carelessness. The reproaches you bring upon yourselves reflect upon your God, and religion is wounded through your sides." A good caution to professors to walk circumspectly. See 1Ti 6:1.

24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles
through you, as it is written.

The name of God. The name and character of the true God. Is blasphemed. Mt 9:3. That is, your conduct is such as to lead the heathen world to blaspheme and reproach both your religion and its Author. By your hypocrisy and crimes the pagan world is led to despise a religion which is observed to have no effect in purifying and restraining its professors; and of course the reproach will terminate on the Author of your religion--that is, the true God. A life of purity would tend to honour religion and its Author; a life of impurity does the reverse.

There is no doubt that this was actually the effect of the deportment of the Jews. They were scattered everywhere; everywhere they were corrupt and wicked; and everywhere they and their religion were despised. Among the Gentiles. In the midst of whom many Jews lived. Through you. By means of you, or as the result of your conduct. It may mean, that you Jews do it, or profane the name of God; but the connexion seems rather to require the former sense. As it is written. To what place the apostle has reference cannot be certainly determined. There are two passages in the Old Testament

which will bear on the case, and perhaps he had them both in his view, Isa 52:5, Eze 36:20,23. The meaning is not that the passages in the Old Testament, referred to by the phrase "as it is written," had any particular reference to the conduct of the Jews in the time of Paul, but that this had been the character of the people, and the effect of their conduct as a nation, instances of which had been before observed and recorded by the prophets. The same thing has occurred to a most melancholy extent in regard to professed Christian nations. For purposes of commerce, and science, and war, and traffic, men from nations nominally Christian have gone into almost every part of the heathen world. But they have not often been real Christians. They have been intent on gain; and have to a melancholy extent been profane, and unprincipled, and profligate men.

Yet the heathen have regarded them as Christians; as fair specimens of the effect of the religion of Christ. They have learned, therefore, to abuse the name of Christian, and the Author of the Christian religion, as encouraging and promoting profligacy of life. Hence one reason, among thousands, of the importance of Christian missions to the heathen. It is well to disabuse the pagan world of their erroneous opinions of the tendency of Christianity. It is well to teach them that we do not regard these men as Christians. As we have sent to them the worst part of our population, it is well to send them holy men, who shall exhibit to them the true nature of Christianity, and raise our character in their eyes as a Christian people. And were there no other result of Christian missions, it would be worth all the expense and toll attending them, to raise the national character in the view of the pagan world.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

For circumcision. Jn 7:22; Acts 7:8. This was the peculiar rite by which the relation to the covenant of Abraham was recognised; or by which the right to all the privileges of a member of the Jewish commonwealth was acknowledged. The Jews of course affixed a high importance to the rite.

26 Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?
27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?
28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
29 but he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Whose praise, etc. Whose object is not to secure the praise of men. One of the main characteristics of the Jews in the time of Christ was, a desire to secure honour among men, as being exactly scrupulous in the performance of all the duties of their religion. They prided themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their regular conformity to the precepts of the law of Moses, Mt 3:9, 6:2,5, Lk 18:10-12, Mt 23:23. But of God. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart," 1Sam 16:7. The praise of God can be bestowed only on those who conform really, and not externally only, to his requirements. The remarks which are made here respecting the Jews, are also strictly applicable to professing Christians, and we may learn--

1. That the external rites of religion are of much less importance than the state of the heart.

2. That the only value of those rites is to promote holiness of heart and life.

3. That the mere fact that we are born of pious ancestors will not save us.

4. That the fact that we were dedicated to God in baptism will not save us.

5. That a mere profession of religion, whatever may it be our creed, will not save us.

6. That the estimate which men may put on our piety is not the proper measure of our true character and standing.

7. It is an inexpressible privilege to be in possession of the word of God, and to know our duty. It may, if improved, conduce to our elevation in holiness and happiness here, and to our eternal felicity hereafter.

8. It is also a fearful thing to neglect the privileges which we enjoy. We shall be judged according to the light which we have; and it will be an awful event to go to eternity from a Christian land unprepared.

9. Whatever may be the destiny of the heathen, it is our duty to make preparation to meet God. The most wicked of the heathen may meet a far milder doom than many who are eternally moral, or who profess religion in Christian lands. Instead, therefore, of speculating on what may be their destiny, it is the duty of every individual to be at peace himself with God, and to flee from the wrath to come.

Romans-3

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there*
of circumcision?
2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were
committed the oracles of God.

that unto them were committed the oracles of God, that is, the scriptures of the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses, which is called the lively oracles (Ac 7:38), and those types, promises, and prophecies, which relate to Christ and the gospel. The scriptures are the oracles of God: they are a divine revelation, they come from heaven, are of infallible truth, and of eternal consequence as oracles. The Septuagint call the Urim and Thummim the logia--the oracles. The scripture is our breast-plate

of judgment. We must have recourse to the law and to the testimony, as to an oracle. The gospel is called the oracles of God, Heb 5:12,1Pe 4:11. Now these oracles were committed to the Jews; the Old Testament was written in their language; Moses and the prophets were of their nation, lived among them, preached and wrote primarily to and for the Jews. They were committed to them as trustees for succeeding ages and churches. The Old Testament was deposited in their hands, to be carefully preserved pure and uncorrupt, and so transmitted down to posterity. The Jews were the Christians' library-keepers, were entrusted with that sacred treasure for their own use and benefit in the first place, and then for the advantage of the world; and, in preserving the letter of the scripture, they were very faithful to their trust, did not lose one iota or tittle, in which we are to acknowledge God's gracious care and providence. The Jews had the means of salvation, but they had not the monopoly of salvation. Now this he mentions with a chiefly, proton men gar--this was their prime and principal privilege. The enjoyment of God's word and ordinances is the chief happiness of a people, is to be put in the imprimis of their advantages, De 4:8,33:3,Ps 147:20.

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

The meaning of the objection is, that the fact supposed, that the Jews would become unfaithful and be lost, would imply that God had failed to keep his promises to the nation; or that he had made promises which the result showed he was not able to perform.

What David said in his haste (Ps 116:11), that all men are liars, Paul here asserts deliberately. Lying is a limb of that old man which we every one of us come into the world clothed with. All men are fickle, and mutable, and given to change, vanity and a lie (Ps 62:9), altogether vanity, Ps 39:5. All men are liars, compared with God. It is very comfortable, when we find every man a liar (no faith in man), that God is faithful. When they speak vanity every one with his neighbour, it is very comfortable to think that the words of the Lord are pure words, Ps 12:2,6. For the further proof of this he quotes Ps 51:4, That thou mightest be justified, the design of which is to show, 1. That God does and will preserve his

own honour in the world, notwithstanding the sins of men. 2. That it is our duty, in all our conclusions concerning ourselves and others, to justify God and to assert and maintain his justice, truth, and goodness, however it goes. David lays a load upon himself in his confession, that he might justify God, and acquit him from any injustice.

4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written,
That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

8 and not *rather,* (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

It is no new thing for the best of God's people and ministers to be charged with holding and teaching such things as they do most detest and abhor; and it is not to be thought strange, when our Master himself was said to be in league with Beelzebub. Many have been reproached as if they had said that the contrary of which they maintain: it is an old artifice of Satan thus to cast dirt upon Christ's ministers, Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit--Lay slander thickly on, for some will be sure to stick. The best men and the best truths are subject to slander. Bishop Sanderson makes a further remark upon this, as we are slanderously reported--blasphemoumetha. Blasphemy in scripture usually signifies the highest degree of slander, speaking ill of God. The slander of a minister and his regular doctrine is a more than ordinary slander, it is a kind of blasphemy, not for his person's sake, but for his calling's sake and his work's sake, 1Th 5:13.

The doctrines which were thus misrepresented and abused were probably these: the apostles taught that the sins of men were the occasion of promoting God's glory in the plan of salvation. That "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Rom 5:20. That God, in the salvation of men, would be glorified just in proportion to the depth and pollution of the guilt which was forgiven. This was true; but how easy was it to misrepresent this as teaching that men ought to sin in order to promote God's glory! And instead of stating it as an inference which THEY drew from the doctrine, to state it as what the apostles actually taught. This is the common mode in which charges are brought against others. Men draw an inference themselves, or suppose that the doctrine leads to such an inference, and then charge it on others as what they actually hold and teach. There is one maxim which should never be departed from: that a man is not to be held responsible for the inferences which we may draw from his doctrine; and that he is never to be represented as holding and teaching that which WE suppose follows from his doctrine. He is answerable only for what he avows.

There Is None Righteous

9 What then? are we better *than they?* No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

(1.) An habitual defect of every thing that is good.

[1.] There is none righteous, none that has an honest good principle of virtue, or is governed by such a principle, none that retains any thing of that image of God, consisting in righteousness, wherein man was created; no, not one; implying that, if there had been but one, God would have found him out. When all the world was corrupt, God had his eye upon one righteous Noah. Even those who through grace are justified and sanctified were none of them righteous by nature. No

righteousness is born with us. The man after God's own heart owns himself conceived in sin.

[2.] There is none that understandeth, Ro 3:11. The fault lies in the corruption of the understanding; that is blinded, depraved, perverted. Religion and righteousness have so much reason on their side that if people had but any understanding they would be better and do better. But they do not understand. Sinners are fools.

[3.] None that seeketh after God, that is,none that has any regard to God, any desire after him. Those may justly be reckoned to have no understanding that do not seek after God. The carnal mind is so far from seeking after God that really it is enmity against him.

[4.] They are together become unprofitable, Ro 3:12. Those that have forsaken God soon grow good for nothing, useless burdens of the earth. Those that are in a state of sin are the most unprofitable creatures under the sun; for it follows,

[5.] There is none that doeth good; no, not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, Ec 7:23. Even in those actions of sinners that have some goodness in them there is a fundamental error in the principle and end; so that it may be said, There is none that doeth good. Malum oritur ex quolibet defectu--Every defect is the source of evil.

10 as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Under the government and dominion of sin: under it as under a tyrant and cruel task-master, enslaved to it;--under it as under a yoke;--under the power of it, sold to work wickedness. And this he had proved, proetiasametha. It is a law term: We have charged them with it, and have made good our charge; we have proved the indictment, we have convicted them by the notorious evidence of the fact. This charge and conviction he here further illustrates by several scriptures out of the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt depraved state of all

men, till grave restrain or change them; so that herein as in a glass we may all of us behold our natural face. The Ro 3:10-12,Ps 14:1-3 are taken from Ro 3:10-12,Ps 14:1-3, which are repeated as containing a very weighty truth, Ps 53:1-3,Ps 14:1-3.

11 there is none that understandeth, there is none that
seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way,
they are together become unprofitable;
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

An habitual defection to every thing that is evil: They are all gone out of the way. No wonder that those miss the right way who do not seek after God, the highest end. God made man in the way, set him in right, but he hath forsaken it. The corruption of mankind is an apostasy.

2. That which is actual. And what good can be expected from such a degenerate race? He instances,

(a.) In their words (Ro 3:13,14), in three things particularly:--

[1.] Cruelty: Their throat is an open sepulchre, ready to swallow up the poor and innocent, waiting an opportunity to do mischief, like the old serpent seeking to devour, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, the destroyer. And when they do not openly avow this cruelty, and vent it publicly, yet they are underhand intending mischief: the poison of asps is under their lips (Jam 3:8), the most venomous and incurable poison, with which they blast the good name of their neighbour by reproaches, and aim at his life by false witness. These passages are borrowed from Ps 5:9,140:3.

[2.] Cheating: With their tongues they have used deceit. Herein they show themselves the devil's children, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. They have used it: it intimates that they make a trade of lying; it is their constant practice, especially belying the ways and people of God.

[3.] Cursing: reflecting upon God, and blaspheming his holy name; wishing evil to their brethren: Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. This is mentioned as one of the great sins of the tongue, Jam 3:9. But those that thus love cursing shall have enough of it, Ps 109:17-19. How many, who are called Christians, do by these sin evince that they are still under the reign and dominion of sin, still in the condition that they were born in.

(b.) In their ways (Ro 3:15-17): Their feet are swift to shed blood; that is, they are very industrious to compass any cruel design, ready to lay hold of all such opportunities. Wherever they go, destruction and misery go along with them; these are their companions--destruction and misery to the people of God, to the country and neighbourhood where they live, to the land and nation, and to themselves at last. Besides the destruction and misery that are at the end of their ways (death is the end of these things), destruction and misery are in their ways; their sin is its own punishment: a man needs no more to make him miserable than to be a slave to his sins.--And the way of peace have they not known; that is, they know not how to preserve peace with others, nor how to obtain peace for themselves. They may talk of peace, such a peace as is in the devil's palace, while he keeps it, but they are strangers to all true peace; they know not the things that belong to their peace. These are quoted from Pr 1:16,Isa 59:7,8.

(c.) The root of all this we have: There is no fear of God before their eyes, Ro 3:18. The fear of God is here put for all practical religion, which consists in an awful and serious regard to the word and will of God as our rule, to the honour and glory of God as our end. Wicked people have not this before their eyes; that is, they do not steer by it; they are governed by other rules, aim at other ends. This is quoted from Ps 36:1. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. The fear of God is would lay a restraint upon our spirits, and keep them right, Ne 5:15. When once fear is cast off, prayer is restrained (Job 15:4), and then all goes to wreck and ruin quickly. So that we have here a short account of the general

depravity and corruption of mankind; and may say, O Adam! what hast thou done? God made man upright, but thus he hath sought out many inventions.

13 Their throat *is* an open sepulchre;
with their tongues they have used deceit;
the poison of asps *is* under their lips:
14 whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:
15 their feet *are* swift to shed blood:
16 destruction and misery *are* in their ways:
17 and the way of peace have they not known:
18 there is no fear of God before their eyes.
19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

The Jews boasted of their being under the law, and placed a great deal of confidence in it: "But," says he, "the law convicts and condemns you--you see it does." That every mouth may be stopped--that all boasting may be silenced. See the method that God takes both in justifying and condemning: he stops every mouth; those that are justified have their mouths stopped by a humble conviction; those that are condemned have their mouths stopped too, for they shall at last be convinced (Jude 1:15), and sent speechless to hell, Mt 22:12. All iniquity shall stop her mouth, Ps 107:42.

Guilty before God. The idea is that of subjection to punishment; but always because the man personally deserves it, and because being unable to vindicate himself, he ought to be punished. It is never used to denote simply an obligation to punishment, but with reference to the fact that the punishment is personally deserved. This word, rendered guilty, is not elsewhere used in the New Testament, nor is it found in the Septuagint. The argument of the apostle here shows, (1.) that in order to guilt, there must be a law, either that of nature or by revelation, Rom 1:1-3:31 and (2) that in order to guilt, there must be a violation of that law which may be charged on them as individuals, and for which they are to be held personally responsible.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified
in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Further to drive us off from expecting justification by the law, he ascribes this conviction to the law (Ro 3:20): For by the law is the knowledge of sin. That law which convicts and condemns us can never justify us. The law is the straight rule, that rectum which is index sui et obliqui--that which points out the right and the wrong; it is the proper use and intendment of the law to open our wound, and therefore not likely to be the remedy. That which is searching is not sanative. Those that would know sin must get the knowledge of the law in its strictness, extent, and spiritual nature. If we compare our own hearts and lives with the rule, we shall discover wherein we have turned aside. Paul makes this use of the law, Ro 7:9, Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight. Observe, (1.) No flesh shall be justified, no man, no corrupted man (Ge 6:3), for that he also is flesh, sinful and depraved; therefore not justified, because we are flesh. The corruption that remains in our nature will for ever obstruct any justification by our own works, which, coming from flesh, must needs taste of the cask, Job 14:4. (2.) Not justified in his sight. He does not deny that justification which was by the deeds of the law in the sight of the church: they were, in their church-estate, as embodied in a polity, a holy people, a nation of priests; but as the conscience stands in relation to God, in his sight, we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. The apostle refers to Ps 143:2.

Righteousness through Faith

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is
manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
22 even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ
unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no
difference:

He argues from God's glory to prove that justification must be expected only by faith in Christ's righteousness. There is no justification by the works of the law. Must guilty man then remain eternally under wrath? Is there no hope? Is the wound become incurable because of transgression? No, blessed be God, it is not

(Ro 3:21,22); there is another way laid open for us, the righteousness of God without the law is manifested now under the gospel. Justification may be obtained without the keeping of Moses's law: and this is called the righteousness of God, righteousness of his ordaining, and providing, and accepting,--righteousness which he confers upon us; as the Christian armour is called the armour of God, Eph 6:11.

Now concerning this righteousness of God observe,

(1.) That it is manifested. The gospel-way of justification is a high-way, a plain way, it is laid open for us: the brazen serpent is lifted up upon the pole; we are not left to grope our way in the dark, but it is manifested to us.

(2.) It is without the law. Here he obviates the method of the judaizing Christians, who would needs join Christ and Moses together--owning Christ for the Messiah, and yet too fondly retaining the law, keeping up the ceremonies of it, and imposing it upon the Gentile converts: no, says he, it is without the law. The righteousness that Christ hath brought in is a complete righteousness.

(3.) Yet it is witnessed by the law and the prophets; that is, there were types, and prophecies, and promises, in the Old Testament, that pointed at this. The law is so far from justifying us that it directs us to another way of justification, points at Christ as our righteousness, to whom bear all the prophets witness. See Ac 10:43. This might recommend it to the Jews, who were so fond of the law and the prophets.

(4.) It is by the faith of Jesus Christ, that faith which hath Jesus Christ for its object--an anointed Saviour, so Jesus Christ signifies. Justifying faith respects Christ as a Saviour in all his three anointed offices, as prophet, priest, and king--trusting in him, accepting of him, and adhering to him, in all these. It is by this that we become

interested in that righteousness which God has ordained, and which Christ has brought in.

(5.) It is to all, and upon all, those that believe. In this expression he inculcates that which he had been often harping upon, that Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, stand upon the same level, and are alike welcome to God through Christ; for there is no difference. Or, it is eis pantas--to all, offered to all in general; the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves; but it is epi pantas tous pisteuontas, upon all that believe, not only tendered to them, but put upon them as a crown, as a robe; they are, upon their believing, interested in it, and entitled to all the benefits and privileges of it.

23 for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in
Christ Jesus:

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege vouchsafed to believers, which the scriptures call justification, whereby they are judicially acquitted and discharged from the guilt and punishment of all their sins, and accounted righteous before God.

Observe, 2. The efficient cause of our justification. It is God that justifies: Who can forgive the crime, but the person against whom we have done the wrong?

Observe, 3. The moving or impulsive cause, namely, the free grace of God: Being justified freely by his grace.

Observe, 4. The meritorious cause, the blood-shedding and death of Christ; through redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

Observe, 5. The final cause; to declare his righteousness, not his clemency and mercy only, but his justice and righteousness, especially that attribute which disposes and inclines him to punish sin and sinners.

Observe, 6. The instrumental cause of justification, faith: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood &c. Some of the papists, especially Cagetan and a Lapide, do call faith causa aplicans in our justification: Verily, an unapplied Christ justifies none, being saved, he must be justified, that is, discharged of, absolved from, the guilt of all sin, upon the account of a complete satisfaction given to divine justice for sin.

Learn, 2. That not all and every sinner, but only repenting and believing sinners are justified by God.

Learn, 3. That when the Lord justifies a believing sinner, he doth it freely; being justified freely by his grace. It is an act of mere grace; there is nothing in the creature that can merit or deserve it: then it would be debt, and not grace.

Learn, 4. That God's free grace and Christ's full satisfaction were consistent, and both concurring in the believer's justification; we are justified freely by God's grace; yet, though the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Him God having set forth to be a propitiation.
The word propitiation is an illusion to the mercy seat, which covered the ark wherein the law was; this typified Christ, who fully covers our sins, the transgressions of the law, out of God's sight.

When therefore the apostle saith, that God hath set forth Christ to be a mercy seat to us, through faith in his blood; we have reason to believe the blood of Christ, as our sin offering, doth make an atonement for us, and renders God propitious to us.

Learn, 5. That Almighty God, in the justification of a believing sinner, is not only gracious and merciful, but just and righteous, in the most exalted degree: To declare his righteousness for the remission of sin.

Where note, That the design and end of God in exacting satisfaction from Christ, was to declare his righteousness in the

remission of sin; but the apostle would have us take notice, that our justification is an act of justice as well as mercy, and that God, as he is a just God, cannot condemn the believer, since Christ has satisfied for his sins.

Oh blessed be God! that pardon of sin is built upon that very attribute, the justice of God, which is so affrighting and dreadful to the offending sinner. This attribute, which seemed to be the main bar against remmission, is now become the very ground and reason why God remits.

Hence saith St. John, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins: Faithful with respect to his own promise, and just with respect to his Son's satisfaction.

Who then can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, when justice itself doth justify them?

Behold here the sweet harmony of the divine attributes in justifying and pardoning the believer! One attribute is not robbed to pay another; neither is one attribute raised upon the ruit of another; but justice and mercy both triumph. And well might the justice of God triumph, for never was it thus honoured before, to have such a person as the Son of God stand honoured before, to have such a person as the Son of God stand at its bar, and such a sum as the Son's blood paid down at once, by way of satisfaction, to its due demands.

Oh glorious and all wise contrivance! whereby God made sufficient provision for the reparation of his honour, for the vindication of his holiness, and for the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness, and for the present consolation, and eternal salvation of all repenting and believing sinners, to the end of the world.

25 whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

To be a propitiation--ιλαστηριον. This word occurs but in one other place in the New Testament: Heb 9:5, "And over it (the ark)

the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." It is used here to denote the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant. It was made of gold, and over it were the cherubim. In this sense it is often used by the LXX. Ex 25:17, "And thou shalt make a propitatory--ιλαστηριον, of gold," Ex 25:18-20,22 30:6 31:7 35:12 37:6-9-9 40:20 Le 16:2,13. The Hebrew name for this was capphoreth, from the verb caphar, to cover, or conceal. It was from this place that God was represented as speaking to the children of Israel: Ex 25:22, "And I will speak to thee front above the Ilasterion," the propitiatory, the mercy-seat; Lev 16:2, "For I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy.seat." This seat, or cover, was covered with the smoke of the incense, when the high priest entered the most holy place, Lev 16:13. And the blood of the bullock offered on the great day of atonement was to be sprinkled "upon the mercy-seat," and "before the mercy-seat," "seven times," Lev 16:14,15. This sprinkling or offering of blood was called making "an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel," etc., Lev 16:16. It was from this mercy-seat that God pronounced pardon, or expressed himself as reconciled to his people. The atonement was made, the blood was sprinkled, and the reconciliation thus effected. The name was thus given to that cover of the ark, because it was the place from which God declared himself reconciled to his people. Still the inquiry is, why is this name given to Jesus Christ? In what sense is he declared to be a propitiation? It is evident that it cannot be applied to him in any literal sense. Between the golden cover of the ark of the covenant and the Lord Jesus the analogy must be very slight, if any such analogy can be perceived. We may observe, however,

(1.) that the main idea, in regard to the cover of the ark called the mercy-seat, was that of God's being reconciled to his people; and that this is the main idea in regard to the Lord Jesus, whom "God hath set forth."

(2.) This reconciliation was effected then by the sprinkling of blood on the mercy-seat, Lev 16:15,16. The same is true of the Lord Jesus --by blood.

(3.) In the former case it was [by] the blood of atonement; the offering of the bullock on the great day of atonement, that the reconciliation was effected, Lev 16:17,18. In the case of the Lord Jesus it was also by blood--by the blood of atonement. But it was by his own blood. This the apostle distinctly states in this verse.

(4.) In the former case there was a sacrifice, or expiatory offering; and so it is in reconciliation by the Lord Jesus. In the former, the mercy-seat was the visible, declared place where God would express his reconciliation with his people. So in the latter, the offering of the Lord Jesus is the manifest and open way by which God will be reconciled to men.

(5.) In the former, there was joined the idea of a sacrifice for sin, Lev 16:1. So in the latter. And hence the main idea of the apostle here is to convey the idea of a sacrifice for sin; or to set forth the Lord Jesus as such a sacrifice. Hence the word "propitiation" in the original may express the idea of a propitiatory sacrifice, as well as the cover to the ark. The word is an adjective, and may be joined to the noun sacrifice, as well as to denote the mercy-seat of the ark. This meaning accords also with its classic meaning to denote a propitiatory offering, or an offering to produce reconciliation. Christ is thus represented, not as a mercy-seat, which would be unintelligible; but as the medium, the offering, the expiation, by which reconciliation is produced between God and man.

The word propitiation is an illusion to the mercy seat, which covered the ark wherein the law was; this typified Christ, who fully covers our sins, the transgressions of the law, out of God's sight.

26 to declare, *I say,* at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

That are past. That have been committed; or that have existed before. This has been commonly understood to refer to past generations, as affirming that sins under all dispensations of the world are to be forgiven in this manner, through the sacrifice of Christ. And it has been supposed that all who have been justified

have received pardon by the merits of the sacrifice of Christ. This may be true; but there is no reason to think that this is the idea in this passage, for

(1.) the scope of the passage does not require it. The argument is not to show how men had been justified, but how they might be. It is not to discuss an historical fact, but to state the way in which sin was to be forgiven under the gospel.

(2.) The language has no immediate or necessary reference to past generations. It evidently refers to the past lives of the individuals who are justified, and not to the sins of former times. All that the passage means, therefore, is, that the plan of pardon is such as completely to remove all the former sins of the life, not of all former generations. If it referred to the sins of former times, it would not be easy to avoid the doctrine of universal salvation.

Through the forbearance of God. Through his patience, his long-suffering. That is, he did not come forth in judgment when the sin was committed; he spared us, though deserving of punishment; and now he comes forth completely to pardon those sins concerning which he has so long and so graciously exercised forbearance. This expression obviously refers not to the remission of sins, but to the fact that they were committed while he evinced such long-suffering. Comp. Acts 17:30. I do not know better how to show the practical value and bearing of this important passage of Scripture, than by transcribing a part of the affecting experience of the poet Cowper. It is well known that before his conversion he was oppressed by a long and dreadful melancholy; that this was finally heightened to despair; and that he was then subjected to the kind treatment of Dr. Cotton in St. Alban's, as a melancholy case of derangement. His leading thought was, that he was doomed to inevitable destruction, and that there was no hope. From this he was roused only by the kindness of his brother, and by the promises of the gospel. (See Taylor's Life of Cowper.) The account of his conversion I shall now give in his own words. "The happy period,, which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear

discovery of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the third chapter of Romans, Whom God hath set forth, etc. Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beam of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement he had made for my pardon and justification. In a moment I believed, and received the peace of the gospel. Unless the almighty Arm had been under me, I think I should have been overwhelmed with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. How glad should I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving. I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace; but flew to it with an earnestness irresistible, and never to be satisfied."

It is for the glory of his justice and righteousness (Ro 3:25,26): Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, &c. Note,

[1.] Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice, typified by the hilasterion, or mercy-seat, under the law. He is our throne of grace, in and through whom atonement is made for sin, and our persons and performances are accepted of God, 1Jo 2:2. He is all in all in our reconciliation, not only the maker, but the matter of it--our priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our all. God was in Christ as in his mercy-seat, reconciling the world unto himself.

[2.] God hath set him forth to be so. God, the party offended, makes the first overtures towards a reconciliation, appoints the days-man; proetheto--fore-ordained him to this, in the counsels of his love from eternity, appointed, anointed him to it, qualified him for it, and has exhibited him to a guilty world as their propitiation. See Mt 3:17,17:5.

[3.] That by faith in his blood we become interested in this propitiation. Christ is the propitiation; there is the healing plaster

provided. Faith is the applying of this plaster to the wounded soul. And this faith in the business of justification hath a special regard to the blood of Christ, as that which made the atonement; for such was the divine appointment that without blood there should be no remission, and no blood but his would do it effectually. Here may be an allusion to the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices under the law, as Ex 24:8. Faith is the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is the blood of sprinkling.

[4.] That all who by faith are interested in this propitiation have the remission of their sins that are past. It was for this that Christ was set forth to be a propitiation, in order to remission, to which the reprieves of his patience and forbearance were a very encouraging preface. Through the forbearance of God. Divine patience has kept us out of hell, that we might have space to repent, and get to heaven. Some refer the sins that are past to the sins of the Old-Testament saints, which were pardoned for the sake of the atonement which Christ in the fulness of time was to make, which looked backward as well as forward. Past through the forbearance of God. It is owing to the divine forbearance that we were not taken in the very act of sin. Several Greek copies make en te anoche tou Theou--through the forbearance of God, to begin Ro 3:26, and they denote two precious fruits of Christ's merit and God's grace:--Remission: dia ten paresin--for the remission; and reprieves: the forbearance of God. It is owing to the master's goodness and the dresser's mediation that barren trees are let alone in the vineyard; and in both God's righteousness is declared, in that without a mediator and a propitiation he would not only not pardon, but not so much as forbear, not spare a moment; it is owning to Christ that there is ever a sinner on this side hell.

[5.] That God does in all this declare his righteousness. This he insists upon with a great deal of emphasis: To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness. It is repeated, as that which has in it something surprising. He declares his righteousness, First, In the propitiation itself. Never was there such a demonstration of the justice and holiness of God as there was in the death of Christ. It appears that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of

Christ would satisfy for it. Finding sin, though but imputed, upon his own Son, he did not spare him, because he had made himself sin for us, 2Co 5:21. The iniquities of us all being laid upon him, though he was the Son of his love, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, Isa 53:10. Secondly, In the pardon upon that propitiation; so it follows, by way of explication: That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Mercy and truth are so met together, righteousness and peace have so kissed each other, that it is now become not only an act of grace and mercy, but an act of righteousness, in God, to pardon the sins of penitent believers, having accepted the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to his justice for them. It would not comport with his justice to demand the debt of the principal when the surety has paid it and he has accepted that payment in full satisfaction. See 1Jo 1:9. He is just, that is, faithful to his word.

That he might be just. This verse contains the substance of the gospel. The word "just" here does not mean benevolent, or merciful, though it may sometimes have that meaning, (Mt 1:19, also Jn 17:25) but it refers to the fact that God had retained the integrity of his character as a moral Governor; that he had shown a due regard to his law, and to the penalty of the law, by his plan of salvation. Should he forgive sinners without an atonement, justice would be sacrificed and abandoned. The law would cease to have any terrors for the guilty, and its penalty would be a nullity. In the plan of salvation, therefore, he has shown a regard to the law by appointing his Son to be a substitute in the place of sinners; not to endure its precise penalty, for his sufferings were not eternal, nor were they attended with remorse of conscience, or by despair, which are the proper penalty of the law; but he endured so much as to accomplish the same ends as if those who shall be saved by him had been doomed to eternal death. That is, he showed that the law could not be violated without introducing suffering; and that it could not be broken with impunity, he showed that he had so great a regard for it, that he would not pardon one sinner without an atonement. And thus he secured the proper honour to his character as a lover of his law, a hater of sin, and a just God. He has shown that if sinners do not avail themselves of the offer of

pardon by Jesus Christ, they must experience in their own souls for ever the pains which this substitute for sinners endured in behalf of men on the cross. Thus, no principle of justice has been abandoned; no threatening has been modified; no claim of his law has been let down; no disposition has been evinced to do injustice to the universe by suffering the guilty to escape. He is in all this great transaction, a just moral governor, as just to his law, to himself, to his Son, to the universe, when he pardons, as he is when he sends the incorrigible sinner down to hell. A full compensation, an equivalent, has been provided by the sufferings of the Saviour in the sinner's stead, and the sinner may be pardoned.

And the justifier of him, etc. Greek, Even justifying him that believeth, etc. This is the peculiarity and the wonder of the gospel, Even while pardoning, and treating the ill-deserving as if they were innocent, he can retain his pure and holy character. His treating the guilty with favour does not show that he loves guilt and pollution, for he has expressed his abhorrence of it in the atonement. His admitting them to friendship and heaven does not show that he approves their past conduct and character, for he showed how much he hated even their sins by giving his Son to a shameful death for them. When an executive pardons offenders, there is an abandonment of the principles of justice and law. The sentence is set aside; the threatenings of the law are departed from; and it is done without compensation. It is declared that, in certain cases, the law may be violated, and its penalty not be inflicted. But not so with God. He shows no less regard to his law in pardoning than in punishing. This is the grand, glorious, peculiar feature of the gospel plan of salvation.

27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.

It is for God's glory; for boasting is thus excluded, Ro 3:27. God will have the great work of the justification and salvation of sinners carried on from first to last in such a way as to exclude boasting, that no flesh may glory in his presence, 1Co 1:29-31. Now, if justification were by the works of the law, boasting would not be excluded. How should it? If we were saved by our own works, we might put the crown upon our own heads. But the law of faith, that

is, the way of justification by faith, doth for ever exclude boasting; for faith is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne; therefore it is most for God's glory that thus we should be justified. Observe, He speaks of the law of faith. Believers are not left lawless: faith is a law, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth; and yet, because it acts in a strict and close dependence upon Jesus Christ, it excludes boasting.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
29 *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:
30 seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.
31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Romans-4

The Example of Abraham

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

If he had been justified by works, room would have been left for boasting, which must for ever be excluded. If so, he hath whereof to glory (Ro 4:2), which is not to be allowed. "But," might the Jews say, "was not his name made great (Ge 12:2), and then might not he glory?" Yes, but not before God; he might deserve well of men, but he could never merit of God. Paul himself had whereof to glory before men, and we have him sometimes glorying in it, yet with humility; but nothing to glory in before God, 1Co 4:4,Php 3:8,9. So Abraham. Observe, He takes it for granted that man must not pretend to glory in any thing before God; no, not Abraham, as great and as good a man as he was; and therefore he fetches an argument from it: it

would be absurd for him that glorieth to glory in any but the Lord.

3 For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,
7 *saying*,
Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

It is quoted from Ps 32:1,2, where observe,

1 The nature of forgiveness. It is the remission of a debt or a crime; it is the covering of sin, as a filthy thing, as the nakedness and shame of the soul. God is said to cast sin behind his back, to hide his face from it, which, and the like expressions, imply that the ground of our blessedness is not our innocency, or our not having sinned (a thing is, and is filthy, though covered; justification does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin), but God's not laying it to our charge, as it follows here: it is God's not imputing sin (Ro 4:8), which makes it wholly a gracious act of God, not dealing with us in strict justice as we have deserved, not entering into judgment, not marking iniquities, all which being purely acts of grace, the acceptance and the reward cannot be expected as debts; and therefore Paul infers (Ro 4:6) that it is the imputing of righteousness without works. 2 The blessedness of it: Blessed are they. When it is said, Blessed are the undefiled in the way, blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, &c., the design is to show the characters of those that are blessed; but when it is said, Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, the design is to show what that blessedness is, and what the ground and foundation of it. Pardoned people are the only blessed people. The sentiments

of the world are, Those are happy that have a clear estate, and are out of debt to man; but the sentence of the word is, Those are happy that have their debts to God discharged. O how much therefore is it our interest to make it sure to ourselves that our sins are pardoned! For this is the foundation of all other benefits. So and so I will do for them; for I will be merciful, Heb 8:12.

8 Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

9 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Abraham is expressly said to be justified by faith fourteen years, some say twenty-five years, before he was circumcised. Now this the apostle takes notice of in answer to the question (Ro 4:9), Cometh this blessedness then on the circumcision only, or on the uncircumcision also? Abraham was pardoned and accepted in uncircumcision, a circumstance which, as it might silence the fears of the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, so it might lower the pride and conceitedness of the Jews, who gloried in their circumcision, as if they had the monopoly of all happiness. Here are two reasons why Abraham was justified by faith in uncircumcision:--

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

The tenour of the covenants must first be settled before the seal can be annexed. Sealing supposes a previous bargain, which is confirmed and ratified by that ceremony. After Abraham's justification by faith had continued several years only a grant by parole, for the confirmation of Abraham's faith God was pleased to appoint a sealing ordinance, and Abraham received it; though it was a bloody ordinance, yet he submitted to it, and

even received it as a special favour, the sign of circumcision, &c. Now we may hence observe,

(1.) The nature of sacraments in general: they are signs and seals--signs to represent and instruct, seals to ratify and confirm. They are signs of absolute grace and favour; they are seals of the conditional promises; nay, they are mutual seals: God does in the sacraments seal to us to be to us a God, and we do therein seal to him to be to him a people.

(2.) The nature of circumcision in particular: it was the initiating sacrament of the Old Testament; and it is here said to be,

[1.] A sign--a sign of that original corruption which we are all born with, and which is cut off by spiritual circumcision,--a commemorating sign of God's covenant with Abraham,--a distinguishing sign between Jews and Gentiles,--a sign of admission into the visible church,--a sign prefiguring baptism, which comes in the room of circumcision, now under the gospel, when (the blood of Christ being shed) all bloody ordinances are abolished; it was an outward and sensible sign of an inward and spiritual grace signified thereby.

[2.] A seal of the righteousness of the faith. In general, it was a seal of the covenant of grace, particularly of justification by faith--the covenant of grace, called the righteousness which is of faith (Ro 10:6), and it refers to an Old-Testament promise, De 30:12.

12 and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised.

See here who are the genuine children and lawful successors of those that were the church's fathers: not those that sit in their chairs, and bear their names, but those that tread in their steps;

this is the line of succession, which holds, notwithstanding interruptions. It seems, then, those were most loud and forward to call Abraham father that had least title to the honours and privileges of his children. Thus those have most reason to call Christ Father, not that bear his name in being Christians in profession, but that tread in his steps.

The Promise Realized through Faith

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

The former observation is levelled against those that confined justification to the circumcision, this against those that expected it by the law; now the promise was made to Abraham long before the law. Compare Ga 3:17,18.

To thy seed, which is Christ. Now Christ is the heir of the world, the ends of the earth are his possession, and it is in him that Abraham was so. And it refers to that promise (Ge 12:3), In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

14 For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

15 because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.

The law worketh wrath--wrath in us to God; it irritates and provokes that carnal mind which is enmity to God, as the damming up of a stream makes it swell--wrath in God against us. It works this, that is, it discovers it, or our breach of the law works it. Now it is certain that we can never expect the inheritance by a law that worketh wrath. How the law works wrath he shows very concisely in the latter part of the verse: Where no law is there is no transgression, an acknowledged maxim, which implies, Where there is a law there is transgression and that transgression is provoking, and so the law worketh wrath.

16 Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is

of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham;
who is the father of us all,

Why the promise was made to him by faith; for three reasons,

(1.) That it might be by grace, that grace might have the honour of it; by grace, and not by the law; by grace, and not of debt, nor of merit; that Grace, grace, might be cried to every stone, especially to the top-stone, in this building. Faith hath particular reference to grace granting, as grace hath reference to faith receiving.

(2.) That the promise might be sure. The first covenant, being a covenant of works, was not sure: but, through man's failure, the benefits designed by it were cut off; and therefore, the more effectually to ascertain and ensure the conveyance of the new covenant, there is another way found out, not by works (were it so, the promise would not be sure, because of the continual frailty and infirmity of the flesh), but by faith, which receives all from Christ, and acts in a continual dependence upon him, as the great trustee of our salvation, and in whose keeping it is safe. The covenant is therefore sure, because it is so well ordered in all things, 2Sa 23:5.

(3.) That it might be sure to all the seed. If it had been by the law, it had been limited to the Jews, to whom pertained the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law (Ro 9:4); but therefore it was by faith that Gentiles as well as Jews might become interested in it, the spiritual as well as the natural seed of faithful Abraham.

17 (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)
before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the
dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they
were:

18 who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the
father of many nations, according to that which was spoken,
So shall thy seed be.

It is God himself that faith fastens upon: other foundation can no man lay. Now observe what in God Abraham's faith had an eye to--to that, certainly, which would be most likely to confirm his faith concerning the things promised:--

1. God who quickeneth the dead. It was promised that he should be the father of many nations, when he and his wife were now as good as dead (Heb 11:11,12),

2. Who calleth things which are not as though they were; that is, creates all things by the word of his power, as in the beginning, Ge 1:3,2Co 4:6. The justification and salvation of sinners, the espousing of the Gentiles that had not been a people, were a gracious calling of things which are not as though they were, giving being to things that were not. It was fit that he who was to be the father of the faithful should have something more than ordinary in his faith--that in him faith should be set in its highest elevation, and so the endeavours of all succeeding believers be directed, raised, and quickened.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body
now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet
the deadness of Sarah's womb:
20 he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but
was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

How he believed. He here greatly magnifies the strength of Abraham's faith, in several expressions.

1. Against hope, he believed in hope, Ro 4:18. There was a hope against him, a natural hope. All the arguments of sense, and reason, and experience, which in such cases usually beget and support hope, were against him; no second causes smiled upon him, nor in the least favoured his hope. But, against all those inducements to the contrary, he believed; for he had a hope for him: He believed in hope, which arose, as his faith did, from the consideration of God's all-sufficiency. That he might become the father of many nations. Therefore God, by his almighty grace, enabled him thus to believe against hope,

that he might pass for a pattern of great and strong faith to all generations. It was fit that he who was to be the father of the faithful should have something more than ordinary in his faith--that in him faith should be set in its highest elevation, and so the endeavours of all succeeding believers be directed, raised, and quickened. Or this is mentioned as the matter of the promise that he believed; and he refers to Ge 15:5, So shall thy seed be, as the stars of heaven, so innumerable, so illustrious. This was that which he believed, when it was counted to him for righteousness, Ro 4:6. And it is observable that this particular instance of his faith was against hope, against the surmises and suggestions of his unbelief. He had just before been concluding hardly that he should go childless, that one born in his house was his heir (Ro 4:2,3); and this unbelief was a foil to his faith, and bespeaks it a believing against hope.

2. Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, Ro 4:19. Observe, His own body was now dead--become utterly unlikely to beget a child, though the new life and vigour that God gave him continued after Sarah was dead, witness his children by Keturah. When God intends some special blessing, some child of promise, for his people, he commonly puts a sentence of death upon the blessing itself, and upon all the ways that lead to it. Joseph must be enslaved and imprisoned before he be advanced. But Abraham did not consider this, ou katenoese--he did not dwell in his thoughts upon it. He said indeed, Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old? Ge 17:17. But that was the language of his admiration and his desire to be further satisfied, not of his doubting and distrust; his faith passed by that consideration, and thought of nothing but the faithfulness of the promise, with the contemplation whereof he was swallowed up, and this kept up his faith. Being not weak in faith, he considered not. It is mere weakness of faith that makes a man lie poring upon the difficulties and seeming impossibilities that lie in the way of a promise. Though it may seem to be the wisdom and policy of carnal reason, yet it is the weakness of faith, to look into the bottom of all the difficulties that arise against the promise.

3. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief (Ro 4:20), and he therefore staggered not because he considered not the frowns and discouragements of second causes; ou diekrithe--he disputed not; he did not hold any self-consultation about it, did not take time to consider whether he should close with it or no, did not hesitate nor stumble at it, but by a resolute and peremptory act of his soul, with a holy boldness, ventured all upon the promise. He took it not for a point that would admit of argument or debate, but presently determined it as a ruled case, did not at all hang in suspense about it: he staggered not through unbelief. Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises. It is not the promise that fails, but our faith that fails when we stagger.

4. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, enedynamothe--he was strengthened in faith, his faith got ground by exercise--crescit eundo. Though weak faith shall not be rejected, the bruised reed not broken, the smoking flax not quenched, yet strong faith shall be commended and honoured. The strength of his faith appeared in the victory it won over his fears. And hereby he gave glory to God; for, as unbelief dishonours God by making him a liar (1Jo 5:10), so faith honours God by setting to its seal that he is true, Joh 3:33. Abraham's faith gave God the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and especially of his faithfulness, resting upon the word that he had spoken. Among men we say, "He that trusts another, gives him credit, and honours him by taking his word;" thus Abraham gave glory to God by trusting him. We never hear our Lord Jesus commending any thing so much as great faith (Mt 8:10,15:28): therefore God gives honour to faith, great faith, because faith, great faith, gives honour to God. 5. He was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform, plerophoretheis--was carried on with the greatest confidence and assurance; it is a metaphor taken from ships that come into the harbour with full sail. Abraham saw the storms of doubts, and fears, and temptations likely to rise against the promise, upon which many a one would have shrunk back, and lain by

for fairer days, and waited a smiling gale of sense and reason. But Abraham, having taken God for his pilot, and the promise for his card and compass, resolves to weather his point, and like a bold adventurer sets up all his sails, breaks through all the difficulties, regards neither winds nor clouds, but trusts to the strength of his bottom and the wisdom and faithfulness of his pilot, and bravely makes to the harbour, and comes home an unspeakable gainer. Such was his full persuasion, and it was built on the omnipotence of God: He was able. Our waverings rise mainly from our distrust of the divine power; and therefore to fix us it is requisite we believe not only that he is faithful, but that he is able, that hath promised. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, Ro 4:22. Because with such a confidence he ventured his all in the divine promise, God graciously accepted him, and not only answered, but out-did, his expectation. This way of glorifying God by a firm reliance on his bare promise was so very agreeable to God's design, and so very conducive to his honour, that he graciously accepted it as a righteousness, and justified him, though there was not that in the thing itself which could merit such an acceptance. This shows why faith is chosen to be the prime condition of our justification, because it is a grace that of all others gives glory to God.

21 and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

Faith, now, is belief in God just so far as he has revealed his will to us.The main or leading leading truths that God had made known to us are, that he has given his Son to die; that he has raised him up; and that through him he is ready to pardon. To put confidence in these truths is to believe now. Doing this, we believe in the same God that Abraham did; we evince the same spirit; and thus show that we are the friends of the same God, and may be treated in the same manner.

Abraham believed the power of God in raising up an Isaac from the dead womb of Sarah; we are to believe the same power exerted in a higher instance, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Isaac was in a figure (Heb 11:19); the resurrection of Christ was real. Now we are to believe on him that raised up Christ; not only believe his power, that he could do it, but depend upon his grace in raising up Christ as our surety; so he explains it, Ro 4:25, where we have a brief account of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, which are the two main hinges on which the door of salvation turns.

1. He was delivered for our offences. God the Father delivered him, he delivered up himself as a sacrifice for sin. He died indeed as a malefactor, because he died for sin; but it was not his own sin, but the sins of the people. He died to make atonement for our sins, to expiate our guilt, to satisfy divine justice.

2. He was raised again for our justification, for the perfecting and completing of our justification. By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he took out our acquittance. When he was buried he lay a prisoner in execution for our debt, which as a surety he had undertaken to pay; on the third day an angel was sent to roll away the stone, and so to discharge the prisoner, which was the greatest assurance possible that divine justice was satisfied, the debt paid, or else he would never have released the prisoner: and therefore the apostle puts a special emphasis on Christ's resurrection; it is Christ that died, yea, rather that has risen again, Ro 8:34. So that upon the whole matter it is very evident that we are not justified by the merit of our own works, but by a fiducial obediential dependence upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness, as the condition on our part of our right to impunity and salvation, which was the truth that Paul in this and the foregoing chapter had been fixing as the great spring and foundation of all our comfort.

24 but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

In this one verse we have an abridgment of the whole gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ declared, and the benefit and advantages of both assigned. 1. For his death; he was delivered for our offences.

Here note, 1. The person delivered: He, that is, Christ Jesus the righteous; the Lord our righteousness.

Note, 2. The person delivering, not expressed, but necessarily implied and understood. Judas delivered him, the Jews delivered him, God the Father delivered him, and Christ himself delivered himself. All these did one and the same act, but not for one and the same end: Judas delivered him for gain, the Jews for envy, the Father delivered him out of love, and Christ delivered himself in great compassion to a lost world.

Note, 3. Unto what he was delivered, namely, Unto death, even the death of the cross. This in "God was an act of the highest justice, in Christ an act of wonderful obedience, in the Jews an act of the highest wickedness.

Note, 4. For whom, and for what he was delivered: for us and for our offenses: It notes the vicegerency of his sufferings, not barely for our goods the final cause, and for our sins as the meritorious cause; but for us, in our room, place and stead, dying under an imputation of guilt, and dying as the sacrificed beast for the expiation of that guilt: The original word here for offences signifies great falls, grievous offences, and heinous crimes.
This sacrificed lamb was delivered and died to expiate the guilt of guilt of great sins, and to make atonement for the greatest sinners.

Note, 5. It is here said, that Christ was delivered, rather than died for our offences, to lead us to the consideration of the first

cause of his suffering for us; namely, The determinate counsel of God, pursuant to which there concession or permission given to wicked instruments to shed his blood; his own Father delivering him up to death for our offences.

Learn hence, That our sins were not only the occasions, but the moving and impulsive cause of Christ's sufferings. He died as a sacrifice to atone an offended Deity: As the sacrifices of old were brought to the altar, and there slain, so Christ, substituting himself in our room and stead, was brought ot he altar of his cross, and there died as a victim or expiatory sacrifice for our sins. Thus, He was delivered for our offenses.

Observe, next, Our Lord's resurrection asserted, He was raised again; and its end assigned, for our justification. Christ as our surety was under the arrest of death; but having given satisfaction by his sufferings, our discharge was published to the world by his resurrection; As by dying in our stead, he bare the curse of the law; so by rising again as a common person, we receive our acquittal from the hand of a judge. His death was our payment, his resurrection our discharge; He was raised again for our justification.
Learn thence, That Christ's resurrection was the cause of our justification; not the meritorious cause, for that was his death and bloodshed; but the declarative and perfect cause of our justification.

His resurrection was a declaration of our justification, the justice of God thereby declaring itself satisfied, by its prisoner being released. His resurrection is also the perfective cause of our justification. The work of redemption wrought for us by his death, is perfected, and made effectual by his resurrection. This makes our redemption complete, which otherwise had been partial and imperfect; nay, none at all. 'Tis upon Christ, as raised, that our faith must be settled: Had he not been raised from the dead, faith in his death had had no foundation, for it

had been an unaccountable thing to believe in one that lay under he power of death.

25 who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

By the death of Christ an atonement is made for sin. If it be asked how his resurrection contributes to our acceptance with God, we may answer,

(1.) It rendered his work complete. His death would have been unavailing, his work would have been imperfect, if he had not been raised up from the dead. He submitted to death as a sacrifice, and it was needful that he should rise, and thus conquer death and subdue our enemies, that the work which he had undertaken might be complete.

(2.) His resurrection was a proof that his work was accepted by the Father. What he had done, in order that sinners might be saved, was approved. Our justification, therefore become sure, as it was for this that he had given himself up to death.

Romans-5

Results of Justification

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

It is sin that breeds the quarrel between us and God, creates not only a strangeness, but an enmity; the holy righteous God cannot in honour be at peace with a sinner while he continues under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. And such are the benignity and good-will of God to man that, immediately upon the removing of that obstacle, the peace is made. By faith we lay hold of God's arm and of his strength, and so are at peace, Isa 27:4,5. There is more in this peace than barely a cessation of enmity, there is friendship and loving-kindness, for God is either the worst enemy or the best friend. Abraham, being justified by faith, was called the friend of God (Jam 2:23), which

was his honour, but not his peculiar honour: Christ has called his disciples friends, Joh 15:13-15. And surely a man needs no more to make him happy than to have God his friend! But this is through our Lord Jesus Christ--through him as the great peace-maker, the Mediator between God and man, that blessed Day's-man that has laid his hand upon us both. Adam, in innocency, had peace with God immediately; there needed no such mediator. But to guilty sinful man it is a very dreadful thing to think of God out of Christ; for he is our peace, Eph 2:14, not only the maker, but the matter and maintainer, of our peace, Col 1:20.

The obstacles, on the part of God, to reconciliation, arising from his justice and law, been removed, and he is now willing to be at peace. The obstacles on the part of man, arising from his sin, his rebellion, and his conscious guilt, may be taken away, and he can now regard God as his friend.

The effect of this plan, when the sinner embraces it, is to produce peace in his own mind. He experiences peace; a peace which the world gives not, and which the world cannot take away, Php 4:7, 1Pet 1:8, Jn 16:22.

2 by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

This is a further privilege, not only peace, but grace, that is, this favour.

Observe, 1 The saints' happy state. It is a state of grace, God's loving-kindness to us and our conformity to God; he that hath God's love and God's likeness is in a state of grace. Now into this grace we have access prosagogen--an introduction, which implies that we were not born in this state; we are by nature children of wrath, and the carnal mind is enmity against God; but we are brought into it. We could not have got into it of ourselves, nor have conquered the difficulties in the way, but we have a manuduction, a leading by the hand,--are led into it as blind, or lame, or weak people are led,--are introduced as pardoned offenders,--are introduced by some favourite at court to kiss the king's hand, as

strangers, that are to have audience, are conducted. Prosagogen eschekamen--We have had access. He speaks of those that have been already brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. Paul, in his conversion, had this access; then he was made nigh. Barnabas introduced him to the apostles (Ac 9:27), and there were others that led him by the hand to Damascus (Ro 5:8), but it was Christ that introduced and led him by the hand into this grace. By whom we have access by faith. By Christ as the author and principal agent, by faith as the means of this access. Not by Christ in consideration of any merit or desert of ours, but in consideration of our believing dependence upon him and resignation of ourselves to him.

2. Their happy standing in this state: wherein we stand. Not only wherein we are, but wherein we stand, a posture that denotes our discharge from guilt; we stand in the judgment (Ps 1:5), not cast, as convicted criminals, but our dignity and honour secured, not thrown to the ground, as abjects. The phrase denotes also our progress; while we stand, we are going. We must not lie down, as if we had already attained, but stand as those that are pressing forward, stand as servants attending on Christ our master. The phrase denotes, further, our perseverance: we stand firmly and safely, upheld by the power of God; stand as soldiers stand, that keep their ground, not borne down by the power of the enemy. It denotes not only our admission to, but our confirmation in, the favour of God. It is not in the court of heaven as in earthly courts, where high places are slippery places: but we stand in a humble confidence of this very thing that he who has begun the good work will perform it, Php 1:6.

3 And not only *so,* but we glory in tribulations also; knowing
that tribulation worketh patience;
4 and patience, experience; and experience, hope:
5 and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is
shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given
unto us.

we glory in tribulations also, especially tribulations for righteousness' sake, which seemed the greatest objection against the saints' happiness, whereas really their happiness did not only

consist with, but take rise from, those tribulations. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer, Ac 5:41. This being the hardest point, he sets himself to show the grounds and reasons of it. How come we to glory in tribulations? Why, because tribulations, by a chain of causes, greatly befriend hope, which he shows in the method of its influence.

1. Tribulation worketh patience, not in and of itself, but the powerful grace of God working in and with the tribulation. It proves, and by proving improves, patience, as parts and gifts increase by exercise. It is not the efficient cause, but yields the occasion, as steel is hardened by the fire. See how God brings meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. That which worketh patience is matter of joy; for patience does us more good than tribulations can do us hurt. Tribulation in itself worketh impatience; but, as it is sanctified to the saints, it worketh patience.

2. Patience experience, Ro 5:4. It works an experience of God, and the songs he gives in the night; the patient sufferers have the greatest experience of the divine consolations, which abound as afflictions abound. It works an experience of ourselves. It is by tribulation that we make an experiment of our own sincerity, and therefore such tribulations are called trials. It works, dokimen--an approbation, as he is approved that has passed the test. Thus Job's tribulation wrought patience, and that patience produced an approbation, that still he holds fast his integrity, Job 2:3.

3. Experience hope. He who, being thus tried, comes forth as gold, will thereby be encouraged to hope. This experiment, or approbation, is not so much the ground, as the evidence, of our hope, and a special friend to it. Experience of God is a prop to our hope; he that hath delivered doth and will. Experience of ourselves helps to evidence our sincerity.

4. This hope maketh not ashamed; that is, it is a hope that will not deceive us. Nothing confounds more than disappointment. Everlasting shame and confusion will be caused by the perishing

of the expectation of the wicked, but the hope of the righteous shall be gladness, Pr 10:28. See Ps 22:5,71:1. Or, It maketh not ashamed of our sufferings. Though we are counted as the offscouring of all things, and trodden under foot as the mire in the streets, yet, having hopes of glory, we are not ashamed of these sufferings. It is in a good cause, for a good Master, and in good hope; and therefore we are not ashamed. We will never think ourselves disparaged by sufferings that are likely to end so well. Because the love of God is shed abroad. This hope will not disappoint us, because it is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of love. It is the gracious work of the blessed Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of all the saints. The love of God, that is, the sense of God's love to us, drawing out love in us to him again. Or, The great effects of his love:

(1.) Special grace; and,

(2.) The pleasant gust or sense of it. It is shed abroad, as sweet ointment, perfuming the soul, as rain watering it and making it fruitful. The ground of all our comfort and holiness, and perseverance in both, is laid in the shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts; it is this which constrains us, 2Co 5:14. Thus are we drawn and held by the bonds of love. Sense of God's love to us will make us not ashamed, either of our hope in him or our sufferings for him.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

We were without strength (Ro 5:6), in a sad condition; and, which is worse, altogether unable to help ourselves out of that condition--lost, and no visible way open for our recovery--our condition deplorable, and in a manner desperate; and, therefore our salvation is here said to come in due time. God's time to help and save is when those that are to be saved are without strength, that his own power and grace may be the more magnified, De 32:36. It is the manner of God to help at a dead lift,

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Greater love has no man.

(1.) One would hardly die for a righteous man, that is, an innocent man, one that is unjustly condemned; every body will pity such a one, but few will put such a value upon his life as either to hazard, or much less to deposit, their own in his stead.

(2.) It may be, one might perhaps be persuaded to die for a good man, that is, a useful man, who is more than barely a righteous man. Many that are good themselves yet do but little good to others; but those that are useful commonly get themselves well beloved, and meet with some that in a case of necessity would venture to be their antipsychoi--would engage life for life, would be their bail, body for body. Paul was, in this sense, a very good man, one that was very useful, and he met with some that for his life laid down their own necks, Ro 16:4. And yet observe how he qualifies this: it is but some that would do so, and it is a daring act if they do it, it must be some bold venturing soul; and, after all, it is but a peradventure.

(3.) But Christ died for sinners (Ro 5:8), neither righteous nor good; not only such as were useless, but such as were guilty and obnoxious; not only such as there would be no loss of should they perish, but such whose destruction would greatly redound to the glory of God's justice, being malefactors and criminals that ought to die. Some think he alludes to a common distinction the Jews had of their people into ndyqym--righteous, hsdym--merciful (compare Isa 17:1), and rssym--wicked. Now herein God commended his love, not only proved or evidenced his love (he might have done that at a cheaper rate), but magnified it and made it illustrious. This circumstance did greatly magnify and advance his love, not only put it past dispute, but rendered it the object of the greatest wonder and admiration: "Now my creatures shall see that I love them, I will give them such an instance of it as shall be without parallel." Commendeth his love, as merchants commend

their goods when they would put them off. This commending of his love was in order to the shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. He evinces his love in the most winning, affecting, endearing way imaginable. While we were yet sinners, implying that we were not to be always sinners, there should be a change wrought; for he died to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins; but we were yet sinners when he died for us.

(4.) Nay, which is more, we were enemies (Ro 5:10), not only malefactors, but traitors and rebels, in arms against the government; the worst kind of malefactors and of all malefactors the most obnoxious. The carnal mind is not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself, Ro 8:7,Col 1:21. This enmity is a mutual enmity, God loathing the sinner, and the sinner loathing God, Zec 11:8. And that for such as these Christ should die is such a mystery, such a paradox, such an unprecedented instance of love, that it may well be our business to eternity to adore and wonder at it. This is a commendation of love indeed. Justly might he who had thus loved us make it one of the laws of his kingdom that we should love our enemies.

Justification and reconciliation are the first and primary fruit of the death of Christ: We are justified by his blood (Ro 5:9), reconciled by his death, Ro 5:10. Sin is pardoned, the sinner accepted as righteous, the quarrel taken up, the enmity slain, an end made of iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. This is done, that is, Christ has done all that was requisite on his part to be done in order hereunto, and, immediately upon our believing, we are actually put into a state of justification and reconciliation. Justified by his blood. Our justification is ascribed to the blood of Christ because without blood there is no remission Heb 9:22. The blood is the life, and that must go to make atonement. In all the propitiatory sacrifices, the sprinkling of the blood was of the essence of the sacrifice. It was the blood that made an atonement for the soul, Le 17:11.

We shall be saved from wrath, from hell and damnation. It is the wrath of God that is the fire of hell; the wrath to come, so it is called, 1Th 1:10. The final justification and absolution of believers at the great day, together with the fitting and preparing of them for it, are the salvation from wrath here spoken of; it is the perfecting of the work of grace.--Reconciled by his death, saved by his life. His life here spoken of is not to be understood of his life in the flesh, but his life in heaven, that life which ensued after his death. Compare Ro 14:9. He was dead, and is alive, Re 1:18. We are reconciled by Christ humbled, we are saved by Christ exalted. The dying Jesus laid the foundation, in satisfying for sin, and slaying the enmity, and so making us salvable; thus is the partition-wall broken down, atonement made, and the attainder reversed; but it is the living Jesus that perfects the work: he lives to make intercession, Heb 7:25. It is Christ, in his exaltation, that by his word and Spirit effectually calls, and changes, and reconciles us to God, is our Advocate with the Father, and so completes and consummates our salvation. Compare Ro 4:25,8:34. Christ dying was the testator, who bequeathed us the legacy; but Christ living is the executor, who pays it. Now the arguing is very strong. He that puts himself to the charge of purchasing our salvation will not decline the trouble of applying it.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall
be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the
death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved
by his life.

The sinner, in this state, regards God as his enemy. He trembles when he thinks of his law; fears his judgments; is alarmed when he thinks of hell. His bosom is a stranger to peace. This has been felt in all lands--alike under the thunders of the law of Sinai among the Jews, in the pagan world, and in lands where the gospel is preached. It is the effect of an alarmed and troubled conscience.

We are brought to an agreement; to a state of friendship and union. We became his friends, laid aside our opposition, and embraced him as our Friend and Portion. To effect this is the great design of

the plan of salvation, 2Cor 5:1-20, Col 1:21, Eph 2:16. It means that there were obstacles existing on both sides to a reconciliation; and that these have been removed by the death of Christ; and that a union has thus been effected. This has been done in removing the obstacles on the part of God--by maintaining the honour of his law; showing his hatred of sin; upholding his justice, and maintaining his truth, at the same time that he pardons. Rom 3:26. And, on the part of man, by removing his unwillingness to' be reconciled; by subduing, changing, and sanctifying his heart; by overcoming his hatred of God, and of his law; and bringing him into submission to the government of God. So that the Christian is, in fact, reconciled to God; he is his friend; he is pleased with his law, his character, and his plan of salvation. And all this has been accomplished by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus as an offering in our place.

By his life. We were reconciled by his death. Death may include possibly his low, humble, and suffering condition. Death has the appearance of great feebleness; the death of Christ had the appearance of the defeat of his plans. His enemies triumphed and rejoiced over him on the cross, and in the tomb. Yet the effect of this feeble, low, and humiliating state was to reconcile us to God. If in this state--when humble, despised, dying, dead--he had power to accomplish so great a work as to reconcile us to God, how much more may we expect that he will be able to keep us now that he is a living, exalted, and triumphant Redeemer! If his fainting powers in dying were such as to reconcile us, how much more shall his full, vigorous powers, as an exalted Redeemer, be sufficient to keep and save us! This argument is but an expansion of what the Saviour himself said, Jn 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

11 And not only *so,* but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

To receive the atonement is, (1.) To give our consent to the atonement, approving of, and agreeing to, those methods which Infinite Wisdom has taken of saving a guilty world by the blood of a crucified Jesus, being willing and glad to be saved in a gospel way and upon gospel terms. (2.) To take the comfort of the atonement, which is the fountain and the foundation of our joy in

God. Now we joy in God, now we do indeed receive the atonement, kauchomenoi--glorying in it.

atonement was the ancient meaning of the English word atonement --AT ONE MENT--being at one, or reconciled.

The doctrine of original sin is not more difficult to be understood, than it is necessary to be known: the apostle here declares the manner how sin and death entered the world, namely, by the fall of Adam the first man: By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.

Note, 1. An unhappy parent; namely, Adam: By him sin entered into the world.

2. An unhappy posterity; namely, the whole world, proceeding from and coming out of the loins of Adam, in whom all have sinned.

3. An unhappy portion; sin and death: Sin entered by Adam, and death entered by sin. This was the legacy which Adam left to all his posterity.

Now the sad and mournful truth which the scripture contains, is this: "That our first parent, by his transgression, hath entailed a miserable inheritance, an unhappy portion of sin and death upon all posterity." Adam's sin becomes ours.

1. By meritorious imputation: God treated with him not as a private person, but as caput gentis, as the root and parent of all mankind.

Hence a comparison is often made between the first and second Adam; the grace of the one, with the sin of the other: the life conveyed by the one, and the death transmitted by the other.

By Adam we were cast, by Christ we were cleared; cursed in Adam, crowned in Christ. Now this comparison would be wholly insignificant, if Adam had not been looked upon as the representative of us all.

2. The sin of Adam is derived to us by way of inhesion: We have received from him a depravity of nature, and evil disposition, a propension to all mischief, and aversion to all good.
The sin of Adam transmitted to us, doth not only cause guilt upon our persons, but filth upon our natures; not only lay a charge to us, but throws a stain upon us.

3. We make Adam's sin our own by imitation, by treading in the steps of his disobedience. Every sin we commit in defiance of the threatenings of God, is a justifying of Adam's rebellion against God; and accordingly, we die by our own folly, as well as by his fall; our destruction is of ourselves, by our actual rebellions; and we shall at the great day charge our sin and misery upon ourselves, not on God, but on Satan, not on instruments, not on our first parents.

Sin entered into the world. He was the first sinner of the race. The word sin here evidently means the violation of the law of God. He was the first sinner among men, and in consequence all others became sinners. The apostle does not here refer to Satan, the tempter, though he was the suggester of evil; for his design was to discuss the effect of the plan of salvation in meeting the sins and calamities of our race.

By one man, etc. By means of one man; by the crime of one man. His act was the occasion of the introduction of all sin into all the world. The apostle here refers to the well-known historical fact,

(Gen 3:6,7) without any explanation of the mode or cause of this. He adduced it as a fact that was well known; and evidently meant to speak of it not for the purpose of explaining the mode, or even of making this the leading or prominent topic in the discussion. His main design is not to speak of the manner of the introduction of sin, but to show that the work of Christ meets and removes well-known and extensive evils. His explanations, therefore, are chiefly confined to the work of Christ. He speaks of the introduction, the spread, and the effects of sin, not as having any theory to defend on that subject, not as designing to enter into a minute description of the case, but as it was manifest on the face of things, as it stood on the historical record, and as it was understood and admitted by mankind. Great perplexity has been introduced by forgetting the scope of the apostle's argument here, and by supposing that he was defending a peculiar theory on the subject of the introduction of sin; whereas nothing is more foreign to his design. He is showing how the plan of justification meets well-understood and acknowledged universal evils. Those evils he refers to just as they were seen, and admitted to exist. All men see them, and feel them, and practically understand them. The truth is, that the doctrine of the fall of man, and the prevalence of sin and death, do not belong peculiarly to Christianity, any more than the introduction and spread of disease does to the science of the healing art. Christianity did not introduce sin; nor is it responsible for it. The existence of sin and woe belongs to the race; appertains equally to all systems of religion, and is a part of the melancholy history of man, whether Christianity be true or false. The existence and extent of sin and death are not affected if the infidel could show that Christianity was an imposition. They would still remain. The Christian religion is just one mode of proposing a remedy for well-known and desolating evils; just as the science of medicine proposes a remedy for diseases which it did not introduce, and which could not be stayed in their desolations, or modified, if it could be shown that the whole science of healing was pretension and quackery. Keeping this design of the apostle in view, therefore, and remembering that he is not defending or stating a theory about the introduction of sin, but that he is explaining the way in which the work of Christ delivers from a deep-felt universal evil, we shall

find the explanation of this passage disencumbered of many of the difficulties with which it has been thought usually to be invested. By one man. By Adam. See Rom 5:14. It is true that sin was literally introduced by Eve, who was first in the transgression, Gen 3:6, 1Timm 2:14. But the apostle evidently is not explaining the precise mode in which sin was introduced, or making this his leading point. He therefore speaks of the introduction of sin in a popular sense, as it was generally understood. The following reasons may be suggested why the man is mentioned, rather than the woman, as the cause of the introduction of sin.

(1.) It was the natural and usual way of expressing such an event. We say that man sinned, that man is redeemed, man dies, etc. We do not pause to indicate the sex in such expressions. So in this, he undoubtedly meant to say that it was introduced by the parentage of the human race.

(2.) The name Adam, in Scripture, was given to the created pair, the parents of the human family, a name designating their earthly origin. Gen 5:1,2, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called THEIR name Adam." The name Adam, therefore, used in this connexion, (Rom 5:14,) would suggest the united parentage of the human family.

(3.) In transactions where man and woman are mutually concerned, it is usual to speak of the man first, on account of his being constituted superior in rank and authority.

(4.) The comparison on the one side, in the apostle's argument, is of the man Christ Jesus; and to secure the fitness, the congruity (Stuart) of the comparison, he speaks of the man only in the previous transaction.

(5.) The sin of the woman was not complete in its effects without the concurrence of the man. It was their uniting in it which was the cause of the evil. Hence the man is especially mentioned as having

rendered the offence what it was; as having completed it, and entailed its curses on the race. From these remarks it is clear that the apostle does not refer to the man here from any idea that there was any particular covenant transaction with him, but that he means to speak of it in the usual, popular sense; referring to him as being the fountain of all the woes that sin has introduced into the world.

Adam and Christ

12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

It is certain that death could not have reigned if sin had not set up the throne for him. This proves that sin was in the world before the law, and original sin, for death reigned over those that had not sinned any actual sin, that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, never sinned in their own persons as Adam did--which is to be understood of infants, that were never guilty of actual sin, and yet died, because Adam's sin was imputed to them. This reign of death seems especially to refer to those violent and extraordinary judgments which were long before Moses, as the deluge and the destruction of Sodom, which involved infants. It is a great proof of original sin that little children, who were never guilty of any actual transgression, are yet liable to very terrible diseases, casualties, and deaths, which could by no means be reconciled with the justice and righteousness of God if they were not chargeable with guilt.

13 (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

15 But not as the offense, so also *is* the free gift: for if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and

the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

16 And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offenses unto justification.

17 For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore, as by the offense of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.

First, By the offence and disobedience of one many were made sinners, and judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

Here observe,

1. That Adam's sin was disobedience, disobedience to a plain and express command: and it was a command of trial. The thing he did was therefore evil because it was forbidden, and not otherwise; but this opened the door to other sins, though itself seemingly small.

2. That the malignity and poison of sin are very strong and spreading, else the guilt of Adam's sin would not have reached so far, nor have been so deep and long a stream. Who would think there should be so much evil in sin?

3. That by Adam's sin many are made sinners: many, that is, all his posterity; said to be many, in opposition to the one that offended, Made sinners, katestathesan. It denotes the making of us such by a judicial act: we were cast as sinners by due course of law. 4. That judgment is come to condemnation upon all those that by Adam's disobedience were made sinners. Being convicted, we are condemned. All the race of mankind lie under a sentence, like an attainder upon a family. There is judgment given and recorded against us in the court of heaven;

and, if the judgment be not reversed, we are likely to sink under it to eternity.

Secondly, In like manner, by the righteousness and obedience of one (and that one is Jesus Christ, the second Adam), are many made righteous, and so the free gift comes upon all. It is observable how the apostle inculcates this truth, and repeats it again and again, as a truth of very great consequence.

Here observe,

1 The nature of Christ's righteousness, how it is brought in; it is by his obedience. The disobedience of the first Adam ruined us, the obedience of the second Adam saves us,--his obedience to the law of mediation, which was that he should fulfil all righteousness, and then make his soul an offering for sin. By his obedience to this law he wrought out a righteousness for us, satisfied God's justice, and so made way for us into his favour.

2 The fruit of it.

(a.) There is a free gift come upon all men, that is, it is made and offered promiscuously to all. The salvation wrought is a common salvation; the proposals are general, the tender free; whoever will may come, and take of these waters of life. This free gift is to all believers, upon their believing, unto justification of life. It is not only a justification that frees from death, but that entitles to life.

(b.) Many shall be made righteous--many compared with one, or as many as belong to the election of grace, which, though but a few as they are scattered up and down in the world, yet will be a great many when they come all together. Katastathesontai--they shall be constituted righteous, as by letters patent. Now the antithesis between these two, our ruin by Adam and our recovery by Christ, is obvious enough.

Perhaps there could not be found a more striking declaration anywhere, that the work of Christ had an original applicability to all men; or that it is, in its own nature, fitted to save all. The course of argument here leads inevitably to this; nor is it possible to avoid it without doing violence to the obvious and fair course of the discussion. It does not prove that all will in fact be saved, but that the plan is fitted to meet all the evils of the fall. A certain kind of medicine may have an original applicability to heal all persons under the same disease, and may be abundant and certain, and yet in fact be applied to few. The sun is fitted to give light to all, yet many may be blind, or may voluntarily close their eyes. Water is adapted to the wants of all men, and the supply may be ample for the human family, yet in fact, from various causes, many may be deprived of it. So of the provisions of the plan of redemption. They are adapted to all; they are ample, and yet in fact, from causes which this is not the place to explain, the benefits, like those of medicine, water, science, etc., may never be enjoyed by all the race. Calvin concurs in this interpretation, and thus shows that it is one which commends itself even to the most strenuous advocates of the system which is called by his name. He says, "He [the apostle] makes the grace common to all, because it is offered to all, not because it is in fact applied to all. For although Christ suffered for the sins of THE WHOLE WORLD, (nam etsi passus est Christus pro peecatis totius mundi,) and it is offered to all without distinction, (indifferenter,) yet all do not embrace it." See Calvin's Comm. on this place.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so
by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.
20 Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound.
But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:
21 that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace
reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ
our Lord.

If there was so much power and efficacy, as it seems there was, in the sin of a man, who was of the earth, earthy, to condemn us, much more are there power and efficacy in the

righteousness and grace of Christ, who is the Lord from heaven, to justify and save us. The one man that saves us is Jesus Christ. Surely Adam could not propagate so strong a poison but Jesus Christ could propagate as strong an antidote, and much stronger.

It is but the guilt of one single offence of Adam's that is laid to our charge: The judgment was ex henos eis katakrima, by one, that is, by one offence, Ro 5:16,17, Margin. But from Jesus Christ we receive and derive an abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. The stream of grace and righteousness is deeper and broader than the stream of guilt; for this righteousness does not only take away the guilt of that one offence, but of many other offences, even of all. God in Christ forgives all trespasses, Col 2:13.

By Adam's sin death reigned; but by Christ's righteousness there is not only a period put to the reign of death, but believers are preferred to reign of life, Ro 5:17. In and by the righteousness of Christ we have not only a charter of pardon, but a patent of honour, are not only freed from our chains, but, like Joseph, advanced to the second chariot, and made unto our God kings and priests--not only pardoned, but preferred. See this observed, Re 1:5,6,5:9,10. We are by Christ and his righteousness entitled to, and instated in, more and greater privileges than we lost by the offence of Adam. The plaster is wider than the wound, and more healing than the wound is killing.

Be made. The same Greek word as before--be appointed, or become. The apostle has explained the mode in which this is done, Rom 1:17; Rom 3:24-26, 4:1-5. That explanation is to limit the meaning here. No more are considered righteous than become so in that way. And as all do not become righteous thus, the passage cannot be adduced to prove the doctrine of universal salvation. The following remarks may express the

doctrines which are established by this much-contested and difficult passage.

(1.) Adam was created holy; capable of obeying law; yet free to fail.

(2.) A law was given him, adapted to his condition--simple, plain, easy to be obeyed, and fitted to give human nature a trial in circumstances as favourable as possible.

(3.) Its violation exposed him to the threatened penalty as he had understood it, and to all the collateral woes which it might carry in its train--involving, as subsequent developments showed, the loss of God's favour; his displeasure evinced in man's toil, and sweat, and sickness, and death; in hereditary depravity, and the curse, and the pains of hell for ever.

(4.) Adam was the head of the race; he was the fountain of being; and human nature was so far-tried in him, that it may be said he was on trial not for himself alone, but for his posterity, inasmuch as his fall would involve them in ruin. Many have chosen to call this a covenant, and to speak of him as a federal head; and if the above account is the idea involved in these terms, the explanation is not exceptionable. As the word covenant, however, is not applied in the transaction in the Bible, and as it is liable to be misunderstood, others prefer to speak of it as a law given to Adam, and as a divine constitution under which he was placed.

(5.) His posterity are, in consequence of his sin, subjected to the same train of ills as if they had been personally the transgressors. Not that they are regarded as personally ill-deserving, or criminal for his sin. God reckons things as they are, and not falsely, (see Rom 4:3, and his imputations are all according to truth. He regarded Adam as standing at the head of the race; and regards and treats all his posterity as coming into the world subject to pain, and death, and depravity, as a

consequence of his sin. See Note, at introduction to Romans chapter 6. This is the Scripture idea of imputation; and this is what has been commonly meant when it has been said that "the GUILT of his first sin"--not the sin itself--" is imputed to his posterity."

(6.) There is something antecedent to the moral action of his posterity, and growing out of the relation which they sustain to him, which makes it certain that they will sin as soon as they begin to act as moral agents. What this is, we may not be able to say; but we may be certain that it is not physical depravity, or any created essence of the soul, or anything which prevents the first act of sin from being voluntary. This hereditary tendency to sin has been usually called "original sin;" and this the apostle evidently teaches.

(7.) As an infant comes into the world with a certainty that he will sin as soon as he becomes a moral agent here, there is the same certainty that, if he were removed to eternity, he would sin there also, unless he were changed. There is, therefore, need of the blood of the atonement and of the agency of the Holy Ghost, that an infant may be saved.

(8.) The facts, here stated accord with all the analogy in the moral government of God. The drunkard secures as a result commonly, that his family will be reduced to beggary, want, and woe. A pirate, or a traitor, will whelm not himself only, but his family in ruin. Such is the great law or constitution on which society is now organized; and we are not to be surprised that the same principle occurred in the primary organization of human affairs.

(9.) As this is the fact everywhere, the analogy disarms all objections which have been made against the scriptural statements of the effects of the sin of Adam. If just now, it was just, then. If it exists now, it existed then.

(10.) The doctrine should be left, therefore, simply as it is in the Scriptures. It is there the simple statement of a fact, without any attempt at explanation. That fact accords with all that we see and feel. It is a great principle in the constitution of things, that the conduct of one man may pass over in its effects on others, and have an influence on their happiness. The simple fact in regard to Adam is, that he sinned; and that such is the organization of the great society of which he was the head and father, that his sin has secured as a certain result that all the race will be sinners also. How this is, the Bible has not explained. It is a part of a great system of things. That it is unjust no man can prove, for none can show that any sinner suffers more than he deserves. That it is wise is apparent, for it is attended with numberless blessings. It is connected with all the advantages that grow out of the social organization. The race might have been composed of independent individuals, where the conduct of an individual, good or evil, might have affected no one but himself. But then society would have been impossible. All the benefits of organization into families, and communities, and nations, would have been unknown. Man would have lived alone; wept alone; rejoiced alone; died alone. There would have been no sympathy; no compassion; no mutual aid. God has therefore grouped the race into separate communities. He has organized society. He has constituted families, tribes, clans, nations; and though on the general principle the conduct of one may whelm another in misery, yet the union, the grouping, the constitution, is the source of most of the blessings which man enjoys in this life, and may be of numberless mercies in regard to that which is to come. If it was the organization on which the race might be plunged into sin, it is also the organization on which it may be raised to life eternal. If, on the one hand, it may be abused to produce misery, it may, on the other, be improved to the advancement of peace, sympathy, friendship, prosperity, salvation. At all events, such is the organization in common life and in religion, and it becomes man not to murmur, but to act on it, and to endeavour, by the tender mercy of God, to turn it to his welfare here and hereafter. As by this organization, through Adam, he

has been plunged into sin, so by the same organization, he shall, through "the second Adam," rise to life, and ascend to the skies.

Romans-6

Dead to Sin but Alive in Christ

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

That are dead to sin. That is, all Christians. To be dead to a thing is a strong expression denoting that it has no influence over us. A man that is dead is uninfluenced and unaffected by the affairs of this life. He is insensible to sounds, and tastes, and pleasures; to the hum of business, to the voice of friendship, and to all the scenes of commerce, gaiety, and ambition. When it is said, therefore, that a Christian is dead to sin, the sense is, that it has lost its influence over him; he is not subject to it; he is in regard to that, as the man in the grave is to the busy scenes and cares of this life. The expression is not infrequent in the New Testament. Gal 2:19, "For I am dead to the law." Col 3:3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." 1Pet 2:24, "Who--bare our sins--that we, being dead to sin," etc. The apostle does not here attempt to prove that Christians are thus dead, nor to state in what way they become so. He assumes the fact without argument. All Christians are thus, in fact, dead to sin. They do not live to sin; nor has sin dominion over them. The expression used here by the apostle is common in all languages. We familiarly speak of a man's being dead to sensual pleasures, to ambition, etc., to denote that they have lost their influence over him.

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

The death of Christ was a lively representation of the death of sin; and believers are to imitate his death, in their dying daily unto sin. Did Christ die for us a painful, shameful, and accursed death? such a death must sin die in us.

Were baptized. The act of baptism denotes dedication to the service of him in whose name we are baptized. One of its designs is to dedicate or consecrate us to the service of Christ. Thus (1Cor 10:2) the Israelites are said to have been "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" i.e. they became consecrated, Or dedicated, or bound to him as their leader and lawgiver. In the place before us, the argument of the apostle is evidently draw from the supposition that we have been solemnly consecrated by baptism to the service of Christ; and that to sin is therefore a violation of the very nature of our Christian profession.

Were baptized into his death. We were baptized with special reference to his death. Our baptism had a strong resemblance to his death. By that he became insensible to the things of the world; by baptism we in like manner become dead to sin. Farther, we are baptized with particular reference to the design of his death, the great leading feature and purpose of his work. That was to expiate sin; to free men from its power; to make them pure. We have professed our devotion to the same cause; and have solemnly consecrated ourselves to the same design--to put a period to the dominion of iniquity. It was to show that by the solemn profession made at our baptism, we had become dead to sin, as Christ was dead to the living world around him when he was buried; and that as he was raised up to life, so we should also rise to a new life. A similar expression occurs in Col 2:12, "Buried with him in baptism," etc.

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that
like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the
Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Mortification, putting off the old man; several ways this is expressed.

(1.) We must live no longer in sin (Ro 6:2), we must not be as we have been nor do as we have done. The time past of our life must suffice, 1Pe 4:3. Though there are none that live without sin, yet, blessed be God, there are those that do not live in sin, do not live in it as their element, do not make a trade of it: this is to be sanctified.

(2.) The body of sin must be destroyed, Ro 6:6. The corruption that dwelleth in us is the body of sin, consisting of many parts and members, as a body. This is the root to which the axe must be laid. We must not only cease from the acts of sin (this may be done through the influence of outward restraints, or other inducements), but we must get the vicious habits and inclinations weakened and destroyed; not only cast away the idols of iniquity out of the heart.--That henceforth we should not serve sin. The actual transgression is certainly in a great measure prevented by the crucifying and killing of the original corruption. Destroy the body of sin, and then, though there should be Canaanites remaining in the land, yet the Israelites will not be slaves to them. It is the body of sin that sways the sceptre, wields the iron rod; destroy this, and the yoke is broken. The destruction of Eglon the tyrant is the deliverance of oppressed Israel from the Moabites.

(3.) We must be dead indeed unto sin, Ro 6:11. As the death of the oppressor is a release, so much more is the death of the oppressed, Job 3:17,18. Death brings a writ of ease to the weary. Thus must we be dead to sin, obey it, observe it, regard it, fulfil its will no more than he that is dead doth his quandam task-masters--be as indifference to the pleasures and delights of sin as a man that is dying is to his former diversions. He that is dead is separated from his former company, converse, business, enjoyments, employments, is not what he was, does not what he did, has not what he had. Death makes a mighty change; such a change doth sanctification make in the soul, it cuts off all correspondence with sin.

(4.) Sin must not reign in our mortal bodies that we should obey it, Ro 6:12. Though sin may remain as an outlaw, though it may oppress as a tyrant, yet let it not reign as a king. Let it not make laws, nor preside in councils, nor command the militia; let it not be uppermost in the soul, so that we should obey it. Though we may be sometimes overtaken and overcome by it, yet let us never be obedient to it in the lusts thereof; let not sinful lusts be a law to you, to which you would yield a consenting obedience. In the lusts thereof--en tais epithymiais autou. It refers to the body, not to sin. Sin lies very much in the gratifying of the body, and humouring that. And there is a reason implied in the phrase your mortal body; because it is a mortal body, and hastening apace to the dust, therefore let not sin reign in it. It was sin that made our bodies mortal, and therefore do not yield obedience to such an enemy.

(5.) We must not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness, Ro 6:13. The members of the body are made use of by the corrupt nature as tools, by which the wills of the flesh are fulfilled; but we must not consent to that abuse. The members of the body are fearfully and wonderfully made; it is a pity they should be the devil's tools of unrighteousness unto sin, instruments of the sinful actions, according to the sinful dispositions. Unrighteousness is unto sin; the sinful acts confirm and strengthen the sinful habits; one sin begets another; it is like the letting forth of water, therefore leave it before it be meddled with. The members of the body may perhaps, through the prevalency of temptation, be forced to be instruments of sin; but do not yield them to be so, do not consent to it. This is one branch of sanctification, the mortification of sin.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:

Learn thence, That all baptized persons ought to labour for, and endeavour after, a conformity to the death of Christ, in their dying daily unto sin. As he died a painful and shameful death for us, such a death should sin die in us; living a dying life, and dying a lingering, but a certain death.

6 knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

The death of Christ was a lively representation of the death of sin; and believers are to imitate his death, in their dying daily unto sin. Did Christ die for us a painful, shameful, and accursed death? such a death must sin die in us.

Our conformity to the death of Christ obliges us to die unto sin; thereby we know the fellowship of his sufferings, Php 3:10. Thus we are here said to be planted together in the likeness of is death (Ro 6:5), to homoiomati, not only a conformity, but a conformation, as the engrafted stock is planted together into the likeness of the shoot, of the nature of which it doth participate. Planting is in order to life and fruitfulness: we are planted in the vineyard in a likeness to Christ, which likeness we should evidence in sanctification. Our creed concerning Jesus Christ is, among other things, that he was crucified, dead, and buried; now baptism is a sacramental conformity to him in each of these, as the apostle here takes notice. First, Our old man is crucified with him, Ro 6:6. The death of the cross was a slow death; the body, after it was nailed to the cross, gave many a throe and many a struggle: but it was a sure death, long in expiring, but expired at last; such is the mortification of sin in believers. It was a cursed death, Ga 3:13. Sin dies as a malefactor, devoted to destruction; it is an accursed thing. Though it be a slow death, yet this must needs hasten it that it is an old man that is crucified; not in the prime of its strength, but decaying: that which waxeth old is ready to vanish away, Heb 8:13. Crucified with him--synestaurothe, not in respect of time, but in respect of causality. The crucifying of Christ for us has an influence upon the crucifying of sin in us. Secondly, We are dead with Christ, Ro 6:8. Christ was obedient to death: when he died, we might be said to die with him, as our dying to sin is an act of conformity both to the design and to the example of Christ's dying for sin. Baptism signifies and seals our union with Christ, our engrafting into Christ; so that we are dead with him, and engaged to have no more to do with sin than he had. Thirdly, We are buried with him by baptism, Ro 6:4. Our conformity is complete. We are

in profession quite cut off from all commerce and communion with sin, as those that are buried are quite cut off from all the world; not only not of the living, but no more among the living, have nothing more to do with them. Thus must we be, as Christ was, separate from sin and sinners. We are buried, namely, in profession and

obligation: we profess to be so, and we are bound to be so: it was our covenant and engagement in baptism; we are sealed to be the Lord's, therefore to be cut off from sin. Why this burying in baptism should so much as allude to any custom of dipping under water in baptism, any more than our baptismal crucifixion and death should have any such references, I confess I cannot see. It is plain that it is not the sign, but the thing signified, in baptism, that the apostle here calls being buried with Christ, and the expression of burying alludes to Christ's burial. As Christ was buried, that he might rise again to a new and more heavenly life, so we are in baptism buried, that is, cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life of faith and love.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Our old man. This expression occurs also in Eph 4:22, "That ye put off .... the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Col 3:9, "Lie not to one another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." From these passages it is evident that Paul uses the expression to denote our sinful and corrupt nature; the passions and evil propensities that exist before the heart is renewed. It refers to the love of sin, the indulgence of sinful propensities, in opposition to the new disposition which exists after the soul is converted, and which is called "the new man."

Is crucified. Is put to death, as if on a cross. In this expression there is a personification of the corrupt propensities of our nature represented as "our old man," our native disposition, etc. The figure is here carried out; and this old man, this corrupt nature, is represented as having been put to death in an agonizing and torturing manner. The pains of crucifixion were perhaps the most torturing of any that the human frame could bear. Death in this manner was most lingering and distressing. And the apostle here,

by the expression "is crucified," doubtless refers to the painful and protracted struggle which every one goes through when his evil propensities are subdued; when his corrupt nature is slain; and when, a converted sinner, he gives himself up to God. Sin dies within him, and he becomes dead to the world, and to sin; "for as by the cross, death is most lingering and severe, so that corrupt nature is not subdued but by anguish." (Grotius.) All who have been born again can enter into this description. They remember "the wormwood and the gall." They remember the anguish of conviction; the struggle of corrupt passion for ascendency; the dying convulsions of sin in the heart; the long and lingering conflict before it was subdued, and the soul became submissive to God. Nothing will better express this than the lingering agony of crucifixion; and the argument of the apostle is, that as sin has produced such an effect, and as the Christian is now free from its embrace and its power, he will live to God.

That the body of sin. This expression doubtless means the same as that which he had just used, "our old men" But why the term body is used, has been a subject in which interpreters have not been agreed. Some say that [it] is a Hebraism, denoting mere intensity or emphasis. Some, that it means the same as flesh; i.e., denoting our sinful propensities and lusts. Grotius thinks that the term "body" is elegantly attributed to sin, because the body of man is made up of many members joined together compactly, and sin also consists of numerous vices and evil propensities joined compactly, as it were, in one body. But the expression is evidently merely another form of conveying the idea contained in the phrase "our old man"--a personification of sin as if it had a living form, and as if it had been put to death on a cross. It refers to the moral destruction of the power of sin in the heart by the gospel, and not to any physical change in the nature or faculties of the soul. Comp. Col 2:11.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

By the body of sin, we are to understand the whole stock and mass of corruption, compacted as it were into one monstrous body,

prepared with all its members to commit actual sins. Called a body, because composed of many sinful passions and lusts, as the body is of many members, and also because they are executed by the body.

And farther, because sin has a real a substance in us, as if it were a body; not that sin is a substance, but the pravity of a substance. Now this body of sin must be destroyed, not as to actions only, but as to affections and inclinations also; 'tis not enough that we scratch this old man's face, but we must stab his heart in desire, in purpose, in endeavours: We must seek the death and destruction of all sin, That henceforth we may not serve sin; that is, that henceforward we should renounce the service of, and all relation to sin.

note, 1. That before regeneration, we are all servants of, yea, slaves to sin; so many lusts, so many lords reigning in us, and tyrannizing over us.

Note, 2. That it is one thing to sin, and another thing to serve sin: To serve sin, is to yield willing obedience, to indulge ourselves in any presumptuous act or course of sin. 'Tis not the presence, but prevalency of sin, that destroys and damns the sinner; 'tis not the flesh being in us, but our being in the flesh, that displeaseth God. Oh! happy for us, if sin's dominion be taken away, though its life be prolonged for a season.

9 knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

1. He argues from our sacramental conformity to Jesus Christ. Our baptism, with the design and intention of it, carried in it a great reason why we should die to sin, and live to righteousness. Thus we must improve our baptism as a bridle of restraint to keep us in from sin, as a spur of constraint to quicken us to duty. Observe this reasoning.

(a.) In general, we are dead to sin, that is, in profession and in obligation. Our baptism signifies our cutting off from the kingdom

of sin. We profess to have no more to do with sin. We are dead to sin by a participation of virtue and power for the killing of it, and by our union with Christ and interest in him, in and by whom it is killed. All this is in vain if we persist in sin; we contradict a profession, violate an obligation, return to that to which we were dead, like walking ghosts, than which nothing is more unbecoming and absurd. For (Ro 6:7) he that is dead is freed from sin; that is, he that is dead to it is freed from the rule and dominion of it, as the servant that is dead is freed from his master, Job 3:19. Now shall we be such fools as to return to that slavery from which we are discharged? When we are delivered out of Egypt, shall we talk of going back to it again?

(b.) In particular, being baptized into Jesus Christ, we were baptized into his death, Ro 6:3. We were baptized eis Christon--unto Christ, as 1Co 10:2, eis Mosen--unto Moses. Baptism binds us to Christ, it binds us apprentice to Christ as our teacher, it is our allegiance to Christ as our sovereign. Baptism is externa ansa Christi--the external handle of Christ, by which Christ lays hold on men, and men offer themselves to Christ. Particularly, we were baptized into his death, into a participation of the privileges purchased by his death, and into an obligation both to comply with the design of his death, which was to redeem us from all iniquity, and to conform to the pattern of his death, that, as Christ died for sin, so we should die to sin. This was the profession and promise of our baptism, and we do not do well if we do not answer this profession, and make good this promise.

1. He died for sin once, namely, to expiate the guilt of sin, and to make atonements for sinners; or else,

2. He died unto sin; that is, to destroy, conquer, and subdue sin in the hearts and lives of his children and people, by the aids and assistances of his Holy Spirit.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Vivification, or living to righteousness; and what is that?

(1.) It is to walk in newness of life, Ro 6:4. Newness of life supposes newness of heart, for out of the heart are the issues of life, and there is not way to make the stream sweet but by making the spring so. Walking, in scripture, is put for the course and tenour of the conversation, which must be new. Walk by new rules, towards new ends, from new principles. Make a new choice of the way. Choose new paths to walk in, new leaders to walk after, new companions to walk with. Old things should pass away, and all things become new. The man is what he was not, does what he did not.

(2.) It is to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Ro 6:11. To converse with God, to have a regard to him, a delight in him, a concern for him, the soul upon all occasions carried out towards him as towards an agreeable object, in which it takes a complacency: this is to be alive to God. The love of God reigning in the heart is the life of the soul towards God. Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat--The soul is where it loves, rather than where it lives. It is to have the affections and desires alive towards God. Or, living (our live in the flesh) unto God, to his honour and glory as our end, by his word and will as our rule--in all our ways to acknowledge him, and to have our eyes ever towards him; this is to live unto God.--Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is our spiritual life; there is no living to God but through him. He is the Mediator; there can be no comfortable receivings from God, nor acceptable regards to God, but in and through Jesus Christ; no intercourse between sinful souls and a holy God, but by the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Through Christ as the author and maintainer of this life; through Christ as the head from whom we receive vital influence; through Christ as the root by which we derive sap and nourishment, and so live. In living to God, Christ is all in all.

(3.) It is to yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Ro 6:13. The very life and being of holiness lie in the

dedication of ourselves to the Lord, giving our own selves to the Lord, 2Co 8:5. "Yield yourselves to him, not only as the conquered yields to the conqueror, because he can stand it out no longer; but as the wife yields herself to her husband, to whom her desire is, as the scholar yields himself to the teacher, the apprentice to his master, to be taught and ruled by him. Not yield your estates to him, but yield yourselves; nothing less than your whole selves;" parastesate eautous--accommodate vos ipsos Deo--accommodate yourselves to God; so Tremellius, from the Syriac. "Not only submit to him, but comply with him; not only present yourselves to him once for all, but be always ready to serve him. Yield yourselves to him as wax to the seal, to take any impression, to be, and have, and do, what he pleases." When Paul said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? (Ac 9:6) he was then yielded to God. As those that are alive from the dead. To yield a dead carcase to a living God is not to please him, but to mock him: "Yield yourselves as those that are alive and good for something, a living sacrifice," Ro 12:1 The surest evidence of our spiritual life is the dedication of ourselves to God. It becomes those that are alive from the dead (it may be understood of a death in law), that are justified and delivered from death, to give themselves to him that hath so redeemed them.

(4.) It is to yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God. The members of our bodies, when withdrawn from the service of sin, are not to lie idle, but to be made use of in the service of God. When the strong man armed is dispossessed, let him whose right it is divide the spoils. Though the powers and faculties of the soul be the immediate subjects of holiness and righteousness, yet the members of the body are to be instruments; the body must be always ready to serve the soul in the service of God. Thus (Ro 6:19), "Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. Let them be under the conduct and at the command of the righteous law of God, and that principle of inherent righteousness which the Spirit, as sanctifier, plants in the soul." Righteousness unto holiness, which intimates growth, and progress, and ground obtained. As every sinful act confirms the sinful habit, and makes the nature more and more prone to sin (hence the members of a

natural man are here said to be servants to iniquity unto iniquity--one sin makes the heart more disposed for another), so every gracious act confirms the gracious habit: serving righteousness is unto holiness; one duty fits us for another; and the more we do the more we may do for God. Or serving righteousness, eis hagiasmon--as an evidence of sanctification

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here we have two parts of our sanctification described, namely, mortification and vivification, dying unto sin, and living unto God.

1. Mortification, or dying unto sin, Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; that is, look upon the death of Christ, as a strong argument against the reign and power of sin; account yourselves dead unto sin.

Now deadness argues three things:

1. Disability. Such as are dead are disabled for working. Proportionable to the measure of our death unto sin, will be our disability to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin in a regenerate man is no more able to do all its will, than a crucified man is able to do what he will; He that is born of God cannot commit sin 1John 3:9; not as others do, and as himself formerly has done.

2. Deadness to sin argues disaffection towards sin, as well as disability: when we die to sin, our love to sin dieth.

3. Deadness argues liberty and unsubjection: he that is dead is freed from sin, as the woman by death is freed from her husband; and the Christian that is dead with Christ unto sin, stands fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free.

Observe, 2. The other part of our sanctification here declared: and that is, living unto God.

This likewise consists in three things:

1. In having our sensitive appetites in subjection, and under the subjection and dominion of reason; when we are governed like men, by reason and conscience, not like beasts, by sense and sensual inclination.

2. In having reason illuminated by faith, guided and directed by divine revelation.

And, 3. When this faith inclines and enables us to live unto God; when faith begets in us a resolution to obey God, and to persevere in our duty to him. This is to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God.

Observe lastly, Christians are said to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Which phrase imports, that Christ is the root and principle of our spiritual life by faith in whom we are enabled to live unto God: as the scion ingrafted into the stock, lives by the juice and nourishment it receives from the stock; so Christians are alive unto God, in, by, and through Jesus Christ, receiving from him that virtue whereby their spiritual life is begun, carried on, and maintained, and shall in due time be perfected and completed.

From whence we learn, that Christ is not only an head of authority, but an head of influence, to his church and members; He strengthening them, they can do all things, but without him they can do nothing: that is, without an interest in him, and an influence of grace derived from him.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

The duty which the apostle exhorts the Christians to; and that is, to prevent the regency and dominion of sin: Let not reign in your mortal bodies.

But when is sin said to reign?

Answer, When the bent and tendency of the heart is toward sin, and all the faculties of the soul are on sin's side, and wholly take its part; when sin is not opposed, or but slightly opposed,; when sin is committed industriously, and temptations to sin prevail easily; when persons sin without any sense of sin, with small

remorse and check for sin; then sin is in its throne, and reigns imperiously.

But why doth the apostle say, Let not sin reign in your body, rather than in your soul?

Answer, Because sin and lusts do gratify the body exceedingly; that is, the sensual appetite, the brutish part of man: and further, because they are acted and executed by the body or outward man, called therefore the deeds of the body.

But why doth the apostle here call it a mortal body?

Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies.

Answer, 1. To put us in mind that the mortality of our bodies is the fruit and punishment of our sins; that sins having brought in death upon us, our bodies must die for sin.

2. To show the vanity and transitoriness of the delights and pleasures of sin, which do gratify a mortal body, which after all its pamperings, must perish.

3. The apostle may probably call it a mortal body, to show that our conflict with sin shall endure but a little while: ere long this mortal shall put on immortality. It may encourage to be violent in the conflict; ere long we shall be victorious in the conquest.

13 Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

As if the apostle had said, "Sin, which has such a kingly and commanding power, will be calling upon you to give up the members of your bodies, and the faculties of your souls, as instruments or weapons for its service: but yield not your consents thereto, turn a deaf ear to the voice of sin, and hearken to the call of God, who commands you to yield yoursleves unto him, and your members as instruments for his service." Here are two opposite masters, God and sin; the one a tyrant and usurper, the other a rightful lord and master. And here also are two opposite

employments: unrighteousness, by which is meant all sin, whereby we deal unrighteously with God, our neighbour, and ourselves; and righteousness, whereby we give to God, to others, and ourselves, their respective dues. Now the apostle calls loudly upon us to render unto God the things that are God's; to yield every member of the body to him, and employ it for him; for the members of the body were all created by him, and redeemed for him, and shall be glorified with him.

O let us then take heed of abusing any members of our body; let us not employ so much as a little finger or hair of our heads in the service of sin: for it is the Lord's: And let every one take heed of dishonouring God with his bodily members, lest he provoke God to deny him the comfortable use of the members of his body. When Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the prophet of God, he presently lost the use of his hand.

Oh! how suddenly can God wither an hand or arm, that is stretched out to do mischief? 'tis a righteous thing for God to smite an abused eye with blindness, an abused ear with deafness, an abused foot with lameness, a swearing or forwswearing tongue with paralytic deadness.

Lord, how justly mayest thou recal thy favours, when we fight against thee with them? Yielding the members of our bodies as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin!

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

He argues from the precious promises and privileges of the new covenant, Ro 6:14. It might be objected that we cannot conquer and subdue sin, it is unavoidably too hard for us: "No," says he, "you wrestle with an enemy that may be dealt with and subdued, if you will but keep your ground and stand to your arms; it is an enemy that is already foiled and baffled; there is strength laid up in the covenant of grace for your assistance, if you will but use it. Sin shall not have dominion." God's promises to us are more

powerful and effectual for the mortifying of sin than our promises to God. Sin may struggle in a believer, and may create him a great deal of trouble, but it shall not have dominion; it may vex him, but shall not rule over him. For we are not under the law, but under grace, not under the law of sin and death, but under the law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus: we are actuated by other principles than we have been: new lords, new laws. Or, not under the covenant of works, which requires brick, and gives no straw, which condemns upon the least failure, which runs thus, "Do this, and live; do it not, and die;" but under the covenant of grace, which accepts sincerity as our gospel perfection, which requires nothing but what it promises strength to perform, which is herein well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant does not put us out of covenant, and especially that it does not leave our salvation in our own keeping, but lays it up in the hands of the Mediator, who undertakes for us that sin shall not have dominion over us, who hath himself condemned it, and will destroy it; so that, if we pursue the victory, we shall come off more than conquerors. Christ rules by the golden sceptre of grace, and he will not let sin have dominion over those that are willing subjects to that rule. This is a very comfortable word to all true believers. If we were under the law, we were undone, for the law curses every one that continues not in every thing; but we are under grace, grace which accepts the willing mind, which is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, which leaves room for repentance, which promises pardon upon repentance; and what can be to an ingenuous mind a stronger motive than this to have nothing to do with sin? Shall we sin against so much goodness, abuse such love? Some perhaps might suck poison out of this flower, and disingenuously use this as an encouragement to sin. See how the apostle starts at such a thought (Ro 6:15): Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. What can be more black and ill-natured than from a friend's extraordinary expressions of kindness and good-will to take occasion to affront and offend him? To spurn at such bowels, to spit in the face of such love, is that which, between man and man, all the world would cry out shame on.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

For we are not under the law. We who are Christians are not subject to that law where sin is excited, and where it rages unsubdued. But it may be asked here, what is meant by this declaration? Does it mean that Christians are absolved from all the obligations of the law? I answer,

(1.) The apostle does not affirm that Christians are not bound to obey the moral law. The whole scope of his reasoning shows that he maintains that they are. The whole structure of Christianity supposes the same thing. Comp. Mt 5:17-19.

(2.) The apostle means to say that Christians are not under the law as legalists, or as attempting to be justified by it. They seek a different plan of justification altogether; and they do not attempt to be justified by their own obedience. The Jews did; they do not.

(3.) It is implied here, that the effect of an attempt to be justified by the law was not to subdue sins, but to excite them, and to lead to indulgence in them. Justification by works would destroy no sin, would check no evil propensity, but would leave a man to all the ravages and riotings of unsubdued passion. If, therefore, the apostle had maintained that men were justified by works, he could not have consistently exhorted them to abandon their sins. He would have had no powerful motives by which to urge it; for the scheme would not lead to it. But he here says that the Christian was seeking justification on a plan which contemplated and which accomplished the destruction of sin; and he therefore infers that sin should not have dominion over them. But under grace. Under a scheme of mercy, the design and tendency of which is to subdue sin, and destroy it.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

He argues from the evidence that this will be of our state, making for us, or against us (Ro 6:16): To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are. All the children of men are either the servants of God, or the servants of sin; these are the two families. Now, if we would know to which of these families we belong, we must enquire to which of these masters we yield obedience. Our obeying the laws of sin will be an evidence against us that we belong to that family on which death is entailed. As, on the contrary, our obeying the laws of Christ will evidence our relation to Christ's family.

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

How the apostle doth not barely urge the necessity of serving Christ in our regenerate state, but does enforce the proportion which our service now ought to bear to the disservice formerly done in our carnal state: As ye have yielded your members servants to iniquity,; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness.

Observe lastly, The great dignation and gracious condescension of Christ, that he should accept those members of ours as instruments of his service, which have been employed in the devil's service.

One would have expected, that Christ should rather have said, "Vile wretch? Satan has had the use and service of thy body, and all its members, from thy childhood and youth, unto this day; thy will has been his throne, thy memory his storehouse, and all thy members his tools and instruments to sin against me; thou didst indeed dedicate all these to my service and glory in thy baptism, but thou hast employed all these in Satan's service for many years past: However, if now thou art willing to yield those very members unto righteousness and to holiness, which formerly were servants unto uncleanness, I will both accept them and reward thee for them."

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Sinners are voluntary in the service of sin. The devil could not force them into the service, if they did not yield themselves to it. This will justify God in the ruin of sinners, that they sold themselves to work wickedness: it was their own act and deed. To iniquity unto iniquity. Every sinful act strengthens and confirms the sinful habit: to iniquity as the work unto iniquity as the wages. Sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind; growing worse and worse, more and more hardened. This he speaks after the manner of men, that is, he fetches a similitude from that which is common among men, even the change of services and subjections.

Unto holiness. In order to practise holiness. Let the surrender of your members to holiness be as sincere and as unqualified as the surrender was to sin. This is all that is required of Christians. Before conversion they were wholly given to sin; after conversion they should be wholly given to God. If all Christians would employ the same energies in advancing the kingdom of God that they have in promoting the kingdom of Satan, the church would rise with dignity and grandeur, and every continent and island would soon feel the movement. No requirement is more reasonable than this; and it should be a source of lamentation and mourning with Christians that it is not so; that they have employed so mighty energies in the cause of Satan, and do so little in the service of God. This argument for energy in the divine life the apostle proceeds further to illustrate, by comparing the rewards obtained in the two kinds of servitude, that of the world and of God.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death.

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Death is as due to a sinner when he hath sinned as wages are to a servant when he hath done his work. This is true of every sin. There is no sin in its own nature venial. Death is the wages of the least sin. Sin is here represented either as the work for which the wages are given, or as the master by whom the wages are given; all that are sin's servants and do sin's work must expect to be thus paid.

but the life is a gift, it comes by favour. Sinners merit hell, but saints do not merit heaven. There is no proportion between the glory of heaven and our obedience; we must thank God, and not ourselves, if ever we get to heaven. And this gift is through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is Christ that purchased it, prepared it, prepares us for it, preserves us to it; he is the Alpha and Omega, All in all in our salvation.

Death is thus called the wages of sin, not because it is an arbitrary, undeserved appointment, but

(1.) because it is its proper desert. Not a pain will be inflicted on the sinner which he does not deserve. Not a sinner will die who ought not to die. Sinners even in hell will be treated just as they deserve to be treated; and there is not to man a more fearful and terrible consideration than this. No man can conceive a more dreadful doom than for himself to be treated for ever just as he deserves to be. But

(2.) this is the wages of sin, because, like the pay of the soldier, it is just what was threatened. Eze 18:4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." God will not inflict anything more than was threatened, and therefore it is just. Death is as due to a sinner when he hath sinned as wages are to a servant when he hath done his work. This is true of every sin. There is no sin in its own nature venial. Death is the wages of the least sin. Sin is here represented either as the work for which the wages are given, or as the master by whom the wages are given; all that are sin's servants and do sin's work must expect to be thus paid.

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Romans-7

An Analogy from Marriage

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?
2 For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

The severest laws could but kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do. Thus while we were alive to the law we were under the power of it--while we were in our Old-Testament state, before the gospel came into the world, and before it came with power into our hearts. Such is the law of marriage (Ro 7:2),

When we were in the flesh, that is, in a carnal state, under the reigning power of sin and corruption--in the flesh as in our

element--then the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members, we were carried down the stream of sin, and the law was but as an imperfect dam, which made the stream to swell the higher, and rage the more. Our desire was towards sin, as that of the wife towards her husband, and sin ruled over us. We embraced it, loved it, devoted all to it, conversed daily with it, made it our care to please it. We were under a law of sin and death, as the wife under the law of marriage; and the product of this marriage was fruit brought forth unto death, that is, actual transgressions were produced by the original corruption, such as deserve death. Lust, having conceived by the law (which is the strength of sin, 1Co 15:56), bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, Jam 1:15. This is the posterity that springs from this marriage to sin and the law. This comes of the motions of sin working in our members. And this continues during life, while the law is alive to us, and we are alive to the law.

3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Now we are thus married to Christ, that we should bring forth fruit unto God, Ro 7:4. One end of marriage is fruitfulness: God instituted the ordinance that he might seek a godly seed, Mal 2:15. The wife is compared to the fruitful vine, and children are called the fruit of the womb. Now the great end of our marriage to Christ is our fruitfulness in love, and grace, and every good work. This is fruit unto God, pleasing to God, according to his will, aiming at his glory. As our old marriage to sin produced fruit unto death, so our second marriage to Christ produces fruit unto God, fruits of righteousness. Good works are the children of the new nature, the products of our union with Christ, as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its union with the root.

Ye also are become dead to the law. Rom 6:3, Rom 6:4, Rom 6:8. The connexion between us and the law is dissolved, so far as the scope of the apostle's argument is concerned. He does not say that we are dead to it, or released from it as a rule of duty, or as a matter of obligation to obey it; for there neither is, nor can be, any such release; but we are dead to it as a way of justification and sanctification. In the great matter of acceptance with God, we have ceased to rely on the law, having become dead to it, and having embraced another plan. By the body of Christ. That is, by his body crucified; or, in other words, by his death. Comp. Eph 2:15, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity," etc.; that is, by his death. Col 1:22, "In the body of his flesh through death," etc.; Rom 2:14, 1Pet 2:24, "Who bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The sense is, therefore, that by the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice; by his suffering for us that which would be sufficient to meet the demands of the law; by his taking our place, he has released us from the law as a way of justification, freed us from its penalty, and saved us from its curse. Thus released, we are at liberty to be uffited to the law of him who has thus bought us with his blood.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

Among other arguments used in the foregoing chapter to persuade us against sin, and to holiness, this was one (Ro 6:14), that we are not under the law; and this argument is here further insisted upon and explained (Ro 7:6): We are delivered from the law. What is meant by this? And how is it an argument why sin should not reign over us, and why we should walk in newness of life?

1. We are delivered from the power of the law which curses and condemns us for the sin committed by us. The sentence of the law against us is vacated and reversed, by the death of Christ, to all true believers. The law saith, The soul that sins shall die; but we are delivered from the law. The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die. We are redeemed from the curse of the law, Ga 3:13.

2. We are delivered from that power of the law which irritates and provokes the sin that dwelleth in us. This the apostle seems especially to refer to (Ro 7:5): The motions of sins which were by the law. The law, by commanding, forbidding, threatening, corrupt and fallen man, but offering no grace to cure and strengthen, did but stir up the corruption, and, like the sun shining upon a dunghill, excite and draw up the filthy steams. We being lamed by the fall, the law comes and directs us, but provides nothing to heal and help our lameness, and so makes us halt and stumble the more. Understand this of the law not as a rule, but as a covenant of works. Now each of these is an argument why we should be holy; for here is encouragement to endeavours, though in many things we come short. We are under grace, which promises strength to do what it commands, and pardon upon repentance when we do amiss. This is the scope of these verses in general, that, in point of profession and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works--under the gospel of Christ, and not under the law of Moses. The difference between a law-state and a gospel-state he had before illustrated by the similitude of rising to a new life, and serving a new master; now here he speaks of is under the similitude of being married to a new husband.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

We are freed, by death, from our obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her obligation to her husband, Ro 7:3. This resemblance is not very close, nor needed it to be. You are become dead to the law, Ro 7:4. He does not say, "The law is dead" (some think because he would avoid giving offence to those who were yet zealous for the law), but, which comes all to one, You are dead to the law. As the crucifying of the world to us, and of us to the world, amounts to one and the same thing, so doth the law dying, and our dying to it. We are delivered from the law (Ro 7:6), katergethemen--we are nulled as to the law; our obligation to it as a husband is cassated and made void. And then he speaks of the law being dead as far as it was a law of bondage to us: That being dead wherein we were held; not the law itself, but its obligation to punishment and its provocation to sin. It is dead, it has lost its

power; and this (Ro 7:4) by the body of Christ, that is, by the sufferings of Christ in his body, by his crucified body, which abrogated the law, answered the demands of it, made satisfaction for our violation of it, purchased for us a covenant of grace, in which righteousness and strength are laid up for us, such as were not, nor could be, by the law. We are dead to the law by our union with the mystical body of Christ. By being incorporated into Christ in our baptism professedly, in our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, have no more to do with it than the dead servant, that is free from his master, hath to do with his master's yoke.

in spirit and in truth, Joh 4:24. There must be a renovation of our spirits wrought by the spirit of God, and in that we must serve. Not in the oldness of the letter; that is, we must not rest in mere external services, as the carnal Jews did, who gloried in their adherence to the letter of the law, and minded not the spiritual part of worship. The letter is said to kill with its bondage and terror, but we are delivered from that yoke that we may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, Lu 1:74,75. We are under the dispensation of the Spirit, and therefore must be spiritual, and serve in the spirit. Compare with this 2Co 3:3,6, &c. It becomes us to worship within the veil, and no longer in the outward court.

The Problem of Indwelling Sin

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

The great advantage that he had found by the law.

1. It was discovering: I had not known sin but by the law, Ro 7:7. As that which is straight discovers that which is crooked, as the looking-glass shows us our natural face with all its spots and deformities, so there is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin which is necessary to repentance, and consequently to peace and pardon, but by comparing our hearts and lives with the law.

Particularly he came to the knowledge of the sinfulness of lust by the law of the tenth commandment. By lust he means sin dwelling in us, sin in its first motions and workings, the corrupt principle. This he came to know when the law said, Thou shalt not covet. The law spoke in other language than the scribes and Pharisees made it to speak in; it spoke in the spiritual sense and meaning of it. By this he knew that lust was sin and a very sinful sin, that those motions and desires of the heart towards sin which never came into act were sinful, exceedingly sinful. Paul had a very quick and piercing judgment, all the advantages and improvements of education, and yet never attained the right knowledge of indwelling sin till the Spirit by the law made it known to him. There is nothing about which the natural man is more blind than about original corruption, concerning which the understanding is altogether in the dark till the Spirit by the law reveal it, and make it known. Thus the law is a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, opens and searches the wound, and so prepares it for healing. Thus sin by the commandment does appear sin (Ro 7:13); it appears in its own colours, appears to be what it is, and you cannot call it by a worse name than its own. Thus by the commandment it becomes exceedingly sinful; that is, it appears to be so. We never see the desperate venom or malignity there is in sin, till we come to compare it with the law, and the spiritual nature of the law, and then we see it to be an evil and a bitter thing.

2. It was humbling (Ro 7:9): I was alive. He thought himself in a very good condition; he was alive in his own opinion and apprehension, very secure and confident of the goodness of his state. Thus he was once, pote--in times past, when he was a Pharisee; for it was the common temper of that generation of men that they had a very good conceit of themselves; and Paul was then like the rest of them, and the reason was he was then without the law. Though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, though himself a great student in the law, a strict observer of it, and a zealous stickler for it, yet without the law. He had the letter of the law, but he had not the spiritual meaning of it--the shell, but not the kernel. He had the law in his hand and in his head, but he had it not in his heart; the notion of it, but not the power of

it. There are a great many who are spiritually dead in sin, that yet are alive in their own opinion of themselves, and it is their strangeness to the law that is the cause of the mistake. But when the commandment came, came in the power of it (not to his eyes only, but to his heart), sin revived, as the dust in a room rises (that is, appears) when the sun-shine is let into it. Paul then saw that in sin which he had never seen before; he then saw sin in its causes, the bitter root, the corrupt bias, the bent to backslide,--sin in its colours, deforming, defiling, breaking a righteous law, affronting an awful Majesty, profaning a sovereign crown by casting it to the ground,--sin in its consequences, sin with death at the heels of it, sin and the curse entailed upon it. "Thus sin revived, and then I died; I lost that good opinion which I had had of myself, and came to be of another mind. Sin revived, and I died; that is, the Spirit, but the commandment, convinced me that I was in a state of sin, and in a state of death because of sin." Of this excellent use is the law; it is a lamp and a light; it converts the soul, opens the eyes, prepares the way of the Lord in the desert, rends the rocks, levels the mountains, makes ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Thou shalt not covet. This is the beginning of the command, and all the rest is implied. The apostle knew that it would be understood without repeating the whole. This particular commandment he selected because it was more pertinent than the others to his purpose. The others referred particularly to external actions. But his object was to show the effect of sin on the mind and conscience. He therefore chose one that referred particularly to the desires of the heart.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead.

But sin. To illustrate the effect of the law on the mind, the apostle in this verse depicts its influence in exciting to evil desires and purposes. Perhaps nowhere has he evinced more consummate knowledge of the human heart than here. He brings an illustration that might have escaped most persons, but which goes directly to establish his position that the law is insufficient to promote the salvation of man. Sin here is personified. It means not a real entity;

not a physical subsistence; not something independent of the mind, having a separate existence, and lodged in the soul; but it means the corrupt passions, inclinations, and desires of the mind itself. Thus we say that lust burns, and ambition rages, and envy corrodes the mind, without meaning that lust, ambition, or envy are any independent physical subsistences; but meaning that the mind that is ambitious, or envious, is thus excited.

Concupiscence. Unlawful or irregular desire. Inclination for unlawful enjoyments. The word is the same which in Rom 7:7 is rendered lust. If it be asked in what way the law led to this, we may reply, that the main idea here is, that opposition by law to the desires and passions of wicked men only tends to inflame and exasperate them. This is the case with regard to sin in every form. An attempt to restrain it by force; to denounce it by laws and penalties; to cross the path of wickedness; only tends to irritate, and to excite into living energy, that which otherwise would be dormant in the bosom.

This it does, because

(1.) it crosses the path of the sinner, and opposes his intention, and the current of his feelings and his life.

(2.) The law acts the part of a detector, and lays open to view that which was in the bosom, but was concealed.

(3.) Such is the depth and obstinacy of sin in man, that the very attempt to restrain often only serves to exasperate, and to urge to greater deeds of wickedness. Restraint by law rouses the mad passions; urges to greater deeds of depravity; makes the sinner stubborn, obstinate, and more desperate. The very attempt to set up authority over him throws him into a posture of resistance, and makes him a party, and excites all the feelings of party rage. Any one may have witnessed this effect often on the mind of a wicked and obstinate child.

(4.) This is particularly true in regard to a sinner. He is calm often, and apparently tranquil; but let the law of God be brought home to his conscience, and he becomes maddened and enraged. He spurns its authority, yet his conscience tells him it is right; he attempts to throw it off, yet trembles at its power; and, to show his independence, or his purpose to sin, he plunges into iniquity, and becomes a more dreadful and obstinate sinner. It becomes a struggle for victory, and in the controversy with God he resolves not to be overcome. It accordingly happens that many a man is more profane, blasphemous, and desperate when under conviction for sin than at other times. In revivals of religion it often happens that men evince violence, and rage, and cursing, which they do not in a state of spiritual death in the church; and it is often a very certain indication that a man is under conviction for sin when he becomes particularly violent, and abusive, and outrageous in his opposition to God.

(5.) The effect here noticed by the apostle is one that has been observed at all times, and by all classes of writers. Thus Cato says, (Livy, xxxiv. 4,) "Do not think, Romans, that it will be hereafter as it was before the law was enacted. It is more safe that a bad man should not be accused, than that he should be absolved; and luxury not excited would be more tolerable than it will be now, by the very chains irritated and excited as a wild beast." Thus Seneca says, (de Clementia, i. 23,) "Parricides began with the law." Thus Horace; (Odes, i. 3,) "The human race, bold to endure all things, rushes through forbidden crime." Thus Ovid, (Amor. iii. 4,) "We always endeavour to obtain that which is forbidden, and desire that which is denied." (These passages are quoted from Tholuck.) See also Prov 9:17, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." If such be the effect of the law, then the inference of the apostle is unavoidable, that it is not adapted to save and sanctify man.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Was alive. This is opposed to what he immediately adds respecting another state, in which he was when he died. It must

mean, therefore, that he had a certain kind of peace; he deemed himself secure; he was free from the convictions of conscience and the agitations of alarm. The state to which he refers here must be doubtless that to which he himself elsewhere alludes, when he deemed himself to be righteous, depending on his own works, and esteeming himself to be blameless, Php 3:4-6 Acts 23:1, 26:4,5. It means, that he was then free from those agitations and alarms which he afterwards experienced when he was brought under conviction for sin. At that time, though he had the law, and was attempting to obey it, yet he was unacquainted with its spiritual and holy nature. He aimed at external conformity. Its claims on the heart were unfelt. This is the condition of every self-confident sinner, and of every one who is unawakened.

Without the law. Not that Paul was ever really without the law--that is, without the law of Moses; but he means before the law was applied to his heart in its spiritual meaning, and with power.

But when the commandment came. When it was applied to the heart and conscience. This is the only intelligible sense of the expression; for it cannot refer to the time when the law was given. When this was, the apostle does not say. But the expression denotes whenever it was so applied; when it was urged with power and efficacy on his conscience, to control, restrain, and threaten him, it produced this effect. We are unacquainted with the early operations of his mind, and with his struggles against conscience and duty. We know enough of him before conversion, however, to be assured that he was proud, impetuous, and unwilling to be restrained. See Acts 8:1-9:43. In the state of his self-confident righteousness and impetuosity of feeling, we may easily suppose that the holy law of God, which is designed to restrain the passions, to humble the heart, and to rebuke pride, would produce only irritation, and impatience of restraint, and revolt.

Sin revived. Lived again. This means that it was before dormant, Rom 7:8 but was now quickened into new life. The word is usually applied to a renewal of life, Rom 14:9, Lk 15:24,32 but here it means substantially the same as the expression in Rom 7:8, "Sin--wrought- in me all manner of concupiscence." The power of sin, which was before dormant, became quickened and active.

I died. That is, I was by it involved in additional guilt and misery. It stands opposed to "I was alive," and must mean the opposite of that; and evidently denotes that the effect of the commandment was to bring him under what he calls death, Rom 5:12,14,15 that is, sin reigned, and raged, and produced its withering and condemning effects; it led to aggravated guilt and misery. It may also include this idea: that before, he was self-confident and secure; but that by the commandment he was stricken down and humbled, his self-confidence was blasted, and his hopes were prostrated in the dust. Perhaps no words would better express the humble, subdued, melancholy, and helpless state of a converted sinner than the expressive phrase "I died." The essential idea here is, that the law did not answer the purpose which the Jew would claim for it, to sanctify the soul and to give comfort, but that all its influence on the heart was to produce aggravated, unpardoned guilt and woe.

10 And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death.

The ill use that his corrupt nature made of the law notwithstanding.

1. Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, Ro 7:8. Observe, Paul had in him all manner of concupiscence, though one of the best unregenerate men that ever was; as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless, and yet sensible of all manner of concupiscence. And it was sin that wrought it, indwelling sin, his corrupt nature (he speaks of a sin that did work sin), and it took occasion by the commandment. The corrupt nature would

not have swelled and raged so much if it had not been for the restraints of the law; as the peccant humours in the body are raised, and more inflamed, by a purge that is not strong enough to carry them off. It is incident to corrupt nature, in vetitum niti--to lean towards what is forbidden. Ever since Adam ate forbidden fruit, we have all been fond of forbidden paths; the diseased appetite is carried out most strongly towards that which is hurtful and prohibited. Without the law sin was dead, as a snake in winter, which the sunbeams of the law quicken and irritate.

2. It deceived men. Sin puts a cheat upon the sinner, and it is a fatal cheat, Ro 7:11. By it (by the commandment) slew me. There being in the law no such express threatening against sinful lustings, sin, that is, his won corrupt nature, took occasion thence to promise him impunity, and to say, as the serpent to our first parents, You shall not surely die. Thus it deceived and slew him.

3. It wrought death in me by that which is good, Ro 7:13. That which works concupiscence works death, for sin bringeth forth death. Nothing so good but a corrupt and vicious nature will pervert it, and make it an occasion of sin; no flower so sweet by sin will such poison out of it. Now in this sin appears sin. The worst thing that sin does, and most like itself, is the perverting of the law, and taking occasion from it to be so much the more malignant. Thus the commandment, which was ordained to life, was intended as a guide in the way to comfort and happiness, proved unto death, through the corruption of nature, Ro 7:10. Many a precious soul splits upon the rock of salvation; and the same word which to some is an occasion of life unto life is to others an occasion of death unto death. The same sun that makes the garden of flowers more fragrant makes the dunghill more noisome; the same heat that softens wax hardens clay; and the same child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The way to prevent this mischief is to bow our souls to the commanding authority of the word and law of God, not striving against, but submitting to it.

Which was ordained to life. Which was intended to produce life, or happiness. Life here stands opposed to death, and means felicity, peace, eternal bliss. Jn 3:36. When the apostle says that it was ordained to life, he probably has reference to the numerous passages in the Old Testament which speak of the law in this manner. Lev 18:5, "Ye shall keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them," Eze 20:11 Eze 20:11,13,21, 18:9,21. The meaning of these passages, in connexion with this declaration of Paul, may be thus expressed:

(1.) The law is good; it has no evil, and is itself fitted to produce no evil.

(2.) If man was pure, and it was obeyed perfectly, it would produce life and happiness only. On those who have obeyed it in heaven, it has produced only happiness.

(3.) For this it was ordained; it is adapted to it; and when perfectly obeyed, it produces no other effect. But,

(4.) man is a sinner; he has not obeyed it; and in such a case the law threatens woe. It crosses the inclination of man; and instead of producing peace and life, as it would on a being perfectly holy, it produces only woe and crime. The law of a parent may be good, and may be appointed to promote the happiness of his children; it may be admirably fitted to it if all were obedient; yet in the family there may be one obstinate, self-willed, and stubborn child, resolved to indulge his evil passions, and the results to him would be woe and despair. The commandment, which was ordained for the good of the family, and which would be adapted to promote their welfare, he alone, of all the number, would find to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me,
and by it slew *me*.

The meaning here seems to be, that his corrupt and rebellious propensities, excited by the law, led him astray; caused him more and more to sin; practised a species of deception on him by urging him on headlong, and without deliberation, into aggravated transgression. In this sense, all sinners are deceived. Their passions urge them on, deluding them, and leading them farther and farther from happiness, and involving them, before they are aware, in crime and death. No being in the universe is more deluded than a sinner in the indulgence of evil passions. The description of Solomon in a particular case will apply to all, Prov 7:21-23.

"With much fair speech she caused him to yield; With the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, As an ox goeth to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correctran of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver, As a bird hasteth to the snare."

12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

1. It is holy, just, and good, Ro 7:12. The law in general is so, and every particular commandment is so. Laws are as the law-makers are. God, the great lawgiver, is holy, just, and good, therefore his law must needs be so. The matter of it is holy: it commands holiness, encourages holiness; it is holy, for it is agreeable to the holy will of God, the original of holiness. It is just, for it is consonant to the rules of equity and right reason: the ways of the Lord are right. It is good in the design of it; it was given for the good of mankind, for the conservation of peace and order in the world. It makes the observers of it good; the intention of it was to better and reform mankind. Wherever there is true grace there is an assent to this--that the law is holy, just, and good.

2. The law is spiritual (Ro 7:14), not only in regard to the effect of it, as it is a means of making us spiritual, but in regard to the extent of it; it reaches our spirits, it lays a restraint upon, and gives a direction to, the motions of the inward man; it is a

discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb 4:12. It forbids spiritual wickedness, heart-murder, and heart-adultery. It commands spiritual service, requires the heart, obliges us to worship God in the spirit. It is a spiritual law, for it is given by God, who is a Spirit and the Father of spirits; it is given to man, whose principal part is spiritual; the soul is the best part, and the leading part of the man, and therefore the law to the man must needs be a law to the soul. Herein the law of God is above all other laws, that it is a spiritual law. Other laws may forbid compassing and imagining, &c., which are treason in the heart, but cannot take cognizance thereof, unless there be some overt act; but the law of God takes notice of the iniquity regarded in the heart, though it go no further. Wash thy heart from wickedness, Jer 4:14. We know this: Wherever there is true grace there is an experimental knowledge of the spirituality of the law of God.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Might become exeeedingly sinful. In the original this is a very strong expression, and is one of those used by Paul to express strong emphasis, or intensity, καθυπερβολην. By hyperboles. In an extensive degree; to the utmost possible extent, 1Cor 12:31, 2Cor 1:8, 4:7, 12:7, Gal 1:13. The phrase occurs in each of these places. The sense here is, that by the giving of the command, and its application to the mind, sin was completely developed; it was excited, inflamed, aggravated, and showed to be excessively malignant and deadly. It was not a dormant, slumbering principle; but it was awfully opposed to God and his law. Calvin has well expressed the sense: "It was proper that the enormity of sin should be revealed by the law; because unless sin should break forth by some dreadful and enormous excess, (as they say,) it would not be known to be sin. This excess exhibits itself the more violently, while it turns life into death." The sentiment of the whole is, that the tendency of the law is to excite the dormant sin of the bosom into active existence, and to reveal its true nature. It is desirable that that

should be done; and as that is all that the law accomplishes, it is not adapted to sanctify the soul. To show that this was the design of the apostle, it is desirable that sin should be thus seen in its true nature, because

(1.) man should be acquainted with his true character. He should not deceive himself.

(2.) Because it is one part of God's plan to develope the secret feelings of the heart, and to show to all creatures what they are.

(3.) Because only by knowing this will the sinner be induced to take a remedy, and strive to be saved. God often thus suffers men to plunge into sin; to act out their nature, that they may see themselves, and be alarmed at the consequences of their own crimes.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Verses 14-25: The remainder of this chapter has been the subject of no small degree of controversy. The question has been whether it describes the state of Paul before his conversion, or afterwards. It is not the purpose of these Notes to enter into controversy, or into extended discussion. But after all the attention which I have been able to give to this passage, I regard it as describing the state of a man under the gospel, as descriptive of the operations of the mind of Paul subsequent to his conversion. This interpretation is adopted for the following reasons:

(1.) Because it seems to me to be the most obvious. It is that which will strike plain men as being the natural meaning; men who have not a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense.

(2.) Because it agrees with the design of the apostle, which is to show that the law is not adapted to produce sanctification and peace. This he had done in regard to a man before he was

converted. If this relates to the same period, then it is a useless discussion of a point already discussed. If it relates to that period also, then there is a large field of action, including the whole period after a man's conversion to Christianity, in which the question might still be unsettled, whether the law there might not be adapted to sanctify. The apostle therefore makes thorough work with the argument, and shows that the operation of the law is everywhere the same.

(3.) Because the expressions which occur are such as cannot be understood of an impenitent sinner. Rom 7:15, Rom 7:22.

(4.) Because it accords with parallel expressions in regard to the state of the conflict in a Christian's mind.

(5.) Because there is a change made here from the past tense to the present. In Rom 7:7, etc., he had used the past tense, evidently describing some former state. In Rom 7:14 there is a change to the present, a change inexplicable, except on the supposition that he meant to describe some state different from that before described. That could be no other than to carry his illustration forward in showing the inefficacy of the law on a man in his renewed state; or to show that such was the remaining depravity of the man, that it produced substantially the same effects as in the former condition.

(6.) Because it accords with the experience of Christians, and not with sinners. It is just such language as plain Christians, who are acquainted with their own hearts, use to express their feelings. I admit that this last consideration is not by itself conclusive; but if the language did not accord with the experience of the Christian world, it would be a strong circumstance against any proposed interpretation. The view which is here expressed of this chapter, as supposing that the previous part (Rom 7:7-13) refers to a man in his unregenerate state, and that the remainder describes the effect of the law on the mind of a renewed man, was adopted by studying the

chapter itself, without aid from any writer. I am happy, however, to find that the views thus expressed are in accordance with those of the late Rev. Dr. J.P. Wilson, than whom, perhaps, no man was ever better qualified to interpret the Scriptures. He says,

"In the fourth verse, he (Paul) changes to the first person plural, because he intended to speak of the former experience of Christians, who had been Jews. In the seventh verse he uses the first person singular, but speaks in the past tense, because he describes his own experience when he was an unconverted Pharisee. In the fourteenth verse, and unto the end of the chapter, he uses the first person singular, and the present tense, because he exhibits his own experience since he became a Christian and an apostle."

15 For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not;
but what I hate, that do I.

That do I. Under the influence of sinful propensities, and carnal inclinations and desires. This represents the strong native propensity to sin; and even the power of corrupt propensity under the restraining influence of the gospel. On this remarkable and important passage we may observe,

(1.) that the prevailing propensity--the habitual fixed inclination of the mind of the Christian--is to do right. The evil course is hated; the right course is loved. This is the characteristic of a pious mind. It distinguishes a holy man from a sinner.

(2.) The evil which is done is disapproved; is a source of grief; and the habitual desire of the mind is to avoid it, and be pure. This also distinguishes the Christian from the sinner.

(3.) There is no need of being embarrassed here with any metaphysical difficulties or inquiries how this can be; for

(a) it is in fact the experience of all Christians. The habitual, fixed inclination and desire of their minds is to serve God. They have a fixed abhorrence of sin; and yet they are conscious of imperfection, and error, and sin, that is the source of uneasiness and trouble. The strength of natural passion may in an unguarded moment overcome them. The power of long habits of previous thoughts may annoy them. A man who was an infidel before his conversion, and whose mind was filled with scepticism, and cavils, and blasphemy, will find the effect of his former habits of thinking lingering in his mind, and annoying his peace for years. These thoughts will start up with the rapidity of the lightning. Thus it is with every vice and every opinion. It is one of the effects of habit. "The very passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it;" and where sin has been long indulged, it leaves its withering, desolating effect on the soul long after conversion, and produces that state of conflict with which every Christian is familiar.

(b) An effect somewhat similar is felt by all men. All are conscious of doing that, under the excitement of passion and prejudice, which their conscience and better judgment disapprove. A conflict thus exists, which is attended with as much metaphysical difficulty as the struggle in the Christian's mind referred to here.

(c) The same thing was observed and described in the writings of the heathen. Thus Xenophon, (Cyrop. vi. 1,) Araspes, the Persian, says in order to excuse his treasonable designs, "Certainly I must have two souls; for plainly it is not one and the same which is both evil and good; and at the same time wishes to do a thing and not to do it. Plainly, then, there are two souls; and when the good one prevails, then it does good; and when the evil one predominates, then it does evil." So also Epictetus (Enchirid. ii. 26) says, "He that sins does not do what he would; but what he would not, that he does." With this

passage it would almost seem that Paul was familiar, and had his eye on it when he wrote. So also the well known passage from Ovid, Meta. vii. 9: Aliudque Cupido, Mens aliud suadet. Video meliora, proboque, Deteriora sequor. "Desire prompts to one thing, but the mind persuades to another. I see the good, and approve it, and yet pursue the wrong."--See other passages of similar import quoted in Grotius and Tholuck.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is*
good.

Here is a description of the conflict between grace and corruption in the heart, between the law of God and the law of sin. And it is applicable two ways:--

1. To the struggles that are in a convinced soul, but yet unregenerate, in the person of whom it is supposed, by some, that Paul speaks.

2. To the struggles that are in a renewed sanctified soul, but yet in a state of imperfection; as other apprehend. And a great controversy there is of which of these we are to understand the apostle here. So far does the evil prevail here, when he speaks of one sold under sin, doing it, not performing that which is good, that it seems difficult to apply it to the regenerate, who are described to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and yet so far does the good prevail in hating sin, consenting to the law, delighting in it, serving the law of God with the mind, that it is more difficult to apply it to the unregenerate that are dead in trespasses and sins.

I. Apply it to the struggles that are felt in a convinced soul, that is yet in a state of sin, knows his Lord's will, but does it not, approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and yet lives in the constant breach of it, Ro 2:17-23. Though he has that within him that witnesses against the sin he commits, and it is not without a great deal of

reluctancy that he does commit it, the superior faculties striving against it, natural conscience warning against it before it is committed and smiting for it afterwards, yet the man continues a slave to his reigning lusts. It is not thus with every unregenerate man, but with those only that are convinced by the law, but not changed by the gospel. The apostle had said (Ro 6:14), Sin shall not have dominion, because you are not under the law, but under grace, for the proof of which he here shows that a man under the law, and not under grace, may be, and is, under the dominion of sin. The law may discover sin, and convince of sin, but it cannot conquer and subdue sin, witness the predominancy of sin in many that are under very strong legal convictions. It discovers the defilement, but will not wash it off. It makes a man weary and heavy laden (Mt 11:28), burdens him with his sin; and yet, if rested in, it yields no help towards the shaking off of that burden; this is to be had only in Christ. The law may make a man cry out, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? and yet leave him thus fettered and captivated, as being too weak to deliver him (Ro 8:3), give him a spirit of bondage to fear, Ro 8:15. Now a soul advanced thus far by the law is in a fair way towards a state of liberty by Christ, though many rest here and go no further. Felix trembled, but never came to Christ. It is possible for a man to go to hell with his eyes open (Nu 24:3,4), illuminated with common convictions, and to carry about with him a self-accusing conscience, even in the service of the devil. He may consent to the law that it is good, delight to know God's ways (as they, Isa 58:2), may have that within him that witnesses against sin and for holiness; and yet all this overpowered by the reigning love of sin. Drunkards and unclean persons have some faint desires to leave off their sins, and yet persist in them notwithstanding, such is the impotency and such the insufficiency of their convictions. Of such as these there are many that will needs have all this understood, and contend earnestly for it: though it is very hard to imagine why, if the apostle intended this, he should speak all along in his own person; and not only so, but in the present tense. Of his own state under conviction he had spoken at large, as of a thing past

(Ro 7:7, &c.): I died; the commandment I found to be unto death; and if here he speaks of the same state as his present state, and the condition he was now in, surely he did not intend to be so understood: and therefore,

II. It seems rather to be understood of the struggles that are maintained between grace and corruption in sanctified souls. That there are remainders of indwelling corruption, even where there is a living principle of grace, is past dispute; that this corruption is daily breaking forth in sins of infirmity (such as are consistent with a state of grace) is no less certain. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, 1Jo 1:8,10. That true grace strives against these sins and corruptions, does not allow of them, hates them, mourns over them, groans under them as a burden, is likewise certain (Ga 5:17): The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. These are the truths which, I think, are contained in this discourse of the apostle. And his design is further to open the nature of sanctification, that it does not attain to a sinless perfection in this life; and therefore to quicken us to, and encourage us in, our conflicts with remaining corruptions. Our case is not singular, that which we do sincerely strive against, shall not be laid to our charge, and through grace the victory is sure at last. The struggle here is like that between Jacob and Esau in the womb, between the Canaanites and Israelites in the land, between the house of Saul and the house of David; but great is the truth and will prevail. Understanding it thus, we may observe here,

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

It is no more I that do it. This is evidently figurative language, for it is really the man that sins when evil is committed. But the apostle makes a distinction between sin and that which he intends by the pronoun I. By the former he evidently means his

corrupt nature; by the latter he refers to his renewed nature, his Christian principles. He means to say that he does not approve or love it in his present state, but that it is the result of his native propensities and passions. In his heart, and conscience, and habitual feeling, he did not choose to commit sin, but abhorred it. Thus every Christian can say that he does not choose to do evil, but would wish to be perfect; that he hates sin, and yet that his corrupt passions lead him astray. But sin. My corrupt passions and native propensities. That dwelleth in me. Dwelling in me as its home. This is a strong expression, denoting that sin had taken up its habitation in the mind, and abode there. It had not yet been wholly dislodged. This expression stands in contrast with another that occurs, where it is said that "the Spirit of God dwells" in the Christian, Rom 8:9, 1Cor 3:16. The sense is, that he is strongly influenced by sin on the one hand; and by the Spirit on the other. From this expression has arisen the phrase so common among Christians, indwelling sin.

19 For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Is present with me. Is near; is at hand. It starts up unbidden, and undesired. It is in the path, and never leaves us, but is always ready to impede our going, and to turn us from our good designs. Comp. Ps 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me." The sense is, that to do evil is agreeable to our strong natural inclinations and passions.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

1. What he complains of--the remainder of indwelling corruptions, which he here speaks of, to show that the law is insufficient to justify even a regenerate man, that the best man in the world hath enough in him to condemn him, if God should deal with him according to the law, which is not the fault of the law, but of our own corrupt nature, which cannot fulfil the law.

The repetition of the same things over and over again in this discourse shows how much Paul's heart was affected with what he wrote, and how deep his sentiments were. Observe the particulars of this complaint.

(1.) I am carnal, sold under sin, Ro 7:14. He speaks of the Corinthians as carnal, 1Co 3:1. Even where there is spiritual life there are remainders of carnal affections, and so far a man may be sold under sin; he does not sell himself to work wickedness, as Ahab did (1Ki 21:25), but he was sold by Adam when he sinned and fell--sold, as a poor slave that does his master's will against his own will--sold under sin, because conceived in iniquity and born in sin.

(2.) What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I, Ro 7:15. And to the same purport, Ro 7:19,21, When I would do good, evil is present with me. Such was the strength of corruptions, that he could not attain that perfection in holiness which he desired and breathed after. Thus, while he was pressing forward towards perfection, yet he acknowledges that he had not already attained, neither was already perfect, Php 3:12. Fain he would be free from all sin, and perfectly do the will of God, such was his settled judgment; but his corrupt nature drew him another way: it was like a clog, that checked and kept him down when he would have soared upward, like the bias in a bowl, which, when it is thrown straight, yet draws it aside.

(3.) In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good, Ro 7:18. Here he explains himself concerning the corrupt nature, which he calls flesh; and as far as that goes there is no good to be expected, any more than one would expect good corn growing upon a rock, or on the sand which is by the sea-side. As the new nature, as far as that goes, cannot commit sin (1Jo 3:9), so the flesh, the old nature, as far as that goes, cannot perform a good duty. How should it? For the flesh serveth the law of sin (Ro 7:25), it is under the conduct and government of that law;

and, while it is so, it is not likely to do any good. The corrupt nature is elsewhere called flesh (Ge 6:3,Joh 3:6); and, though there may be good things dwelling in those that have this flesh, yet, as far as the flesh goes, there is no good, the flesh is not a subject capable of any good.

(4.) I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, Ro 7:23. The corrupt and sinful inclination is here compared to a law, because it controlled and checked him in his good motions. It is said to be seated in his members, because, Christ having set up his throne in his heart, it was only the rebellious members of the body that were the instruments of sin--in the sensitive appetite; or we may take it more generally for all that corrupt nature which is the seat not only of sensual but of more refined lusts. This wars against the law of the mind, the new nature; it draws the contrary way, drives on a contrary interest, which corrupt disposition and inclination are as great a burden and grief to the soul as the worst drudgery and captivity could be. It brings me into captivity. To the same purport (Ro 7:25), With the flesh I serve the law of sin; that is, the corrupt nature, the unregenerate part, is continually working towards sin.

(5.) His general complaint we have in Ro 7:24, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The thing he complains of is a body of death; either the body of flesh, which is a mortal dying body (while we carry this body about with us, we shall be troubled with corruption; when we are dead, we shall be freed from sin, and not before), or the body of sin, the old man, the corrupt nature, which tends to death, that is, to the ruin of the soul. Or, comparing it to a dead body, the touch of which was by the ceremonial law defiling, if actual transgressions be dead works (Heb 9:14), original corruption is a dead body. It was as troublesome to Paul as if he had had a dead body tied to him, which he must have carried about with him. This made him cry out, O wretched man that I am! A man that had learned in every state to be content yet complains thus of his corrupt nature. Had I been required to

speak of Paul, I should have said, "O blessed man that thou art, an ambassador of Christ, a favourite of heaven, a spiritual father of thousands!" But in his own account he was a wretched man, because of the corruption of nature, because he was not so good as he fain would be, had not yet attained, neither was already perfect. Thus miserably does he complain. Who shall deliver me? He speaks like one that was sick of it, that would give any thing to be rid of it, looks to the right hand and to the left for some friend that would part between him and his corruptions. The remainders of indwelling sin are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul.

23 but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

And bringing me into captivity. Making me a prisoner, or a captive. This is the completion of the figure respecting the warfare. A captive taken in war was at the disposal of the victor. So the apostle represents himself as engaged in a warfare; and as being overcome, and made an unwilling captive to the evil inclinations of the heart. The expression is strong; and denotes strong corrupt propensities. But though strong, it is believed it is language which all sincere Christians can adopt of themselves, as expressive of that painful and often disastrous conflict in their bosoms when they contend against the native propensities of their hearts.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

2. What he comforts himself with. The case was sad, but there were some allays. Three things comforted him:--

(a.) That his conscience witnessed for him that he had a good principle ruling and prevailing in him, notwithstanding. It is well when all does not go one way in the soul. The rule of this good principle which he had was the law of God, to which he here speaks of having a threefold regard, which is certainly to be found in all that are sanctified, and no others.

[1.] I consent unto the law that it is good, Ro 7:16, symphemi--I give my vote to the law; here is the approbation of the judgment. Wherever there is grace there is not only a dread of the severity of the law, but a consent to the goodness of the law. "It is a good in itself, it is good for me." This is a sign that the law is written in the heart, that the soul is delivered into the mould of it. To consent to the law is so far to approve of it as not to wish it otherwise constituted than it is. The sanctified judgment not only concurs to the equity of the law, but to the excellency of it, as convinced that a conformity to the law is the highest perfection of human nature, and the greatest honour and happiness we are capable of.

[2.] I delight in the law of God after the inward man, Ro 7:22. His conscience bore witness to a complacency in the law. He delighted not only in the promises of the word, but in the precepts and prohibitions of the word; synedomai expresses a becoming delight. He did herein concur in affection with all the saints. All that are savingly regenerate or born again do truly delight in the law of God, delight to know it, to do it--cheerfully submit to the authority of it, and take a complacency in that submission, never better pleased than when heart and life are in the strictest conformity to the law and will of God. After the inward man; that is, First, The mind or rational faculties, in opposition to the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh. The soul is the inward man, and that is the seat of gracious delights, which are therefore sincere and serious, but secret; it is the renewing of the inward man, 2Co 4:16. Secondly, The new nature. The new man is called the inner man (Eph 3:16), the hidden man of the heart, 1Pe 3:4. Paul, as far as he was sanctified, had a delight in the law of God.

[3.] With the mind I myself serve the law of God, Ro 7:25. It is not enough to consent to the law, and to delight in the law, but we must serve the law; our souls must be entirely delivered up into the obedience of it. Thus it was with Paul's mind; thus it is with every sanctified renewed mind; this is the ordinary course and way; thitherward goes the bent of the soul. I myself--autos ego, plainly

intimating that he speaks in his own person, and not in the person of another.

(b.) That the fault lay in that corruption of his nature which he did really bewail and strive against: It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. This he mentions twice (Ro 7:17,20), not as an excuse for the guilt of his sin (it is enough to condemn us, if we were under the law, that the sin which does the evil dwelleth in us), but as a salvo for his evidences, that he might not sink in despair, but take comfort from the covenant of grace, which accepts the willingness of the spirit, and has provided pardon for the weakness of the flesh. He likewise herein enters a protestation against all that which this indwelling sin produced. Having professed his consent to the law of God, he here professes his dissent from the law of sin. "It is not I; I disown the fact; it is against my mind that it is done." As when in the senate the major part are bad, and carry every thing the wrong way, it is indeed the act of the senate, but the honest party strive against it, bewail what is done, and enter their protestation against it; so that it is no more they that do it.--Dwelleth in me, as the Canaanites among the Israelites, though they were put under tribute: dwelleth in me, and is likely to dwell there, while I live.

(c.) His great comfort lay in Jesus Christ (Ro 7:25): I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. In the midst of his complaints he breaks out into praises. It is a special remedy against fears and sorrows to be much in praise: many a poor drooping soul hath found it so. And, in all our praises, this should be the burden of the son, "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ." Who shall deliver me? says he (Ro 7:24), as one at a loss for help. At length he finds an all-sufficient friend, even Jesus Christ. When we are under the sense of the remaining power of sin and corruption, we shall see reason to bless God through Christ (for, as he is the mediator of all our prayers, so he is of all our praises)--to bless God for Christ; it is he that stands between us and the wrath due to us for this sin. If it

were not for Christ, this iniquity that dwells in us would certainly be our ruin. He is our advocate with the Father, and through him God pities, and spares, and pardons, and lays not our iniquities to our charge. It is Christ that has purchased deliverance for us in due time. Through Christ death will put an end to all these complaints, and waft us to an eternity which we shall spend without sin or sigh. Blessed be God that giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

O wretched man that I am! The feeling implied by this lamentation is the result of this painful conflict; and this frequent subjection to sinful propensities. The effect of this conflict is

(1.) to produce pain and distress, it is often an agonizing struggle between good and evil; a struggle which annoys the peace, and renders life wretched.

(2.) It tends to produce humility. It is humbling to man to be thus under the influence of evil passions. It is degrading to his nature; a stain on his glory; and it tends to bring him into the dust, that he is under the control of such propensities, and so often gives indulgence to them. In such circumstances, the mind is overwhelmed with wretchedness, and instinctively sighs for relief. Can the law aid? Can man aid? Can any native strength of conscience or of reason aid? In vain all these are tried, and the Christian then calmly and thankfully acquiesces in the consolations of the apostle, that aid can be obtained only through Jesus Christ. Who shall deliver me. Who shall rescue me; the condition of a mind in deep distress, and conscious of its own weakness, and looking for aid. The body of this death. Marg. This body of death. The word body here is probably used as equivalent to flesh, denoting the corrupt and evil propensities on the soul. Rom 7:18. It is thus used to denote the law of sin in the members, as being that with which the apostle was struggling, and from which he desired to be delivered. The expression "body of this death" is a Hebraism, denoting a body deadly in its tendency; and the whole expression may mean the corrupt principles of man; the

carnal, evil affections that lead to death or to condemnation. The expression is one of vast strength, and strongly characteristic of the apostle Paul. It indicates,

(1.) that it was near him, attending him, and was distressing in its nature.

(2.) An earnest wish to be delivered from it. Some have supposed that he refers to a custom practised by ancient tyrants, of binding a dead body to a captive as a punishment, and compelling him to drag the cumbersome and offensive burden with him wherever he went. I do not see any evidence that the apostle had this in view. But such a fact may be used as a striking and perhaps not improper illustration of the meaning of the apostle here. No strength of words could express deeper feeling; none more feelingly indicate the necessity of the grace of God to accomplish that to which the unaided human powers are incompetent.

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I
myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

I thank God. That is, I thank God for effecting a deliverance to which I am myself incompetent. There is a way of I of rescue, and trace it altogether to his mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ. What conscience could not do, what the law could not do, what unaided human strength could not do, has been accomplished by the plan the gospel; and complete deliverance can be expected there, and there alone. This is the point to which all his reasoning had tended; and having thus shown that the law was insufficient to effect this deliverance, he is now prepared to utter the language of Christian thankfulness that it can be effected by the gospel. The superiority of the gospel to the law, in overcoming all the evils under which man labours, is thus triumphantly established. Comp. 1Cor 15:57.

The law of sin. That is, in the members. The flesh throughout, in all its native propensities and passions, leads to sin; it has no

tendency to holiness; and its corruptions cart be overcome only by the grace of God. We have thus

(1.) a view of the sad and painful conflict between sin and God. They are opposed in all things.

(2.) We see the raging, withering effect of sin on the soul. In all circumstances it tends to death and woe.

(3.) We see the feebleness of the law and of conscience to overcome this. The tendency of both is to produce conflict and woe. And

(4.) we see that the gospel only can overcome sin. To us it should be a subject of ever-increasing thankfulness, that what could not be accomplished by the law can be thus effected by the gospel; and that God has devised a plan that thus effects complete deliverance, and which gives to the captive in sin an everlasting triumph.

Romans-8

Life in the Spirit

1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, Ro 8:1. This is his triumph after that melancholy complaint and conflict in the foregoing chapter--sin remaining, disturbing, vexing, but, blessed be God, not ruining. The complaint he takes to himself, but humbly transfers the comfort with himself to all true believers, who are all interested in it. 1. It is the unspeakable privilege and comfort of all those that are in Christ Jesus that there is therefore now no condemnation to them. He does not say, "There is no accusation against them," for this there is; but the accusation is thrown out, and the indictment quashed. He does not say, "There is nothing in them that deserves condemnation," for this there is,

and they see it, and own it, and mourn over it, and condemn themselves for it; but it shall not be their ruin. He does not say, "There is no cross, no affliction to them or no displeasure in the affliction," for this there may be; but no condemnation. They may be chastened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world. Now this arises from their being in Christ Jesus; by virtue of their union with him through faith they are thus secured. They are in Christ Jesus, as in their city of refuge, and so are protected from the avenger of blood. He is their advocate, and brings them off. There is therefore no condemnation, because they are interested in the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to the law. In Christ, God does not only not condemn them, but is well pleased with them, Mt 17:5. 2. It is the undoubted character of all those who are so in Christ Jesus as to be freed from condemnation that they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Observe, The character is given from their walk, not from any one particular act, but from their course and way. And the great question is, What is the principle of the walk, the flesh or the spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? Which of these do we mind, for which of these doe we make provision, by which of these are we governed, which of these do we take part with?

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

No condemnation. This does not mean that sin in believers is not to be condemned as much as anywhere, for the contrary is everywhere taught in the Scriptures; but it means,

(1.) that the gospel does not pronounce condemnation like the law. Its office is to pardon; the office of the law, to condemn. The one never affords deliverance, but always condemns; the object of the other is to free from condemnation, and to set the soul at liberty.

(2.) There is no final condemnation under the gospel. The office, design, and tendency of the gospel is to free from the condemning sentence of law. This is its first and its glorious announcement, that it frees lost and ruined men from a most fearful and terrible condemnation.

Not after the flesh. Who do not live to gratify the corrupt desires and passions of the flesh. Rom 7:18. This is a characteristic of a Christian. What it is to walk after the flesh may be seen in Gal 5:19-21.

But after the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit would lead or prompt. What the Spirit produces may be seen in Gal 5:22,23.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

The law was weak, it could not accomplish them /justification & sanctification/: yet that weakness was not through any defect in the law, but through the flesh, through the corruption of human nature, by which we became incapable either of being justified or sanctified by the law. We had become unable to keep the law, and, in case of failure, the law, as a covenant of works, made no provision, and so left us as it found us. Or understand it of the ceremonial law; that was a plaster not wide enough for the wound, it could never take away sin, Heb 10:4.

The foundation of this freedom is laid in Christ's undertaking for us, of which he speaks Ro 8:3, God sending his own Son. Observe, When the law failed, God provided another method. Christ comes to do that which the law could not do. Moses brought the children of Israel to the borders of Canaan, and then died, and left them there; but Joshua did that which Moses could not do, and put them in possession of Canaan. Thus what the law could not do Christ did. The best exposition of this verse we have Heb 10:1-10. To make the sense of the words clear, which in our translation is a little intricate, we may read it thus, with a little transposition:--God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, &c., Ro 8:4. Observe, [1.] How Christ appeared: In the likeness of sinful flesh. Not sinful, for he was holy, harmless, undefiled; but in the likeness of that flesh which was sinful. He took upon him that nature which was corrupt,

though perfectly abstracted from the corruptions of it. His being circumcised, redeemed, baptized with John's baptism, bespeaks the likeness of sinful flesh. The bitings of the fiery serpents were cured by a serpent of brass, which had the shape, through free from the venom, of the serpents that bit them.

Thus by Christ is sin condemned; though it live and remain, its life in the saints is still but like that of a condemned malefactor. It was by the condemning of sin that death was disarmed, and the devil, who had the power of death, destroyed. The condemning of sin saved the sinner from condemnation. Christ was made sin for us (2Co 5:21), and, being so made, when he was condemned sin was condemned in the flesh of Christ, condemned in the human nature: So was sanctification made to divine justice, and way made for the salvation of the sinner. Therefore, sin can neither accuse nor rule; its testimony is null, and its authority null.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. Both in our justification and in our sanctification, the righteousness of the law if fulfilled. A righteousness of satisfaction for the breach of the law is fulfilled by the imputation of Christ's complete and perfect righteousness, which answers the utmost demands of the law, as the mercy-seat was as long and as broad as the ark.

4 that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Observe how we may answer to this character, Ro 8:5, &c.

(1.) By looking to our minds. How may we know whether we are after the flesh or after the Spirit? By examining what we mind, the things of the flesh or the things of the spirit. Carnal pleasure, worldly profit and honour, the things of sense and time, are the things of the flesh, which unregenerate people mind. The favour of God, the welfare of the soul, the concerns of eternity, are the things of the Spirit, which those that are after the Spirit do mind.

The man is as the mind is. The mind is the forge of thoughts. As he thinketh in his heart, so is he, Pr 23:7. Which way do the thoughts move with most pleasure? On what do they dwell with most satisfaction? The mind is the seat of wisdom. Which way go the projects and contrivances? whether are we more wise for the world or for our souls? phronousi ta tes sarkos--they savour the things of the flesh; so the word is rendered, Mt 16:23. It is a great matter what our savour is, what truths, what tidings, what comforts, we do most relish, and are most agreeable to us. Now, to caution us against this carnal-mindedness, he shows the great misery and malignity of it, and compares it with the unspeakable excellency and comfort of spiritual-mindedness.

[1.] It is death, Ro 8:6. It is spiritual death, the certain way to eternal death. It is the death of the soul; for it is its alienation from God, in union and communion with whom the life of the soul consists. A carnal soul is a dead soul, dead as a soul can die. She that liveth in pleasure is dead (1Ti 5:6), not only dead in law as guilty, but dead in state as carnal. Death includes all misery; carnal souls are miserable souls. But to be spiritually minded, phronema tou pneumatos--a spiritual savour (the wisdom that is from above, a principle of grace) is life and peace; it is the felicity and happiness of the soul. The life of the soul consists in its union with spiritual things by the mind. A sanctified soul is a living soul, and that life is peace; it is a very comfortable life. All the paths of spiritual wisdom are paths of peace. It is life and peace in the other world, as well as in this. Spiritual-mindedness is eternal life and peace begun, and an assuring earnest of the perfection of it.

[2.] It is enmity to God (Ro 8:7), and this is worse than the former. The former speaks the carnal sinner a dead man, which is bad; but this speaks him a devil of a man. It is not only an enemy, but enmity itself. It is not only the alienation of the soul from God, but the opposition of the soul against God; it rebels against his authority, thwarts his design, opposes his interest, spits in his face, spurns at his bowels. Can there be a greater enmity? An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. How should this humble us for and warn us against, carnal-mindedness! Shall we harbour and

indulge that which is enmity to God our creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor? To prove this, he urges that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The holiness of the law of God, and the unholiness of the carnal mind, are as irreconcilable as light and darkness. The carnal man may, by the power of divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the carnal mind never can; this must be broken and expelled. See how wretchedly the corrupt will of man is enslaved to sin; as far as the carnal mind prevails, there is no inclination to the law of God; therefore wherever there is a change wrought it is by the power of God's grace, not by the freedom of man's will. Hence he infers (Ro 8:8), Those that are in the flesh cannot please God. Those that are in a carnal unregenerate state, under the reigning power of sin, cannot do the things that please God, wanting grace, the pleasing principle, and an interest in Christ, the pleasing Mediator. The very sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, Pr 15:8. Pleasing God is our highest end, of which those that are in the flesh cannot but fall short; they cannot please him, nay, they cannot but displease him. We may know our state and character,

6 For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

The expression is one of great energy, and shows that it not only leads to death, or leads to misery, but that it is death itself; there is woe and condemnation in the very act and purpose of being supremely devoted to the corrupt passions. Its only tendency is condemnation and despair. But, to be spiritually minded is life i.e. itself is life.

7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Cannot please God. That is, while they are thus in the flesh; while they thus pursue the desires of their corrupt nature, they cannot please God. But this affirms nothing respecting their ability to turn from this course, and to pursue a different mode of life. That is a different question. A child may be obstinate, proud, and disobedient; and, while in this state, it may be affirmed of him that he cannot please his parent. But whether he might not cease to be

obstinate, and become obedient, is a very different inquiry; and the two subjects should never be confounded: It follows from this,

(1.) that those who are unrenewed are totally depraved, since in this state they cannot please God.

(2.) That none of their actions, while in this state can be acceptable to him, since he is pleased only with those who are spiritually minded.

(3.) That those who are in this state should turn from it without delay; as it is desirable that every man should please God.

(4.) That if the sinner does not turn from his course, he will be ruined. With his present character he can never please him; neither in health nor sickness; neither in life nor death; neither on earth nor in hell. He is engaged in hostility against God; and if he does not himself forsake it, it will be endless, and involve his soul in all the evils of a personal, and direct, and eternal warfare with the Lord Almighty.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

By enquiring whether we have the Spirit of God and Christ, or not (Ro 8:9): You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. This expresses states and conditions of the soul vastly different. All the saints have flesh and spirit in them; but to be in the flesh and to be in the Spirit are contrary. It denotes our being overcome and subdued by one of these principles. As we say, A man is in love, or in drink, that is, overcome by it. Now the great question is whether we are in the flesh or in the Spirit; and how may we come to know it? Why, by enquiring whether the Spirit of God dwell in us. The Spirit dwelling in us is the best evidence of our being in the Spirit, for the indwelling is mutual (1Jo 4:16): Dwelleth in God, and God in him. The Spirit visits many that are unregenerate with his motions, which they resist and quench; but in all that are sanctified he dwells; there he resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own

house, where he is constant and welcome, and has the dominion. Shall we put this question to our own hearts, Who dwells, who rules, who keeps house, here? Which interest has the ascendant? To this he subjoins a general rule of trial: If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. To be Christ's (that is, to be a Christian indeed, one of his children, his servants, his friends, in union with him) is a privilege and honour which many pretend to that have no part nor lot in the matter. None are his but those that have his Spirit; that is,

[1.] That are spirited as he was spirited--are meek, and lowly, and humble, and peaceable, and patient, and charitable, as he was. We cannot tread in his steps unless we have his spirit; the frame and disposition of our souls must be conformable to Christ's pattern.

[2.] That are actuated and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, as a sanctifier, teacher, and comforter. Having the Spirit of Christ is the same with having the Spirit of God to dwell in us. But those two come much to one; for all that are actuated by the Spirit of God as their rule are conformable to the spirit of Christ as their pattern. Now this description of the character of those to whom belongs this first privilege of freedom from condemnation is to be applied to all the other privileges that follow.

Is none of his. Is not a Christian. This is a test of piety that is easily applied; and this settles the question. If a man is not influenced by the meek, pure, and holy spirit of the Lord Jesus, if he is not conformed to his image, if his life does not resemble that of the Saviour, he is a stranger to religion. No test could be more easily applied, and none is more decisive. It matters not what else he may have. He may be loud in his professions, amiable in his temper, bold in his zeal, or active in promoting the interests of his own party or denomination in the church; but if he has not the temper of the Saviour, and does not manifest his spirit, it is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. May all who read this honestly examine themselves; and may they have that which is the source of the purest felicity, the spirit and temper of the Lord Jesus.

10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

1. We cannot say but that the body is dead; it is a frail, mortal, dying body, and it will be dead shortly; it is a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. The life purchased and promised does not immortalize the body in its present state. It is dead, that is, it is appointed to die, it is under a sentence of death: as we say one that is condemned is a dead man. In the midst of life we are in death: be our bodies ever so strong, and healthful, and handsome, they are as good as dead (Heb 11:12), and this because of sin. It is sin that kills the body. This effect the first threatening has (Ge 3:19): Dust thou art. Methinks, were there no other argument, love to our bodies should make us hate sin, because it is such an enemy to our bodies. The death even of the bodies of the saints is a remaining token of God's displeasure against sin.

2. But the spirit, the precious soul, that is life; it is now spiritually alive, nay, it is life. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the life of the saint lies in the soul, while the life of the sinner goes no further than the body. When the body dies, and returns to the dust, the spirit if life; not only living and immortal, but swallowed up of life. Death to the saints is but the freeing of the heaven-born spirit from the clog and load of this body, that it may be fit to partake of eternal life. When Abraham was dead, yet God was the God of Abraham, for even then his spirit was life, Mt 22:31,32. See Ps 49:15. And this because of righteousness. The righteousness of Christ imputed to them secures the soul, the better part, from death; the righteousness of Christ inherent in them, the renewed image of God upon the soul, preserves it, and, by God's ordination, at death elevates it, and improves it, and makes it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. The eternal life of the soul consists in the vision and fruition of God, and both assimilating, for which the soul is qualified by the righteousness of sanctification. I refer to Ps 17:15, I will behold thy face in righteousness.

The body is dead. This passage has been interpreted in very different ways. Some understand it to mean that the body is dead in respect to sin; that is, that sin has no more power to excite evil passions and desires; others, that the body must die on account of sin, but that the spiritual part shall live, and even the body shall live also in the resurrection. Thus Calvin, Beza, and Augustine. Doddridge understands it thus: "Though the body is to die on account of the first sin that entered into the world, yet the spirit is life, and shall continue to live on for ever, through that righteousness which the second Adam has introduced." To each of these interpretations there are serious objections, which it is not necessary to urge. I understand the passage in the following manner: The body refers to that of which the apostle had said so much in the previous chapters--the flesh, the man before conversion. It is subject to corrupt passions and desires, and may be said thus to be dead, as it has none of the elements of spiritual life. It is under the reign of sin and death. The word (μεν)--indeed, or truly--has been omitted in our translation, and the omission has obscured the sense. The expression is an admission of the apostle, or a summary statement of what had before been shown. "It is to be admitted, indeed, or it is true, that the unrenewed nature, the man before conversion, under the influence of the flesh, is spiritually dead. Sin has its seat in the fleshly appetites; and the whole body may be admitted thus to be dead or corrupt."

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

There is a life reserved too for the poor body at last: He shall also quicken your mortal bodies, Ro 8:11. The Lord is for the body; and though at death it is cast aside as a despised broken vessel, a vessel in which is no pleasure, yet God will have a desire to the work of his hands (Job 14:15), will remember his covenant with the dust, and will not lose a grain of it; but the body shall be reunited to the soul, and clothed with a glory agreeable to it. Vile bodies shall be newly fashioned, Php 3:21,1Co 15:42. Two great assurances of the resurrection of the body are mentioned:--

(1.) The resurrection of Christ: He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken. Christ rose as the head, and first-fruits, and forerunner of all the saints, 1Co 15:20. The body of Christ lay in the grave, under the sin of all the elect imputed, and broke through it. O grave, then, where is thy victory? It is in the virtue of Christ's resurrection that we shall rise.

(2.) The indwelling of the Spirit. The same Spirit that raiseth the soul now will raise the body shortly: By his Spirit that dwelleth in you. The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1Co 3:16,6:19. Now, though these temples may be suffered for awhile to lie in ruins, yet they shall be rebuilt. The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, shall be repaired, whatever great mountains may be in the way. The Spirit, breathing upon dead and dry bones, will make them live, and the saints even in their flesh shall see God. Hence the apostle by the way infers how much it is our duty to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, Ro 8:12,13. Let not our life be after the wills and motions of the flesh. Two motives he mentions here:--

[1.] We are not debtors to the flesh, neither by relation, gratitude, nor any other bond or obligation. We owe no suit nor service to our carnal desires; we are indeed bound to clothe, and feed, and take care of the body, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. We are not debtors to it; the flesh never did us so much kindness as to oblige us to serve it. It is implied that we are debtors to Christ and to the Spirit: there we owe our all, all we have and all we can do, by a thousand bonds and obligations. Being delivered from so great a death by so great a ransom, we are deeply indebted to our deliverer. See 1Co 6:19,20.

[2.] Consider the consequences, what will be at the end of the way. Here are life and death, blessing and cursing, set before us. If you live after the flesh, you shall die; that is, die eternally. It is the pleasing, and serving, and gratifying, of the flesh, that are the ruin of souls; that is, the second death. Dying indeed is the soul's dying: the death of the saints is but a sleep. But, on the other hand, You

shall live, live and be happy to eternity; that is the true life: If you through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, subdue and keep under all fleshly lusts and affections, deny yourselves in the pleasing and humouring of the body, and this through the Spirit; we cannot do it without the Spirit working it in us, and the Spirit will not do it without our doing our endeavour. So that in a word we are put upon this dilemma, either to displease the body or destroy the soul.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Abba is a Syriac word signifying father or my father; pater, a Greek work; and why both, Abba, Father? Because Christ said so in prayer (Mk 14:36), Abba, Father: and we have received the Spirit of the Son. It denotes an affectionate endearing importunity, and a believing stress laid upon the relation. Little children, begging of their parents, can say little but Father, Father, and that is rhetoric enough. It also denotes that the adoption is common both to Jews and Gentiles: the Jews call him Abba in their language, the Greeks may call him pater in their language; for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew.

Again to fear. That you should again be afraid, or be subjected to servile fear. This implies that in their former state, under the law, they were in a state of servitude, and that the tendency of it was merely to produce alarm. Every sinner is subject to such fear. He has everything of which to be alarmed. God is angry with him; his conscience will trouble him; and he has everything to apprehend in death and in eternity. But it is not so with the Christian. Comp. 2Ti 1:7.

The Spirit of adoption. The feeling of affection, love, and confidence which pertains to children; not the servile, trembling spirit of slaves, but the temper and affectionate regard of sons. Adoption is the taking and treating a stranger as one's own child. It is applied to Christians because God treats them as his children; he receives them into this relation, though they were by nature strangers and enemies. It implies, (1.) that we by nature had no claim on him; (2.) that, therefore, the act is one of mere kindness--of pure, sovereign love; (3.) that we are now under his protection and care; and (4.) that we are bound to manifest towards him the spirit of children, and yield to him obedience. Jn 1:12. Comp. Gal 4:5, Eph 1:5. It is for this that Christians are so often called the sons of God.

Whereby we cry. As children who need protection and help. This evinces the habitual spirit of a child of God; a disposition, (1.) to express towards him the feelings due to a father; (2.) to call upon him-- to address him in the language of affection and endearing confidence; (3.) to seek his protection and aid.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

The former is the work of the Spirit as a Sanctifier; this as a Comforter. Beareth witness with our spirit. Many a man has the witness of his own spirit to the goodness of his state who has not the concurring testimony of the Spirit. Many speak peace to themselves to whom the God of heaven does not speak peace. But those that are sanctified have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits, which is to be understood not of any immediate extraordinary revelation, but an ordinary work of the Spirit, in and by the means of comfort, speaking peace to the soul. This testimony is always agreeable to the written word, and is therefore always grounded upon sanctification; for the Spirit in the heart cannot contradict the Spirit in the word. The Spirit witnesses to none the privileges of children who have not the nature and disposition of children.

With our spirit. To our minds. This pertains to the adoption; and it means, that the Holy Spirit furnishes evidence to our minds that we are adopted into the family of God. This effect is not unfrequently attributed to the Holy Spirit, 2Cor 1:22, 1Jn 5:10,11; 1Cor 2:12. If it be asked how this is done, I answer, It is not by any revelation of new truth; it is not by inspiration; it is not always by assurance; it is not by a mere persuasion that we are elected to eternal life; but it is by producing in us the appropriate effects of his influence. It is his to renew the heart; to sanctify the soul; to produce "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Gal 5:22,23. If a man has these, he has evidence of the witnessing of the Spirit with his spirit. If not, he has no such evidence. And the way, therefore, to ascertain whether we have this witnessing of the Spirit, is by an honest and prayerful inquiry whether these fruits of the Spirit actually exist in our minds. If they do, the evidence is clear. If not, all vain confidence.of good estate; all visions, and raptures, and fancied revelations, will be mere delusions. It may be added, that the effect of these fruits of the Spirit on the mind is to produce a calm and heavenly frame; and in that frame, when attended with the appropriate fruits of the Spirit in a holy life, we may rejoice as an evidence of piety.

17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Heaven is an inheritance that all the saints are heirs to. They do not come to it as purchasers by any merit or procurement of their own; but as heirs, purely by the act of God; for God makes heirs. The saints are heirs though in this world they are heirs under age; see Ga 4:1,2. Their present state is a state of education and preparation for the inheritance. How comfortable should this be to all the children of God, how little soever they have in possession, that, being heirs, they have enough in reversion! But the honour and happiness of an heir lie in the value and worth of that which he is heir to: we read of those that inherit the wind; and therefore we have here an abstract of the premises.

1. Heirs of God. The Lord himself is the portion of the saints' inheritance (Ps 16:5), a goodly heritage, Ro 8:6. The saints are spiritual priests, that have the Lord for their inheritance, Nu 18:20. The vision of God and the fruition of God make up the inheritance the saints are heirs to. God himself will be with them, and will be their God, Re 21:3.

2. Joint-heirs with Christ. Christ, as Mediator, is said to be the heir of all things (Heb 1:2), and true believers, by virtue of their union with him, shall inherit all things, Re 21:7. Those that now partake of the Spirit of Christ, as his brethren, shall, as his brethren, partake of his glory (Joh 17:24), shall sit down with him upon his throne, Re 3:21. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him! Now this future glory is further spoken of as the reward of present sufferings and as the accomplishment of present hopes.

And joint-heirs with Christ. Christ is by eminence THE Son of God. As such, he is heir to the full honours and glory of heaven. Christians are united to him; they are his friends; and they are thus represented as destined to partake with him of his glory. They are the sons of God in a different sense from what he is; he by his nature and high relation, they by adoption; but still the idea of sonship exists in both; and hence both will partake in the glories of the eternal inheritance. Comp. Php 2: 8, 9, Heb 2: 9,10. The connexion between Christ and Christians is often referred to in the New Testament. The fact that they are united here is often alleged as a reason why they will be in glory. Jn 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." 2Ti 2:11,12, "For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Rev 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," etc. Jn 17:22-24.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

This the gospel is filled with the assurances of. Now, that suffering saints may have strong supports and consolations from their hopes

of heaven, he holds the balance (Ro 8:18), in a comparison between the two, which is observable.

1. In one scale he puts the sufferings of this present time. The sufferings of the saints are but sufferings of this present time, strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time (2Co 4:17), light affliction, and but for a moment. So that on the sufferings he writes tekel, weighed in the balance and found light.

2. In the other scale he puts the glory, and finds that a weight, an exceeding and eternal weight: Glory that shall be revealed. In our present state we come short, not only in the enjoyment, but in the knowledge of that glory (1Co 2:9,1Jo 3:2): it shall be revealed. It surpasses all that we have yet seen and known: present vouchsafements are sweet and precious, very precious, very sweet; but there is something to come, something behind the curtain, that will outshine all. Shall be revealed in us; not only revealed to us, to be seen, but revealed in us, to be enjoyed. The kingdom of God is within you, and will be so to eternity.

3. He concludes the sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory--ouk axia pros ten doxan. They cannot merit that glory; and, if suffering for Christ will not merit, much less will doing. They should not at all deter and frighten us from the diligent and earnest pursuit of that glory. The sufferings are small and short, and concern the body only; but the glory is rich and great, and concerns the soul, and is eternal. This he reckons. I reckon--logizomai. It is not a rash and sudden determination, but the product of a very serious and deliberate consideration. He had reasoned the case within himself, weighed the arguments on both sides, and thus at last resolves the point. O how vastly different is the sentence of the word from the sentiment of the world concerning the sufferings of this present time!

I reckon, as an arithmetician that is balancing an account. He first sums up what is disbursed for Christ in the sufferings of this

present time, and finds they come to very little; he then sums up what is secured to us by Christ in the glory that shall be revealed, and this he finds to be an infinite sum, transcending all conception, the disbursement abundantly made up and the losses infinitely countervailed. And who would be afraid then to suffer for Christ, who as he is before-hand with us in suffering, so he will not be behind-hand with us in recompence? Now Paul was as competent a judge of this point as ever any mere man was. He could reckon not by art only, but by experience; for he knew both. He knew what the sufferings of this present time were; see 2Co 11:23-28. He knew what the glory of heaven is; see 2Co 12:3,4. And, upon the view of both, he gives this judgment here. There is nothing like a believing view of the glory which shall be revealed to support and bear up the spirit under all the sufferings of this present time. The reproach of Christ appears riches to those who have respect to the recompence of reward, Heb 11:26.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for
the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but
by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope;

As the saints are suffering for it, so they are waiting for it. Heaven is therefore sure; for God by his Spirit would not raise and encourage those hopes only to defeat and disappoint them. He will establish that word unto his servants on which he has caused them to hope (Ps 119:49), and heaven is therefore sweet; for, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, surely when the desire comes it will be a tree of life, Pr 13:12. Now he observes an expectation of this glory,

1. In the creatures Ro 8:19-22. That must needs be a great, a transcendent glory, which all the creatures are so earnestly expecting and longing for. This observation in these verses has some difficulty in it, which puzzles interpreters a little; and the more because it is a remark not made in any other scripture, with which it might be compared. By the creature here we understand, not as some do the Gentile world, and their expectation of Christ and the gospel, which is an exposition very foreign and forced, but the whole frame of nature, especially that of this lower world--the

whole creation, the compages of inanimate and sensible creatures, which, because of their harmony and mutual dependence, and because they all constitute and make up one world, are spoken of in the singular number as the creature. The sense of the apostle in these four verses we may take in the following observations:--

(1.) That there is a present vanity to which the creature, by reason of the sin of man, is made subject, Ro 8:20. When man sinned, the ground was cursed for man's sake, and with it all the creatures (especially of this lower world, where our acquaintance lies) became subject to that curse, became mutable and mortal. Under the bondage of corruption, Ro 8:21. There is an impurity, deformity, and infirmity, which the creature has contracted by the fall of man: the creation is sullied and stained, much of the beauty of the world gone. There is an enmity of one creature to another; they are all subject to continual alteration and decay of the individuals, liable to the strokes of God's judgments upon man. When the world was drowned, and almost all the creatures in it, surely then it was subject to vanity indeed. The whole species of creatures is designed for, and is hastening to, a total dissolution by fire. And it is not the least part of their vanity and bondage that they are used, or abused rather, by men as instruments of sin. The creatures are often abused to the dishonour of their Creator, the hurt of his children, or the service of his enemies.

When the creatures are made the food and fuel of our lusts, they are subject to vanity, they are captivated by the law of sin. And this not willingly, not of their own choice. All the creatures desire their own perfection and consummation; when they are made instruments of sin it is not willingly. Or, They are thus captivated, not for any sin of their own, which they had committed, but for man's sin: By reason of him who hath subjected the same. Adam did it meritoriously; the creatures being delivered to him, when he by sin delivered himself he delivered them likewise into the bondage of corruption. God did it judicially; he passed a sentence upon the creatures for the sin of man, by which they became subject. And this yoke (poor creatures) they bear in hope that it will not be so always. Ep elpidi hoti kai, &c.--in hope that the

creature itself; so many Greek copies join the words. We have reason to pity the poor creatures that for our sin have become subject to vanity.

(2.) That the creatures groan and travail in pain together under this vanity and corruption, Ro 8:22. It is a figurative expression. Sin is a burden to the whole creation; the sin of the Jews, in crucifying Christ, set the earth a quaking under them. The idols were a burden to the weary beast, Isa 46:1. There is a general outcry of the whole creation against the sin of man: the stone crieth out of the wall (Hab 2:11), the land cries, Job 31:38.

(3.) That the creature, that is now thus burdened, shall, at the time of the restitution of all things, be delivered from this bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Ro 8:21)-- they shall no more be subject to vanity and corruption, and the other fruits of the curse; but, on the contrary, this lower world shall be renewed: when there will be new heavens there will be a new earth (2Pe 3:13,Re 21:1); and there shall be a glory conferred upon all the creatures, which shall be (in the proportion of their natures) as suitable and as great an advancement as the glory of the children of God shall be to them. The fire at the last day shall be a refining, not a destroying annihilating fire. What becomes of the souls of brutes, that go downwards, none can tell. But it should seem by the scripture that there will be some kind of restoration of them. And if it be objected, What use will they be of to glorified saints? we may suppose them of as much use as they were to Adam in innocency; and if it be only to illustrate the wisdom, power, and goodness of their Creator, that is enough. Compare with this Ps 96:10-13,98:7-9. Let the heavens rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh.

(4.) That the creature doth therefore earnestly expect and wait for the manifestation of the children of God, Ro 8:19. Observe, At the second coming of Christ there will be a manifestation of the children of God. Now the saints are God's hidden ones, the wheat seems lost in a heap of chaff; but then they shall be manifested. It

does not yet appear what we shall be (1Jo 3:2), but then the glory shall be revealed. The children of God shall appear in their own colours. And this redemption of the creature is reserved till then; for, as it was with man and for man that they fell under the curse, so with man and for man they shall be delivered. All the curse and filth that now adhere to the creature shall be done away then when those that have suffered with Christ upon earth shall reign with him upon the earth. This the whole creation looks and longs for; and it may serve as a reason why now a good man should be merciful to his beast.

21 because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit,* the redemption of our body.

As the saints are suffering for it, so they are waiting for it. Heaven is therefore sure; for God by his Spirit would not raise and encourage those hopes only to defeat and disappoint them. He will establish that word unto his servants on which he has caused them to hope (Ps 119:49), and heaven is therefore sweet; for, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, surely when the desire comes it will be a tree of life, Pr 13:12. Now he observes an expectation of this glory,

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shall be revealed. The children of God shall appear in their own colours. And this redemption of the creature is reserved till then; for, as it was with man and for man that they fell under the curse, so with man and for man they shall be delivered. All the curse and filth that now adhere to the creature shall be done away then when those that have suffered with Christ upon earth shall reign with him upon the earth. This the whole creation looks and longs for; and it may serve as a reason why now a good man should be merciful to his beast.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

In the saints, who are new creatures, Ro 8:23-25. Observe,

(a.) The grounds of this expectation in the saints. It is our having received the first-fruits of the Spirit, which both quickens our desires and encourages our hopes, and both ways raises our expectations. The first-fruits did both sanctify and ensure the lump. Grace is the first-fruits of glory, it is glory begun. We, having received such clusters in this wilderness, cannot but long for the full vintage in the heavenly Canaan. Not only they--not only the creatures which are not capable of such a happiness as the first-fruits of the Spirit, but even we, who have such present rich receivings, cannot but long for something more and greater. In having the first-fruits of the Spirit we have that which is very precious, but we have not all we would have. We groan within ourselves, which denotes the strength and secrecy of these desires; not making a loud noise, as the hypocrites howling upon the bed for corn and wine, but with silent groans, which pierce heaven soonest of all. Or, We groan among ourselves. It is the unanimous vote, the joint desire, of the whole church, all agree in this: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. The groaning denotes a very earnest and importunate desire, the soul pained with the delay. Present receivings and comforts are consistent with a great many groans; not as the pangs of one dying, but as the throes of a woman in travail--groans that are symptoms of life, not of death.

(b.) The object of this expectation. What is it we are thus desiring and waiting for? What would we have? The adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Though the soul be the principal part of the man, yet the Lord has declared himself for the body also, and has provided a great deal of honour and happiness for the body. The resurrection is here called the redemption of the body. It shall then be rescued from the power of death and the grave, and the bondage of corruption; and, though a vile body, yet it shall be refined and beautified, and made like that glorious body of Christ, Php 3:21,1Co 15:42. This is called the adoption.

[1.] It is the adoption manifested before all the world, angels and men. Now are we the sons of God, but it does not yet appear, the honour is now clouded; but then God will publicly own all his children. The deed of adoption, which is now written, signed, and sealed, will then be recognized, proclaimed, and published. As Christ was, so the saints will be, declared to be the sons of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, Ro 1:4. It will then be put past dispute.

[2.] It is the adoption perfected and completed. The children of God have bodies as well as souls; and, till those bodies are brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, the adoption is not perfect. But then it will be complete, when the Captain of our salvation shall bring the many sons to glory, Heb 2:10. This is that which we expect, in hope of which our flesh rests, Ps 16:9,10. All the days of our appointed time we are waiting, till this change shall come, when he shall call, and we shall answer, and he will have a desire to the work of his hands, Job 14:14,15.

(c.) The agreeableness of this to our present state, Ro 8:24,25. Our happiness is not in present possession: We are saved by hope. In this, as in other things, God hath made our present state a state of trial and probation--that our reward is out of sight. Those that will deal with God must deal upon trust. It is acknowledged that one of the principal graces of a Christian is hope (1Co 13:13), which necessarily implies a good thing to come, which is the object of

that hope. Faith respects the promise, hope the thing promised. Faith is the evidence, hope the expectation, of things not seen. Faith is the mother of hope. We do with patience wait. In hoping for this glory we have need of patience, to bear the sufferings we meet with in the way to it and the delays of it. Our way is rough and long; but he that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and therefore, though he seem to tarry, it becomes us to wait for him.

25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for
it.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.

The help of the Spirit in prayer. While we are in this world, hoping and waiting for what we see not, we must be praying. Hope supposes desire, and that desire offered up to God is prayer; we groan. Now observe,

1. Our weakness in prayer: We know not what we should pray for as we ought. (1.) As to the matter of our requests, we know not what to ask. We are not competent judges of our own condition. Who knows what is good for a man in this life? Ec 6:12. We are short-sighted, and very much biassed in favour of the flesh, and apt to separate the end from the way. You know not what you ask, Mt 20:22. We are like foolish children, that are ready to cry for fruit before it is ripe and fit for them; see Lu 9:54,55. (2.) As to the manner, we know not how to pray as we ought. It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well, seek in a due order; and here we are often at a loss--graces are weak, affections cold, thoughts wandering, and it is not always easy to find the heart to pray, 2Sa 7:27. The apostle speaks of this in the first person: We know not. He puts himself among the rest. Folly, and weakness,

and distraction in prayer, are what all the saints are complaining of. If so great a saint as Paul knew not what to pray for, what little reason have we to go forth about that duty in our own strength!

2 The assistances which the Spirit gives us in that duty. He helps our infirmities, meant especially of our praying infirmities, which most easily beset us in that duty, against which the Spirit helps. The Spirit in the world helps; many rules and promises there are in the word for our help. The Spirit in the heart helps, dwelling in us, working in us, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, especially with respect to the infirmities we are under when we are in a suffering state, when our faith is most apt to fail; for this end the Holy Ghost was poured out. Helpeth, synantilambanetai--heaves with us, over against us, helps as we help one that would lift up a burden, by lifting over against him at the other end--helps with us, that is, with us doing our endeavour, putting forth the strength we have. We must not sit still, and expect that the Spirit should do all; when the Spirit goes before us we must bestir ourselves. We cannot without God, and he will not without us. What help? Why, the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, dictates our requests, indites our petitions, draws up our plea for us. Christ intercedes for us in heaven, the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts; so graciously has God provided for the encouragement of the praying remnant. The Spirit, as an enlightening Spirit, teaches us what to pray for, as a sanctifying Spirit works and excites praying graces, as a comforting Spirit silences our fears, and helps us over all our discouragements. The Holy Spirit is the spring of all our desires and breathings towards God. Now this intercession which the Spirit makes is,

(a.) With groanings that cannot be uttered. The strength and fervency of those desires which the Holy Spirit works are hereby intimated. There may be praying in the Spirit where there is not a word spoken; as Moses prayed (Ex 14:15), and Hannah, 1Sa 1:13. It is not the rhetoric and eloquence, but the faith and fervency, of our prayers, that the Spirit works, as an intercessor, in us. Cannot be uttered; they are so confused, the soul is in such a hurry with temptations and troubles, we know not what to say, nor how to

express ourselves. Here is the Spirit interceding with groans that cannot be uttered. When we can but cry, Abba, Father, and refer ourselves to him with a holy humble boldness, this is the work of the Spirit.

(b.) According to the will of God, Ro 8:27. The Spirit in the heart never contradicts the Spirit in the word. Those desires that are contrary to the will of God do not come from the Spirit. The Spirit interceding in us evermore melts our wills into the will of God. Not as I will, but as thou wilt.

3. The sure success of these intercessions: He that searches the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, Ro 8:27. To a hypocrite, all whose religion lies in his tongue, nothing is more dreadful than that God searches the heart and sees through all his disguises. To a sincere Christian, who makes heart-work of his duty, nothing is more comfortable than that God searches the heart, for then he will hear and answer those desires which we want words to express. He knows what we have need of before we ask, Mt 6:8. He knows what is the mind of his own Spirit in us. And, as he always hears the Son interceding for us, so he always hears the Spirit interceding in us, because his intercession is according to the will of God. What could have been done more for the comfort of the Lord's people, in all their addresses to God? Christ had said, "Whatever you ask the Father according to his will he will give it you." But how shall we learn to ask according to his will? Why, the Spirit will teach us that. Therefore it is that the seed of Jacob never seek in vain.

More than Conquerors

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

The concurrence of all providences for the good of those that are Christ's, Ro 8:28. It might be objected that, notwithstanding all

these privileges, we see believers compassed about with manifold afflictions; though the Spirit makes intercession for them, yet their troubles are continued. It is very true; but in this the Spirit's intercession is always effectual, that, however it goes with them, all this is working together for their good. Observe here.

1 The character of the saints, who are interested in this privilege; they are here described by such properties as are common to all that are truly sanctified.

(1.) They love God. This includes all the out-goings of the soul's affections towards God as the chief good and highest end. It is our love to God that makes every providence sweet, and therefore profitable. Those that love God make the best of all he does, and take all in good part.

(2.) They are the called according to his purpose, effectually called according to the eternal purpose. The call is effectual, not according to any merit or desert of ours, but according to God's own gracious purpose.

2 The privilege of the saints, that all things work together for good to them, that is, all the providences of God that concern them. All that God performs he performs for them, Ps 57:2. Their sins are not of his performing, therefore not intended here, though his permitting sin is made to work for their good, 2Ch 32:31. But all the providences of God are theirs--merciful providences, afflicting providences, personal, public. They are all for good; perhaps for temporal good, as Joseph's troubles; at least, for spiritual and eternal good. That is good for them which does their souls good. Either directly or indirectly, every providence has a tendency to the spiritual good of those that love God, breaking them off from sin, bringing them nearer to God, weaning them from the world, fitting them for heaven. Work together. They work, as physic works upon the body, various ways, according to the intention of the physician; but all for the patient's good. They work together, as several ingredients in a medicine concur to answer the intention.

God hath set the one over against the other (Ec 7:14): synergei, a very singular, with a noun plural, denoting the harmony of Providence and its uniform designs, all the wheels as one wheel, Eze 10:13. He worketh all things together for good; so some read it. It is not from any specific quality in the providences themselves, but from the power and grace of God working in, with, and by, these providences. All this we know--know it for a certainty, from the word of God, from our own experience, and from the experience of all the saints.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

For whom he did foreknow. The word used here (προεγνω) has been the subject of almost endless disputes in regard to its meaning in this place. The literal meaning of the word cannot be a matter of dispute. It denotes, properly, to know beforehand; to be acquainted with future events. But whether it means here simply to know that certain persons would become Christians, or to ordain and constitute them to be Christians, and to be saved, has been a subject of almost endless discussion. Without entering at large into an investigation of the word, perhaps the following remarks may throw light on it.

(1.) It does not here have reference to all the human family; for all are not, and have not been, conformed to the image of his Son. It has reference, therefore, only to those who would become Christians, and be saved.

(2.) It implies certain knowledge. It was certainly foreseen, in some way, that they would believe, and be saved. There is nothing, therefore, in regard to them that is contingent, or subject to doubt in the Divine Mind, since it was certainly foreknown.

(3.) The event which was thus foreknown must have been, for some cause, certain and fixed; since an uncertain event could not be possibly foreknown. To talk of foreknowing a contingent event-

-that is, of foreknowing an event as certain which may or may not exist--is an absurdity.

(4.) In what way such an event became certain is not determined by the use of this word. But it must have been somehow in connexion with a Divine appointment or arrangement, since in no other way can it be conceived to be certain. While the word used here, therefore, does not of necessity mean to decree, yet its use supposes that there was a purpose or plan; and the phrase is an explanation of what the apostle had just said, that it was according to the purpose of God that they were called. This passage does not affirm why, or how,or on what grounds God foreknew that some of the human family would be saved. It simply affirms the fact; and the mode in which those who will believe were designated must be determined from other sources. This passage simply teaches that he knew them; that his eye was fixed on them; that he regarded them as to be conformed to his Son; and that, thus knowing them, he designated them to eternal life. The Syriac renders it in accordance with this interpretation: "And from the beginning he knew them, and sealed them with the image of his Son,' etc. As, however, none would believe but by the influences of his Spirit, it follows that they were not foreknown on account of any faith which they would themselves exercise, or any good works which they would themselves perform, but according to the purpose or plan of God himself.

To foreknow and to predestinate are not the same thing. One is an act of foreknowledge, or knowing something before it occurs; the other is to decree something. We only have knowledge of the past, but God foresees the future even as he sees the past; foresees it, not because he has decreed it, but because there are no limitations on his knowledge. Augustine says: ``There can be no predestination without foreknowledge; but there can be foreknowledge without predestination." "Whom does God foreknow"? Those who shall love God. As he looked into the future these were present to his mind; foreknown. "What did he predestinate of them"? Not that they should love God. Not that they should believe; nor that some should be saved and others

damned; but that those who he saw beforehand would love God, should be conformed to the image of his Son. The only thing predestinated, or foreordained, is that those who love God as revealed in Christ shall become Christlike in life, and like Christ in eternity. This is the only decree in the passage.

30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Foreknow [προεγνω] . Five times in the New Testament. In all cases it means foreknow. Act 26:5; 1Pe 1:20; 2Pe 3:17; Rom 11:2. It does not mean foreordain. It signifies prescience, not preelection. "It is God 's being aware in His plan, by means of which, before the subjects are destined by Him to salvation, He knows whom He has to destine thereto" (Meyer). 46 It is to be remarked :

1. That foreknew is used by the apostle as distinct and different from predestinated [προωρισεν] .

2. That, strictly speaking, it is coordinate with foreordained. "In God is no before." All the past, present, and future are simultaneously present to Him. In presenting the two phases, the operation of God 's knowledge and of His decretory will, the succession of time is introduced, not as metaphysically true, but in concession to human limitations of thought. Hence the coordinating force of kai also.

3. That a predetermination of God is clearly stated as accompanying or (humanly speaking) succeeding, and grounded upon the foreknowledge.

4. That this predetermination is to the end of conformity to the image of the Son of God, and that this is the vital point of the passage.

5. That, therefore, the relation between foreknowledge and predestination is incidental, and is not contemplated as a special

point of discussion. God 's foreknowledge and His decree are alike aimed at holy character and final salvation.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who
can be against us?

What shall we then say to these things? What use shall we make of all that has been said? He speaks as one amazed and swallowed up with the contemplation and admiration of it, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. The more we know of other things the less we wonder at them; but the further we are led into an acquaintance with gospel mysteries the more we are affected with the admiration of them.

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us
all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?
33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God
that justifieth.
34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that
is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also
maketh intercession for us.
35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation,
or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or
sword?
36 As it is written,
For thy sake we are killed all the day long;
we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through
him that loved us.
38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor
principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to
come,
39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to
separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our
Lord.

Romans-9

God's Election of Israel

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing
me witness in the Holy Ghost,
2 that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for
my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren--a very high pang of zeal and affection for his countrymen. He would be willing to undergo the greatest misery to do them good. Love is apt to be thus bold, and venturous, and self-denying. Because the glory of God's grace in the salvation of many is to be preferred before the welfare and happiness of a single person, Paul, if they were put in competition, would be content to forego all his own happiness to purchase theirs.

1. He would be content to be cut off from the land of the living, in the most shameful and ignominious manner, as an anathema, or a devoted person. They thirsted for his blood, persecuted him as the most obnoxious person in the world, the curse and plague of his generation, 1Co 4:13,Ac 22:22. "Now," says Paul, "I am willing to bear all this, and a great deal more, for your good. Abuse me as much as you will, count and call me at your pleasure; your unbelief and rejection create in my heart a heaviness so much greater than all these troubles can that I could look upon them not only as tolerable, but as desirable, rather than this rejection."

2. He would be content to be excommunicated from the society of the faithful, to be separated from the church, and from the communion of saints, as a heathen man and a publican, if that would do them any good. He could wish himself no more remembered among the saints, his name blotted out of the church-records; though he had been so great a planter of churches, and the spiritual father of so many thousands, yet he would be content to

be disowned by the church, cut off from all communion with it, and have his name buried in oblivion or reproach, for the good of the Jews. It may be, some of the Jews had a prejudice against Christianity for Paul's sake; such a spleen they had at him that they hated the religion he was of: "If this stumble you," says Paul, "I could wish I might be cast out, not embraced as a Christian, so you might but be taken in." Thus Moses (Ex 32:33), in a like holy passion of concern, Blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written. 3. Nay, some think that the expression goes further, and that he could be content to be cut off from all his share of happiness in Christ, if that might be a means of their salvation. It is a common charity that begins at home; this is something higher, and more noble and generous.

My kinsmen. Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. We ought to be in a special manner concerned for the spiritual good of our relations, our brethren and kinsmen. To them we lie under special engagements, and we have more opportunity of doing good to them; and concerning them, and our usefulness to them, we must in a special manner give account.

4 who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God,* and the promises;

Especially because of their relation to God (Ro 9:4,5): Who are Israelites, the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen, taken into the covenant of peculiarity, dignified and distinguished by visible church-privileges, many of which are here mentioned:--

(1.) The adoption; not that which is saving, and which entitled to eternal happiness, but that which was external and typical, and entitled them to the land of Canaan. Israel is my son, Ex 4:22.

(2.) And the glory; the ark with the mercy-seat, over which God dwelt between the cherubim--this was the glory of Israel, 1Sa 4:21. The many symbols and tokens of the divine presence and

guidance, the cloud, the Shechinah, the distinguishing favours conferred upon them--these were the glory.

(3.) And the covenants--the covenant made with Abraham, and often renewed with his seed upon divers occasions. There was a covenant at Sinai (Ex 24:1-18), in the plains of Moab (De 29:1-29), at Shechem (Jos 24:1-33), and often afterwards; and still these pertained to Israel. Or, the covenant of peculiarity, and in that, as in the type, the covenant of grace.

(4.) And the giving of the law. It was to them that the ceremonial and judicial law were given, and the moral law in writing pertained to them. It is a great privilege to have the law of God among us, and it is to be accounted so, Ps 147:19,20. This was the grandeur of Israel, De 4:7,8.

(5.) And the service of God. They had the ordinances of God's worship among them--the temple, the altars, the priests, the sacrifices, the feasts, and the institutions relating to them. They were in this respect greatly honoured, that, while other nations were worshipping and serving stocks, and stones, and devils, and they knew not what other idols of their own invention, the Israelites were serving the true God in the way of his own appointment.

(6.) And the promises--particular promises added to the general covenant, promises relating to the Messiah and the gospel state. Observe, The promises accompany the giving of the law, and the service of God; for the comfort of the promises is to be had in obedience to that law and attendance upon that service.

(7.) Whose are the fathers (Ro 9:5), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those men of renown, that stood so high in the favour of God. The Jews stand in relation to them, are their children, and proud enough they are of it: We have Abraham to our father. It was for the father's sake that they were taken into covenant, Ro 11:28.

(8.) But the greatest honour of all was that of them as concerning the flesh (that is, as to his human nature) Christ came; for he took on him the seed of Abraham, Heb 2:16. As to his divine nature, he is the Lord from heaven; but, as to his human nature, he is of the seed of Abraham. This was the great privilege of the Jews, that Christ was of kin to them. Mentioning Christ, he interposes a very great word concerning him, that he is over all, God blessed for ever. Lest the Jews should think meanly of him, because he was of their alliance, he here speaks thus honourably concerning him: and it is a very full proof of the Godhead of Christ; he is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever. Therefore, how much sorer punishment were they worthy of that rejected him! It was likewise the honour of the Jews, and one reason why Paul had a kindness for them, that, seeing God blessed for ever would be a man, he would be a Jew; and, considering the posture and character of that people at that time, it may well be looked upon as a part of his humiliation.

5 whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came,* who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:

Now the difficulty is to reconcile the rejection of the unbelieving Jews with the word of God's promise, and the external tokens of the divine favour, which had been conferred upon them. This he does in four ways:--

1. By explaining the true meaning and intention of the promise, Ro 9:6-13.

2. By asserting and proving the absolute sovereignty of God, in disposing of the children of men, Ro 9:14-24.

3. By showing how this rejection of the Jews, and the taking in of the Gentiles, were foretold in the Old Testament, Ro 9:25-29.

4. By fixing the true reason of the Jews' rejection, Ro 9:30, to the end.

In this paragraph the apostle explains the true meaning and intention of the promise. When we mistake the word, and misunderstand the promise, no marvel if we are ready to quarrel with God about the accomplishment; and therefore the sense of this must first be duly stated. Now he here makes it out that, when God said he would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed (which was the famous promise made unto the fathers), he did not mean it of all his seed according to the flesh, as if it were a necessary concomitant of the blood of Abraham; but that he intended it with a limitation only to such and such. And as from the beginning it was appropriated to Isaac and not to Ishmael, to Jacob and not to Esau, and yet for all this the word of God was not made of no effect; so now the same promise is appropriated to believing Jews that embrace Christ and Christianity, and, though it throws off multitudes that refuse Christ, yet the promise is not therefore defeated and invalidated, any more than it was by the typical rejection of Ishmael and Esau.

I. He lays down this proposition--that they are not all Israel who are of Israel (Ro 9:6), neither because they are, &c., Ro 9:7. Many that descended from the loins of Abraham and Jacob, and were of that people who were surnamed by the name of Israel, yet were very far from being Israelites indeed, interested in the saving benefits of the new covenant. They are not all really Israel that are so in name and profession. It does not follow that, because they are the seed of Abraham, therefore they must needs be the children of God, though they themselves fancied so, boasted much of, and built much upon, their relation to Abraham, Mt 3:9,Joh 8:38,39. But it does not follow. Grace does not run in the blood; nor are saving benefits inseparably annexed to external church privileges, though it is common for people thus to stretch the meaning of God's promise, to bolster themselves up in a vain hope.

II. He proves this by instances; and therein shows not only that some of Abraham's seed were chosen, and others not, but that God therein wrought according to the counsel of his own will; and not

with regard to that law of commandments to which the present unbelieving Jews were so strangely wedded.

1. He specifies the case of Isaac and Ishmael, both of them the seed of Abraham; and yet Isaac only taken into covenant with God, and Ishmael rejected and cast out. For this he quotes Ge 21:12, In Isaac shall thy seed be called, which comes in there as a reason why Abraham must be willing to cast out the bond-woman and her son, because the covenant was to be established with Isaac, Ge 17:19. And yet the word which God had spoken, that he would be a God to Abraham and to his seed, did not therefore fall to the ground; for the blessings wrapt up in that great word, being communicated by God as a benefactor, he was free to determine on what head they should rest, and accordingly entailed them upon Isaac, and rejected Ishmael. This he explains further (Ro 9:8,9), and shows what God intended to teach us by this dispensation.

(1.) That the children of the flesh, as such, by virtue of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, are not therefore the children of God, for then Ishmael had put in a good claim. This remark comes home to the unbelieving Jews, who boasted of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, and looked for justification in a fleshly way, by those carnal ordinances which Christ had abolished. They had confidence in the flesh, and looked for justification in a fleshly way, by those carnal ordinances which Christ had abolished. They had confidence in the flesh, Php 3:3. Ishmael was a child of the flesh, conceived by Hagar, who was young and fresh, and likely enough to have children. There was nothing extraordinary or supernatural in his conception, as there was in Isaac's; he was born after the flesh (Ga 4:29), representing those that expect justification and salvation by their own strength and righteousness.

(2.) That the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Those that have the honour and happiness of being counted for the seed have it not for the sake of any merit or desert of their own, but purely by virtue of the promise, in which God hath obliged

himself of his own good pleasure to grant the promised favour. Isaac was a child of promise; this his proves, Ro 9:9, quoted from Ge 18:10. He was a child promised (so were many others), and he was also conceived and born by force and virtue of the promise, and so a proper type and figure of those who are now counted for the seed, even true believers, who are born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God--of the incorruptible seed, even the word of promise, by virtue of the special promise of a new heart: see Ga 4:28. It was through faith that Isaac was conceived, Heb 11:11. Thus were the great mysteries of salvation taught under the Old Testament, not in express words, but by significant types and dispensations of providence, which to them then were not so clear as they are to us now, when the veil is taken away, and the types are expounded by the antitypes.

2 The case of Jacob and Esau (Ro 9:10-13), which is much stronger, to show that the carnal seed of Abraham were not, as such, interested in the promise, but only such of them as God in sovereignty had appointed. There was a previous difference between Ishmael and Isaac, before Ishmael was cast out: Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, born long before Isaac, was of a fierce and rugged disposition, and had mocked or persecuted Isaac, to all which it might be supposed God had regard when he appointed Abraham to cast him out. But, in the case of Jacob and Esau, it was neither so nor so, they were both the sons of Isaac by one mother; they were conceived hex henos--by one conception; hex henos koitou, so some copies read it. The difference was made between them by the divine counsel before they were born, or had done any good or evil. Both lay struggling alike in their mother's womb, when it was said, The elder shall serve the younger, without respect to good or bad works done or foreseen, that the purpose of God according to election might stand--that this great truth may be established, that God chooses some and refuses others as a free agent, by his own absolute and sovereign will, dispensing his favours or withholding them as he pleases. This difference that was put between Jacob and Esau he further illustrates by a quotation from Mal 1:2,3, where it is said, not of Jacob and Esau the person, but the Edomites and Israelites their posterity, Jacob have I loved,

and Esau have I hated. The people of Israel were taken into the covenant of peculiarity, had the land of Canaan given them, were blessed with the more signal appearances of God for them in special protections, supplies, and deliverances, while the Edomites were rejected, had no temple, altar, priests, nor prophets--no such particular care taken of them nor kindness shown to them. Such a difference did God put between those two nations, that both descended from the loins of Abraham and Isaac, as at first there was a difference put between Jacob and Esau, the distinguishing heads of those two nations. So that all this choosing and refusing was typical, and intended to shadow forth some other election and rejection.

(1.) Some understand it of the election and rejection of conditions or qualifications. As God chose Isaac and Jacob, and rejected Ishmael and Esau, so he might and did choose faith to be the condition of salvation and reject the works of the law. Thus Arminius understands it, De rejectis et assumptis talibus, certa qualitate notatis--Concerning such as are rejected and such as are chosen, being distinguished by appropriate qualities; so John Goodwin. But this very much strains the scripture; for the apostle speaks all along of persons, he has mercy on whom (he does not say on what kind of people) he will have mercy, besides that against this sense those two objections (Ro 9:14,19) do not at all arise, and his answer to them concerning God's absolute sovereignty over the children of men is not at all pertinent if no more be meant than his appointing the conditions of salvation.

(2.) Others understand it of the election and rejection of particular person--some loved, and others hated, from eternity. But the apostle speaks of Jacob and Esau, not in their own persons, but as ancestors--Jacob the people, and Esau the people; nor does God condemn any, or decree so to do, merely because he will do it, without any reason taken from their own deserts.

(3.) Others therefore understand it of the election and rejection of people considered complexly. His design is to justify God, and his

mercy and truth, in calling the Gentiles, and taking them into the church, and into covenant with himself, while he suffered the obstinate part of the Jews to persist in unbelief, and so to un-church themselves--thus hiding from their eyes the things that belonged to their peace. The apostle's reasoning for the explication and proof of this is, however, very applicable to, and, no doubt (as is usual in scripture) was intended for the clearing of the methods of God's grace towards particular person, for the communication of saving benefits bears some analogy to the communication of church-privileges. The choosing of Jacob the younger, and preferring him before Esau the elder (so crossing hands), were to intimate that the Jews, though the natural seed of Abraham, and the first-born of the church, should be laid aside; and the Gentiles, who were as the younger brother, should be taken in in their stead, and have the birthright and blessing. The Jews, considered as a body politic, a nation and people, knit together by the bond and cement of the ceremonial law, the temple and priesthood, the centre of their unity, had for many ages been the darlings and favourites of heaven, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, dignified and distinguished by God's miraculous appearances among them and for them. Now that the gospel was preached, and Christian churches were planted, this national body was thereby abandoned, their church-polity dissolved; and Christian churches (and in process of time Christian nations), embodied in like manner, become their successors in the divine favour, and those special privileges and protections which were the products of that favour. To clear up the justice of God in this great dispensation is the scope of the apostle here.

7 neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children:
but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

10 And not only *this;* but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac,

11 (for *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)
12 it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.
13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.
14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.
15 For he saith to Moses,
I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.
16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of
God that showeth mercy.

Both these are indispensable to salvation, yet salvation is owing to neither, but is purely "of God that showeth mercy." See on Php 2:12, 13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which, out of His own good pleasure, worketh in you both to will and to do."

Not of him that willeth. This does not mean that he that becomes a Christian, and is saved, does not choose eternal life; or is not made willing; or that he is compelled to enter heaven against his own choice. It is true that men by nature have no desire of holiness, and do not choose eternal life. But the effect of the influences of God's Spirit on the heart is to make it "willing in the day of his power," Ps 110:3. The meaning here is, evidently, that eternal life is not bestowed because man had any original willingness or disposition to be saved; it is not because he commences the work, and is himself disposed to it; but it is because God inclines him to it, and disposes him to seek for mercy, and then confers it in his own way. The word willeth here denotes wish or desire. Nor of him that runneth. This denotes strenuous, intense effort, as when a man is anxious to obtain an object, or hastens from danger. The meaning is not that the sinner does not make an effort to be saved; nor that all who become Christians do not in fact strive to enter into the kingdom, or earnestly desire salvation; for the Scriptures teach the contrary, Lk 16:16; 13:24. There is no effort more intense and persevering,

no struggle more arduous or agonizing, than when a sinner seeks eternal life. Nor does it mean that they who strive in a proper way, and with proper effort, shall not obtain eternal life, Mt 7:7. But the sense is,

(1.) that the sinner would not put forth any effort himself. If left to his own course he would never seek to be saved.

(2.) That he is pardoned, not on account of his effort; not because he makes an exertion; but because God chooses to pardon him. There is no merit in his anxiety, and prayers, and agony, on account of which God would forgive him; but he is still dependent on the mere mercy of God to save or destroy him at his will. The sinner, however anxious he may be, and however much or long he may strive, does not bring God under an obligation to pardon him, anymore than the condemned criminal, trembling with the fear of execution, and the consciousness of crime, lays the judge or the jury under an obligation to acquit him. This fact it is of great importance for an awakened sinner to know. Deeply anxious he should be, but there is no merit in his distress. Pray he should, but there is no merit in his prayers. Weep and strive he may, but in this there is no ground of claim on God for pardon; and, after all, he is dependent on his mere sovereign mercy, as a lost, ruined, and helpless sinner, to be saved or lost at his will. But of God that sheweth mercy. Salvation, in its beginning, its progress, and its close, is of him. He has a right, therefore, to bestow it when and where he pleases. All our mercies flow from his mere love and compassion, and not from our deserts. The essential idea here is, that God is the original fountain of all the blessings of salvation.

17 For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh,
Even for this same purpose have I raised thee
up, that I might show my power in thee,
and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Have I raised thee up. Margin, in Ex 9:16, "made thee stand," i.e. sustained thee. The Greek word used by the apostle (εξηγειρα) means, properly, I have excited, roused, or stirred thee up; but it

may also have the meaning, "I have sustained or supported thee." That is, I have kept thee from death; I have preserved thee from ruin; I have ministered strength to thee, so that thy full character has been developed. It does not mean that God had infused into his mind any positive evil, or that by any direct influence he had excited any evil feelings, but that he had kept him in circumstances which were fitted to develop his true character. The meaning of the word and the truth of the case may be expressed in the following particulars:

(1.) God meant to accomplish some great purposes by his existence and conduct.

(2.) He kept him, or sustained him, with reference to that.

(3.) He had control over the haughty and wicked monarch. He could take his life, or he could continue him on earth. As he had control over all things that could affect the pride, the feelings, and the happiness of the monarch, so he had control over the monarch himself.

(4.) He placed him in circumstances just fitted to develop his character. He kept him amidst those circumstances until his character was fully developed.

(5.) He did not exert a positive influence on the mind of Pharaoh; for,

(6.) in all this the monarch acted freely. He did that which he chose to do. He pursued his own course. He was voluntary in his schemes of oppressing the Israelites. He was voluntary in his opposition to God. He was voluntary when he pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea. In all his doings he acted as he chose to do, and with a determined choice of evil, from which neither warning nor judgment would turn him away. Thus he is said to have hardened his own heart, Ex 8:15. (7.) Neither Pharaoh nor any sinner can justly blame God for placing them in

circumstances where they shall develop their own character, and show what they are. It is not the fault of God, but their own fault. The sinner is not compelled to sin; nor is God under obligation to save him contrary to the prevalent desires and wishes of the sinner himself.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?

Who art thou, etc. Paul here strongly reproves the impiety and wickedness of arraigning God. This impiety appears,

(1.) because man is a creature of God, and it is improper that he should arraign his Maker.

(2.) He is unqualified to understand the subject. "Who art thou ?" What qualifications has a creature of a day,--a being just in the infancy of his existence; of so limited faculties; so perverse, blinded, and interested as man--to sit in judgment on the doings of the Infinite Mind? Who gave him the authority, or invested him with the prerogatives of a judge over his Maker's doings?

(3.) Even if man were qualified to investigate those subjects, what right has he to reply against God, to arraign him, or to follow out a train of argument tending to involve his Creator in shame and disgrace? Nowhere is there to be found a more cutting or humbling reply to the pride of man than this. And on no subject was it more needed. The experience of every age has shown that this has been a prominent topic of objection against the government of God; and that there has been no point in the Christian theology to which the human heart has been so ready to make objections as to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

Hath not the potter, etc. This same sovereign right of God the apostle proceeds to urge from another illustration, and another passage from the Old Testament, Isa 64:8, "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." This passage is preceded in Isaiah by one declaring the depravity of man. Isa 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." As they were polluted with sin, as they had transgressed the law of God, and had no claim and no merit, God might bestow his favours as he pleased, and mould them as the potter did the clay. He would do no injury to those who were left, and who had no claim to his mercy, if he bestowed favours on others, any more than the potter would do injustice to one part of the mass, if he put it to an ignoble use, and moulded another part into a vessel of honour. This is still the condition of sinful men. God does no injustice to a man if he leaves him to take his own course to ruin, and makes another, equally undeserving, the recipient of his mercy, he violated none of my rights by not conferring on me the talents of Newton or of Bacon; or by not placing me in circumstances like those of Peter and Paul. Where all are undeserving, the utmost that can be demanded is, that he should not treat them with injustice. And this is secured even in the case of the lost. No man will suffer more than he deserves; nor will any man go to perdition feeling that he has a claim to better treatment than he receives. The same sentiment is found in Jer 18:6, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation," etc. The passage in Isaiah proves that God has the right of a sovereign over guilty individuals; that in Jeremiah, that he has the same right over nations: thus meeting the whole case as it was in the mind of the apostle. These passages, however, assert only the right of God to do it, without affirming anything about the manner in which it is done, In fact, God bestows his favours in a mode very different from that in which a potter moulds his clay. God does not create holiness by a mere act of power, but he produces it in a manner consistent

with the moral agency of men; and bestows his favours not to compel men, but to incline them to be willing to receive them. Ps 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." It should be further remarked, that the argument of the apostle here does not refer to the original creation of men, as if God had then made them one for honour and another for dishonour, he refers to man as fallen and lost. His argument is this: "Man is in ruins; he is fallen; he has no claim on God; all deserve to die. On this mass, where none have any claim, he may bestow life on whom he pleases, without injury to others; he may exercise the right of a sovereign to pardon whom he pleases; or of a potter to mould any part of the useless mass to purposes of utility and beauty."

22 *What* if God, willing to show *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

It is a simple declaration that they were IN FACT fitted for it, without making an affirmation about the manner in which they became so. A reader of the English Bible may, perhaps, sometimes draw the impression that God had fitted them for this. But this is not affirmed; and there is an evident design in not affirming it, and a distinction made between them and the vessels of mercy which ought to be regarded. In relation to the latter it is expressly affirmed that God fitted or prepared them for glory. See Rom 9:23, "Which HE had afore prepared unto glory." The same distinction is remarkably striking in the account of the last judgment in Mt 25:34-41. To the righteous, Christ will say, "Come, ye blessed of my rather, inherit the kingdom prepared FOR YOU," etc. To the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS;" not said to have been originally prepared for them. It is clear, therefore, that God intends to keep the great truth in view, that he prepares his people by direct agency for heaven; but that he exerts no such agency in preparing the wicked for destruction.

23 and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the

Gentiles?

25 As he saith also in Hosea,
I will call them my people, which were not my people;
and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26 And it shall come to pass,
that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people;
there shall they be called the children of the living God.

And it shall come to pass. It shall happen, or take place. This is a continuation of the quotation from the prophet Hosea, (Rom 1:10) designed to confirm the doctrine which he was establishing. Both these quotations have the same design, and are introduced for the same end. In Hosea they did not refer to the calling Of the Gentiles, but to the recalling the rejected Jews. God says, after the Jews had been rejected and scattered for their idolatry; after they had forfeited his favour, and been cast off as if they were not his people, he would recall them, and bestow them again the appellation of sons. The apostle does not quote this as having original reference to the Gentiles, but for the following purposes:--

(1.) If God formerly purposed to recall to himself a people whom he had rejected; if he bestowed favours on his own people after they had forfeited his favour, and ceased to be entitled to the name of "his people " then the same thing was not to be regarded as absurd if he dealt in a similar manner with the Gentiles, also a part of his original great family--the family of man--but long since rejected and deemed strangers.

(2.) The dealings of God towards the Jews in the time of Hosea settled a general principle of government. His treatment of them in this manner was a part of his great plan of governing the world. On the same plan he now admitted the Gentiles to favour. And as this general principle was established; as the history of the Jews themselves was a precedent in the case, it ought not to be objected in the time of Paul that the same principle should be carried out to meet the case also of the Gentiles. In the place. The place where

they may be scattered, or where they may dwell. Or rather, perhaps, in those nations which were not regarded as the people of God, there shall be a people to whom this shall apply. Where it was said unto them. Where the proper appellation of the people was, that they were not the people of God; where they were idolatrous, sinful, aliens, strangers; so that they had none of the marks of the children of God. Ye are not my people. People in covenant with God; under his protection, as their Sovereign, and keeping his laws.

27 Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel,
Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of
the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

A remnant shall be saved. Meaning a remnant only. This implies that great multitudes of them would be cast off, and be not saved. If only a remnant was to be saved, many must be lost; and this was just the point which the apostle was endeavouring to establish. The word remnant means that which is left, particularly what may remain after a battle or a great calamity, 2Kgs 19:31, 10:11, Jud 5:13 Isa 14:22. In this place, however, it means a small part or portion. Out of the great multitude there shall be so few left as to make it proper to say that it was a mere remnant. This implies, of course, that the great mass should be cast away or rejected. And this was the use which the apostle intended to make of it. Comp. the Wisdom of Sirach xliv. 17, "Noah--was left unto the earth as a remnant when the flood came." Shall be saved. Shall be preserved, or kept from destruction. As Isaiah had reference to the captivity of Babylon, this means that only a remnant should return to their native land. The great mass should be rejected and cast off. This was the case with the ten tribes, and also with many others who chose to remain in the land of their captivity. The use which the apostle makes of it is this: In the history of the Jews, by the testimony of Isaiah, a large part of the Jews of that time were rejected, and cast off from being the peculiar people of God. It is clear, therefore, that God has brought himself under no obligation to save all the descendants of Abraham. This case settles the principle. If God did it then, it was equally consistent for him to do it in the time of Paul, under the gospel.

28 for he will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness:

because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

29 And as Isaiah said before,
Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a
seed, we had been as Sodom,
and been made like unto Gomorrah.

Except the Lord of Sabaoth. In Isaiah, the Lord of Hosts. The word Sabaoth is the Hebrew word rendered hosts. It properly denotes armies or military hosts organized for war. Hence it denotes the hosts of heaven, and means

(1.) the angels, who are represented as marshalled or arranged into military orders, Eph 1:21, 3:10, 6:12, Col 1:16, 2:15, Jude 1:6 1Kgs 22:19, "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him" Ps 103:21, 148:2.

(2.) The stars, Jer 33:22, "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered," etc.; Isa 40:26, De 4:19, etc. God is called the Lord of hosts, as being at the head of all these armies; their King and their Commander. It is a phrase properly expressive of his majesty and power, and is appropriately introduced here, as the act of saving "the seed" was a signal act of power in the midst of great surrounding wickedness.

We had been as Sodoma. The nation was so wicked, that unless God had preserved a small number who were pious from the general corruption of the people, they would have been swept off by judgment, like Sodom and Gomorrah. We are told that ten righteous men would have saved Sodom, Gen 18:32. Among the Israelites, in a time of great general depravity, a small number of holy men were found who preserved the nation. The design of the apostle here was the same as in the previous verses--to show that it was settled in the Jewish history that God might cast off the people, and reject them from enjoying the peculiar privileges of his friends. It is true that in Isaiah he has reference to the temporal punishment of the Jews. But it settles a great principle, for which Paul was contending, that God might cast off the nation consistently with his promises and his plans.--We may learn here,

(1.) that the existence of religion among a people is owing to the love of God. "Except the Lord had left us," etc.

(2.) It is owing to his mercy that any men are kept from sin, and any nation from destruction.

(3.) We see the value of religion and of pious men in a nation. Ten such would have saved Sodom; and a few such saved Judea. Comp. Mt 5:13,14. (4.) God has a right to withdraw his mercies from any other people, however exalted their privileges, and leave them to ruin; and we should not be high-minded, but fear, Rom 10:20.

Righteousness Based on Faith

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed
not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even
the righteousness which is of faith.
31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath
not attained to the law of righteousness.
32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by
the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

They depended on their own righteousness, and not on the mercy of God to be obtained by faith.By complying with all the demands of the law, so that they might merit salvation. Their attempted obedience included their prayers, fastings, sacrifices, etc., as well as compliance with the demands of the moral law. It may be asked here, perhaps, how the Jews could know any better than this?

How should they know anything about justification by faith. To this I answer,

(1.) that the doctrine was stated in the Old Testament. See Hab 2:4. Comp. Rom 1:17. Ps 32; Ps 130; Ps 14. Comp. Rom 3, Job 9:2.

(2.) The sacrifices had reference to a future state of things, and were doubtless so understood. See the epistle to the Hebrews. (3.) The principle of justification, and of living by faith, had been fully brought out in the lives and experience of the saints Of old. See Rom 4, Heb 11.

33 as it is written,
Behold, I lay in Zion a
stumblingstone and rock of
offense:
and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Romans-10

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that
they might be saved.

as God is, who is not willing that any should perish (2Pe 3:9), desires not the death of sinners.This, he says, was his heart's desire and prayer, which intimates,

(1.) The strength and sincerity of his desire. It was his heart's desire; it was not a formal compliment, as good wishes are with many from the teeth outward, but a real desire. This it was before it was his prayer. The soul of prayer is the heart's desire. Cold desires do but beg denials; we must even breathe out our souls in every prayer.

(2.) The offering up of this desire to God. It was not only his heart's desire, but it was his prayer. There may be desires in the heart, and yet no prayer, unless those desires be presented to God. Wishing and woulding, if that be all, are not praying.

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but
not according to knowledge.

A good witness, as a reason of his good wish (Ro 10:2): I bear them record that they have a zeal of God. The unbelieving Jews were the most bitter enemies Paul had in the world, and yet Paul gives them as good a character as the truth would bear. We should say the best we can even of our worst enemies; this is blessing

those that curse us. Charity teaches us to have the best opinion of persons, and to put the best construction upon words and actions, that they will bear. We should take notice of that which is commendable even in bad people. They have a zeal of God. Their opposition to the gospel is from a principle of respect to the law, which they know to have come from God. There is such a thing as a blind misguided zeal: such was that of the Jews, who, when they hated Christ's people and ministers, and cast them out, said, Let the Lord be glorified (Isa 66:5); nay, they killed them, and thought they did God good service, Joh 16:2.

A zeal of God. A zeal for God, Thus, Jn 2:17, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" An earnest desire for the honour of the sanctuary has wholly absorbed my attention. Comp. Ps 69:9 Acts 21:20, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law;" Acts 22:3, "And was zealous toward God as ye all are this day." Zeal for God here means passionate ardour in the things pertaining to God, or in the things of religion. In this they were doubtless, many of them, sincere; but sincerity does not of itself constitute true piety. Jn 16:2, The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he, doeth God service." This would be an instance of extraordinary zeal, and in this they would be sincere; but persecution to death of apostles cannot be true religion. See also Mt 23:15; Acts 26:9, "I thought that I ought to do," etc. So many persons suppose that, provided they are sincere and zealous, they must of course be accepted of God. But the zeal which is acceptable is that which aims at the glory of God, and which is founded on true benevolence to the universe; and which does not aim primarily to establish a system of self-righteousness, as did the Jew, or to build up our own sect, as many others do. We may remark here, that Paul was not insensible to what the Jews did, and was not unwilling to give them credit for it. A minister of the gospel should not be blind to the amiable qualities of men, or to their zeal; and should be willing to speak of it tenderly, even when they are proclaiming the doctrine of depravity, or denouncing the just judgments of God.

Not according to knowledge. Not an enlightened, discerning, and intelligent zeal. Not that which was founded on correct views of God and of religious truth. Such zeal is enthusiasm, and often becomes persecuting. Knowledge without zeal becomes cold, abstract, calculating, formal; and may be possessed by devils as well as men. It is the union of the two --the action of the man called forth to intense effort by just views of truth, and by rightfeeling--that constitutes true religion. This was the zeal of the Saviour and of the apostles.

3 For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

The causes of their unbelief, and these are two:--

(1.) Ignorance of God's righteousness. They did not understand, and believe, and consider, the strict justice of God, in hating and punishing sin, and demanding satisfaction, did not consider what need we have of a righteousness wherein to appear before him; if they had, they would never have stood out against the gospel offer, nor expected justification by their own works, as if they could satisfy God's justice. Or, being ignorant of God's way of justification, which he has now appointed and revealed by Jesus Christ. They did not know it, because they would not; they shut their eyes against the discoveries of it, and love darkness rather.

(2.) A proud conceit of their own righteousness: Going about to establish their own--a righteousness of their own devising, and of their own working out, by the merit of their works, and by their observance of the ceremonial law. They thought they needed not to be beholden to the merit of Christ, and therefore depended upon their own performances as sufficient to make up a righteousness wherein to appear before God. They could not with Paul disclaim a dependence upon this (Php 3:9), Not having my own righteousness. See an instance of this pride in the Pharisee, Lu 18:10,11. Compare Ro 10:14.

And seeking to establish, etc. Endeavouring to confirm or make valid their own righteousness; to render it such as to constitute a ground of justification before God; or to make good their own claims to eternal life by their merits. This stands opposed to the justification by grace, or to God's plan. And they must ever be opposed. This was the constant effort of the Jews; and in this they supposed they had succeeded. See Paul's experience in Php 3:4-6; Acts 26:5. Instances of their belief on this subject occur in all the gospels, where our Saviour combats their notions of their own righteousness. See particularly their views and evasions exposed in Mt 23. Comp. Mt 5:20, etc.; Mt 6:2-5. It was this which mainly opposed the Lord Jesus and his apostles; and it is this confidence in their own righteousness which still stands in the way of the progress of the gospel among men.

Have not submitted themselves. Confident in their own righteousness, they have not yielded their hearts to a plan which requires them to come confessing that they have no merit, and to be saved by the merit of another. No obstacle to salvation by grace is so great as the self-righteousness of the sinner.

4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The subserviency of the law to the gospel (Ro 10:4): Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. The design of the law was to lead people to Christ. The moral law was but for the searching of the wound, the ceremonial law for the shadowing forth of the remedy; but Christ is the end of both. See 2Co 3:7,Ga 3:23,24. The use of the law was to direct people for righteousness to Christ.

(1.) Christ is the end of the ceremonial law; he is the period of it, because he is the perfection of it. When the substance comes, the shadow is gone. The sacrifices, and offerings, and purifications appointed under the Old Testament, prefigured Christ, and pointed at him; and their inability to take away sin discovered the necessity of a sacrifice that should, by being once offered, take away sin.

(2.) Christ is the end of the moral law in that he did what the law could not do (Ro 8:3), and secured the great end of it. The end of the law was to bring men to perfect obedience, and so to obtain justification. This is now become impossible, by reason of the power of sin and the corruption of nature; but Christ is the end of the law. The law is not destroyed, nor the intention of the lawgiver frustrated, but, full satisfaction being made by the death of Christ for our breach of the law, the end is attained, and we are put in another way of justification. Christ is thus the end of the law for righteousness, that is, for justification; but it is only to every one that believeth. Upon our believing, that is, our humble consent to the terms of the gospel, we become interested in Christ's satisfaction, and so are justified through the redemption that is in Jesus.

This was the subject of discussion between the apostle and the Jews; and this is all that is necessary to understand in the case. Some have supposed that the word end refers to the ceremonial law; that Christ fulfilled it, and brought it to an end. Others, that he perfectly fulfilled the moral law. And others, that the law in the end leads us to Christ, or that its design is to point us to him.All these are true, but not the truth taught in this passage. That is simple and plain, that by faith in Christ the same end is accomplished in regard to our justification, that would be by perfect obedience to the moral law.

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,
That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.
6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,
Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is,
to bring Christ down *from above:*)

That it is not at all hard or difficult. The way of justification and salvation has in it no such depths or knots as may discourage us, no insuperable difficulties attending it; but, as was foretold, it is a high-way, Isa 35:8. We are not put to climb for it--it is not in heaven; we are not put to dive for it--it is not in the deep. First, We need not go to heaven, to search the records there, or to enquire

into the secrets of the divine counsel. It is true Christ is in heaven; but we may be justified and saved without going thither, to fetch him thence, or sending a special messenger to him. Secondly, We need not go to the deep, to fetch Christ out of the grave, or from the state of the dead: Into the deep, to bring up Christ from the dead. This plainly shows that Christ's descent into the deep, or into hades, was no more than his going into the state of the dead, in allusion to Jonah. It is true that Christ was in the grave, and it is as true that he is now in heaven; but we need not perplex and puzzle ourselves with fancied difficulties, nor must we create to ourselves such gross and carnal ideas of these things as if the method of salvation were impracticable, and the design of the revelation were only to amuse us. No, salvation is not put at so vast a distance from us.

7 or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9 that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

But it is very plain and easy: The word is nigh thee. When we speak of looking upon Christ, and receiving Christ, and feeding upon Christ, it is not Christ in heaven, nor Christ in the deep, that we mean; but Christ in the promise, Christ exhibited to us, and offered, in the word. Christ is nigh thee, for the word is nigh thee: nigh thee indeed: it is in thy mouth, and in thy heart; there is no difficulty in understanding, believing, and owning it. The work thou hast to do lies within thee: the kingdom of God is within you, Lu 17:21. Thence thou must fetch thy evidences, not out of the records of heaven. It is, that is, it is promised that it shall be, in thy mouth (Isa 59:21), and in thy heart, Jer 31:33. All that which is done for us is already done to our hands. Christ is come down from heaven; we need not go to fetch him. He is come up from the deep; we need not perplex ourselves how to bring him up. There is nothing now to be done, but a work in us; this must be our care, to look to our heart and mouth. Those that were under the law were to do all themselves, Do this, and live; but the gospel discovers the

greatest part of the work done already, and what remains cut short in righteousness, salvation offered upon very plain and easy terms, brought to our door, as it were, in the word which is nigh us. It is in our mouth--we are reading it daily; it is in our heart--we are, or should be, thinking of it daily. Even the word of faith; the gospel and the promise of it, called the word of faith because it is the object of faith about which it is conversant, the word which we believe;--because it is the precept of faith, commanding it, and making it the great condition of justification;--and because it is the ordinary means by which faith is wrought and conveyed. Now what is this word of faith? We have the tenour of it, Ro 10:9,10, the sum of the gospel, which is plain and easy enough. Observe,

First, What is promised to us: Thou shalt be saved. It is salvation that the gospel exhibits and tenders--saved from guilt and wrath, with the salvation of the soul, an eternal salvation, which Christ is the author of, a Saviour to the uttermost.

Secondly, Upon what terms.

1. Two things are required as conditions of salvation:--

(a.) Confessing the Lord Jesus--openly professing relation to him and dependence on him, as our prince and Saviour, owning Christianity in the face of all the allurements and affrightments of this world, standing by him in all weathers. Our Lord Jesus lays a great stress upon this confessing of him before men; see Mt 10:32,33. It is the product of many graces, evinces a great deal of self-denial, love to Christ, contempt of the world, a mighty courage and resolution. It was a very great thing, especially, when the profession of Christ or Christianity hazarded estate, honour, preferment, liberty, life, and all that is dear in this world, which was the case in the primitive times.

(b.) Believing in the heart that God raised him from the dead. The profession of faith with the mouth, if there be not the power of it in the heart, is but a mockery; the root of it must be laid in an

unfeigned assent to the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ, especially concerning his resurrection, which is the fundamental article of the Christian faith, for thereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and full evidence was given that God accepted his satisfaction.

2. This is further illustrated (Ro 10:10), and the order inverted, because there must first be faith in the heart before there can be an acceptable confession with the mouth.

(a.) Concerning faith: It is with the heart that man believeth, which implies more than an assent of the understanding, and takes in the consent of the will, an inward, hearty, sincere, and strong consent. It is not believing (not to be reckoned so) if it be not with the heart. This is unto righteousness. There is the righteousness of justification and the righteousness of sanctification. Faith is to both; it is the condition of our justification (Ro 5:1), and it is the root and spring of our sanctification; in it it is begun; by it it is carried on, Ac 15:9.

(b.) Concerning profession: It is with the mouth that confession is made--confession to God in prayer and praise (Ro 15:6), confession to men by owning the ways of God before others, especially when we are called to it in a day of persecution. It is fit that God should be honoured with the mouth, for he made man's mouth (Ex 4:11), and at such a time has promised to give his faithful people a mouth and wisdom, Lu 21:15. It is part of the honour of Christ that every tongue shall confess, Php 2:11. And this is said to be unto salvation, because it is the performance of the condition of that promise, Mt 10:32. Justification by faith lays the foundation of our title to salvation; but by confession we build upon that foundation, and come at last to the full possession of that to which we were entitled. So that we have here a brief summary of the terms of salvation, and they are very reasonable; in short this, that we must devote, dedicate, and give up, to God, our souls and our bodies--our souls in believing with the heart, and our

bodies in confessing with the mouth. This do, and thou shalt live. For this (Ro 10:11) he quotes Isa 28:16, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed; ou kataischynthesetai. That is,

[1.] He will not be ashamed to own that Christ in whom he trusts; he that believes in the heart will not be ashamed to confess with the mouth. It is sinful shame that makes people deny Christ, Mk 8:38. He that believeth will not make haste (so the prophet has it)--will not make haste to run away from the sufferings he meets with in the way of his duty, will not be ashamed of a despised religion.

[2.] He shall not be ashamed of his hope in Christ; he shall not be disappointed of his end. It is our duty that we must not, it is our privilege that we shall not, be ashamed of our faith in Christ. He shall never have cause to repent his confidence in reposing such a trust in the Lord Jesus.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with
the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
11 For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not
be ashamed.
12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for
the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.
13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be
saved.

This sentiment is found substantially in Joel 2:32, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." This is expressly applied to the times of the gospel by Peter, in Acts 2:21. Acts 2:21. To call on the name of the Lord is the same as to call on the Lord himself. The word name is often used in this manner. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower," etc., Prov 18:10; "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee," Ps 20:1. That is, God himself is a strong tower, etc. It is clear, from what follows, that the apostle applies this to Jesus Christ; and this is one of the numerous instances in which the writers of the New Testament apply to him expressions which in the Old Testament are applicable to God. See 1Cor 1:2.

Shall be saved. This is the uniform promise. See Acts 2:21; Acts 22:16, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This is proper and indispensable, because (1.) we have sinned against God, and it is right that we should confess it. (2.) Because he only can pardon us, and it is fit, that if we obtain pardon, we should ask it of God. (3.) To call upon him is to acknowledge him as our Sovereign, our Father, and our Friend; and it is right that we render him our homage. It is implied in this, that we call upon him with right feelings; that is, with a humble sense of our sinfulness and our need of pardon, and with a willingness to receive eternal life as it is offered us in the gospel. And if this be done, this passage teaches us that all may be saved who will do it. He will cast none away who come in this manner. The invitation and the assurance extend to all nations, and to men of all times.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not
believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have
not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?
15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is
written, How beautiful are the feet of them
that preach the gospel of peace,
and bring glad tidings of good things!

What the gospel is: It is the gospel of peace; it is the word of reconciliation between God and man. On earth peace, Lu 2:14. Or, peace is put in general for all good; so it is explained here; it is glad tidings of good things. The things of the gospel are good things indeed, the best things; tidings concerning them are the most joyful tidings, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth.How acceptable they should therefore be to the children of men for their work's sake: How beautiful are the feet, that is, how welcome are they! And, when Christ was sending forth his disciples, he washed their feet. Those that preach the gospel of peace should see to it that their feet (their life and conversation) be beautiful: the holiness of ministers' lives is the beauty of their feet. How beautiful! namely, in the eyes of those that hear them. Those that welcome the message cannot but love the messengers. See 1Th 5:12,13.

the feet. Many have supposed that the meaning of this expression is this: The feet of a herald, naked and dusty from travelling, would be naturally objects of disgust; but that which would be naturally disagreeable is thus made pleasant by the joy of the message. But this explanation is far-fetched, and wants parallel instances. Besides, it is a violation of the image which the apostle had used. That was a distant object--a herald running on the distant hills; and it supposes a picture too remote to observe distinctly the feet, whether attractive or not. The meaning of it is clearly this: "How beautiful is the coming or the running of such a herald." The feet are emblematic of his coming. Their rapid motion would be seen; and their rapidity would be beautiful from the desire to hear the message which he brought. The whole meaning of the passage, then, as applied to ministers of the gospel, is, that their coming is an attractive object, regarded with deep interest, and productive of joy--an honoured and a delightful employment.

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

All the Jews have not, all the Gentiles have not; far the greater part of both remain in unbelief and disobedience. Observe, The gospel is given us not only to be known and believed, but to be obeyed. It is not a system of notions, but a rule of practice. This little success of the word was likewise foretold by the prophet (Isa 53:1): Who hath believed our report? Very few have, few to what one would think should have believed it, considering how faithful a report it is and how well worthy of all acceptation,--very few to the many that persist in unbelief. It is no strange thing, but it is a very sad and uncomfortable thing, for the ministers of Christ to bring the report of the gospel, and not to be believed in it. Under such a melancholy consideration it is good for us to go to God and make our complaint to him.

17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

In the closing part of this chapter, the great doctrine is brought forth and defended, that the way of salvation is open for all the

world. This, in the time Of Paul, was regarded as a novel doctrine. Hence he is at so much pains to illustrate and defend it. And hence, with so much zeal and self-denial, the apostles of the Lord Jesus went and proclaimed it to the nations. This doctrine is not the less important now. And from this discussion we may learn the following truths:

(1.) the heathen world is in danger without the gospel. They are sinful, polluted, wretched. The testimony of all who visit pagan nations accords most strikingly with that of the apostles in their times. Nor is there any evidence that the great mass of heathen population has changed for the better.

(2.) The provisions of the gospel are ample for them--for all. Its power has been tried on many nations; and its mild and happy influence is seen in meliorated laws, customs, habits; in purer institutions; in intelligence and order; and in the various blessings conferred by a pure religion. The same gospel is fitted to produce on the wildest and most wretched population the same comforts which are now experienced in the happiest part of our own land.

(3.) The command of Jesus Christ remains still the same, to preach the gospel to every creature. That command has never been repealed or changed. The apostles met the injunction, and performed what they could. It remains for the church to act as they did, to feel as they did, and put forth their efforts as they did, in obeying one of the most plain and positive laws of Jesus Christ.

(4.) If the gospel is to be proclaimed everywhere, men must be sent forth into the vast field. Every nation must have an opportunity to say, "How beautiful are the feet of him that preaches the gospel of peace." Young men, strong and vigorous in the Christian course, must give themselves to this work, and devote their lives in an enterprise which the apostles regarded as honourable to them; and which Infinite Wisdom did not regard as unworthy the toils, and tears, and self-denials of the Son of God.

(5.) The church, in training young men for the ministry, in fitting her sons for these toils, is performing a noble and glorious work; a work which contemplates the triumph of the gospel among all nations. Happy will it be when the church shall feel the full pressure of this great truth, that the gospel MAY BE, preached to every son and daughter of Adam; and when every man who enters the ministry shall count it not self-denial, but a glorious privilege to be permitted to tell dying pagan men that a Saviour bled for ALL, sinners. And happy that day when it can be said with literal truth, that their sound has gone out into all the earth; and that as far as the sun in his daily course sheds his beams, so far the Sun of righteousness sheds also his pure and lovely rays into the abodes of men. And we may learn, also, from this, (6.) that God will withdraw his favours from those nations that are disobedient and rebellious. Thus he rejected the ancient Jews; and thus also he will forsake all who abuse his mercies; who become proud, luxurious, effeminate, and wicked. In this respect it becomes the people of this favoured land to remember the God of their fathers; and not to forget, too, that national sin provokes God to withdraw, and that a nation that forgets God must be punished.

19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith,
I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people,
and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

A foolish nation. The word fool means one void of understanding. But it also means one who is wicked, or idolatrous; one who contemns God. Ps 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Prov 1:7, "Fools despise wisdom and instruction." Here it means a nation who had no understanding of the true God, ασυνετω I will anger. My bestowing favours on them will excite your anger. We may remark here, (1.) that God is a sovereign, and has a right to bestow his favours on whom he pleases. (2.) That when men abuse his mercies, become proud, or cold, or dead in his service, he often takes away their privileges, and bestows them on others. (3.) That the effect of his sovereignty is to excite men to anger. Proud and wicked men are always enraged that he bestows his favours on others; and the effect of his sovereign dealings is to provoke to anger the very men who by their sins have rejected

his mercy. Hence there is no doctrine that proud man hates so cordially as he does the doctrine of Divine sovereignty; and none that will so much test the character of the wicked.

20 But Isaiah is very bold, and saith,
I was found of them that sought me not;
I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

The Jews have heard it too, Ro 10:19-21. For this he appeals to two passages of the Old Testament, to show how inexcusable they are too. Did not Israel know that the Gentiles were to be called in? They might have known it from Moses and Isaiah.

First, One is taken from De 32:21, I will provoke you to jealousy. The Jews not only had the offer, but saw the Gentiles accepting it and benefitted by that acceptance, witness their vexation at the event. They had the refusal: To you first, Ac 3:26. In all places where the apostles came still the Jews had the first offer, and the Gentiles had but their leavings. If one would not, another would. Now this provoked them to jealousy. They, as the elder brother in the parable (Lu 15:1-32) envied the reception and entertainment of the prodigal Gentiles upon their repentance. The Gentiles are here called no people, and a foolish nation, that is, not the professing people of God. How much soever there be of the wit and wisdom of the world, those that are not the people of God are, and in the end will be found to be, a foolish people. Such was the state of the Gentile world, who yet were made the people of God, and Christ to them the wisdom of God. What a provocation it was to the Jews to see the Gentiles taken into favour we may see, Ac 13:45,17:5,13, and especially Ac 22:22. It was an instance of the great wickedness of the Jews that they were thus enraged; and this in Deuteronomy is the matter of a threatening. God often makes people's sin their punishment. A man needs no greater plague than to be left to the impetuous rage of his own lusts.

Secondly, Another is taken from Isa 65:1,2, which is very full, and in it Esaias is very bold--bold indeed, to speak so plainly of the rejection of his own countrymen. Those that will be found

faithful have need to be very bold. Those that are resolved to please God must not be afraid to displease any man. Now Esaias speaks boldly and plainly,

1. Of the preventing grace and favour of God in the reception and entertainment of the Gentiles (Ro 10:20): I was found of those that sought me not. The prescribed method is, Seek and find; this is a rule for us, not a rule for God, who is often found of those that do not seek. His grace is his own, distinguishing grace his own, and he dispenses it in a way of sovereignty, gives of withholds it at pleasure--anticipates us with the blessings, the riches choicest blessings, of his goodness. Thus he manifested himself to the Gentiles, by sending the light of the gospel among them, when they were so far from seeking him and asking after him that they were following after lying vanities, and serving dumb idols. Was not this our own particular case? Did not God begin in love, and manifest himself to us when we did not ask after him? And was not that a time of love indeed, to be often remembered with a great deal of thankfulness?

2. Of the obstinacy and perverseness of Israel, notwithstanding the fair offers and affectionate invitations they had, Ro 10:21. Observe,

(a.) God's great goodness to them: All day long I have stretched forth my hands.

[1.] His offers: I have stretched forth my hands, offering them life and salvation with the greatest sincerity and seriousness that can be, with all possible expressions of earnestness and importunity, showing them the happiness tendered, setting it before them with the greatest evidence, reasoning the case with them. Stretching forth the hands is the gesture of those that require audience (Ac 26:1), or desire acceptance, Pr 1:24. Christ was crucified with his hands stretched out. Stretched forth my hands as offering reconciliation--come let us shake hands and be friends; and our duty is to give the hand to him, 2Ch 30:8.

[2.] His patience in making these offers: All day long. The patience of God towards provoking sinners is admirable. He waits to be gracious. The time of God's patience is here called a day, lightsome as a day and fit for work and business, but limited as a day, and a night at the end of it. he bears long, but he will not bear always.

(b.) Their great badness to him. They were a disobedient gainsaying people. One word in the Hebrew, in Isaiah, is here well explained by two; not only disobedient to the call, not yielding to it, but gainsaying, and quarrelling with it, which is much worse. Many that will not accept of a good proposal will yet acknowledge that they have nothing to say against it: but the Jews who believed not rested not there, but contradicted and blasphemed. God's patience with them was a very great aggravation of their disobedience, and rendered it the more exceedingly sinful; as their disobedience advanced the honour of God's patience and rendered it the more exceedingly gracious. It is a wonder of mercy in God that his goodness is not overcome by man's badness; and it is a wonder of wickedness in man that his badness is not overcome by God's goodness.

21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Lord! why should we, that are sinners ourselves, think much to bear with sinners? Let us rather imitate thy example in waiting upon them with the offers of grace and mercy, and follow them with our melting entreaties and passionate importunities, till we either overcome their obstinacy, or leave them totally inexcusable.

God's dealings even with reprobate sinners are full of tenderness and compassion; all the day long extending the arms of His mercy even to the disobedient and gainsaying. This will be felt and acknowledged at last by all who perish, to the glory of God's forbearance and to their own confusion (Ro 10:21).

It presents the figure of a parent, with hands extended, appealing to a wayward child. That child was the Jewish nation. It was cast off because it "would" be cast off. It refused to listen to appeals. See Mt 23:37. The apostle is far from ascribing the rejection of Israel to a divine decree, but he assigns the cause to Israel itself. Just so the Savior says in the passage just referred to, "How often 'would I' have gathered, . . . but 'ye would not'". The divine wish was that Israel should be saved, but Israel stubbornly refused.

Romans-11

The Remnant of Israel

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elijah ? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

Lord, they have killed, etc. This is taken from 1Kgs 19:10. The quotation is not literally made, but the sense is preserved. This was a charge which Elijah brought against the whole nation; and the act of killing the prophets he regarded as expressive of the character of the people, or that they were universally given to wickedness. The fact was true that they had killed the prophets, etc., (1Kgs 18:4,13) but the inference which Elijah seems to have drawn from it, that there were no pious men in the nation, was not well founded.

And digged down. Altars, by the law of Moses, were required to be made of earth or unhewn stones, Ex 20:24,25. Hence the expression, to dig them down, means completely to demolish or destroy them. Thine altars. There was one great altar in the front of the tabernacle and the temple, on which the daily sacrifices of

the Jews were to be made. But they were not forbidden to make altars also elsewhere, Ex 20:25. And hence they are mentioned as existing in other places, 1Sam 7:17, 16:2,3, 1Kgs 18:30,32. These were the altars of which Elijah complained as having been thrown down by the Jews; an act which was regarded as expressive of signal impiety.

I am left alone. I am the only prophet which is left alive. We are told that when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them in a cave, 1Kgs 18:4. But it is not improbable that they had been discovered and put to death by Ahab. The account which Obadiah gave Elijah when he met him, (1Kgs 18:13) seems to favour such a supposition.

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him?
I have reserved to myself seven thousand men,
who have not bowed the knee to *the image of*
Baal.

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant
according to the election of grace.

6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no
more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace:
otherwise work is no more work.

If men are justified by their works, it could not be a matter of favour, but was a debt. If it could be that the doctrine of justification by grace could be held, and yet at the same time that the Jewish doctrine of merit was true, then it would follow that grace had changed its nature, or was a different thing from what the word properly signified. The idea of being saved by merit contradicts the very idea of grace. If a man owes me a debt, and pays it, it cannot be said to be done by favour, or by grace. I have a claim on him for it, and there is no favour in his paying his just dues.

Works here mean conformity to the law; and to be saved by works would be to be saved by such conformity as the meritorious cause. Of course there could be no grace or favour in giving what was due; if there was favour, or grace, then works would lose their essential

characteristic, and cease to be the meritorious cause of procuring the blessings. What is paid as a debt is not conferred as a favour.

And from this it follows that salvation cannot be partly by grace and partly by works. It is not because men can advance any claims to the favour of God; but from his mere unmerited grace. He that is not willing to obtain eternal life in that way, cannot obtain it at all.

7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for;
but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded
8 (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see,
and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

God hath given. Expressions like this are common in the Scriptures, where God is represented as having an agency in producing the wickedness and stupidity of sinners. See Rom 9:17,18. Mt 13:16; Mk 4:11, Mk 4:12; also 2Thes 2:11.

Eyes that they should not see, etc. This expression is not taken literally from any single place in the Old Testament; but expresses the general sense of several passages, Isa 6:10, De 29:4. It denotes a state of mind not different from a spirit of slumber. When we sleep, the eyes are insensible to surrounding objects, and the ear to sounds. Though in themselves the organs may be perfect, yet the mind is as though they were not; and we have eves which then do not see, and ears which do not hear. Thus with the Jews. Though they had all the proper faculties for understanding and receiving the gospel, yet they rejected it.

9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap,
and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them:

Verses 9,10. And David saith, etc. This quotation is made from Ps 69:22,23. This psalm is repeatedly quoted as having reference to the events recorded in the New Testament. Acts 1:20. This quotation is introduced immediately after one that undoubtedly refers to the Lord Jesus. Rom 11:21, "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The passage here quoted immediately follows as an imprecation of vengeance for their sins. "Let their table," etc. The quotation is not

made, however, either literally from the Hebrew or from the Septuagint, but the sense only is retained. The Hebrew is, "Let their table before them be for a snare, and for those at peace let it be for a gin." The Septuagint is, "Let their table before them be for a snare, and for a stumbling-block, and for an offence." The ancient Targum is, "Let their table which they had prepared before me be for a snare, and their sacrifices be for an offence." The meaning is this: The word table denotes food, In this they expected pleasure and support. David prays that even this, where they expected joy and refreshment, might prove to them the means of punishment and righteous retribution, A snare is that by which birds or wild beasts were taken. They are decoyed into it, or walk or fly carelessly into it, and it is sprung suddenly on them. So of the Jews. The petition is, that while they were seeking refreshment and joy, and anticipating at their table no danger, it might be made the means of their ruin. The only way in which this could be done would be, that their temporal enjoyments would lead them away from God, and produce stupidity and indifference to their spiritual interests. This is often the result of the pleasures of the table, or of seeking sensual gratifications. The apostle does not say whether this prayer was right or wrong. The use which he seems to make of it is this, that David's imprecation was to be regarded in the light of a prophecy; that what he prayed for would come to pass; and that this had actually occurred in the time of the apostle: that their very enjoyments, their national and private privileges, had been the means of alienating them from God, had been a snare to them, and was the cause of their blindness and infidelity. This also is introduced in the psalm as a punishment for giving him vinegar to drink; and their treatment of the Messiah was the immediate cause why all this blindness had come upon the Jews.

And a recompence. The Hebrew word translated "that which should have been for their welfare," is capable of this meaning, and may denote their recompense, or that which is appropriately rendered to them. It means, here, that their ordinary comforts and enjoyments, instead of promoting their permanent welfare, may be the occasion of their guilt and ruin. This is often the effect of earthly comforts. They might lead us to God, and should excite our

gratitude and praise; but they are often abused to our spiritual slumber and guilt, and made the occasion of our ruin. The rich are thus often most forgetful of God; and the very abundance of their blessings made the means of darkness of mind, ingratitude, prayerlessness, and ruin. Satisfied with them, they forget the Giver; and while they enjoy many earthly blessings, God sends barrenness into their souls. This was the guilt of Sodom, "pride, and fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness," (Eze 16:49) and against this Moses solemnly warned the Jews, De 6:11,12, 8:10-12. This same caution might be extended to the people of this land, and especially to those who are rich, and are blessed with all that their hearts have wished. From the use which the apostle makes of this passage in the Psalms, it is clear that he regarded it rather as a prophetic denunciation for their sins --a prediction of what would be-- than as a prayer. In his time it had been fulfilled; and the very national privileges of the Jews, on which they so much prided themselves, and which might have been so great blessings, were the occasion of their greater sin in rejecting the Messiah, and of their greater condemnation. Thus their table was made a trap, etc.

10 let their eyes be darkened, that they may not
see, and bow down their back alway.

And bow down their back alway. The Hebrew (Ps 69:23) is, "Let their loins totter or shake;" that is, as one does when he has on him a heavy burden. The apostle has retained this sense. It means, let them be called to bear heavy and oppressive burdens; let them be subjected to toil or servitude, as a reward for their sins. That this had come upon the Jews in the time of Paul is clear; and it is further clear that it came upon them, as it was implied in the psalm, in consequence of their treatment of the Messiah. Much difficulty has been felt in reconciling the petitions in the Psalms for calamities on enemies, with the Spirit of the New Testament. Perhaps they cannot all be thus reconciled; and it is not at all improbable that many of those imprecations were wrong. David was not a perfect man; and the Spirit of inspiration is not responsible for his imperfections. Every doctrine delivered by the sacred writers is true; every fact recorded is recorded as it was. But it does not follow that all the men who wrote, or about whom a narrative was given, were perfect. The reverse is the fact. And

it does not militate against the inspiration of the Scriptures that we have a record of the failings and imperfections of those men. When they uttered improper sentiments; when they manifested improper feelings; when they performed wicked actions, it is no argument against the inspiration of the Scriptures that they were recorded. All that is done in such a case, and all that inspiration demands, is that they be recorded as they are. We wish to see human nature as it is; and one design of making the record of such failings is to show what man is, even under the influence of religion; not as a perfect being, for that would not be true; but as he actually exists, mingled with imperfection. Thus many of the wishes of the ancient saints, imperfect as they were, are condemned as sinful by the spirit of the Christian religion. They were never commended or approved, but they are recorded just to show us what was in fact the character of man, even partially under the influence of religion. Of this nature, probably, were many of the petitions in the Psalms; and the Spirit of God is no more answerable for the feeling because it is recorded, than he is for the feelings of the Edomites when they said, "Rase it, rase it to the foundation," Ps 137:7. Many of those prayers, however, were imprecations on his enemies as a public man, as the magistrate of the land. As it is right and desirable that the robber and the pirate should be detected and punished; as all good men seek it, and it is indispensable for the welfare of the community, where is the impropriety of praying that it may be done? Is it not right to pray that the laws may be executed; that justice may be. maintained; and that restraint should be imposed on the guilty? Assuredly this may be done with a very different spirit from that of revenge. It may be the prayer of the magistrate that God will help him in that which he is appointed to do, and in what ought to be done. Besides, many of these imprecations were regarded as simply predictions of what would be the effect of sin; or of what God would do to the guilty. Such was the case we are now considering, as understood by the apostle. But in a prediction there can be nothing wrong.

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Have they stumbled that they should fall? This is to be regarded as an objection, which the apostle proceeds to answer. The meaning is, Is it the design of God that the Jews should totally and irrecoverably be cast off? Even admitting that they are now unbelieving, that they have rejected the Messiah, that they have stumbled, is it the purpose of God finally to exclude them from mercy? The expression to stumble is introduced because he had just mentioned a stumbling-stone. It does not mean to fall down to the ground, or to fall so that a man may not recover himself; but to strike the foot against an obstacle, to be arrested in going, and to be in danger of falling. Hence it means to err, to sin, to be in danger. To fall expresses the state when a man pitches over an obstacle so that he cannot recover himself, but falls to the ground. Hence to err, to sin, or to be cast off irrecoverably. The apostle shows that this last was not the way in which the Jews had fallen, that they were not to be cast off for ever, but that occasion was taken by their fall to introduce the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel, and then they should be restored.

But rather through their fall. By means of their fall. The word fall here refers to all their conduct and doom at the coming of the Messiah, and in the breaking up of their establishment as a nation. Their rejection of the Messiah; the destruction of their city and temple; the ceasing of their ceremonial rites; and the rejection and dispersion of their nation by the Romans, all enter into the meaning of the word fall here, and were all the occasion of introducing salvation to the Gentiles. Salvation. The Christian religion, with all its saving benefits. It does not mean that all the Gentiles were to be saved, but that the way was open; they might have access to God, and obtain his favour through the Messiah. The Gentiles. All the world that were not Jews. The rejection and fall of the Jews contributed to the introduction of the Gentiles in the following manner:

(1.) It broke down the barrier which had long subsisted between them.

(2.) It made it consistent and proper, as they had rejected the Messiah, to send the knowledge of him to others.

(3.) It was connected with the destruction of the temple: and the rites of the Mosaic law; and taught them, and all others, that the worship of God was not to be confined to any single place.

(4.) The calamities that came upon the Jewish nation scattered the inhabitants of Judea, and with the Jews also those who had become Christians, and thus the gospel was carried to other lands.

(5.) These calamities, and the conduct of the Jews, and the close of the Jewish economy, were the means of giving to apostles, and other Christians, right views of the true design of the Mosaic institutions. If the temple had remained; if the nation had continued to flourish, it would have been long before they would have been effectually detached from those rites. Experience showed, even as it was, that they were slow in learning that the Jewish ceremonies were to cease. Some of the most agitating questions in the early church pertained to this; and if the temple had not been destroyed, the contest would have been much longer and more difficult.

12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

How much more their fulness. The word fulness (πληρωμα) means that which fills up, or completes anything. Thus it is applied to that which fills a vessel or cup; also to the piece of cloth which is put in to fill up the rent in a garment, Mt 9:16. To the fragments which were left when Christ had fed the five thousand, Mk 8:20; Rom 13:10, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," i.e., it is the filling up of the law, or that which renders the obedience complete. See Gal 5:14. Here it stands opposed to their fall, and their diminution, and evidently means their complete restoration to the favour of God; their recovery from unbelief and apostasy. That there will be such

a recovery the apostle proceeds to show. The sentiment is, If their rejection and punishment--their being cut off from the favour of God--an event apparently so unlikely to promote the spread of true religion; if their being withdrawn from all active influence in spreading the true knowledge of God, be yet the occasion of so many blessings to mankind as have attended the spread of the gospel in consequence of it, how much more shall we expect when they shall be restored--when the energy and zeal of the Jewish nation shall unite with the efforts of others in spreading the knowledge of the true Messiah?" In what way, or when this shall be, we know not. But it is easy to see, that if the Jewish people should be converted to the Christian faith, they would have facilities for spreading the truth which the church has never had without them.

(1.) They are scattered in all nations, and have access to all people.

(2.) Their conversion, after so long unbelief, would have all the power and influence of a miracle performed in view of all nations. It would be seen why they had been preserved, and their conversion would be a most striking fulfillment of the prophecies.

(3.) They are familiar with the languages of the world, and their conversion would at once establish many Christian missionaries in the heart of all the kingdoms of the world. It would be kindling at once a thousand lights fix all the dark parts of the earth.

(4.) The Jews have shown that they are eminently fitted to spread the true religion. It was by Jews, converted to Christianity, that the gospel was first spread. Each of the apostles was a Jew; and they have lost none of the ardour, enterprise, and zeal, that always characterized their nation. Their conversion would be, therefore, to give to the Christian church a host of missionaries prepared for their work, familiar with all customs, languages, and climes, and already in the heart of all kingdoms, and with facilities for their work in advance, which others must gain only by the slow toil of many years.

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

We may see here,

(1.) that it is the earnest wish of the ministry to save the souls of men.

(2.) That they should urge every argument and appeal with reference to to save the souls of men.

(3.) That even the most awful and humbling truths may have this tendency. No truth could be more likely to irritate and offend than that the Jews would be cast off; and yet the apostle used this so faithfully, and yet so tenderly, that he expected and desired it might be the means of saving the souls of his countrymen. Truth often irritates, enrages, and thus excites the attention. Thought or inquiry, however it may be excited, may result in conversion. And thus, even restlessness, and vexation, and anger, may be the means of leading a sinner to Jesus Christ. It should be no part of a minister's object, however, to produce anger. It is a bad emotion; in itself it is evil; and if men can be won to embrace the Saviour without anger, it is better. No wise man would excite a storm and tempest that might require infinite power to subdue, when the same object could be gained with comparative peace, and under the mild influence of love.

(4.) It is right to use all the means in our power, not absolutely wicked, to save men. Paul was full of devices; and much of the success of the ministry will depend on a wise use of plans that may, by the Divine blessing, arrest and save the souls of men.

14 if by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are* my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving *of them be,* but life from the dead?

16 For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy:* and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

Is also holy. It is lawful then for the owner to partake of it. The offering of a part has consecrated the whole. By this illustration Paul doubtless means to say that the Jewish nation, as a people, were set apart to the service of God, and were so regarded by him. Some have supposed, that by the firstfruit here the apostle intends to refer to the early converts made to the Christian faith in the first preaching of the gospel. But it is more probable that he refers to the patriarchs, the pious men of old, as the firstfruits of the Jewish nation. See Rom 11:28. By their piety the nation was in a manner sanctified, or set apart to the service of God; implying that yet tile great mass of them would be reclaimed and saved. If the root be holy. This figure expresses the same thing as is denoted in the first part of the verse. The root of a tree is the source of nutritious juices necessary for its growth, and gives its character to the tree. If that be sound, pure, vigorous, we expect the same of the branches. A root bears a similar relation to the tree that the firstfruit does to the mass of bread. Perhaps there is allusion here to Jer 11:16, where the Jewish nation is represented under the image of "a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit." In this place the reference is doubtless to Abraham and the patriarchs, as the root or founders of the Jewish nation. If they were holy, it is to be expected that the distant branches, or descendants, would also be so regarded. The mention of the root and branches of a tree gives the apostle occasion for an illustration of the relation at that time of the Jews and Gentiles to the church of Christ.

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

18 boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in.

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

But fear. This fear stands opposed to the spirit of boasting and self-confidence, against which he was exhorting them. It does not mean terror or horror, but it denotes humility, watchfulness, and

solicitude to abide in the faith. Do not be haughty and high-minded against the Jew, who has been east off, but "demean yourself as a humble believer, and one who has need to be continually on his guard, and to fear lest he may fall through unbelief, and be cast off." (Stuart.) We may here learn,

(1.) that there is danger lest those who are raised to eminent privileges should become unduly exalted in their own estimation, and despise others.

(2.) The tendency of faith is to promote humility, and a sense of our dependence on God.

(3.) The system of salvation by faith produces that solicitude, and careful guarding and watchfulness, which is necessary to preserve us from apostasy and ruin.

21 for if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

The goodness. The benevolence or mercy of God towards you in admitting you to his favour. This calls for gratitude, love, confidence. It demands expressions of thanksgiving. It should be highly prized, in order that it may excite to diligence to secure its continuance. The severity of God. That is, towards the Jews. The word severity now suggests sometimes the idea of harshness, or even of cruelty. (Webster.) But nothing of this kind is conveyed in the original word here. It properly denotes cutting off--(αποτομιαν)--from (αποτεμνω), to cut off; and is commonly applied to the act of the gardener or vine dresser in trimming trees or vines, and cutting off the decayed or useless branches. Here it refers to the act of God in cutting off or rejecting the Jews as useless branches; and conveys no idea of injustice, cruelty, or harshness. It was a just act, and consistent with all the perfections of God. It indicated a purpose to do that which was right, though

the inflictions might seem to be severe, and though they must involve them in many heavy calamities.

If thou continue in his goodness. The word "his" is not in the original. And the word goodness may denote integrity, probity, uprightness, as well as favour. Rom 3:12, "There is none that doeth good." The Septuagint often thus uses the word, Ps 14:1,3, etc. This is probably the meaning here; though it may mean, "if thou dost continue in a state of favour;" that is, if your faith and good conduct shall be such as to make God continue his kindness towards you. Christians do not merit the favour of God by their faith and good works; but their obedience is an indispensable condition on which that favour is to be continued. It is thus that the grace of God is magnified, at the same time that the highest good is done to man himself. Otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. Comp. Jn 15:2 The word thou refers here to the Gentile churches. In relation to them the favour of God was dependent on their fidelity. If they became disobedient and unbelieving, then the same principle which led him to withdraw his mercy from the Jewish people would lead also to their rejection and excision. And on this principle God has acted in numberless cases. Thus his favour was withdrawn from the seven churches of Asia, Revelation chapters 1-3, from Corinth, from Antioch, from Philippi, and even from Rome itself.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in:

for God is able to graff them in again.

And they also. The Jews. If they bide not, etc. If they do not continue in wilful obstinacy and rejection of the Messiah. As their unbelief was the sole cause of their rejection, so, if that be removed, they may be again restored to the Divine favour. For God is able, etc. He has

(1.) power to restore them; to bring them back, and replace them in his favour.

(2.) He has not bound himself utterly to reject them, and for ever to exclude them. In this way the apostle reaches his purpose, which was to show them that God had not cast away his people, or finally rejected the Jewish nation, Rom 11:1,2. That God has this power, the apostle proceeds to show in the next verse.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches,* be graffed into their own olive tree?

Which is wild by nature. Which is uncultivated and unfruitful. That is, if you were introduced into a state of favour with God from a condition which was one of enmity and hostility to him. The argument here is, that it was in itself as difficult a thing to reclaim them, and change them from opposition to God to friendship, as it would seem difficult or impossible to reclaim and make fruitful the wild olive tree.

And wert grafted contrary to nature. Contrary to your natural habits, thoughts, and practices. There was, among the Gentiles, no inclination or tendency towards God. This does not mean that they were physically depraved, or that their disposition was literally like the wild olive; but it is used, for the sake of illustration, to show that their moral character and habits were unlike those of the friends of God.

How much more, etc. The meaning of this whole verse may be thus expressed: "If God had mercy on the Gentiles, who were outcasts from his favour, shall he not much rather on those who were so long his people, to whom had been given the promises, and the covenants, and the law, whose ancestors had been so many of them his friends and among whom the Messiah was born?" In some respects there are facilities among the Jews for their conversion, which had not existed among the Gentiles. They worship one God; they admit the authority of revelation; they have the Scriptures of the Old Testament; they expect a Messiah; and they have a habit of professed reverence for the will of God.

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this
mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that
blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the
Gentiles be come in.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is
written, There shall come out of Zion the
Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness
from Jacob:

All Israel. All the Jews. It was a maxim among the Jews, that "every Israelite should have part in the future age." (Grotius.) The apostle applies that maxim to his own purpose; and declares the sense in which it would be true. He does not mean to say that every Jew of every age would be saved; for he had proved that a large portion of them would be, in his time, rejected and lost. But the time would come when, as a people, they would be recovered; when the nation would turn to God; and when it could be said of them, that, as a nation, they were restored to the Divine favour. It is not clear that he means that even then every individual of them would be saved, but the body of them; the great mass of the nation would be. Nor is it said when this would be. This is one of the things which "the Father hath put in his own power," Acts 1:7. He has given us the assurance that it shall be done to encourage us in our efforts to save them; and he has concealed the time when it shall be, lest we should relax our efforts, or feel that no exertions were needed to accomplish what must take place at a fixed time.

27 for this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away
their sins.

28 As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but
as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers'
sakes.

They are beloved. God still regards them with interest; has purposes of mercy towards them; intends still to do them good. This does not mean that he approved of their conduct or character, or that he had for them the same kind of affection which he would have had if they had been obedient. God does not love a sinful

character; but he may have still purposes of mercy, and regard men with deep interest on whom he intends yet to bestow mercy.

29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

And calling of God. The word calling (κλησις) here denotes that act of God by which he extends an invitation to men to come and partake of his favours, whether it be by a personal revelation as to the patriarchs, Or by the promises of the gospel, or by the influences of his Spirit. All such invitations or callings imply a pledge that he will bestow the favour, and will not repent, or turn from it. God never draws or invites sinners to himself without being willing to bestow pardon and eternal life. The word calling here, therefore, has not respect to external privileges, but to that choosing of a sinner, and influencing him to come to God, which is connected with eternal life.

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he not said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Eze 24:14, 1Sam 15:29, Ps 89:35,36, Tit 1:2, Heb 6:18, Jas 1:17. It follows from this,

(1.) that all the promises made to the people of God shall be fulfilled.

(2.) That his people need not be discouraged or desponding in times of persecution and trial.

(3.) That none who become his true friends will be forsaken, or cast off. God does not bestow the gift of repentance and faith, of pardon and peace, on men, for a temporary purpose; nor does he capriciously withdraw them, and leave the soul to ruin. When he renews a soul, it is with reference to his own glory; and to withdraw those favours, and leave such a soul once renewed to go down to hell, would be as much a violation of all the principles of his nature as it would be to all the promises of the Scripture.

(4.) For God to forsake such a soul, and leave it to ruin, would imply that he did repent. It would suppose a change of purpose and of feeling. It would be the character of a capricious being, with no settled plan or principles of action; no confidence could be reposed in him, and his government would be unworthy the affections and trust of his intelligent creation.

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have
now obtained mercy through their unbelief:
31 even so have these also now not believed, that through your
mercy they also may obtain mercy.

That through your mercy, etc. The immediate effect of the unbelief of the Jews was to confer salvation on the Gentiles or to open the way for the preaching of the gospel to them. But its remote effect would be to secure the preaching of the gospel again to the Jews. Through the mercy, that is, the compassion or deep feeling of the converted Gentiles; through the deep and tender pity which they would feel for the blinded and degraded Jews, the gospel should be again carried to them, and they should be recalled to the long-lost favour of God. Each party should thus cause salvation to come to the other--the Jews to the Gentiles by their unbelief; but the Gentiles, in their turn, to the Jews by their belief. We may here learn,

(1.) that the Jews are to be converted by the instrumentality of the Gentiles. It is not to be by miracle, but by the regular and common way in which God blesses men.

(2.) That this is to be done by the mercy or compassion of the Gentiles; by their taking pity on the lost and 'wretched condition of the Jewish people.

(3.) It is to be when the abundance of the Gentiles--that is, when great numbers of the Gentiles--shall be called in. It may be asked here, whether the time is not approaching for the Gentiles to make efforts to being the Jews to the knowledge of the Messiah. Hitherto those efforts have been unsuccessful; but it will not always be so; the time is coming when the promises of God in

regard to them shall be fulfilled. Christians shall be moved with deep compassion for the degraded and forsaken Jews, and they shall be called into the kingdom of God, and made efficient agents in extending the gospel through the whole world. May the time soon come when they shall feel as they should for the rejected and forsaken children of Abraham, and when their labours for their conversion shall be attended with success.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

All are represented, therefore, as in prison, enclosed or confined by God, and to be liberated only in his own way and time. In regard to the agency of God in this, we may remark,

(1.) that the word does not mean that God compelled them to disbelieve the gospel. When, in Gal 3:22, the Scripture is said to have included all under sin, it is not meant that the Scripture compelled them not to believe.

(2.) The word does not imply that the sin and unbelief for which they were shut up were not voluntary. Even when a man is committed to prison, the crime which brought him there is voluntary, and for it he is responsible.

(3.) The keeper of a prison does no wrong in confining a criminal; or the judge in condemning him; or the executioner in fulfilling the sentence of the law. So of God. What he does is not to compel men to remain under unbelief, but to declare that they are so; so to encompass them with the proof of it that they shall realize that there is no escape from the evidence of it, and thus to press on them the evidence of their need of a Saviour. This he does in relation to all sinners who ever become converted.

(4.) Yet God permitted this; suffered Jews and Gentiles to fall into unbelief, and to be concluded under it, because he had a special purpose to answer in leaving man to the power of sin and Unbelief. One of those purposes was, doubtless, to manifest the power of his grace and mercy in the plan of redemption.

(5.) In all this, and in all other sin, man is voluntary. He chooses his course of evil, and God is under no obligation to compel him to do otherwise. Being under unbelief, God declares the fact, and avails himself of it, in the plan of salvation by grace.

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Past finding out. Literally, which cannot be tracked or traced out. The footsteps cannot be followed. As if his path were in the sea, (Ps 77:19) and the waves closed immediately, leaving no track, it cannot be followed or sought out. It is known that he has passed, but there is no way of tracing his goings. This is a beautiful and striking figure. It denotes that God's plans are deep, and beyond our comprehension. We can see the proofs that he is everywhere; but how it is, we cannot comprehend. We are permitted to see the vast movements around us; but the invisible hand we cannot see, nor trace the footsteps of that mighty God who performs his wonders on the ocean and on the land.

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?

35 or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

Or who hath, etc. The sentiment in this verse is found substant Job 41:11, "Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him Hebrew word "prevented" means to anticipate, to go before; a asks, "Who has anticipated me; who has conferred favours before I have on him; who has thus laid me under oblation to hi is the sense in which the apostle uses the word here. Who has services, laid God under obligation to recompense or pay him a is added in Job, "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine Paul, contrary to the prevailing doctrine of the Jews, shows that could plead his own merits, or advance with a claim on God. favours of salvation must be bestowed by mercy or grace; God them all; and he had a right to bestow them when and where he

The same claim to all things is repeatedly made by God, Ex 10:14, Ps 24: 50:12.

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

All things. The universe; the creation; or, still more particularly, the things of which the apostle is discoursing. He does not affirm that he is the author of sin, or of sinful thoughts; not that he creates evil, or that evil is designed to promote his glory. The apostle is not discoursing of these, but of his method of bestowing his favours; and he says that these are to be conferred in such a way as to promote his honour, and to declare the praise of him who is the original Source, the Creator and the Proprietor of all things.

From the close of this chapter we may make the following observations :--

1. God is infinitely wise, and just, and good. This is seen in all his plans and doings, and especially in the glorious plan of saving men.

2. It becomes man to be humble, he can see but few of the reasons of the doings of an infinite God. He is not qualified to sit in judgment on his plans. He is not fitted to arraign him. There is nothing more absurd than for a man to contend with God, or to find fault with his plans; and yet there is nothing more common. Man speaks, and thinks, and reasons on the great things pertaining to the Divine mind and plan, as if he were qualified to counsel the Being of infinite wisdom, and to arraign at the bar of his own reason the Being of infinite goodness.

3. It is our duty to be submissive to God. His plans may often require him to cross the path of our pleasures, or to remove some of our enjoyments. He tries us by requiring us to put confidence in him where we cannot see the reason of his doings, and to believe that he is qualified for universal empire. In all such cases it is our duty to submit to his will. Hie is seeking a grander and

nobler object than our private good. He is seeking the welfare of a vast universe; and he best knows in what way that can be promoted.

4. God is the Creator and Proprietor of all things. It would be possible to prove this from his works. But his word unequivocally asserts it. He has formed, and he upholds, and he directs all things for his glory. He who formed all has a right to all. He who is the Source of life has the right to direct it, or to withdraw the gift. He on whom all depend has a right to homage and praise.

5. He has formed a universe that is eminently adapted to declare his glory. It evinces infinite power in its creation; and it is fitted to fill the mind with evergrowing wonder and gladness in its contemplation. The sacred writers were filled with rapture when they contemplated it; and all the discoveries of astronomy, and geology, and science in general, in modern times, are fitted to carry forward the wonder, and fill the lips with new expressions of praise. The universe is vast and grand enough to occupy the thoughts for ever. How little do we know of the wonders of his creation, even pertaining to this little world; to our own bodies and souls; to the earth, the ocean, the beast and the reptile, the bird and the insect; how much less of that amazing view of worlds and systems which modern astronomy has opened to our view-- the vast starry frame which the eye can penetrate for millions and millions of miles, and where it finds world piled on world, and system rising above system, in wonderful order and grandeur, and where the utmost power of the telescope can as yet find no bounds!

6. Equally true is this in his moral government. The system is such as to excite our wonder and praise. The creation and control of free, and active, and mighty minds, is as wonderful as the creation and control of matter, even the vast masses of the planetary systems. Creation is filled with minds. God has peopled the worlds with conscious, free, and active

intelligences. The wonderful wisdom by which he controls them; the amazing moral power by which he guards and binds them to himself, by which he restrains and awes the rebellious; and the complete subjection by which he will bring all yet at his feet, is as much replete with wonder as the wisdom and skill by which he framed the heavens. To govern mind requires more wisdom and skill than to govern matter. To control angels and men evinces more glory than to roll the streams or the ocean, or than to propel and guide the planets. And especially is this true of the plan of salvation. That wondrous scheme is adapted to call forth eternal praise, and to show for ever the wisdom and mercy of God. Without such a plan, we cannot see how the Divinity could be fully manifested; with that, we see God as God, vast, grand, mighty, infinite; but still seeking to do good, and having power to enter any vast mass of iniquity, and to diffuse purity and peace over the face of an alienated and dying world.

7. The salvation of sinners is not to promote their own glory primarily, but that of God. "He is first, and he last; he is midst, and without end," in their salvation. God seeks his own honour, and seeks it by their return and their obedience. But if they will not promote his glory in that way, they must be made to promote it in their ruin.

8. It is the duty of men to seek the honour of this infinitely wise and holy God. It commends itself to every man's conscience. God has formed us all; and man can have no higher destiny and honour than to be permitted to promote and spread abroad through all the universe the knowledge of a Being whose character is infinitely lovely, whose government is right, and whose presence and favour will diffuse blessings of salvation and eternal peace on all the wide creation that will be obedient to his will.

Romans-12

Exhortations for Christian Living

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

Your bodies. The bodies of animals were offered in sacrifice. The apostle specifies their bodies particularly in reference to that fact. Still the entire animal was devoted; and Paul evidently meant here the same as to say, present YOURSELVES, your entire person, to the service of God. Comp. 1Cor 6:16, Jas 3:6. It was not customary or proper to speak of a sacrifice as art offering of a soul or spirit, in the common language of the Jews; and hence the apostle applied their which Christians were to make of themselves to God. A living sacrifice. A sacrifice is an offering made to God as an atonement for sin; or any offering made to him and his service as an expression of thanksgiving or homage. It implies, that he who offers it presents it entirely, releases all claim or right to it, and leaves it to be disposed of for the honour of God. In the case of an animal, it was slain, and the blood offered; in the case of any other offering, as the firstfruits, etc., it was set apart to the service of God; and he who offered it released all claim on it, and submitted it to God, to be disposed of at his will. This is the offering which the apostle entreats the Romans to make; to devote themselves to God, as if they had no longer any claim on themselves; to be disposed of by him; to suffer and bear all that he might appoint; and to promote his honour in any way which he might command. This is the nature of true religion.

Living. (ζωσαν). It demands vigorous and active powers in the service of God the Saviour. There is something very affecting in the view of such a sacrifice; in regarding life, with all its energies, its intellectual, and moral, and physical powers, as one long sacrifice--one continued offering unto God. An immortal

being presented to him; presented voluntarily, with all his energies, from day to day, until life shall close, so that it may be said that he has lived and died an offering made freely unto God. This is religion.

Holy. This means, properly, without blemish or defect. No other sacrifice could be made to God. The Jews were expressly forbid to offer that which was lame, or blind, or in any way deformed, De 15:21; Lev 1:3,10, 3:1, 22:20, De 17:1. Comp. Mal 1:8. If offered without any of these defects, it was regarded as holy, i.e., appropriately set apart, or consecrated to God. In like manner we are to consecrate to God our best faculties; the rigour of our minds, and talents, and time. Not the feebleness of sickness merely; not old age alone; not time which we cannot otherwise employ; but the first rigour and energies of the mind and body--our youth, and health, and strength. Our sacrifice to God is to be not divided, separate; but it is to be entire and complete. Many are expecting to be Christians in sickness; many in old age; thus purposing to offer unto him the blind and the lame. The sacrifice is to be free from sin. It is not to be a divided, and broken, and polluted service. It is to be with the best affections of our hearts and lives.

Acceptable unto God. They are exhorted to offer such a sacrifice as will be acceptable to God; that is, such an one as he had just specified, one that was living and holy. No sacrifice should be made which is not acceptable to God. The offerings of the heathen' the pilgrimages of Mohammedans; the self-inflicted penalties of the Roman Catholics, uncommanded by God, cannot be acceptable to him. Those services will be acceptable to God, and those only, which he appoints. Comp. Col 2:20-23. Men are not to invent services; or to make crosses; or to seek persecutions and trials; or to provoke opposition. They are to do just what God requires of them, and that will be acceptable to God. And this fact, that what we do is acceptable to God, is the highest recompense we can have. It matters little what men think of us, if God approves what we do. To please him should be our highest aim; the fact that we do please him is our highest reward.

Which is your reasonable service. The word reasonable, with us, means that which is "governed by reason; thinking, speaking, or acting conformably to the dictates of reason," (Webster) or that which can be shown to be rational or proper. A reasonable service means that which is mental, or pertaining to reason. It stands opposed not to that which is foolish or unreasonable, but to the external service of the Jews, and such as they relied on for salvation. The worship of the Christian is that which pertains to the mind, or is spiritual; that of the Jew was external.

We may learn from this verse,

(1.)that the proper worship of God is the free homage of the mind. It is not forced or constrained. The offering of ourselves should be voluntary. No other can be a true offering, and none other can be acceptable.

(2.) We are to offer our entire selves, all that we have and are, to God. No other offering can be such as he will approve.

(3.) The character of God is such as should lead us to that. It is a character of mercy--of long-continued and patient forbearance--and it should influence us to devote ourselves to him.

(4.) It should be done without delay. God is as worthy of such service now as he ever will or can be. He has every possible claim on our affections and our hearts.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

The word used here properly denotes an age, or generation of men. It may denote a particular generation, or it may be applied to the race. It is sometimes used in each of these senses. Thus here it may mean, that Christians should not conform to the maxims, habits, feelings, etc., of a wicked, luxurious, and

idolatrous age, but should be conformed solely to the precepts and laws of the gospel; or the same principle may be extended to every age, and the direction may be, that Christians should not conform to the prevailing habits, style, and manners of the world--the people who know not God. They are to be governed by the laws of the Bible; to fashion their lives after the example of Christ; and to form themselves by principles different from those which prevail in the world. In the application of this rule there is much difficulty. Many may think that they are not conformed to the world, while they can easily perceive that their neighbour is. They indulge in many things which others may think to be conformity to the world, and are opposed to many things which others think innocent. The design of this passage is doubtless to produce a spirit that should not find pleasure in the pomp and vanity of the world; and which will regard all vain amusements and gaieties with disgust, and lead the mind to find pleasure in better things.

That ye may prove. The sense is, that such a renewed mind is essential to a successful inquiry after the will of God. Having a disposition to obey him, the mind will be prepared to understand his precepts. There will be a correspondence between the feelings of the heart and his will; a nice tact or taste, which will admit his laws, and see the propriety and beauty of his commands. A renewed heart is the best preparation for studying Christianity; the man who is chaste has most clearly and forcibly the arguments for chastity, etc. A heart in love with the fashions and follies of the world is ill-fitted to appreciate the arguments for humility, prayer, etc. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," Jn 7:17. The reason why the heart is renewed is, that we may do the will of God; the heart that is renewed is best fitted to appreciate and understand his will.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

The measure of faith. The word faith here is evidently put for religion, or Christianity. Faith is a main thing in religion. It constitutes its first demand; and the Christian religion, therefore, is characterized by its faith, or its confidence in God. See Mk 16:16. Comp. Heb 11, Rom 4. We are not therefore to be elated in our view of ourselves; we are not to judge of our own characters by wealth, or talent, or learning; but by our attachment to God, and by the influence of faith on our minds. The meaning is, judge yourselves, or estimate yourselves, by your piety. The propriety of this rule is apparent,

(1.) because no other standard is a correct one, or one of value. Our talent, learning, rank, or wealth, is a very improper rule by which to estimate ourselves. All may be wholly unconnected with moral worth; and the worst as well as the best men may possess them.

(2.) God will judge us in the day of judgment by our attachment to Christ and his cause, (Mt 25) and that is the true standard by which to estimate ourselves here.

(3.) Nothing else will secure and promote humility but this. All other things may produce or promote pride, but this will effectually secure humility. The fact that God has given all that we have; the fact that the poor and obscure may have as true an elevation of character as ourselves; the consciousness of our own imperfections and short-comings in the Christian faith; and the certainty that we are soon to be arraigned to try this great question, whether we have evidence that we are the friends of God, will all tend to promote humbleness of mind, and to bring down our usual inordinate self-estimation. If all Christians judged themselves in this way, it would remove at once no small part of the pride of station and of life from the world, and would produce deep attachment for those who are blessed with the faith of the gospel, though they may be unadorned by any of the wealth or trappings which now promote pride and distinctions among men.

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Thus in the church, every individual is not only necessary in his place as an individual, but is needful to the proper symmetry and action of the whole. And we may learn here,

(1.) that no member of the church of Christ should esteem himself to be of no importance. In his own place he may be of as much consequence as the man of learning, wealth, and talent may be in his.

(2.) God designed that there should be differences of endowments of nature and of grace in the church; just as it was needful that there should be differences in the members of the human body.

(3.) No one should despise or lightly esteem another. All are necessary. We can no more spare the foot or the hand than we can the eye; though the latter may be much more curious and striking as a proof of Divine skill. We do not despise the hand or the foot any more than we do the eye; and in all we should acknowledge the goodness and wisdom of God. See these thoughts carried out in 1Cor 12:21-25.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

The word faith is thus used often to denote that extraordinary confidence in God which attended the working of miracles, etc., Mt 17:20, 21:21, Lk 17:6.

7 or ministry, *let us wait* on *our* ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

With simplicity. See Mt 6:22, "If thine eye be single," etc.; Lk 11:34. The word simplicity (απλοτης)is used in a similar sense to denote singleness, honesty of aim, purity, integrity, without any mixture of a base, selfish, or sinister end. It requires the bestowment of a favour without seeking any personal or selfish ends; without partiality; but actuated only by the desire to bestow them in the best possible maimer to promote the object for which they were given, 2Cor 8:2, 9:11,13, 1:12, Eph 6:5, Col 3:22. It is plain that when property was entrusted to them, there would be danger that they might be tempted to employ it for selfish and sinister ends, to promote their influence and prosperity; and hence the apostle exhorted them to do it with a single aim to the object for which it was given. Well did he know that there was nothing more tempting than the possession of wealth, though given to be appropriated to others. And this exhortation is applicable not only to the deacons of the churches, but to all who in this day of Christian benevolence are entrusted with money to advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He that ruleth. This word properly designates one who is set over others, or who presides or rules, or one who attends with diligence and care to a thing. In 1Thes 5:12, it is used in relation to ministers in general: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord." 1Timm 3:4,5,12, it is applied to the head of a family, or one who diligently and faithfully performs the duty of a father: "One that ruleth well his own house." 1Timm 5:17, it is applied to "elders" in the church: "Let the elders that rule well," etc. It is not elsewhere used except in Tit 3:8,14, in a different sense, where it is translated "to maintain good works." The prevailing sense of the word, therefore, is to rule, to preside over, or to have the management of. But to what class of persons reference is had here, and what was precisely their duty, has been made a matter of controversy, and it is not easy to determine. Whether this refers to a permanent office in the church, or to an occasional presiding in their assemblies convened for business, etc., is not settled by the use of the word. It has the idea of

ruling, as in a family, or of presiding, as in a deliberative assembly; and either of these ideas would convey all that is implied in the original word. Comp. 1Cor 12:28.

He that sheweth mercy. It is probable, that this refers to those who had the care of the sick and infirm, the aged and the needy; not so much to provide for them by charity, as to attend on them in their affliction, and to take care of them. To the deacons was committed the duty of distributing alms, but to others that of personal attendance This can hardly be called an office, in the technical sense; and yet it is not improbable that they were designated to this by the church, and requested to perform it. There were no hospitals and no almshouses. Christians felt it their duty to show personal attention to the infirm and the sick; and so important was their office, that it was deemed worthy of notice in a general direction to the church. With cheerfulness. The direction given to those who distributed alms was to do it with simplicity, with an honest aim to meet the purpose for which it was entrusted to them. The direction here varies according to the duty to be performed. It is to be done with cheerfulness, pleasantness, joy; with a kind, benign, and happy temper. The importance of this direction to those in this situation is apparent. Nothing tends so much to enhance the value of personal attendance on the sick and afflicted, as a kind and cheerful temper. If anywhere a mild, amiable, cheerful, and patient disposition is needed, it is near a sick bed and when administering to the wants of those who are in affection. And whenever we may be called to such a service, we should remember that this is indispensable. If moroseness, or impatience, or fretfulness is discovered in us, it will pain those whom we seek to benefit, embitter their feelings, and render our services of comparatively little value. The needy and infirm, the feeble and the aged, have enough to bear without the impatience and harshness of professed friends. It may be added, that the example of the Lord Jesus Christ is the brightest which the world has furnished of this temper. Though constantly encompassed by the infirm and the afflicted, yet he was always kind, and gentle, and mild, and has left before us exactly what

the apostle meant when he said, "he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." The example of the good Samaritan is also another instance of what is intended by this direction. Comp. 2Cor 9:7. This direction is particularly applicable to a physician.

9 *Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil;
cleave to that which is good.

10 *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in
honor preferring one another;

Preferring one another. The word preferring means going before, leading, setting an example. Thus in showing mutual respect and honour, they were to strive to excel; not to see which could obtain most honour, but which could confer most, or manifest most respect. Comp. 1Pet 5:5, Eph 5:21. Thus they were to be studious to show to each other all the respect which was due in the various relations of life; children to show proper respect to parents, parents to children, servants to their masters, etc.; and all to strive, by mutual kindness, to promote the happiness of the Christian community. How different this from the spirit of the world; the spirit which seeks not to confer honour, but to obtain it; which aims not to diffuse respect, but to attract all others to give honour to us. If this single direction were to be obeyed in society, it would put an end at once to no small part of the envy, and ambition, and heart-burning, and dissatisfaction of the world. It would produce contentment, harmony, love, and order in the community; and stay the progress of crime, and annihilate the evils of strife, and discord, and malice. And especially, it would give order and beauty to the church. It would humble the ambition of those who, like Diotrephes, love to have the preeminence, (3Jn 1:9) and make every man willing to occupy the place for which God has designed him, and rejoice that his brethren may be exalted to higher posts of responsibility and honour.

11 not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

In business, (τησπουδη). This is the same word which, in Rom 12:88, is rendered diligence. It properly denotes haste intensity, ardour of mind; and hence it also denotes industry, labour. The direction means, that we should be diligently occupied in our

proper employment. It does not refer to any particular occupation, but is used, in a general sense, to denote all the labour which we may have to do; or is a direction to be faithful and industrious in the discharge of all our appropriate duties. Comp. Eccl 9:10. The tendency of the Christian religion is to promote industry.

(1.) It teaches the value of time.

(2.) Presents numerous and important things to be done.

(3.) It inclines men to be conscientious in the improvement of each moment.

(4.) And it takes away the mind from those pleasures and pursuits which generate and promote indolence. The Lord Jesus was constantly employed in filling up the great duties of his life; and the effect of his religion has been to promote industry wherever it has spread, both among nations and individuals. An idle man and a Christian are names which do not harmonize. Every Christian has enough to do to occupy all his time; and he whose life is spent in ease, and in doing nothing, should doubt altogether his religion. God has assigned us much to accomplish; and he will hold us answerable for the faithful performance of it. Comp. Jn 5:17, 9:14, 1Thes 4:11, 2Thes 3:10,12. All that would be needful to transform the idle, and vicious, and wretched, into sober and useful men, would be to give to them the spirit of the Christian religion. See the example of Paul, Acts 20:34,35.

12 rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Continuing instant in prayer. That is, be persevering in prayer. See Col 4:2. Lk 18:1 The meaning of this direction is, that in order to discharge aright the duties of the Christian life, and especially to maintain a joyful hope, and to be sustained in the midst of afflictions, it is necessary to cherish a spirit of prayer, and to live near to God. How often a Christian should pray, the

Scriptures do not inform us. Of David. we are told that he prayed seven times a day, (Ps 119:164) of Daniel, that he was accustomed to pray three times a day, (Dan 6:10) of our Saviour we have repeated instances of his praying mentioned; and the same of the apostles, The following rules, perhaps, may guide us in this:

(1.) Every Christian should have some time, allotted for this service, and some place where he may be alone with God.

(2.) It is not easy, perhaps not possible, to maintain a life of piety without regular habits of secret devotion.

(3.) The morning, when we have experienced God's protecting care, when the mind is fresh, and the thoughts are as yet clear and unoccupied with the world, when we go forth to the duties, trials, and temptations of the day; and the evening, when we have again experienced his goodness, and are about to commit ourselves to his protecting care, and when we need his pardoning mercy for the errors and follies of the day, seem to be times which commend themselves to all as appropriate seasons for private devotion.

(4.) Every person will also find other times when private prayer will be needful, and when he will be inclined to it. In affliction, in perplexity, in moments of despondency, in danger, and want, in disappointment, and in the loss of friends, we shall feel the propriety of drawing near to God, and of pouring out the heart before him.

(5.) Besides this, every Christian is probably conscious of times when he feels peculiarly inclined to pray; he feels just like praying; he has a spirit of supplication; and nothing but prayer will meet the instinctive desires of his bosom. We are often conscious of an earnest desire to see and converse with an absent friend, to have communion with those we love; and we

value such fellowship as among the happiest moments of life. So with the Christian. He may have an earnest desire to have communion with God; his heart pants for it; and he cannot resist the propensity to seek him, and pour out his desires before him. Compare the feelings expressed by David in Ps 42:1,2,

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

Comp. Ps 63:1. Such seasons should be improved; they are the "spring-times" of our piety; and we should expand every sail, that we may be "filled with all the fulness of God." They are happy, blessed moments of our life; and then devotion is sweetest and most pure; and then the soul knows what it is to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1Jn 1:3.

(6.) In addition to all this, Christians may be in the habit of praying to God without the formality of retirement. God looks upon the heart; and the heart may pour forth its secret desires to Him even when in business, when conversing with a friend, when walking, when alone, and when in society. Thus the Christian may live a life of prayer; and it shall be one of the characteristics of his life that he prays! By this he shall be known; and in this he shall learn the way to possess peace in religion.

"In every joy that crowns my days, In every pain I bear, My heart shall find delight in praise, Or seek relief in prayer. "When gladness wings my favour'd hour, Thy love my thoughts shall fill; Resigned when storms of sorrow lower, My soul shall meet thy will. "My lifted eye, without a tear, The gathering storm shall see; My steadfast heart shall know no fear: That heart shall rest on thee."

 distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Given to hospitality. This expression means that they should readily and cheerfully entertain strangers. This is a duty which is frequently enjoined in the Scriptures. Heb 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." 1Pet 4:9, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." Paul makes this especially the duty of a Christian bishop: 1Timm 3:2, "A bishop then must--be given to hospitality;" Tit 1:8. Hospitality is especially enjoined by the Saviour, and its exercise commanded: Mt 10:40,42, "He that receiveth you receiveth me," etc. The want of hospitality is one of the charges which the Judge of mankind will allege against the wicked, and on which he will condemn them: Mt 25:43, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in." It is especially commended to us by the example of Abraham, (Gen 18:1-8,) and of Lot, (Gen 19:1,2,) who thus received angels unawares. It was one of the virtues on which Job particularly commended himself, and which he had not failed to practise. Job 31:16,17, "If I have withheld the poor from theft desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof," etc. In the time of our Saviour it was, evidently practised in the most open and frank manner. Lk 10:7, "And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give." A remarkable instance is also mentioned in Lk 11:5. This virtue is no less common in eastern nations at present than it was in the time of Christ. It is eminently the virtue of oriental nations, of their ardent and open temperament. It springs up naturally in countries thinly settled, where the sight of a stranger would be therefore peculiarly pleasant; in countries, too, where the occupation was chiefly to attend flocks, and where there was much leisure for conversation; and where the population was too sparse, and the travellers too infrequent, to justify inn-keeping as a business. From all these causes, it has happened that there are, properly speaking, no inns or taverns in the regions around Palestine. It was customary, indeed, to erect places for lodging and shelter at suitable distances, or by the side of springs or watering-places, for travellers to lodge in. But they are built at the public expense, and are unfurnished. Each traveller carries his own

bed and clothes and cooking utensils, and such places are merely designed as a shelter for caravans. (See Robinson's Calmet, Art. Caravanserai.) It is still so; and hence it becomes, in their view, a virtue of high order to entertain, at their own tables, and in their families, such strangers as may be travelling. Niebuhr says, that "the hospitality of the Arabs has always been the subject of promise; and I believe that those of the present day exercise this virtue no less than the ancients did. There are, in the villages of Tehama, houses which are public, where travellers may lodge and be entertained some days gratis, if they will be content with the fare; and they are much frequented. When the Arabs are at table, they invite those who happen to come to eat with them, whether they be Christians or Mohammedans, gentle or simple." "The primitive Christians," says Calmet, "considered one principle part of their duty to consist in showing hospitality to strangers. They were, in fact, so ready in discharging this duty, that the very heathen admired them for it. They were hospitable to all strangers, but especially to those who were of the household of faith. Believers scarcely ever travelled without letters of communion, which testified the purity of their faith, and procured for them a favourable reception wherever the name of Jesus Christ was known." (Calmet, Dict.) Calmet is also of opinion that the two minor epistles of John may be such letters of recommendation and communion. Comp. 2Jn 1:10. It may be added, that it would be particularly expected of Christians that they should show hospitality to the ministers of religion. They were commonly poor; they received no fixed salary; they travelled from place to place; and they would be dependent for support on the kindness of those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. This was particularly intended by our Saviour's instructions on the subject, Mt 10:11-13,40-42. The duty of hospitality is still binding on Christians and all men. The law of Christ is not repealed. The customs of society are indeed changed; and one evidence of advancement in commerce and in security is furnished in the fact that inns are now provided and patronized for the traveller in all Christian lands. Still this does not lessen the obligations to show hospitality. It is demanded by the very

genius of the Christian religion; it evinces proper love towards mankind; it shows that there is a feeling of brotherhood and kindness towards others, when such hospitality is shown. It unites society, creates new bonds of interest and affection, to show kindness to the stranger and to the poor. To what extent this is to be done, is one of those questions which are to be left to every man's conscience and views of duty. No rule can be given on the subject. Many men have not the means to be extensively hospitable; and many are not placed in situations that require it. No rules could be given that should be applicable to all cases; and hence the Bible has left the general direction, has furnished examples where it was exercised, has recommended it to mankind, and then has left every man to act on the rule, as he will answer it to God. See Mt 25:34-46.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Be of the same mind one toward another. Don't set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Don't be wise in your own conceits./HNV/

[Be] of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits./KJV/

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits. /Amplified Bible/

Be of the same mind, etc. This passage has been variously interpreted. "Enter into each other's circumstances, in order to see how you would yourself feel." Chrysostom. "Be agreed in

your opinions and views." Stuart. "Be united or agreed with each other." Flatt. Comp. Php 2:2 2Co 13:11. A literal translation of the Greek will give somewhat a different sense, but one evidently correct. "Think of, that is, regard, or seek after the same thing for each other; that is, what you regard or seek for yourself, seek also for your brethren. Do not have divided interests; do not be pursuing different ends and aims; do not indulge counter plans and purposes; and do not seek honours, offices, for yourself, which you do not seek for your brethren; so that you may still regard yourselves as brethren on a level, and aim at the same object." The Syriac has well rendered the passage: "And what you think concerning yourselves, the same also think concerning your brethren; neither think with an elevated or ambitious mind, but accommodate yourselves to those who are of humbler condition." Comp. 1Pet 3:8.

Mind not high things. Greek, Not thinking of high things. That is, not seeking them, or aspiring after them. The connexion shows that the apostle had in view those things which pertained to worldly offices and honours--wealth, and state, and grandeur. They were not to seek them for themselves; nor were they to court the society or the honours of the men in an elevated rank in life. Christians were commonly of the poorer ranks, and they were to seek their companions and joys there, and not to aspire to the society of the great and the rich. Comp. Jer 45:5, "And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Lk 12:15.

To men of low estate. In the Greek the word here is an adjective, (ταπεινοις) and may refer either to men or to things, either in the masculine or neuter gender. The sentiment is not materially changed, whichever interpretation is adopted. It means, that Christians should seek the objects of interest and companionship not among the great, the rich, and the noble, but among the humble and the obscure. They should do it because their Master did it before them; because his friends are most commonly found among those in humble life; because Christianity prompts to benevolence, rather than to a fondness for pride and display; and because of the influence on the mind produced by an attempt to

imitate the great, to seek the society of the rich, and to mingle with the scenes of gaiety, folly, and ambition.

Be not wise, etc. Comp. Isa 5:21, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Rom 11:25. The meaning is, Do not trust in the conceit of your own superior skill and understanding, and refuse to hearken to the counsel of others.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men./KJV/

Things honest. Literally, things beautiful, or comely. The expression here does not refer to property, or to provision made for a family, etc. The connexion requires us to understand it respecting conduct, and especially our conduct towards those who injure us. It requires us to evince a spirit and to manifest a deportment, in such cases, that shall be lovely and comely in the view of others; such as all men will approve and admire. And the apostle wisely cautions us to provide for this, i.e. to think of it beforehand, to make it a matter of fixed principle and purpose, so that we shall not be overtaken and excited by passion. If left to the time when the offence shall be given, we may be excited and off our guard, and may therefore evince an improper temper. All persons who have ever been provoked by injury (and who has not been?) will see the profound wisdom of this caution to discipline and guard the temper by previous purpose, that we may not evince an improper spirit.

In the sight of all men. Such as all must approve; such that no man can blame; and, therefore, such as shall do no discredit to religion. This expression is taken from Prov 3:4. The passage shows that men may be expected to approve a mild, kind, and patient temper in the reception of injuries; and facts show that this is the case. The Christian spirit is one that the world must approve, however little it is disposed to act on it.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

so far as it depends on you, This implies two things:

(1.)We are to do our utmost endeavours to preserve peace, and to appease the anger and malice of others.

(2.) We are not to begin or to originate a quarrel. So far as we are concerned, we are to seek peace. But then it does not always depend on us. Others may oppose and persecute us; they will hate religion, and may slander, revile, and otherwise injure us; or they may commence an assault on our persons or property. For their assaults we are not answerable; but we are answerable for our conduct towards them; and on no occasion are we to commence a warfare with them. It may not be possible to prevent their injuring and opposing us; but it is possible not to begin a contention with them; and when they have commenced a strife, to seek peace, and to evince a Christian spirit. This command doubtless extends to everything connected with strife; and means, that we are not to provoke them to controversy, or to prolong it. when it is commenced. See Ps 34:14, Mt 5:9,39-41, Heb 12:14. If all Christians would follow this command, if they would never provoke to controversy, if they would injure no man by slander or by unfair dealing, if they would compel none to prosecute them in law by want of punctuality in payment of debts or honesty in business, if they would do nothing to irritate, or to prolong a controversy when it is commenced, it would put an end to no small part of the strife that exists in the world.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Avenge not yourselves. To avenge is to take satisfaction for an injury by inflicting punishment on the offender. To take such satisfaction for injuries done to society is lawful and proper for a magistrate, Rom 13:4; and to take satisfaction for injuries done by sin to the universe is the province of God. But the apostle here is addressing private individual Christians. And the

command is, to avoid a spirit and purpose of revenge. But this command is not to be so understood that we may not seek for justice, in a regular and proper way, before civil tribunals. If our character is assaulted, if we are robbed and plundered, if we are oppressed contrary to the law of the land, religion does not require us to submit to such oppression and injury without seeking our rights in an orderly and regular manner. If it did, it would be to give a premium to iniquity, to countenance wickedness, and require a man, by becoming a Christian, to abandon his rights. Besides, the magistrate is appointed for the praise of those who do well, and to punish evil-doers, 1Pet 2:14. Further, our Lord Jesus did not surrender his rights, (Jn 18:23;) and Paul demanded that he himself should be treated according to the rights and privileges of a Roman citizen, Acts 16:37. The command here not to avenge ourselves means, that we are not to take it out of the hands of God, or the hands of the law, and to inflict it ourselves. It is well known that where there are no laws, the business of vengeance is pursued by individuals in a barbarous and unrelenting manner. In a state of savage society, vengeance is immediately taken, if possible, or it is pursued for years, and the offended man is never satisfied until he has imbrued his hands in the blood of the offender. But Christianity seeks the ascendency of the laws; and in cases which do not admit or require the interference of the laws, in private assaults and quarrels, it demands that we bear injury with patience, and commit our cause unto God. See Lev 19:18.

I will repay, etc. This is said in substance, though not in so many words, in De 32:35,36. Its design is to assure us, that those who deserve to be punished, shall be; and that, therefore, the business of revenge may be safely left in the hands of God. Though we should not do it, yet, if it ought to be done, it will be done. This assurance will sustain us, not in the desire that our enemy shall be punished, but in the belief that God will take the matter in his own hands; that he call administer it better than we can; and that if our enemy ought to be punished, he will be. We, therefore, should leave it all with God. That God will vindicate his people,

is clearly and abundantly proved in 2Thes 1:6-10, Rev 6:9-11, De 32:40-43.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, etc. This verse is taken almost literally from Prov 25:21,22. Hunger and thirst here are put for want in general. If thine enemy is needy in any way, do him good, and supply his wants. This is, in spirit, the same as the command of the Lord Jesus, (Mt 5:44,) "Do good to them that hate you," etc. In so doing. It does not mean that we are to do this for the sake of heaping coals of fire on him, but that this will be the result. Thou shalt heap, etc. Coals of fire are doubtless emblematical of pain. But the idea here is not that in so doing we shall call down Divine vengeance on the man; but the apostle is speaking of the natural effect or result of showing him kindness. Burning coals heaped on a man's head would be expressive of intense agony. So the apostle says that the effect of doing good to an enemy would be to produce pain. But the pain will result from shame, remorse of conscience, a conviction of the evil of his conduct, and an apprehension of Divine displeasure that may lead to repentance. To do this, is not only perfectly right, but it is desirable. If a man can be brought to reflection and true repentance, it should be done. In regard to this passage we may remark,

(1.) that the way to promote peace is to do good even to enemies.

(2.) The way to bring a man to repentance is to do him good. On this principle God is acting continually. He does good to all, even to the rebellious; and he designs that his goodness should lead men to repentance, Rom 2:4. Men will resist wrath, anger, and power; but goodness they cannot resist; it finds its way to the heart; and the conscience does its work, and the sinner is overwhelmed at the remembrance of his crimes.

(3.) If men would act on the principles of the gospel, the world would soon be at peace. No man would suffer himself many times

to be overwhelmed in this way with coals of fire. It is not human nature, bad as it is; and if Christians would meet all unkindness with kindness, all malice with benevolence, and all wrong with right, peace would soon pervade the community, and even opposition to the gospel might soon die away.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Be not overcome of evil. Be not vanquished or subdued by injury received from others. Do not suffer your temper to be excited; your Christian principles to be abandoned; your mild, amiable, kind, and benevolent temper to be ruffled by any opposition or injury which you may experience. Maintain your Christian principles amidst all opposition, and thus show the power of the gospel. They are overcome by evil who suffer their temper to be excited, who become enraged and revengeful, and who engage in contention with those who injure them, Prov 16:32.

But overcome evil with good. That is, subdue or vanquish evil by doing good to others. Show them the loveliness of a better spirit; the power of kindness and benevolence; the value of an amiable, Christian deportment. So doing, you may disarm them of their rage, and be the means of bringing them to better minds. This is the noble and grand sentiment of the Christian religion. Nothing like this is to be found in the heathen classics; and nothing like it ever existed among pagan nations. Christianity alone has brought forth this lovely and mighty principle; and one design of it is to advance the welfare of man by promoting peace, harmony, and love. The idea of overcoming evil with good never occurred to men until the gospel was preached. It never has been acted on except under the influences of the gospel. On this principle God shows kindness; on this principle the Saviour came, and bled, and died; and on this principle all Christians should act in treating their enemies, and in bringing a world to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. If Christians will show benevolence, if they will send forth proofs of love to the ends of the earth, the evils of the world will be overcome. Nor can the nations be converted until Christians act on this great and most important principle of their religion, on the largest scale possible, TO "OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD."

Romans-13

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

It is God's prerogative to make laws immediately to bind conscience, and we must render to God the things that are God's. But it intimates that our subjection must be free and voluntary, sincere and hearty. Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought, Ec 10:20. To compass and imagine are treason begun. The subjection of soul here required includes inward honour (1Pe 2:17) and outward reverence and respect, both in speaking to them and in speaking of them--obedience to their commands in things lawful and honest, and in other things a patient subjection to the penalty without resistance--a conformity in every thing to the place and duty of subjects, bringing our minds to the relation and condition, and the inferiority and subordination of it. "They are higher powers; be content they should be so, and submit to them accordingly." Now there was good reason for the pressing of this duty of subjection to civil magistrates,

1. Because of the reproach which the Christian religion lay under in the world, as an enemy to public peace, order, and government, as a sect that turned the world upside down, and the embracers of it as enemies to Cæsar, and the more because the leaders were Galileans--an old slander. Jerusalem was represented as a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, Ezr 4:15,16. Our Lord Jesus was so reproached, though he told them his kingdom was not of this world: no marvel, then, if his followers have been loaded in all ages with the like calumnies, called factious, seditious, and turbulent, and looked upon as the troublers of the land, their enemies having found such representations needful for the justifying of their barbarous rage against them. The apostle therefore, for the obviating of this reproach and the clearing of Christianity from it, shows that obedience to civil magistrates is one of the laws of Christ, whose religion helps to make people good subjects; and it was very unjust to charge upon Christianity

that faction and rebellion to which its principles and rules are so directly contrary.

2. Because of the temptation which the Christians lay under to be otherwise affected to civil magistrates, some of them being originally Jews, and so leavened with a principle that it was unmeet for any of the seed of Abraham to be subject to one of another nation--their king must be of their brethren, De 17:15. Besides, Paul had taught them that they were not under the law, they were made free by Christ. Lest this liberty should be turned into licentiousness, and misconstrued to countenance faction and rebellion, the apostle enjoins obedience to civil government, which was the more necessary to be pressed now because the magistrates were heathens and unbelievers, which yet did not destroy their civil power and authority. Besides, the civil powers were persecuting powers; the body of the law was against them.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

Because of the danger we run ourselves into by resistance. Magistrates bear the sword, and to oppose them is to hazard all that is dear to us in this world; for it is to no purpose to contend with him that bears the sword. The Christians were then in those persecuting times obnoxious to the sword of the magistrate for their religion, and they needed not make themselves more obnoxious by their rebellion. The least show of resistance or sedition in a Christian would soon be aggravated and improved, and would be very prejudicial to the whole society; and therefore they had more need than others to be exact in their subjection, that those who had so much occasion against them in the matter of their God might have no other occasion. To this head must that argument be referred (Ro 13:2), Those that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: krima lepsontai, they shall be called to an account for it. God will reckon with them for it, because the resistance reflects upon him. The magistrates will reckon with them for it. They will come under the lash of the law, and will find the higher powers too high to be

trampled upon, all civil governments being justly strict and severe against treason and rebellion; so it follows (Ro 13:3), Rulers are a terror. This is a good argument, but it is low for a Christian.

Magistrates are therefore called gods (Ps 82:6), because they bear the image of God's authority. And those who spurn at their power reflect upon God himself. But pity it is that ever this gracious intention should be perverted, and that those who bear the sword, while they countenance and connive at sin, should be a terror to those who do well. But so it is, when the vilest men are exalted (Ps 12:1,8); and yet even then the blessing and benefit of a common protection, and a face of government and order, are such that it is our duty in that case rather to submit to persecution for well-doing, and to take it patiently, than by any irregular and disorderly practices to attempt a redress. Never did sovereign prince pervert the ends of government as Nero did, and yet to him Paul appealed, and under him had the protection of the law and the inferior magistrates more than once. Better a bad government than none at all.

It is a good thing when the punishment of malefactors is managed as an ordinance of God, instituted and appointed by him. First, As a holy God, that hates sin, against which, as it appears and puts up its head, a public testimony is thus borne. Secondly, As King of nations, and the God of peace and order, which are hereby preserved. Thirdly, As the protector of the good, whose persons, families, estates, and names, are by this means hedged about. Fourthly, As one that desires not the eternal ruin of sinners, but by the punishment of some would terrify others, and so prevent the like wickedness, that others may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Nay, it is intended for a kindness to those that are punished, that by the destruction of the flesh the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

4 for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due;* custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Of justice (Ro 13:7): Render therefore to all their dues, especially to magistrates, for this refers to what goes before; and likewise to all with whom we have to do. To be just is to give to all their due, to give every body his own. What we have we have as stewards; others have an interest in it, and must have their dues. "Render to God his due in the first place, to yourselves, to you families, your relations, to the commonwealth, to the church, to the poor, to those that you have dealings with in buying, selling, exchanging, &c. Render to all their dues; and that readily and cheerfully, not tarrying till you are by law compelled to it." He specifies,

1. Due taxes:

2. Due respect: Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. This sums up the duty which we owe not only to magistrates, but to all superiors, parents, masters, all that are over us in the Lord,

3. Due payment of debts (Ro 13:8): "Owe no man any thing; that is, do not continue in any one's debt, while you are able to pay it, further than by, at least, the tacit consent of the person to whom you are indebted. Give every one his own. Do not spend that upon yourselves, which you owe to others." The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again, Ps 37:21. Many that are very sensible of the trouble think little of the sin of being in debt.

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Thou shalt not commit adultery; for though this commonly goes under the name of love (pity it is that so good a word should be so

abused) yet it is really as great a violation of it as killing and stealing is, which shows that true brotherly love is love to the souls of our brethren in the first place. He that tempts others to sin, and defiles their minds and consciences, though he may pretend the most passionate love (Pr 7:15,18), does really hate them, just as the devil does, who wars against the soul.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

11 And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Now it is high time to awake (Ro 13:11), to awake out of the sleep of sin (for a sinful condition is a sleeping condition), out of the sleep of carnal security, sloth and negligence, out of the sleep of spiritual death, and out of the sleep of spiritual deadness; both the wise and foolish virgins slumbered and slept, Mt 25:5.

1. It is gospel time, it is the accepted time, it is working time; it is a time when more is expected than was in the times of that ignorance which God winked at, when people sat in darkness. It is high time to awake; for the sun has been up a great while, and shines in our faces. Have we this light to sleep in? See 1Th 5:5,6. It is high time to awake; for others are awake and up about us. Know the time to be a busy time; we have a great deal of work to do, and our Master is calling us to it again and again. Know the time to be a perilous time. We are in the midst of enemies and snares. It is high time to awake, for the Philistines are upon us; our neighbour's house is on fire, and our own in danger. It is time to awake, for we have slept enough (1Pe 4:3), high time indeed, for behold the bridegroom cometh."

2. "The salvation we are upon the brink of: Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed--than when we first believed, and so took upon us the profession of Christianity. Is there but a step between us and heaven, and shall we be so very slow and dull in our Christian course, and move so heavily?

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off
the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.
13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and
drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife
and envying:

How to dress ourselves:

1. "What we must put off; put off our night-clothes, which it is a shame to appear abroad in: Cast off the works of darkness." Sinful works are works of darkness; they come from the darkness of ignorance and mistake, they covet the darkness of privacy and concealment, and they end in the darkness of hell and destruction. "Let us therefore, who are of the day, cast them off; not only cease from the practice of them, but detest and abhor them, and have no more to do with them. Because eternity is just at the door, let us take heed lest we be found doing that which will then make against us," 2Pe 3:11,14.

2. "What we must put on." Our care must be wherewithal we shall be clothed, how shall we dress our souls?

(1.) Put on the armour of light. Christians are soldiers in the midst of enemies, and their life a warfare, therefore their array must be armour, that they may stand upon their defence--the armour of God, to which we are directed, Eph 6:13,

(2.) Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, Ro 13:14. This stands in opposition to a great many base lusts, mentioned Ro 13:13. Rioting and drunkenness must be cast off: one would think it should follows, but, "Put on sobriety, temperance, chastity," the opposite virtues: no, "Put on Christ, this includes all. Put on the righteousness of Christ for justification; be found in him (Php 3:9) as a man is found in his clothes; put on the priestly garments of the elder brother, that in them you may obtain the blessing. Put on the spirit and grace of Christ for sanctification; put on the new man (Eph 4:24); get the habit of grace confirmed, the acts of it quickened." Jesus Christ is the best clothing for Christians to adorn themselves with, to arm themselves with; it is decent, distinguishing, dignifying, and defending. Without Christ, we are naked, deformed; all other things are filthy rages, fig-leaves,

a sorry shelter. God has provided us coats of skins--large, strong, warm, and durable. By baptism we have in profession put on Christ, Ga 3:27. Let us do it in truth and sincerity. The Lord Jesus Christ. "Put him on as Lord to rule you, as Jesus to save you, and in both as Christ, anointed and appointed by the Father to this ruling saving work."

III. How to walk. When we are up and dressed, we are not to sit still in an affected closeness and privacy, as monks and hermits. What have we good clothes for, but to appear abroad in them?--Let us walk. Christianity teaches us how to walk so as to please God, whose eye is upon us: 1Th 4:1, Walk honestly as in the day. Compare Eph 5:8, Walk as children of light. Our conversation must be as becomes the gospel. Walk honestly; euschemonos--decently and becomingly, so as to credit your profession, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend religion in its beauty to others. Christians should be in a special manner careful to conduct themselves well in those things wherein men have an eye upon them, and to study that which is lovely and of good report. Particularly, here are three pairs of sins we are cautioned against:--

1. We must not walk in rioting and drunkenness; we must abstain from all excess in eating and drinking. We must not give the least countenance to revelling, nor indulge our sensual appetite in any private excesses. Christians must not overcharge their hearts with surfeiting and drunkenness, Lu 21:34. This is not walking as in the day; for those that are drunk are drunk in the night, 1Th 5:7.

2. Not in chambering and wantonness; not in any of those lusts of the flesh, those works of darkness, which are forbidden in the seventh commandment. Downright adultery and fornication are the chambering forbidden. Lascivious thoughts and affections, lascivious looks, words, books, sons, gestures, dances, dalliances, which lead to, and are degrees of, that uncleanness, are the wantonness here forbidden--whatsoever transgresseth the pure and sacred law of chastity and modesty.

3. Not in strife and envying. These are also works of darkness; for, though the acts and instances of strife and envy are very common, yet none are willing to own the principles, or to acknowledge themselves envious and contentious. It may be the lot of the best saints to be envied and striven with; but to strive and to envy ill becomes the disciples and followers of the peaceable and humble Jesus. Where there are riot and drunkenness, there usually are chambering and wantonness, and strife and envy. Solomon puts them all together, Pr 23:29, &c. Those that tarry long at the wine (Pr 23:30) have contentions and wounds without cause (Pr 23:29) and their eyes behold strange women, Pr 23:33.

14 but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for
the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof.*

Romans-14

Those Weak in Faith

I. An account of the unhappy contention which had broken out in the Christian church. Our Master had foretold that offences would come; and, it seems, so they did, for want of that wisdom and love which would have prevented discord, and kept up union among them.

There was a difference among them about the distinction of meats and days; these are the two things specified. There might be other similar occasions of difference, while these made the most noise, and were most taken notice of.

See to what degrees of mortification and self-denial a tender conscience will submit. None know but those that experience it how great both the restraining and the constraining power of conscience is.

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to
doubtful disputations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.
3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.
4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.
5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Another rule here given is this, that in these doubtful things every one not only may, but must, walk according to the light that God hath given him. This is laid down Ro 14:5, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; that is, "Practise according to your own judgment in these things, and leave others to do so too. Do not censure the practice of others; let them enjoy their own opinion; if they be persuaded in their own mind that they ought to do so and so, do not condemn them, but, if your sober sentiments be otherwise, do not make their practice a rule to you, any more than you must prescribe yours as a rule to them.Take heed of acting contrary to the dictates of a doubting conscience. First be persuaded that what you do is lawful, before you venture to do it." In doubtful things, it is good keeping on the sure side of the hedge. If a weak Christian doubts whether it be lawful to eat flesh, while he remains under that doubt he had best forbear, till he be fully persuaded in his own mind. We must not pin our faith upon any one's sleeve, nor make the practice of others our rule; but follow the dictates of our own understanding. To this purport he argues, Ro 14:14,23, which two verses explain this, and give us a rule not to act against the dictates,

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

1. Here the apostle speaks of the distinction of meats and days as a thing indifferent, when it went no further than the opinion and practice of some particular persons, who had been trained up all their

days to such observances, and therefore were the more excusable if they with difficulty parted with them. But in the epistle to the Galatians, where he deals with those that were originally Gentiles, but were influenced by some judaizing teachers, not only to believe such a distinction and to practise accordingly, but to lay a stress upon it as necessary to salvation, and to make the observance of the Jewish festivals public and congregational, here the case was altered, and it is charged upon them as the frustrating of the design of the gospel, falling from grace, Ga 4:9-11. The Romans did it out of weakness, the Galatians did it out of wilfulness and wickedness; and therefore the apostle handles them thus differently. This epistle is supposed to have been written some time before that to the Galatians. The apostle seems willing to let the ceremonial law wither by degrees, and to let it have an honourable burial; now these weak Romans seem to be only following it weeping to its grave, but those Galatians were raking it out of its ashes.

2. It was not so much the difference itself that did the mischief as the mismanagement of the difference, making it a bone of contention.

(1.) Those who were strong, and knew their Christian liberty, and made use of it, despised the weak, who did not. Whereas they should have pitied them, and helped them, and afforded them meek and friendly instruction, they trampled upon them as silly, and humoursome, and superstitious, for scrupling those things which they knew to be lawful: so apt are those who have knowledge to be puffed up with it, and to look disdainfully and scornfully upon their brethren.

(2.) Those who were weak, and durst not use their Christian liberty, judged and censured the strong, who did, as if they were loose Christians, carnal professors, that cared not what they did, but walked at all adventures, and stuck at nothing. They judged them as breakers of the law, contemners of God's ordinance, and the like. Such censures as these discovered a great deal of rashness and uncharitableness, and would doubtless tend much to the alienating of

affection. Well, this was the disease, and we see it remaining in the church to this day; the like differences, in like manner mismanaged, are still the disturbers of the church's peace.

But,

II. We have proper directions and suggestions laid down for allaying this contention, and preventing the ill consequences of it. The apostle, as a wise physician, prescribes proper remedies for the disease, which are made up of rules and reasons. Such gentle methods does he take, with such cords of a man does he draw them together; not by excommunicating, suspending, and silencing either side, but by persuading them both to a mutual forbearance; Let us observe the rules he gives, some to the strong and some to the weak, and some to both, for they are interwoven; and reduce the reasons to their proper rules.

1. Those who are weak must be received, but not to doubtful disputations, Ro 14:1. Take this for a general rule; spend your zeal in those things wherein you and all the people of God are agreed, and do not dispute about matters that are doubtful. Receive him, proslambavesthe--take him to you, bid him welcome, receive him with the greatest affection and tenderness; porrigite manum (so the Syriac): lend him your hand, to help him, to fetch him to you, to encourage him. Receive him into your company, and converse, and communion, entertain him with readiness and condescension, and treat him with all possible endearments. Receive him: not to quarrel with him, and to argue about uncertain points that are in controversy, which will but confound him, and fill his head with empty notions, perplex him, and shake his faith. Let not your Christian friendship and fellowship be disturbed with such vain janglings and strifes of words.--Not to judge his doubtful thoughts (so the margin), "not to pump out his weak sentiments concerning those things which he is in doubt about, that you may censure and condemn him." Receive him, not to expose him, but to instruct and strengthen him. See 1Co 1:10,Php 3:15,16.

2. Those who are strong must by no means despise the weak; nor those who are weak judge the strong, Ro 14:3. This is levelled directly against the fault of each party. It is seldom that any such contention exists but there is a fault on both sides, and both must mend. He argues against both these jointly: we must not despise nor judge our brethren. Why so?

(A) Because God hath received them; and we reflect upon him if we reject those whom he hath received. God never cast off any one that had true grace, though he was but weak in it; never broke the bruised reed. Strong believers and weak believers, those that eat and those that eat not, if they be true believers, are accepted of God.

(B) Because they are servants to their own master (Ro 14:4): Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? We reckon it a piece of ill manners to meddle with other people's servants, and to find fault with them and censure them. Weak and strong Christians are indeed our brethren, but they are not our servants. This rash judging is reproved, Jam 3:1, under the notion of being many masters. We make ourselves our brethren's masters, and do in effect usurp the throne of God, when we take upon us thus to judge them, especially to judge their thoughts and intentions, which are out of our view, to judge their persons and state, concerning which it is hard to conclude by those few indications which fall within our cognizance. God sees not as man sees; and he is their master, and not we.

(C) Because both the one and the other, if they be true believers, and are right in the main, have an eye to God, and do approve themselves to God in what they do, Ro 14:6.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.
8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

Our end and aim: not self, but the Lord. As the particular end specifies the action, so the general scope and tendency specify the state. If we would know what way we walk in, we must enquire what end we walk towards.

First, Not to self. We have learned to deny ourselves; this was our first lesson: None of us liveth to himself. This is a thing in which all the people of God are one, however they differ in other things; though some are weak and others are strong, yet both agree in this, not to live to themselves. Not one that hath given up his name to Christ is allowedly a self-seeker; it is contrary to the foundation of true Christianity.

Secondly, But to the Lord (Ro 14:8), to the Lord Christ, to whom all power and judgment are committed, and in whose name we are taught, as Christians, to do every thing we do (Col 3:17), with an eye to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, Php 1:21. Christ is the gain we aim at, living and dying. We live to glorify him in all the actions and affairs of life; we die, whether a natural or a violent death, to glorify him, and to go to be glorified with him. Christ is the centre, in which all the lines of life and death do meet.

[2.] The ground of this, Ro 14:9. It is grounded upon Christ's absolute sovereignty and dominion, which were the fruit and end of his death and resurrection. He is Lord of those that are living to rule them, of those that are dead to receive them and raise them up.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that
he might be Lord both of the dead and living.
10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at
nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment
seat of Christ.
11 For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord,
every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God.
12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

Another rule here prescribed is to those who are clear in these matters, and know their Christian liberty, yet to take heed of using it so as to give offence to a weak brother.

(1.) Of grief to our brother, "One that is weak, and thinks it unlawful to eat such and such meats, will be greatly troubled to see thee eat them, out of a concern for the honour of the law which he thinks forbids them, Christians should take heed of grieving one another, and of saddening the hearts of Christ's little ones. See Mt 18:6,10.

(2.) Of guilt to our brother. The former is a stumbling-block, that gives our brother a great shake, and is a hindrance and discouragement to him; but this is an occasion to fall. "If thy weak brother, purely by thy example and influence, without any satisfaction received concerning his Christian liberty, be drawn to act against his conscience and to walk contrary to the light he has, and so to contract guilt upon his soul, though the thing were lawful to thee, yet not being so to him (he having not yet thereto attained), thou art to be blamed for giving the occasion." See this case explained, 1Co 8:9-11, (1Co 8:13), (Ro 14:21). We must not weaken those that are weak; that is to quench the smoking flax and to break the bruised reed. Observe the motives to enforce this caution.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Cause the ruin of one: The word ruin here refers, doubtless, to the ruin of the soul in hell.

[1.] Consider the royal law of Christian love and charity, which is hereby broken (Ro 14:15): If thy brother be grieved with thy meat--be troubled to see thee eat those things which the law of Moses did

forbid, which yet thou mayest lawfully do; possibly thou art ready to say, "Now he talks foolishly and weakly, and it is no great matter what he says." We are apt, in such a case, to lay all the blame on that side. But the reproof is here given to the stronger and more knowing Christian: Now walkest thou not charitably.

[2.] Consider the design of Christ's death: Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died, Ro 14:15.

First, Drawing a soul to sin threatens the destruction of that soul. By shaking his faith, provoking his passion, and tempting him to act against the light of his own conscience, thou dost, as much as in thee lies, destroy him, giving him an occasion to return to Judaism. Me apollye. It denotes an utter destruction.

Secondly, The consideration of the love of Christ in dying for souls should make us very tender of the happiness and salvation of souls, and careful not to do any thing which may obstruct and hinder them. Did Christ quit a life for souls, such a life, and shall not we quit a morsel of meat for them? Shall we despise those whom Christ valued at so high a rate? Did he think it worth while to deny himself so much for them as to die for them, and shall not we think it worth while to deny ourselves so little for them as abstaining from flesh comes to?--with thy meat. Thou pleadest that it is thy own meat, and thou mayest do what thou wilt with it; but remember that, though the meat is thine, the brother offended by it is Christ's, and a part of his purchase. While thou destroyest thy brother thou art helping forward the devil's design, for he is the great destroyer; and, as much as in thee lies, thou art crossing the design of Christ, for he is the great Saviour, and dost not only offend thy brother, but offend Christ; for the work of salvation is that which his heart is upon. But are any destroyed for whom Christ died? If we understand it of the sufficiency and general intendment of Christ's death, which was to save all upon gospel terms, no doubt but multitudes are. Though none that were given to Christ shall perish (Joh 6:39), yet thou mayest, as much as is in thy power, destroy such. No thanks to thee if they be not destroyed; by doing that which has a tendency to it,

thou dost manifest a great opposition to Christ. Nay, and thou mayest utterly destroy some whose profession may be so justifiable that thou art bound to believe, in a judgment of charity, that Christ died for them. Compare this with 1Co 8:10,11.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17 for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but
righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

it is not being of this party and persuasion, of this or the other opinion in minor things, that will recommend us to God. It will not be asked at the great day, "Who ate flesh, and who ate herbs?" "Who kept holy days, and who did not?" Nor will it be asked, "Who was conformist and who was non-conformist?" But it will be asked, "Who feared God and worked righteousness, and who did not?" Nothing more destructive to true Christianity than placing it in modes, and forms, and circumstantials, which eat out the essentials. Secondly, It is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. These are some of the essentials of Christianity, things in which all the people of God are agreed, in the pursuit of which we must spend our zeal, and which we must mind with an excelling care. Righteousness, peace, and joy, are very comprehensive words; and each of them includes much, both of the foundation and the superstructure of religion. Might I limit the sense of them, it should be thus:--As to God, our great concern is righteousness--to appear before him justified by the merit of Christ's death, sanctified by the Spirit of his grace; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. As to our brethren, it is peace--to live in peace and love, and charity with them, following peace with all men: Christ came into the world to be the great peace-maker. As to ourselves, it is joy in the Holy Ghost--that spiritual joy which is wrought by the blessed Spirit in the hearts of believers, which respects God as their reconciled Father and heaven as their expected home.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God,
and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace,
and things wherewith one may edify another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure;
but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offense.

The works of peace and comfort are destroyed by such an offence given; take heed of it therefore; do not undo that which God hath done. You should work together with God, do not countermine his work.

First, The work of grace and peace is the work of God; it is wrought by him, it is wrought for him; it is a good work of his beginning, Php 1:6. Observe, The same for whom Christ died (Ro 14:15) are here called the work of God; besides the work that is wrought for us there is a work to be wrought in us, in order to our salvation. Every saint is God's workmanship, his husbandry, his building, Eph 2:10,1Co 3:9.

Secondly, We must be very careful to do nothing which tends to the destruction of this work, either in ourselves or others. We must deny ourselves in our appetites, inclinations, and in the use of Christian liberty, rather than obstruct and prejudice our own or others' grace and peace. Many do for meat and drink destroy the work of God in themselves (nothing more destructive to eh soul than pampering and pleasing the flesh, and fulfilling the lusts of it), so likewise in others, by wilful offence given. Think what thou destroyest--the work of God, whose work is honourable and glorious; think for what thou destroyest it--for meat, which was but for the belly, and the belly for it.

21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

22 Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Though men condemn us, it is well enough if our own hearts condemn us not, 1Jo 3:21.

23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

It must be understood likewise with this proviso, though men's judgments and opinions may make that which is good in itself to become evil to them, yet they cannot make that which is evil in

itself to become good, either in itself or to them.The Pharisees taught people to plead conscience, when they made corban an excuse for denying relief to their parents, Mt 15:5,6. But this would not serve any more than Paul's erroneous conscience would justify his rage against Christianity (Ac 26:9), or theirs, Joh 16:2.

Anyone who is not clear that it is lawful for him to eat swine's flesh (suppose), and yet is drawn, notwithstanding his doubts, to eat it, because he sees others do it, because he would gratify his appetite with it, or because he would not be reproached for his singularity; he is damned. Our rule is, to walk as far as we have attained, not further, Php 3:15,16.

The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, and it is a dangerous thing to debauch and put a force upon conscience, though it be under a mistake.

Consider the evil of giving offence, and what an abuse it is of our Christian liberty. He grants that all things indeed are pure. We may lawfully eat flesh, even those meats which were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but, if we abuse this liberty, it turns into sin to us: It is evil to him that eats with offence. Lawful things may be done unlawfully.--Eats with offence, either carelessly or designedly giving offence to his brethren. It is observable that the apostle directs his reproof most against those who gave the offence; not as if those were not to be blamed who causelessly and weakly took the offence from their ignorance of Christian liberty, and the want of that charity which is not easily provoked and which thinketh no evil (he several times tacitly reflects upon them), but he directs his speech to the strong, because they were better able to bear the reproof, and to begin the reformation. For the further pressing of this rule, we may here observe two directions which have relation to it:--First, Let not then your good be evil spoken of (Ro 14:16)--take heed of doing any thing which may give occasion to others to speak evil, either of the Christian religion in general, or of your Christian liberty in particular. The gospel is your good; the liberties and franchises, the privileges and immunities, granted by

it, are your good; your knowledge and strength of grace to discern and use your liberty in things disputed are your good, a good which the weak brother hath not. Now let not this be evil spoken of. It is true we cannot hinder loose and ungoverned tongues from speaking evil of us, and of the best things we have; but we must not (if we can help it) give them any occasion to do it. Let not the reproach arise from any default of ours; as 1Ti 4:12, Let no man despise thee, that is, do not make thyself despicable. So here, Do not use your knowledge and strength in such a manner as to give occasion to people to call it presumption and loose walking, and disobedience to God's law. We must deny ourselves in many cases for the preservation of our credit and reputation, forbearing to do that which we rightly know we may lawfully do, when our doing it may be a prejudice to our good name; as, when it is suspicious and has the appearance of evil, or when it becomes scandalous among good people, or has any way a brand upon it. In such a case we must rather cross ourselves than shame ourselves. Though it be but a little folly, it may be like a dead fly, very prejudicial to one that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, Ec 10:1. We may apply it more generally. We should manage all our good duties in such a manner that they may not be evil spoken of. That which for the matter of it is good and unexceptionable may sometimes, by mismanagement, be rendered liable to a great deal of censure and reproach. Good praying, preaching, and discourse, may often, for want of prudence in ordering the time, the expression, and other circumstances to edification, be evil spoken of. It is indeed their sin who do speak evil of that which is good for the sake of any such circumstantial errors, but it is our folly if we give any occasion to do so. As we tender the reputation of the good we profess and practise, let us so order it that it may not be evil spoken of. Secondly, Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God, Ro 14:22. It is not meant of justifying faith (that must not be hid, but manifested by our works), but of a knowledge and persuasion of our Christian liberty in things disputed. "Hast thou clearness in such a particular? Art thou satisfied that thou mayest eat all meats, and observe all days (except the Lord's day) alike? Have it to thyself, that is, enjoy the comfort of it in thy own bosom, and do not trouble others by the imprudent use of it, when it might give

offence, and cause thy weak brother to stumble and fall." In these indifferent things, though we must never contradict our persuasion, yet we may sometimes conceal it, when the avowing of it will do more hurt than good. Have it to thyself--a rule to thyself (not to be imposed upon others, or made a rule to them), or a rejoicing to thyself. Clearness in doubtful matters contributes very much to our comfortable walking, as it frees us from those scruples, jealousies, and suspicions, which those who have not such clearness are entangled in endlessly. Compare Ga 6:4, Let every man prove his own work, that is, bring it to the touchstone of the word and try it by that so exactly as to be well satisfied in what he does; and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Paul had faith in these things: I am persuaded that there is nothing unclean of itself; but he had it to himself, so as not to use his liberty to the offence of others.

Romans-15

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.
2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good to edification.

I. We must bear the infirmities of the weak, Ro 15:1. We all have our infirmities; but the weak are more subject to them than others--the weak in knowledge or grace, the bruised reed and the smoking flax. We must consider these; not trample upon them, but encourage them, and bear with their infirmities. If through weakness they judge and censure us, and speak evil of us, we must bear with them, pity them, and not have our affections alienated from them. Alas! it is their weakness, they cannot help it. Thus Christ bore with his weak disciples, and apologised for them. But there is more in it; we must also bear their infirmities by sympathizing with them, concerning ourselves for them, ministering strength to them, as there is occasion. This is bearing one another's burdens.

II. We must not please ourselves, but our neighbour, Ro 15:1,2. We must deny our own humour, in consideration of our brethren's weakness and infirmity.

1. Christians must not please themselves. We must not make it our business to gratify all the little appetites and desires of our own heart; it is good for us to cross ourselves sometimes, and then we shall the better bear others crossing of us. We shall be spoiled (as Adonijah was) if we be always humoured. The first lesson we have to learn is to deny ourselves, Mt 16:24.

2. Christians must please their brethren. The design of Christianity is to soften and meeken the spirit, to teach us the art of obliging and true complaisance; not to be servants to the lust of any, but to the necessities and infirmities of our brethren--to comply with all that we have to do with as fare as we can with a good conscience. Christians should study to be pleasing. As we must not please ourselves in the use of our Christian liberty (which was allowed us, not for our own pleasure, but for the glory of God and the profit and edification of others), so we must please our neighbour. How amiable and comfortable a society would the church of Christ be if Christians would study to please one another, as now we see them commonly industrious to cross, and thwart, and contradict one another!--Please his neighbour, not in every thing, it is not an unlimited rule; but for his good, especially for the good of his soul: not please him by serving his wicked wills, and humouring him in a sinful way, or consenting to his enticements, or suffering sin upon him; this is a base way of pleasing our neighbour to the ruin of his soul: if we thus please men, we are not the servants of Christ; but please him for his good; not for our own secular good, or to make a prey of him, but for his spiritual good.--To edification, that is, not only for his profit, but for the profit of others, to edify the body of Christ, by studying to oblige one another. The closer the stones lie, and the better they are squared to fit one another, the stronger is the building. Now observe the reason why Christians must please one another: For even Christ pleased not himself. The

self-denial of our Lord Jesus is the best argument against the selfishness of Christians. Observe,

(a.) That Christ pleased not himself. He did not consult his own worldly credit, ease, safety, nor pleasure; he had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, would not be made a king, detested no proposal with greater abhorrence than that, Master, spare thyself, did not seek his own will (Joh 5:30), washed his disciples' feet, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, troubled himself (Joh 11:33), did not consult his own honour, and, in a word, emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation: and all this for our sakes, to bring in a righteousness for us, and to set us an example. His whole life was a self-denying self-displeasing life. He bore the infirmities of the weak, Heb 4:15.

(b.) That herein the scripture was fulfilled: As it is written, The reproaches of those that reproached thee fell on me. This is quoted out of Ps 69:9, the former part of which verse is applied to Christ (Joh 2:17), The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the latter part here; for David was a type of Christ, and his sufferings of Christ's sufferings. It is quoted to show that Christ was so far from pleasing himself that he did in the highest degree displease himself. Not as if his undertaking, considered on the whole, were a task and grievance to him, for he was very willing to it and very cheerful in it; but in his humiliation the content and satisfaction of natural inclination were altogether crossed and denied. He preferred our benefit before his own ease and pleasure. This the apostle chooses to express in scripture language; for how can the things of the Spirit of God be better spoken of than in the Spirit's own words? And this scripture he alleges, The reproaches of those that reproached thee fell on me.

[1.] The shame of those reproaches, which Christ underwent. Whatever dishonour was done to God was a trouble to the Lord Jesus. He was grieved for the hardness of people's hearts, beheld a sinful place with sorrow and tears. When the saints were persecuted, Christ so far displeased himself as to take what was

done to them as done against himself: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Christ also did himself endure the greatest indignities; there was much of reproach in his sufferings.

[2.] The sin of those reproaches, for which Christ undertook to satisfy; so many understand it. Every sin is a kind of reproach to God, especially presumptuous sins; now the guilt of these fell upon Christ, when he was made sin, that is, a sacrifice, a sin-offering for us. When the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, they fell upon him as upon our surety. Upon me be the curse. This was the greatest piece of self-displacency that could be: considering his infinite spotless purity and holiness, the infinite love of the Father to him, and his eternal concern for his Father's glory, nothing could be more contrary to him, nor more against him, than to be made sin and a curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him, especially considering for whom he thus displeased himself, for strangers, enemies, and traitors, the just for the unjust, 1Pe 3:18. This seems to come in as a reason why we should bear the infirmities of the weak. We must not please ourselves, for Christ pleased not himself; we must bear the infirmities of the weak, for Christ bore the reproaches of those that reproached God. He bore the guilt of sin and the curse for it; we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it. He bore the presumptuous sins of the wicked; we are called only to bear the infirmities of the weak.--Even Christ; kai gar ho Christos. Even he who was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, who needed not us nor our services,--even he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, who had reason enough to pleas himself, and no reason to be concerned, much less to be crossed, for us,--even he pleased not himself, even he bore our sins. And should not we be humble, and self-denying, and ready to consider one another, who are members one of another?

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written,
The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.
4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for
our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the
Scriptures might have hope.

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to
be likeminded one toward another according to Christ
Jesus:
6 that ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel to the Gentiles

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us,
to the glory of God.

Those that have received Christ by faith must receive all Christians by brotherly love; though poor in the world, though persecuted and despised, though it may be matter of reproach and danger to you to receive them, though in the less weighty matters of the law they are of different apprehensions, though there may have been occasion for private piques, yet, laying aside these and the like considerations, receive you one another. Now the reason why Christians must receive one another is taken, as before, from the condescending love of Christ to us: As Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Christ has received us into the nearest and dearest relations to himself: has received us into his fold, into his family, into the adoption of sons, into a covenant of friendship, yea, into a marriage-covenant with himself; he has received us (though we were strangers and enemies, and had played the prodigal) into fellowship and communion with himself. Those words, to the glory of God, may refer both to Christ's receiving us, which is our pattern, and to our receiving one another, which is our practice according to that pattern. We are called to an eternal glory by Christ Jesus, Joh 17:24. See to what he received us-to a happiness transcending all comprehension; see for what he received us--for his Father's glory; he had this in his eye in all the instances of his favour to us.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision
for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the
fathers:

1. He received the Jews, Ro 15:8. Let not any think hardly or scornfully therefore of those that were originally Jews, and still, through weakness, retain some favour of their old Judaism; for,

(1.) Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision. That he was a minister, diakonos--a servant, bespeaks his great and exemplary condescension, and puts an honour upon the ministry: but that he was a minister of the circumcision, was himself circumcised and made under the law, and did in his own person preach the gospel to the Jews, who were of the circumcision--this makes the nation of the Jews more considerable than otherwise they appear to be. Christ conversed with the Jews, blessed them, looked upon himself as primarily sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, laid hold of the seed of Abraham (Heb 2:16, margin), and by them, as it were, caught at the whole body of mankind. Christ's personal ministry was appropriated to them, though the apostles had their commission enlarged.

(2.) He was so for the truth of God. That which he preached to them was the truth; for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, Joh 18:37. And he is himself the truth, Joh 14:6. Or, for the truth of God, that is, to make good the promises given to the patriarchs concerning the special mercy God had in store for their seed. It was not for the merit of the Jews, but for the truth of God, that they were thus distinguished--that God might approve himself true to this word which he had spoken.--To confirm the promises made unto the fathers. The best confirmation of promises is the performance of them. It was promised that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed, that Shiloh should come from between the feet of Judah, that out of Israel should he proceed that should have the dominion, that out of Zion should go forth the law, and many the like. There were many intermediate providences which seemed to weaken those promises, providences which threatened the fatal decay of that people; but when Messiah the Prince appeared in the fulness of time, as a minister of the circumcision, all these promises were confirmed, and the truth of them was made to appear; for in Christ all the promises of God,

both those of the Old Testament and those of the New, are Yea, and in him Amen. Understanding by the promises made to the fathers the whole covenant of grace, darkly administered under the Old Testament, and brought to a clearer light now under the gospel, it was Christ's great errand to confirm that covenant, Da 9:27. He confirmed it by shedding the blood of the covenant.

2. He received the Gentiles likewise. This he shows, Ro 15:9-12.

(1.) Observe Christ's favour to the Gentiles, in taking them in to praise God--the work of the church on earth and the wages of that in heaven. One design of Christ was that the Gentiles likewise might be converted that they might be one with the Jews in Christ's mystical body. A good reason why they should not think the worse of any Christian for his having been formerly a Gentile; for Christ has received him. He invites the Gentiles, and welcomes them. Now observe how their conversion is here expressed: That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. A periphrasis of conversion.

[1.] They shall have matter for praise, even the mercy of God. Considering the miserable and deplorable condition that the Gentile world was in, the receiving of them appears more as an act of mercy than the receiving of the Jews. Those that were Lo-ammi--not a people, were Lo-ruhama--not obtaining mercy, Ho 1:6,9,2:23. The greatest mercy of God to any people is the receiving of them into covenant with himself: and it is good to take notice of God's mercy in receiving us.

[2.] They shall have a heart for praise. They shall glorify God for his mercy. Unconverted sinners do nothing to glorify God; but converting grace works in the soul a disposition to speak and do all to the glory of God; God intended to reap a harvest of glory from the Gentiles, who had been so long turning his glory into shame.

9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as
it is written,
For this cause I will confess to thee among the
Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.
10 And again he saith,
Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.
11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles;
and laud him, all ye people.

The fulfilling of the scriptures in this. The favour of God to the Gentiles was not only mercy, but truth. Though there were not promises directly given to them, as to the fathers of the Jews, yet there were many prophesies concerning them, which related to the calling of them, and the embodying of them in the church, some of which he mentions because it was a thing that the Jews were hardly persuaded to believe. Thus, by referring them to the Old Testament, he labours to qualify their dislike of the Gentiles, and so to reconcile the parties at variance.

[1.] It was foretold that the Gentiles should have the gospel preached to them: "I will confess to thee among the Gentiles (Ro 15:9), that is, thy name shall be known and owned in the Gentile world, there shall gospel grace and love be celebrated." This is quoted from Ps 18:49, I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen. A thankful explication and commemoration of the name of God are an excellent means of drawing others to know and praise God. Christ, in and by his apostles and ministers, whom he sent to disciple all nations, did confess to God among the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ, as well as the conversion of sinners, is set forth by the praising of God. Christ's declaring God's name to his brethren is called his praising God in the midst of the congregation, Ps 22:22. Taking these words as spoken by David, they were spoken when he was old and dying, and he was not likely to confess to God among the Gentiles; but when David's psalms are read and sung among the Gentiles, to the praise and glory of God, it may be said that David is confessing to God among the Gentiles, and singing to his name. He that was the sweet psalmist of the Gentiles. Converting grace makes people greatly in love with David's psalms. Taking them as spoken by Christ, the Son of

David, it may be understood of his spiritual indwelling by faith in the hearts of all the praising saints. If any confess to God among the Gentiles, and sing to his name, it is not they, but Christ and his grace in them. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; so, I praise, yet not I, but Christ in me.

[2.] That the Gentiles should rejoice with his people, Ro 15:10. This is quoted from that song of Moses, De 32:43. Observe, Those who were incorporated among his people are said to rejoice with his people. No greater joy can come to any people than the coming of the gospel among them in power. Those Jews that retain a prejudice against the Gentiles will by no means admit them to any of their joyful festivities; for (say they) a stranger intermeddleth not with the joy, Pr 14:10. But, the partition-wall being taken down, the Gentiles are welcome to rejoice with his people. Being brought into the church, they share in its sufferings, are companions in patience and tribulation, to recompense which they share in the joy.

[3.] That they should praise God (Ro 15:11): Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles. This is quoted out of that short psalm, Ps 117:1. Converting grace sets people a praising God, furnishes with the richest matter for praise, and gives a heart to it. The Gentiles had been, for many ages, praising their idols of wood and stone, but now they are brought to praise the Lord; and this David in spirit speaks of. In calling upon all the nations to praise the Lord, it is intimated that they shall have the knowledge of him.

[4.] That they should believe in Christ (Ro 15:12), quoted from Isa 11:10, where observe,

First, The revelation of Christ, as the Gentiles' king. He is here called the root of Jesse, that is, such a branch from the family of David as is the very life and strength of the family: compare Isa 11:1. Christ was David's Lord, and yet withal he was the Son of David (Mt 22:45), for he was the root and offspring of David, Re 22:16. Christ, as God, was David's root; Christ, as man, was

David's offspring.--And he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles. This explains the figurative expression of the prophet, he shall stand for an ensign of the people. When Christ rose from the dead, when he ascended on high, it was to reign over the Gentiles.

Secondly, The recourse of the Gentiles to him: In him shall the Gentiles trust. Faith is the soul's confidence in Christ and dependence on him. The prophet has it, to him shall the Gentiles seek. The method of faith is first to seek unto Christ, as to one proposed to us for a Saviour; and, finding him able and willing to save, then to trust in him. Those that know him will trust in him. Or, this seeking to him is the effect of a trust in him; seeking him by prayer, and pursuant endeavours. We shall never seek to Christ till we trust in him. Trust is the mother; diligence in the use of means the daughter. Jews and Gentiles being thus united in Christ's love, why should they not be united in one another's love?

12 And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse,
and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles;
in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in
believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of
the Holy Ghost.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye
also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to
admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you
in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is
given to me of God,

16 that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,
ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the
Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy
Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in
those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ
hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by
word and deed,

Now how was this great work wrought?

1. Christ was the principal agent. He does not say, "which I worked," but "which Christ wrought by me," Ro 15:18. Whatever good we do, it is not we, but Christ by us, that does it; the work is his, the strength his; he is all in all, he works all our works, Php 2:13,Isa 26:12. Paul takes all occasions to own this, that the whole praise might be transmitted to Christ.

2. Paul was a very active instrument: By word and deed, that is, by his preaching, and by the miracles he wrought to confirm his doctrine; or his preaching and his living. Those ministers are likely to win souls that preach both by word and deed, by their conversation showing forth the power of the truths they preach. This is according to Christ's example, who began both to do and teach, Ac 1:1.-- Through mighty signs and wonders: en dynamei semeion--by the power, or in the strength, of signs and wonders. These made the preaching of the word so effectual, being the appointed means of conviction, and the divine seal affixed to the gospel-charter, Mk 16:17,18. 3. The power of the Spirit of God made this effectual, and crowned all with the desired success, Ro 15:19.

(1.) The power of the Spirit in Paul, as in the other apostles, for the working of those miracles. Miracles were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost (Ac 1:8), therefore reproaching the miracles is called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Or,

(2.) The power of the Spirit in the hearts of those to whom the word was preached, and who saw the miracles, making these means effectual to some and not to others. It is the Spirit's operation that makes the difference. Paul himself, as great a preacher as he was, with all his might signs and wonders, could not make one soul obedient further than the power of the Spirit of God accompanied his labours. It was the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that made those great mountains plain before this Zerubbabel. This is an encouragement to faithful ministers, who labour under the sense

of great weakness and infirmity, that it is all one to the blessed Spirit to work by many, or by those that have on power. The same almighty Spirit that wrought with Paul often perfects strength in weakness, and ordains praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

19 through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit
of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto
Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.
20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ
was named, lest I should build upon another man's
foundation:
21 but as it is written,
To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see:
and they that have not heard shall understand.

Paul Plans to Visit Rome

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming
to you.

He tells them that the reason why he could not come to them was because he had so much work cut out for him elsewhere. For which cause, that is, because of his labours in other countries, he was so much hindered. God had opened a wide door for him in other places, and so turned him aside. Observe in this,

(1.) The gracious providence of God conversant in a special manner about his ministers, casting their lot, not according to their contrivance, but according to his own purpose. Paul was several times crossed in his intentions; sometimes hindered by Satan (as 1Th 2:18), sometimes forbidden by the Spirit (Ac 16:7), and here diverted by other work. Man purposes but God disposes, Pr 16:9,19:21,Jer 10:23. Ministers purpose, and their friends purpose concerning them, but God overrules both, and orders the journeys, removals, and settlements, of his faithful ministers as he pleases. The stars are in the right hand of Christ, to shine where he sets them. The gospel does not come by chance to any place, but by the will and counsel of God.

(2.) The gracious prudence of Paul, in bestowing his time and pains where there was most need. Had Paul consulted his own ease, wealth, and honour, the greatness of the word would never have hindered him from seeing Rome, but would rather have driven him thither, where he might have had more preferment and taken less pains. But Paul sought the things of Christ more than his own things, and therefore would not leave his work of planting churches, no, not for a time, to go and see Rome. The Romans were whole, and needed not the physician as other poor places that were sick and dying. While men and women were every day dropping into eternity, and their precious souls perishing for lack of vision, it was no time for Paul to trifle. There was now a gale of opportunity, the fields were white unto the harvest; such a season slipped might never be retrieved; the necessities of poor souls were pressing, and called aloud, and therefore Paul must be busy. It concerns us all to do that first which is most needful. True grace teaches us to prefer that which is necessary before that which is unnecessary, Lu 10:41,42. And Christian prudence teaches us to prefer that which is more necessary before that which is less so. This Paul mentions as a sufficient satisfying reason. We must not take it ill of our friends if they prefer necessary work, which is pleasing to God, before unnecessary visits and compliments, which may be pleasing to us. In this, as in other things, we must deny ourselves.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24 whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to
them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.
29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in
the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.
30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in
your prayers to God for me;

How they must pray for him: That you strive together.

(1.) That you strive in prayer. We must put forth all that is within us in that duty; pray with fixedness, faith, and fervency; wrestle with God, as Jacob did; pray in praying, as Elias did (Jam 5:17), and stir up ourselves to take hold on God (Isa 64:7); and this is not only when we are praying for ourselves, but when we are praying for our friends. True love to our brethren should make us as earnest for them as sense of our own need makes us for ourselves.

(2.) That you strive together with me. When he begged their prayers for him, he did not intend thereby to excuse his praying for himself; no, "Strive together with me, who am wrestling with God daily, upon my own and my friends' account." He would have them to ply the same oar. Paul and these Romans were distant in place, and likely to be so, and yet they might join together in prayer; those who are put far asunder by the disposal of God's providence may yet meet together at the throne of his grace. Those who beg the prayers of others must not neglect to pray for themselves.

31 that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea;
and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted
of the saints;
32 that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and
may with you be refreshed.
33 Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

Romans-16

Personal Greetings

1 I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of
the church which is at Cenchreae:
2 that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye
assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she
hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also.
3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus:
4 who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom
not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the
Gentiles.
5 Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my
well- beloved Epenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia
unto Christ.
6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us.
7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow
prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were
in Christ before me.
8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.
9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.
10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of
Aristobulus' *household.*
11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the *household*
of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.
12 Salute Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute
the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.
13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.
14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and
the brethren which are with them.
15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and
Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.
16 Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ
salute you.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

The caution itself, which is given in the most obliging manner that could be: I beseech you, brethren. He does not will and command, as one that lorded it over God's heritage, but for love's sake beseeches. How earnest, how endearing, are Paul's exhortations! He teaches them,

1. To see their danger: Mark those who cause divisions and offences. Our Master had himself foretold that divisions and offences would come, but had entailed a woe on those by whom they come (Mt 18:7), and against such we are here cautioned. Those who burden the church with dividing and offending impositions, who uphold and enforce those impositions, who introduce and propagate dividing and offending notions, which are erroneous or justly suspected, who out of pride, ambition, affectation of novelty, or the like, causelessly separate from their brethren, and by perverse disputes, censures, and evil surmisings, alienate the affections of Christians one from another--these cause divisions and offences, contrary to, or different from (for that also is implied, it is para ten didachen), the doctrine which we have learned. Whatever varies from the form of sound doctrine which we have in the scriptures opens a door to divisions and offences. If truth be once deserted, unity and peace will not last long. Now, mark those that thus cause divisions, skopein. Observe them, the method they take, the end they drive at. There is need of a piercing watchful eye to discern the danger we are in from such people; for commonly the pretences are plausible, when the projects are very pernicious. Do not look only at the divisions and offences, but run up those streams to the fountain, and mark those that cause them, and especially that in them which causes these divisions and offences, those lusts on each side whence come these wars and fightings. A danger discovered is half prevented.

2. To shun it: "Avoid them. Shun all necessary communion and communication with them, lest you be leavened and infected by them. Do not strike in with any dividing interests, nor embrace any of those principles or practices which are destructive to Christian love and charity, or to the truth which is according to godliness.--Their word will eat as doth a canker." Some think he especially warns them to take heed of the judaizing teachers, who, under convert of the Christian name, kept up the Mosaical ceremonies, and preached the necessity of them, who were industrious in all places to draw disciples after them, and whom Paul in most of his epistles cautions the churches to take heed of.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

The worse they are, the more need we have to watch against them. Now observe his description of them, in two things:--

(1.) The master they serve: not our Lord Jesus Christ. Though they call themselves Christians, they do not serve Christ; do not aim at his glory, promote his interest, nor do his will, whatever they pretend. How many are there who call Christ Master and Lord, that are far from serving him! But they serve their own belly--their carnal, sensual, secular interests. It is some base lust or other that they are pleasing; pride, ambition, covetousness, luxury, lasciviousness, these are the designs which they are really carrying on. Their God is their belly, Php 3:19. What a base master do they serve, and how unworthy to come in competition with Christ, that serve their own bellies, that make gain their godliness, and the gratifying of a sensual appetite the very scope and business of their lives, to which all other purposes and designs must truckle and be made subservient.

(2.) The method they take to compass their design: By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple. Their words and speeches have a show of holiness and zeal for God (it is an easy thing to be godly from the teeth outward), and show of kindness and love to those into whom they instil their

corrupt doctrines, accosting them courteously when they intend them the greatest mischief. Thus by good words and fair speeches the serpent beguiled Eve. Observe, They corrupt their heads by deceiving their hearts, pervert their judgments by slyly insinuating themselves into their affections. We have a great need therefore to keep our hearts with all diligence, especially when seducing spirits are abroad.

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men.* I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

Because of the peril we are in, through our proneness and aptness to be inveigled and ensnared by them: "For your obedience has come abroad unto all men--you are noted in all the churches for a willing, tractable, complying people." And,

(a.) Therefore, because it was so, these seducing teachers would be the more apt to assault them. The devil and his agents have a particular spite against flourishing churches and flourishing souls. The ship that is known to be richly laden is most exposed to privateers. The adversary and enemy covets such a prey, therefore look to yourselves, 2Jo 1:8. "The false teachers hear that you are an obedient people, and therefore they will be likely to come among you, to see if you will be obedient to them." It has been the common policy of seducers to set upon those who are softened by convictions, and begin to enquire what they shall do, because such do most easily receive the impressions of their opinions. Sad experience witnesses how many who have begun to ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, have fatally split upon this rock, which proves it to be much the duty of ministers, with a double care, to feed the lambs of the flock, to lay a good foundation, and gently to lead those that are with young.

(b.) Though it were so, yet they were in danger from these seducers. This Paul suggests with a great deal of modesty and tenderness; not as one suspicious of them, but as one solicitous for them: "You obedience has come abroad unto all men; we

grant this and rejoice in it: I am glad therefore on your behalf." Thus does he insinuate their commendation, the better to make way for the caution. A holy jealousy of our friends may very well comport with a holy joy in them. "You think yourselves a very happy people, and so do I too: but for all that you must not be secure: I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. You are a willing good-natured people, but you had best take heed of being imposed upon by those seducers." A pliable temper is good when it is under good government; but otherwise it may be very ensnaring; and therefore he gives two general rules:--

[1.] To be wise unto that which is good, that is, to be skilful and intelligent in the truths and ways of God. "Be wise to try the spirits, to prove all things, and then to hold fast that only which is good." There is need of a great deal of wisdom in our adherence to good truths, and good duties, and good people, lest in any of these we be imposed upon and deluded. Be ye therefore wise as serpents (Mt 10:16), wise to discern that which is really good and that which is counterfeit; wise to distinguish things that differ, to improve opportunities. While we are in the midst of so many deceivers, we have great need of that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way, Pr 14:8.

[2.] To be simple concerning evil--so wise as not to be deceived, and yet so simple as not to be deceivers. It is a holy simplicity, not to be able to contrive, nor palliate, nor carry on, any evil design; akeraious--harmless, unmixed, inoffensive. In malice be you children, 1Co 14:20. The wisdom of the serpent becomes Christians, but not the subtlety of the old serpent. We must withal be harmless as doves. That is a wisely simple man that knows not how to do any thing against the truth. Now Paul was the more solicitous for the Roman church, that it might preserve its integrity, because it was so famous; it was a city upon a hill, and many eyes were upon the Christians there, so that an error prevailing there would be a bad precedent, and have an ill influence upon other churches.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.
Amen.

Because of the promise of God, that we shall have victory at last, which is given to quicken and encourage, not to supersede, our watchful cares and vigorous endeavours. It is a very sweet promise (Ro 16:20): The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.

(1.) The titles he gives to God: The God of peace, the author and giver of all good. When we come to God for spiritual victories, we must not only eye him as the Lord of hosts, whose all power is, but as the God of peace, a God at peace with us, speaking peace to us, working peace in us, creating peace for us. Victory comes from God more as the God of peace than as the God of war; for, in all our conflicts, peace is the thing we must contend for. God, as the God of peace, will restrain and vanquish all those that cause divisions and offences, and so break and disturb the peace of the church.

(2.) The blessing he expects from God--a victory over Satan. If he mean primarily those false doctrines and seducing spirits spoken of before, of which Satan was the prime founder and author, yet doubtless, it comprehends all the other designs and devices of Satan against souls, to defile, disturb, and destroy them, all his attempts to keep us from the purity of heaven, the peace of heaven here, and the possession of heaven hereafter. Satan tempting and troubling, acting as a deceiver and as a destroyer, the God of peace will bruise under our feet. He had cautioned them before against simplicity: now they, being conscious of their own great weakness and folly, might think, "How shall we evade and escape these snares that are laid for us? Will not these adversaries of our souls be at length too hard for us?" "No," says he, "fear not; though you cannot overcome in your own strength and wisdom, yet the God of peace will do it for you; and through him that loved us we shall be more than conquerors."

[1.] The victory shall be complete: He shall bruise Satan under your feet, plainly alluding to the first promise the Messiah made in

paradise (Ge 3:15), that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, which is in the fulfilling every day, while the saints are enabled to resist and overcome the temptations of Satan, and will be perfectly fulfilled when, in spite of all the powers of darkness, all that belong to the election of grace shall be brought triumphantly to glory. When Joshua had conquered the kings of Canaan, he called the captains of Israel to set their feet upon the necks of those kings (Jos 10:24), so will Christ, our Joshua, enable all his faithful servants and soldiers to set their feet upon Satan's neck, to trample upon, and triumph over, their spiritual enemies. Christ hath overcome for us; disarmed the strong man armed, broken his power, and we have nothing to do but to pursue the victory and divide the spoil. Let this quicken us to our spiritual conflict, to fight the good fight of faith--we have to do with a conquered enemy, and the victory will be perfect shortly.

[2.] The victory shall be speedy: He shall do it shortly. Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come. He hath said it, Behold, I come quickly. When Satan seems to have prevailed, and we are ready to give up all for lost, then will the God of peace cut the work short in righteousness.

21 Timothy my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

22 I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord.

23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Concluding Doxology

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26 but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

27 to God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians

[1 Corinthians]

1 Corinthians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,
2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:
3 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving for Spiritual Gifts

4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;
5 that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge;
6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:
7 so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:
8 who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of the encouraging hopes the apostle had of them for the time to come, founded on the power and love of Christ, and the faithfulness of God, 1Co 1:8,9. He who had begun a good work in them, and carried it on thus far, would not leave it unfinished. Those that wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be kept by him, and confirmed to the end; and those that are so will be blameless in the day of Christ: not upon the principle of strict justice, but gracious absolution; not in rigour of law, but from rich and free grace. How desirable is it to be confirmed and kept of Christ for such a purpose as this! How glorious are the hopes of

such a privilege, whether for ourselves or others! To be kept by the power of Christ from the power of our own corruption and Satan's temptation, that we may appear without blame in the great day! O glorious expectation, especially when the faithfulness of God comes in to support our hopes! He who hath called us into the fellowship of his Son is faithful, and will do it, 1Th 5:24. He who hath brought us into near and dear relation to Christ, into sweet and intimate communion with Christ, is faithful; he may be trusted with our dearest concerns. Those that come at his call shall never be disappointed in their hopes in him. If we approve ourselves faithful to God, we shall never find him unfaithful to us. He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail, Ps 89:33.

That ye may be blameless. The word rendered blameless ανεγκλητους does not mean perfect, but properly denotes those against whom there is no charge of crime; who are unaccused, and against whom there is no ground of accusation. Here it does not mean that they were personally perfect, but that God would so keep them, and enable them to evince a Christian character, as to give evidence that they were his friends, and completely escape condemnation in the last day. Rom 8:33,34. There is no man who has not his faults; no Christian who is not conscious of imperfection; but it is the design of God so to keep his people, and so to justify and sanctify them through the Lord Jesus, that the church may be presented "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle" Eph 5:27 in the day of judgment.

God is faithful. That is, God is true, and constant, and will adhere to his promises. He will not deceive. He will not promise, and then fail to perform; he will not commence anything which he will not perfect and finish. The object of Paul, in introducing the idea of the faithfulness of God, here is, to show the reason for believing that the Christians at Corinth would be kept unto everlasting life. The evidence that they will persevere depends on the fidelity of God; and the argument of the apostle is, that as they had been called by him into the fellowship of his Son, his faithfulness of character would render it certain that they would be kept to eternal life. The same idea he has presented in Php 1:6: "Being confident

of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will also perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Ye were called. The word "called" here does not refer merely to an invitation or an offer of life, but to the effectual influence which had been put forth; which had inclined them to embrace the gospel. Rom 8:30; Rom 9:12. See Mk 2:17, Lk 5:32, Gal 1:6,7, 5:8,13; Eph 1:4, Col 3:16. In this sense the word often occurs in the Scriptures, and is designed to denote a power, or influence, that goes forth with the external invitation, and that makes it effectual. That power is the agency of the Holy Spirit.

9 God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Divisions in the Church

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Be perfectly joined together in the same mind, as far as you can. In the great things of religion be of a mind: but, when there is not a unity of sentiment, let there be a union of affections. The consideration of being agreed in greater things should extinguish all feuds and divisions about minor ones."

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

15 lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

The manner in which Paul preached the gospel, and the cross of Christ: Not with the wisdom of words (1Co 1:17), the enticing words of man's wisdom (1Co 2:4), the flourish of oratory, or the accuracies of philosophical language, upon which the Greeks so much prided themselves, and which seem to have been the peculiar recommendations of some of the heads of the faction in this church that most opposed this apostle. He did not preach the gospel in this manner, lest the cross of Christ should be of no effect, lest the success should be ascribed to the force of art, and not of truth; not to the plain doctrine of a crucified Jesus, but to the powerful oratory of those who spread it, and hereby the honour of the cross be diminished or eclipsed. Paul had been bred up himself in Jewish learning at the feet of Gamaliel, but in preaching the cross of Christ he laid his learning aside. He preached a crucified Jesus in plain language, and told the people that that Jesus who was crucified at Jerusalem was the Son of God and Saviour of men, and that all who would be saved must repent of their sins, and believe in him, and submit to his government and laws. This truth needed no artificial dress; it shone out with the greatest majesty in its own light, and prevailed in the world by its divine authority, and the demonstration of the Spirit, without any human helps. The plain preaching of a crucified Jesus was more powerful than all the oratory and philosophy of the heathen world.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.

It is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God, 1Co 1:23,24.

1. Christ crucified is a stumbling-block to the Jews. They could not get over it. They had a conceit that their expected Messiah was to be a great temporal prince, and therefore would never own one

who made so mean an appearance in life, and died so accursed a death, for their deliverer and king. They despised him, and looked upon him as execrable, because he was hanged on a tree, and because he did not gratify them with a sign to their mind, though his divine power shone out in innumerable miracles. The Jews require a sign, 1Co 1:22. See Mt 12:38.

2. He was to the Greeks foolishness. They laughed at the story of a crucified Saviour, and despised the apostles' way of telling it. They sought for wisdom. They were men of wit and reading, men that had cultivated arts and sciences, and had, for some ages, been in a manner the very mint of knowledge and learning. There was nothing in the plain doctrine of the cross to suit their taste, nor humour their vanity, nor gratify a curious and wrangling temper: they entertained it therefore with scorn and contempt. What, hope to be saved by one that could not save himself! And trust in one who was condemned and crucified as a malefactor, a man of mean birth and poor condition in life, and cut off by so vile and opprobrious a death! This was what the pride of human reason and learning could not relish. The Greeks thought it little better than stupidity to receive such a doctrine, and pay this high regard to such a person: and thus were they justly left to perish in their pride and obstinacy. Note, It is just with God to leave those to themselves who pour such proud contempt on divine wisdom and grace.

3. To those who are called and saved he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Those who are called and sanctified, who receive the gospel, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, discern more glorious discoveries of God's wisdom and power in the doctrine of Christ crucified than in all his other works. Note, Those who are saved are reconciled to the doctrine of the cross, and led into an experimental acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ crucified.

For the preaching of the cross. Greek, "the word ολογος of the cross;" i.e., the doctrine of the cross; or the doctrine which

proclaims salvation only through the atonement which the Lord Jesus Christ made on the cross. This cannot mean that the statement that Christ died as a martyr on a cross appears to be foolishness to men; because, if that was all, there would be nothing that would appear contemptible, or that would excite their opposition more than in the death of any other martyr. The statement that Polycarp, and Ignatius, and Paul, and Cranmer, died as martyrs, does not appear to be foolishness, for it is a statement of an historical truth, and their death excites the high admiration of all men. And if, in the death of Jesus on the cross, there had been nothing more than a mere martyr's death, it would have been equally the object of admiration to all men. But the "preaching of the cross" must denote more than that; and must mean,

(1.) that Christ died as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men, and that it was this which gave its peculiarity to his sufferings on the cross.

(2.) That men can be reconciled to God, pardoned, and saved only by the merits and influence of this atoning sacrifice.

Foolishness. Folly. That is, it appears to them to be contemptible and foolish, or unworthy of belief. To the great mass of the Jews, and to the heathen philosophers, and indeed to the majority of the men of this world, it has ever appeared foolishness, for the following reasons:

(1.) The humble origin of the Lord Jesus. They despise him that lived in Nazareth; that was poor; that had no home, and few friends, and no wealth, and little honour among his own countrymen.

(2.) They despise him who was put to death as an impostor, at the instigation of his own countrymen, in an ignominious manner on the cross--the usual punishment of slaves.

(3.) They see not why there should be any particular efficacy in his death. They deem it incredible that he who could not save himself should be able to save them; and that glory should come from the ignominy of the cross.

(4.) They are blind to the true beauty of his personal character; to the true dignity of his nature; to his power over the sick, the lame, the dying, and the dead; they see not the bearing of the work of atonement on the law and government of God; they believe not in his resurrection, and his present state of exalted glory. The world looks only at the fact that the despised man of Nazareth was put to death on a cross, and smiles at the idea that such a death could have any important influence on the salvation of man. It is worthy of remark, also, that to the ancient philosophers this doctrine would appear still more contemptible than it does to the men of these times. Everything that came from Judea they looked upon with contempt and scorn; and they would spurn, above all things else, the doctrine that they were to expect salvation only by the crucifixion of a Jew. Besides, the account of the crucifixion has now lost to us no small part of its reputation of ignominy. Even around the cross there is conceived to be no small amount of honour and glory. There is now a sacredness about it, from religious associations; and a reverence which men in Christian lands can scarcely help feeling when they think of it. But to the ancients it was connected with every idea of ignominy. It was the punishment of slaves, impostors, and vagabonds; and had even a greater degree of disgrace attached to it than the gallows has with us. With them, therefore, the death on the cross was associated with the idea of all that is shameful and dishonourable; and to speak of salvation only by the sufferings and death of a crucified man, was fitted to excite in their bosoms only unmingled scorn.

19 For it is written,
I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.
20 Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer
of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this
world?

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom
knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching
to save them that believe.
22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:
23 but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock,
and unto the Greeks foolishness;
24 but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.
25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men;
and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise
men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are*
called:

You see the state of Christianity; not many men of learning, or authority, or honourable extraction, are called." There is a great deal of meanness and weakness in the outward appearance of our religion. For, (1.) Few of distinguished character in any of these respects were chosen for the work of the ministry. God did not choose philosophers, nor orators, nor statesmen, nor men of wealth and power and interest in the world, to publish the gospel of grace and peace. Not the wise men after the flesh, though men would apt to think that a reputation for wisdom and learning might have contributed much to the success of the gospel. Not the mighty and noble, however men might be apt to imagine that secular pomp and power would make way for its reception in the world. But God seeth not as man seeth. He hath chosen the foolish things of the world, the weak things of the world, the base and despicable things of the world, men of mean birth, of low rank, of no liberal education, to be the preachers of the gospel and planters of the church. His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. He is a better judge than we what instruments and measures will best serve the purposes of his glory. (2.) Few of distinguished rank and character were called to be Christians. As the teachers were poor and mean, so generally were the converts. Few of the wise, and mighty, and noble, embraced the doctrine of the cross. The first Christians, both among Jews and Greeks, were weak, and foolish, and base; men of mean furniture as to their mental improvements, and very mean rank and condition as to their outward estate; and

yet what glorious discoveries are there of divine wisdom in the whole scheme of the gospel, and in this particular circumstance of its success!

27 but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

To beat down the pride and vanity of men. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise--men of no learning to confound the most learned; the weak things of the world to confound the might--men of mean rank and circumstances to confound and prevail against all the power and authority of earthly kings; and base things, and things which are despised--things which men have in the lowest esteem, or in the utmost contempt, to pour contempt and disgrace on all they value and have in veneration; and things which are not, to bring to nought (to abolish) things that are--the conversion of the Gentiles (of whom the Jews had the most contemptuous and vilifying thoughts) was to open a way to the abolishing of that constitution of which they were so fond, and upon which they valued themselves so much as for the sake of it to despise the rest of the world. It is common for the Jews to speak of the Gentiles under this character, as things that are not. Thus, in the apocryphal book of Esther, she is brought in praying that God would not give his sceptre to those who are not, Esth. xiv. 11. Esdras, in one of the apocryphal books under his name, speaks to God of the heathen as those who are reputed as nothing, 2 Esdras vi. 56, 57. And the apostle Paul seems to have this common language of the Jews in his view when he calls Abraham the father of us all before him whom he believed, God, who calleth those things that are not as though they were, Ro 4:17. The gospel is fitted to bring down the pride of both Jews and Greeks, to shame the boasted science and learning of the Greeks, and to take down that constitution on which the Jews valued themselves and despised all the world besides, that no flesh should glory in his presence (1Co 1:29), that there might be no pretence for boasting. Divine wisdom alone had the contrivance of the method of redemption; divine grace alone revealed it, and made it known. It lay, in both respects, out of human reach. And the doctrine and discovery prevailed, in spite of all the opposition it met with from human art or authority: so

effectually did God veil the glory and disgrace the pride of man in all. The gospel dispensation is a contrivance to humble man.

28 and base things of the world, and things which are despised,
hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to
nought things that are:

And things which are not. ταμηοντα. That which is nothing; which is worthless; which has no existence; those things which were below contempt itself; and which, in the estimation of the world, were passed by as having no existence-as not having sufficient importance to be esteemed worthy even of the slight notice which is implied in contempt. For a man who despises a thing must at least notice it, and esteem it worth some attention. But the apostle here speaks of things beneath even that slight notice; as completely and totally disregarded, as having no existence. The language here is evidently that of hyperbole, Jn 21:25. It was a figure of speech common in the East, and not unusual in the sacred writings. Comp. Isa 40:17:

"All nations before him are as nothing, And they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity."

See also Rom 4:17: "God, who calleth those things which be not as though they were." This language was strongly expressive of the estimate which the Jews fixed on the Gentiles, as being a despised people, as being in fact no people; a people without laws, and organization, and religion, and privileges. See Hoss 1:10, 2:23, Rom 9:25, 1Pet 2:10. "When a man of rank among the Hindoos speaks of low-caste persons, of notorious profligates, or of those whom he despises, he calls them alla-tha-varkal, i.e., thou who are not. The term does not refer to life or existence, but to a quality or disposition, and is applied to those who are vile and abominable in all things. 'My son, my son, go not among them who are not.' 'Alas! alas! those people are all alla-tha-varkal' When wicked men prosper, it is said, 'This is the time for those who are not.' 'Have you heard that those who are not are now acting righteously? 'Vulgar and indecent expressions are also called words that are

not.' To address men in the phrase are not, is provoking beyond measure."--Roberts, as quoted in Bush's illustrations of Scripture.

29 that no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

It is as admirably fitted to glorify God. There is a great deal of power and glory in the substance and life of Christianity. Though the ministers were poor and unlearned, and the converts generally of the meanest rank, yet the hand of the Lord went along with the preachers, and was mighty in the hearts of the hearers; and Jesus Christ was made both to ministers and Christians what was truly great and honourable. All we have we have from God as the fountain, and in and through Christ as the channel of conveyance. He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1Co 1:30): all we need, or can desire. We are foolishness, ignorant and blind in the things of God, with all our boasted knowledge; and he is made wisdom to us. We are guilty, obnoxious to justice; and he is made righteousness, our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt; and he is made sanctification, the spring of our spiritual life; from him, the head, it is communicated to all the members of his mystical body by his Holy Spirit. We are in bonds, and he is made redemption to us, our Saviour and deliverer. Observe, Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is also made sanctification. He never discharges from the guilt of sin, without delivering from the power of it; and he is made righteousness and sanctification, that he may in the end be made complete redemption, may free the soul from the very being of sin, and loose the body from the bonds of the grave: and what is designed in all is that all flesh may glory in the Lord, 1Co 1:31. Observe, It is the will of God that all our glorifying should be in the Lord: and, our salvation being only through Christ, it is thereby effectually provided that it should be so. Man is humbled, and God glorified and exalted, by the whole scheme.

31 that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

1 Corinthians-2

Proclaiming Christ Crucified

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with
excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the
testimony of God.
2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus
Christ, and him crucified.
3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in
much trembling.
4 And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing
words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit
and of power:
5 that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but
in the power of God.

He was also among them in weakness and fear, and in much trembling; and yet his speech and preaching were in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 1Co 2:3,4. His enemies in the church of Corinth spoke very contemptuously of him: His bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible, 2Co 10:10. Possibly he had a little body, and a low voice; but, though he had not so good an elocution as some, it is plain that he was no mean speaker. The men of Lystra looked on him to be the heathen god Mercury, come down to them in the form of a man, because he was the chief speaker, Ac 14:12.

The Revelation by God's Spirit

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet
not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world,
that come to nought:
7 but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden
wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory;
8 which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they
known
it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The ignorance of the great men of the world about it: Which none of the princes of this world knew (1Co 2:8), the principal men in authority and power, or in wisdom and learning. The Roman governor, and the guides and rulers of the Jewish church and nation, seem to be the persons here chiefly meant. These were the princes of this world, or this age, who, had they known this true and heavenly wisdom, would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This Pilate and the Jewish rulers literally did when our Redeemer was crucified upon the sentence of the one and the clamorous demands of the other. Observe, Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory, a title much too great for any creature to bear: and the reason why he was hated was because he was not known. Had his crucifiers known him, known who and what he was, they would have withheld their impious hands, and not have taken and slain him. This he pleaded with his Father for their pardon: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, Lu 23:34. Note, There are many things which people would not do if they knew the wisdom of God in the great work of redemption. They act as they do because they are blind or heedless. They know not the truth, or will not attend to it.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
neither have entered into the heart of man,
the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

t was a testimony of love to God in the Jewish believers to live in expectation of the accomplishment o evangelical promises. Waiting upon God is an evidence of love to him. Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, Isa 25:9. Observe, There are things which God hath prepared for those that love him, and wait for him. There are such things prepared in a future life for them, things which sense cannot discover, no present information can convey to our ears, nor can yet enter our hearts. Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel, 2Ti 1:10. But the apostle speaks here of the subject-matter of the divine revelation under the gospel. These are such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Observe, The great truths of the gospel are things lying out of the sphere of human discovery: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard them, nor have they entered into the heart of man. Were they objects of sense, could they be discovered by an eye of reason, and communicated by the ear to the mind, as matters of common human knowledge may, there had been

no need of a revelation. But, lying out of the sphere of nature, we cannot discover them but by the light of revelation. And therefore we must take them as they lie in the scriptures, and as God has been pleased to reveal them.

10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

The scripture is given by inspiration of God. Holy men spoke of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2Pe 1:21. And the apostles spoke by inspiration of the same Spirit, as he taught them, and gave them utterance. Here is a proof of the divine authority of the holy scriptures. Paul wrote what he taught: and what he taught was revealed of God by his Spirit, that Spirit that searches all things, yea, the deep things of God, and knows the things of God, as the spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man, 1Co 2:11. A double argument is drawn from these words in proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost:--

1. Omniscience is attributed to him: He searches all things, even the deep things of God. He has exact knowledge of all things, and enters into the very depths of God, penetrates into his most secret counsels. Now who can have such a thorough knowledge of God but God?

2. This allusion seems to imply that the Holy Spirit is as much in God as a man's mind is in himself. Now the mind of the man is plainly essential to him. He cannot be without his mind. Now can God be without his Spirit. He is as much and as intimately one with God as the man's mind is with the man. The man knows his own mind because his mind is one with himself. The Spirit of God knows the things of God because he is one with God. And as no man can come at the knowledge of what is in another man's mind till he communicates and reveals it, so neither can we know the secret counsels and purposes of God till they are made known to us by his Holy Spirit.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The Spirit of God knows much better how to speak of the things of God than the best critics, orators, or philosophers. Comparing spiritual things with spiritual--one part of revelation with another, the revelation of the gospel with that of the Jews, the discoveries of the New Testament with the types and prophecies of the Old.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them,* because they are spiritually discerned.

The natural man, the animal man.

1.The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not, Joh 1:5. Not that the natural faculty of discerning is lost, but evil inclinations and wicked principles render the man unwilling to enter into the mind of God, in the spiritual matters of his kingdom, and yield to their force and power. It is the quickening beams of the Spirit of truth and holiness that must help the mind to discern their excellency, and to so thorough a conviction of their truth as heartily to receive and embrace them.

2.The natural man, that is, the wise man of the world (1Co 1:19,20), the wise man after the flesh, or according to the flesh (1Co 2:26), one who hath the wisdom of the world, man's wisdom (1Co 2:4-6), a man, as some of the ancients, that would learn all truth by his own ratiocinations, receive nothing by faith, nor own any need of supernatural assistance. This was very much the character of the pretenders to philosophy and the Grecian learning and wisdom in that day. Such a man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. Revelation is not with him a principle of science; he looks upon it as delirium and dotage, the extravagant thought of some deluded dreamer. It is no way to wisdom among the famous masters of the world; and for that reason he can have no knowledge of things

revealed, because they are only spiritually discerned, or made known by the revelation of the Spirit, which is a principle of science or knowledge that he will not admit.

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged, or discerned, of no man, 1Co 2:15. Either,

(1.) He who is sanctified and made spiritually-minded (Ro 8:6) judgeth all things, or discerneth all things--he is capable of judging about matters of human wisdom, and has also a relish and favor of divine truths; he sees divine wisdom, and experiences divine power, in gospel revelations and mysteries, which the carnal and unsanctified mind looks upon as weakness and folly, as things destitute of all power and not worthy any regard. It is the sanctified mind that must discern the real beauties of holiness; but, by the refinement of its facilities, they do not lose their power of discerning and judging about common and natural things. The spiritual man may judge of all things, natural and supernatural, human and divine, the deductions of reason and the discoveries of revelation. But he himself is judged or discerned of NO MAN. God's saints are his hidden ones, Ps 83:3. Their life is hid with Christ in God, Col 3:3. The carnal man knows no more of a spiritual man than he does of other spiritual things. He is a stranger to the principles, pleasures, and actings, of the divine life. The spiritual man does not lie open to his observation. Or,

(2.) He that is spiritual (who has had divine revelations made to him, receives them as such, and founds his faith and religion upon them) can judge both of common things and things divine; he can discern what is, and what is not, the doctrine of the gospel and of salvation, and whether a man preaches the truths of God or not. He does not lose the power of reasoning, nor renounce the principles of it, by founding his faith and religion on revelation. But he himself is judged of no man--can be judged, so as to be confuted, by no man; nor can any man who is not spiritual, not under a divine afflatus himself (see 1Co 14:37), or not founding his faith on a divine

revelation, discern or judge whether what he speaks be true or divine, or not. Of no man: for when the prophets are judged of the prophets, it is the Spirit that judges, and not the man.

None who are not spiritual are able to sit in judgment upon his higher life. He is on a higher level, and the animal man, from his lower level, cannot well estimate him. In short, he who founds all his knowledge upon principles of science, and the mere light of reason, can never be a judge of the truth or falsehood of what is received by revelation. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him (1Co 2:16), that is, the spiritual man? Who can enter so far into the mind of God as to instruct him who has the Spirit of God, and is under his inspiration? He only is the person to whom God immediately communicates the knowledge of his will. And who can inform or instruct him in the mind of God who is so immediately under the conduct of his own Spirit? Very few have known any thing of the mind of God by a natural power. But, adds the apostle, we have the mind of Christ; and the mind of Christ is the mind of God. He is God, and the principal messenger and prophet of God. And the apostles were empowered by his Spirit to make known his mind to us. And in the holy scriptures the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, are fully revealed to us. Observe, It is the great privilege of Christians that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit.

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians-3

Laborers Together with God

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.

They were still mere babes in Christ. They had received some of the first principles of Christianity, but had not grown up to maturity of understanding in them, or of faith and holiness; and yet it is plain, from several passages in this epistle, that the Corinthians were very

proud of their wisdom and knowledge. Note, It is but too common for persons of very moderate knowledge and understanding to have a great measure of self-conceit. The apostle assigns their little proficiency in the knowledge of Christianity as a reason why he had communicated no more of the deep things of it to them. They could not bear such food, they needed to be fed with milk, not with meat,

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye
were not able *to bear it,* neither yet now are ye able.

Note, It is the duty of a faithful minister of Christ to consult the capacities of his hearers and teach them as they can bear. And yet it is natural for babes to grow up to men; and babes in Christ should endeavour to grow in Stature, and become men in Christ. It is expected that their advances in knowledge should be in proportion to their means and opportunities, and their time of professing religion, that they may be able to bear discourses on the mysteries of our religion, and not always rest in plain things. It was a reproach to the Corinthians that they had so long sat under the ministry of Paul and had made no more improvement in Christian knowledge. Note, Christians are utterly to blame who do not endeavour to grow in grace and knowledge.

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying,
and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?
4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos;
are ye not carnal?

These were proofs of their being carnal, that fleshly interests and affections too much swayed them. Note, Contentions and quarrels about religion are sad evidences of remaining carnality. True religion makes men peaceable and not contentious. Factious spirits act upon human principles, not upon principles of true religion; they are guided by their own pride and passions, and not by the rules of Christianity: Do you not walk as men? Note, It is to be lamented that many who should walk as Christians, that is, above the common rate of men, do indeed walk as men, live and act too much like other men.

5 Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom
ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

Some of the factious people in Corinth seem to have made more of them, as if they were lords of their faith, authors of their religion. Note, We should take care not to deify ministers, nor put them into the place of God. Apostles were not the authors of our faith and religion, though they were authorized and qualified to reveal and propagate it. They acted in this office as God gave to every man. Observe, All the gifts and powers that even apostles discovered and exerted in the work of the ministry were from God.

Even apostolical ministers are nothing of themselves, can do nothing with efficacy and success unless God give the increase. Note, The best qualified and most faithful ministers have a just sense of their own insufficiency, and are very desirous that God should have all the glory of their success. Paul and Apollos are nothing at all in their own account, but God is all in all.

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.
8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Note, All the faithful ministers of Christ are one in the great business and intention of their ministry. They may have differences of sentiment in minor things; they may have their debates and contests; but they heartily concur in the great design of honouring God and saving souls, by promoting true Christianity in the world. All such may expect a glorious recompence of their fidelity, and in proportion to it: Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. Their business is one, but some may mind it more than others: their end or design is one, but some may pursue it more closely than others: their Master also is one, and yet this good and gracious Master may make a difference in the rewards he gives, according to the different service they do: Every one's own work shall have its own reward. Those that work hardest shall fare best. Those that are most faithful shall have the greatest reward; and glorious work it is in which all faithful ministers are employed.

9 For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Note, Faithful ministers may and ought to have a concern for their own reputation. Their usefulness depends much upon it. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. This is a proper caution; there may be very indifferent building on a good foundation. It is easy to err here; and great care should be used, not only to lay a sure and right foundation, but to erect a regular building upon it. Nothing must be laid upon it but what the foundation will bear, and what is of a piece with it. Gold and dirt must not be mingled together. Note, Ministers of Christ should take great care that they do not build their own fancies or false reasonings on the foundation of divine revelation. What they preach should be the plain doctrine of their Master, or what is perfectly agreeable with it.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

But of those that hold the foundation, and embrace the general doctrine of Christ's being the mediator between God and man, there are two sorts:--

I. Some build upon this foundation gold, silver, and precious stones (1Co 3:12), namely, those who receive and propagate the pure truths of the gospel, who hold nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, and preach nothing else. This is building well upon a good foundation, making all of apiece, when ministers not only depend upon Christ as the great prophet of the church, and take him for their guide and infallible teacher, but receive and spread the doctrines he

taught, in their purity, with out any corrupt mixtures, without adding or diminishing.

II. Others build wood, hay, and stubble, on this foundation; that is, though they adhere to the foundation, they depart from the mind of Christ in many particulars, substitute their own fancies and inventions in the room of his doctrines and institutions, and build upon the good foundation what will not abide the test when the day of trial shall come, and the fire must make it manifest, as wood, hay, and stubble, will not bear the trial by fire, but must be consumed in it. There is a time coming when a discovery will be made of what men have built on this foundation: Every man's work shall be made manifest, shall be laid open to view, to his own view and that of others. Some may, in the simplicity of their hearts, build wood and stubble on the good foundation, and know not, all the while, what they have been doing; but in the day of the Lord their own conduct shall appear to them in its proper light. Every man's work shall be made manifest to himself, and made manifest to others, both those that have been misled by him and those that have escaped his errors. Now we may be mistaken in ourselves and others; but there is a day coming that will cure all our mistakes, and show us ourselves, and show us our actions in the true light, without covering or disguise: For the day shall declare it (that is, every man's work), because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is, 1Co 3:13. The day shall declare and make it manifest, the last day, the great day of trial; see 1Co 4:5. Though some understand it of the time when the Jewish nation was destroyed and their constitution thereby abolished, when the superstructure which judaizing teachers would have raised on the Christian foundation was manifested to be no better than hay and stubble, that would not bear the trial. The expression carries in it a plain allusion to the refiner's art, in which the fire separates and distinguishes the dross from the gold and silver; as it also will silver and gold and precious stones, that will endure the fire, from wood and hay and stubble, that will be consumed in it.

Note, There is a day coming that will as nicely distinguish one man from another, and one man's work from another's, as the fire

distinguishes gold from dross, or metal that will bear the fire from other materials that will be consumed in it. In that day,

1. Some men's works will abide the trial--will be found standard. It will appear that they not only held the foundation, but that they built regularly and well upon it--that they laid on proper materials, and in due form and order. The foundation and the superstructure were all of a piece. The foundation-truths, and those that had a manifest connection with them, were taught together. It may not be so easy to discern this connection now, nor know what works will abide the trial then; but that day will make a full discovery. And such a builder shall not, cannot fail of a reward. He will have praise and honour in that day, and eternal recompence after it. Note, Fidelity in the ministers of Christ will meet with a full and ample reward in a future life. Those who spread true and pure religion in all the branches of it, and whose work will abide in the great day, shall receive a reward. And, Lord, how great! how much exceeding their deserts!

2. There are others whose works shall be burnt (1Co 3:15), whose corrupt opinions and doctrines, or vain inventions and usages in the worship of God, shall be discovered, disowned, and rejected, in that day--shall be first manifested to be corrupt, and then disapproved of God and rejected. Note, The great day will pluck off all disguises, and make things appear as they are: He whose work shall be burnt will suffer loss. If he have built upon the right foundation wood and hay and stubble, he will suffer loss. His weakness and corruption will be the lessening of his glory, though he may in the general have been an honest and an upright Christian. This part of his work will be lost, turning no way to his advantage, though he himself may be saved. Observe, Those who hold the foundation of Christianity, though they build hay, wood, and stubble, upon it, may be saved. This may help to enlarge our charity. We should not reprobate men for their weakness: for nothing will damn men but wickedness. He shall be saved, yet so as by fire, saved out of the fire. He himself shall be snatched out of that flame which will consume his work. This intimates that it will be difficult for those that corrupt and deprave Christianity to be saved. God will have no mercy on their works, though he may pluck them as brands out of the burning.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss:
but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of
God dwelleth in you?

Dwelleth in you. As God dwelt formerly in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, so his Spirit now dwells among Christians. This cannot mean

(1.) that the Holy Spirit is personally united to Christians, so as to form a personal union; or

(2.) that there is to Christians any communication of his nature or personal qualities; or

(3.) that there is any union of essence or nature with them, for God is present in all places, and can, as God, be no more present at one place than at another. The only sense in which he can be peculiarly present in any place is by his influence, or agency. And the idea is one which denotes agency, influence, favour, peculiar regard; and in that sense only can he be present with his church, The expression must mean,

(a.) that the church is the seat of his operations, the field or abode on which he acts on earth;

(b.) that his influences are there, producing the appropriate effects of his agency, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering," etc., Gal 5:22,23;

(c.) that he produces there consolations, that he sustains and guides his people;

(d.) that they are regarded as dedicated or consecrated to him;

(e.) that they are especially dear to him--that he loves them, and thus makes his abode with them. Jn 14:23.

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy;
for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

It looks from other parts of the epistle, where the apostle argues to the very same purport (see 1Co 6:13-20), as if the false teachers among the Corinthians were not only loose livers, but taught licentious doctrines, and what was particularly fitted to the taste of this lewd city, on the head of fornication. Such doctrine was not to be reckoned among hay and stubble, which would be consumed while the person who laid them on the foundation escaped the burning; for it tended to corrupt, to pollute, and destroy the church, which was a building erected for God, and consecrated to him, and therefore should be kept pure and holy. Those who spread principles of this sort would provoke God to destroy them. Note, Those who spread loose principles, that have a direct tendency to pollute the church of God, and render it unholy and unclean, are likely to bring destruction on themselves. It may be understood also as an argument against their discord and factious strifes, division being the way to destruction. But what I have been mentioning seems to be the proper meaning of the passage: Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? It may be understood of the church of Corinth collectively, or of every single believer among them; Christian churches are temples of God. He dwells among them by his Holy Spirit. They are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph 2:22. Every Christian is a living temple of the living God. God dwelt in the Jewish temple, took possession of it, and resided in it, by that glorious cloud that was the token of his presence with that people. So Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. The temple was devoted and consecrated to God, and set apart from every common to a holy use, to the immediate service of God. So all Christians are separated from common uses, and set apart for God and his service. They are sacred to him--a very good argument this against all fleshly lusts, and all doctrines that give countenance to them. If we are the temples of God, we must do nothing that shall alienate ourselves from him, or corrupt and pollute ourselves, and thereby unfit ourselves for his use; and we must hearken to no doctrine nor doctor that would seduce us to any such practices. Note, Christians are holy by profession, and should

be pure and clean both in heart and conversation. We should heartily abhor, and carefully avoid, what will defile God's temple, and prostitute what ought to be sacred to him.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

Do not be led away from the truth and simplicity of the gospel by pretenders to science and eloquence, by a show of deep learning, or a flourish of words, by rabbis, orators, or philosophers." Note, We are in great danger of deceiving ourselves when we have too high an opinion of human wisdom and arts; plain and pure Christianity will be likely to be despised by those who can suit their doctrines to the corrupt taste of their hearers, and set them off with fine language, or support them with a show of deep and strong reasoning. But he who seems to be wise must become a fool that he may be wise. He must be sensible of his own ignorance, and lament it; he must distrust his own understanding, and not lean on it. To have a high opinion of our wisdom is but to flatter ourselves, and self-flattery is the very next step to self-deceit. The way to true wisdom is to sink our opinion of our own to a due level, and be willing to be taught of God. He must become a fool who would be truly and thoroughly wise. The person who resigns his own understanding, that he may follow the instruction of God, is in the way to true and everlasting wisdom. The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way, Ps 25:9. He that has a low opinion of his own knowledge and powers will submit to better information; such a person may be informed and improved by revelation: but the proud man, conceited of his own wisdom and understanding, will undertake to correct even divine wisdom itself, and prefer his own shallow reasonings to the revelations of infallible truth and wisdom.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

Let him become a

(1.) Let him be willing to be regarded as a fool.

(2.) Let him sincerely embrace this gospel, which will inevitably expose him to the charge of being a fool.

(3.) Let all his earthly wisdom be esteemed in his own eyes as valueless and as folly in the great matters of salvation. That he may be wise. That he may have true wisdom--that which is of God. It is implied here,

(a.) that the wisdom of this world will not make a man truly wise.

(b.) That a reputation for wisdom may contribute nothing to a man's true wisdom, but may stand in the way of it.

(c.) That for such a man to embrace the gospel, it is necessary that he should be willing to cast away dependence on his own wisdom, and come with the temper of a child to the Saviour.

(d.) That to do this will expose him to the charge of folly, and the derision of those who are wise in their own conceit.

(e.) That true wisdom is found only in that science which teaches men to live unto God, and to be prepared for death and for heaven--and that science is found only in the gospel.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

21 Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours;

Life is yours, that you may have season and opportunity to prepare for the life of heaven; and death is yours, that you may go to the possession of it. It is the kind messenger that will fetch you to your Father's house. Things present are yours, for your support on the road; things to come are yours, to enrich and regale you for ever at your journey's end." Note, If we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. All is ours, time and eternity, earth and heaven, life and death. We shall want no good thing, Ps 84:11. But it must be remembered, at the same time, that

we are Christ's, the subjects of his kingdom, his property. He is Lord over us, and we must own his dominion, and cheerfully submit to his command and yield themselves to his pleasure, if we would have all things minister to our advantage. All things are ours, upon no other ground than our being Christ's. Out of him we are without just title or claim to any thing that is good.

Note, Those that would be safe for time, and happy to eternity, must be Christ's. And Christ is God's. He is the Christ of God, anointed of God, and commissioned by him, to bear the office of a Mediator, and to act therein for the purposes of his glory. Note, All things are the believer's, that Christ might have honour in his great undertaking, and God in all might have the glory. God in Christ reconciling a sinful world to himself, and shedding abroad the riches of his grace on a reconciled world, is the sum and substance of the gospel.

22 whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or
death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;
23 and ye are Christ's; and Christ *is* God's.

1 Corinthians-4

The Ministry of the Apostles

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ,
and stewards of the mysteries of God.

In our opinion of ministers, as well as all other things, we should be careful to avoid extremes. Apostles themselves were,

1. Not to be overvalued, for they were ministers, not masters; stewards, not lords. They were servants of Christ, and no more, though they were servants of the highest rank, that had the care of his household, that were to provide food for the rest, and appoint and direct their work.

Note, It is a very great abuse of their power, and highly criminal in common ministers, to lord it over their fellow-servants, and challenge authority over their faith or practice. For even apostles were but servants of Christ, employed in his work, and sent on his errand, and dispensers of the mysteries of God, or those truths which had been hidden from the world in ages and generations past. They had no authority to propagate their own fancies, but to spread Christian faith.

2. Apostles were not to be undervalued; for, though they were ministers, they were ministers of Christ. The character and dignity of their master put an honour on them. Though they are but stewards, they are not stewards of the common things of the world, but of divine mysteries. They had a great trust, and for that reason had an honourable office. They were stewards of God's household, high-stewards in his kingdom of grace. They did not set up for masters, but they deserved respect and esteem in this honourable service.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

Note, The ministers of Christ should make it their hearty and continual endeavour to approve themselves trustworthy; and when they have the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of their Master, they must slight the opinions and censures of their fellow-servants: But with me, saith the apostle, it is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment, 1Co 4:3. Indeed, reputation and esteem among men are a good step towards usefulness in the ministry; and Paul's whole argument upon this head shows he had a just concern for his own reputation. But he that would make it his chief endeavour to please men would hardly approve himself a faithful servant of Christ, Ga 1:10. He that would be faithful to Christ must despise the censures of men for his sake. He must look upon it as a very little thing (if his Lord approves him) what judgment men form of him. They may think very meanly or very hardly of him, while he is doing his duty; but it is not by their

judgment that he must stand or fall. And happy is it for faithful ministers that they have a more just and candid judge than their fellow-servants; one who knows and pities their imperfections, though he has none of his own. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men, 2Sa 24:14. The best of men are too apt to judge rashly, and harshly, and unjustly; but his judgment is always according to truth. It is a comfort that men are not to be our final judges. Nay, we are not thus to judge ourselves:Note, It is not judging well of ourselves, justifying ourselves, that will prove us safe and happy. Nothing will do this but the acceptance and approbation of our sovereign Judge. Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth, 2Co 10:18.

I judge not mine own self. I do not attempt to pronounce a judgment on myself. I am conscious of imperfection, and of being biased by self-love in my own favour. I do not feel that my judgment of myself would be strictly impartial, and in all respects to be trusted. Favourable as may be my opinion, yet I am sensible that I may be biased. This is designed to soften what he had just said about their judging him, and to show further the little value which is to be put on the judgment which man may form. "If I do not regard my own opinion of myself as of high value, I cannot be suspected of undervaluing you when I say that I do not much regard your opinion; and if I do not estimate highly my own opinion of myself, then it is not to be expected that I should set a high value on the opinions of others." God only is the infallible Judge; and as we and our fellow-men are liable to be biased in our opinions, from envy, ignorance, or self-love, we should regard the judgment of the world as of little value.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified:
but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come,
who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and
will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall
every man have praise of God.

It is judging out of season, and judging at an adventure. He is not to be understood of judging by persons in authority, within the verge

of their office, nor of private judging concerning facts that are notorious; but of judging persons' future state, or the secret springs and principles of their actions, or about facts doubtful in themselves. To judge in these cases, and give decisive sentence, is to assume the seat of God and challenge his prerogative. Note, How bold a sinner is the forward and severe censurer! How ill-timed and arrogant are his censures! But there is one who will judge the censurer, and those he censures, without prejudice, passion, or partiality. And there is a time coming when men cannot fail judging aright concerning themselves and others, by following his judgment. This should make them now cautious of judging others, and careful in judging themselves. There is a time coming when the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts--deeds of darkness that are now done in secret, and all the secret inclinations, purposes, and intentions, of the hidden man of the heart. Note, There is a day coming that will dispel the darkness and lay open the face of the deep, will fetch men's secret sins into open day and discover the secrets of their hearts: The day shall declare it. The judge will bring these things to light. The Lord Jesus Christ will manifest the counsels of the heart, of all hearts. Note, The Lord Jesus Christ must have the knowledge of the counsels of the heart, else he could not make them manifest. This is a divine prerogative (Jer 17:10), and yet it is what our Saviour challenges to himself in a very peculiar manner (Re 2:23): All the churches shall know that I am HE who searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works. Note, We should be very careful how we censure others, when we have to do with a Judge from whom we cannot conceal ourselves. Others do not lie open to our notice, but we lie all open to his: and, when he shall come to judge, every man shall have praise of God. Every man, that is, every one qualified for it, every one who has done well. Though none of God's servants can deserve any thing from him, though there be much that is blamable even in their best services, yet shall their fidelity be commended and crowned by him; and should they be condemned, reproached, or vilified, by their fellow-servants, he will roll away all such unjust censures and reproaches, and show them in their own amiable light. Note, Christians may well be patient under unjust censures, when

they know such a day as this is coming, especially when they have their consciences testifying to their integrity. But how fearful should they be of loading any with reproaches now whom their common Judge shall hereafter commend.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and *to* Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not
to think *of men* above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

The apostle here lets us into the reason why he had used his own name and that of Apollos in this discourse of his. He had done it in a figure, and he had done it for their sakes. He chose rather to mention his own name, and the name of a faithful fellow-labourer, than the names of any heads of factions among them, that hereby he might avoid what would provoke, and so procure for his advice the greater regard. Note, Ministers should use prudence in their advices and admonitions, but especially in their reproofs, lest they lose their end. The advice the apostle would by this means inculcate was that they might learn not to think of men above what is written (above what he had been writing), nor be puffed up for one against another (1Co 4:6). common ministers cannot bear these characters in the same sense that apostles did. Note, We must be very careful not to transfer the honour and authority of the Master to his servant. We must call no man Master on earth; one is our Master, even Christ, Mt 23:8,10. We must not think of them above what is written.

Note, The word of God is the best rule by which to judge concerning men. And again, judging rightly concerning men, and not judging more highly of them than is fit, is one way to prevent quarrels and contentions in the churches. Pride commonly lies at the bottom of these quarrels. Self-conceit contributes very much to our immoderate esteem of our teachers, as well as ourselves. Our commendation of our own taste and judgment commonly goes along with our unreasonable applause, and always with a factious adherence to one teacher, in opposition to others that may be equally faithful and well qualified. But to think modestly of ourselves, and not above what is written of our teachers, is the most

effectual means to prevent quarrels and contests, sidings and parties, in the church. We shall not be puffed up for one against another if we remember that they are all instruments employed by God in his husbandry and building, and endowed by him with their various talents and qualifications.

7 For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it,* why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*

He cautions them against pride and self-conceit by this consideration, that all the distinction made among them was owing to God: Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? 1Co 4:7. Here the apostle turns his discourse to the ministers who set themselves at the head of these factions, and did but too much encourage and abet the people in those feuds. What had they to glory in, when all their peculiar gifts were from God? They had received them, and could not glory in them as their own, without wronging God. At the time when they reflected on them to feed their vanity, they should have considered them as so many debts and obligations to divine bounty and grace. But it may be taken as a general maxim: We have no reason to be proud of our attainments, enjoyments, or performances; all that we have, or are, or do, that is good, is owing to the free and rich grace of God. Boasting is for ever excluded. There is nothing we have that we can properly call our own: all is received from God. It is foolish in us therefore, and injurious to him, to boast of it; those who receive all should be proud of nothing, Ps 115:1. Beggars and dependents may glory in their supports; but to glory in themselves is to be proud at once of meanness, impotence, and want. Note, Due attention to our obligations to divine grace would cure us of arrogance and self-conceit.Note, Those do not commonly know themselves best who think best of themselves, who have the highest opinion of themselves. The Corinthians might have reigned, and the apostle with them, if they had not been blown up with an imaginary royalty. Note, Pride is a great prejudice to our improvement. He is stopped from growing wiser or better who thinks himself at the height; not only full, but rich, nay, a king.

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.
9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

He comes to set forth his own circumstances and those of the other apostles, and compares them with theirs.

1. To set forth the case of the apostles: For I think it hath pleased God to set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. Paul and his fellow-apostles were exposed to great hardships. Never were any men in this world so hunted and worried. They carried their lives in their hands: God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death, 1Co 4:9. An allusion is made to some of the bloody spectacles in the Roman amphitheatres, where men were exposed to fight with wild beasts, or to cut one another to pieces, to make diversion for the populace, where the victor did not escape with his life, though he should destroy his adversary, but was only reserved for another combat, and must be devoured or cut in pieces at last; so that such wretched criminals (for they were ordinarily condemned persons that were thus exposed) might very properly be called epithanatioi--persons devoted or appointed to death. They are said to be set forth last, because the meridian gladiators, those who combated one another in the after-part of the day, were most exposed, being obliged to fight naked; so that (as Seneca says, epist. 7) this was perfect butchery, and those exposed to beasts in the morning were treated mercifully in comparison with these. The general meaning is that the apostles were exposed to continual danger of death, and that of the worst kinds, in the faithful discharge of their office. God had set them forth, brought them into view, as the Roman emperors brought their combatants into the arena, the place of show, though not for the same purposes. They did it to please the populace, and humour their own vanity, and sometimes a much worse principle. The apostles were shown to manifest the power of divine grace, to confirm the truth of their mission and doctrine, and to propagate religion in the world. These

were ends worthy of God--noble views, fit to animate them to the combat.

But they had like difficulties to encounter, and were in a manner as much exposed as these miserable Roman criminals. Note, The office of an apostle was, as an honourable, so a hard and hazardous one: "For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men, 1Co 4:9. A show. We are brought into the theatre, brought out to the public view of the world. Angels and men are witnesses to our persecutions, sufferings, patience, and magnanimity. They all see that we suffer for our fidelity to Christ, and how we suffer; how great and imminent are our dangers, and how bravely we encounter them; how sharp our sufferings, and how patiently we endure them, by the power of divine grace and our Christian principles. Ours is hard work, but honourable; it is hazardous, but glorious. God will have honour from us, religion will be credited by us. The world cannot but see and wonder at our undaunted resolution, our invincible patience and constancy." And how contentedly could they be exposed, both to sufferings and scorn, for the honour of their Master! Note, The faithful ministers and disciples of Christ should contentedly undergo any thing for his sake and honour. 2. He compares his own case with that of the Corinthians: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honourable, but we are despised, 1Co 4:10. We are fools for Christ's sake; such in common account, and we are well content to be so accounted. We can pass for fools in the world, and be despised as such, so that the wisdom of God and the honour of the gospel may by this means be secured and displayed."

Note, Faithful ministers can bear being despised, so that the wisdom of God and the power of his grace be thereby displayed. "But you are wise in Christ. You have the fame of being wise and learned Christians, and you do not a little value yourselves upon it. We are under disgrace for delivering the plain truths of the gospel, and in as plain a manner: you are in reputation for your eloquence and human wisdom, which among many make you pass for wise men in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. We are

suffering for Christ's sake" (so being weak plainly signifies, 2Co 12:10), "when you are in easy and flourishing circumstances." Note, All Christians are not alike exposed. Some suffer greater hardships than others who are yet engaged in the same warfare. The standard-bearers in an army are most struck at. So ministers in a time of persecution are commonly the first and greatest sufferers. Or else, "We pass upon the world for persons of but mean endowments, mere striplings in Christianity; but you look upon yourselves, and are looked upon by others, as men, as those of a much more advanced growth and confirmed strength." Note, Those are not always the greatest proficients in Christianity who think thus of themselves, or pass for such upon others. It is but too easy and common for self-love to commit such a mistake. The Corinthians may think themselves, and be esteemed by others, as wiser and stronger men in Christ than the apostles themselves. But O! how gross is the mistake!

10 We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honorable, but we *are* despised.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;

They were driven about the world, without having any fixed abode, any stated habitation. Poor circumstances indeed, for the prime ministers of our Saviour's kingdom to have no house nor home, and to be destitute of food and raiment! But yet no poorer than his who had not where to lay his head, Lu 9:58. But O glorious charity and devotion, that would carry them through all these hardships! How ardently did they love God, how vehemently did they thirst for the salvation of souls! Theirs was voluntary, it was pleasing poverty. They thought they had a rich amends for all the outward good things they wanted, if they might but serve Christ and save souls.

12 and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless;

being persecuted, we suffer it:

They were treated as men not fit to live, perikatharmata. It is reasonably thought by the critics that an allusion is here made to a common custom of many heathen nations, to offer men in sacrifice in a time of pestilence, or other like grievous calamity. These were

ordinarily the vilest of men, persons of the lowest rank and worst character. Thus, in the first ages, Christians were counted the source of all public calamities, and were sacrificed to the people's rage, if not to appease their angry deities. And apostles could not meet with better usage. They suffered in their persons and characters as the very worst and vilest men, as the most proper to make such a sacrifice: or else as the very dirt of the world, that was to be swept away: nay, as the off-scouring of all things, the dross, the filings of all things. They were the common-sewer into which all the reproaches of the world were to be poured. To be the off-scouring of any thing is bad, but what is it to be the off-scouring of all things! How much did the apostles resemble their Master, and fill up that which was behind of his afflictions, for his body's sake, which is the church! Col 1:24. They suffered for him, and they suffered after his example. Thus poor and despised was he in his life and ministry. And every one who would be faithful in Christ Jesus must prepare for the same poverty and contempt. Note, Those may be very dear to God, and honourable in his esteem, whom men may think unworthy to live, and use and scorn as the very dirt and refuse of the world. God seeth not as man seeth, 1Sa 16:7.

Note, The disciples of Christ, and especially his ministers, should hold fast their integrity, and keep a good conscience, whatever opposition of hardships they meet with from the world. Whatever they suffer from men, they must follow the example, and fulfil the will and precepts, of their Lord. They must be content, with him and for him, to be despised and abused.

13 being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world,
and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.
14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn *you.*
15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.
16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.
17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring

you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and *in* the spirit of meekness?

He puts it to their choice how he should come among them, whether with a rod or in love and the spirit of meekness (1Co 4:21); that is, according as they were they would find him. If they continued perverse among themselves and with him, it would be necessary to come with a rod; that is, to exert his apostolical power in chastising them, by making some examples, and inflicting some diseases and corporal punishments, or by other censures for their faults. Note, Stubborn offenders must be used with severity. In families, in Christian communities, paternal pity and tenderness, Christian love and compassion, will sometimes force the use of the rod. But this is far from being desirable, if it may be prevented. And therefore the apostle adds that it was in their own option whether he should come with a rod or in a quite different disposition and manner: Or in love and the spirit of meekness. As much as if he had said, "Take warning, cease your unchristian feuds, rectify the abuses among you, and return to your duty, and you shall find me as gentle and benign as you can with. It will be a force upon my inclination to proceed with severity. I had rather come and display the tenderness of a father among you than assert his authority. Do but your duty, and you have no reason to avoid my presence." Note, It is a happy temper in a minister to have the spirit of love and meekness predominant, and yet to maintain his just authority.

1 Corinthians-5

Judgment of Immorality

1 It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

This chapter is entirely occupied with a notice of an offence which existed in the church at Corinth, and with a statement of the measures which the apostle expected them to pursue in regard to it. Of the existence of this offence he had been informed, probably by "those of the house of Chloe," 1Cor 1:11, and there is reason to suppose that they had not even alluded to it in the letter which they had sent to him asking advice. See 1Cor 7:1.

That one should have. Probably as his wife; or it may mean simply that he had criminal intercourse with her. Perhaps some man had parted with his wife, on some account, and his Son had married her, or maintained her for criminal intercourse. It is evident from 2Cor 7:12, that the person who had suffered the wrong, as well as he who had done it, was still alive. Whether this was marriage or concubinage has been disputed by commentators, and it is not possible, perhaps, to determine.

It was told in all places, to their dishonour, and the reproach of Christians. And it was the more reproachful because it could not be denied. Note, The heinous sins of professed Christians are quickly noted and noised abroad. We should walk circumspectly, for many eyes are upon us, and many mouths will be opened against us if we fall into any scandalous practice. This was not a common instance of fornication, but such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles, that a man should have his father's wife--either marry her while his father was alive, or keep her as his concubine, either when he was dead or while he was alive. In either of these cases, his criminal conversation with her might be called fornication; but had his father been dead, and he, after his

decease, married to her, it had been incest still, but neither fornication nor adultery in the strictest sense. But to marry her, or keep her as a concubine, while his father was alive, though he had repudiated her, or she had deserted him, whether she were his own mother or not, was incestuous fornication: Scelus incredibile (as Cicero calls it), et prater unum in omni vitâ inauditum (Orat. pro Cluent.), when a woman had caused her daughter to be put away, and was married to her husband. Incredible wickedness! says the orator; such I never heard of in all my life besides. Not that there were no such instances of incestuous marriages among the heathens; but, whenever they happened, they gave a shock to every man of virtue and probity among them. They could not think of them without horror, nor mention them without dislike and detestation. The crime was known in a few instances, but chiefly of those who were princes and rulers; but it was nowhere regarded with approbation, but was always treated as abominable wickedness. Yet such a horrible wickedness was committed by one in the church of Corinth, and, as is probable, a leader of one of the factions among them, a principal man.

Note, The best churches are, in this state of imperfection, liable to very great corruptions. Is it any wonder when so horrible a practice was tolerated in an apostolical church, a church planted by the great apostle of the Gentiles?

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

1. It may be that the proud man either wholly overlooks or artfully disguises his faults, or endeavours to transform his blemishes into beauties. Those of the Corinthians that were admirers of the incestuous person's gifts could overlook or extenuate his horrid practices.

2. It may intimate to us that some of the opposite party were puffed up. They were proud of their own standing, and trampled upon him that fell. Note, It is a very wicked thing to glory over the miscarriages and sins of others. We should lay them to heart, and

mourn for them, not be puffed up with them. Probably this was one effect of the divisions among them. The opposite party made their advantage of this scandalous lapse, and were glad of the opportunity.

Note, It is a sad consequence of divisions among Christians that it makes them apt to rejoice in iniquity. The sins of others should be our sorrow. Nay, churches should mourn for the scandalous behaviour of particular members, and, if they be incorrigible, should remove them. He that had done this wicked deed should have been taken away from among them.

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed,

4 in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

This is the great doctrine of the gospel. The Jews, after they had killed the passover, kept the feast of unleavened bread. So must we; not for seven days only, but all our days. We should die with our Saviour to sin, be planted into the likeness of his death by mortifying sin, and into the likeness of his resurrection by rising again to newness of life, and that internal and external. We must have new hearts and new lives.

Note, The whole life of a Christian must be a feast of unleavened bread. His common conversation and his religious performances must be holy. He must purge out the old leaven, and keep the feast of unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. He must be without

guilt in his conduct towards God and man. And the more there is of sincerity in our own profession, the less shall we censure that of others. Note, On the whole, The sacrifice of our Redeemer is the strongest argument with a gracious heart for purity and sincerity. How sincere a regard did he show to our welfare, in dying for us! and how terrible a proof was his death of the detestable nature of sin, and God's displeasure against it! Heinous evil, that could not be expiated but with the blood of the Son of God! And shall a Christian love the murderer of his Lord? God forbid.

Note, 1. Christian churches should be pure and holy, and not bear such corrupt and scandalous members. They are to be unleavened, and should endure no such heterogeneous mixture to sour and corrupt them. Or,

2. To each particular member of the church. And so it implies that they should purge themselves from all impurity of heart and life, especially from this kind of wickedness, to which the Corinthians were addicted to a proverb. See the argument at the beginning. This old leaven was in a particular manner to be purged out, that they might become a new lump. Note, Christians should be careful to keep themselves clean, as well as purge polluted members out of their society. And they should especially avoid the sins to which they themselves were once most addicted, and the reigning vices of the places and the people where they live.

8 therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

They were also to purge themselves from malice and wickedness--all ill-will and mischievous subtlety. This is leaven that sours the mind to a great degree. It is not improbable that this was intended as a check to some who gloried in the scandalous behaviour of the offender, both out of pride and pique. Note, Christians should be careful to keep free from malice and mischief. Love is the very essence and life of the Christian religion. It is the fairest image of God, for God is love (1Jo 4:16), and therefore it is no wonder if it be the greatest beauty and ornament of a Christian. But malice is

murder in its principles: He that hates his brother is a murderer (1Jo 3:15), he bears the image and proclaims him the offspring of him who was a murderer from the beginning, Joh 8:44. How hateful should every thing be to a Christian that looks like malice and mischief.

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:
10 yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.
11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not to eat.
12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?
13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Note, Christians may and ought to testify more respect to loose worldlings than to loose Christians. This seems a paradox. Why should we shun the company of a profane or loose Christian, rather than that of a profane or loose heathen? But, as to members of the church, they are within, are professedly bound by the laws and rules of Christianity, and not only liable to the judgment of God, but to the censures of those who are set over them, and the fellow-members of the same body, when they transgress those rules. Every Christian is bound to judge them unfit for communion and familiar converse. They are to be punished, by having this mark of disgrace put upon them, that they may be shamed, and, if possible, reclaimed thereby: and the more because the sins of such much more dishonour God than the sins of the openly wicked and profane can do. The church therefore is obliged to clear herself from all confederacy with them, or connivance at them, and to bear testimony against their wicked practices. Note, Though the church has nothing to do with those without, it must endeavour to keep clear of the guilt and reproach of those within.

1 Corinthians-6

Going to Law before Unbelievers

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law
before the unjust, and not before the saints?
2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if
the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the
smallest matters?
3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more
things that pertain to this life?
4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set
them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.
5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man
among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between
his brethren?
6 but brother goeth to law with brother, and that
before the unbelievers.

The fault he blames them for: it was going to law. Not but that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully. But,

1. Brother went to law with brother (1Co 6:6), one member of the church with another. The near relation could not preserve peace and good understanding. The bonds of fraternal love were broken through. And a brother offended, as Solomon says, is harder to be won than a strong city; their contentions are like the bars of a castle, Pr 18:19. Note, Christians should not contend with one another, for they are brethren. This, duly attended to, would prevent law-suits, and put an end to quarrels and litigations.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go
to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong?
Why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves to* be defrauded?

This tended much to the reproach of Christianity. It published at once their folly and unpeaceableness; whereas they pretended to be the children of wisdom, and the followers of the Lamb, the meek and lowly Jesus, the prince of peace. And therefore, says the apostle, "Dare any of you, having a controversy with another,

go to law, implead him, bring the matter to a hearing before the unjust?" Note, Christians should not dare to do any thing that tends to the reproach of their Christian name and profession.

Here is at least an intimation that they went to law for trivial matters, things of little value; for the apostle blames them that they did not suffer wrong rather than go to law (1Co 6:7), which must be understood of matters not very important. In matters of great damage to ourselves or families, we may use lawful means to right ourselves. We are not bound to sit down and suffer the injury tamely, without stirring for our own relief; but, in matters of small consequence, it is better to put up with the wrong. Christians should be of a forgiving temper. And it is more for their ease and honour to suffer small injuries and inconveniences than seem to be contentious.

Note, A Christian should rather put up with a little injury than tease himself, and provoke others, by a litigious contest. The peace of his own mind, and the calm of his neighbourhood, are more worth than victory in such a contest, or reclaiming his own right, especially when the quarrel must be decided by those who are enemies to religion. But the apostle tells them they were so far from bearing injuries that they actually did wrong, and defrauded, and that their brethren. Note, It is utterly a fault to wrong and defraud any; but it is an aggravation of this fault to defraud our Christian brethren. The ties of mutual love ought to be stronger between them than between others. And love worketh no ill to his neighbour, Ro 13:10. Those who love the brotherhood can never, under the influence of this principle, hurt or injure them.

The argument is, that greater evil would be done to the cause of Christ by the fact of Christians appearing before a heathen tribunal with their disputes, than could result to either party from the injury done by the other. And this is probably always the case; so that although the apostle refers here to heathen tribunals, the

same reasoning, on the principle, would apply to Christians carrying their causes into the courts at all.

Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do you not suffer yourself to be injured, rather than to dishonour the cause of religion by your litigations? They should do this,

(1.) because religion requires its friends to be willing to suffer wrong patiently, Prov 22:22, Mt 5:39,40, Rom 12:17,19, 1Thes 5:15.

(2.) Because great injury results to the cause of religion from such trials. The private wrong which an individual would suffer, in perhaps all cases, would be a less evil on the whole than the public injury which is done to the cause of piety by the litigations and strifes of Christian brethren before a civil court.

(3.) The differences among Christians could be adjusted among themselves, by a reference to their brethren. In ninety-nine cases of a hundred, the decision would be more likely to be just and satisfactory to all parties from an amicable reference, than from the decisions of a civil court. In the very few cases where it would be otherwise, it would be better for the individual to suffer, than for the cause of religion to suffer. Christians ought to love the cause of their Master more than their own individual interest. They ought to be more afraid that the cause of Jesus Christ would be injured than that they should be a few pounds poorer from the conduct of others, or than that they should individually suffer in their character from the injustice of others. To be defrauded? Receive injury; or suffer a loss of property. Grotius thinks that the word "take wrong" refers to personal insult; and the word "defrauded" refers to injury in property. Together, they are probably designed to refer to all kinds of injury and injustice. And the apostle means to say, that they had better submit to any kind of injustice than carry the cause against a Christian brother before a heathen tribunal. The doctrine here taught is, that Christians ought by no means to go to law with each other before a heathen

tribunal; that they ought to be willing to suffer any injury from a Christian brother rather than do it. And by implication the same thing is taught in regard to the duty of all Christians, that they ought to suffer any injury to their persons and property rather than dishonour religion by litigations before civil magistrates. It may be asked, then, whether lawsuits are never proper; or whether courts of justice are never to be resorted to by Christians to secure their rights? To this question we may reply, that the discussion of Paul relates only to Christians, when both parties are Christians, and that it is designed to prohibit such an appeal to courts by them. If ever lawful for Christians to depart from this rule, or for Christians to appear before a civil tribunal, it is conceived that it can be only in circumstances like the following:

(a.) Where two or more Christians may have a difference, and where they know not what is right, and what the law is in a case. In such instances there may be a reference to a civil court to determine it-- to have what is called an amicable suit, to ascertain from the proper authority what the law is, and what is justice in the case.

(b.) When there are causes of difference between Christians and the men of the world. As the men of the world do not acknowledge the propriety of submitting the matter to the church, it may be proper for a Christian to carry the matter before a civil tribunal, Evidently, there is no other way, in such cases, of settling a cause; and this mode may be resorted to, not with a spirit of revenge, but with a spirit of love and kindness. Courts are instituted for the settlement of the rights of citizens, and men by becoming Christians do not alienate their rights as citizens. Even these cases, however, might commonly be adjusted by a reference to impartial men, better than by the slow, and expensive, and tedious, and often irritating process of carrying a cause through the courts.

(c.) Where a Christian is injured in his person, character, or property, he has a right to seek redress. Courts are instituted for

the protection and defence of the innocent and the peaceable against the fraudulent, the wicked, and the violent. And a Christian owes it to his country, to his family, and to himself, that the man who has injured him should receive the proper punishment. The peace and welfare of the community demand it. If a man murders my wife or child, I owe it to the laws and to my Country, to justice and to God, to endeavour to have the law enforced. So if a man robs my property, or injures my character, I may owe it to others as well as to myself that the law in such a case should be executed, and the rights of others also be secured. But in all these cases a Christian should engage in such prosecutions, not with a desire of revenge, not with the love of litigation, but with the love of justice, and of God, and with a mild, tender, candid, and forgiving temper, with a real desire that the opponent may be benefited, and that all his rights also should be secured. Rom 13:1 and following.

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Be not deceived. Those who cannot but know the fore-mentioned truth are but too apt not to attend to it. Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves that God is such a one as themselves, and that they may live in sin and yet die in Christ, may lead the life of the devil's children and yet go to heaven with the children of God. But this is all a gross cheat. Note, It is very much the concern of mankind that they do not cheat themselves in the matters of their souls. We cannot hope to sow to the flesh and yet reap everlasting life.

10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

He puts them in mind what a change the gospel and grace of God had made in them: Such were some of you (1Co 6:11), such notorious sinners as he had been reckoning up. The Greek word

is tauta--such things were some of you, very monsters rather than men. Note, Some that are eminently good after their conversion have been as remarkably wicked before. Quantum mutatus ab illo!--How glorious a change does grace make! It changes the vilest of men into saints and the children of God. Such were some of you, but you are not what you were. You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. Note, The wickedness of men before conversion is no bar to their regeneration and reconciliation to God. The blood of Christ, and the washing of regeneration, can purge away all guilt and defilement. Here is a rhetorical change of the natural order: You are sanctified, you are justified. Sanctification is mentioned before justification: and yet the name of Christ, by which we are justified, is placed before the Spirit of God, by whom we are sanctified. Our justification is owing to the merit of Christ; our sanctification to the operation of the Spirit: but both go together. Note, None are cleansed from the guilt of sin, and reconciled to God through Christ, but those who are also sanctified by his Spirit. All who are made righteous in the sight of God are made holy by the grace of God.

ye are washed. Heb 10:22. Washing is an emblem of purifying. They had been made pure by the Spirit of God. They had been indeed baptized, and their baptism was an emblem of purifying; but the thing here particularly referred to is not baptism, but it is something that had been done by the Spirit of God, and must refer to his agency on the heart in cleansing them from these pollutions. Paul here uses three words--washed, sanctified, justified--to denote the various agencies of the Holy Spirit by which they had been recovered from sin. The first, that of washing, I understand of that work of the Spirit by which the process of purifying was commenced in the soul, and which was especially signified in baptism--the work of regeneration or conversion to God. By the agency of the Spirit, the defilement of these pollutions had been washed away or removed--as filth is removed by ablution. The agency of the Holy Ghost in regeneration is elsewhere represented by washing. Tit 3:5, "The washing of regeneration." Compare Heb 10:22.

Ye are sanctified. This denotes the progressive and advancing process of purifying which succeeds regeneration in the Christian. Regeneration is the commencement of it--its close is the perfect purity of the Christian in heaven. Jn 17:17. It does not mean that they were perfect--for the reasoning of the apostle shows that this was far from being the case with the Corinthians; but that the work was advancing, and that they were in fact under a process of sanctification.

ye are justified. Your sins are pardoned, and you are accepted as righteous, and will be treated as such on account of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 1:17"; Rom 3:25, Rom 3:26; Rom 4:3. The apostle does not say that this was last in the order of time, but simply says that this was done to them. Men are justified when they believe, and when the work of sanctification commences in the soul.

Glorify God in Your Body

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

The Lord is for the body, thus: He is for its resurrection and glorification, according to what follows, 1Co 6:14, which is a second argument against this sin, the honour intended to be put on our bodies: God hath both raised up our Lord, and will raise us up by his power (1Co 6:14), by the power of him who shall change our vile body, and make it like to his glorious body by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, Php 3:21. It is an honour done to the body that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead: and it will be an honour to our bodies that they will be raised. Let us not abuse those bodies by sin, and make them vile, which, if they be kept pure, shall, notwithstanding their

present vileness, be made like to Christ's glorious body. Note, The hopes of a resurrection to glory should restrain Christians from dishonouring their bodies by fleshly lusts.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of a harlot? God forbid.

Note, We must take care that we do not use what belongs to Christ as if it were our own, and much less to his dishonour.

16 What! know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body?
for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

Nothing can stand in greater opposition to the honourable relations and alliances of a Christian man than this sin. He is joined to the Lord in union with Christ, and made partaker by faith of his Spirit. One spirit lives and breathes and moves in the head and members. Christ and his faithful disciples are one, Joh 17:21,22. But he that is joined to a harlot is one body, for two shall be one flesh, by carnal conjunction, which was ordained of God only to be in a married state. Now shall one in so close a union with Christ as to be one spirit with him yet be so united to a harlot as to become one flesh with her? Were not this a vile attempt to make a union between Christ and harlots? And can a greater indignity he offered to him or ourselves? Can any thing be more inconsistent with our profession or relation? Note, The sin of fornication is a great injury in a Christian to his head and lord, and a great reproach and blot on his profession. It is no wonder therefore that the apostle should say, "Flee fornication (1Co 6:18), avoid it, keep out of the reach of temptations to it, of provoking objects. Direct the eyes and mind to other things and thoughts." Alia vitia pugnando, sola libido fugiendo vincitur--Other vices may be conquered in fight, this only by flight; so speak many of the fathers.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body;

but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Note, We should not make our present vile bodies more vile by sinning against them.

19 What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

The fifth argument against this sin is that the bodies of Christians are the temples of the Holy Ghost which is in them, and which they have of God, 1Co 6:19. He that is joined to Christ is one spirit. He is yielded up to him, is consecrated thereby, and set apart for his use, and is hereupon possessed, and occupied, and inhabited, by his Holy Spirit. This is the proper notion of a temple--a place where God dwells, and sacred to his use, by his own claim and his creature's surrender. Such temples real Christians are of the Holy Ghost. Must he not therefore be God? But the inference is plain that hence we are not our own. We are yielded up to God, and possessed by and for God; nay, and this is virtue of a purchase made of us: You are bought with a price. In short, our bodies were made for God, they were purchased for him. If we are Christians indeed they are yielded to him, and he inhabits and occupies them by his Spirit: so that our bodies are not our own, but his. And shall we desecrate his temple, defile it, prostitute it, and offer it up to the use and service of a harlot? Horrid sacrilege! This is robbing God in the worst sense. Note, The temple of the Holy Ghost must be kept holy. Our bodies must be kept as his whose they are, and fit for his use and residence.

The apostle argues from the obligation we are under to glorify God both with our body and spirit, which are his, 1Co 6:20. He made both, he bought both, and therefore both belong to him and should be used and employed for him, and therefore should not be defiled, alienated from him, and prostituted by us. No, they must be kept as vessels fitted for our Master's use. We must look upon our whole selves as holy to the Lord, and must use our bodies as property which belongs to him and is sacred to his use and service. We are to honour him with our bodies and spirits, which are his; and therefore, surely, must abstain from fornication; and not only from the outward act, but from the adultery of the heart, as our Lord

calls it, Mt 5:28. Body and spirit are to be kept clean, that God may be honoured by both. But God is dishonoured when either is defiled by so beastly a sin. Therefore flee fornication, nay, and every sin. Use your bodies for the glory and service of their Lord and Maker. Note, We are not proprietors of ourselves, nor have power over ourselves, and therefore should not use ourselves according to our own pleasure, but according to his will, and for his glory, whose we are, and whom we should serve, Ac 27:23.

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians-7

Problems concerning Marriage

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman.
2 Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.
3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.
4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.
5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.
6 But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment.
7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.
8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.
9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.
10 And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband:

In this paragraph the apostle gives them direction in a case which must be very frequent in that age of the world, especially among the Jewish converts; I mean whether they were to live with heathen relatives in a married state. Moses's law permitted divorce; and there was a famous instance in the Jewish state, when the people were obliged to put away their idolatrous wives, Ezr 10:3. This might move a scruple in many minds, whether converts to Christianity were not bound to put away or desert their mates, continuing infidels. Concerning this matter the apostle here gives direction. And,

In general, he tells them that marriage, by Christ's command, is for life; and therefore those who are married must not think of separation. The wife must not depart from the husband (1Co 7:10), nor the husband put away his wife, 1Co 7:11. This I command, says the apostle; yet not I, but the Lord. Not that he commanded any thing of his own head, or upon his own authority. Whatever he commanded was the Lord's command, dictated by his Spirit and enjoined by his authority. But his meaning is that the Lord himself, with his own mouth, had forbidden such separations, Mt 5:32,19:9,Mk 10:11,Lu 16:18. Note, Man and wife cannot separate at pleasure, nor dissolve, when they will, their matrimonial bonds and relation. They must not separate for any other cause than what Christ allows. And therefore the apostle advises that if any woman had been separated, either by a voluntary act of her own or by an act of her husband, she should continue unmarried, and seek reconciliation with her husband, that they might cohabit again. Note, Husbands and wives should not quarrel at all, or should be quickly reconciled. They are bound to each other for life. The divine law allows of no separation. They cannot throw off the burden, and therefore should set their shoulders to it, and endeavour to make it as light to each other as they can.

11 but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to
her husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.
13 And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.
14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.
15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases:* but God hath called us to peace.

But, though a believing wife or husband should not separate from an unbelieving mate, yet if the unbelieving relative desert the believer, and no means can reconcile to a cohabitation, in such a case a brother or sister is not in bondage (1Co 7:15),

16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?
17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

He lays down this rule in general--as God hath distributed to every one. Note, Our states and circumstances in this world are distributions of divine Providence. This fixes the bounds of men's habitations, and orders their steps. God setteth up and pulleth down. And again, As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. Whatever his circumstances or condition was when he was converted to Christianity, let him abide therein, and suit his conversation to it. The rules of Christianity reach every condition. And in every state a man may live so as to be a credit to it.

Note, It is the duty of every Christian to suit his behaviour to his condition and the rules of religion, to be content with his lot, and conduct himself in his rank and place as becomes a Christian. The apostle adds that this was a general rule, to be observed at all times and in all places; So ordain I in all churches.

Note, Our comfort and happiness depend on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world. The goodness of our outward condition does not discharge us from the duties of Christianity, nor the badness of it debar us from Christian privileges.

18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather.

22 For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant.

23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

The servants of Christ should be at the absolute command of no other master besides himself, should serve no man, any further than is consistent with their duty to him. No man can serve two masters.

24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

He sums up his advice: Let every man wherein he is called abide therein with God, 1Co 7:24. This is to be understood of the state wherein a man is converted to Christianity. No man should make his faith or religion an argument to break through any natural or civil obligations. He should quietly and comfortably abide in the condition in which he is; and this he may well do, when he may abide therein with God.

25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say*, that *it is* good for a man so to be.

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.
28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.
29 But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

He enforces these advices with two reasons:--

1. The time is short, 1Co 7:29. We have but little time to continue in this world; but a short season for possessing and enjoying worldly things; kairos synestalmenos. It is contracted, reduced to a narrow compass. It will soon be gone. It is just ready to be wrapped up in eternity. Therefore do not set your hearts on worldly enjoyments. Do not be overwhelmed with worldly cares and troubles. Possess what you must shortly leave without suffering yourselves to be possessed by it. Why should your hearts be much set on what you must quickly resign?

2. The fashion of this world passeth away (1Co 7:31), schema--the habit, figure, appearance, of the world, passeth away. It is daily changing countenance. It is in a continual flux. It is not so much a world as the appearance of one. All is show, nothing solid in it; and it is transient show too, and will quickly be gone. How proper and powerful an argument is this to enforce the former advice! How irrational is it to be affected with the images, the fading and transient images, of a dream! Surely man walketh in a vain show (Ps 39:6), in an image, amidst the faint and vanishing appearances of things. And should he be deeply affected, or grievously afflicted, with such a scene?

30 and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

He takes this occasion to give general rules to all Christians to carry themselves with a holy indifferency towards the world, and every thing in it.

1. As to relations: Those that had wives must be as though they had none; that is, they must not set their hearts too much on the comforts of the relation; they must be as though they had none. They know not how soon they shall have none. This advice must be carried into every other relation. Those that have children should be as though they had none. Those that are their comfort now may prove their greatest cross. And soon may the flower of all comforts be cut down.

2. As to afflictions: Those that weep must be as though they wept not; that is, we must not be dejected too much with any of our afflictions, nor indulge ourselves in the sorrow of the world, but keep up a holy joy in God in the midst of all our troubles, so that even in sorrow the heart may be joyful, and the end of our grief may be gladness. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning. If we can but get to heaven at last, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes; and the prospect of it now should make us moderate our sorrows and refrain our tears.

3. As to worldly enjoyments: Those that rejoice should be as though they rejoiced not; that is, they should not take too great a complacency in any of their comforts. They must be moderate in their mirth, and sit loose to the enjoyments they most value. Here is not their rest, nor are these things their portion; and therefore their hearts should not be set on them, nor should they place their solace or satisfaction in them.

4. As to worldly traffic and employment: Those that buy must be as though they possessed not. Those that prosper in trade, increase in wealth, and purchase estates, should hold these possessions as though they held them not. It is but setting their hearts on that which is not (Pr 23:5) to do otherwise. Buying and possessing should not too much engage our minds. They hinder many people altogether from minding the better part. Purchasing land and trying oxen kept the guests invited from the wedding-supper, Lu 14:18,19. And, when they do not altogether hinder men from minding their chief business, they do very much divert them from

a close pursuit. Those are most likely to run so as to obtain the prize who ease their minds of all foreign cares and cumbrances.

5. As to all worldly concerns: Those that use this world as not abusing it, 1Co 7:31. The world may be used, but must not be abused. It is abused when it is not used to those purposes for which it is given, to honour God and do good to men--when, instead of being oil to the wheels of our obedience, it is made fuel to lust--when, instead of being a servant, it is made our master, our idol, and has that room in our affections which should be reserved for God. And there is great danger of abusing it in all these respects, if our hearts are too much set upon it. We must keep the world as much as may be out of our hearts, that we may not abuse it when we have it in our hands.

31 and they that use this world, as not abusing *it:* for the fashion of this world passeth away.

32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

33 but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife.

34 There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband.

This is good, says he, for the present distress. Christians, at the first planting of their religion, were grievously persecuted. Their enemies were very bitter against them, and treated them very cruelly. They were continually liable to be tossed and hurried by persecution. This being the then state of things, he did not think it so advisable for Christians that were single to change conditions. The married state would bring more care and cumber along with it (1Co 7:33,34), and would therefore make persecution more terrible, and render them less able to bear it. Note, Christians, in regulating their conduct, should not barely consider what is lawful in itself, but what may be expedient for them.

"If thou art bound to a wife, do not seek to be loosed. It is thy duty to continue in the married relation, and do the duties of it." And though such, if they were called to suffer persecution, would find peculiar difficulties in it; yet, to avoid these difficulties, they must not cast off nor break through the bonds of duty. Duty must be done, and God trusted with events. But to neglect duty is the way to put ourselves out of the divine protection.

35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Indeed to be careless is a fault; a wise concern about worldly interests is a duty; but to be careful, full of care, to have an anxious and perplexing care about them, is a sin. All that care which disquiets the mind, and distracts it in the worship of God, is evil; for God must be attended upon without distraction, 1Co 7:35. The whole mind should be engaged when God is worshipped. The work ceases while it diverts to any thing else, or is hurried and drawn hither and thither by foreign affairs and concerns. Those who are engaged in divine worship should attend to this very thing, should make it their whole business. But how is this possible when the mind is swallowed up of the cares of this life? Note, It is the wisdom of a Christian so to order his outward affairs, and choose such a condition in life, as to be without distracting cares, that he may attend upon the Lord with a mind at leisure and disengaged. This is the general maxim by which the apostle would have Christians govern themselves. In the application of it Christian prudence must direct. That condition of life is best for every man which is best for his soul, and keeps him most clear of the cares and snares of the world. By this maxim the apostle solves the case put to him by the Corinthians, whether it were advisable to marry?

36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her age,* and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

37 Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

38 So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he
that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.
39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth;
but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to
whom she will; only in the Lord.
40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I
think also that I have the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians-8

Food Offered to Idols

Chapter 8

This chapter is very important, as it settles some principles in regard to the conduct of Christians; and shows how they should act in reference to things that are indifferent; or which in themselves can be considered as neither right nor wrong; and in reference to those things which may be considered in themselves as right and lawful, but whose indulgence might injure others. And from the chapter we learn: (1.) That Christians, though they are truly converted, yet may have many erroneous views and feelings in reference to many things, 1Cor 8:6. This was true of those converted from ancient heathenism, and it is true of those who are now converted from heathenism, and of all young converts. Former opinions, and prejudices, and even superstitions, abide long in the mind, and cast a long and withering influence over the regions of Christian piety. The morning dawn is at first very obscure. The change from night to daybreak is at first scarcely perceptible. And so it may be in conversion. The views which a heathen entertained from his childhood could not at once be removed. The influence of corrupt opinions and feelings, which a sinner has long indulged, may travel over in his conversion, and may long endanger his piety and destroy his peace. Corrupt and infidel thoughts, associations of pollution, cannot be destroyed at once; and we are not to expect from a child in the Christian life, the full vigour, and the elevated principle, and the strength to resist temptation, which we expect of the man matured in the service of the Lord Jesus. This should lead us to charity in regard to the imperfections and failings of young converts; to a willingness to

aid and counsel them; to carefulness not to lead them into sin; and it should lead us not to expect the same amount of piety, zeal, and purity in converts from degraded heathens, which we expect in Christian lands, and where converts have been trained up under all the advantages of Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes. (2.) Our opinions should be formed, and our treatment of others regulated, not by abstract knowledge, but by love, 1Cor 8:1. A man is usually much more likely to act right who is influenced by charity and love, than one who is guided by simple knowledge, or by self-confidence. One is humble, kind, tender towards the frailties of others, sensible himself of infirmity, and is disposed to do right; the other may be vain, harsh, censorious, unkind, and severe. Knowledge is useful; but for the practical purposes of life, in an erring and fallen world, love is more useful; and while the one often leads astray, the other seldom errs. Whatever knowledge we may have, we should make it a point from which we are never to depart, that our opinions of others, and our treatment of them, should be formed under the influence of love. (3.) We should not be self-confident of our wisdom, 1Cor 8:2. Religion produces humility. Mere knowledge may fill the heart with pride and vanity. True knowledge is not inconsistent with humility; but it must be joined with a heart that is right. The men that have been most eminent in knowledge have also been distinguished for humility; but the heart was right, and they saw the folly of depending on mere knowledge. (4.) There is but one God, 1Cor 8:4-6. This great truth lies at the foundation of all true religion; and yet is so simple that it may be known by all Christians, however humble, and is to be presumed to be known by all. But though simple, it is a great and glorious truth. To keep this before the minds of men, was one great purpose of all God's revelations; and to communicate it to men is now the grand object of all missionary enterprises. The world is full of idols and idolaters; but the knowledge of this simple truth would change the moral aspect of the entire globe. To spread this truth should be the great aim and purpose of all true Christians; and when this truth is spread, the idols of the heathen will fall to the dust. (5.) Christians acknowledge one and only one Lord, 1Cor 8:6. He rules over them. His laws bind them. He controls them. He has a right to them. He can dispose of them as

he pleases. They are not their own; but are bound to live entirely to him, and for the promotion of his cause. (6.) It becomes Christians to exercise continual care, lest their conduct, even in things which are in themselves lawful, should be the occasion of leading others into sin, 1Cor 8:9. Christians very often pursue a course of conduct which may not be in itself unlawful but which may lead others who have not their intelligence, or strength of principle, into error. One man may be safe where another man is in danger. One man may be able to resist temptations which would entirely overcome another. A course of life may, perhaps, be safe for a man of years and of mature judgment, which would be ruinous to a young man. And the grand principle here should be, not to do that, even though it may be lawful itself, which would, be the occasion of leading others into sin. (7.) We see here the importance and the power of example, 1Cor 8:10,11. Nothing is of more value than a correct Christian example. And this applies particularly to those who are in the more elevated ranks of life; who occupy stations of importance; who are at the head of families, colleges, and schools. The ignorant will be likely to follow the example of the learned; the poor of the rich; those in humble life will imitate the manners of the great. Even in things, therefore, which may not be in themselves unlawful in these circumstances, they should set an example of self-denial, of plainness, of abstinence, for the sake of those beneath them. They should so live that it would be safe and right for all to imitate their example, Christ, though he was rich, yet so lived that all may safely imitate him, though he was honoured of God, and exalted to the highest office as the Redeemer of the world, yet he lived so that all in every rank may follow him; though he had all power, and was worshipped by angels, yet so lived that he might teach the most humble and lowly how to live; and so lived that it is safe and proper for all to live as he did. So should every monarch, and prince, and rich man; every noble, and every learned man; every man of honour and office; every master of a family, and every man of age and wisdom, live that all others may learn of them how to live, and that they may safely walk in their footsteps. (8.) We have here a noble instance of the principles on which Paul was willing to act, 1Cor 8:13. He was willing to deny himself of any

gratification, if his conduct was likely to be the occasion of leading others into sin. Even from that which was in itself lawful he would abstain for ever, if by indulgence he would be the occasion of another's falling into transgression. But how rare is this virtue! How seldom is it practised! How few Christians and Christian ministers are there who deny themselves any gratification in things in themselves right, lest they should induce others to sin. And yet this is the grand principle of Christianity; and this should influence and guide all the professed friends and followers of Christ. This principle might be applied to many things in which many Christians now freely indulge; and, if applied, would produce great and important changes in society. 1st. Entertainments and feasts which, perhaps, you may be able to afford, (that is, afford in the supposition that what you have is yours, and not the Lord's,) may lead many of those who cannot afford it to imitate you, and to involve themselves in debt, in extravagance, in ruin. 2nd. You might possibly be safe at a festival, at a public dinner, or in a large party; but your example would encourage others where they would not be safe; and yet, how could you reply should they say that you were there, and that they were encouraged by you? 3rd. On the supposition that the use of wine and other fermented liquors may be in themselves lawful, and that you might be safe in using them, yet others may be led by your example to an improper use of them, or contract a taste for stimulating drinks that may end in their ruin. Would it be right for you to continue the use of wine in such circumstances? Would Paul have done it? Would he not have adopted the noble principle in this chapter, that he would not touch it while the world stands, if it led him to sin? 4th. You might be safe in a party of amusement, in the circle of the gay, and in scenes of merriment and mirth. I say you might be, though the supposition is scarcely possible that Christian piety is ever safe in such scenes, and though it is certain that Paul or the Saviour would not have been found there. But how will it be for the young, and for those of less strength of Christian virtue? Will they be safe there? Will they be able to guard against these allurements as you could? Will they not be led into the love of gaiety, vanity, and folly? And what would Paul have done in such cases? What would Jesus Christ have done? What should Christians now do? This single principle,

if fairly applied, would go far to change the aspect of the Christian world. If all Christians had Paul's delicate sensibilities, and Paul's strength of Christian virtue, and Paul's willingness to deny himself to benefit others, the aspect of the Christian world would soon change. How many practices, now freely indulged in, would be abandoned! And how soon would every Christian be seen to set such an example that all others could safely follow it!

1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

We know, says the apostle, that we all have knowledge (1Co 8:1) as if he had said, "You who take such liberty are not the onl knowing persons; we who abstain know as much as you of th vanity of idols, and that they are nothing; but we know too that th liberty you take is very culpable, and that even lawful liberty mus be used with charity and not to the prejudice of weaker brethren. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth, 1Co 8:1.

2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Note, 1 The preference of charity to conceited knowledge. That is best which is fitted to do the greatest good. Knowledge, or at least a high conceit of it, is very apt to swell the mind, to fill it with wind, and so puff it up. This tends to no good to ourselves, but in many instances is much to the hurt of others. But true love, and tender regard to our brethren, will put us upon consulting their interest, and acting as may be for their edification. Observe, 2. That there is no evidence of ignorance more common than a conceit of knowledge: If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. He that knows most best understands his own ignorance, and the imperfection of human knowledge. He that imagines himself a knowing man, and is vain and conceited on this imagination, has reason to suspect that he knows nothing aright, nothing as he ought to know it. Note, It is one thing to know truth, and another to know it as we ought, so as duly to improve our knowledge. Much may be known when nothing is known to any good purpose, when neither

ourselves nor others are the better for our knowledge. And those who think they know any thing, and grow fain hereupon, are of all men most likely to make no good use of their knowledge; neither themselves nor others are likely to be benefited by it. But, adds the apostle, if any man love God, the same is known of God. If any man love God, and is thereby influenced to love his neighbour, the same is known of God; that is, as some understand it, is made by him to know, is taught of God. Note, Those that love God are most likely to be taught of God, and be made by him to know as they ought. Some understand it thus: He shall be approved of God; he will accept him and have pleasure in him. Note, The charitable person is most likely to have God's favour. Those who love God, and for his sake love their brethren and seek their welfare, are likely to be beloved of God; and how much better is it to be approved of God than to have a vain opinion of ourselves!

3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 but to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.

There are that are called gods, in heaven and earth, gods many, and lords many; but they are falsely thus called. The heathens had many such, some in heaven and some on earth, celestial deities, that were of highest rank and repute among them, and terrestrial ones, men made into gods, that were to mediate for men with the former, and were deputed by them to preside over earthly affairs. These are in scripture commonly called Baalim.

1.They had gods of higher and lower degree; nay, many in each order: gods many, and lords many; but all titular deities and

mediators: so called, but not such in truth. All their divinity and mediation were imagery. For, 1. To us there is but one God, says the apostle, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in or for him. We Christians are better informed; we well know there is but one God, the fountain of being, the author of all things, maker, preserver, and governor of the whole world, of whom and for whom are all things. Not one God to govern one part of mankind, or one rank and order of men, and another to govern another. One God made all, and therefore has power over all. All things are of him, and we, and all things else, are for him. Called the Father here, not in contradistinction to the other persons of the sacred Trinity, and to exclude them from the Godhead, but in contradistinction to all creatures that were made by God, and whose formation is attributed to each of these three in other places of scripture, and not appropriated to the Father alone.

2.There is to us but one Lord, one Mediator between God and men, even Jesus Christ. Not many mediators, as the heathen imagined, but one only, by whom all things were created and do consist, and to whom all our hope and happiness are owing--the man Christ Jesus; but a man in personal union with the divine Word, or God the Son. This very man hath God made both Lord and Christ, Ac 2:36. Jesus Christ, in his human nature and mediatorial state, has a delegated power, a name given him, though above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. And thus he is the only Lord, the only Mediator, that Christians acknowledge, the only person who comes between God and sinners, administers the world's affairs under God, and mediates for men with God. All the lords of this sort among heathens are merely imaginary ones. Note, It is the great privilege of us Christians that we know the true God, and true Mediator between God and man: the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, Joh 17:3.

7 Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

He informs them that every Christian man, at that time, was not so fully convinced and persuaded that an idol was nothing. Howbeit, there is not in every man this knowledge; for some, with conscience of the idol, unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; with conscience of the idol; that is, some confused veneration for it. Though they were converts to Christianity, and professed the true religion, they were not perfectly cured of the old leaven, but retained an unaccountable respect for the idols they had worshipped before.

Note, Weak Christians may be ignorant, or have but a confused knowledge of the greatest and plainest truths. Such were those of the one God and one Mediator. And yet some of those who were turned form heathenism to Christianity among the Corinthians seem to have retained a veneration for their idols, utterly irreconcilable with those great principles; so that when an opportunity offered to eat things offered to idols they did not abstain, to testify their abhorrence of idolatry, nor eat with a professed contempt of the idol, by declaring they looked upon it to be nothing; and so their conscience, being weak, was defiled; that is, they contracted guilt; they ate out of respect to the idol, with an imagination that it had something divine in it, and so committed idolatry: whereas the design of the gospel was to turn men from dumb idols to the living God. They were weak in their understanding, not thoroughly apprized of the vanity of idols; and, while they ate what was sacrificed to them out of veneration for them, contracted the guilt of idolatry, and so greatly polluted themselves. This seems to be the sense of the place; though some understand it of weak Christians defiling themselves by eating what was offered to an idol with an apprehension that thereby it became unclean, and made those so in a moral sense who should eat it, every one not having a knowledge that the idol was nothing, and therefore that it could not render what was offered to it in this sense unclean. Note, We should be careful to do nothing that may occasion weak Christians to defile their consciences.

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours
become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.
10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in
the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is
weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered
to idols;

It seems as if some of the Corinthians had imbibed an opinion that even this might be done, because they knew an idol was nothing in the world, 1Co 8:4. The apostle seems to answer more directly to the case (1Co 10:1-22), and here to argue, upon supposition of their being right in this thought, against their abuse of their liberty to the prejudice of others; but he plainly condemns such liberty in 1Co 10:1-22. It might occasion their falling into idolatrous actions, perhaps their falling off from Christianity and revolting again to heathenism. "If a man see thee, who hast knowledge, shall not one who is less thoroughly informed in this matter, and thinks an idol something, be emboldened to eat what was offered to the idol, not as common food, but sacrifice, and thereby be guilty of idolatry?" Such an occasion of falling they should be careful of laying before their weak brethren, whatever liberty or power they themselves had. The apostle backs this caution with two considerations:-- 1 The danger that might accrue to weak brethren, even those weak brethren for whom Christ died. We must deny ourselves even what is lawful rather than occasion their stumbling, and endanger their souls (1Co 8:11): Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? Note, Those whom Christ hath redeemed with his most precious blood should be very precious and dear to us. If he had such compassion as to die for them, that they might not perish, we should have so much compassion for them as to deny ourselves, for their sakes, in various instances, and not use our liberty to their hurt, to occasion their stumbling, or hazard their ruin. That man has very little of the spirit of the Redeemer who had rather his brother should perish than himself be abridged, in any respect, of his liberty. He who hath the Spirit of Christ in him will love those whom Christ loved, so as to die for them, and will study to promote their spiritual and eternal warfare, and shun every thing that would unnecessarily grieve them, and

much more every thing that would be likely to occasion their stumbling, or falling into sin.

2 The hurt done to them Christ takes as done to himself: When you sin so against the weak brethren and wound their consciences, you sin against Christ, 1Co 8:12. Note, Injuries done to Christians are injuries to Christ, especially to babes in Christ, to weak Christians; and most of all, involving them in guilt: wounding their consciences is wounding him. He has a particular care of the lambs of the flock: He gathers them in his arm and carries them in his bosom, Isa 60:11. Strong Christians should be very careful to avoid what will offend weak ones, or lay a stumbling-block in their way. Shall we be void of compassion for those to whom Christ has shown so much? Shall we sin against Christ who suffered for us? Shall we set ourselves to defeat his gracious designs, and help to ruin those whom he died to save?

These were usually kept in the temple, where the sacrifice was offered (1Co 8:10), and, if any thing was left when the feast ended, it was usual to carry away a portion to their friends; what remained, after all, belonged to the priests, who sometimes sold it in the markets. See 1Co 10:25.

11 and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother
perish, for whom Christ died?
12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their
weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.
13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no
flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to
offend.

Note, We should be very tender of doing any thing that may be an occasion of stumbling to others, though it may be innocent in itself. Liberty is valuable, but the weakness of a brother should induce, and sometimes bind, us to waive it. We must not rigorously claim nor use our own rights, to the hurt and ruin of a brother's soul, and so to the in jury of our Redeemer, who died for him. When it is certainly foreseen that my doing what I may forbear or refrain will occasion a fellow-christian to do what he ought to forbear/refrain, I

shall offend, scandalize, or lay a stumbling-block in his way, which to do is a sin, however lawful the thing itself be which is done. And, if we must be so careful not to occasion other men's sins, how careful should we be to avoid sin ourselves! If we must not endanger other men's souls, how much should we be concerned not to destroy our own!

We see here the importance and the power of example, 1Cor 8:10,11. Nothing is of more value than a correct Christian example. And this applies particularly to those who are in the more elevated ranks of life; who occupy stations of importance; who are at the head of families, colleges, and schools. The ignorant will be likely to follow the example of the learned; the poor of the rich; those in humble life will imitate the manners of the great. Even in things, therefore, which may not be in themselves unlawful in these circumstances, they should set an example of self-denial, of plainness, of abstinence, for the sake of those beneath them. They should so live that it would be safe and right for all to imitate their example, Christ, though he was rich, yet so lived that all may safely imitate him, though he was honoured of God, and exalted to the highest office as the Redeemer of the world, yet he lived so that all in every rank may follow him; though he had all power, and was worshipped by angels, yet so lived that he might teach the most humble and lowly how to live; and so lived that it is safe and proper for all to live as he did. So should every monarch, and prince, and rich man; every noble, and every learned man; every man of honour and office; every master of a family, and every man of age and wisdom, live that all others may learn of them how to live, and that they may safely walk in their footsteps.

1 Corinthians-9

The Rights of Those Who Preach the Gospel

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ
our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?
2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you:
for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

He justly upbraids the Corinthians with their disrespect: "Doubtless, if I am not an apostle to others, I am so to you, 1Co 9:2. I have laboured so long, and with so much success, among you, that you, above all others, should own and honour my character, and not call it in question." Note, It is no new thing for faithful ministers to meet with the worst treatment where they might expect the best. This church at Corinth had as much reason to believe, and as little reason to question, his apostolical mission, as any; they had as much reason, perhaps more than any church, to pay him respect.

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this:
4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?
5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as
other apostles, and *as* the brethren of the Lord, and
Cephas?
6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?
7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who
planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or
who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?
8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?
9 For it is written in the law of Moses,
Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of
the ox that treadeth out the corn.
Doth God take care for oxen?
10 or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt,
this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and
that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.
11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing
if we shall reap your carnal things?
12 If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather?
Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all
things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.
13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things
live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar
are partakers with the altar?
14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the
gospel should live of the gospel.

15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is committed unto me.

18 What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

19 For though I be free from all *men,* yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

Though I be free from all men. He was free-born, a citizen of Rome. He was in bondage to none, nor depended upon any for his subsistence; yet he made himself a servant to all, that he might gain the more. He behaved as a servant; he laboured for their good as a servant; he was careful to please, as a servant to his master; he acted in many cases as if he had no privileges; and this that he might gain the more, or make the more converts to Christianity. He made himself a servant, that they might be made free.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

As without law. Not practicing the peculiar rites and ceremonies enjoined in the law of Moses. Not insisting on them, or urging them; but showing that the obligation to those rites had been done away; and that they were not binding, though when among the Jews I might still continue to observe them. Acts 15:1 and following: and the argument of Paul in Gall 2:11-18. I neglected the ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic law, when I was with those who had not heard of the law of Moses, or those who did not observe them, because I knew that the binding obligation of these ceremonial precepts had ceased. I did not, therefore, press them upon the Gentiles, nor did I superstitiously and publicly practise them. In all this, Paul has reference only to those things which he regarded as in themselves

indifferent, and not a matter of conscience; and his purpose was not needlessly to excite the prejudice or the opposition of the world. Nothing is ever gained by provoking opposition for the mere sake of opposition. Nothing tends more to hinder the gospel than that. In all things of conscience and truth a man should be firm, and should lose his life rather than abandon either; in all things of indifference, of mere custom, of prejudice, he should yield, and accommodate himself to the modes of thinking among men, and adapt himself to their views, feelings, and habits of life, that he may win them to Christ. Being not without law to God. Not regarding myself as being absolutely without law, or as being freed from obligation to obey God. Even in all this, I endeavoured so to live as that it might be seen that I felt myself bound by law to God. I was not a despiser, and contemner and neglecter of law, as such, but only regarded myself as not bound by the peculiar ceremonial law of Moses. This is an instance of Paul's conscientiousness. He would not leave room to have it supposed for a moment that he disregarded all law. He was bound to God by law; and in the conduct to which he was referring, he felt that he was obeying him. He was bound by higher law than those ceremonial observances which were now to be done away. This passage would destroy all the refuges of the Antinomians. Whatever privileges the gospel has introduced, it has not set us free from the restraints and obligations of law. That is binding still; and no man is at liberty to disregard the moral law of God. Christ came to magnify, strengthen, and to honour the law, not to destroy it. But under the law to Christ. Bound by the law enjoined by Christ; under the law of affectionate gratitude and duty to him. I obeyed his commands; followed his instructions; sought his honour; yielded to his will. In this he would violate none of the rules of the moral law. And he here intimates, that his grand object was to yield obedience to the law of the Saviour, and that this was the governing purpose of his life. And this would guide a man right. In doing this, he would never violate any of the precepts of the moral law, for Christ obeyed them, and enjoined their observance. He would never feel that he was without law to God, for Christ obeyed God, and enjoined it on all. He would never feel that religion came to set him free from law, or to authorize licentiousness; for its grand purpose and aim is to make

men holy, and to bind them everywhere to the observance of the pure law of the Redeemer.

To the weak. Rom 15:1. To those weak in faith; scrupulous in regard to certain observances; whose consciences were tender and unenlightened, and who would be offended even by things which might be in themselves lawful. He did not lacerate their feelings, and run counter to their prejudices, for the mere sake of doing it. Became I as weak. I did not shock them. I complied with their customs. I conformed to them in my dress, habits, manner of life, and even in the services of religion. I abstained from food which they deemed it their duty to abstain from; and where, if I had partaken of it, I should have offended them. Paul did not do this to gratify himself, or them, but to do them good. And Paul's example should teach us not to make it the main business of life to gratify ourselves: and it should teach us not to lacerate the feelings of others; not to excite their prejudices needlessly; not to offend them where it will do no good. If truth offends men, we cannot help it.

But in matters of ceremony, and dress, and habits, and customs, and forms, we should be willing to conform to them, as far as can be done, and for the sole purpose of saving their souls. I am made all things to all men. I become all things; that is, I accommodate myself to them in all things, so far as can be done with a good conscience. That I might by all means. παντως. That I might use every possible endeavour that some at least might be saved. It is implied here that the opposition to the gospel was everywhere great; that men were reluctant to embrace it; that the great mass were going to ruin, and that Paul was willing to make the highest possible exertions, to deny himself, and practise every innocent art, that he might save a few at least out of the innumerable multitudes that were going to death and hell. It follows from this,

(1.) that men are in danger of ruin.

(2.) We should make an effort to save men. We should deny ourselves, and give ourselves to toil and privation, that we may save some at least from ruin.

21 to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

He specifies some particulars wherein he made himself a servant to all. He accommodated himself to all sorts of people.

1. To the Jews, and those under the law, he became a Jew, and as under the law, to gain them. Though he looked on the ceremonial law as a yoke taken off by Christ, yet in many instances he submitted to it, that he might work upon the Jews, remove their prejudices, prevail with them to hear the gospel, and win them over to Christ.

2. To those that are without the law as without law that is, to the Gentiles, whether converted to the Christian faith or not. In innocent things he could comply with people's usages or humours for their advantage. He would reason with the philosophers in their own way. And, as to converted Gentiles, he behaved among them as one that was not under the bondage of the Jewish laws, as he had asserted and maintained concerning them, though he did not act as a lawless person, but as one who was bound by the laws of Christ. He would transgress no laws of Christ to please or humour any man; but he would accommodate himself to all men, where he might do it lawfully, to gain some. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and so, one would have thought, might have excused himself from complying with the Jews; and yet, to do them good, and win them over to Christ, he did, in innocent things, neglect the power he had to do otherwise, and conformed to some of their usages and laws. And though he might, by virtue of that character, have challenged authority over the Gentiles, yet he accommodated himself, as much as he innocently might, to their prejudices and ways of thinking. Doing good was the study and business of his life; and, so that he might reach this end, he did not stand on privileges and punctilios.

3. To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak, 1Co 9:22. He was willing to make the best of them. He did not despise nor judge them, but became as one of them, forbore to use his liberty for their sake, and was careful to lay no stumbling-block in their way. Where any, through the weakness of their understanding, or the strength of their prejudices, were likely to fall into sin, or fall off from the gospel into heathen idolatry, through his use of his liberty, he refrained himself. He denied himself for their sakes, that he might insinuate into their affections, and gain their souls. In short, he became all things to all men, that he might by all means (all lawful means) gain some. He would not sin against God to save the soul of his neighbour, but he would very cheerfully and readily deny himself. The rights of God he could not give up, but he might resign his own, and he very often did so for the good of others.

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak:
I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means
save some.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker
thereof with *you*.

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but
one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery. οαγωνιζομενος. That agonizes; that is, that is engaged in the exercise of wrestling, boxing, or pitching the bar or quoit. Lk 13:24. The sense is, every one who endeavours to obtain a victory in these athletic exercises. Is temperate in all things. The word which is rendered "is temperate," (εγκρατευεται,) denotes abstinence from all that would excite, stimulate, and ultimately enfeeble; from wine, from exciting and luxurious living, and from licentious indulgences. It means that they did all they could to make the body vigorous, active, and supple. They pursued a course of entire temperate living. Comp. Acts 24:25, 1Cor 7:9, Gall 5:23, 2Pet 1:6. It relates not only to indulgences unlawful in themselves, but to abstinence from many things that were regarded as lawful, but which were believed to render the body weak and effeminate. The phrase, "in all things," means that this course of temperance or abstinence was not confined to one thing, or to one class of things, but to every kind of food and drink, and every indulgence that had a

tendency to render the body weak and effeminate. The preparations which those who proposed to contend in these games made is well known, and is often referred to by the classic writers. Epictetus, as quoted by Grotius, (in loco,) thus speaks of these preparations. "Do you wish to gain the prize at the Olympic games? consider the requisite preparations and the consequence. You must observe a strict regimen; must live on food which is unpleasant; must abstain from all delicacies; must exercise yourself at the prescribed times in heat and in cold; you must drink nothing cool, (ψυχρον;) must take no wine as usual; you must put yourself under a pugilist, as you would under a physician, and afterwards enter the lists." (Epiet., oh. 35.) Horace has described the preparations necessary in the same way.

Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam Multa tulit fecitque puer; sudavit, et alsit, Abstinuit Venere et Baccho.--De ARTE Poet. 412 A youth who hopes the Olympic prize to gain, All arts must try, and every toil sustain; The extremes of heat and cold must often prove, And shun the weakening joys of wine and love.--Francis

To obtain a corruptible crown. A garland, diadem, or civic wreath, that must soon fade away. The garland bestowed on the victor was made of olive, pine, apple, laurel, or parsley. That would soon lose its beauty and fade; of course, it could be of little value. Yet we see how eagerly they sought it; how much self-denial those who entered the lists would practise to obtain it; how long they would deny themselves of the common pleasures of life, that they might be successful. So much temperance would heathens practise to obtain a fading wreath of laurel, pine, or parsley! Learn hence,

(1.) the duty of denying ourselves to obtain a far more valuable reward, the incorruptible crown of heaven.

(2.) The duty of all Christians, who strive for that crown, to be temperate in all things. If the heathens practised temperance to

obtain a fading laurel, should not we to obtain one that never fades?

(3.) How much their conduct puts to shame the conduct of many professing Christians and Christian ministers. They set such a value on a civic wreath of pine or laurel, that they were willing to deny themselves, and practise the most rigid abstinence. They knew that indulgence in WINE and in luxurious living unfitted them for the struggle and for victory; they knew that it enfeebled their powers, and weakened their frame; and, like men intent on an object dear to them, they abstained wholly from these things, and embraced the principles of total abstinence. Yet how many professed Christians, and Christian ministers, though striving for the crown that fadeth not away, indulge in wine, and in the filthy, offensive, and disgusting use of tobacco; and in luxurious living, and in habits of indolence and sloth! How many there are that WILL not give up these habits, though they know that they are enfeebling, injurious, offensive, and destructive to religious comfort and usefulness. Can a man be truly in earnest in his professed religion; can he be a sincere Christian, who is not willing to abandon anything and everything that will tend to impair the rigour of his mind, and weaken his body, and make him a stumbling-block to others?

(4.) The value of temperance is here presented in a very striking and impressive view. When even the heathens wished to accomplish anything that demanded skill, strength, power, rigour of body, they saw the necessity of being temperate, and they were so. And this proves what all experiment has proved, that if men wish to accomplish much, they must be temperate. It proves that men can do more without intoxicating drink than they can with it. The example of these Grecian Athletae--their wrestlers, boxers, and racers--is against all the farmers, and mechanics, and seamen, and day-labourers, and gentlemen, and clergymen, and lawyers, who plead that stimulating drink is necessary to enable them to bear cold and heat, and toil and exposure. A little experience from men like the Grecian wrestlers, who had something that they wished to do, is much better than a great deal of philosophy and

sophistical reasoning from men who wish to drink, and to find some argument for drinking that shall be a salvo to their consciences. Perhaps the world has furnished no stronger argument in favour of total abstinence than the example of the Grecian Athletae. It is certain that their example, the example of men who wished to accomplish much by bodily rigour and health, is an effectual and irrefragable argument against all those who plead that stimulating drinks are desirable or necessary in order to increase the rigour of the bodily frame. But we. We Christians. An incorruptible. An incorruptible, an unfading crown. The blessings of heaven that shall be bestowed on the righteous are often represented under the image of a crown or diadem; a crown that is unfading and eternal, 2Ti 4:8; Jas 1:12, 1Pet 5:4, Rev 2:10, 3:11, 4:4. The doctrine here taught is, the necessity of making an effort to secure eternal life. The apostle never thought of entering heaven by indolence, or by inactivity. He urged, by every possible argument, the necessity of making an exertion to secure the rewards of the just. His reasons for this effort are many. Let a few be pondered.

(1.) The work of salvation is difficult. The thousand obstacles arising, the love of sin, and the opposition of Satan and of the world, are in the

(2.) The danger of losing the crown of glory is great. Every moment exposes it to hazard, for at any moment we may die.

(3.) The danger is not only great, but it is dreadful. If anything should arouse man, it should be the apprehension of eternal damnation and everlasting wrath.

(4.) Men in this life, in the games of Greece, in the career of ambition, in the pursuit of pleasure and wealth, make immense efforts to obtain the fading and perishing object of their desires. Why should not a man be willing to make as great efforts at least to secure eternal glory?

(5.) The value of the interest at stake. Eternal happiness is before those who will embrace the offers of life. If a man should be influenced by anything to make an effort, should it not be by the prospect of eternal glory? What should influence him if this should not?

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

He directs them in their course, by setting more fully to view his own example, still carrying on the allusion.

1. Those that ran in their games were kept to a set diet: "Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things, 1Co 9:25. The fighters and wrestlers in your exercises are kept to strict diet and discipline; nay, they keep themselves to it. They do not indulge themselves, but restrain themselves from the food they eat and so from the liberties they use on other occasions. And should not Christians much more abridge themselves of their liberty, for so glorious an end as winning the race, and obtaining the prize set before them? They used a very spare diet, and course food, and denied themselves much, to prepare for their race and combat; so do I; so should you, after my example. It is hard if, for the heavenly crown, you cannot abstain from heathen sacrifices."

2. They were not only temperate, but inured themselves to hardships. Those who fought with one another in these exercises prepared themselves by beating the air, as the apostle calls it, or by throwing out their arms, and thereby inuring themselves, beforehand, to deal about their blows in close combat, or brandish them by way of flourish. There is no room for any such exercise in the Christian warfare. Christians are ever in close combat. There enemies make fierce and hearty opposition, and are ever at hand; and for this reason they must lay about them in earnest, and never drop the contest, nor flag and faint in it. They must fight, not as those that beat the air, but must strive against their enemies with all their might. One enemy the apostle here mentions, namely, the body; this must be kept under, beaten black and blue,

as the combatants were in these Grecian games, and thereby brought into subjection. By the body we are to understand fleshly appetites and inclinations. These the apostle set himself to curb and conquer, and in this the Corinthians were bound to imitate him. Note, Those who would aright pursue the interests of their souls must beat down their bodies, and keep them under. They must combat hard with fleshly lusts, and not indulge a wanton appetite, and long for heathenish sacrifices, nor eat them, to please their flesh, at the hazard of their brethren's souls. The body must be made to serve the mind, not suffered to lord over it.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

26. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air /KJVPCE/

The racers in these games run at uncertainty. All run, but one receives the prize, 1Co 9:24. Every racer, therefore, is at a great uncertainty whether he shall win it or no. But the Christian racer is at no such uncertainty. Every one may run here so as to obtain; but then he must run within the lines, he must keep to the path of duty prescribed, which, some think, is the meaning of running not as uncertainly, 1Co 9:26. He who keeps within the limits prescribed, and keeps on in his race, will never miss his crown, though others may get theirs before him. And would the Grecian racers keep within their bounds, and exert themselves to the very last, when one only could win, and all must be uncertain which that one would be? And shall not Christians be much more exact and vigorous when all are sure of a crown when they come to the end of their race?

27 but I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

He sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly inclinations, and pampering the body and its lusts and appetites: I keep my body under, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away (1Co 9:27), rejected, disapproved, adokimos, one to whom the brabeutes--the

judge or umpire of the race, will not decree the crown. The allusion to the games runs through the whole sentence.

Note, A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may show others the way to heaven, and never get thither himself. To prevent this, Paul took so much pains in subduing and keeping under bodily inclinations, lest by any means he himself, who had preached to others, should yet miss the crown, be disapproved and rejected by his sovereign Judge. A holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle; and how much more necessary is it to our preservation? Note, Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him.

1 Corinthians-10

Warning against Idolatry

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
2 and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
3 and did all eat the same spiritual meat;
4 and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

(1.) They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea (1Co 10:2), or into Moses, that is, brought under obligation to Moses's law and covenant, as we are by baptism under the Christian law and covenant. It was to them a typical baptism.

(2.) They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink, that we do. The manna on which they fed was a type of Christ crucified, the bread which came down from heaven, which whoso eateth shall live forever. Their drink was a stream fetched from a rock which followed them in all their journeyings in the wilderness; and this rock was Christ, that is, in type and figure.

He is the rock on which the Christian church is built; and of the streams that issue from him do all believers drink, and are refreshed. Now all the Jews did eat of this meat, and drink of this rock, called here a spiritual rock, because it typified spiritual things. These were great privileges. One would think that this should have saved them; that all who ate of that spiritual meat, and drank of that spiritual drink, should have been holy and acceptable to God. Yet was it otherwise: With many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness, 1Co 10:5. Note, Men may enjoy many and great spiritual privileges in this world, and yet come short of eternal life. Many of those who were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and sea, that is, had their faith of his divine commission confirmed by these miracles, were yet overthrown in the wilderness, and never saw the promised land. Let none presume upon their great privileges, or profession of the truth; these will not secure heavenly happiness, nor prevent judgments here on earth, except the root of the matter be in us.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

1. We should shun inordinate desires after carnal objects: Not lust after evil things, as they lusted, 1Co 10:6. God fed them with manna, but they must have flesh, Nu 11:4. They had food for their supply, but, not content with this, they asked meat for their lusts, Ps 16:14. Carnal desires get head by indulgence, and therefore should be observed and checked in their first rise: if once they prevail, and bear sway in us, we know not whither they will carry us. This caution stands first, because carnal appetites indulged are the root and source of much sin.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

2. He warns against idolatry (1Co 10:7): Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. The sin of the golden calf is referred to, Ex 32:6. They first sacrificed to their idol, then feasted on the sacrifices, and then danced before it. The apostle is speaking to the

case of the Corinthians, who were tempted to feast on the heathen sacrifices, things offered to idols, though they do not seem to have been under any temptation to offer sacrifice themselves. Even eating and drinking of the sacrifices before the idol, and as things sacrificed, was idolatry, which, by the example of the Israelites, they should be warned to avoid.

And rose up to play. παιζειν. The Hebrew word used in Ex 32:6, (,) means to laugh, to sport, to jest, to mock, to insult, (Gen 21:9;) and then to engage in dances accompanied with music, in honour of an idol. This was often practised, as the worship of idols was celebrated with songs and dances. This is particularly affirmed of this instance of idol worship, (Ex 32:19;) and this was common among ancient idolaters; and this mode of worship was even adopted by David before the ark of the Lord, 2Sam 6:6, 1Chr 13:8, 15:29. All that the word "to play" here necessarily implies is, that of choral songs and dances, accompanied with revelry in honour of the idol. It was however the fact, that such worship was usually accompanied with much licentiousness; but that is not necessarily implied in the use of the word. Most of the oriental dances were grossly indecent and licentious; and the word here may be designed to include such indelicacy and licentiousness.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

He cautions against fornication, a sin to which the inhabitants of Corinth were in a peculiar manner addicted. They had a temple among them dedicated to Venus (that is, to lust), with above a thousand priestesses belonging to it, all common prostitutes. How needful was a caution against fornication to those who lived in so corrupt a city, and had been used to such dissolute manners, especially when they were under temptations to idolatry too! and spiritual whoredom did in many cases lead to bodily prostitution. Most of the gods whom the heathens served were represented as patterns of lewdness; and much lewdness was committed in the very worship of many of them. Many of the Jewish writers, and many Christians after them, think that such worship was paid to Baal-Peor; and that fornication was committed with the daughters of

Moab in the worship of that idol. They were enticed by these women both to spiritual and corporal whoredom; first to feast on the sacrifice, if not to do more beastly acts, in honour of the idol, and then to defile themselves with strange flesh (Nu 25:1-18), which brought on a plague, that in one day slew twenty-three thousand, besides those who fell by the hand of public justice. Note, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, in whatever external relation they may stand to him, and whatever outward privileges he may bestow upon them. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues.

Three and twenty thousand. The Hebrew text in Nu 25:9, is twenty-four thousand. In order to reconcile these statements, it may be observed, that perhaps twenty-three thousand fell directly by the plague, and one thousand were slain by Phinehas and his companions, (Grotius;) or it may be that the number was between twenty-three and twenty-four thousand, and it might be expressed in round numbers by either. --Macknight. At all events, Paul has not exceeded the truth. There were at least twenty-three thousand that fell, though there might have been more. The probable supposition is, that the three and twenty thousand fell immediately by the hand of God in the plague, and the other thousand by the judges; and as Paul's design was particularly to mention the proofs of the immediate Divine displeasure, he refers only to those who fell by that, in illustration of his subject. There was a particular reason for this caution in respect to licentiousness.

(1.) It was common among all idolaters; and Paul, in cautioning them against idolatry, would naturally warn them of this danger.

(2.) It was common at Corinth. It was the prevalent vice there. To Corinthianize was a term synonymous among the ancients with licentiousness.

(3.) So common was this at Corinth, that, as we have seen, (see the Introduction,) not less than a thousand prostitutes were supported in a single temple there; and the city was visited by vast multitudes of

foreigners, among other reasons on account of its facilities for this sin. Christians, therefore, were in a peculiar manner exposed to it; and hence the anxiety of the apostle to warn them against it.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

4. He warns us against tempting Christ (as some of them tempted, and were destroyed of serpents, 1Co 10:9), or provoking him to jealousy, 1Co 10:22. He was with the church in the wilderness; he was the angel of the covenant, who went before them. But he was greatly grieved and provoked by them in many ways: They spoke against him and Moses, Wherefore have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for which reason God sent fiery serpents among them (Nu 21:5,6), by which many of them were stung mortally. And it is but just to fear that such as tempt Christ under the present dispensation will be left by him in the power of the old serpent.

In what way the Corinthians were in danger of tempting Christ is not known, and can only be conjectured. It may be that the apostle cautions them against exposing themselves to temptation in the idol temples--placing themselves, as it were, under the unhappy influence of idolatry, and thus needlessly trying, the strength of their religion, and making an experiment on the grace of Christ, as if he were bound to keep them even in the midst of dangers into which they needlessly ran. They would have the promise of grace to keep them only when they were in the way of their duty, arid using all other precautions. To go beyond this, to place themselves in needless danger, to presume on the grace of Christ to keep them in all circumstances, would be to tempt him, and provoke him to leave them. Mt 4:7.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

5. He warns against murmuring: Neither murmur you as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer (1Co 10:10), by a destroying angel, an executioner of divine vengeance. They quarrelled with God, and murmured against Moses his minister, when any difficulties pressed them. When they met with

discouragements in the way to Canaan, they were very apt to fly in the face of their leaders, were for displacing them, and going back to Egypt under the conduct of others of their own choosing. Something like this seems to have been the case of the Corinthians; they murmured against Paul, and in him against Christ, and seem to have set up other teachers, who would indulge and soothe them in their inclinations, and particularly in a revolt to idolatry. Rather let them feast on idol sacrifices than bear the reproach, or expose themselves to the ill-will, of heathen neighbours. Such conduct was very provoking to God, and was likely to bring upon them swift destruction, as it did on the Israelites, Nu 14:37. Note, Murmuring against divine disposals and commands is a sin that greatly provokes, especially when it grows to such a head as to issue in apostasy, and a revolt from him and his good ways.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Not only the laws and ordinances of the Jews, but the providences of God towards them, were typical. Their sins against God, and backslidings from him, were typical of the infidelity of many under the gospel. God's judgments on them were types of spiritual judgments now. Their exclusion from the earthly Canaan typified the exclusion of many under the gospel out of the heavenly Canaan, for their unbelief. Their history was written, to be a standing monitor to the church, even under the last and most perfect dispensation: To us, on whom the end of the world is come, the concluding period of God's gracious government over men. Note, Nothing in scripture is written in vain. God had wise and gracious purposes towards us in leaving the Jewish history upon record; and it is our wisdom and duty to receive instruction from it. Upon this hint the apostle grounds a caution (1Co 10:12): Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Note, The harms sustained by others should be cautious to us. He that thinks he stands should not be confident and secure, but upon his guard. Others have fallen, and so may we. And then we are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength, and thereupon most apt to be secure, and off our guard. Distrust of himself, putting him at once upon vigilance and dependence on God, is the

Christian's best security against all sin. Note, He who thinks he stands is not likely to keep his footing, if he fears no fall, nor guards against it. God has not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves: his protection supposes our own care and caution.

Upon whom the ends of the world are come. This expression is equivalent to that which so often occurs in the Scriptures, as "the last time," "the latter day," etc. See it fully explained Acts 2:17. It means the last dispensation; or, that period and mode of the Divine administration under which the affairs of the world would be wound up. There would be no mode of administration beyond that of the gospel. But it by no means denotes necessarily that the continuance of this period called "the last times," and "the ends of the world," would be brief, or that the apostle believed that the world would soon come to an end. It might be the last period, and yet be longer than any one previous period, or than all the previous periods put together. There may be a last dynasty in an empire, and yet it may be longer than any previous dynasty, or than all the previous dynasties put together. The apostle Paul was at special pains in 2Thes 2 to show, that by affirming that the last time had come, he did not mean that the world would soon come to an end.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Note, 1. The trials of common Christians are but common trials: others have the like burdens and the like temptations; what they bear up under, and break through, we may also.

2. God is faithful. Though Satan be a deceiver, God is true. Men may be false, and the world may be false; but God is faithful, and our strength and security are in him. He keepeth his covenant, and will never disappoint the filial hope and trust of his children.

3. He is wise as well as faithful, and will proportion our burden to our strength. He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. 4. When he will make them to issue well. He will make a way to escape, either the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. There is no valley so dark but he can find a way through it, no affliction so grievous but he can prevent, or remove, or enable us to support it, and in the end overrule it to our advantage.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

And upon this argument he grounds another caution against idolatry: Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Observe, 1. How he addresses them: My dearly beloved. It is out of tender affection to them that he presses this advice upon them. 2 The matter of his advice: "Flee idolatry; shun it, and all approaches towards it." Idolatry is the most heinous injury and affront to the true God; it is transferring his worship and honour to a rival. 3. The ground of this advice: "Seeing you have such encouragement to trust God, and to be faithful, do you approve yourselves men, be not shaken by any discouragements your heathen enemies may lay before you. God will succour and assist, help you in your trials, and help you out of them; and therefore be not guilty of any idolatrous compliances." Note, We have all the encouragement in the world to flee sin and prove faithful to God. We cannot fall by a temptation if we cleave fast to him.

15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

17 For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

He applies this to the argument against feasting with idolaters on their sacrifices, and to prove those that do so idolaters. This he does,

1. By following the principle on which they would argue it to be lawful, namely, that an idol was nothing. Many of them were nothing at all, none of them had any divinity in them. What was

sacrificed to idols was nothing, no way changed from what it was before, but was every whit as fit for food, considered in itself. They indeed seem to argue that, because an idol was nothing, what was offered was no sacrifice, but common and ordinary food, of which they might therefore eat with as little scruple. Now the apostle allows that the food was not changed as to its nature, was as fit to be eaten as common food, where it was set before any who knew not of its having been offered to an idol. But, 2. He proves that the eating of it as a part of a heathen sacrifice was,

(1.) A partaking with them in their idolatry. It was having fellowship with devils, because what the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils; and to feast with them upon these sacrifices was to partake in the sacrifice, and therefore to worship the god to whom it was made, and have fellowship or communion with him just as he who eats the Lord's supper is supposed to partake in the Christian sacrifice; or as those who ate the Jewish sacrifices partook of what was offered on their altar. But heathens sacrificed to devils: "Therefore do not feast on their sacrifices. Doing it is a token of your having fellowship with the demons to whom they are offered. I would not have you be in communion with devils."

(2.) It was a virtual renouncing of Christianity: You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils, 1Co 10:21. To partake of this Christian feast was to have communion with Christ: to partake of the feasts made in honour of the heathen idols, and made of things sacrificed to them, was to have communion with devils. Now this was to compound contraries; it was by no means consistent. Communion with Christ, and communion with devils, could never be had at once. One must be renounced, if the other was maintained. He who held communion with Christ must renounce that with devils; he who held communion with devils must by that very deed renounce communion with Christ. And what a manifest self-contradiction must that man's conduct be that would partake of the Lord's table, and yet partake of the table of demons! God and mammon can never be served together, nor fellowship be at once had with Christ and Satan. Those who communicate with devils

must virtually renounce Christ. This may also intimate that such as indulge themselves in gluttony or drunkenness, and by so doing make their own table the table of devils, or keep up fellowship with Satan by a course of known and wilful wickedness, cannot partake truly of the cup and table of the Lord. They may use the sign, but do not the thing signified thereby. For a man can never be at once in communication with Christ and his church and yet in fellowship with Satan. Note, How much reason have we to look to it that every sin and idol be renounced by us, when we eat and drink at the Lord's table.

He warns them, upon the whole, against such idolatry, by signifying to them that God is a jealous God (1Co 10:22): Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? It is very probable that many among the Corinthians made light of being at these heathen feasts, and thought there was no harm in it. But the apostle bids them beware. The reason with which the second commandment is enforced is, I am a jealous God. God cannot endure a rival in matter of worship; nor give his glory, nor suffer it to be given, to another. Those who have fellowship with other gods provoke him to jealousy, De 32:16. And, before this be done, persons should consider whether they are stronger than he. It is a dangerous thing to provoke God's anger, unless we could withstand his power. But who can stand before him when he is angry? Na 1:6. This should be considered by all who continue in the love and liking of sin, and in league with it, while yet they profess to keep up communion with Christ. Is not this the way to provoke his jealousy and indignation? Note, Attention to the greatness of God's power should restrain us from provoking his jealousy, from doing any thing to displease him. Shall we rouse almighty wrath? And how shall we withstand it? Are we a match for God? Can we resist his power, or control it? And, if not, shall we arm it against us, by provoking him to jealousy? No, let us fear his power, and let this restrain us from all provocation.

19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

20 But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils:
ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table
of devils.
22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

Do All to the Glory of God

23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

He gives a caution against abusing our liberty in lawful things. That may be lawful which is not expedient, which will not edify. A Christian must not barely consider what is lawful, but what is expedient, and for the use of edification. A private Christian should do so even in his private conduct. He must not seek his own only, but his neighbour's wealth. He must be concerned not to hurt his neighbour, nay, he must be concerned to promote his welfare; and must consider how to act so that he may help others, and not hinder them in their holiness, comfort, or salvation. Those who allow themselves in every thing not plainly sinful in itself will often run into what is evil by accident, and do much mischief to others. Every thing lawful in itself to be done is not therefore lawfully done. Circumstances may make that a sin which in itself is none. These must be weighed, and the expediency of an action, and its tendency to edification, must be considered before it be done. Note, The welfare of others, as well as our own convenience, must be consulted in many things we do, if we would do them well.

"The earth is the Lord's, therefore you may eat any thing without scruple that is set before you as common food; and yet, because the earth is the Lord's, eat nothing that will give offence, lay a stumbling-block before others, and encourage some in idolatry, or tempt others to eat when they are not clear in their own mind that it is lawful, and so sin, and wound their own consciences." Note, Christians should be very cautious of doing what may thus prejudice the consciences of others, and weaken their authority with them, which is by all means to be kept up.

Our own humour and appetite must not determine our practice, but the honour of God and the good and edification of the church. We should not so much consult our own pleasure and interest as the advancement of the kingdom of God among men. Note, A Christian should be a man devoted to God, and of a public spirit.

24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth.*
25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, *that* eat, asking no question for conscience' sake:
26 for the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.
27 If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast,* and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake.
28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake: for the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:
29 conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another *man's* conscience?
30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?
31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.
32 Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

He presses all upon them by his own example: Even as I please all men (or study to do it) in all things (that I lawfully can), not seeking my own profit, but that of many, that they may be saved, 1Co 10:33. Note, A preacher may press his advice home with boldness and authority when he can enforce it with his own example. He is most likely to promote a public spirit in others who can give evidence of it in himself. And it is highly commendable in a minister to neglect his own advantage that he may promote the salvation of his hearers. This shows that he has a spirit suitable to his function. It is a station for public usefulness, and can never be faithfully discharged by a man of a narrow spirit and selfish principles.

33 even as I please all *men* in all *things,* not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians-11

1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

The Covering of Women's Heads

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all
things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you.
3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is
Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head
of Christ *is* God.
4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head
covered, dishonoreth his head.
5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head
uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as
if she were shaven.
6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it
be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be
covered.
7 For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he
is
the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the
man.
8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.
9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the
woman for the man.
10 For this cause ought the woman to have power [a covering, *in
sign that she is under the power of her husband*] on *her* head because
of the angels.
11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman,
neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.
12 For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also
by the woman; but all things of God.
13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto
God uncovered?
14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long
hair, it is a shame unto him?

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her*
hair is given her for a covering.
16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such
custom, neither the churches of God.

Disorder at the Lord's Supper

17 Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not, that ye
come together not for the better, but for the worse.
18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear
that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.
19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they
which are approved may be made manifest among you.
20 When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not
to eat the Lord's supper.
21 For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and
one is hungry, and another is drunken.
22 What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye
the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall
I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered
unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the *same* night in which he was
betrayed, took bread:
24 and when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat;
this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in
remembrance of me.
25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had
supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood:
this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.
26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show
the
Lord's death till he come.

Partaking of the Supper Unworthily

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.
28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.
29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
30 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.
31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.
32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.
33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.
34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

1 Corinthians-12

Spiritual Gifts

1 Now concerning spiritual *gifts,* brethren, I would not have you ignorant.
2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.
3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Now the apostle tells them none could act under the influence, nor by the power, of the Spirit of God, who disowned and blasphemed Christ: for the Spirit of God bore uncontrollable witness to Christ by prophecy, miracles, his resurrection from the dead, the success of his doctrine among men, and its effect upon them; and could never so far contradict itself as to declare him accursed. And on the other hand no man could say Jesus was the Lord (that is, live by this faith, and work miracles to prove it), but it must be by the Holy Ghost. To own

this truth before men, and maintain it to the death, and live under the influence of it, could not be done without the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. No man can call Christ Lord, with a believing subjection to him and dependence upon him, unless that faith be wrought by the Holy Ghost. No man can confess this truth in the day of trial but by the Holy Ghost animating and encouraging him. Note, We have as necessary a dependence on the Spirit's operation and influence for our sanctification and perseverance as on the mediation of Christ for our reconciliation and acceptance with God: and no man could confirm this truth with a miracle but by the Holy Ghost. No evil spirit would lend assistance, if it were in his power, to spread a doctrine and religion so ruinous to the devil's kingdom. The substance of what the apostle asserts and argues here is that whatever pretences there were to inspiration or miracles, among those who were enemies to Christianity, they could not be from the Spirit of God; but no man could believe this with his heart, nor prove with a miracle that Jesus was Christ, but by the Holy Ghost: so that the extraordinary operations and powers among them did all proceed from the Spirit of God.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.
6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.
7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.
8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
9 to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;
10 to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:
11 but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.
12 For as the body is one, and hath many members and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Tit 3:5. But it is by the Spirit, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. It is the Spirit's operation, signified by the outward administration, that makes us members. And by communion at the other ordinance we are sustained; but then it is not merely by drinking the wine, but by drinking into one Spirit. The outward administration is a means appointed of God for our participation in this great benefit; but it is baptism by the Spirit, it is internal renovation and drinking into one Spirit, partaking of his sanctifying influence from time to time, that makes us true members of Christ's body, and maintains our union with him. Being animated by one Spirit makes Christians one body.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

The disposal of members in a natural body, and their situation, are as God pleases: But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him, Ro 12:18. We may plainly perceive the divine wisdom in the distribution of the members; but it was made according to the counsel of his will; he distinguished and distributed them as he pleased. So is it also in the members of Christ's body: they are chosen out to such stations, and endued with such gifts, as God pleases. He who is sovereign Lord of all disposes his favours and gifts as he will. And who should gainsay his pleasure? What foundation is here for repining in ourselves, or envying others? We should be doing the duties of our own place, and not murmuring in ourselves, nor quarrelling with others, that we are not in theirs.

19 And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?
20 But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.
21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:
23 and those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.
24 For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that *part* which lacked:

Such is the man's concern for his whole body that on the less honourable members more abundant honour is bestowed, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. Those parts which are not fit, like the rest, to be exposed to view, which are either deformed or shameful, we most carefully clothe and cover; whereas the comely parts have no such need. The wisdom of Providence has so contrived and tempered things that the most abundant regard and honour should be paid to that which most wanted it, Ro 12:24. So should the members of Christ's body behave towards their fellow-members: instead of despising them, or reproaching them, for their infirmities, they should endeavour to cover and conceal them, and put the best face upon them that they can.

25 that there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.
26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Divine wisdom has contrived and ordered things in this manner that the members of the body should not be schismatics, divided from each other and acting upon separate interests, but well affected to each other, tenderly concerned for each other, having a fellow-feeling of each other's griefs and a communion in each other's pleasures and joys, Ro 12:25,26.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Observe the order of these offices and gifts. They are here placed in their proper ranks. Those of most value have the first place. Apostles, prophets, and teachers, were all intended to instruct the people, to inform them well in the things of God, and promote their spiritual edification: without them, neither evangelical knowledge nor holiness could have been promoted. But the rest, however fitted to answer the great intentions of Christianity, had no such immediate regard to religion, strictly so called. Note, God does, and we should, value things according to their real worth: and the use of things is the best criterion of their real worth. Those are most valuable that best answer the highest purposes. Such were apostolical powers, compared with theirs who had only the gift of healing and miracles. What holds the last and lowest rank in this enumeration is diversity of tongues. It is by itself the most useless and insignificant of all these gifts. Healing diseases, relieving the poor, helping the sick, have their use: but how vain a thing is it to speak languages, if a man does it merely to amuse or boast himself! This may indeed raise the admiration, but cannot promote the edification, of the hearers, nor do them any good. And yet it is manifest from Ro 14:1-23 that the Corinthians valued themselves exceedingly on this gift. Note, How proper a method it is to beat down pride to let persons know the true value of what they pride themselves in! It is but too common a thing for men to value themselves most on what is least worth: and it is of great use to bring them to a sober mind by letting them know how much they are mistaken.

We must be content with our own rank and share, if they be lower and less than those of others. We must not be conceited of ourselves, and despise others, if we are in the higher rank and have greater gifts. Every member of the body is to preserve its own rank, and do its own office; and all are to minister to one another, and promote the good of the body in general, without envying, or despising, or neglecting, or ill-using, any one particular member.

How blessed a constitution were the Christian church, if all the members did their duty!

29 *Are* all apostles? *are* all prophets? *are* all teachers? *are* all
workers of miracles?
30 have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues?
do all interpret?
31 But covet earnestly the best gifts.
And yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians-13

Love

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and
have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a
tinkling cymbal.
2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all
mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so
that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am
nothing.
3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor,* and though
I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth
me nothing.

The outward acts of charity: Bestowing his goods to feed the poor, 1Co 13:3. Should all a man has be laid out in this manner, if he had no charity, it would profit him nothing. There may be an open and lavish hand, where there is no liberal and charitable heart. The external act of giving alms may proceed from a very ill principle. Vain-glorious ostentation, or a proud conceit of merit, may put a man to large expense this way who has no true love to God nor men. Our doing good to others will do none to us, if it be not well done, namely, from a principle of devotion and charity, love to God, and good-will to men. Note, If we leave charity out of religion, the most costly services will be of no avail to us. If we give away all we have, while we withhold the heart from God, it will not profit. 5. Even sufferings, and even those of the most grievous kind: If we give our bodies to be burnt, without charity, it profiteth nothing, 1Co 13:3. Should we sacrifice our

lives for the faith of the gospel, and be burnt to death in maintenance of its truth, this will stand us in no stead without charity, unless we be animated to these sufferings by a principle of true devotion to God, and sincere love to his church and people, and good-will to mankind. The outward carriage may be plausible, when the invisible principle is very bad. Some men have thrown themselves into the fire to procure a name and reputation among men. It is possible that the very same principle may have worked up some to resolution enough to die for their religion who never heartily believed and embraced it. But vindicating religion at the cost of our lives will profit nothing if we feel not the power of it; and true charity is the very heart and spirit of religion. If we feel none of its sacred heat in our hearts, it will profit nothing, though we be burnt to ashes for the truth. Note, The most grievous sufferings, the most costly sacrifices, will not recommend us to God, if we do not love the brethren; should we give our own bodies to be burnt, it would not profit us. How strange a way of recommending themselves to God are those got into who hope to do it by burning others, by murdering, and massacring, and tormenting their fellow-christians, or by any injurious usage of them! My soul, enter not thou into their secrets. If I cannot hope to recommend myself to God by giving my own body to be burnt while I have no charity, I will never hope to do it by burning or maltreating others, in open defiance to all charity.

4 Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not;
charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
5 doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not
easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

The apostle gives us in these verses some of the properties and effects of charity, both to describe and commend it, that we may know whether we have this grace and that if we have not we may fall in love with what is so exceedingly amiable, and not rest till we have obtained it. It is an excellent grace, and has a world of good properties belonging to it. As,

I. It is long suffering--makrothymei. It can endure evil, injury, and provocation, without being filled with resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives it power

over the angry passions, and furnishes it with a persevering patience, that shall rather wait and wish for the reformation of a brother than fly out in resentment of his conduct. It will put up with many slights and neglects from the person it loves, and wait long to see the kindly effects of such patience on him.

II. It is kind--chresteuetai. It is benign, bountiful; it is courteous and obliging. The law of kindness is in her lips; her heart is large, and her hand open. She is ready to show favours and to do good. She seeks to be useful; and not only seizes on opportunities of doing good, but searches for them. This is her general character. She is patient under injuries, and apt and inclined to do all the good offices in her power. And under these two generals all the particulars of the character may be reduced.

III. Charity suppresses envy: It envieth not; it is not grieved at the good of others; neither at their gifts nor at their good qualities, their honours not their estates. If we love our neighbour we shall be so far from envying his welfare, or being displeased with it, that we shall share in it and rejoice at it. His bliss and sanctification will be an addition to ours, instead of impairing or lessening it. This is the proper effect of kindness and benevolence: envy is the effect of ill-will. The prosperity of those to whom we wish well can never grieve us; and the mind which is bent on doing good to all can never with ill to any.

IV. Charity subdues pride and vain-glory; It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, is not bloated with self-conceit, does not swell upon its acquisitions, nor arrogate to itself that honour, or power, or respect, which does not belong to it. It is not insolent, apt to despise others, or trample on them, or treat them with contempt and scorn. Those who are animated with a principle of true brotherly love will in honour prefer one another, Ro 12:10. They will do nothing out of a spirit of contention or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind will esteem others better than themselves, Php 2:3. True love will give us an esteem of our brethren, and raise our value for them; and this will limit our esteem of ourselves,

and prevent the tumours of self-conceit and arrogance. These ill qualities can never grow out of tender affection for the brethren, nor a diffusive benevolence. The word rendered in our translation vaunteth itself bears other significations; nor is the proper meaning, as I can find, settled; but in every sense and meaning true charity stands in opposition to it. The Syriac renders it, non tumultuatur--does not raise tumults and disturbances. Charity calms the angry passions, instead of raising them. Others render it, Non perperàm et perversè agit--It does not act insidiously with any, seek to ensnare them, nor tease them with needless importunities and addresses. It is not froward, nor stubborn and untractable, nor apt to be cross and contradictory. Some understand it of dissembling and flattery, when a fair face is put on, and fine words are said, without any regard to truth, or intention of good. Charity abhors such falsehood and flattery. Nothing is commonly more pernicious, nor more apt to cross the purposes of true love and good will.

V. Charity is careful not to pass the bounds of decency; ouk aschemonei--it behaveth not unseemly; it does nothing indecorous, nothing that in the common account of men is base or vile. It does nothing out of place or time; but behaves towards all men as becomes their rank and ours, with reverence and respect to superiors, with kindness and condescension to inferiors, with courtesy and good-will towards all men. It is not for breaking order, confounding ranks bringing all men on a level; but for keeping up the distinction God has made between men, and acting decently in its own station, and minding its own business, without taking upon it to mend, or censure, or despise, the conduct of others. Charity will do nothing that misbecomes it.

VI. Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness: Seeketh not its own, does not inordinately desire nor seek its own praise, or honour, or profit, or pleasure. Indeed self-love, in some degree, is natural to all men, enters into their very constitution. And a reasonable love of self is by our Saviour made the measure of our love to others, that charity which is here described, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The apostle does not mean that charity

destroys all regard to self; he does not mean that the charitable man should never challenge what is his own, but utterly neglect himself and all his interests. Charity must then root up that principle which is wrought into our nature. But charity never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or with the neglect of others. It often neglects its own for the sake of others; prefers their welfare, and satisfaction, and advantage, to its own; and it ever prefers the weal of the public, of the community, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to its private advantage. It would not advance, nor aggrandize, nor enrich, nor gratify itself, at the cost and damage of the public.

VII. It tempers and restrains the passions. Ou paroxynetai--is not exasperated. It corrects a sharpness of temper, sweetens and softens the mind, so that it does not suddenly conceive, nor long continue, a vehement passion. Where the fire of love is kept in, the flames of wrath will not easily kindle, nor long keep burning. Charity will never be angry without a cause, and will endeavour to confine the passions within proper limits, that they may not exceed the measure that is just, either in degree or duration. Anger cannot rest in the bosom where love reigns. It is hard to be angry with those we love, but very easy to drop our resentments and be reconciled.

VIII. Charity thinks no evil. It cherishes no malice, nor gives way to revenge: so some understand it. It is not soon, nor long, angry; it is never mischievous, nor inclined to revenge; it does not suspect evil of others, ou logizetai to kakon--it does not reason out evil, charge guilt upon them by inference and innuendo, when nothing of this sort appears open. True love is not apt to be jealous and suspicious; it will hide faults that appear, and draw a veil over them, instead of hunting and raking out those that lie covered and concealed: it will never indulge suspicion without proofs, but will rather incline to darken and disbelieve evidence against the person it affects. It will hardly give into an ill opinion of another, and it will do it with regret and reluctance when the evidence cannot be resisted; hence it will never be forward to suspect ill, and reason itself into a bad opinion upon mere appearances, nor

give way to suspicion without any. It will not make the worst construction of things, but put the best face that it can on circumstances that have no good appearance.

IX. The matter of its joy and pleasure is here suggested: 1. Negatively: It rejoiceth not in iniquity. It takes no pleasure in doing injury or hurt to any. It thinks not evil of any, without very clear proof. It wishes ill to none, much less will it hurt or wrong any, and least of all make this matter of its delight, rejoice in doing harm and mischief. Nor will it rejoice at the faults and failings of others, and triumph over them, either out of pride or ill-will, because it will set off its own excellences or gratify its spite. The sins of others are rather the grief of a charitable spirit than its sport or delight; they will touch it to the quick, and stir all its compassion, but give it no entertainment. It is the very height of malice to take pleasure in the misery of a fellow-creature. And is not falling into sin the greatest calamity that can befal one? How inconsistent is it with Christian charity, to rejoice at such fall! 2. Affirmatively: It rejoiceth in the truth, is glad of the success of the gospel, commonly called the truth, by way of emphasis, in the New Testament; and rejoices to see men moulded into an evangelical temper by it, and made good. It takes no pleasure in their sins, but is highly delighted to see them do well, to approve themselves men of probity and integrity. It gives it much satisfaction to see truth and justice prevail among men, innocency cleared, and mutual faith and trust established, and to see piety and true religion flourish.

X. It beareth all things, it endureth all things, panta stegei, panta hypomenei. Some read the first, covers all things. So the original also signifies. Charity will cover a multitude of sins, 1Pe 4:8. It will draw a veil over them, as far as it can consistently with duty. It is not for blazing nor publishing the faults of a brother, till duty manifestly demands it. Necessity only can extort this from the charitable mind. Though such a man be free to tell his brother his faults in private, he is very unwilling to expose him by making them public. Thus we do by our own faults, and thus charity would teach us to do by the faults of others; not publish them to

their shame and reproach, but cover them from public notice as long as we can, and be faithful to God and to others. Or, it beareth all things,--will pass by and put up with injuries, without indulging anger or cherishing revenge, will be patient upon provocation, and long patient, panta hypomenei--holds firm, though it be much shocked, and borne hard upon; sustains all manner of injury and ill usage, and bears up under it, such as curses, contumacies, slanders, prison, exile, bonds, torments, and death itself, for the sake of the injurious, and of others; and perseveres in this firmness. Note, What a fortitude and firmness fervent love will give the mind! What cannot a lover endure for the beloved and for his sake! How many slights and injuries will he put up with! How many hazards will he run and how many difficulties encounter!

XI. Charity believes and hopes well of others: Believeth all things; hopeth all things. Indeed charity does by no means destroy prudence, and, out of mere simplicity and silliness, believe every word, Pr 14:15. Wisdom may dwell with love, and charity be cautious. But it is apt to believe well of all, to entertain a good opinion of them when there is no appearance to the contrary; nay, to believe well when there may be some dark appearances, if the evidence of ill be not clear. All charity is full of candour, apt to make the best of every thing, and put on it the best face and appearance? it will judge well, and believe well, as far as it can with any reason, and will rather stretch its faith beyond appearances for the support of a kind opinion; but it will go into a bad one with the upmost reluctance, and fence against it as much as it fairly and honestly can. And when, in spite of inclination, it cannot believe well of others, it will yet hope well, and continue to hope as long as there is any ground for it. It will not presently conclude a case desperate, but wishes the amendment of the worst of men, and is very apt to hope for what it wishes. How well-natured and amiable a thing is Christian charity? How lovely a mind is that which is tinctured throughout with such benevolence, and has it diffused over its whole frame! Happy the man who has this heavenly fire glowing in his heart, flowing out of his mouth, and diffusing its warmth over all with whom he has to do! How

lovely a thing would Christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more actuated and animated by this divine principle, and paid a due regard to a command on which its blessed author laid a chief stress! A new commandment give I to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another, Joh 13:34. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, Joh 13:35. Blessed Jesus! how few of thy professed disciples are to be distinguished and marked out by this characteristic!

6 rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
7 beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
8 Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.
9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

From its longer continuance and duration: Charity never faileth. It is a permanent and perpetual grace, lasting as eternity; whereas the extraordinary gifts on which the Corinthians valued themselves were of short continuance. They were only to edify the church on earth, and that but for a time, not during its whole continuance in this world; but in heaven would be all superseded, which yet is the very seat and element of love. Prophecy must fail, that is, either the prediction of things to come (which is its most common sense) or the interpretation of scripture by immediate inspiration. Tongues will cease, that is, the miraculous power of speaking languages without learning them. There will be but one language in heaven. There is no confusion of tongues in the region of perfect tranquility. And knowledge will vanish away. Not that, in the perfect state above, holy and happy souls shall be unknowing, ignorant: it is a very poor happiness that can consist with utter ignorance. The apostle is plainly speaking of miraculous gifts, and therefore of knowledge to be had out of the common way (see 1Co 14:6), a knowledge of mysteries supernaturally communicated. Such knowledge was to vanish away. Some indeed understand it of common knowledge acquired

by instruction, taught and learnt. This way of knowing is to vanish away, though the knowledge itself, once acquired, will not be lost. But it is plain that the apostle is here setting the grace of charity in opposition to supernatural gifts. And it is more valuable, because more durable; it shall last, when they shall be no more; it shall enter into heaven, where they will have no place, because they will be of no use, though, in a sense, even our common knowledge may be said to cease in heaven, by reason of the improvement that will then be made in it. The light of a candle is perfectly obscured by the sun shining in its strength.

II. He hints that these gifts are adapted only to a state of imperfection: We know in part, and we prophesy in part, 1Co 13:9. Our best knowledge and our greatest abilities are at present like our condition, narrow and temporary. Even the knowledge they had by inspiration was but in part. How little a portion of God, and the unseen world, was heard even by apostles and inspired men! How much short do others come of them! But these gifts were fitted to the present imperfect state of the church, valuable in themselves, but not to be compared with charity, because they were to vanish with the imperfections of the church, nay, and long before, whereas charity was to last for ever.

III. He takes occasion hence to show how much better it will be with the church hereafter than it can be here. A state of perfection is in view (1Co 13:10): When that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When the end is once attained, the means will of course be abolished. There will be no need of tongues, and prophecy, and inspired knowledge, in a future life, because then the church will be in a state of perfection, complete both in knowledge and holiness. God will be known then clearly, and in a manner by intuition, and as perfectly as the capacity of glorified minds will allow; not by such transient glimpses, and little portions, as here. The difference between these two states is here pointed at in two particulars:

1 The present state is a state of childhood, the future that of manhood: When I was a child, I spoke as a child (that is, as some think, spoke with tongues), I understood as a child; ephronoun--sapiebam (that is, "I prophesied, I was taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, in such an extraordinary way as manifested I was not out of my childish state"), I thought, or reasoned, elogizomen, as a child; but, when I became a man, I put away childish things. Such is the difference between earth and heaven. What narrow views, what confused and indistinct notions of things, have children, in comparison of grown men! And how naturally do men, when reason is ripened and matured, despise and relinquish their infant thoughts, put them away, reject them, esteem as nothing! Thus shall we think of our most valued gifts and acquisitions in this world, when we come to heaven. We shall despise our childish folly, in priding ourselves in such things when we are grown up to men in Christ.

2. Things are all dark and confused now, in comparison of what they will be hereafter: Now we see through a glass darkly (en ainigmati, in a riddle), then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known. Now we can only discern things at a great distance, as through a telescope, and that involved in clouds and obscurity; but hereafter the things to be known will be near and obvious, open to our eyes; and our knowledge will be free from all obscurity and error. God is to be seen face to face; and we are to know him as we are known by him; not indeed as perfectly, but in some sense in the same manner. We are known to him by mere inspection; he turns his eye towards us, and sees and searches us throughout. We shall then fix our eye on him, and see him as he is, 1Jo 3:2. We shall know how we are known, enter into all the mysteries of divine love and grace. O glorious change! To pass from darkness to light, from clouds to the clear sunshine of our Saviour's face, and in God's own light to see light! Ps 36:9. Note, It is the light of heaven only that will remove all clouds and darkness from the face of God. It is at best but twilight while we are in this world; there it will be perfect and eternal day.

IV. To sum up the excellences of charity, he prefers it not only to gifts, but to other graces, to faith and hope (1Co 13:13): And now abide faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these is charity. True grace is much more excellent than any spiritual gifts whatever. And faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces, of which charity is the chief, being the end to which the other two are but means. This is the divine nature, the soul's felicity, or its complacential rest in God, and holy delight in all his saints. And it is everlasting work, when faith and hope shall be no more. Faith fixes on the divine revelation, and assents to that: hope fastens on future felicity, and waits for that: and in heaven faith well be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition. There is no room to believe and hope, when we see and enjoy. But love fastens on the divine perfections themselves, and the divine image on the creatures, and our mutual relation both to God and them. These will all shine forth in the most glorious splendours in another world, and there will love be made perfect; there we shall perfectly love God, because he will appear amiable for ever, and our hearts will kindle at the sight, and glow with perpetual devotion. And there shall we perfectly love one another, when all the saints meet there, when none but saints are there, and saints made perfect. O blessed state! How much surpassing the best below! O amiable and excellent grace of charity! How much does it exceed the most valuable gift, when it outshines every grace, and is the everlasting consummation of them! When faith and hope are at an end, true charity will burn for ever with the brightest flame. Note, Those border most upon the heavenly state and perfection whose hearts are fullest of this divine principle, and burn with the most fervent charity. It is the surest offspring of God, and bears his fairest impression. For God is love, 1Jo 4:8,16. And where God is to be seen as he is, and face to face, there charity is in its greatest height--there, and there only, will it be perfected.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a
child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put
away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face:
now I

know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

1 Corinthians-14

Speaking in Tongues

1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts,* but rather that ye may prophesy.
2 For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him;* howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.
3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort.
4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Whereas the end of speaking in the church is to edify the church (1Co 14:4), to which prophesying, or interpreting scripture by inspiration or otherwise, is immediately adapted. Note, That is the best and most eligible gift which best answers the purposes of charity and does most good; not that which can edify ourselves only, but that which will edify the church. Such is prophesying, or preaching, and interpreting scripture, compared with speaking in an unknown tongue.

5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.
6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?
7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?
8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to
be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for
ye shall speak into the air.
10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world,
and none of them *is* without signification.
11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be
unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh
shall be a barbarian unto me.
12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts,* seek
that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.
13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray
that he may interpret.
14 For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth,
but my understanding is unfruitful.
15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with
the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will
sing with the understanding also.
16 Else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he
that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy
giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou
sayest?
17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.
18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:
19 yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my
understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also,
than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.
20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice
be ye children, but in understanding be men.
21 In the law it is written,
With *men of* other tongues and other
lips will I speak unto this people;
and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

I. Tongues, as the Corinthians used them, were rather a token of judgment from God than mercy to any people (1Co 14:21): In the law (that is, the Old Testament) it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people; and yet for all this they will not hear me, saith the Lord, Isa 28:11. Compare De 28:46,49. To both these passages, it is thought, the apostle refers.

Both are delivered by way of threatening, and one is supposed to interpret the other. The meaning in this view is that it is an evidence that a people are abandoned of God when he gives them up to this sort of instruction, to the discipline of those who speak in another language. And surely the apostle's discourse implies, "You should not be fond of the tokens of divine displeasure. God can have no gracious regards to those who are left merely to this sort of instruction, and taught in language which they cannot understand. They can never be benefited by such teaching as this; and, when they are left to it, it is a sad sign that God gives them over as past cure." And should Christians covet to be in such a state, or to bring the churches into it? Yet thus did the Corinthian preachers in effect, who would always deliver their inspirations in an unknown tongue.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Tongues were rather a sign to unbelievers than to believers, 1Co 14:22. They were a spiritual gift, intended for the conviction and conversion of infidels, that they might be brought into the Christian church; but converts were to be built up in Christianity by profitable instructions in their own language. The gift of tongues was necessary to spread Christianity, and gather churches; it was proper and intended to convince unbelievers of that doctrine which Christians had already embraced; but prophesying, and interpreting scripture in their own language, were most for the edification of such as did already believe: so that speaking with tongues in Christians assemblies was altogether out of time and place; neither one nor the other was proper for it. Note, That gifts may be rightly used, it is proper to know the ends which they are intended to serve. To go about the conversion of infidels, as the apostles did, had been a vain undertaking without the gift of tongues, and the discovery of this gift; but, in an assembly of Christians already converted to the Christian faith, to make use and ostentation of this gift would be perfectly impertinent, because it would be of no advantage to the assembly; not for conviction of truth, because they had already embraced it; not for their edification, because they did not understand, and could not get benefit without understanding, what they heard.

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one
place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that*
are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are
mad?
24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or
one
unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:
25 and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so
falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that
God is in you of a truth.
26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of
you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a
revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto
edifying.
27 If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or
at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one
interpret.
28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the
church;
and let him speak to himself, and to God.
29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.
30 If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first
hold his peace.
31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all
may be comforted.
32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.
33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as
in all churches of the saints.
34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not
permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be
under obedience, as also saith the law.
35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their
husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in
the church.
36 What! came the word of God out from you? or came it unto
you only?

37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let
him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are
the commandments of the Lord.
38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.
39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to
speak with tongues.
40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians-15

The Resurrection of the Dead

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I
preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein
ye stand;
2 by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I
preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.
3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also
received, how that Christ died for our sins according to
the Scriptures;
4 and that he was buried, and that he rose again the
third day according to the Scriptures:
5 and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:
6 after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at
once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present,
but some are fallen asleep.
7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.
8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out
of due time.

(1.) That he was one born out of due time (1Co 15:8), an abortive, ektroma, a child dead born, and out of time. Paul resembled such a birth, in the suddenness of his new birth, in that he was not matured for the apostolic function, as the others were, who had personal converse with our Lord. He was called to the office when such conversation was not to be had, he was out of time for it. He had not known nor followed the Lord, nor been formed in his family, as the others were, for this high and honourable function. This was in Paul's account a very humbling circumstance.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

By owning himself inferior to the other apostles: Not meet to be called an apostle. The least, because the last of them; called latest to the office, and not worthy to be called an apostle, to have either the office or the title, because he had been a persecutor of the church of God, 1Co 15:9. Indeed, he tells us elsewhere that he was not a whit behind the very chief apostles (2Co 11:5)-- for gifts, graces, service, and sufferings, inferior to none of them. Yet some circumstances in his case made him think more meanly of himself than of any of them. Note, A humble spirit, in the midst of high attainments, is a great ornament to any man; it sets his good qualities off to much greater advantage. What kept Paul low in an especial manner was the remembrance of his former wickedness, his raging and destructive zeal against Christ and him members. Note, How easily God can bring a good out of the greatest evil! When sinners are by divine grace turned into saints, he makes the remembrance of their former sins very serviceable, to make them humble, and diligent, and faithful.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

By ascribing all that was valuable in him to divine grace: But by the grace of God I am what I am, 1Co 15:10. It is God's prerogative to say, I am that I am; it is our privilege to be able to say, "By God's grace we are what we are." We are nothing but what God makes us, nothing in religion but what his grace makes us. All that is good in us is a stream from this fountain. Paul was sensible of this, and kept humble and thankful by this conviction; so should we. Nay, though he was conscious of his own diligence, and zeal, and service, so that he could say of himself, the grace of God was not given him in vain, but he laboured more abundantly than they all: he thought himself so much more the debtor to divine grace. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 and if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

17 and if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

And is it not absurd for one who believes in Christ to admit a principle that involves so absurd an inference? Can that man have faith in Christ who can believe concerning him that he will leave his faithful servants, whether ministers or others, in a worse state than his enemies? Note, It were a gross absurdity in a Christian to admit the supposition of no resurrection or future state. It would leave no hope beyond this world, and would frequently make his condition the worst in the world. Indeed, the Christian is by his religion crucified to this world, and taught to live upon the hope of another. Carnal pleasures are insipid to him in a great degree; and spiritual and heavenly pleasures are those which he affects and pants after. How sad is his case indeed, if he must be dead to worldly pleasures and yet never hope for any better!

Thus did our blessed Lord himself, Heb 12:2. And thus we are bidden to do after his example, and have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life. This is the very end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (1Pe 1:9), not only what it will issue in, but what we should aim at.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the
resurrection of the dead.

For, since by man came death, it was every way proper that by man should come deliverance from it, or, which is all one, a resurrection, 1Co 15:21. And so, as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive; as through the sin of the first Adam all men became mortal, because all derived from him the same sinful nature, so through the merit and resurrection of Christ shall all who are made to partake of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature, revive, and become immortal. All who die die through the sin of Adam; all who are raised, in the sense of the apostle, rise through the merit and power of Christ. But the meaning is not that, as all men died in Adam, so all men, without exception, shall be made alive in Christ; for the scope of the apostle's argument restrains the general meaning. Christ rose as the first-fruits; therefore those that are Christ's (1Co 15:23) shall rise too.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits;
afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
24 Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the
kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down
all rule, and all authority and power.
25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
26 The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.
27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith,
All things are put under *him, it is* manifest that he is
excepted, which did put all things under him.
28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the
Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under
him, that God may be all in all.
29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if
the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the
dead?
30 and why stand we in jeopardy every hour?
31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord,
I
die daily.

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.

It would be a much wiser thing to take the comforts of this life: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die (1Co 15:32); let us turn epicures. Thus this sentence means in the prophet, Isa 22:13. Let us even live like beasts, if we must die like them. This would be a wiser course, if there were no resurrection, no after-life or state, than to abandon all the pleasures of life, and offer and expose ourselves to all the miseries of life, and live in continual peril of perishing by savage rage and cruelty. This passage also plainly implies, as I have hinted above, that those who denied the resurrection among the Corinthians were perfect Sadducees, of whose principles we have this account in the holy writings, that they say, There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit (Ac 23:8), that is, "Man is all body, there is nothing in him to survive the body, nor will that, when once he is dead, ever revive again."

33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Error and vice are infectious: and, if we would avoid the contagion, we must keep clear of those who have taken it. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed, Pr 13:20. Here is an exhortation to break off their sins, and rouse themselves, and lead a more holy and righteous life (1Co 15:34): Awake to righteousness, or awake righteously, eknepsate dikaios, and sin not, or sin no more. "Rouse yourselves, break off your sins by repentance: renounce and forsake every evil way, correct whatever is amiss, and do not, by sloth and stupidity, be led away into such conversation and principles as will sap your Christian hopes, and corrupt your practice." The disbelief of a future state destroys all virtue and piety. But the best improvement to be made of the truth is to cease from sin, and set ourselves to the business of religion, and that in good earnest. If there will be a resurrection and a future life, we should live and act as those who believe it, and should not give into such senseless and sottish notions as will debauch our morals, and render us loose and sensual in our lives.Awake - Arouse from stupidity on this subject; awake from your conscious security; be alarmed, as it is right and proper that you should be, for you are surrounded by dangers, and

by those who would lead you into error and vice; rouse from such wild and delusive opinions as these persons have, and exercise a constant vigilance as becomes those who are the friends of God and the expectants of a blessed resurrection."

The word rendered - being together; companionship; close intercourse; converse. It refers not to discourse only, but to intercourse, or companionship. Paul quotes these words from Menander, (in Sentent. Comicor. Gr. p. 248, ed. Steph.,) a Greek poet. He thus shows that he was, in some degree at least, familiar with the Greek writers. Acts 17:28. Menander was a celebrated comic poet of Athens, educated under Theophrastus. Paul quoted this sentiment from a Greek poet, perhaps, because it might be supposed to have weight with the Greeks. It was a sentiment of one of their own writers, and here was an occasion in which it was exactly applicable. It is implied in this, that there were some persons who were endeavouring to corrupt their minds from the simplicity of the gospel. The sentiment of the passage is, that the intercourse of evil-minded men, or that the close friendship and conversation of those who hold erroneous opinions, or who are impure in their lives, tends to corrupt the morals, the heart, the sentiments of others. The particular thing to which Paul here applies it, is the subject of the resurrection. Such intercourse would tend to corrupt the simplicity of their faith, and pervert their views of the truth of the gospel, and thus corrupt their lives. It is always true that such intercourse has a pernicious effect on the mind and the heart. It is done,

(1.) by their direct effort to corrupt the opinions, and to lead others into sin.

(2.) By the secret, silent influence of their words, and conversation, and example. We have less horror at vice by becoming familiar with it; we look with less alarm on error when we hear it often expressed; we become less watchful and cautious when we are constantly with the gay, the worldly, the unprincipled, and the vicious. Hence Christ sought that there should be a pure society,

and that his people should principally seek the friendship, and conversation of each other, and withdraw from the world. It is in the way that Paul here refers to, that Christians embrace false doctrines; that they lose their spirituality, love of prayer, fervour of piety, and devotion to God. It is in this way that the simple are beguiled, the young corrupted, and that vice, and crime, and infidelity spread over the world.

34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have
not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.
35 But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and
with what body do they come?
36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:
37 and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that
shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some
other *grain:*
38 but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every
seed his own body.
39 All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of
men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another
of birds.
40 *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the
glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is*
another.
41 *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon,
and another glory of the stars; for *one* star differeth from
another star in glory.

All this is to intimate to us that the bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be so far changed, that they will be fitted for the heavenly regions, and that there will be a variety of glories among the bodies of the dead, when they shall be raised, as there is among the sun, and moon, and stars, nay among the stars themselves

42 So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in
corruption, it is raised in incorruption:
43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in
weakness, it is raised in power:

(1.) It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown. Burying the dead is like sowing them; it is like committing the seed

to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. And our bodies, which are sown, are corruptible, liable to putrefy and moulder, and crumble to dust; but, when we rise, they will be out of the power of the grave, and never more be liable to corruption.

(2.) It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. Ours is at present a vile body, Php 3:21. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body; it is thrown into the grave as a despised and broken vessel, in which there is no pleasure. But at the resurrection a glory will be put upon it; it will be made like the glorious body of our Saviour; it will be purged from all the dregs of earth, and refined into an ethereal substance, and shine out with a splendour resembling his.

(3.) It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is laid in the earth, a poor helpless thing, wholly in the power of death, deprived of all vital capacities and powers, of life and strength: it is utterly unable to move or stir. But when we arise our bodies will have heavenly life and vigour infused into them; they will be hale, and firm, and durable, and lively, and liable no more to any infirmity, weakness, or decay.

(4.) It is sown a natural, or animal body, soma psychikon, a body fitted to the low condition and sensitive pleasures and enjoyments of this life, which are all gross in comparison of the heavenly state and enjoyments. But when we rise it will be quite otherwise; our body will rise spiritual. Not that body would be changed into spirit: this would be a contradiction in our common conceptions; it would be as much as to say, Body changed into what is not body, matter made immaterial. The expression is to be understood comparatively. We shall at the resurrection have bodies purified and refined to the last degree, made light and agile; and, though they are not changed into spirit, yet made fit to be perpetual associates of spirits made perfect. And why should it not be as much in the power of God to raise incorruptible, glorious, lively, spiritual bodies, out of the ruins of those vile, corruptible, lifeless, and animal ones, as first to make matter out of nothing, and then,

out of the same mass of matter, produce such variety of beings, both in earth and heaven? To God all things are possible; and this cannot be impossible.

44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.
There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul;
the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.
46 Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.
47 The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven.
48 As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.
49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.
50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.
51 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must*
put on immortality.
54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
55 O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

O death. This triumphant exclamation is the commencement of the fourth division of the chapter--the practical consequences of the doctrine. It is such an exclamation as every man with right feelings will be disposed to make, who contemplates the ravages of death; who looks upon a World where in all forms he has reigned, and who then contemplates the glorious truth, that a complete and final

triumph has been obtained over this great enemy of the happiness of man, and that man would die no more. It is a triumphant view which bursts upon the soul as it contemplates the fact that the work of the second Adam has repaired the ruins of the first, and that man is redeemed; his body will be raised; not another human being should die, and the work of death should be ended. Nay, it is more. Death is not only at an end; it shall not only cease, but its evils shall be repaired; and the glory and honour shall encompasse the body of man, such as would have been unknown had there n no death. No commentary can add to the beauty and force of the language in this verse; and the best way to see its beauty, and to enjoy it, is to sit down and think of DEATH; of what death has been, and has done; of the millions and millions that have died; of the earth strewed with the dead, and "arched with graves;" of our own death; the certainty that we must die, and our parents, and brothers, and sisters, and children, and friends; that all, all must die;--and then to suffer the truth, in its full-orbed splendour, to rise upon us, that the time will come when DEATH SHALL, BE AT AN END. Who, in such contemplation, can refrain from the language of triumph, and from hymns of praise? Where is thy sting? The word which is here rendered sting (κεντρον) denotes, properly, a prick, a point; hence a goad or stimulus; i.e., a rod or staff with an iron point, for goading oxen, Acts 9:5;) and then a sting properly, as of scorpions, bees, etc. It denotes here a venomous thing, or weapon, applied to death personified, as if death employed it to destroy life, as the sting of a bee or a scorpion is used, The idea is derived from the venomous sting of serpents, or other reptiles, as being destructive and painful. The language here is the language of exultation, as if that was taken away or destroyed. O grave, αδη. Hades, the place of the dead. It is not improperly rendered, however, grave. The word properly denotes a place of darkness; then the world, or abodes of the dead. According to the Hebrews, hades, or sheol, was a vast subterranean receptacle, or abode, where the souls of the dead existed. It was dark, deep, still, awful. The descent to it was through the grave; and the spirits of all the dead were supposed to be assembled there; the righteous occupying the upper regions, and the wicked the lower. Isa 14:9. Compare Lowth, Lect. on Heb. Poet. vii.

Campbell, Prel. Diss. vi. part 2, & 2. It refers here to the dead; and means that the grave, or hades, should no longer have a victory. Thy victory? Since the dead are to rise; since all the graves are to give up all that dwell in them; since no man will die after that, where is its victory? It is taken away. It is despoiled. The power of death and the grave is vanquished, and Christ is triumphant over all. It has been well remarked here, that the words in this verse rise above the plain and simple language of prose, and resemble a hymn, into which the apostle breaks out in view of the glorious truth which is here presented to the mind. The whole verse,is indeed a somewhat loose quotation from Hoss 13:14, which we translate---

"O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

But which the Seventy render-

"O death, where is thy punishment? O grave, where is thy sting?"

Probably Paul did not intend this as a direct quotation; but he spoke as a man naturally does who is familiar with the language of the Scriptures, and used it to express the sense which he intended, without meaning to make a direct and literal quotation. The form which Paul uses is so poetic in its structure, that Pope has adopted it, with only a change in the location of the members, in the "Dying Christian:"

"O grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting."

The sting of death. The sting which death bears; that with which he effects his: purpose; that which is made use of to inflict death; or that which is the cause of death. There would be no death without sin. The apostle here personifies death, as if it were a living being, and as making use of sin to inflict death, or as being the sting, or envenomed instrument, with which he inflicts the mortal agony. The idea is, that sin is the cause of death. It introduced it; it makes it certain; it is the cause of the pain, distress, agony, and horror which attends it. Had there been no sin, men would not have died. If there were no sin, death would not be attended with horror or alarm. For why should innocence be afraid to die? What has innocence to fear anywhere in the universe of a just God? The fact, therefore, that men die, is proof that they are sinners; the fact that

they feel horror and alarm, is proof that they feel themselves to be guilty, and that they are afraid to go into the presence of a holy God. If this be taken away, if sin be removed, of course the horror, and remorse, and alarm which it is fitted to produce will be removed also. Is sin. Sin is the cause of it. Rom 5:12. The strength of sin. Its power over the mind; its terrific and dreadful energy; and especially its power to produce alarm in the hour of death. Is the law. The pure and holy law of God. This idea Paul has illustrated at length in Rom 7:9-13. Rom 7:9, and Rom 7:10-13, he probably made the statement here in order to meet the Jews, and to show that the law of God had no power to take away the fear of death; and that, therefore, there was need of the gospel, and that this alone could do it. The Jews maintained that a man might be justified and saved by obedience to the law. Paul here shows that it is the law which gives its chief rigour to sin, and that it does not tend to subdue or destroy it; and that power is seen most strikingly in the pangs and horrors of a guilty conscience on the bed of death. There was need, therefore, of the gospel, which alone could remove the cause of these horrors, by taking away sin, and thus leaving the pardoned man to die in peace. Rom 4:15.

56 The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

57 But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast,
unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,
forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the
Lord.

The foundation for this triumph is here intimated,

(1.) In the account given whence death had its power to hurt: The sting of death is sin. This gives venom to his dart: this alone puts it into the power of death to hurt and kill. Sin unpardoned, and nothing else, can keep any under his power. And the strength of sin is the law; it is the divine threatening against the transgressors of the law, the curse there denounced, that gives power to sin. Note, Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its hurtful power.

By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, Ro 5:12. It is its cursed progeny and offspring.

(2.) In the account given of the victory saints obtain over it through Jesus Christ, 1Co 15:56. The sting of death is sin; but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting. He has made atonement for sin; he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore, but it cannot hurt. The strength of sin is the law; but the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer's becoming a curse for us. So that sin is deprived of its strength and sting, through Christ, that is, by his incarnation, suffering, and death. Death may seize a believer, but cannot sting him, cannot hold him in his power. There is a day coming when the grave shall open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, and become incorruptible and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then will it plainly appear that, as to them, death will have lost its strength and sting; and all by the mediation of Christ, by his dying in their room. By dying, he conquered death, and spoiled the grave; and, through faith in him, believers become sharers in his conquests. They often rejoice beforehand, in the hope of this victory; and, when they arise glorious from the grave, they will boldly triumph over death. Note, It is altogether owing to the grace of God in Christ that sin is pardoned and death disarmed. The law puts arms into the hand of death, to destroy the sinner; but pardon of sin takes away this power from the law, and deprives death of its strength and sting. It is by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we are freely justified, Ro 3:24. It is no wonder, therefore,

(3.) If this triumph of the saints over death should issue in thanksgiving to God: Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Christ Jesus, our Lord, 1Co 15:57. The way to sanctify all our joy is to make it tributary to the praise of God. Then only do we enjoy our blessings and honours in a holy manner when God has his revenue of glory out of it, and we are free to pay it to him. And this really improves and exalts our satisfaction. We are conscious at once of having done our duty and enjoyed our pleasure. And what can be more joyous in itself than the saints'

triumph over death, when they shall rise again? And shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? Shall not their souls magnify the Lord? When he shows such wonders to the dead, shall they not arise and praise him? Ps 88:10. Those who remain under the power of death can have no heart to praise; but such conquests and triumphs will certainly tune the tongues of the saints to thankfulness and praise--praise for the victory (it is great and glorious in itself), and for the means whereby it is obtained (it is given of God through Christ Jesus), a victory obtained not by our power, but the power of God; not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so, and has by dying obtained this conquest for us. Must not this circumstance endear the victory to us, and heighten our praise to God? Note, How many springs of joy to the saints and thanksgiving to God are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests, of our Redeemer! With what acclamations will saints rising from the dead applaud him! How will the heaven of heavens resound his praises for ever! Thanks be to God will be the burden of their song; and angels will join the chorus, and declare their consent with a loud Amen, Hallelujah.

An exhortation, and this threefold:-- 1. That they should be stedfast--hedraioi, firm, fixed in the faith of the gospel, that gospel which he had preached and they had received, namely, That Christ died for our sins, and arose again the third day, according to the scriptures (1Co 15:3,4), and fixed in the faith of the glorious resurrection of the dead, which, as he had shown, had so near and necessary a connection with the former. "Do not let your belief of these truths be shaken or staggered. They are most certain, and of the last importance." Note, Christians should be stedfast believers of this great article of the resurrection of the dead. It is evidently founded on the death of Christ. Because he lives, his servants shall live also, Joh 14:19. And it is of the last importance; a disbelief of a future life will open a way to all manner of licentiousness, and corrupt men's morals to the last degree. It will be easy and natural to infer hence that we may live like beasts, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. 2. He exhorts them to be immovable, namely, in their expectation of this great privilege of being raised

incorruptible and immortal. Christians should not be moved away from this hope of this gospel (Col 1:23), this glorious and blessed hope; they should not renounce nor resign their comfortable expectations. They are not vain, but solid hopes, built upon sure foundations, the purchase and power of their risen Saviour, and the promise of God, to whom it is impossible to lie--hopes that shall be their most powerful supports under all the pressures of life, the most effectual antidotes against the fears of death, and the most quickening motives to diligence and perseverance in Christian duty. Should they part with these hopes? Should they suffer them to be shaken? Note, Christians should live in the most firm expectation of a blessed resurrection. This hope should be an anchor to their souls, firm and sure, Heb 6:19. 3. He exhorts them to abound in the work of the Lord, and that always, in the Lord's service, in obeying the Lord's commands. They should be diligent and persevering herein, and going on towards perfection; they should be continually making advances in true piety, and ready and apt for every good work. The most cheerful duty, the greatest diligence, the most constant perseverance, become those who have such glorious hopes. Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are assured of such abundant recompences in a future life? What vigour and resolution, what constancy and patience, should those hopes inspire! Note, Christians should not stint themselves as to their growth in holiness, but be always improving in sound religion, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

The motive resulting from the former discourse is that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; nay, they know it shall not. They have the best grounds in the world to build upon: they have all the assurance that can rationally be expected: as surely as Christ is risen, they shall rise; and Christ is as surely risen as the scriptures are true, and the word of God. The apostles saw him after his death, testified this truth to the world in the face of a thousand deaths and dangers, and confirmed it by miraculous powers received from him. Is there any room to doubt a fact so well attested? Note, True Christians have undoubted evidence that their labour will not be in vain in the Lord; not their most diligent services, nor their most

painful sufferings; they will not be in vain, not be vain and unprofitable. Note, The labour of Christians will not be lost labour; they may lose for God, but they will lose nothing by him; nay, there is more implied than is expressed in this phrase: it means that they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will never be found unjust to forget their labour of love, Heb 6:10. Nay, he will do exceedingly abundantly above what they can now ask or think. Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter to be revealed in them, Ro 8:18. Note, Those who serve God have good wages; they cannot do too much nor suffer too much for so good a Master. If they serve him now, they shall see him hereafter; if they suffer for him on earth, they shall reign with him in heaven; if they die for his sake, they shall rise again from the dead, be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, and inherit eternal life.

1 Corinthians-16

The Collection for the Saints

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given
order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.
2 Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him
in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no
gatherings when I come.

Note, When God blesses and prospers us, we should be ready to relieve and comfort his needy servants; when his bounty flows forth upon us, we should not confine it to ourselves, but let it stream out to others. The good we receive from him should stir us up to do good to others, to resemble him in our beneficence; and therefore the more good we receive from God the more we should do good to others. They were to lay by as God had blessed them, in that proportion. The more they had, through God's blessing, gained by their business or labour, their traffic or work, the more they were to lay by. Note, God expects that our beneficence to others should hold some proportion to his bounty to us. All we

have is from God; the more he gives (circumstances being considered), the more he enables us to give, and the more he expects we should give, that we should give more than others who are less able, that we should give more than ourselves when we were less able. And, on the other hand, from him to whom God gives less he expects less. He is no tyrant nor cruel taskmaster, to exact brick without straw, or expect men shall do more good than he gives ability. Note, Where there is a willing mind he accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not (2Co 8:12); but as he prospers and blesses us, and puts us in a capacity to do good, he expects we should. The greater ability he gives, the more enlarged should our hearts be, and the more open our hands; but, where the ability is less, the hands cannot be as open, however willing the mind and however large the heart; nor does God expect it.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Plans for Travel

5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia:
for I do pass through Macedonia.

6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries.

Note, Great success in the work of the gospel commonly creates many enemies. The devil opposes those most, and makes them most trouble, who most heartily and successfully set themselves to destroy his kingdom. There were many adversaries; and therefore the apostle determined to stay. Some think he alludes in this passage to the custom of the Roman Circus, and the doors of it, at

which the charioteers were to enter, as their antagonists did at the opposite doors. True courage is whetted by opposition; and it is no wonder that the Christian courage of the apostle should be animated by the zeal of his adversaries. They were bent to ruin him, and prevent the effect of his ministry at Ephesus; and should he at this time desert his station, and disgrace his character and doctrine? No, the opposition of adversaries only animated his zeal. He was in nothing daunted by his adversaries; but the more they raged and opposed the more he exerted himself. Should such a man as he flee? Note, Adversaries and opposition do not break the spirits of faithful and successful ministers, but only enkindle their zeal, and inspire them with fresh courage. Indeed, to labour in vain is heartless and discouraging. This damps the spirits, and breaks the heart. But success will give life and vigour to a minister, though enemies rage, and blaspheme, and persecute. It is not the opposition of enemies, but the hardness and obstinacy of his hearers, and the backslidings and revolt of professors, that damp a faithful minister, and break his heart.

10 Now if Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear:
for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also *do.*

And there are many adversaries. Many opposers; many who resist the gospel. These were doubtless in part Jews who excited opposition to him, and in part the friends of Demetrius. See Acts 19. That Paul had great success in Ephesus, and that his labours were attended with a great revival of religion there, is manifest from that chapter. We may remark here,

(1.) that such a work of grace, such a setting open of a great and effectual door, is often the occasion of increased opposition to the gospel. It is no uncommon thing that the adversaries of Christ should be excited at such times; and we are not to be surprised if the same thing should occur now which occurred in the time of Paul.

(2.) This was regarded by Paul as no reason why he should leave Ephesus, but rather as a reason why he should remain there. It was

regarded by him as an evidence that the Holy Spirit was there. It was proof that the enemies of God were alarmed, and that the kingdom of Christ was advancing. His presence also would be needed there, to encourage and strengthen the young converts who would be attacked and opposed; and he deemed it his duty to remain. A minister should never wish to make enemies to the gospel, nor seek to excite them to make opposition; but such opposition is often evidence that the Spirit of God is among a people; that the consciences of sinners are aroused and alarmed; and that the great enemy of God and man is making, as he was at Ephesus, a desperate effort to preserve his kingdom from being destroyed.

(3.) A minister should regard it as his duty in a special manner to be among his people when there is such opposition excited. His presence is needed to comfort and encourage the church; and when the minds of men are excited, it is often the best time to present truth, and to defend successfully the great doctrines of the Bible.

(4.) Ministers should not be discouraged because there is opposition to the gospel. It is one ground of encouragement. It is an indication of the presence of God in awakening the conscience. And it is far more favourable as a season to do good than a dead calm, and when there is universal stagnation and unconcern.

11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

He recommends Timothy to them, in several particulars. As,

1. He bids them take care that he should be among them without feat, 1Co 16:10. Timothy was sent by the apostle to correct the abuses which had crept in among them; and not only to direct, but to blame, and censure, and reprove, those who were culpable. They were all in factions, and no doubt the mutual strife and hatred ran very high among them. There were some very rich, as it is probable; and many very proud, upon account both of their outward wealth and spiritual gifts. Proud spirits cannot easily bear

reproof. It was reasonable therefore to think young Timothy might be roughly used; hence the apostle warns them against using him ill. Not but that he was prepared for the worst; but, whatever his firmness and prudence might be, it was their duty to behave themselves well towards him, and not discourage and dishearten him in his Lord's work. They should not fly out into resentment at his reproof. Note, Christians should bear faithful reproofs from their ministers, and not terrify and discourage them from doing their duty.

2. He warns them against despising him, 1Co 16:11. He was but a young man, and alone, as Ecumenius observes. He had no one to back him, and his own youthful face and years commanded but little reverence; and therefore the great pretenders to wisdom among them might be apt to entertain contemptuous thoughts of him. "Now," says the apostle, "guard against this." Not that he distrusted Timothy; he knew that Timothy would do nothing to bring contempt on his character, nothing to make his youth despicable. But pride was a reigning sin among the Corinthians, and such a caution was but too necessary. Note, Christians should be very careful not to pour contempt on any, but especially on ministers, the faithful ministers of Christ. These, whether young or old, are to be had in high esteem for their works sake. 3. He tells them they should give him all due encouragement, use him well while he was with them; and, as an evidence of this, they should send him away in friendship, and well prepared for his journey back again to Paul. This, as I have before observed, is the meaning of bringing him on his journey in peace, 1Co 16:11. Note, Faithful ministers are not only to be well received by a people among whom they may for a season minister, but are to be sent away with due respect.

He assigns the reasons why they should behave thus towards Timothy.

1. Because he was employed in the same work as Paul, and acted in it by the same authority, 1Co 16:10. He did not come on Paul's

errand among them, nor to do his work, but the work of the Lord. Though he was not an apostle, he was assistant to one, and was sent upon this very business by a divine commission. And therefore to vex his spirit would be to grieve the Holy Spirit; to despise him would be to despise him that sent him, not Paul, but Paul's Lord and theirs. Note, Those who work the work of the Lord should be neither terrified nor despised, but treated with all tenderness and respect. Such are all the faithful ministers of the word, though not all in the same rank and degree. Pastors and teachers, as well as apostles and evangelists, while they are doing their duty, are to be treated with honour and respect.

2. Another reason is implied; as they were to esteem him for his work's sake, so also for Paul's sake, who had sent him to Corinth; not of his own errand indeed, but to work the work of the Lord: Conduct him forth in peace, that he may come to me, for I look for him with the brethren (1Co 16:11); or I with the brethren look for him (the original will bear either), ekdechomai gar auton meta ton adelphon--"I am expecting his return, and his report concerning you; and shall judge by your conduct towards him what your regard and respect for me will be. Look to it that you send him back with no evil report." Paul might expect from the Corinthians, that a messenger from him, upon such an errand, should be regarded, and well treated. His services and success among them, his authority with them as an apostle, would challenge this at their hands. They would hardly dare to send back Timothy with a report that would grieve or provoke the apostle. "I and the brethren expect his return, wait for the report he is to make; and therefore do not use him ill, but respect him, regard his message, and let him return in peace."

12 As touching *our* brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

He informs them of Apollos's purpose to see them. 1. He himself had greatly desired him to come to them, 1Co 16:12. Though one party among them had declared for Apollos against Paul (if that passage is to be understood literally, vide 1Co 4:6), yet Paul did

not hinder Apollos from going to Corinth in his own absence, nay, he pressed him to go thither. He had no suspicions of Apollos, as if he would lessen Paul's interest and respect among them, to the advancement of his own. Note, Faithful ministers are not apt to entertain jealousies of each other, nor suspect of such selfish designs. True charity and brotherly love think no evil. And where should these reign, if not in the breasts of the ministers of Christ? 2. Apollos could not be prevailed on for the present to come, but would at a more convenient season. Perhaps their feuds and factions might render the present season improper. He would not go to be set at the head of a party and countenance the dividing and contentious humour. When this had subsided, through Paul's epistle to them and Timothy's ministry among them, he might conclude a visit would be more proper. Apostles did not vie with each other, but consulted each other's comfort and usefulness. Paul intimates his great regard to the church of Corinth, when they had used him ill, by entreating Apollos to go to them; and Apollos shows his respect to Paul, and his concern to keep up his character and authority, by declining the journey till the Corinthians were in better temper. Note, It is very becoming the ministers of the gospel to have and manifest a concern for each other's reputation and usefulness.

Final Greetings

13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Some general advices; as,

1. That they should watch (1Co 16:13), be wakeful and upon their guard. A Christian is always in danger, and therefore should ever be on the watch; but the danger is greater at some times and under some circumstances. The Corinthians were in manifest danger upon many accounts: their feuds ran high, the irregularities among them were very great, there were deceivers got among them, who endeavoured to corrupt their faith in the most important articles, those without which the practice of virtue and piety could never subsist. And surely in such dangerous circumstances it was their concern to watch. Note, If a Christian would be secure, he must be

on his guard; and the more his danger the greater vigilance is needful for his security.

2. He advises them to stand fast in the faith, to keep their ground, adhere to the revelation of God, and not give it up for the wisdom of the world, nor suffer it to be corrupted by it--stand for the faith of the gospel, and maintain it even to death; and stand in it, so as to abide in the profession of it, and feel and yield to its influence.

Note, A Christian should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert nor renounce it. It is by this faith alone that he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation; it is by faith that we stand (2Co 1:24); it is by this that we must overcome the world (1Jo 5:4), both when it fawns and when it frowns, when it tempts and when it terrifies. We must stand therefore in the faith of the gospel, if we would maintain our integrity. 3. He advises them to act like men, and be strong: "Act the manly, firm, and resolved part: behave strenuously, in opposition to the bad men who would divide and corrupt you, those who would split you into factions or seduce you from the faith: be not terrified nor inveigled by them; but show yourselves men in Christ, by your steadiness, by your sound judgment and firm resolution."

Note, Christians should be manly and firm in all their contests with their enemies, in defending their faith, and maintaining their integrity. They should, in an especial manner, be so in those points of faith that lie at the foundation of sound and practical religion, such as were attacked among the Corinthians: these must be maintained with solid judgment and strong resolution. 4. He advises them to do every thing in charity, 1Co 16:14. Our zeal and constancy must be consistent with charity. When the apostle would have us play the man for our faith or religion, he puts in a caution against playing the devil for it. We may defend our faith, but we must, at the same time, maintain our innocence, and not devour and destroy, and think with ourselves that the wrath of man will work the righteousness of God, Jam 1:24.

Note, Christians should be careful that charity not only reign in their hearts, but shine out in their lives, nay, in their most manly defences of the faith of the gospel. There is a great difference between constancy and cruelty, between Christian firmness and feverish wrath and transport. Christianity never appears to so much advantage as when the charity of Christians is most conspicuous when they can bear with their mistaken brethren, and oppose the open enemies of their holy faith in love, when every thing is done in charity, when they behave towards one another, and towards all men, with a spirit of meekness and good will.

14 Let all your things be done with charity.

15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

16 that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and laboreth.

17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus:

for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss.

21 The salutation of *me* Paul with mine own hand.

22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha.

With a very solemn warning to them: If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, 1Co 16:22. We sometimes need words of threatening, that we may fear. Blessed is he, says the wise man, who feareth always. Holy fear is a very good friend both to holy faith and holy living. An how much reason have all Christians to fear falling under this doom! If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha. Here observe,

1 The person described, who is liable to this doom: He that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ. A meiosis, as some think; he who blasphemes Christ disowns his doctrine, slights and contemns his institutions, or, through pride of human knowledge and learning, despises his revelations. It stands here as a warning to the Corinthians and a rebuke of their criminal behaviour. It is an admonition to them not to be led away from the simplicity of the gospel, or those principles of it which were the great motives to purity of life, by pretenders to science, by the wisdom of the world, which would call their religion folly, and its most important doctrines absurd and ridiculous. Those men had a spite at Christ; and, if the Corinthians give ear to their seducing speeches, they were in danger of apostatizing from him. Against this he gives them here a very solemn caution. "Do not give into such conduct, if you would escape the severest vengeance." Note, Professed Christians will, by contempt of Christ, and revolt from him, bring upon themselves the most dreadful destruction. Some understand the words as they lie, in their plain and obvious meaning, for such as are without holy and sincere affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many who have his name much in their mouths have no true love to him in their hearts, will not have him to rule over them (Lu 19:27), no, not though they have very towering hopes of being saved by him. And none love him in truth who do not love his laws and keep his commandments. Note, There are many Christians in name who do not love Christ Jesus the Lord in sincerity. But can any thing be more criminal or provoking? What, not love the most glorious lover in the world! Him who loved us, and gave himself for us, who shed his blood for us, to testify his love to us, and that after heinous wrong and provocation! What had we a power of loving for, if we are unmoved with such love as this, and without affection to such a Saviour? But,

2. We have here the doom of the person described: "Let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, lie under the heaviest and most dreadful curse. Let him be separated from the people of God, from the favour of God, and delivered up to his final, irrevocable, and inexorable vengeance" Maran-atha is a Syriac phrase, and signifies

The Lord cometh. That very Lord whom they do not love, to whom they are inwardly and really disaffected whatever outward profession they make, is coming to execute judgment. And to be exposed to his wrath, to be divided to his left hand, to be condemned by him, how dreadful! If he will destroy, who can save? Those who fall under his condemning sentence must perish, and that for ever. Note, Those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ must perish without remedy. The wrath of God abides on every one who believes not on the Son, Joh 3:36. And true faith in Christ will evermore be productive of sincere love to him. Those who love him not cannot be believers in him.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.

24 My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians

[2 Corinthians]

2 Corinthians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Affliction

3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

The object of the apostle's thanksgiving, to whom he offers up blessing and praise, namely, the blessed God, who only is to be praised, whom he describes by several glorious and amiable titles.

1. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: ho Theos kai pater tou Kyriou hemon Iesou Christou. God is the Father of Christ's divine nature by eternal generation, of his human nature by miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin, and of Christ as God-man, and our Redeemer, by covenant-relation, and in and through him as Mediator our God and our Father, Joh 20:17. In the Old Testament we often meet with this title, The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, to denote God's covenant-relation to them and their seed; and in the New Testament God is styled the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to denote his covenant-relation to the Mediator and his spiritual seed. Ga 3:16.

2. The Father of mercies. There is a multitude of tender mercies in God essentially, and all mercies are from God originally: mercy in his genuine offspring and his delight. He delighteth in mercy, Mic 7:18.

3. The God of all comfort; from his proceedeth the COMFORTER, Joh 15:26. He giveth the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, 2Co 1:22. All our comforts come from God, and our sweetest comforts are in him.

4 who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

The benefits that he himself and his companions had received from God; for God had comforted them in all their tribulations, 2Co 1:4. In the world they had trouble, but in Christ they had peace. The apostles met with many tribulations, but they found comfort in them all: their sufferings (which are called the sufferings of Christ, 2Co 1:5, because Christ sympathized with his members when suffering for his sake) did abound, but their consolation by Christ did abound also. Note,

(1.) Then are we qualified to receive the comfort of God's mercies when we set ourselves to give him the glory of them.

(2.) Then we speak best of God and his goodness when we speak from our own experience, and, in telling others, tell God also what he has done for our souls.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you *is* steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Paul felt that he was condemned to die; that he felt as if he were under sentence of death, and with no hope of acquittal; he was called to contemplate the hour of death as just before him. The words, "in ourselves," mean, against ourselves; or, we expected certainly to die. This seems as if he had been con- condemned to die; and may either refer to some instance when the popular fury was so great that he felt it was determined he should die, or, more probably, to a judicial sentence that he should be cast to the wild beasts, with the certain expectation that he would be destroyed, as was always the case with those who were subjected to the execution of such a sentence. Here he touches only on the doctrine of the resurrection, taking it for granted that its truth is admitted by the Corinthians, and urging its bearing on their practice.

That we should not trust in ourselves. This is an exceedingly beautiful and important sentiment. It teaches that, in the time to which Paul refers, he was in so great danger, and had so certain a prospect of death, that he could put no reliance on himself, he felt that he must die; and that human aid was vain. According to every probability he would die; and all that he could do was to cast himself on the protection of that God who had power to save him even then, if he chose, and who, if he did it, would exert power similar to that which is put forth when the dead are raised. The effect, therefore, of the near prospect of death, was to lead him to put increased confidence in God. He felt that God only could save him; or that God only could sustain him if he should die. Perhaps, also, he means to say, that the effect of this was to lead him to put increased confidence in God after his deliverance; not to trust in his own plans, or to confide in his own strength; but to feel that all that he had was entirely in the hands of God. This is a common and a happy effect of the near prospect of death to a Christian; and it is well to contemplate the effect on such a mind as that of Paul in the near prospect of dying, and to see how instinctively then it clings to God. A true Christian in such circumstances will rush to His arms, and feel that there he is safe. But in God which raiseth the dead. Intimating that a rescue in such circumstances would be like raising the dead. It is probable that

on this occasion Paul was near dying; that he had given up all hope of life--perhaps, as at Lystra, (Acts 14:19,) he was supposed to be dead. He felt, therefore, that he was raised up by the immediate power of God, and regarded it as an exertion of the same power by which the dead are raised. Paul means to intimate, that so far as depended on any power of his own, he was dead. He had no power to recover himself; and but for the gracious interposition of God he would have died.

What they did in their distress: They trusted in God. And they were brought to this extremity in order that they should not trust in themselves but in God, 2Co 1:9. Note, God often brings his people into great straits, that they may apprehend their own insufficiency to help themselves, and may be induced to place their trust and hope in his all-sufficiency. Our extremity is God's opportunity. In the mount will the Lord be seen; and we may safely trust in God, who raiseth the dead, 2Co 1:9. God's raising the dead is a proof of his almighty power. He that can do this can do any thing, can do all things, and is worthy to be trusted in at all times. Abraham's faith fastened upon this instance of the divine power: He believed God who quickeneth the dead, Ro 4:17. If we should be brought so low as to despair even of life, yet we may then trust in God, who can bring back not only from the gates, but from the jaws, of death.

10 who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us;*

What use they made of this deliverance: We trust that he will yet deliver us (2Co 1:10), that God will deliver to the end, and preserve to his heavenly kingdom. Note, Past experiences are great encouragements to faith and hope, and they lay great obligations to trust in God for time to come. We reproach our experiences if we distrust God in future straits, who hath delivered as in former troubles. David, even when a young man, and when he had but a small stock of experiences, argued after the manner of the apostle here, 1Sa 17:37.

11 ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

The Postponement of Paul's Visit

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

He appeals to the testimony of conscience with rejoicing (2Co 1:12), in which observe,

1 The witness appealed to, namely, conscience, which is instead of a thousand witnesses. This God's deputy in the soul, and the voice of conscience is the voice of God. They rejoiced in the testimony of conscience, when their enemies reproached them, and were enraged against them. Note, The testimony of conscience for us, if that be right and upon good grounds, will be matter of rejoicing at all times and in all conditions. An approving conscience. It does not condemn me on the subject. Though others might accuse him, though his name might be calumniated, yet he had comfort in the approval which his own conscience gave to his course. Paul's conscience was enlightened, and its decisions were correct. Whatever others might charge him with, he knew what had been the aim and purpose of his life; and the consciousness of upright aims, and of such plans as the "grace of God" would prompt to, sustained him. An approving conscience is of inestimable value when we are calumniated--and when we draw near to death.

2 The testimony this witness gave. And here take notice, Conscience witnessed,

(a.) Concerning their conversation, their constant course and tenour of life: by that we may judge of ourselves, and not by this or that single act.

(b.) Concerning the nature or manner of their conversation; that it was in simplicity and godly sincerity. This blessed apostle was a true Israelite, a man of plain dealing; you might know where to have him.

He was not a man who seemed to be one thing and was another, but a man of sincerity.

(c.) Concerning the principle they acted from in all their conversation, both in the world and towards these Corinthians; and that was not fleshly wisdom, nor carnal politics and worldly views, but it was the grace of God, a vital gracious principle in their hearts, that cometh from God, and tendeth to God. Then will our conversation be well ordered when we live and act under the influence and command of such a gracious principle in the heart.

That in simplicity. εναπλοτητι. Tindal renders this forcibly, "without doubleness." The word means sincerity, candour, probity, plain-heartedness, Christian simplicity, frankness, integrity. See 2Cor 11:3. It stands opposed to double-dealings and purposes; to deceitful appearances, and crafty plans; to mere policy, and craftiness in accomplishing an object. A man under the influence of this, is straightforward, candid, open, frank; and he expects to accomplish his purpose by integrity and fair dealing, and not by stratagem and cunning. Policy, craft, artful plans, and deep-laid schemes of deceit belong to the world; simplicity of aim and purpose are the true characteristics of a real Christian. And godly sincerity. Greek, "Sincerity of God." This may be a Hebrew idiom, by which the superlative degree is indicated; when, in order to express the highest degree, they added the name of God, as in the phrases "mountains of God," signifying the highest mountains, or "cedars of God," denoting lofty cedars. Or it may mean such sincerity as God manifests and approves; such as he, by his grace, would produce in the heart; such as the religion of the gospel is fitted to produce. The word used here, ειλικρινεια, and rendered sincerity, denotes, properly, clearness, such as is judged of or discerned in sunshine, (from ειλη and κρινω,) and thence pureness, integrity. It is most probable that the phrase here denotes that sincerity which God produces and approves; and the sentiment is, that pure religion, the religion of God, produces entire sincerity in the heart. Its purposes and aims are open and manifest, as if seen in the sunshine. The plans of the world are obscure, deceitful, and dark, as if in night.

13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;
14 as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also *are* ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.
15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;
16 and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea.
17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?
18 But *as* God *is* true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.
19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.
20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Bad men are false; good men are fickle; but God is true, neither fickle nor false. The apostle, having mentioned the stability of the divine promises, makes a digression to illustrate this great and sweet truth, that all the promises of God are yea and amen. For,

1. They are the promises of the God of truth (2Co 1:20), of him that cannot lie, whose truth as well as mercy endureth for ever.

2. They are made in Christ Jesus (2Co 1:20), the Amen, the true and faithful witness; he hath purchased and ratified the covenant of promises, and is the surety of the covenant, Heb 7:22.

3. They are confirmed by the Holy Spirit. He does establish Christians in the faith of the gospel; he has anointed them with his sanctifying grace, which in scripture is often compared to oil; he has sealed them, for their security and confirmation; and he is given as an earnest in their hearts, 2Co 1:21,22. An earnest secures the promise, and is part of the payment. The illumination of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an

earnest of everlasting joy. Note, The veracity of God, the mediation of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit, are all engaged that the promises shall be sure to all the seed, and the accomplishment of them shall be to the glory of God (2Co 1:20) for the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and never-failing truth and faithfulness.

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed
us, *is* God;
22 who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our
hearts.
23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I
came not as yet unto Corinth.
24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of
your joy: for by faith ye stand.

2 Corinthians-2

1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to
you in heaviness.
2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but
the same which is made sorry by me?
3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have
sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence
in you all, that my joy is *the joy* of you all.
4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you
with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might
know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

But that ye might know the love, etc. This was one of the best evidences of his great love to them which he could possibly give. It is proof of genuine friendship for another, when we faithfully and affectionately admonish him of the error of his course; it is the highest proof of affection when we do it with tears. It is cruelty to suffer a brother to remain in sin unadmonished; it is cruel to admonish him of it in a harsh, severe, and authoritative tone; but it is proof of tender attachment when we go to him with tears, and entreat him to repent and reform. No man gives higher proof of attachment to another than he who affectionately admonishes him of his sin and danger.

Forgiveness for the Offender

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

If any have caused grief. There is doubtless here an allusion to the incestuous person. But it is very delicately done. He does not mention him by name. There is not anywhere an allusion to his name; nor is it possible now to know it. Is this not a proof that the names of the offending brethren in a church should not be put on the records of sessions, and churches, and presbyteries, to be handed down to posterity? Paul does not here either expressly refer to such a person. He makes his remark general, that it might be as tender and kind to the offending brother as possible. They would know whom he meant, but they had already punished him, as Paul supposed, enough; and now all that he said in regard to him was as tender as possible, and fitted, as much as possible, to conciliate his feelings and allay his grief. He did not harshly charge him with sin; he did not use any abusive or severe epithets; but he gently insinuates that he "had caused grief;" he had pained the hearts of his brethren.

6 Sufficient to such a man *is* this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many.

it was a sufficient punishment to the offender. It had accomplished all that he had desired. It had humbled him, and brought him to repentance; and doubtless led him to put away his. wife. Compare 1Cor 5:1. As that had been done, it was proper now that he should be again restored to the privileges of the church. No evil would result from such a restoration, and their duty to their penitent brother demanded it. Mr. Locke has remarked, that Paul conducts this subject here with very great tenderness and delicacy. The entire passage, from 2Cor 2:5-10, relates solely to this offending brother; yet he never once mentions his name, nor does he mention his crime. He speaks of him only in the soft terms of "such a one" and "any one." Nor does he use an epithet which would be calculated to wound his feelings, or to transmit his name to posterity, or to communicate it to other churches. So that though this epistle should be read, as Paul doubtless intended, by other churches, and be

transmitted to future times, yet no one would ever be acquainted with the name of the individual. How different this from the temper of those who would blazon abroad the names of offenders, or make a permanent record to carry them down with dishonour to posterity.

7 So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

that when that is done, the church ought to forgive the offending brother, and admit him again to their fellowship. When it can be ascertained that the punishment has been effectual in reforming him, may depend somewhat on the nature of the offence. In this case, it was sufficiently shown by his putting away his wife, and by the manifestations of sorrow. So, in other cases, it may be shown by a man's abandoning a course of sin, and reforming his life. If he has been unjust, by his repairing the evil; if he has been pursuing an unlawful business, by abandoning it; if he has pursued a course of vice, by his forsaking it, and by giving satisfactory evidences of sorrow and of reformation, for a period sufficiently long to show his sincerity. The time which will be required in each case must depend, of course, somewhat on the nature of the offence, the previous character of the individual, the temptations to which he may be exposed, and the disgrace which he may have brought on his Christian calling. It is to be observed, also, that then his restoration is to be regarded as an act of forgiveness, a layout, (χαρισασθαι, that is, χαρις, favour, grace,) on the part of the church. It is not a matter of justice, or of claim on his part; for having once dishonoured his calling, he has forfeited his right to a good standing among Christians; but it is a matter of favour, and he should be willing to humble himself before the church, and make suitable acknowledgment for his offences.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ;

11 lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Paul's Anxiety at Troas

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,
13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

Paul then states the disappointment which he had had at Troas in not seeing Titus, from whom he had expected to learn what was the state of the church at Corinth, and what was the reception of his letter there; but that not seeing him there, he had gone on to Macedonia

Triumphant in Christ

14 Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.
15 For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

God had made him everywhere successful; and had made him triumph in Christ in every place. This fact gives him occasion 2Cor 2:15,16 to state the general effect of his preaching and his labours. His efforts, he says, were always acceptable to God--though he could not be ignorant that in some cases the gospel which he preached was the occasion of the aggravated condemnation of those who heard and rejected it. Yet he had the consolation of reflecting that it was by no fault of his, 2Cor 2:17. It was not because he had corrupted the word of God; it was not because he was unfaithful; it was not because he was not sincere. He had a good conscience-- a conscience which assured him that he spoke in sincerity, and as in the sight of God--though the unhappy effect might be that many would perish from under his ministry.

16 to the one *we are* the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

Here observe,

1 The different success of the gospel, and its different effects upon several sorts of persons to whom it is preached. The success is different; for some are saved by it, while others perish under it. Nor is this to be wondered at, considering the different effects the gospel has. For,

(1.) Unto some it is a savour of death unto death. Those who are willingly ignorant, and wilfully obstinate, disrelish the gospel, as men dislike an ill savour, and therefore they are blinded and hardened by it: it stirs up their corruptions, and exasperates their spirits. They reject the gospel, to their ruin, even to spiritual and eternal death.

(2.) Unto others the gospel is a savour of life unto life. To humble and gracious souls the preaching of the word is most delightful and profitable. As it is sweeter than honey to the taste, so it is more grateful than the most precious odours to the senses, and much more profitable; for as it quickened them at first, when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it makes them more lively, and will end in eternal life.

2 The awful impressions this matter made upon the mind of the apostle, and should also make upon our spirits: Who is sufficient for these things? 2Co 2:16. Tis hikanos--who is worthy to be employed in such weighty work, a work of such vast importance, because of so great consequence? Who is able to perform such a difficult work, that requires so much skill and industry? The work is great and our strength is small; yea, of ourselves we have no strength at all; all our sufficiency is of God. Note, If men did seriously consider what great things depend upon the preaching of the gospel, and how difficult the work of the ministry is, they would be very cautious how they enter upon it, and very careful to perform it well.

3. The comfort which the apostle had under this serious consideration,

(1.) Because faithful ministers shall be accepted of God, whatever their success be: We are, if faithful, unto God a sweet savour of Christ (2Co 2:15), in those who are saved and in those also who perish. God will accept of sincere intentions, and honest endeavours, though with many they are not successful. Ministers shall be accepted, and recompensed, not according to their success, but according to their fidelity. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, Isa 49:5.

(2.) Because his conscience witnessed to his faithfulness, 2Co 2:17. Though many did corrupt the word of God, yet the apostle's conscience witnessed to his fidelity. He did not mix his own notions with the doctrines and institutions of Christ; he durst not add to, nor diminish from, the word of God; he was faithful in dispensing the gospel, as he received it from the Lord, and had no secular turn to serve; his aim was to approve himself to God, remembering that his eye was always upon him; he therefore spoke and acted always as in the sight of God, and therefore in sincerity. Note, What we do in religion is not of God, does not come from God, will not reach to God, unless it be done in sincerity, as in the sight of God.

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

2 Corinthians-3

Ministers of the New Covenant

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others,* epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

3 *forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:
5 not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;
6 who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

This he does in answer to the accusations of false teachers, who magnify greatly the law of Moses. He distinguishes between the letter and the spirit even of the New Testament, 2Co 3:6. As able ministers of the New Testament, they were ministers not merely of the letter, to read the written word, or to preach the letter of the gospel only, but they were ministers of the Spirit also; the Spirit of God did accompany their ministrations. The letter killeth; this the letter of the law does, for that is the ministration of death; and if we rest only in the letter of the gospel we shall be never the better for so doing, for even that will be a savour of death unto death; but the Spirit of the gospel, going along with the ministry of the gospel, giveth life spiritual and life eternal.

7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away;

The Old-Testament dispensation was the ministration of death (2Co 3:7), whereas that of the New Testament is the ministration of life. The law discovered sin, and the wrath and curse of God. This showed us a God above us and a God against us; but the gospel discovers grace, and Emmanuel, God with us. Upon this account the gospel is more glorious than the law; and yet that had a glory in it, witness the shining of Moses's face (an indication thereof) when he came down from the mount with the tables in his hand, that reflected rays of brightness upon his countenance.

8 how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?
9 For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.
10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

The law was the ministration of condemnation, for that condemned and cursed every one who continued not in all things written therein to do them; but the gospel is the ministration of righteousness: therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed. This shows us that the just shall live by his faith. This reveals the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for obtaining the remission of sins and eternal life. The gospel therefore so much exceeds in glory that in a manner it eclipses the glory of the legal dispensation, 2Co 3:10. As the shining of a burning lamp is lost, or not regarded, when the sun arises and goes forth in his strength; so there was no glory in the Old Testament, in comparison with that of the New.

11 For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 and not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

Concerning the duty of the ministers of the gospel to use great plainness or clearness of speech. They ought not, like Moses, to put a veil upon their faces, or obscure and darken those things which they should make plain. The gospel is a more clear dispensation than the law; the things of God are revealed in the New Testament, not in types and shadows, and ministers are much to blame if they do not set spiritual things, and gospel-truth and grace, in the clearest light that is possible. Though the Israelites could not look stedfastly to the end of what was commanded, but is now abolished, yet we may. We may see the meaning of those types and shadows by the accomplishment, seeing the veil is done away in, Christ and he is come, who was the end of the law for righteousness to all those who believe, and whom Moses and all the prophets pointed to, and wrote of.

14 but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

Concerning the privilege and advantage of those who enjoy the gospel, above those who lived under the law. For,

1. Those who lived under the legal dispensation had their minds blinded (2Co 3:14), For until this day, etc. The sense of this is, that even to the time when Paul wrote, it was a characteristic of the great mass of the Jewish people, that they did not understand the true sense of their own Scriptures. They did not understand its doctrines in regard to the Messiah. vail seems to be thrown over the Old Testament when they read it, as there was over the face of Moses, so that the glory of their own Scriptures is concealed from their view, as the glory of the face of Moses was hidden. Which vail is done away in Christ. In the manifestation, or appearance of Jesus the Messiah, the vail is removed. The obscurity which rested on the prophecies and types of the former dispensation is withdrawn; and as the face of Moses could have been distinctly seen if the vail on his face had been removed, so it is in regard to the true meaning of the Old Testament by the coming of the Messiah. What was obscure is now made clear; and the prophecies are so completely fulfilled in him, that his coming has removed the covering, and shed a clear light over them all. Many of the prophecies, for example, until the Messiah actually appeared, appeared obscure, and almost contradictory. Those which spoke of him, for illustration, as man and as God; as suffering, and yet reigning; as dying, and yet as ever-living; as a mighty Prince, a Conqueror, and a King, and yet as a man of sorrows; as humble, and yet glorious: all seemed difficult to be reconciled until they were seen to harmonize in Jesus of Nazareth. Then they were plain, and the vail was taken away. Christ is seen to answer all the previous descriptions of him in the Old Testament; and his coming casts a clear light on all which was before obscure. and there was a veil upon their hearts, 2Co 3:15. Thus it was formerly, and so it was especially as to those who remained in Judaism after the coming of the Messiah and the publication of his gospel.

Nevertheless, the apostle tells us, there is a time coming when this veil also shall be taken away, and when it (the body of that people) shall turn to the Lord, 2Co 3:16. Or, when any particular person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away; the blindness of the mind, and the hardness of the heart, are cured.

2 The condition of those who enjoy and believe the gospel is much more happy. For,

(1.) They have liberty: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, and where he worketh, as he does under the gospel-dispensation, there is liberty (2Co 3:17), freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the servitude of corruption; liberty of access to God, and freedom of speech in prayer. The heart is set at liberty, and enlarged, to run the ways of God's commandments. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. This is a general truth designed to illustrate the particular sentiment which he had just advanced. The word "liberty" here ελευθεριαα refers, I think, to freedom in speaking; the power of speaking openly and freely, as in 2Cor 3:12. It states the general truth, that the effect of the Spirit of God was to give light and clearness of view; to remove obscurity from a subject, and to enable one to see it plainly. This would be a truth that could not be denied by the Jews, who held to the doctrine that the spirit of God revealed truth, and it must be admitted by all. Under the influence of that Spirit, therefore, Paul says that he was able to speak with openness and boldness; that he had a clear view of truth, which the mass of the Jews had not; and that the system of religion which he preached was open, plain, and clear. The word "freedom" would, perhaps, better convey the idea. "There is freedom from the dark and obscure views of the Jews; freedom from their prejudices, and their superstitions; freedom from the slavery and bondage of sin; the freedom of the children of God, who have clear views of him as their Father and Redeemer, and who are enabled to express those views openly and boldly to the world."

(2.) They have light; for with open face we behold the glory of the Lord, 2Co 3:18. The Israelites saw the glory of God in a cloud, which was dark and dreadful; but Christians see the glory of the Lord as in a glass, more clearly and comfortably. It was the peculiar privilege of Moses for God to converse with him face to face, in a friendly manner; but now all true Christians see him more clearly with open face. He showeth them his glory.

(3.) This light and liberty are transforming; we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory (2Co 3:18), from one degree of glorious grace unto another, till grace here be consummated in glory for ever. How much therefore should Christians prize and improve these privileges! We should not rest contented without an experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the gospel, by the operation of the Spirit, bringing us into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But we all. All Christians. The discussion in the chapter has related Mainly to the apostles'; but this declaration seems evidently to refer to all Christians, as distinguished from the Jews. With open face. 1Cor 13:12. Tindal renders this, "And now the Lord's glory appeareth in us all as in a glass. The sense is, "with unvailed face," alluding to the fact 2Cor 3:13 that the face of Moses was vailed, so that the Children of Israel could not steadfastly look on it. In contradistinction from that, Paul says that Christians are enabled to look upon the glory of the Lord in the gospel without a vail--without any obscure, intervening medium. Beholding as in a glass. On the word glass, and the sense in which it is used in the New Testament, 1Cor 13:12. The word here used (κατοπτριζομενοι) has been very variously rendered. Macknight renders it, "We all reflecting as mirrors the glory of the Lord." Doddridge, "Beholding as by a glass." Locke, "With open countenances as mirrors, reflecting the glory of the Lord." The word κατοπτριζω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, to

look in a mirror; to behold as in a mirror. The mirrors of the ancients were made of burnished metal, and they reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness. And the meaning is, that the gospel reflected the glory of the Lord; it was, so to speak, the mirror--the polished, burnished substance in which the glory of the Lord shone, and where that glory was irradiated and reflected so that it might be seen by Christians. There was no vail over it; no obscurity; nothing to break its dazzling splendour, or to prevent its meeting the eye. Christians, by looking on the gospel, could see the glorious perfections and plans of God, as bright, and clear, and brilliant as they could see a light reflected from the burnished surface of the mirror. So to speak, the glorious perfections of God shone from heaven, beamed upon the gospel, and were thence reflected to the eye and the heart of the Christian, and had the effect of transforming them into the same image. This passage is one of great beauty, and is designed to set forth the gospel as being the reflection of the infinite glories of God to the minds and hearts of men. The glory of the Lord. The splendour, majesty, and holiness of God as manifested in the gospel, or of the Lord as incarnate. The idea is, that God was clearly and distinctly seen in the gospel. There was no obscurity, no vail, as in the case of Moses. In the gospel they were permitted to look on the full splendour of the Divine perfections--the justice, goodness, mercy, and benevolence of God--to see him as he is with undimmed and unvailed glory. The idea is, that the perfections of God shine forth with splendour and beauty in the gospel, and that we are permitted to look on them clearly and openly. Are changed into the same image. It is possible that there may be an allusion here to the effect which was produced by looking into an ancient mirror. Such mirrors were made of burnished metal, and the reflection from them would be intense. If a strong light were thrown on them, the rays would be cast by reflection on the face of him who looked on the mirror, and it would be strongly illuminated. And the idea may be, that the glory of God, the splendour of the Divine perfections, was thrown on the gospel, so to speak, like a bright light on a polished mirror; and that that glory was reflected from the gospel on him who contemplated it, so that he appeared to be transformed into the same image. Locke renders it, "We are changed into his very image

by a continued succession of glory, as it were, streaming upon us from the Lord." The figure is one of great beauty; and the idea is, that by placing ourselves within the light of the gospel--by contemplating the glory that shines there--we become changed into the likeness of the same glory, and conformed to that which shines there with so much splendour. By contemplating the resplendent face of the blessed Redeemer, we are changed into something of the same image. It is a law of our nature that we are moulded, in our moral feelings, by the persons with whom we associate, and by the objects which we contemplate. We become insensibly assimilated to those with whom we have intercourse, and to the objects with which we are familiar. We imbibe the opinions, we copy the habits, we imitate the manners, we fall into the customs of those with whom we have daily conversation, and whom we make our companions and friends. Their sentiments insensibly become our sentiments, and their ways our ways. It is thus with the books with which we are familiar. We are insensibly but certainly moulded into conformity to the opinions, maxims, and feelings which are there expressed. Our own sentiments undergo a gradual change, and we are likened to those with which in this manner we are conversant: So it is in regard to the opinions and feelings which from any cause we are in the habit of bringing before our minds. It is the way by which men become corrupted in their sentiments and feelings in their contact with the world; it is the way in which amusements, and the company of the gay and the dissipated, possess so much power; it is the way in which the young and inexperienced are beguiled and ruined; and it is the way in which Christians dim the lustre of their piety, and obscure the brightness of their religion, by their contact with the gay and fashionable world. And it is on the same great principle that Paul says that, by contemplating the glory of God in the gospel, we become insensibly but certainly conformed to the same image, and made like the Redeemer. His image will be reflected on us. We shall imbibe his sentiments, catch his feelings, and be moulded into the image of his own purity. Such is the great and wise law of our nature; and it is on this principle, and by this means, that God designs we should be made pure on earth, and kept pure in heaven for ever. From glory to glory. From one degree of glory to another.

"The more we behold this brilliant and glorious light, the more do rove reflect back its rays; that is, the more we contemplate the great truths of the Christian religion, the more do our minds become imbued with its spirit."--Bloomfield. This is said in contradistinction probably to Moses. The splendour on his face gradually died away. But not so with the light reflected from the gospel. It becomes deeper and brighter constantly. This sentiment is parallel to that expressed by the psalmist: "They go from strength to strength," Ps 84:7; that is, they go from one degree of strength to another, or one degree of holiness to another, until they come to the full vision of God himself in heaven. The idea in the phrase before us is, that there is a continual increase of moral purity and holiness under the gospel, until it results in the perfect glory of heaven. The doctrine is, that Christians advance in piety; and that this is done by the contemplation of the glory of God as it is revealed in the gospel. As by the Spirit of the Lord. Marg.; "Of the Lord the Spirit." Greek, "As from the Lord the Spirit." So Beza, Locke, Wolf, Rosenmuller, and Doddridge render it. The idea is, that it is by the Lord Jesus Christ the spirit of the law, the spirit, referred to by Paul above, 2Cor 3:6,17. It is done by the Holy Spirit procured or imparted by the Lord Jesus. This sentiment is in accordance with that which prevails everywhere in the Bible, that it is by the Holy Spirit alone that the heart is changed and purified. And the object of the statement here is, doubtless, to prevent the supposition that the change from "glory to glory" was produced in any sense by the mere contemplation of truth, or by any physical operation of such contemplation on the mind. It was by the Spirit of God alone that the heart was changed even under the gospel, and amidst the full blaze of its truth. Were it not for his agency, even the contemplation of the glorious truths of the gospel would be in vain, and would produce no saving effect on the human heart. (a) "a glass the glory" 1Cor 13:12 (b) "same image" Rom 8:29 (c) "glory to glory" Ps 84:7 (1) "by the Spirit" "of the Lord the Spirit"
REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 3

(1.) The best of all evidences of a call to the office of the ministry is the Divine blessing resting on our labours, 2Cor 3:1,2. If sinners are converted; if souls are sanctified; if the interest, of pure religion

are advanced; if by humble, zealous, and self-denying efforts a man is enabled so to preach as that the Divine blessing shall rest constantly on his labours, it is among the best of all evidences that he is called of God, and is approved by him. And though it may be true, and is true, that men who are self-deceived, or are hypocrites, are sometimes the means of doing good, yet it is still true, as a general rule, that eminent and long-continued success in the ministry is an evidence of God's acceptance, and that he has called a minister to this office. Paul felt this, and often appealed to it; and why may not others also?

(2.) A minister may appeal to the effect of the gospel among his own people as a proof that it is from God, 2Cor 3:2,3. Nothing else would produce such effects as were produced at Corinth but the power of God. If the wicked are reclaimed; if the intemperate and licentious are made temperate and pure; if the dishonest are made honest, and the scoffer learns to pray, under the gospel, it proves that it is from God. To such effects a minister may appeal as proof that the gospel which he preaches is from heaven. A system which will produce these effects must be true.

(3.) A minister should so live among a people as to be able to appeal to them with the utmost confidence in regard to the purity and integrity of his own character, 2Cor 3:1,2. He should so live, and preach, and act, that he will be under no necessity of adducing testimonials from abroad in regard to his character. The effect of his gospel, and the tenor of his life, should be his best testimonial and to that he should be able to appeal. A man who is under a necessity constantly, or often, of defending his-own character; of bolstering it up by testimonials from abroad; who is obliged to spend much of his time in defending his reputation, or who chooses to spend much of his time in defending it, has usually a character and reputation not worth defending. Let a man live as he ought to do, and he will, in the end, have a good reputation. Let him strive to do the will of God, and save souls, and he will have all the reputation which he ought to have. God will take care of his character; and will give him just as much reputation as it is desirable that he should have. See Ps 37:5,6.

(4.) The church is, as it were, an epistle sent by the Lord Jesus, to show his character and will, 2Cor 3:3. It is his representative on earth. It holds his truth. It is to imitate his example. It is to show how he lived. And it is to accomplish that which he would accomplish were he personally on earth, and present among men-- as a letter is designed to accomplish some important purpose of the writer when absent. The church, therefore, should be such as shall appropriately express the will and desire of the Lord Jesus. It should resemble him. It should hold his truth; and it should devote itself with untiring diligence to the great purpose of advancing his designs, and spreading his gospel around the world.

(5.) Religion has its seat in the heart, 2Cor 3:3. It is engraven there. It is written not with ink, or engraven on stone, but it is written by the Spirit of God on the heart. That professed religion, therefore, which does not reach the heart, and which is not felt there, is false and delusive. There is no true religion which does not reach and affect the heart.

(6.) We should feel our dependence on God in all things, 2Cor 3:5. We are dependent on him,

1st, for revelation itself. Man had no power of originating the truths which constitute revelation. They are the free and pure gift of God.

2nd. For success in saving souls. God only can change the heart. It is not done by human reasoning; by any power of man; by any eloquence of persuasion. It is by the power of God; and if a minister of religion meets with any success, it will be by the presence and by the power of God alone.

3rd. We are dependent on him for the power of thought at all; for clearness of intellect; for such a state of bodily health as to permit us to think; for bright conceptions; for ability to arrange our thoughts; for the power of expressing them clearly; for such a state

of mind as shall be free from vain fancies, and vagaries, and eccentricities; and for such a state as shall mark our plans as those of common sense and prudence. On such plans much of the comfort of life depends; and on such plans depends also nearly all the success which men ever meet with in any virtuous and honourable calling. And if men felt, as they should do, how much they are dependent on God for the power of clear thinking, and for the characteristics of sound sense in their schemes, they would pray for it more than they do; and would be more grateful that such a rich blessing is so extensively conferred on men.

(7.) Religion has a living power, 2Cor 3:6. It is not the letter, but the spirit. It is not made up of forms and ceremonies. It does not consist in Cold, external rites, however regular they may be; nor in formal prayer, or in stated seasons of devotion. All these will be dead and vain, unless the heart is given to God and to his service. If these are all, there is no religion. And if we have no better religion than that, we should at once abandon our hopes, and seek for that which does not kill, but which makes alive.

(8.) The office of the ministers of the gospel is glorious, and most honourable, 2Cor 3:7-9. It is far more honourable than was the office of Moses; and their work is far more glorious than was his. His consisted in giving the law on tables of stone; in the external splendour which attended its promulgation; and in introducing a system which must be soon done away. His was a ministry "of death" and of "condemnation." Theirs is a ministration by which the Holy Spirit is communicated to men--through them as channels, or organs, by which the saving grace of that Spirit is imparted, it is a work by which men are made righteous, justified, and accepted; it is a work whose effects are never to fade away, but which are to live amidst the splendours of heaven.

(9.) The responsibility and solemnity of the work of the ministry. It was a solemn and responsible work for Moses to give the law amidst the thunders of Sinai to the children of Israel. It is much more solemn to be the medium by which the eternal truths of the

gospel are made known to men. The one, imposing as it was, was designed to be temporary, and was soon to pass away; the other is to be eternal in its effects, and is to enter vitally and deeply into the eternal destiny of man. The one pertained to laws written on stone; the other to influences that are deeply and for ever to affect the heart. No work can be more solemn and responsible than that through which the Holy Spirit, with renewing and sanctifying power, is conveyed to man; that which is connected with the justification of sinners; and that which in its effects is to be permanent as the soul itself, and to endure as long as God shall exist.

(10.) We see the folly of attempting to be justified by the law, 2Cor 3:7,9. It is the ministration of death and of condemnation. It speaks only to condemn. Law knows nothing of pardon. It is not given for that purpose; and no perfect law can contain within itself provisions for pardon. Besides, no one has ever complied with all the demands of the law; no one ever will. All have sinned. But if ALL the demands of the law be not complied with, it speaks only to condemn, Jas 2:10. If a man in other respects has been ever so good a citizen, and yet has committed murder, he must die. So says the law. If a man has been ever so valiant, and fought ever so bravely, and yet is guilty of an act of treason, he must die. The question is not what he has been in other respects, or what else he may or may not have done, but has he committed this offence? If he has, the law knows no forgiveness, and pronounces his condemnation. If pardoned, it must be by some other system than by the regular operation of law. So with the sinner against God. If the law is violated, it speaks only to condemn. If he is pardoned, it can be only by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(11.) The danger of grieving the Holy Spirit, 2Cor 3:8. The gospel is the field of the operations of the Holy Spirit in our world. It is the ministration of the Spirit. It is the channel by which his influences descend on man. To reject that gospel is to reject him, and to cut off the soul from all possibility of being brought under his saving influence and power for ever. He strives with men only in connexion with the gospel; and all hope, therefore, of being

brought under his saving power, is in attending to that gospel, and embracing its provisions. The multitudes, therefore, who are rejecting or neglecting that gospel, are throwing themselves beyond his saving influences, and placing themselves beyond the possibility of salvation,

(12.) We see the guilt of neglecting or rejecting the gospel. It is the scheme, and the only scheme, for pardon, 2Cor 3:8-10. It is a far more glorious manifestation of the goodness of God than the law of Moses. It is the glorious and benevolent manifestation of God, through the incarnation, the sufferings, and the death of his Son. It is the ONLY plan of pardoning mercy that has been or that will be revealed. If men are not pardoned through that, they are not pardoned at all. If they are not saved by that, they must die for ever. What guilt is there, therefore, in neglecting and despising it! What folly is there in turning away from its provisions of mercy,and neglecting to secure an interest in what it provides!

(13.) The gospel is to spread around the world, and endure to the end of time, 2Cor 3:11. It is not like the institutions of Moses, to endure for a limited period, and then to be done away. The cloud and tempest, the thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai, which attended the giving of the law, soon disappeared. The unusual and unnatural splendour on the countenance of Moses soon vanished away. All the magnificence of the Mosaic ritual also soon faded away. But not so the gospel. That abides. That is the last dispensation; the permanent economy; that under which the affairs of the world are to be brought to an end. That is to pervade all lands; to bless all people; to survive all revolutions; to outlive all the magnificence of courts, and all the splendour of mighty dynasties, and is to endure till this world shall come to an end, and live in its glorious effects for ever and ever. It is, therefore, to be the fixed principle, on which all Christians are to act, that the gospel is to be permanent, and is to spread over all lands, and yet fill all nations with joy. And if so, how fervent and unceasing should be their prayers and efforts to accomplish this great and glorious result!

(14.) We learn from this chapter the duty of preaching in a plain, simple, intelligible manner, 2Cor 3:12. Preaching should always be characterized indeed by good sense, and ministers should show that they are not fools, and their preaching should be such as to interest thinking men--for there is no folly or nonsense in the Bible. But their preaching should not be obscure, metaphysical, enigmatical, and abstruse. It should be so simple that the unlettered may learn the plan of salvation; so plain that no one shall mistake it except by his own fault. The hopes of the gospel are so clear that there is no need of ambiguity or enigma; no need of abstruse metaphysical reasoning in the pulpit. Nor should there be an attempt to appear wise or profound, by studying a dry, abstruse, and cold style and manner. The preacher should be open, plain, simple, sincere; he should testify what he feels; should be able to speak as himself animated by hope, and to tell of a world of glory to which he is himself looking forward with unspeakable joy.

(15.) It is the privilege of the Christian to look on the unvailed and unclouded glory of the gospel, 2Cor 3:12,13. He does not look at it through types and shadows. He does not contemplate it when a vail of obscurity is drawn designedly over it. He sees it in its true beauty and splendour. The Messiah has come, and he may contemplate openly and plainly his glory, and the grandeur of his work. The Jews looked upon it in the light of prophecy; to us it is history. They saw it only through obscure shadows, types, and figures; we see it in open day, may survey at leisure its full beauty, and contemplate in the fulness of its splendour the gospel of the blessed God. For this we cannot be too thankful; nor can we be too anxious lest we undervalue our privileges, and abuse the mercies that we enjoy.

(16.) In reading the Old Testament, we see the importance of suffering the rejected light of the New Testament to be thrown upon it, in order correctly to understand it, 2Cor 3:13,14. It is our privilege to know what the institutions of Moses meant; to see the and which he contemplated. And it is our privilege to see what they

referred to, and how they prefigured the Messiah and his gospel. In reading the Old Testament, therefore, there is no reason why we should not take with us the knowledge which we have derived from the New, respecting the character, work, and doctrines of the Messiah; and to suffer them to influence our understanding of the laws and institutions of Moses. Thus shall we treat the Bible as a whole, and allow one part to throw light on another--a privilege which we always concede to any book, There is no reason why Christians in reading the Old Testament should remain in the same darkness as the ancient or the modern Jews.

(17.) Thus read, the Old Testament will be to us of inestimable value, 2Cor 3:14. It is of value not only as introducing the gospel; as furnishing predictions whose fulfillment are full demonstration of the truth of religion; as containing specimens of the sublimest and purest poetry in the world; but it is of value as embodying, though amidst many types and shadows and much obscurity, all the great doctrines of the true religion. Though to the Jews, and to the world, there is a vail cast over it, yet to the Christian there is a beauty and splendour on all its pages--for the coming of Christ has removed that vail, and the sense of those ancient writings is now fully seen. True piety will value the Old Testament, and will find there, in the sweetest poetry in the world, the expression of feelings which the religion of the Messiah only can produce; and pure and elevated thoughts which could have been originated by nothing but his anticipated coming. It is no mark of piety or of wisdom to disparage the Jewish Scriptures. But the higher the attainments in Christian feeling, the more will the writings of Moses and the prophets be loved.

(18.) Men may have the Bible, and may read it long, and much, and yet not understand it, 2Cor 3:15. So it was, and is, with the Jews. The Scriptures were attentively read by them, and yet they did not understand them. So it is still. There is a vail on their heart, and they are blinded. So it is often now with others. Men often read the Bible, and see little beauty in it. They read, and they do not understand it. The reason is, the heart is not right. There should be a correspondence of feeling between the heart and the Bible, or a

congeniality of view in order to appreciate its value and its truth. No man can understand or appreciate Milton or Cowper who has not a taste like theirs. No man can understand and appreciate a a poem or an essay on patriotism, who is not a lover of his country; or on chastity, who is impure; or on temperance, who is intemperate; or on virtue in general, who is a stranger to virtue in every form. And so in reading the Bible. To appreciate and understand fully the writings of David, Isaiah, Paul, or John, we must have their feelings; our hearts must glow with their love to God and the Redeemer; we must feel as they did the guilt and burden of sin; and we must rejoice as they did in the hope of deliverance, and in the prospect of heaven. Till men have these feelings, they are not to wonder that the Bible is to them a dead letter, or a sealed book, and that they do not understand it, or see any beauty in its pages.

(19.) This chapter furnishes an argument for the fidelity and truth of the statement of Paul, 2Cor 3:15. The argument is, that his description is as applicable to the Jews now as it was in his own time--and that, therefore, it must have been drawn from nature. The same vail is on their hearts now as in his time; there is the same blindness arid darkness in regard to the true meaning of their Scriptures. The language of Paul will accurately express that blindness now; and his description, therefore, is not drawn from fancy, but from fact. It is true now in regard to that singular people, and it was true in his own time; and the lapse of eighteen hundred years has only served to confirm the truth of his description in regard to the people of his own nation and time.

(20.) That vail is to be removed only by their turning to God, 2Cor 3:16. It is only by true conversion that the mind can be brought to a full and clear understanding of the Scriptures; and that event will yet take place in regard to the Jews. They shall yet be converted to the Messiah whom their fathers slew, and whom they have So long rejected; and when that event shall occur, they shall see the beauty of their own Scriptures, and rejoice in the promises and glorious hopes which they hold out to the view.

(21.) The duty of meditating much on the glory of the gospel, 2Cor 3:18. It is by that we are purified. It is by keeping it constantly before the mind; dwelling on its splendour; thinking of its glorious truths, that we become transformed into the same image, and made like God. If the character is formed by the objects which we contemplate, and with which we are familiar; if we are insensibly moulded in our feelings and principles by that with which we constantly associate, then we should think much of the truths of the gospel. We should pray much--for thus we come in contact with God and his truth. We should read the Scripture much. We should commune with the good and the pure. We should make our companions of those who most love the Lord Jesus, and most decidedly bear his image. We should think much of a pure heaven. Thus shall we be moulded, insensibly it may be, but certainly, into the image of a holy God and Saviour, and be prepared for a pure and holy heaven.

2 Corinthians-4

1 Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

Their constancy and sincerity in their work and labour, concerning which observe,

1. Their constancy and perseverance in their work are declared: "We faint not (2Co 4:1) under the difficulty of our work, nor do we desist from our labour." And this their stedfastness was owing to the mercy of God. From the same mercy and grace from which they received the apostleship, they received strength to persevere in the work of that office.

Note, As it is great mercy and grace to be called to be saints, and especially to be counted faithful, and be put into the ministry (1Ti 1:12), so it is owing to the mercy and grace of God if we continue faithful and persevere in our work with diligence. The best men in the world would faint in their work, and under their burdens, if

they did not receive mercy from God. By the grace of God I am what I am, said this great apostle in his former epistle to these Corinthians, 1Co 15:10. And that mercy which has helped us out, and helped us on, hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the end.

2 but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

An objection is obviated, which might be thus formed: "If it be thus, how then does it come to pass, that the gospel is hid, and proves ineffectual, as to some who hear it?" To which the apostle answers, by showing that this was not the fault of the gospel, nor of the preachers thereof. But the true reasons of this are,

1. Those are lost souls to whom the gospel is hid, or is ineffectual, 2Co 4:3. Christ came to save that which was lost (Mt 17:11), and the gospel of Christ is sent to save such; and, if this do not find and save them, they are lost for ever; they must never expect any thing else to save them, for there is no other method or means of salvation. The hiding of the gospel therefore from souls is both an evidence and cause of their ruin.

2. The god of this world hath blinded their minds, 2Co 4:4. They are under the influence and power of the devil, who is here called the god of this world, and elsewhere the prince of this world, because of the great interest he has in this world, the homage that is paid to him by multitudes in this world, and the great sway that, by divine permission, he bears in the world, and in the hearts of his subjects, or rather slaves. And as he is the prince of darkness, and ruler of the darkness of this world, so he darkens the understandings of men, and increases their prejudices, and supports his interest by keeping them in the dark, blinding their

minds with ignorance, and error, and prejudices, that they should not behold the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. Observe,

(1.) Christ's design by his gospel is to make a glorious discovery of God to the minds of men. Thus, as the image of God, he demonstrates the power and wisdom of God, and the grace and mercy of God for their salvation. But,

(2.) The design of the devil is to keep men in ignorance; and, when he cannot keep the light of the gospel out of the world, he makes it his great business to keep it out of the hearts of men.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

A proof of their integrity is given, 2Co 4:5. They made it their business to preach Christ, and not themselves: We preach not ourselves. Self was not the matter nor the end of the apostles' preaching: they did not give their own notions and private opinions, nor their passions and prejudices, for the word and will of God; nor did they seek themselves, to advance their own secular interest or glory. But they preached Christ Jesus the Lord; and thus it did become them and behove them to do, as being Christ's servants. Their business was to make their Master known to the world as the Messiah, or the Christ of God, and as Jesus, the only Saviour of men, and as the rightful Lord, and to advance his honour and glory. Note, All the lines of Christian doctrine centre in Christ; and in preaching Christ we preach all we should preach. "As to ourselves," says the apostle, "we preach, or declare, that we are your servants for Jesus' sake." This was no compliment, but a real profession of a readiness to do good to their souls, and to promote their spiritual and eternal interest, and that for Jesus' sake; not for their own sake or their own advantage, but for Christ's sake, that they might imitate his great example, and advance his glory.

Note, Ministers should not be of proud spirits, lording it over God's heritage, who are servants to the souls of men: yet, at the same time, they must avoid the meanness of spirit implied in becoming the servants of the humours or the lusts of men; if they should thus seek to please men, they would not be the servants of Christ, Ga 1:10. And there was good reason,

1. Why they should preach Christ. For by gospel light we have the knowledge of the glory of God, which shines in the face of Jesus Christ, 2Co 4:6. And the light of this Sun of righteousness is more glorious than that light which God commanded to shine out of darkness. It is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun in the firmament; but it is more pleasant and profitable when the gospel shines in the heart.

Note, As light was the first-born of the first creation, so it is in the new creation: the illumination of the Spirit is his first work upon the soul. The grace of God created such a light in the soul that those who were sometimes darkness are made light in the Lord, Eph 5:8.

2. Why they should not preach themselves: because they were but earthen vessels, things of little or no worth or value. Here seems to be an allusion to the lamps which Gideon's soldiers carried in earthen pitchers, Jdg 7:16. The treasure of gospel light and grace is put into earthen vessels. The ministers of the gospel are weak and frail creatures, and subject to like passions and infirmities as other men; they are mortal, and soon broken in pieces. And God has so ordered it that the weaker the vessels are the stronger his power may appear to be, that the treasure itself should be valued the more.

Note, There is an excellency of power in the gospel of Christ, to enlighten the mind, to convince the conscience, to convert the soul, and to rejoice the heart; but all this power is from God the author, and not from men, who are but instruments, so that God in all things must be glorified.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of
the power may be of God, and not of us.
8 *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed,
but not in despair;
9 persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
10 always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that
the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

We are persecuted by men, pursued with hatred and violence fro
place, as men not worthy to live; yet not forsaken of God," 2Co
men may be sometimes forsaken of their friends, as well as pers
their enemies; but God will never leave them nor forsake them. A
are sometimes dejected, or cast down; the enemy may in a grea
prevail, and our spirits begin to fail us; there may be fears withi
as fightings without; yet we are not destroyed," 2Co 4:9.

11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake,
that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal
flesh.
12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.
13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I
believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and
therefore speak;

Faith kept them from fainting: We have the same spirit of faith (2Co 4:13), that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit; the same faith by which the saints of old did and suffered such great things. Note, The grace of faith is a sovereign cordial, and an effectual antidote against fainting-fits in troublous times. The spirit of faith will go far to bear up the spirit of a man under his infirmities; and as the apostle had David's example to imitate, who said (Ps 116:10), I have believed, and therefore have I spoken, so he leaves us his example to imitate: We also believe, says he, and therefore speak. Note, As we receive help and encouragement from the good words and examples of others, so we should be careful to give a good example to others.

14 knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

The consideration of the glory of God and the benefit of the church, by means of their sufferings, kept them from fainting, 2Co 4:15. Their sufferings were for the church's advantage (2Co 1:6), and thus did redound to God's glory. For, when the church is edified, then God is glorified; and we may well afford to bear sufferings patiently and cheerfully when we see others are the better for them--if they are instructed and edified, if they are confirmed and comforted. Note, The sufferings of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are intended for the good of the church and the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

The thoughts of the advantage their souls would reap by the sufferings of their bodies kept them from fainting: Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day, 2Co 4:16. Here note,

(1.) We have every one of us an outward and an inward man, a body and a soul.

(2.) If the outward man perish, there is no remedy, it must and will be so, it was made to perish.

(3.) It is our happiness if the decays of the outward man do contribute to the renewing of the inward man, if afflictions outwardly are gain to us inwardly, if when the body is sick, and weak, and perishing, the soul is vigorous and prosperous. The best of men have need of further renewing of the inward man, even day by day. Where the good work is begun there is more work to be done, for carrying it forward. And as in wicked men things grow every day worse and worse, so in godly men they grow better and better.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

Note, [1.] There are unseen things, as well as things that are seen. [2.] There is this vast difference between them: unseen things are eternal, seen things but temporal, or temporary only. [3.] By faith we not only discern these things, and the great difference between them, but by this also we take our aim at unseen things, and chiefly regard them, and make it our end and scope, not to escape present evils, and obtain present good, both of which are temporal and transitory, but to escape future evil and obtain future good things, which though unseen, are real, and certain, and eternal; and faith is the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen, Heb 11:1.

18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

2 Corinthians-5

1 For we know that, if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

(1.) What heaven is in the eye and hope of a believer. He looks upon it as a house, or habitation, a dwelling-place, a resting-place, a hiding-place, our Father's house, where there are many mansions, and our everlasting home. It is a house in the heavens, in that high and holy place which as far excels all the palaces of this earth as the heavens are high above the earth. It is a building of God, whose builder and maker is God, and therefore is worthy of its author; the happiness of the future state is what God hath prepared for those that love him. It is eternal in the heavens, everlasting habitations, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay in which our souls now dwell, which are mouldering and decaying, and whose foundations are in the dust.

(2.) When it is expected this happiness shall be enjoyed--immediately after death, so soon as our house of this earthly tabernacle is dissolved. Note,

[1.] That the body, this earthly house, is but a tabernacle, that must be dissolved shortly; the nails or pins will be drawn, and the cords be loosed, and then the body will return to dust as it was.

[2.] When this comes to pass, then comes the house not made with hands. The spirit returns to God who gave it; and such as have walked with God here shall dwell with God for ever.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

The body of flesh is a heavy burden, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers groan because burdened with a body of sin, and the many corruptions that are still remaining and raging in them. This makes them complain, O wretched man that I am! Ro 7:24. (2.) There is a groaning of desire after the happiness of another life; and thus believers groan: Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven (2Co 5:2), to obtain a blessed immortality, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (2Co 5:4), that being found clothed, we may not be naked (2Co 5:3),

Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, etc. There is evidently here a change of the metaphor, which gives an apparent harshness to the construction. One idea of the apostle is, that the body here, and the spiritual body hereafter, is a house or a dwelling. Here he speaks of it as a garment which may be put on or laid off; and of himself as earnestly desiring to put on the immortal clothing or vestment which was in heaven. Both these figures are common in ancient writings; and a change in this manner in the popular style is not unusual. The Pythagoreans compared the body to a tent or hut for the soul; the Platonists liken it to a vestment.--Bloomfield. The Jews speak of a vestment to the soul in this world and the next. They affirm that the soul had a covering when it was under the throne of God, and before it was

clothed with the body. This vestment, they say, was "the image of God," which was lost by Adam. After the fall, they say, Adam and all his posterity were regarded as naked. In the future world they say the good will be clothed with a vestment for the soul, which they speak of as lucid and radiant, and such as no one on earth can attain.--Schoettgen. But there is no reason to think that Paul referred to any such trifles as the Jews have believed on this subject. He evidently regarded man as composed of body and soul. The soul was the more important part, and the body constituted its mere habitation or dwelling. Yet a body was essential to the idea of the complete man; and since this was frail and dying; he looked forward to a union with the body that should be eternal in the heavens, as a more desirable and perfect habitation of the soul. Mr. Locke has given an interpretation of this in which he is probably alone, but which has so much appearance of plausibility that it is not improper to refer to it. He supposes that this whole passage has reference to the fact that at the coming of the Redeemer the body will be changed without experiencing death, (comp. 1Cor 15:51,52;) that Paul expected that this might soon occur; and that he earnestly desired to undergo this transformation without experiencing the pains of dying. He therefore paraphrases it, "For in this tabernacle I groan, earnestly desiring, without putting off this mortal, earthly body by death, to have that celestial body superinduced, if so be the coming of Christ shall overtake me in this life, before I put off this body"

3 if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Note, [1.] Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as put an end to all our troubles here below. Naked we came into this world, and naked shall we go out of it. But,

[2.] Gracious souls are not found naked in the other world; no, they are clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. They shall be delivered out of all their troubles, and

shall have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Re 7:14.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

The believer's assurance of his interest in this future blessedness, on a double account:--

(1.) From the experience of the grace of God, in preparing and making him meet for this blessedness. He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, 2Co 5:5. Note, All who are designed for heaven hereafter are wrought or prepared for heaven while they are here; the stones of that spiritual building and temple above are squared and fashioned here below. And he that hath wrought us for this is God, because nothing less than a divine power can make a soul partaker of a divine nature; no hand less than the hand of God can work us for this thing. A great deal is to be done to prepare our souls for heaven, and that preparation of the heart is from the Lord.

(2.) The earnest of the Spirit gave them this assurance: for an earnest is part of payment, and secures the full payment. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit are earnests of everlasting grace and comfort.

6 Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Therefore we are always confident. The word here used θαρρουντες means, to be of good cheer; to have good courage; to be full of hope. The idea is, that Paul was not dejected, cast down, disheartened, discouraged. He was cheerful and happy. He was patient in his trials, and diligent in his calling. He was full of hope, and of the confident expectation of heaven; and this filled him with cheerfulness and with joy. Tindal renders it, "We are always of good cheer." And this was not occasional and transitory, it was constant, it was uniform, it always παντοτε existed. This is an instance of the uniform cheerfulness which will be produced by the assured prospect of heaven. It is an instance, too, when the hope of heaven will enable a man to face danger with courage; to

endure toil with patience; and to submit to trials in any form with cheerfulness.

By faith. In the belief of those things which we do not see. We believe in the existence of objects which are invisible, and we are influenced by them. To walk by faith, is to live in the confident expectation of things that are to come; in the belief of the existence of unseen realities; and suffering them to influence us as if they were seen. The people of this world are influenced by the things that are seen. They live for wealth, honour, splendour, praise, for the objects which this world can furnish, and as if there were nothing which is unseen, or as if they ought not to be influenced by the things which are unseen. The Christian, on the contrary, has a firm conviction of the reality of the glories of heaven; of the fact that the Redeemer is there; of the fact that there is a crown of glory; and he lives and acts as if that were all real, and as if he saw it all. The simple account of faith, and of living by faith is, that we live and act as if these things were true, and suffer them to make an impression on our mind according to their real nature. Mk 16:16. It is contradistinguished from living simply under the influence of things that are seen. God is unseen--but the Christian lives, and thinks, and acts as if there were a God, and as if he saw him. Christ is unseen now by the bodily eye; but the Christian lives and acts as if he were seen; that is, as if his eye were known to be upon us, and as if he was now exalted to heaven, and was the only Saviour. The Holy Spirit is unseen; but he lives and acts as if there were such a Spirit, and as if his influences were needful to renew and purify the soul. Heaven is unseen; but the Christian lives, and thinks, and acts as if there were a heaven, and as if he now saw its glories. He has confidence in these and in kindred truths, and he acts as if they were real. Could man see all these--were they visible to the naked eye as they are to the eye of faith, no one would doubt the propriety of living and acting with reference to them. But if they exist, there is no more impropriety in acting with reference to them than if they were seen. Our seeing or not seeing them does not alter their nature or importance; and the fact that they are not seen does not make it improper to act with reference to them. There are many ways of being convinced of the existence and reality of objects besides

seeing them; and it may be as rational to be influenced by the reason, the judgment, or by strong confidence, as it is to be influenced by sight. Besides, all men are influenced by things which they have not seen. They hope for objects that are future. They aspire to happiness which they have not yet beheld. They strive for honour and wealth which are unseen, and which are in the distant future. They live and act--influenced by strong faith and hope--as if these things were attainable; and they deny themselves, and labour, and cross oceans and deserts, and breathe in pestilential air, to obtain those things which they have not seen, and which to them are in the distant future. And why should not the Christian endure like labour, and be willing to suffer in like manner, to gain the unseen crown which is incorruptible, and to acquire the unseen wealth which the moth does not corrupt? And further still, the men of this world strive for those objects which they have not beheld, without any promise or any assurance that they shall obtain them. No being, able to grant them, has promised them; no one has assured them that their lives shall be lengthened out to obtain them. In a moment they may be cut off, and all their plans frustrated; or they may be utterly disappointed, and all their plans fail; or if they gain the object, it may be unsatisfactory, and may furnish no pleasure such as they had anticipated. But not so the Christian. He has

(1.) the promise of life.

(2.) He has the assurance that sudden death cannot deprive him of it. It at once removes him to the object of pursuit, not from it.

(3.) He has the assurance that when obtained, it shall not disgust, or satiate, or decay, but that it shall meet all the expectations of the soul, and shall be eternal.

Not by sight. This may mean either that we are not influenced by a sight of these future glories, or that we are not influenced by the things which we see. The main idea is, that we are not influenced and governed by the sight. We are not governed and controlled by

the things which we see, and we do not see those things which actually influence and control us. In both it is faith that controls us, and not sight.

The apostle deduces an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state and condition in this world, 2Co 5:6-8. Here observe,

1. What their present state or condition is: they are absent from the Lord (2Co 5:6); they are pilgrims and strangers in this world; they do but sojourn here in their earthly home, or in this tabernacle; and though God is with us here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not with him as we hope to be: we cannot see his face while we live: For we walk by faith, not by sight, 2Co 5:7. We have not the vision and fruition of God, as of an object that is present with us, and as we hope for hereafter, when we shall see as we are seen. Note, Faith is for this world, and sight is reserved for the other world: and it is our duty, and will be our interest, to walk by faith, till we come to live by sight.

2. How comfortable and courageous we ought to be in all the troubles of life, and in the hour of death: Therefore we are, or ought to be, always confident (2Co 5:6), and again (2Co 5:8), We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body. True Christians, if they duly considered the prospect faith gives them of another world, and the good reasons of their hope of blessedness after death, would be comforted under the troubles of life, and supported in the hour of death: they should take courage, when they are encountering the last enemy, and be willing rather to die than live, when it is the will of God that they should put off this tabernacle.

Note, As those who are born from above long to be there, so it is but being absent from the body, and we shall very soon be present with the Lord--but to die, and be with Christ--but to close our eyes to all things in this world, and we shall open them in a world of glory. Faith will be turned into sight.

To be present with the Lord. The Lord Jesus. Acts 1:24. Comp. Php 1:23. The idea of Paul is, that the Lord Jesus would constitute the main glory of heaven, and that to be with him was equivalent to being in a place of perfect bliss. He had no idea of any heaven where the Lord Jesus was not; and to be with him was to be in heaven. That world where the Redeemer is, is heaven. This also proves that the spirits of the saints, when they depart, are with the Redeemer; that is, are at once taken to heaven. It demonstrates

(1.) that they are not annihilated.

(2.) That they do not sleep, and remain in an unconscious state, as Dr. Priestly supposes.

(3.) That they are not in some intermediate state--either in a state of purgatory, as the Papists suppose, or a state where all the souls of the just and the unjust are assembled in a common abode, as many Protestants have supposed--but

(4.) that they dwell WITH Christ; they are WITH the Lord, (προςτονκυριον.) They abide in his presence; they partake of his joy and his glory; they are permitted to sit with him in his throne, Rev 3:21. The same idea the Saviour expressed to the dying thief, when he said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," Lk 23:43.

7 (for we walk by faith, not by sight:)
8 we are confident, *I say,* and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.
9 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.
10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

He proceeds to deduce an inference to excite and quicken himself and others to duty, 2Co 5:9-11. So it is that well-grounded hopes of heaven will be far from giving the least encouragement to sloth and sinful security; on the contrary, they should stir us up to use the

greatest care and diligence in religion: Wherefore, or because we hope to be present with the Lord, we labour and take pains, 2Co 5:9. Philotimoumetha--We are ambitious, and labour as industriously as the most ambitious men do to obtain what they aim at. Here observe, 1. What it was that the apostle was thus ambitious of--acceptance with God. We labour that, living and dying, whether present in the body or absent from the body, we may be accepted of him, the Lord (2Co 5:9), that we may please him who hath chosen us, that our great Lord may say to us, Well done. This they coveted as the greatest favour and the highest honour: it was the summit of their ambition. 2. What further quickening motives they had to excite their diligence, from the consideration of the judgment to come, 2Co 5:10,11. There are many things relating to this great matter that should awe the best of men into the utmost care and diligence in religion; for example, the certainty of this judgment, for we must appear; the universality of it, for we must all appear; the great Judge before whose judgment-seat we must appear, the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself will appear in flaming fire; the recompence to be then received, for things done in the body, which will be very particular (unto every one), and very just, according to what we have done, whether good or bad. The apostle calls this awful judgment the terror of the Lord (2Co 5:11), and, by the consideration thereof, was excited to persuade men to repent, and live a holy life, that, when Christ shall appear terribly, they may appear before him comfortably. And, concerning his fidelity and diligence, he comfortably appeals unto God, and the consciences of those he wrote to: We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

For we must. δει. It is proper, fit, necessary that we should all appear there. This fact to which Paul now refers is another reason why it was necessary to lead a holy life, and why Paul gave himself with so much diligence and self-denial to the arduous duties of his office. There is a necessity or a fitness that we should appear there to give up our account, for we are here on trial; we are responsible moral agents; we are placed here to form characters for eternity. Before we receive our eternal allotment, it is proper that we should render our account of the manner in which we have lived, and of the

manner in which we have improved our talents and privileges. In the nature of things, it is proper that we should undergo a trial before we receive our reward, or before we are punished; and God has made it necessary and certain, by his direct and positive appointment, that we should stand at the bar of the final Judge. See Rom 14:10.

All. Both Jews and Gentiles; old and young; bond and free; rich and poor; all of every class, and every age, and every nation. None shall escape by being unknown; none by virtue of their rank or wealth; none because they have a character too pure to be judged; All shall be arraigned in one vast assemblage, and with reference to their eternal doom. See Rev 20:12. Rosenmuller supposes that the apostle here alludes to an opinion that was common among the Jews, that the Gentiles only would be exposed to severe judgments in the future world, and that the Jews would be saved as a matter of course. But the idea seems rather to be, that as the trial of the great day was the most important that man could undergo, and as all must give account there, Paul and his fellow-labourers devoted themselves to untiring diligence and fidelity that they might be accepted in that great day.

Done in his body. Literally, "the things by or through (διᾳ) the body." Tindal renders it, "the works of his body." The idea is, that every man shall receive an appropriate reward for the actions of this life. Observe here,

(1.) that it is the works done in or through the body; not which the body itself has done. It is the mind, the man that has lived in the body, and acted by it, that is to be judged.

(2.) It is to be for the deeds of this life; not for what is done after death. Men are not to be brought into judgment for what they do after they die. All beyond the grave is either reward or punishment; it is not probation. The destiny is to be settled for ever by what is done in this world of probation.

(3.) It is to be for all the deeds done in the body; for all the thoughts, plans, purposes, words, as well as for all the outward actions of the man. All that has been thought or done must come into review, and man must give account for all.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The terror of the Lord. That is, of the Lord Jesus, who will be seated on the throne of judgment, and who will decide the destiny of all men, 2Cor 5:10 Mt 25. The sense is, knowing how much the Lord is to be feared; what an object of terror and alarm it will be to stand at the judgment-seat; how fearful and awful will be the consequences of the trial of that day. The Lord Jesus will be an object of terror and alarm or it will be a subject inspiring terror and alarm to stand there on that day, because

(1.) he has all power, and is appointed to execute judgment;

(2.) because all must there give a strict and impartial account of all that they have done;

(3.) because the wrath of God will be shown in the condemnation of the guilty. It will be a day of awful wailing and alarm when all the living and the dead shall be arraigned on trial with reference to their eternal destiny; and when countless hosts of the guilty and impenitent shall be thrust down to an eternal hell. Who can describe the amazing terror of the scene? Who can fancy the horrors of the hosts of the guilty and the wretched who shall then hear that their doom is to be fixed for ever in a world of unspeakable woe? The influence of the knowledge of the terror of the Lord on the mind of the apostle'seems to have been two-fold: first, an apprehension of it as a personal concern, and a desire to escape it, which led him to constant self-denial and toil; and, secondly, a desire to save others from being overwhelmed in the wrath of that dreadful day.

But we are made manifest unto God. The meaning of this is, probably, that God sees that we are sincere and upright in our aims and purposes. He is acquainted with our hearts. All our motives are known to him, and he sees that it is our aim to promote his glory, and to save the souls of men. This is probably said to counteract the charge which might have been brought against him by some of the disaffected in Corinth, that he was influenced by improper motives and guns. To meet this, Paul says that God knew that he was endeavouring to save souls, and that he was actuated by a sincere desire to rescue them from the impending terrors of the day of judgment.

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

This is to put an argument in their mouths wherewith to answer his accusers, who made vain boastings, and gloried in appearances only; that he might give them an occasion to glory on their behalf, or to defend them against the reproaches of their adversaries. And if the people can say that the word has been manifested to their consciences, and been effectual to their conversion and edification, this is the best defence they can make for the ministry of the word, when they are vilified and reproached.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God: or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause.

He gives good reasons for their great zeal and diligence. Some of Paul's adversaries had, it is likely, reproached him for his zeal and fervour, as if he had been a madman, or, in the language of our days, a fanatic; they imputed all to enthusiasm, as the Roman governor told him, Much learning has made thee mad, Ac 26:24. But the apostle tells them,

1. It was for the glory of God, and the good of the church, that he was thus zealous and industrious: "Whether we be beside ourselves, or whether we be sober (whether you or others do think the one or the other), it is to God, and for his glory: and it is for your cause, or to promote your good," 2Co 5:13. If they manifested

the greatest ardour and vehemency at some times, and used the greatest calmness in strong reasonings at other times, it was for the best ends; and in both methods they had good reason for what they did.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

2Cor 5:14 Verse 14. For the love of Christ. In this verse, Paul brings into view the principle which actuated him; the reason of his extraordinary and disinterested zeal. That was, that he was influenced by the love which Christ had shown in dying for all men, and by the argument which was furnished by that death respecting the actual character and condition of man, (in this verse;) and of the obligation of those who professed to be his true friends, 2Cor 5:15. The phrase "the love of Christ" (αγαπητουχριστου) may denote either the love which Christ bears toward us, and which he has manifested, or our love toward, him. In the former sense the phrase "the love of God" is used in Rom 5:8, 2Cor 13:13; and the phrase "love of Christ" in Eph 3:17. The phrase is used in the latter sense in Jn 15:9,10, and Rom 8:35. It is impossible to determine the sense with certainty, and it is only by the view which shall be taken of the connexion and of the argument which will in any way determine the meaning. Expositors differ in regard to it. It seems to me that the phrase here means the love which Christ had toward us. Paul speaks of his dying for all as the reason why he was urged on to the course of self-denial which he evince& Christ died for all. All were dead. Christ evinced his great love for us, and for all, by giving himself to die; and it was this love which Christ had shown that impelled Paul to his own acts of love and self-denial. He gave himself to his great work, impelled by that love which Christ had shown; by the view of the ruined condition of man which that work furnished; and by a desire to emulate the Redeemer, and to possess the same spirit which he evinced. Constraineth us. συνεχει. This word (συνεχω) properly means, to hold together, to press together, to shut up; then to press on, urge, impel, or excite.

Here it means, that the impelling, or exciting motive in the labours and self-denials of Paul, was the love of Christ--the love which he

had showed to the children of men. Christ so loved the world as to give himself for it. His love for the world was a demonstration that men were dead in sins. And we, being urged by the same love, are prompted to like acts of zeal and self-denial to save the world from ruin. Because we thus judge. Greek, "We judging this;" that is, we thus determine in our own minds, or we thus decide; or this is our firm conviction and belief--we come to this conclusion. That if one died for all. On the supposition that one died for all; or taking it for granted that one died for all, then it follows that all were dead. The "one" who died for all here is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus. The word "for" (υπερ) means, in the place of, in the stead of. See Phm 1:13, and 2Cor 5:20 of this chapter. It means that Christ took the place of sinners, and died in their stead; that he endured what was an ample equivalent for all the punishment which would be inflicted if they were to suffer the just penalty of the law; that he endured so much suffering, and that God by his great substituted sorrows made such an expression of his hatred of sin, as to answer the same end in expressing his sense of the evil of sin, and in restraining others from transgression, the guilty were personally to suffer the full penalty of the law. If this was done, of course the guilty might be pardoned and saved, since all the ends which could be accomplished by their destruction have been accomplished by the substituted sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Rom 3:25, Rom 3:26, where this subject is considered at length, The phrase "for all," (υπερπαντων,) obviously means for all mankind; for every man.

This is an exceedingly important expression in regard to the extent of the atonement which the Lord Jesus made; and while it proves that his death was vicarious, that is, in the place of others, and for their sakes, it demonstrates also that the atonement was general, and had, in itself considered, no limitation, and no particular reference to any class or condition of men, and no particular applicability to one class more than to another. There was nothing in the nature of the atonement that limited it to any one class or condition; there was nothing in the design that made it, in itself, any more applicable to one portion of mankind than to another. And whatever may be true in regard. to the fact as to its actual applicability, or in regard to the purpose of God to apply it, it is

demonstrated by this passage that his death had an original applicability to all, and that the merits of that death were sufficient to save all. The argument in favour of the general atonement, from this passage, consists in the following points:

(1.) That Paul assumes this as a matter that was well known, indisputable, and universally admitted, that Christ died for all. He did not deem it necessary to enter into the argument to prove it, nor even to state it formally. It was so well known, and so universally admitted, that he made it a first principle--an elementary position-- a maxim on which to base another important doctrine--to wit, that all were dead. It was a point which he assumed that no one would call in question; a doctrine which might be laid down as the basis of an argument--like one of the first principles or maxims in science.

(2.) It is the plain and obvious meaning of the expression--the sense which strikes all men, unless they have some theory to support to the contrary; and it requires all the ingenuity which men can ever command to make it appear even plausible that this is consistent with the doctrine of a limited atonement--much more to make it out that it does not mean all. If a man is told that all the human family must die, the obvious interpretation is, that it applies to every individual. If told that all the passengers on board a steamboat were drowned, the obvious interpretation is, that every individual was meant. If told that a ship was wrecked, and that all the crew perished, the obvious interpretation would be that none escaped. If told that all the inmates of an hospital were sick, it would be understood that there was not an individual that was not sick. Such is the view which would be taken by nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of a thousand, if told that Christ died for all; nor could they conceive how this could be consistent with the statement that he died only for the elect, and that the elect was only a small part of the human family.

(3.) This interpretation is in accordance with all the explicit declarations on the design of the death of the Redeemer. Heb 2:9,

"That he, by the grace of, God, should taste death for every man." Comp. Jn 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." 1Timm 2:6, "Who gave himself a ransom for all." See Mt 20:28, "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." 1Jn 2:2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

(4.) The fact also, that on the ground of the atonement made by the Redeemer salvation is offered unto all men by God, is a proof that he died for all. The apostles were directed to go "into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature," with the assurance that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mk 16:16, and everywhere in the Bible the most full and free offers of salvation are made to all mankind. Comp. Isa 55:1, Jn 7:37, Rev 22:17. These offers are made on the ground that the Lord Jesus died for men, Jn 3:16. They are offers of salvation through the gospel, of the pardon of sin, and of eternal life to be made "to every creature." But if Christ died only for a part; if there is a large portion of the human family for whom he died in no sense whatever; if there is no provision of any kind made for them, then God must know this, and then the offers cannot be made with sincerity, and God is tantalizing them with the offers of that which does not exist, and which he knows does not exist. It is of no use here to say that the preacher does not know who the elect are, and that he is obliged to make the offer to all in order that the elect may be reached. For it is not the preacher only who offers the gospel. It is God who does it, and he knows who the elect are, and yet he offers salvation to all. And if there is no salvation provided for all, and no possibility that all to whom the offer comes should be saved, then God is insincere; and there is no way possible of vindicating his character.

(5.) If this interpretation is not correct, and if Christ did not die for all, then the argument of Paul here is a non sequitur, and is worthless. The demonstration that all are dead, according to him, is that Christ died for all. But suppose that he meant, or that he knew, that Christ died only for a part--for the elect--then how

would the argument stand, and what would be its force? "Christ died only for a portion of the human race, therefore ALL are sinners. Medicine is provided only for a part of mankind, therefore all are sick. Pardon is offered to part only, therefore all are guilty." But Paul never reasoned in this way. He believed that Christ died for all mankind, and on the ground of that he inferred at once that all needed such an atonement; that all-were sinners, and that all were exposed to the wrath of God. And the argument is in this way, and in this way only, sound. But still it may be asked, what is the force of this argument ? How does the fact that Christ died for all prove that all were sinners, or dead in sin? I answer,

(a.) In the same way as to provide medicine for all, proves that all are sick, or liable to be sick; and to offer pardon to all who are in a prison, proves that all there are guilty. What insult is it to offer medicine to a man in health; or pardon to a man who has violated no law! And there would be the same insult in offering salvation to a man who was not a sinner, and who did not need forgiveness.

(b.) The dignity of the Sufferer, and the extent of his sufferings, prove that all were under a deep and dreadful load of guilt. Such a Being would not have come to die unless the race had been apostate; nor would he have endured so great sorrows unless a deep and dreadful malady had spread over the world. The deep anxiety, the tears, the toils, the sufferings, and the groans of the Redeemer, show what was his sense of the condition of man, and prove that he regarded them as degraded, fallen, and lost. And if the Son of God, who knows all hearts, regarded them as lost, they are lost. He was not mistaken in regard to the character of man, and he did not lay down his life under the influence of delusion and error. If to the view which has been taken of this important passage it be objected that the work of the atonement must have been to a large extent in vain; that it has been actually applied to but comparatively a small portion of the human family, and that it is unreasonable to suppose that God would suffer so great sorrows to be endured for nought, we may reply,

(1.) that it may not have been in vain, though it may have been rejected by a large portion of mankind. There may have been other purposes accomplished by it besides the direct salvation of men. It was doing much when it rendered it consistent for God to offer salvation to all; it is much that God could be seen to be just, and yet pardoning the sinner; it was much when his determined hatred of sin, and his purpose to honour his law, were evinced; and in regard to the benevolence and justice of God to other beings and to other worlds, much, very much was gained, though all the human race had rejected the plan and been lost; and in regard to all these objects, the plan was not in vain, and the sufferings of the Redeemer were not for nought. But

(2.) it is in accordance with what we see everywhere, when much that God does seems to our eyes, though not to his, to be in vain. How much rain falls on ever sterile sands or on barren rocks, to our eyes in vain! What floods of light are poured each day on barren wastes, or untraversed oceans, to our eyes in vain! How many flowers shed forth their fragrance in the wilderness, and "waste their sweetness on the desert air," to us apparently for nought! How many pearls lie useless in the ocean; how much gold and silver in the earth; how many diamonds amidst rocks to us unknown, and apparently in vain! How many lofty trees rear their heads in the untraversed wilderness, and after standing for centuries fall on the earth and decay, to our eyes in vain! And how much medicinal virtue is created by God each year in the vegetable world that is unknown to man, and that decays and is lost without removing any disease, and that seems to be created in vain! And how long has it been before the most valuable medicines have been found out, and applied to alleviating pain, or removing disease! Year after year, and age after age, they existed in a suffering world, and men died perhaps within a few yards of the medicine which would have relieved or saved them, but it was unknown, or, if known, disregarded.

But times were coming when their value would be appreciated, and when they would be applied to benefit the sufferer. So with the

plan of salvation. It may be rejected, and the sufferings of the Redeemer may seem to have been for nought. But they will yet be of value to mankind; and when the time shall come for the whole world to embrace the Saviour, there will be found no want of sufficiency in the plan of redemption, and in the merits of the Redeemer, to save all the race. Then were all dead. All dead in sin; that is, all were sinners. The fact that he died for all proves that all were transgressors. The word "dead" is not unfrequently used in the Scriptures to denote the condition of sinners. See Eph 2:1. It means not that sinners are in all senses and in all respects like a lifeless corpse, for they are not. They are still moral agents, and have a conscience, and are capable of thinking, and speaking, and acting. It does not mean that they have no more power, than one in the grave, for they have more power. But it means that there is a striking similarity, in some respects, between one Who is dead and a sinner. That similarity does not extend to everything, but in many respects it is very striking.

(1.) The sinner is as insensible to the glories of the heavenly world, and the appeals of the gospel, as a corpse is to what is going on around or above it. The body that lies in the grave is insensible to the voice of friendship, and the charms of music, and the hum of business, and the plans of gain and ambition; and so the sinner is insensible to all the glories of the heavenly world, and to all the appeals that are made to him, and to all the warnings of God. He lives as though there were no heaven and no hell; no God and no Saviour.

(2.) There is need of the same Divine power to convert a sinner which is needful to raise up the dead. The same cause does not exist, making the existence of that power necessary; but it is a fact that a sinner will no more be converted by his own power than a dead man will rise from the grave by his own power. No man ever yet was converted without direct Divine agency, any more than Lazarus was raised without Divine agency. And there is no more just or melancholy description which can be given of man, than to say that he is dead in sins. He is insensible to all the appeals that God makes to him; he is insensible to all the sufferings of the

Saviour, and to all the glories of heaven; he lives as though these did not exist, or as though he had no concern in them; his eyes see no more beauty in them than the sightless eyeballs of the dead do in the material world; his ear is as inattentive to the calls of God and the gospel as the ear of the dead is to the voice of friendship or the charms of melody; and in a world that is full of God, and that might be full of hope, he is living without God and without hope.

15 and *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

The love of Christ constrained them, 2Co 5:14. They were under the sweetest and strongest constraints to do what they did. Love has a constraining virtue to excite ministers and private Christians in their duty. Our love to Christ will have this virtue; and Christ's love to us, which was manifested in this great instance of his dying for us, will have this effect upon us, if it be duly considered and rightly judged of. For observe how the apostle argues for the reasonableness of love's constraints, and declares,

(1.) What we were before, and must have continued to be, had not Christ died for us: We were dead, 2Co 5:14. If one died for all, then were all dead; dead in law, under sentence of death; dead in sins and trespasses, spiritually dead. Note, This was the deplorable condition of all those for whom Christ died: they were lost and undone, dead and ruined, and must have remained thus miserable for ever if Christ had not died for them.

(2.) What such should do, for whom Christ died; namely, that they should live to him. This is what Christ designed, that those who live, who are made alive unto God by means of his death, should live to him that died for them, and rose again for their sakes also, and that they should not live to themselves, 2Co 5:15. Note, We should not make ourselves, but Christ, the end of our living and actions: and it was one end of Christ's death to cure us of this self-love, and to excite us always to act under the commanding influence of his love. A Christian's life should be consecrated to

Christ; and then do we live as we ought to live when we live to Christ, who died for us.

Constraineth us./KJV/ This word (συνεχω) properly means, to hold together, to press together, to shut up; then to press on, urge, impel, or excite. Here it means, that the impelling, or exciting motive in the labours and self-denials of Paul, was the love of Christ--the love which he had showed to the children of men. Christ so loved the world as to give himself for it. His love for the world was a demonstration that men were dead in sins. And we, being urged by the same love, are prompted to like acts of zeal and self-denial to save the world from ruin.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

That they which live. They who are true Christians; who are made alive unto God as the result of the dying love of the Redeemer. Sinners are dead in sins. Christians are alive to the worth of the soul, the presence of God, the importance of religion, the solemnities of eternity; i.e., they act and feel as if these things had a real existence, and as if they should exert a constant influence upon the heart and life. It is observable that Paul makes a distinction here between those for whom Christ died and those who actually "live;" thus demonstrating that there may be many for whom he died who do not live to God, or who are not savingly benefited by his death. The atonement was for all, but only apart are actually made alive to God, Multitudes reject it; but the fact that he died for all, that he tasted death for every man, that he not only died for the elect but for all others, that his benevolence was so great as to embrace the whole human family in the design of his death, is a reason why they who are actually made alive to God should consecrate themselves entirely to his service. The fact that he died for all erinted such unbounded and infinite benevolence, that it should induce us who are actually benefited by his death, and who have any just views of it, to devote all that we have to his service. Should not henceforth live unto themselves. Should not seek our own ease and pleasure; should not make it our great object to promote our own interest; but should make it the grand purpose

of our lives to promote his honour, and to advance his cause. This is a vital principle in religion; and it is exceedingly important to know what is meant by living to ourselves, and whether we do it. It is done in the following, and perhaps in some other ways:

(1.) When men seek pleasure, gain, or reputation, as the controlling principle of their lives.

(2.) When they are regardless of the rights of others, and sacrifice all the claims which others have on them in order to secure the advancement of their own purposes and ends.

(3.) When they are regardless of the wants of others, and turn a deaf ear to all the appeals which charity makes to them, and have no time to give to serve them, and no money to spare to alleviate their wants; and especially when they turn a deaf ear to the appeals which are made for the diffusion of the gospel to the benighted and perishing.

(4.) When their main purpose is the aggrandizement of their own families --for their families are but a diffusion of self. And

(5.) when they seek their own salvation only from selfish motives, and not from a desire to honour God. Multitudes are selfish even in their religion; and the main purpose which they have in view is to promote their own objects, and not the honour of the Master whom they profess to serve. They seek and profess religion only because they desire to escape from wrath, and to obtain the happiness of heaven, and not from any love to the Redeemer, or any desire to honour him. Or they seek to build up the interests of their own church and party, and all their zeal is expended on that, and that alone, without any real desire to honour the Saviour. Or though in the church, they are still selfish and live wholly to themselves. They live for fashion, for gain, for reputation. They practise no self-denial; they make no effort to advance the cause of God the Saviour. But unto him, etc. Unto the Lord Jesus Christ. To live to him is the opposite to living unto ourselves. It is to seek

his honour; to feel that we belong to him; that all our time and talents--all our strength of intellect and body--all the avails of our skill and toil--all belong to him, and should be employed in his service. If we have talents by which we can influence other minds, they should be employed to honour the Saviour. If we have skill, or strength to labour, by which we can make money, we should feel that it all belongs to him, and should be employed in his service. If we have property, we should feel that it is his, and that he has a claim upon it all, and that it should be honestly consecrated to his cause. And if we are endowed with a spirit of enterprise, and are fitted by nature to encounter perils in distant and barbarous climes, as Paul was, we should feel like him that we are bound to devote all entirely to his service, and to the promotion of his cause. A servant, a slave, does not live to himself, but to his master. His person, his time, his limbs, his talents, and the avails of his industry are not regarded as his own. He is judged incapable of holding any property which is not at the disposal of his master. If he has strength, it is his master's. If he has skill, the avails of it are his master's. If he is an ingenious mechanic, or labours in any department; if he is amiable, kind, gentle, and faithful, and adapted to be useful in an eminent degree, it is regarded as all the property of his master. He is bound to go where his master chooses; to execute the task which he assigns; to deny himself at his master's will; and to come and lay the avails of all his toil and skill at his master's feet. He is regarded as having been purchased with money; and the purchase-money is supposed to give a right to his time, his talents, his services, and his soul. Such as the slave is supposed to become by purchase, and by the operation of human laws, the Christian becomes by the purchase of the Son of God, and by the voluntary recognition of him as the Master, and as having a right to all that we have and are. To him all belongs; and all should be employed in endeavouring to promote his glory, and in advancing his cause. Which died for them, and rose again. Paul here states the grounds of the obligation under which he felt himself placed, to live not unto himself but unto Christ.

(1.) The first is, the fact that Christ had died for him, and for all his people. The effect of that death was the same as a purchase. It was a purchase. 1Cor 6:20 1Cor 7:23. Comp. 1Pet 1:18,19.

(2.) The second is, that he had risen again from the dead. To this fact Paul traced all his hopes of eternal life, and of the resurrection from the dead. See Rom 4:25. As we have the hope of the resurrection from the dead only from the fact that he rose; as he has "brought life and immortality to light," and hath in this way "abolished death," (2Ti 1:10;) as all the prospect of entering a world where there is no death and no grave is to be traced to the resurrection of the Saviour, so we are bound by every obligation of gratitude to devote ourselves without any reserve to him. To him, and him alone, should we live; and in his cause our lives should be, as Paul's was, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight.

17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Regeneration, which consists of two things; namely,

1. Weanedness from the world: "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh, 2Co 5:16. We do not own nor affect any person or thing in this world for carnal ends and outward advantage: we are enabled, by divine grace, not to mind nor regard this world, nor the things of this world, but to live above it. The love of Christ is in our hearts, and the world is under our feet."

Note, Good Christians must enjoy the comforts of this life, and their relations in this world, with a holy indifference.

2. A thorough change of the heart: For if any man be in Christ, if any man be a Christian indeed, and will approve himself such, he is, or he must be, a new creature, 2Co 5:17. Some read it, Let him be a new creature. This ought to be the care of all who profess the Christian faith, that they be new creatures; not only that they have a new name, and wear a new livery, but that they have a new heart and new nature. And so great is the change the grace of God makes

in the soul, that, as it follows, old things are passed away--old thoughts, old principles, and old practices, are passed away; and all these things must become new. Note, Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul; all things are new. The renewed man acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company.

18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

By Jesus Christ. By the agency or medium of Jesus Christ. He was the Mediator to interpose in the work of reconciliation. And he was abundantly qualified for this work, and was the only Being that has lived in this world who was qualified for it. For

(1.) he was endowed with a Divine and human nature--the nature of both the parties at issue, God and man, and thus, in the language of Job, could "lay his hand upon both," Job 9:33.

(2.) He was intimately acquainted with both the parties, and knew what was needful to be done. He knew God the Father so well that he could say, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son," Mt 11:27. And he knew man so well that it could be said of him, he "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," Jn 2:25. No one can be a mediator who is not acquainted with the feelings, views, desires, claims, or prejudices of both the parties at issue.

(3.) He was the Friend of both the parties. He loved God. No man ever doubted this, or had any reason to call it in question; and he was always desirous of securing all that God claimed, and of vindicating him, and he never abandoned anything that God had a right to claim. And he loved man. He showed this in all his life. He sought hiss welfare in every way possible, and gave himself for him. Yet no one is qualified to act the mediator's part who is not the common friend of both the parties at issue, and who will not seek the welfare, the right, or the honour of both.

(4.) He was willing to suffer anything from either party in order to produce reconciliation. From the hand of God he was willing to endure all that he deemed to be necessary, in order to show his hatred of sin by his vicarious sufferings, and to make an atonement; and from the hand of man he was willing to endure all the reproach, and contumely, and scorn which could be possibly involved in the work of inducing man to be reconciled to God. And

(5.) he has removed all the obstacles which existed to a reconciliation. On the part of God, he has made it consistent for him to pardon. He has made an atonement so that God can be just while he justifies the sinner. He has maintained his truth, and justice, and secured the stability of his moral government, while he admits offenders to his favour. And on the part of man, he, by the agency of his Spirit, overcomes the unwillingness of the sinner to be reconciled, humbles his pride, shows him his sin, changes his heart, subdues his enmity against God, and secures in fact a harmony of feeling and purpose between God and man, so that they shall be reconciled for ever.

19 to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Reconciling the world unto himself. The world here evidently means the human race generally, without distinction of nation, age, or rank. The whole world was alienated from him, and he sought to have it reconciled. This is one incidental proof that God designed that the plan of salvation should be adapted to all men. 2Cor 5:14. It may be observed further, that God sought that the world should be reconciled. Man did not seek it. He had no plan for it. He did not desire it. He had no way to effect it. It was the offended party, not the offending, that sought to be reconciled; and this shows the strength of his love. It was love for enemies and alienated beings, and love evinced to them by a most earnest desire to become their friend, and to be at agreement with them. Rom 5:8. Tindal renders this very accurately, "For God was in Christ, and made agreement between the world and himself, and imputed not their sins unto them.

Not imputing their trespasses. Not reckoning their transgressions to them; that is, forgiving them, pardoning them. On the meaning of the word impute, Rom 4:3. The idea here is, that God did not charge on them with inexorable severity and stern justice their offences, but graciously provided a plan of pardon, and offered to remit their sins on the conditions of the gospel. The plan of reconciliation demonstrated that he was not disposed to impute their sins to them, as he might have done, and to punish them with unmitigated severity for their crimes, but was more disposed to pardon and forgive. And it may be here asked, if God was not disposed to charge with unrelenting severity their own sins to their account, but was rather disposed to pardon them, can we believe that he is disposed to charge on them the sin of another? If he does not charge on them with inexorable and unmitigated severity their own transgressions, will he charge on them with unrelenting severity--or at all--the sin of Adam? Rom 5:19. The sentiment here is, that God is not disposed or inclined to charge the transgressions of men upon them; he has no pleasure in doing it; and therefore he has provided a plan by which they may be pardoned. At the same time it is true that, unless their sins are pardoned, justice will charge or impute their sins to them, and will exact punishment to the uttermost.

And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Marg., "put in us." Tindal renders this, "and hath committed unto us the preaching of the atonement." The meaning is, that the office of making known the nature of this plan, and the conditions on which God was willing to be reconciled to man, had been committed to the ministers of the gospel.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

As an unquestionable privilege, 2Co 5:18,19. Reconciliation supposes a quarrel, or breach of friendship; and sin has made a breach, it has broken the friendship between God and man. The heart of the sinner is filled with enmity against God, and God is

justly offended with the sinner. Yet, behold, there may be a reconciliation; the offended Majesty of heaven is willing to be reconciled. And observe,

1. He has appointed the Mediator of reconciliation. He has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, 2Co 5:18. God is to be owned from first to last in the undertaking and performance of the Mediator. All things relating to our reconciliation by Jesus Christ are of God, who by the mediation of Jesus Christ has reconciled the world to himself, and put himself into a capacity of being actually reconciled to offenders, without any wrong or injury to his justice or holiness, and does not impute to men their trespasses, but recedes from the rigour of the first covenant, which was broken, and does not insist upon the advantage he might justly take against us for the breach of that covenant, but is willing to enter into a new treaty, and into a new covenant of grace, and, according to the tenour thereof, freely to forgive us all our sins, and justify freely by his grace all those who do believe.

2. He has appointed the ministry of reconciliation, 2Co 5:18. By the inspiration of God the scriptures were written, which contain the word of reconciliation, showing us that peace was made by the blood of the cross, that reconciliation is wrought, and directing us how we may be interested therein. And he has appointed the office of the ministry, which is a ministry of reconciliation: ministers are to open and proclaim to sinners the terms of mercy and reconciliation, and persuade them to comply therewith. For,

Reconciliation is here spoken of as our indispensable duty, 2Co 5:20. As God is willing to be reconciled to us, we ought to be reconciled to God. And it is the great end and design of the gospel, that word of reconciliation, to prevail upon sinners to lay aside their enmity against God. Faithful ministers are Christ's ambassadors, sent to treat with sinners on peace and reconciliation: they come in God's name, with his entreaties, and act in Christ's stead, doing the very thing he did when he was

upon this earth, and what he wills to be done now that he is in heaven. Wonderful condescension! Though God can be no loser by the quarrel, nor gainer by the peace, yet by his ministers he beseeches sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept of the terms he offers, that they would be reconciled to him, to all his attributes, to all his laws, and to all his providences, to believe in the Mediator, to accept the atonement, and comply with his gospel, in all the parts of it and in the whole design of it. And for our encouragement so to do the apostle subjoins what should be well known and duly considered by us (2Co 5:21), namely,

(a.) The purity of the Mediator: He knew no sin.

(b.) The sacrifice he offered: He was made sin; not a sinner, but sin, that is, a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin.

(c.) The end and design of all this: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Note,

[1.] As Christ, who knew no sin of his own, was made sin for us, so we, who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God in him.

[2.] Our reconciliation to God is only through Jesus Christ, and for the sake of his merit: on him therefore we must rely, and make mention of his righteousness and his only.

Verse 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ. We are the ambassadors whom Christ has sent forth to negotiate with men in regard to their reconciliation to God.

Tindal renders this, "Now then are we messengers in the room of Christ." The word here used (πρεσβευομεν, from πρεσβυς, an aged man, an elder, and then an ambassador) means, to act as an ambassador, or sometimes merely to deliver a message for

another, without being empowered to do anything more than to explain or enforce it.--Bloomfield. See Thucyd. 7, 9. An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank, employed by one prince or state at the court of another, to manage the concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the dignity and power of his sovereign.--

Webster. He is sent to do what the sovereign would himself do were he present. They are sent to make known the will of the sovereign, and to negotiate matters of commerce, of war, or of peace, and in general everything affecting the interests of the sovereign among the people to whom they are sent. At all times, and in all countries, an ambassador is a sacred character, and his person is regarded as inviolable, he is bound implicitly to obey the instructions of his sovereign, and as far as possible to do only what the sovereign would do were he, himself present.

Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, as they are sent to do what he would do were he personally present. They are to make known, and to explain, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled to men. They are not to negotiate on any new terms, nor to change those which God has proposed, nor to follow their own plans or devices; but they are simply to urge, explain, state, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled. Of course they are to seek the honour of the Sovereign who has sent them forth, and to seek to do only his will. They go not to promote their own welfare; not to seek honour, dignity, or emolument; but they go to transact the business which the Son of God would engage in were he again personally on the earth. It follows that their office is one of great dignity, and great responsibility, and that respect should be showed them as the ambassadors of the King of kings. As though God did beseech you by us. Our message is to be regarded as the message of God. It is God who speaks. What we say to you is said in his name and on his authority, and should be received with the respect which is due to a message directly from God. The gospel message is God speaking to men through the ministry, and entreating them to be reconciled. This invests the message which, the ministers of

religion bear with infinite dignity and solemnity; and it makes it a fearful and awful thing to reject it. We pray you in Christ's stead. υπερχριστου. In the place of Christ; or doing what he did when on earth, and what he would do were he where we are. Be ye reconciled to God. This is the sum and burden of the message which the ministers of the gospel bear to their fellow-men. 2Cor 5:19. It implies that man has something to do in this work. He is to be reconciled to God, he is to give up his opposition, he is to submit to the terms of mercy.

All the change in the case is to be in him, for God cannot change. God has removed all the obstacles to reconciliation which existed on his part. He has done all that he will do, all that needed to be done; in order to render reconciliation as easy as possible. And now it remains that man should lay aside his hostility, abandon his sins, embrace the terms of mercy, and become in fact reconciled to God. And the great object of the ministers of reconciliation is to urge this duty on their fellow-men. They are to do it in the name of Christ. They are to do it as if Christ were himself present, and were himself urging the message. They are to use the arguments which he would use; evince the zeal which he would show; and present the motives which he would present, to induce a dying world to become in fact reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Continuation of Notes on 2Cor 5:21

(14.) We should act feeling that we are in the immediate presence of God, and so as to meet his acceptance and approbation, whether we remain on earth, or whether we are removed to eternity, 2Cor 5:9. The prospect of being with him, and the consciousness that his eye is fixed upon us, should make us diligent, humble, and laborious. It should be the great purpose of our lives to secure his favour, and meet with his acceptance; and it should make no difference with us, in this respect, where we are--whether on earth or in heaven; with the prospect of long life,

or of an early death, in society or in solitude; at home or abroad; on the land or on the deep; in sickness or in health; in prosperity or in adversity, it should be our great aim so to live as to be "accepted of him." And the Christian will so act. To act in this manner is the very nature of true piety; and where this desire does not exist, there can be no true religion.

(15.) We must appear before the judgment-seat, 2Cor 5:10. We must all appear there. This is inevitable. There is not one of the human family that can escape. Old and young; rich and poor; bond and free; all classes, all conditions, all nations must stand there, and give an account for all the deeds done in the body, and receive their eternal doom. How solemn is the thought of being arraigned! How deeply affecting the idea that on the issue of that one trial will depend our eternal weal or woe! How overwhelming the reflection that from that sentence there can be no appeal; no power of reversing it; no possibility of afterwards changing our destiny!

(16.) We shall soon be there, 2Cor 5:10. No one knows when he is to die; and death, when it comes, will remove us at once to the judgment-seat. A disease that may carry us off in a few hours may take us there; or death that may come in an instant shall bear us to that awful bar. How many are stricken down in a moment; how many are hurried without any warning to the solemnities, of the eternal world! So we may die. No one can insure our lives; no one can guard us from the approach of the invisible king of terrors.

(17.) We should be ready to depart. If we must stand at that awful bar; and if we may be summoned there any moment, assuredly we should lose no time in being ready to go. It is our great business in life; and it should claim our first attention, and all other things should be postponed that we may be ready to die. It should be the first inquiry every morning, and the last subject of thought every evening-- for who knows when he rises in the morning but that before night he may stand at the judgment-seat! Who, when he lies down on his bed at night, knows but that in the

silence of the night-watches he may be summoned to go alone---to leave his family and friends, his home and his bed, to answer for all the deeds done in the body?

(18.) We should endeavour to save others from eternal death, 2Cor 5:11. If we have ourselves any just views of the awful terrors of the day of judgment, and if we have any just views of the wrath of God, we should endeavour "to persuade" others to flee from the wrath to come. We should plead with them; we should entreat them; we should weep over them; we should pray for them, that they may be saved from going up to meet the awful wrath of God. If our friends are unprepared to meet God; if they are living in impenitence and sin, and if we have any influence over others in any way, we should exert it all to induce them to come to Christ, and to save themselves from the awful terrors of that day. Paul deemed no self-denial and no sacrifice too great, if he might persuade them to come to God, and to save their souls. And who that has any just views of the awful terrors of the day of judgment, of the woes of an eternal hell, and of the glories of an eternal heaven, can deem that labour too great which shall be the means of saving immortal souls! Not to frighten them should we labour; not to alarm them merely should we plead with them; but we should endeavour by all means to persuade them to come to the Redeemer. We should not use tones of harshness and denunciation; we should not speak of hell as if we would rejoice to execute the sentence; but we should speak with tenderness, earnestness, and with tears, (comp. Acts 20:31,) that we may induce our friends and fellow-sinners to be reconciled to God.

(19.) We should not deem it strange or remarkable if we are charged with being deranged for being active and zealous in the subject of religion, 2Cor 5:13. There will always be enough, both in the church and out of it, to charge us with over-heated zeal; with want of prudence; or with decided mental alienation. But we are not to forget that Paul was accused of being--"mad ;" and even the Redeemer was thought to be "beside himself." "It is sufficient

for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord;" and if the Redeemer was charged with derangement on account of his peculiar views and his zeal, we should not suppose that any strange thing had happened to us if we are accused in like manner.

(20.) The gospel should be offered to all men, 2Cor 5:14. If Christ died for all, then salvation is provided for all; and then it should be offered to all freely and fully. It should be done without any mental reservation, for God has no such mental reservation; without any hesitation or misgiving; without any statements that would break the force, or weaken the power of such an offer on the consciences of men. If they reject it, they should be left to see that they reject that which is in good faith offered to them, and that for this they must give an account to God. Every man who preaches the gospel should feel that he is not only permitted but REQUIRED to preach the gospel "to every creature;" nor should he embrace any opinion whatever which will, in form or in fact, cramp him or restrain him in thus offering salvation to all mankind. The fact that Christ died for all, and that all may be saved, should be a fixed and standing point in all systems of theology, and should be allowed to shape every other opinion, and to shed its influence over every other view of truth.

(21.) All men by nature are dead in sins, 2Cor 5:14. They are insensible to their own good; to the appeals of God; to the glories of heaven, and to the terrors of hell. They do not act for eternity; they are without concern in regard to their everlasting destiny. They are as insensible to all these things, until aroused by the Spirit of God, as a dead man in his grave is to surrounding objects. And there is nothing that ever did arouse such a man, or ever could, but the same power that made the world, and the same voice that raised Lazarus from his grave. This melancholy fact strikes us everywhere; and we should be deeply humbled that it is our condition by nature, and should mourn that it is the condition of our fellow-men everywhere.

(22.) We should form our estimate of objects, and of their respective value and importance, by other considerations than those which are derived from their temporal nature, 2Cor 5:16. It should not be simply according to the flesh. It should not be as they estimate them who are living for this world. It should not be by their rank, their splendour, or their fashion. It should be by their reference to eternity, and their bearing on the state of things there.

(23.) It should be with us a very serious inquiry whether our views of Christ are such as they have who are living after the flesh, or such only as the unrenewed mind takes, 2Cor 5:16. The carnal mind has no just views of the Redeemer. To every impenitent sinner he is "a root out of a dry ground." There is no beauty in him. And to every hypocrite, and every deceived professor of religion, there is really no beauty seen in him. There is no spontaneous, elevated, glowing attachment to him. It is all forced and unnatural. But to the true Christian there is a beauty seen in his character that is not seen in any other; and the whole soul loves him, and embraces him. His character is seen to be most pure and lovely; his benevolence boundless; his ability and willingness to save infinite. The renewed soul desires no other Saviour; and rejoices that he is just what he is--rejoices in his humiliation as well as his exaltation; in his poverty as well as his glory; rejoices in the privilege of being saved by him who was spit upon, and mocked, and crucified, as well as by him who is at the right hand of God. One thing is certain, unless we have just views of Christ we can never be saved.

(24.) The new birth is a great and most important change, 2Cor 5:17. It is not in name or in profession merely, but it is a deep and radical change of the heart. It is so great that it may be said of each one, that he is a new creation of God; and in relation to each one, that old things are passed away, and all things are become new. How important it is that we examine our hearts and see whether this change has taken place, or whether we are still living

without God and without hope. It is indispensable that we be born again, Jn 3. If we are not born again, and if we are not new creatures in Christ, we must perish for ever. No matter what our wealth, talent, learning, accomplishment, reputation, or morality, unless we have been so changed that it may be said, and that we can say, "old things are passed away, and all things are become new," we must perish for ever. There is no power in the universe that can save a man who is not born again.

(25.) The gospel ministry is a most responsible and important work, 2Cor 5:18,19. There is no other office of the same importance; there is no situation in which man can be placed more solemn than that of making known the terms on which God is willing to bestow favour on apostate man.

(26.) How amazing is the Divine condescension, that God should have ever proposed such a plan of reconciliation, 2Cor 5:20,21. That he should not only have been willing to be reconciled, but that he should have sought, and have been so anxious for it as to be willing to send his own Son to die to secure it! It was pure, rich, infinite benevolence. God was not to be benefited by it. He was infinitely blessed and happy, even though man should have been lost. He was pure, and just, and holy, and it was not necessary to resort to this in order to vindicate his own character, he had done man no wrong; and if man had perished in his sins, the throne of God would have been pure and spotless. It was love--mere love. It was pure, holy, disinterested, infinite benevolence. It was worthy of God; and it has a claim to the deepest gratitude of man. Let us then, in view of this whole chapter, seek to be reconciled to God. Let us lay aside all our opposition to him. Let us embrace his plans. Let us be willing to submit to him, and to become his ETERNAL FRIENDS. Let us seek that heaven to which he would raise us; and though our earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, let us be prepared, as we may be, for that eternal habitation which he has fitted up for all who love him in the heavens.

2 Corinthians-6

1 We then, *as* workers together *with him,* beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

We then, as workers together with him. On the meaning of this expression, 1Cor 3:9. The Greek here is, συνεργουντες "working together;" and may mean either-that the apostles and ministers to whom Paul refers were joint labourers in entreating them not to receive the grace of God in vain, or it may mean that they co-operated with God, or were engaged with him in endeavouring to secure the reconciliation of the world to himself. Tindal renders it, "we as helpers." Doddridge, "we then as the joint-labourers of God." Most expositors have concurred in this interpretation. The word properly means, to work together; to co-operate in producing any result. Macknight supposes that the word here is in the vocative, and is an address to the fellow-labourers of Paul, entreating them not to receive the grace of God in vain. In this opinion he is probably alone, and has manifestly departed from the scope and design of the passage. Probably the most obvious meaning is that of our translators, who regard it as teaching that Paul was a joint-worker with God in securing the salvation of men.

That ye receive not the grace of God in vain. The "grace of God" here means evidently the gracious offer of reconciliation and pardon. And the sense is, "We entreat you not to neglect or slight this offer of pardon, so as to lose the benefit of it, and be lost. It is offered freely and fully. It may be partaken of by all, and all may be saved. But it may also be slighted, and all the benefits of it will then be lost." The sense is, that it was possible that this offer might be made to them, they might hear of a Saviour, be told of the plan of reconciliation, and have the offers of mercy pressed on their attention and acceptance, and yet all be in vain. They might, not-withstanding all this, be lost; for simply to hear of the plan of salvation or the offers of mercy, will no more save a sinner than to hear of medicine will save the sick. It must be

embraced and applied, or it will be in vain. It is true that Paul probably addressed this to those who were professors of religion; and the sense is, that they should use all possible care and anxiety lest these offers should have been made in vain. They should examine their own hearts; they should inquire into their own condition; they should guard against self-deception. The same persons (2Cor 5:20) Paul had exhorted also to be reconciled to God; and the idea is, that he would earnestly entreat even professors of religion to give all diligence to secure an interest in the saving mercy of the gospel, and to guard against the possibility of being self-deceived and ruined.

Here note, 1. The nature of the ministerial function: The ministry is a work, an arduous and laborious work; neither angels nor men are of themselves sufficient for it, without proportionable assistance from God. Ministers are workers.

Note, 2. They are workers together; they join together with one voice, with one cry, beseeching sinners to be reconciled unto God. All the ministers of Christ are fellow-labourers, workers together in God's harvest-field; that which is the work of one, is the work of all; they should all join in it, and rejoice together in the success of it; not only labour with, but bless God for the services and success of, each other.

Lord! how sad it is to see the ministers of God divided in their work and way, when one rejoiceth in that which to another is cause of mourning!

Note, 3. Ministers are workers together with God, as well as with one another; they are subordinate instruments working by him, but not co-ordinate causes producing with him the work of conversion in the souls of men; not as if they could communicate any power of strength to the working of grace by the preaching of the word, 1Cor 3:5 Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?

Observe, 4. The exhortation, or cautionary direction, given; We beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain; where by the grace of God, is meant the grace of the gopsel; because it is graciously and freely bestowed upon a people, and because the matter and message which it brings is grace.

The law discovers God's will, the gospel discovers his good will: and by receiving this grace in vain, is meant the receiving the gospel unfruitfully, unprofitably, and ineffectually; when we do not receive it with a due estimation, with fervency of affection, with a fiducial application; when it doth not purify the heart, reform the life, and save the soul. It is not the receiving of the gospel into our houses, into our heads, into our mouths, but into our hearts, that will bring us to heaven.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted,
and in the day of salvation have I succored thee:
Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

Verse 2. For he saith. See Isa 49:8. In that passage the declaration refers to the Messiah, and the design is there to show that God would be favourable to him; that he would hear him when he prayed, and would make him the medium of establishing a covenant with his own people, and of spreading the true religion around the earth. See my Note on that place. Paul quotes the passage here, not as affirming that he used it in exactly the sense, or with reference to the same design for which it was originally spoken, but as expressing the idea which he wished to convey, or in accordance with the general principle implied in its use in Isaiah. The general idea there, or the principle involved was, that under the Messiah God would be willing to hear; that is, that he would be disposed to show mercy to the Jew and to the Gentile. This is the main idea of the passage as used by Paul. Under the Messiah, it is said by Isaiah, God would be willing to show mercy. That would be an acceptable time. That time, says Paul, has arrived. The Messiah has come, and now God is willing to pardon and save. And the doctrine in this verse is, that under the Messiah, or in the time of Christ, God

is willing to show mercy unto men. In him alone is the throne of grace accessible; and now that he has come, God is willing to pardon, and men should avail themselves of the offers of mercy.

I have heard thee. The Messiah. I have listened to thy prayer for the salvation of the heathen world. The promise to the Messiah was, that the heathen world should be given to him; but it was a promise that it should be in answer to his prayers and intercessions: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Ps 2:8. The salvation of the heathen world, and of all who are saved, is to be in answer to the prevalent intercession of the Lord Jesus.

Behold now is the accepted time, etc. The meaning of this passage is, "The Messiah is come. The time referred to by Isaiah has arrived. It is now a time when God is ready to show compassion, to hear prayer, and to have mercy on mankind. Only through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, does he show mercy, and men should therefore now embrace the offers of pardon." The doctrine taught here therefore is, that through the Lord Jesus, and where he is preached, God is willing to pardon and save men; and this is true wherever he is preached, and as long as men live under the sound of the gospel. The world is under a dispensation of mercy, and God is willing to show compassion; and while this exists, that is, while men live, the offers of salvation are to be freely made to them. The time will come when it will not be an acceptable time with God. The day of mercy will be closed; the period of trial will be ended; and men will be removed to a world where no mercy is shown, and where compassion is unknown. This verse, which should be read as a parenthesis, is designed to be connected with the argument which the apostle is urging, and which he presented in the previous chapter. The general doctrine is, that men should seek reconciliation with God. To enforce that, he here says, that it was now the acceptable time, the time when God was willing to be reconciled to men. The general sentiment of this passage may be thus expressed: (1.) Under the gospel it is an acceptable time, a day of mercy, a time when God

is willing to show mercy to men. (2.) There may be special seasons which may be peculiarly called the acceptable or accepted time. (a.) When the gospel is pressed on the attention by the faithful preaching of his servants, or by the urgent entreaties of friends; (b.) when it is brought to our attention by any striking dispensation of Providence; (c.) when the Spirit of God strives with us, and brings us to deep reflection, or to conviction for sin; (d.) in a revival of religion, when many are pressing into the kingdom: it is at all such seasons an accepted time, a day of salvation, a day which we should improve. It is "NOW" such a season, because (1.) the time of mercy will pass by, and God will not be willing to pardon the sinner who goes unprepared to eternity. (2.) Because we cannot calculate on the future. We have no assurance, no evidence that we shall live another day or hour. (3.) It is taught here, that the time will come when it will not be an accepted time. Now Is the accepted time; at some future period it will NOT be. If men grieve away the Holy Spirit; if they continue to reject the gospel; if they go unprepared to eternity, no mercy can be found. God does not design to pardon beyond the grave. He has made no provision for forgiveness there; and they who are not pardoned in this life must be unpardoned for ever.

3 Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

What caution they used not to give offence that might hinder the success of their preaching: Giving no offence in any thing, 2Co 6:3. The apostle had great difficulty to behave prudently and inoffensively towards the Jews and Gentiles, for many of both sorts watched for his halting, and sought occasion to blame him and his ministry, or his conversation; therefore he was very cautious not to give offence to those who were so apt to take offence, that he might not offend the Jews by unnecessary zeal against the law, nor the Gentiles by unnecessary compliances with such as were zealous for the law. He was careful, in all his words and actions, not to give offence, or occasion of guilt or grief. Note, When others are too apt to take offence, we should be cautious lest we give offence; and ministers especially should be careful lest they do any thing that may bring blame on their ministry or render that unsuccessful.

Giving no offence in any thing. We the ministers of God, 2Cor 6:1 The word rendered offence means, properly, stumbling; then offence, or cause of offence, a falling into sin. The meaning here is, "giving no occasion for contemning or rejecting the gospel; and the idea of Paul is, that he and his fellow-apostles so laboured as that no one who saw or knew them should have occasion to reproach the ministry, or the religion which they preached; but so that in their pure and self-denying lives, the strongest argument should be seen for embracing it. Comp. Mt 10:16, 1Cor 8:13, 10:32,33. Php 2:16; 1Thes 2:10, 1Thes 5:22. How they conducted [themselves] so as to give no offence he states in the following verses. That the ministry be not blamed. The phrase, "the ministry," refers here not merely to the ministry of Paul, that is, it does not mean merely that he would be subject to blame and reproach, but that the ministry itself which the Lord Jesus had established would be blamed, or would be reproached by the improper conduct of any one who was engaged in that work. The idea is, that the misconduct of one minister of the gospel would bring a reproach upon the profession itself, and would prevent the usefulness and success of others, just as the misconduct of a physician exposes the profession to reproach, or the bad conduct of a lawyer reflects itself in some degree on the entire profession. And it is so everywhere.

The errors, follies, misconduct, or bad example of one minister of the gospel brings a reproach upon the sacred calling itself, and prevents the usefulness of many others. Ministers do not stand alone. And though no one can be responsible for the errors and failings of others, yet no one can avoid suffering in regard to his usefulness by the sins of others. Not only, therefore, from a regard to his personal usefulness should every minister be circumspect in his walk, but from respect to the usefulness of all others who sustain the office of the ministry, and from respect to the success of religion all over the world. Paul made it one of the principles of his conduct so to act that no man should have cause to speak reproachfully of the ministry on his account. In order to this, he felt it to be necessary not only to claim and assert honour for the

ministry, but to lead such a life as should deserve the respect of men. If a man wishes to secure respect for his calling, it must be by living in the manner which that calling demands, and then respect and honour will follow as a matter of course.

4 but in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

It is the lot of faithful ministers often to be reduced to great difficulties, and to stand in need of much patience.

Those who would approve themselves to God must approve themselves faithful in trouble as well as in peace, not only in doing the work of God diligently, but also in bearing the will of God patiently.

In watchings. In wakefulness, or want of sleep. He probably refers to the fact that in these arduous duties, and in his travels, and in anxious cares for the churches, and for the advancement of religion, he was often deprived of his ordinary rest. He refers to this again in 2Cor 11:27. In fastings. Referring probably not only to the somewhat frequent fasts to which he voluntarily submitted as acts of devotion, but also to the fact that in his travels, when abroad and among strangers, he was often destitute of food. To such trials, those who travelled as Paul did, among strangers, and without property, would be often compelled to submit; and such trials, almost without number, the religion which we now enjoy has cost. It at first cost the painful life, the toils, the anxieties, and the sufferings of the Redeemer; and it has been propagated and perpetuated amidst the deep sorrows, the sacrifices, and the tears and blood of those who have contributed to perpetuate it on earth. For such a religion--originated, extended, and preserved in such a manner--we can never express suitable gratitude to God. Such a religion we cannot over-estimate in value; and for the extension and perpetuity of such a religion, we also should be willing to practise unwearied self-denial.

5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;

6 by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the

Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

By pureness. Paul, having in the previous verses grouped together some of the sufferings which he endured, and by which he had endeavoured to commend and extend the true religion, proceeds here to group together certain other influences by which he had sought the same object. The substance of what he here says is, that it had not only been done by sufferings and trials, but by a holy life, and by entire consecration to the great cause to which he had devoted himself, he begins by stating that it was by pureness, that is, by integrity, sanctity, a holy and pure life. All preaching and all labours would have been in vain without this; and Paul well knew that if he succeeded in the ministry, he must be a good man. The same is true in all other professions. One of the essential requisites of an orator, according to Quintilian, is, that he must be a good man; and no man may expect ultimately to succeed in any calling of life unless he is pure. But however this may be in other callings, no one will doubt it in regard to the ministry of the gospel.

By knowledge. Interpreters have differed much in the interpretation of this. Rosenmuller and Schleusner understand by it prudence. Grotius interprets it as meaning a knowledge of the law. Doddridge supposes that it refers to a solicitude to improve in the knowledge of those truths which they were called to communicate to others. Probably the idea is a very simple one. Paul is showing how he endeavoured to commend the gospel to others, 2Cor 6:4. He says, therefore, that one way was by communicating knowledge, true knowledge. He proclaimed that which was true, and which was real knowledge, in opposition to the false science of the Greeks, and in opposition to those who would substitute declamation for argument, and the mere ornaments of rhetoric for truth. The idea is, that the ministry should not be ignorant; but that if they wished to commend their office, they should be well-informed, and should be men of good sense. Paul had no belief that an ignorant ministry was preferable to one that was characterized by true knowledge; and he felt that if he was to be useful, it was to be by his imparting to others truth that would be useful. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge," Mal 2:7.

By love unfeigned. Sincere, true, ardent love to all. By undissembled, pure, and genuine affection for the souls of men. What good can a minister do, if he does not love his people and the souls of men? The prominent characteristic in the life of the Redeemer was love--love to all. So if we are like him, and if we do any good, we shall have love to men. No man is useful without it; and ministers, in general, are useful just in proportion as they have it. It will prompt to labour, self- denial, and toil; it will make them patient, ardent, kind; it will give them zeal, and will give them access to the heart; it will accomplish what no eloquence, labour, or learning will do without it. He who shows that he loves me has access at once to my heart; he who does not, cannot make a way there by any argument, eloquence, denunciation, or learning. No minister is useful without it; no one with it can be otherwise than useful.

7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

Verse 7. By the word of truth. That is, by making known the truths of the gospel. It was his object to make known the simple truth. He did not corrupt it by false mixtures of philosophy and human wisdom, but communicated it as it had been revealed to him. The object of the appointment of the Christian ministry is to make known the truth; and when that is done, it cannot but be that they will commend their office and work to the favourable regards of men. By the power of God. By the Divine power which attended the preaching of the gospel. Most of the ancient commentators explain this of the power of working miracles.--Bloomfield. But it probably includes all the displays of Divine power which attended the propagation of the gospel, whether in the working of miracles, or in the conversion of men. If it be asked how Paul used this power so as to give no offence in the work of the ministry, it may be replied, that the miraculous endowments bestowed upon the apostles, the power of speaking foreign languages, etc., seem to have been bestowed upon them to be employed in the same way as were their natural faculties. 1Cor 14:32. The idea here is, that they used the great powers intrusted to them by God, not as impostors would have done, for the purposes of gain and ambition, or for vain display, but solely for the furtherance of the true

religion, and the salvation of men. They thus showed that they were sent from God, as well by the nature of the powers with which they were intrusted, as by the manner in which they used them.

By the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. Interpreters have varied much in the exposition of this passage; and many have run into utter wildness. Grotius says that it refers to the manner in which the ancient soldiers were armed. They bore a spear in their right hand, and a shield in the left. With the former they attacked their foes, with the latter they made defence. Some have supposed that it refers to the fact that they were taught to use the sword with the left hand as well as with the right. The simple idea is, that they were completely armed. To be armed on the right hand and on the left, is to be well armed, or entirely equipped. They went forth to conflict. They met persecution, opposition, and slander. As the soldier went well armed to battle, so did they. But the armour with which they met their foes, and which constituted their entire panoply, was a holy life. With that they met all the assaults of their enemies; with that all slander and persecution. That was their defence, and by that they hoped and expected to achieve their conquests. They had no swords, and spears, and helmets, and shields; no carnal weapons of offence and defence; but they expected to meet all their assaults, and to gain all their victories, by an upright and holy life.

8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as
deceivers, and *yet* true;

By honour and dishonour. The apostle is still illustrating the proposition that he and his fellow-labourers endeavoured to give no offence, (2Cor 6:3,) and to commend themselves as the ministers of God, 2Cor 6:4. He here (2Cor 6:8-10) introduces another group of particulars in which it was done. The main idea is, that they endeavoured to act in a manner so as to commend the ministry and the gospel, whether they were in circumstances of honour or dishonour, whether lauded or despised by the world. The word rendered "by" (δια) does not here denote the means by which they commended the gospel, but the medium. In the midst of honour and dishonour, whatever might be the esteem in which they were held by the world, they gave no offence. The first is, "by

honour." They were not everywhere honoured, or treated with respect. Yet they were sometimes honoured by men. The churches which they founded would honour them, and as the ministers of religion they would be by them treated with respect. Perhaps occasionally also they might be treated with great attention and regard by the men of the world on account of their miraculous powers. Comp. Acts 28:7. So now, ministers of the gospel are often treated with great respect and honour. They are beloved and venerated, caressed and flattered, by the people of their charge. As ministers of God, as exercising a holy function, their office is often treated with great respect by the World. If they are eloquent or learned, or if they are eminently successful, they are often highly esteemed and loved. It is difficult in such circumstances to "commend themselves as the ministers of God." Few are the men who are not injured by honour; few who are not corrupted by flattery. Few are the ministers who are proof against this influence, and who in such circumstances can honour the ministry. If done, it is by showing that they regard such things as of little moment; by showing that they are influenced by higher considerations than the love of praise; by not allowing this to interfere with their duties, or to make them less faithful and laborious; but rather by making this the occasion of increased fidelity and increased zeal in their Master's cause. Most ministers do more to "give offence" in times when they are greatly honoured by the world than when they are despised. Yet it is possible for a minister who is greatly honoured to make it the occasion of commending himself more and more as a minister of God. And he should do it; as Paul said he did. The other situation was "in dishonour." It is needless to say, that the apostles were often in situations where they had opportunity thus to commend themselves as the ministers of God. If sometimes honoured, they were often dishonoured. If the world sometimes flattered and caressed them, it often despised' them, and cast out their names as evil. 1Cor 4:13. And perhaps it is so substantially now with those who are faithful. In such circumstances, also, Paul sought to commend himself as a minister of God. It was by receiving all expressions of contempt with meekness; by not suffering them to interfere with the faithful discharge of his duties; by rising above them, and showing the power of religion to sustain

him; and by returning good for evil, prayers for maledictions, blessings for curses, and by seeking to save, not injure and destroy, those who thus sought to overwhelm him with disgrace. It may be difficult to do this, but it can be done; and when done, a man always does good.

By evil report. The word here used (δυσφημια) means, properly, ill-omened language, malediction, reproach, contumely. It refers to the fact that they were often slandered and calumniated. Their motives were called in question, and their names aspersed. They were represented as deceivers and impostors, etc. The statement here is, that in such circumstances, and when thus assailed and reproached, they endeavoured to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Evidently they endeavoured to do this by not slandering or reviling in return; by manifesting a Christian spirit; by living down the slanderous accusation, and by doing good, if possible, even to their calumniators. It is more difficult, says Chrysostom, to bear such reports than it is pain of body; and it is consequently more difficult to evince a Christian spirit then. To human nature it is trying to have the name slandered and cast out as evil when we are conscious only of a desire to do good. But it is sufficient for the disciple that he be as his Master; and if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, we must expect they will also those of his household. It is a fine field for a Christian minister, or any other Christian, to do good when his name is unjustly slandered. It gives him an opportunity of showing the true excellency of the Christian spirit; and it gives him the inexpressible privilege of being like Christ--like him in his suffering and in the moral excellence of character. A man should be willing to be anything if it will make him like the Redeemer--whether it be in suffering or in glory. See Php 3:10, 1Pet 4:13. And good report. When men speak well of us; when we are commended, praised, or honoured. To honour the gospel then, and to commend the ministry, is

(1.) to show that the earth is not set on this, and does not seek it;

(2.) to keep the heart from being puffed up with pride and self-estimation;

(3.) not to suffer it to interfere with our fidelity to others, and with our faithfully presenting to them the truth. Satan often attempts to bribe men by praise, and to neutralize the influence of ministers by flattery. It seems hard to go and proclaim to men painful truths, who are causing the incense of praise to ascend around us. And it is commonly much easier for a minister of the gospel to commend himself as a minister, of God when he is slandered than when he is praised; when his name is cast out as evil, than when the breezes of popular favour are wafted upon him. Few men can withstand the influence of flattery, but many men can meet persecution with a proper spirit; few men comparatively can always evince Christian fidelity to others when they live always amidst the influence of "good report," but there are many who can be faithful when they are poor, and despised, and reviled. Hence it has happened, that God has so ordered it that his faithful servants have had but little of the "good report" which this world can furnish, but that they have been generally. subjected to persecution and slander.

As deceivers. That is, we are regarded and treated as if we were deceivers, and as if we were practicing an imposition on mankind, and as if we would advance our cause by any trick or fraud that would be possible. We are regarded and treated as deceivers. Perhaps this refers to some charges which had been brought against them by the opposing faction at Corinth, (Locke,) or perhaps to the opinion which the Jewish priests and heathen philosophers entertained of them. The idea is, that though they were extensively regarded and treated as impostors, yet they endeavoured to live as became the ministers of God. They bore the imputation with patience, and they applied themselves diligently to the work of saving souls. Paul seldom turned aside to vindicate himself from such charges, but pursued his Master's work, and evidently felt that if he had a reputation that was worth anything, or deserved any reputation, God would take care of it. Comp. Ps

37:1-4. A man, especially a minister, who is constantly endeavouring to vindicate his own reputation, usually has a reputation which is not worth vindicating. A man who deserves a reputation will ultimately obtain just as much as is good for him, and as will advance the cause in which he is embarked. And yet true. We are not deceivers and impostors. Though we are regarded as such, yet we show ourselves to be true and faithful ministers of Christ.

9 as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

As unknown. As those who are deemed to be of an obscure and ignoble rank in life, unknown to the great, unknown to fame. The idea, I think, is, that they went as strangers, as persons unknown, in preaching the gospel. Yet, though thus unknown, they endeavoured to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Though among strangers; though having no introduction from the great and the noble, yet they endeavoured so to act as to convince the world that they were the ministers of God. This could be done only by a holy life, and by the evidence of the Divine approbation which would attend them in their work. And by this the ministers of religion, if they are faithful, may make themselves known even among those who were strangers, and may live so as to "give no offence." Every minister and every Christian, even when they are "unknown," and when among strangers, should remember their high character as the servants of God and should so live as to commend the religion which they profess to love, or which they are called on to preach. And yet how often is it that ministers, when among strangers, seem to feel themselves at liberty to lay aside their ministerial character, and to engage in conversation, and even partake of amusements, which they themselves would regard as wholly improper if it were known that they were the ambassadors of God! And how often is it the case that professing Christians when travelling, when among strangers, when in foreign lands, forget their high calling, and conduct [themselves] in a manner wholly different from what they did when surrounded by Christians, and when restrained by the sentiments and by the eyes of a Christian community! And yet well known. Our sentiments and our principles are well known. We have no concealments to

make. We practice no disguise. We attempt to impose on no one. Though obscure in our origin; though without rank, or wealth, or power, or patronage, to commend ourselves to favour, yet we have succeeded in making ourselves known to the world. Though obscure in our origin, we are not obscure now. Though suspected of dark designs, yet our principles are all well known to the world. No men of the same obscurity of birth ever succeeded in making themselves more extensively known than did the apostles. The world at large became acquainted with them; and by their self-denial, zeal, and success, they extended their reputation around the globe. As dying. That is, regarded by others as dying. As condemned often to death; exposed to death; in the midst of trials that expose us to death, and that are ordinarily followed by death. 1Cor 15:31, on the phrase, "I die daily." They passed through so many trials, that it might be said that they were constantly dying. And, behold, we live. Strange as it may seem, we still survive. Through all our trials we are preserved; and, though often exposed to death, yet we still live. The idea here is, that in all these trials, and in these exposures to death, they endeavoured to commend themselves as the ministers of God. They bore their trials with patience; submitted to these exposures without a murmur; and ascribed their preservation to the interposition of God. As chastened. The word chastened (παιδευομενοι) means corrected, chastised. It is applied to the chastening which God causes by affliction and calamities, 1Cor 11:32, Rev 3:19 Heb 12:6. It refers here, not to the scourgings to which they were subjected in the synagogues and elsewhere, but to the chastisements which God inflicted, the trials to which he subjected them. And the idea is, that in the midst of these trials they endeavoured to act as became the ministers of God. They bore them with patience. They submitted to them as coming from his hand. They felt that they were right, and they submitted without a murmur. And not killed. Though severely chastened, yet we are not put to death. We survive them--preserved by the interposition of God.

10 as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.

As sorrowful, λυπουμενοι. Grieving, afflicted, troubled, sad. Under these sufferings we seem always to be cast down and sad. We

endure afflictions that usually lead to the deepest expressions of grief. If the world looks only upon our trials, we must be regarded as always suffering, and always sad. The world will suppose that we have cause for continued lamentation, (Doddridge,) and they will regard us as among the most unhappy of mortals. Such, perhaps, is the estimate which the world usually affixes to the Christian life. They regard it as a life of sadness and of gloom--of trial and of melancholy. They see little in it that is cheerful, and they suppose that a heavy burden presses constantly on the heart of the Christian. Joy they think pertains to the gaieties and pleasures of this life; sadness to religion.

Alway rejoicing. So Paul was, notwithstanding the fact that he always appeared to have occasion for grief. Religion had a power not only to sustain the soul in trial, but to fill it with positive joy. The sources of his joy were doubtless the assurances of the Divine favour, and the hopes of eternal glory. And the same is true of religion always. There is an internal peace and joy which the world may not see or appreciate, but which is far more than a compensation for all the trials which the Christian endures.

As poor. The idea is, we are poor, yet in our poverty we endeavour "to give no offence, and to commend ourselves as the ministers of God." This would be done by their patience and resignation; by their entire freedom from everything dishonest and dishonourable; and by their readiness, when necessary, to labour for their own support. There is no doubt that the apostles were poor. Comp. Acts 3:6. The little property which some of them had, had all been forsaken in order that they might follow the Saviour, and go and preach his gospel. And there is as little doubt that the mass of ministers are still poor, and that God designs and desires that they should be. It is in such circumstances that he designs they should illustrate the beauty and the sustaining power of religion, and be examples to the world.

Yet making many rich. On the meaning of the word rich, Rom 2:4. Here the apostle means that he and his fellow-labourers, though poor themselves, were the instruments of conferring durable and

most valuable possessions on many persons. They had bestowed on them the true riches. They had been the means of investing them with treasures infinitely more valuable than any which kings and princes could bestow. They to whom they ministered were made partakers of the treasure where the moth doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

11 O *ye* Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

Our heart is enlarged. We have deep feelings, which naturally vent themselves in fervent and glowing language. The main idea here is, that he had a strong affection for them; a heart which embraced and loved them all, and which expressed itself in the language of deep emotion, he had loved them so that he was willing to be reproached, and to be persecuted, and to be poor, and to have his name cast out as evil. "I cannot be silent. I conceal or dissemble nothing. I am full of ardent attachment, and that naturally vents itself in the strong language which I have used." True attachment will find means of expressing itself. A heart full of love will give vent to its feelings. There will be no dissembling and hypocrisy there. And if a minister loves the souls of his people, he will pour out the affections of his heart in strong and glowing language.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

because his heart was thus enlarged with love to them, therefore he opened his mouth so freely to them in kind admonitions and exhortations: "You are not," says he, "straitened in us; we would gladly do you all the service we can, and promote your comfort, as helpers of your faith and your joy; and, if it be otherwise, the fault is in yourselves; it is because you are straitened in yourselves, and fail in suitable returns to us, through some misapprehensions concerning us; and all we desire as a recompense is only that you would be proportionably affected towards us, as children should love their father." Note, It is desirable that there should be a mutual good affection between ministers and their people, and this would greatly tend to their mutual comfort and advantage.

It is the language of reproof, meaning that he had not received from them the demonstrations of attachment which he had a right to expect, and which was a fair and proportionate return for the love bestowed on them. Probably he refers to the fact that they had formed parties; had admitted false teachers; and had not received his instructions as implicitly and as kindly as they ought to have done.

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged.

Now for a recompence, in the same. "By way of recompense, open your hearts m the same manner towards me as I have done toward you. It is all the reward or compensation which I ask of you; all the return which I desire. I do not ask silver or gold, or any earthly possessions. I ask only a return of love, and a devotedness to the cause which I love, and which I endeavour to promote." I speak as unto my children. I speak as a parent addressing children. I sustain toward you the relation of a spiritual father, and I have a right to require and expect a return of affection. Be also enlarged. Be not straitened in your affections. Love me as I love you. Give to me the same proofs of attachment which I have given you. The idea in this verse is, that the only compensation or remuneration which he expected for all the love which he had shown them, and for all his toils and self-denials in their behalf, (2Cor 6:4,5,) was, that they would love him, and yield obedience to the laws of the gospel requiring them to be separate from the world, (2Cor 6:14-18.) One ground of the claim which he had to their affection was, that he sustained toward them the relation of a father, and that he had a right to require and to expect such a return of love. The Syriac renders it well, "Enlarge your love towards me." Tindal renders it, "I speak unto you as unto children, which have like reward with us; stretch yourselves therefore out; bear not the yoke with unbelievers."

Ye Are the Temple of the Living God

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And in order to a correct understanding of this, the following principles may be suggested: I. There is a large field of action, pursuit, principle, and thought, over which infidelity, sin, heathenism, and the world as such, have the entire control. It is wholly without the range of Christian law, and stands opposed to Christian law. It pertains to a different kingdom; is conducted by different principles; and tends to destroy and annihilate the kingdom of Christ. It cannot be reconciled with Christian principle, and cannot be conformed to but in entire violation of the influence of religion. Here the prohibition of the New Testament is absolute and entire. Christians are not to mingle with the people of the world in these things; and are not to partake of them. This prohibition, it is supposed, extends to the following, among other things:

(1.) To idolatry. This was plain. On no account or pretence were the early Christians to partake of that, or to countenance it. In primitive times, during the Roman persecutions, all that was asked was that they should cast a little incense on the altar of a heathen god. They refused to do it; and because they refused to do it, thousands perished as martyrs. They judged rightly; and the world has approved their cause.

(2.) Sins vice, licentiousness. This is also plain. Christians are in no way to patronize them, or to lend their influence to them, or to promote them by their name, their presence, or their property. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins," 1Timm 5:22, 2Jn 1:11.

(3.) Arts and acts of dishonesty, deception, and fraud, in traffic and trade, Here the prohibition also must be absolute. No Christian can have a right to enter into partnership with another where the business is to be conducted on dishonest and unchristian principles, or where it shall lead to the violation of any of the laws of God. If it involves deception and fraud in the principles on which it is conducted; if it spreads ruin and poverty--as the distilling and vending of ardent spirits does; if it leads to the necessary violation of the Christian Sabbath, then the case is plain.

A Christian is to have no "fellowship with such unfruitful works of darkness, but is rather to reprove them," Eph 5:11.

(4.) The amusements and pleasures that are entirely worldly, and sinful in their nature; that are wholly under worldly influence, and which cannot be brought under Christian principles. Nearly all amusements are of this description. The rate principle here seems to be, that if a Christian. in such a place is expected to lay aside his Christian principles, and if it would be deemed indecorous and improper for him to introduce the subject of religion, or if religion would be regarded as entirely inconsistent with the nature of the amusement, then he is not to be found there, The world reigns there; and if the principles of his Lord and Master would be excluded, he should not be there. This applies of course to the theatre, the circus, the ball-room, and to large and splendid parties of pleasure. We are not to associate with idolaters in their idolatry; nor with the licentious in their licentiousness; nor with the infidel in his infidelity; nor with the proud in their pride; nor with the gay in their gaiety; nor with the friends of the theatre, or the ball-room, or the circus, in their attachment to these places and pursuits. And whatever other connexion we are to have with them as neighbours, citizens, or members of our families, we are not to participate with them IN these things. Thus far all seems to be clear; and this rule is a plain one, whether it applies to marriage, or to business, or to religion, or to pleasure. Comp. 1Cor 5:10. II. There is a large field of action, thought, and plan, which may be said to be common with the Christian and the world; that is, where the Christian is not expected to abandon his own principles, and where there will be, or need be, no compromise of the sternest views of truth, or the most upright, serious, and holy conduct. He may carry his principles with him; may always manifest them if necessary; and may even commend them to others. A few of these may be referred to.

(1.) Commercial transactions and professional engagements that are conducted on honest and upright principles, even when those with whom we act are not Christians.

(2.) Literary and scientific pursuits, which never, when pursued with a right spirit, interfere with the principles of Christianity, and never are contrary to it.

(3.) The love and affection which are due to relatives and friends. Nothing in the Bible assuredly will prohibit a pious son from uniting with one who is not pious in supporting an aged and infirm parent, or a much loved and affectionate sister. The same remark is true also respecting the duty which a wife owes to a husband, a husband to a wife, or a parent to a child, though one of them should not be a Christian. And the same observation is true also of neighbours, who are not to be prohibited from uniting as neighbours in social intercourse, and in acts of common kindness and charity, though all are not Christians.

(4.) As citizens. We owe duties to our country; and a Christian need not refuse to act with others in the elective franchise, or in making or administering the laws. Here, however, it is clear that he is not at liberty to violate the laws and the principles of the Bible. He cannot be at liberty to unite with them in political schemes that are contrary to the law of God, or in elevating to office men whom he cannot vote for with a good conscience as qualified for the station.

(5.) In plans of public improvement; in schemes that go to the advancement of the public welfare, when the schemes do not violate the laws of God. But if they involve the necessity of violating the Sabbath, or any of the laws of God, assuredly he cannot consistently participate in them.

(6.) In doing good to others. So the Saviour was with sinners; so he ate, and drank, and conversed with them: So we may mingle with them, without partaking of their wicked feelings and plans, so far as we can do them good, and exert over them a holy and saving influence. In all the situations here referred to, and in all the duties growing out of them the Christian may maintain his principles, and

may preserve a good conscience. Indeed, the Saviour evidently contemplated that his people would have such intercourse with the world, and that in it they would do good. But in none of these is there to be any compromise of principle; in none to be any yielding to the opinions and practices that are contrary to the laws of God. III. There is a large field of action, conduct, and plan, where Christians only will act together. These relate to the peculiar duties of religion--to prayer, Christian fellowship, the ordinances of the gospel, and most of the plans of Christian beneficence. Here the world will not intrude; and here assuredly there will be no necessity of any compromise of Christian principle.

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said,
I will dwell in them, and walk in *them;*
and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The temple of God. What has a temple of God to do with idol worship? It is erected for a different purpose, and the worship of idols in it would not be tolerated. It is implied here that Christians are themselves the temple of God--a fact which Paul proceeds immediately to illustrate; and that it is as absurd for them to mingle with the infidel world, as it would be to erect the image of a heathen god in the temple of JEHOVAH. This is strong language; and we cannot but admire the energy and copiousness of the expressions used by Paul, "which cannot," says Bloomfield, "be easily paralleled in the best classical writers."

With idols. Those objects which God hates, and on which he cannot look but with abhorrence. The sense is, that for Christians to mingle with the sinful world--to partake of their pleasures, pursuits, and follies--is as detestable and hateful in the sight of God, as if his temple were profaned by erecting a deformed, and shapeless, and senseless block in it as an object of worship. And assuredly, if Christians had such a sense of the abomination of mingling with the world, they would feel the obligation to be separate and pure.

For ye are the temple of the living God. See this explained 1Cor 3:16, 1Cor 3:17 The idea is, that as God dwells with his people, they ought to be separated from a sinful and polluted world. As God hath said. The words here quoted are taken substantially from Ex 29:45, Lev 26:12, Eze 37:27. They are not literally quoted, but Paul has thrown together the substance of what occurs in several places. The sense, however, is the same as occurs in the places referred to. I will dwell in them. ενοικησω. I will take up my indwelling in them. There is an allusion, doubtless, to the fact that he would be present among his people by the Shechinah, or the visible symbol of his presence. 1Cor 3:16, 1Cor 3:17. It implies, when used with reference to Christians, that the Holy Spirit would abide with them, and that the blessing of God would attend them. See Rom 8, Col 3:16, 2Ti 1:14. And walk in them. That is, I will walk among them. I will be one of their number. He was present among the Jews by the public manifestation of his presence by a symbol; he is present with Christians by the presence and guidance of his Holy Spirit. And I will be their God. Not only the God whom they worship, but the God who will protect and bless them. I will take them under my peculiar protection, and they shall enjoy my favour. This is certainly as true of Christians as it was of the Jews, and Paul has not departed from the spirit of the promise in applying it to the Christian character. His object in quoting these passages is to impress on Christians the solemnity and importance of the truth that God dwelt among them and with them; that they were under his care and protection; that they belonged to him, and that they therefore should be separate from the world.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,
saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing;*
and I will receive you,
18 and will be a Father unto you,
and ye shall be my sons and daughters,
saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians-7

REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 7

(1.) Christians are bound, by every solemn and sacred consideration, to endeavour to purify themselves, 2Cor 7:1. They who have the promises of eternal life, and the assurance that God will be to them a Father, and evidence that they are his sons and daughters, should not indulge in the filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

(2.) Every true Christian will aim at perfection, 2Cor 7:1. He will desire to be perfect; he will strive for it; he will make it a subject of unceasing and constant prayer. No man can be a Christian to whom it would not be a pleasure to be at once as perfect as God. And if any man is conscious that the idea of being made at once perfectly holy would be unpleasant or painful, he may set it down as certain evidence that he is a stranger to religion.

(3.) No man can be a Christian who voluntarily indulges m sin, or in what he knows to be wrong, 2Cor 7:1. A man who does that, cannot be aiming at perfection. A man who does that, shows that he has no real desire to be perfect.

(4.) How blessed will be heaven! 2Cor 7:1. There we shall be perfect. And the crowning glory of heaven is not that we shall be happy, but that we shall be holy. Whatever there is in the heart that is good, shall there be perfectly developed; whatever there is that is evil shall be removed, and the whole soul will be like God. The Christian desires heaven, because he will be there perfect. He desires no other heaven. He could be induced to accept no other if it were offered to him. He blesses God day by day that there is such a heaven, and that there is no other--that there is one world which sin does not enter, and where evil shall be unknown.

(5.) What a change will take place at death! 2Cor 7:1 The Christian will be there made perfect. How this change will be there produced we do not know. Whether it will be by some extraordinary influence of the Spirit of God on the heart, or by the mere removal from the body, and from a sinful world to a world of glory, we know not. The fact seems to be clear, that at death the Christian will be made at once as holy as God is holy, and that he will ever continue to be in the future world.

(6.) What a desirable thing it is to die! 2Cor 7:1. Here, should we attain to the age of the patriarchs, like them we should continue to be imperfect. Death only will secure our perfection; and death, therefore, is a desirable event. The perfection of our being could not be attained but for death; and every Christian should rejoice that he is to die. It is better to be in heaven than on earth; better to be with God than to be away from him; better to be made perfect than to be contending here with internal corruption, and to struggle with our sins. "I would not live always," was the language of holy Job; "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ," was the language of holy Paul.

(7.) It is often painful to be compelled to use the language of reproof, 2Cor 7:8. Paul deeply regretted the necessity of doing it in the case of the Corinthians, and expressed the deepest anxiety in regard to it. No man, no minister, parent, or friend can use it but with deep regret that it is necessary. But the painfulness of it ahould not prevent our doing it. It should be done tenderly, but faithfully. If done with the deep feeling, with the tender affection of Paul, it will be done right; and when so done, it will produce the desired effect, and do good. No man should use the language of reproof with a hard heart, or with severity of feeling. If he is, like Paul, ready to weep when he does it, it will do good. If he does it because he delights in it, it will do evil.

(8.) It is a subject of rejoicing where a people exercise repentance, 2Cor 7:8. A minister has pleasure not in the pain which his reproofs cause; not in the deep anxiety and distress of the sinner;

and not in the pain which Christians feel under his reproofs; but he has joy in the happy results or the fruits which follow from it. It is only from the belief that those tears will produce abundant joy that he has pleasure in causing them, or in witnessing them.

(9.) The way to bring men to repentance, is to present to them the simple and unvarnished truth, 2Cor 7:8,9. Paul stated simple and plain truths to the Corinthians. He did not abuse them; he did not censure them in general terms; he stated things just as they were, and specified the things on account of which there was occasion for repentance. So if ministers wish to excite repentance in others, they must specify the sins over which others should weep; if we wish, as individuals, to feel regret for our sins, and to have true repentance toward God, we must dwell on those particular sins which we have committed, and should endeavour so to reflect on them that they may make an appropriate impression on the heart. No man will truly repent by general reflections on his sin; no one who does not endeavour so to dwell on his sins as that they shall make the proper impression, which each one is fitted to produce on the soul. Repentance is that state of mind which a view of the truth in regard to our own depravity is fitted to produce.

(10.) There is a great difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world, 2Cor 7:10. All men feel sorrow. All men, at some period of their lives, grieve over their past conduct. Some in their sorrow are pained because they have offended God, and go to God, and find pardon and peace in him. That sorrow is unto salvation. But the mass do not look to God. They turn away from him even in their disappointments, and in their sorrows, and in the bitter consciousness of sin. They seek to alleviate their sorrows in worldly company, in pleasure, in the intoxicating bowl; and such sorrow works death. It produces additional distress, and deeper gloom here, and eternal woe hereafter.

(11.) We may learn what constitutes true repentance, 2Cor 7:11. There should be, and there will be, deep feeling. There will be "carefulness" deep anxiety to be freed from the sin; there will be a

desire to remove it; "indignation" against it; "fear" of offending God; "earnest desire" that all that has been wrong should be corrected; "zeal" that the reformation should be entire; and a wish that the appropriate "revenge" or expression of displeasure should be excited against it. The true penitent hates nothing so cordially as he does his sin. He hates nothing but sin. And his warfare with that is decided, uncompromising, inexorable, and eternal.

(12.) It is an evidence of mercy and goodness in God that the sorrow which is felt about sin may be made to terminate in our good, and to promote our salvation, 2Cor 7:10,11. If sorrow for sin had been suffered to take its own course, and had proceeded unchecked, it would in all cases have produced death. If it had not been for the merciful interposition of Christianity, by which even sorrow might be turned to joy, this world would have been everywhere a world of sadness and of death, Man would have suffered. Sin always produces, sooner or later, woe. Christianity has done nothing to make men wretched, but it has done everything to bind up broken hearts. It has revealed a way by which sorrow may be turned into joy, and the bitterness of grief may be followed by the sweet calm and sunshine of peace.

(13.) The great purpose of Christian discipline is to benefit the whole church, 2Cor 7:12. It is not merely on account of the offender, nor is it merely that the injured may receive a just recompense. It is primarily that the church may be pure, and that the cause of religion may not be dishonoured. When the work of discipline is entered on from any private and personal motives, it is usually attended with bad feeling, and usually results in evil. When it is entered on with a desire to honour God, and to promote the purity of the church; when the whole aim is to deliver the church from opprobrium and scandal, and to have just such a church as Jesus Christ desires, then it will be prosecuted with good temper, and with right feeling, and then it will lead to happy results. Let no man institute a process of discipline on an offending brother from private, personal, and revengeful feelings. Let him first examine his own heart, and let him be sure that his aim is solely the glory of Christ, before he attempts to draw down the

censure of the church on an offending brother. How many cases of church discipline would be arrested if this simple rule were observed! And while the case before us shows that it is important in the highest degree that discipline should be exercised on an offending member of the church; while no consideration should prevent us from exercising that discipline; and while every man should feel desirous that the offending brother should be reproved or punished, yet this case also shows that it should be done with the utmost tenderness, the most strict regard to justice, and the deepest anxiety that the general interests of religion should not suffer by the manifestation of an improper-spirit, or by improper motives in inflicting punishment on an offending brother.

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Paul's Joy at the Church's Repentance

2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

Verse 1. Having therefore these promises. The promises referred to in 2Cor 6:17,18; the promise that God would be a Father, a Protector, and a Friend. The idea is, that as we have a promise that God would dwell in us, that he would be our God, that he would be to us a Father, we should remove from us whatever is offensive in his sight, and become perfectly holy.

Let us cleanse ourselves. Let us purify ourselves. Paul was not afraid to bring into view the agency of Christians themselves in the work of salvation. He therefore says, "let us purify ourselves," as if Christians had much to do; as if their own agency was to be employed; and as if their purifying was dependent on their own efforts. While it is true that all purifying influence and all holiness proceed from God, it is also true that the effect of all the influences

of the Holy Spirit is to excite us to diligence, to purify our own hearts, and to urge us to make strenuous efforts to overcome our own sins. He who expects to be made pure without any effort of his own, will never become pure; and he who ever becomes holy, will become so in consequence of strenuous efforts to resist the evil of his own heart, and to become like God. The argument here is, that we have the promises of God to aid us. We do not go about the work in our own strength. It is not a work in which we are to have no aid. But it is a work which God desires, and where he will give us all the aid which we need.

Flesh And spirit. By "filthiness of the spirit," the apostle means, probably, all the thoughts or mental associations that defile the man. Thus the Saviour (Mt 15:19) speaks of evil thoughts, etc., that proceed out of the heart, and that pollute the man. And probably Paul here includes all the sins and passions which appertain particularly to mind or to the soul rather than to carnal appetites--such as the desire of revenge, pride, avarice, ambition, etc. These are in themselves as polluting and defiling as the gross sensual pleasures. They stand as much in the way of sanctification, they are as offensive to God, and they prove as certainly that the heart is depraved, as the grossest sensual passions. The main difference is, that they are more decent in the external appearance; they can be better concealed; they are usually indulged by a more elevated class in society; but they are not the less offensive to God. It may be added, also, that they are often conjoined in the same person; and that the man who is defiled in his "spirit"is often a man most corrupt and sensual in his "flesh." Sin sweeps with a desolating influence through the whole frame; and it usually leaves no part unaffected, though some part may be more deeply corrupted than others.

Perfecting. This word (επιτελουντες) means, properly, to bring to an end, to finish, complete. The idea here is, that of carrying it out to the completion. Holiness had been commenced in the heart; and the exhortation of the apostle is, that they should make every effort that it might be complete in all its parts. He does not say that this work of perfection had ever been accomplished--nor does he say

that it had not been. He only urges the obligation to make an effort to be entirely holy; and this obligation is not affected by the inquiry whether any one has been or has not been perfect. It is an obligation which results from the nature of the law of God, and his unchangeable claims on the soul. The fact that no one has been perfect does not relax the claim; the fact that no one will be in this life, does not weaken the obligation. It proves only the deep and dreadful depravity of the human heart, and should humble us under the stubbornness of guilt. The obligation to be perfect is one that is unchangeable and eternal. See Mt 5:48, 1Pet 1:15. Tindal renders this, "And grow up to full holiness in the fear of God." The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection--perfection in all things--in the love of God, of Christ, of man; perfection of heart, and feeling, and emotion; perfection in his words, and plans, and dealings with men; perfection in his prayers, and in his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire it, and who does not constantly aim at it. No man is a friend of God who can acquiesce in a state of sin, and who is satisfied and contented that he is not as holy as God is holy. And any man who has no desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be as perfect as God, may set it down as demonstrably certain that he has no true religion, How can a man be a Christian who is willing to acquiesce in a state of sin, and who does not desire to be just like his Master and Lord? In the fear of God. Out of fear and reverence of God. From a regard to his commands, and a reverence for his name. The idea seems to be, that we are always in the presence of God; we are professedly under his law; and we should be awed and restrained by a sense of his presence from the commission of sin, and from indulgence in the pollutions of the flesh and spirit. There are many sins that the presence of a child will restrain a man from committing; and how should the conscious presence of a holy God keep us from sin! If the fear of a man or of a child will restrain us, and make us attempt to be holy and pure, how should the fear of the all-present and the all-seeing God keep us, not only from outward sins, but from polluted thoughts and unholy desires!

3 I speak not *this* to condemn *you:* for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*.

4 Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears.

Within were fears, Referring probably to the anxiety which he had in regard to the success of the epistle which he had sent to the church at Corinth. He felt great solicitude on the subject. He had sent Titus there to see what was the state of the church, and to witness the effect of his instructions. Titus had not come to him as he had expected, at Troas, (2Cor 2:13,) and he felt the deepest anxiety in regard to him and the success of his epistle. His fears were probably that they would be indisposed to exercise the discipline on the offender; or lest the severity of the discipline required should alienate them from him; or lest the party under the influence of the false teachers should prevail. All was uncertainty, and his mind was filled with the deepest apprehension.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.

Though I did repent. Doddridge renders this, "however anxious I may have been." The word here used does not denote repentance in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, as if any wrong had been done. It is not the language of remorse. It can denote here nothing more than "that uneasiness which a good man feels, not from the consciousness of having done wrong, but from a tenderness for others, and a fear lest that which, prompted by duty, he had said, should have too strong an effect upon them."--Campbell, diss. vi. part iii. & 9. See the meaning of the word further illustrated in the same dissertation. The word

(μεταμελομαι) denotes, properly, to change one's purpose or mind after having done anything, (Robinson;) or an uneasy feeling of regret for what has been done, without regard either to duration or effects.--Campbell. Here it is not to be understood that Paul meant to say he had done anything wrong. He was an inspired man, and what he had said was proper and right. But he was a man of deep feeling, and of tender affections. He was pained at the necessity of giving reproof. And there is no improbability in supposing that after the letter had been sent off, and he reflected on its nature and on the pain which it would cause to those whom he tenderly loved, there might be some misgiving of heart about it, and the deepest anxiety and regret at the necessity of doing it. What parent is there who has not had the same feeling as this? He has felt it necessary to correct a beloved child, and has formed the purpose, and has executed it. But is there no misgiving of heart? No question asked whether it might not have been dispensed with? No internal struggle; no sorrow?; no emotion which may be called regret at the resolution which has been taken? Yet there is no repentance as if the parent had done wrong, he feels that he has done what was right and necessary. He approves his own course, and has occasion of rejoicing at the good effects Which follow. Such appears to have been the situation of the apostle Paul in this case; and it shows that he had a tender heart, that he did not delight in giving pain, and that he had no desire to overwhelm them with grief. When the effect was seen, he was not unwilling that they should be apprized of the pain which it had cost him. When a parent has corrected a child, no injury is done if the child becomes acquainted with the strugglings which it has cost him, and the deep pain and anxiety caused by the necessity of resorting to chastisement.

For I perceive, etc. I perceive the good effect of the epistle. I perceive that it produced the kind of sorrow in you which I desired. I see that it has produced permanent good results. The sorrow, which it caused in you is only for a season; the good effects will be abiding. I have, therefore, great occasion to rejoice that I sent the epistle. It produced permanent repentance and reformation, (2Cor 7:9,) and thus accomplished all that I wished or desired.

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

But that ye sorrowed to repentance: It was not mere grief; it was not sorrow producing melancholy, gloom, or despair; it was not sorrow which led you to be angry at him who had reproved you for your errors--as is sometimes the case with the sorrow that is produced by reproof; but it was sorrow that led to a change and reformation. It was sorrow that was followed by a putting away of the evil for the existence of which there had been occasion to reprove you. It denotes a change for the better; a change of mind that is durable and productive in its consequences; a change which amounts to a permanent reformation. See Campbell's Diss. ut supra. The sense here is, that it produced a change, a reformation. It was such sorrow for their sin as to lead them to reform, and to put away the evils which had existed among them. It was this fact, and not that they had been made sorry, that led Paul to rejoice.

That ye might receive damage by us in nothing. The Greek word rendered "receive damage" (ζημιωθητε) means, properly, to bring loss upon any one; to receive loss or detriment. 1Cor 3:15. Comp. Php 3:8. The sense here seems to be, "So that on the whole no real injury was done you in any respect by me. You were indeed put to pain and grief by my reproof. You sorrowed. But it has done you no injury on the whole. It has been a benefit to you. If you had not reformed; if you had been pained without putting away the sins for which the reproof was administered; if it had been mere grief without any proper fruit, you might have said that you would have suffered a loss of happiness, or you might have given me occasion to inflict severer discipline. But now you are gainers in happiness by all the sorrow which I have caused. Sinners are gainers in happiness, in the end, by all the pain of repentance produced by the preaching of the gospel. No man suffers loss by being told of his faults if he repents; and men are under the highest obligations to those faithful ministers and other friends who tell them of their errors, and who are the means of bringing them to true repentance.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

For godly sorrow. "Sorrow according, to God," (ηγαρκαταθεονλυπη) That is, such sorrow as has respect to God, or is according to his will, or as leads the soul to him. This is a very important expression in regard to true repentance, and shows the exact nature of that sorrow which is connected with a return to God. The phrase may be regarded as implying the following things:

(1.) Such sorrow as God approves, or such as is suitable to, or conformable to his will and desires., It cannot mean that it is such sorrow or grief as God has, for he has none; but such as shall be in accordance with what God demands in a return to him. It is a sorrow which his truth is fitted to produce on the heart; such a sorrow as shall appropriately arise from viewing sin as God views it; such sorrow as exists in the mind when our views accord with his in regard to the existence, the extent, the nature, and the ill-desert of sin. Such views will lead to sorrow that it has ever been committed; and such views will be "according to God."

(2.) Such sorrow as shall be exercised towards God in view of sin; which shall arise from a view of the evil of sin as committed against a holy God. It is not mainly that it will lead to pain; that it will overwhelm the soul in disgrace; that it will forfeit the favour or lead to the contempt of man; or that it will lead to an eternal hell; but, it is such as arises from a view of the evil of sin as committed against a holy and just God. It is not mainly from the fact that it is an offence against his infinite majesty. Such sorrow David had (Ps 51:4) when he said, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned;" when the offence regarded as committed against man, enormous as it was, was lost and absorbed in its greater evil when regarded as committed against God. So all true and genuine repentance is that which regards sin as deriving its main evil from the fact that it is committed against God.

(3.) That which leads to God. It leads to God to obtain forgiveness --to seek for consolation. A heart truly contrite and penitent seeks God, and implores pardon from him. Other sorrow in view of sin than that which is genuine repentance, leads the person away from God. He seeks consolation in the world; he endeavours to drive away his serious impressions, or to drown them in the pleasures and the cares of life. But genuine sorrow for sin leads the soul to God, and conducts the sinner, through the Redeemer, to him to obtain the pardon and peace which he only can give to a wounded spirit. In God alone can pardon and true peace be found; and godly sorrow for sin will seek them there.

Worketh repentance. Produces a change that shall be permanent; a reformation. It is not mere regret; it does not soon pass away in its effects, but it produces permanent and abiding changes. A man who mourns over sin as committed against God, and who seeks to God for pardon, will reform his life, and truly repent. He who has grief for sin only because it will lead to disgrace or shame, or because it will lead to poverty or pain, will not necessarily break off from it and reform. It is only when it is seen that sin is committed against God, and is evil in his sight, that it leads to a change of life.

Not to be repented of. αμεταμελητον 2Cor 7:8. Not to be regretted. It is permanent and abiding. There is no occasion to mourn over such repentance and change of life. It is that which the mind approves, and which it will always approve. There will be no reason for regretting it, and it will never be regretted. And it is so. Who ever yet repented of having truly repented of sin? Who is there, who has there ever been, who became a true penitent, and a true Christian, who ever regretted it? Not an individual has ever been known who regretted his having become a Christian. Not one who regretted that he had become one too soon in life, or that he had served the Lord Jesus too faithfully or too long.

But the sorrow of the world. All sorrow which is not toward God, and which does not arise from just views of sin as committed, against God, or lead to God. Probably Paul refers here to the sorrow which arises from worldly causes, and which does not lead to God for consolation. Such may be the sorrow which arises from the loss of friends or property; from disappointment, or, from shame and disgrace. Perhaps it may include the following things:

(1.) Sorrow arising from losses of property and friends, and from disappointment.

(2.) Sorrow for sin or vice when it overwhelms the mind with the consciousness of guilt, and when it does not lead to God, and when there is no contrition of soul from viewing it as an offence against God. Thus a female who has wandered from the paths of virtue, and involved her family and herself in disgrace; or a man who has been guilty of forgery, or perjury, or any other disgraceful crime, and who is detected; a man who has violated the laws of the land, and who has involved himself and family in disgrace, will often feel regret, and sorrow, and remorse, but it arises wholly from worldly considerations, and does not lead to God.

(3.) When the sorrow arises from a view of worldly consequences merely, and when there is no looking to God for pardon and consolation. Thus men, when they lose their property or friends, often pine in grief without looking to God. Thus when they have wandered from the path of virtue, and have fallen into sin, they often look merely to the disgrace among men, and see their names blasted, and their comforts gone, and pine away in grief. There is no looking to God for pardon or for consolation. The sorrow arises from this world, and it terminates there. It is the loss of what they valued pertaining to this world, and it is all which they had, and it produces death. It is sorrow such as the men of this World have--begins with this world, and terminates

with this world. Worketh death. Tends to death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. It does not tend to life.

(a.) It produces distress only. It is attended with no consolation.

(b.) It tends to break the spirit, to destroy the peace, and to mar the happiness.

(c.) It often leads to death itself. The spirit is broken, and the heart pines away under the influence of the unalleviated sorrow; or under its influence men often lay violent hands on themselves, and take their lives. Life is often closed under the influence of such sorrow.

(d.) It tends to eternal death. There is no looking to God; no looking for pardon. It produces murmuring, repining, complaining, fretfulness against God, and thus leads to his displeasure, and to the condemnation and ruin of the soul.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

For behold this self-same thing. For see in your own case the happy effects of godly sorrow. See the effects which it produced; see an illustration of what it is fitted to produce. The construction is, "For, lo! this very thing, to wit, your sorrowing after a godly manner, wrought carefulness, clearing of yourselves," etc. The object of Paul is to illustrate the effects of godly sorrow, to which he had referred in 2Cor 7:10. He appeals, therefore, to their own case, and says that it was beautifully illustrated among themselves.

What carefulness. σπουδην. This word properly denotes speed, haste; then diligence, earnest effort, forwardness. Here it, is evidently used to denote the diligence and the great anxiety which they manifested to remove the evils which existed among

them. They went to work to remove them. They did not sit down to mourn over them merely, nor did they wait for God to remove them, nor did they plead that they could do nothing; but they set about the work as though they believed it might be done. When men are thoroughly convinced of sin, they will set about removing it with the utmost diligence. They will feel that this can be done, an,d must be done, or that the soul will be lost.

What clearing of yourselves, απολογιαν. Apology. This word properly means a plea or defence before a tribunal or elsewhere, Acts 22:1, 2Ti 4:16. Tindal renders it, "Yea, it caused you to clear yourselves." The word here properly means apology for what had been done; and it probably refers here to the effort which would be made by the sounder part of the church to clear themselves from blame in what had occurred. It does not mean that the guilty, when convicted of sin, will attempt to vindicate themselves, and to apologize to God for what they have done; but it means that the church at Corinth were anxious to state to Titus all the mitigating circumstances of the case; they showed great solicitude to free themselves, as far as could be done, from blame; they were anxious, as far as could be, to show that they had not; approved of what had occurred, and perhaps that it had occurred only because it could not have been prevented. We are not to suppose that all the things here referred to occurred in the same individual, and that the same persons precisely evinced diligence, and made the apology, etc. It was done by the church; all evinced deep feeling; but some manifested it in one way, and some in another. The whole church was roused; and all felt, and all endeavoured, in the proper way, to free themselves from the blame, and to remove the evil from among them.

Yea, what indignation. Indignation against the sin, and perhaps against the persons who had drawn down the censure of the apostle. One effect of true repentance is to produce decided hatred of sin. It is not mere regret, or sorrow; it is positive hatred. There is a deep indignation against it as an evil and a bitter thing.

Yea, what fear. Fear lest the thing should be repeated. Fear lest it should not be entirely removed. Or it may possibly mean fear of the displeasure of Paul, and of the punishment which would be inflicted if the evil were not removed. But it more probably refers to the anxious state of mind that the whole evil might be corrected, and to the dread of having any vestige of the evil remaining among them.

Yea, what vehement desire. This may either mean their fervent wish to remove the cause of complaint, or their anxious desire to see the apostle. It is used in the latter sense in 2Cor 7:7, and according to Doddridge and Bloomfield this is the meaning here. Locke renders it, "desire of satisfying me." It seems to me more probable that Paul refers to their anxious wish to remove the sin, since this is the topic under consideration. The point of his remarks in this verse is not so much their affection for him, as their indignation against their sin, and their deep grief that sin had existed and had been tolerated among them.

Yea, what zeal. Zeal to remove the sin, and to show your attachment to me. They set about the work of reformation in great earnest.

Yea, what revenge! Tindal renders this, "it caused punishment." The idea is, that they immediately set about the work of inflicting punishment on the offender. The word here used (εκδικησιν) properly denotes maintenance of right, protection; then it is used in the sense of avengement, or vengeance; and then of penal retribution or punishment. See Lk 21:22, 2Thes 1:8, 1Pet 2:14.

In all things, etc. The sense of this is, "You have entirely acquitted yourselves of blame in this business." The apostle does not mean that none of them had been to blame, or that the church had been free from fault, for a large part of his former epistle is occupied in reproving them for their faults in this business; but

he means that, by their zeal and their readiness to take away the cause of complaint, they had removed all necessity of further blame, and had pursued such a course as entirely to meet his approbation. They had cleared themselves of any further blame in this business, and had become, so far as this was concerned, "clear," (αγνους,) or pure.

The apostle, in the foregoing verses, had declared, that godly sorrow, or a sorrow wrought by the Spirit of God, worketh true repentance, and produceth thorough reformation, not to be repented of: Now in this verse he proves, that the Corinthians sorrow for the incestuous person's sin, was of this nature, namely, a godly sorrow, because it produced such excellent effects and fruits as godly sorrow is wont to do. Seven of which he here reckons up.

1. Care, or an holy carefulness to amend what is amiss for time to come, by shunning and avoiding all occasions and temptations that lead to sin. He that truly repenteth, is careful not to sin again.

2. Clearing of themselves, that they did not approve the fact of the incestuous person,but did inflict the church's censures upon him, and so put away evil from amongst them.

3. Indignation against sin; this is found where godly sorrow is found; the heart rises, swells, and boils against sin; we are then angry and sin not; when we are angry at sin, and with ourselves for sinning.

4. Fear a true penitent fears to offend: and that he may not offend, doth nourish in himself an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of himself: There is found with him a fear of reverence, from an awful apprehension of the holiness and Majesty of God, and also a fear of diligence and vigilance, watching and warring against sin, that it may not set upon us and surprise us for the time to come.

5. Vehement desire, after a thorough reformation, and to rectify whatever is amiss; a desire to be rid of all sin, and in the mean time conflicting with it, and groaning under it.

6. Zeal; this is an affection in the true penitent, compounded of love and anger. Be zealous and repent, is Christ's own call, Rev 3:19 This will make a penitent persist in the exercise and expression of his godly sorrow for sin, and persevere in his course of mortification, in defiance of all opposition made against him.

7. Revenge; this is the result of zeal, when our zeal boils into revenge, and puts us upon self-castigations: not so much upon our bodies with whips and scourges but by the abatement of lust which stirreth in us, buffeting, the flesh, and bringing it into subjection. And this revenge leads the penitent also to make satisfaction for wrongs done, either by open confession, or secret restitution: In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear of this matter.

As if the apostle had said, "By these forementioned acts of yours, the body of you hath shewn that you did not approve of the incestuous person's sin, but evinced by your sorrow for it, that you are clear of it.

Learn hence, 1. That there is no way to get clear of the guilt of other men's sins, but by duly mourning for them: Now your are clear of this matter.

Learn, 2. That true repentance for sin, clears us from the guilt of it, both in the sight of God and man; and if so, it is both uncharitable and unchristian to stigmatize or reproach any person for the sin, which we either know or believe he has truly repented of.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, etc. In this verse Paul states the main reason why he had written to them on the subject. It was not principally on account of the man who had done the wrong, or of him who had been injured; but it was from tender anxiety for the whole church, and in order to show the deep interest which he had in their welfare. Not for his cause that had done the wrong. Not mainly or principally on account of the incestuous person, 1Cor 5:1. It was not primarily with reference to him as an individual that I wrote, but from a regard to the whole church. Nor for his cause that suffered wrong. Not merely that the wrong which he had suffered might be rectified, and that his rights might be restored, valuable and desirable as was that object. The offence was, that a man had taken his father's wife as his own, (1Cor 5:1;) and the person injured, therefore, was his father. It is evident from this passage, I think, that the father was living at the time when Paul wrote this epistle. But that our care, etc. I wrote mainly that I might show the deep interest which I had in the church at large, and my anxiety that it might not suffer by the misconduct of any of its members. It is from a regard to the welfare of the whole church that discipline should be administered, and not simply with reference to an individual who has done wrong, or an individual who is injured. In church discipline, such private interests are absorbed in the general interest of the church at large.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth.

15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all *things.*

I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence, etc. I have had the most ample proof that you are disposed to obey God, and to put away everything that is offensive to him. The address of this part of the epistle, says Doddridge, is wonderful. It is designed,

evidently, not merely to commend them for what they had done, and to show them the deep attachment which he had for them, but in a special manner to prepare them for what he was about to say in the following chapter respecting the collection which he had so much at heart for the poor saints at Jerusalem. What he here says was admirably adapted to introduce that subject. They had thus far showed the deepest regard for him. They had complied with all his directions. All that he had said of them had proved to be true. And as he had boasted of them to Titus, (2Cor 7:14,) and expressed his entire confidence that they would comply with his requisitions, so he had also boasted of them to the churches of Macedonia, and expressed the utmost confidence that they would be liberal in their benefactions, 2Cor 9:2. All that Paul here says in their favour, therefore, was eminently adapted to excite them to liberality, and to prepare them to comply with his wishes in regard to that contribution.

2 Corinthians-8

The Offering for the Saints

Paul had given directions for taking up this collection in the first epistle. See 2Cor 8:1, seq. Comp. Rom 15:26. This collection he had given Titus direction to take up when he went to Corinth. See 2Cor 8:6-17. But from some cause it had not been completed, 2Cor 8:10,11. What that cause was, is not stated; but it may have been possibly the disturbances which had existed there, or the opposition of the enemies of Paul, or the attention which was necessarily bestowed in regulating the affairs of the church. But in order that the contribution might be made, and might be a liberal one, Paul presses on their attention several considerations designed to excite them to give freely. The chapter is, therefore, of importance to us, as it is a statement of the duty of giving liberally to the cause of benevolence, and of the motives by which it should be done. In the presentation of this subject, Paul urges upon them the following considerations:

REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 8

(1.) Let us bear in mind that a disposition to be liberal proceeds only from God, 2Cor 8:1 The human heart is by nature selfish, and indisposed to benevolence. It is only by the grace of God that men are excited to liberality; and we should therefore pray for this, as well as for all other graces. We should beseech God to remove selfishness from our minds; to dispose us to feel as we should feel for the wants of others, and to incline us to give just what we ought to give to relieve them in trouble, and to promote their temporal and eternal welfare.

(2.) It is an inestimable blessing when God gives a spirit of liberality to the church, 2Cor 8:1. It should be regarded as a proof of his special favour, and as an evidence of the prevalence of the principles of true religion.

(3.) Men are often most liberal when in circumstances of distress, perplexity, and affliction, 2Cor 8:2. Prosperity often freezes the heart, but adversity opens it. Success in life often closes the hand of benevolence, but adversity opens it. We are taught to feel for the sufferings of others by suffering ourselves; and in the school of adversity we learn invaluable lessons of benevolence which we should never acquire in prosperity. If you want the tear of sympathy, if you want aid in a good cause, go to a man in affliction, and his heart is open. And hence it is that God often suffers his people to pass through trials in order that they may possess the spirit of large and active benevolence.

(4.) If Christians desire to be liberal they must first devote themselves to God, 2Cor 8:5. If this is not done they will have no heart to give, and they will not give. They will have a thousand excuses ready, and there will be no ground of appeal which we can make to them: True liberality is always based on the fact that we have given ourselves wholly to God.

(5.) When Christians have honestly devoted themselves to God, it will be easy to contribute liberally to the cause of benevolence, 2Cor 8:5. They will find something to give; or if they have nothing now, they will labour and deny themselves in order that they may have something to give. If every professed Christian on earth had honestly given himself to God, and should act in accordance with this, the channels of benevolence would never be dry.

(6.) We should compare ourselves in the matter of benevolence with the churches here referred to, 2Cor 8:3. They were poor; they were in deep affliction, and yet they contributed all in their power, and beyond their power. Do we do this? Do we give according to our ability? Do we deny ourselves one comfort-- withhold one gratification-- curtail one expense which fashion demands, in order that we may have the means of doing good? Oh, if every Christian would give according to his ability to the sacred cause of charity, how soon would the means be ample to place the Bible in every family on the globe, to preach the gospel in every country, and to maintain all the institutions which the cause of humanity needs in this and in other lands!

(7.) The Christian character is incomplete unless there is a spirit of large and liberal beneficence, 2Cor 8:7. This is indispensable to the proper symmetry of the Christian graces, and this should be cultivated in order to give beauty and completeness to the whole. Yet it cannot be denied that there are true Christians where this is wanting. There are those who give every other evidence of piety; who are men of prayer, and who evince humility, and who are submissive in trials, and whose conversation is that of Christians, who are yet sadly deficient in this virtue. Either by an original closeness of disposition, or by a defect of education, or by want of information in regard to the Objects of Christian benevolence, they are most stinted in their benefactions, and often excite the amazement of others that they give so little to the cause of benevolence. Such persons should be entreated to carry out their Christian

character to completion. As they abound in other things, they should abound in this grace also. They are depriving themselves of much comfort, and are bringing much injury on the cause of the Redeemer while they refuse to sustain the great objects of Christian charity: No Christian character is symmetrical or complete, unless it is crowned with the spirit of large and comprehensive benevolence towards every object that tends to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of man.

(8.) The sincerity of our love should be tested, and will be, by our readiness to deny ourselves to do good to others, 2Cor 8:8. The love of the Lord Jesus was tested in that way; and there can be no true love to God or man, where there is not a readiness to contribute of our means for the welfare of others. If we love the Redeemer, we shall devote all to his service; if we love our fellow-men, we shall evince our "sincerity" by being willing to part with our earthly substance to alleviate their woes, enlighten their ignorance, and save their souls.

(9.) Let us imitate the example of the Lord Jesus, 2Cor 8:9. He was rich, yet he became poor; and, oh! How POOR! Let the rich learn to copy his example, and be willing to part with their abundant and superfluous wealth in order that they may relieve and benefit others. That man is most happy, as well as most useful, who most resembles the Redeemer; that man will be most happy who stoops from the highest earthly elevation to the lowest condition, that he may minister to the welfare of others.

(10.) Charity should be voluntary, 2Cor 8:12. It should be the free and spontaneous offering of the heart; and the first promptings of the heart, before the pleadings of avarice come in, and the heart grows cold by the influence of returning covetousness, are likely to be the most correct.

(11.) Charity should be in an honest proportion to our means, 2Cor 8:12. It should be according to what a man hath. God has

left the determination of this proportion to every individual, responsible to him alone. He has not told us how much we shall give, or in what proportion we shall give; but he has left it for every individual to decide what he may give, and what he ought to give.

(12.) If men do not give according to their means, they must answer for it to God. Every man may have opportunity to contribute to relieve others, if he will open his heart and ears to the cries of a suffering and a dying world. No man can complain that he has no opportunity to give; or that he may not procure for his own soul all the blessings which can be produced by the most large and liberal benevolence.

(13.) Men have no excuse for being lost, 2Cor 8:12. If God required more of them than they could render, they would have. They would not be to blame. They might be sufferers and martyrs in hell, but no one would blame them. But the sinner can never have any such excuse. God never required any more of him than he had power to render; and if he dies, it will be his own fault, and the throne of God will still be spotless and pure.

(14.) God's government is an equal, and just, and good government, 2Cor 8:12. What can be more equitable than the principle that a man is accepted according to what he has? What ground of complaint can the sinner have in regard to this administration?

(15.) The churches should bear their just proportion in the cause of Christian beneficence, 2Cor 8:13-15. There are great interests of charity which MUST be sustained. The world cannot do without them. Not only must the poor be provided for, but the cause of temperance, and of Sabbath-schools, and of missions must be sustained. Bibles must be distributed, and men must be educated for the ministry, and the widow and the fatherless must be the objects of Christian benevolence. These burdens, if they are burdens, should be equally distributed. The

rich should furnish their fair proportion in sustaining them; and those in more moderate circumstances must do their fair proportion also in sustaining them. If this were done, all the objects of Christian benevolence could be sustained, and they would in fact not be burdensome to the churches. With infinite ease all might be contributed that is necessary to send the gospel around the world.

(16.) Ministers of the gospel should have as little as possible to do with money matters, 2Cor 8:19-21. While they should be willing, if it is necessary, to be the almoners of the churches, and should esteem it a privilege to be the means of conveying to the poor and needy, and to the great cause of benevolence, what the churches may choose to commit to them, yet they should not covet this office; they should not show any particular desire for it; nor should they do it unless, like Paul, they have the most ample security that the voice of slander can never be raised in regard to their management. Let them see to it that they have persons associated with them who have the entire confidence of the churches; men who will be responsible also, and who will be competent witnesses of the manner in which they discharge their duty. In all things ministers should be pure. On few points is there more danger that the enemy will endeavour to take advantage, and to injure their character, than in regard to their abuse of funds intrusted to their care.

(17.) Let all Christians so live that it may be honestly said of them, they are "the glory of Christ," 2Cor 8:23. Let them aim so to live that it will be esteemed to be an honour to the Redeemer that he called them into his kingdom, and that he so richly endowed them by his grace. This would be a commendation to all men where they might go; to say this is enough to say of any man. None can have a higher character than to have it said with truth of him, "He is the glory of Christ; he is an honour to his Redeemer and to his cause."

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

It was a time of great affliction with them, as may be seen, Ac 18:17. The Christians in these parts met with ill treatment, which had reduced them to deep poverty; yet, as they had abundance of joy in the midst of tribulation, they abounded in their liberality; they gave out of a little, trusting in God to provide for them, and make it up to them.

(2.) They gave very largely, with the riches of liberality (2Co 8:2), that is, as liberally as if they had been rich. It was a large contribution they made, all things considered; it was according to, yea beyond, their power (2Co 8:3), as much as could well be expected from them, if not more. Note, Though men may condemn the indiscretion, yet God will accept the pious zeal, of those who in real works of piety and charity do rather beyond their power.

(3.) They were very ready and forward to this good work. They were willing of themselves

3 For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves;

4 praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. Greek, "that we would take the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." They asked of us to take part in the labour of conveying it to Jerusalem. The occasion of this distress which made the collection for the saints of Judea necessary, was probably the famine which was predicted by Agabus, and which occurred in the time of Claudius Caesar. Acts 11:28. Barnabas was associated with Paul in conveying the contribution to Jerusalem, Acts 11:30. Paul was unwilling to do it unless they particularly desired it, and he seems to have insisted that some person shoed be associated with him, 2Cor 8:20, 1Cor 16:3,4.

5 And *this they did,* not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

But first gave their own selves to the Lord. They first made an entire consecration of themselves and all that they had to the Lord. They kept nothing back. They felt that all they had was his. And where a people honestly and truly devote themselves to God, they will find no difficulty in having the means to contribute to the cause of charity.

And unto us by the will of God. That is, they gave themselves to us to be directed in regard to the contribution to be made. They complied with our wishes and followed our directions. The phrase, "by the will of God," means evidently that God moved them to this, or that it was to be traced to his direction and providence. It is one of the instances in which Paul traces everything that is right and good to the agency and direction of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing *of it;* that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

As there was a readiness to will. Now accomplish the thing, and be not satisfied with having begun it. Do not suppose that the intention was sufficient, or that you are now released from the obligation. A year indeed has elapsed; but the necessity of the aid for the poor has not ceased. The sentiment here is, that if we have felt it our duty to aid in a cause of benevolence, and have commenced it, and have then been interrupted in executing our

purpose, we should seize the first favourable opportunity to accomplish what we had designed. We should not regard ourselves as released from our obligation; but should, from a regard to consistency and our obligation to God, accomplish what we had intended.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

It is accepted. Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Macknight, and some others apply this to the person, and render it, "he is accepted;" but the more usual, and the more natural interpretation, is to apply it to the gift--it is accepted. God will approve of it, and will receive it favourably. According to that a man hath, etc. He is not required to give what he has not. His obligation is proportioned to his ability. His offering is acceptable to God according to the largeness and willingness of his heart, and not according to the narrowness of his fortune.--Locke. If the means are small, if the individual is poor, and if the gift shall be therefore small in amount, yet it may be proof of a larger heart, and of more true love to God and his cause, than when a much more ample benefaction is made by one in better circumstances. This sentiment the Saviour expressly stated and defended in the case of the poor widow, Mk 12:42-44, Lk 21:1-4. She who had cast in her two mites into the treasury, had put in more than all which the rich men-had contributed, for they had given of their abundance, but she had cast in all that she had, even all her living. The great and obviously just and equal principle here stated, was originally applied by Paul to the duty of giving alms. But it is equally true and just as applied to all the duties which we owe to God. He demands

(1.) a willing mind, a heart disposed to yield obedience. He claims that our service should be voluntary and sincere, and that we should make an unreserved consecration of what we have.

(2.) He demands only what we have power to render. He requires a service strictly according to our ability, and to be measured by that. He demands no more than our powers are fitted to produce;

no more than we are able to render. Our obligations in all cases are limited by our ability. This is obviously the rule of equity; and this is all that is anywhere demanded in the Bible, and this is everywhere demanded. Thus our love to Him is to be in proportion to our ability, and not to be graduated by the ability of angels or other beings. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL THY heart, and with all THY soul, and with all THY mind, and with all THY strength," Mk 12:30. Here the obligation is limited by the ability, and the love is to be commensurate with the ability. So of repentance, faith, and of obedience in any form. None but a tyrant ever demands more than can be rendered; and to demand more is the appropriate description of a tyrant, and cannot appertain to the ever-blessed God.

(3.) If there is any service rendered to God, according to the ability, it is accepted of him. It may not be as much or as valuable as may be rendered by beings of higher powers; it may not be as much as we would desire to render, but it is all that God demands, and is acceptable to him. The poor widow was not able to give as much as the rich man; but her offering was equally acceptable, and might be more valuable, for it would be accompanied with her prayers. The service which we can render to God may not be equal to that which the angels render; but it may be equally appropriate to our condition and our powers, and may be equally acceptable to God. God may be as well pleased with the sighings of penitence, as the praises of angels; with the offerings of a broken and a contrite heart, as with the loud hallelujahs of unfallen beings in heaven.

13 For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

For I mean not that other men be eased, etc. I do not intend that others should be eased in order to relieve you. Literally, "Not that there should be rest (ανεσις, a letting loose, remission, relaxation) to others, but affliction (θλιψις) to you." Probably the Corinthians were able to contribute more than many other churches, certainly more than the churches of Macedonia, (2Cor 8:2;) and Paul therefore presses upon them the duty of giving according to their means, yet he by no means intended that the entire burden should come on them.

And the doctrine here taught is,

(1.) that the support of the objects of benevolence should be on equal principles. The rich should bear an equal and fair proportion; and if more frequent demands are made on their benefaction than on others, they should not complain.

(2.) Christians should contribute liberally while they have the means. In the vicissitudes of life, no one can tell how soon he may be unable to contribute, or may even be dependent on the charity of others himself. A change in the commercial world; losses by fire or at sea; want of success in business; loss of health, and the failure of his plans, may soon render him unable to aid the cause of benevolence. While he is prospered, he should embrace every opportunity to do good to all. Some of the most painful regrets which men ever have, arise from the reflection that when prospered they were indisposed to give to benefit others, and when their property is swept away they become unable. God often sweeps away the property which they were indisposed to contribute to aid others, and leaves them to penury and want. Too late they regret that they were not the liberal patrons of the objects of benevolence when they were able to be. That there may be equality. That all may be just and equal. That no unjust burden should be borne by any one portion of the great family of the redeemed. Every Christian brother should bear his due proportion.

14 but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want; that there may be equality:

15 as it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

They should, therefore, impart freely to those who had been less successful. Wealth, like manna, is the gift of God. It is like that spread by his hand around us every day. Some are able to gather much more than others. By their skill, their health, their diligence, or by providential arrangements, they are eminently successful.

Others are feeble, or sick, or aged, or destitute of skill, and are less successful. All that is obtained is by the arrangement of God. The health, the strength, the skill, the wisdom by which we are enabled to obtain it, are all his gift. That which is thus honestly obtained, therefore, should be regarded as his bounty, and we should esteem it a privilege daily to impart to others less favoured and less successful. Thus society will be bound more closely together. There will be, as there was among the Israelites, the feelings of universal brotherhood. There will be on the one hand the happiness flowing from the constant exercise of the benevolent feelings; on the other the strong ties of gratitude. On the one hand the evils of poverty will be prevented, and on the other the not less, though different, evils resulting from superabundant wealth. Is it a forced and unnatural analogy also to observe, that wealth, like manna, corrupts by being kept in store? Manna, if kept more than a single day, became foul and loathsome. Does wealth, hoarded up when it might be properly employed--wealth that should have been distributed to relieve the wants of others--become corrupting in its nature, and offensive in the sight of holy and benevolent minds? Comp. Jas 5:2-4. Wealth, like manna, should be employed in the service which God designs--employed to diffuse everywhere the blessings of religion, comfort, and peace.

16 But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

For you. For your completing the collection. Paul represents it as being done for them, or for their welfare. The poor saints in Judea, indeed, were to have the immediate benefit of the contribution; but it was a privilege for them to give, and Paul rejoiced that they had that privilege. A man who presents to Christians a feasible object of benevolence, and who furnishes them an opportunity of doing good to others, is doing good to them, and they should esteem it an act of kindness done to them.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

For indeed he accepted the exhortation. He cheerfully complied with the exhortation which I gave him, to wit, to visit you, and

excite you to this good work. But being more forward. More disposed to do this than I had supposed. The idea here is, that he was very ready to engage in this; he was more ready to engage in it than Paul was to exhort him to it; he anticipated his request; he had already resolved to engage in it. Of his own accord he went, etc. he went voluntarily, and without urging. The ground of Paul's thankfulness here seems to have been this: he apprehended, probably, some difficulty in obtaining the collection there, he was acquainted with the distracted state of the church, and feared that Titus might have some reluctance to engage in the service, lie was therefore very agreeably surprised when he learned that Titus was willing to make another journey to Corinth, and to endeavour to complete the collection.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 and not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind:

20 avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

That no man should blame us. That no one should have any occasion to say that I had appropriated it to my own use, or contrary to the will of the donors. Paul felt how dangerous it was for ministers to have much to do with money matters, he had a very deep impression of the necessity of keeping his own character free from suspicion on this subject, he knew how easy it might be for his enemies to raise the charge that he had embezzled the funds, and appropriated them to his own use. He therefore insisted on having associated with him some one who had the entire confidence of the churches, and who should be appointed by them, and thus he was certain of being for ever free from blame on the subject: a most important example for all ministers in regard to the pecuniary benefactions of the churches.

In this abundance /KJV/ etc. In this large amount which is contributed by the churches, and committed to our disposal. Large sums of money are in our time committed to the ministers of the gospel, in the execution of the objects of Christian benevolence.

Nothing can be more wise than the example of Paul here, that they should have associated with them others who have the entire confidence of the churches, that there may not be occasion for slander to move her poisonous tongue against the ministers of religion.

21 providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.
22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you.
23 Whether *any do inquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren *be inquired of, they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ.
24 Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

2 Corinthians-9

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:
2 for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.
3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:
4 lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.
5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as *a matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness.
6 But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

He which soweth sparingly. This expression has all the appearance of a proverb, and doubtless is such. It does not Occur indeed

elsewhere in the Scriptures, though substantially the same sentiment exciting to liberality often occurs. See Ps 41:1-3, Prov 11:24,25; Prov 19:17, 22:9. Paul here says that it is in giving as it is in agriculture. A man that sows little, must expect to reap little. If he sows a small piece of land, he will reap a small harvest; or if he is niggardly in sowing, and wishes to save his seed and will not commit it to the earth, he must expect to reap little. So it is in giving. Money given in alms, money bestowed to aid the poor and needy, or to extend the influence of virtue and pure religion, is money bestowed in a way similar to the act of committing seed to the earth. It will be returned again in some way with an abundant increase. It shall not be lost. The seed may be buried long. It may lie in the ground with no indication of a return or of increase. One who knew not the arrangements of Providence might suppose it was lost and dead. But in due time it shall spring up and produce an ample increase. So with money given to objects of benevolence. To many it may seem to be a waste, or may appear to be thrown away. But in due time it will be repaid in some way with abundant increase. And the man who wishes to make the most out of his money for future use and personal comfort, will give liberally to deserving objects of charity--just as the man who wishes to make the most out of his grain will not suffer it to lie in his granary, but will commit the seed to the fertile earth. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days," Eccl 11:1, that is, when the waters, as of the Nile, have over flowed the banks, and flooded the whole adjacent country, then is the time to cast abroad thy seed. The waters will retire, and the seed will sink into the accumulated fertile mud that is deposited, and will spring up in an abundant harvest. So it is with that which is given for objects of benevolence.

This every one knows is true in regard to grain that is sowed. It is also no less true in regard to deeds of charity. The idea is, that God will bestow rewards in proportion to what is given. These rewards may refer to results in this life, or to the rewards in heaven, or both. All who have ever been in the habit of giving liberally to the objects of benevolence can testify that they have lost nothing, but

have reaped in proportion to their liberality. This follows in various ways.

(1.) In the comfort and peace which results from giving. If a man wishes to purchase happiness with his gold, he can secure the most by bestowing it liberally on objects of charity. It will produce him more immediate peace than it would to spend it in sensual gratifications, and far more than to hoard it up useless in his coffers.

(2.) In reflection on it hereafter. It will produce more happiness in remembering that he has done good with it, and promoted the happiness of others, than it will to reflect that he has hoarded up useless wealth, or that he has squandered it in sensual gratification. The one will be unmingled pleasure when he comes to die; the other will be unmingled self-reproach and pain.

(3.) In subsequent life, God will in some way repay to him far more than he has bestowed in deeds of charity. By augmented prosperity, by health and future comfort, and by raising up for us and our families, when in distress and want, friends to aid us, God can and often does abundantly repay the liberal for all their acts of kindness and deeds of beneficence.

(4.) God can and will reward his people in heaven abundantly for all their kindness to the poor, and all their self-denials in endeavouring to diffuse the influence of truth and the knowledge of salvation. Indeed, the rewards of heaven will be in no small degree apportioned in this manner, and determined by the amount of benevolence which we have shown on earth. See Mt 25:34-40. On all accounts, therefore, we have every inducement to give liberally. As a farmer who desires an ample harvest scatters his seed with a liberal hand; as he does not grudge it though it falls into the earth; as he scatters it with the expectation that in due time it will spring up and reward his labours, so should we give with a liberal hand to aid the cause of benevolence; nor should we deem what we give to be lost or wasted though we wait long before we

are recompensed, or though we should be in no other way rewarded than by the comfort which arises from the act of doing good.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give;* not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, etc. The main idea in this verse is, that the act of giving should be voluntary and cheerful. It should not seem to be extorted by the importunity of others, (@Co 9:6;) nor should it be given from urgent necessity, but it should be given as an offering of the heart. On this part of the verse we may remark,

(1.) that the heart is usually more concerned in the business of giving than the head. If liberality is evinced, it will be the heart which prompts to it; if it is not evinced, it will be because the heart has some bad passions to gratify, and is under the influence of avarice, or selfishness, or some other improper attachment. Very often a man is convinced he ought to give liberally, but a narrow heart and a parsimonious spirit prevent it.

(2.) We should follow the dictates of the heart in giving. I mean that a man will usually give more correctly who follows the first promptings of his heart when an object of charity is presented, than be will if he takes much time to deliberate. The instinctive prompting of a benevolent heart is to give liberally. And the amount which should be given will usually be suggested to a man by the better feelings of his heart. But if he resolves to deliberate much, and if he suffers the heart to grow cold, and if he defers it, the pleadings of avarice will come in, or some object of attachment or plan of life will rise to view, or he will begin to compare himself with others, and he will give much less than he would have done if he had followed the first impulse of feeling. God implanted the benevolent feelings in the bosom that they should prompt us to do good; and he who acts most in accordance with them is most likely to do what he ought to do; and in general it is the safest and best rule for a man to give just what his heart prompts him to give when an object of charity is presented. Man at best is too selfish to be

likely to give too much, or to go beyond his means; and if in a few instances it should be done, more would be gained in value in the cultivation of benevolent feeling than would be lost in money. I know of no better rule on the subject, than to cultivate as much as possible the benevolent feelings, and then to throw open the soul to every proper appeal to our charity, and to give just according to the instinctive prompting of the heart.

(3.) Giving should be voluntary and cheerful. It should be from the heart. Yet there is much, very much that is not so, and there is, therefore, much benevolence that is spasmodic and spurious; that cannot be depended on, and that will not endure. No dependence can be placed on a man in regard to giving, who does not do it from the steady influences of a benevolent heart. But there is much obtained in the cause of benevolence that is produced by a kind of extortion. It is given because others give, and the man would be ashamed to give less titan they do. Or, it is given because he thinks his rank in life demands it, and he is prompted to it by pride and vanity. Or, he gives from respect to a pastor or a friend, or because he is warmly importuned to give; or because he is shut up to a kind of necessity to give, and must give or he would lose his character, and become an object of scorn and detestation. In all this there is nothing cheerful and voluntary; and there can be nothing in it acceptable to God. Nor can it be depended on permanently. The heart is not in it, and the man will evade the duty as soon as he can, and will soon find excuses for not giving at all. Not grudgingly. Greek, "Not of grief," (μηεκλυπης.) Not as if he were sorry to part with his money. Not as if he were constrained to do a thing that was extremely painful to him. Or of necessity. As if he were compelled to do it. Let him do it cheerfully. For God loveth a cheerful giver. And who does not? Valuable as any gift may be in itself, yet if it is forced and constrained; if it can be procured only after great importunity and persevering effort, who can esteem it as desirable? God desires the heart in every service. No service that is not cheerful and voluntary, none that does not arise from true love to him, can be acceptable in his sight. God loves it because it shows a heart like his own--a heart disposed to give cheerfully, and to do good on the largest scale possible; and

because it shows a heart attached from principle to his service and cause. The expression here has all the appearance of a proverb, and expressions similar to this occur often in the Scriptures. In an uninspired writer, also, this idea has been beautifully expanded. "In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance, and dedicate thy tithes with gladness. Give unto the Most High according as he hath enriched thee; and as thou hast gotten give with a cheerful eye. For the Lord recompenseth, and will give thee seven times as much."--Wisdom of the Son of Sirach, chap. xxxv. 9--11. In nothing, therefore, is it more important than to examine the motives by which we give to the objects of benevolence. However liberal may be our benefactions, yet God may see that there is no sincerity, and may hate the spirit with which it is done.

8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things,* may abound to every good work:

Verse 8. And God is able, etc. Do not suppose that by giving liberally you will be impoverished and reduced to want. You should rather confide in God, who is able to furnish you abundantly with what is needful for the supply of our necessities. Few persons are ever reduced to poverty by liberality. Perhaps in the whole circle of his acquaintance it would be difficult for an individual to point out one who has been impoverished or made the poorer in this way. Our selfishness is generally a sufficient guard against this; but it is also to be added, that the Divine blessing rests upon the liberal man, and that God keeps him from want. But in the mean time there are multitudes who are made poor by the want of liberality. They are parsimonious in giving, but they are extravagant in dress, and luxury, and in expenses for amusement or vice, and the consequence is poverty and want. "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty," Prov 11:24. The Divine blessing rests upon the liberal; and while every person should make a proper provision for his family, every one should give liberally, confiding in God that he will furnish the supplies for our future wants. Let this maxim be borne in mind, that no one is usually made the poorer by being liberal.

Here the apostle tacitly answers the common objection against liberal alms-giving; men are afraid they shall want themselves, what they give away to others. No, says the apostle, God is able to make all grace and mercy shown by you to abound the more towards you, that you, having a sufficiency of the comforts of this life, may abound in every good work of charity towards others.

As if he had said, Be not afraid to give, nor sparing in giving; for hereby you make God your debtor, and you will find him an all-sufficient paymaster; he will repay you both in temporals and spirituals. Thou shalt receive silver for thy brass, gold for thy silver, grace for thy gold, a treasure in haeven for thy dross on earth: nay, your gold and silver will multiply here, as seed sown when scattered with a wise and prudent hand."

The apostle here engages God's all-sufficiency for it; God will show his all-sufficiency, in giving you an all-sufficiency in all things; only we must remember, that we are to allow time; for Almighty God loves to be trusted upon his word: and those that will not give him credit, let them try if they can improve their estates better, or put them into safer hands.

We have no reason to distrust the goodness of God, and surely we have no reason to question his power; he is able to make all grace abound towards us, and abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and temporal good things. He can cause us to have a sufficiency in all things, to be content with what we have, to make up what we give, to be able to give yet more: as it is written (Ps 112:9) concerning the charitable man, He hath dispersed abroad. He hath given to the poor.

9 (as it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor:
his righteousness remaineth for ever.
10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:)

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower. This is an expression of an earnest wish. In the previous verses he had stated the promises, or had shown what we had a right to expect as a consequence of liberality, he here unites the expression of an earnest desire that they might experience this themselves. The allusion is to the act of sowing seed. The idea is, that when a man scatters seed in his field, God provides him with the means of sowing again, he not only gives him a harvest to supply, his wants, but he blesses him also in giving him the ability to sow again. Such was the benevolent wish of Paul. He desired not only that God would supply their returning wants, but he desired also that he would give them the ability to do good again; that he would furnish them the means of future benevolence, he acknowledges God as the source of all increase, and wishes that they may experience the results of such increase. Perhaps in this language there is an allusion to Isa 55:10; and the idea is, that it is God who furnishes by his providence the seed to the sower. In like manner he will furnish you the means of doing good.

11 being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

Being enriched in every thing, etc. In all respects your riches are conferred on you for this purpose. The design of the apostle is to state to them the true reason why wealth was bestowed. It was not for the purposes of luxury and self-gratification; not to be spent in sensual enjoyment, not for parade and display; it was that it might be distributed to others in such a way as to cause thanksgiving to God. At the same time, this implies the expression of an earnest wish on the part of Paul. He did not desire that they should be rich for their own gratification or pleasure; he desired it only as the means of their doing good to others. Right feeling will desire property only as the means of promoting happiness and producing thanksgiving to God. They who truly love their children and friends will wish them to be successful in acquiring wealth only that they may have the means and the disposition to alleviate misery, and promote the happiness of all around them. No one who has true benevolence will desire that any one in whom he feels an interest should be enriched for the purpose of living amidst luxury, and encompassing himself with the indulgences which wealth can

furnish. If a man has not a disposition to do good with money, it is not true benevolence, to desire that he may possess it.

Which causeth through us, etc. That is, we shall so distribute your alms as to cause thanksgiving to God. The result will be, that by our instrumentality thanks will be given to the great Source and Giver of all wealth. Property should always be so employed as to produce thanksgiving. If it is made to contribute to our own support and the support of our families, it should excite thanksgiving. If it is given to others, it should be so given, if it is possible, that the recipient should be more grateful to God than to us; should feel that though we may be the honoured instrument in distributing it, yet the true benefactor is God.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

But is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God. Will abound unto God in producing thanksgivings. The result will be that it will produce abundant thanksgiving in their hearts to God.

Still our apostle proceeds, by way of motive, farther to excite and stir up the Corinthians to this charitable contribution, from sundry considerations; namely,

1st. That it would be a very seasonable supply to the church's wants, who were at this time in great want of it: Now, the seasonableness of any mercy, adds greatly to the worth and value, to the pleasure and sweetness of it.

2ndly, That it would occasion repeated praises and incessant thanksgivings to God, for many persons, and upon many accounts.

3rdly, This distribution of yours, says the apostle, will be a convincing experiment, evidence and demonstration of your

professed subjection to the gospel, and that your faith is not barren and ineffectual. No better evidence of our real; subjection to the gospel of Christ, than a cheerful compliance, not with the cheap, but with the costly duties of Christianity.

Lastly, For your alms, you will engage a stock of prayers going for you: This will procure, yea, provoke them to pray night and day for you, nay, not only engage prayer for you, but it will also draw forth their love and fervent affection towards you, make them very desirous of your acquaintance, having received such an experiment of the grace of God that is in you.

13 while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men;*

For your professed subjection, etc. Literally, "For the obedien profession of the gospel." It does not imply merely that there was a of religion, but that there was a real subjection to the gospel v professed. This is not clearly expressed in our translation. T expressed it better, "Which praise God for your obedience in ackn the gospel of Christ." There was a real and sincere submission to of Christ, and that was manifested by their giving liberally to supply of others. The doctrine is, that one evidence of true subjection to one proof that our profession is sincere and genuine, is a will contribute to relieve the wants of the poor and afflicted frie Redeemer.

14 and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

And by their prayer for you. On the grammatical construction of this difficult verse, Doddridge and Bloomfield may be consulted. It is probably to be taken in connexion with 2Cor 9:12, and 2Cor 9:13 is a parenthesis. Thus interpreted, the sense will be, "The administration of this service 2Cor 9:12 will produce abundant thanks to God. It will also 2Cor 9:14 produce another effect. It will tend to excite the prayers of the saints for you, and thus produce important benefits to yourselves. They will earnestly desire your welfare; they will anxiously pray to be united in Christian

friendship with those who have been so signally endowed with the grace of God." The sentiment is, that charity should be shown to poor and afflicted Christians because it will lead them to pray for us and to desire our welfare. The prayers of the poorest Christian for us are worth more than all we usually bestow on them in charity; and he who has secured the pleadings of a child of God, however humble, in his behalf, has made a good use of his money. Which long after you. Who earnestly desire to see and know you. Who will sincerely desire your welfare, and who will thus be led to pray for you. For the exceeding grace of God in you. On account of the favour which God has shown to you; the strength and power of the Christian principle, manifesting itself in doing good to those whom you have never seen. The apostle supposes that the exercise of a charitable disposition is to be traced entirely to God. God is the Author of all grace; he alone excites in us a disposition to do good to others.

15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Thanks be unto God. Whitby supposes that this refers to the charitable disposition which they had manifested; and that the sense is, that God was to be adored for the liberal spirit which they were disposed, to manifest, and the aid which they were disposed to render to others. But this, it is believed, falls far below the design of the apostle. The reference is rather to the inexpressible gift which God had granted to them in bestowing his Son to die for them; and this is one of the most striking instances which occur in the New Testament, showing that the mind of Paul was full of this subject; and that wherever he began, he was sure to end with a reference to the Redeemer. The invaluable gift of a Saviour was so familiar to his mind, and he was so accustomed to dwell on that in his private thoughts, that the mind naturally and easily glanced on that whenever anything occurred that by the remotest allusion would suggest it. The idea is, "Your benefactions are indeed valuable; and for them, for the disposition which you have manifested, and for all the good which you will be enabled thus to accomplish, we are bound to give thanks to God. All this will excite the gratitude of those who shall be benefited. But how small is all this compared with the great gift which God has imparted in bestowing a Saviour! That is unspeakable. No words can express

it, no language convey an adequate description of the value of the gift, and of the mercies which result from it." His unspeakable gift. The word here used (ανεκδιηγητω) means, what cannot be related, unutterable. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The idea is, that no words can properly express the greatness of the gift thus bestowed on man. It is higher than the mind can conceive; higher than language can express. On this verse we may observe,

(1.) that the Saviour is a gift to men. So he is uniformly represented. See Jn 3:16, Gal 1:4, 2:20, Eph 1:22, 1Timm 2:6, Tit 2:14. Man had no claim on God. He could not compel him to provide a plan of salvation; and the whole arrangements the selection of the Saviour, the sending him into the world, and all the benefits resulting from his work, are all an undeserved gift to man.

(2.) This is a gift unspeakably great, whose value no language can express, no heart fully conceive. It is so because

(a.) of his own greatness and glory;

(b.) because of the inexpressible love which he evinced;

(c.) because of the unutterable sufferings which he endured;

(d.) because of the inexpressibly great benefits which result from his work. No language can do justice to this work in either of these respects; no heart in this world fully conceives the obligation which rests upon man in virtue of his work.

(3.) Thanks should be rendered to God for this. We owe him our highest praises for this. This appears,

(a.) because it was mere benevolence in God. We had no claim; we could not compel him to grant us a Saviour. The gift might have been withheld, and his throne would have been spotless. We owe

no thanks where we have a claim; where we deserve nothing, then he who benefits us has a claim on our thanks.

(b.) Because of the benefits which we have received from him. Who can express this? All our peace and hope; all our comfort and joy in this life; all our prospect of pardon and salvation; all the offers, of eternal glory are to be traced to him. Man has no prospect of being happy when he dies, but in virtue of the "unspeakable gift" of God. And when he thinks of his sins, which may now be freely pardoned; when he thinks of an agitated and troubled conscience, which may now be at peace; when he thinks of his soul, which may now be unspeakably and eternally happy; when he thinks of the hell from which he is delivered, and of the heaven to whose eternal glories he may now be raised up by the gift of a Saviour, his heart should overflow with gratitude, and the language should be continually on his lips and in his heart, "THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT." Every other mercy should seem small compared with this; and every manifestation of right feeling in the heart should lead us to contemplate the source of it, and to feel, as Paul did, that all is to be traced to the unspeakable gift of God. REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 9

(1.) This chapter, with the preceding, derives special importance from the fact that it contains the most extended discussion of the principles of Christian charity which occurs in the Bible. No one can doubt that it was intended by the Redeemer that his people should be distinguished for benevolence. It was important, therefore, that there should be some portion of the New Testament where the principles on which charity should be exercised, and the motives by which Christians should be induced to give, should be fully stated. Such a discussion we have in these chapters; and they therefore demand the profound and prayerful attention of all who love the Lord Jesus.

(2.) We have here a striking specimen of the manner in which the Bible is written. Instead of abstract statements and systematic

arrangement, the principles of religion are brought out in connexion with a case that actually occurred. But it follows that it is important to study attentively the Bible, and to be familiar with every part of it. In some part of the Scriptures, statements of the principles which should guide us in given circumstances will be found; and Christians should, therefore, be familiar with every part of the Bible.

(3.) These chapters are of special importance to the ministers of religion, and to all whose duty it is to press upon their fellow Christians the duty of giving liberally to the objects of benevolence. The principles on which it should be done are fully developed here. The motives which it is lawful to urge are urged here by Paul. It may be added, also, that the chapters are worthy of our profound study on account of the admirable tact and address which Paul evinces in inducing others to give. Well he knew human nature. Well he knew the motives which would influence others to give. And well he knew exactly how to shape his arguments and adapt his reasoning to the circumstances of those whom he addressed.

(4.) The summary of the motives presented in this chapter contains still the most important argument which can be urged to produce liberality. We cannot but admire the felicity of Paul in this address--a felicity not the result of craft and cunning, but resulting from his amiable feelings, and the love which he bore to the Corinthians and to the cause of benevolence. He reminds them of the high opinion which he had of them, and of the honourable mention which he had been induced to make of them, (2Cor 9:1,2;) he reminds them of the painful result to his own feelings and theirs if the collection should in any way fail, and it should appear that his confidence in them had been misplaced, (2Cor 9:3-5;) he refers them to the abundant reward which they might anticipate as the result of liberal benefactions, and of the fact that God loved those who gave cheerfully, (2Cor 9:6,7;) he reminds them of the abundant grace of God, who was able to supply all their wants and to give them the means to contribute liberally to meet the wants of the poor, (2Cor 9:8;) he reminds them of the joy which their

liberality would occasion, and of the abundant thanksgiving to God which would result from it, (2Cor 9:12,13;) and he refers them to the unspeakable gift of God, Jesus Christ as an example, and an argument, and as urging the highest claims in them, 2Cor 9:15. "Who," says Doddridge, "could withstand the force of such oratory?" No doubt it was effectual in that case, and it should be in all others.

(5.) May the motives here urged by the apostle be effectual to persuade us all to liberal efforts to do good! Assuredly there is no less occasion for Christian liberality now than there was in the time of Paul. There are still multitudes of the poor who need the kind and efficient aid of Christians. And the whole world now is a field in which Christian beneficence may be abundantly displayed, and every land may and should experience the benefits of the charity to which the gospel prompts, and which it enjoins. Happy are they who are influenced by the principles of the gospel to do good to all men! Happy they who have any opportunity, to illustrate the power of Christian principle in this; any ability to alleviate the wants of one sufferer, or to do anything in sending that gospel to benighted nations which alone can save the soul from eternal death!

(6.) Let us especially thank God for his unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ. Let us remember that to him we owe every opportunity to do good; that it was because he came that there is any possibility of benefiting a dying world; and that all who profess to love him are bound to imitate his example, and to show their sense of their obligation to God for giving a Saviour. How poor and worthless are all our gifts compared with the great gift of God; how slight our expressions of compassion, even at the best, for our fellow-men, compared with the compassion which he has shown for us ! When God has given his Son to die for us, what should we not be willing to give that we may show our gratitude, and that we may benefit a dying world!

2 Corinthians-10

Paul's Defense of His Ministry

REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 10

(1.) We should have no desire to show off any peculiar boldness or energy of character which we may have, 2Cor 10:1,2. We should greatly prefer to evince the gentleness and meekness of Christ. Such a character is in itself of far more value than one that is merely energetic and bold; that is rash, authoritative, and fond of display.

(2.) They who are officers in, the church should have no desire to administer discipline, 2Cor 10:2. Some men are so fond of power, that they always love to exercise it. They are willing to show it even by inflicting punishment on others; and, "dressed in a little brief authority," they are constantly seeking occasion to show their consequence; they magnify trifles; they are unwilling to pass by the slightest offences. The reason is not that they love the truth, but that they love their own consequence, and they seek every opportunity to show it.

(3.) All Christians and all Christian ministers are engaged in a warfare, 2Cor 10:3. They are at war with sin in their own hearts, and with sin wherever it exists on earth, and with the powers of darkness. With foes so numerous and so vigilant, they should not expect to live a life of ease or quietness. Peace, perfect peace, they may expect in heaven, not on earth. Here they are to fight the good fight of faith, and thus to lay hold on eternal life. It has been the common lot of all the children of God to maintain such a war, and shall we expect to be exempt?

Shall I be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize, And sailed through bloody seas ? Are there no foes for me to face-- Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, To help me on to God?"

(4.) The weapons of the Christian are not to be carnal, but are to be spiritual, 2Cor 10:4. He is not to make his way by the exhibition of human passion; in bloody strife; and by acting under the influence of ambitious feelings. Truth is his weapon; and armed with truth, and aided by the Spirit of God, he is to expect the victory. How different is the Christian warfare from others! How different is Christianity from other systems! Mohammed made his way by arms, and propagated his religion amidst the din of battle. But not so Christianity. That is to make its way by the silent, but mighty operation of truth; and there is not a rampart of idolatry and sin that is not yet to fall before it.

(5.) The Christian should be a man of a pure spirit, 2Cor 10:4. He is to make his way by the truth. He should therefore love the truth, and he should seek to diffuse it as far as possible. In propagating or defending it, he should be always mild, gentle, and kind. Truth is never advanced, and an adversary is never convinced, where passion is evinced; where there is a haughty manner, or a belligerent spirit. The apostolic precepts are full of wisdom--speaking the truth in love," Eph 4:15; "in MEEKNESS INSTRUCTING those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2Ti 2:25.

(6.) In his warfare, the Christian shall conquer, 2Cor 10:4,5. Against the truth of Christianity nothing has been able to stand. It made its way against the arrayed opposition of priests and emperors; against customs and laws; against inveterate habits and opinions; against all forms of sin, until it triumphed, and "the banners of the faith floated from the palaces of the Caesars." So it will be in all the conflicts with evil. Nothing is more certain than that the powers of darkness in this world are destined to fall before the power of Christian truth, and that every stronghold of sin shall yet be demolished. So it is in the conflicts of the individual Christian. He may struggle long and hard. He may have many foes to contend with. But he shall gain the victory. His triumph shall be

secure; and he shall yet be enabled to say, "I have fought a good fight-- henceforth there is laid up for me a CROWN"

"The saints in all this glorious war Shall conquer, though they die; They see the triumph from afar, And seize it with their eye."

(7.) Yet all should feel their dependence on God, 2Cor 10:4. It is only through him, and by his aid, that we have any power. Truth itself has no power except as it is attended and directed by God; and we should engage in our conflict feeling that none but God can give us the victory. If forsaken by him, we shall fall; if supported by him, we may face without fear a "frowning world," and all the powers of the "dark world of hell."

(8.) We should not judge by the outward appearance, 2Cor 10:7. It is the heart that determines the character; and by that God shall judge us, and by that we should judge ourselves.

(9.) We should aim to extend the gospel as far as possible, 2Cor 10:14-16. Paul aimed to go beyond the regions where the gospel had been preached, and to extend it to far-distant lands. So the "field" still "is the world." A large portion of the earth is yet unevangelized. Instead, therefore, of sitting down quietly in enjoyment and ease, let us, like him, earnestly desire to extend the influence of pure religion, and to bring distant nations to the saving knowledge of the truth.

(10.) Let us not boast in ourselves, 2Cor 10:17. Not of our talents, wealth, learning, or accomplishments let us glory. But let us glory that we have such a God as JEHOVAH. Let us glory that we have such a Redeemer as Jesus Christ. Let us glory that we have such a sanctifier as the Holy Spirit. Let us acknowledge God as the Source of all our blessings, and to him let us honestly consecrate our hearts and our lives.

(11.) What a reverse of judgment there will yet be on human character! 2Cor 10:17,18. How many now commend themselves

who will be condemned in the last day! How many men boast of their talents and morals, and even their religion, who will then be involved in indiscriminate condemnation with the most vile and worthless of the race! How anxious should we be, therefore, to secure the approbation of God! and whatever our fellow-men may say of us, how infinitely desirable is it to be commended then by our heavenly Father!

1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

By the meekness and gentleness of Christ. In view of the meekness and mildness of the Redeemer; or desiring to imitate his gentleness and kindness. Paul wished to imitate that. He did not wish to have occasion for severity, he desired at all times to imitate and to exhibit the gentle feelings of the Saviour. He had no pleasure in severity; and he did not desire to exhibit it.

2 but I beseech *you,* that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

I entreat you so to act that I may not have occasion to exercise the severity which I fear I shall be compelled to use against those who accuse me of being governed wholly by worldly motives and policy. That I may not be compelled to be bold and decisive in my measures by your improper conduct.

As if we were governed by the weak and corrupt principles of human nature. As if we had no higher motive than carnal and worldly policy. As if we were seeking our own advantage, and not the welfare of the world. The charge was, probably, that he was not governed by high and holy principles, but by the principles of mere worldly policy; that he was guided by personal interests, and by worldly views--by ambition, or the love of dominion, wealth, or popularity, and that he was destitute of every supernatural endowment, and every evidence of a Divine commission.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

For though we walk in the flesh. Though we are mortal, like other men; though we dwell, like them, in mortal bodies, and necessarily must devote some care to our temporal wants; and though, being in the flesh, we are conscious of imperfections and frailties like others. The sense is, that he did not claim exemption from the common wants and frailties of nature. The best of men are subject to these wants and frailties; the best of men are liable to err.

We do not war after the flesh. The warfare in which he was engaged was with sin, idolatry, and all forms of evil. He means that in conducting this he was not actuated by worldly views or policy, or by such ambitious and interested aims as controlled the men of this world. This refers primarily to the warfare in which Paul was himself engaged as an apostle; and the idea is, that he went forth as a soldier under the great Captain of his salvation, to fight his battles, and to make conquests for him. A similar allusion occurs in 2Ti 2:3,4. It is true, however, that not only all ministers, but all Christians, are engaged in a warfare; and it is equally true that they do not maintain their conflict "after the flesh," or on the principles which govern the men of this, world. The warfare of Christians relates to the following points:

(1.) it is a warfare with the corrupt desires and sensual propensities of the heart; with internal corruption and depravity; with the remaining unsubdued propensities of a fallen nature.

(2.) With the powers of darkness--the mighty spirits of evil that seek to destroy us. See Eph 6:11-17.

(3.) With sin in all forms; with idolatry, sensuality, corruption, intemperance, profaneness, wherever they may exist. The Christian is opposed to all these; and it is the aim and purpose of his life, as far as he may be able, to resist and subdue them. He is a soldier, enlisted under the banner of the Redeemer, to oppose and resist all forms of evil. But his warfare is not conducted on worldly principles. Mohammed propagated his religion with the sword; and the men of this world seek for victory by arms and violence.

The Christian looks for his conquests only by the force and power of truth, and by the agency of the Spirit of God.

4 (for the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;)

But mighty through God. Marg., "to" They are rendered mighty or powerful by the agency of God. They depend on him for their efficacy. Paul has not here specified the weapons on which he relied; but he had before specified them, 2Cor 6:6,7, so that there was no danger of mistake. The weapons were such as were furnished by truth and righteousness, and these were rendered mighty by the attending agency of God. The sense is, that God is the Author of the doctrines which we preach, and that he attends them with the agency of his Spirit, and accompanies them to the hearts of men. It is important for all ministers to feel that their weapons are mighty ONLY through God. Conquerors and earthly warriors go into battle depending on the might of their own arm, and on the wisdom and skill which plans the battle.

The Christian goes on his warfare, feeling that however well adapted the truths which he holds are to accomplish great purposes, and however wisely his plans are formed, yet that the efficacy of all depends on the agency of God. He has no hope of victory but in God. And if God does not attend him, he is sure of inevitable defeat. To the pulling down of strong holds. The word here rendered "strongholds" (οχυρωμα) means, properly, a fastness, fortress, or strong fortification. It is here beautifully used to denote the various obstacles resembling a fortress which exist, and which are designed and adapted to oppose the truth and the triumph of the Christian's cause. All those obstacles are strongly fortified. The sins of his heart are fortified by long indulgence, and by the hold which they have on his soul. The wickedness of the world which he opposes is strongly fortified by the fact that it has seized on strong human passions; that one point strengthens another; that great numbers are united. The idolatry of the world was strongly fortified by prejudice, and long establishment, and the protection of laws, and the power of the priesthood; and the opinions of the world are entrenched behind false philosophy and the power of subtle argumentation. The whole world is fortified against

Christianity; and the nations of the earth have been engaged in little else than in raising and strengthening such strongholds for the space of six thousand years. The Christian religion goes forth against all the combined and concentrated powers of resistance of the whole world; and the warfare is to be waged against every strongly fortified place of error and of sin. These strong fortifications of error and of sin are to be battered down and laid in ruins by our spiritual weapons.

5 casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Verse 5. Casting down imaginations. Marg., reasonings. The word is probably used here in the sense of device, and refers to all the plans of a wicked world--the various systems of false philosophy, and the reasonings of the enemies of the gospel. The various systems of false philosophy were so entrenched, that they might be called the stronghold of the enemies of God. The foes of Christianity pretend to a great deal of reason, and rely on that in resisting the gospel. And every high thing, etc. Every exalted opinion respecting the dignity and purity of bunyan nature; all the pride of the human heart and of the understanding. All this is opposed to the knowledge of God, and all exalts itself into a vain self-confidence. Men entertain vain and unfounded opinions respecting their own excellency, and they feel that they do not need the provisions of the gospel, and are unwilling to submit to God. And bringing into captivity, etc. The figure here is evidently taken from military conquests. The idea is, that all the strongholds of heathenism, and pride, and sin, would be demolished; and that when this was done, like throwing down the walls of a city, or making a breach, all the plans and purposes of the soul, the reason, the imagination, and all the powers of the mind, would be subdued or led in triumph by the gospel, like the inhabitants of a captured city. Christ was the great Captain in this warfare. In his name the battle was waged, and by his power the victory was won. The captives were made for him, and under his authority; and all were to be subject to his control. Every power of thought in the heathen

world; all the systems of philosophy, and all forms of opinion among men; all the purposes of the soul; all the powers of reason, memory, judgment, fancy, in an individual, were all to come under the laws of Christ. All doctrines were to be in accordance with his will; philosophy should no longer control them, but they should be subject to the will of Christ. All the plans of life should be controlled by the will of Christ, and formed and executed under his control--as captives are led by a conqueror. All the emotions and feelings of the heart should be controlled by him, and led by him as a captive is led by a victor. The sense is, that it was the aim and purpose of Paul to accomplish this, and that it would certainly be done. The strongholds of philosophy, heathenism, and sin should be demolished, and all the opinions, plans, and purposes of the world should become subject to the all-conquering Redeemer.

6 and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

And having in a readiness, etc. I am ready to punish all disobedience, notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary. 2Cor 10:1, 2Cor 10:2. Clothed as I am with this power; aiming to subdue all things to Christ, though the weapons of my warfare are not carnal, and though I am modest or timid 2Cor 10:1 when I am with you, I am prepared to take any measures of severity required by my apostolic, office, in order that I may inflict deserved punishment on those who have violated the laws of Christ. The design of this is to meet the objection of his enemies, that he would not dare to execute his threatenings. When your obedience is fulfilled. Doddridge renders this, "Now your obedience is fulfilled, and the sounder part of your church restored to due order and submission." The idea seems to be, that Paul was ready to inflict discipline when the church had shown a readiness to obey his laws, and to do its own duty--delicately intimating that the reason why it was not done was the want of entire promptness in the church itself, and that it could not be done on any offender as long as the church itself was not prepared to sustain him. The church was to discountenance the enemies of the Redeemer; to show an entire readiness to sustain the apostle, and to unite with him in the effort to maintain the discipline of Christ's house.

That is, having in a readiness that which will revenge all disobedience upon refractory and stubborn offenders (namely, the power of excommunication) and both authority and ability to inflict such corporal punishment as he judged fit, by delivering them unto Satan; which power he resolved to make use of, when the greater part of them were, by their obedience to his admonitions, reduced to good order again.

Where note, That the apostle defers the excommunicating and censuring the offenders amongst them, they being very many, till he had, by exhortaiton and argument, brought over as many as possibly he could unto obedience. There is no place for severe remedies, when the diseases have taken and infected the whole church: the offenders in the church, when very many, cannot be easily punished; for when great multitudes are concerned, they are like to draw great multitudes after them.

The apostle's practice in this case here, is a good pattern for our imitation, not to be too forward, rash, and hasty in denouncing the censures of the church, but to proceed prudently and gradually: first using all fair means and gentle methods, and waiting with all patience for the reducing them to their duty who will be reduced, and then revenging the glory and honour of God only upon such as will by no means be reclaimed or reduced.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's.

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? /KJV/ This is addressed evidently to the members of the church, and with reference to the claims which had been set up by the false teachers. There can be no doubt that they valued themselves on their external advantages, and laid claim to peculiar honour in the work of the ministry, because they were superior in personal appearance, in rank, manners, or eloquence to Paul. Paul reproves them for thus judging, and assures them that this was not a proper

criterion by which to determine on qualifications for the apostolic office. Such things were highly valued among the Greeks, and a considerable part of the effort of Paul in these letters is to show that these things constitute no evidence that those who possessed them were sent from God. If any man trust to himself, etc. This refers to the false teachers who laid claims to be the followers of Christ by way of eminence. Whoever these teachers were, it is evident that they claimed to be on the side of Christ, and to be appointed by him. They were probably Jews, and they boasted of their talents and eloquence, and possibly that they had seen the Saviour. The phrase, "trust to himself," seems to imply that they relied on some special merit of their own, or some special advantage which they had.-- Bloomfield. It may have been that they were of the same tribe that he was, or that they had seen him, or that they confided in their own talents or endowments as proof that they had been sent by him. It is not an uncommon thing for men. to have such confidence in their own gifts, and particularly in a power of fluent speaking, as to suppose that this is a sufficient evidence that they are sent to preach the gospel. Let him of himself think this again. Since he relies so much on himself; since he has such confidence in his own powers, let him look at the evidence that I also am of Christ. That, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's. That I have given as much evidence that I am commissioned by Christ as they can produce. It may be of a different kind. It is not in eloquence, and rank, and the gift of a rapid and ready elocution, but it may be superior to what they are able to produce. Probably Paul refers here to the fact that he had seen the Lord Jesus, and that he had been directly commissioned by him. The sense is, that no one could produce more proofs of being called to the ministry than he could.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

9 that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

10 For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

Are weighty and powerful. Tindal renders this, "sore and strong." The Greek is, "heavy and strong," (βαρειαικαισχυραι). The sense

is, that his letters were energetic and powerful. They abounded with strong argument, manly appeals, and impressive reproof. This even his enemies were compelled to admit, and this no one can deny who ever read them. Paul's letters comprise a considerable portion of the New Testament; and some of the most important doctrines of the New Testament are those which are advocated and enforced by him; and his letters have done more to give shape to the theological doctrines of the Christian world than any other cause whatever. He wrote fourteen epistles to churches and individuals on various occasions and on a great variety of topics; and his letters soon rose into very high repute among even the inspired ministers of the New Testament, 2Pet 3:15,16, and were regarded as inculcating the most important doctrines of religion. The general characteristics of Paul's letters are:

(1.) They are strongly argumentative. See especially the epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews.

(2.) They are distinguished for boldness and rigour of style.

(3.) They are written under great energy of feeling and of thought--a rapid and impetuous torrent that bears him forcibly along.

(4.) They abound more than most other writings in parentheses, and the sentences are often involved and obscure.

(5.) They often evince rapid transitions and departures from the regular current of thought. A thought strikes him suddenly, and he pauses to illustrate it, and dwells upon it long, before he returns to the main subject. The consequence is, that it is often difficult to follow him.

(6.) They are powerful in reproof--abounding with strokes of great boldness of denunciation, and also with specimens of most withering sarcasm and most delicate irony.

(7.) They abound in expressions of great tenderness and pathos. Nowhere can be found expressions of a heart more tender and affectionate than in the writings of Paul.

(8.) They dwell much on great and profound doctrines, and on the application of the principles of Christianity to the various duties of life.

(9.) They abound with references to the Saviour. He illustrates everything by his life, his example, his death, his resurrection. It is not wonderful that letters composed on such subjects and in such a manner, by an inspired man, produced a deep impression on the Christian world; nor that they should be regarded now as among the most important and valuable portions of the Bible. Take away Paul's letters, and what a chasm would be made in the New Testament! What a chasm in the religious opinions and in the consolations of the Christian world!

And his speech contemptible. To be despised. Some suppose that he had an impediment in his speech. But conjecture here is vain and useless. We are to remember that this is a charge made by his adversaries, and that it was made by the fastidious Greeks, who professed to be great admirers of eloquence, but who in his time confided much more in the mere art of the rhetorician than in the power of thought, and in energetic appeals to the reason and conscience of men. Judged by their standard, it may be that Paul had not the graces in voice or manner, or in the knowledge of the Greek language, which they esteemed necessary in a finished orator; but judged by his power of thought, and his bold and manly defence of truth, and his energy of character and manner, and his power of impressing truth on mankind, he deserves, doubtless, to be ranked among the first orators of antiquity. No man has left the impress of his own mind on more other minds than Paul.

11 Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

But they measuring themselves by themselves. Whitby and Clarke suppose that this means that they compared themselves with each other; and that they made the false apostles particularly their standard. Doddridge, Grotius, Bloomfield, and some others suppose the sense to be, that they made themselves the standard of excellence. They looked continually on their own accomplishments, and did not look at the excellences of others. They thus formed a disproportionate opinion of themselves, and undervalued all others. Paul says that he had not boldness enough for that. It required a moral courage to which he could lay no claim. Horace (B. i. Ep. 7, 98) has an expression similar to this:

Metri se quemque suo modulo ac pede, veturn est.

The sense of Paul is, that they made themselves the standard of excellence; that they were satisfied with their own attainments; and that they overlooked the superior excellence and attainments of others. This is a graphic description of pride and self-complacency; and alas! it is what is often exhibited. How many there are, and it is to be feared even among professing Christians, who have no other standard of excellence than themselves. Their views are the standard of orthodoxy; their modes of worship are the standard of the proper manner of devotion; their habits and customs are in their own estimation perfect; and their own characters are the models of excellence, and they see little or no excellence in those who differ from them. They look on themselves as the true measure of orthodoxy, humility, zeal, and piety; and they condemn all others, however excellent they may be, who differ from them. And comparing themselves, etc. Or rather comparing themselves with themselves. Themselves they make to be the standard, and they judge of everything by that. Are not wise. Are stupid and foolish. Because

(1.) they had no such excellence as to make themselves the standard.

(2.) Because this was an indication of pride.

(3.) Because it made them blind to the excellences of others. It was to be presumed that others had endowments not inferior to theirs.

(4.) Because the requirements of God, and the character of the Redeemer, were the proper standard of conduct. Nothing is a more certain indication of folly than for a man to make himself the standard of excellence. Such an individual must be blind to his own real character; and the only thing certain about his attainments is that he is inflated with pride. And yet how common! How self-satisfied are most persons! How pleased with their own character and attainments! How grieved at any comparison which is made with others implying their inferiority! How prone to undervalue all others simply because they differ from them! The margin renders this, "understand it not," that is, they do not understand their own character or their inferiority.

13 But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

But we will not boast of things without our measure. Tindal renders this, "But we will not rejoice above measure." There is great obscurity in the language here, arising from its brevity. But the general idea seems to be plain. Paul says that he had not boldness as they had to boast of things wholly beyond his proper rule and his actual attainments and influence: and, especially, that he was not disposed to enter into other men's labours; or to boast of things that had been done by the mere influence of his name, and beyond the proper limits of his personal exertions. He made no boast of having done anything where he had not been himself on the ground and laboured assiduously to secure the object. They, it is not improbable, had boasted of what had been done in Corinth as though it were really their work, though it had been

done by the apostle himself. Nay more, it is probable that they boasted of what had been done by the mere influence of their name. Occupying a central position, they supposed that their reputation had gone abroad,and that the mere influence of their reputation had had an important effect. Not so with Paul. He made no boast of anything but what God had enabled him to do by his evangelical labours, and by personal exertions. He entered into no other men's labours, and claimed nothing that others had done as his own. He was not bold enough for that.

But according to the measure of the rule, etc. Marg., or line. The word rendered "rule," (κανων, whence our English word canon,) means properly a reed, rod, or staff employed to keep anything stiff, erect, asunder, (Hom. Iliad, 8, 103 ;) then a measuring rod or line; then any standard or rule--its usual meaning in the New Testament, as, e.g., of life and doctrine, Gal 6:16; Php 3:16.--Robinson's Lex. Here it means the limit, boundary line, or sphere of action assigned to any one. Paul means to say that God had appropriated a certain line or boundary as the proper limit of his sphere of action; that his appropriate sphere extended to them; that in going to them, though they were far distant from the field of his early labours, he had confined himself within the proper limits assigned him by God; and that in boasting of his labours among them he was not boasting of anything which did not properly fall within the sphere of labour assigned to him. The meaning is, that Paul was especially careful not to boast of anything beyond his proper bounds. Which God hath distributed to us. Which, in assigning our respective fields of labour, God has assigned unto me and my fellow-labourers. The Greek word here rendered "distributed" (εμερισεν) means, properly, to measure; and the sense is, that God had measured out or apportioned their respective fields of labour; that by his providence he had assigned to each one his proper sphere; and that, in the distribution, Corinth had fallen to the lot of Paul. In going there he had kept within the proper limits; in boasting of his labours and success there he did not boast of what did not belong to him. A measure to reach even unto you. The sense is, "The limits assigned me include you, and I may therefore justly boast of what I have done among you as

within my proper field of labour." Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, Acts 26:17,18; and the whole country of Greece, therefore, he regarded as falling within the limits assigned to him. No one therefore, could blame him for going there as if he was an intruder; no one assert that he had gone beyond the proper bounds.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure,* as though we reached not unto you; for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ:

15 not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is,* of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

Not boasting of things without our measure. There is here probably an allusion to the false teachers at Corinth. They had come after Paul had been there and had entered into his labours. When he had founded the church; when he had endured trials and persecutions in order to reach Corinth; when he had laboured there for a year and a half, Acts 18:11, they came and entered the quiet and easy field, formed parties, and claimed the field as their own. Paul says that he had not courage to do that. 2Cor 10:12. That required a species of boldness to which he could lay no claim; and he did not assume honour to himself like that. That is, of other men's labours. Not intruding into churches which we did not establish, and claiming the right to direct their affairs, and to exclude the founders from all proper honours and all influence, and endeavouring to alienate the affections of Christians from their spiritual father and guide.

That we shall be enlarged. Marg., Magnified in you. Bloomfield supposes that this means, "to gain fame and glory by you;" that is, as the teacher may justly by his pupils. So Robinson renders it, "to make great, to praise." But to me the idea seems to be, that he wished them to enlarge or magnify him by introducing him to larger fields of action; by giving him a wider sphere of labour. It was not: that he wished to be magnified by obtaining a wider reputation, not as a matter of praise or ambition, but he wished to have his work and success greatly enlarged. This he hoped to be enabled to do partly by the aid of the church at Corinth. When

they became able to manage their own affairs; when his time was not demanded to superintend them; when their faith became so strong that his presence was not needed; and when they should assist him in his preparations for travel, then he would enter on his wider field of labour. He had no intention of sitting down in ease, as the false teachers in Corinth seem disposed to have done.

16 to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

But he that glorieth, he that boasts. Whatever may be the occasion of his boasting, whether in planting churches or in watering them; whether in his purposes, plans, toils, or success. Paul himself did not deem it improper on some occasions to boast, 2Cor 11:16, 12:5, but it was not of his own power, attainments, or righteousness, he was disposed to trace all to the Lord, and to regard him as the Source of all blessing and all success.

Let him glory in the Lord. In this serious and weighty admonition, Paul designs, doubtless, to express the manner in which he was accustomed to glory, and to furnish an admonition to the Corinthians. In the previous part of the chapter there had been some severe irony. He closes the chapter with the utmost seriousness and solemnity of manner, in order to show on his part that he was not disposed to glory in his own attainments, and to admonish them not to boast of theirs. If they had anything valuable, they should regard the Lord as the Author of it. In this admonition it is probable that Paul had in his eye the passage in Jer 9:23,24, though he has not expressly quoted it: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." The sentiment is a favourite one with Paul, as it should be with all Christians. 1Cor 1:31. On this verse we may here remark, I. That nothing is more common than for men to boast or glory. Little as they really have in which to glory, yet there is no one probably who has not something of which he is proud, and of which he is disposed to boast. It would

be difficult or impossible to find a person who had not something on which he prided himself; something in which he esteemed himself superior to others. II The things of which they boast are very various.

(1.) Many are proud of their personal beauty--many, too, who would be unwilling to be thought proud of it.

(2.) Many glory in their accomplishments; or, what is more likely, in the accomplishments of their children.

(3.) Many glory in their talents; talents for anything, valuable or not, in. which they suppose they surpass others. They glory in their talent for eloquence, or science, or gaining knowledge; or in their talent for gaining property or keeping it; for their skill in their professions or callings; for their ability to run, to leap, or to practise even any trick or sleight of hand. There is nothing so worthless that it does not constitute a subject of glorying, provided it be ours. If it belong to others, it may be valueless.

(4.) Many glory in their property; in fine houses, extended plantations, or in the reputation of being rich; or in gorgeous dress, equipage, and furniture. In short, there is nothing which men possess in which they are not prone to glory. Forgetful of God the giver; forgetful that all may be soon taken from them, or that they soon must leave all; forgetful that none of these things can constitute a distinction in the grave or beyond, they boast as if these things were to remain for ever, and as if they had been acquired independently of God. How prone is the man of talents to forget that God has given him his intellect, and that for its proper use he must give account! How prone is the rich man to forget that he must die! How prone the gay and the beautiful to forget that they will lie undistinguished in the grave; and that death will consume them as soon as the most vile and worthless of the species! III. If we glory, it should be in the Lord. We should ascribe our talents, wealth, health, strength, salvation to him. We should rejoice

(a.) that we have such a Lord--so glorious, so full of mercy, so powerful, so worthy of confidence and love.

(b.) We should rejoice in our endowments and possessions as his gift. We should rejoice that we may come and lay everything at his feet; and whatever may be our rank, or talents, or learning, we should rejoice that we may come with the humblest child of poverty, and sorrow, and want, and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake," Ps 115:1. 1Cor 1:31.

Verse 18. For not he who commendeth himself, etc. Not he who boasts of his talents and endowments. He is not to be judged by the estimate which he shah place on himself, but by the estimate which God shall form and express. Is approved. By God. It is no evidence that we shall be saved that we are prone to commend ourselves. See Rom 12:10. But whom the Lord commendeth. Rom 2:29. The idea here is, that men are to be approved or rejected by God. He is to pass judgment on them, and that judgment is to be in accordance with his estimate of their character, and not according to their own. If he approves them, they will be saved; if he does not, vain will be all their empty boasting--vain all their reliance on their wealth, eloquence, learning, or earthly honours. None will save them from condemnation; not all these things can purchase for them eternal life. Paul thus seriously shows that we should be mainly anxious to obtain the Divine favour. It should be the grand aim and purpose of our life; and we should repress all disposition for vain-glory or self-confidence; all reliance on our talents, attainments, or accomplishments for salvation. OUR BOAST IS THAT WE HAVE SUCH A REDEEMER; AND IN THAT WE ALL MAY GLORY.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

2 Corinthians-11

1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.

For I am jealous over you. This verse expresses the reason why he was disposed to speak of his attainments, and of what he dad done. It was because he loved them, and because he feared that they were in danger of being seduced from the simplicity of the gospel. The phrase, "I am jealous," (ζηλω,) means, properly, I ardently love you; I am full of tender attachment to you. The word was usual among the Greeks to denote an ardent affection of any kind, (from ζεω, to boil, to be fervid or fervent.) The precise meaning is to be determined by the connexion. 1Cor 12:31. The word may denote the jealousy which is felt by an apprehension of departure from fidelity on the part of those whom we love; or it may denote a fervid and glowing attachment. The meaning here probably is, that Paul had a strong attachment to them.

With godly jealousy. Greek, "with the zeal of God," (θεουζηλω) That is, with very great or vehement zeal--in accordance with the Hebrew custom when the name God is used to denote anything signally great, as the phrase "mountains of God," meaning very elevated or lofty mountains. The mention of this ardent attachment suggested what follows. His mind reverted to the tenderness of the marriage relation, and to the possibility that in that relation the affections might be estranged. He makes use of this figure, therefore, to apprize them of the change which he apprehended. For I have espoused you, etc. The word here used αρμοζω means, properly, to adapt, to fit, to join together. Hence to join in wedlock, to marry. Here it means to marry to another; and the idea is, that Paul had been the agent employed in forming

a connexion, similar to the marriage connexion, between them and the Saviour.

The allusion here is not certain. It may refer to the custom which prevailed when friends made and procured the marriage for the bridegroom; or it may refer to some custom like that which prevailed among the Lacedemonians, where persons were employed to form the lives and manners of virgins, and prepare them for the duties of the married life. The sense is clear. Paul claims that it was by his instrumentality that they had been united to the Redeemer. Under him they had been brought into a relation to the Saviour, similar to that sustained by the bride to her husband; and he felt all the interest in them which naturally grew out of that fact, and from a desire to present them blameless to the pure Redeemer. The relation of the church to Christ is often represented by marriage. See Eph 5:23-33, Rev 19:7, 21:9. To one husband.

To the Redeemer. That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. The allusion here, according to Doddridge, is to the custom among the Greeks "of having an officer whose business it was to educate and form young women, especially those of rank and figure, designed for marriage, and then to present them to those who were to be their husbands; and if this officer through negligence permitted them to be corrupted between the espousals and the consummation of the marriage, great blame would fall upon him." Such a responsibility Paul felt. So anxious was he for the entire purity of that church which was to constitute "the bride, the Lamb's wife;" so anxious that all who were connected with that church should be presented pure in heaven.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Verse 3. But I fear. Paul had just compared the church to a virgin, soon to be presented as a bride to the Redeemer. The mention of this seems to have suggested to him the fact, that the first woman

was deceived and led astray by the tempter, and that the same thing might occur in regard to the church which he was so desirous should be preserved pure. The grounds of his fear were

(1.) that Satan had seduced the first woman, thus demonstrating that the most holy were in danger of being led astray by temptation; and

(2.) that special efforts were made to seduce them from the faith. The persuasive arts of the false teachers, the power of philosophy, and the attractive and corrupting influences of the world, he had reason to suppose, might be employed to seduce them from simple attachment to Christ. Lest by any means. Lest somehow, (μηπως.) It is implied that many means would be used; that all arts would be tried; and that in some way, which perhaps they little suspected, these arts would be successful, unless they were constantly put on their guard. As the serpent beguiled Eve. See Gen 3:1-11. The word serpent here refers doubtless to Satan, who was the agent by whom Eve was beguiled. See Jn 8:44, 1Jn 3:8, Rev 12:9, 20:2. Paul did not mean that they were in danger of being corrupted in the same way, but that similar efforts would be made to seduce them. Satan adapts his temptations to the character and circumstances of the tempted. He varies them from age to age, and applies them in such a way as best to secure his object. Hence all should be on their guard. No one knows the mode in which he will approach him, but all may know that he will approach them in some way. Through his subtilty. See Gen 3:1. By his craft, art, wiles, (εντηπανουργια.) The word implies that shrewdness, cunning, craft was employed. A tempter always employs cunning and art to accomplish his object. The precise mode in which Satan accomplished his object is not certainly known. Perhaps the cunning consisted in assuming an attractive form--a fascinating manner--a manner fitted to charm; perhaps in the idea that the eating of the forbidden fruit had endowed a serpent with the power of reason and speech above all other animals, and that it might be expected to produce a similar transformation in Eve. At all events, there were false pretences and appearances; and such Paul apprehended would be employed

by the false teachers to seduce and allure them. 2Cor 11:13,14. So your minds should be corrupted. So your thoughts should be perverted. So your hearts should be alienated. The mind is corrupted when the affections are alienated from the proper object, and when the soul is filled with unholy plans, and purposes, and desires. From the simplicity that is in Christ.

(1.) From simple and single-hearted devotedness to him--from pure and unmixed attachment to him. The fear was that their affections would be fixed on other objects, and that the singleness and unity of their devotedness to him would be destroyed.

(2.) From his pure doctrines. By the admixture of philosophy, by the opinions of the world, there was danger that their minds should be turned away from their hold on the simple truths which Christ had taught.

(3.) From that simplicity of mind and heart; that, childlike candour and docility; that freedom from all guile, dishonesty, and deception, which so eminently characterized the Redeemer. Christ had a single.aim; was free from all guile; was purely honest; never made use of any improper arts; never resorted to false appearances, and never deceived. His followers should, in like manner, be artless and guileless. There should be no mere cunning, no trick, no craft in advancing their purposes. There should be nothing but honesty and truth in all that they say. Paul was afraid that they would lose this beautiful simplicity and artlessness of character and manner; and that they would insensibly be led to adopt the maxims of mere cunning, of policy, of expediency, of seductive arts, which prevailed so much in the world--a danger which was imminent among the shrewd and cunning people of Greece, but which is confined to no time and no place. Christians should be more guileless than even children are; as pure and free from trick, and from art and cunning, as was the Redeemer himself.

(4.) From the simplicity in worship which the Lord Jesus commended and required. The worship which the Redeemer designed to establish was simple, unostentatious, and pure -- strongly in contrast with the gorgeousness and corruption of the pagan worship, and even with the imposing splendour of the Jewish temple-service. He intended that it should be adapted to all lands, and such as could be offered by all classes of men--a pure worship, claiming first the homage of the heart, and then such simple external expressions as should best exhibit the homage of the heart. How easily might this be corrupted! What temptations were there to attempt to corrupt it by those who had been accustomed to the magnificence of the temple-service, and who would suppose that the religion of the Messiah could not be less gorgeous than that which was designed to shadow forth his coming; and by those who had been accustomed to the splendid rites of the pagan worship, and who would suppose that the true religion ought not to be less costly and splendid than the false religion had been! If so much expense had been lavished on false religions, how natural to suppose that equal costliness at least should be bestowed on the true religion! Accordingly, the history of the church, for a considerable part of its existence, has been little more than a record of the various forms in which the simple worship, instituted by the Redeemer, has been corrupted, until all that was gorgeous in pagan ceremonies, and splendid in the Jewish ritual, has been introduced as a part of Christian worship.

(5.) From simplicity in dress, and manner in living. The Redeemer's dress was simple. His manner of living was simple. His requirements demand great simplicity and plainness of apparel and manner of life, 1Pet 3:3-6, 1Timm 2:9,10. Yet how much proneness is there at all times to depart from this! What a besetting sin has it been, in all ages, to the church of Christ! And how much pains should there be that the very simplicity that is in Christ should be observed by all who bear the Christian name!

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

For if he that cometh, etc. There is much difficulty in this verse in ascertaining the true sense, and expositors have been greatly perplexed and divided in opinion, especially with regard to the true sense of the last clause, "ye might well bear with him." It is difficult to ascertain whether Paul meant to speak ironically or seriously; and different views will prevail, as different views are taken of the design. If it be supposed that he meant to speak seriously, the sense will be, "If the false teacher could recommend a better Saviour than I have done, or a Spirit better able to sanctify and save, then there would be a propriety in your receiving him, and tolerating his doctrines." If the former, then the sense will be, "You cannot well bear with me; but if a man comes among you preaching a false Saviour, and a false Spirit, and a false doctrine, then you bear with him without any difficulty."

Another interpretation still has been proposed, by supposing that the word "me" is to be supplied at the close of the verse instead of "him;" and then the sense would be, "If you receive so readily one who preaches another gospel, one who comes with far less evidence that he is sent from God than I have, and if you show yourselves thus ready to fall in with any kind of teaching that may be brought to you, you might at least bear with me also." Amidst this variety it is not easy to ascertain the true sense. To me it seems probable, however, that Paul spoke seriously, and that our translation has expressed the true sense. The main idea doubtless is, that Paul felt that there was danger that they would be corrupted. If they could bring a better gospel, a more perfect system, and proclaim a more perfect Saviour, there would be no such change. But that could not be expected. It could not be done. If, therefore, they preached any other Saviour or any other gospel--if they departed from the truths which he had taught them--it would be for the worse. It could not be otherwise. The Saviour whom he preached was perfect, and was able to save. The Spirit which he preached was perfect, and able to sanctify. The gospel which he preached was perfect, and there was no hope that it could be improved. Any change must be for the worse; and as the false teachers varied from his instructions, there was every reason to apprehend that their minds would be corrupted from the

simplicity that was in Christ. The principal idea therefore is, that the gospel which he preached was as perfect as it could be, and that any change would be for the worse. No doctrine which others brought could be recommended because it was better. By the phrase "he that cometh" is meant, doubtless, the false teacher in Corinth. Preacheth another Jesus. Proclaims one who is more worthy of your love, and more able to save. If he that comes among you and claims your affections can point out another Christ who is more worthy of your confidence, then I admit that you do well to receive him. It is implied here that this could not be done. The Lord Jesus, in his character and work, is perfect. No Saviour superior to him has been provided; none but he is necessary. Whom we have not preached. Let them show, if they can, that they have any Saviour to tell of whom we have not preached. We have given all the evidence that we are sent by God, and have laid all the claim to your confidence, which they can do for having made known the Saviour. They, with all their pretensions, have no Saviour to tell you of with whom we have not already made you acquainted. They have no claims therefore, from this quarter, which we have not also. Or if ye receive another spirit, etc. If they can preach to you another Sanctifier and Comforter; or if under their ministry you have received higher proofs of the power of the Spirit in performing miracles, in the gift of tongues, in renewing sinners, and in comforting your hearts. The idea is, that Paul had proclaimed the existence and agency of the same Holy Spirit which they did; that his preaching had been attended with as striking proofs of the presence and power of that Spirit; that he had all the evidence of a Divine commission from such an influence attending his labours which they could possibly have. They could reveal no spirit better able to sanctify and save; none who had more power than the Holy Spirit which they had received under the preaching of Paul; and there was therefore no reason why they should be "corrupted" or seduced from the simple doctrines which they had received, and follow others. Or another gospel, etc. A gospel more worthy of your acceptance --one more free, more full, more rich in promises; one that revealed a better plan of salvation, or that was more full of comfort and peace. Ye might well bear with him.

Marg.,"with me." The word "him" is not in the Greek; but is probably to be supplied. The sense is, There would then be some excuse for your conduct. There would be some reason why you should welcome such teachers; But if this cannot be done; if they can preach no other and no better gospel and Saviour than I have done, then there is no excuse. There is no reason why you should follow such teachers, and forsake those who were your earliest guides in religion. Let us never forsake the gospel which we have, till we are sure we can get a better. Let us adhere to the simple doctrines of the New Testament, until some one can furnish better and clearer doctrines. Let us follow the rules of Christ in our opinions and our conduct--our plans, our mode of worship, our dress, and our amusements, engagements, and company--until we can certainly ascertain that there are better rules. A man is foolish for making any change until he has evidence that he is likely to better himself: and it remains yet to be proved that any one has ever bettered himself or his family by forsaking the simple doctrines of the Bible, and embracing a philosophical speculation; by forsaking the scriptural views of the Saviour as the incarnate God, and embracing the views which represent him as a mere man; by forsaking the simple and plain rules of Christ about our manner of life, our dress, and our words and actions, and embracing those which are recommended by mere fashion and by the customs of a gay world.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

7 Have I committed an offense in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them,* to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself.*

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

As the truth of Christ is in me. That is, I solemnly declare this as in the presence of Christ. As I am a Christian man; as I feel bound

to declare the truth; and as I must answer to Christ. It is a solemn form of asseveration, equal to an oath. Rom 9:1. Comp. 1Timm 2:7. No man shall stop me, etc. Marg., this boasting shall not be stopped in me. Rom 9:15. The idea here is, that Paul was solemnly determined that the same thing should continue. He had not been burdensome to any, and he was resolved that he would not be. Rather than be burdensome he had laboured with his own hands, and he meant to do it still. No man in all Achaia should ever have reason to say that he had been an idler, and had been supported by the churches when he was doing nothing. It was the fixed and settled purpose of his life never to be burdensome to any man. What a noble resolution! How fixed were the principles of his life! And what an instance of magnanimous self-denial and of elevated purpose! Every man, minister or otherwise, should adopt a similar resolution. He should resolve to receive nothing for which he has not rendered a fair equivalent; and resolve, if he has health, never to be a burden to his friends or to the church of God. And even if sick he may yet feel that he is not burdensome to others. If he is gentle and grateful; if he makes no unnecessary care; and especially if he furnishes an example of patience and piety, and seeks the blessing of God on his benefactors, he furnishes them what they will usually esteem an ample equivalent. No man need be burdensome to his friends; and all should resolve that by the grace of God they never will be. There is considerable variety in the MSS. here, (see Mill on the place,) but in regard to the general sense there can be no doubt. Nothing should ever hinder this boasting; nothing should deprive him of the privilege of saying that he had not been a burden.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

But what I do. The course of life which I have been pursuing I will continue to pursue. That is, I will continue to preach as I have done without demanding a support. I will labour with my own hands if necessary; I will preach without demanding rigidly what I might be entitled to. That I may cut off occasion. That I may give them no opportunity of accusing me of desiring to grow rich,

and of calumniating me. Paul meant that they should have no plausible pretext even for accusing him; that no man should be able to say that he was preaching merely for the hire. Which desire occasion. No doubt his enemies eagerly sought opportunities of accusing him, and greatly wished for some plausible reason for charging him with that which would be disgraceful and ruinous to his character. Or it may mean that they desired opportunity from the example of Paul to justify themselves in their course; that they took wages from the church at Corinth largely, and desired to be able to say that they had his example. That wherein they glory. Probably meaning that they boasted that they preached the gospel gratis; that they received nothing for their labours. Yet while they did this, it is not improbable that they received presents of the Corinthians, and under various pretences contrived to get from them an ample support, perhaps much more than would have been a reasonable compensation. Men who profess to preach the gospel gratis usually contrive in various ways to get more from the people than those who receive a regular and stipulated compensation. By taxing pretty liberally their hospitality; by accepting liberal presents; by frequent proclamation of their self-denial and their poverty, they usually filch large amounts from the people. No people were ever louder in praise of poverty, or in proclamation of their own self-denials, than some orders of monks, and that when it might be said almost that the richest possessions of Europe were passing into their hands. At all events, Paul meant that these men should have no opportunity from his course to take any such advantage. He knew what he had a right to, 1Cor 9 but he had not urged the right. He had received nothing from the church at Corinth, and he meant to receive nothing. He had honestly preached the gospel to them without charge, and he meant still to do it, 1Cor 9:18. They should, therefore, have no opportunity from his conduct either to accuse him of preaching for money, or of sheltering themselves under his example in pretending to preach for nothing, when they were in fact obtaining large sums from the people. They may be found even as we. That they may be compelled honestly to pursue such a course as I do, and be found to be in fact what they pretend to be.

The sense is, "I mean so to act that if they follow my example, or plead my authority, they may be found to lead an honest life; and that if they boast on this subject, they shall boast strictly according to truth. There shall be no trick; nothing underhanded or deceptive in what they do, so far as my example can prevent it."

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

For such are false apostles. They have no claim to the apostolic office. They are deceivers. They pretend to be apostles; but they have no Divine commission from the Redeemer. Paul had thus far argued the case without giving them an explicit designations deceivers. But here he says that men who had conducted [themselves] thus; who had attempted to impose on the people; who had brought another gospel, whatever pretences they might have--and he was not disposed to deny that there was much that was plausible--were really impostors, and the enemies of Christ. It is morally certain, from 2Cor 11:22, that these men were Jews; but why they had engaged in the work of preaching, or why they had gone to Corinth, cannot with certainty be determined. Deceitful workers. Impostors. Men who practise various arts to impose on others. They were crafty, and fraudulent, and hypocritical. It is probable that they were men who saw that great advantage might be taken of the new religion; men who saw the power which it had over the people, and who saw the confidence which the new converts were inclined to repose in their teachers; perhaps men who had seen the disciples to the Christian faith commit all their property to the hands of the apostles, or who had heard of their doing it, (comp. Acts 4:34,35,) and who supposed that by pretending to be apostles also they might come in for a share of this confidence, and avail themselves of this disposition to commit their property to their spiritual guides. To succeed, it was needful as far as possible to undermine the influence of the true apostles, and take their place in the confidence of the people. Thence they were "deceitful (δολιοι) workers," full of trick, and cunning, and of plausible arts to impose on others. Transforming themselves, etc. Pretending to be apostles. Hypocritical and deceitful, they yet pretended to have been sent by Christ. This is

a direct charge of hypocrisy. They knew they were deceivers; and yet they assumed the high claims of apostles of the Son of God.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

And no marvel. And it is not wonderful, 2Cor 11:15. Since Satan himself is capable of appearing to be an angel of light, it is not to be deemed strange that those who are in his service also should resemble him. For Satan himself is transformed, etc. That is, he who is an apostate angel; who is malignant and wicked; who is the prince of evil, assumes the appearance of a holy angel. Paul assumes this as an indisputable and admitted truth, without attempting to prove it, and without referring to any particular instances. Probably he had in his eye cases where Satan put on false and delusive appearances for the purpose of deceiving, or where he assumed the appearance of great sanctity and reverence for the authority of God. Such instances occurred in the temptation of our first parents, Gen 3:1-6, and in the temptation of the Saviour, Mt 4. The phrase, "an angel of light," means a pure and holy angel--light being the emblem of purity and holiness. Such are all the angels that dwell in heaven; and the idea is, that Satan assumes such a form as to appear to be such an angel. Learn here,

(1.) his power. He can assume such an aspect as he pleases. He can dissemble, and appear to be eminently pious. He is the prince of duplicity as well as of wickedness; and it is the consummation of bad power for an individual to be able to assume any character which he pleases.

(2.) His art. He is long practised in deceitful arts. For six thousand years he has been practicing the art of delusion; and with him it is perfect.

(3.) We are not to suppose that all that appears to be piety is piety. Some of the most plausible appearances of piety are assumed by Satan and his ministers. None ever professed a profounder regard for the authority of God than Satan did when he tempted the

Saviour. And if the prince of wickedness can appear to be an angel of light, we are not to be surprised if those who have the blackest hearts appear to be men of most eminent piety.

(4.) We should be on our guard. We should not listen to suggestions merely because they appear to come from a pious man, nor because they seem to be prompted by a regard to the will of God. We may be always sure that if we are to be tempted, it will be by some one having a great appearance of virtue and religion.

(5.) We are not to expect that Satan will appear to man to be as bad as he is. He never shows himself openly to be a spirit of pure wickedness; or black and abominable in his character; or full of evil, and hateful. He would thus defeat himself. It is for this reason that wicked men do not believe that there is such a being as Satan. Though continually under his influence, and "led captive by him at his will," yet they neither see him nor the chains which lead them, nor are they willing to believe in the existence of the one or the other.

15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Paul's Sufferings as an Apostle

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.
17 That which I speak, I speak *it* not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.
18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.
19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *yourselves* are wise.
20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour *you*, if a man take *of you*, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

For ye suffer, etc. You bear patiently with men who impose on you in every way, and who are constantly defrauding you,

though you profess to be so wise; and you may bear with me a little, though I have no such intention. Seriously, if you bear with boasters who intend to delude and deceive you in various ways, you may bear with one who comes to you with no such intention, but with an honest purpose to do good. If a man bring you into bondage. καταδουλοι. If a man, or if any one, (ειτις,) make a slave of you, or reduce you to servitude. The idea is, doubtless, that the false teachers set up a lordship over their consciences; destroyed their freedom of opinion; and made them subservient to their will. They really took away their Christian freedom as much as if they had been slaves. In what way this was done is unknown. It may be that they imposed on them rites and forms, commanded expensive and inconvenient ceremonies, and required arduous services merely at their own will. A false religion always makes slaves. It is only true Christianity that leaves perfect freedom. All heathens are slaves to their priests; all fanatics are slaves to some fanatical leader; all those who embrace error are slaves to those who claim to be their guides. The papist everywhere is the slave of the priest, and the despotism there is as great as in any region of servitude whatever. If a man devour you. This is exceedingly sarcastic. The idea is, "Though you are so wise, yet you in fact tolerate men who impose on you--no matter though they eat you up, or consume all that you have. By their exorbitant demands they would consume all you have; or, as we would say, eat you out of house and home." All this they took patiently; and freely gave all that they demanded. False teachers are always rapacious. They seek the property, not the souls of those to whom they minister. Not satisfied with a maintenance, they aim to obtain all, and their plans are formed to secure as much as possible of those to whom they minister. If a man take of you. If he take and seize upon your possessions. If he comes and takes what he pleases, and bears it away as his own. If a man exalt himself. If he set himself up as a ruler, and claim submission. No matter how arrogant his claims, yet you are ready to bear with him. You might, then, bear with me in the very moderate demands which I make on your obedience and confidence. If a man smite you on the face. The word here rendered "smite" (δερει) means,

properly, to skin, to flay; but in the New Testament it means to beat, to scourge--especially so as to take off the skin, Mt 21:35, Mk 12:3,5. The idea here is, if any one treats you with contumely and scorn--since there can be no higher expression of it than to smite a man on the face, Mt 26:67. It is not to be supposed that this occurred literally among the Corinthians; but the idea is, that the false teachers really treated them with as little respect as if they smote them on the face. In what way this was done is unknown; but probably it was by their domineering manners, and the little respect which they showed for the opinions and feelings of the Corinthian Christians. Paul says that as they bore this very patiently, they might allow him to make some remarks about himself in self-commendation.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I *am* more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 *in* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

Among false brethren. This was the crowning danger and trial to Paul, as it is to all others. A man can better bear danger by land and water, among robbers and in deserts, than he can bear to have his confidence abused, and to be subjected to the action and the arts of spies upon his conduct. Who these were he has not informed us. He mentions it as the chief trial to which he had been exposed, that he had met those who pretended to be his friends, and who yet had sought every possible opportunity to expose and destroy him. Perhaps he has here a delicate reference to the

danger which he apprehended from the false brethren in the church at Corinth.

27 in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

That which cometh upon me daily. There is great force in the original here. The phrase rendered "that which cometh upon me" means, properly, "that which rushes upon me." The word (επισυστασις means, properly, a concourse, a crowd, hence a tumult; and the idea here is, that these cares rushed upon him, or pressed upon him like a crowd of men or a mob that bore all before it. This is one of Paul's most energetic expressions, and denotes the incessant anxiety of mind to which he was subject. The care of all the churches. The care of the numerous churches which he had established, and which needed his constant supervision. They were young; many of them were feeble; many were made up of heterogeneous materials; many composed of Jews and Gentiles mingled together, with conflicting prejudices, habits, preferences; many of them were composed of those who had been gathered from the lowest ranks of life; and questions would be constantly occurring, relating to their order and discipline, in which Paul would feel a deep interest, and which would naturally be referred to him for decision. Besides this, they had many trials. They were persecuted, and would suffer much. In their sufferings Paul would feel deep sympathy, and would desire, as far as possible, to afford them relief. In addition to the churches which he had planted, he would feel an interest in all others; and doubtless many cases would be referred to him, as an eminent apostle, for counsel and advice. No wonder that all this came rushing on him like a tumultuous assembly ready to overpower him.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

Who is weak, etc. I sympathize with all. I feel where others feel, and their sorrows excite deep sympathetic emotions in my bosom. Like a tender and compassionate friend I am affected when I see others in circumstances of distress. The word weak here may refer to any want of strength, any infirmity or

feebleness arising either from body or mind. It may include all who were feeble by persecution or by disease; or it may refer to the weak in faith and doubtful about their duty, (1Cor 9:22,) and to those who were burdened with mental sorrows. The idea is, that Paul had a deep sympathy in all who needed such sympathy from any cause. And the statement here shows the depth of feeling of this great apostle; and shows what should be the feeling of every pastor. Rom 12:15. And I am not weak? I share his feelings, and sympathize with him. If he suffers, I suffer. Bloomfield supposes that Paul means, that in the case of those who were weak in the faith he accommodated himself to their weakness, and thus became all things to all men. 1Cor 9:22. But it seems to me probable that he uses the phrase here in a more general sense, as denoting that he sympathized with those who were weak and feeble in all their circumstances.

Who is offended. σκανδαλιζεται. Who is scandalized. The word means, properly, to cause to stumble and fall; hence to be a stumbling-block to any one; to give or cause offence to any one. The idea here seems to be, "Who is liable to be led astray; who has temptations and trials that are likely to lead him to sin or to cause him to fall, and I do not burn with impatience to restore him, or with indignation against the tempter?" In all such cases Paul deeply sympathized with them, and was prompt to aid them.

And I burn not? /KJV/ That is, with anger or with great agitation of mind at learning that any one had fallen into sin. This may either mean that he would burn with indignation against those who had led them into sin, or be deeply excited in view of the disgrace which would be thus brought on the Christian cause. In either case it means that his mind would be in a glow of emotion; he would feel deeply; he could not look upon such things with indifference, or without being deeply agitated. With all he sympathized; and the condition of all, whether in a state of feeble faith, or feeble body, or falling into sin, excited the deepest emotions in his mind. The truth here taught is, that Paul felt a deep sympathy for all others who bore the Christian name, and

this sympathy for others greatly increased the cares and toils of the apostolic office which he sustained. But having given this exposition, candour compels me to acknowledge that the whole verse may mean, "Who is feeble in the faith in regard to certain observances and rites and customs, (1Cor 9:22,) and I do not also evince the same? I do not rouse their prejudices, or wound their feelings, or alarm them. On the other hand, who is scandalized, or led into sin by the example of others in regard to such custom; who is led by the example of others into transgression, and I do not burn with indignation?" In either case, however, the general sense is, that he sympathized with all others.

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.
31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.
32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:
33 and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

2 Corinthians-12

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.
2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven.
3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)
4 how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

And heard unspeakable words. The word which is here rendered "unspeakable," (αρρητα) may either mean what cannot be spoken, or what ought not to be spoken. The word means unutterable, ineffable; and whichever idea we attach to it, Paul

meant to say that he could not attempt by words to do justice to what he saw and heard. The use of the word "words" here would seem to imply that he heard the language of exalted praise; or that there were truths imparted to his mind which he could not hope to convey in any language spoken by men. Which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Marg., "possible." Witsius supposes that the word εξον may include both, and Doddridge accords with the interpretation. See also Robinson's Lexicon. The word is most commonly used in the signification of lawful. Thus, Mt 14:4, "It is not lawful for thee to have her;" Acts 16:21, "Which it is not lawful for us to observe;" Acts 22:25, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman," etc. In the same sense of lawful it is used in Mt 12:2,10,12; Mt 20:15, Mk 2:26, 10:2. When it refers to possibility, it probably means moral possibility; that is, propriety, or it means that it is right. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here rather means that it was not proper to give utterance to those things; it would not be right to attempt it. It might be also true that it would not have been possible for language to convey clearly the ideas connected with the things which Paul was then permitted to see; but the main thought is, that there was some reason why it would not be proper for him to have attempted to communicate those ideas to men at large.

The Jews held that it was unlawful to pronounce the Tetragrammaton, i.e., the name of four letters, (,) JEHOVAH; and whenever that name occurred in their Scriptures, they substituted the name Adonai in its place. They maintain, indeed, that the true pronunciation is utterly lost, and none of them to this day attempt to pronounce it. But this was mere superstition; and it is impossible that Paul should have been influenced by any such reason as this. The transaction here referred to is very remarkable. It is the only instance in the Scriptures of any one who was taken to heaven, either in reality or in vision, and who returned again to the earth, and was then qualified to communicate important truths about the heavenly world from personal observation. Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven; but they returned not to converse with men. Elijah appeared with

Moses in conversation with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration; but they conversed with him only about his decease, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem, Lk 9:31. There would have been no propriety for them to have spoken to Jesus of heaven, for he came down from heaven and was in heaven, (Jn 3:13,) and they were not permitted to speak to the disciples of heaven. Lazarus was raised from the dead, (Jn 11), and many of the saints which had slept in their graves arose at the death of Jesus, (Mt 27:52,) but there is no intimation that they communicated anything to the living about the heavenly world. Of all the millions who have been taken to heaven, not one has been permitted to return to bear his testimony to its glories; to witness for God that he is faithful to his promises; to encourage his pious friends to persevere; or to invite his impenitent friends to follow him to that glorious world. And so fixed is the law, so settled is the principle, that even Lazarus was not permitted to go, though at the earnest request of the rich man in hell, and warn his friends not to follow him to that world of woe, Lk 16:27-31. Mohammed, indeed, feigned that he had made a journey to heaven, and he attempts to describe what he saw; and the difference between true inspiration and false or pretended inspiration is strikingly evinced by the difference between Paul's dignified silence--verba sacro digna silentio (Horace)--and the puerilities of the prophet of Mecca. See the Koran, chap. xvii. As the difference between the true religion and imposture is strikingly illustrated by this, we may recur to the principal events which happened to the impostor on his celebrated journey. The whole account may be seen in Prideaux's Life of Mohammed, p. 43, seq. He solemnly affirmed that he had been translated to the heaven of heavens; that on a white beast, less than a mule, but larger than an ass, he had been conveyed from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem; had successively ascended the seven heavens with his companion Gabriel, receiving and returning the salutations of its blessed inhabitants; had then proceeded alone within two bow-shots of the throne of the Almighty, when he felt a cold which pierced him to the heart, and was touched on the shoulder by the hand of God, who commanded him to pray fifty times a day, but with the

advice of Moses he was prevailed on to have the number reduced to five; and that he then returned to Jerusalem and to Mecca, having performed a journey of thousands of years in the tenth part of a night. The fact that Paul was not permitted to communicate what he had seen is very remarkable. It is natural to ask why it is so? Why has not God sent down departed saints to tell men of the glories of heaven? Why does he not permit them to come and bear testimony to what they have seen and enjoyed? Why not come and clear up the doubts of the pious; why not come and convince a thoughtless world; why not come and bear honourable testimony for God that he is faithful to reward his people? And especially why did he not suffer Paul, whom he had permitted to behold the glories of paradise, to testify simply to what he had seen, and tell us what was there ? To these questions, so obvious, it is impossible to give an answer that we can demonstrate to be the true one. But we may suggest some reasons which may furnish a plausible answer, and which may serve to remove some of the perplexity in the case. I would, therefore, suggest that the following may have been some of the reasons why Paul was not permitted to communicate what he saw to men:

(1.) It was designed for the support of Paul himself, in view of the very remarkable trials which he was about to endure. God had called him to great toils and self-denials. He was to labour much alone; to go to foreign lands; to be persecuted, and ultimately put to death; and it was his purpose to qualify him for this work by some peculiar manifestation of his favour. He accordingly gave him such views of heaven that he would be supported in his trials by a conviction of the undoubted truth of what he taught, and by the prospect of certain glory when his labours should end. It was one instance when God gave peculiar views to prepare for trials, as he often does to his people now, preparing them in a peculiar manner for peculiar trials. Christians, from some cause, often have more elevated views and deeper feeling before they are called to endure trials than they have at other times--peculiar grace to prepare them for suffering. But as this was designed in a peculiar manner for Paul

alone, it was not proper for him to communicate what he saw to others.

(2.) It is probable that if there were a full revelation of the glories of heaven, we should not be able to comprehend it; or even if we did, we should be incredulous in regard to it. So unlike what we see; so elevated above our highest comprehension; probably so unlike what we now anticipate, is heaven, that we should be slow to receive the revelation. It is always difficult to describe what we have not seen, even on earth, so that we shall have any very clear idea of it: how much more difficult must it be to describe heaven! We are often incredulous about what is reported to exist in foreign lands on earth, which we have not seen, and a long time is often necessary before we will believe it. The king of Siam, when told by the Dutch ambassador that water became so hard in his country that men might walk on it, said, "I have often suspected you of falsehood, but now I know that you lie." So incredulous might we be, with our weak faith, if we were told what-actually exists in heaven. We should not improbably turn away from it as wholly incredible.

(3.) There are great truths which it is not the design of God to reveal to men. The object is to communicate enough to win us, to comfort us, to support our faith--not to reveal all. In eternity there must be boundless truths and glories which are not needful for us to know now, and which, on many accounts, it would not be proper to be revealed to men. The question is not, do we know all, but have we enough safely to guide us to heaven, and to comfort us in the trials of life.

(4.) There is enough revealed of heaven for our guidance and comfort in this world. God has told us what it will be in general. It will be a world without sin; without tears; without wrong, injustice, fraud, or wars; without disease, pestilence, plague, death; and it is easy to fill up the picture sufficiently for all our purposes. Let us think of a world where all shall be pure and holy; of a world free from all that we now behold that is evil;

free from pain, disease, death; a world where "friends never depart, foes never come;" a world where all shall be harmony and love--and where all this shall be ETERNAL; and we shall see that God has revealed enough for our welfare here. The highest hopes of man are met when we anticipate AN ETERNAL HEAVEN; the heaviest trials may be cheerfully borne when we have the prospect of EVERLASTING REST.

(5.) One other reason may be assigned why it was not proper for Paul to disclose what he saw, and why God has withheld more full revelations from men about heaven. It is, that his purpose is that we shall here walk by faith and not by sight. We are not to see the reward, nor to be told fully what it is. We are to have such confidence in God that we shall assuredly believe that he will fully reward and bless us, and under this confidence we are to live and act here below. God designs, therefore, to try our faith, and to furnish an abundant evidence that his people are disposed to obey his commands, and to put their trust in his faithfulness. Besides, if all the glories of heaven were revealed; if all were told that might be; and if heaven were made as attractive to mortal view as possible, then it might appear that his professed people were influenced solely by the hope of the reward. As it is, there is enough to support and comfort; not enough to make it the main and only reason why we serve God. It may be added,

(a.) that we have all the truth which we shall ever have about heaven here below. No other messenger will come; none of the pious dead will return. If men, therefore, are not willing to be saved in view of the truth which they have, they must be lost. God will communicate no more.

(b.) The Christian will soon know all about heaven. He will soon be there. He begins no day with any certainty that he may not close it in heaven; he lies down to rest at no time with any assurance that he will not wake in heaven, amidst its full and eternal splendours.

(c.) The sinner will soon know fully what it is to lose heaven. A moment may make him fully sensible of his loss--for he may die; and a moment may put him for ever beyond the possibility of reaching a world of glory.

We are not capable of knowing all, nor is it fit we should know very much, of the particulars of that glorious place and state; it is our duty and interest to give diligence to make sure to ourselves a mansion there; and, if that be cleared up to us, then we should long to be removed thither, to abide there for ever. This third heaven is called paradise (2Co 12:4), in allusion to the earthly paradise out of which Adam was driven for his transgression; it is called the paradise of God (Re 2:7), signifying to us that by Christ we are restored to all the joys and honours we lost by sin, yea, to much better. The apostle does not mention what he saw in the third heaven or paradise, but tells us that he heard unspeakable words, such as it is not possible for a man to utter--such are the sublimity of the matter and our unacquaintedness with the language of the upper world: nor was it lawful to utter those words, because, while we are here in this world, we have a more sure word of prophecy than such visions and revelations. 2Pe 1:19. We read of the tongue of angels as well as men, and Paul knew as much of that as ever any man upon earth did, and yet preferred charity, that is, the sincere love of God and our neighbour. This account which the apostle gives us of his vision should check our curious desires after forbidden knowledge, and teach us to improve the revelation God has given us in his word. Paul himself, who had been in the third heaven, did not publish to the world what he had heard there, but adhered to the doctrine of Christ: on this foundation the church is built, and on this we must build our faith and hope.

5 Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

And lest I should be exalted. Lest I should be spiritually proud; lest I should become self-confident and vain, and suppose that I was a special favourite of Heaven. If Paul was in danger of spiritual pride, who is not? If it was necessary for God to adopt some special measures to keep him humble, we are not to be surprised that the same thing should occur in other cases. There is abundant reason to believe that Paul was naturally a proud man. He was by nature self-confident; trusting in his own talents and attainments, and eminently ambitious. When he became a Christian, therefore, one of his besetting sins would be pride; and as he had been peculiarly favoured in his call to the apostleship; in his success as a preacher; in the standing which he had among the other apostles, and in the revelations imparted to him, there was also peculiar danger that he would become self-confident, and proud of his attainments. There is no danger that more constantly besets Christians, and even eminent Christians, than pride. There is no sin that is more subtle, insinuating, deceptive; none that lurks more constantly around the heart, and that finds a more ready entrance, than pride. He who has been characterized by pride before his conversion, will be in special danger of it afterwards; he who has eminent gifts in prayer, or in conversation, or in preaching, will be in special danger of it; he who is eminently successful will be in danger of it; and he who has any extraordinary spiritual comforts will be in danger of it. Of this sin he who lives nearest to God may be in most special danger; and he who is most eminent in piety should feel that he also occupies a position where the enemy will approach him in a sly and subtle manner, and where he is in peculiar danger of a fall. Possibly the fear that he might be in danger of being made proud by the flattery of his friends may have been one reason why Paul kept this thing concealed for fourteen years; and if men wish to keep themselves from the danger this sin, they should not be forward to speak even of the most favoured moments of their communion with God.

There was given to me. That is, God was pleased to appoint me. The word which Paul uses is worthy of special notice. It is that this "thorn in the flesh" was given to him, implying that it was a favour. He does not complain of it; he does not say it was sent in cruelty; he does not even speak of it as an affliction; he speaks of it as a gift, as any man would of a favour that had been bestowed. Paul had so clear a view of the benefits which resulted from it, that he regarded it as a favour, as Christians should every trial.

The messenger of Satan. Among the Hebrews it was customary to attribute severe and painful diseases to Satan. Comp. Job 2:6,7, Lk 13:16. In the time of the Saviour, malignant spirits are known to have taken possession of the body in numerous cases, and to have produced painful bodily diseases; and Paul here says that Satan was permitted to bring this calamity on him.

To buffet me. To buffet, means to smite with the hand; then to maltreat in any way. The meaning is, that the effect and design of this was deeply to afflict him. Doddridge and Clarke suppose that the reference is here to the false teacher whom Satan had sent to Corinth, and who was to him the source of perpetual trouble. But it seems more probable to me that he refers to some bodily infirmity. The general truth taught in this verse is, that God will take care that his people shall not be unduly exalted by the manifestations of his favour, and by the spiritual privileges which he bestows on them. He will take measures to humble them; and a large part of his dealings with his people is designed to accomplish this. Sometimes it will be done, as in the case of Paul, by bodily infirmity or trial, by sickness, or by long and lingering disease; sometimes by great poverty, and by an humble condition of life; sometimes by reducing us from a state of affluence, where we were in danger of being exalted above measure; sometimes by suffering us to be slandered and calumniated, by suffering foes to rise up against us who shall blacken our character, and in such a manner that we cannot meet it; sometimes by persecution; sometimes by want of success in our enterprises, and, if in the ministry, by withholding his Spirit; sometimes by suffering us to

fall into sin, and thus greatly humbling us before the world. Such was the case with David and with Peter; and God often permits us to see in this manner our own weakness, and to bring us to a sense of our dependence and to proper humility by suffering us to perform some act that should be ever afterward a standing source of our humiliation; some act so base, so humiliating, so evincing the deep depravity of our hearts, as for ever to make and keep us humble. How could David be lifted up with pride after the murder of Uriah? How could Peter after having denied his Lord with a horrid oath? Thus many a Christian is suffered to fall by the temptation of Satan, to show him his weakness and to keep him from pride; many a fall is made the occasion of the permanent benefit of the offender. And perhaps every Christian who has been much favored with elevated spiritual views and comforts can recall something which shall be to him a standing topic of regret and humiliation in his past life. We should be thankful for any calamity that will humble us; and we should remember that clear and elevated views of God and heaven are, after all, more than a compensation for all the sufferings which it may be necessary to endure in order to make us humble.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

And he said unto me. The Saviour replied. In what way this was done, or whether it was done at the time when the prayer was offered, Paul does not inform us. It is possible, as Macknight supposes, that Christ appeared to him again, and spake to him in an audible manner. Grotius supposes that this was done by the (Bath-qol-- "daughter of the voice") so frequently referred to by the Jewish writers, and which they suppose to be referred to in 1Kgs 19:12, by the phrase, "a still small voice." But it is impossible to determine in what way it was done, and it is not material. Paul was in habits of communion with the Saviour, and was accustomed to receive revelations from him. The material fact here is, that the request was not granted in the exact form in

which he presented it, but that he received assurance of grace to support him in his trial. It is one of the instances in which the fervent prayer of a good man, offered undoubtedly in faith, was not answered in the form in which he desired, though substantially answered in the assurance of grace sufficient to support him. It furnishes, therefore, a very instructive lesson in regard to prayer, and shows us that we are not to expect as a matter of course that all our prayers will be literally answered, and that we should not be disappointed or disheartened if they are not. It is a matter of fact that not all the prayers even of the pious, and of those who pray having faith in God as a hearer of prayer, are literally answered. Thus the prayer of David (2Sam 12:16-20) was not literally answered: the child for whose life he so earnestly prayed died. So the Saviour's request was not literally answered, Mk 14:36. The cup of suffering which he so earnestly desired should be taken away, was not re- moved. So in the case before us. Compare also De 3:23-27; Job 30:20, Lam 3:8. So in numerous cases now, Christians pray with fervour and with faith for the removal of some calamity which is not removed; or for something which they regard as desirable for their welfare, which is withheld. Some of the reasons why this is done are obvious:

(1.) The grace that will be imparted if the calamity is not removed, will be of greater value to the individual than would be the direct answer to his prayer. Such was the case with Paul; so it was doubtless with David; and so it is often with Christians now. The removal of the calamity might be apparently a blessing, but it might also be attended with danger to our spiritual welfare; the grace imparted may be of permanent value, and may be connected with the development of some of the loveliest traits of Christian character.

(2.) It might not-be for the good of the individual who prays that the exact thing should be granted. When a parent prays with great earnestness and with insubmision for the life of a child, he knows not what he is doing. If the child lives, he may be the occasion of much more grief to him than if he had died. David had far more trouble from Absalom than he had from the death of the child for

which he so earnestly prayed. At the same time, it may be better for the child that he should be removed. If he dies in infancy he will be saved. But who can tell what will be his character and destiny, should he live to be a man? So of other things.

(3.) God has often some better thing in store for us than would be the immediate answer to our prayer. Who can doubt that this was true of Paul? The promised grace of Christ as sufficient to support us, is of more value than would be the mere removal of any bodily affliction.

(4.) It would not be well for us, probably, should our petition be literally answered. Who can tell what is best for himself? If the thing were obtained, who can tell how soon we might forget the Benefactor, and become proud and self-confident? It was the design of God to humble Paul; and this could be much better accomplished by continuing his affliction, and by imparting the promised grace, than by withdrawing the affliction, and withholding the grace. The very thing to be done was to keep him humble; and this affliction could not be withdrawn without also foregoing the benefit. It is true, also, that where things are in themselves proper to be asked, Christians sometimes ask them in an improper manner, and this is one of the reasons why many of their prayers are not answered. But this does not pertain to the case before us. My grace is sufficient for thee. A much better answer than it would have been to have removed the calamity; and one that seems to have been entirely satisfactory to Paul. The meaning of the Saviour is, that he would support him; that he would not suffer him to sink exhausted under his trials; that he had nothing to fear. The affliction was not indeed removed; but there was a promise that the favour of Christ would be shown to him constantly, and that he would find his support to be ample. If Paul had this support, he might well bear the trial; and if we have this assurance, as we may have, we may welcome affliction, and rejoice that calamities are brought upon us. It is a sufficient answer to our prayers if we have the solemn promise of the Redeemer that we shall be upheld, and never sink under the burden of our heavy woes. My strength is made perfect in

weakness. That is, the strength which I impart to my people is more commonly and more completely manifested when my people feel that they are weak. It is not imparted to those who feel that they are strong, and who do not realize their need of Divine aid. It is not so completely manifested to those who are vigorous and strong, as to the feeble. It is when we are conscious that we are feeble, and when we feel our need of aid, that the Redeemer manifests his power to uphold, and imparts his purest consolations. Grotius has collected several similar passages from the classic writers, which may serve to illustrate this expression. Thus Pliny, vii. Epis. 26, says, "We are best where we are weak." Seneca says, "Calamity is the occasion of virtue." Quintilian, "All temerity of mind is broken by bodily calamity." Minutius Felix, "Calamity is often the discipline of virtue." There are few Christians who cannot bear witness to the truth of what the Redeemer here says, and who have not experienced the most pure consolations which they have known, and been most sensible of his comforting presence and power, in times of affliction.

Most gladly therefore, etc. I count it a privilege to be afflicted, if my trials may be the means of my more abundantly enjoying the favour of the Redeemer. His presence and imparted strength are more than a compensation for all the trials that I endure. That the power of Christ. The strength which Christ imparts; his power manifested in supporting me in trials. May rest upon me. επισκηνωση. The word properly means to pitch a tent upon; and then to dwell in or upon. Here it is used in the sense of abiding upon; or remaining with. The sense is, that the power which Christ manifested to his people rested with them, or abode with them in their trials, and therefore he would rejoice in afflictions, in order that he might partake of the aid and consolation thus imparted. Learn hence,

(1.) that a Christian never loses anything by suffering and affliction. If he may obtain the favour of Christ by his trials, he is a gainer. The favour of the Redeemer is more than a compensation for all that we endure in his cause.

(2.) The Christian is a gainer by trial. I never knew a Christian that was not ultimately benefited by trials. I never knew one who did not find that he had gained much that was valuable to him in scenes of affliction. I do not know that I have found one who would be willing to exchange the advantages he has gained in affliction for all that the most uninterrupted prosperity and the highest honours that the world could give would impart.

(3.) Learn to bear trials with joy. They are good for us. They develop some of the most lovely traits of character. They injure no one, if they are properly received. And a Christian should rejoice that he may obtain what he does obtain in affliction, cost what it may. It is worth more than it costs; and when we come to die, the things that we shall have most occasion to thank God for will be our afflictions. And, oh, if they are the means of raising us to a higher seat in heaven, and placing us nearer the Redeemer there, who will not rejoice in his trials?

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Therefore I take pleasure. Since so many benefits result from trials; since my afflictions are the occasion of obtaining the favour of Christ in so eminent a degree, I rejoice in the privilege of suffering. There is often real pleasure in affliction, paradoxical as it may appear. Some of the happiest persons I have known are those who have been deeply afflicted; some of the purest joys which I have witnessed have been manifested on a sick bed, and in the prospect of death. And I have no doubt that Paul, in the midst of all his infirmities and reproaches, had a joy above that which all the wealth and honour of the world could give. See here the power of religion. It not only supports--it comforts. It not only enables one to bear suffering with resignation, but it enables him to rejoice. Philosophy blunts the feelings; infidelity leaves men to murmur and repine in trial; the pleasures of this world have no power even to support or comfort in times of affliction; but

Christianity. furnishes positive pleasure in trial, and enables the sufferer to smile through his tears.

In infirmities. In my weaknesses. 2Cor 11:30. In reproaches. In the contempt and scorn with which I meet as a follower of Christ. 2Cor 11:21. In necessities.

In want. 2Cor 6:4, 2Cor 6:4,5. In distresses for Christ's sake. 2Cor 6:4. In the various wants and difficulties to which I am exposed on account of the Saviour, or which I suffer in his cause. For when I am weak, then am I strong. When I feel weak; when I am subjected to trial, and nature faints and fails, then strength is imparted to me, and I am enabled to bear all. The more I am borne down with trials, the more do I feel my need of Divine assistance, and the more do I feel the efficacy of Divine grace. Such was the promise in De 33:25, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." So in Heb 11:34, "Who out of weakness were made strong." What Christian has not experienced this, and been able to say that when he felt himself weak, and felt like sinking under the accumulation of many trials, he has found his strength according to his day, and felt an arm of power supporting him? It is then that the Redeemer manifests himself in a peculiar manner; and then that the excellency of the religion of Christ is truly seen, and its power appreciated and felt.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I
ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind
the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all
patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it*
be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

Paul Plans a Third Visit

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be
burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children

ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

18 I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

21 *and* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me, etc. Lest I should, be compelled to inflict punishment on those whom I supposed to have been converted under my ministry. I had rejoiced in them as true converts. I had counted them as among the fruit of my ministry. Now to be compelled to inflict punishment on them as having no religion would mortify me and humble me. The infliction of punishment on members of the church is a sort of punishment to him who inflicts it as well as to him who is punished. Members of the church should walk uprightly, lest they overwhelm the ministry in shame. And that I shall bewail many, etc. If they repented of their sin, he could still rejoice in them. If they continued in their sin, till he came, it would be to him a source of deep lamentation. It is evident from the word "many" here, that the disorders had prevailed very extensively in the church at Corinth. The word rendered "have sinned already" means, "who have sinned before;" and the idea is, that they were old offenders, and that they had not yet repented.

The uncleanness. Rom 1:24. And fornication, and lasciviousness, etc. 1Cor 5:1; 1Cor 6:18. This was the sin to which they were particularly exposed in Corinth, as it was the sin for which that corrupt city was distinguished. See the Introduction to the First Epistle. Hence the frequent cautions in these epistles against it; and hence it is not to be wondered at that some of those who had become professing Christians had fallen into it. It may be added, that it is still the sin to which converts from the corruptions and licentiousness of paganism are particularly exposed.

2 Corinthians-13

1 This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.
2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:
3 since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.
4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

For though he was crucified through weakness. Various modes have been adopted of explaining the phrase "through weakness." The most probable explanation is that which refers to the human nature which he had assumed, Php 2:7,8, 1Pet 3:18, and to the appearance of weakness which he manifested. He did not choose to exert his power. He appeared to his enemies to be weak and feeble. This idea would be an exact illustration of the point before the apostle. He is illustrating his own conduct, and especially in the fact that he had not exerted his miraculous powers among them in the punishment of offenders; and he does it by the example of Christ, who though abundantly able to have exerted his power and to have rescued himself from his enemies, yet was willing to appear weak, and to be crucified. It is very clear,

(1.) that the Lord Jesus seemed to his enemies to be weak and incapable of resistance.

(2.) That he did not put forth his power to protect his life. He in fact offered no resistance, as if he had no power.

(3.) He had a human nature that was peculiarly sensitive, and sensible to suffering; and that was borne down and crushed under the weight of mighty woes. Isa 53:2,3. From all these causes he seemed to be weak and feeble; and these appear to me to be the principal ideas in this expression.

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Here the apostle advises the Corinthians, instead of inquiring after the proof of Christ in him, to examine whether they were in Christ themselves; intimating to us, that such are usually most backward to examine the state of their own souls, who are forward to enquire into the spiritual state and condition of others. "You seek a proof of Christ in me, says the apostle: Oh, rather prove and examine yourselves."

Where note, 1. A duty expressed; Examine yourselves; prove yourselves: The word is a metaphor taken from goldsmiths, who with great exactness try their gold; the truth of it by the touchstone, the weight of it by the scale, and the purity of it by the fire. And the repetition of the command, Examine yourselves; prove yourselves; implies the great backwardness that is in men's natures to perform this duty, the great necessity of the duty, and the great diligence and frequency to be used in performing of the duty.

Learn hence, That self-examination is an excellent, a necessary and important duty, belonging to every one in the church, and

requires great diligence and faithfulness in the performing of it. 'Tis necessary, in regard of our comforts, and also in regard of our graces; for there are counterfeit graces, as well as real; and common graces, as well as saving; and 'tis a duty that requires diligence and frequency, because the work is difficult, because the heart is backward, because we are apt to be deceived, and willing to be deceived; because many have miscarried without is, and many perish by a negligent performance of it: Therefore examine yourselves; prove yourselves.

Note, 2. The subject-matter of our examination, whether ye be in the faith; that is, whether ye be converted to the Christian faith, whether the faith of Christ be in you, whether the pinciple of faith be in your consciences, whether the practice of faith be in your lives, whether your faith be the parent and principle of obedience, working love, and working by love.

Note, 3. The enforcement or motive to this duty, Except ye be reprobates; that is, counterfeit, adulterate, unsound, and insincere Christians, unaccepted of God, and not owned by him. As reprobate silver has no worth or fitness in it for trading, so such Christians as, upon examination are not found to have the grace of faith in them, more precious than gold, are unapproved of God, and rejected by him.

Note, 4. When the apostle expostulates with them, and says, Know ye not your ownselves? it implies both the folly and unreasonableness of the neglect of the duty, and also the possibility and easiness of knowing whether Christ be in us, or not, upon a due and diligent inquiry, whether we have experienced the quickening and transforming power of Christ in our hearts and lives.

Finally, So great is the benefit, and so sweet the comfort, which flows to us by examinations and self-acquaintance, that it will abundantly recompence our care and diligence, in the frequent and faithful discharge of it.

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.
7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.
8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.
9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection.
10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Final Greetings

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.
12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
13 All the saints salute you.
14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians
[Galatians]

Galatians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Neither by man. "Neither by or through δι the instrumentality of any man." Here he designs to exclude all men from having had any agency in his appointment to the apostolic office. He was neither sent out from any body of men to execute their purposes, nor did he receive his commission, authority, or ordination, through the medium of any man. A minister of the gospel now receives his call from God, but he is ordained or set apart to his office by man. Matthias, the apostle chosen in the place of Judas, (Acts 1:17,) received his call from God, but it was by the vote of the body of the apostles. Timothy was also called of God, but he was appointed to his office by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1Timm 4:14. But Paul here says that he received no such commission as that from the apostles. They were not the means or the medium of ordaining him to his work. He had, indeed, together with Barnabas, been set apart at Antioch by the brethren there, (Acts 13:1-3,) for a special mission in Asia Minor; but this was not an appointment to the apostleship. He had been restored to sight after the miraculous blindness produced by seeing the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus, by the laying on of the hands of Ananias, and had received important instruction from him, (Acts 9:17;) but his commission as an apostle had been received directly from the Lord Jesus, without any intervening medium, or any form of human authority, Acts 9:15, 22:17-21, 1Cor 9:1.

But by Jesus Christ. That is, directly by Christ. He had been called by him, and commissioned by him, and sent by him, to engage in the work of the gospel.

To whom this epistle is sent--to the churches of Galatia. There were several churches at that time in this country, and it should seem that all of them were more or less corrupted through the arts of those seducers who had crept in among them; and therefore Paul, on whom came daily the care of all the churches, being deeply affected with their state, and concerned for their recovery to the faith and establishment in it, writes this epistle to them. He directs it to all of them, as being all more or less concerned in the matter of it; and he gives them the name of churches, though they had done enough to forfeit it, for corrupt churches are never allowed to be churches: no doubt there were some among them who still continued in the faith, and he was not without hope that others might be recovered to it.

2 and all the brethren which are with me.
Unto the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ,

The apostolical benediction, Ga 1:3. Herein the apostle, and the brethren who were with him, wish these churches grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the usual blessing wherewith he blesses the churches in the name of the Lord--grace and peace. Grace includes God's good-will towards us and his good work upon us; and peace implies in it all that inward comfort, or outward prosperity, which is really needful for us; and they come from God the Father as the fountain, through Jesus Christ as the channel of conveyance. Both these the apostle wishes for these Christians. But we may observe, First grace, and then peace, for there can be no true peace without grace.

4 who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

5 to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Who gave himself for our sins. The reason why Paul so soon introduces this important doctrine, and makes it here so prominent, probably is, that this was the cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion, the great truth which was ever to be kept before the mind, and because this truth had been in fact lost sight of by them. They had embraced doctrines which tended to obscure it, or to make it void. They had been led into error by the Judaizing teachers, who held that it was necessary to be circumcised, and to conform to the whole Jewish ritual. Yet the tendency of all this was to obscure the doctrines of the gospel, and particularly the great truth that men can be justified only by faith in the blood of Jesus, Gal 5:4. Comp. Gal 1:6,7. Paul, therefore, wished to make this prominent--the very starting point in their religion; a truth never to be forgotten, that Christ gave himself for their sins, that he might deliver them from all the bad influences of this world, and from all the false systems of religion engendered in this world. The expression "who gave" τουδοντος is one that often occurs in relation to the work of the Redeemer, where it is represented as a gift, either on the part of God, or on the part of Christ himself. Jn 3:16. Comp. Jn 4:10, Rom 4:25, 2Cor 9:15, Gal 2:20, Eph 5:25, Tit 2:14. This passage proves,

(1.) that it was wholly voluntary on the part of the Lord Jesus. No one compelled him to come; no one could compel him. It is not too much to say, that God could not, and would not, COMPEL any innocent and holy being to undertake the great work of the atonement, and endure the bitter sorrows which were necessary to redeem man. God will compel the guilty to suffer, but he never will compel the innocent to endure sorrows, even in behalf of others. The whole work of redemption must be voluntary, or it could not be performed.

(2.) It evinced great benevolence on the part of the Redeemer. He did not come to take upon himself unknown and unsurveyed woes. He did not go to work in the dark. He knew

what was to be done. He knew just what sorrows were to be endured--how long, how keen, how awful. And yet, knowing this, he came resolved and prepared to endure all those woes, and to drink the bitter cup to the dregs.

(3.) If there had not been this benevolence in his bosom, man must have perished for ever. He could not have saved himself; and he had no power or right to compel another to suffer in his behalf; and even God would not lay this mighty burden on any other, unless he was entirely willing to endure it. How much, then, do we owe to the Lord Jesus; and how entirely should we devote our lives to him who loved us, and gave himself for us! The word himself is rendered, by the Syriac, his life, (Naphshe) and this is in fact the sense of the Greek, that he gave his life for our sins, or that he died in our stead. He gave his life up to toil, tears, privation, sorrow, and death, that he might redeem us. The phrase, "for our sins," υπερτωναμαρτιωνημων, means the same as on account of; meaning, that the cause or reason why he gave himself to death was our sins; that is, he died because we are sinners, and because we could be saved only by his giving himself up to death. Many Mss., instead of υπερ, here read περι, ,but the sense is not materially varied. The Syriac translates it, "who gave himself instead of," by a word denoting that there was a substitution of the Redeemer in our place. The sense is, that the Lord Jesus became a vicarious offering, and died in the stead of sinners. It is not possible to express this idea more distinctly and unambiguously than Paul has done in this passage. Sin was the procuring cause of his death; to make expiation for sin was the design of his coming; and sin is pardoned and removed only by his substituted suffering.

There Is No Other Gospel

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

Learn hence that men, professedly pious, and apparently ardently attached to the gospel, may become soon perverted in their views, and alienated from those who had called them into the gospel, and whom they professed tenderly to love. The ardour of the affections becomes cool, and some artful, and zealous, and plausible teachers of error seduce the mind, corrupt the heart, and alienate the affections. Where there is the ardour of the first love to God, there is also an effort soon made by the adversary to turn away the heart from him; and young converts are commonly soon attacked in some plausible manner, and by art and arguments adapted to turn away their minds from the truth, and to alienate the affections from God.

Into the grace of Christ. Locke renders this, "into the covenant of grace which is by Christ." Doddridge understands it of the method of salvation which is by or through the grace of Christ. There is no doubt that it refers to the plan of salvation which is by Christ, or in Christ; and the main idea is, that the scheme of salvation which they had embraced under his instruction,, was one which contemplated salvation only by the grace or favour of Christ; and that from that they had been removed to another scheme, essentially different, where the grace of Christ was made useless and void. It is Paul's object to show that the true plan makes Christ the great and prominent object; and that the plan which they had embraced was, in this respect, wholly different.

Unto another gospel. A gospel which destroys the grace of Christ; which proclaims salvation on other terms than simple dependence on the merits of the Lord Jesus; and which has introduced the Jewish rites and ceremonies as essential, in

order to obtain salvation. The apostle calls that scheme the gospel, because it pretended to be: it was preached by those who claimed to be preachers of the gospel; who alleged that they had come direct from the apostles at Jerusalem, and who pretended to declare the method of salvation. It claimed to be the gospel, and yet it was essentially unlike the plan which he had preached as constituting the gospel. That which he preached, inculcated the entire dependence of the sinner on the merits and grace of Christ; that system had introduced dependence on the observance of the rites of the Mosaic system as necessary to salvation.

7 which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

It was a different system, and one which taught an entirely different method of justification before God. It seems to me that this is the true sense of the passage, and that Paul means to teach them that the system, though it was called the gospel, was essentially different from that which he had taught, and which consisted in simple reliance on Christ for salvation. The system which they taught was, in fact, the Mosaic system--the Jewish mode, depending on the rites and ceremonies of religion--and which, therefore, did not deserve to be called the gospel. It would load them again with burdensome rites, and with cumbrous institutions, from which it was the great purpose of the gospel to relieve them.

But there be some that trouble you. Though this is most manifestly another system, and not the gospel at all, yet there are some persons who are capable of giving trouble, and of unsettling your minds, by making it plausible. They pretend that they have come direct from the apostles at Jerusalem; that they have received their instructions from them, and that they preach the true gospel as they teach it. They pretend that Paul was called into the office of an apostle after them; that he had never seen the Lord Jesus; that he had derived his information only from others; and thus they are able to present a plausible argument, and to unsettle the minds of the Galatians.

And would pervert. That is, the tendency of their doctrine is wholly to turn away, μεταστρεψαι, to destroy, or render useless the gospel of Christ. It would lead, to the denial of the necessity of dependence on the merits of the Lord Jesus for salvation, and would substitute dependence on rites and ceremonies. This does not of necessity mean that such was the design of their teaching, for they might have been in the main honest; but that such was the tendency and result of their teaching. It would lead men to rely on the Mosaic rites for salvation.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

But though we. That is, we the apostles. Probably he refers particularly to himself, as the plural is often used by Paul when speaking of himself. He alludes here, possibly, to a charge which was brought against him by the false teachers in Galatia, that he had changed his views since he came among them, and now preached differently from what he did then. See the Introduction. They endeavoured probably to fortify their own opinions in regard to the obligations of the Mosaic law, by affirming, that though Paul when he was among them had maintained that the observance of the law was not necessary to salvation, yet that he had changed his views, and now held the same doctrine on the subject which they did. What they relied on in support of this opinion is unknown. It is certain, however, that Paul did, on some occasions, (Acts 21:21-26,) comply with the Jewish rites; and it is not improbable that they were acquainted with that fact, and interpreted it as proving that he had changed his sentiments on the subject. At all events, it would make their allegation plausible that Paul was now in favour of the observance of the Jewish rites, and that if he had ever taught differently, he must now have changed his opinion. Paul, therefore, begins the discussion by denying this in the most solemn manner. He affirms that the gospel which he had at first preached to them was the true gospel. It contained the great doctrines of

salvation. It was to be regarded by them as a fixed and settled point, that there was no other way of salvation but by the merits of the Saviour. No matter who taught anything else; no matter though it be alleged that he had changed his mind; no matter even though he should preach another gospel; and no matter though an angel from heaven should declare any other mode of salvation, it was to be held as a fixed and settled position, that the true gospel had been preached to them at first. We are not to suppose that Paul admitted that he had changed his mind, or that the inferences of the false teachers there were well-founded; but we are to understand this as affirming, in the most solemn manner, that the true gospel, and the only method of salvation, had been preached among them at first.

Or an angel from heaven. This is a very strong rhetorical mode of expression. It is not to be supposed that an angel from heaven would preach any other than the true gospel. But Paul wishes to put the strongest possible case, and to affirm, in the strongest manner possible, that the true gospel had been preached to them. The great system of salvation had been taught; and no other was to be admitted--no matter who preached it, no matter what the character or rank of the preacher, and no matter with what imposing claims he came. It follows from this, that the mere rank, character, talent, eloquence, or piety of a preacher, does not of necessity give his doctrine a claim to our belief, or prove that his gospel is true. Great talents maybe prostituted; and great sanctity of manner, and even holiness of character, may be in error; and no matter what may be the rank, and talents, and eloquence, and piety of the preacher, if he does not accord with the gospel which was first preached, he is to be held accursed.

Let him be accursed. Greek, αναθεμα, (anathema.) On the meaning of this word, 1Cor 12:3; 1Cor 16:22. It is not improperly here rendered "accursed," or "devoted to destruction." The object of Paul is to express the greatest possible abhorrence of any other doctrine than that which he

had himself preached. So great was his detestation of it, that, says Luther, "he casteth out very flames of fire; and his zeal is so fervent, that he beginneth almost to curse the angels." It follows from this,

(1.) that any other doctrine than that which is proclaimed in the Bible on the subject of justification, is to be rejected and treated with abhorrence, no matter what the.rank, talent, or eloquence of him who defends it.

(2.) That we are not to patronize or countenance such preachers. No matter what their zeal, or their apparent sincerity, or their apparent sanctity, or their apparent success, or their real boldness in rebuking vice, we are to withdraw from them. "Cease, my son," said Solomon, "to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge," Prov 19:27. Especially are we to withdraw wholly from that instruction which goes to deny the great doctrines of salvation--that pure gospel which the Lord Jesus and the apostle taught. If Paul would regard even an angel as doomed to destruction, and as held accursed, should he preach any other doctrine, assuredly ice should not be found to lend our countenance to it, nor should we patronize it by attending on such a ministry. Who would desire to attend on the ministry of even an angel, if he was to be held accursed? How much less the ministry of a man preaching the same doctrine! It does not follow from this, however, that we are to treat others with severity of language, or with the language of cursing. They must answer to God. We are to withdraw from their teaching; we are to regard the doctrines with abhorrence; and we are not to lend our countenance to them. To their own Master they stand or fall; but what must be the doom of a teacher whom an inspired man has said should be regarded as "ACCURSED!" It may be added, how responsible is the ministerial office! How fearful the account which the ministers of religion must render! How much prayer, and study, and effort are needed that they may be able to understand the true gospel, and that they may not be led into error, or lead others into error!

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

By the question here, Paul means to say, that his great object was now to please God. He desired his favour rather than the favour of man. He acted with reference to his will. He derived his authority from him, and not from the sanhedrim or any earthly council. And the purpose of all this is to say, that he had not received his commission to preach from man, but had received it directly from God.

For if I yet pleased men. If I made it my aim to please men; if this was the regulating principle of my conduct. The word "yet" here ετι, has reference to his former purpose. It implies that this had once been his aim. But he says, if he had pursued that purpose to please men, if this had continued to be the aim of his life, he would not now have been a servant of Christ. He had been constrained to abandon that purpose, in order that he might be a servant of Christ; and the sentiment is, that in order that a man may become a Christian, it is necessary for him to abandon the purpose of pleasing men as the rule of his life. It may be implied also, that if in fact a man makes it his aim to please men, or if this is the purpose for which he lives and acts, and if he shapes his conduct with reference to that, he cannot be a Christian or a servant of Christ. A Christian must act from higher motives than those, and he who aims supremely at the favour of his fellow-men has full evidence that he is not a Christian. A friend of Christ must do his duty, and must regulate his conduct by the will of God, whether men are pleased with it or not. And it may be further implied, that the life and deportment of a sincere Christian will not please men. It is not that which they love. A holy, humble, spiritual life they do not love. It is true, indeed, that their consciences tell them that such a life is right; that they are often constrained to speak well of the life of Christians, and to commend it; it is true that they are constrained to respect a man who is a sincere Christian, and that they often repose confidence in such a man;

and it is true also that they often speak with respect of them when they are dead; but the life of an humble, devoted, and zealous Christian they do not love. It is contrary to their views of life. And especially if a Christian so lives and acts as to reprove them either by his words or by his life; or if a Christian makes his religion so prominent as to interfere with their pursuits or pleasures, they do not love it. It follows from this,

(1.) that a Christian is not to expect to please men. He must not be disappointed, therefore, if he does not. His Master did not please the world; and it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.

(2.) A professing Christian, and especially a minister, should be alarmed when the world flatters and caresses him. He should fear either

(a) that he is not living as he ought to, and that sinners love him because he is so much like them, and keeps them in countenance; or

(b) that they mean to make him betray his religion and become conformed to them. It is a great point gained for the gay world, when it can, by its caresses and attentions, get a Christian to forsake a prayer-meeting for a party, or surrender his deep spirituality to engage in some political project. "Woe unto you," said the Redeemer, "when all men speak well of you," Lk 6:26.

(3.) One of the main differences between Christians and the world is, that others aim to please men; the Christian aims to please God. And this is a great difference.

(4.) It follows that if men would become Christians, they must cease to make it their object to please men. They must be willing to be met with contempt and a frown; they must be willing to be persecuted and despised; they must be willing to

lay aside all hope of the praise and the flattery of men, and be content with an honest effort to please God.

(5.) True Christians must differ from the world. Their aims, feelings, purposes must be unlike the world. They are to be a peculiar people; and they should be willing to be esteemed such. It does not follow, however, that a true Christian should not desire the good esteem of the world, or that he should be indifferent to an honourable reputation, (1Timm 3:7;) nor does it follow that a consistent Christian will not often command the respect of the world. In times of trial, the world will repose confidence in Christians; when any work of benevolence is to be done, the world will instinctively look to Christians; and notwithstanding, sinners will not love religion, yet they will secretly feel assured that some of the brightest ornaments of society are Christians, and that they have a claim to the confidence and esteem of their fellow-men.

Paul's Ministry of the True Gospel

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached
of me is not after man.
12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by
the revelation of Jesus Christ.
13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews'
religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of
God, and wasted it:
14 and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in
mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the
traditions of my fathers.
15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my
mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,

He did not take time to deliberate whether he should or should not become a Christian. He made up his mind at once, and on the spot. He did not consult with any one; he did not ask advice of any one; he did not wait to be instructed by any one. He was convinced by the vision in an overpowering manner that Jesus

was the Messiah, and he yielded at once. The main idea is, that there was no delay, no consultation, no deferring it, that he might see and consult with his friends, or with the friends of Christianity. The object for which he dwells on this is to show that he did not receive his views of the gospel from man.He did not take time to deliberate whether he should or should not become a Christian. He made up his mind at once, and on the spot. He did not consult with any one; he did not ask advice of any one; he did not wait to be instructed by any one. He was convinced by the vision in an overpowering manner that Jesus was the Messiah, and he yielded at once. The main idea is, that there was no delay, no consultation, no deferring it, that he might see and consult with his friends, or with the friends of Christianity. The object for which he dwells on this is to show that he did not receive his views of the gospel from man.

Flesh and blood. Any human being: for so the phrase properly signifies. Mt 16:17. This does not mean here that Paul did not consult his own ease and happiness; that he was regardless of the sufferings which he might be called to endure; that he was willing to suffer, and was not careful to make provision for his own comforts which was true in itself; but that he did not lay the case before any man, or any body of men, for instruction or advice, he acted promptly and decisively, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, Acts 26:19 but resolved at once to obey. Many suppose that this passage means that Paul did not take counsel of the evil passions and suggestions of his own heart, or of the feelings which would have prompted him to lead a life of ambition, or a life under the influence of corrupt desires. But however true this was in fact, no such thing is intended here. It means simply that he did not take counsel of any human being, he resolved at once to follow the command of the Saviour, and at once to obey him. The passage shows,

(1.) that when the Lord Jesus calls us to follow him, we should promptly and decidedly obey.

(2.) We should not delay even to take counsel of earthly friends, or wait for human advice, or consult their wishes, but should at once resolve to follow the Lord Jesus. Most persons, when they are awakened to see their guilt, and their minds are impressed on the subject of religion, are prone to defer it; to resolve to think of it at some future time; or to engage in some other business before they become Christians; or, at least, they wish to finish what they have on hand before they yield to God. Had Paul pursued this course, he would probably never have become a Christian. It follows, therefore,

(3.) that when the Lord Jesus calls us, we should at once abandon any course of life, however pleasant, or any plan of ambition, however brilliant, or any scheme of gain, however promising, in order that we may follow him. What a brilliant career of ambition did Paul abandon! and how promptly and decidedly did he do it! tie did not pause or hesitate a moment; but, brilliant as were his prospects, he at once forsook all--paused in mid-career in his ambition--and, without consulting a human being, at once gave his heart to God. Such a course should be pursued by all. Such a promptness and decision will prepare one to become an eminent Christian, and to be eminently useful.

16 to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among
the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and
blood:

17 neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles
before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto
Damascus.

Neither went I up to Jerusalem. That is, I did not go there at once. I did not go to consult with the apostles there, or to be instructed by them in regard to the nature of the Christian religion. The design of this statement is to show that in no sense did he derive his commission from man.To them which were apostles before me.This implies that Paul then regarded himself to be an apostle. They were, he admits, apostles before

he was; but he felt also that he had original authority with them, and he did not go to them to receive instruction, or to derive his commission from them. Several of the apostles remained in Jerusalem for a considerable time after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, and it was regarded as the principal place of authority. See Acts 15. He did not go to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles after his visit to Arabia, but returned again to the place where he was converted, and preached there, showing that he had not derived his commission from the other apostles.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,
and abode with him fifteen days.
19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's
brother.
20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God,
I lie not.
21 Afterward I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;
22 and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which
were in Christ:
23 but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times
past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.
24 And they glorified God in me.

And they glorified God in me. They praised God on my account. They regarded me as a true convert and a sincere Christian; and they praised God that he had converted such a persecutor, and had made him a preacher of the gospel. The design for which this is mentioned is to show that though he was personally unknown to them, and had not derived his views of the gospel from them, yet that he had their entire confidence. They regarded him as a convert and an apostle, and they were disposed to praise God for his conversion. This fact would do much to conciliate the favour of the Galatians, by showing them that he had the confidence of the churches in the very-land where the gospel was first planted, and which was regarded as the source of ecclesiastical authority. In view of this we may remark,

(1.) that it is the duty of Christians kindly and affectionately to receive among their number those who have been converted from a career of persecution or of sin in any form. And it is always done by true Christians. It is easy to forgive a man who has been actively engaged in persecuting the church, or a man who has been profane, intemperate, dishonest, or licentious, if he becomes a true penitent, and confesses and forsakes his sins. No matter what his life has been; no matter how abandoned, sensual, or devilish; if he manifests true sorrow, and gives evidence of a change of heart, he is cordially received into any church, and welcomed as a fellow-labourer in the cause which he once destroyed. Here, at least, is one place where forgiveness is cordial and perfect. his former life is not remembered, except to praise God for his grace in recovering a sinner from such a course; the evils that he has done are forgotten; and he is henceforward regarded as entitled to all the privileges and immunities of a member of the household of faith. There is not on earth an infuriated persecutor or blasphemer who would not be cordially welcomed to any Christian church on the evidence of his repentance; not a man so debased and vile, that the most pure, and elevated, and learned, and wealthy Christians would not rejoice to sit down with him at the same communion table, on the evidence of his conversion to God.

(2.) We should "glorify" or praise God for all such instances of conversion. We should do it because

(a) of the abstraction of the talents of the persecutor from the cause of evil. Paul could have done, and would have done, immense service to the enemies of Christianity, if he had pursued the career which he had commenced. But when he was converted, all that bad influence ceased. So when an infidel or a profligate man is converted now.

(b) Because now his talents will be consecrated to a better service. They will be employed in the cause of truth and

salvation. All the power of the matured and educated talent will now be devoted to the interests of religion; and it is a fact for which we should thank God, that he often takes educated talent, and commanding influence, and an established reputation for ability, learning, and zeal, and devotes it to his own service.

(c) Because there will be a change of destiny; because the enemy of the Redeemer will now be saved. The moment when Saul of Tarsus was converted, was the moment which determined a change in his eternal destiny. Before, he was in the broad way to hell; henceforward he walked in the path of life and salvation. Thus we should always rejoice over a sinner returning from the error of his ways; and should praise God that he who was in danger of eternal ruin is now an heir of glory. Christians are not jealous in regard to the numbers who shall enter heaven. They feel that there is "room" for all; that the feast is ample for all; and they rejoice when any can be induced to come with them and partake of the happiness of heaven.

(3.) We may still glorify and praise God for the grace manifested in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. What does not the world owe to him! What do we not owe to him! No man did as much in establishing the Christian religion as he did; no one among the apostles was the means of converting and saving so many souls; no one has left so many and so valuable writings for the edification of the church. To him we owe the invaluable epistles--so full of truth, and eloquence, and promises, and consolations--on which we are commenting; and to him the church owes, under God, some of its most elevated and ennobling views of the nature of Christian doctrine and duty. After the lapse, therefore, of eighteen hundred years, we should not cease to glorify God for the conversion of this wonderful man; and should feel that we have cause of thankfulness that he changed the infuriated persecutor to a holy and devoted apostle.

(4.) Let us remember that God has the same power now. There is not a persecutor whom he could not convert with the same ease with which he changed Saul of Tarsus. There is not a vile and sensual man that he could not make pure; not a dishonest man that his grace could not make honest; not a blasphemer that he could not teach to venerate his name; not a lost and abandoned sinner that he cannot receive to himself. Let us, then, without ceasing cry unto him, that his grace may be continually manifested in reclaiming such sinners from the error of their ways, and bringing them to the knowledge of the truth, and to a consecration of their lives to his service.

Galatians-2

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

But privately. Marg., severally. Gr., κατιδιαν . The phrase means, that he did it not in a public manner; not before a promiscuous assembly; not even before all the apostles collected together, but in a private manner to a few of the leaders and chief persons, he made a private explanation of his motives and views, that they might understand it before it became a matter of public discussion. The point on which Paul made this private explanation was not whether the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, for on that they had no doubt after the revelation to Peter, Acts 10; but whether the rites of the Jews were to be imposed on the Gentile converts. Paul explained his views and his practice on that point, which were, that he did not impose those rites on the Gentiles; that he taught that men might be justified without their observance; and that they were not necessary in order to salvation. The reasons why

he sought this private interview with the leading men in Jerusalem he has not stated; but we may suppose that they were something like the following:

(1.) The Jews in general had very strong attachment to their own customs, and this attachment was found in a high degree among those who were converted from among them to the Christian faith. They would be strongly excited, therefore, by the doctrine that those customs were not necessary to be observed.

(2.) If the matter were submitted to a promiscuous assembly of converts from Judaism, it could not fail to produce great excitement. They could not be made readily to understand the reasons why Paul acted in this manner; there would be no possibility in an excited assemblage to offer the explanations which might be desirable; and after every explanation which could be given in this manner, they might have been unable to understand all the circumstances of the case.

(3.) If a few of the principal men were made to understand it, Paul felt assured that their influence would be such as to prevent any great difficulty, he therefore sought an early opportunity to lay the case before them in private, and to secure their favour; and this course contributed to the happy issue of the whole affair. See Acts 15. There was indeed much disputation when the question came to be submitted to "the apostles and elders," Acts 15:7; many of the sect of the Pharisees in that assembly maintained that it was needful to teach the Gentiles that the law of Moses was to be kept, Acts 15:5; and no one can tell what would have been the issue of that discussion among the excitable minds of the converts from Judaism, had not Paul taken the precaution, as he here says, to have submitted the case in private to those who were of "reputation," and if Peter and James had not in this manner been satisfied, and had not submitted the views which they did, as recorded in Acts 15:7-21, and which terminated the whole

controversy. We may just remark here, that this fact furnishes an Horae Paulinae--though he has hot referred to this--of what he calls undesigned coincidences. The affair in Acts 15, and the course of the debate, looks very much as if Peter and James had had some conference with Paul in private, and had had an opportunity of understanding fully his views on the subject before the matter came before the "apostles and elders" in public, though no such private conference is there referred to by Luke. But on turning to the epistle to the Galatians, we find in fact that he had on one occasion before seen the same Peter and James, Gal 1:18,19; and that he had had a private interview with those "of reputation" on these very points, and particularly that James, Peter, and John had approved his course, and given to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, Gal 2:9. Thus understood, the case here referred to was one of the most consummate instances of prudence that occurred in the life of Paul; and from this case we may learn,

(1.) that when a difficulty is to be settled involving great principles, and embracing a great many points, it is better to seek-an opportunity of private explanation than to submit it to a promiscuous multitude or to public debate. It is not well to attempt to settle important points when the passions of a promiscuous assembly may be excited, and where prejudices are strong. It is better to do it by private explanations, when there is an opportunity coolly to ask questions and to state the facts just as they are.

(2.) The importance of securing the countenance of influential men in a popular assembly; of having men in the assembly who would understand the whole case. It was morally certain that if such men as Peter and James were made to understand the case, there would be little difficulty in arriving at an amicable adjustment of the difficulty.

(3.) Though this passage does not refer to preaching the gospel in general, since the gospel here submitted to the men of

reputation was the question referred to above, yet we may remark, that great prudence should be used in preaching; in stating truths that may excite prejudices, or when we have reason to apprehend prejudices; and that it is often best to preach the gospel to men of reputation κατιδιαν separately, or privately. In this way the truth can be made to bear on the conscience; it may be better adapted to the character of the individual; he may put himself less in a state of defence, and guard himself less against the proper influences of truth. And especially is this true in conversing with persons on the subject of religion. It should be if possible alone, or privately. Almost any man may be approached on the subject of religion if it be done when he is alone, when he is at leisure, and if it be done in a kind spirit. Almost any man will become irritated if you address him personally in a promiscuous assembly, or even with his family around him. I have never in more than one or two instances been unkindly treated when I have addressed an individual on the subject of religion, if he was alone; and though a minister should never shrink from stating the truth, and should never be afraid of man, however exalted his rank, or great his talents, or vast his wealth, yet he will probably meet with most success when he discourses privately to "them which are of reputation."

Lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Lest the effects of my labours and journeys should be lost. Paul feared that if he did not take this method of laying the case before them privately, they would not understand it. Others might misrepresent him, or their prejudices might be excited; and when the ease came before the assembled apostles and elders, a decision might be adopted which would go to prove that he had been entirely wrong in his views, or which would lead those whom he had taught to believe that he was, and which would greatly hinder and embarrass him in his future movements. In order to prevent this, therefore, and to secure a just decision, and one which would not hinder his future usefulness, he had sought this private interview, and thus his object was gained.

He there communicated the gospel to them, which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately, &c. Here we may observe both the faithfulness and prudence of our great apostle.

(1.) His faithfulness in giving them a free and fair account of the doctrine which he had all along preached among the Gentiles, and was still resolved to preach--that of pure Christianity, free from all mixtures of Judaism. This he knew was a doctrine that would be ungrateful to many there, and yet he was not afraid to own it, but in a free and friendly manner lays it open before them and leaves them to judge whether or no it was not the true gospel of Christ. And yet,

(2.) He uses prudence and caution herein, for fear of giving offence. He chooses rather to do it in a more private than in a public way, and to those that were of reputation, that is, to the apostles themselves, or to the chief among the Jewish Christians, rather than more openly and promiscuously to all, because, when he came to Jerusalem, there were multitudes that believed, and yet continued zealous for the law, Ac 21:20. And the reason of this his caution was lest he should run, or had run, in vain, lest he should stir up opposition against himself and thereby either the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be obstructed; for nothing more hinders the progress of the gospel than differences of opinion about the doctrines of it, especially when they occasion quarrels and contentions among the professors of it, as they too usually do. It was enough to his purpose to have his doctrine owned by those who were of greatest authority, whether it was approved by others or not. And therefore, to avoid offence, he judges it safest to communicate it privately to them, and not in public to the whole church. This conduct of the apostle may teach all, and especially ministers, how much need they have of prudence, and how careful they should be to use it upon all occasions, as far as is consistent with their faithfulness.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

But neither Titus, who was with me. Paul introduces this case of Titus undoubtedly to show that circumcision was not necessary to salvation. It was a case just in point, lie had gone up to Jerusalem with express reference to this question, here was a man whom he had admitted to the Christian church without circumcising him. He claimed that he had a right to do so; and that circumcision was not necessary in order to salvation. If it were necessary, it would have been proper that Titus should have been compelled to submit to it. But Paul says this was not demanded; or if demanded by any, the point was yielded, and he was not compelled to be circumcised. It is to be remembered that this was at Jerusalem; that it was a case submitted to the apostles there; and that consequently the determination of this case settled the whole controversy about the obligation of the Mosaic laws on the Gentile converts. It is quite evident from the whole statement here, that Paul did not intend that Titus should be circumcised; that he maintained that it was not necessary; and that he resisted it when it was demanded, Gal 2:4,5. Yet on another occasion he himself performed the act of circumcision on Timothy, Acts 16:3. But there is no inconsistency in his conduct. In the case of Titus it was demanded as a matter of right and as obligatory on him, and he resisted the principle as dangerous. In the case of Timothy, it was a voluntary compliance on his part with the usual customs of the Jews, where it was not pressed as a matter of obligation, and where it would not be understood as indispensable to salvation. No danger would follow from compliance with the custom, and it might do much to conciliate the favour of the Jews, and he therefore submitted to it. Paul would not have hesitated to have circumcised Titus in the same circumstances in which it was done to Timothy; but the circumstances were different; and when it was insisted on as a matter of principle and of obligation, it became a matter of principle and of obligation with him to oppose it.

Being a Greek. Born of Gentile parents, of course he had not been circumcised. Probably both his parents were Greeks. The case with Timothy was somewhat different. His mother was a Jewess, but his father was a Greek, Acts 16:3.

4 and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

And that because of false brethren. Who these false brethren were is not certainly known; nor is it known whether he refers to those who were at Jerusalem, or to those who were at Antioch. It is probable that he refers to Judaizing Christians, or persons who claimed to be Christians and to have been converted from Judaism. Whether they were dissemblers and hypocrites, or whether they wore so imperfectly acquainted with Christianity, and so obstinate, opinionated, and perverse, though really in some respects good men, that they were conscientious in this, it is not easy to determine. It is clear, however, that they opposed the apostle Paul; that they regarded him as teaching dangerous doctrines; that they perverted and misstated his views; and that they claimed to have clearer views of the nature of the true religion than he had. Such adversaries he met everywhere, 2Cor 11:26; and it required all his tact and skill to meet their plausible representations. It is evident here that Paul is assigning a reason for something which he had done, and that reason was to counteract the influence of the "false brethren" in the case. But what is the thing concerning which he assigns a reason? It is commonly supposed to have been on account of the fact that he did not submit to the circumcision of Titus, and that he means to say that he resisted that in order to counteract their influence, and defeat their designs.

In this way he could more easily counteract the influence of the false brethren, he could make a full statement of his doctrines, he could meet their inquiries, and anticipate the objections of his enemies, he could thus secure the influence of the leading apostles in his favour, and effectually prevent all the efforts of

the false brethren to impose the Jewish rites on Gentile converts.

Unawares brought in. The word rendered "unawares" παρεισακτους is derived from a verb meaning to lead in by the side of others, to introduce along with others; and then to lead or bring in by stealth, to smuggle in.--Robinson, Lex. The verb occurs nowhere in the New Testament but in 2Pet 2:1, where it is applied to heresies, and is rendered, "who privily shall bring in." Here it refers probably to men who had been artfully introduced into the ministry, who made pretensions to piety, but who were either strangers to it, or who were greatly ignorant of the true nature of the Christian system; and who were disposed to take every advantage, and to impose on others the observance of the peculiar rites of the Mosaic economy. Into what they were brought, the apostle does not say. It may have been that they had been introduced into the ministry in this manner, (Doddridge;) or it may be that they were introduced into the "assembly" where the apostles were collected to deliberate on the subject.--Chandler. I think it probable that Paul refers to the occurrences in Jerusalem, and that these false brethren had been introduced from Antioch or some other place where Paul had been preaching, or that they were persons whom his adversaries had introduced to demand that Titus should be circumcised, under the plausible pretence that the laws of Moses required it, but really in order that there might be such proof as they desired that this rite was to be imposed on the Gentile converts. If Paul was compelled to submit to this, if they could carry this point, it would be just such an instance as they needed, and would settle the whole inquiry, and prove that the Mosaic laws were to be imposed on the Gentile converts. This was the reason why Paul so strenuously opposed it.

To spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus. In the practice of the Christian religion. The liberty referred to was, doubtless, the liberty from the painful, expensive, and onerous rites of the Jewish religion. See Gal 5:1. Their object in spying

out the liberty which Paul and others had, was, undoubtedly, to be witnesses of the fact that they did not observe the peculiar rites of the Mosaic system; to make report of it; to insist on their complying with those customs, and thus to secure the imposition of those rites On the Gentile converts. Their first object was to satisfy themselves of the fact that Paul did not insist on the observance of their customs; and then to secure, by the authority of the apostles, an injunction or order that Titus should be circumcised, and that Paul and the converts made under his ministry should be required to comply with those laws.

5 to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour. We did not submit to this at all. We did not yield even for the shortest tune. We did not waver in our opposition to their demands, or in the slightest degree become subject to their wishes. We steadily opposed their claims, in order that the great principle might be for ever settled that the laws of Moses were not to be imposed as obligatory on the Gentile converts.He felt that a great principle was involved; and though on all proper occasions he was willing to yield and to become all things to all men, yet here he did not court them, or temporize with them in the least. The phrase "by subjection" here means, that he did not suffer himself to be compelled to yield. The phrase "for an hour" is equivalent to the shortest period of time. He did not waver or yield at all.

they came only to spy out their liberty which they had in Christ Jesus, or to see whether Paul would stand up in defence of that freedom from the ceremonial law which he had taught as the doctrine of the gospel, and represented as the privilege of those who embraced the Christian religion. Their design herein was to bring them into bondage, which they would have effected could they have gained the point they aimed at; for, had they prevailed with Paul and the other apostles to have circumcised Titus, they would easily have imposed circumcision upon other Gentiles, and so have brought them under the bondage of the

law of Moses. But Paul, seeing their design, would by no means yield to them; he would not give place by subjection, no, not for an hour, not in this one single instance; and the reason of it was that the truth of the gospel might continue with them--that the Gentile Christians, and particularly the Galatians, might have it preserved to them pure and entire, and not corrupted with the mixtures of Judaism, as it would have been had he yielded in this matter. Circumcision was at that time a thing indifferent, and what in some cases might be complied with without sin; and accordingly we find even Paul himself sometimes giving way to it, as in the case of Timothy, Ac 16:3. But when it is insisted on as necessary, and his consenting to it, though only in a single instance, is likely to be improved as giving countenance to such an imposition, he has too great a concern for the purity and liberty of the gospel, to submit to it; he would not yield to those who were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, but would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, which conduct of his may give us occasion to observe that what under some circumstances may lawfully be complied with, yet, when that cannot be done without betraying the truth, or giving up the liberty, of the gospel, it ought to be refused.

6 But of those who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed *to be somewhat* in conference added nothing to me:

There is an apparent harshness in our common translation, which is unnecessary.Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me. Tindal renders this, "What they were in time passed, it maketh no matter to me." The idea seems to be this: Paul means to say, that whatever was their real rank and standing, it did not in the least affect his authority as an apostle, or his argument. While he rejoiced in their concurrence, and while he sought their approbation, yet he did not admit for a moment that he was inferior to them as an apostle, or dependent on them for the justness of his views. What they were, or what they might be thought to be, was immaterial to his claims as an apostle, and immaterial to the authority of his own views as an

apostle. He had derived his gospel from the Lord Jesus; and he had the fullest assurance that his views were just. Paul makes this remark evidently in keeping with all that he had said, that he did not regard himself as in any manner dependent on them for his authority. He did not treat them with disrespect; but he did not regard them as having a right to claim an authority over him.

God accepteth no man's person. Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11. This is a general truth, that God is not influenced in his judgment by a regard to the rank, or wealth, or external condition of any one. Its particular meaning here is, that the authority of the apostles was not to be measured, by their external rank, or by the measure of reputation which they had among men. If, therefore, it were to be admitted that he himself was not in circumstances of so much external honour as the other apostles, or that they were esteemed to be of more elevated rank than he was, still he did not admit that this gave them a claim to any higher authority. God was not influenced in his judgment by any such consideration; and Paul therefore claimed that all the apostles were in fact on a level in regard to their authority. In conference. When I conferred with them, Gal 2:2. They did not then impose on me any new obligations; they did not communicate anything to me of which I was before ignorant.

7 but contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;

It is evidently not meant here that Paul was to preach only to the Gentiles and Peter only to the Jews, for Paul often preached in the synagogues of the Jews, and Peter was the first who preached to a Gentile, Acts 10; but it is meant that it was the main business of Paul to preach to the Gentiles, or that this was especially intrusted to him.

8 (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles;)

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me

and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Paul felt that if he had the countenance of these men, it would be an important proof to the churches of Galatia that he had a right to regard himself as an apostle. Their countenance was expressed in the most full and decisive manner.

That we should go unto the heathen. To preach the gospel, and to establish churches. In this way the whole matter was settled, and settled as Paul desired it to be. A delightful harmony was produced between Paul and the apostles at Jerusalem; and the result showed the wisdom of the course which he had adopted. There had been no harsh contention or strife. No jealousies had been suffered to arise. Paul had sought an opportunity of a full statement of his views to them in private, Gal 2:2, and they had been entirely satisfied that God had called him and Barnabas to the work of making known the gospel among the heathen. Instead of being jealous at their success, they had rejoiced in it; and instead of throwing any obstacle in their way, they cordially gave them the right hand. How easy would it be always to prevent jealousies and strifes in the same way! If there was, on the one hand, the same readiness for a full and frank explanation, and if, on the other, the same freedom from envy at remarkable success, how many strifes that have disgraced the church might have been avoided! The true way to avoid strife is just that which is here proposed. Let there be on both sides perfect frankness; let there be a willingness to explain and state things just as they are; and let there be a disposition to rejoice in the talents, and zeal, and success of others, even though it should far outstrip our own, and contention in the church would cease, and every devoted and successful minister of the gospel would receive the right hand of fellowship from all--however venerable by age or authority--who love the cause of true religion.

10 Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Only they would that we should remember the poor. That is, as I suppose, the poor Christians in Judea. It can hardly be supposed that it would be necessary to make this an express stipulation in regard to the converts from among the Gentiles, and it would not have been very pertinent to the case before them to have done so. The object was, to bind together the Christians from among the heathen, and from among the Jews, and to prevent alienation and unkind feeling. It might have been alleged that Paul was disposed to forget his own countrymen altogether; that he regarded himself as so entirely the apostle of the Gentiles that he would become wholly alienated frown those who were his "kinsmen according to the flesh," and thus it might be apprehended that unpleasant feelings would be engendered among those who had been converted from among the Jews. Now nothing could be better adapted to allay this than for him to pledge himself to feel a deep interest in the poor saints among the Jewish converts; to remember them in his prayers; and to endeavour to secure contributions for their wants. Thus he would show that he was not alienated from his countrymen; and thus the whole church would be united in the closest bonds. It is probable that the Christians in Judea were at that time suffering the ills of poverty, arising either from some public persecution, or from the fact that they were subject to the displeasure of their countrymen. All who know the peculiar feelings of the Jews at that time in regard to Christians, must see at once that many of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth would be subjected to great inconveniences on account of their attachment to him. Many a wife might be disowned by her husband; many a child disinherited by a parent; many a man might be thrown out of employment by the fact that others would not countenance him; and hence many of the Christians would be poor. It became, therefore, an object of special importance to provide for them; and hence this is so often referred to in the New Testament. In addition to this, the church in Judea was afflicted with famine. Comp. Acts 11:30, Rom 15:25-27, 1Cor 16:1,2, 2Cor 8:1-7.

The same which I also was forward to do. See the passages just referred to. Paul interested himself much in the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and in this way he furnished the fullest evidence that he was not alienated from them, but that he felt the deepest interest in those who were his kindred. One of the proper ways of securing union in the church is to have the poor with them, and depending on them for support; and hence every church has some poor persons as one of the bonds of union. The best way to unite all Christians, and to prevent alienation, and jealousy, and strife, is to have a great common object of charity, in which all are interested, and to which all may contribute. Such a common object for all Christians in a sinful world. All who bear the Christian name may unite in promoting its salvation, and nothing would promote union in the now divided and distracted church of Christ like a deep and common interest in the salvation of all mankind.

Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

But when Peter was come to Antioch. On the situation of Antioch, Acts 11:19. The design for which Paul introduces this statement here is evident. It is to show that he regarded himself as on a level with the chief apostles, and that he did not acknowledge his inferiority to any of them. Peter was the eldest, and probably the most honoured of the apostles. Yet Paul says that he did not hesitate to resist him in a case where Peter was manifestly wrong, and thus showed that he was an apostle of the same standing as the others.

I withstood him to the face. I openly opposed him, and reproved him. Paul thus showed that he was equal with Peter in his apostolical authority and dignity. The instance before us is one of faithful public reproof; and every circumstance in it is worthy of special attention, as it furnishes a most important illustration of the manner in which such reproof should be conducted. The

first thing to be noted is, that it was done openly, and with candour. It was reproof addressed to the offender himself. Paul did not go to others and whisper his suspicions; he did not seek to undermine the influence and authority of another by slander; he did not calumniate him, and then justify himself on the ground that what he had said was no more than true: he went to him at once, and he frankly stated his views, and reproved him in a case where he was manifestly wrong. This too was a case so public and well known, that Paul made his remarks before the church, Gal 2:14, because the church was interested in it, and because the conduct of Peter led the church into error.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

From James. Gal 1:19. Whether they were sent by James, or whether they came of their own accord, is unknown. It is evident only that they had been intimate with James at Jerusalem, and they doubtless pleaded his authority. James had nothing to do with the course which they pursued; but the sense of the whole passage is, that James was a leading man at Jerusalem, and that the rites of Moses were observed there. When they came down to Antioch, they of course observed those rites, and insisted that others should do it also. It is very evident that at Jerusalem the peculiar rites of the Jews were observed for a long time by those who became Christian converts. They would not at once cease to observe them, and thus needlessly shock the prejudices of their countrymen. Acts 21:21 also Acts 21:22-25.

He did eat with the Gentiles. Peter had been taught that in the remarkable vision which he saw, as recorded in Acts 10. He had learned that God designed to break down the wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles, and he familiarly associated with them, and partook with them of their food. He evidently disregarded the peculiar laws of the Jews about meats and drinks, and partook of the common food which was in use among the Gentiles. Thus he showed his belief that all the race was henceforward to be regarded as on a level, and that the

peculiar institutions of the Jews were not to be considered as binding, or to be imposed on others.

But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself. He withdrew from the Gentiles, and probably from the Gentile converts to Christianity. The reason why he did this is stated. He feared those who were of the circumcision, or who had been Jews. Whether they demanded this of him; whether they encountered him in debate; or whether he silently separated himself from the Gentiles without their having said anything to him, is unknown. But he feared the effect of their opposition; he feared their reproaches; he feared the report which would be made to those at Jerusalem; and perhaps he apprehended that a tumult would be excited, and a persecution commenced at Antioch by the Jews who resided there. This is a melancholy illustration of Peter's characteristic trait of mind. We see in this act the same Peter who trembled when he began to sink in the waves; the same Peter who denied his Lord. Bold, ardent, zealous, and forward, he was at the same time timid and often irresolute; and he often had occasion for the deepest humility, and the most poignant regrets at the errors of his course. No one can read his history without loving his ardent and sincere attachment to his Master; and yet no one can read it without a tear of regret that he was left thus to do injury to his cause. No man loved the Saviour more sincerely than he did, yet his constitutional timidity and irresoluteness of character often led him to courses of life fitted deeply to wound his cause.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that

Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

Insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away, etc. Concerning Barnabas, Acts 4:36. Barnabas was the intimate friend of Paul. He had been associated with him in very important labours; and the fact, therefore, that the conduct of Peter was exciting so unhappy an influence as even to lead so worthy and good a man as he was into hypocrisy and error, made it the more proper that Paul should publicly notice and reprove the conduct of Peter. It

could not but be a painful duty, but the welfare of the church and the cause of religion demanded it, and Paul did not shrink from what was so obvious a duty.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

I said unto Peter before them all. That is, probably, before all the church, or certainly before all. who had offended with him in the case. Had this been a private affair, Paul would doubtless have sought a private interview with Peter, and would have remonstrated with him in private on the subject. But it was public. It was a case where many were involved, and where the interests of the church were at stake. It was a case where it was very important to establish some fixed and just principles, and he therefore took occasion to remonstrate with him in public on the subject. This might have been at the close of public worship; or it may have been that the subject came up for debate in some of their public meetings, whether the rites of the Jews were to be imposed on the Gentile converts. This was a question which agitated all the churches where the Jewish and Gentile converts were intermingled; and it would not be strange that it should be the subject of public debate at Antioch. The fact that Paul reproved Peter before "them all," proves,

(1.) that he regarded himself, and was so regarded by the church, as on an equality with Peter, and as having equal authority with him.

(2.) That public reproof is right when an offence has been public, and when the church at large is interested, or is in danger of being led into error. Comp. 1Timm 5:20, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

(3.) That it is a duty to reprove those who err. It is a painful duty, and one much neglected; still it is a duty often enjoined in the

Scriptures, and one that is of the deepest importance to the church. He does a favour to another man who, in a kind spirit, admonishes him of his error, and reclaims him from a course of sin. He does another the deepest injury, who suffers sin unrebuked to lie upon him, and who sees him injuring himself and others, and who is at no pains to admonish him for his faults.

(4.) If it is the duty of one Christian to admonish another who is an offender, and to do it in a kind spirit, it is the duty of him who has offended to receive the admonition in a kind spirit and with thankfulness. Excitable as Peter was by. nature, yet there is no evidence that he became angry here, or that he did not receive the admonition of his brother Paul with perfect good temper, and with an acknowledgment that Paul was right and that he was wrong. Indeed, the case was so plain--as it usually is, if men would be honest--that he seems to have felt that it was right, and to have received the rebuke as became a Christian. Peter, unhappily, was accustomed to rebukes; and he was at heart too good a man to be offended when he was admonished that he had done wrong. A good man is willing to be reproved when he has erred, and it is usually proof that there is much that is wrong when we become excited and irritable if another admonishes us of our faults. It may be added here, that nothing should be inferred from this in regard to the inspiration or apostolic authority of Peter. The fault was not that he taught error of doctrine, but that he sinned in conduct. Inspiration, though it kept the apostles from teaching error, did not keep them necessarily from sin. A man may always teach the truth, and yet be far from perfection in practice. The case here proves that Peter was not perfect, a fact proved by his whole life; it proves that he was sometimes timid, and even, for a period, time-serving; but it does not prove that what he wrote for our guidance was false and erroneous.

15 We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,
16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and

not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

I. Justification is properly a word applicable to courts of justice, but is used in a similar sense in common conversation among men. An illustration will show its nature. A man is charged, e.g., with an act of trespass on his neighbour's property. Now there are two ways which he may take to justify himself, or to meet the charge, so as to be regarded and treated as innocent. He may

(a) either deny that he performed the act charged on him, or he may

(b) admit that the deed was done, and set up as a defence that he had a right to do it. In either case, if the point be made out, he will be just or innocent in the sight of the law. The law will have nothing against him, and he will be regarded and treated in the premises as an innocent man; or he has justified himself in regard to the charge brought against him.

II. Charges of a very serious nature are brought against man by his Maker. He is charged with violating the law of God; with a want of love to his Maker; with a corrupt, proud, sensual heart; with being entirely alienated from God by wicked works; in one word, with being entirely depraved. This charge extends to all men; and to the entire life of every unrenewed man. It is not a charge merely affecting the external conduct, not merely affecting the heart; it is a charge of entire alienation from God--a charge, in short, of total depravity. See, especially, Rom 1, 2, 3. That this charge is a very serious one, no one can doubt. That it deeply affects the human character and standing, is as clear. It is a charge brought in the Bible; and God appeals in proof of it to the history of the world, to every man's conscience, and to the life of every one who has lived; and on these facts, and on his own power in searching the hearts, and in knowing what is in man, he rests the proofs of the charge. III. It is impossible for man to vindicate himself from this charge. He can neither show that the things charged have not been committed, nor that,

having been committed, he had a right to do them. He cannot prove that God is not right in all the charges which he has made against him in his word; and he cannot prove that it was right for him to do as he has done. The charges against him are facts which are undeniable, and the facts are such as cannot be vindicated. But if he can do neither of these things, then he cannot be justified by the law. The law will not acquit him. It holds him guilty. It condemns him. No argument which he can use will show that he is right, and that God is wrong. No works that he can perform will be any compensation for what he has already done. No denial of the existence of the facts charged will alter the case; and he must stand condemned by the law of God. In the legal sense he cannot be justified; and justification, if it ever exist at all, must be in a mode that is a departure from the regular operation of law, and in a mode which the law did not contemplate, for no law makes any provision for the pardon of those who violate it. It must be by some system which is distinct from the law, and in which man may be justified on different principles than those which the law contemplates. IV. This other system of justification is that which is revealed in the gospel by the faith of the Lord Jesus. It does NOT consist in either of the following things:

(1.) It is not a system or plan where the Lord Jesus takes the part of the sinner against the law or against God. He did not come to show that the sinner was right, and that God was wrong. He admitted most fully, and endeavoured constantly to show, that God was right, and that the sinner was wrong; nor can an instance be referred to where the Saviour took the part of the sinner against God, in any such sense that he endeavoured to show that the sinner had not done the things charged on him, or that he had a right to do them.

(2.) It is not that we are either innocent, or are declared to be innocent. God justifies the "ungodly," Rom 4:5. We are not innocent; we never have been; we never shall be; and it is not the design of the scheme to declare any such untruth as that we

are not personally undeserving. It will be always true that the justified sinner has no claims to the mercy and favour of God.

(3.) It is not that we cease to be undeserving personally. He that is justified by faith, and that goes to heaven, will go there admitting that he deserves eternal death, and that he is saved wholly by favour and not by desert.

(4.) It is not a declaration on the part of God that we have wrought out salvation, or that we have any claim for what the Lord Jesus has done. Such a declaration would not be true, and would not be made.

(5.) It is not that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is transferred to his people. Moral character cannot be transferred. It adheres to the moral agent as much as colour does to the rays of light which cause it. It is not true that we died for sin, and it cannot be so reckoned or imputed. It is not true that we have any merit, or any claim, and it cannot be so reckoned or imputed. All the imputations of God are according to truth; and he will always reckon us to be personally undeserving and sinful. But if justification be none of these things, it may be asked, what is it? I answer, It is the declared purpose of God to regard and treat those sinners who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as if they had not sinned, on the ground of the merits of the Saviour. It is not mere pardon. The main difference between pardon and justification respects the sinner contemplated in regard to his past conduct, and to God's future dealings with him. Pardon is a free forgiveness of past offences. It has reference to those sins as forgiven and blotted out. It is an act of remission on the part of God. Justification has respect to the law, and to God's future dealings with the sinner. It is an act by which God determines to treat him hereafter as a righteous man, or as if he had not sinned. The ground or reason of this is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ; merit such that we can plead it as if it were our own. The rationale of it is, that the Lord Jesus has accomplished by his death the same happy effects in regard to the law and the

government of God, which would be accomplished by the death of the sinner himself. In other words, nothing would be gained to the universe by the everlasting punishment of the offender himself, which will not be secured by his salvation on the ground of the death of the Lord Jesus. He has taken our place, and died in our stead; and he has met the descending stroke of justice, which would have fallen on our own head if he had not interposed, Isa 53:1 and following, and now the great interests of justice will be as firmly secured if we are saved, as they would be if we were lost. The law has been fully obeyed by one who came to save us, and as much honour has been done to it by his obedience as could have been by our own; that is, it as much shows that the law is worthy of obedience, to have it perfectly obeyed by the Lord Jesus, as it would if it were obeyed by us. It as much shows that the law of a sovereign is worthy of obedience, to have it obeyed by an only son, and an heir to the crown, as it does to have it obeyed by his subjects. And it has as much shown the evil of the violation of the law to have the Lord Jesus suffer death on the cross, as it would if the guilty had died themselves. If transgression whelm the innocent in calamity; if it extends to those who are perfectly guiltless, and inflicts pain and woe on them, it is as certainly an expression of the evil of transgression as if the guilty themselves suffer. And an impression as deep has been made of the evil of sin by the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in our stead, as if we had suffered ourselves. He endured on the cross as intense agony as we can conceive it possible for a sinner ever to endure; and the dignity of the Person who suffered--THE INCARNATE GOD--is more than an equivalent for the more lengthened sorrows which the penalty of the law exacts in hell. Besides, from the very dignity of the Sufferer in our place, an impression has gone abroad on the universe more deep and important than would have been by the sufferings of the individual himself in the world of woe. The sinner who is lost will be unknown to other worlds. His name may be unheard beyond the gates of the prison of despair. The impression which will be made on distant worlds by his individual sufferings will be as a part of the aggregate of woe, and his individual sorrows may make no impression on distant

worlds. But not so with Him who took our place, He stood in the centre of the universe. The sun grew dark, and the dead arose, and angels gazed upon the scene; and from his cross an impression went abroad to the farthest part of the universe, showing the tremendous effects of the violation of law, when not one soul could be saved from its penalty without such sorrows of the Son of God. In virtue of all this, the offender, by believing on him, may be treated as if he had not sinned; and this constitutes justification. God admits him to favour as if he had himself obeyed the law, or borne its penalty, since as many good results will now follow from his salvation as could be derived from his punishment; and since all the additional happy results will follow which can be derived from the exercise of pardoning mercy. The character of God is thus revealed. His mercy is shown. His determination to maintain his law is evinced. The truth is maintained; and yet he shows the fulness of his mercy, and the richness of his benevolence.

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

These words are generally looked upon as an objection, which the adversaries of the doctrine of justification by faith, have been always ready to make against it, namely, "That if persons be not justified by their obedience to the law, then they may live as they list in the breach and violation of the law, and freely indulge themselves in sin, and consequently make Christ the minister of sin, as if he had relaxed the duty." The apostle rejects this inference and deduction with the greatest abhorrence and detestation, saying, God forbid.

Hence note, that it is no new prejudice, though a very unjust one, against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not by works, that it opens a door to licentiousness, and makes Christ the minister of sin.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

For if I build again the things which I destroyed. Paul here uses the first person; but he evidently intends it as a general proposition, and means that if any one does it he becomes a transgressor. The sense is, that if a man, having removed or destroyed that which was evil, again introduces it or establishes it, he does wrong, and is a transgressor of the law of God. The particular application here, as it seems to me, is to the subject of circumcision, and the other rites of the Mosaic law. They had been virtually abolished by the coming of the Redeemer, and by the doctrine of justification by faith. It had been seen that there was no necessity for their observance, and of that Peter and the others had been fully aware. Yet they were lending their influence again to establish them, or to "build" them up again. They complied with them, and they insisted on the necessity of their observance. Their conduct, therefore, was that of building up again that which had once been destroyed--destroyed by the ministry, and toils, and death of the Lord Jesus, and by the fair influence of his gospel. To rebuild that again, to re-establish those customs, was wrong, and now involved the guilt of a transgression of the law of God.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

For I through the law. On this passage the commentators are by no means agreed. It is agreed that in the phrase "am dead to the law," the law of Moses is referred to, and that the meaning is, that Paul had become dead to that as a ground or means of justification, lie acted as though it were not; or it ceased to have influence over him. A dead man is insensible to all around him. He hears nothing; sees nothing; and nothing affects him. So when we are said to be dead to anything, the meaning is, that it does not have an influence over us. In this sense Paul was dead to the law of Moses. He ceased to observe it as a ground of justification. It ceased, to be the grand aim and purpose of his life, as it had been formerly, to obey it. He had higher purposes than that, and truly lived to God. Rom 6:2. But on the meaning of the phrase "through the law," διανομου there has been a great variety of opinion. Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, and some others, suppose that he means the Christian religion; and that the

meaning is, "By one law, or doctrine, I am dead to another;" that is, the Christian doctrine has caused me to cast aside the Mosaic religion. Doddridge, Clarke, Chandler, and most others, however, suppose that he here refers to the law of Moses, and that the meaning is, that by contemplating the true character of the law of Moses itself; by considering its nature and design; by understanding the extent of its requisitions, he had become dead to it; that is, he had laid aside all expectations of being justified by it. This seems to me to be the correct interpretation. Paul had formerly expected to be justified by the law. He had endeavoured to obey it. It had been the object of his life to comply with all its requisitions, in order to be saved by it, Php 3:4-6. But all this while he had not fully understood its nature; and when he was made fully to feel and comprehend its spiritual requirements, then all his hopes of justification by it died, and he became dead to it. See this sentiment more fully explained Rom 7:9. That I might live unto God. That I might be truly alive, and might be found engaged in his service. He was dead to the law, but not to everything. He had not become literally inactive and insensible to all things, like a dead man, but he had become truly sensible to the commands and appeals of God, and had consecrated himself to his service. Rom 6:11.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Gal 2:20 Verse 20. I am crucified with Christ. In the previous verse, Paul had said that he was dead. In this verse he states what he meant by it, and shows that he did not wish to be understood as saying that he was inactive, or that he was literally insensible to the appeals made to him by other beings and objects. In respect to one thing he was dead; to all that was truly great and noble he was alive. To understand the remarkable phrase, "I am crucified with Christ," we may remark,

(1.) that this was the way in which Christ was put to death. He suffered on a cross, and thus became literally dead.

(2.) In a sense similar to this, Paul became dead to the law, to the world, and to sin. The Redeemer, by the death of the cross, became insensible to all surrounding objects, as the dead always are. He ceased to see and hear, and was as though they were not. Hie was laid in the cold grave, and they did not affect or influence him. So Paul says that he became insensible to the law as a means of justification; to the world; to ambition and the love of money; to the pride and pomp of life; and to the dominion of evil and hateful passions. They lost their power over him; they ceased to influence him.

(3.) This was with Christ, or by Christ. It cannot mean literally that he was put to death with him, for that is not true; but it means that the effect of the death of Christ on the cross was to make him dead to these things, in like manner as he, when he died, became insensible to the things of this busy world. This may include the following things:

(a) There was an intimate union between Christ and his people; so that what affected him, affected them. See Jn 15:5,6.

(b) The death of the Redeemer on the cross involved as a consequence the death of his people to the world and to sin. See Gal 5:24, 6:14. It was like a blow at the root of a vine or a tree, which would affect every branch and tendril; or like a blow at the head, which affects every member of the body.

(c) Paul felt identified with the Lord Jesus; and he was willing to share in all the ignominy and contempt which was connected with the idea of the crucifixion. He was willing to regard himself as one with the Redeemer. If there was disgrace attached to the manner in which he died, he was willing to share it with him. He regarded it as a matter to be greatly desired to be made just like Christ in all things, and even in the manner of his death. This idea he has more fully expressed in Php 3:10, "That I may know him, [that is, I desire earnestly to know him,] and the power of

his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." See also Col 1:24, 1Pet 4:13. Nevertheless I live. This expression is added, as in Gal 2:19, to prevent the possibility of mistake. Paul, though he was crucified with Christ, did not wish to be understood that he felt himself to be dead. He was not inactive; not insensible, as the dead are, to the appeals which are made from God, or to the great objects which ought to interest an immortal mind. He was still actively employed, and the more so from the fact that he was crucified with Christ. The object of all such expressions as this is to show that it was no design of the gospel to make men inactive, or to annihilate their energies. It was not to cause men to do nothing. It was not to paralyze their powers, or stifle their own efforts. Paul therefore says, "I am not dead. I am truly alive; and I live a better life than I did before." Paul was as active after conversion as he was before. Before, he was engaged in persecution; now, he devoted his great talents with as much energy, and with as untiring zeal, to the cause of the great Redeemer. Indeed, the whole narrative would lead us to suppose that he was more active and zealous after his conversion than he was before. The effect of religion is not to make one dead in regard to the putting forth of the energies of the soul. True religion never made one lazy man; it has converted many a man of indolence, and effeminacy, and self-indulgence, to a man actively engaged in doing good. If a professor of religion is less active in the service of God than he was in the service of the world--less laborious, and zealous, and ardent than he was before his supposed conversion--he ought to set it down as full proof that he is an utter stranger to true religion.

Yet not I. This also is designed to prevent misapprehension. In the previous clause he had said that he lived, or was actively engaged. But lest this should be misunderstood, and it should be inferred that he meant to say it was by his own energy or powers, he guards it, and says it was not at all from himself. It was by no native tendency; no power of his own; nothing that could be traced to himself, he assumed no credit for any zeal which he had shown in the true life. He was disposed to trace it all to

another. He had ample proof in his past experience that there was no tendency in himself to a life of true religion, and he therefore traced it all to another. Christ liveth in me. Christ was the source of all the life that he had. Of course this cannot be taken literally that Christ had a residence in the apostle; but it must mean that his grace resided in him; that his principles actuated him; and that he derived all his energy, and zeal, and life from his grace. The union between the Lord Jesus and the disciple was so close that it might be said the one lived in the other. So the juices of the vine are in each branch, and leaf, and tendril, and live in them and animate them; the vital energy of the brain is in each delicate nerve--no matter how small--that is found in any part of the human frame. Christ was in him, as it were, the vital principle. All his life and energy were derived from him. And the life which I now live in the flesh. As I now live on the earth, surrounded by the cares and anxieties of this life. I carry the life-giving principles of my religion to all my duties and all my trials. I live by the faith of the Son of God. By confidence in the Son of God, looking to him for strength, and trusting in his promises and in his grace.

Who loved me, etc. He felt under the highest obligation to him, from the fact that he had loved him, and given himself to the death of the cross in his behalf. The conviction of obligation on this account Paul often expresses. Rom 6:8, and Rom 6:9-11; Rom 8:35, and Rom 8:36-39; 2Cor 5:15. There is no higher sense of obligation than that which is felt towards the Saviour; and Paul felt himself bound, as we should, to live entirely to him who had redeemed us by his blood.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

I do not frustrate the grace of God. The word rendered "frustrate" αθετω means, properly, to displace, abrogate, abolish; then to make void, to render null, Mk 7:9, Lk 7:30, 1Cor 1:19. The phrase, "the grace of God," here refers to the favour of God manifested in the plan of salvation by the gospel, and is another name for the gospel. The sense is, that Paul would not take any measures, or pursue any course, that would render that vain or

inefficacious. Neither by his own life, by a course of conduct which would show that it had no influence over the heart and conduct, nor by the observance of Jewish rites and customs, would he do anything to render that inefficacious. The design is to show that he regarded it as a great principle, that the gospel was efficacious in renewing and saving man, and he would do nothing that would tend to pre, vent that impression on mankind. A life of sin, of open depravity and licentiousness, would do that. And, in like manner, a conformity to the rites of Moses, as a ground of justification, would tend to frustrate the grace of God, or to render the method of salvation solely by the Redeemer nugatory. This is to be regarded, therefore, as at the same time a reproof of Peter for complying with customs which tended to frustrate the plan of the gospel, and a declaration that he intended that his own course of life should be such as to confirm the plan, and show its efficacy in pardoning the sinner, and rendering him alive in the service of God.

For if righteousness come by the law. If justification can be secured by the observance of any law--ceremonial or moral--then there was no need of the death of Christ as an atonement. This is plain. If man by conformity to any law could be justified before God, what need was there of an atonement? The work would then have been wholly in his own power, and the merit would have been his. It follows from this, that man cannot be justified by his own morality, or his almsdeeds, or his forms of religion, or his honesty and integrity. If he can, he needs no Saviour--he can save himself. It follows, also, that when men depend on their own amiableness, and morality, and good works, they would feel no need of a Saviour; and this is the true reason why the mass of men reject the Lord Jesus. They suppose they do not deserve to be sent to hell. They have no deep sense of guilt. They confide in their own integrity, and feel that God ought to save them. Hence they feel no need of a Saviour; for why should a man in health employ a physician? And confiding in their own righteousness, they reject the grace of God, and despise the plan of justification through the Redeemer. To feel the need of a Saviour, it is necessary to feel that we are lost and

ruined sinners; that we have no merit on which we can rely; and that we are entirely dependent on the mercy of God for salvation. Thus feeling, we shall receive the salvation of the gospel with thankfulness and joy, and show that in regard to us Christ is not "dead in vain."

Galatians-3

The Spirit Received through Faith

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Crucified among you? That is, represented among you as crucified. The words "among you," however, are wanting in many MSS., and obscure the sense. If they are to be retained, the meaning is, that the representations of the Lord Jesus, as crucified, had been as clear and impressive among them as if they had seen him with their own eyes. The argument is, that they had so clear a representation of the Lord Jesus, and of the design of his death, that it was strange that they had so soon been perverted from the belief of it. Had they seen the Saviour crucified; had they stood by the cross and witnessed his agony in death on account of sin, how could they doubt what was the design of his dying, and how could they be seduced from faith in his death, or be led to embrace any other method of justification? How could they now do it, when, although they had not seen him die, they had the fullest knowledge of the object for which he gave his precious life? The doctrine taught in this verse is, that a faithful exhibition of the sufferings and death of the Saviour ought to exert an influence over our minds and-hearts as if we had seen him die; and that they to whom such an exhibition has been made should avoid being led astray by the blandishments of false doctrines, and by the arts of man. Had we seen the Saviour expire, we could never have forgotten the scene. Let us endeavour to cherish a remembrance of his sufferings and death as if we had seen him die.

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

By the flesh. By the observance of the carnal rites of the Jews---- for so the word here evidently means. This has not been an uncommon thing. Many have been professedly converted by the Spirit, and have soon fallen into the observance of mere rites and ceremonies, and depended mainly on them for salvation. Many churches have commenced their career in an elevated and spiritual manner, and have ended in the observance of mere forms. So many Christians begin their course in a spiritual manner, and end it "in the flesh" in another sense.

They soon conform to the world. They are brought under the influence of worldly appetites and propensities. They forget the spiritual nature of their religion; and they live for the indulgence of ease, and for the gratification of the senses. They build themselves houses, and they "plant vineyards," and they collect around them the instruments of music, and the bowl and the wine is in their feasts, and they surrender themselves to luxury of living; and it seems as if they intended to perfect their Christianity by drawing around them as much of the world as possible. The beautiful simplicity of their early piety is gone. The blessedness of those moments when they lived by simple faith has fled. The times when they sought all their consolation in God are no more; and they now seem to differ from the world only in form. I dread to see a Christian inherit much wealth, or even to be thrown into very prosperous business. I see in it a temptation to build himself a splendid mansion, and to collect around him all that constitutes luxury among the people of the world. How natural for him to fed that if he has wealth like others, he should show it in a similar manner! And how easy for the most humble and spiritually-minded Christian, in the beginning of his Christian life, to become conformed to the world, (such is the weakness of human nature in its best forms;) and having begun in the Spirit, to end in the flesh !

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain.

5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and
worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the
law, or by the hearing of faith?

God's Covenant with Abraham

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him
for righteousness.
7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are
the children of Abraham.

Are the children of Abraham. Abraham was the "father of the faithful." The most remarkable trait in his character was his unwavering confidence in God. They who evinced the same trait, therefore, were worthy to be called his children. They would be justified in the same way, and in the same manner meet the approbation of God. It is implied here, that it was sufficient for salvation to have a character which would render it proper to say that we are the children of Abraham. If we are like him, if we evince the same spirit and character, we may be sure of salvation.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the
heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto
Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.
9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful
Abraham.
10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse:
for it is written,
Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all
things which are written in the book of the law
to do them.

For as many as are of the works of the law. As many as are seeking to be justified by yielding obedience to the law--whether the moral law, or the ceremonial law. The proposition is general; and it is designed to show that, from the nature of the ease, it is impossible to be justified by the works of the law, since, under all circumstances of obedience which we can render, we are still left with its heavy curse resting on us.

Are under the curse. The curse which the law of God denounces. Having failed by all their efforts to yield perfect obedience, they must, of course, be exposed to the curse which the law denounces on the guilty. The word rendered curse καταραν, means, as with us, properly, imprecation or cursing. It is used in the Scriptures particularly in the sense of the Hebrew --malediction, or execration, Job 31:30, Jer 29:18, Dan 9:11; of the word ,, Mal 2:2; Prov 3:33; and especially of the common Hebrew word --a curse, Gen 27:12,13, De 11:26,28,29, 23:5, 27:13, et sape al. It is here used evidently in the sense of devoting to punishment or destruction; and the idea is, that all who attempt to secure salvation by the works of the law, must be exposed to its penalty. It denounces a curse on all who do not yield entire obedience; and no partial compliance with its demands can save from the penalty.

For it is written. The substance of these words is found in De 27:26 "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." It is the solemn close of a series of maledictions which Moses denounces in that chapter on the violators of the law. In this quotation, Paul has given the sense of the passage, but he has quoted literally neither from the Hebrew nor from the Septuagint. The sense, however, is retained. The word "cursed" here means, that the violator of the law shall be devoted to punishment or destruction. The phrase, "that continueth not," in the Hebrew is "that confirmeth not"--that does not establish or confirm by his life. He would confirm it by continuing to obey it; and thus the sense in Paul and in Moses is substantially the same.

The book of the law. That is, in the law. This phrase is not found in the passage in Deuteronomy. The expression there is, "the words of this law." Paul gives it a somewhat larger sense, and applies it to the whole of the law of God. The meaning is, that the whole law must be obeyed, or man cannot be justified by it, or will be exposed to its penalty and its curse. This idea is

expressed more fully by James, 2:10, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" that is, he is guilty of breaking the law as a whole, and must be held responsible for such violation. The sentiment here is one that is common to all law, and must be, from the nature of the case. The idea is, that a man who does not yield compliance to a whole law, is subject to its penalty, or to a curse. All law is sustained on this principle. A man who has been honest, and temperate, and industrious, and patriotic, if he commits a single act of murder, is subject to the curse of the law, and must meet the penalty. A man who has been honest and honourable in all his dealings, yet if he commit a single act of forgery, he must meet the curse denounced by the laws of his country, and bear the penalty. So in all matters pertaining to law: no matter what the integrity of the man, no matter how upright he has been, yet for the one offence the law denounces a penalty, and he must bear it. It is out of the question for him to be justified by it. He cannot plead as a reason why he should not be condemned for the act of murder or forgery, that he has in all other respects obeyed the law, or even that he has been guilty of no such offences before. Such is the idea of Paul in the passage before us. It was clear to his view that man had not, in all respects, yielded obedience to the law of God. If he had not done this, it was impossible that he should be justified by the law, and he must bear its penalty.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

A fourth argument is here produced to prove, that no sinner can be justified before God, by the works of the law, although before men he may. The argument is this, taken from The just shall live by faith Hab 2:4: that is, live his spiritual life by faith, his life of justification and sanctification also: the life of his righteousness before God, of his holiness before men, and his life of glory with God in heaven, are all by faith. He adds, The law is not of faith; Gal 3:12 that is, the law says nothing of faith in a Mediator, or promises life to any person, save only to him who by a sinless obedience performs exactly what it prescribes: but the voice of the law is, Do, or die.

Learn hence, that the law and faith, that is, the law and the gospel, are not contrary to each other, but are mutually subservient one to another in many things; as thus, when the law makes known sin, the gospel holds forth the remedy for sin; the law discovers our need of Christ, the gospel makes an offer and gracious tender of Jesus Christ; the law makes known to us our entire duty, the gospel furnishes us with strength and ability to perform that duty.

Learn, 2. That though the law and faith, that is, the gospel, which is the doctrine of faith, be not contrary to each other, yet in point of justification they are mutually inconsistent one with another: So that if justification be by the works of the law, it cannot be had by faith: if it be had by faith, it cannot be attained by the works of the law. There can be no mixture of law and gospel, of faith and works, in this matter.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

From the curse of the law. The curse which the law threatens, and which the execution of the law would inflict; the punishment due to sin. This must mean, that he has rescued us from the consequences of transgression in the world of woe; he has saved us from the punishment which our sins have deserved. The word "us," here, must refer to all who are redeemed; that is, to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The curse of the law is a curse which is due to sin, and cannot be regarded as applied particularly to any one class of men. All who violate the law of God, however that law may be made known, are exposed to its penalty. The word "law" here relates to the law of God in general, to all the laws of God made known to man. The law of God denounced death as the wages of sin. It threatened punishment in the future world for ever. That would certainly have been inflicted, but for the coming

and death of Christ. The world is lying by nature under this curse, and it is sweeping the race on to ruin.

Being made a curse for us. This is an exceedingly important expression. Tindal renders it, "And was made a curse for us." The Greek word is καταρα, the same word which is used in Gal 3:10. Gal 3:10. There is scarcely any passage in the New Testament on which it is more important to have correct views than this; and scarcely any one on which more erroneous opinions have been entertained. In regard to it, we may observe that it does not mean,

(1.) that by being made a curse, his character or work were in any sense displeasing to God. He approved always of what the Lord Jesus did, and he regarded his whole character with love and approbation. The passage should never be so interpreted as to leave the impression that he was in any conceivable sense the object of the Divine displeasure.

(2.) He was not ill-deserving, he was not blameworthy. He had done no wrong, he was holy, harmless, undefiled. No crime charged upon him was proved; and there is no clearer doctrine in the Bible than that, in all his character and work, the Lord Jesus was perfectly holy and pure.

(3.) He was not guilty, in any proper sense of the word. The word guilty means, properly, to be bound to punishment for crime. It does not mean, properly, to be exposed to suffering; but it always, when properly used, implies the notion of personal crime. I know that theologians have used the word in a somewhat different sense, but it is contrary to the common and just apprehensions of men. When we say that a man is guilty, we instinctively think of his having committed a crime, or having done something wrong. When a jury finds a man guilty, it implies that the man has committed a crime, and ought to be punished. But in this sense, and in no conceivable sense, where the word is properly used, was the Lord Jesus guilty.

(4.) It cannot be meant that the Lord Jesus properly bore the penalty of the law. His sufferings were in the place of the penalty, not the penalty itself. They were a substitution for the penalty, and were, therefore, strictly and properly vicarious, and were not the identical sufferings which the sinner would himself have endured. There are some things in the penalty of the law which the Lord Jesus did not endure, and which a substitute or a vicarious victim could not endure, Remorse of conscience is a part of the inflicted penalty of the law, and will be a vital part of the sufferings of the sinner in hell--but the Lord Jesus did not endure that. Eternity of sufferings is an essential part of the penalty of the law--but the Lord Jesus did not suffer for ever. Thus there are numerous sorrows connected with the consciousness of personal guilt, which the Lord Jesus did not and cannot endure.

(5.) He was not sinful, or a sinner, in any sense. He did not so take human guilt upon him, that the words sinful and sinner could with any propriety be applied to him. They are not applied to him in any way in the Bible; but the language there is undeviating. It is, that in all senses he was holy and undefiled. And yet language is often used on this subject which is horrible, and but little short of blasphemy, as if he was guilty, and as if he was even the greatest sinner in the universe. I have heard language used which sent a thrill of horror to my heart; and language may be found in the writings of those who hold the doctrine of imputation in the strictest sense, which is but little short of blasphemy. I have hesitated whether I should copy-expressions here on this subject from one of the greatest and best of men--I mean LUTHER--to show the nature of the views which men sometimes entertain on the subject of the imputation of sin to Christ. But as Luther deliberately published them to the world in his favourite book, which he used to call his "Catharine de Bora," after the name of his wife; and as similar views are sometimes entertained now; and as it is important that such views should be held up to universal abhorrence--no matter how respectable the source from which they emanate--I will copy a few of his expressions on this subject:

"And this, no doubt, all the prophets did foresee in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, THAT EVER WAS OR COULD BE IN THE WORLD. For he, being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person, and without sins; is not now the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; but a sinner which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor, and a persecutor; of Peter, which denied Christ; of David, which was an adulterer, a murderer, and caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord; and, briefly, which hath and beareth all the sins of all men in his body: not that he himself committed them, but for that he received them, being committed or done of us, and laid them upon his own body, that he might make satisfaction for them with his own blood. Therefore, this general sentence of Moses comprehendeth him also, (albeit in his own person he was innocent,) because it found him amongst sinners and transgressors; like as the magistrate taketh him for a thief, and punisheth him whom he findeth among other thieves and transgressors, though he never committed anything worthy of death. When the law, therefore, found him among thieves, it condemned and killed him as a thief." "If thou wilt deny him to be a sinner and accursed, deny also that he was crucified and dead." "But if it be not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified between two thieves, then it is not absurd to say that he was accursed, and OF ALL SINNERS THE GREATEST." "God, our most merciful Father, sent his only Son into the world, and laid upon him all the sins of all men, saying, be thou Peter, that denier; Paul, that persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor; David, that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men: see, therefore, that thou pay and satisfy for them."--

Luther on the Galatians, chap. iii. 13, (pp. 213--215; Edit. Loud., 1838.) Luther was a great and holy man. He held, as firmly as any one can, to the personal holiness of the Redeemer. But this language shows how imperfect and erroneous views may warp the language of holy men; and how those sentiments led him to

use language which is little less than blasphemy. Indeed, we cannot doubt that if Luther had heard this very language used by one of the numerous enemies of the gospel in his time, as applicable to the Saviour, he would have poured out the full torrent of his burning wrath, and all the stern denunciations of his most impassioned eloquence, on the head of the scoffer and the blasphemer. It is singular, it is one of the remarkable facts in the history of mind, that a man with the New Testament before him, and accustomed to contemplate daily its language, could ever have allowed himself to use expressions like these of the holy and unspotted Saviour. But what is the meaning of the language of Paul, it will be asked, when he says that he was "made a curse for us?" In reply, I answer, that the meaning must be ascertained from the passage which Paul quotes in support of his assertion, that Christ was "made a curse for us." That passage is, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This passage is found in De 21:23. It occurs in a law respecting one who was hanged for a "sin worthy of death," De 21:22. The law was, that he should be buried the same day, and that the body should not remain suspended over the night; and it is added, as a reason for this, that "he that is hanged is accursed of God;" or, as it is in the margin, "the curse of God." The meaning is, that when one was executed for crime in this manner, he was the object of the Divine displeasure and malediction. Regarded thus as an object accursed of God, there was a propriety that the man who was executed for crime should be buried as soon as possible, that the offensive object should be hidden from the view. In quoting this passage, Paul leaves out the words "of God," and simply says, that the one who was hanged on a tree was held accursed. The sense of the passage before us is, therefore, that Jesus was subjected to what was regarded as an accursed death. He was treated in his death AS IF he had been a criminal. He was put to death in the same manner as he would have been if he had himself been guilty of the violation of the law. Had he been a thief or a murderer, had he committed the grossest and the blackest crimes this would have been the punishment to which he would have been subjected. This was the mode of punishment adapted to those crimes, and he was treated as if all these had been committed by him. Or, in other words, had he been

guilty of all these, or any of these, he could not have been treated in a more shameful and ignominious manner than he was; nor could he have been subjected to a more cruel death. As has already been intimated, it does not mean that he was guilty, nor that he was not the object of the approbation and love of God, but that his death was the same that it would have been if he had been the vilest of malefactors, and that that death was regarded by the law as accursed. It was by such substituted sorrows that we are saved; and he consented to die the most shameful and painful death, as if he were the vilest malefactor, in order that the-most guilty and vile of the human race might be saved. In regard to the way in which his death is connected with our justification, see Gal 2:16. It may be observed, also, that the punishment of the cross was unknown to the Hebrews in the time of Moses, and that the passage in De 21:23 did not refer originally to that. Nor is it known that hanging criminals alive was practised among the Hebrews. Those who were guilty of great crimes were first stoned or otherwise put to death, and then their bodies were suspended for a few hours on a gibbet. In many cases, however, merely the head was suspended utter it had been severed from the body, Gen 40:17-19; Nu 25:4,5. Crucifixion was not known in the time of the giving of the law; but the Jews gave such an extent to the law in De 21:23, as to include this mode of punishment. Jn 19:31, seq. The force of the argument here, as used by the apostle Paul, is, that if to be suspended on a gibbet after having been put to death was regarded as a curse, it should not be regarded as a curse in a less degree to be suspended alive on a cross, and to be put to death in this manner. If this interpretation of the passage be correct, then it follows that this should never be used as implying, in any sense, that Christ was guilty, or that he was ill-deserving, or that he was an object of the Divine displeasure, or that he poured out on him all his wrath. He was, throughout, an object of the Divine love and approbation. God never loved him more, or approved what he did more, than when he gave himself to death on the cross. He had no hatred towards him; he had no displeasure to express towards him. And it is this which makes the atonement so wonderful and so glorious. Had he been displeased with him; had the Redeemer been properly an object of his wrath; had he in any

sense deserved those sorrows, there would have been no merit in his sufferings; there would have been no atonement. What merit can there be when one suffers only what he deserves? But what made the atonement so wonderful, so glorious, so benevolent, what made it an atonement at all, was, that innocence was treated As IF it were guilt; that the most pure, and holy, and benevolent, and lovely Being on earth should consent to be treated, and should be treated by God and man, As IF he were the most vile and ill-deserving. This is the mystery of the atonement; this shows the wonders of the Divine benevolence; this is the nature of substituted sorrow; and this lays the foundation for the offer of pardon, and for the hope of eternal salvation.

The way and manner in and by which Jesus Christ effecteth all this for us; namely, by his being made a curse for us; not that Christ was made the very curse itself, or changed into a curse, but he took the curse upon himself, our sin became his by voluntary susception of the punishment; and Christ underwent that death, the death of the cross, which by the law was accursed, to free us from the curse of the law; as Christ was made sin for us, so was he made a curse for us. Now as he was made sin, not by contracting the guilt of sin, but by suffering the punishment of sin; so he was made a curse, by undergoing that death which the law styles accursed.

14 that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The man that doeth them shall live in them: and for every failure herein the law denounces a curse. Unless our obedience be universal, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be perpetual too (if in any instance at any time we fail and come short), we fall under the curse of the law. The curse is wrath revealed, and ruin threatened: it is a separation unto all evil, and this is in full force, power, and virtue, against all sinners, and therefore against all men; for all have sinned and become guilty before God: and if, as transgressors of the law, we are under the curse of it, it must be a vain thing to look for justification by it. But, though this is not to be expected from the

law, yet the apostle afterwards acquaints us that there is a way open to our escaping this curse, and regaining the favour of God, namely, through faith in Christ, who (as he says, Ga 3:13) hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, &c. A strange method it was which Christ took to redeem us from the curse of the law; it was by his being himself made a curse for us. Being made sin for us, he was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for the present under that infamous token of the divine displeasure upon which the law of Moses had put a particular brand, De 21:22. The design of this was that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ--that all who believed on Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, might become heirs of Abraham's blessing, and particularly of that great promise of the Spirit, which was peculiarly reserved for the times of the gospel. Hence it appeared that it was not by putting themselves under the law, but by faith in Christ, that they become the people of God and heirs of the promise. Here note,

1 The misery which as sinners we are sunk into--we are under the curse and condemnation of the law.

2 The love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us--he has submitted to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law.

3. The happy prospect which we now have through him, not only of escaping the curse, but of inheriting the blessing. And,

4. That it is only through faith in him that we can hope to obtain this favour.

That we might receive the promise of the Spirit. That all we who are Christian converts. The promise of the Spirit, or the promised Spirit, is here put for all the blessings connected with the Christian religion. It includes evidently the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit; and all his influences in renewing the heart, in sanctifying the soul, and in comforting the people of God. These

influences had been obtained in virtue of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus in the place of sinners, and these influences were the sum of all the blessings promised by the prophets.

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17 And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

The illustration is, that when a contract or agreement is made by men involving obligations and promises, no one can add to it or take from it. It will remain as it was originally made. So with God. He made a solemn promise to Abraham. That promise pertained to his posterity. The blessing was connected with that promise, and it was of the nature of a compact with Abraham. But if so, then this could not be effected by the law which was four hundred years after, and the law must have been given to secure some different object from that designed by the promise made to Abraham, Gal 3:19. But the promise made to Abraham was designed to secure the "inheritance," or the favour of God; and if so, then the same thing could not be secured by the observance of the law, since there could not be two ways so unlike each other of obtaining tho. same thing.

God cannot have two ways of justifying and saving men; and if he revealed a mode to Abraham, and that mode was by faith, then it could not be by the observance of the law which was given so long after. The main design of the argument and the illustration here, Gal 3:15 and following is to show that the promise made to Abraham was by no means made void by the giving of the law. The law had another design, which did not interfere with the promise made to Abraham. That stood on its own merits, irrespective of the demands and the design of the

law. It is possible, as Rosenmuller suggests, that Paul may have had his eye on an objection to his view. The objection may have been, that there were important acts of legislation which succeeded the promise made to Abraham, and that that promise must have been superseded by the giving of the law. To this he replies, that the Mosaic law given at a late period could not take away or nullify a solemn promise made to Abraham, but that it was intended for a different object.

18 For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

The Purpose of the Law

19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Gal 3:19 Verse 19. Wherefore then serveth the law? This is obviously an objection which might be urged to the reasoning which the apostle had pursued. It was very obvious to ask, if the principles which he had laid down were correct, of what use was the law? Why was it given at all? Why were there so many wonderful exhibitions of the Divine power at its promulgation? Why were there so many commendations of it in the Scriptures? And why were there so many injunctions to obey it? Are all these to be regarded as nothing, and is the law to be esteemed as worthless? To all this the apostle replies that the law was not useless, but that it was given by God for great and important purposes, and especially for purposes closely connected with the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and the work of the Mediator. It was added, προσετεθη. It was appended to all the previous institutions and promises. It was an additional arrangement, on the part of God, for great and important purposes. It was an arrangement subsequent to the giving of the promise, and was intended to secure important advantages until the superior arrangement under the Messiah should be introduced, and was with reference to that. Because of

transgressions. On account of transgressions, or with reference to them. The meaning is, that the law was given to show the true nature of transgressions, or to show what was sin. It was not to reveal a way of justification, but it was to disclose the true nature of sin; to deter men from committing it; to declare its penalty; to convince men of it, and thus to be "ancillary" to, and preparatory to, the work of redemption through the Redeemer. This is the true account of the law of God as given to apostate man, arid this use of the law still exists. This effect of the law is accomplished

(1) by showing us what God requires, and what is duty. It is the straight rule of what is right; and to depart from that is the measure of wrong.

(2.) It shows us the nature and extent of transgression, by showing us how far we have departed from it.

(3.) It shows what is the just penalty of transgression, and is thus fitted to reveal its true nature.

(4.) It is fitted to produce conviction for sin, and thus shows how evil and bitter a thing transgression is. Rom 4:15; Rom 7:7, also Rom 7:8-11.

(5.) It thus shows its own inability to justify and save men, and is a preparatory arrangement to lead men to the cross of the Redeemer. Gal 3:24. At the same time,

(6.) the law was given with reference to transgressions, in order to keep men from transgression. It was designed to restrain and control them by its denunciations, and by the fear of its threatened penalties. When Paul says that the law was given on account of transgressions, we are not to suppose that this was the sole use of the law; but that this was a main or leading purpose. It may accomplish many other important purposes, (Calvin,) but this is one leading design. And this design it still accomplishes. It shows men their duty. It reminds them of their guilt. It teaches

them how far they have wandered from God. It reveals to them the penalty of disobedience. It shows them that justification by the law is impossible, and that there must be some other way by which men must be saved. And since these advantages are derived from it, it is of importance that that law should be still proclaimed, and that its high demands and its penalties should be constantly held up to the view of men. Till the seed should come, etc. The Messiah, to whom the promise particularly applied. See Gal 3:16. It is not implied here that the law would be of no use after that, but that it would accomplish important purposes before that. A large portion of the laws of Moses would then indeed cease to be binding. They were given to accomplish important purposes among the Jews until the Messiah should comic, and then they would give way to the more important institutions of the gospel. But the moral law would continue to accomplish valuable objects after his advent, in showing men the nature of transgression, and leading them to the cross of Christ. The essential idea of Paul here is, that the whole arrangement of the Mosaic economy, including all his laws, was with reference to the Messiah. It was a part of a great and glorious whole. It was not an independent thing. It did not stand by itself. It was incomplete, and in many respects unintelligible, until he came--as one part of a tally is unmeaning and useless until the other is found. In itself it did not justify or save men, but it served to introduce a system by which they could be saved. It contained no provisions for justifying men, but it was in the design of God an essential part of a system by which they could be saved. It was not a whole in itself, but it was a part of a glorious whole, and led to the completion and fulfillment of the entire scheme by which the race could be justified and brought to heaven. And it was ordained by angels. That is, the law was ordained by angels. The word ordained, here, διαταγεις, usually means to arrange; to dispose in order; and is commonly used with reference to the marshalling of an army. In regard to the sentiment here, that the law was ordained by angels, Acts 7:13. The Old Testament makes no mention of the presence of angels at the giving of the law; but it was a common opinion among the Jews, that the law was given by the instrumentality of angels,

and arranged by them; and Paul speaks in accordance with this opinion. Comp. Heb 2:2 The sentiment here is, that the law was prescribed, ordered, or arranged by the instrumentality of the angels-- an opinion, certainly, which none can prove not to be true. In itself considered, there is no more absurdity in the opinion that the law of God should be given by the agency of angels, than there is that it should be done by the instrumentality of man. In the Septuagint De 33:2 there is an allusion of the same kind. The Hebrew is, "From his right hand went a fiery law for them." The Seventy render this, "His angels with him on his right hand." Comp. Joseph. Ant. xv. 5, 3. That angels were present at the giving of the law is more than implied, it is believed, in two passages of the Old Testament. The one is that which is referred to above, and a part of which the translators of the Septuagint expressly apply to angels, De 33:2 The Hebrew is, "Jehovah came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came [literally] with ten thousands of holiness;" that is, with his holy ten thousands, or with his holy myriads, By the holy myriads here mentioned, what can be meant but the angels? The word "holy," in the Scriptures, is not given to storms, and winds, and tempests; and the natural interpretation is, that he was attended with vast hosts of intelligent beings. The same sentiment is found in Ps 68:17: "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands repeated; the Lord is in the midst of them, as in Sinai, as in his sanctuary." Does not this evidently imply, that when he gave the law on Mount Sinai he was surrounded by a multitude of angels? See Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus viii. pp. 565--567. It may be added, that in the fact itself there is no improbability. What is more natural than to suppose that when the law of God was promulgated in such a solemn manner on Mount Sinai to a world, that the angels should be present? If any occasion on earth has ever occurred where their presence was allowable and proper, assuredly that was one. And yet the Scriptures abound with assurances that the angels are interested in human affairs, and that they have had an important agency in the concerns of man. In the hand. That is, under the direction or control of. To be in the hand of one is to be under his control; and the idea is, that while this was done by

the ordering of the angels, or by their disposition, it was under the control of a mediator. Rosenmuller, however, and others, suppose that this means simply by, (per;); that is, that it was done by the instrumentality of a mediator. But it seems to me to imply more than this; that the mediator, here referred to had some jurisdiction or control over the law thus given; or that it was subject to him, or with reference to him. The interpretation, however, will be affected by the view which is taken of the meaning of the word mediator. Of a mediator. The word mediator μεσιτου means, properly, one who intervenes between two parties, either as an interpreter or internuncius, or as an intercessor or reconciler. In the New Testament, in all the places where it occurs, unless the passage before us be an exception, it is applied to the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator between God and man, 1Timm 2:5, Heb 8:6, 9:15, 12:24. There has been some difference of opinion as to the reference of the word here. Rosenmuller, Grotius, Doddridge, Bloomfield, Robinson, (Lex.,) Chandler, and many others, suppose that it refers to Moses. Calvin and many others suppose that the reference is to Christ. The common sentiment among expositors undoubtedly is, that the reference is to Moses; and it is by no means easy to show that that is not the correct opinion. But to me it seems that there are reasons why it should be regarded as having reference to the great Mediator between God and man. Some of the reasons which incline me to this opinion are,

(1.) that the name mediator is not, so far as I know, applied to Moses elsewhere in the Scriptures.

(2.) The name is appropriated to the Lord Jesus. This is certainly the case in the New Testament, unless the passage before us be an exception; and the name is not found in the Old Testament.

(3.) It is difficult to see the pertinency of the remark here, or the bearing on the argument on the supposition that it refers to Moses. How would it affect the drift and purport of the apostle's reasoning? How would it bear on the case? But on the

supposition that it refers to the Lord Jesus, that would be a material fact in the argument. It would show that the law was subordinate to the Messiah, and was with reference to him. It was not only subservient by being ordained by angels, but as being under the Mediator, and with reference to him, until he, the "promised seed," should come.

(4.) It is only by such an interpretation that the following "vexed" verse can be understood. If that be applied to Moses, I see not that any sense can be affixed to it that shall be pertinent or intelligible. These reasons may not appear satisfactory to others; and I admit they are not as clear as would be desirable that reasons should be in the exposition of the Bible, but they may be allowed perhaps to have some weight. If they are of weight, then the sentiment of the passage is, that the law was wholly subordinate, and could not make the promise of no effect. For

(1) it was given hundreds of years after the promise.

(2.) It was under the direction of angels, who must themselves be inferior to and subordinate to the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man. If given by their agency and instrumentality, however important it might be, it could not interfere with a direct promise made by God himself, but must be subordinate to that promise.

(3.) It was under the Mediator, the promised Messiah. It was in his hand, and subject to him. It was a part of the great plan which was contemplated in the promise, and was tributary to that, and must be so regarded. It was not an independent scheme; not a thing that stood by itself; but a scheme subordinate and tributary, and wholly under the control of the Mediator, and a part of the plan of redemption, and of course to be modified or abrogated just as that This should require, and to be regarded as wholly tributary, to it. This view will accord certainly with the argument of Paul, and with his design in showing, that the law could by no

means, and in no way, interfere with the promise made to Abraham, but must be regarded as wholly subordinate to the plan of redemption.

20 Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.

21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Is the law then against the promises of God? Is the law of Moses to be regarded as opposed to the promises made to Abraham? Does this follow from any view which can be taken of the subject? The object of the apostle in asking this question is, evidently, to take an opportunity to deny, in the most positive manner, that there can be any such clashing or contradiction. He shows, therefore, what was the design of the law, and declares that the object was to further the plan contemplated in the promise made to Abraham. It was an auxiliary to that. It was as good as a law could be; and it was designed to prepare the way for the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

For if there had been a law given which could have given life. The law of Moses is as good as a law can be. It is pure, and holy, and good. It is not the design to insinuate anything against the law in itself, or to say that as a law it is defective. But law could not give life. It is not its nature; and man cannot be justified by obedience to it. No man ever has yielded perfect compliance with it, and no man, therefore, can be justified by it. Gal 2:16, Gal 3:10. Verily righteousness should have been by the law. Or justification would have been secured by the law. The law of Moses was as well adapted to this as a law could be. No better law could have been originated for this purpose; and if men were to attempt to justify themselves before God by their own works, the law of Moses would be as favourable for such an undertaking as any law which could be revealed. It is as reasonable, and equal, and pure. Its demands are as just, and its terms as favourable, as could be any of the terms of mere law. And such a law has been given, in part, in order to show that. justification by the law is out of the question. If men could not be justified by a law so pure, and equal, and just, so reasonable in all its

requirements, and so perfect, how could they expect to be justified by conformity to any inferior or less perfect rule of life? The fact, therefore, that no one can be justified by the pure law revealed on Mount Sinai, for ever settles the question about the possibility of being justified by law.

22 But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

But the Scripture. The Old Testament, Jn 5:39, containing the law of Moses. Hath concluded all under sin. Has shut up συνεκλεισεν all under the condemnation of sin; that is, has declared all men, no matter what their rank and external character, to be sinners. Of course, they cannot be justified by that law which declares them to be guilty, and which condemns them, any more than the law of the land will acquit a murderer, and pronounce him innocent, at the same time that it holds him to be guilty. In regard to the meaning of the expression here used, Rom 11:32. Comp. Rom 3:9,19. That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, etc. That the promise referred to in the transaction with Abraham, the promise of justification and life by faith in the Messiah. Here we see one design of the law. It was to show that they could not be justified by their own works, to hedge up their way in regard to justification by their own righteousness, and to show them their need of a better righteousness. The law accomplishes the same end now. It shows men that they are guilty; and it does it in order that they may be brought under the influence of the pure system of the gospel, and become interested in the promises which are connected with eternal salvation.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster. The word rendered schoolmaster, παιδαγωγος, whence the word pedagogue, referred originally to a slave or freedman, to whose care boys were committed, and who accompanied them to the public schools. The idea here is not that, of instructor, but there is reference to the office and duty of the paedagogus among the ancients. The office was usually intrusted to slaves or freedmen. It is true, that

when the paedagogus was properly qualified, he assisted the children committed to his care in preparing their lessons. But still his main duty was not instruction, but it was to watch over the boys; to restrain them from evil and temptation; and to conduct them to the schools, where they might receive instruction. See, for illustrations of this, Wetstein, Bloomfield, etc. In the passage before us, the proper notion of pedagogue is retained. In our sense of the word schoolmaster, Christ is the schoolmaster, and not the law. The law performs the office of the ancient pedagogue, to lead us to the teacher or the instructor. That teacher or instructor is Christ. The ways in which the law does this may be the following:

(1.) It restrains us and rebukes us, and keeps us as the ancient pedagogue did his boys.

(2.) The whole law was designed to be introductory to Christ. The sacrifices and offerings were designed to shadow forth the Messiah, and to introduce him to the world.

(3.) The moral law--the law of God--shows men their sin and danger, and thus leads them to the Saviour. It condemns them, and thus prepares them to welcome the offer of pardon through a Redeemer.

(4.) It still does this. The whole economy of the Jews was designed to do this; and under the preaching of the gospel it is still done. Men see that they are condemned; they are convinced by the law that they cannot save themselves, and thus they are led to the Redeemer. The effect of the preached gospel is to showy men their sins, and thus to be preparatory, to the embracing of the offer of pardon. Hence the importance of preaching the law still; and hence it is needful that men should be made to feel that they are sinners, in order that they may be prepared to embrace the offers of mercy. Comp. Rom 10:4.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

We are no longer under a schoolmaster. Under the pedagogus, or pedagogue. We are not kept in restraint, and under bondage, and led along to another to receive instruction. We are directly under the great Teacher, the Instructor himself; and have a kind of freedom which we were not allowed before. The bondage and servitude have passed away; and we are free from the burdensome ceremonies and expensive rites (comp. Acts 15:10) of the Jewish law, and from the sense of condemnation which it imposes. This was true of the converts from Judaism to Christianity--that they became free from the burdensome rites of the law; and it is true of all converts to the faith of Christ, that, having been made to see their sin by the law, and having been conducted by it to the cross of the Redeemer, they are now made free.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

For ye are all the children of God, etc. All who bear the Christian name--the converts from among the Jews and Gentiles alike. Jn 1:12. The idea here is, that they are no longer under tutors and governors; they are no longer subject to the direction and will of the paedagogus; they are arrived at age, and are admitted to the privileges of sons. Gal 4:1 The language here is derived from the fact, that until the son arrived at age, he was in many respects not different from a servant. He was under laws and restraints, and subject to the will of another. When of age, he entered on the privileges of heirship, and was free to act for himself. Thus, under the law, men were under restraints, and subject to heavy exactions. Under the gospel, they are free, and admitted to the privileges of the sons of God.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul means to teach that no man has any preference or advantage in the kingdom of God because he is a rich man, or because he is of elevated rank; no one is under any disadvantage because he is poor, or because he is ignorant, or a slave. All at the foot of the cross are sinners; all at the communion table are saved by the

same grace; all who enter into heaven, will enter clothed in the same robes of salvation, and arranged, not as princes and nobles, and rich men and poor men, in separate orders and ranks, but mingling together as redeemed by the same blood, and arranged in ranks according to their eminence in holiness. Comp. Isa 56:8.

29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Then are ye Abraham's seed. The promise made to Abraham related to the Messiah. It was a promise that in him all should be blessed. Abraham believed in that Messiah, and was distinguished for his faith in him who was to come. If they believed in Christ, therefore, they showed that they were the spiritual descendants of Abraham. No matter whether they were Jews or Gentiles--whether they had been circumcised or not--they had the same spirit which he evinced, and were interested in the promises made to him. And heirs according to the promise. See Rom 8:17. Are heirs of God. You inherit the blessings promised to Abraham, and partake of the felicity to which he looked forward. You have become truly heirs of God, and this is in accordance with the promise made to Abraham. It is not by the obedience of the law; it is by faith--in the same way that Abraham possessed the blessing: an arrangement before the giving of the law, and therefore one that may include all, whether Jews or Gentiles. All are on a level; and all are alike the children of God, and in the same manner, and on the same terms that Abraham was.

Galatians-4

1 Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

As long as he is a child. Until he arrives at the age. The word rendered "child," νηπιος, properly means an infant; literally, one not speaking, (νη, insep, un, επος;) and hence a child, or babe, but without any definite limitation.--Rob. It is used as the word infant is with us in law, to denote a minor.

Differeth nothing from a servant. That is, he has no more control of his property; he has it not at his command. This does not mean that he does not differ in any respect, but only that in the matter under consideration he does not differ. He differs in his prospects of inheriting the property, and in the affections of the father, and usually in the advantages of education, and in the respect and attention shown him; but in regard to property he does not differ, and he is like a servant, under the control and direction of others. Though he be lord of all. That is, in prospect. He has a prospective right to all the property, which no one else has. The word "lord" here, κυριος, is used in the same sense in which it is often in the Scriptures, to denote master or owner. The idea which this is designed to illustrate is, that the condition of the Jews before the coming of the Messiah was inferior, in many respects, to what the condition of the friends of God would be under him--as inferior as the condition of an heir was before he was of age, to what it would be when he should enter on his inheritance, The Jews claimed indeed, that they were the children or the sons of God--a title which the apostle would not withhold from the pious part of the nation; but it was a condition in which they had not entered on the full inheritance, and which was far inferior to that of those who had embraced the Messiah, and who were admitted to the full privileges of sonship.

They were indeed heirs. They were interested in the promises. But still they were in a condition of comparative servitude, and could be made free only by the gospel.

2 but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

4 but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

That is, "When the fulness of time was come, which God the Father had appointed for the finishing of the legal dispensation, and for the abolishing the ceremonial rites, God sent forth from

himself the Son of himself, his only begotten Son, made, that is, born of a woman, made under and obedient to the law, subjecting himself both to its precepts and its curse, to redeem them who were under the law, and discharge them from the curse and malediction of it; that we believers, we the members of the Christian church, might receive the adoption of sons, without any observance of circumcision, or other ceremonial rites."

But when the fulness of the time was come. The full time appointed by the Father; the completion (filling up, πληρωμα) of the designated period for the coming of the Messiah. Isa 49:7, Isa 49:8, 2Cor 6:2 The sense is, that the time which had been predicted, and when it was proper that he should come, was complete. The exact period had arrived when all things were ready for his coming. It is often asked why he did not come sooner; and why mankind did not have the benefit of his incarnation and atonement immediately after the fall? Why were four thousand dark and gloomy years allowed to roll on, and the world suffered to sink deeper and deeper in ignorance and sin? To these questions perhaps no answer entirely satisfactory can be given. God undoubtedly saw reasons which we cannot see, and reasons which we shall approve if they are disclosed to us. It may be observed, however, that this delay of redemption was in entire accordance with the whole system of Divine arrangements, and with all the Divine interpositions in favour of men. Men are suffered long to pine in want, to suffer from disease, to encounter the evils of ignorance, before interposition is granted.

In respect to all of these, it may be true that they are made known at the very best time, the time that will on the whole most advance the welfare of the race. And so of the incarnation and work of the Saviour. It was seen by God to be the best time; the time when, on the whole, the race would be most benefited by his coming. Even with our limited and imperfect vision, we can see the following things in regard to its being the most fit and proper time:

(1.) It was just the time when all the prophecies centered in him, and when there could be no doubt about their fulfillment. It was important that such an event should be predicted in order that there might be full evidence that he came from heaven; and yet, in order that prophecy may be seen to have been uttered by God, it must be so far before the event as to make it impossible to have been the result of mere human conjecture.

(2.) It was proper that the world should be brought to see its need of a Saviour, and that a fair and satisfactory opportunity should be given to men to try all other schemes of salvation, that they might be prepared to welcome this. This had been done. Four thousand years were sufficient to show to man his own powers, and to give him an opportunity to devise some scheme of salvation. The opportunity had been furnished under every circumstance that could be deemed favourable. The most profound and splendid talent of the world had been brought to bear on it, especially in Greece and Rome; and ample opportunity had been given to make a fair trial of the various systems of religion devised on national happiness and individual welfare; their power to meet and arrest crime, to purify the heart, to promote public morals, and to support man in his trials; their power to conduct him to the true God, and to give him a well-founded hope of immortality. All had failed; and then it was a proper time for the Son of God to come and to reveal a better system.

(3.) It was a time when the world was at peace. The temple of Janus, closed only in times of peace, was then shut, though it had been but once closed before during the Roman history. What an appropriate time for the "Prince of Peace" to come! The world was, to a great extent, under the Roman sceptre. Communications between different parts of the world were then more rapid and secure than they had been at any former period, and the gospel could be more easily propagated. Further, the Jews were scattered in almost all lands, acquainted with the

promises, looking for the Messiah, furnishing facilities to their own countrymen, the apostles, to preach the gospel in numerous synagogues, and qualified, if they embraced the Messiah, to become most zealous and devoted missionaries. The same language, the Greek, was moreover, after the time of Alexander the Great, the common language of no small part of the world, or as least was spoken and understood, among a considerable portion of the nations of the earth. At no period before had there been so extensive a use of the same language.

(4.) It was a proper period to make the new system known. It accorded with the benevolence of God, that it should be delayed no longer than that the world should be in a suitable state for receiving the Redeemer. When that period, therefore, had arrived, God did not delay, but sent his Son on the great work of the world's redemption.

God sent forth his Son. This implies that the Son of God had an existence before his incarnation. See Jn 16:28. The Saviour is often represented as sent into the world, and as coming forth from God.

Made under the law. As one of the human race, partaking of human nature, he was subject to the law of God. As a man he was bound by its requirements, and subject to its control. He took his place under the law, that he might accomplish an important purpose for those who were under it. He made himself subject to it that he might become one of them, and secure their redemption.

5 to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive
the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his
Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

The Spirit of his Son. The spirit of the Lord Jesus; the spirit which animated him, or which he evinced. The idea is, that as the Lord Jesus was enabled to approach God with the language of endearment and love, so they would be. He, being the true and

exalted Son of God, had the spirit appropriate to such a relation; they being adopted, and made like him, have the same spirit. The "spirit" here referred to does not mean, as I suppose, the Holy Spirit as such; nor the miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, but the spirit which made them like the Lord Jesus; the spirit by which they were enabled to approach God as his children, and use the reverent, and tender, and affectionate language of a child addressing a father. It is that language used by Christians when they have evidence of adoption; the expression of the warm, and elevated, and glowing emotions which they have when they can approach God as their God, and address him as their Father.

Abba, Father. Rom 8:15. It is said in the Babylonian Gemara, a Jewish work, that it was not permitted slaves to use the title of Abba in addressing the master of the family to which they belonged. If so, then the language which Christians are here represented as using is the language of freemen, and denotes that they are not under the servitude, of sin.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Warning against Returning to Bondage

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Here note, how contemptuously, or at least disesteemingly, our apostle speaks of the legal rites of the ceremonial law: He calls them elements or rudiments, because they were God's first instructions given to his church for his worship, to which he intended afterwards a more perfect way of worship: Next he calls them weak elements, because the law made nothing perfect, and the observance of it was impotent and unavailable to a sinner's justification before God: And lastly, he calls them

beggarly elements, in comparison with that more rational and spiritual way of worship under the gospel.

Whence we may learn, that holy zeal will teach a saint to speak with a sort of contempt of any thing that encroaches upon the honour due to Christ, or any of his offices. True, the Levitical ceremonies were appointed by God himself as a part of divine worship leading to Christ, and as such to be religiously observed; but when the false apostles did urge the observation of them under the gospel, as a part of necessary commanded worship, and as a part of the Galatians righteousness before God, St. Paul is bold then to give them the name of weak and beggarly elements.

To the weak and beggarly elements. To the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, imposing a servitude really not less severe than the customs of paganism. On the word elements, Gal 4:3. They are called "weak" because they had no power to save the soul; no power to justify the sinner before God. They are called "beggarly," (Greek, πτωχα, poor,) because they could not impart spiritual riches.

Whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage. As if you had a wish to be under servitude. The absurdity is as great as it would be for a man who had been freed from slavery to desire again his chains. They had been freed by the gospel from the galling servitude of heathenism, and they now again had sunk into the Jewish observances, as if they preferred slavery to freedom, and were willing to go from one form of it to another. The main idea is, that it is absurd for men who have been made free by the gospel to go back again into any kind of servitude or bondage.

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

St. Paul here gives instances to the Galatians, wherein it did appear, that they brought themselves under an unnecessary bondage to the rites of the ceremonial law; he tells them plainly, that they kept the ceremonial sabbaths, feasts and fasts, as if that law was obligatory, and still binding: "Ye observe days, that is,

the Jewish sabbath days, and new moons; and months, as the feast of the first month, and of the seventh month; and times, that is, the times of their solemn festivals for going up to Jerusalem, as the Passover, Pentecost, and feast of tabernacles; and years, as the sabbatical years, and years of Jubilee. This, says the apostle, makes me afraid of you, that I have preached the gospel, and the doctrine of free justification by faith, in vain to you; because you leave the doctrine I taught you, and put your confidence in observing those legal ceremonial rites."

Learn hence, 1. That the work of the ministry is a laborious work; I have bestowed upon you labour, says St. Paul. A minister's life is not a life of ease, but of much toil and pains, a labouring unto faintness and weariness, as the word here used doth import and signify.

Learn, 2. That the most laborious ministers and lively preachers may sometimes see so little fruit of their labours and endeavours, that they may have just cause to fear that few are savingly converted by their ministry: St. Paul here was afraid lest he had laboured in vain among the Galatians.

Learn, 3. That in order to the success of our ministry, we must not content ourselves with a reproof of sin in general, but must descend to particulars, and give instances of those several and distinct sins which our people are guilty of, and ought to fall under our reproof for. Thus the apostle here gives particular instances of the sins formerly reproved, in their observing days, and months, and times, and years. Generals, we say, do not affect; but particular reproofs are more piercing, and more convincing; When we say to the sinner, as Nathan to David, Thou art the man; this, if anything, will stick close to the conscience.

Days. The days here referred to are doubtless the days of the Jewish festivals. They had numerous days of such observances; and in addition to those specified in the Old Testament, the Jews had added many others, as days commemorative of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple, and of other important events in their history. It is not a fair interpretation of this to suppose that the apostle refers to the Sabbath, properly so called, for this was a part of the Decalogue /the Ten Commandments/, and was observed by the Saviour himself, and by the apostles also. It is a fair interpretation to apply it to all those days which are not commanded to be kept holy in the Scriptures; and hence the passage is as applicable to the observance of saints' days, and days in honour of particular events in sacred history, as to the days observed by the Galatians. There is as real servitude in the observance of the numerous festivals and fasts in the Papal communion, and in some Protestant churches, as there was in the observance of the days in the Jewish ecclesiastical calendar; and, for anything that can see, such observances are as inconsistent now, with the freedom of the gospel, as they were in the time of Paul. We should observe as seasons of holy time what it can be proved God has commanded us, and no more.

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am;* for I *am* as ye *are:* ye have not injured me at all.

Brethren, I beseech you, be as, I am, etc. There is great brevity in this passage, and no little obscurity, and a great many different interpretations have been given of it by commentators. The various views expressed may be seen in Bloomfield's Crit. Dig. Locke renders it, "Let you and I be as if we were all one. Think yourselves to be very me; as I, in my own mind, put no difference at all between you and myself." Koppe explains it thus:-- "Imitate my example; for I, though a Jew by birth, care no more for Jewish rites than you." Rosenmuller explains it, "Imitate my manner of life, in rejecting the Jewish rites; as I having renounced the Jewish rites, was much like you when I preached the gospel to you." Other interpretations may be seen in Chandler, Doddridge, Calvin, etc. In our version there seems to be an impropriety of expression; for if he was as they were, it

would seem to be a matter of course that they would be like him, or would resemble him. The sense of the passage, however, it seems to. me, cannot be difficult. The reference is doubtless to the Jewish rites and customs, and to the question whether they were binding on Christians. Paul's object is to persuade them to abandon them. He appeals to them, therefore, by his own example. And it means evidently, "Imitate me in this thing. Follow my example, and yield no conformity to those rites and customs." The ground on which he asks them to imitate him may be either,

(1.) that he had abandoned them, or

(2.) because he asks them to yield a point to him. He had done so in many instances for their welfare, and had made many sacrifices for their salvation; and he now asks them to yield this one point, and to become as he was, and to cease these Jewish observances, as he had done.

For I am as ye are. Greek, "For I as ye." This means, I suppose, "For I have conformed to your customs in many things. I have abandoned my own peculiarities; given up my customs as far as possible; conformed to you as Gentiles as far as I could do, in order to benefit and save you. I have laid aside the peculiarity of the Jew on the principle of becoming all things to all men, 1Cor 9:20, and 1Cor 9:21,22) in order that I might save you. I ask in return only the slight sacrifice that you will now become like me in the matter under consideration."

Ye have not injured me at all." It is not a personal matter. I have no cause of complaint. You have done me no personal wrong. There is no variance between us; no unkind feeling; no injury done as individuals. I may, therefore, with the more freedom, ask you to yield this point, when I assure you that I do not feel personally injured. I have no wrong, to complain of, and I ask it on higher grounds than would be an individual request: it is for your good, and the good of the great cause." When Christians

turn away from the truth, and disregard the instructions and exhortations of pastors, and become conformed to the world, it is not a personal matter, or a matter of personal offence to them, painful as it may be to them. They have no peculiar reason-to say that they are personally injured. It is a higher matter. The cause suffers; the interests of religion are injured; the church at large is offended, and the Saviour is "wounded in the house of his friends." Conformity to the world, or a lapse into some sin, is a public offence, and should be regarded as an injury done to the cause of the Redeemer. It shows the magnanimity of Paul, that though they had abandoned his doctrines, and forgotten his love and his toils in their welfare, he did not regard it as a personal offence, and did not consider himself personally injured. An ambitious man, or an impostor, would have made that the main, if not the only thing.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

17 They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

Yea, they would exclude you. Margin, us. A few printed editions of the New Testament have ημας, us, instead of υμας, you.--Mill. The word exclude here probably means, that they endeavoured to exclude the Galatians from the love and affection of Paul. They would shut them out from that, in order that they might secure them for their own purposes. If the reading in the margin, however, should be retained, the sense would be clearer: "They wish to exclude us, i.e., me, the apostle, in order that they may have you wholly to themselves. If they can once get rid of your attachment to me, then they will have no difficulty in securing you for themselves." This reading, says Rosenmuller, is found "in many of the best codices, and versions, and fathers." It is

adopted by Doddridge, Locke, and others. The main idea is clear: Paul stood in the way of their designs. The Galatians were truly attached to him; and it was necessary, in order to accomplish their ends, to withdraw their affections from him. When false teachers have designs on a people, they begin by alienating their confidence and affections from their pastors and teachers. They can hope for no success until this is done; and hence the efforts of errorists, and of infidels, and of scorners, is to undermine the confidence of a people in the ministry; and when this is done, there is little difficulty in drawing them over to their own purposes.

That ye might affect them. The same word as in the former part of the verse--" that ye might zealously affect them;" i.e., that ye might show ardent attachment to them. Their first work is to manifest special interest for your welfare; their second, to alienate you from him who had first preached the gospel to you; their object, not your salvation, or your real good, but to secure your zealous love for themselves.

18 But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in *a* good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you.

And not only when I am present with you. It seems to me that there is great adroitness and great delicacy of irony in this remark; and that the apostle intends to remind them, as gently as possible, that it would have been as well for them to have shown their zeal in a good cause, when he was absent, as well as when he was with them. The sense may be, "You were exceedingly zealous in a good cause when I was with you. You loved the truth; you loved me. Since I left you, and as soon almost as I was out of your sight, your zeal died away, and your ardent love for me was transferred to others. Suffer me to remind you, that it would be well to be zealous of good when I am away, as well as when I am with you. There is not much true affection in that which dies away as soon as a man's back is turned." The doctrine is, that true zeal or love will live alike when the object is near, and when it is removed; when our friends are present with us, and when they leave us; when their eye is upon us, and when it is turned away.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until
Christ be formed in you,
20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for
I
stand in doubt of you.

And to change my voice. That is, from complaint and censure, to tones of entire confidence.

The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear
the law?
22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one
by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.
23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh;
but he of the free woman *was* by promise.

Verse 23. But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh. In the ordinary course of nature, without any special promise, or any unusual Divine interposition, as in the case of Isaac. But he of the free-woman, etc. The birth of Isaac was in accordance with a special promise, and by a remarkable Divine interposition. See Gen 18:10, 21:1,2, Heb 11:11,12. Comp. Rom 4:19-21. The idea here of Paul is, that the son of the slave was in a humble and inferior condition from his very birth. There was no special promise attending him. He was born into a state of inferiority and servitude, which attended him through his whole life. Isaac, however, was met with promises as soon as he was born, and was under the benefit of those promises as long as he lived. The object of Paul is to state the truth in regard to a condition of servitude and slavery. It is attended with evils from beginning to end; from the birth to the grave. By this illustration he means to show them the folly of beaming the voluntary slaves of the law after they had once been made free. (e) "bond woman" Rom 9:7,8

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants;
the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage,
which is Hagar.
25 For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to
Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

And answereth to Jerusalem. Marg., Is in the same rank with. The margin is the better translation. The meaning is, it is just like it, or corresponds with it. Jerusalem as it is now, (i.e., in the days of Paul,) is like Mount Sinai. It is subject to laws, and rites, and customs; bound by a state of servitude, and fear, and trembling, such as existed when the law was given on Mount Sinai. There is no freedom; there are no great and liberal views; there is none of the liberty which the gospel imparts to men.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not;
break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

The object of the apostle in introducing it here seems to be to prove that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, would partake of the privileges connected with the heavenly Jerusalem. He had in the previous verse spoken of the Jerusalem from above as the common mother of ALL true Christians, whether by birth Jews or Gentiles. This might be disputed or doubted by the Jews; and he therefore adduces this proof from the Old Testament. Or if it was not doubted, still the quotation was pertinent, and would illustrate the sentiment which he had just uttered. The mention of Jerusalem as a mother seems to have suggested this text. Isaiah had spoken of Jerusalem as a female that had been long desolate and childless, now rejoicing by a large accession from the Gentile world, and increased in numbers like a female who should have more children than one who had been long married. To this Paul appropriately refers when he says that the whole church, Jews and Gentiles, were the children of the heavenly Jerusalem, represented here as a rejoicing mother. He has not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but he has used the Septuagint version, and has retained the sense. The sense is, that the accession from the Gentile world would be far

more numerous than the Jewish people had ever been--a prophecy that has been already fulfilled.

30 Nevertheless what saith the Scripture?
Cast out the bondwoman and her son:
for the son of the bondwoman shall not be
heir with the son of the free woman.

Even so it is now. That is, Christians, the children of the promise, are persecuted by the Jews, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "as it now is," and who are uninterested in the promises, as Ishmael was. For an illustration of this, see Paley's Horae Pauline, on this [Epistle, No. V. Dr. Paley has remarked, that it does not appear that the apostle Paul was ever set upon by the Gentiles, unless they were first stirred up by the Jews, except in two instances. One of these was at Philippi, after the cure of the Pythoness, (Acts 16:19;) and the other at Ephesus, at the instance of Demetrius, Acts 19:24. The persecutions of the Christians arose, therefore, mainly from the Jews--from those who were in bondage to the law, and to rites and customs; and Paul's allusion here to the case of the persecution which Isaac the free-born son endured, is exceedingly pertinent and happy.

Cast out the bond-woman and her son. This was the language of Sarah, in an address to Abraham, requesting him to cast out Hagar and Ishmael, Gen 21:10. That was done. Paul uses it here as applicable to the case before him. As used by him, the meaning is, that everything like servitude in the gospel is to be rejected, as Hagar and Ishmael were driven away. It does not mean, as it seems to me, that they were to expel the Jewish teachers in Galatia, but that they were to reject everything like servitude and bondage; they were to adhere only to that which was free. Paul cannot here mean that the passage in Gen 21:10 originally had reference to the gospel, for nothing evidently was farther from the mind of Sarah than any such reference; nor can it be shown that he meant to approve of or vindicate the conduct of Sarah; but he finds a passage applicable to his purpose, and he conveys his ideas in that language as exactly expressing his meaning. We all use language in that way wherever we find it.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

So then, brethren. It follows from all this. Not from the allegory regarded as an argument--for Paul does not use it thus--but from the considerations suggested on the whole subject. Since the Christian religion is so superior to the Jewish; since we are by it freed from degrading servitude, and are not in bondage to rites and ceremonies; since it was designed to make us truly free, and since by that religion we are admitted to the privileges of sons, and are no longer under laws, and tutors, and governors, as if we were minors; from all this it follows, that we should feel and act, not as if we were children of a bond-woman, and born in slavery, but as if we were children of a free-woman, and born to liberty. It is the birthright of Christians to think, and feel, and act like freemen; and they should not allow themselves to become the slaves of customs, and rites, and ceremonies, but should feel that they are the adopted children of God.

Galatians-5

Stand Fast in Liberty

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

That if ye be circumcised. This must be understood with reference to the subject under consideration. If you are circumcised with such a view as is maintained by the false teachers that have come among you; that is, with an idea that it is necessary in order to your justification. He evidently did not mean that if any of them had been circumcised before their conversion to Christianity; nor could he mean to say that circumcision, in all cases, amounted to a rejection of Christianity, for he had himself procured the circumcision of Timothy, Acts 16:3. If it was done, as it was then, for prudential considerations, and with a wish not unnecessarily to

irritate the Jews, and to give one a more ready access to them, it was not to be regarded as wrong. But if, as the false teachers in Galatia claimed, as a thing essential to salvation, as indispensable to justification and acceptance with God, then the matter assumed a different aspect; and then it became, in fact, a renouncing of Christ as himself sufficient to save us. So with anything else. Rites and ceremonies in religion may be in themselves well enough, if they are held to be matters not essential; but the moment they are regarded as vital and essential, that moment they begin to infringe on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and that moment they are to be rejected; and it is because of the danger that this will be the case, that they are to be used sparingly in the Christian church. Who does not know the danger of depending upon prayers, and alms, and the sacraments, and extreme unction, and penance, and empty forms, for salvation? And who does not know how much in the Papal communion the great doctrine of justification has been obscured by numberless such rites and forms?

Christ shall profit you nothing. Will be of no advantage to you. Your dependence on circumcision, in these circumstances, will in fact amount to a rejection of the Saviour, and of the doctrine of justification by him.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

That he is a debtor to do the whole law. He binds himself to obey all the law of Moses. Circumcision was the distinguishing badge of the Jews, as baptism is of Christians. A man, therefore, who became circumcised, became a professor of the Jewish religion, and bound himself to obey all its peculiar laws. This must be understood, of course, with reference to the point under discussion; and means, if he did it with a view to justification, or as a thing that was necessary and binding. It would not apply to such a case as that of Timothy, where it was a matter of mere expediency or prudence. Gal 5:2.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Verse 4. Christ is become of no effect unto you. You will derive no advantage from Christ. His work in regard to you is needless and vain. If you can be justified in any other way than by him, then of course you do not need him, and your adoption of the other mode is, in fact, a renunciation of him. They would not need him if they could be thus justified; and they could derive no benefit from him. A man who can be justified by his own obedience, does not need the aid or the merit of another; and ff it was true, as they seemed to suppose, that they could be justified by the law, it followed that the work of Christ was in vain so far as they were concerned.

Ye are fallen from grace. That is, this would mount to apostasy from the religion of the Redeemer, and would be in fact a rejection of the grace of the gospel.

Its simple and obvious meaning is, that if a man who had been a professed Christian should be justified by his own conformity to the law, and adopt that mode of justification, then that would amount to a rejection of the mode of salvation by Christ, and would be a renouncing of the plan of justification by grace. The two systems cannot be united. The adoption of the one is, in fact, a rejection of the other. Christ will be "a whole Saviour," or none.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of
righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing,
nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

But faith which worketh by love. Faith that evinces its existence by love to God, and benevolence to men. It is not a mere intellectual belief; but it is that which reaches the heart, and controls the affections. It is not a dead faith; but it is that which is operative, and which is seen in Christian kindness and affection. It is not mere belief of the truth, but it is that which produces true attachment to others. A mere intellectual assent to the truth may leave the heart cold and unaffected; however bold, and self-confident, and "sound," may not be inconsistent with contentions, and strifes, and logomachies /an argument about words/, and

divisions. The true faith is that which is seen in benevolence, in love to God, in love to all who bear the Christian name; in a readiness to do good to all mankind. This shows that the heart is affected by the faith that is held; and this is the nature and design of all true religion. Tindal renders this, "faith, which by love is mighty in operation."

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

8 This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

the apostle means to say, that the influence which had brought this change about was at first small and unimportant; that there might have been but a few teachers of that kind, and it might have not been deemed worthy of particular attention or alarm; but that the doctrines thus infused into the churches, had spread like leaven, until the whole mass had become affected.

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased.

Then is the offence of the cross eased. "For if I should preach the necessity of circumcision, as is alleged, the offence of the cross of Christ would be removed. The necessity of depending on the merits of the sacrifice made on the cross would be taken away, since then men could be saved by conformity to the laws of Moses. The very thing that I have so much insisted on, and that has been such a stumbling-block to the Jews, 1Cor 1:23, that conformity to their rites was of no avail, and that they must be saved only by the merits of a crucified Saviour, would be done away with." Paul means that if this had been done, he would have saved himself from giving offence, and from the evils of persecution. He would have preached that men could be saved by conformity to Jewish rites, and that would have saved him from all the persecutions which he had endured in consequence of preaching the necessity of salvation by the cross.

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Only use not liberty, etc. The word use here, introduced by our translators, obscures the sense. The idea is, "You are called to liberty, but it is not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. It is not freedom from virtuous restraints, and from the laws of God. It is liberty from the servitude of sin, and religious rites and ceremonies, not freedom from the necessary restraints of virtue." It was necessary to give this caution, because

(1) there was a strong tendency in all converts from heathenism to relapse again into their former habits. Licentiousness abounded; and where they had been addicted to it before their conversion, and where they were surrounded by it on every hand, they were in constant danger of falling into it again. A bare and naked declaration, therefore, that they had been called to liberty, to freedom from restraint, might have been misunderstood, and some might have supposed that they were free from all restraints.

(2.) It is needful to guard the doctrine from abuse at all times. There has been a strong tendency, as the history of the church has shown, to abuse the doctrines of grace. The doctrine that Christians are "free," that there is liberty to them from restraint, has been perverted always by Antinomians, and been made the occasion of their indulging freely in sin. And the result has shown that nothing was more important than to guard the doctrine of Christian liberty, and to show exactly what Christians are freed from, and what laws are still binding on them, Paul is, therefore, at great pains to show that the doctrines which he had maintained did not lead to licentiousness, and did not allow the indulgence of sinful and corrupt passions.

But by love serve one another. By the proper manifestation of love one to another, strive to promote each other's welfare. To do this will not be inconsistent with the freedom of the gospel. When there is love, there is no servitude. Duty is pleasant, and offices of

kindness agreeable. Paul does not consider them as freed from all law and all restraint; but they are to be governed by the law of love. They were not to feel that they were so free that they might lawfully give indulgence to the desires of the flesh, but they were to regard themselves as under the law to love one another; and thus they would fulfil the law of Christian freedom.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt
love thy neighbor as thyself.
15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be
not consumed one of another.

The Fruit of the Spirit and the Works of the Flesh

16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the
lust of the flesh.

And ye shall not fulfil, etc. Marg., Fulfil not--as if it were a command. So Tindal renders it. But the more common interpretation, as it is the more significant, is that adopted by our translators. Thus it is not merely a command; it is the statement of an important and deeply interesting truth--that the only way to overcome the corrupt desires and propensities of our nature, is by submitting to the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is not by philosophy; it is not by mere resolutions to resist them; it is not by the force of education and laws; it is only by admitting into our souls the influence of religion, and yielding ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. If we live under the influences of that Spirit, we need not fear the power of the sensual and corrupt propensities of our nature.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against
the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that
ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These words are brought in as a special reason why Christians should walk in the Spirit, that is, after the motions and guidance of God's Holy Spirit: because otherwise the flesh will quickly prevail over them; for the flesh is continually lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; that is, the evil inclinations of corrupt nature are continually struggling with, and striving against, the good

motions which the Holy Spirit of God stirreth up in us. And in like manner the Spirit, or renewed nature, opposes the motions of corrupt nature: for these two principles are contrary the one to the other; so that ye who are led by the Spirit, cannot act (with deliberation and consent) according to the flesh; nor can they that are led by the flesh, do the things which delight the Spirit.

Learn hence, 1. That there is a diversity of principles in a Christian flesh and spirit; there is a good principle, called spirit, because the Spirit of God is the author of it; and a bad principle in us, which is called flesh, by which we are inclined to that which is evil. This is called flesh, to denote its intimacy with us; it is as near to us as our flesh, to denote its nearness to us; it is as dear to us as our own flesh, as dear as a right hand or right eye; and to denote its continuance with us, as long as we carry flesh about us, so long will this principle of corrupt nature remain in us and continue with us.

Learn, 2. That the motions and inclinations in our nature to sin, do ever conflict and combat with, oppose and war against the motions of God's Holy Spirit, exciting and inclining us to good: though contraries cannot be together in the same subject in an intense, yet they may be together in a remiss, degree.

Learn, 3. The consequence and issue of this combat: We cannot do the things that we would, nor any thing as we would; we cannot perform any holy duty perfectly in this life. As soon may an imperfect father beget a perfect child, as we, in our state of imperfection, perform any duty free from sin.

O, what need, what great need then, have the best of saints of the mediation and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, when they present any performed duty unto God!

And what need also to watch our own hearts when we are upon our knees, to fortify them against the incursions and disturbances of the

flesh; seeing, after all our care and vigilance in duty, we can none of us do the things that we would, nor any thing as we should!

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these,*
adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

That is, if ye be under the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit of God, and that renewing principle of grace which he had produced in you, you are no longer under the law; that is, not under the moral law as a covenant of life for our justification, though under it as an eternal role of living; not under the vindictive, though under the directive power of the law. So that the force of the apostle's argument seems to lie thus: "You are by the Spirit, by the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, free from the curse and terror of the moral law; how unreasonable then is it to suppose, that you should be still subject to the ceremonial law? No; if you be led by the Spirit, neither the moral law shall condemn you, nor the cermonial law oblige and bind you."

20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath,
strife, seditions, heresies,

21 envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like:
of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time
past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the
kingdom of God.

Shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Cannot possibly be saved. 1Cor 6:9; 1Cor 6:10-11. In regard to this passage we may remark,

(1.) that it furnishes the most striking and unanswerable proof of human depravity. Paul represents these things as "the works of the flesh"-- the works of the unrenewed nature of man. They are such as human nature, when left to itself, everywhere produces. The world shows that such is the fact; and we cannot but ask, is a nature producing this to be regarded as pure? Is man an unfallen being? Can he save himself? Does he need no Saviour?

(2.) This passage is full of fearful admonition to those who indulge in any or all of these vices. Paul, inspired of God, has solemnly declared that such cannot be saved. They cannot enter into the

kingdom of heaven as they are. Nor is it desirable that they should. What would heaven be if filled up with adulterers, and fornicators, and idolaters, with the proud and envious, and with murderers and drunkards? To call such a place heaven, would be an abuse of the word. No one could wish to dwell there; and such men cannot enter into heaven.

(3.) The human heart must be changed, or man cannot be saved. This follows, of course. If such is its tendency, then there is a necessity for such a change as that in regeneration, in order that man may be happy and be saved.

(4.) We should rejoice that such men cannot, with their present characters, be admitted to heaven. We should rejoice that there is one world where these vices are unknown--a world of perfect and eternal purity. When we look at the earth; when we see how these vices prevail; when we reflect that every land is polluted, and that we cannot traverse a continent or an island, visit a nook or corner of the earth, dwell in any city or town, where these vices do not exist, oh how refreshing and invigorating is it to look forward to a pure heaven! How cheering the thought that there is one world where these vices axe unknown; one world, all whose ample plains may be traversed, and the note of blasphemy shall never fall on the ear; one world, where virtue shall be safe from the arts of the seducer; one world, where we may for ever dwell, and not one reeling and staggering drunkard shall ever be seen; where there shall be not one family in want and tears, from the vice of its unfaithful head! With what joy should we look forward to that world! With what ardour should we pant that it may be our own!

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

But the fruit of the Spirit. That which the Holy Spirit produces. It is not without design, evidently, that the apostle uses the word "Spirit" here, as denoting that these things do not flow from our own nature. The vices above enumerated are the proper "works" or result of the operations of the human heart; the virtues which he enumerates are produced by a foreign influence--the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Hence Paul does not trace them to our own hearts, even when renewed. He says that they are to be regarded as the proper result of the Spirit's operations on the soul.

23 meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

They that are Christ's; that is, they that are truly his followers, and sincere disciples, they have crucified, that is, subdued, and in some degree mortified and put to death, their fleshly corruptions, their carnal lusts, and sinful affections and passions. They did, by baptism, engage themselves to die unto sin; and the regenerate have done it in some measure: that have crucified the flesh; yet we must not understand this of a total, plenary, and final crucifixion, but inchoative only; and they are said to have done it, because they are daily doing of it, in proposito, voto, et eonatu, in resolution, in desire, and endeavour.

And by affections, we are not to understand natural, fixion, is not to be understood a total extinction of sin, but a deposing of it from its regency and dominion in the soul of the sinner; yet as death surely, though slowly, follows crucifixion, so likewise doth sin live in a believer a dying life, and dies a lingering, but a certain death; They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

Learn hence, 1. That there are a peculiar people which are Christ's, that have special interest in him, union and communion with him; They that are Christ's, not by an external profession only, but by an internal implantation into him by faith.

Learn, 2. That all such as thus have an interest in Christ, are daily crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. The death of sin is here compared to our Saviour's crucifixion;

1.To show the conformity there is betwixt the death of sin, and the death of Christ. Did Christ die a painful, shameful, lingering, and accursed, death? So dies sin in the soul of a believer. There is a gradual weakening of the power of sin in him; sin is dying, as he, but it is a long time a-dying.

2.To denote the principal mean and instrument of our mortification, namely, the death of Christ; by virtue whereof believers do crucify their corrupt affections; the great arguments to mortification being drawn from the sufferings of Christ for sin.

Learn,

3. That the work of mortification, (called here, tropically, a crucifixion,) strikes not only at all sin, but at the root of all sins; it spares none, neither the flesh, nor any of its affections and lusts, do escape; root and branches, head and members; the old man is crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, and the axe of mortification laid to the root of every sin and sinful affection. In this manner do they that are Christ's crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Here we may note, That there must be a principle of spiritual life before there can be any spiritual motion and exercise; we must first live in the Spirit, and the Spirit live in us, before we can possibly walk in the Spirit: the child must live before it can walk.

Note, 2. That when there is a principle of grace and spiritual life in the heart, there will be the actings and exercise of grace in the life: If we live in the Spirit, we shall walk in the Spirit.

I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes. Ezek 36:27. An holy heart will be attended with an holy life, and a good conscience accompanied with a good conversation; spiritual life will produce spiritual motion.

26 Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory. The word here used κενοδοξοι means, proud or vain of empty advantages, as of birth, property, eloquence, or learning. The reference here is probably to the paltry competitions which arose on account of these supposed advantages. It is possible that this might have been one cause of the difficulties existing in the churches of Galatia, and the apostle is anxious wholly to check and remove it. The Jews prided themselves on their birth; and men are everywhere prone to over-value the supposed

advantages of birth and blood. The doctrines of Paul are, that in great and most vital respects men are on a level; that these things contribute nothing to salvation, Gal 3:28 ; and that Christians should esteem them of little importance, and that they should not be suffered to interfere with their fellowship, or to mar their harmony and peace. Provoking one another. The sense is, that they who are desirous of vain glory, do provoke one another. They provoke those whom they regard as inferiors by a haughty carriage and a contemptuous manner towards them. They look upon-them often with contempt; pass them by with disdain; treat them as beneath their notice; and this provokes, on the other hand, hard feeling, and hatred, and a disposition to take revenge. When men regard themselves as equal in their great and vital interests; when they feel that they are fellow-heirs of the grace of life; when they feel that they belong to one great family, and are in their great interests on a level; deriving no advantage from birth and blood; on a level as descendants of the same apostate father; as being themselves sinners; on a level at the foot of the cross, at the communion table, on beds of sickness, in the grave, and at the bar of God; when they feel this, then the consequences here referred to will be avoided. There will be no haughty carriage such as to provoke opposition; and, on the other hand, there will be no envy on account of the superior rank of others.

Envying one another. On account of their superior wealth, rank, talent, learning. The true way to cure envy is to make men feel that in their great and important interests they are on a level. Their great interests are beyond the grave. The distinctions of this life are temporary, and are comparative trifles. Soon all will be on a level in the grave, and at the bar of God, and in heaven. Wealth, and honour, and rank do not avail there. The poorest man will wear as bright a crown as the rich; the man of most humble birth will be admitted as near the throne as he who can boast the longest line of illustrious ancestors. Why should a man who is soon to wear a "crown incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," envy him who has a ducal coronet here, or a royal diadem--baubles that are soon to be laid aside for ever? Why should he, though poor here, who is soon to inherit the treasures of heaven, where "moth and rust do not corrupt," envy him who can walk over a few acres as his own, or who

has accumulated a glittering pile of dust, soon to be left for ever? Why should he who is soon to wear the robes of salvation, made "white in the blood of the Lamb," envy him who is "clothed in purple and fine linen," or who can adorn himself and his family in the most gorgeous attire which art and skill can make, soon to give place to the winding-sheet, soon to be succeeded by the simple garb which the most humble wears in the grave? If men feel that their great interests are beyond the tomb; that in the important matter of salvation they are on a level; that soon they are to be undistinguished beneath the clods of the valley, how unimportant comparatively would it seem to adorn their bodies, to advance their name and rank, and to improve their estates? The rich and the great would cease to look down with contempt on those of more humble rank; and the poor would cease to envy those above them, for they are soon to be their equals in the grave; their equals, perhaps their superiors, in heaven !

Galatians-6

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken. Marg., although. It is a case which the apostle supposes might happen, Christians were not perfect; and it was possible that they who were true Christians might be surprised by temptation, and fall into sin. The word rendered be overtaken προληφθη, from προλαμβανω means, properly, to take before another, to anticipate, 1Cor 11:21; then to be before taken or caught; and may here mean either that one had been formerly guilty of sin, or had been recently hurried on by his passions or by temptations to commit a fault. It is probable that the latter here is the true sense, and that it means, if a man is found to be overtaken by any sin; if his passions, or if temptation get the better of him. Tindal renders it, "If any man be fallen by chance into any fault." It refers to cases of surprise, or of sudden temptation. Christians do not commit sin deliberately, and as a part of the plan of life; but they may be surprised by sudden temptation, or urged on by impetuous and headstrong passion, as David and-Peter were. Paul does not speak of

the possibility of restoring one who deliberately forms the plan of sinning; he does not suppose that such a man could be a Christian, and that it would be proper to speak of restoring such a man.

Ye which are spiritual. Who are under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Gal 5:22, Gal 5:23. The apostle, in this verse, refers evidently to those who have fallen into some sensual indulgence, Gal 5:19-21; and says that they who have escaped these temptations, and who are under the influences of the Spirit, should recover such persons. It is a very important qualification for those who would recover others from sin, that they should not be guilty of the same sin themselves. Reformers should be holy men. Men who exercise discipline in the church should be "spiritual" men--men in whom implicit confidence may be properly reposed.

Restore such an one. On the meaning of the word here used, 2Cor 13:11. Here it means, not to restore him to the church after he has been excluded, but set him right, bring him back, recover him from his errors and his faults. The apostle does not say in what manner this is to be done; but it is usually to be done, doubtless, by affectionate admonition, by faithful instruction, and by prayer. Discipline or punishment should not be resorted to until the other methods are tried in vain, Mt 18:15-17.

In the spirit of meekness. With a kind, forbearing, and forgiving spirit. Mt 5:5. Not with anger; not with a lordly and overbearing mind; not with a love of finding others in fault, and with a desire for inflicting the discipline of the church; not with a harsh and unforgiving temper; but with love, and gentleness, and humility, and patience, and with a readiness to forgive when wrong has been done. This is an essential qualification for restoring and recovering an offending brother. No man should attempt to rebuke or admonish another who cannot do it in the spirit of meekness; no man should engage in any way in the work of reform who has not such a temper of mind.

Considering thyself, etc. Remembering how liable you are yourself to err; and how much kindness and indulgence should therefore be shown to others. You are to act as if you felt it possible that you might also be overtaken with a fault; and you should act as you would wish that others should do towards you. Pliny (Epis. viii. 22) has expressed a similar sentiment in the following beautiful language: "Atque ego optimum et emendatissimum existimo, qui caeteris ira ignoscit, tanquam ipsc quotidie peccet; ira peccatis abstinet, tanquam nemini ignoscat. Proinde hoc domi, hoc foris, hoc in onmi vitse genere teneamus, ut nobis implacabiles simus, exorabiles istis etiam, qui dare veniam nisi sibi nesciunt." The doctrine taught by Paul is, that such is human infirmity, and such the strength of human depravity, that no one knows into what sins he may himself fall. He may be tempted to commit the same sins which he endeavours to amend in others; he may be left to commit even worse sins. If this is the case, we should be tender, while we are firm; forgiving, while we set our faces against evil; prayerful, while we rebuke; and compassionate, when we are compelled to inflict on others the discipline of the church. Every man who has any proper feelings, when he attempts to recover an erring brother, should pray for him and for himself also; and will regard his duty as only half done, and that very imperfectly, if he does not "consider also that he himself may be tempted."

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Bear ye one another's burdens. Rom 15:1. Bear with each other; help each other in the Divine life. The sense is, that every man has peculiar temptations and easily besetting sins, which constitute a heavy burden. We should aid each other in regard to these, and help one another to overcome them. And so fulfil the law of Christ. The peculiar law of Christ, requiring us to love one another. Jn 13:34. This was the distinguishing law of the Redeemer; and they could in no way better fulfil it than by aiding each other in the Divine life. The law of Christ would not allow us to reproach the offender, or to taunt him, or to rejoice in his fall. We should help him to take up his load of infirmities, and sustain him by our counsels, our exhortations, and our prayers. Christians, conscious of their infirmities, have a right to the sympathy and the prayers of their brethren. They should not be east off to a cold and heartless world; a world rejoicing over

their fall, and ready to brand them as hypocrites. They should be pressed to the warm bosom of brotherly kindness; and prayer should be made to ascend without ceasing around an erring and a fallen brother. Is this the case in regard to all who bear the Christian name?

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

For if a man think himself to be something, etc. See Gal 5:26. This is designed, evidently, to be another reason why we should be kind and tender to those who have erred. It is, that even those who are most confident may fall. They who feel secure, and think it impossible that they should sin, are not safe. They may be wholly deceived, and may be nothing, when they have the highest estimate of themselves. They may themselves fall into sin, and have need of all the sympathy and kindness of their brethren. When he is nothing. When he has no strength, and no moral worth. When he is not such as he apprehends, but is lifted up with vain self-conceit. He deceiveth himself. He understands not his own character. "The worst part of the fraud falls on his own head."--Doddridge. He does not accomplish what he expected to do; and instead of acquiring reputation from others, as he expected, he renders himself contemptible in their sight.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

But let every man prove. That is, try or examine in a proper manner. Let him form a proper estimate of what is due to himself, according to his real character. Let him compare himself with the word of God, and the infallible rule which he has given, and by which we are to be judged in the last great day. Comp. Rom 12:3; 1Cor 11:28;; 2Cor 13:5.

In himself alone. Comp. Prov 14:14: "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." The sentiment is, that he will find in himself a source of pure joy. He will not be dependent on the applause of others for happiness. In an approving conscience; in the evidence of the favour of God; in an honest effort to lead a pure and holy life, he will have happiness. The source of his joys will be within; and he will not be dependent--as the man of ambition, and the man who thinks of

himself more highly than he ought, will--on the favours of a capricious multitude, and on the breath of popular applause.

And not in another. He will not be dependent on others for happiness, Here is the true secret of happiness. It consists,

(1.) in not forming an improper estimate of ourselves; in knowing just what we are, and what is due to us; in not thinking ourselves to be something, when we are nothing.

(2.) In leading such a life that it may be examined to the core; that we may know exactly what we are, without being distressed or pained. That is, in having a good conscience, and in the honest and faithful discharge of our duty to God and man.

(3.) In not being dependent on the fickle applause of the world for our comfort. The man who has no internal resources, and who has no approving conscience; who is happy only when others smile, and miserable when they frown, is a man who can have no security for enjoyment. The man who has a good conscience, and who enjoys the favour of God, and the hope of heaven, carries with him the source of perpetual joy. He cannot be deprived of it. His purse may be taken, and his house robbed, but the highwayman cannot rob him of his comforts. He carries with him an unfailing source of happiness when abroad, and the same source of happiness abides with him at home: he bears it into society, and it remains with him in solitude; it is his companion when in health, and when surrounded by his friends; and it is no less his companion when his friends leave him, and when he lies upon a bed of death.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

For every man shall bear his own burden. This seems to be a kind of proverbial saying; and it means here, every man shall have his proper reward. If he is a virtuous man, he will be happy; if a vicious man, he will be miserable. If a virtuous man, he will have the source of happiness in himself; if a sinner, he must bear the proper penalty of his sin. In the great day, every man shall be properly rewarded. Knowing this, we should be little anxious about the sentiments of

others, and should seek to maintain a good conscience towards God and man. The design of this passage is to prevent men from forming an improper estimate of themselves, and of the opinions of others. Let a man feel that he is soon to stand at the judgment-seat, and it will do much to keep him from an improper estimate of his own importance; let him feel that he must give an account to God, and that his great interests are to be determined by the estimate which God will affix to his character, and it will teach him that the opinion of the world is of little value. This will restrain his vanity and ambition. This will show him that the great business of life is to secure the favour of God, and to be prepared to give up his account; and there is no way so effectual of checking ambition, and subduing vanity and the love of applause, as to feel that we are soon to stand at the awful bar of God.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him
that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a
man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Here is a caution to take heed of mocking God, or of deceiving ourselves, by imagining that he can be imposed upon by mere pretensions or professions (Ga 6:7): Be not deceived, God is not mocked. This may be considered as referring to the foregoing exhortation, and so the design of it is to convince those of their sin and folly who endeavoured by any plausible pretences to excuse themselves from doing their duty in supporting their ministers: or it may be taken in a more general view, as respecting the whole business of religion, and so as designed to take men off from entertaining any vain hopes of enjoying its rewards while they live in the neglect of its duties. The apostle here supposes that many are apt to excuse themselves from the work of religion, and especially the more self-denying and chargeable parts of it, though at the same time they may make a show and profession of it; but he assures them that this their way is their folly, for, though hereby they may possibly impose upon others, yet they do but deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who is perfectly acquainted with their hearts as well as actions, and, as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be mocked; and therefore, to prevent this, he directs us to lay down as a rule to ourselves, That whatsoever a man soweth that

shall he also reap; or that according as we behave ourselves now, so will our account be in the great day. Our present time is seed-time: in the other world there will be a great harvest; and, as the husbandman reaps in the harvest according as he sows in the seedness, so we shall reap then as we sow now. And he further informs us (Ga 6:8) that, as there are two sorts of seedness, sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit, so accordingly will the reckoning be hereafter: If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption. If we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. Those who live a carnal sensual life, who instead of employing themselves to the honour of God and the good of others, spend all their thoughts, and care, and time, about the flesh, must expect no other fruit of such a course than corruption--a mean and short-lived satisfaction at present, and ruin and misery at the end of it. But, on the other hand, those who sow to the Spirit, who under the guidance and influence of the Spirit do live a holy and spiritual life, a life of devotedness to God and of usefulness and serviceableness to others, may depend upon it that of the Spirit they shall reap life everlasting--they shall have the truest comfort in their present course, and an eternal life and happiness at the end of it. Note, Those who go about to mock God do but deceive themselves. Hypocrisy in religion is the greatest folly as well as wickedness, since the God we have to do with can easily see through all our disguises, and will certainly deal with us hereafter, not according to our professions, but our practices.

But not deceived. That is, in regard to your character, and your hopes for eternity. This is a formula of introduction to some admonition that is peculiarly weighty and important. It implies that there was danger that they would be deceived in reference to their character. The sources of the danger were the corruption of their own hearts, the difficulty of knowing their true character, the instructions of false teachers, etc. 1Cor 6:9. God is not mocked. He cannot be imposed on, or mocked. He knows what our real character is, and he will judge us accordingly. The word rendered mocked μυκτηριζω means, properly, to turn up the nose in scorn; hence to mock, or deride, or insult. The sense is, that God could not be

imposed on, or could not be insulted with impunity, or successfully. To mock is, properly,

(1.) to imitate, to mimic; to imitate in contempt or derision.

(2.) To deride, to laugh at, to ridicule.

(3.) To defeat, or to illude, or to disappoint.

(4.) To fool, to tantalize--Webster. Here it cannot mean to imitate, or to mimic, but it refers to the principles of the Divine administration, and must mean that they could not be treated with contempt, or successfully evaded. They could not hope to illude or impose on God. His principles of government were settled, and they could not impose on him. To what the reference is here, is not perfectly plain. In the connexion in which it stands, it seems to refer to the support of the ministers of the gospel; and Paul introduces the general principle, that as a man sows he will reap, to show them what will be the effect of a liberal and proper use of their property. If they made a proper use of it; if. they employed it for benevolent purposes; if they appropriated what they should to the support of religion, they would reap accordingly. God could not be imposed on in regard to this. They could not make him think that they had true religion when they were sowing to the flesh, and when they were spending their money in purchasing pleasure, and in luxury and vanity. No zeal, however ardent; no prayers, however fervent or long; no professions, however loud, would impose on God. And to make such prayers, and to manifest such zeal and such strong professions, while the heart was with the world, and they were spending their money for everything else but religion, was mocking God. Alas, how much mockery of God like this still prevails! How much, when men seem disposed to make God believe that they are exceedingly zealous and devoted, while their heart is truly with the world! How many long prayers are offered; how much zeal is shown; how many warm professions are made, as if to make God and man believe that the heart was truly engaged in the cause of religion, while little or nothing is given in the cause of benevolence;

while the ministers of religion are suffered to starve; and while the "loud professor" rolls in wealth, and is distinguished for luxury of living, for gaiety of apparel, for splendour of equipage, and for extravagance in parties of pleasure! Such professors attempt to mock God. They are really sowing to the flesh; and of the flesh they must reap corruption.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap
corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the
Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we
shall reap, if we faint not.

We shall reap, if we faint not. If we do not give over, exhausted and disheartened. It is implied here, that unless a man perseveres in doing good to the end of life, he can hope for no reward. He who becomes disheartened, and who gives over his efforts; he that is appalled by obstacles, and that faints on account of the embarrassments thrown in his way; he that pines for ease, and withdraws from the field of benevolence, shows that he has no true attachment to the cause, and that his heart has never been truly in the work of religion. He who becomes a true Christian, becomes such FOR ETERNITY. He has enlisted, never to withdraw. He becomes pledged to do good and to serve God always. No obstacles are to deter, no embarrassments are to drive him from the field. With the rigour of his youth, and the wisdom and influence of his riper years; with his remaining powers when enfeebled by age; with the last pulsation of life here, and with his immortal energies in a higher world, he is to do good. For that he is to live. In that he is to die; and when he awakes in the resurrection with renovated powers, he is to awake to an everlasting service of doing good, as far as he may have opportunity, in the kingdom of God.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*,
especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Paul Glories in the Cross

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine
own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

For the cross of Christ. From attachment to the cause of a crucified Saviour. If they insisted on entire dependence on the merits of his blood, and renounced all dependence on rites and ceremonies, they would suffer persecution. This verse shows the true cause of the zeal which the Judaizing teachers evinced. It was the fear of persecution. It was the want of independence and boldness in maintaining the doctrine that men.were to be saved only by the merits of the Lord Jesus. By attempting to blend together the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity; by maintaining that the observance of the Jewish rites was necessary, and yet that Jesus was the Messiah, they endeavoured to keep in with both parties, and thus to escape the opposition of the Jews. It was an unhallowed compromise. It was an attempt to blend things together which could not be united. One must really displace the other. If men depended on the rites of Moses, they had no need of dependence on the Messiah; if they professed to depend on him, then to rely on anything else was, in fact, to disown and reject him. Embracing the one system was, in fact, renouncing the other. Such is the argument of Paul; and such his solemn remonstrance against embracing any doctrine which would obscure the glory of simple dependence on the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

Keep the law. The law of Moses, or the law of God. Paul's idea is, that if they were circumcised, they brought themselves under obligation to keep the whole law of God. Gal 5:3. But they did not do it.

(1.) No man perfectly observes the whole law of God.

(2.) The Jewish nation, as such, were very far from doing it.

(3.) It is probable that these persons did not pretend even to keep the whole law of Moses. Paul insists on it, that if they were circumcised, and depended on that for salvation, they were under obligation to keep the whole law. But they did not. Probably they did not offer sacrifice, or join in any of the numerous observances of the Jewish nation, except some of the more prominent, such as circumcision. This, says Paul, is inconsistent in the highest degree; and they thus show their insincerity and hypocrisy. That they may glory in your flesh. In having you as converts, and in persuading you, to be circumcised, that they may show their zeal for the law, and thus escape persecution. The phrase "in your flesh," here is equivalent to "in your circumcision;" making use of your circumcision to promote their own importance, and to save themselves from persecution.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

That I should glory. That I should boast; or that I should rely on anything else. Others glory in their conformity to the laws of Moses; others in their zeal, or their talents, or their learning, or their orthodoxy; others in their wealth, or their accomplishments; others in their family alliances, and their birth; but the supreme boast and glorying of a Christian is in the cross of Christ. In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus, the crucified Messiah. It is a subject of rejoicing and glorying that we have such a Saviour. The world looked upon him with contempt; and the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jew, and folly to the Greek. 1Cor 1:23. But to the Christian, that cross is the subject of glorying. It is so because

(1.) of the love of Him who suffered there;

(2.) of the purity and holiness of his character, for the innocent died there for the guilty;

(3.) of the honour there put on the law of God by his dying to maintain it unsullied;

(4.) of the reconciliation there made for sin, accomplishing what could be done by no other oblation, and by no power of man;

(5.) of the pardon there procured for the guilty;

(6.) of the fact that through it we become dead to the world, and are made alive to God;

(7.) of the support and consolation which goes from that cross to sustain us in trial; and,

(8.) of the fact that it procured for us admission into heaven, a title to the world of glory. All is glory around the cross. It was a glorious Saviour who died; it was glorious love that led him to die; it was a glorious object to redeem a world; and it is unspeakable glory to which he will raise lost and ruined sinners by his death. Oh, who would not glory in such a Saviour! Compared with this, what trifles are all the objects in which men usually boast! And what a lesson is here furnished to the true Christian! Let us not boast of our wealth. It will soon leave us, or we shall be taken from it, and it can aid us little in the great matters that are before us, It will not ward off disease; it will not enable us to bear pain; it will not smooth the couch of death; it will not save the soul. Let us not glory in our strength, for it will soon fail; in our beauty, for we shall soon be undistinguished in the corruption of the tomb; in our accomplishments, for they will not save us; in our learning, for it is not that by which we can be brought to heaven. But let us glory that we have for a Saviour the eternal Son of God--that glorious Being who was adored by the inhabitants of heaven; who made the worlds; who is pure, and lovely, and most holy; and who has undertaken our cause, and died to save us. I desire no higher honour than to be saved by the Son of God. It is the exaltation of my nature, and shows me more than anything else its true dignity, that one so great and glorious sought my redemption. That cannot be an object of temporary value which he sought by coming from heaven; and if there is any

object of real magnitude in this world, it is the soul which the eternal Son of God died to redeem.

Having shown what it was that the false apostles gloried in, he next shows what it was that he himself gloried in; namely, in the cross of Christ; that is, in his preaching Christ crucified, and the necessity of faith in him who died as a sacrifice upon the cross. The cross of Christ is taken three ways in scripture, materially, metaphorically, and metonymically.
The material cross of Christ is that which he died upon at Jerusalem: this the church of Rome glories in greatly, but not the apostle.

The metaphorical cross of Christ, is afflictions, Luke 9:28. Let him take up the cross; that is, submit to any afflictions. God oft-times sanctifies this cross, for the crucifying the hearts of his people to the world.

But the cross of Christ is taken metonymically for the gospel, the doctrine of the gospel, or of him that died upon the cross.

Now Christianity, or the doctrine of the gospel, crucifies us to the world: first, by discovering to us the great vanity and emptiness of the world and all the perishing satisfactions of it; secondly, by propounding such arguments to crucify the world, as were never heard of from all the philosophers and wise men that ever lived in the world; namely, arguments taken from the glory of God, from the death of Christ, from the dignity of the soul, &c.

Learn hence, That such a Christian as doth experimentally find his heart and affections daily more and more crucified to the world, by the cross of Christ, has unspeakable cause and reason sufficient for spiritual glorying and rejoicing.

It consists not in a vile esteem of the world, as useless or hurtful; or in casting off all care and concern for the things of the world, as sinful and unnecessary; nor is every degree of desire after, love

unto, or delight in, the things of the world, inconsistent with our being crucified to it: nor doth it consist in, or oblige us to, the withdrawing ourselves from all society and conversation with the men of the world.

But, positively, crucifixion to the world consists in a crucified judgment and opinion of the world; in crucifying our love and affections to the world; in crucifying our hopes and expectations from the world; in crucifying our care and concern for the world; in crucifying our delight in, and our endeavour after, the world.

We may, and ought to, glory in the blessed effect and fruit of Christ's death in re-stamping the image of God upon the soul, in the certain tokens of the love of God: we may glory in the death of Christ's enemy, and our soul's enemy: we may glory in that wherein God is glorified, and in that which is the earnest of our own glorification. Now crucifixion to the world, by the cross of Christ, is this, all this, and therefore warrantably to be boasted of, and gloried in.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

ordinances and fleshly privileges of circumcision, &c. which the false apostles so much gloried in: namely, because circumcision, nor uncircumcision, neither the presence of that ordinance, nor the want of it, availeth any thing, as to our acceptance with Christ, and interest in him: but the new creature is all in all; a circumcised heart, not a circumcised foreskin, a renewed nature, a divine temper of mind, rendering us like to Christ; this will enable us to love him, and qualify us for living with him now in Christ Jesus.

That is, now under the Christian dispensation, under the economy of the gospel, neither the presence nor absence of this outward badge of circumcision will avail any thing to our justification before God: but that which was signified by circumcision, is the thing that pleased God; namely, the renovation of our nature, and becoming new creatures both in heart and life.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Observe here, 1. The nature of Christianity described: it is a walk. Now a walk is a motion, a free and voluntary motion, an uniform and even motion: it is a progressive motion, and a constant motion.

Observe, 2. The condition of this walk, and that is regularity: it is a walk by rule; a Christian is not a lawless person, to range and ramble, and run up and down, as fancy leads him: but he walks by rule, by the rule of scripture, by the rule of charity.

Observe, 3. The determination of that rule which a Christian is to walk by: it must be according to this rule. What rule? The foregoing verse declares it is regeneration, and the law of the new creature. As many as walk according to that rule; when the new creature in the principles and workings of it is made the ground, the pattern, and direction, of our obedience, and we frame and square all the actions of our lives according thereunto.

Observe, 4. The blessed privileges belonging to them that thus walk: Peace be into them, and mercy: that is, there shall be peace and mercy to them; these shall be their portion; nay, they shall be upon them; that is, in a large and plentiful manner vouchsafed to them.

Observe lastly, The honourable mention which the apostle makes of them that thus walk by scripture rule, according to the law of the new creature, written in the heart: he calls them the true Israel of God, the spiritual seed of Abraham, the children of his faith; which was a thousand times greater privilege than to be the children of his flesh: these are the persons interested in his blessings.

Learn hence, That true and inward peace, great and lasting peace, peace with God, and peace with conscience, is the assured portion, and shall be the possession, of all and only those who walk according to the law of God, the rule of the creature. As many as walk according to this rule.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Let no man trouble me. This implies that he had had trouble of some kind, and he earnestly desires that he may have no more. What particular trouble he here refers to is not certainly known, and commentators have not been agreed. It seems to me that the connexion requires us to understand it of the molestation which he had had in regard to his call to the apostolic office, and his authority to explain and defend the religion of the Redeemer. This had been one principal subject of this epistle. His authority had been called in question. He had felt it necessary to go into a vindication of it. His instructions had been departed from on the ground that he was not one of the original apostles, and that he differed from others. See Gal 1:11. Hence all the anxiety and trouble which he had had in regard to their departure from the doctrines which he had taught them. He closes the whole subject of the epistle by this tender and affecting language, the sense of which has been well expressed by Crellius: "I have shown my apostolic authority, and proved that I am commissioned by the Lord Jesus. I have stated and vindicated the great doctrine of justification by faith, and shown that the Mosaic law is not necessarily binding. On these points may I have no more trouble. I have enough for my nature to bear of other kinds. I bear in my body the impressive proofs that I am an apostle, and the sufferings that require all my fortitude to sustain them. These marks, received in the service of the Lord Jesus, and so strongly resembling those which he himself received, prove that I am truly engaged in his cause, and am commissioned by him. These wounds and sorrows are so many, that I have need of the kindness and prayers of Christians, rather than to be compelled to vindicate myself, and to rebuke them for their own wanderings."

For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The word here rendered "marks" στιγματα means, properly, the marks or brands which are pricked or burnt in upon the body. So Slaves were sometimes branded by their masters, to prevent their escape; and so devotees to an idol god sometimes caused to be impressed on themselves the name or image of the divinity which they adored. Herodotus (ii. 113) mentions a temple of Hercules in Egypt, in which if any slave took refuge, and had the sacred brands or marks impressed on him, στιγματα he thereby devoted himself to the god, and it was not lawful for any one to injure him. Many have supposed that Paul here says, in allusion to such a custom, that he had the name of the Redeemer impressed on his body, and that he regarded himself as devoted to him and his cause. It seems to me that, by these marks or brands, he refers to the weals which he had received in his body; the marks of stripes and sufferings which he endured in the service of the Redeemer. Comp. 2Cor 11:24,25. He had repeatedly been scourged. He bore the marks of that on his person now. They were the evidences that he was devoted to the Saviour. He had received them in his cause; and they were the proofs that he belonged to the Lord Jesus. He had suffered for him, and had suffered much. Having thus suffered, and having thus the evidence that he belonged to the Saviour, and having by his sufferings given ample proof of that to others, he asks to be freed from further molestation. Some had in their body the marks of circumcision, the evidence that they were disciples of the law of Moses; others had perhaps in their persons the image and name of an idol to which they were devoted; but the marks which he bore were the weals which he had received by being again and again whipped publicly in the cause of the Redeemer. To that Redeemer, therefore, he felt himself united, and from that attachment he would not allow himself to be diverted. How often has an old soldier shown his scars with pride and exultation as a proof of his attachment to his country! Numerous scars, the loss of an arm, an eye, or a leg, are thus the much-valued and vaunted pledges of attachment to liberty, and a passport to the confidence of every man who loves his country. "I prize this wound," said Lafayette, when struck in the foot by a musket-ball at

Germantown, "as among the most valued of my honours." So Paul felt in regard to the scourges which he had receipted in the cause of the Lord Jesus. They were his boast and his glory; the pledge that he had been engaged in the cause of the Saviour, and a passport to all who loved the Son of God. Christians now are not subjected to such stripes and scourgings. But let us have some marks of our attachment to the Lord Jesus. By a holy life; by self-denial; by subdued animal affections; by zeal in the cause of truth; by an imitation of the Lord Jesus; and by the marks of suffering in our body, if we should be called to it, let us have some evidence that we are his; and be able to say, when we look on death and eternity, "we bear with us the evidence that we belong to the Son of God." To us, that will be of more value than any ribbon or star indicating elevated rank; more valuable than a ducal coronet; more valuable than the brightest jewel that ever sparkled on the brow of royalty.

Benediction

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians
[Ephesians]

Ephesians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,
To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

The work which the heart of the apostle was set upon, and that is, the work of blessing God: we bless God one way, he blesses us another; he blesses us imperatoriously, by commanding his blessings upon us; we bless him optatively, when with thankful hearts we praise him, when we wish well to him, and speak well of him.
Lord, what an infinite favour and privilege is this vouchsafed to us, not only to pray to God and receive blessings from him, but to admit us to bless him, and to account himself honoured by us when we acknowledge him the fountain of all blessings and blessedness to us his creatures!

Observe, 2. The title under which our apostle blessed him, namely, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He doth not say now under the gospel, as of old under the law, Blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; or, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; but, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where note, 1. He is a God to Christ, in relation to his being man: Christ being foreordained before the foundation of the world,to the work and office of a Mediator, 1Pe 1:20 and the Father making a covenant or federal transaction with him from all eternity as Mediator.

Note, 2. He is a Father to Christ, and that both as God and man: a father to him as God, by eternal and ineffable generation, the one being Deus gignens, and the other Deus genitus: thus he was the only begotten Son of the Father: and Father to him as man, by virtue of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, Therefore that holy thing shall be called the Son of God Luke 1:32.

Observe, 3. The reason why under these relations he so affectionately blesses God, namely, for bestowing blessings, spiritual blessings, all spiritual blessings; and this is in or concerning heavenly things, which tend to fit us for heaven and eternal glory. And lastly, all these blessings are conferred upon us in Christ, he, by his merit, hath purchased them; he, as our head and advocate,in our name has received them; by virtue of our union with whom we have a right upon them, and shall ere long in heaven be fully and finally possessed of them.

Behold here the transcendent bounty and liberality of our heavenly Father. He has more than one blessing for his children, he has all spiritual and heavenly blessings for them, grace on earth, and glory in heaven; grace to enable them to glorify him upon earth, and glory as the reward of grace with himself in heaven.

Rejoice, O Christian, in thy lot and portion; God himself hath but all things, and so hast thou. Has he all spiritual blessings in heaven in full possession? thou hast them also in right and title at present, and ere long shalt enjoy them in full fruitation. Eternally blessed then be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, or in heavenly things, in Christ.

Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This commences a sentence which continues to the close of Verse 12. The length of the periods in the writings of Paul, is one cause of the obscurity of his style, and renders an explanation often difficult. The meaning of this phrase is, that God has laid a foundation for gratitude for what he has done. The ground or reason of the praise here referred to, is that which is stated in the following verses. The leading thing on which the apostle dwells is God's eternal purpose--his everlasting counsel in regard to the salvation of man. Paul breaks out into the exclamation that God is worthy of praise for such a plan, and that his eternal purposes, now manifest to men, give exalted views of the character and glory of God. Most persons suppose the contrary. They feel that the plans of God are dark, and stern, and forbidding, and such as to render his character anything but amiable. They speak of him, when he is referred to as a sovereign, as if he were tyrannical and unjust; and they never connect the idea of that which is amiable and lovely with the doctrine of eternal purposes. There is no doctrine that is usually so unpopular; none that is so much reproached; none that is so much abused. There is none that men desire so much to disbelieve or avoid; none that they are so unwilling to have preached; and none that they are so reluctant to find in the Scriptures. Even many Christians turn away from it with dread; or if they tolerate it, they yet feel that there is something about it that is peculiarly dark and forbidding. Not so felt Paul. He felt that it laid the foundation for eternal praise; that it presented glorious views of God; that it was the ground of confidence and hope; and that it was desirable that Christians should dwell upon it, and praise God for it. Let us feel, therefore, as we enter upon the exposition of this chapter, that God is to be praised for ALL his plans, and that it is possible for Christians to have such views of the doctrine of eternal predestination as to give them most elevated conceptions of the glory of the Divine character. And let us also be willing to know the truth. Let us approach word after word, and phrase after phrase, and verse after verse, in this chapter, willing to know all that God teaches, to believe all that he has revealed, and ready to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ far all that he has done."

Who hath blessed us. Who does Paul mean here by "us?" Does he mean all the world? This cannot be, for all the world are not thus blessed with all spiritual blessings. Does he mean nations? For the same reason this cannot be. Does he mean the Gentiles, in contradistinction from the Jews? Why, then, does he use the word us,including himself, who was a Jew? Does he mean to say that they were blessed with external privileges, and that this was the only object of the eternal purposes of God? This cannot be, for he speaks of "spiritual blessings ;" he speaks of the persons referred to as having "redemption," and "the forgiveness of sins;" as having "obtained an inheritance," and as being sealed with the "Holy Spirit of promise." These appertain not to nations, or to external privileges, or the mere offers of the gospel, but to true Christians; to persons who have been redeemed. The persons referred to by the word "us," are those who are mentioned in Eph 1:1 1 as "saints"--αγιοις; "holy" and "faithful"-- πιστοις--believing, or believers. This observation is important, because it shows that the plan or decree of God had reference to individuals, and not merely to nations. Many have supposed (see Whitby, Dr. A. Clarke, Bloomfield, and others) that the apostle here refers to the Gentiles, and that his object is to show that they were now admitted to the same privileges as the ancient Jews, and that the whole doctrine of predestination here referred to, has relation to that fact. But, I would ask, were there no Jews in the church at Ephesus? See Ac 18:20,24 19:1-8. The matter of fact seems to have been, that Paul was uncommonly successful there among his own countrymen, and that his chief difficulty there arose, not from the Jews, but from the influence of the heathen, Acts 19:24. Besides, what evidence is there that the apostle speaks in this chapter peculiarly of the Gentiles, or that he was writing to that portion of the church at Ephesus which was of Gentile origin? And if he was, why did he name himself among them as one on whom this blessing had been bestowed? The fact is, that this is a mere supposition, resorted to without evidence, and in the face of every fair principle of interpretation, to avoid an unpleasant doctrine. Nothing can be clearer than that Paul meant to write to Christians as such; to speak of privileges which they enjoyed as peculiar to

themselves; and that he had no particular reference to nations, and did not design merely to refer to external privileges.

With all spiritual blessings. Pardon, peace, redemption, adoption, the earnest of the Spirit, etc., referred to in the following verses--blessings which individual Christians enjoy, and not external privileges conferred on nations.

In heavenly places in Christ. The word places is here understood, and is not in the original. It may mean heavenly places, or heavenly things. The word places does not express the best sense. The idea seems to be, that God has blessed us in Christ in regard to heavenly subjects or matters. In Eph 1:20, the word "places" seems to be inserted with more propriety. The same phrase occurs again in Eph 2:6, 3:10; and it is remarkable that it should occur in the same elliptical form four times in this one epistle, and, I believe, in no other part of the writings of Paul. Our translators have, in each instance, supplied the word "places," as denoting the rank or station of Christians, of the angels, and of the Saviour, to each of whom it is applied. The phrase probably means, in things pertaining to heaven; fitted to prepare us for heaven; and tending toward heaven. It probably refers here to everything that was heavenly in its nature, or that had relation to heaven, whether gifts or graces. As the apostle is speaking, however, of the mass of Christians on whom these things had been bestowed, I rather suppose that he refers to what are called Christian graces, than to the extraordinary endowments bestowed on the few. The sense is, that in Christ, i.e., through Christ, or by means of him, God had bestowed all spiritual blessings that were fitted to prepare for heaven--such as pardon, adoption, the illumination of the Spirit, etc.

4 according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

According as. The importance of this verse will render proper a somewhat minute examination of the words and phrases of which it is composed. The general sense of the passage is, that these blessings pertaining to heaven were bestowed upon Christians in accordance with an eternal purpose. They were not conferred by

chance or hap-hazard. They were the result of intention and design on the part of God. Their value was greatly enhanced from the fact that God had designed from all eternity to bestow them, and that they come to us as the result of his everlasting plan. It was not a recent plan; it was not an after-thought; it was not by mere chance; it was not by caprice; it was the fruit of an eternal counsel. Those blessings had all the value, and all the assurance of permanency, which must result from that fact. The phrase "according as" καθως--implies that these blessings were in conformity with that eternal plan, and have flowed to us as the expression of that plan. They are limited by that purpose, for it marks and measures all. It was as God had chosen that it should be, and had appointed in his eternal purpose.

He hath chosen us. The word "us" here shows that the apostle had reference to individuals, and not to communities. It includes Paul himself as one of the "chosen," and those whom he addressed--the mingled Gentile and Jewish converts in Ephesus. That it must refer to individuals is clear. Of no community, as such, can it be said, that it was "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy." It is not true of the Gentile world as such, nor of any one of the nations making up the Gentile world. The word rendered here "hath chosen" - εξελεξατο--is from a word meaning to lay out together, (Passow,) to choose out, to select. It has the idea of making a choice or selection among different objects or things. It is applied to things, as in Lk 10:42. "Mary hath chosen that good part;"--she has made a choice, or selection of it, or has shown a preference for it. 1Cor 1:27: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world ;" he has preferred to make use of them among all the conceivable things which might have been employed "to confound the wise." Comp. Acts 1:2,24, 6:5, 15:22,25. It denotes to choose out with the accessary idea of kindness or favour. Mk 13:20. "For the elect's sake whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." Jn 13:18, "I know whom I have chosen." Acts 13:17. "The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers;" that is, selected them from the nations to accomplish important purposes. This is evidently the sense of the word in the passage before us. It means to make a selection or choice, with the idea of favour or love, and with a view

to impart important benefits on those whom he chose. The idea of making some distinction between them and others, is essential to a correct understanding of the passage-- since there can be no choice where no such distinction is made. He who chooses one out of many things makes a difference, or evinces a preference--no matter what the ground or reason of his doing it may be. Whether this refers to communities and nations, or to individuals, still it is true that a distinction is made, or a preference given of one over another. It may be added, that so far as justice is concerned, it makes no difference whether it refers to nations or to individuals. If there is injustice in choosing an individual to favour, there cannot be less in choosing a nation--for a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals. Every objection which has ever been made to the doctrine of election as it relates to individuals, will apply with equal force to the choice of a nation to peculiar privileges. If a distinction is made, it may be made with as much propriety in respect to individuals as to nations.

In him. In Christ. The choice was not without reference to any means of saving them; it was not a mere purpose to bring a certain number to heaven; it was with reference to the mediation of the Redeemer, and his work. It was a purpose that they should be saved by him, and share the benefits of the atonement. The whole choice and purpose of salvation had reference to him, and out of him no one was chosen to life, and no one out of him will be saved.

Before the foundation of the world. This is a very important phrase in determining the time when the choice was made. It was not an after-thought. It was not commenced in time. The purpose was far back in the ages of eternity. But what is the meaning of the phrase "before the foundation of the world?" Dr. Clarke supposes that it means "from the commencement of the religious system of the Jews, which," says he, "the phrase some- times means." Such principles of interpretation are they compelled to resort to who endeavour to show that this refers to a national election to privileges, and who deny that it refers to individuals. On such principles the Bible may be made to signify any- thing and everything. Dr. Chandler, who also supposes that it refers to

nations, admits, however, that the word "foundation" means the beginning of anything; and that the phrase here means, "before the world began." There is scarcely any phrase in the New Testament which is more clear in its signification than this. The word rendered "foundation"--καταβολη--means, properly, a laying down, a founding, a foundation--as where the foundation of a building is laid; and the phrase "before the foundation of the world, " clearly means before the world was made, or before the work of creation. See Mt 13:35, 25:34, Lk 11:50, Heb 9:26, Rev 13:8, in all which places the phrase "the foundation of the world" means the beginning of human affairs; the beginning of the world; the beginning of history, etc. Thus, in Jn 17:24, the Lord Jesus says, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," i.e. from eternity, or before the work of creation commenced. Thus Peter says (1Pet 1:20) of the Saviour, "who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." It was the purpose of God before the worlds were made, to send him to save lost men. Comp. Rev 17:8. Nothing can be clearer than that the phrase before us must refer to a purpose that was formed before the world was made. It is not a temporary arrangement; it has not grown up under the influence of vacillating purposes; it is not a plan newly formed, or changed with each coming generation, or variable like the plans of men. It has all the importance, dignity, and assurances of stability which necessarily result from a purpose that has been eternal in the mind of God. It may be observed here,

(1.) that if the plan was formed "before the foundation of the world," all objections to the doctrine of an eternal plan are removed. If the plan was formed before the world, no matter whether a moment, an hour, a year, or millions of years, the plan is equally fixed, and the event equally necessary. All the objections which will lie against an eternal plan, will lie against a plan formed a day or an hour before the event. The one interferes with our freedom of action as much as the other.

(2.) If the plan was formed "before the foundation of the world," it was eternal. God has no new plan. He forms no new schemes. He is not changing and vacillating. If we can ascertain what is the plan

of God at any time, we can ascertain what his eternal plan was with reference to the event. It has always been the same-- for "he is of ONE MIND, and who can turn him?" Job 23:13. In reference to the plans and purposes of the Most High, there is nothing better settled than that WHAT HE ACTUALLY DOES, HE ALWAYS MEANT TO Do--which is the doctrine of eternal decrees---and the whole of it.

That we should be holy. Paul proceeds to state the object for which God had chosen his people. It is not merely that they should enter into heaven. It is not that they may live in sin. It is not that they may flatter themselves that they are safe, and then live as they please. The tendency among men has always been to abuse the doctrine of predestination and election; to lead men to say that if all things are fixed there is no need of effort; that if God has an eternal plan, no matter how men live, they will be saved if he has elected them, and that at all events they cannot change that plan, and they may as well enjoy life by indulgence in sin. The apostle Paul held no such view of the doctrine of predestination. In his apprehension it is a doctrine fitted to excite the gratitude of Christians; and the whole tendency and design of the doctrine, according to him, is to make men holy, and without blame before God in love.

And without blame before him in love. The expression "in love," is probably to be taken in connexion with the following verse, and should be tendered, "In love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children." It is all to be traced to the love of God.

(1.) It was love for us which prompted to it.

(2.) It is the highest expression of love to be ordained to eternal life --for what higher love could God show us?

(3.) It is love on his part, because we had no claim to it, and had not deserved it. If this be the correct view, then the doctrine of predestination is not inconsistent with the highest moral excellence in the Divine character, and should never be represented as the

offspring of partiality and injustice. Then, too, we should give thanks that "God has, in love, predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Our apostle having in the former verse offered up a very solemn thanksgiving to God, for blessing the Ephesians with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, he comes in this verse to discover and declare the fountain from whence all these spiritual blessings did proceed and flow, namely, from God's gracious purpose in our election before all time; He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, &c.

Where note, 1. The favour vouchsafed, election; and the fruit and product of that favour, holiness of life and conversation.

Note, 1. The favour and privilege vouchsafed by God, He hath chosen. This denotes the freeness of the favour: he chose when he might have refused. His book of life is a book of love; the cause of our love is in the object; the reason of God's love is in himself.

Note, 2. The subject of this favour, He hath chosen us, us Gentiles. The Jews much gloried in their being a chosen generation, a peculiar people; we Gentiles are a chosen generation also; they were beloved for their father's sake, Abraham's, we for Christ's sake.

Note, 3. The antiquity of this favour: Before the foundation of the world: that is, from all eternity. The apostle, to take the Jews off from boasting, as they did, that the world was made for their sake, and that the Messiah from the beginning of the world did enter into a covenant with God to redeem them especially, declares, that the despised Gentiles were elected and chosen by God to be an holy people to himself; and all this, in the purpose of God, before the foundations of the world were laid.

Note, 4. God is said to have chosen us in Christ, as our head. Consider Christ as God, so we are chosen by him. I know whom I

have chosen, says Christ. Consider him as a Mediator; so we are chosen in him, not for him: because, not Christ's undertaking for us, but the Father's good pleasure towards us, was the spring and fontal cause of our election. The truth is, God was so far from choosing the Gentiles out of faith foreseen, that he did not choose them for the sake and obedience of Christ foreseen; God did not love us from eternity because Christ was to die for us in time, but because he loved us with an everlasting love; therefore in the fulness of time, Christ was sent to die for us: so that the death of Christ was the fruit and effect, but not the cause of our election. No other reason, says bishop Fell upon the place, can be assigned of this privilege, but the good pleasure of God; and if Christ's sufferings were not the cause of our election, much less our own deserving, as he adds there; Almighty God not choosing us because worthy, but to make us worthy by choosing us.

Note, 5. The effect and fruit, the benefit and end, of this free and ancient favour: That we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Holiness is here declared not to be the cause, but the effect of our election: God chose the Gentiles from eternity to be his people, not because they were holy, they were far enough from that, being afar off from God, but designing that they thus graciously chosen should be holy; initially, progressively, and perseveringly holy in this life, and perfectly holy in the next; yet arriving at such a perfection here in holiness as to denominate us blameless in the account of God, by virtue of our faith in Christ, and love to one another.

From the whole learn, 1. That God's bestowing all spiritual blessings upon us in time, is the effect and fruit of his electing love from all eternity; He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Learn, 2. That God hath chosen none to happiness and glory hereafter, but only such as are holy in conversation here, holy in the habitual frame and disposition of their hearts, and in the general course and tenor of their lives and actions.

Learn, 3. That such as are holy before God, will endeavour to walk unblamably in the sight of man, in the exercise of love, and in the practice of all the duties of the second table, which are at once evidences of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession; That we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love.

5 having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Having predestinated us. On the meaning of the word here used, Rom 1:4 Rom 8:29. The word used (προοριζω) means, properly, to set bounds before; and then to predetermine. There is the essential idea of setting bounds or limits, and of doing this beforehand. It is not that God determined to do it when it was actually done, but that he intended to do it beforehand. No language could express this more clearly, and I suppose this interpretation is generally admitted. Even by those who deny the doctrine of particular election, it is not denied that the word here used means to predetermine; and they maintain that the sense is, that God had predetermined to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of his people. Admitting, then, that the meaning is to predestinate in the proper sense, the only question is, who are predestinated? To whom does the expression apply? Is it to nations, or to individuals? I In reply to this, in addition to the remarks already made, I would observe,

(1.) that there is no specification of nations here as such, no mention of the Gentiles in contradistinction from the Jews.

(2.) Those referred to were those included in the word "us," among whom Paul was one--but Paul was not a heathen.

(3.) The same objection will lie against the doctrine of predestinating nations which will lie against predestinating individuals.

(4.) Nations axe made up of individuals, and the predetermination must have had some reference to individuals. What is a nation but a collection of individuals? There is no such abstract being or thing as a nation; and if there was any purpose in regard to a nation, it

must have had some reference to the individuals composing it. He that would act on the ocean, must act on the drops of water that make up the ocean; for besides the collection of drops of water there is no ocean. He that would remove a mountain, must act on the particles of matter that compose that mountain; for there is no such thing as an abstract mountain. Perhaps there was never a greater illusion than to suppose that all difficulty is removed in regard to the doctrine of election and predestination, by saying that it refers to nations. What difficulty is lessened? What is gained by it? How does it make God appear more amiable and good? Does it render him less partial to suppose that he has made a difference among nations, than to suppose he has made a difference among individuals? Does it remove any difficulty about the offer of salvation, to suppose that he has granted the knowledge of his truth to some nations, and withheld it from others? The truth is, that all the reasoning which has been founded on this supposition, has been merely throwing dust in the eyes. If there is any well-founded objection to the doctrine of decrees or predestination, it is to the doctrine at all, alike in regard to nations and individuals, and there are just the same difficulties in the one case as in the other. But there is no real difficulty in either. Who could worship or honour a God who had no plan, or purpose, or intention in what he did? Who can believe that the universe was formed and is governed without design? Who can doubt that what God does he always meant to do? When, therefore, he converts and saves a soul, it is clear that he always intended to do it. He has no new plan. It is not an after-thought. It is not the work of chance. If I can find out any thing that God has done, I have the most certain conviction that he always meant to do it--and this is all that is intended by the doctrine of election or predestination. What God does, he always meant to do. What he permits, he always meant to permit. I may add further, that if it is right to do it, it was right to intend to do it. If there is no injustice or partiality in the act itself, there is no injustice or partiality in the intention to perform it. If it is right to save a soul, it was always right to intend to save it. If it is right to condemn a sinner to woe, it was right to intend to do it. Let us, then, look at the thing itself; and if that is not wrong, we should not blame the purpose to do it, however long it has been cherished. Unto the

adoption, etc. Jn 1:12; Rom 8:15. According to the good pleasure of his will. The word rendered "good pleasure"--(ευδοκια)--means a being well pleased; delight in any thing, favour, good-will, Lk 2:14, Php 1:15. Comp. Lk 12:32. Then it denotes purpose, or will, the idea of benevolence being included. Robinson. Rosenmuller renders the phrase, "from his most benignant decree." The evident object of the apostle is to state why God chose the heirs of salvation. It was done as it seemed good to him in the circumstances of the case. It was not that man had any control over him, or that man was consulted in the determination, or that it was based on the good works of man, real or foreseen. But we are not to suppose that there were no good reasons for what he has thus done. Convicts are frequently pardoned by an executive. He does it according to his own will, or as seems good in his sight. He is to be the judge, and no one has a right to control him in doing it. It may seem to be entirely arbitrary. The executive may not have communicated the reasons why he did it, either to those who are pardoned, or to the other prisoners, or to any one else. But we are not to infer that there was no reason for doing it. If he is a wise magistrate, and worthy of his station, it is to be presumed that there were reasons which, if known, would be satisfactory to all. But those reasons he is under no obligations to make known. Indeed, it might be improper that they should be known. Of that he is the best judge. Meantime, however, we may see what would be the effect in those who were not forgiven. It would excite, very likely, their hatred, and they would charge him with partiality or with tyranny. But they should remember that whoever might be pardoned, and on whatever ground it might be done, they could not complain. They would suffer no more than they deserve. But what if, when the act of pardon was made known to one part, it was offered to the others also on certain plain and easy conditions? Suppose it should appear that while the executive meant, for wise but concealed reasons, to forgive a part, he had also determined to offer forgiveness to all. And suppose that they were in fact disposed in the highest degree to neglect it, and that no inducements or arguments could prevail on them to accept of it. Who then could blame the executive? Now this is about the case in regard to God, and the doctrine of election. All men were guilty and condemned.

For wise reasons, which God has not communicated to us, he determined to bring a portion at least of the human race to salvation. This he did not intend to leave to chance and hap-hazard. He saw that all would of themselves reject the offer, and that unless some efficient means were used, the blood of the atonement would be shed in vain. He did not make known to men who they were that he meant to save, nor the reason why they particularly were to be brought to heaven. Meantime he meant to make the offer universal; to make the terms as easy as possible, and thus to take away every ground of complaint. If men will not accept of pardon; if they prefer their sins; if nothing can induce them to come and be saved, why should they complain? If the doors of a prison are open, and the chains of the prisoners are knocked off, and they will not come out, why should they complain that others are in fact willing to come out and be saved? Let it be borne in mind, that the purposes of God correspond exactly to facts as they actually occur, and much of the difficulty is taken away. If in the facts there is no just ground of complaint, there can be none, because it was the intention of God that the facts should be so.

That is, "having predestinated us Gentiles, who in the esteem of the Jews were accounted dogs, to be his adopted sons and daughters, in and by Jesus Christ, in whom he hath made us accepted, to the abundant praise and glory of his free grace and mercy."

Observe here, 1. That none are the children of God by nature: none are born sons, but made sons; not of their own, but God's making; and in order to this glorious privilege, we were predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.

Observe, 2. The attribute mentioned here by the apostle, which moved God to predestinate us to the adoption of children: it was the glory of his grace, he mentions not the glory of his holiness, the glory of his justice, or the glory of his power, because the glory of his power is manifested in making of the world, the glory of his holiness in making of his law, the glory of his justice in turning the transgressors of that law into hell; but his grace he shows no where

so much as in the predestination ofhis children, and in what he hath predestinated them unto; he showeth indeed all his attributes herein, but grace over and above all the rest.

Observe 3. The effect and fruit of this privilege, namely, of our being predestinated to the adoption of children, and that is, our being made accepted in Christ the Beloved; the word is properly rendered, He hath made us dear, precious, and delightful, to himself; or in one word, He hath ingratiated us.

Here note, That as Jesus Christ is in an eminent manner beloved of God and accepted with him, so in like manner all God's adopted children do, and shall, find favour with God, and acceptance through Christ: He hath made us freely accepted in the Beloved.

6 to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved:

To the praise of the glory of his grace. This is a Hebraism, and means the same as "to his glorious grace." The object was to excite thanksgiving for his glorious grace manifested in electing love. The real tendency of the doctrine, in minds that are properly affected, is not to excite opposition to God, or to lead to the charge of partiality, tyranny, or severity; it is to excite thankfulness and praise. In accordance with this, Paul introduced the statement (Eph 1:3) by saying that God was to be regarded as "blessed" for forming and executing this plan. The meaning is, that the doctrine of predestination and election lays the foundation of adoring gratitude and praise. This will appear plain by a few considerations.

(1.) It is the only foundation of hope for man. If he were left to himself all the race would reject the offers of mercy, and would perish. History, experience, and the Bible alike demonstrate this.

(2.) All the joys which any of the human race have, are to be traced to the purpose of God to bestow them. Man has no power of originating any of them, and ff God had not intended to confer them, none of them would have been possessed.

(3.) All these favours are conferred on those who had no claim on God. The Christian who is pardoned had no claim on God for pardon; he who is admitted to heaven could urge no claim for such a privilege and honour; he who enjoys comfort and peace in the hour of death, enjoys it only through the glorious grace of God.

(4.) All that is done by election is fitted to excite praise. Election is to life, and pardon, and holiness, and heaven. But why should not a man praise God for these things? God chooses men to be holy, not sinful; to be happy, not miserable; to be pure, not impure; to be saved, not to be lost. For these things he should be praised. He should be praised that he has not left the whole race to wander away and die. Had he chosen but one to eternal life, that one should praise him, and all the holy universe should join in the praise. Should he now see it to be consistent to choose but one of the fallen spirits, and to make him pure, and to readmit him to heaven, that one spirit would have occasion for eternal thanks, and all heaven might join in his praises. How much more is praise due to him, when the number chosen is not one or a few, but when millions which no man can number, shall be found to be chosen to life, Rev 7:9.

(5.) The doctrine of predestination to life has added no pang of sorrow to any one of the human race. It has made millions happy who would not otherwise have been, but not one miserable. It is not a choice to sorrow, it is a choice to joy and peace.

(6.) No one has a right to complain of it. Those who are chosen assuredly should not complain of the grace which has made them what they are, and which is the foundation of all their hopes. And they who are not chosen have no right to complain; for

(a.) they have no claim to life.

(b.) They are, in fact; unwilling to come. They have no desire to be Christians and to be saved. Nothing can induce them to forsake their sins and come to the Saviour. Why, then, should they complain if others are in fact willing to be saved? Why should a

man complain for being left to take his own course, and to walk in his own way? Mysterious, therefore, as is the doctrine of predestination, and fearful and inscrutable as it is in some of its aspects, yet, in a just view of it, it is fitted to excite the highest expressions of thanksgiving, and to exalt God in the apprehension of man. He who has been redeemed and saved by the love of God; who has been pardoned and made pure by mercy; on whom the eye of compassion has been tenderly fixed, and for whom the Son of God has died, has abundant cause for thanksgiving and praise. Wherein he hath made us accepted. Has regarded us as the objects of favour and complacency. In the beloved. In the Lord Jesus Christ, the well-beloved Son of God. Mt 3:17. He has chosen us in him, and it is through him that these mercies have been conferred on us.

7 in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

The forgiveness of sins. We obtain through his blood, or through the atonement he has made, the forgiveness of sins. We are not to suppose that this is all the benefit which we receive from his death, or that this is all that constitutes redemption. It is the main, and perhaps the most important thing. But we also obtain the hope of heaven, the influences of the Holy Spirit, grace to guide us and to support us in trial, peace in death, and perhaps many more benefits. Still forgiveness is so prominent and important, and the apostle has mentioned that as if it were all.

8 wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

Learn, That the gospel's method for recovering and saving lost sinners by a Redeemer, was a mystery, a hidden mystery: it was hid where all the world could never have found it, where angels and men could never discover it; it was hid in God, in his breast and bosom, in his heart and thoughts; it was hid from angels; nay, the churches knew it before the angels; yea, the angels learnt it from the churches, Eph 3:10.

Unto principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God: and as it was hid from angels, so from the wise men of the world, 1Cor 2:8. "We preach the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew;" nay, the gospel was hid from all the saints of the Old Testament, comparatively, not absolutely, with respect to that clear revelation which we have of the gospel now, it may be said to be hidden from them then.

O, what obligation then do we lie under, who live under the dispensation of the gospel, to acknowledge what an infinite favour it is from God clearly to know the mystery of his will, concerning the redemption and salvation of poor lost sinners by a Mediator! God has now revealed it, and he desires all may know and receive the revelation of it, namely, the hidden mystery of his will.
Observe, lastly, What was the impelling and moving cause of God's making known the mystery of his will by the gospel, and his enlightening the understandings of men savingly to apprehend it, proceeds entirely from the purpose and pleasure of his own good will: Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.

Such was the doctrine that God meant to call the Gentiles, which was long concealed, at least in part, and which was not fully made known until the Saviour came, and which had been till that time a mystery-- concealed truth-- though, when it was revealed, there was nothing incomprehensible in it. Thus in Col 1:26, "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." So it was in regard to the doctrine of election. It was a mystery until it was made known by the actual conversion of those whom God had chosen. So in regard to the incarnation of the Redeemer; the atonement; the whole plan of salvation. Over all these great points there was a veil thrown and men did not understand them until God revealed them. When they were revealed, the mystery was removed, and men were able to see clearly the manifestation of the will of God.

10 that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him.

That in the dispensation. The word here rendered "dispensation," οικονομιαν, means, properly, the management of household affairs. Then it means stewardship or administration; a dispensation or arrangement of things; a scheme or plan. The meaning here is, that this plan was formed in order (εις) or unto this end, that in the full arrangement of times, or in the arrangements completing the filling up of the times, God might gather together in one all things. Tindal renders it, "to have it declared when the time was full come," etc.

The fulness of times. When the times were fully completed; when all the periods should have passed by which he had prescribed, or judged necessary to the completion of the object. The period referred to here is that when all things shall be gathered together in the Redeemer at the winding up of human affairs, or the consummation of all things. The arrangement was made with reference to that, and embraced all things which conduced to that. The plan stretched from before "the foundation of the world" to the period when all times should be completed; and of course all the events occurring in that intermediate period were embraced in the plan.

He might gather together in one. The word here used--ανακεφαλαιοω means, literally, to sum up, to recapitulate, as an orator does at the close of his discourse. It is from κεφαλη the head; or κεφαλαιον, the sum, the chief thing, the main point. In the New Testament the word means to collect under one head, or to comprehend several things under one. Romm 13:9: "It is briefly comprehended, i.e. summed up under this one precept," sc., love. In the passage before us, it means that God would sum up, or comprehend all things in heaven and earth through the Christian dispensation; he would make one empire under one head, with common feelings, and under the same laws. The reference is to the unity which will hereafter exist in the kingdom of God, when all his friends on earth and in heaven shall be united, and all shall have

a common head. Now there is alienation. The earth has been separated from other worlds by rebellion. It has gone off into apostasy and sin. It refuses to acknowledge the Great Head to which other worlds are subject, and the object is to restore it to its proper place, so that there shall be one great and united kingdom.

All things. ταπαντα. It is remarkable that Paul has here used a word which is in the neuter gender. It is not all persons, all angels, or all men, or all the elect, but all things. Bloomfield and others suppose that persons are meant, and that the phrase is used for τουςπαντες. But it seems to me that Paul did not use this word without design. All things are placed under Christ, (Eph 1:22, Mt 28:18,) and the design of God is to restore harmony in the universe. Sin has produced disorder not only in mind, but in matter. The world is disarranged. The effects of transgression are seen everywhere; and the object of the plan of redemption is to put things on their pristine footing, and restore them as they were at first. Everything is therefore put under the Lord Jesus, and all things are to be brought under his control, so as to constitute one vast harmonious empire. The amount of the declaration here is, that there is hereafter to be one kingdom, in which there shall be no jar or alienation; that the now separated kingdoms of heaven and earth shah be united under one head, and that henceforward all shall be harmony and love. The things which are to be united in Christ, are those which are "in heaven and which are on earth." Nothing is said of hell. Of course this passage cannot teach the doctrine of universal salvation, since there is one world which is not to have a part in this ultimate union.

In Christ. By means of Christ, or under him, as the great Head and King. He is to be the great Agent in effecting this, and he is to preside over this united kingdom. In accordance with this view the heavenly inhabitants, the angels as well as the redeemed, are uniformly represented as uniting in the same worship, and as acknowledging the Redeemer as their common head and king, Rev 5:9,10,11,12.

Both which are in heaven. Marg. as in Gr., in the heavens. Many different opinions have been formed of the meaning of this

expression. Some suppose it to mean the saints in heaven, who died before the coming of the Saviour; and some that it refers to the Jews, designated as the heavenly people, in contradistinction from the Gentiles, as having nothing divine and heavenly in them, and as being of the earth. The more simple and obvious interpretation is however, without doubt, the correct one, and this is to suppose that it refers to the holy inhabitants of other worlds. The object of the plan of salvation is to produce a harmony between them and the redeemed on earth, or to produce, out of all, one great and united kingdom. In doing this, it is not necessary to suppose that any change is to be produced in the inhabitants of heaven. All the change is to occur among those on earth, and the object is to make, out of all, one harmonious and glorious empire.

And which are on earth. The redeemed on earth. The object is to bring them into harmony with the inhabitants of heaven. This is the great object proposed by the plan of salvation. It is to found one glorious and eternal kingdom, that shall comprehend all holy beings on earth and all in heaven. There is now discord and disunion. Man is separated from God, and from all holy beings. Between him and every holy being there is by nature discord and alienation. Unrenewed man has no sympathy with the feelings and work of the angels; no love for their employment; no desire to be associated with them. Nothing can be more unlike than the customs, feelings, laws, and habits which prevail on earth, from those which prevail in heaven. But the object of the plan of salvation is to restore harmony to those alienated communities, and produce eternal concord and love. Learn hence,

(1.) The greatness and glory of the plan of salvation. It is no trifling undertaking to reconcile worlds, and of such discordant materials to found one great, and glorious, and eternal empire.

(2.) The reason of the interest which angels feel in the plan of redemption, 1Pet 1:12. They are deeply concerned in the redemption of those who, with them, are to constitute that great kingdom which is to be eternal. Without envy at the happiness of others; without any feeling that the accession of others will

diminish their felicity or glory, they wait to hail the coming of others, and rejoice to receive even one who comes to be united to their number.

(3.) This plan was worthy of the efforts of the Son of God. To restore harmony in heaven and earth; to prevent the evils of alienation and discord; to rear one immense and glorious kingdom, was an object worthy the incarnation of the Son of God.

(4.) The glory of the Redeemer. He is to be exalted as the Head of this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and all the redeemed on earth and the angelic hosts shall acknowledge him as their common Sovereign and Head.

(5.) This is the greatest and most important enterprize on earth. It should engage every heart, and enlist the powers of every soul. It should be the earnest desire of all to swell the numbers of those who shall constitute this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and to bring as many as possible of the human race into union with the holy inhabitants of the other world.

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Of him who worketh all things. Of God, the universal Agent. The affirmation here is not merely that God accomplishes the designs of salvation according to the counsel of his own will, but that he does everything. His agency is not confined to one thing, or to one class of objects. Every object and event is under his control, and is in accordance with his eternal plan. The word rendered worketh ενεργεω---means, to work, to be active, to produce, Eph 1:20; Gal 2:8, Php 2:13. A universal agency is ascribed to him. "The same God which worketh all in all," 1Cor 12:6. He has an agency in causing the emotions of our hearts. "God, who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Php 2:13. He has an agency in distributing to men their various allotments and endowments. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will," 1Cor 12:11. The agency of God is seen everywhere. Every leaf, flower, rose-bud, spire of grass; every

sunbeam, and every flash of lightning; every cataract and every torrent, all declare his agency; and there is not an object that we see that does not bespeak the control of an all-present God. It would be impossible to affirm more explicitly, that God's agency is universal, than Paul does in the passage before us.

The general doctrine is, that God works in all things, and controls all; but that his agency everywhere is in accordance with the laws and nature of that part of his kingdom where it is exerted. By this simple principle we may secure the two great points which it is desirable to secure on this subject--

(1.) the doctrine of the universal agency of God; and

(2.) the doctrine of the freedom and responsibility of man.

After the counsel of his own will. Not by consulting his creatures, or conforming to their views, but by his own views of what is proper and right. We are not to suppose that this is by mere will, as if it were arbitrary, or that he determines anything without good reason. The meaning is, that his purpose is determined by what he views to be right, and without consulting his creatures or conforming to their views. His dealings often seem to us to be arbitrary. We are incapable of perceiving the reasons of what he does. He makes those his friends who we should have supposed would have been the last to have become Christians. He leaves those who seem to us to be on the borders of the kingdom, and they remain unmoved and uneffected. But we are not thence to suppose that he is arbitrary. In every instance, we are to believe that there is a good reason for what he does, and one which we may be permitted yet to see, and in which we shall wholly acquiesce. The phrase "counsel of his own will" is remarkable. It is designed to express in the strongest manner the fact that it is not by human counsel or advice.

12 that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13 In whom ye also *trusted,* after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

With that holy Spirit of promise. With the Holy Spirit that was promised. See Jn 16:7-11,13; 15:26, 14:16,17. It is not improbable, I think, that the apostle here refers particularly to the occurrence of which we have a record in Acts 19:1-6. Paul, it is there said, having passed through the upper provinces of Asia Minor, came to Ephesus. He found certain persons who were the disciples of John, and he asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they "believed," Eph 1:2. They replied that they had not heard whether there was any Holy Ghost, and that they had been baptized unto John's baptism. Paul taught them the true nature of the baptism of John; explained to them the Christian system; and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and "the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

14 which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Until the redemption. Rom 8:23. The meaning here is, we have the Holy Spirit as the pledge that that shall be ours, and the Holy Spirit will be imparted to us until we enter on that inheritance. Of the purchased possession. Heaven, purchased for us by the death of the Redeemer. The word here used--περιποιησις--occurs in the following places in the New Testament: 1Thes 5:9, rendered "to obtain salvation;" 2Thes 2:14 to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord;" Heb 10:39, "to the saving of the soul;" 1Pet 2:9, "a peculiar people;" literally, a people of acquirement to himself; and in the passage before us. It properly means, an acquisition, an obtaining, a laying up. Here it means, the complete deliverance from sin, and the eternal salvation acquired for us by Christ. The influence of the Holy Spirit, renewing and sanctifying us, comforting us in trials, and sustaining us in afflictions, is the pledge that the redemption is yet to be wholly ours.

After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Where note, That the privilege of sealing always follows the duty of believing, never goes before it. Sealing doth imply that precious and excellent esteem which they have with God. Nothing but what

is precious is sealed by us. Who seals up dung and pebbles in a bag? Believers are God's jewels, his treasure, therefore sealed. Sealing also is for safety and security, for discrimination, and for confirmation. The Holy Spirit, by sanctifying of us, doth discriminate and distinguish us from the rest of the world, doth secure and preserve us from the fatal danger of a ruinous apostasy, and doth also confirm our hopes of the glorious inheritance.

Observe, 5. That the Holy Spirit is given to believers in the nature of an earnest; sanctifying grace, wrought in the heart here, is a sure earnest of glory hereafter; which is the earnest of our inheritance. An earnest binds the bargain, and is a part of the bargain, if it be but a shilling given as an earnest, it secures a contract for a thousand pounds. Believers are to consider and look upon grace, not barely as grace but as an earnest of glory.

O, be thankful to God for his sanctifying Spirit, not only as subduing thy corruptions, but as a pledge and earnest of a glorious inheritance. It is a great comfort to find grace in the soul, as sanctifying, as quickening, and renewing; but a greater matter of rejoicing to find it also there as witnessing, as sealing and confirming, as a part of our inheritance in glory, and as a pledge and earnest of the whole.

Observe, 6. That the Holy Spirit of God is God. To sanctify, to seal, to confirm our hearts, are divine operations: he that doth these, must be a divine Person. True; how the Spirit of God is God, and how he proceedeth from the Father and Son, cannot be comprehended by our reason and shallow understandings. No wonder that the doctrine of the Trinity is inexplicible, seeing the nature of God is incomprehensible; our faith, then, must assent to what our reason cannot comprehend, otherwise we can never be Christians.

Observe lastly, That heaven is here called a possession, and a purchased possession, that is, by the blood of Christ. A king's ransom we account a vast sum; O, what will our ransom by the blood of the Son of God come to! Grace is purchased, and glory is purchased, both by the blood of Christ. Lord! what will that glory come to! In eternity we shall admire it, but never fully comprehend it.

Prayer for Knowledge and Understanding

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

And revelation. That is, revealing to you more and more of the character of the Redeemer, and of the nature and results of his work. It is probable here that by the word "Spirit" the apostle refers to the Holy Spirit as the Author of all wisdom, and the Revealer of all truth. His prayer is, that God would grant to them the Holy Spirit to make them wise, and to reveal his will to them.

In the knowledge of him. Marg., for the acknowledgment. That is, in order that you may more fully acknowledge him, or know him more intimately and thoroughly. They had already made high attainments, (Eph 1:15,) but Paul felt that they might make still higher; and the idea here is, that however far Christians may have advanced in knowledge and in love, there is an unfathomed depth of knowledge which they may still explore, and which they should be exhorted still to attempt to fathom. How far was Paul from supposing that the Ephesians had attained to perfection!

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Our apostle proceeds in this verse, and to the end of the chapter, in a very affectionate and fervent prayer, on the behalf of the

Ephesians; namely, that the blessed Spirit of God, the author of all divine illumination, would farther open the eyes of their understanding, formerly shut up in heathenish blindness and darkness, that so they might know,

1. What is the hope of his calling; that is, what high and glorious hopes he had called them unto: for hope here is taken for the object of hope, or the great and good things hoped for: and it is said to be the hope of their calling, because, at their conversion from heathenism to Christianity, they were entitled to, and called to the expection of, these great and good things, which were the object of hope.

Where note, The Ephesians' deplorable state before conversion, they were without hope; and the happy exchange of their condition by embracing Christianity, they were begotten to a lively hope of glorious things, which before they were wholly ignorant of, and strangers to. As a sinner's misery lies not in what feels, but what he fears; so a Christian's happiness consists not in what he has in hand, but what he has in hope: May you know what is the hope of his calling.

The second blessing which he prays for on their behalf, is, that they may know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; that is, say some, What an exceeding glorious thing it is to be a Christian! What an exceeding glory redounds to God, by his people, which are his inheritance! say others. But most understand the words as a description of heaven, which is here called an inheritance, a rich inheritance, a glorious inheritance, in or among the saints; that is the saints in heaven, who hold that in possession which the saints on earth have in hope and expectation.

Learn hence, That heaven is the saints' inheritance. An inheritance is an estate that belongs to children, to all such, and none but such. It is an undeserved possession, and it is a sure and certain possession.

Here note, That Almighty God is said in scripture to make heaven as sure to his saints, by all sorts of ways, as a man can make an inheritance sure to his child. It is theirs by promise, it is theirs by purchase, it is theirs by gift, it is theirs by bequest; it is given by will to them, I appoint by will unto you a kingdom. Luke 22:29 Can any thing be surer, or more ways made secure to any person, than this inheritance of heaven is to the holy servants of God? But, farther, the apostle calls it the riches of the glory of his inheritance; that is, a very rich and exceedingly glorious inheritance: such abundant riches and transcendant glory are found in it, as overwhelm the mind of man that here enters upon the close contemplation of it.

Heaven will appear to be a glorious inheritance, if we consider the glory of the place, the glory of the company, the glory of the employment, and the glory that will be then and there upon our souls and bodies. Lord, make us meet for this glorious inheritance of thy saints in light!

The next particular which the aposstle prays for, on behalf of the converted Ephesians, is this, that they might know or sensibly apprehend, the greatness of that divine power which God had exerted; first, in their conversion; next, in carrying on that work step by step, in spite of all opposition: then, in giving them the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit, as miracles, tongues, and prophecy; also, the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, as knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, and patience, to inable them to go on in suffering for Christ to the uttermost; and lastly, that they might know the exceeding greatness of that power which God will farther exert towards them as believers, in raising up their dead bodies, to enter upon that glorious inheritance which God by promise insured to them; which power, he assures them, would bear some likeness to, and correspondence with that omnipotent power which God put forth, in raising Christ from the dead and advancing him to the heavenly glory, where he is Lord of all.

Observe here, What an heap of words our apostle makes use of, to set forth the power of God in the soul's conversion from the power

of sin, and in the body's ressurrection from the power of the grave: he calls it "power, the power of God, the greatness of his power, and the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, and the power which raised up Christ from the dead."

Lord! what a glorious power was that which opened our Redeemer's grave, when he lay in the heart of the earth, with a mighty stone rolled upon his sepulchre! May the same Almighty Power break as under all those bars of unbelief, which keep our souls under the power and dominion of sin now, and at the great day break in pieces the bars of death and the grave, that it may be altogether impossible for us any longer to be holden by them: for towards thy saints, and in order to their salvation, thou dost engage the uttermost of thine attributes, the uttermost of thy love, and the exceeding greatness of thy power!

According to the working of his mighty power. Marg., The might of his power. This should be taken with the clause in the following verse, "which he wrought in Christ;" and the meaning is, that the power which God has exerted in us is in accordance with the power which was shown in raising up the Lord Jesus. It was the proper result of that, and was power of a similar kind. The same power is requisite to convert a sinner which is demanded in raising the dead. Neither will be accomplished but by omnipotence, Eph 2:5; and the apostle wished that they should be fully apprised of this fact, and of the vast power which God had put forth in raising them up from the death of sin. To illustrate this sentiment is one of his designs in the following verses; and hence he goes on to show that men, before their conversion, were "dead in trespasses and sins;" that they had no spiritual life; that they were the "children of wrath;" that they were raised up from their death in sin by the same power which raised the Lord Jesus from the grave, and that they were wholly saved by grace, Eph 2:1-10. In order to set this idea of the power which God had put forth in their regeneration in the strongest light, he goes into a magnificent description of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, and shows how that was connected with the renewing of Christians. God had set him over all things. He had put all things under his feet, and had made

principalities and dominions everywhere subject to him. In this whole passage, Eph 1:19-23, 2:1-10, the main thing to be illustrated is the POWER which God has shown in renewing and saving his people; and the leading sentiment is, that the SAME power is evinced in that which was required to raise up the Lord Jesus from the dead, and to exalt him over the universe.

19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who
believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
20 which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,
and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,
21 far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and
every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that
which is to come:

Our apostle, in these words, discovers to us Christ's exaltation, or that glory and dignity which, after his resurrection and ascension, the Father put upon him as God-man, or Mediator; far surpassing the glory of all created beings. Now this is represented to us by the notion, and under the metaphor, of Christ's sitting at God's right hand.

This imports, 1. Fulness of rest and pleasure, that he quietly, securely, and everlastingly, possesses all that happiness and satisfaction in heaven, which God himself is possessed of, and delighted with, far above all the pleasures and delightful satisfactions which all the glorified saints and glorious angels do or can possibly enjoy.

2. It implies a fulness of honour and glory, of dignity and respect. Heb 2:9 we see Jesus to be crowned with glory and honour, sitting down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

3. Christ's sitting at God's right hand, imports his having all rule, dominion, and power, put into his hand, to govern all things both in heaven and on earth.

4. It imports and implies ability to execute that power; all those royal glorious endowments which God filled the human nature of Christ with, to make him fit to be the supreme head of his church,

and the great and wise governor of the world; all this doth God's setting Christ at his own right hand import and imply.

Far above all principality. The general sense in this verse is, that the Lord Jesus was exalted to the highest conceivable dignity and honour. Comp. Php 2:9, Col 2:10. In this beautiful and most important passage, the apostle labours for words to convey the greatness of his conceptions, and uses those which denote the highest conceivable dignity and glory. The main idea is, that God had manifested great power in thus exalting the Lord Jesus, and that similar power was exhibited in raising up the sinner from the death of sin to the life and honour of believing. The work of religion throughout was a work of power; a work of exalting and honouring the dead, whether dead in sin or in the grave; and Christians ought to know the extent and glory of the power thus put forth in their salvation. The word rendered "far above"-- υπερανω--is a compound word, meaning high above, or greatly exalted. He was not merely above the ranks of the heavenly beings, as the head; he was not one of their own rank, placed by office a little above them, but he was infinitely exalted over them, as of different rank and dignity. How could this be if he were a mere man, or if he were an angel? The word rendered "principality" --αρχης--means, properly, the beginning; and then the first, the first place, power, dominion, pre-eminence, rulers, magistrates, etc. It may refer here to any rank and power, whether among men or angels, and the sense is, that Christ is exalted above all.

The apostle expresses more plainly what he has said in the former verse figuratively; God hath exalted Christ far above all principalities and powers, might and dominion, and every name that is named; and hath put all things under his feet.
Where note,
1. The eminency,
2. The universality, of our Lord's exaltation.
Its eminency appears in the height of his exaltation; he is not only above, but far above, all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion; and in the lowness of the subjection of all things to him, having put all things under his feet. And the universality of Christ's

exaltation appears, by instancing in principalities and powers, might and dominion; under which he comprehends all things that are excellent in heaven and earth, angels and men, & c. all creatures whatsoever being placed in a degree of inferiority beneath him, and in the lowest state of subjection under him.

Whence we learn, 1. That the human nature of Christ, and his glorified body, by virtue of that unspeakable union between the two natures of Christ, his Godhead and manhood, is so highly dignified and exalted in heaven, that all the glory of heaven and earth, of kings and emperors, of sun, moon, and stars, of the souls of just men made perfect, yea, and of the spotless, glorious angels themselves, is nothing to it, nor may be compared with it. Christ now sits in heaven, in our glorified humanity united to his glorious deity; that body which hung on an ignominious cross in blood and gore, now shines brighter than ten thousand suns in the kingdom of his Father. All this honour and homage, glory and praise, dominion and power, is due to our Lord and Redeemer, as the reward of his sufferings; God hath set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers.

Learn, 2. That although the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall cease at the last day, (and be delivered up by Christ unto his Father,) as to the way wherein he now administers it, by ruling in the midst of his enemies, whom he shall then have finally subdued and destroyed: yet his natural kingdom, as God, shall never cease, but continue in the world to come, without end.

Those words here, not only in this world, but in the world to come, do show the duration of Christ's kingly government, and that he is king for ever and ever, that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth through eternal ages.

22 and hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

St. Paul having spoken of Christ's sovereignty in general, over all created beings, both in heaven and in earth, in the foregoing verses, doth in the words before us declare, that as he is an head of

dominion and authority to the whole creation in general, so he is an head of influence to his church in particular.
Note, Christ was given by the Father to be the church's head. Now, this metaphor of an head implies several things; as,

1. Eminency above the church; as the head is above the members.

2. Authority over the church: the head governs all the members.

3. Oneness of nature betwixt him and his church to see an head of one nature, and members of another, is monstrous.

4. It implies a strict, intimate,and close union betwixt him and his church, as betwixt head and members; which union as to the members of the visible church, is a political union; but as to the invisible members, (real believers,) the union betwixt Christ and them is mystical, spiritual, supernatural, and indissoluble.
Lastly, this metaphor of an head, given here to Christ, implies a communication of influences from himself unto all his members; an influence of common gifts to the visible members of his body, and an influence of spiritual life and motion to the invisible members, true believers.

Indeed, Christ is the head of angels as well as saints, but in different respects; to angels, he is an head of dominion and government, an head of authority and superiority; but to his church, he is an head of dominion and direction also; not only an head of authority, but an head of vital influence too. The angels are Christ's honourable subjects, but saints are the mystical members of his body, the former are as then nobles in his kingdom, that attend upon his person, but the latter are the endeared spouse that lies in his bosom. O glorious dignity of the meanest believer above the highest angel! For as the nobles in a prince's court think it a preferment and honour to wait upon his queen, so the glorious angels account it no

dishonour to them to serve and administer to the saints, to which honourable office they are appointed, Heb 1:14 namely, to be ministering, or servicible spirits, for the good of them that are the heirs of salvation. As the chiefest servants disdain not to serve the heir, so the angels delight to serve the saints.
Observe, 2. As the character here given of Christ, The head of his church; so the honourable title put upon the church, she is his body: The head over all the church, which is his body; not his natural, but his mystical body.

This implies, 1. The church's union with Christ, and her relation to him.

2. The church's receiving influences from him, life, motion, and strength; all which the members of the body receive by virtue of union with their head.

3. It implies the duty of subjection and obedience due from the church to Christ, as from the members to the head.

4. It implies the union and order among the members themselves: that as all the members of the natural body sympathize with, and are subservient to, each other; so should all the members of the church, Christ's mystical body, employ their gifts, and improve their functions and offices, for the general good of the whole, and the mutual benefit and advantage of each other, as becomes the body of Christ, and members in particular.
But especially the church is said here to be the body of Christ, and He her head;

1. With respect to a communication of influences: Christ our head is our fountain of life; our head is our heart also, out of it are the issues of life: from him we live, by him we move, and our spiritual being is derived from him, strengthened and sustained by him; the whole church receives spiritual life, motion, and strength from Christ, as the body doth from the animating and enlivening soul.

2. Christ is called here the head of the church his body, with respect to a complication of interest, as well as a communication of influences. As the head and the body, as the husband and the wife, so Christ and his church are mutually concerned for each other: they stand and fall, live and die, together; whatsoever he has is theirs; they have nothing but through him, they have all things in him, and by him; his God is their God, his Father is their Father; his blood, his bowels, his merit, his Spirit, his life, his death, is theirs; and as all that he has is his church's, so all that he did is for his church, called here his body. He obeyed as his church's head; he died as her head; and hath in his church's name taken possession of heaven, as a purchased inheritance for her. How fitly then may Christ be called the head of the church, and the church be called the body of Christ?

Observe, 3. How Christ came to be the head of his church: God the Father gave him this authority, ver. 22, And gave him to be head over all things to the church; that dignity and superiority, that dominion and power, which Christ has over his church, is given to him by God the Father; none else was fit for it but himself: and although it was given him, what bold presumption is it, and will it be, in any person upon earth to assume any power over, or to exercise any office in, the church, when never called to it, nor authorized by Christ to undertake it!

We may demand of such confident undertakers, as the Pharisees demanded of the holy and humble Jesus, By what authority dost thou do these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Observe, 4. The high honour which is put upon the church by being Christ's body; by this she becomes Christ's fulness: The church which is his body, the fulness of him.

Yet note, The church is not the fulness of Christ personal, but of Christ mystical; not of his natural, but mystical, body: every saint, and every degree of grace in a saint, is part of Christ's fulness. The work of the ministry then is the best and noblest work in the world,

because it is an adding to the fulness of Christ. God had but one Son in the world; and he made him a minister.

And if increasing the number of converts, and adding to persons' growth in grace, be an addition to Christ's fulness, then how glorious a sight will the great day afford when Christ shall have all his fulness; when there shall not be one saint wanting; nor one degree of grace in any saint wanting; when head and members shall be both full, full of grace, full of joy, full of glory: when Christ shall be fully glorified in his saints, and they everlastingly filled with the fulness of him that filleth all in all?

Observe, 5. The glorious title here given to our Lord Jesus Christ, as head of his church. He filleth all in all; he filleth all persons, both angels and men; he filleth all places, heaven with glory, earth with grace, hell with horror; he filleth all ordinances, prayer with prevalency, preaching with efficacy, & c. he filleth all relations, fathers with paternal affections, mothers with maternal bowels; he fills all conditions, riches with thankfulness, poverty with contentment.

To the Church. With reference to the church, or for its benefit and welfare. Jn 17:2 The universe is under his control and direction for the welfare of his people.

(1.) All the elements--the physical works of God--the winds and waves-- the seas and rivers---all are under him, and all are to be made tributary to the welfare of the church.

(2.) Earthly kings and rulers; kingdoms and nations are under his control. Thus far Christ has controlled all the wicked rulers of the earth, and they have not been able to destroy that church which he redeemed with his own blood.

(3.) Angels in heaven, with all their ranks and orders, are under his control with reference to the church. Heb 1:14. Comp. Mt 26:53.

(4.) Fallen angels are under his control, and shall not be able to injure or destroy the church. Mt 16:18. The church, therefore, is safe. All the great powers of heaven, earth, and hell, are made subject to its Head and King; and no weapon that is formed against it shall prosper.

23 which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Which is his body. This comparison of the church with a person or body, of which the Lord Jesus is the head, is not uncommon in the New Testament. 1Cor 11:3; 1Cor 12:27; Eph 4:15, Eph 4:16.

The fulness of him. The word here rendered fulness-- πληρωμα means, properly, that with which anything is filled, the filling up, the contents. Rom 11:12. The exact idea here, however, is not very dear, and interpreters have been by no means united in their opinions of the meaning. It seems probable that the sense is, that the church is the completion or filling up of his power and glory. It is that without which his dominion would not be complete, he has control over the angels and over distant worlds, but his dominion would not be complete without the control over his church; and that is so glorious, that it fills up the honour of the universal dominion, and makes his empire complete. According to Rosenmuller, the word fulness here means a great number or multitude; a multitude, says he, which, not confined to its own territory, spreads afar, and fills various regions. Koppe also regards it as synonymous with multitude or many, and supposes it to mean all the dominion of the Redeemer over the body--the church. He proposes to translate the whole verse, "He has made him the Head over his church, that he might rule it as his own body--the whole wide state of his universal kingdom." "This," says Calvin, (in loc.,)" is the highest honour of the church, that the Son of God regards himself as in a sense imperfect unless he is joined to us. The church constitutes the complete body of the Redeemer. A body is complete when it has all its members and limbs in proper proportions; and those members might be said to be the completion, or the filling-up, or the fulness--πληρωμα--of the body or the person. This language would not, indeed, be such as would usually be adopted to express the idea now; but this is evidently the sense in which Paul uses it here. The meaning is, that the church sustains the same relation to

Christ which the body does to the head. It helps to form the entire person. There is a close and necessary union. The one is not complete without the other. And one is dependant on the other. When the body has all its members in due proportion, and is in sound and vigorous health, the whole person then is complete and entire. So it is to be in the kingdom of the Redeemer. He is the head; and that redeemed church is the body, the fulness, the completion, the filling-up of the entire empire over which he presides, and which he rules. On the meaning of the word fulness πληρωμα-the reader may consult Storr's Opuscula, vol. i., pp. 144--187, particularly pp. 169--183. Storr understands the word in the sense of full or abundant mercy, and supposes that it refers to the great benignity which God has shown to his people, and renders it, "The great benignity of him who filleth all things with good, as he called Jesus from the dead to life, and placed him in heaven, so even you, sprung from the heathen, who were dead in sin on account of your many offences in which you formerly lived, etc.--hath he called to life by Christ." This verse, therefore, he would connect with the following chapter, and he regards it all as designed to illustrate the great power and goodness of God. Mr. Locke renders it, "Which is his body, which is completed by him alone," and supposes it means, that Christ is the head, who perfects the church by supplying all things to all its members which they need. Chandler gives an interpretation in accordance with that which I have first suggested, as meaning that the church is the full "complement" of the body of Christ; and refers to AElian and Dionysius Halicarnassus, who use the word "fulness" or πληρωμα as referring to the rowers of a ship. Thus, also, we say that the ship's crew is its "complement," or that a ship or an army has its complement of men; that is, the ranks are filled up or complete. In like manner, the church will be the filling-up, or the complement, of the great kingdom of the Redeemer--that which will give completion or perfectness to his universal dominion.

That filleth all in all. That fills all things, or who pervades all things. 1Cor 12:6; 1Cor 15:28. Comp. Col 3:11. The idea is, that there is no place where he is not, and which he does not fill; and that he is the source of all the holy and happy influences that are

abroad in the works of God. It would not be easy to conceive of an expression more certainly denoting omnipresence and universal agency than this; and if it refers to the Lord Jesus, as seems to be indisputable, the passage teaches not only his supremacy, but demonstrates his universal agency, and his omnipresence--things that pertain only to God. From this passage we may observe,

(1.) that just views of the exaltation of the Redeemer are to be obtained only by the influence of the Spirit of God on the heart, Eph 1:17-19. Man, by nature, has no just conceptions of the Saviour, and has no desire to have. It is only as the knowledge of that great doctrine is imparted to the mind, by the Spirit of God, that we have any practical and saving acquaintance with such an exaltation. The Christian sees him, by faith, exalted to the right hand of God, and cheerfully commits himself and his all to him, and feels that all his interests are safe in his hands.

(2.) It is very desirable to have such views of an exalted Saviour. So Paul felt when he earnestly prayed that God would give such views to the Ephesians, Eph 1:17-20. It was desirable in order that they might have a right understanding of their privileges; in order that they might know the extent of the power which had been manifested in their redemption; in order that they might commit their souls with confidence to him. In my conscious weakness and helplessness; when I am borne down by the labours, and exposed to the temptations of life; when I contemplate approaching sickness and death, I desire to feel that that Saviour to whom I have committed my all is exalted far above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. When the church is persecuted and opposed; when hosts of enemies rise up against it, and threaten its peace and safety, I rejoice to feel assured the Redeemer and Head of the church is over all, and that he has power to subdue all her foes and his.

(3.) The church is safe. Her great Head is on the throne of the universe, and no weapon that is formed against her can prosper, he has defended it hitherto in all times of persecution, and the past is a pledge that he will continue to protect it to the end of the world.

(4.) Let us commit our souls to this exalted Redeemer. Such a Redeemer we need--one who has all power in heaven and earth. Such a religion we need--that can restore the dead to life. Such hope and confidence we need as he can give--such peace and calmness as shall result from unwavering confidence in him who filleth all in all.

Ephesians-2

Saved by Grace

1 And you *hath he quickened,* who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Who were dead in trespasses and sins. On the meaning of the word dead, Rom 5:12; Rom 6:2. It is affirmed here of those to whom Paul wrote at Ephesus, that before they were converted they were "dead in sins." There is not anywhere a more explicit proof of depravity than this, and no stronger language can be used. They were dead in relation to that to which they afterwards became alive--i. e., to holiness. Of course, this does not mean that they were in all respects dead. It does not mean that they had no animal life, or that they did not breathe, and walk, and act. Nor can it mean that they had no living intellect or mental powers, which would not have been true. Nor does it settle any question as to their ability or power while in that state. It simply affirms a fact--that in relation to real spiritual life they were, in consequence of sin, like a dead man in regard to the objects which are around him. A corpse is insensible. It sees not, and hears not, and feels not. The sound of music, and the voice of friendship and of alarm, do not arouse it. The rose and the lily breath forth their fragrance around it, but the corpse perceives it not. The world is busy and active around it, but it is unconscious of it all. It sees no beauty in the landscape; hears not the voice of a friend; looks not upon the glorious sun and stars; and is unaffected by the running stream and the rolling ocean. So with the sinner in regard to the spiritual and eternal world, he sees no beauty in religion; he hears not the call of God; he is unaffected by the dying love of the Saviour; and he has no interest in eternal realities. In all these he feels no more concern, and sees no more

beauty, than a dead man does in the world around him. Such is, in fact, the condition of a sinful world. There is, indeed, life and energy and motion. There are vast plans and projects, and the world is intensely active. But, in regard to religion, all is dead. The sinner sees no beauty there; and no human power can arouse him to act for God, any more than human power can rouse the sleeping dead, or open the sightless eye-balls on the light of day. The same power is needed in the conversion of a sinner which is needed in raising the dead; and one and the other alike demonstrate the omnipotence of him who can do it.

According to the prince of the power of the air. See Eph 6:12. 2Cor 4:4. There can be no doubt that Satan is here intended, and that Paul means to say that they were under his control as their leader and prince. The phrase, "the prince of the power," may mean either "the powerful prince," or it may mean that this prince had power over the air, and lived and reigned there particularly. The word "prince"-- αρχων -- Archon, means one first in authority and power, and is then applied to any one who has the pre-eminence or rule. It is applied to Satan, or the chief of the fallen angels, as where he is called "the prince--αρχων-- of the devils," Mt 9:34, 12:24, Mk 3:22, Lk 11:15; "the prince of this world," Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11. But why he is here called the prince having power over the air, it is not easy to determine. Robinson (Lex.) supposes it to be because he is lord of the powers of the air; that is, of the demons who dwell and rule in the atmosphere. So Doddridge supposes that it means that he controls the fallen spirits who are permitted to range the regions of the atmosphere. It is generally admitted that the apostle here refers to the prevailing opinions both among the Jews and heathen, that the air was thickly peopled with spirits or demons. That this was a current opinion may be seen fully proved in Wetstein. Comp. Bloomfield, Grotius, and particularly Koppe. Why the region of the air was supposed to be the dwelling-place of such spirits is now unknown. The opinion may have been either that such spirits dwelt in the air or that they had control over it, according to the later Jewish belief. Cocceius, and some others, explain the word air here as meaning the same as darkness, as in profane writers. It is evident to my mind that Paul does not speak

of this as a mere tradition, opinion, or vagary of the fancy, ar as a superstitious belief; but that he refers to it as a thing which he regarded as true. In this opinion I see no absurdity that should make it impossible to believe it. For,

(1.) the Scriptures abundantly teach that there are fallen, wicked spirits; and the existence of fallen angels is no more improbable than the existence of fallen men.

(2.) The Bible teaches that they have much to do with this world. They tempted man; they inflicted disease in the time of the Saviour; they are represented as alluring and deceiving the race.

(3.) They must have some locality-some part of the universe where they dwell. That they were not confined down to hell in the time of the Redeemer is clear from the New Testament; for they are often represented as having afflicted and tortured men.

(4.) Why is there any improbability in the belief that their residence should have been in the regions of the air? That while they were suffered to be on earth to tempt and afflict men, they should have been permitted peculiarly to occupy these regions? Who can tell what may be in the invisible world, and what spirits may be permitted to fill up the vast space that now composes the universe? And who can tell what control may have been given to such fallen spirits over the regions of the atmosphere--over clouds, and storms, and pestilential air? Men have control over the earth, and pervert and abuse the powers of nature to their own ruin and the ruin of each other. The elements they employ for the purposes of ruin and of temptation. Fruit and grain they convert to poison; minerals, to the destruction caused by war. In itself considered, there is nothing more improbable that spirits of darkness may have had control over the regions of the air, than that fallen man has over the earth; and no more improbability that that power has been abused to ruin men, than that the power of men is abused to destroy each other. No one can prove that the sentiment here referred to by Paul is not true; and no one can show how the doctrine that fallen spirits may do mischief in any part of the works of God, is any more improbable

than that wicked men should do the same thing. The word "power" here--" power of the air"--I regard as synonymous with dominion or rule: "a prince having dominion or rule over the air." The spirit that now worketh. That still lives, and whose energy for evil is still seen and felt among the wicked. Paul here means undoubtedly to teach that there was such a spirit, and that he was still active in controlling men.

2 wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The deplorable condition which the Ephesians were in by nature, and all persons with them before their conversion from sin to God. It is a state of spiritual death; the natural and unregenerate man is a dead man, spiritually dead in sin. Our apostle doth not say they were in a dying, but in a dead condition; not half dead, but altogether dead.
But how so?

Not dead as to natural actions, they can eat and drink; not as to rational actions, they can reason and discourse; not as to civil actions, they can buy and sell, bargain and trade. Nor is the natural man dead to moral actions; he can pray, read, and hear the word, meditate upon it, and discourse of it; if he please, he can hearken to the voice of God's judgments, consider and call his own ways to remembrance.

But as to spiritual acts, to be spiritually performed, here he is dead, till quickened by a vital act of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to enlighten blind eyes, and whose delight it is to quicken and enliven dead souls.

But what doth this state of spiritual death imply?
It doth suppose and imply a state of separation from God, insensibility of that dismal state, an impotency and inability to recover ourselves out of that condition, and our loathsomeness and offensiveness to Almighty God, whilst we continue in it.
In short, every unregenerate man is a dead man, in a double sense.

He is, 1. Legally dead, being under the condemnatory sentence of the law; we call a man underthe sentence of death, a dead man.

2. Spiritually dead, as being destitute of a principle of spiritual life, a quickening principle to enable the soul to perform spiritual operations. Thus before regeneration are we dead, in opposition to justification: and dead in opposition to sanctification also; and the fatal instrument, by which our souls die, is here discovered, dead in or by trespasses and sins. This is the sword that kills souls, and cuts them off from God. You hath he quickened, being dead in trespasses and sins.

Observe, 2. The choice and singular privilege and favour vouchsafed to the Ephesians, in and under the power of spiritual death; they were quickened; that is, made spiritually alive by the quickening or life-giving power of the Spirit of God. A regenerate man is a living man; he lives a life of justification, which consists in pardon of sin.
A condemned man's pardon is his life; and he lives a life of sanctification, having received from the Holy Spirit a vital principle of grace in all the powers and faculties of the soul: justification reconciles God to us, sanctification reconciles us to God; justification takes away the legal enmity, sanctification the natural enmity between God and us.

Here note, That the person who is spiritually quickened, is universally quickened; there is not a faculty in the soul but is spiritually dead, and therefore not a faculty but must be spiritually quickened. As there is an universal pollution in every faculty, so must there be an universal renovation; for no spiritual duty can be performed without it, no spiritual privilege can be enjoyed without it, and we can never be saved hereafter, is not spiritually quickened here: but if quickened aright, we live a divine life, the life (in some measure) which God himself lives; and this must needs be an excellent life and a pleasant life here on earth, and shall be an everlasting life with Christ in heaven: Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.

Observe 3. The person quickening described: You hath he quickened; that is, God the Father, who, Eph 1:17, is said to have given them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of himself. Man in his natural state considered, is unable of himself to quicken himself; he doth not so much as desire the quickening grace of God, till God gives the grace of desire.

Alas! the understanding is naturally so blind, the heart so hard, and the will so stout and stubborn, that none but a divine power can enlighten the one, and efficaciously incline the other: it is a change of stone into flesh, of a dead sinner into a living saint. A change from nature to grace requires as much or more divine power, than a change from grace to glory. To see a creature naturally filthy, now to delight in purity; to see a sinner that by nature drinks in iniquity like water, now thirsting after righteousness; to see a man that loathed the holy law and holy ways of God, now longing to walk in them, and to come to an exact conformity to God in them; these acts are above nature, contrary to nature, and consequently the God of grace is the author of them: You hath he quickened.

Our apostle having in the former verse described the Ephesians by their natural state and inward condition, as dead in trespasses and sins, doth in this verse set forth their misery in respect of their outward conversation; they walked in and made a constant trade of sin. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, &c.

Here note, 1. Their constant and continued course of life, set forth by walking; a metaphor frequently used in scripture, to set forth the tenor of a person's conversation; wherein, that is, in which sins in time past ye walked.

Note 2. The path in which they walked, in sins and trepasses; this denotes the abundance of sin that was in them, and committed by them with facility and ease, with satisfaction and delight. Walking is a motion, a voluntary motion, a progressive motion, a pleasant

and delightful motion: it is natural to men, whilst unregenerate, to walk in sin with some sort of delight and pleasure; but alas! it is the pleasure of the beast, and not of the man, a sensual, and not a rational satisfaction.

Note, 3. The guides which they are said here to follow: the world and Satan.

1. The world; that is, the corrupt course and sinful customs of the men of the world, according to the time and place in which they live; for though the world alters in the course and fashion of it, from time to time, yet it is, and ever will be, the world still; and the unregenerate part of mankind will always walk according to the course of this world.

The second guide which the Ephesians followed, was Satan, styled here a prince, in regard of that mighty power which he has in and over the men of the world; and the prince of the power of the air, because he exercises his power (by God's permission) in the lower regions of the air. All the elements and meteors stoop to his direction; when God gives him leave he can command the fire, the water, the winds, the thunders; all these powers that are in the air he can command, and therefore he is called their prince; yet here is a matter of comfort to us, Satan is the prince of the air only; if so, when the air shall cease, his kingdom shall cease; when the world is ended his dominion and power is ended.

Again, there is farther comfort in this, Satan is prince of the air, but Christ is prince of heaven and earth, and the air too: both our prayers whilst we live, and our souls when we die, pass through the air, but Satan can neither intercept the one, nor stop the other, in their passage thither. Christ, when he ascended into heaven, went through the air, this kingdom of devils, and spoiled their principalities and powers; he entered heaven in the sight of them all, and led them all captives in triumph at his chariot, so that they shall never hurt the souls of his people, not ever keep them from heaven.

Again, the devil is here described by the influence he has upon the minds of sinners: he works in the children of disobedience. Satan's way of working in and upon obstinate and impenitent sinners, is very powerful and efficacious.

Hence it is said here, 1. That they are led by Satan, they walk according to the prince of the power of the air; that is, according to his guidance, according to his mind and will. He has them at his beck; he says to one sinner, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh.

2. They are excited and assisted by Satan: he works in them, and suggests evil thoughts to them; he filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie unto the Holy Ghost; he put a lie first into their hearts, and then into their mouths.

Now from hence we may infer, that the Holy Spirit of God doth always inwardly work in pious persons, enabling them to will and to do according to his own good pleasure. For it is unreasonable to conceive that the evil spirit should have more power over the children of disobedience, in whom he dwells, than the good Spirit has in those pious persons in whose hearts he is said to dwell. Surely the Spirit of God doth more to the saving of souls, than the devil can do to the damning of them.

3 among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

In the lusts of our flesh. Living to gratify the flesh, or the propensities of a corrupt nature. It is observable here, that the apostle changes the form of the address from "ye" to "we," thus including himself with others, and saying that this was true of all before their conversion. He means undoubtedly to say, that whatever might have been the place of their birth, or the differences of religion under which they had been trained, they were substantially alike by nature. It was a characteristic of all that they lived to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The design of the apostle in thus grouping himself with them was, to show that he did not claim to be any better by nature than they

were, and that all which any of them had of value was to be traced to the grace of God. There is much delicacy here on the part of the apostle. His object was to remind them of the former grossness of their life, and their exposure to the wrath of God. Yet he does not do it harshly. He includes himself in their number. He says that what he affirms of them was substantially true of himself --of all--that they were under condemnation, and exposed to the Divine wrath.

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Marg. as in Greek, wills. Complying with the wishes of a depraved nature. The "will of the flesh" is that to which the flesh, or the unrenewed nature of man, prompts; and Paul says that all had been engaged in fulfilling those fleshly propensities. This was clearly true of the heathen, and it was no less true of the unconverted Jew that he lived for himself, and sought to gratify the purposes of a depraved nature, though it might manifest itself in a way different from the heathen. The "will of the mind" referred to here relates to the wicked thoughts and purposes of the unrenewed nature--the sins which relate rather to the intellect than to the gross passions. Such, for instance, are the sins of pride, envy, ambition, covetousness, etc.; and Paul means to say, that before conversion they lived to gratify these propensities, and to accomplish these desires of the soul.

And were by nature, φυσει. By birth, or before we were converted. By conversion and adoption they became the children of God; before that, they were all the children of wrath. This is, I think, the fair meaning of this important declaration. It does not affirm when they began to be such, or that they were such as soon as they were born, or that they were such before they became moral agents, or that they became such in virtue of theft connexion with Adam--whatever may be the truth on these points; but it affirms that before they were renewed, they were the children of wrath. So far as this text is concerned, this might have been true at their very birth; but it does not directly and certainly prove that. It proves that at no time before their conversion were they the children of God, but that their whole condition before that was

one of exposure to wrath. Comp. Rom 2:14,27, 1Cor 11:14; Gal 2:15. Some men are born Jews, and some heathen; some free, and some slaves; some white, and some black; some are born to poverty, and some to wealth; some are the children of kings, and some of beggars; but, whatever their rank or condition, they are born exposed to wrath, or in a situation which would render them liable to wrath. But why this is the apostle does not say. Whether for their own sins, or for the sins of another; whether by a corrupted soul, or by imputed guilt; whether they act as moral agents as soon as born, or at a certain period of childhood, Paul does not say.

The children of wrath. Exposed to wrath, or liable to wrath. They did not by nature inherit holiness; they inherited that which would subject them to wrath. The meaning has been well expressed by Doddridge, who refers it "to the original apostasy and corruption, in consequence of which men do, according to the course of nature, fall early into personal guilt, and so become obnoxious to the Divine displeasure." Many modern expositors have supposed that this has no reference to any original tendency of our fallen nature to sin, or to native corruption, but that it refers to the habit of sin, or to the fact of their having been the slaves of appetite and passion. I admit that the direct and immediate sense of the passage is, that they were, when without the gospel, and before they were renewed, the children of wrath; but still the fair interpretation is, that they were born to that state, and that that condition was the regular result of their native depravity; and I do not know a more strong or positive declaration that can be made to show that men are by nature destitute of holiness, and exposed to perdition.

Even as others. That is, "do not suppose that you stand alone, or that you are the worst of the species. You are indeed, by nature, the children of wrath; but not you alone. All others were the same. You have a common inheritance with them. I do not mean to charge you with being the worst of sinners, or as being alone transgressors. It is the common lot of man--the sad, gloomy inheritance to which we all are born." The Greek is, ουλοιποι--"the remainder, or the others," --including all. Rom 5:1. This

doctrine, that men without the gospel are the children of wrath, Paul had fully defended in Romans, chapters 1-3. No truth, perhaps, is more frequently stated in the Bible; none is more fearful and awful in its character. What a declaration, that we "are by nature the children of wrath!" Who should not inquire what it means? Who should not make an effort to escape from the wrath to come, and become a child of glory and an heir of life?

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

But God, who is rich in mercy. On the use of the word rich by Paul, Eph 1:7. It is a beautiful expression. "God is rich in mercy;" overflowing, abundant. Mercy is the riches or the wealth of God. Men are often rich in gold, and silver, and they pride themselves in these possessions; but God is rich in mercy. In that he abounds; and he is so rich in it he is willing to impart it to others; so rich that he can make all blessed.

St. Paul having set forth that miserable state, which both Jews and Gentiles were in by nature, namely, dead in sins, and children of wrath; he doth next set forth their deliverance from that woeful estate, by the rich mercy and free grace of God: God, who is rich in mercy, &c.

Here observe, 1. The author of our deliverance, God; and the moving or impulsive cause of it, rich mercy and great love.
Where note, That God hath done more for us, infinitely more, than he did for the angels: he showed love to them, but mercy to us; they are vessels of honour, but we are vessels of mercy: the object of mercy, is a creature in distress and misery.

Note farther, That all the attributes in God are subjected to his love; this is the great prevailing attribute which sways all the rest: which way love goes, all attributes go; mercy, power, justice, and wisdom, they all work in subordination to love, they are at all love's beck, and love sets them all on work for the good and benefit of the object loved.

Note, 3. That the love which God bears to the children of men, is a great love; and the mercy which was set on work by it, is rich mercy; his love so great, that it can never be expressed; his mercy so rich, that it can never be conceived: rich mercy is abundant mercy, inconceivable mercy, inexhaustible mercy, sure mercy.

Note,4. The blessed effects and fruits of this great love and rich mercy in God towards the Ephesians, in quickening them when dead, in saving them when lost, in doing all things for them when they had undone themselves; God, who is rich in mercy--even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.

Learn hence, That poor lost sinners do stand in need of all the riches of mercy that are in God, in order to their regeneration and salvation: if ever we be saved, it is the riches of mercy that must save us.

Note, 5. How the apostle ascribes the whole work of their salvation to God's free grace, in opposition to any merit or worth in the persons to be saved: By grace ye are saved.

Learn hence, That the dependency our salvation has in the whole, and in all the parts of it, upon the free grace of God, is the great thing which St. Paul delighted to discover and make known to us here: By grace ye are saved; and he asserts it again, By grace, &c. Eph 2:8

5 even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 and hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

The apostle here instances in two branches more of that salvation which he had in the foregoing verse affirmed to be of grace, namely, that of our resurrection and glorification; both which are yet to come, and yet they are spoken of as already past: when the Father raised and glorified Christ, all believers were raised and glorified in him; for in his resurrection and glorification he did sustain the quality of a public person, representing his whole

church as their head and husband; and, accordingly, believers are and may be said to be raised already, and glorified already, not in their own persons, but in Christ their head. The apostle says, God has raised us up, and has made us sit together; not, he shall raise us, and will make us sit; to denote the dependency which our resurrection and glorification has upon Christ's, as the effects depend upon the cause, and also the undoubted certainty that they shall come to pass, Christ's resurrection and glorification being a pledge of ours.

Learn hence, 1. That Christ rose from the dead, and ascended up into heaven, not as a private person, but as the common head and parent, root and representative of his church and people; so that what he has done, they may be said to have done: they rose in him, and are set down in heaven in him; and blessed be God for the well-grounded hopes, that as we now sit together in Christ, so ere long we shall for ever sit together with Christ.

Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ is the cause of our resurrection and glorification, he is the efficient cause, the meritorious cause, and exemplary cause, of our resurrection and glorification.

Learn 3. From the phrase here used of sitting, and of sitting together in Christ, that believers shall certainly partake of the same kingly state and dignity, of the same honour and glory, of the same delight and pleasure, of the same rest and tranquillity, of the same state and security, with Christ in heaven. He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

That in the ages to come. In all future times. The sense is, that the riches of Divine grace, and the Divine benignity, would be shown in the conversion of Christians and their salvation to all future times. Such was his love to those who were lost, that it would be an everlasting monument of his mercy, a perpetual and unchanging proof that he was good. The sense is, we are raised up with Christ, and are made to partake of his honour and glory, in order that others may for ever be impressed with a sense of the Divine goodness and

mercy to us. The exceeding riches of his grace. The abounding, overflowing riches of grace. Eph 1:7. This is Paul's favourite expression--an expression so beautiful and so full of meaning that it will bear often to be repeated. We may learn from this verse,

(1.) that one object of the conversion and salvation of sinners is to furnish a proof of the mercy and goodness of God.

(2.) Another object is, that their conversion may be an encouragement to others. The fact, that such sinners as the Ephesians had been, were pardoned and saved, affords encouragement also to others to come and lay hold on life. And so of all other sinners who are saved. Their conversion is a standing encouragement to all others to come in like manner; and now the history of the church for more than eighteen hundred years furnishes all the encouragement which we could desire.

(3.) The conversion of great sinners is a special proof of the Divine benignity. So Paul argues in the case before us; and so he often argued from his own case. 1Timm 1:16.

(4.) Heaven, the home of the redeemed, will exhibit the most impressive proof of the goodness of God that the universe furnishes. There will be a countless host who were once polluted and lost; who were dead in sins; who were under the power of Satan, and who have been saved by the riches of Divine grace--a host now happy and pure, and free from sin, sorrow, and death--the living and eternal monuments of the grace of God.

7 that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in *his* kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

In these words our apostle informs the Ephesians, and in them all succeeding Christians, that their complete salvation, from the first to the last, from the lowest to the highest step, depends upon God's free favour and grace in Christ, and not upon any merit or desert in ourselves; works having no meritorious or casual influence upon our salvation, (for they are not causes, but effects, of that grace by

which we are saved,) to the intent that all boasting may be excluded, and that all the saints' glorying may be in God, and not in themselves.

Note here, 1. That believers are saved already, in some sense; not only because they have salvation begun in their new birth here, but they have already a right and title to, yea, a pledge and an earnest of, complete salvation; believers are saved here.

Note, 2. That the believers' salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Note 3. That faith, by and through which they are said to be saved, is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; faith is the gift of God as well as Jesus Christ, and the one as necessary as the other; for as the only way to heaven is by Christ, so the only way to Christ is by faith; as sin has put a vanity into the creature, so unbelief puts a vanity in Christ, that he should profit us nothing. Wrestle we then with God in prayer for a believing heart.

9 not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

For we are his workmanship. We are his making--ποιημα. That is, we are created or formed by him, not only in the general sense in which all things are made by him, but in that peculiar sense which is denoted by the new creation. 2Cor 5:17. Whatever of peace, or hope, or purity we have, has been produced by his agency on the soul. There cannot be conceived to be a stronger expression to denote the agency of God in the conversion of men, or the fact that salvation is wholly of grace. Created in Christ Jesus. On the word created, 2Cor 5:17. Unto good works. With reference to a holy life; or, the design for which we have been created in Christ is, that we should lead a holy life. The primary object was not to bring us to heaven. It was that we should be holy. Paul held perhaps more firmly than any other man to the position, that men are saved by the mere grace of God, and by a Divine agency on

the soul; but it is certain that no man ever held more firmly that men must lead holy lives, or they could have no evidence that they were the children of God.

Here note, That as good works are antecedently necessary to salvation, so renewing grace is absolutely necessary to good works; therefore before there can be a good work, there must be a good workman, and that good workman must be God's workmanship, created anew through the power of God.

Observe, 2. The meritorious cause of this spiritual workmanship; and that is, Christ Jesus; We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus; that is, through the intervening meditation of Christ Jesus. The life which we live in this new creation state, namely, a life of holiness, it is purchased by his death, produced by his Spirit; all spiritual life comes from God, through Christ as a Mediator; he is a quickening head and life-giving spirit; God sent his Son that we might live by him 1John 4:9; Christ is first our ransom, and then the fountain of life unto our souls: created in Christ Jesus.

Observe, 3. The final cause of this divine workmanship; and that is, to good works: all those that are new creatures are created unto good works; so that a holy life is the necessary fruit of their new creation. New creatures are not to live idly, much less to live wickedly; but to make conscience of every duty, to bring forth fruit of piety towards God, of righteousness towards our neighbour, of love and universal charity towards all mankind. Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them: that is, God hath before prepared these works for us, and also prepared us for them;
he has prepared these works for us,
first by his decree and purpose; he that ordained the end, salvation, hath appointed good works as the means thereto, by his precept and command. He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, &c. Mic 6:8.

And as God hath prepared these works for us, so he hath prepared us for them by his Holy Spirit, making our hearts fit for our work, by enlightening our minds, and inclining our wills.

Learn hence, That new creatures are both ordained and obliged to, and also fitted and prepared for, good works: God will have his children distinguished from others by the good they do, as well as the devil's children are characterized by the mischief which they do.

Observe, lastly, The constancy of the christian's duty declared, with reference to good works: he is to walk in them.

Now, walking denotes and implies both a way and action. Walking,

1. It implies a way; and intimates plainly to us, tht good works are the way and means to obtain salvation: we can never come at heaven as the end, but by walking in the path of good works as the way and means.

2. An action: walking denotes spontaneity in the principle, progress and perseverance in the motion; he that walks, goes forward, gets ground, gives not over till he comes to his journey's end.

A good man is as diligent and zealous, as constant and persevering, in good works as if he were to be saved for them and by them; and at the same time relies by faith on the merits of the Mediator for his acceptance with God, renouncing all confidence in his own good works; he knows they cannot justify themselves, much less can they justify him, who has a better righteousness than that of his best obedience, to denominate him righteous in the sight of God.

Thus are we God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works; which God had before ordained that we should walk in them.

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

He calls upon the Ephesians to remember their former miserable condition before conversion, when they were in their heathen and unregenerate state, when they were Gentiles and reproached by the Jews for being uncircumcised, and looked upon by the Jews as dogs; he calls upon them here, to remember their obligations to God, for bringing them out of this miserable state and deplorable condition; Remember, that in times past, ye were Gentiles in the flesh.

Learn hence, That believers, remembering and calling to mind the sin they were guilty of, and the misery they were exposed to, in their natural and unregenerate state, may many ways be of singular use and advantage to them, and be spiritually improved by them; namely, thus

1. To excite us to magnify the greatness of God's love, and to admire the freeness and riches of his grace. This we shall certainly do, when we remember, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

2. To inflame our love to Jesus Christ: Mary loved much, when she remembered that much was forgiven her.

3. To increase our godly sorrow for sin: Then shall they be confounded when they remember that I am pacified towards them for all their abominations, Ezek 16:63.

4. To quicken us up to greater zeal and industry for God: it was the remembrance of what Paul was before conversion, that fired him with holy zeal, and carried him forth with such vigour and industry

after his conversion, that he laboured more abundantly than all the apostles.

5. The remembrance how bad we were ourselves before conversion, will be a special mean to keep up our hearts in hopes of, in prayers for, and endeavours after the conversion of others, though very bad at present. What they are, that thou once wert; and what thou now art, that they may also be.

Observe, 2. That as St. Paul does put the Ephesians in mind of their former miserable condition, in their heathenish and unregenerate state; so he does particularize the same, and branch it forth into its distinct parts and members.
When they were unconverted Gentiles,

1. They were without Christ, that is without the knowledge of Christ, without any relation to him, or interest in him, without union and communion with him, without any communications of life and light, of grace and holiness, of joy and comfort, of pardon and protection, received from him. They did not discern any excellency, nor taste any sweetness, in Christ; and consequently had no love to him, no longings after him, no delight or satisfaction in him.
Ah! miserable condition of a Christless soul: if thou art without Christ, thou are without the spirit and grace of Christ, to enlighten thee, to quicken thee, to sanctify and save thee.

2. They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel: that is, they were no members of Christ's church either visible or invisible: they did not so much as profess themselves to be a people, that stood in any relation to God; they were unchurched Gentiles; for in Jewry only was God known, and his name great in Israel, Ps 76:1
Verily, whatever the world thinks of it, it is a very great favour from God to be born within the pale of the visible church, and to have communion with her; for thereby we partake of many excellent privileges; namely, the word and sacraments, the communion of saints, together with the offers of Christ, and salvation by him.

3. They were strangers to the covenant of promise; that is, to the covenant of grace, first made with Adam after the fall, then with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, afterwards with Israel upon Mount Sinai; for which reason it is here by the apostle called covenants, in the plural number, though it was always one and the same covenant in substance; and its being called the covenants of promise, seems to point at the promise made to Adam, Gen 3:15 that first grand original promise, of which promise all the following promises were but branches, or more full explanations.

Now the Ephesians are here said to be strangers to the covenant of promise; because, as Gentiles, this covenant was never revealed to them, nor any offer of it made by the ministry of the word, and consequently they could have no actual interest in the blessings and privileges of it.

This intimates to us, that for men to live and die without an offer of the covenant of grace made unto them, is a woeful, sad, and dangerous condition, because their salvation is rendered in an ordinary way impossible, forasmuch as the terms upon which salvation may be had are concealed from them.

4. They were without hope; that is, they were without the grace of hope, and without the means of hope: they were without hopes of redemption, without hopes of redemption, without hopes of pardon and reconciliation, and consequently without any well-grounded hope of eternal life and salvation. Such as are Christless, must be hopeless; such as are without faith, must needs be without hope; and such as are without the promise, must necessarily be without faith: for the promise is the ground of hope.

Learn, That for a person to be without a well-grounded hope of future happiness, is a very deplorable case and condition; but all such as are without the pale of the Christian church, without the bond of the covenant of grace, without the offer of a Savior in the gospel, they must be without hope, even in this life, and so are of all men most miserable.

5. They were without God in the world; that is, without the knowledge of the true God, without worshipping of him as God, without any affiance or trust in him, without performing any obedience to him: not that the Ephesians, and other heathens, lived without any sense or sensible apprehension of the majesty and holiness of the true God: now,this is to live without God in the world; and verily such a life is worse than death.

The apostle calls all the Gentiles, not only the barbarous and savage, but the best polished and civilized nations, Atheon, Atheist, because they wanted the right knowledge of God by and through a Mediator: there is no knowing God acceptably, except we know him in Christ, and approach unto him by Christ.

In this affecting manner doth our apostle set before the Ephesians their dark and dismal state whilst Gentiles, and before brought into the Christian church by preaching the gospel of Christ unto them; they were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. God grant that every unregenerate sinner may think of it till his heart and soul are affected with it.

13 but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Ye who sometimes were far off. Who were formerly--ποτε. Tindal translates it, a whyle agoo. The phrase far off --μακραν--means that they were formerly far off from God and his people. The expression is derived from the custom of speaking among the Hebrews. God was supposed to reside in the temple. It was a privilege to be near the temple. Those who were remote from Jerusalem and the temple were regarded as far off from God, and hence as peculiarly irreligious and wicked. Isa 57:19.

Where note, 1. That persons who are most remote, and at the farthest distance from God, are sometimes unexpectedly brought home unto him: Ye who were afar off, are now made nigh.

Note, 2. That it is owing to the blood of Christ, to his death and sufferings, that any soul is brought into a state of nearness unto God, and finds acceptance with him: Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us;*

He is our peace: that is,

1. He is the Mediator of our peace, the great peace-maker betwixt God and men.

2.He is our peace: that is, the purchaser of our peace.

3. He is our peace; that is, the establisher of our peace. All which is to be understood, not only of peace betwixt God and man, but also betwixt man and man. Who hath made both one; that is, both Jews and Gentiles one church.

Here note, That there was a very great and deep-rooted enmity betwixt Jews and Gentiles, until Christ purchased their peace and reconciliation.

The Jews derided, scorned, and hated the Gentiles as unclean, compared them to dogs and swine.

The Gentiles, they reproached the Jews for circumcising their flesh, esteemed them, of all nations, the worst; and would hold their nose at the Jews when they met them, and cry, O faetentes Judaei! O ye stinking Jews! and turn away their eyes from them.

Learn from hence then, That the uniting of both Jew and Gentile into one church, was one blessed effect and sweet fruit of the purchase of Christ's blood; Christ's offering of himself was intended as a sacrifice for enmities between man and man, as well as for enmities between God and man: He is our peace, who hath made both one.
Observe next, What Christ hath done in order to his making peace between Jew and Gentile;

1. He has abolished the ceremonial law, called here a partition-wall, betwixt the Jews and the Gentiles; in allusion, no doubt, to that wall to Solomon's temple which separated the court of the Jews from that of the Gentiles, that they could neither come at, nor look at one another. So that this partition-wall being said to be broken down, intimates to us, that Jew and Gentile, who before had two manner of religions, the one in and under a covenant with God, the other afar off, and without God; yet now by Christ are both adopted into the same church, partakers of the same covenants, incorporated into the same faith, entitled to the same glory.

2. Christ has abolished the enmity and perpetual strife which was occasioned between Jew and Gentile, upon the account of the observation of the ceremonial law, and the ordinances thereunto belonging: He hath abolished the enmity; that is, the ceremonial law, which made the enmity between them. The ceremonial law was the cause and the continuer of that enmity which was betwixt Jew and Gentile: this is called the law of commandments contained in ordinances: because Almighty God did actually separate the Jews from all the world, by giving them ordinances and commandments, judicial and ceremonial laws, containing many visible and external observances, which forbade them to communicate with the Gentile world.

Now Christ being come in the flesh, all those observances ceased, and those legal ordinances vanished away; all nations become blessed in Christ, and Jews and Gentiles become one church, both alike the people of God, both admitted equally into covenant, and both alike blessed.

Here note, That the moral law, summarily comprised and comprehended in the Ten Commandments, was no part of the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile. Nor did the death of Christ abrogate this law, nor is it at all abolished: but it was the law of ceremonies only, which the sufferings and death of Christ put an end unto; for when he died, they all vanished; as the shadow disappears when the substance is come.

15 having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;

16 and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

> Having slain the enmity. Not only the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, but the enmity between the sinner and God. He has by that death removed all the obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God and on the part of man. It is made efficacious in removing the enmity of the sinner against God, and producing peace.

17 and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

> But how did Christ preach to the Gentiles?
> Ans. Though he did not in his own person preach peace to the Gentiles, yet he gave commission to the apostles to preach to them, Matt 28:19-20, and they and their successors, pursuant to such commission, did preach peace unto them, even to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh.
>
> Learn hence, That when the ministers of Christ do come in his name, and by a commission received from him, to preach peace, and offer terms of reconciliation unto lost sinners, it is all one as if Christ himself did come and preach; he expects the same readiness from them in receiving the message, as if it were delivered to them from his own mouth; and will treat the despisers of his ministers, and the contemners of their message, as if the affront were offered immediately to his own person.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone;*

21 in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord:

22 in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Whence we learn, That the church of Christ under the gospel, is God's great household or family, in a peculiar manner admitted to an intimate communion with him, in a special way provided and cared for by him; and every sincere Christian becomes a member of this blessed family, and enjoys all the privileges thereof: Ye are all fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Note, 3. St. Paul proceeds yet farther, and compares the church of Christ to an edifice or stately building: Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, &c. Now this similitude holds forth unto us a still farther degree of nearness to, and communion with, God and his church, than the former. What can be more closely united, and more strictly joined together, than stones in a building? And our apostle calling the church an holy temple, seems to allude to Solomon's temple, which was a type of the Christian church, as the tabernacle was of the Jewish church. The tabernacle was ambulatory and changeable, made of decaying and corruptible materials, and so fitly typified the Jewish dispensation, which was temporary and transient; but the temple was made of durable rich materials, and thereby a proper type of the Christian church, which is called a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

But observe further, How our apostle doth describe this stately edifice, this spiritual building, the Christian church, these several ways:

1. By its foundation which it stands upon, namely, the apostles and prophets; that is, upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, not upon their persons: Christ himself being the personal foundation and chief corner-stone.

Learn, That though Christ himself be the builder of, and the chief corner-stone in, his church, yet he employs his ministers now, as he did the prophets and apostles of old, to lay the foundation, and carry on the superstructure, and no one apostle had a privilege in this above another.

2. The church as a spiritual building or temple, is here described by the unity and compactness of its parts: in whom all the building fitly framed together; that is, all the members of the church are by faith firmly joined to Christ as the foundation, and to one another by love, and their unity is both their strength and their beauty.

3. This building is described by its worth and perpetual increase, it groweth unto an holy temple. The church groweth two ways, by an addition of new and particular converts, and by an addition of new graces in every particular convert.

Where remark, how this spiritual edifice, the church of Christ, differs from all other buildings; both the whole of it, and all the individual parts of it, are endued with life, a life flowing from Christ the foundation, a life far from a state of perfection, in whom all the building groweth; all a Christian's life and spiritual growth flow from his union and communion with Christ; in him all the building groweth.

4. This building, namely, the Christian church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, is here described by the end and design of Christ in erecting this growing edifice; namely, to be an holy temple unto God, wherein now (as in the material temple of old) he may manifest his gracious presence, and be perpetually worshipped, glorified, and served. The whole church, or collective body of believers jointly, and each believer severally and apart, are a spiritual and holy temple unto the Lord, in and by whom all spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered up, and all the duties of new and sincere obedience acceptably performed.

Ephesians-3

Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
2 if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3 how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words;

Observe here, 1. The title given to the gospel, it is styled the grace of God; partly because the glad tidings which the gospel brings are the effect and product of God's grace and favour, and partly because the gospel is the instrument and means of working peace in the souls of persons.

Observe, 2. The title given to St. Paul's apostleship; he styles it the dispensation of the grace of God, because God had commissioned him to declare and dispense the gospel of grace to them; Christ's ministers are the dispensers of his mind to the children of men.

Observe, 3. The title here given to the calling of the Gentiles: he styles it a mystery. The calling of the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ,
without the works of the law, was a mystery hid from ages.

Observe, 4. The way and manner how St. Paul came by the knowledge of this mystery: it was by divine revelation from heaven, Eph 3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery. The mystery of man's redemption in general, and of the calling of the Gentiles in particular to the participation of that grace, was made known by divine revelation to the apostles by God himself. The truth is, the redempton of a lost world, by the incarnation, death, and passion, of the Son of God, is so stupendous and surprising, so wonderful and amazing, that the very thoughts of it had been the highest blasphemy, if God himself had not revealed it.

4 whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,)

In the mystery of Christ. This does not refer to anything mysterious in the person of Christ; or the union of the Divine and human nature in him; or to anything difficult of apprehension in the work of the atonement. It means the hitherto concealed doctrine, that through the Messiah the Gentiles were to be received to the same privileges as the Jews, and that the plan of salvation was to be made equally free for all. This great truth had

been hitherto concealed, or but partially understood, and Paul says that he was appointed to make it known to the world. His knowledge on the subject, he says, could be understood by what he had said, and from that they could judge whether he was qualified to state and defend the doctrines of the Gospel. Paul evidently supposed that the knowledge which he had on that subject was of eminent value; that it was possessed by few; that it was important to understand it. Hence he dwells upon it. He speaks of the glory of that truth. He traces it back to the counsels of God. He shows that it entered into his eternal plans; and he evidently felt that the truth which he had communicated in the former part of this epistle was among the most important that could come before the mind.

5 which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

As if the apostle had said, "Of this gospel it pleased God to make me a successful minister or dispenser, furnishing me with ordinary and extraordinary gifts and graces from his Holy Spirit, for that weighty work and sevice; unto me, even unto me, I say, was this special favour granted, though unworthy, (being less than the least of all saints, because once a great persecutor,) yet unto me was the apostolic office committed, to preach unto the Gentiles the incomparable and incomprehensible riches of God's mercy towards them in Christ, in receiving them fully, freely and finally, in covenant with himself; and to make known unto all men what is the communion or fellowship of this mystery, namely, that the Gentiles with the Jews should have one faith, one Lord, one hope, one heavenly inheritance; which was a mystery hid in the secret intention and decree of God, until discovered by divine revelation.

Observe here, 1. How careful the apostle was to assert his authority and apostolical commission, I was made a minister; and how he refers his calling immediately to the grace of God, Unto me was this grace given. It was the grace of God converted him, it was the grace of God revealed the gospel to him, and that called him to reveal it unto others.

Observe, 2. How the apostle attributes the success of his ministry to the power of God, and not to his own endeavours; By the effectual working of his own power. The grace of God in him, and the power of God accompanying him, was effectual to the conversion of very many sinners, and to the producing of great signs and miracles which were wrought by him.

Observe, 3. The noble subject of St. Paul's sermons, what it was he preached amongst the Gentiles; namely, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Riches imply abundance, and abundance of such things as are of worth and value: in Christ are riches, all riches, eminently and transcendently found; riches of grace, and riches of glory: and these are called unsearchable; not as if it were unlawful to search after them, but because after our utmost search after them we can never fully discover them.

Learn hence, that there are such mazes, such mysteries of love and goodness, in our Lord Jesus Christ, as, though it be our duty to be continually searching after them, yet we can never, by our utmost searching, fully discover them and find them out.

Observe,4. The humble and low opinion which the great apostle had of himself, not barely the least, but less than the least of all saints; he was, in his own esteem, as little as could be, less than the least; a double dimunitive; a comparative made of a superlative.
Thus he debases himself, upon consideration of his former enmity against Christ and his church: lower he could not lie than he lays himself, the greatest and chiefest of sinners; the least, yea, less than the least, of all saints; growth in grace, and increase in humility accompany one another.

9 and to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery,
which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who
created all things by Jesus Christ:
10 to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly
places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
11 according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus
our Lord:

Observe here, 1. The title given to the holy angels; they are styled principalities and powers, because God makes us of their powerful ministry in governing the kingdoms and principalities of this world: and they are said to be in heavenly places; not as if they were never here upon earth below, but because the ordinary place of their residence is heaven above.

Observe, 2. That the angels are not omniscient and all knowing. The wisdom of God in the work of redemption was a secret unknown to the glorious angels; they did not know it until God made it known unto them.

Observe, 3. That God did not make the mystery of the gospel, or the glorious work of redemption, known unto the angels immediately, but occasionally, by the revelation of it first to the church, and by the church to them: as if the apostles had said, "Had it not been for the light given to, and spread abroad in, the church, the angels had been in the dark about the mysteries of the gospel to this day. By the church is made known unto the angels the manifold wisdom of God."

Quest. But how could the church communicate this knowledge to angels?

Ans. Either the angels did gather up their knowledge of these mysteries, by the ministry of the apostles preaching them to the world in a way of information; or else they saw, as in a glass, the manifold wisdom of God, and the dispensations of his mercy, grace, and goodness, towards his church, in a way of contemplation.

Observe, 4. The title here given to the work of redemption, it is styled, the maniflod wisdom of God.

O, how full of variety was the wisdom of God in man's recovery! It is of many folds and plaits, manifold in kind, manifold in degree, manifold in its administration. There are manifold secrets in this wisdom: some less perfectly seen, some more perfectly understood, and some that will never perhaps be thoroughly understood. Doubtless, there are some secrets in the wisdom of God, which it belongs only to God to understand and know. Blessed be God that so much of the manifold wisdom of God, in the glorious work of redemption, is made known unto us, as will eternally ravish and delight us.

To the intent. Greek, "that"--ινα. The sense is, that it was with this design, or that this was the purpose for which all things were made. One grand purpose in the creation of the universe was, that the wisdom of God might be clearly shown by the church. It was not enough to evince it by the formation of the sun, the stars, the earth, the seas, the mountains, the floods. It was not enough to show it by the creation of intelligent beings, the formation of immortal minds on earth, and the various ranks of the angelic world. There were views of the Divine character which could be obtained only in connexion with the redemption of the world. Hence the universe was created, and man was made upon the earth, not merely to illustrate the Divine perfections in the work of creation, but in a still more illustrious manner in the work of redemption. And hence the deep interest which the angelic hosts have ever evinced in the salvation of man.

That now. The word now--νυν--is wanting in the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic; and is omitted by many of the Fathers. See Koppe. If it is to be retained, it means that this display is to be made under the gospel. "Now, since the Messiah is come; now, under the Christian dispensation, this revelation is to be made to distant worlds."

Unto the principalities and powers. To the angelic hosts--the intelligent beings that surround the throne of God. Eph 1:21.

By the Church. By the incarnation of the Redeemer to save it; by the mercy shown to it; by the wise arrangement made to recover his people from the fall; and by all the graces and beauties which that redeemed church will evince on earth and in heaven.

The manifold wisdom of God. Literally, much-variegated. It means the greatly-diversified wisdom. It does not mean merely that there was great wisdom, but that the wisdom shown was diversified and varied; like changing, variegated colours. There was a "beautiful and well-ordered variety of dispensations" towards that church, all of which tended to evince the wisdom of God. It is like a landscape, or a panoramic view passing before the mind, with a great variety of phases and aspects, all tending to excite admiration. In the redemption of the church, there is not merely one form or one phase of wisdom. It is wisdom, ever-varying, ever-beautiful. There was wisdom manifested when the plan was formed; wisdom in the selection of the Redeemer; wisdom in the incarnation; wisdom in the atonement; wisdom in the means of renewing the heart, and sanctifying the soul; wisdom in the various dispensations by which the Church is sanctified, guided, and brought to glory. The wisdom thus shown is like the ever-varying beauty of changing clouds, when the sun is reflected on them at evening. Each aspect is full of beauty. One bright cloud differs in appearance from others; yet all tend to fill the mind with elevated views of God.

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

he shows the great and gracious privileges which all believers are admitted to the participation of, by and through our Lord Jesus Christ; namely, boldness, access, and confidence: In whom we have boldness, and access, with confidence, through the faith of him.

Access' that is, a liberty of approach to God as a Father:

Boldness; that is, a freedom of speech in delivering our heart, our whole mind and heart, to him, in the duty of prayer and thanksgiving:
Confidence; that is, a well-grounded persuasion that both our persons and performances shall find acceptance with God.

All which privileges are enjoyed by the exercise of faith in Christ: We have boldness, access, and confidence, through the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not. The connexion here is this. Paul was then a prisoner at Rome. He had been made such in consequence of his efforts to diffuse the Christian religion among the Gentiles. Eph 3:1. His zeal in this cause, and the opinions which he held on this subject, had roused the wrath of the Jews, and led to all the calamities which he was now suffering. Of that the Ephesians, he supposes, were aware. It was natural that they should be distressed at his sufferings, for all his privations were endured on their account. But here he tells them not to be troubled and disheartened. He was indeed suffering; but he was reconciled to it, and they should be also, since it was promoting their welfare. The word rendered "faint"- εκκακεω--means, literally, to turn out a coward, or to lose one's courage; then to be faint-hearted, etc. 2Cor 4:1. It is rendered faint in Lk 18:1, 2Cor 4:1,16, Eph 3:13 and weary in Gal 6:9, 2Thes 3:13. It does not elsewhere occur. It is rendered here by Locke, dismayed. Koppe supposes it means that they should not suppose that the Christian religion was vain and false because he was suffering so much from his countrymen on account of it. But it rather means that they might be in danger of being discouraged by the fact that he was enduring so much. They might become disheartened in their attachment to a system of religion which exposed its friends to such calamities. Paul tells them that this ought not to follow. They were to be profited by all his sufferings, and they should, therefore, hold fast to a religion which was attended with so many benefits to them--though he should suffer.Which is your glory. Which tends to your honour and welfare. You have occasion to rejoice that you have a friend who

is willing thus to suffer for you; you have occasion to rejoice in all the benefits which will result to you from his trials in your behalf.

Prayer for Love Which Surpasses Knowledge

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

This is the more natural interpretation. The whole "family of God" means all his children; and the idea is, that they all bear the same name, derived from the Redeemer; all are Christians. No matter where they are, in heaven or in earth; no matter from what nation they are converted, whether Jews or Gentiles, they an have one name, and one Redeemer, and all belong to one family. See Eph 4:4-6. In heaven. Spirits of just men made perfect. It does not properly refer to angels, for he is not speaking of them, but of the family of the redeemed. If the phrase, "in heaven," could ever be taken to denote the Jews as contradistinguished from the Gentiles, I should think that this was one of the places. Many expositors have supposed that it is frequently so used in this epistle, but I see no clear evidence of it, and no instance where it seems very probable, unless this should be one. And it is not necessary here, for it may mean all the redeemed, whether in heaven or earth, though the connexion would seem rather to have suggested a reference to the Jews and the Gentiles. An expression similar to this occurs in Col 1:20:--"To reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." The passage before us is one that is commonly explained by a reference to Jewish opinions. The Jews were accustomed to call the angels in heaven God's upper family, and his people on earth his lower family. See the passages cited from the Rabbinical writers in Wetstein. Is named. This means substantially the same as is. They are all of one family. They all have one Father, and are all of one community. The expression is taken from the custom in a family, where all bear the name of the head of the family; and the meaning is, that all in heaven and on earth are united under one head, and constitute one community. It does not mean that all are called by the same name, or that the name Christian is given to the angels, but that they all pertain to the same community, and constitute the same great and glorious

brotherhood. Part are in heaven, near his throne; part in distant worlds; part are angels of light; part redeemed and happy spirits; part are in the church on earth; but they are all united as one family, and have one Head and Father. This glorious family will yet be gathered together in heaven, and will encompass the throne of their common Father rejoicing.

15 of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

According to the riches of his glory. According to the glorious abundance of his mercy. See Php 4:19. Out of those stores of rich grace which can never be exhausted. The word riches, so often used by Paul, denotes abundance; and the idea here is, that his grace was inexhaustible and ample for all their wants. To be strengthened with might. To be powerfully strengthened. That is, to give you abundant strength to bear trials; to perform your duties; to glorify his name. In the inner man. In the heart, the mind, the soul. Rom 7:22. The body needs to be strengthened every day. In like manner the soul needs constant supplies of grace. Piety needs to be constantly invigorated, or it withers and decays. Every Christian needs grace given each day to enable him to bear trials, to resist temptation, to discharge his duty, to live a life of faith.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Eph 2:22. Expressions like this often occur in the Scriptures, where God is said to dwell in us, and we are said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. Jn 14:23; 1Cor 6:19. That ye being rooted. Firmly established--as a tree is whose roots strike deep, and extend afar. The meaning is, that his love should be as firm in our hearts as a tree is in the soil, whose roots strike deep into the earth. And grounded. τεθεμελιωμενοι--founded--as a building is on a foundation. The word is taken from architecture where a firm foundation is laid; and the meaning is, that he wished them to be as firm in the love of Christ, as a building is that rests on a solid basis. In love. In love to the Redeemer--perhaps also in love to each other-- and to all. Love was the great principle of the true religion, and the apostle wished that they might be fully settled in that.

Our apostle here proceeds with affectionate ardour to pray for further spiritual blessings on the behalf of his beloved Ephesians:

1. He prays that Christ may dwell in their hearts by his most holy faith. The phrase of dwelling in us, imports a very close and intimate union between Christ and believers; he dwells in them subjectively and effectively, by his gracious influences, by his powerful assistances, by his quickening impressions. The Holy Spirit is the bond of union on Christ's part, and faith on our part.

2. He prays that they may be rooted and grounded in love; that is, that they might be so deeply possessed with the sense of God's love, that they might be the very habit of their souls, and rooted nature in them.

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted
and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and
length, and depth, and height;

The dimensions of redeeming love are admirable: The breadth, and length, and depth, and height. By enumerating these dimensions, the apostle designs to signify the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, the unsearchable riches of his love, which is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, Job 11:8,9. Some describe the particulars thus: By the breadth of it we may understand the extent of it to all ages, nations, and ranks of men; by the length of it, its continuance from everlasting to everlasting; by the depth of it, its stooping to the lowest condition, with a design to relieve and save those who have sunk into the depths of sin and misery; by its height, its entitling and raising us up to the heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to comprehend this love: it is the character of all the saints that they do so; for they all have a complacency and a confidence in the love of Christ: And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, Eph 3:19. If it passeth knowledge, how can we know it? We must pray and endeavour to know something, and should still covet and strive to know more and more of it, though, after the best endeavours, none can fully comprehend it: in its full extent it surpasses knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better

perceived and known by Christians than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven.

He prays that the Ephesians may comprehend what is the breadth, length, depth, and height, of the love of God, and the mysteries of the gospel; intimating to us, that we are not to content ourselves with a superficial view of God's free love in Christ, but to make an accurate inspection into all the dimensions of it: to view it in its breadth, and extending to all ages, Jewish and Christian; in its length, as reaching from eternity to eternity; in its depth, as it stoops down to succour and relieve the vilest and the greatest, if penitent sinners; in its height, whereby it reaches up to heaven, and entitles us to the joy and felicity of the saints above.

Verily, the love of God in Christ to a lost world, is so vast and boundless, so rich and matchless, exceeding not only our comprehension, but conceptions also, that not only the natural man cannot understand it, but the renewed man also is unable to fathom it, but must be daily endeavouring to take dimensions of it; for the love of Christ surpassingly transcends the knowledge of the most illuminated believer; it surpasses natural knowledge, apostolical knowledge, yea, angelical knowledge. That ye may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.

He prays that they may know the superlative love of Christ to a lost world is a transcendent love; that the knowledge of it may be attained in some measure, that it is our duty to seek after it, and search into it; but, after all, we can never fully comprehend it. What created understanding can know what is unknowable, or comprehend what is incomprehensible?

Learn, There are such dimensions and degrees in the love of Christ to sinners, which, at least in this present and imperfect state, do surpass all comprehension and conception; also that love whereby he took our nature upon him, that love whereby he took our sins upon him, is so stupendous and amazing, that the holy angels

awfully admire it, but even their enlarged capacities cannot fully comprehend it.

He prays that they might be filled with all the fulness of God; that is, with such measures of grace, knowledge, faith, holiness, and love, which God hath appointed believers unto, and they are capable of, in this life.

Note here, 1. That there is a fulness in God, which we can neither be filled with, nor may we strive to be filled with; God is essentially full, originally full, independently full, inexhaustibly full, of all holiness and grace. Now this fullness of his is undiminishable, and consequently incommunicable.

Note, 2. That there is a fulness of God which we may, and therefore ought, to pray and endeavour to be filled with; namely, to be filled with the knowledge of God, to be filled with the grace and Spirit of God, to be filled with the wisdom of God, that we may know God more, serve him better, glorify him on earth, and be glorified with him in heaven. In a word, we may pray for, and strive to be filled with, such a measure of the fulness of God and his grace, as God shall see fit to give, and as our capacities are or may be prepared to receive; God is not straitened towards us, let us not be straitened in ourselves: Open thy mouth wide, says God, and I will fill it. Blessed be God for a present fulness of sufficiency, and for the hopes of a future fulness to satiety.

19 and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye
might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all
that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises. Our blessed Saviour has taught us to do so. Take notice how he describes God, and how he ascribes glory to him. He describes him as a God that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the saints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, still God is still able to do more, abundantly

more, exceedingly abundantly more. Open thy mouth ever so wide, still he hath wherewithal to fill it. Note, In our applications to God we should encourage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency and almighty power. According to the power which worketh in us. As if he had said, We have already had a proof of this power of God, in what he hath wrought in us and done for us, having quickened us by his grace, and converted us to himself. The power that still worketh for the saints is according to that power that hath wrought in them. Wherever God gives of his fulness he gives to experience his power. Having thus described God, he ascribes glory to him. When we come to ask for grace from God, we ought to give glory to God. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. In ascribing glory to God, we ascribe all excellences and perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of them all. Observe, The seat of God's praises is in the church. That little rent of praise which God receives from this world is from the church, a sacred society constituted for the glory of God, every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, concurs in this work of praising God. The Mediator of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from his to us through the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus throughout all ages, world without end; for he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. Amen. So be it; and so it will certainly be.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle closes his prayer with thanksgiving and praise; intimating to us, that praise should evermore conclude that work which prayer began, and that spiritual blessings principally deserve our praises.

Observe, 2. The title which St. Paul's faith fixed upon, in his approaches to God in prayer and praise; and that is, his omnipotence or almighty power. In all our addresses to God, it is our duty to have such apprehensions, and use such expressions concerning him, as may most strengthen our faith. He is able, saith

the apostle,to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

Note here, The comprehensive fulness of this expression: he is able to do for us, to do abundantly for us, to do exceeding abundantly for us,above what we ask; yea, to do exceeding abundantly for us above what we can think, as well as ask.

O! how narrow, short, and poor are our prayers, compared with the power of God! It is much that the tongue can ask; it is more that the mind can think: but the Lord is able to do for us, not only above what we can ask, but abundantly above what we can think.
Lord, what an everlasting spring of comfort is this! what encouragement doth it administer to thy people! what encouragement to prayer! what encouragement in prayer! They pray to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think.

Observe, 3. That it is not God's absolute power that St. Paul bottoms his faith in prayer upon, (for God can do many things that he never will do,) but it is his operative, promised, and formerly experienced power.

According to the power that worketh in us; that is, according to that infinite and almighty power which God had exerted and put forth in their first conversion: this power was, and is, a main prop for confidence in prayer.

Learn hence, That the experience we have had of God's gracious power in working in us, by converting and quickening grace, may and ought to confirm our faith, that he will do exceeding abundantly for us above what we can ask or think, when we are upon our knees in prayer before him.

21 unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The concluding doxology To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Where note, 1. The divine praise given to Almighty God, namely, that of glory: To him be glory.--Glory is the fountain of all excellency in the creatures; they all shine with beams borrowed from God's excellences, as stars shine with the light they receive from the body of the sun. Almighty God is that infinitely glorious being, in whom all the excellences and perfections of the creatures are eminently and transcendently found.

Note, 2. The persons giving this glory unto God: the church, To him be glory in the church. True, it is the duty of all reasonable creatures to set forth God's glory; but only the church (holy and gracious persons alone) can perform it in an active and acceptable manner.

Note, 3. The person through whom this duty becomes acceptable unto God: through Christ Jesus, To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus.

The duty of praise and thanksgiving is what we owe to God for received favours, and indeed is all we have to pay him; but neither this, nor any other duty, can find acceptance with God, but by and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians-4

The Unity of the Spirit

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Here note, 1. The person exhorting and beseeching, I Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you; I that am in bonds for Christ, I that am imprisoned for preaching the gospel to you, and for proselyting you by it to Christianity. Nothing can more oblige a people to hearken to the exhortations of the ministers of Christ, than this consideration, that the truths which they deliver to them, they stand ready both to suffer for and to seal with their precious blood: I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you.

Note, 2. The comprehensive duty exhorted to, That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; worthy, that is, beseeming and becoming your holy profession, answerable to the dignity and obligation of your Christian name; or, as he exhorteth the Philippians, Phil 1:20, "walk as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ."

But when may we be said so to do:

Ans. When we walk according to the precepts and commands of the gospel; answerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel; answerable to that grand pattern of holiness which the gospel sets before us, the example of Jesus Christ; answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords.

Finally, to walk worthy or our vocation, is to walk answerable to those high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises the Christian up to the expectation of.

2 with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;

Having exhorted them to the practice of their general duty, namely, to walk worthy of their holy vocation, in the former verse; in these two verses he presses upon them more special and particular duties, the chief of which is the duty of Christian unity and concord; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit.

The word signifies a diligent, industrious, and united endeavour, to preserve and keep, to support and maintain, to unity of the Spirit; that is, an union of heart and spirit, an unity of faith and doctrine, and unity of judgment and affection, amongst all the professors of Christianity.

Observe, 2. The means by which this duty may be performed, and the unity of the Spirit maintained; namely, in or by the bond of peace: a peacable disposition and temper, a peacable deportment and behaviour, is the bond or ligament which binds Christians together; whereas discord and division cuts that bond asunder.

Observe, 3. The special graces which the apostle recommends unto us, as excellent helps for preserving unity and peace; namely, humility, meekness, mutual forbearance.

1. Humility; With all lowliness Eph 4:2; that is, with all submissiveness of mind, and humble apprehensions of ourselves. What Tertullus said of Festus flatteringly, we may say of humility truly, By thee, O humility, we enjoy great quietness. The humble man is a peaceable man; only by pride cometh contention.

2. Meekness; which consists in a backwardness to provoke others, or to be provoked by others; as lowliness stood in opposition to pride, so meekness here stands in opposition to peevishness/ irritable/: With all lowliness and meekness.

3. Long-suffering and mutual forbearance; when Christians are so far from resenting every wrong, and revenging every injury that is offered to them, that they can bear with one another's weaknesses, cover each other's infirmities, pity one another's failings, and pardon each other's provocations. And this duty of mutual forbearance ought to proceed from a principle of love to each other; forbearing one another in love.

3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

The apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to a strict unity and concord amongst themselves next proceeds to enforce his exhortation with several arguments; and there are no fewer than seven summed up in the three verses now before us.

1. Says the apostle, there is one body, that is, one universal church, whereof ye are all members.

2. There is one Spirit, by which ye are all animated and enlivened, and therefore keep the unity of the Spirit.

3. There is one hope of eternal life, by which we are all excited. Our inheritance in heaven is the same; God doth not give one a double portion, or a parti-coloured coat above another; but it is called an inheritance in light, because all alike are partakers of it, and sharers in it: the saints have all one hope, therefore should have all but one heart.

4. One Lord Jesus Christ, the head of his church, the Saviour of the body, one whom we all profess to serve and obey: Be ye therefore one, for your Lord is one.

5. There is one faith: that is, either one grace of faith whereby we believe, or one doctrine of faith which is believed; ye all believe in one and the same Saviour, and are justified by him after one and the same manner; therefore be ye also one; one in affection as well as one in belief.

6. There is one baptism, one door by which we all enter into the church; both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, rich and poor, they are all one in Christ Jesus, and by one Spirit baptized into one body.

7. One God and Father of all things. And of all persons in Christ, whom we all expect one and the same salvation from. And this God is transcendently above all, and over all: his eye penetrates and pierces through you all, and he is in and among you all, as in his holy temple; therefore such as endeavour to divide you, do as much as in them lies to divide God himself that dwells in you.

From the whole learn, That so many are the obligations, so strong the bonds and ties, which lie upon all the members of the church to be at unity among themselves, of one judgment, and of one heart; that such as violate these bonds, and culpably divide and separate themselves from communion with their brethern, Christ looks upon them no longer as members of his body, but as having rent and torn themselves from it.

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6 one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Is given grace. The favour of God; meaning here, that God had bestowed upon each sincere Christian the means of living as he ought to do, and had in his gospel made ample provision that they might walk worthy of their vocation. What are the endowments thus given the apostle states in the following verses. The grace referred to here, most probably, means the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, or his operations on the heart in connexion with the use of the means which God has appointed. According to the measure of the gift of Christ. Grace is bestowed upon all true Christians, and all have enough to enable them to live a life of holiness. Yet we are taught here,

(1.) that it is a gift. It is bestowed on us. It is not what is originated by ourselves.
(2.) It is by a certain measure. It is not unlisted, and without rule. There is a wise adaptation; an imparting it by a certain rule. The same grace is not given to all, but to all is given enough to enable them to live as they ought to live.

(3.) That measure is the gift of Christ, or what is given in Christ. It comes through him. It is what he has purchased; what he has obtained by his merits. All have enough for the purposes for which God has called them into his kingdom; but there are not the same endowments conferred on all. Some have grace given them to qualify them for the ministry; some to be apostles; some to be martyrs; some to make them eminent as public benefactors. All this has been obtained by Christ; and one should not complain that another has more distinguished endowments than he has. Rom 12:3; Jn 1:16.

8 Wherefore he saith,
When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Wherefore he saith. The word "he" is not in the original; and it may mean "the Scripture saith," or "God saith." The point of the argument here is, that Christ, when he ascended to heaven, obtained certain gifts for men, and that those gifts are bestowed

upon his people in accordance with this. To prove that, he adduces this passage from Ps 68:18. Much perplexity has been felt in regard to the principle on which Paul quotes this Psalm, and applies it to the ascension of the Redeemer. The Psalm seems to have been composed on the occasion of removing the ark of the covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion, 2Sam 6:1, seq. It is a song of triumph, celebrating the victories of, JEHOVAH, and particularly the victories which had been achieved when the ark was at the head of the army. It appears to have no relation to the Messiah; nor would it probably occur to any one, on reading it, that it referred to his ascension, unless it had been so quoted by the apostle. Great difficulty has been felt, therefore, in determining on what principle Paul applied it to the ascension of the Redeemer. Some have supposed that the Psalm had a primary reference to the Messiah; some that it referred to him in only a secondary sense; some that it is applied to him by way of "accommodation;" and some that he merely uses the words as adapted to express him idea, as a man adopts words which are familiar to him, and which will express his thoughts, though not meaning to say that the words had any such reference originally. Storr supposes that the words were used by the Ephesian Christians in their hymns, and that Paul quoted them as containing a sentiment which was admitted among them. This is possible; but it is mere conjecture. It has been also supposed that the tabernacle was a type of Christ; and that the whole Psalm, therefore, having original reference to the tabernacle, might be applied to Christ as the antitype. But this both conjectural and fanciful. On the various modes adopted to account for the difficulty, the reader may consult Rosenmuller, in loc. To me it seems plain that the Psalm had original reference to the bringing up the ark to Mount Zion, and is a triumphal song. In the song or psalm, the poet shows why God was to be praised--on account of his greatness, and his benignity to men, Eph 4:1-6. He then recounts the doings of God in former times--particularly his conducting his people through the wilderness, and the fact that his enemies were discomfited before him, Eph 4:7-12. All this refers to the God, the symbols of whose presence were on the tabernacle, and accompanying the ark. He then speaks of the various fortunes that had befallen the ark of the covenant. It had lain among the pots,

Eph 4:13, yet it had formerly been white as snow when God scattered kings by it, Eph 4:14. He then speaks of the hill of God--the Mount Zion to which the ark was about to be removed, and says that it is an "high hill"--" high as the hills of Bashan," the hill where God desired to dwell for ever, Eph 4:16. God is then introduced as ascending that hill, encompassed with thousands of angels, as in Mount Sinai; and the poet says that, in doing it, he had triumphed over his enemies, and had led captivity captive, Eph 4:18. The fact that the ark of God thus ascended the hill of Zion, the place of rest; that it was to remain there as its permanent abode, no more to be carried about at the head of armies, was the proof of its triumph. It had made everything captive; it had subdued every foe; and its ascent there would be the means of obtaining invaluable gifts for men. Mercy and truth would go forth from that mountain; and the true religion would spread abroad, even to the rebellious, as the results of the triumph of God, whose symbol was over the tabernacle and the ark. The placing the ark there was the proof of permanent victory, and would be connected with most important benefits to men. The "ascending on high," therefore, in the Psalm, refers, as it seems to me, to the ascent of the symbol of the Divine Presence accompanying the ark on Mount Zion, or to the placing it "on high" above all its foes. The remainder of the Psalm corresponds with this view. This ascent of the ark on Mount Zion; this evidence of its triumph over all the foes of God; this permanent residence of the ark there; and this fact that its being established there would be followed with the bestowment of invaluable gifts to men, might be regarded as a BEAUTIFUL EMBLEM Of the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven. There were strong points of resemblance. He also ascended on high. His ascent was the proof of victory over his foes. He went there for a permanent abode. And his ascension was connected with the bestowment of important blessings to men. It is as such emblematic language, I suppose, that the apostle makes the quotation. It did not originally refer to this; but the events were so similar in many points that the one would suggest the other, and the same language would describe both. It was language familiar to the apostle; language that would aptly express his thoughts, and language that was not improbably applied to the ascension of the Redeemer by Christians at that time. The

phrase, therefore, "he saith"--λεγει-or "it saith," or "the Scripture saith," means, "it is said;" or, "this language will properly express the fact under consideration, to wit, that there is grace given to each one of us, or that the means are furnished by the Redeemer for us to lead holy lives." When he ascended up on high. To heaven. The Psalm is, "Thou hast ascended on high." Comp. Eph 1:20,21. He led captivity captive. The meaning of this in the Psalm is, that he triumphed over his foes. The margin is, "a multitude of captives." But this, I think, is not quite the idea. It is language derived from a conqueror, who not only makes captives, but who makes captives of those who were then prisoners, and who conducts them as a part of his triumphal procession. He not only subdues his enemy, but he leads his captives in triumph. The allusion is to the public triumphs of conquerors, especially as celebrated among the Romans, in which captives were led in chains, (Tacitus, Ann. xii. 38,) and to the custom in such triumphs of distributing presents among the soldiers. Comp. also Jud 5:30, where it appears that this was also an early custom in other nations. Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. When Christ ascended to heaven, he triumphed over all his foes. It was a complete victory over the malice of the great enemy of God, and over those who had sought his life. But he did more. He rescued those who were the captives of Satan, and led them in triumph. Man was held by Satan as a prisoner. His chains were around him. Christ rescued the captive prisoner, and designed to make him a part of his triumphal procession into heaven, that thus the victory might be complete--triumphing not only over the great foe himself, but swelling his procession with the attending hosts of those who had been the captives of Satan, now rescued and redeemed.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

Into the lower parts of the earth. To the lowest state of humiliation. This seems to be the fair meaning of the words. Heaven stands opposed to earth. One is above; the other is beneath. From the one, Christ descended to the other; and he came not only to the earth, but he stooped to the most humble condition of humanity here. See Php 2:6-8. Comp. Isa 44:23. Some have understood this of the grave; others of the region of departed spirits; but these

interpretations do not seem to be necessary. It is the earth itself that stands in contrast with the heavens; and the idea is, that the Redeemer descended from his lofty eminence in heaven, and became a man of humble rank and condition. Comp. Ps 139:15.

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Now from the apostle's scope and design in this argument, we learn, That though diversity of gifts in the church, and divers measures of grace in and among the members thereof, are too often a sad occasion of division and strife, through the prevalency of envy and pride, and other dividing lusts; yet this great variety and diversity of gifts and graces, rightly considered, would be found to be one of the strongest ties and bonds of union, seeing we all stand in mutual need of the gifts and graces of each other.

It is very evident, that our apostle's scope here is, to urge and enforce unity, from the diversity of gifts and graces which are amongst the members of the church; God forbid then that they should occasion envy and animosities, strife and contention, rents and divisions.

Our apostle's next argument for unity, is in the 11th and 12th verses, where he proves, that as the unity and edification of the church was the design of Christ in dispensing divers gifts and graces amongst the members of the church, so was it likewise his aim and end in instituting such variety of offices and officers in his church: for this end it was that he gave to his church by qualification and mission,

13 till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 that we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

St. Paul, in these words, declares one special end for which the ministry of the word was instituted and appointed, namely, to preserve from error and seduction, to prevent instability of mind, and unsettledness of judgment, and to confirm persons in fundamental truths, that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, &c.

Observe here, 1. The name which St. Paul gives to unstable persons and unsettled professors: he calls them children, not in regard of age, but in respect of knowledge and understanding: children, is a word that denotes imperfection and weakness, instability and ungroundedness in knowledge.

Observe, 2. How the unsteadiness of these professors is expressed by a double metaphor; the former is drawn from a wave of the sea, they are tossed to and fro; the latter is drawn from a light cloud hovering in the air, carried about from place to place: neither wave nor cloud have any constancy, but are both moving if the least wind be stirring.

Observe, 3. The cause of this instability; every wind of doctrine; professors that have no solid principles every wind of doctrine has power over them to drive them to and fro, every teacher can cast them into what mould he pleases, and blow them, like grasses, into this or that shape, at the pleasure of his breath. But why wind of doctrine? Because there is no solidity in it, but being wind in the preacher, it breeds but wind in the hearer, because of its variety and novelty, and because of its prevalency over unstaid men. How suddenly sometimes is a family, a town, yea, a whole country, leavened with a particular error!

Observe, 4. The characters of those imposters and seducers that do thus unsettle and unhinge men, they use sleight; a metaphor taken from gamesters, who with art and sleight of hand can cog the dice, and win the game. Seducers cheat with false doctrines, as gamesters do with false dice. Cunning craftiness; the word signifies the subtility and deep policy of the old serpent; implying that seducers are old and cunning gamesters, skillful to deceive: they

lie in wait to deceive; the word signifies an ambushment, or stratagem of war, implying that all seducers' sleight and craftiness is to this very end and purpose, that they may entrap and catch men within the ambush of their impostures.

From the whole learn, That seducers and false teachers are craftsmasters of sleight and subtilty, and stratagems of deceit; they have artifices, ways and methods, to take men unawares, and to make merchandise of the people: they wrest and rack the scriptures to make them speak what they please, not what the Holy Ghost intended.

If all this art fails, their last advice is, to recommend their doctrines upon some private pretended revelation and uncommon impulse of the Holy Spirit: by all which methods they lie in wait to deceive.

15 but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

Our apostle had set forth the excellent end of the ministry, in the foregoing verse, for furthering their stability and steadfastness in grace; here he declares the admirable fitness of it, for helping forward their proficiency and growth in grace. Speaking the truth in love: that is, cleaving to the truth of Christ's doctrine, and living in love with one another, you may grow up in Christ by making progress in all christian graces, being united to him as members to the head.

Here note, How the apostle draws a comparsion between the natural and mystical members, and the increase of both: as there must be a fellowship betwixt the natural head and members, so must there be a union betwixt Christ, the spiritual head, and believers, his mystical members; and as there is further required a mutual communion and fellowship of the members of the body within, and amongst themselves, in order to growth and increase, so must there be concord, love, and unity, amongst believers, if they expect to see grace growing in themselves, or in one another.

Are the members of the natural body severally distinct from one another, some principal, others ministerial; but all concurring to the service of the whole? So, in order to spiritual growth, must all the members of Christ's mystical body keep their rank and order, and act in their own sphere, with spiritual wisdom and humility; the eye not doing the work of the hand, nor the hand the work of the foot; but everyone in the calling wherein he is called, must there abide with God.

Again, is there a supply from head to members in the mystical body, and from one mystical member to another: one is apt to teach, another ready to comfort, a third able to convince, a fourth willing to exhort, a fifth to advise and counsel; and all these, and every one of these, contributing all they can to the welfare and growth of the whole. Happy is it both for the natural and mystical body, when the members of both are subservient to each other, and contribute all they can to the mutual growth and improvement of one another, and especially for the benefit and advantage of the whole.

16 from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by
that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working
in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the
edifying of itself in love.

The New Life in Christ

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk
not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
18 having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of
God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness
of their heart:

Having the understanding darkened. That is, because they were alienated from the true God, and particularly because of "the blindness of their hearts." The apostle does not say that this was a "judicial" darkening of the understanding; or that they might not have perceived the truth; or that they had no ability to understand

it. He speaks of a simple and well-known fact--a fact that is seen now as well as then--that the understanding becomes darkened by indulgence in sin. A man who is intemperate has no just views of the government of the appetites. A man who is unchaste has no perception of the loveliness of purity. A man who is avaricious or covetous has no just views of the beauty of benevolence. A man who indulges in low vices will weaken his mental powers, and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body, and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion. Nothing is more obvious than that indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers, and renders them unfit for high intellectual effort. This is seen all over the heathen world now-- in the stolid, stupid mind; the perverted moral sense; the incapacity for profound or protracted mental effort, as really as it was among the heathens to whom Paul preached. The missionary who goes among the heathen has almost to create an intellect as well as a conscience, before the gospel will make an impression. It is seen, too, in all the intellect of the bar, the senate, the pulpit, and the medical profession, that is ruined by intemperance, and in the intellect of multitudes of young men wasted by licentiousness and drunkenness. I know that under the influence of ambition and stimulating drinks the intellect may seem to put forth unnatural efforts, and to glow with an intensity nowhere else seen; but it soon burns out--and the wastes of such an intellect become soon like the hardened scoriae of the volcano, or the cinders of the over-heated furnace. Learn hence, that if a man wishes to be blessed with a clear understanding, he should be a good man; he who wishes a mind well balanced and clear, should fear and love God; and had Christianity done no other good on earth than to elevate the intellect of mankind, it would have been the richest blessing which has ever been vouchsafed to the race. It follows, too, that as man has debased his understanding by sin, it is needful to make an exertion to elevate it again; and hence a large part of the efforts to save men must consist in patient instruction. Hence the necessity of schools at missionary stations.

From the life of God. From a life like that of God, or a life of which he is the source and author. The meaning is, that they lived a life which was unlike God, or which he' could not approve. Of the truth of this, in regard to the heathen every- where, there can be no doubt. Rom 1:20; and Rom 1:21-23.

Through the ignorance that is in them. The ignorance of the true God, and of what constituted virtue. Rom 1:20; and Rom 1:21-23.

Because of the blindness of their heart. Marg., hardness. Hardness is a better word. It is a better translation of the Greek; and it better accords with the design of the apostle. Here the reason is stated why they lived and acted as they did, and why the understanding was blinded. It is not that God has enfeebled the human intellect by a judicial sentence on account of the sin of Adam, and made it incapable of perceiving the truth; it is not that there is any deficiency or incapacity of natural powers; it is not that the truths of religion are so exalted that man has no natural ability to understand them, for they may be as well understood as any other truths, 1Cor 2:14. The simple reason is, "the hardness of THE HEART." That is the solution given by an inspired apostle, and that is enough. A man who has a blind and hard heart sees no beauty in truth, and feels not its force, and is insensible to all its appeals. Learn then,

(1.) that men are to blame for the blindness of their understanding. Whatever proceeds from a wicked heart they are responsible for. But for mere inferiority of intellect they would not be to blame.

(2.) They are under obligation to repent and love God. If it was required of them to enlarge their intellects, or create additional faculties of mind, they could not be bound to do it. But where the whole thing required is to have a better heart, they may be held responsible.

(3.) The way to elevate the understandings of mankind is to purify the heart. The approach must be made through the affections. Let

the man feel right towards God, and they will soon think right; let the heart be pure, and the understanding will be clear.

19 who being past feeling have given themselves over unto
lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.
20 But ye have not so learned Christ;
21 if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the
truth is in Jesus:
22 that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,
which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Concerning the former conversation. The word conversation here means conduct--as it commonly does in the Bible. 2Cor 1:12. The meaning here is, "With respect to your former conduct or habits of life, lay aside all that pertained to a corrupt and fallen nature. You are not to lay everything aside that formerly pertained to you. Your dress, and manners, and modes of speech and intercourse, might have been in many respects correct. But everything that proceeded from sin; every habit, and custom, and mode of speech and of conduct that, was the result of depravity, is to be laid aside. The peculiar characteristics of an unconverted man you are to put off, and are to assume those which are the proper fruits of a renewed heart." The old man. Rom 6:6. Which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. The meaning is, (1.) that the unrenewed man is not under the direction of reason and sound sense, but is controlled by his passions and desires. The word lusts has a more limited signification with us than the original word. That word we now confine to one class of sensual appetites; but the original word denotes any passion or propermiry of the heart. It may include avarice, ambition, the love of pleasure or of gratification in any way; and the meaning here is, that the heart is by nature under the control of such desires. (2.) Those passions are deceitful. They lead us astray. They plunge us into ruin. All the passions and pleasures of the world are illusive. They promise more than they perform; and they leave their deluded votaries to disappointment, and to tears. Nothing is more "deceitful" than the promised pleasures of this world; and all who yield to them find at last that they "flatter but to betray."

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Christians; and we may learn from this,

(1.) That it is necessary that man should be renewed in order to be saved.

(2.) That it is proper to exhort Christians to be renewed. They need renovated strength every day.

(3.) That it is a matter of obligation to be renewed. Men are bound thus to be renovated. And

(4.) that they have sufficient natural ability to change from the condition of the old to that of the new man, or they could not be exhorted to it. In the spirit of your mind. In your temper; your heart; your nature.

And that ye put on the new man. The new man refers to the renovated nature. This is called, in other places, the "new creature, or the new creation," 2Cor 5:17, and refers to the condition after the heart is changed. The change is so great, that there is no impropriety in speaking of one who has experienced it as "a new man." He has new feelings, principles, and desires. He has laid aside his old principles and practices, and, in everything that pertains to moral character, he is new. His body is indeed the same; the intellectual structure of his mind the same; but there has been a change in his principles and feelings which make him, in all the great purposes of life, a new being. Learn, that regeneration is not a trifling change. It is not a mere change of relations, or of the outward condition. It is not merely being brought from the world into the church, and being baptized, though by the most holy hands; it is much more. None of these things would make proper the declaration, "he is a new man." Regeneration by the Spirit of God does.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.

For we are members one of another. We belong to one body--the church --which is the body of Christ. Rom 5:12. The idea is, that falsehood tends to loosen the bonds of brotherhood. In the human body harmony is observed. The eye never deceives the hand, nor the hand the foot, nor the heart the lungs. The whole move harmoniously as if the one could put the utmost confidence in the other--and falsehood in the church is as ruinous to its interests as it would be to the body if one member was perpetually practising a deception on another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Some understand these words only as a cautionary direction, and sense them thus: If ye be angry at any time, take heed that ye sin not, by exceeding due bounds; and if at any time it doth so, suppress it speedily, before the sun go down. This was a practice even amongst the heathen; before the sun went down, they would shake hands and embrace one another; to the shame of Christians, who gave place to the devil, according to the known proverb, Contubernalem habet diabolum, qui lectum petit iratus. "He that goes angry to bed, has the devil for his chamber-fellow;" yea, for his bed-fellow! nay, he lies not only in his bed, but in his bosom.
Others understand the words as a precept and command: Be angry, but take heed of sinful anger. Now the way to be angry and not sin, is to be angry at nothing but at sin; it is our duty to be angry when we see others depart from their duty. Meek Moses, who was cool enough in his own cause, was not so in God's; he has no zeal for God, that is not moved when he sees or hears God dishonoured.

Learn hence, 1. That anger being an affection implanted by God in the human nature, is not in itself evil or sinful, but in some cases a necessary duty.

Learn hence, 2. That there is an easy and ready passage from what is lawful to what is sinful, Be angry, and sin not; implying, that it is a very easy matter to sin in our anger, and no easy matter to be angry and not to sin.

Learn, 3. That it is very difficult, if not impossible, to avoid sin in our anger, if we let anger hang upon our spirits, and continue with us; anger may pass through the heart of a wise man, but rests in the bosom of fools: anger against sin must continue, but continuance in anger will be sinful.

To prevent the sin of immoderate anger, these rules will be useful:

1. Desire not to hear what others say of thee, lest you want patience to bear what you hear; many tear themselves with anger, when they hear themselves torn with slander; we had better be in the dark concerning our own wrongs, than by knowing of them wrong ourselves by passion or desire of revenge.

2. What you do hear said of you, interpret always in the most favourable sense; call it an infirmity, and distinguish between what is spoken and the intent of the speaker.

3. In and under all provocations, cast your eye upward, look up to God; and cast your eye inward, and see what you have deserved; though not at your neighbour's hand, yet at God's hand. Shimel gave David provocation to boil up his anger to the height of fury, 2Sam 16:5,but by eyeing God, how calm and meek was his spirit! Thus, be angry, and sin not.

27 neither give place to the devil.

Neither give place to the devil. This has respect probably to the exhortation in the former verse. "Do not yield to the suggestions and temptations of Satan, who would take every opportunity to persuade you to cherish unkind and angry feelings, and to keep up a spirit of resentment among brethren." Many of our feelings, when we suppose we are merely defending our rights, and securing what is our own, are produced by the temptations of the devil. The heart is deceitful; and seldom more deceitful in any case than when a man is attempting to vindicate himself from injuries done to his person and reputation. The devil is always busy when we are angry, and in some way, if possible, will lead us into sin; and the best way to avoid his wiles is to curb the temper, and restrain even sudden

anger. No man sins by restraining his anger; no man is certain that he will not who indulges it for a moment.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Working with his hands. Pursuing some honest employment. Paul was not ashamed to labour with "his own hands," 1Cor 4:12; and no man is dishonoured by labour. God made man for toil, Gen 2:15; and employment is essential to the happiness of the race. No man, who is able to support himself, has a right to depend on others. Rom 12:11. That he may have to give to him that needeth. Marg., distribute. Not merely that he may have the means of support, but that he may have it in his power to aid others. The reason and propriety of this is obvious. The human race is one great brotherhood. A considerable part cannot labour to support themselves. They are too old, or too young; or they are crippled or feeble, or laid on beds of sickness. If others do not divide with them the avails of their labours, they will perish. We are required to labour in order that we may have the privilege of contributing to their comfort. Learn from this verse,

(1.) that every Christian should have some calling, business, or profession, by which he may support himself. The Saviour was a carpenter; Paul a tentmaker; and no man is disgraced by being able to build a house, or to construct a tent.

(2.) Christianity promotes industry. It is rare that an idle man becomes a Christian; but if he does, religion makes him industrious just in proportion as it has influence over his mind. To talk of a lazy Christian is about the same as to talk of burning water or freezing fire.

(3.) Christians should have some useful and honest employment. They should work "that which is good." They should not pursue an employment which will necessarily injure others. No man has a right to place a nuisance under the window of his neighbour; nor has he any more right to pursue an employment that shall lead his neighbour into sin, or ruin him. An honest employment benefits

everybody. A good farmer is a benefit to his neighbourhood and country; and a good shoemaker, blacksmith, weaver, cabinet-maker, watchmaker, machinist, is a blessing to the community. He injures no one; he benefits all. How is it with the distiller, and the vender of alcoholic drinks? He benefits no one; he injures everybody. Every quart of intoxicating drink that is taken from his house does evil somewhere--evil, and only evil, and that continually. No one is made better, or richer; no one is made more moral or industrious; no one is helped on the way to heaven by it. Thousands are helped on the way to hell by it, who are already in the path; and thousands are induced to walk in the way to death who, but for that distillery, store, or tavern, might have walked in the way to heaven. Is this, then, "working that WHICH IS GOOD ?" Would Paul have done it? Would Jesus do it? Strange, that by a professing Christian it was ever done! See a striking instance of the way in which the Ephesian Christians acted when they were first converted, in Acts 19:19. Acts 19:19.

(4.) The main business of a Christian is not to make money, and to become rich. It is that he may have the means of benefiting others. Beyond what he needs for himself, his poor, and sick, and aged, and afflicted brother and friend has a claim on his earnings--and they should be liberally bestowed.

(5.) We should labour in order that we may have the means of doing good to others. It should be just as much a matter of plan and purpose to do this, as it is to labour in order to buy a goat, or to build a house, or to live comfortably, or to have the means of a decent burial. Yet how few are those who have any such end in view, or who pursue their daily toil definitely, that they may have something to give away. The world will be soon converted when all Christians make that the purpose Rom 12:11.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Let no corrupt communication proceed. 1Cor 15:33. The word rendered "corrupt" σαπρος means bad, decayed, rotten, and is applied to putrid vegetables or animal substances. Then it is applied

to a tree is of a useless character, that produces no good fruit, Mt 7:17. Then it is used in a moral sense, as our word "corrupt" is, to denote that which is depraved, evil, contaminating, and may denote here anything that is obscene, offensive, or that tends to corrupt others. The importance of this admonition will be appreciated when it is remembered, (1.) that such obscene and filthy conversation prevailed everywhere, and does still among the heathen. So general is this, that at almost every missionary station it has been found that the common conversation is so corrupt and defiling, that missionaries have felt it necessary to send their children home to be educated, in order to secure them from the contaminating influence of those around them. (2.) Those who have had the misfortune to be familiar with the common conversation of the lower classes in any community, and especially with the conversation of young men, will see the importance of this admonition. Scarcely anything can be conceived more corrupt or corrupting than that which often prevails among young men--and even young men in the academies and colleges of this land. (3.) Its importance will be seen from the influence of such corrupt communications. "The passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it!" the expression of such a thought deepens the pollution on the soul, and corrupts others. It is like retaining an offensive carcase above ground, to pollute the air, and to diffuse pestilence and death, which should at once be buried out of sight. A Christian should be pure in his conversation. His Master was pure. His God is pure. The heaven to which he goes is pure. The religion which he professes is pure. NEVER should he indulge himself in an obscene allusion; never should retail anecdotes of all obscene character, or smile when they are retailed by others. Never should he indulge in a jest having a double meaning; never should he listen to a song of this character. If those with whom he associates have not sufficient respect for themselves and him to abstain from such corrupt and corrupting allusions, he should at once leave them.

30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God. This is addressed to Christians, and it proves that it is possible for them to grieve the Holy Spirit. The word here used--λυπειτε, means, properly, to afflict

with sorrow; to make sad or sorrowful. It is rendered, to make sorry, or sorrowful, Mt 14:9, 17:23, 18:31, 19:22, 26:22,37 Mk 14:19, Jn 16:20, 2Cor 2:2, 6:10, 7:8,9,11, 1Thes 4:13. It is rendered grieved, Mk 10:22, Jn 21:17, Rom 14:15, 2Cor 2:4,5, Eph 4:30; and once, "in heaviness," 1Pet 1:6. The verb does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The common meaning is, to treat others so as to cause grief. We are not to suppose that the Holy Spirit literally endures grief, or pain, at the conduct of men. The language is such as is fitted to describe what men endure, and is applied to him to denote that kind of conduct which is fitted to cause grief; and the meaning here is, "do not pursue such a course as is fitted, in its own nature, to pain the benevolent heart of a holy being. Do not act towards the Holy Spirit in a manner which would produce pain in the bosom of a friend who loves you. There is a course of conduct which will drive that Spirit from the mind as if he were grieved and pained--as a course of ingratitude and sin would pain the heart of an earthly friend, and cause him to leave you." If asked what that conduct is, we may reply,

(1.) Open and gross sins. They are particularly referred to here; and the meaning of Paul is, that theft, falsehood, anger, and kindred vices, would grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause him to depart.

(2.) Anger, in all its forms. Nothing is more fitted to drive away all serious and tender impressions from the mind than the indulgence of anger.

(3.) Licentious thoughts and desires. The Spirit of God is pure, and he dwells not in a soul that is filled with corrupt imaginings.

(4.) Ingratitude. We feel ingratitude more than almost anything else; and why should we suppose that the Holy Spirit would not feel it also?

(5.) Neglect. The Spirit of God is grieved by that. Often he prompts us to pray; he disposes the mind to seriousness, to the perusal of the Bible, to tenderness and penitence. We neglect those favoured

moments of our piety, and lose those happy seasons for becoming like God.

(6.) Resistance. Christians often resist the Holy Ghost. He would lead them to be dead to the world; yet they drive on their plans of gain. He would teach them the folly of fashion and vanity; yet they deck themselves in the gayest apparel. He would keep them from the splendid party, the theatre, and the ballroom; yet they go there. All that is needful for a Christian to do, in order to be eminent in piety, is to yield to the gentle influences which would draw him to prayer and to heaven.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil
speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:
32 and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one
another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians-5

Walk as Children of Light

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Verse 1. Be ye therefore followers of God. Gr., "Be imitators--μιμηται--of God." The idea is not that they were to be the friends of God, or numbered among his followers, but that they were to imitate him in the particular thing under consideration. The word "therefore"--ουν--connects this with the previous chapter, where he had been exhorting them to kindness, and to a spirit of forgiveness, and he here entreats them to imitate God, who was always kind and ready to forgive. Comp. Mt 5:44-47. As he forgives us, (Eph 4:32) we should be ready to forgive others; as he has borne with our faults, we should bear with theirs; as he is ever ready to hear our cry when we ask for mercy, we should be ready to hear others when they desire to be forgiven; and as he is never weary with doing us good, we should never be weary in benefiting them. As dear children. The meaning is, "as those children which are beloved follow the example of a father, so we, who are beloved of God, should follow his example." What a simple rule this is! And how much contention and strife would be avoided if it were followed! If every Christian who

is angry, unforgiving, and unkind, would just ask himself the question, "How does God treat me?" it would save all the trouble and heart-burning which ever exists in the church.

2 and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor.

And walk in love. That is, let your lives be characterized by love; let that be evinced in all your deportment and conversation. Jn 13:34. As Christ also hath loved us. We are to evince the same love for one another which he has done for us. He showed his love by giving himself to die for us, and we should evince similar love to one another, 1Jn 3:16. And hath given himself for us. This is evidently added by the apostle to show what he meant by saying that Christ loved us, and what we ought to do to evince our love for each other. The strength of his love was so great that he was willing to give himself up to death on our account; our love for our brethren should be such that we would be willing to do the same thing for them, 1Jn 3:16. An offering. The word here used--προσφορα̃ν--means, properly, that which is offered to God--in any way, or whatever it may be. It is, however, in the Scriptures, commonly used to denote an offering without blood--a thank-offering--and thus is distinguished from a sacrifice, or a bloody oblation. The word occurs only in Acts 21:26, 24:17, Rom 15:16, Eph 5:2, Heb 10:5,8,10,14,18. It means here that he regarded himself as an offering to God. And a sacrifice, θυσιαν. Christ is here expressly called a Sacrifice--the usual word in the Scriptures to denote a proper sacrifice. A sacrifice was an offering made to God by killing an animal and burning it on an altar, designed to make atonement for sin. It always implied the killing of the animal as an acknowledgment of the sinner that he deserved to die. It was the giving up of life, which was supposed to reside in the blood, (Rom 3:25,) and hence it was necessary that blood should be shed. Christ was such a sacrifice; and his love was shown in his being willing that his blood should be shed to save men. For a sweet-smelling savour. 2Cor 2:15, where the word savour is explained. The meaning here is, that the offering which Christ made of himself to God was like the grateful and pleasant smell of incense, that is, it was acceptable to him. It was an exhibition of

benevolence with which he was pleased, and it gave him the opportunity of evincing his own benevolence in the salvation of men. The meaning of this in the connexion here is, that the offering which Christ made was one of love. So, says Paul, do you love one another. Christ sacrificed himself by love, and that sacrifice was acceptable to God. So do you show love one to another. Sacrifice everything which opposes it, and it will be acceptable to God. He will approve all which is designed to promote love, as he approved the sacrifice which was made, under the influence of love, by his Son.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

But fornication. A common vice among the heathen then as it is now, and one into which they were in special danger of falling. Rom 1:29; 1Cor 6:18. And all uncleanness. Impurity of life. Rom 1:24. Comp. Rom 6:9, Gall 5:19, Eph 4:19, Col 3:5. Or covetousness. The connexion in which this word is found is remarkable. It is associated with the lowest and most debasing vices, and this, as well as those vices, was not once to be named among them. What was Paul's estimate, then, of covetousness? He considered it as an odious and abominable vice; a vice to be regarded in the same light as the most gross sin, and as wholly to be abhorred by all who bore the Christian name. See Eph 5:5. The covetous man, according to Paul, is to be ranked with the sensual, and with idolaters, (Eph 5:5,) and with those who are entirely excluded from the kingdom of God. Is this the estimate in which the vice is held now? Is it the view which professing Christians take of it? Do we not feel that there is a great difference between a covetous man and a man of impure and licentious life? Why is this? Because

(1.) it is so common;

(2.) because it is found among those who make pretensions to refinement and even religion;

(3.) because it is not so easy to define what is covetousness, as it is to define impurity of life; and

(4.) because the public conscience is seared, and the mind blinded to the low and groveling character of the sin. Yet is not the view of Paul the right view? Who is a covetous man? A man who, in the pursuit of gold, neglects his soul, his intellect, and his heart. A man who, in this insatiable pursuit, is regardless of justice, truth, charity, faith, prayer, peace, comfort, usefulness, conscience; and who shall say that there is any vice more debasing or degrading than this? The time may come, therefore, when the covetous man will be regarded as deserving the same rank in the public estimation with the most vicious, and when TO COVET will be considered as much opposed to the spirit of the gospel as any of the vices here named. When that time shall come, the world's conversion will probably be not a distant event. Let it not be once named among you. That is, let it not exist; let there be no occasion for mentioning such a thing among you; let it be wholly unknown. This cannot mean that it is wrong to mention these vices for the purpose of rebuking them, or cautioning those in danger of committing them--for Paul himself in this manner mentions them here, and frequently elsewhere--but that they should not exist among them.

4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

For this ye know. Be assured of this. The object here is, to deter from indulgence in those vices by the solemn assurance that no one who committed them could possibly be saved. Nor unclean person. No one of corrupt and licentious life can be saved. See Rev 22:15. Nor covetous man, who is an idolater. That is, he bestows on money the affections due to God. See Col 3:5. To worship money is as real idolatry as to worship a block of stone. If this be so, what an idolatrous world is this! How many idolaters are there in professedly Christian lands! How many, it is to be feared, in the church itself! And since every covetous man is certainly to be excluded from the kingdom of God, how anxious should we be to examine our hearts, and to know whether this sin may not lie at our door! Hath any inheritance, etc. Such an one shall never enter

heaven. This settles the inquiry about the final destiny of a large portion of the world; and this solemn sentence our conscience and all our views of heaven approve. Let us learn hence,

(1.) that heaven will be pure.

(2.) That it will be a desirable place--for who would wish to live always with the licentious and the impure?

(3.) It is right to reprove these vices, and to preach against them. Shall we not be allowed to preach against those sins which will certainly exclude men from heaven?

(4.) A large part of the world is exposed to the wrath of God. What numbers are covetous! What multitudes are licentious! In how many places is licentiousness openly and unblushingly practised! In how many more places in secret! And in how many more is the heart polluted, while the external conduct is moral; the soul corrupt, while the individual moves in respectable society!

(5.) What a world of shame will hell be! How dishonourable and disgraceful to be damned for ever, and to linger on in eternal fires, because the man was TOO POLLUTED to be admitted into pure society! Here, perhaps, he moved in fashionable life, and was rich, and honoured, and flattered; there he will be sent down to hell because his whole soul was corrupt, and because God would not suffer heaven to be contaminated by his presence!

(6.) What a doom awaits the covetous man! He, like the sensualist, is to be excluded from the kingdom of God. And what is to be his doom? Will he have a place apart from the common damned--a golden palace and a bed of down in hell? No. It will be no small part of his aggravation that he will be doomed to spend an eternity with those in comparison with whom on earth, perhaps, he thought himself to be pure as an angel of light.

(7.) With this multitude of the licentious mad the covetous, will sink to hell all who are not renewed and sanctified. What a prospect

for the gay, the fashionable, the moral, the amiable, and the lovely, who have no religion! For all the impenitent and the unbelieving, there is but one home in eternity. Hell is less terrible from its penal fires and its smoke of torment, than from its being made up of the profane, the sensual, and the vile; and its supremest horrors arise from its being the place where shall be gathered all the corrupt and unholy dwellers in a fallen world; all who are so impure that they cannot be admitted into heaven. Why, then, will the refined, the moral, and the amiable not be persuaded to seek the society of a pure heaven? to be prepared for the world where holy beings dwell?

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Let no man deceive you. Let no one, by artful plans, persuade you that there will be no danger from practising these vices. We may suppose that they would be under strong temptations to mingle in the gay and festive scenes where these vices were not frowned on, or where they were practised; or that they might be tempted to commit them by some of the plausible arguments which were then used for theft indulgence. Many of their friends may have been in these circles; and they would endeavour to convince them that such were the customs which had been long practised, and that there could be no harm still in theft indulgence. Not a few philosophers endeavoured, as is well known, to defend some of these practices, and even practised them themselves. Rom 1:1 and following. It required, therefore, all the authority of an apostle to convince them, that however plausible were the arguments in defence of them, they certainly exposed those who practised them to the wrath of God.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

8 For ye were sometime darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light;

Here the Ephesians are put in mind of the darkness and blindness of their heathen state, before the light of the gospel came among them; they were not only dark, very much in the dark, but darkness itself: he next acquaints them with their happy condition, by entertaining of the gospel of Christ; they therefore became light in the Lord, they were savingly enlightened by the word and Spirit of

God; and accordingly he urges them to walk answerably to their Christian profession, Walk as children of the light.

Note here, 1. That the state which every soul is in by nature, and before conversion, is a state of spiritual darkness; like men in the dark, they go they know not whither, they do they know not what, they stumble and fall they know not how and when.

Note, 2. That all those whom God calls effectually out of the darkness and ignorance of their natural and unregenerate state, he doth enlighten them by his word and Holy Spirit.

Note, 3. That such as are so called and enlightened, ought to walk suitably to their privilege, and answerably to their high and honourable profession. Walk as children of light; that is, holy, humbly, cheerfully, thankfully, before God; exemplarily and unblamably before the world.

9 (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

The unfruitful works. The deeds of darkness that produce no benefit to the body or the soul. The word unfruitful is here used in contrast with the "fruit of the Spirit," Eph 5:9. But rather reprove them. By your life, your conversation, and all your influence. This is the business of Christians. Their lives should be a standing rebuke of a sinful world, and they should be ever ready to express their disapprobation of its wickedness in every form.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

For it is a shame even to speak, etc. Comp. Rom 1:24; also Rom 1:25-32. It is still a shame to speak of the practices of the heathen. Missionaries tell us that they cannot describe the images on the car of Juggernaut, or tell us what is done in the idol temples. All over the world the same thing is true. The cheek of modesty and virtue would be suffused with shame at the very mention of what is done by the worshippers of idols; and the same is true of what is done

by multitudes in Christian lands, who are not worshippers of idols. Their deeds cannot be described in the circles of the refined and the delicate; they cannot be told in the presence of mothers and sisters. Is there not emphasis here in the words, "even to SPEAK of those things?" If the apostle would not allow, them to name those things, or to speak of them, is it wise or safe for Christians now to be familiar with the accounts of those practices of pollution, and for ministers to portray them in the pulpit, and for the friends of "moral reform" to describe them before the world? The very naming of those abominations often produces improper associations in the mind; the description creates polluting images before the imagination; the exhibition of pictures, even for the purpose of condemning them, defiles the soul. There are some vices which, from the corruptions of the human heart, cannot be safely described; and it is to be feared that, under the plea of faithfulness, many have done evil by exciting improper feelings, where they should only have alluded to the crime, and then spoken in thunder. Paul did not describe these vices, he denounced them; he did not dwell upon them long enough for the imagination to find employment, and to corrupt the soul. He mentioned the vice, and then he mentioned the wrath of God; he alluded to the sin, and then he spoke of the exclusion from heaven. Comp. 1Cor 6:18.

13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. "Anything which will show the real form and nature of an object deserves to be called light." Of the truth of this no one can doubt. The meaning in this connexion is, that that system which discloses the true nature of what is done by the heathen deserves to be considered as light; and that the gospel, which does this, should be regarded as a system of light and truth. It discloses the odiousness and vileness, and it stands thus in strong contrast with all the false and abominable systems which have upheld or produced those vices.

Because admonitions and reproof make the works of darkness manifest to the sinner's conscience, set sin forth in its black and ugly colours.

A discovery of sin in its vileness, odiousness, and ugliness, is necessary to a sinner's conviction of it, and conversion from it; and God doth not only bless the ministry of the word from the pulpit, but sometimes by a word of reproof from the mouth of a private christian, and the light of his holy example for this great end. A reproof piously and prudently given to open sinners, by private christians, shall not miss of its end; it will certainly have its effect, either in the sinner's conversion and salvation, or in his obduration and condemnation: as all things reprovable are made manifest by light, so a prudent reproof and pious conversation put sin to shame, if not to silence.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Wherefore he saith. Marg., or it. διολεγει. The meaning may be, either that the Lord says, or the Scripture. Much difficulty has been experienced in endeavouring to ascertain where this is said. It is agreed on all hands that it is not found, in so many words, in the Old Testament. Some have supposed that the allusion is to Isa 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live--awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs," etc. But the objections to this are obvious and conclusive.

(1.) This is not a quotation of that place, nor has it a resemblance to it, except in the word" awake."

(2.) The passage in Isaiah refers to a different matter, and has a different sense altogether. Isa 26:19. To make it refer to those to whom the gospel comes is most forced and unnatural. Others have supposed that the reference is to Isa 60:1-3, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come," etc. But the objection to this is not less decisive.

(1.) It is not a quotation of that passage, and the resemblance is very remote, if it can be seen at all.

(2.) That is addressed to the church, calling on her to let her light shine; this, to awake and arise from the dead, with the assurance that Christ would give them light. The exhortation here is to

Christians, to avoid the vices of the heathen around them; the exhortation in Isaiah is to the church, to rejoice and exult in view of the fact that the day of triumph had come, and that the heathen were to be converted, and to come in multitudes and devote themselves to God. In the design of the two passages there is no resemblance. Some have supposed that the words are taken from some book among the Hebrews which is now lost. Epiphanius supposed that it was a quotation from a prophecy of Elijah; Syncellus and Euthalius, from some writing of Jeremiah; Hippolytus, from the writing of some now unknown prophet. Jerome supposed it was taken from some apocryphal writings. Grotius supposes that it refers to the word light Eph 5:13, and that the sense is, "That light says; that is, that a man who is pervaded by that light, let him so say to another." Heumann, and after him Storr, Michaelis, and Jenning, (Jewish Ant. ii. 252,) suppose that the reference is to a song or hymn that was sung by the early Christians, beginning in this manner, and that the meaning is, "Wherefore, as it is said in the hymns which we sing,

' Awake, thou that sleepest; Arise from the dead; Christ shall give thee light.'"

Others have supposed that there is an allusion to a sentiment which prevailed among the Jews, respecting the significancy of blowing the trumpet on the first day of the month, or the feast of the new moon. Maimonides conjectures that that call of the trumpet, especially in the month Tisri, in which the great day of atonement occurred, was designed to signify a special call to repentance; meaning, "You who sleep, arouse from your slumbers; search and try yourselves; think on your Creator; repent, and attend to the salvation of the soul." Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. But all this is evidently conjecture. I see no evidence that Paul meant to make a quotation at all. Why may we not suppose that he speaks as an inspired man, and that he means to say, simply, that God now gives this command, or that God now speaks in this way? The sense then would be, "Be separate from sinners. Come out from among the heathen. Do not mingle with their abominations; do not name them. You are the children of light; and God says to

you, Awake from false security, rouse from the death of sin, and Christ shall enlighten you." Whatever be the origin of the sentiment in this verse, it is worthy of inspiration, and accords with all that is elsewhere said in the Scriptures. Awake thou that sleepest. Arouse from a state of slumber and false security. Sleep and death are striking representations of the state in which men are by nature. In sleep we are, though living, insensible to any danger that may be near; we are unconscious of what may be going on around us; we hear not the voice of our friends; we see not the beauty of the grove or the landscape; we are forgetful of our real character and condition. So with the sinner. It is as if his faculties were locked in a deep slumber. He hears not when God calls; he has no sense of danger; he is insensible to the beauties and glories of the heavenly world; he is forgetful of his true character and condition. To see all this, he must be first awakened; and hence this solemn command is addressed to man. He must rouse from this condition, or he cannot be saved. But can he awaken himself? Is it not the work of God to awaken a sinner? Can he rouse himself to a sense of his condition and danger? How do we do in other things? The man that is sleeping on the verge of a dangerous precipice we would approach, and say, "Awake, you are in danger." The child that is sleeping quietly in its bed, while the flames are bursting into the room, we would rouse, and say, "Awake, or you will perish." Why not use the same language to the sinner slumbering on the verge of ruin, in a deep sleep, while the flames of wrath are kindling around him? We have no difficulty in calling on sleepers elsewhere to awake when in danger; how can we have any difficulty when speaking to the sinner? And arise from the dead. The state of the sinner is often compared to death. Eph 2:1. Men are by nature dead in sins; yet they must rouse from this condition, or they will perish. How singular, it may be said, to call upon the dead to rise! How could they raise themselves up? Yet God speaks thus to men, and commands them to rise from the death of sin. Learn then,

(1.) that men are not dead in sin in any such sense that they are not moral agents, or responsible.

(2.) That they are not dead in any such sense that they have no power of any kind.

(3.) That it is right to call on sinners to arouse from their condition, and live.

(4.) That they must put forth their efforts as if they were to begin the work themselves, without waiting for God to do it for them. They are to awake; they are to arise. It is not God who is to awake; it is not Christ who is to arise. It is the sinner who is to awake from his slumber, and arise from the state of death; nor is he to wait for God to do the work for him. And Christ shall give thee light. Christ is the light of the world. Jn 1:4, Jn 1:9; Jn 8:12; Heb 1:3. The idea here is, that if they will use all the powers with which God has endowed them, and arouse from their spiritual slumber, and make an appropriate effort for salvation, then they may expect that Christ will shine upon them, and bless them in their efforts. This is just the promise that we need, and it is all that we need. All that man can ask is, that if he will make efforts to be saved, God will bless those efforts, so that they shah not be in vain. Faculties of mind have been given us to be employed in securing our salvation; and if we will employ them as they were intended to be employed, we may look for the Divine aid; if not, we cannot expect it. "God helps those who help themselves ;" and they who will make no effort for their salvation must perish, as they who will make no effort to provide food must starve. This command was indeed addressed at first to Christians; but it involves a principle which is applicable to all. Indeed, the language here is rather descriptive of the condition of impenitent sinners than of Christians. In a far more important sense they are "asleep," and are "dead;" and with the more earnestness, therefore, should they be entreated to awake, and to rise from the dead, that Christ may give them light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Redeeming the time. The word here rendered redeeming, means, to purchase; to buy up from the possession or power of any one; and then to redeem, to set free--as from service or bondage. Gall 3:13. Here it means, to rescue or recover our time from waste; to

improve it for great and important purposes. Because the days are evil. Because the times in which you live are evil. There are many allurements and temptations that would lead you away from the proper improvement of time, and that would draw you into sin. Such were those that would tempt them to go to places of sinful indulgence and revelry, where their time would be wasted, and worse than wasted. As these temptations abounded, they ought therefore to be more especially on their guard against a sinful and unprofitable waste of time. This exhortation may be addressed to all, and is applicable to all periods. The sentiment is, that we ought to be solicitous to improve our time to some useful purpose, because there are, in an evil world, so many temptations to waste it. Time is given us for most valuable purposes. There are things enough to be done to occupy it all, and no one need have it hang heavy on his hands. He that has a soul to be saved from eternal death need not have one idle moment. He that has a heaven to win has enough to do to occupy all his time. Man has just enough given him to accomplish all the purposes which God designs, and God has not given him more than enough. They redeem their time who employ it

(1.) in gaining useful knowledge;

(2.) in doing good to others;

(3.) in employing it for the purpose of an honest livelihood for themselves and families;

(4.) in prayer and self-examination, to make the heart better;

(5.) in seeking salvation, and in endeavouring to do the will of God. They are to redeem time from all that would waste and destroy it--like recovering marshes and fens to make them rich meadows and vineyards. There is time enough wasted by each sinner to secure the salvation of the soul; time enough wasted to do all that is needful to be done to spread religion around the world, and to save the race. We should still endeavour to redeem our time for the same reasons which are suggested by the apostle--because the days are

evil. There are evil influences abroad; allurements and vices that would waste time, and from which we should endeavour to rescue it. There are evil influences tending to waste time

(1.) in the allurements to pleasure and amusement in every place, and especially in cities;

(2.) in the temptations to novel-reading, consuming the precious hours of probation to no valuable purpose;

(3.) in the temptations of ambition, most of the time spent for which is wholly thrown away, for few gain the prize, and when gained, it is all a bauble, not worth the effort;

(4.) in dissipation--for who can estimate the amount of valuable tune that is worse than thrown away in the places of revelry and dissipation?

(5.) in wild and visionary plans--temptations to which abound in all lands, and pre-eminently in our own;

(6.) and in luxurious indulgence--in dressing, and eating, and drinking.

A most important and necessary duty exhorted to; namely, to redeem the time. This cannot be done in a natural sense: time, once past, is irrecoverably lost, we can no more recall it; but in a moral sense, time may be said to be redeemed, when our diligence to improve it is redoubled, when we do much work in a little time.
To redeem time, supposes and implies a right knowledge of the use and end of time, and high valuation of the worth and excellency of time, and resolution to rescue it out of the hands of those that would devour it: idleness, excess of sleep, inordinate adorning of the body, immoderate recreations, vain company, an excess of worldly business, all these are robbers of our time, and time must be rescued out of their hands.

Quest. Who are the persons more especially concerned to redeem time?

Ans. All those that are young: such as have idly wasted a great part of their time; all that are ignorant and graceless; all that are weak and aged, and have but a few sands in their glass; all those that are recovered from sickness; and all such as, through poverty, restraint or service, are scanted of their time, should wisely redeem it, and industriously improve it, for God and their souls: because upon this moment depends eternity, and according to our present choice will be our eternal lot.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is.*

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Verse 18. And be not drunk with wine. A danger to which they were exposed, and a vice to which those around them were much addicted. Lk 21:34. It is not improbable that in this verse there is an allusion to the orgies of Bacchus, or to the festivals celebrated in honour of that heathen god. He was "the god of wine," and, during those festivals, men and women regarded it as an acceptable act of worship to become intoxicated, and with wild songs and cries to run through streets, and fields, and vineyards. To these things the apostle opposes psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, as much more appropriate modes of devotion, and would have the Christian worship stand out in strong contrast with the wild and dissolute habits of the heathen. Plato says, that while those abominable ceremonies in the worship of Bacchus continued, it was difficult to find in all Attica a single sober man. Rosenmuller, Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. On the subject of wine, and the wines used by the ancients, Jn 2:10, Jn 2:11. We may learn from this verse,

19 speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Giving thanks always. This is probably designed to be connected with the preceding verse, and to denote that the proper subject of psalms and hymns is thanksgiving and praise. This is indeed always the main design, and should be so regarded; and this part of worship should be so conducted as to keep up in the heart a lively sense of the mercy and goodness of God. For all things. υπερπαντων for all things, or all persons. Dr. Barrow supposes that the meaning here is, that they were to give thanks for all persons, and to regard themselves as under obligations to give thanks for the mercies bestowed upon the human race, in accordance with the idea expressed in the Liturgy of the Episcopal Church, "We, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men." This idea is beautiful; and it accords with the requirements of the Scriptures elsewhere. 1Timm 2:1, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." Such is the duty of Christians; and I see no departure from the fair meaning of the words here, in supposing that the apostle may have designed to express such an idea. The sense, according to this, would be, that we are to praise God for his general mercy to mankind; for all the happiness which mortals are permitted to enjoy; for the love of God to mankind in creation, in providence, and in redemption--just as a grateful child will give thanks for all the kindness shown to his brothers and sisters. One obvious effect of this would be to overcome selfishness, and to make us rejoice in the happiness of others as well as in our own. Another effect would be to make us feel a deeper interest in the condition of our fellow-creatures. Another would be to elevate and enlarge our conceptions of the goodness or God--directing the mind to all the favours which he has bestowed on the race. Man has much for which to be grateful; and the duty of acknowledging the mercy of God to the race should not be forgotten. We are often prone so to magnify our calamities, and to contemplate the woes of the race, that we overlook the occasions for gratitude; and we should, therefore, look upon the mercies which we enjoy as well as the miseries which we endure, that our hearts may be right. He who looks only on his trials will soon find his mind soured and complaining; he who endeavours to find how many occasions for

gratitude he has, will soon find the burden of his sorrows alleviated, and his mind tranquil and calm. Yet, if the words here are to be taken as in our translation, "for all things," they are full of force and beauty. At the close of life, and in heaven, we shall see occasion to bless God for all his dealings with us. We shall see that we have not suffered one pang too much, or been required to perform one duty too severe. We shall see that all our afflictions, as well as our mercies, were designed for our good, and were needful for us. Why, then, should we not bless God in the furnace, as well as in the palace; on a bed of pain, as well as on a bed of down; in want, as well as when sitting down at the splendid banquet? God knows what is best for us; and the way in which he leads us, mysterious though it seem to be now, will yet be seen to have been full of goodness and mercy.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, through his mediation, or trusting in him. Jn 14:13. The meaning is, that we are always to approach God through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. When we ask for mercy, it is to be on his account, or through his merits; when we plead for strength and grace to support us in trial, it is to be in dependence on him; and when we give thanks, it is to be through him, and because it is through his intervention that we receive all blessings, and by his merits that even the gratitude of beings so sinful as we are can be accepted.

21 submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Our apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to such general duties as belong to all Christians, comes now to exhort them to the practice of relative duties, as they are members of societies, and particularly as they live in a family society one with another, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; much of the life and power of religion appearing in the conscientious practice and performance of religious duties.

But first he gives them a general direction to submit themselves one to another in the fear of God, that is, by yielding and mutually condescending to each other, stooping to the meanest office of love and kindness one towards another; and this in the fear of God, that is, either in obedience to the command of God, which enjoins this

submission, for then we perform our duty one towards another acceptably, and as we ought, when we eye the command of God in what we do: or else in the fear of God, that is, making the fear of God the rule and measure of our submission one to another; for we are by no means bound to submit ourselves in order to the pleasing of our neighbours, any farther than is consistent with that subjection and obedience which we owe to God.

Learn hence, That where that noble and divine principle of the fear of God prevaileth in the heart, it will make a man conscientiously careful of his duty towards man: the fear of God in him will have both the force of a motive to quicken him up unto, and also of a rule to guide and direct him in, that submission, which, in obedience to God is due and payable to his neighbours.

Be Subject to One Another

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Husbands, love your wives. The duty of the wife is to obey; the right of the husband is to command. But the apostle would guard against the abuse of that right by enjoining the manifestation of such a spirit on the husband as would secure obedience on the part of the wife. He proceeds, therefore, to show that the husband, in all his intercourse with the wife, should manifest the same spirit which the Lord Jesus did towards the church; or, in other words, he holds up the conduct of the Redeemer towards the church as the model for a husband to imitate. If a husband wished a rule that would be short, simple, clear, and efficacious, about the manner in which he should regard and treat his wife, he could not find a better one than that here suggested. Even as Christ loved the Church. This was the strongest love that has ever been evinced in this world. It follows, that a husband is in no danger of loving his wife too much, provided

she be not loved more than God. We are to make the love which Christ had for the church the model. And gave himself for it. Gave himself to die to redeem it. The meaning here is, that husbands are to imitate the Redeemer in this respect. As he gave himself to suffer on the cross to save the church, so we are to be willing to deny ourselves and to bear toil and trial, that we may promote the happiness of the wife. It is the duty of the husband to toil for her support; to provide for her wants; to deny himself of rest and ease, if necessary, in order to attend on her in sickness; to go before her in danger; to defend her if she is in peril; and to be ready to die to save her. Why should he not be? If they are shipwrecked, and there is a single plank on which safety can be secured, should he not be willing to place her on that, and see her safe at all hazards to himself? But there may be more implied in this than that a man is to toil, and even to lay down his life for the welfare of his wife. Christ laid down his life to save the church; and a husband should feel that it should be one great object of his life to promote the salvation of his wife. He is bound so to live as not to interfere with her salvation, but so as to promote it in every way possible. He is to furnish her all the facilities that she may need, to enable her to attend on the worship of God; and to throw no obstacles in her way. He is to set her the example; to counsel her if she needs counsel; and to make the path of salvation as easy for her as possible. If a husband has the spirit and self-denial of the Saviour, he will regard no sacrifice too great if he may promote the salvation of his family.

26 that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by
the word,

27 that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having
spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and
without blemish.

Not having spot. Not having a stain, a defect, or any impurity--still retaining the allusion to a bride, and to the care taken to remove every blemish. Or wrinkle. In the rigour and beauty of youth; like a bride in whom here is no wrinkle of age. Or any such thing. Nothing to deform, disfigure, or offend. To this beautiful illustration of the final glory of the church, the apostle was led by the mention of the relation of the husband and the wife. It shows

(1.) the tendency of the thoughts of Paul. He delighted to allow the associations in his mind, no matter what the subject was, to draw him along to the Redeemer.

(2.) The passage here shows us what the church will yet be. There will be a period in its history when there shall not be any imperfection; when there shall be neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. In heaven all will be pure. On earth we are preparing for that world of purity; and it cannot be denied that here there is much that is imperfect and impure. But in that future world, where the church shall be presented to Christ, clothed in the robes of salvation, there shall not be one unholy member, one deceiver or hypocrite, one covetous or avaricious man, one that shall pain the hearts of the friends of purity by an unholy life. And in all the millions that shall be gathered there out of every land, and people, and tongue, and age, there shall be no envy malice, backbiting, pride, vanity, worldliness; there shall be no annoying and vexing conflict in the heart with evil passions, "nor any such thing." How different from the church as it is now; and how we should pant for that blessed world!

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Of his flesh, and of his bones. There is an allusion here evidently to the language which Adam used respecting Eve, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," Gen 2:23. It is language which is employed to denote the closeness of the marriage relation, and which Paul applies to the connexion between Christ and his people. Of course, it cannot be understood literally. It is not true, literally, that our bones are a part of the bones of Christ, or our flesh of his flesh; nor should language ever be used that would imply a miraculous union. It is not a physical union, but a union of attachment, of feeling, of love. If we avoid the notion of a physical union, however, it is scarcely possible to use too strong language in describing the union of believers with the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures make use of language which is stronger than that employed to describe any other connexion; and there is no union

of affection so powerful as that which binds the Christian to the Saviour. So strong is it, that he is willing for it to forsake father, mother, and home; to leave his country, and to abandon his possessions; to go to distant lands, and dwell among barbarians, to make the Redeemer known; or to go to the cross or the stake from simple love to the Saviour. Account for it as men may, there has been manifested on earth nowhere else so strong an attachment as that which binds the Christian to the cross. It is stronger love than that which a man has for his own flesh and bones; for it makes him willing that his flesh should be consumed by fire, or his bones broken on the wheel, rather than deny him. Can the infidel account for this strength of attachment on any other principle than that it has a Divine origin ?

30 for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
33 Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband.

Ephesians-6

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Children. τεκνα. This word usually signifies those who are young; but it is here used, evidently, to denote those who were under the care and government of their parents, or those who were not of age. Obey your parents. This is the first great duty which God has enjoined on children. It is to do what their parents command them to do. The God of nature indicates that this is duty, for he has impressed it on the minds of all in every age; and the Author of revelation confines it. It is particularly important,

(1.) because the good order of a family, and hence of the community, depends on it; no community or family being prosperous where there is not due subordination in the household.

(2.) Because the welfare of the child depends on it; it being of the highest importance that a child should be early taught obedience to law, as no one can be prosperous or happy who is not thus obedient.

(3.) Because the child is not competent, as yet, to reasons on what is right, or qualified to direct himself; and, while that is the case, he must be subject to the will of some other person.

(4.) Because the parent, by his age and experience, is to be presumed to be qualified to direct and guide a child. The love which God has implanted in the heart of a parent for a child secures, in general, the administration of this domestic government in such a way as not to injure the child. A father will not, unless under strong passion or the excitement of intoxication, abuse his authority. He loves the child too much. He desires his welfare; and the placing of the child under the authority of the parent is about the same thing, in regard to the welfare of the child, as it would be to endow the child at once with all the wisdom and experience of the parent himself.

(5.) It is important, because the family government is designed to be an imitation of the government of God. The government of God is what a perfect family government would be; and to accustom a child to be obedient to a parent is designed to be one method of leading him to be obedient to God. No child that is disobedient to a parent will be obedient to God; and that child that is most obedient to a father and mother will be most likely to become a Christian, and an heir of heaven. And it may be observed, in general, that no disobedient child is virtuous, prosperous, or happy. Every one foresees the ruin of such a child; and most of the cases of crime that lead to the penitentiary, or the gallows, commence by disobedience to parents. In the Lord. That is, as far as their commandments agree with those of God, and no farther. No parent can have a right to require a child to steal, or lie, or cheat, or assist him in committing murder, or in doing any other wrong thing. No parent has a right to forbid a child to pray, to read the Bible, to worship God, or to make a profession of religion. The duties and rights of children, in such cases, are similar to those of wives, Eph

5:22; and, in all cases, God is to be obeyed rather than man. When a parent, however, is opposed to a child; when he expresses an unwillingness that a child should attend a particular church, or make a profession of religion, such opposition should, in all cases, be a sufficient reason for the child to pause and re-examine the subject. He should pray much, and think much, and inquire much, before, in any case, he acts contrary to the will of a father or mother; and, when he does do it, he should state to them, with great gentleness and kindness, that he believes he ought to love and serve God. For this is right. It is right,

(1.) because it is so appointed by God as a duty;

(2.) because children owe a debt of gratitude to their parents for what they have done for them;

(3.) because it will be for the good of the children themselves, and for the welfare of society.

2 Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

Which is the first commandment with promise. With a promise annexed to it. The promise was, that their days should be long in the land which the Lord their God would give them. It is not to be supposed that the observance of the four first commandments would not be attended with a blessing, but no particular blessing is promised. It is true, indeed, that there is a general declaration annexed to the second commandment, that God would show mercy to thousands of generations of them that loved him, and that kept his commandments. But that is rather a declaration in regard to all the commands of God than a promise annexed to that specific commandment. It is an assurance that obedience to the law of God would be followed with blessings to a thousand generations, and is given in view of the first and second commandments together, because they related particularly to the honour that was due to God. But the promise in the fifth commandment is a special promise. It does not relate to obedience to God in general, but it is a particular assurance that they who honour their parents shall have a particular blessing as the result of that obedience.

That it may be well with thee. This is found in the fifth commandment as recorded in De 5:16. The whole commandment as there recorded is, "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The meaning here is, that they would be more happy, useful, and virtuous, if they obeyed their parents than if they disobeyed them. And thou mayest live long on the earth. In the Commandment, as recorded in Ex 20:12, the promise is, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This referred to the promised land--the land of Canaan. The meaning doubtless is, that there would be a special providence, to those who were obedient to parents length of days. Long regarded as a great blessing; and this blessing was promised. The apostle here gives to the promise a more general form, and says obedience to parents was connected at all times with long life. We may remark here,

(1.) that long life is a blessing. It affords a longer space to prepare for eternity; it enables a man to be more useful; and it furnishes a longer opportunity to study the works of God on earth. It is not improper to desire it; and we should make use of all the means in our power to lengthen out our days, and to preserve and protract our lives.

(2.) It is still true that obedience to parents is conducive to length of life, and that those are most obedient in early life, other things being equal, have prospect of living long. This occurs because

(a.) obedient are saved from the vices and crimes which shorten life. No parent will command his child to be a drunkard, a gambler, a spendthrift, a pirate, or a murderer. But these vices and crimes, resulting in most cases from disobedience to parents, all shorten they who early commit them are certain of an early grave. No child who disobeys a parent can have any security that he will not fall a victim to such vices and crimes.

(b.) Obedience to parents is connected with virtuous habits that are conducive to long life. It will make a child industrious, temperate, sober; it will lead him to restrain and govern his wild passions; it will lead him to form habits of self-government which will, in future life, save him from the snares of vice and temptation.

(c.) Many a life is lost early by disobeying a parent. A child disobeys a father, and goes into a dram-shop; or he goes to sea; or he becomes the companion of the wicked--and he may be wrecked at sea, or his character on land may be wrecked for ever. Of disobedient children, there is perhaps not one in a hundred that ever reaches an honoured old age.

(d.) We may still believe that God, in his providence, will watch over those who are obedient to a father and mother. If he regards a falling sparrow, (Mt 10:29,) he will not be unmindful of an obedient child; if he numbers the hairs of the head, (Mt 10:30,) he will not be regardless of the little boy that honours him by obeying a father and mother.

3 that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And ye fathers. A command addressed particularly to fathers because they are at the head of the family, and its government is especially committed to them. The object of the apostle here is, to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to obey, it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey. This statement is in accordance with what he had said Eph 5:22-25 of the relation of husband and wife. It was the duty of the wife to obey -- but it was the corresponding duty of the husband to manifest such a character that it would be pleasant to yield obedience--so to love her, that his known wish would be law to her. In like manner it is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it

would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion. Provoke not your children to wrath. That is, by unreasonable commands; by needless severity; by the manifestation of anger. So govern them, and so punish them--if punishment is necessary --that they shall not lose their confidence in you, but shall love you. The apostle here has hit on the very danger to which parents are most exposed in the government of their children. It is that of souring their temper; of making them feel that the parent is under the influence of anger, and that it is right for them to be so too. This is done

(1.) when the commands of a parent are unreasonable and severe. The spirit of a child then becomes irritated, and he is "discouraged," Col 3:21.

(2.) When a parent is evidently excited when he punishes a child. The child then feels

(a.) that if his father is angry, it is not wrong for him to be angry; and

(b.) the very fact of anger in a parent kindles anger in his bosom--just as it does when two men are contending. If he submits in the case, it is only because the parent is the strongest, not because he is right; and the child cherishes anger, while he yields to power. There is no principle of parental government more important than that a father should command his own temper when he inflicts punishment. He should punish a child not because he is angry, but because it is right; not because it has become a matter of personal contest, but because God requires that he should do it, and the welfare of the child demands it. The moment when a child sees that a parent punishes him under the influence of anger, that moment the child will be likely to be angry too--and his anger will be as proper as that of the parent. And yet how often is punishment inflicted in this manner! And how often does the child feel that the parent punished him simply because he was the strongest, not because it was right! And how often is the mind of a child left with a strong

conviction that wrong has been done him by the punishment which he has received, rather than with repentance for the wrong that he has himself done! But bring them up. Place them under such discipline and instruction that they shall become acquainted with the Lord. In the nurture, ενπαιδεια. The word here used means, training of a child; hence education, instruction, discipline. Here it means that they are to train up their children in such a manner as the Lord approves; that is, they are to educate them for virtue and religion. And admonition. The word here used--νουθεσια--means, literally, a putting in mind; then warning, admonition, instruction. The sense here is, that they were to put them in mind of the Lord--of his existence, perfections, law, and claims on their hearts and lives. This command is positive, and is in accordance with all the requirements of the Bible on the subject. No one can doubt that the Bible enjoins on parents the duty of endeavouring to train up their children in the ways of religion, and of making it the grand purpose of this life to prepare them for heaven. It has been often objected that children should be left on religious subjects to form their own opinions when they are able to judge for themselves. Infidels and irreligious men always oppose or neglect the duty here enjoined; and the plea commonly is, that to teach religion to children is to make them prejudiced; to destroy their independence of mind; and to prevent their judging as impartially on so important a subject as they ought to. In reply to this, and in defence of the requirements of the Bible on the subject, we may remark,

(1.) that to suffer a child to grow up without any instruction in religion, is about the same as to suffer a garden to lie without any culture. Such a garden would soon be overrun with weeds, and briers, and thorns--but not sooner, or more certainly, than the mind of a child would.

(2.) Men do instruct their children in a great many things, and why should they not in religion? They teach them how to behave in company; the art of farming; the way to make or use tools; how to make money; how to avoid the arts of the cunning seducer. But why should it not be said that all this tends to destroy their independence, and to make them prejudiced? Why not leave their minds open and

free, and suffer them to form their own judgments about farming and the mechanic arts when their minds are matured?

(3.) Men do inculcate their own sentiments in religion. An infidel is not usually very anxious to conceal his views from his children. Men teach by example, by incidental remarks, by the neglect of that which they regard as of no value. A man who does not pray, is teaching his children not to pray; he who neglects the public worship of God, is teaching his children to neglect it; he who does not read the Bible, is teaching his children not to read it. Such is the constitution of things, that it is impossible for a parent not to inculcate his own religious views on his children. Since this is so, all that the Bible requires is, that his instructions should be RIGHT,

(4.) To inculcate the truths of religion is not to make the mind narrow, prejudiced, and indisposed to perceive the truth. Religion makes the mind candid, conscientious, open to conviction, ready to follow the truth. Superstition, bigotry, infidelity, and all error and falsehood, make the mind narrow and prejudiced.

(5.) If a man does not teach his children truth, others will teach them error. The young sceptic that the child meets in the street; the artful infidel; the hater of God; the unprincipled stranger, will teach the child. But is it not better for a parent to teach his child the truth than for a stranger to teach him error.

(6.) Religion is the most important of all subjects, and therefore it is of most importance that children on that subject should be taught TRUTH. Of whom can God so properly require this as of a parent? If it be asked in what way a parent is to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,

I answer,

1st. by directly inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion--just as he does anything else that he regards as of value.

2nd. By placing them in the Sabbath school, where he may have a guarantee that they will be taught the truth. 3rd. By conducting them--not merely sending them--to the sanctuary, that they may be taught in the house of God.

4th. By example--all teaching being valueless without that.

5th. By prayer for the Divine aid in his efforts, and for the salvation of their souls. These duties are plain, simple, easy to be performed, and are such as a man knows he ought to perform. If neglected, and the soul of the child be lost, a parent has a most fearful account to render to God.

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Not with eyeservice. That is, not with service rendered only under the eye of the master, or when his eye is fixed on you. The apostle has here adverted to one of the evils of involuntary servitude as it exists everywhere. It is, that the slave will usually obey only when the eye of the master is upon him. The freeman, who agrees to labour for stipulated wages, may be trusted when the master is out of sight; but not the slave. Hence the necessity, where there are slaves, of having "drivers" who shall attend them, and who shall compel them to work. This evil it is impossible to avoid, except where true religion prevails--and the extensive prevalence of true religion would set the slave at liberty. Yet, as long as the relation exists, the apostle would enjoin on the servant the duty of performing his work conscientiously, as rendering service to the Lord. This direction, moreover, is one of great importance to all who are employed in the service of others. They are bound to perform their duty with as much fidelity as though the eye of the employer was always upon them, remembering that though the eye of man may be turned away, that of God never is. As men-pleasers. As if it were the main object to please men. The object should be rather to please and honour God. But as the servants of Christ. 1Cor 7:22. Doing the will of God from the heart. That is, God requires

industry, fidelity, conscientiousness, submission, and obedience in that rank of life. We render acceptable service to God when, from regard to his will, we perform the services which are demanded of us in the situation in life where we may be placed, however humble that may be.

7 with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:
8 knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

As to the Lord, and not to men. That is, he should regard his lot in life as having been ordered by Divine Providence for some wise and good purpose; and, until he may be permitted to enjoy his liberty in a quiet and peaceable manner, 1Cor 7:21, he should perform his duties with fidelity, and feel that he was rendering acceptable service to God. This would reconcile him to much of the hardships of his lot. The feeling that God has ordered the circumstances of our lives, and that he has some wise and good ends to answer by it, makes us contented there; though we may feel that our fellow-man may be doing us injustice. It was this principle that made the martyrs so patient under the wrongs done them by men; and this may make even a slave patient and submissive under the wrongs of a master. But let not a master think, because a pious slave shows this spirit, that therefore the slave feels that the master is right in withholding his freedom; nor let him suppose, because religion requires the slave to be submissive and obedient, that therefore it approves of what the master does. It does this no more than it sanctioned the conduct of Nero, because religion required the martyrs to be unresisting, and to allow themselves to be led to the stake. A conscientious slave may find happiness in submitting to God, and doing his will, just as a conscientious martyr may. But this does not sanction the wrong, either of the slave-owner or of the persecutor.

Knowing that whatsoever good thing. Whatever a man does that is right, for that he shall be appropriately rewarded. No matter what his rank in life, if he discharges his duty to God and man. he will be accepted. A man in a state of servitude may so live as to honour God; and, so living, he should not be greatly solicitous about his condition. A master may fail to render suitable recompense to a

slave; but, if the servant is faithful to God, he will recompense him in the future world. It is in this way that religion would make the evils of life tolerable, by teaching those who are oppressed to bear their trials in a patient spirit, and to look forward to the future world of reward, Religion does not approve of slavery. It is the friend of human rights. If it had full influence on earth, it would restore every man to freedom, and impart to each one his rights. Christianity nowhere requires its friends to make or to own a slave. No one under the proper influence of religion ever yet made a man a slave; there is no one under its proper influence who would not desire that all should be free; and just in proportion as true religion spreads over the world will universal freedom be its attendant.

But Christianity would lighten the evils of slavery even while it exists, and would comfort those who are doomed to so hard a lot, by assuring them that there they may render acceptable service to God, and that they soon will be admitted to a world where galling servitude will be known no more. If they may not have freedom here, they may have contentment; if they feel that wrong is done them by men, they may feel that right will be done them by God; if their masters do not reward them for their services here, God will; and if they may not enjoy liberty here, they will soon be received into the world of perfect freedom in heaven.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

And ye masters. The object of this is to secure for servants a proper treatment. It is evident, from this, that there were in the Christian church those who were masters; and the most obvious interpretation is, that they were the owners of slaves. Some such persons would be converted, as such are now. Paul did not say that they could not be Christians. He did not say that they should be excluded at once from the communion. He did not hold them up to reproach, or use harsh and severe language in regard to them. He taught them their duty towards those who were under them, and laid down principles which, if followed, would lead ultimately to universal freedom. Do the same things unto them. ταυτα. The "same things," here, seem to refer to what he had said in the

previous verses. They were, to evince towards their servants the same spirit which he had required servants to evince towards them --the same kindness, fidelity, and respect for the will of God. He had required servants to act conscientiously; to remember that the eye of God was upon them, and that in that condition in life they were to regard themselves as serving God, and as mainly answerable to him. The same things the apostle would have masters feel. They were to be faithful, conscientious, just, true to the interests of their servants, and to remember that they were responsible to God. They were not to take advantage of their power to oppress them, to punish them unreasonably, or to suppose that they were freed from responsibility in regard to the manner in which they treated them. In the corresponding passage in Colossians Col 4:1 this is, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." Col 4:1

The Whole Armor of God

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Our apostle, calling us here forth to the Christian warfare, gives forth the first word of encouragement to battle: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

A Christian, above all men, needs resolution, and a daring courage: if he be possessed with fear, he is unfit to go into the field; if dispirited with strong impressions of danger, how unready for the encounter! Cowards win neither earth nor heaven. But where lies the Christian's strength? Verily, on the Lord, and not in himself; the strength of the whole host of saints lies in the Lord of hosts, and accordingly it ought to be the Christian's great care, in all difficulties and dangers, to strengthen his faith in the almighty power of God.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

They must be well armed: "Put on the whole armour of God (Eph 6:11), make use of all the proper defensitives and weapons for repelling the temptations and stratagems of Satan--get and exercise all the Christian graces, the whole armour, that no part be naked

and exposed to the enemy." Observe, Those who would approve themselves to have true grace must aim at all grace, the whole armour. It is called the armour of God, because he both prepares and bestows it. We have no armour of our own that will be armour of proof in a trying time. Nothing will stand us in stead but the armour of God. This armour is prepared for us, but we must put it on; that is, we must pray for grace, we must use the grace given us, and draw it out into act and exercise as there is occasion. The reason assigned why the Christian should be completely armed is that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil--that he may be able to hold out, and to overcome, notwithstanding all the devil's assaults, both of force and fraud, all the deceits he puts upon us, all the snares he lays for us, and all his machinations against us. This the apostle enlarges upon here, and shows,

1. What our danger is, and what need we have to put on this whole armour, considering what sort of enemies we have to deal with--the devil and all the powers of darkness: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, &c., Eph 6:12. The combat for which we are to be prepared is not against ordinary human enemies, not barely against men compounded of flesh and blood, nor against our own corrupt natures singly considered, but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world.

(1.) We have to do with a subtle enemy, an enemy who uses wiles and stratagems, as Eph 6:11. He has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls: hence he is called a serpent for subtlety, an old serpent, experienced in the art and trade of tempting.

(2.) He is a powerful enemy: Principalities, and powers, and rulers. They are numerous, they are vigorous; and rule in those heathen nations which are yet in darkness. The dark parts of the world are the seat of Satan's empire. Yea, they are usurping princes over all men who are yet in a state of sin and ignorance. Satan's is a kingdom of darkness; whereas Christ's is a kingdom of light.

(3.) They are spiritual enemies: Spiritual wickedness in high places, or wicked spirits, as some translate it. The devil is a spirit,

a wicked spirit; and our danger is the greater from our enemies because they are unseen, and assault us ere we are aware of them. The devils are wicked spirits, and they chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to, spiritual wickednesses, pride, envy, malice, &c. These enemies are said to be in high places, or in heavenly places, so the word is, taking heaven (as one says) for the whole expansum, or spreading out of the air between the earth and the stars, the air being the place from which the devils assault us. Or the meaning may be, "We wrestle about heavenly places or heavenly things;" so some of the ancients interpret it. Our enemies strive to prevent our ascent to heaven, to deprive us of heavenly blessings and to obstruct our communion with heaven. They assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts; and therefore we have need to be upon our guard against them. We have need of faith in our Christian warfare, because we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, as well as of faith in our Christian work, because we have spiritual strength to fetch in. Thus you see your danger.

Put on the whole armour of God. The whole description here is derived from the weapons of an ancient soldier. The various parts of those weapons--constituting the "whole panoply"--are specified in Eph 6:14-17. The word rendered "whole armour," (πανοπλιαν, panoply,) means complete armour, offensive and defensive. See Lk 11:22. Rom 13:12, 2Cor 6:7. "The armour of God" is not that which God wears, but that which he has provided for the Christian soldier. The meaning here is,

(1.) that we are not to provide in our warfare such weapons as men employ in their contests, but such as God provides; that we are to renounce the weapons which are carnal, and put on such as God has directed for the achievement of the victory.

(2.) We are to put on the "whole armour." We are not to go armed partly with what God has appointed, and partly with such weapons as men use; nor are we to put on a part of the armour only, but the whole of it. A man needs all that armour if he is about to fight the battles of the Lord; and if he lacks one of the weapons which God

has appointed, defeat may be the consequence. That ye may be able to stand. The foes are so numerous and mighty, that, unless clothed with the Divine armour, victory will be impossible. Against the wiles of the devil. The word rendered "wiles" μεθοδεια means, properly, that which is traced out with method; that which is methodized; and then that which is well laid--art, skill, cunning. It occurs in the New Testament only in Eph 4:14, and in this place. It is appropriately here rendered wiles, meaning cunning devices, arts, attempts to delude and destroy us. The wiles of the devil are the various arts and stratagems which he employs to drag souls down to perdition. We can more easily encounter open force than we can cunning; and we need the weapons of Christian armour to meet the attempts to draw us into a snare, as much as to meet open force. The idea here is, that Satan does not carry on an open warfare. He does not meet the Christian soldier face to face. He advances covertly; makes his approaches in darkness; employs cunning rather than power, and seeks rather to deceive and betray than to vanquish by mere force. Hence the necessity of being constantly armed to meet him whenever the attack is made. A man who has to contend with a visible enemy may feel safe, if he only prepares to meet him in the open field. But far different is the case if the enemy is invisible; if he steals upon us slyly and stealthily; if he practices war only by ambushes and by surprises. Such is the foe that we have to contend with--and almost all the Christian struggle is a warfare against stratagems and wiles. Satan does not openly appear. He approaches us not in repulsive forms, but comes to recommend some plausible doctrine, to lay before us some temptation that shall not immediately repel us. He presents the world in an alluring aspect; invites to pleasures that seem to be harmless; and leads us in indulgence, until we have gone so far that we cannot retreat.

Observe, 2. A direction given how a saint may come to be strong in the Lord; namely, by putting on the whole armour of God; that is, by being clothed with the following graces, which are hereafter mentioned in this chapter; as, the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, &c.

Now these are called armour of God, because they are of his appointment and institution; and of his make and constitution; and this armour must be put on, that is, our grace kept in continual exercise. It is one thing to have armour in the house, and another to have it buckled on in the field; it is not sufficient to have grace in the habit and principle, but it is grace in act and exercise that must conquer spiritual enemies.

Observe, 3. A reason assigned why the Christian is to be thus completely armed: That he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; intimating that the devil is one chief enemy we have to combat with in the Christian warfare, and that this enemy is a wily, subtle enemy, discovering his dangerous policy, first by tempting and alluring into sin, and then by vexing and tormenting for sin.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places.*

For we wrestle. Gr., "The wrestling to us ;" or, "There is not to us a wrestling with flesh and blood." There is undoubtedly here an allusion to the ancient games of Greece, a part of the exercises in which consisted in wrestling. 1Cor 9:25, and following. The Greek word here used--παλη--denotes a wrestling; and then a struggle, fight, combat, here it refers to the struggle or combat which the Christian is to maintain--the Christian warfare. Not with flesh and blood. Not with men. Gall 1:16. The apostle does not mean to say that Christians had no enemies among men that opposed them, for they were exposed often to fiery persecution; nor that they had nothing to contend with in the carnal and corrupt propensities of their nature, which was true of them then as it is now; but that their main controversy was with the invisible spirits of wickedness that sought to destroy them. They were the source and origin of all their spiritual conflicts, and with them the warfare was to be maintained. But against principalities. There can be no doubt whatever that the apostle alludes here to evil spirits. Like good angels, they were regarded as divided into ranks and orders, and were supposed to be under the control of one mighty leader. Eph 1:21. It is probable that the allusion here is to the ranks and orders which they sustained

before their fall, something like which they may still retain. The word principalities refers to principal rulers, or chieftains. Powers. Those who had power, or to whom the name of powers was given. Milton represents Satan as addressing the fallen angels in similar language :--

"Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers."

Against the rulers of the darkness of this world. The rulers that preside over the regions of ignorance and sin with which the earth abounds. Eph 2:2 Darkness is an emblem of ignorance, misery, and sin; and no description could be more accurate than that of representing these malignant spirits as ruling over a dark world. The earth--dark, and wretched, and ignorant, and sinful--is just such a dominion as they would choose, or as they would cause; and the degradation and woe of the heathen world are just such as foul and malignant spirits would delight in. It is a wide and a powerful empire. It has been consolidated by ages. It is sustained by all the authority of law; by all the omnipotence of the perverted religious principle; by all the reverence for antiquity; by all the power of selfish, corrupt, and base passions. No empire has been so extended, or has continued so long, as that empire of darkness; and nothing on earth is so difficult to destroy. Yet the apostle says that it was on that kingdom they were to make war. Against that, the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be set up; and that was to be overcome by the spiritual weapons which he specifies. When he speaks of the Christian warfare here, he refers to the contest with the powers of this dark kingdom. He regards each and every Christian as a soldier to wage war on it in whatever way he could, and wherever he could attack it. The contest, therefore, was not primarily with men, or with the internal corrupt propensities of the soul; it was with this vast and dark kingdom that had been set up over mankind. I do not regard this passage, therefore, as having a primary reference to the struggle which a Christian maintains with his own corrupt propensities. It is a warfare on a large scale with the entire kingdom of darkness over the world. Yet, in maintaining the warfare, the struggle will be with such portions of that kingdom as we come in contact with, and will actually relate

(1.) to our own sinful propensities--which are a part of the kingdom of darkness;

(2.) with the evil passions of others--their pride, ambition, and spirit of revenge--which are also a part of that kingdom;

(3) with the evil customs, laws, opinions, employments, pleasures of the world--which are also a part of that dark kingdom;

(4) with error, superstition, false doctrine--which are also a part of that kingdom; and

(5) with the wickedness of the heathen world--the sins of benighted nations ---also a part of that kingdom. Wherever we come in contact with evil--whether in our own hearts or elsewhere--there we are to make war. Against spiritual wickedness. Marg., "or wicked spirits." Literally, "the spiritual things of wickedness;" but the allusion is undoubtedly to evil spirits, and to their influences on earth. In high places, εντοιςεπουρανιοις, "in celestial, or heavenly places." The same phrase occurs in Eph 1:3, 2:6, where it is translated, "in heavenly places." The word (επουρανιοις) is used of those that dwell in heaven, Mt 18:35, Php 2:10; of those who come from heaven, 1Cor 15:48, Php 3:21; of the heavenly bodies--the sun, moon, and stars, 1Cor 15:40. Then the neuter plural of the word is used to denote the heavens; and then the lower heavens, the sky, the air, represented as the seat of evil spirits. Eph 2:2. This is the allusion here. The evil spirits are supposed to occupy the lofty regions of the air, and thence to exert a baleful influence on the affairs of man. What was the origin of this opinion it is not needful here to inquire. No one can prove, however, that it is incorrect. It is against such spirits, and all their malignant influences, that Christians are called to contend. In whatever way their power is put forth--whether in the prevalence of vice and error; of superstition and magic arts; of infidelity, atheism, or antinomianism; of evil customs and laws; of pernicious fashions and opinions, or in the corruptions of our own hearts, we are to make war on all these forms of evil, and never to yield in the conflict.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be
able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having
on the breastplate of righteousness;
15 and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
16 above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to
quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

How our apostle having described the enemy in the foregoing verse, and set him forth in all his formidable strength and power, comes forth in the head of his Ephesian camp, gives a fresh alarm, and bids them arm! arm! Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day; intimating that an evil day is before us; that it will be of mighty advantage to us to be able to stand in the evil day; and that without the help of divine armour we cannot stand in that day. The sanctifying graces of God's Spirit are this armour: he that has not these, let his common gifts be never so gay and glorious, he will never hold out to fight the last battle, but fall into the enemy's hand, and be taken captive by him at his will.

Observe next, How our apostle comes to describe the armour of God piece by piece, which the Christian is to put on before he takes the field against the enemy. Here is the soldier's girdle, his breastplate, his shoes, his shield, his helmet, and his sword, all described; his offensive and defensive weapons, wherewith soldiers of old used to arm their bodies from head to foot.

Now the apostle assigneth to particular graces a use and excellency answerable to these pieces of armour, and shows that there is some resemblance between every grace and that piece of the bodily armour to which it is here compared; but observable it is, that although there be pieces of armour for all other parts of the body, here is none assigned for the back, nor back-parts, because there must be no running away, no hope of escaping by flight in this spiritual warfare: if we turn our back upon our enemy, we lie open to his darts, and are in danger of destruction; if we fight on, we have our second in the field, and are sure of victory, provided we enter the field in order and stand to our arms, maintain our watch, keep our ground, and appear armed cap-a-pie, from head to foot, with the

several pieces of armour here recommended: the first of which is the girdle of truth, Having your loins girt about with truth Eph 6:14 that is, sincerity of heart. Doth a girdle or belt adorn the soldier? so doth sincerity adorn the Christian. Doth the girdle strengthen the soldier's loins? so doth sincerity strengthen the soul, and every grace in the soul: it is sincere faith that is strong faith; it is sincere love that is mighty love.

Secondly, The breastplate of righteousness; by which is to be understood the love and practice of universal holiness.

But why is this compared to a breastplate?

Ans. Because as the breastplate defends the most principal parts of the body, where the heart and vitals are closely couched together; thus holiness preserves the soul and conscience, the principal parts of a Christian, from the wounds and harms of sin, which is the weapon that Satan uses to give conscience its deadly stab with.

The third piece of Christian armour is the spiritual shoe, fitted to the soldier's foot, and worn by him so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan: the soldier's way is sometimes full of sharp stones, and sometimes strewed with sharp iron spikes stuck into the ground; the soldier will soon be wounded, or foundered, if not well shod. Therefore the direction here is, Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; that is, maintaining an holy readiness of spirit, and a resolute frame of heart, to undergo any suffering, and endure any hardship in your Christian warfare; which frame of spirit being wrought in us by the doctrine of the gospel, is therefore called the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The fourth piece of armour recommended above all to be put on, is the shield of faith; this is that grace by which we believe the truth of God's word in general, and depend upon Christ in particular, as

crucified, for pardon and life, and this upon the warrant of the promise.

But why is faith compared to a shield?

Ans. Because, as the shield defends the whole body, so faith defends the whole man; the understanding from error, the conscience from searedness, the will from rebellion against the will and command of God. And as the shield defends the whole armour, as well as the soldier's whole body, it defends the breastplate, as well as the breast; so faith is our armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all other graces whatsoever.

The fifth piece of armour is mentioned, The helmet of salvation; Eph 6:17 by which the grace of hope is understood, which has for its object salvation, called therefore the hope of salvation. Salvation is the ultimate and comprehensive object of the Christian's expectation; and it is compared to an helmet, because as the helmet defends the head, so doth the hope of salvation defend the soul; it keeps the head above water, and makes the Christian bold and brave. Hope is a grace of singular use and excellent service to a Christian, in the whole course of his Christian warfare; it puts him upon noble services, it keeps him patient under the greatest sufferings, and it will enable the soul to wait long for the performance of divine promises.

The sixth piece of spiritual armour is the sword. Eph 6:17. The former were defensive, but this is both an offensive and defensive weapon; such is the word of God. But why compared to a sword?
Ans. In regard both of its necessity and excellency: the sword was ever esteemed a most necessary and useful part of the soldier's furniture; of such usefulness, necessity, and excellency is the word of God, by which the Christian doth defend himself, and offend his enemies.

But why is it called the sword of the Spirit?

Ans. Because the Spirit was the author of it; the Spirit of God is the interpreter of it: and it is the Spirit that gives the word its efficacy and power in the soul: the word of God, contained in the scriptures, is the sword by which the Spirit of God enables his saints to overcome and vanquish all their enemies.

The seventh and last piece of spiritual armour is mentioned, and that is prayer: Praying always, with all prayer, &c. Eph 6:18
Here note, The time for prayer, praying always; the sorts and kinds of prayer, praying always, with all prayer; the inward principle of prayer, from which it must flow, in the Spirit; the guard to set about the duty of prayer, watching thereunto; the constancy to be exercised in the duty, with all perservance, the comprehensiveness of the duty,for all saints.

Learn, That prayer is a necessary duty for all Christians, and to be used, with all other pieces of spiritual armour, by the Christian soldier.

What our duty is: to take and put on the whole armour of God, and then to stand our ground, and withstand our enemies.

(1.) We must withstand, Eph 6:13. We must not yield to the devil's allurements and assaults, but oppose them. Satan is said to stand up against us, 1Ch 21:1. If he stand up against us, we must stand against him; set up, and keep up, an interest in opposition to the devil. Satan is the wicked one, and his kingdom is the kingdom of sin: to stand against Satan is to strive against sin. That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, in the day of temptation, or of any sore affliction.

(2.) We must stand our ground: And, having done all, to stand. We must resolve, by God's grace, not to yield to Satan. Resist him, and

he will flee. If we distrust our cause, or our leader, or our armour, we give him advantage. Our present business is to withstand the assaults of the devil, and to stand it out; and then, having done all that is incumbent on the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, our warfare will be accomplished, and we shall be finally victorious.

(3.) We must stand armed; and this is here most enlarged upon. Here is a Christian in complete armour: and the armour is divine: Armour of God, armour of light, Ro 13:12. Armour of righteousness, 2Co 6:7. The apostle specifies the particulars of this armour, both offensive and defensive. The military girdle or belt, the breast-plate, the greaves (or soldier's shoes), the shield, the helmet, and the sword. It is observable that, among them all, there is none for the back; if we turn our back upon the enemy, we lie exposed.

[1.] Truth or sincerity is our girdle, Eph 6:14. It was prophesied of Christ (Isa 11:5) that righteousness should be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. That which Christ was girded with all Christians must be girded with. God desires truth, that is, sincerity, in the inward parts. This is the strength of our loins; and it girds on all other pieces of our armour, and therefore is first mentioned. I know no religion without sincerity. Some understand it of the doctrine of the truths of the gospel: they should cleave to us as the girdle does to the loins, Jer 13:11. This will restrain from libertinism and licentiousness, as a girdle restrains and keeps in the body. This is the Christian soldier's belt: ungirded with this, he is unblessed.

[2.] Righteousness must be our breast-plate. The breast-plate secures the vitals, shelters the heart. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us is our breast-plate against the arrows of divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. The apostle explains this in 1Th 5:8, Putting on the breast-plate of faith and love. Faith and love include all Christian graces; for by faith we are united to Christ and by love to our brethren. These will infer a diligent observance of our duty to God, and a righteous

deportment towards men, in all the offices of justice, truth, and charity.

[3.] Resolution must be as the greaves to our legs: And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, Eph 6:15. Shoes, or greaves of brass, or the like, were formerly part of the military armour (1Sa 17:6): the use of them was to defend the feet against the gall-traps, and sharp sticks, which were wont to be laid privily in the way, to obstruct the marching of the enemy, those who fell upon them being unfit to march. The preparation of the gospel of peace signifies a prepared and resolved frame of heart, to adhere to the gospel and abide by it, which will enable us to walk with a steady pace in the way of religion, notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers that may be in it. It is styled the gospel of peace because it brings all sorts of peace, peace with God, with ourselves, and with one another. It may also be meant of that which prepares for the entertainment of the gospel, namely, repentance. With this our feet must be shod: for by living a life of repentance we are armed against temptations to sin, and the designs of our great enemy. Dr. Whitby thinks this may be the sense of the words: "That you may be ready for the combat, be shod with the gospel of peace, endeavour after that peaceable and quiet mind which the gospel calls for. Be not easily provoked, nor prone to quarrel: but show all gentleness and all long-suffering to all men, and this will certainly preserve you from many great temptations and persecutions, as did those shoes of brass the soldiers from those galltraps," &c.

[4.] Faith must be our shield: Above all, or chiefly, taking the shield of faith, Eph 6:16. This is more necessary than any of them. Faith is all in all to us in an hour of temptation. The breast-plate secures the vitals; but with the shield we turn every way. This is the victory over the world, even our faith. We are to be fully persuaded of the truth of all God's promises and threatenings, such a faith being of great use against temptations. Consider faith as it is the evidence of things not seen and the substance of things hoped for, and it will appear to be of admirable use for this purpose. Faith, as receiving Christ and the benefits of redemption, so deriving grace from him, is like a shield, a sort of universal defence. Our enemy the devil is here called

the wicked one. He is wicked himself, and he endeavours to make us wicked. His temptations are called darts, because of their swift and undiscerned flight, and the deep wounds that they give to the soul; fiery darts, by way of allusion to the poisonous darts which were wont to inflame the parts which were wounded with them, and therefore were so called, as the serpents with poisonous stings are called fiery serpents. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are the darts which Satan shoots at us. Faith is the shield with which we must quench these fiery darts, wherein we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hit us, or at least that they may not hurt us. Observe, Faith, acted upon the word of God and applying that, acted upon the grace of Christ and improving that, quenches the darts of temptation.

[5.] Salvation must be our helmet (Eph 6:17); that is, hope, which has salvation for its object; so 1Th 5:8. The helmet secures the head. A good hope of salvation, well founded and well built, will both purify the soul and keep it from being defiled by Satan, and it will comfort the soul and keep it from being troubled and tormented by Satan. He would tempt us to despair; but good hope keeps us trusting in God, and rejoicing in him.

[6.] The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The sword is a very necessary and useful part of a soldier's furniture. The word of God is very necessary, and of great use to the Christian, in order to his maintaining the spiritual warfare and succeeding in it. It is called the sword of the Spirit, because it is of the Spirit's inditing and he renders it efficacious and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. Like Goliath's sword, none like that; with this we assault the assailants. Scripture-arguments are the most powerful arguments to repel temptation with. Christ himself resisted Satan's temptations with, It is written, Mt 4:4,6,7,10. This, being hid in the heart, will preserve from sin (Ps 119:11), and will mortify and kill those lusts and corruptions that are latent there.

[7.] Prayer must buckle on all the other parts of our Christian armour, Eph 6:18. We must join prayer with all these graces, for our defence against these spiritual enemies, imploring help and

assistance of God, as the case requires: and we must pray always. Not as though we were to do nothing else but pray, for there are other duties of religion and of our respective stations in the world that are to be done in their place and season; but we should keep up constant times of prayer, and be constant to them. We must pray upon all occasions, and as often as our own and others' necessities call us to it. We must always keep up a disposition to prayer, and should intermix with immediately ejected prayers with other duties, and with common business. Though set and solemn prayer may sometimes be unseasonable (as when other duties are to be done), yet pious ejections can never be so. We must pray with all prayer and supplication, with all kinds of prayer: public, private, and secret, social and solitary, solemn and sudden; with all the parts of prayer: confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgivings for favours received. We must pray in the Spirit; our spirits must be employed in the duty and we must do it by the grace of God's good Spirit. We must watch thereunto, endeavouring to keep our hearts in a praying frame, and taking all occasions, and improving all opportunities, for the duty: we must watch to all the motions of our own hearts towards the duty. When God says, Seek my face, our hearts must comply, Ps 27:8. This we must do with all perseverance. We must abide by the duty of prayer, whatever change there may be in our outward circumstances; and we must continue in it as long as we live in the world. We must persevere in a particular prayer; not cutting it short, when our hearts are disposed to enlarge, and there is time for it, and our occasions call for it. We must likewise persevere in particular requests, notwithstanding some present discouragements and repulses. And we must pray with supplication, not for ourselves only, but for all saints; for we are members one of another. Observe, None are so much saints, and in so good a condition in this world, but they need our prayers, and they ought to have them. The apostle passes hence to the conclusion of the epistle.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Our apostle having directed the Ephesians to the duty of prayer in general, desires them here to pray for himself in particular.

Where observe, 1. His exhortation and direction to pray for himself, and all the ministers of the gospel: And for me. Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ are and ought in a special manner to be remembered in the saints' prayers.

Observe, 2. The mercy which he desires them to pray for: That utterance may be given: namely a readiness to deliver to others what God has handed unto us. Ministers depend upon God for utterance, and it is their people's duty to be earnest with God to give it to them.

Observe, 3. The end why he desires this utterance: That he may open his mouth boldly to make known the ministry of the gospel.
Where note, 1. The sublime nature of the gospel minister: and that is, to make known that gospel-mystery.

2. The manner how he is to perform this work: That I may open my mouth boldly; namely, in asserting truth, and in reproving sin, with a wise and prudent, with a meek and humble, with an active and zealous boldness.

Observe 4. A double argument to back and enforce his request to pray for him:

1. From his office: For which I am an ambassador. The ministers of the gospel are God's ambassadors; and shall not their people pray for the success of their embassies?

From his afflicted state: He was an ambassador in bonds; his zeal for God, and his truth, confined him to a prison; he preached himself into a gaol. Well, therefore, might they pray for him, who had now lost his liberty, and soon after was to lose his life, for them: no prayers can be too much to strengthen the hands, and to encourage the hearts, of such as suffer tribulation and persecution for the sake

of Christ: Pray for me, that I may make known the mysteries of the gospel, for which I am an ambassadsor in bonds.

20 for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak
boldly, as I ought to speak.

Final Greetings

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a
beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make
known to you all things:
22 whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might
know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.
23 Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in
sincerity.
Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians
[Philippians]

Philippians-1

Salutation

1 Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
2 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Philippian Christians

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

The proper character of a gospel minister: he is his people's constant remembrancer, and the rememberer of his people: I remember you all, says the apostle, I remember you always, and in every prayer. This is a very great part of our ministerial duty, to pray for the people; and not in our public offices only, but in our private addresses also, and this continually, without ceasing; we should never rise off our knees, without bearing our people upon our hearts before the Lord. Did minister and people strive more together in their prayers one for another, there would be less strife and contention between them one with another. Ministers must be their people's remembrancers; St. Paul here remembered the Philippians, all the Philippians always, and in every prayer.

Observe, 2. St. Paul could and did remember the Philippians with joy: though he was in sadness himself in a prison, yet he could think of them, as a people converted by his ministry, with joy; making request with joy. When the ministers of Christ see any success of their labours in the lives of their people, it is a matter of inexpressible joy to them, how sad soever the case is with them

as to their outward circumstances; when they sigh in a prison with respect to their personal sufferings, they can sing and rejoice, if they find their people's proficiency in knowledge and growth in grace: I thank my God for you, making request with joy.

Observe, 3. The ground and occasion of this his joy, For your fellowship in the gospel; Phil 1:5 that is, for your ready embracing of the gospel at my first preaching of it to you, for the real subjection of some, and the professed subjection of all, to the faith of Christ, whereby you were brought into fellowship with Christ and his church; and also for the continuance of you, in the faith and profession of the gospel, from the first day until now.

Learn hence, That when a people, upon the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, do readily receive and obey it, and remain constant in their profession of it, and obedience to it, it is matter of unspeakable thanksgiving and praise to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. I thank God for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now, that is, for continuing in the faith, and persevering in your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, I bless God for this.

4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with
joy,
5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
6 being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good
work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

Here we have a further cause assigned of St. Paul's joy on the Philippians' behalf: namely, the firm and full assurance which he had of their perseverance in grace unto the end. God, that has begun, will perfect, that is, augment and increase it, till it arrive at perfection in glory.

Note here, 1. The nature of grace described, or the proper title deservedly given to the grace of God; it is called a good work; he that hath begun a good work, &c. Well may regenerating grace be called a good work, because it is the living foundation and vital principle from whence all good works do proceed and flow; the grace of God in the heart is the root of all true holiness in the life;

as good works are necessary to salvation, so renewing grace is necessary to good works.

Note, 2. As the nature of grace described, so the author and augmenter of grace declared, and that is, God. He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, that is, augment it, and increase it. As the good work of grace in the heart is God's work, and he is the author of it, so he will maintain it, and carry it on to perfection, and be both the increaser and perfecter of it; God never doth his work by halves.

Note, 3. The certainty of grace asserted: Being confident of this very thing.

But what ground had St. Paul for this confidence?

Ans. Because grace is the care of the whole Trinity: all the Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do concern themselves both in the production, preservation, and perfection of it; the Father decrees it, the Son purchases it, the Spirit infuses it: the Father begets it, the Son excites it, the Holy Spirit conducts: and as they all did concur to its production, so did they all co-operate and work together for the preservation of it.

Learn hence, That such persons, in whose souls Almighty God has begun a good work of grace, may with much assurance expect by the influence of God's care, and the exercise of their own endeavours, that they shall hold out and persevere in a state of grace unto the end; until the day of Christ, that is, the day of judgment.

7 even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

These words are expressive of that passionate degree of Christian love which St. Paul bore to the Philippians; he durst appeal to God, as to the sincerity and fervency of it: God is my record, I call

him to witness, and can appeal to him as the searcher of hearts, how greatly I long after you; that is, how passionately and sincerely I love you, with the most intense and hearty affection, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.
The expression may denote the efficient cause, and the exemplary cause, of his love.

1. That the author of this his love unto them was Christ, he was the spring and procurer of it; and consequently it was no carnal or selfish love, to serve his own ends and designs upon them, but truly spiritual.

2. That Christ's love to him was the pattern and example, according to which he loved them, with no common love, but with an entire and intense affection, from the ground of the heart and the most intimate bowels: no words can be more expressive of that fervent love and earnest longing which St. Paul had for the welfare of the Philippians; a love which very far exceeds the love of all relations. He doth not say I long after you in the bowels of a father, or in the bowels of an husband, but in the bowels of Jesus Christ; humbly comparing his love towards them to the love of Jesus Christ; not for the degrees of it, not for the fruits and advantages of it, but for the truth and sincerity of it: I greatly long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, no more endeared affection, between such ministers of Christ and their beloved people, as they have been happily instrumental to convert to God when present with them, they passionately love them; when absent from them they affectionately long after them; imitating, as much as they can, their Lord Jesus Christ, both in reality and sincerity, and also in the measure and degree, of endearing affection:

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment;

After salutations given by St. Paul to his beloved Philippians, he next pours out his soul in fervent prayer and supplication for them; and the mercy which he prays for is observable, first, namely,

growth and proficiency in grace: This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge,and in all judgment; that their love to God, their love to him, and their love one to another, may yet more and more abound.

Love is the root-grace from which most graces spring; therefore he prays for the strengthening of that grace in particular, and that there may be found with them judgment, as well as affection, in the exercise of it: we ought to love judiciously, as well as affectionately.
The more judicious a saint grows in his Christian course, and the more understanding and judgment is found with him in the way of his duty; the stronger his grace is, and the more glory will he bring to God.
The understanding and judgment being the guiding and leading faculties in man, there can be no more acceptable holiness in the will, than there is knowledge in the understanding.

I can hate sin, and love God, no more than I know of the evil of sin, and of the perfections that are in God: the more judicious then a Christian grows, the more his holiness grows; and accordingly St. Paul's prayer is, that they may grow more and more in knowledge in all judgment.

Observe, 2. The great ends mentioned by the apostle for which he did so earnestly desire their proficiency in knowledge and judgment, and their growth in love, and every other grace; namely,

1. That they might approve things that are excellent, that is, all such things as the gospel requires: implying, that the things prescribed to us in the gospel, are things excellent and good for us, things worthy to be prescribed by God, and things reasonable to be practised by us; and that the approbation of these things, by a steadiness in judgment and practice, is every Christian's duty, and ought to be their great endeavour.

2. That they might be sincere in their holy profession, incorrupt and pure both in doctrine and manners.

3. That they might be without offence, unblameable in conversation, and be kept from being occasions of stumbling unto others, even to the end of their days.

4. He prays that they may not only be inoffensive persons, but fruitful Christians: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God; that is, that they may abound in good works, undertaken in Christ's strength, and with an eye at God's glory.

Learn hence, 1. That a negative holiness is not sufficient to salvation: it is not enough that Christians be harmless and inoffensive towards others, but they must labour after an holy fruitfulness in good works: they must be filled with all the fruits of righteousness.

Learn, 2. That our works be truly good, and fruits of righteousness, it is necessary that they be done by Christ's strength and assistance, and with an eye at the glory and praise of God, in order to their acceptance: Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Learn, 3. That no shorter time ought to be assigned for our inoffensive walking, and fruitfulness in conversation, than the day of our death: Unto the death of Christ, says our apostle, that is, till the great reckoning-day, when Christ will render to us our complete reward: if we be faithful and fruitful to the death, we shall then receive the crown of life.

10 that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ;

11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

To Me to Live Is Christ

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Our apostle's design in these words is, to prevent the Philippians' stumbling, and being scandalized at his present sufferings, assuring them that the things which happened to him, through the malice of his persecutors, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, than any ways to the hinderance of it, as they feared.

Learn hence, That the sufferings and persecutions which the messengers and ministers of Christ do undergo for the sake of the gospel, are oft-times so overruled by the wisdom of God, that they rather increase than diminish the church, and rather promote than prejudice the interest of the gospel.
Next, he declares the special and particular advantages which had redounded to the gospel, by those sufferings which he had patiently endured for the gospel's sake.

1. His bonds in Christ, that is, his imprisonment for the gospel of Christ, were manifest in the palace; that is, were manifestly taken notice of in Nero's court, and elsewhere in the city; so that people enquiring into the cause of his sufferings, found that it was not any misdemeanor, but that his preaching and practising the doctrine of Christianity was the only reason of his sufferings.

2. Another advantage which accrued to the church by his bonds, was this, namely, that many ministers of Christ, who preached the word of God far and near, hearing of his constancy under suffering, were both encouraged and emboldened thereby; encouraged to shake off fear, and emboldened to preach Christ with greater resolution. Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Note here, The title given by this great apostle to the inferior ministers of the gospel: he calls them brethren, and brethren in the Lord, putting himself and them in mind of their mutual and respective duties, which was to live and love as brethren: to admonish, exhort, and encourage one another, to stand up in defence of the just credit and reputation of one another, and jointly to set their shoulder to the work of Christ together.

Note, 2. That the ministers of Christ, observing how God upholds some of their brethren under sufferings and persecutions, should encourage themselves to go on with resolution in the work of the Lord, not fearing their own personal sufferings, knowing that the same assistance which supported one, stands ready to succour others: The brethern in the Lord waxed confident by my bonds.

13 so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places;*

14 and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife. What was the ground of this "envy and strife" the apostle does not mention. It would seem, however, that even in Rome there was a party which was jealous of the influence of Paul, and which supposed that this was a good opportunity to diminish his influence, and to strengthen their own cause. He was not now at large so as to be able to meet and confute them. They had access to the mass of the people. It was easy, under plausible pretences, to insinuate hints about the ambitious aims, or improper influence of Paul, or to take strong ground against him and in favour of their own views, and they availed themselves of this opportunity. It would seem most probable, though this is not mentioned, that these persons were Judaizing teachers, professing Christianity, and who supposed that Paul's views were derogatory to the honour of Moses and the law.

He suffered from false friends as well as from enemies (Php 1:15,16): Some preach Christ even of envy and strife. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely. Now this would be a stumbling-block and discouragement to some, that there were those who envied Paul's reputation in the churches, and the interest he had among the Christians, and endeavoured to supplant and undermine him. They were secretly pleased when he was laid up in prison, that they might have the better opportunity to steal away the people's affections; and they laid themselves out the more in preaching, that they might gain to themselves the reputation they envied him: Supposing to add affliction to my bonds. They thought hereby to grieve his spirit, and make him afraid of losing his interest, uneasy under his confinement, and impatient for release. It is sad that there should be men who profess the gospel, especially who preach it, who are governed by such principles as these, who should preach Christ in spite to Paul, and to increase the affliction of his bonds. Let us not think it strange if in these later and more degenerate ages of the church there should be any such. However, there were others who were animated by Paul's sufferings to preach Christ the more vigorously: Some also of good will, and love: from sincere affection to the gospel, that the work might not stand while the workman was laid up.--Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. They knew that he was appointed to support and propagate the gospel in the world, against all the violence and opposition of its enemies, and were afraid lest the gospel should suffer by his confinement. This made them the more bold to preach the word and supply his lack of service to the church.

Our apostle had declared in the foregoing verses, that several of his brethren in the work of the ministry, through his constancy in suffering, were emboldened to preach Jesus Christ with more resolution than before. But here he discovers, that there was a vast difference between those preachers: all did not preach Christ alike, with the same mind, from the same motives, for the same sincere ends.

Some, alas! preach Christ out of envy and strife; that is, envying the success of the apostle's ministry, and endeavouring to draw people off from approving him, to applaud them, hoping to grieve and gall him thereby: but others preached the gospel of Christ of good-will, with a purity of intention, and sincerity of affection, both towards Christ and towards himself, who, for the defence of the gospel, now lay in prison. However, seeing Christ was preached and made known by both, by some in pretence, by others in truth, the apostle rejoiced at it, and took comfort in it.

Learn hence, 1. That such ministers of the gospel are gladly and joyfully to be heard, who preach Christ and his pure word soundly and truly, with what mind soever, from what motive soever, and for what end soever, they preach Christ and his holy gospel. The word is his which they bring, how vicious soever the person, and how bad soever the intention be of him that brings it; and, if the message be his, it is our duty to receive it without prejudice, be the principle what it will in him that delivers it. Many preach in Christ's name, who perish in his wrath; for Christ takes notice of the inward intention, as well as of the outward action, and observes not only the matter which ministers preach, but the end for which, and the motives from which, they preach, whether from love and good will, or from envy and strife.

Learn, 2. That such Christians who find their hearts inflamed with zeal for the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls, do and will rejoice exceedingly that Christ is preached, whoever the person is, or whatever the principle may be in him that preaches: If Christ be preached, says St. Paul, I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

17 but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Still our apostle pursues and prosecutes his former design, namely, to prevent the Philippians being offended at his sufferings; and accordingly, he shows that as the gospel of Christ had gained much already, it should gain yet more, by his imprisonment and afflictions, which he was very confident would tend to the furtherance of his salvation, through the help of their prayers, and the supplies of grace from the Spirit of Christ; where, by salvation is meant deliverance out of his present sufferings, which he fully expected by the help and benefit of the church's prayers.

Great are the expectations of the saints, even as to temporal salvation and outward mercies, from the joint prayers and intercessions of the church of Christ. This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer. But if by salvation be meant eternal happiness, then his confident persuasion was this, That all the designs of his adversaries against him should be so overruled and ordered by God, that through the influences and supplies of the Holy Spirit, all should work together for good, and his eternal salvation be advanced thereby, through the concurrence and assistance of their prayers.

20 according to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

In the 20th verse he tells them, that according to his former expectation and hope, he was resolved that no terror should ever make him ashamed to own the truth of Christ, but that, with a convincing boldness, he would now, as heretofore appear in the defence of it, and that Christ should be magnified by him in the body, whether by life or death; that is, whether my life be further prolonged, or be now by martyrdom ended, Christ will be magnified: if I live, the power of Christ will be magnified in my deliverance from death: if I die, his power will be magnified in enabling me to undergo death for his name and sake: so that I am at a point, either to love or die, as the wisdom of Christ shall determine; I am, as to myself, indifferent for either, well knowing

that Christ will be glorified in me, and by me, both by life and death.

Learn hence, That nothing lies so near the heart of a saint as the honour and glory of Christ; this he resolves shall be promoted by him, living and dying; by his great services, supposing his life, and by his extraordinary sufferings and martyrdom, in case of his death.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

For to me to live is Christ. My sole aim in living is to glorify Christ. He is the supreme End of my life, and I value it only as being devoted to his honour. Doddridge. His aim was not honour, learning, gold, pleasure; it was to glorify the Lord Jesus. This was the single purpose of his soul--a purpose to which he devoted himself with as much singleness and ardour as ever did a miser to the pursuit of gold, or a devotee of pleasure to amusement, or an aspirant for fame to ambition. This implied the following things:

(1.) A purpose to know as much of Christ as it was possible to know--to become as fully acquainted as he could with his rank, his character, his plans, with the relations which he sustained to the Father, and with the claims and influences of his religion. See Php 3:10, Eph 3:19. Comp. Jn 17:3.

(2.) A purpose to imitate Christ--to make him the model of his life. It was a design that his Spirit should reign in his heart, that the same temper should actuate him, and that the same great end should be constantly had in view.

(3.) A purpose to make his religion known, as far as possible, among mankind. To this Paul seriously gave his life, and devoted his great talents. His aim was to see on how many minds he could impress the sentiments of the Christian religion; to see to how many of the human family he could make Christ known, to whom he was unknown before. Never was there a man who gave himself

with more ardour to any enterprise, than Paul did to this; and never was one more successful, in any undertaking, than he was in this.

(4.) It was a purpose to enjoy Christ. He drew his comforts from him. His happiness he found in communion with him. It was not in the works of art; not in the pursuits of elegant literature; not in the gay and fashionable world; but it was in communion with the Saviour, and in endeavouring to please him. Remark,

(1.) Paul never had occasion to regret this course. It produced no sadness when he looked over his life. He never felt that he had had an unworthy aim of living; he did not wish that his purpose had been different when he came to die.

(2.) If it was Paul's duty thus to live, it is no less that of every Christian. What was there in his case that made it his duty to "live unto Christ," which does not exist in the case of every sincere Christian on earth? No believer, when he comes to die, will regret that he has lived unto Christ; but how many, alas! regret that this has not been the aim and purpose of their souls?

And to die is gain - But how would it be gain to die? What advantage would there be in Paul's circumstances? What in ours? It may be answered, that it will be gain for a Christian to die in the following respects:--

(1.) He will be then freed from sin. Here it is the source of perpetual humiliation and sorrow; in heaven he will sin no more.

(2.) He will be freed from doubts about his condition. Here the best are liable to doubts about theft personal piety, and often experience many an anxious hour in reference to this point; in heaven, doubt will be known no more.

(3.) He will be freed from temptation. Here, no one knows when he may be tempted, nor how powerful the temptation may be; in heaven, there will be no allurement to lead him astray; no artful,

cunning, and skilful votaries of pleasure to place inducements before him to sin; and no heart to yield to them, if there were.

(4.) He will be delivered from all his enemies--from the slanderer, the calumniator, the persecutor. Here the Christian is constantly liable to have his motives called in question, or to be met with detraction and slander; there, there will be none to do him injustice; all will rejoice in the belief that he is pure.

(5.) He will be delivered from suffering. Here he is constantly liable to it. His health fails, his friends die, his mind is sad. There, there shall be no separation of friends, no sickness, and no tears.

(6.) He will be delivered from death. Here, death is ever nigh--dreadful, alarming, terrible to our nature There, death will be known no more. No face will ever turn pale, and no knees tremble, at his approach; in all heaven there will never be seen a funeral procession, nor will the soil there ever open its bosom to furnish a grave.

(7.) To all this may be added the fact, that the Christian will be surrounded by his best friends; that he will be reunited with those whom he loved on earth; that he will be associated with the angels of light; and that he will be admitted to the immediate presence of his Saviour and his God? Why, then, should a Christian be afraid to die? And why should he not hail that hour, when it comes, as the hour of his deliverance, and rejoice that he is going home? Does the prisoner, long confined in a dungeon, dread the hour which is to open his prison, add permit him to return to his family and friends? Does the man in a foreign land, long an exile, dread the hour when he shall embark on the ocean to be conveyed where he may embrace the friends of his youth? Does the sick man dread the hour which restores him to health? the afflicted, the hour of comfort? the wanderer at night, the cheering light of returning day? And why, then, should the Christian dread the hour which will restore him to immortal vigour; which shall remove all his sorrows; which shall introduce him to everlasting day?

"Death is the crown of life: Were death denied, poor man would live in vain; Were death denied, to live would not be life; Were death denied, even fools would wish to die. Death wounds to cure; we tall; we rise; we reign ! Spring from our fetters; hasten in the skies; Where blooming Eden withers in our sight. Death gives us more than was in Eden lost. The king of terrors is the prince of peace." Night Thoughts, iii.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

And to be with Christ. We may remark on this expression,

(1.) that this was the true reason why he wished to be away. It was his strong love to Christ; his anxious wish to be with him; his firm belief that in his presence was "fulness of joy."

(2.) Paul believed that the soul of the Christian would be immediately with the Saviour at death. It was evidently his expectation that he would at once pass to his presence, and not that he would remain in an intermediate state to some far distant period.

(3.) The soul does not sleep at death. Paul expected to be with Christ, and to be conscious of the fact--to see him, and to partake of his glory.

(4.) The soul of the believer is made happy at death. To be with Christ is synonymous with being in heaven, for Christ is in heaven, and is its glory. We may add,

(a.) that this wish to be with Christ constitutes a marked difference between a Christian and other men. Other men may be willing to die; perhaps be desirous to die, because their sorrows are so great that they feel that they cannot be borne. But the Christian desires to depart from a different motive altogether. It is to be with Christ--and this constitutes a broad line of distinction between him and other men.

(b.) A mere willingness to die, or even a desire to die, is no certain evidence of preparation for death. If this willingness or desire is caused by mere intensity of suffering; if it is produced by disgust at the world, or by disappointment; if it arises from some view of fancied Elysian fields beyond the grave, it constitutes no evidence whatever of preparation for death. I have seen not a few persons who were not professed Christians on a bed of death, and not a few willing to die, nay, not a few who wished to depart. But in the vast majority of instances it was because they were sick of life, or because their pain made them sigh for relief, or because they were so wretched that they did not care what happened--and this they and their friends construed into an evidence that they were prepared to die! In most instances this is a miserable delusion; in no case is a mere willingness to die an evidence of preparation for death.

24 nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.
25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;
26 that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.
27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Only let your conversation. The word conversation we now apply almost exclusively to oral discourse, or to talking. But it was not formerly confined to that, and is never so used in the Scriptures. It means conduct in general--including, of course, our manner of speaking, but not limited to that--and should be so understood in every place where it occurs in the Bible. The original word here used πολιτευω-politeuo, means, properly, to administer the State; to live as a citizen; to conduct one's self according to the laws and customs of a State. See Acts 23:1. Comp. examples in Wetstein. It would not be improperly rendered, "let your conduct, as a citizen, be as becomes the gospel;" and might without impropriety, though not exclusively, be referred to our deportment as members of a community, or citizens of a State. It undoubtedly implies that, as citizens, we should act, in all the duties which that relation

involves--in maintaining the laws, in submission to authority, in the choice of rulers, etc., as well as in other relations --on the principles of the gospel; for the believer is bound to perform every duty on Christian principles. But the direction here should not be confined to that. It doubtless includes our conduct in all relations in life, and refers to our deportment in general; not merely as citizens of the State, but as members of the church, and in all other relations. In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it--all should be done as becomes the gospel. The direction, therefore, in this place, is to be understood of everything pertaining to conduct.

As it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

(1.) The rules of the gospel are to be applied to all our conduct--to our conversation, business transactions, modes of dress, style of living, entertainments, etc. There is nothing which we do, or say, or purpose, that is to be excepted from those rules.

(2.) There is a way of living which is appropriate to the gospel, or which is such as the gospel requires. There is something which the gospel would secure as its proper fruits in all our conduct, and by which our lives should be regulated. It would distinguish us from the gay, and from those who seek honour and wealth as their supreme object. If all Christians were under the influence of the gospel, there would be something in their dress, temper, conversation, and aims, which would distinguish them from others. The gospel is not a thing of naught; nor is it intended that it should exert no influence on its friends.

(3.) It is very important that Christians should frame their lives by the rules of the gospel, and, to this end, should study them, and know what they are. This is important,

(a.) because they are the best and wisest of all rules;

(b.) because it is only in this way that Christians can do good;

(c.) because they have solemnly covenanted with the Lord to take his laws as their guide;

(d.) because it is only in this way that they can enjoy religion; and

(e.) because it is only by this that they can have peace on a dying bed. If men live as "becometh the gospel," they live well. Their lives are honest and honourable; they are men of truth and uprightness; they will have no sources of regret when they die, and they will not give occasion to their friends to hang their heads with shame in the remembrance of them. No man on a dying bed ever yet regretted that he had framed his life by the rules of the gospel, or felt that his conduct had been conformed too much to it.

28 and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

For unto you. Unto you as Christians. This favour is granted unto you in your present circumstances. It is given. God concedes to you this privilege or advantage. In the behalf of Christ. In the cause of Christ, or with a view to honour Christ. Or, these things are brought on you in consequence of your being Christians. Not only to believe on him. It is represented here as a privilege to be permitted to believe on Christ. It is so.

(1.) It is an honour to a man to believe one who ought to be believed, to trust one who ought to be trusted, to love one who ought to be loved.

(2.) It is a privilege to believe on Christ, because it is by such faith that our sins are forgiven; that we become reconciled to God, and have the hope of heaven.

(3.) It is a privilege, because it saves the mind from the tortures and the deadly influence of unbelief --the agitation, and restlessness, and darkness, and gloom of a sceptic.

(4.) It is a privilege, because we have then a Friend to whom we may go in trial, and on whom me may roll all our burdens. If there is anything for which a Christian ought to give unfeigned thanks, it is that he has been permitted to believe on the Redeemer. Let a sincere Christian compare his peace, and joy, and hope of heaven, and support in trials, with the restlessness, uneasiness, and dread of death, in the mind of an unbeliever, and he will see abundant occasion for gratitude. But also to suffer for his sake. Here it is represented as a privilege to suffer in the cause of the Redeemer--a declaration which may sound strange to the world. Yet this sentiment frequently occurs in the New Testament. Thus it is said of the apostles, Acts 5:41, that "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Col 1:24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you." 1Pet 4:13: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Comp. Jas 1:2, Mk 10:30. Acts 5:41. It is a privilege thus to suffer in the cause of Christ, because

(1.) we then resemble the Lord Jesus, and are united with him in trials;

(2.) because we have evidence that we are his, if trials come upon us in his cause;

(3.) because we are engaged in a good cause, and the privilege of maintaining such a cause is worth much of suffering; and

(4.) because it will be connected with a brighter crown and more exalted honour in heaven.

30 having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Having the same struggle. The same agony αγωνα-- the same strife with bitter foes, and the same struggle in the warfare.

Which ye saw in me. When I was in Philippi, opposed by the multitude, and thrown into prison, Acts 16.

And now hear to be in me. In Rome. He was a prisoner there, was surrounded by enemies, and was about to be tried for his life. He says that they ought to rejoice if they were called to pass through the same trials.

In this chapter we have a beautiful illustration of the true spirit of a Christian, in circumstances exceedingly trying. The apostle was in a situation where religion would show itself, if there were any in the heart; and where, if there was none, the bad passions of our nature would be developed. He was a prisoner. He had been unjustly accused. He was about to be put on trial for his life, and it was wholly uncertain what the result would be. He was surrounded with enemies, and there were not a few false friends and rivals who took advantage of his imprisonment to diminish his influence, and to extend their own. He was, perhaps, about to die; and, at any rate, was in such circumstances as to be under a necessity of looking death in the face.

In this situation he exhibited some of the tenderest and purest feelings that ever exist in the heart of man--the genuine fruit of pure religion. He remembered them with affectionate and constant interest in his prayers. He gave thanks for all that God had done for them. Looking upon his own condition, he said that the trials which had happened to him, great as they were, had been overruled to the furtherance of the gospel. The gospel had become known even in the imperial palace. And though it had been preached by some with no good will towards him, and with much error, yet he cherished no hard feeling; he sought for no revenge; he rejoiced that in any way, and from any motives, the great truth had been made known that a Saviour died. Looking forward to the possibility that his trial before the emperor might terminate in his death, he calmly anticipated such a result, and looked at it with composure. He says that, in reference to the great purpose of his life, it would make no difference whether he lived or died, for he was assured that Christ would be honoured whatever was the result. To him personally it would be gain to die; and, as an individual, he longed for the hour when he might be with Christ. This feeling is religion, and this is produced only by the hope of eternal life through the Redeemer.

An impenitent sinner never expressed such feelings as these; nor does any other form of religion but Christianity enable a man to look upon death in this manner. It is not often that a man is even willing to demand then this state of mind is produced not by the hope of heaven, but by disgust at the world; by disappointed ambition; by painful sickness, when the sufferer feels that any change would be for the better. But Paul had none of these feelings. His desire to depart was not produced by a hatred of life; nor by the greatness of his sufferings; nor by disgust at the world. It was the noble, elevated, and pure wish to be with Christ--to see him whom he supremely loved, whom he had so long and so faithfully served, and with whom he was to dwell for ever. To that world where Christ dwelt he would gladly rise; and the only reason why he could be content to remain here was, that he might be a little longer useful to his fellow-men. Such is the elevated nature of Christian feeling. But alas! how few attain to it; and even among Christians how few are they that can habitually feel and realize that it would be gain for them to die! How few can say with sincerity that they desire to depart, and to be with Christ? How rarely does even the Christian reach that state of mind, and gain that view of heaven, that, standing amidst his comforts here, and looking on his family, and friends, and property, he can say, from the depths of his soul, that he feels it would be gain for him to go to heaven? Yet such deadness to the world may be produced--as it was in the case of Paul; such deadness to the world should exist in the heart of every sincere Christian. Where it does exist, death loses its terror, and the heir of life can look calmly on the bed where he will lie down to die; can think calmly of the moment when he will give the parting hand to wife and child, and press them to his bosom for the last time, and imprint on them the last kiss; can look peacefully on the spot where he will moulder back to dust, and in view of all can triumphantly say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Philippians-2

Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation

1 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of
love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,
2 fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love,
being of one accord, of one mind.

The important duty which the apostle exhorts the Philippians to; and that is, love and unity, unity in judgment and opinion, unity in heart and affection, unity in design and endeavours; so necessary and advantageous is the duty of unity and concord among all the professors of Christianity, that all the cautions and warnings, all the advice and counsel, all the melting entreaties and passionate importunities of the ministers of Christ, are little enough to excite persons to it, and direct them in the practice of it.

Observe, 2. What an heap of arguments the apostle makes use of to excite and quicken the Philippians to the love and practice of this duty: If there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any bowels and mercies.

As if he had said, If ever you have tasted, by means of my ministry, any sweetness and consolation in Christ and his holy religion, if ever you have found any comfort in his love, if ever you have enjoyed any communion with his Spirit, if ye be men, and have any bowels of mercy for yourselves, if ye be Christians, and have any pity for me in my bonds, fulfill ye my joy in this, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind.

O! the tenderness, the gentleness, and meekness of soul which was in St. Paul, and ought to be in every spiritual pastor towards his people, to win them, and prevail upon them to love the truth and peace.

Fulfil ye my joy, says the apostle; as if he had said, Sufferings I have enough already; O! do not you, by your divisions and dissensions, add more: I am already a prisoner, expecting the sentence of death, preparing for the sword of persecution, but none of these things move me; I can rejoice in a dungeon, sing in the stocks, triumph in death, if I can but hear you stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

But, if I hear that you are broken by divisions, my heart is broke; the news of differences and dissensions among you will be heavier to me than my chain, darker than my dungeon, sharper than Nero's sword. Do not thus add to my sorrow and sufferings; but as you have begun and occasioned joy in me, I beseech you fulfil and complete my joy, by your being of one heart, of one mind, entirely one.

3 *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Let nothing be done through strife. With a spirit of contention. This command forbids us to do anything, or attempt anything, as the mere result of strife. This is not the principle from which we are to act, or by which we are to be governed. We are to form no plan, and aim at no object, which is to be secured in this way. The command prohibits all attempts to secure anything over others by mere physical strength, or by superiority of intellect or numbers, or as the result of dark schemes and plans formed by rivalry, or by the indulgence of angry passions, or with the spirit of ambition. We are not to attempt to do anything merely by outstripping others, or by showing that we have more talent, courage, or zeal. What we do is to be by principle, and with a desire to maintain the truth, and to glorify God. And yet how often is this rule violated! How often do Christian denominations attempt to outstrip each other, and to see which shall be the greatest! How often do ministers preach with no better aim! How often do we attempt to outdo others in dress, and in the splendour of furniture and equipage! How often, even in plans of benevolence, and in the cause of virtue and religion, is the secret aim to outdo others. This is all wrong. There is no holiness in such efforts. Never once did the Redeemer act from such a

motive, and never once should this motive be allowed to influence us. The conduct of others may be allowed to show us what we can do, and ought to do; but it should not be our sole aim to outstrip them. Comp. 2Cor 9:2-4. Or vainglory. The word here used --κενοδοζια kenodoxia, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the adjective--κενοδοξος kenedoxos, occurs once in Gall 5:26. Gall 5:26. It means, properly, empty pride, or glory, and is descriptive of vain and hollow parade and show. Suidas renders it, "any vain opinion about one's self"--ματαιατιςπερι εαυτουοιησις. The idea seems to be that of mere self-esteem; a mere desire to honour ourselves, to attract attention, to win praise, to make ourselves uppermost, or foremost, or the main object. The command here solemnly forbids our doing anything with such an aim--no matter whether it be in intellectual attainments, in physical strength, in skill in music, in eloquence or song, in dress, furniture, or religion. Self is not to be foremost; selfishness is not to be the motive. Probably there is no command of the Bible which would have a wider sweep than this, or would touch on more points of human conduct, if fairly applied. Who is there who passes a single day without, in some respect, desiring to display himself? What minister of the gospel preaches, who never has any wish to exhibit his talents, eloquence, or learning? How few make a gesture, but with some wish to display the grace or power witch which it is done! Who, in conversation, is always free from a desire to show his wit, or his power in argumentation, or his skill in repartee? Who plays at the piano without the desire of commendation? Who thunders in the senate, or goes to the field of battle; who builds a house, or purchases an article of apparel; who writes a book, or performs a deed of benevolence, altogether uninfluenced by this desire? If all could be taken out of human conduct which is performed merely from "strife," or from "vain-glory," how small a portion would be left! But in lowliness of mind. Modesty, or humility. The word here used is the same which is rendered humility in Acts 20:19, Col 2:18,23; 1Pet 5:5; humbleness in Col 3:12; and lowliness in Eph 4:2; Php 2:3. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It here means humility, and it stands opposed to that pride or self-valuation which would lead us to strive for the ascendancy, or which acts from a wish for flattery or

praise. The best and the only true correction of these faults is humility. This virtue consists in estimating ourselves according to truth. It is a willingness to take the place which we ought to take in the sight of God and man; and, having the low estimate of our own importance and character which the truth about our insignificance as creatures and vileness as sinners would produce, it will lead us to a willingness to perform lowly and humble offices that we may benefit others. Let each esteem other better than themselves. Comp. 1Pet 5:5. This is one of the effects produced by true humility, and it naturally exists in every truly modest mind. The reasons are these:

(1.) We are sensible of our own defects, but we have not the same clear view of the defects of others. We see our own hearts; we are conscious of the great corruption there; we have painful evidence of the impurity of the motives which often actuate us-- the evil thoughts and corrupt desires in our own souls; but we have not the same view of the errors, defects, and follies of others. We can see only their outward conduct; but, in our own case, we can look within. It is natural for those who have any just sense of the depravity of their own souls, charitably to hope that it is not so with others, and to believe that they have purer hearts. This will lead us to feel that they are worthy of more respect than we are. Hence this is always the characteristic of modesty and humility--graces which the gospel is fitted eminently to produce. A truly pious man will be always, therefore, an humble man, and will wish that others should be preferred in office and honour to himself. Of course, this will not make him blind to the defects of others when they are manifested; but he will be himself retiring, modest, unambitious, unobtrusive. This rule of Christianity would strike a blow at all the ambition of the world. It would rebuke the love of office, and would produce universal contentment in any low condition of life where the providence of God may have cast our lot. 1Cor 7:21.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Look not every man on his own things. That is, be not selfish. Do not let your care and attention be wholly absorbed by your own concerns, or by the concerns of your own family. Evince a

tender interest for the happiness of the whole, and let the welfare of others lie near your hearts. This, of course, does not mean that there is to be any improper interference in the business of others, or that we are to have the character of "busy-bodies in other men's matters," 2Thes 3:11; 1Timm 5:13; 1Pet 4:15; but that we are to regard, with appropriate solicitude, the welfare of others, and to strive to do them good. But every man also on the things of others. It is the duty of every man to do this. No one is at liberty to live for himself, or to disregard the wants of others. The object of this rule is to break up the narrow spirit of selfishness, and to produce a benevolent regard for the happiness of others. In respect to the rule we may observe:

(1.) We are not to be "busy-bodies" in the concerns of others. See the references above. We are not to attempt to pry into their secret purposes. Every man has his own plans, and thoughts, and intentions, which no other one has a right to look into. Nothing is more odious than an intermeddler in the concerns of others.

(2.) We are not to obtrude our advice where it is not sought, or at unseasonable times and places, even if the advice is in itself good. No man likes to be interrupted to hear advice; and I have no right to require that he should suspend his business in order that I may give him counsel.

(3.) We are not to find fault with what pertains exclusively to him. We are to remember that there are some things which are his business, not ours; and we are to learn to "possess our souls in patience," if he does not give just as much as we think he ought to benevolent objects, or if he dresses in a manner not to please our taste, or if he indulges in things which do not accord exactly with our views. He may see reasons for his conduct which we do not; and it is possible that he may be right, and that, if we understood the whole case, we should think and act as he does. We often complain of a man because he does not give as much as we think he ought to objects of charity; and it is possible that he may be miserably niggardly and narrow. But it is also possible that he may be more embarrassed than we know of; or that he

may just then have demands against him of which we are ignorant; or that he may have numerous poor relatives dependant on him; or that he gives much with "the left hand" which is not known by "the right hand." At any rate, it is his business, not ours; and we are not qualified to judge until we understand the whole case.

(4.) We are not to be gossips about the concerns of others. We are not to hunt up small stories and petty scandals respecting their families; we are not to pry into domestic affairs, and divulge them abroad, and find pleasure in circulating such things from house to house. There are domestic secrets which are not to be betrayed; and there is scarcely an offence of a meaner or more injurious character than to divulge to the public what we have seen in a family whose hospitality we have enjoyed.

(5.) Where Christian duty and kindness require us to look into the concerns of others, there should be the utmost delicacy. Even children have their own secrets, and their own plans and amusements, on a small scale, quite as important to them as the greater games which we are playing in life; and they will feel the meddlesomeness of a busy-body to be as odious to them as we should in our plans. A delicate parent, therefore, who has undoubtedly a right to know all about his children, will not rudely intrude into their privacies, or meddle with their concerns. So, when we visit the sick, while we show a tender sympathy for them, we should not be too particular in inquiring into their maladies or their feelings. So, when those with whom we sympathize have brought their calamities on themselves by their own fault, we should not ask too many questions about it. We should not too closely examine one who is made poor by intemperance, or who is in prison for crime. And so, when we go to sympathize with those who have been, by a reverse of circumstances, reduced from affluence to penury, we should not ask too many questions. We should let them tell their own story. If they voluntarily make us their confidants, and tell us all about their circumstances, it is well; but let us not drag out the circumstances, or wound their feelings by our impertinent

inquiries, or our indiscreet sympathy in their affairs. There are always secrets which the sons and daughters of misfortune would wish to keep to themselves. But, while these things are true, it is also true that the rule before us positively requires us to show an interest in the concerns of others; and it may be regarded as implying the following things:

(1.) We are to feel that the spiritual interests of every one in the church is, in a certain sense, our own interest. The church is one. It is confederated together for a common object. Each one is intrusted with a portion of the honour of the whole, and the conduct of one member affects the character of all. We are therefore to promote, in every way possible, the welfare of every other member of the church. If they go astray, we are to admonish and entreat them; if they are in error, we are to instruct them; if they are in trouble, we are to aid them. Every member of the church has a claim on the sympathy of his brethren, and should be certain of always finding it when his circumstances are such as to demand it.

(2.) There are circumstances where it is proper to look with special interest on the temporal concerns of others. It is when the poor, the fatherless, and the afflicted must be sought out in order to be aided and relieved. They are too retiring and modest to press their situation on the attention of others, and they need that others should manifest a generous care in their welfare in order to relieve them. This is not improper interference in their concerns, nor will it be so regarded.

(3.) For a similar reason, we should seek the welfare of all others in a spiritual sense. We should seek to arouse the sinner, and lead him to the Saviour. He is blind, and will not come himself; unconcerned, and will not seek salvation; filled with the love of this world, and will not seek a better; devoted to pursuits that will lead him to ruin, and he ought to be apprized of it. It is no more an improper interference in his concerns to apprize him of his condition, and to attempt to lead him to the Saviour, than it is to warn a man in a dark night, who walks on the verge of a

precipice, of his peril; or to arouse one from sleep whose house is in flames. In like manner, it is no more intermeddling with the concerns of another to tell him that there is a glorious heaven which may be his, than it is to apprize a man that there is a mine of golden ore on his farm. It is for the man's own interest, and it is the office of a friend to remind him of these things. Hie does a man a favour who tells him that he has a Redeemer, and that there is a heaven to which he may rise; he does his neighbour the greatest possible kindness who apprizes him that there is a world of infinite woe, and tells him of an easy way by which he may escape it. The world around is dependant on the church of Christ to be apprized of these truths. The gay will not warn the gay of their danger; the crowd that presses to the theatre or the ball-room will not apprize those who are there that they are in the broad way to hell; and every one who loves his neighbour should feel sufficient interest in him to tell him that he may be eternally happy in heaven.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
6 who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Behold here the greatest example of humility, of lowliness and abasement, that ever the world was acquainted with: the mighty God became less than man!

To make a due estimate hereof we must first observe, What Christ was before his incarnation and humiliation, namely, the great and mighty God: for, says the apostle, he was in the form of God, and equal with God; that is, being the substantial form, and essential image of the Father, enjoying the divine nature, with all its glory, and all the ensigns of majesty which God himself had eternally and invariably. As to be in the form of a servant, signifies that he was a servant; so to be in the form of God, signifies that he was God.

And observe, 2. He was in the form of God, before he was in the form of a servant: And, being in the form of God, he thought it

no robbery to be equal with God. Now if he thought it no robbery, it could be no robbery; and if no robbery, he must be equal; and if equal, he must be God by nature, as the Father is.
Learn hence, That our Saviour possessed that glory which is truly divine, before he assumed our nature as man: he had a peerage or equality with his Father in glory; the angels adored him im heaven before his incarnation on earth, Isa 6:1,2.

Observe, 3. What mighty abasement the holy Jesus, God blessed for evermore, underwent, when he humbled himself: He was found in fashion as a man; he took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.
Behold here the Son of righteousness under an (almost total) eclipse; he that was eternally beautiful and glorious, being the brightness of his Father's glory, was so veiled, clouded, and debased, in the day of his humiliation, that he appears not like a God, scarce like a man.
Note, 1. He took upon him the form of a servant: now this was a lower degree of condescension than the assuming the naked human nature; for a servant is not simply a man, but a mean man, a man in a low estate.

Lord! what abasement was here, that Christ, who was in the form of God, should degrade himself into the form of a servant, and take the human nature without honour, after it had lost its primitive innocency, after sin had blotted the original glory of it, and withered the beauty and excellency thereof! O inconceivable condescension!

Note, 2. He emptied himself, or made himself of no reputation, that is, in the day of his incarnaton he laid aside the robes of his glory, he emptied himself of that divine splendour and majesty which before he had; not by ceasing to be what he was, but by assuming something to himself which before he was not: the Son of God descended from his throne, and put on our vile mortality;

he parted with his glory, that he might part with his life for our salvation.

Note, 3. He was made in the likeness of man, and found in fashion as a man; that is, he was truly and really man, made in the likeness of other men, without any visible outward difference: He was in all things like unto us, sin only excepted, Rom 8:3. He is said to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, that is, in flesh that had the marks and miserable effects of sin upon it: not that Christ assumed sinful flesh, or flesh really defiled, by sin, but he assumed the human nature, attended with a whole troop of human imfirmities, which sin first let into that nature, as hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, mortality and death. By reason of which, though he was not a sinner, yet he looked like one, and they that conversed with him took him for one, seeing all these effects of sin upon him.

Lord, what a stoop was this! To be made in the likeness of innocent flesh had been much; but to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, rebellious flesh, flesh, though not defiled, yet miseraably defaced by sin! O, what is this! and who can declare his humiliation!

Note, 4. The nature of this humiliation: he humbled himself; the word imports both a real and a voluntary abasement. Real: Christ did not personsate an humble man, nor act the part of one in a debased state, but was really and in very deed humbled, both in the sight of God and man: and, as it was real, so also was his humiliation voluntary. It is not said he was humbled, but that he humbled himself; he was willing to stoop to this low and abject state for us; and it was the voluntariness of his humiliation that made it so acceptable to God, and so beneficial and servicable unto us.

Note, 5. The degrees of our holy Lord's humiliation: he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Here we have the depth of Christ's humiliation specified; it was unto death, and also aggravated, even unto the death of the cross; he humbled

himself, not only to become a mortal man, but a dead corpse; and that too hanging on a tree, dying the death of a malefactor. There was pain, shame, and a curse, in the death of the cross: Christ underwent the pain patiently, the shame meekly, the curse obediently, all of them willingly and cheerfully, that the justice of God might be satisfied, his wrath pacified, his majesty reconciled, death and hell vanquished and destroyed. Behold the trancendency of Christ's love to the children of men! Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but greater love had the Son of God than this, that he laid down his life for his inveterate enemies: he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

1. Here are the two natures of Christ: his divine nature and his human nature.

(1.) Here is his divine nature: Who being in the form of God (Php 2:6), partaking of the divine nature, as the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This agrees with Joh 1:1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God: it is of the same import with being the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), and the brightness of his glory, and express image of his person, Heb 1:3. He thought it no robbery to be equal with God; did not think himself guilty of any invasion of what did not belong to him, or assuming another's right. He said, I and my Father are one, Joh 10:30. It is the highest degree of robbery for any mere man or mere creature to pretend to be equal with God, or profess himself one with the Father. This is for a man to rob God, not in tithes and offerings, but of the rights of his Godhead, Mal 3:8. Some understand being in the form of God--en morphe Theou hyparchon, of his appearance in a divine majestic glory to the patriarchs, and the Jews, under the Old Testament, which was often called the glory, and the Shechinah. The word is used in such a sense by the LXX. and in the New Testament. He appeared to the two disciples, en hetera morphe--In another form, Mk 16:12. Metemorphothe--he was transfigured before them, Mt 17:2. And he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he did not greedily catch at, nor covet and affect to appear

in that glory; he laid aside the majesty of his former appearance while he was here on earth, which is supposed to be the sense of the peculiar expression, ouk harpagmon hegesato. Vid. Bishop Bull's Def. cap. 2 sect. 4 et alibi, and Whitby in loc.

(2.) His human nature: He was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man. He was really and truly man, took part of our flesh and blood, appeared in the nature and habit of man. And he voluntarily assumed human nature; it was his own act, and by his own consent. We cannot say that our participation of the human nature is so. Herein he emptied himself, divested himself of the honours and glories of the upper world, and of his former appearance, to clothe himself with the rags of human nature. He was in all things like to us, Heb 2:17.

2. Here are his two estates, of humiliation and exaltation.

(1.) His estate of humiliation. He not only took upon him the likeness and fashion of a man, but the form of a servant, that is, a man of mean estate. He was not only God's servant whom he had chosen, but he came to minister to men, and was among them as one who serveth in a mean and servile state. One would think that the Lord Jesus, if he would be a man, should have been a prince, and appeared in splendour. But quite the contrary: He took upon him the form of a servant. He was brought up meanly, probably working with his supposed father at his trade. His whole life was a life of humiliation, meanness, poverty, and disgrace; he had nowhere to lay his head, lived upon alms, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, did not appear with external pomp, or any marks of distinction from other men. This was the humiliation of his life.

But the lowest step of his humiliation was his dying the death of the cross. He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He not only suffered, but was actually and voluntarily obedient; he obeyed the law which he brought himself under as Mediator, and by which he was obliged to die. I have power to

lay down my life, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father, Joh 10:18. And he was made under the law, Ga 4:4. There is an emphasis laid upon the manner of his dying, which had in it all the circumstances possible which are humbling: Even the death of the cross, a cursed, painful, and shameful death,--a death accursed by the law (Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree)--full of pain, the body nailed through the nervous parts (the hands and feet) and hanging with all its weight upon the cross,--and the death of a malefactor and a slave, not of a free-man,--exposed as a public spectacle. Such was the condescension of the blessed Jesus.

8 and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and
became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name
which is above every name:
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven,
and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

The former verse spake of the depth of Christ's humiliation; these, of the height of his exaltation.

Where observe, 1. The dignity itself conferred by God upon Christ; God exalted him, highly exalted him, exalted him above all exaltation, as the word signifies. Christ in his resurrection was exalted; in his ascension, he was highly exalted; in his sitting at God's right hand, he was very highly exalted above all exaltation.

Observe, 2. How the steps of Christ's exaltation did punctually answer the steps of his humiliation; the first step of his humiliation was his incarnation, by which he was made man, and, as our surety, was made sin.

The first step of his exaltation was his resurrection, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power; and, as our surety, having paid our debt was released from the prison of the grave.
The second step of his humiliation, was his poor and contemptible life, and his painful, shameful, and accursed death; answerable thereunto is Christ's ascension into heaven, and sitting there at God's right hand, advancing him above all principalities and

power, that is, above all the angels, and placing him next himself in dignity and honour.

Observe, 3. The connection between Christ's humiliation and exaltation: he humbled himself, and became obedient to the death; wherefore God hath highly exalted him.

Where note, That some make the humiliation of Christ the meritorious cause of his exaltation; and his exaltation the reward of his humiliation: others make the humiliation of Christ only the antecedent of his exaltation; he humbled himself, and God has exalted him to a dignity above all dignities and pre-eminency whatsoever, making him King and Head of his church, and giving him all power both in heaven and earth, requiring that the divine honour due to God should be given to him also.

Observe, 4. The particulars of our Lord's exaltation declared: and they are three.

1. God hath given him a name above every name; that is, dignity and power, majesty and authority, over all creatures both in heaven and earth.

2. That every knee, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, should bow to the name of Jesus: every knee, that is, every creature in heaven, earth, and hell, shall bow, that is, yield subjection to Christ, some voluntarily, others unwillingly; the good angels and good men paying a cheerful homage, the evil angels and bad men yielding a forced and constrained subjection to him.

3. That every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; every tongue, that is, every person, men of all nations and languages, shall confess Christ crucified to be the Lord and Judge of the world, acknowledging his royal sovereignity and dominion.

Observe, 5. The end of Christ's glorious exaltation; it was, to the glory of God the Father: that is, it pleased God the Father, for his

own glory, that the Lord Jesus Christ, after he had been deeply humbled, should be highly exalted.

Observe, lastly, the apostle's great design and scope in setting before the Philippians the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ: and that was to excite them to the grace and duty of humility, that the same humble mind should be in them which was also in Christ Jesus. As if he had said our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself greatly for us, and afterwards was highly exalted by God above us; so in proportion may you expect to be exalted by God, if you humble yourselves, in order to maintain and preserve the church's peace and unity; for before honour is humility.

His exaltation: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation. Because he humbled himself, God exalted him; and he highly exalted him, hyperypsose, raised him to an exceeding height. He exalted his whole person, the human nature as well as the divine; for he is spoken of as being in the form of God as well as in the fashion of man. As it respects the divine nature, it could only be the recognizing of his rights, or the display and appearance of the glory he had with the Father before the world was (Joh 17:5), not any new acquisition of glory; and so the Father himself is said to be exalted. But the proper exaltation was of his human nature, which alone seems to be capable of it, though in conjunction with the divine. His exaltation here is made to consist in honour and power. In honour; so he had a name above every name, a title of dignity above all the creatures, men and angels. And in power: Every knee must bow to him. The whole creation must be in subjection to him: things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, the inhabitants of heaven and earth, the living and the dead. At the name of Jesus; not at the sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus; all should pay a solemn homage. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord--every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer, and that all power in heaven and earth is given to him, Mt 28:18. Observe the vast extent of the kingdom of Christ; it reaches to heaven and earth, and to all the creatures in each, to angels as well as men, and to the dead as well

as the living.--To the glory of God the Father. Observe, It is to the glory of God the Father to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, Joh 5:23. Whatever respect is paid to Christ redounds to the honour of the Father. He who receiveth me receiveth him who sent me, Mt 10:40.

11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shining as Lights in the World

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed. The Philippians had from the beginning manifested a remarkable readiness to show respect to the apostle, and to listen to his teaching. This readiness he more than once refers to and commends. He still appeals to them, and urges them to follow his counsels, that they might secure their salvation. Now much more in my absence. Though they had been obedient when he was with them, yet circumstances had occurred in his absence which made their obedience more remarkable, and more worthy of special commendation. Work out your own salvation. This important command was first addressed to Christians, but there is no reason why the same command should not be regarded as addressed to all--for it is equally applicable to all. The duty of doing this is enjoined here; the reason, for making the effort, or the encouragement for the effort, is stated in the next verse. In regard to the command here, it is natural to inquire why it is a duty, and what is necessary to be done in order to comply with it? On the first of these inquiries, it may be observed that it is a duty to make a personal effort to secure salvation, or to work out our salvation:

(1.) Because God commands it. There is no command more frequently repeated in the Scriptures, than the command to make to ourselves a new heart; to strive to enter in at the strait gate; to break off from sin, and to repent.

(2.) It is a duty because it is our own personal interest that is at stake. No other one has, or can have, as much interest in our salvation as we have. It is every man's duty to be as happy as possible here, and to be prepared for eternal happiness in the future world. No man has a right either to throw away his life or his soul. He has no more right to do the one than the other; and if it is a man's duty to endeavour to save his life when in danger of drowning, it is no less his duty to endeavour to save his soul when in danger of hell.

(3.) Our earthly friends cannot save us. No effort of theirs can deliver us from eternal death without our own exertion. Great as may be their solicitude for us, and much as they may do, there is a point where their efforts must stop--and that point is always short of our salvation, unless we are roused to seek salvation. They may pray, and weep, and plead, but they cannot save us. There is a work to be done on our own hearts which they cannot do.

(4.) It is a duty, because the salvation of the soul will not take care of itself without an effort on our part. There is no more reason to suppose this than that health and life will take care of themselves without our own exertion. And yet many live as if they supposed that somehow all would yet be well; that the matter of salvation need not give them any concern, for that things will so arrange themselves that they will be saved. Why should they suppose this any more in regard to religion than in regard to anything else?

(5.) It is a duty, because there is no reason to expect the Divine interposition without our own effort. No such interposition is promised to any man, and why should he expect it? In the case of all who have been saved, they have made an effort--and why should we expect that God will favour us more than he did them? "God helps them who help themselves;" and what reason has any man to suppose that he will interfere in his case and save him, if he will put forth no effort to "work out his own salvation?" In regard to the other inquiry --What does the command imply; or

what is necessary to be done in order to comply with it?--we may observe, that it does not mean

(1.) that we are to attempt to deserve salvation on the ground of merit. That is out of the question; for what can man do that shall be an equivalent for eternal happiness in heaven? Nor

(2.) does it mean that we are to endeavour to make atonement for past sins. That would be equally impossible--and it is, besides, unnecessary. That work has been done by the great Redeemer. But it means,

(1.) that we are to make an honest effort to be saved in the way which God has appointed;

(2.) that we are to break off from our sins by true repentance;

(3.) that we are to believe in the Saviour and honestly to put our trust in him;

(4.) that we are to give up all that we have to God;

(5.) that we are to break away from all evil companions and evil plans of life; and

(6.) that we are to resist all the allurements of the world, and all the temptations which may assault us that would lead us back from God, and are to persevere unto the end. The great difficulty in working out salvation is in forming a purpose to begin at once. When that purpose is formed, salvation is easy. With fear and trembling. That is, with that kind of anxiety which one has who feels that he has an important interest at stake, and that he is in danger of losing it. The reason or the ground for "fear" in this case is in general this: there is danger of losing the soul.

(1.) So many persons make ship wreck of all hope and perish, that there is danger that we may also.

(2.) There are so many temptations and allurements in the world, and so many things that lead us to defer attention to religion, that there is danger that we may be lost.

(3.) There is danger that if the present opportunity passes, another may not occur. Death may soon overtake us. No one has a moment to lose. No one can designate one single moment of his life, and say, "I may safely lose that moment. I may safely spend it in the neglect of my soul."

(4.) It should be done with the most earnest concern, from the immensity of the interest at stake. If the soul is lost, all is lost. And who is there that can estimate the value of that soul which is thus in danger of being lost for ever?

Observe here, 1. The commendation given by St. Paul of his beloved Philippians, for their cheerful obedience to the precepts of the gospel: they always obeyed, that is, ever since their first conversion to christianity, not only while the apostle was upon the spot with them, but since the providence of God necessitated his absence from them; not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.
But how came it to pass that their obedience was greater, when they wanted the apostle for their instructor?

Ans. In the absence of one teacher they had another, and him a better that the inspired apostle, even the inspiring Spirit of God, who in the apostle's absence was more immediately present with them by his inward motions, to excite and enable them both to will and to do what is well pleasing to him.

O! how good is God at the supplying the wants, and making up the losses of his people! If persecution drives his church's ministers into dungeons, and they cannot hear a voice behind them, they shall have the presence of his Holy Spirit, and hear a voice within them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.

Observe, 2. A special duty which St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to be found in the practice of, namely, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling; implying, that it should be every christian's great work to be daily working out his own salvation, that is, diligently making use of all means and faithfulness, practising all duties in order thereunto.

Note here, 1. The excellency of the object proposed; and that is, salvation: there is salvation held forth and tendered by God to lost sinners, in the gospel.

Note, 2. The difficulty of salvation, supposed and implied in the word work; which signifies an exerting our utmost endeavours, in order to the attaining of it. The work of salvation is no lazy man's business, but a work of labour and difficulty, though the difficulties may be overcome by an industrious diligence.

Note, 3. The necessity of perseverance, in order to our attaining of salvation: Work out your salvation, that is, perfect and consummate the work which you have happily begun.

Note, 4. The manner how we should work out our own salvation: namely, with fear and trembling; intimating, that an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of ourselves, will be of singular use and advantage to us in the working out of our salvation.

Observe, 3. The argument or motive to excite unto this labour and diligence in and about the work of salvation; and this is very encouraging, because God works with us, and in us, ver. 13. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.

That God works with us, is great encouragement to work; but we must remember God works arbitrarily, and not necessarily; he worketh but of his own good pleasure, as a free agent, who can cease when he pleases. Therefore work with fear and trembling.

Learn from the whole, 1. That we can do nothing without God.

2. That he will do nothing without his assistance, he will do nothing without the concurrence of our endeavours: he worketh in us both to will and to do, and we must work with him, in order to the working out of our salvation.

13 for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

He exhorts them to diligence and seriousness in the Christian course: Work out your own salvation. It is the salvation of our souls (1Pe 1:9), and our eternal salvation (Heb 5:9), and contains deliverance from all the evils sin had brought upon us and exposed us to, and the possession of all good and whatsoever is necessary to our complete and final happiness. Observe, It concerns us above all things to secure the welfare of our souls: whatever becomes of other things, let us take care of our best interests. It is our own salvation, the salvation of our own souls. It is not for us to judge other people; we have enough to do to look to ourselves; and, though we must promote the common salvation (Jude 1:3) as much as we can, yet we must upon no account neglect our own. We are required to work out our salvation, katergazesthe. The word signifies working thoroughly at a thing, and taking true pains. Observe, We must be diligent in the use of all the means which conduce to our salvation. We must not only work at our salvation, by doing something now and then about it; but we must work out our salvation, by doing all that is to be done, and persevering therein to the end. Salvation is the great thing we should mind, and set our hearts upon; and we cannot attain salvation without the utmost care and diligence. He adds, With fear and trembling, that is, with great care and circumspection: "Trembling for fear lest you miscarry and come short. Be careful to do every thing in religion in the best manner, and fear lest under all your advantages you should so much as seem to come short," Heb 4:1. Fear is a great guard and preservative from evil.

II. He urges this from the consideration of their readiness always to obey the gospel: "As you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, Php 2:12. You

have been always willing to comply with every discovery of the will of God; and that in my absence as well as presence. You make it to appear that regard to Christ, and care of your souls, sway more with you than any mode of showing respect whatsoever." They were not merely awed by the apostle's presence, but did it even much more in his absence. "And because it is God who worketh in you, do you work out your salvation. Work, for he worketh." It should encourage us to do our utmost, because our labour shall not be in vain. God is ready to concur with his grace, and assist our faithful endeavours. Observe, Though we must use our utmost endeavours in working out our salvation, yet still we must go forth, and go on, in a dependence upon the grace of God. His grace works in us in a way suitable to our natures, and in concurrence with our endeavours; and the operations of God's grace in us are so far from excusing, that they are intended to quicken and engage our endeavours. "And work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for he worketh in you." All our working depends upon his working in us. "Do not trifle with God by neglects and delays, lest you provoke him to withdraw his help, and all your endeavours prove in vain. Work with fear, for he works of his good pleasure."--To will and to do: he gives the whole ability. It is the grace of God which inclines the will to that which is good: and then enables us to perform it, and to act according to our principles. Thou hast wrought all our works in us, Isa 26:12. Of his good pleasure. As there is no strength in us, so there is no merit in us. As we cannot act without God's grace, so we cannot claim it, nor pretend to deserve it. God's good will to us is the cause of his good work in us; and he is under no engagements to his creatures, but those of his gracious promise.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:
15 that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Among those of perverted sentiments and habits; those who are disposed to complain and find fault; those who will take every occasion to pervert what you do and say, and who seek every opportunity to

retard the cause of truth and righteousness. It is not certainly known to whom the apostle refers here, but it seems not improbable that he had particular reference to the Jews who were in Philippi. The language here used was employed by Moses De 32:6 as applicable to the Jewish people, and it is accurately descriptive of the character of the nation in the time of Paul. The Jews were among the most bitter foes of the gospel, and did perhaps more than any other people to embarrass the cause of truth, and prevent the spread of the true religion.

16 holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

Holding forth the word of life. That is, you are under obligation to hold forth the word of life. It is a duty incumbent on you as Christians to do it. The "word of life" means the gospel, called the "word of life" because it is the message that promises life; or perhaps this is a Hebraism, denoting the living, or life giving word. The gospel stands thus in contrast with all human systems of religions for they have no efficacy to save--and to the law which "killeth." Jn 6:63; 2Cor 3:6. The duty here enjoined is that of making the gospel known to others, and of thus keeping up the knowledge of it in the world. This duty rests on Christians, Mt 5:14,16, and they cannot escape from the obligation. They axe bound to do this, not only because God commands it, but

(1.) because they are called into the church that they may be witnesses for God, Isa 43:10.

(2.) Because they are kept on the earth for that purpose. If it were not for some such design, they would be removed to heaven at once on their conversion.

(3.) Because there are no others to do it. The gay will not warn the gay, nor the proud the proud, nor the scoffer the scoffer. The thoughtless and the vain will not go and tell others that there is a God and a Saviour; nor will the wicked warn the wicked, and tell them that they are in the way to hell. There are none who will do this but Christians; and, if they neglect it, sinners will go unwarned and unalarmed down to death. This duty rests on every Christian.

The exhortation here is not made to the pastor, or to any officer of the church particularly; but to the mass of communicants. They are to shine as lights in the world; they are to hold forth the word of life. There is not one member of a church who is so obscure as to be exempt from the obligation; and there is not one who may not do something in this work. If we are asked how this may be done, we may reply,

(1.) they are to do it by example. Every one is to hold forth the living word in that way.

(2.) By efforts to send the gospel to those who have it not. There is almost no one who cannot contribute something, though it may be but two mites, to accomplish this.

(3.) By conversation. There is no Christian who has not some influence over the minds and hearts of others; and he is bound to use that influence in holding forth the word of life.

(4.) By defending the Divine origin of religion when attacked.

(5.) By rebuking sin, and thus testifying to the value of holiness. The defence of the truth, under God, and the diffusion of a knowledge of the way of salvation, rests on those who are Christians. Paganism never originates a system which it would not be an advantage to the world to have destroyed as soon as it is conceived. Philosophy has never yet told of a way by which a sinner may be saved. The world at large devises no plan for the salvation of the soul. The most crude, ill-digested, and perverse systems of belief conceivable, prevail in the community called "the world." Every form of opinion has an advocate there; every monstrous vagary that the human mind ever conceived finds friends and defenders there. The human mind has of itself no elastic energy to bring it from the ways of sin; it has no recuperative power to lead it back to God. The world at large is dependant on the church for any just views of God, and of the way of salvation; and every Christian is to do his part in making that salvation known.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Behold here now St. Paul, the undershepherd, imitates Christ, that great and good Shepherd, in his readiness to lay down his life for the sheep; not for their reconciliation, but for their confirmation: If, says he, it shall please God that I be, by martyrdom, offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith; that is, to establish you in the faith which I have taught you, and to confirm and seal the truth of it with my blood, I will rejoice therein for your sakes; and I desire you to rejoice with me, and to bless God for me in so doing.

Note here, The emphasis and elegancy of the apostle's words, If I be offered up: a manifest allusion to the Jewish sacrifices, in which there was wine poured out as a libation upon the sacrifice, and then offered up to God. Thus, says he, if my blood, like wine, be poured forth, whilst I am employed by the preaching of the gospel to render you Gentiles an acceptable sacrifice, and a sweet-smelling savour unto God, I should rejoice even thus to die in your service, and for the confirmation of your faith.

Hence learn, That life itself is not, and will not be thought too dear, or accounted by the ministers of Christ too much, to lay down in the service of their people's souls, and for the confirmation of their faith: If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice.

Learn, 2. That the ministers of Christ should not preach any thing to their people, but what they dare seal and confirm the truth of, with their very blood, if God calls them thereunto. St. Paul had before preached the doctrine of the gospel to the Philippians, and now he stood ready to seal it with his blood.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

For all seek their own. That is, all who are with me. Who Paul had with him at this time is not fully known, but he doubtless means that this remark should apply to the mass of Christians and Christian ministers then in Rome. Perhaps he had proposed to some of them to go and visit the church at Philippi, and they had declined it because of the distance and the dangers of the way. When the trial of Paul came on before the emperor, all who were with him in Rome fled from him, 2Ti 4:16; and it is possible that the same disregard of his wishes and his welfare had already begun to manifest itself among the Christians who were at Rome, so that he was constrained to say that, as a general thing, they sought their own ease and comfort, and were unwilling to deny themselves in order to promote the happiness of those who lived in the remote parts of the world. Let us not be harsh in judging them. How many professing Christians in our cities and towns are there now who would be willing to leave their business and their comfortable homes, and go on an embassy like this to Philippi? How many are there who would not seek some excuse, and show that it was a characteristic that they "sought their own" rather than the things which pertained to the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Not the things which are Jesus Christ's. Which pertain to his cause and kingdom. They are not willing to practise self-denial in order to promote that cause. It is implied here,

(1.) that it is the duty of those who profess religion to seek the things which pertain to the kingdom of the Redeemer, or to make that the great and leading object of their lives. They are bound to be willing to sacrifice "their own" things--to deny themselves of ease, and to be always ready to expose themselves to peril and want if they may be the means of advancing his cause.

(2.) That frequently this is not done by those who profess religion. It was the case with the professed Christians at Rome, and it is often the case in the churches now. There are few Christians who deny themselves much to promote the kingdom of the Redeemer; few who are willing to lay aside what they regard as "their own" in order to advance his cause. Men live for their own ease; for their families;

for the prosecution of their own business--as if a Christian could have anything which he has a right to pursue independently of the kingdom of the Redeemer, and without regard to his will and glory.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.
22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.
23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.
24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.
25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.
26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.
27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death. Dr. Paley has remarked (Hor. Paul. on Phil. No. ii.) that the account of the sickness and recovery of Epaphroditus is such as to lead us to suppose that he was not restored by miracle; and he infers that the power of healing the sick was conferred on the apostles only occasionally, and did not depend at all on their will, since, if it had, there is every reason to suppose that Paul would at once have restored him to health. This account, he adds, shows also that this epistle is not the work of an impostor. Had it been, a miracle would not have been spared. Paul would not have been introduced as showing such anxiety about a friend lying at the point of death, and as being unable to restore him. It would have been said that he interposed at once, and raised him up to health.

On me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. In addition to all the sorrows of imprisonment, and the prospect of a trial, and the want of friends. The sources of his sorrow, had Epaphroditus died, would have been such as these:

(1.) He would have lost a valued friend, and one whom he esteemed as a brother and worthy fellow-labourer.

(2.) He would have felt that the church at Philippi had lost a valuable member.

(3.) His grief might have been aggravated from the consideration that his life had been lost in endeavouring to do him good. He would have felt that he was the occasion, though innocent, of his exposure to danger.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again,
ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such
in reputation:

30 because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not
regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Let us learn, from the interesting narrative respecting Epaphroditus at the close of this chapter, to live and act as becomes Christians in every situation in life, Php 2:25-30. It was much to have the praise of an apostle, and to be commended for his Christian conduct, as this stranger in Rome was. He went there, not to view the wonders of the imperial city, and not to run the rounds of giddy pleasure there, but to perform an important duty of religion. While there he became sick--not by indulgence in pleasures; not as the result of feasting and revelry, but in the work of Christ. In a strange city, far from home, amidst the rich, the great, the gay; in a place where theatres opened their doors, and where places of amusement abounded, he led a life which an apostle could commend as pure. There is nothing more difficult for a Christian than to maintain an irreproachable walk when away from the usual restraints and influences that serve to keep him in the paths of piety, and when surrounded with the fascinations and allurements of a great and wicked city.

Philippians-3

Pressing toward the Mark

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to
you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.

Verse 1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. That is in the Lord Jesus. Php 3:3, Acts 1:24, and 1Thes 5:16. The idea here is, that it is the duty of Christians to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. This duty implies the following things.

(1.) They should rejoice that they have such a Saviour. Men everywhere have felt the need of a Saviour, and to us it should be a subject of unfeigned joy that one has been provided for us. When we think of our sins, we may now rejoice that there is One who can deliver us from them; when we think of the worth of tile soul, we may rejoice that there is One who can save it from death; when we think of our danger, we can rejoice that there is One who can rescue us from all peril, and bring us to a world where we shall be forever safe.

(2.) We may rejoice that we have such a Saviour. He is just such as we need. He accomplishes just what we want a Saviour to do. We need one to make known to us a way of pardon, and he does it. We need one to make an atonement for sin, and he does it. We need one to give us peace from a troubled conscience, and he does it. We need one to support us in trials and bereavements, and he does it. We need one who can comfort us on the bed of death, and guide us through the dark valley, and the Lord Jesus is just what we want. When we look at his character, it is just such as it should be to win our hearts, and to make us love him; and when we look at what he has done, we see that he has accomplished all that we can desire, and why should we not rejoice?

(3.) We may and should rejoice in him. The principal joy of the true Christian should be in the Lord. He should find his happiness not in riches, or gaiety, or vanity, or ambition, or books, or in the world in any form, but in communion with the Lord Jesus, and in the hope of eternal life through him. In his friendship, and in his service, should be the highest of our joys, and in these we may always be happy. It is the privilege, therefore, of a Christian to rejoice. He has more sources of joy than any other man--sources which do not fail when all others fail. Religion is not sadness or melancholy, it is joy; and the Christian should never leave the

impression on others that his religion makes him either gloomy or morose. A cheerful countenance, an eye of benignity, a conversation pleasant and kind, should always evince the joy of his heart, and in all his intercourse with the world around him he should show that his heart is full of joy.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Beware of dogs. Dogs in the east are mostly without masters; they wander at large in the streets and fields, and feed upon offals, and even upon corpses. Comp. 1Kgs 14:11, 16:4, 21:19. They are held as unclean, and to call one a dog is a much stronger expression of contempt there than with us, 1Sam 17:43, 2Kgs 8:13. The Jews called the heathen dogs, and the Mohammedans call Jews and Christians by the same name. The term dog also is used to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious, and is evidently so employed here. It is possible that the language used here may have been derived from some custom of affixing a caution on a house that was guarded by a dog to persons approaching it. L'Enfant remarks that at Rome it was common for a dog to lie chained before the door of a house, and that a notice was placed in sight, "Beware of the dog." The same notice I have seen in this city affixed to the kennel of dogs in front of a bank, that were appointed to guard it. The reference here is, doubtless, to Judaizing teachers; and the idea is, that they were contentious, troublesome, dissatisfied, and would produce disturbance. The strong language which the apostle uses here shows the sense which he had of the danger arising from their influence. It may be observed, however, that the term dogs is used in ancient writings with great frequency, and even by the most grave speakers. It is employed by the most dignified characters in the Iliad, (Bloomfield;) and the name was given to a whole class of Greek philosophers--the Cynics. It is used in one instance by the Saviour, Mt 7:6. By the use of the term here, there can be no doubt that the apostle meant to express strong disapprobation of the character and course of the persons referred to, and to warn the Philippians in the most solemn mariner against them. Beware of evil workers. Referring, doubtless, to the same persons that he had characterized as dogs. The reference is to Jewish teachers, whose doctrines and influence he regarded only as evil. We do not know

what was the nature of their teaching, but we may presume that it consisted much in urging the obligations of the Jewish rites and ceremonies; in speaking of the advantage of having been born Jews; and in urging a compliance with the law in order to justification before God. In this way their teachings tended to set aside the great doctrine of salvation by the merits of the Redeemer. Beware of the concision. Referring, doubtless, also to the Jewish teachers. The word rendered concision κατατομη-- means, properly, a cutting off, a mutilation, it is used here contemptuously for the Jewish circumcision, in contrast with the true circumcision. Robinson, Lex. It is not to be understood that Paul meant to throw contempt on circumcision as enjoined by God, and as practised by the pious Jews of other times, Acts 16:3, but only as it was held by the false Judaizing teachers. As they held it, it was not the true circumcision. They made salvation to depend on it, instead of its being only a sign of the covenant with God. Such a doctrine, as they held it, was a mere cutting off of the flesh, without understanding anything of the true nature of the rite; and hence the unusual term by which he designates it. Perhaps, also, there may be included the idea that a doctrine so held would be, in fact, a cutting off of the soul; that is, that it tended to destruction. Their cutting and mangling the flesh might be regarded as an emblem of the manner in which their doctrine would cut and mangle the church. Doddridge. The meaning of the whole is, that they did not understand the true nature of the doctrine of circumcision, but that with them it was a mere cutting of the flesh, and tended to destroy the church.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

For we are the circumcision. We who are Christians. We have and hold the true doctrine of circumcision. We have that which was intended to secure this rites for we are led to renounce the flesh, and to worship God in the spirit. The apostle, in this verse, teaches that the ordinance of circumcision was not designed to be a mere outward ceremony, but was intended to be emblematic of the renunciation of the flesh with its corrupt propensities, and to lead to the pure and spiritual worship of God. In this he has undoubtedly

stated its true design. They who now urged it as necessary to salvation, and who made salvation depend on its mere outward observance, had lost sight of this object of the rite. But this, the real design of circumcision, was attained by those who had been led to renounce the flesh, and who had devoted themselves to the worship of God. Rom 2:28, Rom 2:29. Which worship God in the spirit. Jn 4:24. Comp. Gen 17:10-14. And rejoice in Christ Jesus. See Php 4:1. That is, we have, through him, renounced the flesh; we have become the true worshippers of God, and have thus attained what was originally contemplated by circumcision, and by all the other rites of religion. And have no confidence in the flesh. In our own corrupt nature; or in any ordinances that relate merely to the flesh. We do not depend on circumcision for salvation, or on any external rites and forms whatever --on any advantage of rank, or blood. The word "flesh" here seems to refer to every advantage which any may have of birth; to any external conformity to the law, and to everything which unaided human nature can do to effect salvation. On none of these things can we put reliance for salvation; none of them will constitute a ground of hope.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. So far as the righteousness which can be obtained by obeying the law is concerned, it is not needful to suppose here that he refers merely to the ceremonial law; but the meaning is, that he did all that could be done to obtain salvation by the mere observance of law. It was supposed by the Jews, and especially by the Pharisees, to which sect he belonged, that it was possible to be saved in that way; and Paul says that he had done all that was supposed to be necessary for that. We are not to imagine that, when he penned this declaration, he meant to be understood as saying that he had wholly complied with the law of God; but that, before his conversion, he supposed that he had done all that was necessary

to be done in order to be saved by the observance of law. He neglected no duty that he understood it to enjoin. He was not guilty of deliberately violating it. He led a moral and strictly upright life, and no one had occasion to "blame" or to accuse him as a violator of the law of God. There is every reason to believe that Paul, before his conversion, was a young man of correct deportment, of upright life, of entire integrity; and that he was free from the indulgences of vice and passion, into which young men often fall. In all that he ever says of himself as being "the chief of sinners," and as being "unworthy to be called an apostle," he never gives the least intimation that his early life was stained by vice, or corrupted by licentious passions. On the contrary, we are left to the fair presumption that, if any man could be saved by his own works, he was that man. This fact should be allowed to make its proper impression on those who are seeking salvation in the same way; and they should be willing to inquire whether they may not be deceived in the matter, as he was, and whether they are not in as much real danger in depending on their own righteousness, as was this most upright and zealous young man.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

But what things were gain to me. The advantages of birth, of education, and of external conformity to the law. "I thought these to be gain--that is, to be of vast advantage in the matter of salvation. I valued myself on these things, and supposed that I was rich in all that pertained to moral character and to religion." Perhaps, also, he refers to these things as laying the foundation of a hope of future advancement in honour and in wealth in this world. They commended him to the rulers of the nation; they opened before him a brilliant prospect of distinction; they made it certain that he could rise to posts of honour and of office, and could easily gratify all the aspirings of his ambition. Those I counted loss. "I now regard them all as so much loss. They were really a disadvantage--a hindrance--an injury. I look upon them not as gain or an advantage, but as an obstacle to my salvation." He had relied on them. He had been led by these things to an improper estimate of his own character, and he had been thus hindered from embracing the true religion, lie says, therefore, that he now renounced all dependence on them; that he esteemed them not as contributing to his salvation, but, so

far as any reliance should be placed on them, as in fact so much loss.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss. Not only those things which he had just specified, and which he had himself possessed, he says he would be willing to renounce in order to obtain an interest in the Saviour, but everything which could be imagined. Were all the wealth and honour which could be conceived of his, we would be willing to renounce them in order that he might obtain the knowledge of the Redeemer. He would be a gainer who should sacrifice everything in order to win Christ. Paul had not only acted on this principle when he became a Christian, but had ever afterwards continued to be ready to give up everything in order that he might obtain an interest in the Saviour. He uses here the same word ζημιαν,--which he does in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 27:21, when speaking of the loss which had been sustained by loosing from Crete, contrary to his advice, on the voyage to Rome. The idea here seems to be, "What I might obtain, or did possess, I regard as loss in comparison with the knowledge of Christ, even as seamen do the goods on which they set a high value, in comparison with their lives. Valuable as they may be, they are willing to throw them all overboard in order to save themselves." Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc.

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things. Paul, when he became a Christian, gave up his brilliant prospects in regard to this life, and everything indeed on which his heart had been placed. He abandoned the hope of honour and distinction; he sacrificed every prospect of gain or ease; and he gave up his dearest friends, and separated himself from those whom he tenderly loved. He might have risen to the highest posts of honour in his native land, and the path which an ambitious young man desires was fully open before him. But all this had been cheerfully sacrificed in order that he might obtain an interest in the Saviour,

and partake of the blessings of his religion, he has not, indeed, informed us of the exact extent of his loss in becoming a Christian. It is by no means improbable that he had been excommunicated by the Jews; and that he had been disowned by his own family. And do count them but dung. The word here used--σκυβαλον--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, dregs, refuse; what is thrown away as worthless; chaff, offal, or the refuse of a table or of slaughtered animals; and then filth of any kind. No language could express a more deep sense of the utter worthlessness of all that external advantages could confer in the matter of salvation. In the question, of justification before God, all reliance on birth, and blood, and external morality, and forms of religion, and prayers, and alms, is to be renounced, and, in comparison with the merits of the great Redeemer, to be esteemed as vile. Such were Paul's views; and we may remark, that if this was so in his case, it should be in ours. Such things can no more avail for our salvation than they could for his. We can no more be justified by them than he could. Nor will they do anything more in our case to commend us to God than they did in his.

Not having mine own righteousness. That is, not relying on that for salvation. This was now the great aim of Paul, that it might be found at last that he was not trusting to his own merits, but to those of the Lord Jesus. Which is of the law. Rom 10:3. The "righteousness which is of the law" is that which could be obtained by conformity to the precepts of the Jewish religion, such as Paul had endeavoured to obtain before he became a Christian. He now saw that no one complied perfectly with the holy law of God, and that all dependence on such a righteousness was vain. All men by nature seek salvation by the law. They set up some standard which they mean to comply with, and expect to be saved by conformity to that. With some it is the law of honour, with others the laws of honesty, with others the laws of kindness and courtesy, and with others the law of God. If they comply with the requirements of these laws, they suppose that they will be safe; and it is only the grace of God showing them how defective their standard is, or how far they come from complying with its demands, that can ever bring them from this dangerous

dependence. Paul in early life depended on his compliance with the laws of God as he understood them, and supposed that he was safe. When he was brought to realize his true condition, he saw how far short he had come of what the law of God required, and that all dependence on his own works was vain. But that which is through the faith of Christ. That justification which is obtained by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 1:17; Rom 3:24; Rom 4:5. Righteousness which is of God by faith. Which proceeds from God, or of which he is the great Source and Fountain. This may include the following things:

(1.) God is the author of pardon--and this is a part of the righteousness which the man who is justified has.

(2.) God purposes to treat the justified sinner as if he had not sinned--and thus his righteousness is of God.

(3.) God is the source of all the grace that will be imparted to the soul, making it really holy. In this way, all the righteousness which the Christian has is "of God." The idea of Paul is, that he now saw that it was far more desirable to be saved by righteousness obtained from God than by his own. That obtained from God was perfect, and glorious, and sufficient; that which he had attempted to work out was defective, impure, and wholly insufficient to save the soul. It is far more honourable to be saved by God than to save ourselves; it is more glorious to depend on him than to depend on anything that we can do.

9 and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

That I may know him. That I may be fully acquainted with his nature, his character, his work, and with the salvation which he has wrought out. It is one of the highest objects of desire in the mind of the Christian to know Christ. Eph 3:19. And the power of his resurrection. That is, that I may understand and experience the

proper influence which the fact of his resurrection should have on the mind. That influence would be felt in imparting the hope of immortality; in sustaining the soul in the prospect of death, by the expectation of being raised from the grave in like manner; and in raising the mind above the world, Rom 6:11. There is no one truth that will have greater power over us, when properly believed, than the truth that Christ has risen from the dead. His resurrection confirms the truth of the Christian religion, 1Cor 15:11; makes it certain that there is a future state, and that the dead will also rise; dispels the darkness that was around the grave, and shows us that our great interests are in the future world. The fact that Christ has risen from the dead, when fully believed, will produce a sure hope that we also shall be raised, and will animate us to bear trials for his sake, with the assurance that we shall be raised up as he was. One of the things which a Christian ought most earnestly to desire is, to feel the power of this truth on his soul--that his great Redeemer has burst the bands of death; has brought life and immortality to light, and has given us the pledge that our bodies shall rise. What trials may we not bear with this assurance? What is to be dreaded in death, if this is so? What glories rise to the view when we think of the resurrection! And what trifles are all the things which men seek here, when compared with the glory that shall be ours when we shah be raised from the dead! And the fellowship of his sufferings. That I may participate in the same kind of sufferings that he endured; that is, that I may in all things be identified with him. Paul wished to be just like his Saviour. He felt that it was an honour to live as he did; to evince the spirit that he did, and to suffer in the same manner. All that Christ did and suffered was glorious in his view, and he wished in all things to resemble him. He did not desire merely to share his honours and triumphs in heaven, but, regarding his whole work as glorious, he wished to be wholly conformed to that, and, as far as possible, to be just like Christ. Many are willing to reign with Christ, but they would not be willing to suffer with him; many would be willing to wear a crown of glory like him, but not the crown of thorns; many would be willing to put on the robes of splendour which will be worn in heaven, but not the scarlet robe of contempt and mockery. They would desire to share the glories and triumphs of redemption,

but not its poverty, contempt, and persecution. This was not the feeling of Paul. He wished in all things to be just like Christ, and hence he counted it an honour to be permitted to suffer as he did. So Peter says, "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," 1Pet 4:13. So Paul says Col 1:24that he rejoiced in his sufferings in behalf of his brethren, and desired "to fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ," or that in which he had hitherto come short of the afflictions which Christ endured. The idea is, that it is an honour to suffer as Christ suffered; and that the true Christian will esteem it a privilege to be made just like him, not only in glory, but in trial. To do this is one evidence of piety; and we may ask ourselves, therefore, whether these are the feelings of our hearts. Are we seeking merely the honours of heaven, or should we esteem it a privilege to be reproached and reviled, as Christ was--to have our names cast out, as his was--to be made the object of sport and derision, as he was--and to be held up to the contempt of a world, as he was? If so, it is an evidence that we love him; if not so, and we are merely seeking the crown of glory, we should doubt whether we have ever known anything of the nature of true religion. Being made conformable to his death. In all things, being just like Christ---to live as he did, and to die as he did. There can be no doubt that Paul means to say that he esteemed it so desirable to be just like Christ, that he would regard it as an honour to die in the same manner. He would rejoice to go with him to the cross, and to pass through the circumstances of scorn and pain which attended such a death. Yet how few there are who would be willing to die as Christ died, and how little would the mass of men regard it as a privilege and honour! Indeed, it requires an elevated state of pious feeling to be able to say that it would be regarded as a privilege and honour to die like Christ; to have such a sense of the loveliness of his character in all things, and such ardent attachment to him, as to rejoice in the opportunity of dying as he did! When we think of dying, we wish to have our departure made as comfortable as possible. We would have our sun go down without a cloud. We would wish to lie on a bed of down; we would have our head sustained by the kind arm of a friend, and not left to fall, in the intensity of sufferring, on the breast; we would wish to have the place where we die surrounded by sympathizing kindred,

and not by those who would mock our dying agonies. And, if such is the will of God, it is not improper to desire that our end may be peaceful and happy; but we should also feel, if God should order it otherwise that it would be an honour, in the cause of the Redeemer, to die amidst reproaches--to be led to the stake, as the martyrs have been--or to die, as our Master did, on a cross. They who are most like him in the scenes of humiliation here, will be most like him in the realms of glory.

By the resurrection of the dead, here, is not to be understood the general resurrection, for all men shall attain to that, whether they strive for it or no; but he intends that complete holiness, and absolute perfection in grace, which shall attend the state of the resurrection; so he explains it himself in the next verse, Not that I have already attained, &c. or am already perfect; and he shows how diligent he was in endeavouring, in the use of all possible means, to arrive at it, and attain unto it.

Learn, That the glorious resurrection of the just, or grace consummated in glory, is attainable, and deserves and requires the utmost care and diligence of the most holy and zealous Christians to be exerted and put forth, in order to the attaining of it: If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

11 if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Our apostle here compares himself to a person running in a race; the prize which he did contend and run for, was, perfection in grace. The highest degree of which, in this life, consists in a desire and endeavour to obtain the largest measures and fullest degrees of holiness, that are here attainable: the manner how he ran for this prize, he tells us, was by looking forward, not backward; he did not look back to the things which he had left behind, namely, to the privileges of Judaism, nor to his past performances; but, like a racer, kept himself continually upon the stretch, with his eye fixed firmly upon the prize at the end of the goal, that he might lay hold upon it, and be crowned with it.

Note, Christianity is a race; every Christian in this life must run this race; in his running he must look forward, and not backward, not reckon how much of the way is past, but make the best of the way to come: he must keep heaven, as the mark and prize he runs for, continually in his eye, to hearten him on against all hardships and discouragements whatsoever; and in a word, must be apprehended before he can apprehend. St. Paul was apprehended by Christ, and caught hold of by him, whin he fled from him, otherwise he had never apprehended: Christ takes hold on us, before we have any desire to lay hold on him; we move as moved of him, and assisted of him.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do,* forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. That is, to have obtained that for which I have been called into the service of the Redeemer. There is something which I strive after which I have not yet gained. This statement is a confirmation of the opinion that in the previous verse, where he says that he was not "already perfect," he includes a moral perfection, and not merely the obtainment of the prize or reward; for no one could suppose that he meant to be understood as saying that he had obtained the crown of glory. This one thing I do. Paul had one great aim and purpose of life. He did not attempt to mingle the world and religion, and to gain both. He did not seek to obtain wealth and salvation too; or honour here and the crown of glory hereafter; but he had one object, one aim, one great purpose of soul. To this singleness of purpose he owed his extraordinary attainments in piety, and his uncommon success as a minister. A man will accomplish little who allows his mind to be distracted by a multiplicity of objects. A Christian will accomplish nothing who has not a single great aim and purpose of soul. That purpose should be to secure the prize, and to renounce everything that would be in the way to its attainment. Let us, then, so live that we may be able to say, that there is one great object which we always have in view, and that we mean to avoid everything which would interfere with that. Forgetting those things which are behind.

There is an allusion here undoubtedly to the Grecian races. One running to secure the prize would not stop to look behind him to see how much ground he had run over, or who of his competitors had fallen or lingered in the way. He would keep his eye steadily on the prize, and strain every nerve that he might obtain it. If his attention was diverted for a moment from that, it would hinder his flight, and might be the means of his losing the crown. See cut on page 249. So the apostle says it was with him. He looked onward to the prize. He fixed the eye intently on that. It was the single object in his view, and he did not allow his mind to be diverted from that by anything--not even by the contemplation of the past. He did not stop to think of the difficulties which he had overcome, or the troubles which he had met, but he thought of what was yet to be accomplished. This does not mean that he would not have regarded a proper contemplation of the past life as useful and profitable for a Christian, (Eph 2:11,) but that he would not allow any reference to the past to interfere with the one great effort to win the prize. It may be, and is, profitable for a Christian to look over the past mercies of God to his soul, in order to awaken emotions of gratitude in the heart, and to think of his shortcomings and errors, to produce penitence and humility. But none of these things should be allowed, for one moment, to divert the mind from the purpose to win the incorruptible crown. And it may be remarked in general, that a Christian will make more rapid advances in piety by looking forward than by looking backward. Forward, we see everything to cheer and animate us--the crown of victory, the joys of heaven, the society of the blessed-- the Saviour beckoning to us, and encouraging us. Backward, we see everything to dishearten and to humble. Our own unfaithfulness; our coldness, deadness, and dulness; the little zeal and ardour which we have, all are fitted to humble and discourage. He is the most cheerful Christian who looks onward, and who keeps heaven always in view. He who is accustomed much to dwell on fine past, though he may be a true Christian, will be likely to be melancholy and dispirited, to be a recluse rather than a warm-hearted and active friend of the Saviour. Or if he looks backward to contemplate what he has done--the space that he has run over --the difficulties which he has surmounted--and his own rapidity in the race, he will be likely to

become self-complacent and self-satisfied. He will trust in his past endeavours, and feel that the prize is now secure, and will relax his future efforts. Let us, then, look onward. Let us not spend our time either in pondering the gloomy past, and our own unfaithfulness, or in thinking of what we have done, and thus becoming puffed up with self-complacency; but let us keep the eye steadily on the prize, and run the race as though we had just commenced it. And reaching forth. As one does in a race. Unto those things which are before. Before the racer there was a crown or garland to be bestowed by the judges of the games. Before the Christian there is the crown of glory, the eternal reward of heaven. There is the favour of God, victory over sin and death, the society of the redeemed and of angelic beings, and the assurance of perfect and eternal freedom from all evil. These are enough to animate the soul, and to urge it on with ever-increasing rigour in the Christian race.

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Of the high calling of God. Which is the end or result of that calling. God has called us to great and noble efforts; to a career of true honour and glory; to the obtainment of a bright and imperishable crown. It is a calling which is "high," or upward ανω--that is, which tends to the skies. The calling of the Christian is from heaven, and to heaven. Comp. Prov 15:24, He has been summoned by God, through the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to secure the crown. It is placed before and above him in heaven. It may he his, if he will not faint or tire, or look backward. It demands his highest efforts, and it is worth all the exertions which a mortal can make even in the longest life.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Let as many as be perfect, that is, grown Christians, instructed thoroughly in their Christian duty, who, compared with others, may be called perfect, be thus minded, as I am, namely, to believe the circumcision of the flesh abolished, and that no confidence is to be placed in any righteousness of our own, but in the righteousness which is of God by faith only; and if any, seduced by the judaizing teachers, be otherwise minded, and think that the ceremonial law is not abrogated, nor the practice of circumcision abolished, God

in his due time will show them their error, and convince them, that none of those things are now necessary for the obtaining of his favour.
Nevertheless, in the mean time, he exhorts all persons, according to the measures of light and knowledge which they had received, to walk according to the rule of the Scriptures, preserving mutual love, and avoiding further rents and divisions.

Observe here, That in the first and best age of the Christian church, there was, and we cannot expect but there ever will be, a variety of opinions and differences in judgment amongst the members thereof.

Observe, 2. That in this case of unavoidable differences amongst good men, there ought to be mutual charity and meekness, moderation and forbearance, no censorious judging of each other, but look first at what is wanting in ourselves and next at what is useful in others: the one will make us humble, the other charitable; and both peaceable.

And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded. That is, if there were any among them who had not these elevated views and aims, and who had not been brought to sec the necessity of such efforts, or who had not learned that such high attainments were possible. There might be those among them who had been very imperfectly instructed in the nature of religion; those who entertained views which impeded their progress, and prevented the simple and earnest striving for salvation which Paul was enabled to put forth. He had laid aside every obstacle; renounced all the Jewish opinions which had impeded his salvation, and had now one single aim--that of securing the prize. But there might be those who had not attained to these views, and who were still impeded and embarrassed by erroneous opinions. God shall reveal even this unto you. He will correct your erroneous opinions, and disclose to you the importance of making this effort for the prize. This is the expression of an opinion, that to those who were sincere and true Christians, God would yet make a full revelation of the nature of religion, or would lead them on so that they would fully understand

it. They who are acquainted with religion at all, or who have been truly converted, God will teach and guide until they shall have a full understanding of divine things.

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule. This is a most wise and valuable rule, and a rule that would save much difficulty and contention in the church, if it were honestly applied. The meaning is this--that though there might be different degrees of attainment among Christians, and different views on many subjects, yet there were points in which all could agree; there were attainments which they all had made, and in reference to them they should walk in harmony and love. It might be that some had made much greater advances than others. They had more elevated views of religion; they had higher knowledge; they were nearer perfection. Others had had less advantages of education and instruction, had had fewer opportunities of making progress in the divine life, and would less understand the higher mysteries of the Christian life. They might not see the truth or propriety of many things which those in advance of them would see clearly. But it was not worth while to quarrel about these things. There should be no angry feeling, and no fault-finding on either side. There were many things in which they could see alike, and where there were no jarring sentiments. In those things they could walk harmoniously; and they who were in advance of others should not complain of their less informed brethren as lacking all evidence of piety; nor should those who had not made such advances complain of those before them as fanatical, or as disposed to push things to extremes. They who had the higher views should, as Paul did, believe that God will yet communicate them to the church at large, and in the mean time should not denounce others; and those who had less elevated attainments should not censure their brethren as wild and visionary. There were common grounds on which they might unite, and thus the harmony of the church would be secured. No better rule than this could be applied to the subjects of inquiry which spring up among Christians respecting temperance, slavery, moral reform, and the various doctrines of religion; and, if this rule had been always observed, the church would have been always saved from harsh contention and from schism. If a man does not

see things just as I do, let me try with mildness to "teach" him, and let me believe that if he is a Christian, God will make this known to him yet; but let me not quarrel with him, for neither of us would be benefited by that, nor would the object be likely to be attained. In the mean time, there are many things in which we can agree. In them let us work together, and strive, as far as we can, to promote the common object. Thus we shall save our temper, give no occasion to the world to reproach us, and be much more likely to come together in all our views. The best way to make true Christians harmonious is, to labour together in the common cause of saving souls. As far as we can agree, let us go and labour together; and where we cannot yet, let us "agree to differ." We shall all think alike by-and-by.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

And mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. There were those in the church who endeavoured to live as he had done, renouncing all confidence ill the flesh, and aiming to win the prize. There were others, it would seem, who were actuated by different views. See Php 3:18. There are usually two kinds of professing Christians in every church--those who imitate the Saviour, and those who are worldly and vain. The exhortation here is, to "mark"--that is, to observe with a view to imitate--those who lived as the apostles did. We should set before our minds the best examples, and endeavour to imitate the most holy men. A worldly and fashionable professor of religion is a very bad example to follow; and, especially, young Christians should set before their minds for imitation, and associate with, the purest and most spiritual members of the church. Our religion takes its form and complexion much from those with whom we associate; and he will usually be the most holy man who associates with the most holy companions.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

For many walk. Many live, the Christian life being often in the Scriptures compared with a journey. In order to induce them to imitate those who were the most holy, the apostle says that there

were many, even in the church, whom it would not be safe for them to imitate. He evidently here refers mainly to the church at Philippi, though it may be that he meant to make the declaration general, and to say that the same thing existed in other churches. There has not probably been any time yet in the Christian church when the same thing might not be said. Of whom I have told you often. When he preached in Philippi. Paul was not afraid to speak of church-members when they did wrong, and to warn others not to imitate their example. He did not attempt to cover up or excuse guilt because it was in the church, or to apologize for the defects and errors of those who professed to be Christians. The true way is, to admit that there are those in the church who do not honour their religion, and to warn others against following their example. But this fact does not make religion any the less true or valuable, any more than the fact that there is counterfeit money makes all money bad, or makes genuine coin of no value. And now tell you even weeping. This is the true spirit with which to speak of the errors and faults of Christians. It is not to go and blazon their inconsistencies abroad. It is not to find pleasure in the fact that they are inconsistent. It is not to reproach religion on that account, and to say that all religion is false and hollow, and that all professors are hypocrites. We should rather speak of the fact with tears; for, if there is any thing that should make us weep, it is, that there are those in the church who are hypocrites, or who dishonour their profession. We should weep,

(1.) because they are in danger of destroying their own souls;

(2.) because they are destined to certain disappointment when they come to appear before God; and

(3.) because they injure the cause of religion, and give occasion to the "enemies of the Lord to speak reproachfully." He who loves religion will weep over the inconsistencies of its friends; he who does not will exult and triumph. That they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. The "cross" was the instrument of death on which the Redeemer died to make atonement for sin. As the atonement made by Christ for sin is that which peculiarly distinguishes his

religion from all others, the "cross" comes to be used to denote his religion; and the phrase here means, that they were the enemies of his religion, or were strangers to the gospel. It is not to be supposed that they were open and avowed enemies of the cross or that they denied that the Lord Jesus died on the cross to make an atonement. The characteristic of those persons mentioned in tile following verse is, rather, that they were living in a manner which showed that they were strangers to his pure gospel. An immoral life is enmity to the cross of Christ; for he died to make us holy. A life where there is no evidence that the heart is renewed is enmity to the cross; for he died that we might be renewed. They are the enemies of the cross, in the church,

(1.) who have never been born again;

(2.) who are living in the indulgence of known sin;

(3.) who manifest none of the peculiarities of those who truly love him;

(4.) who have a deeper interest ill worldly affairs than they have in the cause of the Redeemer;

(5.) whom nothing can induce to give up their worldly concerns when God demands it;

(6.) who are opposed to all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; and

(7.) who are opposed to all the peculiar duties of religion, or who live in the habitual neglect of them. It is to be feared that at all times there are such enemies of the cross in the church, and the language or, the apostle implies that it ks a proper subject of grief and tears. He wept over it, and so should we. It is from this cause that so much injury is done to the true religion in the world. One secret enemy in a camp may do more harm than fifty men who are open foes; and a single unholy or inconstant member in a church may do much more injury than many men who are avowedly opposed to religion.

It is not by infidels, and scoffers, and blasphemers, so much, that injury is done to the cause of religion; it is by the unholy lives of its professed friends--the worldliness, inconsistency, and want of the proper spirit of religion, among those who are in the church. Nearly all the objections that are made to religion are from this quarter; and if this objection, were taken away, the religion of Christ would soon spread its triumphs around the globe.

Whose end is destruction. That is, as they have no true religion, they must perish in the same manner as all sinners. A mere profession will not save them. Unless they are converted, and become the true friends of the cross, they cannot enter heaven. Whose God is their belly. Who worship their own appetites; or who live not to adore and honour God, but for self-indulgence and sensual gratifications. See Rom 16:18. And whose glory is in their shame. That is, they glory in things of which they ought to be ashamed. They indulge in modes of living which ought to cover them with confusion. Who mind earthly things. That is, whose hearts are set on earthly things, or who live to obtain them. Their attention is directed to honour, gain, or pleasure, and their chief anxiety is that they may secure these objects. This is mentioned as one of the characteristics of enmity to the cross of Christ; and if this be so, how many are there in the church now who are the real enemies of the cross! How many professing Christians are there who regard little else than worldly things! How many who live only to acquire wealth, to gain honour, or to enjoy the pleasures of the world! How many are there who have no interest in a prayer-meeting, in a Sabbath-school, in religious conversation, and in the advancement of true religion on the earth! These are the real enemies of the cross. It is not so much those who deny the doctrines of the cross, as it is those who oppose its influence on their hearts; not so much those who live to scoff and deride religion, as it is those who "mind earthly things," that injure this holy cause in the world.

For our conversation is in heaven. That is, this is true of all who are sincere Christians. It is a characteristic of Christians, in contradistinction from those who are the "enemies of the cross,"

that their conversation is in heaven. The word "conversation" we now apply almost entirely to oral discourse. It formerly, however, meant conduct in general, and it is usually employed in this sense in the Scriptures. Php 1:27, where the verb occurs, from which the noun here is derived. The word here used πολιτευμα --is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, any public measure, administration of the state, the manner in which the affairs of a state are administered; and then the state itself, the community, commonwealth, those who are bound under the same laws, and associated in the same society. Here it cannot mean that their "conversation," in the sense of discourse or talking, was in heaven; nor that their "conduct" was in heaven --for this would convey no idea, and the original word does not demand it; but the idea is, that they were heavenly citizens, or citizens of the heavenly world, in contradistinction from a worldly community. They were governed by the laws of heaven; they were a community associated as citizens of that world, and expecting there to dwell. The idea is, that there are two great communities in the universe--that of the world, and that of heaven; that governed by worldly laws and institutions, and that by the laws of heaven; that associated for worldly purposes, and that associated for heavenly or religious purposes; and that the Christian belonged to the latter--the enemy of the cross, though in the church, belonged to the former. Between true Christians, therefore, and others, there is all the difference which arises from belonging to different communities; being bound together for different purposes; subject to different laws; and altogether under a different administration. There is more difference between them than there is between the subjects of two earthly governments. Comp. Eph 2:6,19. From whence also we look for the Saviour. From heaven. That is, it is one of the characteristics of the Christian that he believes that the Lord Jesus will return from heaven, and that he looks and waits for it. Other men do not believe this, (2Pet 3:4,) but the Christian confidently expects it. His Saviour has been taken away from the earth, and is now in heaven, but it is a great and standing article of his faith that that same Saviour will again come, and take the believer to himself. Jn 14:2, Jn 14:3; 1Thes 4:14. This was the firm belief of the early

Christians, and this expectation with them was allowed to exert a constant influence on their hearts and lives.

It led them

(1.) to desire to be prepared for his coming;

(2.) to feel that earthly affairs were of little importance, as the scene here was soon to close;

(3.) to live above the world, and in the desire of the appearing of the Lord Jesus. This was one of the elementary doctrines of their faith, and one of the means of producing deadness to the world among them; and among the early Christians there was, perhaps, no doctrine that was more the object of firm belief, and the ground of more delightful contemplation, than that their ascended Master would return. In regard to the certainty of their belief on this point, and the effect which it had on their minds, see the following texts of the New Testament, Mt 24:42,44; Lk 12:37, Jn 14:3, Acts 1:11, 1Cor 4:5, Col 3:4, 1Thes 2:19, 2Thes 2:1; Heb 10:37, Jas 5:7,8, 1Jn 3:2, Rev 22:7,12,20. It may be asked, with great force, whether Christians in general have now any such expectation of the second appearing of the Lord Jesus, or whether they have not fallen into the dangerous error of prevailing unbelief, so that the expectation of his coming is allowed to exert almost no influence on the soul? In the passage before us, Paul says that it was one of the distinct characteristics of Christians that they looked for the coming of the Saviour from heaven. They believed that he would return. They anticipated that important effects would follow to them from his second coming. So we should look. There may be, indeed, a difference of opinion about the time when he will come, and about the question whether he will come to reign "literally" on the earth--but the fact that Christ will return to our world is common ground on which all Christians may meet, and is a fact which should be allowed to exert its full influence on the heart. It is a glorious truth--for what a sad world would this be, and what a sad prospect would be before the Christian, if the Saviour were never to come to raise his people from their graves, and to gather his redeemed to himself!

The fact that he will come is identified with all our hopes. It is fitted to cheer us in trial; to guard us in temptation; to make us dead to the world; to lead us to keep the eye turned toward heaven.

Who shall change our vile body. 1Cor 5:1, and following. The original words, which are here rendered "vile body," properly mean "the body of humiliation;" that is, our humble body. It refers to the body as it is in its present state, as subject to its infirmities, disease, and death. It is different far from what it was when man was created, and from what it will be in the future world. Paul says that it is one of the objects of the Christian hope and expectation that this body, so subject to infirmities and sicknesses, will be changed. That it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Gr., "The body of his glory;" that is, the body which he has in his glorified state. What change the body of the Redeemer underwent when he ascended to heaven we are not informed; nor do we know what is the nature, size, appearance, or form of the body which he now has. It is certain that it is adapted to the glorious world where he dwells; that it has none of the infirmities to which it was liable when here; that it is not subject, as here, to pain or death; that it is not sustained in the same manner. The body of Christ in heaven is of the same nature as the bodies of the saints will be in the resurrection, and which the apostle calls "spiritual bodies," 1Cor 15:44;) and it is doubtless accompanied with all the circumstances of splendour and glory which are appropriate to the Son of God. The idea here is, that it is the object of the desire and anticipation of the Christian, to be made just like Christ in all things. He desires to resemble him in moral character here, and to be like him in heaven. Nothing else will satisfy him but such conformity to the Son of God; and when he shall resemble him in all things, the wishes of his soul will be all met and fulfilled. According to the working, etc. That is, such a change demands the exertion of vast power. No creature can do it. But there is One who has power entrusted to him over all things, and he can effect this great transformation in the bodies of men. Comp. 1Cor 15:26,27. He can mould the mind and the heart to conformity to his own image, and thus also he can transform the body so that it shall resemble his. Everything he can make subject to his will. Mt 28:18; Jn 17:2. And he that has this power can

change our humbled and debased bodies, so that they shall put on the glorious appearance and form of that of the Son of God himself. What a contrast between our bodies here--frail, feeble, subject to sickness, decay, and corruption--and the body as it will be in heaven! And what glorious prospect awaits the weak and dying believer, in the future world!

19 whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. There are many called by Christ's name who are enemies to Christ's cross, and the design and intention of it. Their walk is a surer evidence what they are than their profession. By their fruits you shall know them, Mt 7:20. The apostle warns people against such,

1.) Very frequently: I have told you often. We so little heed the warnings given us that we have need to have them repeated. To write the same things is safe, Php 3:1.

(2.) Feelingly and affectionately: I now tell you weeping. Paul was upon proper occasions a weeping preacher, as Jeremiah was a weeping prophet. Observe, An old sermon may be preached with new affections; what we say often we may say again, if we say it affectionately, and are ourselves under the power of it.

2. He gives us the characters of those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ.

(1.) Whose God is their belly. They minded nothing but their sensual appetites. A wretched idol it is, and a scandal for any, but especially for Christians, to sacrifice the favour of God, the peace of their conscience, and their eternal happiness to it. Gluttons and drunkards make a god of their belly, and all their care is to please it and make provision for it. The same observance which good people give to God epicures give to their appetites. Of such he

says, They serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies, Ro 16:18.

(2.) They glory in their shame. They not only sinned, but boasted of it and gloried in that of which they ought to have been ashamed. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in. "They value themselves for what is their blemish and reproach."

(3.) They mind earthly things. Christ came by his cross to crucify the world to us and us to the world; and those who mind earthly things act directly contrary to the cross of Christ, and this great design of it. They relish earthly things, and have no relish of the things which are spiritual and heavenly. They set their hearts and affections on earthly things; they love them, and even dote upon them, and have a confidence and complacency in them. He gives them this character, to show how absurd it would be for Christians to follow the example of such or be led away by them; and, to deter us all from so doing, he reads their doom.

(4.) Whose end is destruction. Their way seems pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death, Ro 6:21. It is dangerous following them, though it is going down the stream; for, if we choose their way, we have reason to fear their end. Perhaps he alludes to the total destruction of the Jewish nation.

II. He proposes himself and his brethren for an example, in opposition to these evil examples: Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark those who walk as you have us for an example, Php 3:17. Mark them out for your pattern. He explains himself (Php 3:20) by their regard to Christ and heaven: For our conversation is in heaven. Observe, Good Christians, even while they are here on earth, have their conversation in heaven. Their citizenship is there, politeuma. As if he had said, We stand related the that world, and are citizens of the New Jerusalem. This world is not our home, but that is. There our greatest privileges and concerns lie. And, because our citizenship is there, our

conversation is there; being related to that world, we keep up a correspondence with it. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his head is, and his home is, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his affections upon things above; and where his heart is there will his conversation be. The apostle had pressed them to follow him and other ministers of Christ: "Why," might they say, "you are a company of poor, despised, persecuted people, who make no figure, and pretend to no advantages in the world; who will follow you?" "Nay," says he, "but our conversation is in heaven. We have a near relation and a great pretension to the other world, and are not so mean and despicable as we are represented." It is good having fellowship with those who have fellowship with Christ, and conversation with those whose conversation is in heaven.

1. Because we look for the Saviour from heaven (Php 3:20): Whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not here, he has ascended, he has entered within the veil for us; and we expect his second coming thence, to gather in all the citizens of that New Jerusalem to himself.

2. Because at the second coming of Christ we expect to be happy and glorified there. There is good reason to have our conversation in heaven, not only because Christ is now there, but because we hope to be there shortly: Who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, Php 3:21. There is a glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, which they will be instated in at the resurrection. The body is now at the best a vile body, to soma tes tapeinoseos hemon--the body of our humiliation: it has its rise and origin from the earth, it is supported out of the earth, and is subject to many diseases and to death at last. Besides, it is often the occasion and instrument of much sin, which is called the body of this death, Ro 7:24. Or it may be understood of its vileness when it lies in the grave; at the resurrection it will be found a vile body, resolved into rottenness and dust; the dust will return to the earth as it was, Ec 12:7. But it will be made a glorious body; and not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe,

(1.) The sample of this change, and that is, the glorious body of Christ; when he was transfigured upon the mount, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, Mt 17:2. He went to heaven clothed with a body, that he might take possession of the inheritance in our nature, and be not only the first-born from the dead, but the first-born of the children of the resurrection. We shall be conformed to the image of his Son, that he may be the first-born among many brethren, Ro 8:29.

(2.) The power by which this change will be wrought: According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. There is an efficacy of power, an exceeding greatness of power, and the working of mighty power, Eph 1:19. It is matter of comfort to us that he can subdue all things to himself, and sooner or later will bring over all into his interest. And the resurrection will be wrought by this power. I will raise him up at the last day, Joh 6:44. Let this confirm our faith of the resurrection, that we not only have the scriptures, which assure us it shall be, but we know the power of God, which can effect it, Mt 22:29. At Christ's resurrection was a glorious instance of the divine power, and therefore he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead (Ro 1:4), so will our resurrection be: and his resurrection is a standing evidence, as well as pattern, of ours. And then all the enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom will be completely conquered. Not only he who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb 2:14), but the last enemy, shall be destroyed, that is, death, 1Co 15:26, shall be swallowed up in victory, 1Co 15:54.

Here our apostle proposes his own example to their imitation: follow me, who have renounced all my Jewish privileges, all confidence in any thing of my own; and mark them for your patterns, who walk so as to have us for an example.

O! how happy is it when the ministers of Christ go before their people, and tread out the steps which they are to take towards heaven; when they can say to their people, (without any

upbraiding from their own consciences,) Be followers of us, and of all such as have us for an example.

Next, he warns them against following the doctrines and practices of the false teachers, the judaizing doctors, those great zealots for the observation of the ceremonial law, and the rite of circumcision; these he paints out in their proper colours:

1. He calls them the enemies of the cross of Christ, because they preached up the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law; and so, in effect, denied Christ to be come in the flesh, or affirmed that he died in vain.

Whose end is destruction: if they persist in their wicked doctrines and practices, their end will be everlasting destruction:
Whose god is their belly; who chiefly mind the gratification and pleasing of a sensual appetite: they who serve their belly before God, or as they should serve God, do make a god of their belly; we may provide for the belly, but not serve it; that is to serve us, by fitting us to serve God, our neighbours, and ourselves;

Whose glory is in their shame; that is, they gloried in their wicked practices in general, whereof they ought to be ashamed, and in the circumcision of the shameful member in particular; they are puffed up with that which should rather make them blush:

They mind earthly things; the riches, honours, pleasures, applause of the world, are things wholly upon their hearts,
counting gain godliness, not regarding Christ's interest, but only the promoting their own designs.

Lord! what a dismal character is this of those men that undertake to be teachers of others! With what a black coal doth the apostle draw their picture! and yet his hand was guided by the Spirit of God, whose judgment of them was according to truth.

As if the apostle had said, "As you love your souls, follow not those false teachers afore described, for they are citizens of the world: but imitate and follow us, who are citizens of heaven, where our head is, where our heart is, where our happiness is. It is true we live here below, but we belong to the corporation and society above, our citizenship is in heaven; for we have an high esteem of that happiness, and our chief concern is to make sure of it, and we please and delight ourselves with the joyful expectation of it, and we live answerably to our expectation; as we hope hereafter to love like the angels in glory, so we now endeavour to live like the angels in holiness."

Learn hence, All the faithful, both ministers and people, have a right to heaven, as to their city; they are therefore with their hearts and affections to be daily aspiring after it, and live in hopes of getting, ere long, the full possession of it.

Observe here, 1. All the faithful, who have their conversation in heaven, do expect and look for Christ coming from thence, not as a terrible judge, but as a gracious and powerful Saviour.

Observe, 2. What they do expect at the coming of this Saviour, namely, the changing of their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.

Note here, 1. The present condition of the body of man: it is in a vile condition, vile in its original, our body is made of vile dust; vile, in regard of its accidental vileness, as the body is the seat of many vile diseases, and subject to vile abuses; vile considered with respect to its ultimate vileness at death; how does a body, as beautiful as ever was Absalom's, when death comes, run into rottenness and putrefaction! Our sin makes us vile in the sight of God whilst we live, and renders our bodies viler in the sight of men when we die.

Note, 2. The future condition which the bodies of good men shall be in, at the appearance of Christ: this vile body shall be a beautiful and a blessed body; the body we lay down shall be

rebuilt, formed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; resembling his in incorruptibility and immortality, in purity and spirituality, in power and activity, in happiness and felicity.

Note, 3. The efficient cause of this great and glorious change, with reference to the body; and that is Christ, he shall change our vile bodies: together with the means by which all this is to be effected and accompolished, namely, the wonderful power of Christ, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Surely it is as easy for Christ to give a body to a soul at the resurrection, as to breathe a soul into a body every day in the work of creation. But the power of Christ is but a weak argument to build our hopes of the body's resurrection upon, without a revelation of his will: he can quench all the fire in hell in a moment; but where has he said he will do it? But now in the case before us, Christ is not only able to raise, but has declared he will raise and change our vile bodies; so that faith is enabled to make a sufficient reply to all the astonishing difficulties that reason can muster up: and those Christians that can only say, Our conversation is in heaven, may add, from thence we look for a Saviour, The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

21 who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Philippians-4

Rejoice in the Lord

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved.

Behold in this glass the heart of every faithful ambassador of Jesus Christ: it would not please them so much to have an imperial crown set upon their heads, and to be made the emperors of the world, as to see souls brought off from the world, by their ministry, to the obedience of the word. This made the Philippians St. Paul's joy and crown at present, and gave him hopes they would be his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. May the same mind be in us which was in this great apostle.

Observe, 2. The great and important duty which St. Paul here exhorts the Philippians to; and that is, steadfastness in the faith and doctrine of the gospel in general: and in particular, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, without obliging themselves to observe circumcision, or any part of the ceremonial law: Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved, my joy and crown.

Learn hence, 1. That steadfastness in the true religion, and perseverance in the faith of Christ, is the great and indespensable duty of every Christian that has a due regard to his salvation. That such a steadiness in the faith of Christ, and his holy religion, is a present joy, and will be an eternal crown of rejoicing to the ministers of God.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

That they be of the same mind. That they be united, or reconciled. Whether the difference related to doctrine, or to something else, we cannot determine from this phrase. The language is such as would properly relate to any difference. In the Lord. In their Christian walk and plans. They were doubtless professing Christians, and the apostle exhorts them to make the Lord the great object of their affections, and, in their regard for him, to bury all their petty differences and animosities.

3 And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellow laborers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to: Christian cheerfulness and joy; a duty which glorifies God, adorns religion, is beneficial to ourselves, by enabling us to bear afflictions, to glory in them, and to triumph over them.

Observe, 2. The object of this duty, a glorious and replenishing object; Christ the Lord: Rejoice in the Lord.

3. The perpetuity and constancy of the duty: Rejoice alway; that is, at all times, and in all conditions.

4. The difficulty of the duty, implied in the repetition of the command: Again, I say, Rejoice.

From the whole note, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great, sure, and perpetual joy of his children and people.

2. That it is their duty to be joying in him always, and always rejoicing for him, and to rejoice in their knowledge fo him, in his undertaking for them, in their interest in him, in their influences of grace and comfort derived from him, in their hopes fo glory to be eternally enjoyed with him.

3. That to get the heart up to this duty, at all times, and in all conditions, is no easy work: therefore the exhortation is doubled: Rejoice alway; and again I say, Rejoice; pointing out how averse we are to this spiritual and very beneficial duty.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. That is, let it be such that others may see it. This does not mean that they were to make an ostentatious display of it, but that it should be such a characteristic of their lives that it would be constantly visible to others. The word moderation επιεικες--refers to restraint on the passions, general soberness of living, being free from all excesses. The word properly means that which is fit or suitable, and then

propriety, gentleness, mildness.--They were to indulge in no excess of passion, or dress, or eating, or drinking. They were to govern their appetites, restrain their temper, and to be examples of what was proper for men in view of the expectation that the Lord would soon appear. The Lord is at hand. Is near. Php 3:20; 1Cor 16:22. This has the appearance of being a phrase in common use among the early Christians, and as being designed to keep before their minds a lively impression of an event which ought, by its anticipation, to produce an important effect. Whether, by this phrase, they commonly understood the coming of the Lord to destroy Jerusalem, or to remove them by death, or to judge the world, or to reign personally on the earth, it is impossible now to determine, and is not very material to a proper understanding of its use here. The idea is, that the expectation that the Lord Jesus will "come" ought to be allowed to produce moderation of our passions, in our manner of living, in our expectations of what this world can furnish, and in our desires of earthly good. On him who feels that he is soon to die, and to stand at the bar of God-- on him who expects soon to see the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, it cannot fail to have this effect. Men indulge their passions--are extravagant in their plans of life, and in their expectations of earthly good for themselves and for their families, because they have no realizing sense of the truth that there is before them a vast eternity. He that has a lively expectation that heaven will soon be his, will form very moderate expectations of what this world can furnish.

Be careful for nothing. That is, be not anxious or solicitous about the things of the present life. The word here used--μεριμνατε -- does not mean that we are to exercise no care about worldly matters--no care to preserve our property, or to provide for our families, (1Timm 5:8;) but that there is to be such confidence in God as to free the mind from anxiety, and such a sense of dependence on him as to keep it calm. See the subject explained Mt 6:25. But in every thing. Everything in reference to the supply of your wants, and the wants of your families; everything in respect to afflictions, embarrassments, and trials: and everything relating to your spiritual condition. There ia nothing which

pertains to body, mind, estate, friends, conflicts, losses, trials, hopes, fears, in reference to which we may not go and spread it all out before the Lord. By prayer and supplication. The word rendered supplication is a stronger term than the former. It is the mode of prayer peculiarly which arises from the sense of need, or want--from δεομαι, to want, to need. With thanksgiving. Thanksgiving connected with prayer. We can always find something to be thankful for, no matter what may be the burden of our wants, or the special subject of our petitions. When we pray for the supply of our wants, we may be thankful for that kind Providence which has hitherto befriended us; when we pray for restoration from sickness, we may be thankful for the health we have hitherto enjoyed, and for God's merciful interposition in the former days of trial, and for his goodness in now sparing our lives; when we pray that our children and friends may be preserved from danger and death, we may remember how often God has interposed to save them; when, oppressed with a sense of sin, we pray for pardon, we have abundant cause of thanksgiving that there is a glorious way by which we may be saved. The greatest sufferer that lives in this world of redeeming love, and who has the offer of heaven before him, has cause of gratitude. Let your request be made known unto God. Not as if you were to give him information, but to express to him your wants. God needs not to be informed of our necessities, but he requires that we come and express them to him. Comp. Eze 36:37: "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

And the peace of God. The peace which God gives. The peace here particularly referred to is that which is felt when we have no anxious care about the supply of our wants, and when we go confidently and commit everything into the hands of God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee," Isa 26:3 Jn 14:27. Which passeth all understanding. That is, which surpasses all that men had conceived or imagined. The expression is one that denotes that the peace imparted is of the highest possible kind. The apostle Paul frequently used terms

which had somewhat of a hyperbolical cast, Eph 3:19; comp. Jn 21:25;) and the language here is that which one would use who designed to speak of that which was of the highest order. The Christian, committing his way to God, and feeling that he will order all things aright, has a peace which is nowhere else known. Nothing else will furnish it but religion. No confidence that a man can have in his own powers; no reliance which he can repose on his own plans or on the promises or fidelity of his fellow-men, and no calculations which he can make on the course of events, can impart such peace to the soul as simple confidence in God. Shall keep your hearts and minds. That is, shall keep them from anxiety and agitation. The idea is, that by thus making our requests known to God, and going to him in view of all our trials and wants, the mind would be preserved from distressing anxiety. The way to find peace, and to have the heart kept from trouble, is thus to go and spread out all before the Lord. Comp. Isa 26:3,4,20, 37:1-7. The word here rendered shall keep is a military term, and means that the mind would be guarded as a camp or castle is. It would be preserved from the intrusion of anxious fears and alarms. Through Christ Jesus. By his agency, or intervention. It is only in him that the mind can be preserved in peace. It is not by mere confidence in God, or by mere prayer, but it is by confidence in God as he is revealed through the Redeemer, and by faith in him. Paul never lost sight of the truth, that all the security and happiness of a believer were to be traced to the Saviour.

Think on These Things

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

Whatsoever things are true. In this exhortation the apostle assumes that there were certain things admitted to be true, and pure, and good, in the world, which had not been directly revealed, or which were commonly regarded as such by the men

of the world; and his object is to show them that such things ought to be exhibited by the Christian. Everything that was honest and just towards God and towards men was to be practised by them, and they were in all things to be examples of the highest kind of morality. They were not to exhibit partial virtues; not to perform one set of duties to the neglect or exclusion of others; not to be faithful in their duties to God, and to neglect their duty to men; not to be punctual in their religious rites, and neglectful of the common laws of morality; but they were to do everything that could be regarded as the fair subject of commendation, and that was implied in the highest moral character. The word true refers here to everything that was the reverse of falsehood. They were to be true to their engagements; true to their promises; true in their statements; and true in their friendships. They were to maintain the truth about God; about eternity; about the judgment; and about every man's character. Truth is a representation of things as they are; and they were constantly to live under the correct impression of objects. A man who is false to his engagements, or false in his statements and promises, is one who will always disgrace religion. Whatsoever things are honest. σεμνα. Properly, venerable, reverend; then honourable, reputable. The word was originally used in relation to the gods, and to the things that pertained to them, as being worthy of honour or veneration. Pussow. As applied to men, it commonly means grave, dignified, worthy of veneration or regard. In the New Testament it is rendered grave in 1Timm 3:8,11, and Tit 2:2, the only places where the word occurs except this; and the noun (σεμνοτης) is rendered honesty in 1Timm 2:2 and gravity in 1Timm 3:4, Tit 2:7. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The word, therefore, does not express precisely what the word honest does with us, as confined to dealings or business transactions, but rather has reference to what was regarded as worthy of reputation or honour; what there was in the customs of society, in the respect due to age and rank, and in the intercourse of the world, that deserved respect or esteem. It includes indeed what is right in the transaction of business, but it embraces also much more, and means that the Christian is to show respect to all the venerable and proper customs of society,

when they did not violate conscience or interfere with the law of God. Comp. 1Timm 3:7. Whatsoever things are just. The things which are right between man and man. A Christian should be just in all his dealings. His religion does not exempt him from the strict laws which bind men to the exercise of this virtue, and there is no way by which a professor of religion can do more injury, perhaps, than by injustice and dishonesty in his dealings. It is to be remembered, that the men of the world, in estimating a man's character, affix much more importance to the virtues of justice and honesty than they do to regularity in observing the ordinances of religion; and therefore, if a Christian would make an impression on his fellow-men favourable to religion, it is indispensable that he manifest uncorrupted integrity in his dealings. Whatsoever things are pure. Chaste--in thought, and feeling, and in the intercourse between the sexes. 1Timm 5:2. Whatsoever things are lovely. The word here used means, properly, what is dear to any one; then what is pleasing. Here it means what is amiable--such a temper of mind that one can love it; or such as to be agreeable to others. A Christian should not be sour, crabbed, and irritable in his temper for nothing almost tends so much to injure the cause of religion as a temper always chafed; a brow morose and stern; an eye that is severe and unkind, and a disposition to find fault with everything. And yet it is to be regretted that there are many persons, who make no pretensions to piety, who far surpass many professors of religion in the virtue here commended. A sour and crabbed temper in a professor of religion will undo all the good that he attempts to do. Whatsoever things are of good report. That is, whatsoever is truly reputable in the world at large. There are actions which all men agree in commending, and which in all ages and countries are regarded as virtues. Courtesy, urbanity, kindness, respect for parents, purity between brothers and sisters, are among those virtues--and the Christian should be a pattern and an example in them all. His usefulness depends much more on the cultivation of these virtues than is commonly supposed. If there be any virtue. If there is anything truly virtuous. Paul did not suppose that he had given a full catalogue of the virtues which he would have cultivated. He therefore adds, that if there was anything else that had the nature

of true virtue in it, they should be careful to cultivate that also. The Christian should be a pattern and example of every virtue. And if there be any praise. Anything worthy of praise, or that ought to be praised. Think on these things. Let them be the object of your careful attention and study, so as to practise them. Think what they are; think on the obligation to observe them; think on the influence which they would have on the world around you.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Acknowledgment of the Philippians' Gift

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of this epistle, acquaints the Philippians with what great joy he had received their charity sent unto him; and that it came no sooner, he believed did not proceed from any disrespect towards him, but only for want of either ability or opportunity of sending to him: yet withal gives them to understand, that he could bear want, or a strait condition, very well, for, having Christ for his teacher, he had learned in whatsoever state he was, therein to be content; he could bear either plenty or scarcity, fulness or want; yea, could do all things through Christ that strengthened him.

Observe here, 1. The vicissitude and great uncertainty of St. Paul's outward condition: at one time he abounds, at another time he is abased; at one time he abounds, at another time he is abased; at one time he is full, at another in want; teaching us, that the dearest of God's children, in regard of their outward condition, are subject to variety of changes.

Observe, 2. The general lesson which they have learnt, with reference to this variety of conditions, and that is, the lesson of contentment: I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Observe, 3. The particular lessons learnt by him: Both how to abound, and how to be abased. They are both hard lessons, but, of the two, perhaps it is harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased.

Quest. 1. When may man be said to know how to abound?

Ans. When he sets a due value and right esteem upon the things of the world, and neither prizes them too high nor too low: when a man so uses his abundance as to avoid the temptations which do attend and accompany that abundance; when he is willing to part with his abundance at the call and command of God; and, in a word, when he attends more to the duties of his prosperous state, than to the sensual pleasures and satisfaction of it.

Quest. 2. What is it to know how to be abased?

Ans. Not to be discouraged, or suffer the spirit to sink or faint in the day of adversity: to be not only humbled by affliction, but humble under it; to suffer what God inflicts, without impatience or complaint, without sourness of spirit or discontent; to believe the hand of a Father: that whatever we part with, is but a perishing creature; that God is able to restore all our lost comfort with advantage to us, and will do it if it be good for us, either in kind or equivalency: this is to know how to be abased.

Quest. 3. How doth it appear harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased?

Ans. Thus: there are more duties, and harder duties, required of those that abound, than of them that want. There are more

temptations, and stronger temptations, which attend those in abundance than them that want.

Hence it is that God gives so many solemn charges and commands to those that abound, to take heed to themselves, more than those that are in want. When thou art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God,, and thy heart be lifted up. Deut 6:12
In a word, I do not remember one instance in all the scripture of a full or prosperous condition, which was ever so much as the remote occasion of the sinner's conversion unto God; but I find in scripture that an afflicted condition has been blessed to many for this end, 2Chr 33:12; Hos 5:15; Job 23:14.

Observe, 4. The school which St. Paul learnt this great lesson in, to know how to be abased, and how to abound, and to be thoroughly content in every condition: it was not at Gamaliel's feet, but Christ's feet: I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Christ was both his tutor and his strengthener, he taught him his lesson, and enabled him to practise it.

See here, 1. That a real Christian is able to do all things, all things that concern a Christian, all things that belong to the glory of God, and his soul's salvation; all things, not in a legal, but evangelical sense; not all things, nor indeed any thing, with a sinless perfection, but all things in respect of his love to the whole law, in respect of his purpose and resolution, in respect of his desire and endeavours.

Again, I can do all things; understand it in an active sense, I can deny myself, believe in a withdrawing God, conquer the world, subdue unmortified corruption, and live a life of evangelical perfection: take it also in a passive sense, I can suffer all things, I can bear Christ's cross, wear his yoke, endure any thing for him, or from him, when called forth to suffer.

Note, 2. That as a Christian can do all things, so his ability to do all things lies not in himself, but in Christ. A believer receives an

active power from Christ, to enable him to do whatever he requires him to do: ability to subdue corruption, to conquer temptation, to bear affliction, and to glorify God in every condition: all this is from Christ; and the sincere Christian may say with this eminent saint, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

The modesty and great ingenuity of the apostle, in assuring them, that his praising their liberality so much was not upon design to get more: Not because I desire a gift; that is, any further gift for my own private advantage; I am far from the thought of spunging upon you: but I aim at your advantage in this that your liberality may afford you the fruits of a plentiful reward in the day of Christ, who will not forget your work and labour of love in ministering to the saints. Having thus guarded against all suspicion of greediness in himself, and evidenced that his commending of their liberality was not upon design, he proceeds again to praise their liberality yet farther, and extols it in such words as may cause admiration.

Note, 1. How abundantly satisfied the apostle was with what he had received, I have all, and abound, I am full; as if he had had the treasures of the Indies in his coffers. Grace is content with a little, and thinks that little an abundance; the contented man only is rich.

2. How St. Paul gives an acknowledgment, under his hand, that Epaphroditus had faithfully delivered to him the whole of their charity sent by him; I have received of Epaphroditus all the things

which were sent from you. Epaphroditus was their chief minister, or bishop, a person of great reputation, whose fidelity none could suspect; yet St. Paul gives it under his hand, that he had executed his trust faithfully. Though a man be never so trust-worthy in himself, and be never so much entrusted by others, yet he ought, in wisdom, to guard against any suspicion which may be taken up against his honesty and faithfulness.

Note, 3. The high expressions which St. Paul makes use of, in setting forth the Philippians' charity towards him: he calls it an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God; the very same words here which he makes use of, Eph 5:2, where he calls the death of Christ, a sacrifice and sweet- smelling savour. The expression is borrowed from the Levitical sacrifices, which were of God's appointing and approving; and it imports, that our charity expressed towards the members, but especially the ministers, of Jesus Christ, now under the gospel, is as acceptable and well-pleasing unto God as the sweetest incense and the fattest sacrifices were under the law.

Here observe, That the Socinians, to lessen the meritoriousness of Christ's sacrifice, do parallel this text with that other, Eph 5:2, "Is the death of Christ (say they) called a sacrifice, and sweet-smelling savour? So is the Philippians' charity here called a sacrifice, but both in a figurative and metaphorical sense only."

But mark the difference, St. Paul, Eph 5:2 says, Christ gave himself a sacrifice, which, being once offered, was sufficient to take away sin, Heb 10:10 but the Philippians are not said to give themselves a sacrifice, but their alms were as grateful to God as incense.
If it be said from Rom 12:1 that believers are required to present themselves living sacrifices unto God, and acceptable: I answer, So they are, and so they do present themselves gratulatory, but not expiatory, sacrifices unto God, Ye are a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ. 2Pe 2:5 Christ's oblation and sacrifice was acceptable for itself; believers, and their eucharistical sacrifices, are acceptable to God

only in, by, and through, our Lord Jesus Christ, By him set us offer the sacrifice of praise continually. Heb 13:15

Note lastly, The assurance which St. Paul gives the Philippians, that God would abundantly recompense their charity into their own bosoms, ver. 19.My God will supply all your need, &c. As if he had said, "Do not think you shall want, because you have liberally supplied my wants; no, my God will supply you, for your supplying me: According to his riches in glory, that is, according to his rich mercy and glorious grace." There is no need to be supplied in the glory of the next life, but there is a glory in rich grace, which readily and plentifully supplies all the needs in this life.

Note, 1. That such as administer now to the wants of others, may fall into want, and be driven to straits themselves.

2. That the more forward they have been to supply the wants and administer to the necessities of others in the time of their abundance, the more may they expect from the bountiful hand of God, in the day of their necessity and distress: My God shall supply all your need, &c.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The endearing title given to Almighty God, God our Father; the word Father is a title of great honour; the word our is a word of singular comfort. The appropriating positive terms, mine, thine, ours, have a great sweetness in them, and breathe abundance of affection. As Luther used to say, "The comfort of the gospel lay in pronouns possessive, when we can say with believing Thomas, My Lord and my God; with blessed Paul, Who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Learn, That God is a Father in a more peculiar and special manner to all that are interested in his Son Jesus Christ. The word Father

implies spiritual generation, that we are begotten by him, and like unto him; it implies vehemency of affection, no bowels comparable unto a father's; it implies designed benefit by correction, that he exercises in unto profit.

And in the word our is implied, that God is the Father of every believer, the weakest as well as the strongest; we are all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus: and it points out our duty also, that as there is one God and Father of all, so all believers should be of one heart and of one mind among themselves.

Note, 2. What it is which our apostle attributes and ascribes unto God, namely, glory, and that for ever and ever. Glory, that is, the manifestation of all his glorious excellences and perfections.
Learn hence, That it is the fervent desire of all believers to have the worth and excellences of God everlastingly acknowledged, and in a boundless manner displayed: Unto God be glory for ever and ever.
This word, for ever and ever, is, upon different accounts, the saddest and sweetest word in all the Bible. When applied to sinners, and what they suffer from God as the desert, the due desert, of their sins, then it is a word of the saddest weight, Rev 14:11. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;

They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. 2Thess 1:9
'Tis the word for ever and ever that sets all hell a roaring, and it is the same word that fills heaven with joy and rejoicing. To God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.
22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.
23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the

Colossians
[Colos sians]

Colossians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our*
brother,
2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at
Colossae:
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
praying always for you,
4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye*
have to all the saints,
5 for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard
before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

St. Paul discovers the motive which excited the Colossians to such steadiness and constancy in the faith of Christ, and in love one to another; and that was the hope laid up for them in heaven; that is, the great and good things here hoped for, and there to be enjoyed.
As the sinners misery consists not in what he feels, but what he fears; so the believer's happiness lies not in what he has in his hand, but in what he has in hope: the reward which encourages his perseverance in faith and love, is laid up in heaven; that is, safely and plentifully, as a parent lays up his treasures for the use of his children: It is both lawful and laudable then for Christians to have

an eye to the promised reward, as an encouragement to duty, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

Observe, 2. Ther means by which they came to the knowledge of this hope, it was by the word of truth, the preaching of the gospel to them by the ministry of Epaphras; this was so exceedingly blessed by God, that thereby the saving hope of this reward was wrought in them.

Where note, The title given to the gospel, it is eminently the word of truth, having Christ for its main subject, who is the way, the truth, and the life; and being confirmed by Christ the testator's blood.

Note farther, That the preaching of this word of truth, the doctrine of the gospel, is the great instrumental mean, appointed by God for begetting in us a lively hope of the reward laid up for us in heaven; for the hope laid up for you in heaven, whereof you have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

Observe, 3. The commendation here given of the gospel, which had begot in these Colossians a lively hope of the heavenly reward:
It is commended, 1. For being one and the same gospel which was preached by the apostles throughout all the world, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; that is, with incredible swiftness into the most eminent parts and places of the world then known; an infallible proof of the divinity of the gospel, that it was thus owned and blessed of God.

The gospel, at all times, and in all places, is one and the same; and Christ, when he pleases, can swiftly drive the chariot of the gospel round about the world, and bring in not only persons and familiers, but cities, nations, and kingdoms, to the obedience of it.

2. The gospel preached to them is commended for its fruitfulness, it bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you; that is, fruits of piety and holiness towards God, and fruits of righteousness and charity towards man.

Learn hence, That it is matter of praise, and unspeakable thanksgiving, to the ministers of Christ, when the light of the gospel breaks forth among a people, where it never befoe shined, and is accompanied with early and constant fruits of piety, humility, faith and love, in the hearts and lives of those to whom it is preached. The gospel bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day you heard of it, &c.

6 which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth
fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the
grace of God in truth:
7 as ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for
you a faithful minister of Christ;
8 who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.
9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray
for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of
his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Observe here, 1. The person who first preached the gospel of Christ to the Colossians, and converted them to the Christian faith, it was Epaphras; As ye learned of Epaphras.

Observe, 2. The commendation given to Epaphras, and his character by St. Paul; he was regularly called to the work, and a diligent fellow-labourer with St. Paul in the work of preaching and dispensing the mysteries of the everlasting gospel to a lost world; who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.

Learn hence, That the knowledge of life and salvation is ordinarily wrought in persons by the preaching of the gospel, by men called of God to that sacred function.

Observe, 3. A particular instance of the faithfulness of Epaphras towards the Colossians, he declared unto St. Paul their love in the Spirit; that is, their spiritual love and fervent affection to him, though they had never seen his face nor heard his voice.
The faithful ministers and members of Jesus Christ do affectionately love one another though they see not the face of each other; there is no such loadstone of love as the grace of God. This will draw forth

the heart and affections of a believer to the ends of the earth, to pray for, to mourn over, and to rejoice with such of their brethren as they never saw, but of whose condition they have heard.

Observe, 4. The kind return which St. Paul makes to them, for their love in the Spirit towards him; For this cause we do not cease to pray for you: there is no such way to attain an interest in, and to obtain constant benefit and advantage by the prayers of the ministers of God, as to be expressive of our love and affection both to God and them.

Observe, 5. The especial blessings which he prays for on the Colossians' behalf, namely, that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will, that is, attain to a more perfect and comprehensive knowledge of God's will and their duty, furnished with all divine wisdom and spiritual understanding, to regulate their lives according to their knowledge.

Learn from hence, That there is a fulness of divine knowledge, which is attained by none, but should be aimed at by all, seeing they that know most of God's word and revealed will, come far short of what they should know.

Learn, 2. That the knowledge wisdom, and understanding, which Christians should especially labour after, and attain unto, is of things spiritual: that ye be filled with knowledge and spiritual understanding.

10 that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Being fruitful in every good work. This is one way in which we are to walk worthy of the Lord, and so as to please him. Jn 15:8. And increasing in the knowledge of God. This is another way in which we may walk worthy of the Lord, and so as to please him. It is by endeavouring to become better acquainted with his true character. God is pleased with those who desire to understand what he is; what he does; what he purposes; what he commands. Hence he not only commands us to study his works, (comp. Ps 111:2,) but he has made

a world so beautiful as to invite us to contemplate his perfections as reflected in that world. All good beings desire that others should understand their character, and God delights in those who are sincerely desirous of knowing what he is, and who inquire with humility and reverence into his counsels and his will. Men are often displeased when others attempt to look into their plans, for they are sensible they will not bear the light of investigation. God has no plans which would not be seen to be, in the highest degree, glorious to him.

Strengthened with all might. This was also an object of Paul's earnest prayer. He desired that they might be strengthened for the performance of duty; to meet temptations; and to bear up under the various trials of life. According to his glorious power. Not by any human means, but by the power of God. There is a manifestation of power in the spirit with which Christians are enabled to bear up under trims, which shows that it is not of human origin. It is the power which God gives them in the day of trial. This power is "glorious," or, as it is in the Greek, it is the "power of his glory." It is manifestly the power of the great and glorious God, and it tends to promote his glory, and to show forth his praise. Unto all patience. So that you may be enabled to bear all your trials without murmuring. It is only the power of God that can enable us to do that.

Giving thanks to the Father. This is another mode by which we may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," Col 1:10; to wit, by rendering appropriate thanks to God for his mercy. The particular point which the apostle here says demanded thanksgiving was, that they had been called from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. This had been done by the special mercy of the Father, who had provided the plan of salvation, and had sent his Son to redeem them. The connexion shows that the word "Father" refers, in this place, not to God as the Father of his creatures, but to the Father as distinguished from the Son. It is the "Father" who has translated us into the kingdom of the "Son." Our especial thanks are due to the "Father" in this, as he is represented as the great Author of the whole plan of salvation as he who sent his Son to redeem us. Who hath made us meet. The word here used ικανοω means, properly, to make

sufficient, from ικανος sufficient, abundant, much. The word conveys the idea of having sufficient or enough to accomplish anything. 2Cor 3:6. The verb is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. In its use here, there seems to be implied the idea of conferring the privilege or the ability to be thus made the partakers of the kingdom, and the idea also of rendering us fit for it. The sense is, he has conferred on us grace sufficient to make it proper that we should partake of the blessings of his kingdom. In regard to this "fitness" or "meetness" for that kingdom, we may remark,

(1.) that it does not mean that we are rendered fit by our own merits, or by anything which we have done; for it is expressly said that it is God who has thus rendered us "meet" for it. No one, by his own merits, ever made himself fit for heaven. His good works cannot be an equivalent for the eternal rewards of heaven; nor is the heart, when unrenewed, even in the best state, fit for the society and the employments of heaven. There is no adaptedness of such a heart, however amiable and however refined, to the pure spiritual joys of the upper world. Those joys are the joys of religion, of the love of God, of pleasure in holiness; and the unrenewed heart can never be wrought up to a fitness to enter into those joys. Yet

(2.) there is a fitness or meetness which Christians possess for heaven. It consists in two things. First, in their having complied with the conditions on which God promises heaven; so that, although they have no merit in themselves, and no fitness by their own works, they have that meetness which results from having complied with the terms of favour. They have truly repented of their sins, and believed in the Redeemer; and they are thus in the proper state of mind to receive the mercy of God; for, according to the terms of mercy, there is a propriety that pardon should be bestowed on the penitent, and peace on the believing. A child that is truly broken-hearted for a fault is in a fit state of mind to be forgiven; a proud, and obstinate, and rebellious child is not. Secondly, there is, in fact, a fitness in the Christian for the participation of the inheritance of the saints in light. He has a state of feeling that is adapted to that. There is a congruity between his feelings and heaven--a state of mind that can be satisfied with nothing but heaven. He has in his

heart substantially the same principles which reign in heaven; and he is fitted to find happiness only in the same objects in which the inhabitants of heaven do. He loves the same God and Saviour; has pleasure in the same truths; prefers, as they do, holiness to sin; and, like the inhabitants of heaven, he would choose to seek his pleasure in holy living, rather than in the ways of vanity, his preferences are all on the side of holiness and virtue; and, with such preferences, he is fitted for the enjoyments of heaven. In character, views, feelings, and preferences, therefore, the Christian is made "fit" to participate in the employments and joys of the saints in light. To be partakers of the inheritance. The privileges of religion are often represented as an heirship, or an inheritance. Rom 8:17. Of the saints in light. Called, Col 1:13, "the kingdom of his dear Son." This is a kingdom of light, as opposed to the kingdom of darkness in which they formerly were. In the East, and particularly in Persia, there prevailed early the belief that there were two great kingdoms in the universe--that of light, and that of darkness. We find traces of this opinion in the Scriptures, where the kingdom of God is called "light," and that of Satan is called "darkness." These are, of course, figurative expressions; but they convey important truth. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of holiness, knowledge, happiness; and all these are found in the kingdom over which God presides, and of which Christians are the heirs. Accordingly, we find the word light often used to describe this kingdom. Thus it is said of God, who presides over it, that he "is light, and in him is no darkness at all," 1Jn 1:5; of Christ, that he is "the light of man," Jn 1:4; that he is "the true light," Jn 1:9; that he is "the light of the world," Jn 8:12. Comp. Jn 12:35; Lk 2:32. The angels of that kingdom are "angels of light," 2Cor 11:14. Those who compose that kingdom on earth are "the children of light," Lk 16:8, 1Thes 5:5. And all the descriptions of that kingdom in heaven represent it as filled with light and glory, Isa 60:19, Rev 21:23, 22:5.

11 strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto
all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;
12 giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be
partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
13 who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath
translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Reconciliation through Christ's Death

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:
15 who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:
16 for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Concerning the person of the Redeemer. Glorious things are here said of him; for blessed Paul was full of Christ, and took all occasions to speak honourably of him. He speaks of him distinctly as God, and as Mediator.

1. As God he speaks of him, Col 1:15-17. (1.) He is the image of the invisible God. Not as man was made in the image of God (Ge 1:27), in his natural faculties and dominion over the creatures: no, he is the express image of his person, Heb 1:3. He is so the image of God as the son is the image of his father, who has a natural likeness to him; so that he who has seen him has seen the Father, and his glory was the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, Joh 1:14,14:9.

(2.) He is the first-born of every creature. Not that he is himself a creature; for it is prototokos pases ktiseos--born or begotten before all the creation, or before any creature was made, which is the scripture-way of representing eternity, and by which the eternity of God is represented to us: I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; when there was no depth, before the mountains were settled, while as yet he had not made the earth, Pr 8:23-26. It signifies his dominion over all things, as the first-born in a family is heir and lord of all, so he is the heir of all things, Heb 1:2 The word, with only the change of the accent, prototokos, signifies actively the first begetter or producer of all things, and so it well agrees with the following clause. Vid. Isidor. Peleus. epist. 30 lib. 3.

(3.) He is so far from beginning himself a creature that he is the Creator: For by him were all things created, which are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, Col 1:16. He made all things out of nothing, the highest angel in heaven, as well as men upon earth. He made the world, the upper and lower world, with all the inhabitants of both. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which was made, Joh 1:3. He speaks here as if there were several orders of angels: Whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, which must signify either different degrees of excellence or different offices and employments. Angels, authorities, and powers, 1Pe 3:22. Christ is the eternal wisdom of the Father, and the world was made in wisdom. He is the eternal Word, and the world was made by the word of God. He is the arm of the Lord, and the world was made by that arm. All things are created by him and for him; di autou kai eis auton. Being created by him, they were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure and for his praise. He is the end, as well as the cause of all things. To him are all things, Ro 11:36; eis auton ta panta.

(4.) He was before all things. He had a being before the world was made, before the beginning of time, and therefore from all eternity. Wisdom was with the Father, and possessed by him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old, Pr 8:22. And in the beginning the Word was with God and was God, Joh 1:1. He not only had a being before he was born of the virgin, but he had a being before all time.

(5.) By him all things consist. They not only subsist in their beings, but consist in their order and dependences. He not only created them all at first, but it is by the word of his power that they are still upheld, Heb 1:3. The whole creation is kept together by the power of the Son of God, and made to consist in its proper frame. It is preserved from disbanding and running into confusion.

17 and he is before all things, and by him all things consist:
18 and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Our apostle having, in the former verses, described what Christ is in himself, comes next to describe him with relation to his church; shewing,

1. That he is her Head, he is the Head of the body, the church; as the head and the members make one body, so Christ and his people constitute one church; he is of the same nature (as man) with his church, he poureth forth the same Spirit upon his church, he is both an Head of authority, and a Head of influence to his church, he sympathizes with her in all her sufferings on earth, and longs for the full fruition and final enjoyment of her in heaven.

2. He is the beginning of the Christian church, the root, the fountain and foundation of it, the active beginning, or the first principle and author of it, and of all those influences of grace and spiritual life which do animate and enlive it.

3. He is called the first-born from the dead.

1. Because he was the first that arose to an immortal life, never to die more; all others that were raised to life, besides him, died again, but death had no more dominion over him.
Again, 2. Because he was the principal and efficient cause of their resurrection; all that were raised before him, were raised by him, by a power derived from him:
And, 3. Because he is the pattern and exemplary cause of the resurrection; his members are not only raised by him, but like unto him. Fashioned like unto his glorious body Phil 3:21.
Was his body raised sustantially the same? So shall ours be.
Was his body wonderfully improved by the resurrection? So shall ours, in point of purity and spirituality, in point of power and activity, in point of immortality and incorruptibility.
Was his holy body raised to be eternally glorified? So shall ours.
How fitly then is our Lord here called the first-born from the dead? Even herein he had the pre-eminence.

Still our apostle proceeds in describing the person of our Redeemer, and the admirable qualificatons found in him for the work and

service of our redemption; he declares here, that there was a perfect and complete fulness of all divine graces and excellencies dwelling in the Mediator, and that by the pleasure and appointment of God the Father; there is in him a fulness of merit for our justification, a fulness of grace for our sanctification, a fulness of wisdom for our direction, a fulness of power for our preservation, a fulness of mercy, pity, and compassion, to relieve and succour us in all our distresses.

And this fulness which is in Christ, is an original and independent fulness, and it is an infinite and inexhaustible fulness; it is a complete and comprehensive fulness, and it is a ministerial fulness; the fulness that is in him of grace and comfort, is on purpose to communicate unto us, to be dispersed and given forth to all his members. No sooner had our apostle said, that he is the Head of the body, the church; but he instantly subjoins, that it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell, namely, for his church's benefit and advantage.

19 For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;
20 and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

Through the blood of his cross. By his blood shed on the cross. That blood, making atonement for sin, was the means of making reconciliation between God and man. On the meaning of the word blood, as used in this connexion, Rom 3:25. By him to reconcile all things to himself. On the meaning of the word reconcile, Mt 5:24, Rom 5:10, 2Cor 5:18. When it is said that "it pleased the Father by Christ to reconcile all things to himself," the declaration must be understood with some limitation.

(1.) It relates only to those things which are in heaven and earth -- for those only are specified. Nothing is said of the inhabitants of hell, whether fallen angels, or the spirits of wicked men who are there.

(2.) It cannot mean that all things are actually reconciled for that never has been true. Multitudes on earth have remained alienated from God, and have lived and died his enemies.

(3.) It can mean then, only, that he had executed a plan that was adapted to this; that if fairly and properly applied, the blood of the cross was fitted to secure entire reconciliation between heaven and earth. There was no enemy which it was not fitted to reconcile to God; there was no guilt, now producing alienation, which it could not wash away.

Here one special reason is assigned why all fulness dwelt in our Lord the Redeemer, namely, to fit him for the great work and office of a Mediator or Reconciler, that so he might happily make up that breach which sin had made between God and the world, having removed the enmity which was betwixt them by his death and sufferings, called here the blood of his cross, that is the blood which he freely and voluntarily shed upon the cross.

Note here, 1. That God and man were once friends, though soon by sin made enemies; reconciliation doth suppose an antecedent friendship.

Note, 2. That though man was first in the breach yet God was first in the offer of reconciliation; It pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself.

Note, 3. That as there was no possibility of ever making up this breach, but by a Mediator; so no person in heaven or earth was or could be found, in all things fitted or furnished for the work of a Mediator, but only Christ; By him to reconcile all things to himself.

Note, 4. The universality of the subject reconciled, all things both in heaven and in earth: By things in heaven,
1. Some understand the blessed angels; but there being no breach between God and them, Christ was not the author of reconciliation, though he was an head of confirmation to them. Others understand it of a reconciliation between the angels and man, thus: Whilst man continued in his obedience to God, angels and men were in a state of perfect friendship one with another; but when man rebelled against God, the angels became averse to man for that rebellion; but

God being reconciled to man by the death of his son, the angels are become friends and ministering spirits to us, and both they and we constitute one church under Christ the head thereof; thus Christ reconciled all things in heaven and earth, that is, the angels in heaven he has reconciled to man on earth.

2. Other, by things in heaven, do not understand the angels, but the saints departed; the patriarchs, prophets, and all the faithful now in heaven, or here on earth, they were all reconciled, in order to their being saved; intimating, that the blood of Christ did expiate the guilt of those persons who lived before him, as well as of those that died after him: He reonciled all things in heaven and earth, capable of reconciliation, appointed to it, and that stood in need of it.

Note, lastly, The instrumental means by which all this was effected, namely, by the blood of the cross; to make up the breach betwixt God and the fallen creature, cost the Mediator no less than his precious blood.

Lord! Who can look upon sin as any other than an infinite and immense evil, which cost the Son of God his life to expiate the guilt of it? How can a little sin be committed against a great God?

Whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. That is, to produce harmony between the things in heaven and in earth; so that all things shall be reconciled to him, or so that there shall be harmony between heaven and earth. The meaning is not that "the things in heaven" were alienated from God, but that there was alienation in the universe which affected heaven, and the object was to produce again universal concord and love. Substantially the same sentiment is found in Eph 1:10. Eph 1:10. Much has been written on the meaning of this expression, and a great variety of opinions have been entertained of it. It is best, always, unless necessity require a different interpretation, to take words in their usual signification. If that rule be adopted here, "things in heaven" will refer to God and the angels, and perhaps may include the principles of the Divine government. "Things on earth" will embrace men, and the various things on earth which are now at variance with God and with

heaven. Between these, it is designed to produce harmony by the blood of the cross, or by the atonement. As in heaven nothing is wrong; as it is not desirable that anything should be changed there, all the change that is to take place, in order to produce reconciliation, is to be on the part of men and the things of this world. The only effect of the blood of the atonement on the "things" of heaven, in effecting the reconciliation, is to render it consistent for God to be at peace with sinners. The effect on earth is to dispose the sinner to a willingness to be reconciled; to lead him to lay aside his enmity; to change his heart; and to effect a change in the views and principles prevailing on earth which are now at variance with God and his government. When this shall be done there will be harmony between heaven and earth, and an alienated world will be brought into conformity with the laws and government of the Creator.

Paul's Ministry to the Church

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

St. Paul having treated of Christ's work of reconciliation in general, in the preceding verse, in this he applies it ot the Colosssians in particular:

Where 1. He describes to them the miserable state and deplorable condition they were in before they were converted to the Christian faith; they were strangers, nay, enemies unto God: Enemies in their minds, which implies a deep rooted enmity, advancing so high as to hate God, not as a Creator, but as a lawgiver; not as a Benefactor, but as a judge and revenger of sin.

O deplorable degradation, to be at enmity in our minds against him who
is the author of our being, and the fountain of our happiness!

Observe, 2. The gracious change wrought in their condition by virtue of Christ's mediation, you hath he reconciled; not only laid own his life to purchase reconciliation for them, but by the ministry of his word, accompanied with the operation of his holy Spirit, working upon their hearts, even then when they had a strong

aversion from God, to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with him: You, who were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, now hath he reconciled.
Observe, 3. The way and means by which Christ effected this work of reconciliation for them and us, namely, by taking upon him a true body, subject to fleshly infirmities, though without sin; and in that body suffering death for us, that we might be presented at the last day, perfectly holy unto god.

In order to our reconciliation with God, it pleased Christ, the second Person in the ever-glorious Trinity, to assume a body of flesh, that he might be of the same nature with us, and in that body of flesh to die for sin; that the same nature which had sinned, might give satisfaction for sin.

And further, to make us completely happy, he has not only taken away the legal enmity on God's part, but the natural anmity on our part; for he sanctifies those whom he reconciles initially in this life, but perfectly and completely in the next, and where and when they shall be presented holy, unblameable, and unreproveable, to his heavenly Father.

22 in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable in his sight:

23 if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

Here our apostle declares to the Colossians, how they may know whether they were indeed of the number of those who were actually reconciled to God by the blood of his Son, namely, if they persevered in the faith, and continued grounded fast in their holy religion; If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled; implying, that it is the great duty of Christians, who have sat under the preaching of the gospel, to be well settled in the doctrine of faith, which they have heard and received, and that the best way to be settled, is to be well grounded; if we are not settled in religion, we can never grow in religion; an ungrounded Christian can never be a growing Christian; and if we are not well grounded in the faith, we

can never suffer for the faith; for such as are sceptics in religion, will never prove martyrs for the sake of religion.

Observe, 2. The universality of that tender, which by the preaching of the gospel is made unto all sorts of sinners, of reconciliation with God, and acceptance through Christ; which gospel was preached to every creature under heaven; that is to lost mankind, to some of all sorts; not in Judea only, but amongst the Gentiles also; to every human creature, no person, no nation being refused or passed by; plainly intimating, that an indefinite and universal tender of reconciliation with God, and salvation by Jesus Christ, is made unto all person, by the preaching of the gospel.

Happy they, whose hearts are inclined and disposed to accept of, and comply with them, who in the day of the gospel's visitation, do know the things of their peace.

24 who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

As if the apostle had said, "I am not only contented with, but I greatly rejoice in, my sufferings for you converted Gentiles, and help, as much as in me lies, to fill up some part of that which is, by God's decree, behind, unfulfilled of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church."

Note here, 1. That Almighty God has decreed such a measure of sufferings to his church, whereof Christ, as the head, underwent a considerable part and proportion, when he was here upon earth, in his poverty, in his labours, in his sufferings, both in life, and at his death.

Note, 2. That there is yet a remainder of sufferings, assigned over by Christ unto his members, which must be filled up by them, whreof St. Paul had a great share, and every believer must have some share; for, as long as Christ has a member upon the earth, there will be something for that member to suffer.

Note, 3. That those sufferings which Christ's members suffer, are the sufferings of Christ; the sufferings of the members are the sufferings of the Head, being undergone for the sake of the Head. Christ, in his natural body considered, can suffer no more; but in his mystical body, in his members, he daily suffers, and will suffer, till the measure of sufferings is filled up which God hath determined.

Quest. But why are Christ's sufferings in and by his members thus to be prolonged, yea, perpetuated?
Ans. Not by way of satisfaction for sin, not in order to reconciliation with God, but in order to the conversion of the world, for example to others, for perfecting of their own graces, and for increasing of their glory.

25 whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 *even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, as a Redeemer, was long hid from the knowledge of the Gentiles; and that at last they were brought to the knowledge of Christ, and the participation of gospel privileges was a great mystery awfully to be admired, and a glorious mercy with all thankfulness to be acknowledged, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles-which is Christ, in you, the hope of glory, which gospel, preached amongst you, and received and entertained by you, is an earnest and ground of your hope of glory.

Note here, 1. That Christ is in, and among believers; he is among them by the preaching of the gospel, he is in them by the inhabitation of his holy Spirit.

Note, 2. That all true believers, whilst here on earth, have an hope of glory.

Note, 3. That Christ's indwelling presence in the souls of believers by his holy Spirit, is an earnest of that glory, and an evident demonstration of their hope of it: Believers have in them a glorious

hope, they have before them a glory hoped for; Christ is the ground of both, by him we obtain the end of our hope, even the salvation of our souls.

27 to whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Colossians-2

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and *for* them at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

What was the ground and occasion of St. Paul's inexpressible agony and concern of spirit, for and on behalf of these Colossians; namely this, there was a number of men risen up who began very early to corrupt the purity and simplicity of the gospel and the Christian religion: a sort they were, partly of Judaizing, and partly Paganizing Christians; the former joined the Jewish ceremonies, the latter the Gentiles impurities, even in worship with the Christian religion.
Now the urgency of this case put the solicitous and concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words here intimate; I would ye knew what a conflict I have for you and your near neighbours of Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.

The men of the world little understand, and less consider, what burden of solicitous care lies upon the ministers of Christ, for and on behalf of the whole church of Christ in general, which is continually in danger of being corrupted by false teachers, who everywhere lie in wait to deceive.

2 that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

Our apostle having discovered, in the former verse, that inward anxiety of mind which he laboured under, on the behalf of these Colossians, doth, in these words, propose an expedient how the threatening danger might be averted, namely, by mutual love one to another, and by a clear and effacious faith of the gospel; by these he reckons they would be so closely compacted together, as that no subtlety or violence could endanger them: If, by faith, they did cleave close to God and Christ, and by love keep close to one another, he firmly believed they would give no enemies an opportunity, either to be the successful authors, or the delighted spectators of their ruin.

Learn hence, That the maintaining of sincere love amongst Christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measure of certainty and efficacy, in reference to the substantials of Christianity, are the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them against the fatal danger of a ruinous apostasy: That their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, &c.

3 in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

That is, in Jesus Christ, and in his gospel, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, laid up as in a store-house, and from thence are they only to be expected and derived. The knowledge of Christ and his gospel is an extensive and comprehensive knowledge, a rich and enriching knowledge; the chiefest gain is loss, and the richest treasure is dung, when Christ's riches are displayed; and after all that we have or can attain unto, of the knowledge of Christ, his works is unsearchable, no finite understanding can reach the depth thereof; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

Note here, How exceedingly desirous the apostle was, that the Colossians might continue sound in the Christian faith, and be preserved out of the hands of false teachers, who by false arguments, and ensnaring persuasions sought to beguile them, in matters of religion: We are in greater danger from the subtle seducer, than we are from the fiery persecutor; sophistical arguments, and insinuating persuasions, captivate those persons whom violence could never have brought over to their party; therefore is our apostle so earnest

with the Colossians, that none should beguile them with inticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him:

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord. Have received him by faith as your Saviour, or as you were instructed respecting his rank, character, and work. The object here is to induce them not to swerve from the views which they had of Christ when he was made known to them. This is, "As you have received the doctrine of Christ Jesus, the Lord, by the preaching of Epaphras, and therein have embraced Christ by faith, so do you constantly adhere to that doctrine, conforming you lives thereunto; and seeing you are thus implanted into Christ, be like trees, well and deeply rooted in him, or like a house, firmly built upon him, as the only sure and abiding foundation."

Learn, That such as have received the grace of God in truth, ought, to labour after stability in grace and establishment in the true religion, that they may stand like a rock, immoveable in assaults, and unshaken amidst all the batteries that may be made upon their faith by heretics and seducers.

So walk ye in him. Continue in those views of Christ; live in the maintenance of them; let them regulate your whole conduct. The word walk, in the Scriptures, is used to denote the manner of life; and the sense here is, that they should live and act wholly under the influence of the conceptions which they had of the Saviour when they first embraced him. The particle "so" is supplied by our translators, and rather weakens the sense. No stress should be laid on it, as is often done. The meaning is, simply, "Since you have received Christ as your Lord as he was preached to you, hold fast the doctrine which you have received, and do not permit yourselves to be turned aside by any Jewish teachers, or teachers of philosophy."

7 rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Dead but Risen with Christ

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

The apostle cautions the Colossians against deceivers (Col 2:4): And this I say lest any man beguile you with enticing words; and Col 2:8, Lest any man spoil you. He insists so much upon the perfection of Christ and the gospel revelation, to preserve them from the ensnaring insinuations of those who would corrupt their principles.

Note, 1 The way in which Satan spoils souls is by beguiling them. He deceives them, and by this means slays them. He is the old serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtlety, 2Co 11:3. He could not ruin us if he did not cheat us; and he could not cheat us but by our own fault and folly.

2. Satan's agents, who aim to spoil them, beguile them with enticing words. See the danger of enticing words; how many are ruined by the flattery of those who lie in wait to deceive, and by the false disguises and fair appearances of evil principles and wicked practices. By good words, and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple, Ro 16:18. "You ought to stand upon your guard against enticing words, and be aware and afraid of those who would entice you to any evil; for that which they aim at is to spoil you." If sinners entice thee, consent thou not, Pr 1:10. Observe,

I. A sovereign antidote against seducers (Col 2:6,7): As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him, rooted and built up, &c. Here note,

1. All Christians have, in profession at least, received Jesus Christ the Lord, received him as Christ, the great prophet of the church, anointed by God to reveal his will; as Jesus the great high priest, and Saviour from sin and wrath, by the expiatory sacrifice of himself; and as Lord, or sovereign and king, whom we are to obey and be

subject to.--Received him, consented to him, taken him for ours in every relation and every capacity, and for all the purposes and uses of them.

2 The great concern of those who have received Christ is to walk in him--to make their practices conformable to their principles and their conversation agreeable to their engagements. As we have received Christ, or consented to be his, so we must walk with him in our daily course and keep up our communion with him.

3. The more closely we walk with Christ the more we are rooted and established in the faith. A good conversation is the best establishment of a good faith. If we walk in him, we shall be rooted in him; and the more firmly we are rooted in him the more closely we shall walk in him: Rooted and built up. Observe, We cannot be built up in Christ, unless we be first rooted in him. We must be united to him by a lively faith, and heartily consent to his covenant, and then we shall grow up in him in all things.--As you have been taught--"according to the rule of the Christian doctrine, in which you have been instructed." Observe, A good education has a good influence upon our establishment. We must be established in the faith, as we have been taught, abounding therein. Observe, Being established in the faith, we must abound therein, and improve in it more and more; and this with thanksgiving. The way to have the benefit and comfort of God's grace is to be much in giving thanks for it. We must join thanksgiving to all our improvements, and be sensible of the mercy of all our privileges and attainments. Observe,

II The fair warning given us of our danger: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, Col 2:8. There is a philosophy which is a noble exercise of our reasonable faculties, and highly serviceable to religion, such a study of the works of God as leads us to the knowledge of God and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is vain and deceitful, which is prejudicial to religion, and sets up the wisdom of man in competition with the wisdom of God, and while it pleases men's fancies ruins their faith; as nice and curious speculations about

things above us, or of no use and concern to us; or a care of words and terms of art, which have only an empty and often a cheating appearance of knowledge. After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world: this plainly reflects upon the Jewish pedagogy or economy, as well as the Pagan learning. The Jews governed themselves by the traditions of their elders and the rudiments or elements of the world, the rites and observances which were only preparatory and introductory to the gospel state; the Gentiles mixed their maxims of philosophy with their Christian principles; and both alienated their minds from Christ. Those who pin their faith on other men's sleeves, and walk in the way of the world, have turned away from following after Christ. The deceivers were especially the Jewish teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses in conjunction with the gospel of Christ, but really in competition with it and contradiction to it.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Had they then the Shechinah, or special presence of God, called the glory, from the visible token of it? So have we now in Jesus Christ (Col 2:9): For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the cherubim, in a cloud which covered the mercy-seat; but now it dwells in the person of our Redeemer, who partakes of our nature, and is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and has more clearly declared the Father to us. It dwells in him bodily; not as the body is opposed to the spirit, but as the body is opposed to the shadow. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in the Christ really, and not figuratively; for he is both God and man. That is, this was the great and central doctrine that was to be maintained about Christ, that all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him. Every system which denied this was a denial of the doctrine which they had been taught; and against everything that would go to undermine this, they were especially to be on their guard. Almost all heresy has been begun by some form of the denial of the great central truth of the incarnation of the Son of God.

Here St. Paul gives a reason of the foregoing caution against philosophy; for in him, that is, in Christ, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; As if he had said, "Let no man impose upon you by a lame and imperfect philosophy, there is no need of that, for

now there is introduced an absolute and complete doctrine, namely, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has the fulness of all divine wisdom in it, and the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in himself, that is personally and substantially."

Where note, That the apostle says not, that the Godhead is assistant to Christ, but, that it resideth or dwelleth in him; as the Deity dwelt in the the ark symbolically, so it dwelt in Christ bodily.
Note farther, That Christ is not here said to be filled with the fulness of God, as the church is said to be, Eph 1:23 in regard of the gifts and graces which she had received from him; but the whole fulness of the Godhead is here said to reside in him, which can argue him to be no less than really and truly God, his complete essence dwelleth in him. Well might the apostle therefore add, Ye are complete in him Col 2:10, wanting no requisite to salvation; ye need not go to the philosophers for knowledge, for in Christ you have complete wisdom; he is above all Pagan philosophers and Jewish Rabbies; nay, he is the Head of all principalities and powers; that is, above the highest angel in heaven.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

And ye are complete in him. Having no need, for the purposes of salvation, of any aid to be derived from the philosophy of the Greeks, or the traditions of the Jews. All that is necessary to secure your salvation is to be found in the Lord Jesus. There is a completion, or a filling up, in him, so as to leave nothing wanting. This is true in respect

(1.) to the wisdom which is needful to guide us;

(2.) the atonement to be made for sin;

(3.) the merit by which a sinner can be justified; and

(4.) the grace which is needful to sustain us in the trials, and to aid us in the duties of life. 1Cor 1:30. There is no necessity, therefore, that we should look to the aid of philosophy, as if there was a defect in the teachings of the Saviour; or to human strength, as if he were

unable to save us; or to the merits of the saints, as if those of the Redeemer were not sufficient to meet all our wants.

11 in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

The apostle had asserted before, that we are complete in Christ: He proves it now, thus; we want not circumcision: Why? Because we have in Christ the thing signified by circumcision, namely, the spiritual circumcision of the heart, which consists in putting off, by the power of Christ's Spirit, the body of natural corruption; which done, there was no need of the outward circumcision made with hands, or the cutting off the flesh of the fore-skin.

Observe, Original corruption is a body, or, as a body to us, it cleaves as close to the soul as the flesh to the bones. This body, with all its members, we must be cutting daily by spiritual circumcision or real mortification; and, where that is done, God is well pleased: He regards not that cirumcision which is outward in the flesh, which is made with hands, but that which is inward, the circumcision of the heart, and of the Spirit, whose praise is not of man, but of God.

Had they circumcision, which was the seal of the covenant? In Christ we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands (Col 2:11), by the work of regeneration in us, which is the spiritual or Christian circumcision. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, Ro 2:29. This is owing to Christ, and belongs to the Christian dispensation. It is made without hands; not by the power of any creature, but by the power of the blessed Spirit of God. We are born of the Spirit, Joh 3:5. And it is the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Tit 3:5. It consists in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, in renouncing sin and reforming our lives, not in mere external rites. It is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, 1Pe 3:21. And it is not enough to put away some one particular sin, but we must put off the whole body of sin. The old man must be crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, Ro 6:6. Christ was circumcised, and, by virtue of our union to him, we partake of that effectual grace which puts off the body of the sins

of the flesh. Again, The Jews thought themselves complete in the ceremonial law; but we are complete in Christ, Col 2:10. That was imperfect and defective; if the first covenant had been faultless, there would no place have been sought for the second (Heb 8:7), and the law was but a shadow of good things, and could never, by those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect, Heb 10:1. But all the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by the complete sacrifice for sin and revelation of the will of God. Which is the head of all principality and power.

Ye are circumcised. You have received that which was designed to be represented by circumcision--the putting away of sin. Php 3:3. With the circumcision made without hands. That made in the heart by the renunciation of all sin. The Jewish teachers insisted on the necessity of the literal circumcision in order to salvation, (comp. Eph 2:11;) and hence this subject is so often introduced into the writings of Paul, and he is at so much pains to show that, by believing in Christ, all was obtained which was required in order to salvation. Circumcision was an ordinance by which it was denoted that all sin was to be cut off or renounced, and that he who was circumcised was to be devoted to God and to a holy life. All this, the apostle says, was obtained by the gospel; and, consequently, they had all that was denoted by the ancient rite of circumcision. What Christians had obtained, moreover, related to the heart; it was not a mere ordinance pertaining to the flesh. In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. That is, in renouncing the deeds of the flesh, or becoming holy. The word "body," here, seems to be used with reference to circumcision. In that ordinance, the body of the FLESH was subjected to the rite; with Christians, it is the body of sin that is cut off. By the circumcision of Christ. Not by the fact that Christ was circumcised, but that we have that kind of circumcision which Christ established--to wit, the renouncing of sin. The idea of the apostle here seems to be, that since we have thus been enabled by Christ to renounce sin, and to devote ourselves to God, we should not be induced, by any plausible arguments, to return to an ordinance pertaining to the flesh, as if that were needful for salvation.

12 buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

We have communion with Christ in his whole undertaking (Col 2:12): Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you have risen with him. We are both buried and rise with him, and both are signified by our baptism; not that there is anything in the sign or ceremony of baptism which represents this burying and rising, any more than the crucifixion of Christ is represented by any visible resemblance in the Lord's supper: and he is speaking of the circumcision made without hands; and says it is through the faith of the operation of God. But the thing signified by our baptism is that we are buried with Christ, as baptism is the seal of the covenant and an obligation to our dying to sin; and that we are raised with Christ, as it is a seal and obligation to our living to righteousness, or newness of life. God in baptism engages to be to us a God, and we become engaged to be his people, and by his grace to die to sin and to live to righteousness, or put off the old man and put on the new.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

And the uncircumcision of your flesh. That is, Gentiles, and giving unrestrained indulgence to the desires of the flesh. They lived as those who had not by any religious rite or covenant brought themselves under obligations to lead holy lives.

Christ's death is our life: And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, Col 2:13. A state of sin is a state of spiritual death. Those who are in sin are dead in sin. As the death of the body consists in its separation from the soul, so the death of the soul consists in its separation from God and the divine favour. As the death of the body is the corruption and putrefaction of it, so sin is the corruption or depravation of the soul. As a man who is dead is unable to help himself by any power of his own, so an habitual sinner is morally impotent: though he has a natural power, or the power of a reasonable creature, he has not a spiritual power, till he has the divine life or a renewed nature. It is principally to be understood of the Gentile world, who lay in

wickedness. They were dead in the uncircumcision of their flesh, being aliens to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world, Eph 2:11,12. By reason of their uncircumcision they were dead in their sins. It may be understood of the spiritual uncircumcision or corruption of nature; and so it shows that we are dead in law, and dead in state. Dead in law, as a condemned malefactor is called a dead man because he is under a sentence of death; so sinners by the guilt of sin are under the sentence of the law and condemned already, Joh 3:18. And dead in state, by reason of the uncircumcision of our flesh. An unsanctified heart is called an uncircumcised heart: this is our state. Now through Christ we, who were dead in sins, are quickened; that is, effectual provision is made for taking away the guilt of sin, and breaking the power and dominion of it. Quickened together with him--by virtue of our union to him, and in conformity to him. Christ's death was the death of our sins; Christ's resurrection is the quickening of our souls.

14 blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,
which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his
cross;

Whatever was in force against us is taken out of the way. He has obtained for us a legal discharge from the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us (Col 2:14), which may be understood, 1. Of that obligation to punishment in which consists the guilt of sin. The curse of the law is the hand-writing against us, like the hand-writing on Belshazzar's wall. Cursed is every one who continues not in every thing. This was a hand-writing which was against us, and contrary to us; for it threatened our eternal ruin. This was removed when he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Ga 3:13. He cancelled the obligation for all who repent and believe. "Upon me be the curse, my father." He vacated and disannulled the judgment which was against us. When he was nailed to the cross, the curse was as it were nailed to the cross. And our indwelling corruption is crucified with Christ, and by virtue of his cross. When we remember the dying of the Lord Jesus, and see him nailed to the cross, we should see the hand-writing against us taken out of the way. Or rather, 2. It must be understood of the ceremonial law, the hand-writing of ordinances, the ceremonial institutions or the law of commandments contained in ordinances (Eph 2:15), which was a

yoke to the Jews and a partition-wall to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus took it out of the way, nailed it to his cross; that is, disannulled the obligation of it, that all might see and be satisfied that it was no more binding. When the substance came, the shadows fled away. It is abolished (2Co 3:13), and that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away, Heb 8:13. The expressions are in allusion to the ancient methods of cancelling a bond, either by crossing the writing or striking it through with a nail.

Now, says the apostle, your debt of sin is paid to the justice of God, by the death of Christ; and seeing the obligation is cancelled, it would be madness and impiety to renew it again, as those do who plead for circumcision and practise the legal ceremonies.

Note here, There was an obligation upon every man to undergo the curse of the law; for violating the commands of the law, there was an handwriting against us. The obligation must be cancelled, before the condemning power of the law can be abolished, and sin pardoned: None but Christ could cancel this obligation? and not he neither, without paying the full sum payable from us; Christ when hanging on the cross, did nail this handwriting to his cross, which shall never be produced in judgment against the penitent believer; but this obligation remains upon the file uncancelled, with respect to all sinners who live and die in their sins, and they shall always lie in prison, ever satisfying, but never able fully to satisfy this obligation.

Blotting out the handwriting. The word rendered handwriting means something written by the hand, a manuscript; and here, probably, the writings of the Mosaic law, or the law appointing many ordinances or observances in religion. The allusion is probably to a written contract, in which we bind ourselves to do any work, or to make a payment, and which remains in force against us until the bond is cancelled. That might be done either by blotting out the names, or by drawing lines through it, or, as appears to have been practised in the east, by driving a nail through it. The Jewish ceremonial law is here represented as such a contract, binding those under it to its observance, until it was nailed to the cross. The meaning here is, that the burdensome requirements of the Mosaic law are abolished, and

that its necessity is superseded by the death of Christ. His death had the same effect, in reference to those ordinances, as if they had been blotted from the statute-book. This it did by fulfilling them, by introducing a more perfect system and by rendering their observance no longer necessary, since all that they were designed to typify had been now accomplished in a better way. Eph 2:15. Of ordinances. Prescribing the numerous rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. That was against us. That is, against our peace, happiness, comfort; or, in other words, which was oppressive and burdensome. Comp. Acts 15:10. Those ordinances bound and lettered the soul, restrained the expansive spirit of true piety which seeks the salvation of all alike, and thus operated as a hinderance to the enlarged spirit of true religion. Thus they really operated against the truly pious Jew, whose religion would lead him to seek the salvation of the world; and to the Gentile, since he was not in a situation to avail himself of them, and since they would be burdensome if he could. It is in this sense, probably, that the apostle uses the word "us," as referring to all, and as cramping and restraining the true nature of religion. Which was contrary to us. Operated as a hinderance, or obstruction, in the matter of religion. The ordinances of the Mosaic law were necessary, in order to introduce the gospel; but they were always burdensome. They were to be confined to one people; and if they were continued, they would operate to prevent the spread of the true religion around the world. 2Cor 3:7,9. Hence the exulting language of the apostle in view of the fact that they were now taken away, and that the benefits of religion might be diffused all over the world. The gospel contains nothing which is "against," or "contrary to," the true interest and happiness of any nation or any class of men. And took it out of the way. Gr., "Out of the midst;" that is, he wholly removed it. He has removed the obstruction, so that it no longer prevents union and harmony between the Jews and the Gentiles. Nailing it to his cross. As if he had nailed it to his cross, so that it would be entirely removed out of our way. The death of Jesus had the same effect, in regard to the rites and institutions of the Mosaic religion, as if they had been affixed to his cross. It is said that there is an allusion here to the ancient method by which a bond or obligation was cancelled, by driving a nail through it, and affixing it to a post. This was practised, says Grotius, in Asia. In a somewhat similar manner, in our banks

now, a sharp instrument, like the blade of a knife, is driven through a check, making a hole through it, and furnishing to the teller of the bank a sign or evidence that it has been paid. If this be the meaning, then the expression here denotes that the obligation of the Jewish institutions ceased on the death of Jesus, as if he had taken them and nailed them to his own cross, in the manner in which a bond was cancelled.

15 *and* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

And having spoiled. Plundered; as a victorious army does a conquered country. Col 2:8. The terms used in this verse are all military; and the idea is, that Christ has completely subdued our enemies by his death. A complete victory was achieved by his death, so that everything is now in subjection to him, and we have nothing to fear. Principalities and powers. Eph 1:21; Eph 6:12. The "principalities and powers" here referred to, are the formidable enemies that had held man in subjection, and prevented his serving God. There can be no doubt, I think, that the apostle refers to the ranks of fallen, evil spirits which had usurped a dominion over the world. Jn 12:31; Eph 2:2 The Saviour, by his death, wrested the dominion from them, and seized upon what they had captured, as a conqueror seizes upon his prey. Satan and his legions had invaded the earth, and drawn its inhabitants into captivity, and subjected them to their evil reign. Christ, by his death, subdues the invaders, and recaptures those whom they had subdued. He made a show of them openly. As a conqueror, returning from a victory, displays in a triumphal procession the kings and princes whom he has taken, and the spoils of victory. This was commonly done when a "triumph" was decreed for a conqueror. On such occasions, it sometimes happened that a considerable number of prisoners were led along amidst the scenes of triumph. 2Cor 2:14. Paul says that this was now done "openly"--that is, it was in the face of the whole universe; a grand victory; a glorious triumph over all the powers of hell. It does not refer to any public procession or display on the earth; but to the grand victory as achieved in view of the universe, by which Christ, as a conqueror, dragged Satan and his legions at his triumphal car. Comp. Rom 16:20. Triumphing over them in it. Marg., "or, himself." Either "by the cross," or "by himself." Or, it may mean, as Rosenmuller

suggests, that "God Col 2:12 triumphed over these foes in him; i.e., in Christ." The sense is substantially the same, that this triumph was effected by the atonement made for sin by the Redeemer. See the word triumph explained in the 2Cor 2:14. The meaning of all this is, that since Christ has achieved for us such a victory, and has subdued all the foes of man, we should not be led captive, but should regard ourselves as freemen. We should not be made again the slaves of custom, or habit, or ritual observances, or superstitious rites, or anything whatever that has its origin in the kingdom of darkness. We are bound to assert and to use our freedom, and should not allow any hostile power, in the form of philosophy or false teaching of any kind, to plunder or "spoil" us, Col 2:8. The Christian is a freeman. His great Captain has subdued all his enemies, and we should not allow them again to set up their dark empire over our souls. The argument of the apostle in these verses Col 2:13-15 is derived from what Christ has done for us. He mentions four things. (1.) He has given us spiritual life; (2.) he has forgiven all our trespasses; (3.) he has blotted out or abolished the "ordinances" that were against us; and (4.) he has triumphed over all our foes. From all this he infers Col 2:16, seq. that we should not be made captive or subdued by any of the rights of superstition, or any of the influences of the kingdom of darkness.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days:*

Let no man therefore judge you. Rom 14:10,13. The word judge here is used in the sense of pronouncing a sentence. The meaning is, "since you have thus been delivered by Christ from the evils which surrounded you; since you have been freed from the observances of the law, let no one sit in judgment on you, or claim the right to decide for you in those matters. You are not responsible to man for your conduct, but to Christ; and no man has a right to impose that on you as a burden from which he has made you free." In meat. Marg., for eating and drinking. The meaning is, "in respect to the various articles of food and drink." There is reference here, undoubtedly, to the distinctions which the Jews made on this subject, implying that an effort had been made by Jewish teachers to show them that the Mosaic laws were binding on all. Or in respect of an holyday. Marg., part. The meaning is, "in the part, or the particular of a holyday; that is, in respect to it." The word rendered

"holyday" --εορτη means, properly, a feast or festival; and the allusion here is to the festivals of the Jews. The sense is, that no one had a right to impose their observance on Christians, or to condemn them if they did not keep them. They had been delivered from that obligation by the death of Christ, Col 2:14. Or of the new moon. On the appearance of the new moon, among the Hebrews, in addition to the daily sacrifices, two bullocks, a ram, and seven sheep, with a meat-offering, were required to be presented to God, Nu 10:10, 28:11-14. The new moon in the beginning of the month Tisri (October) was the beginning of their civil year, and was commanded to be observed as a festival, Lev 23:24,25. Or of the sabbath days. Gr, "of the sabbaths." The word Sabbath in the Old Testament is applied not only to the seventh day, but to all the days of holy rest that were observed by the Hebrews, and particularly to the beginning and close of their great festivals. There is, doubtless, reference to those days in this place, as the word is used in the plural number, and the apostle does not refer particularly to the Sabbath properly so called. There is no evidence, from this passage, that he would teach that there was no obligation to observe any holy time, for there is not the slightest reason to believe that he meant to teach that one of the ten commandments had ceased to be binding on mankind. If he had used the word in the singular number --"THE Sabbath"--it would then, of course, have been clear that he meant to teach that that commandment had ceased to be binding, and that a sabbath was no longer to be observed. But the use of the term in the plural number, and the connexion, show that he had his eye on the great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law-- and not to the moral law, or the ten commandments. No part of the moral law-- no one of the ten commandments -- could be spoken of as "a shadow of good things to come." These commandments are, from the nature of moral law, of perpetual and universal obligation.

Here we have an inference or conclusion drawn by our apostle from the foregoing argument, that seeing the ceremonial law was now abolished, therefore none should take upon them to judge or condemn another for not observing any of the legal ceremonies, either those that related to meats, that is, the difference to be

observed in meats, or the other relating to the difference to be observed in days.

Here note, That the days observed amongst the Jews, were of three sorts: Anniversary, which returned every year, called here an holy day; Lunary which returned every month, the first day of every new moon; Weekly, which returned every week, and on the seventh day of every week: All which are abrogated, even the Jewish seventh-day sabbath; and the Lord's day, or the Christian's first-day sabbath, substituted in its place, 1Cor 16:2.

Observe here, 1. That there is both a sinful and a lawful abstinence from meats; that abstinence is sinful, when men abstain from some meats, under pretence of holiness and conscience, as if some meats were unclean, or less holy in their own natures than others, 1Tim 4:4 or as if simple abstinence at any time were a thing acceptable to God in itself, without respect had to the end for which it is sometimes required.

But there is a three-fold abstinence from meats, which is lawful; Political, enjoined by the magistrate for civil ends; Medicinal, prescribed by the physician for health's preservation; Ecclesiastical, when God by his providence, and the voice of his church, calls his people to fasting.

Observe, 2. The reason alledged by the apostle, why Christians should not judge one another, with respect to meats and drinks, times and seasons, namely, because those legal ceremonies were but dark shadows of things to come; but the body and substance, represented by those shadows, is Christ come in the flesh: And consequently, to observe the ceremonies, and regard these shadows under the gospel, is in effect to say, That Christ the body is not yet come.

Here note, 1. The title given to the ceremonial worship, it is styled a shadow, because it was a dark and imperfect representation of the truth: What is a shadow, but the coming of a thick body posed between Christ the true light and us, and so casts a shadow of him.

Note, 2. The title given to Christ with respect to the shadows of the ceremonial law, he is the body and the substance of them; now as the shadow vanishes when the substance is come, so these ceremonial ordinances were to cease upon the coming of Christ; and to observe them now, under the gospel, is in effect to say, that Christ is not yet come in the flesh.

Note, 3. That the Jewish sabbath was a ceremonial ordinance, and a part of that handwriting of ordinances which was to be blotted out by Christ; and consequently the Christian is not obliged to observe it.
As the distinction of meats and drinks and the observation of the new moons were confessedly ceremonial; so was also the Jewish sabbath, which with the rest was equally cancelled by Christ as a part of the handwriting of ordinances; so that to observe the Jewish sabbath, or to condemn the Christian for not observing it, is as much a denial, that Christ is come in the flesh as to observe circumcision, or any other part of the ceremonial law.

17 which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.
18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Let no man beguile you of your reward. Marg., judge against you. The word here used καταβραβευω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is a word which was employed with reference to the distribution of prizes at the Grecian games, and means, to give the prize against any one, to deprive of the palm. Hence it means to deprive of a due reward; and the sense here is, that they were to be on their guard lest the "reward"--the crown of victory to which they looked forward--should be wrested from them by the arts of others. That would be done if they should be persuaded to turn back, or to falter in the race. The only way to secure the prize was to hold on in

the race which they were then running; but if they yielded to the philosophy of the Greeks, and the teachings of the Jews, they would be defrauded of this reward as certainly as a racer at the games would if the crown of victory should be unjustly awarded to another. In this case, too, as real injustice would be done, though the apostle does not say it would be in the same manlier. Here it would be by art--in the case of the racer it would be by a wrong decision; but in either case the crown was lost. This exhortation has the more force from this consideration. Against an unjust judge we could have no power; but we may take care that the reward be not wrested from us by fraud. In a voluntary humility. Marg. "being a voluntary in humility." Tindal renders this, "Let no man make you shoot at a wrong mark, which, after his own imagination, walketh in the humbleness of angels." The word used here (ταπεινοφροσυνη) means, lowliness of mind, modesty, humbleness of deportment; and the apostle refers, doubtless, to the spirit assumed by those against whom he would guard the Colossians--the spirit of modesty or of humble inquirers. The meaning is, that they would not announce their opinions with dogmatic certainty, but they would put on the appearance of great modesty. In this way, they would become really more dangerous--for no false teachers are so dangerous as those who assume the aspect of great humility, and who manifest great reverence for Divine things. The word rendered "voluntary" here θελων --does not, properly, belong to the word rendered "humility." It rather appertains to the subsequent part of the sentence, and means that the persons referred to were willing, or had pleasure in attempting, to search into the hidden and abstruse things of religion. They were desirous of appearing to do this with an humble spirit--even with the modesty of an angel--but still they had pleasure in that profound and dangerous kind of inquiry. And worshipping of angels. θρησκειατωναγγελων. This does not mean, as it seems to me, that they would themselves worship angels, or that they would teach others to do it--for there is no reason to believe this. Certainly the Jewish teachers, whom the apostle seems to have had particularly in his eye, would not do it; nor is there any evidence that any class of false teachers would deliberately teach that angels were to be worshipped. The reference is rather to the profound reverence--the spirit of lowly piety--which the angels evinced, and to the fact that the teachers referred to would

assume the same spirit, and were, therefore, the more dangerous. They would come professing profound regard for the great mysteries of religion, and for the incomprehensible perfections of the Divinity, and would approach the subject professedly with the awful veneration which the angels have when they "look into these things," 1Pet 1:12. There was no bold, irreverent, or confident declamation, but the danger in the case arose from the fact that they assumed so much the aspect of modest piety; so much the appearance of the lowly devotion of angelic beings. The word here rendered worship θρησκεια--occurs in the New Testament only here, in Acts 26:6, Jas 1:26,27, in each of which places it is rendered religion. It means here the religion, or the spirit of humble reverence and devotion which is evinced by the angels; and this accords well with the meaning in Jas 1:26,27. Intruding into those things which he hath not seen. Or, inquiring into them. The word used here (εμβατευων) means, to go in, or enter; then to investigate, to inquire. It has not, properly, the meaning of intruding, or of impertinent inquiry, (see Passow,) and I do not see that the apostle meant to characterize the inquiry here as such. He says that it was the object of their investigations to look, with great professed modesty and reverence, into those things which are not visible to the eye of mortals. The "things" which seem here to be particularly referred to, are the abstruse questions respecting the mode of the Divine subsistence; the ranks, orders, and employments of angelic beings; and the obscure doctrines relating to the Divine government and plans. These questions comprised most of the subjects of inquiry in the Oriental and Grecian philosophy, and inquiries on these the apostle apprehended would tend to draw away the mind from the "simplicity that is in Christ." Of these subjects, what can be known more than is revealed? Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. Notwithstanding the avowed "humility," the modesty, the angelic reverence, yet the mind was full of vain conceit, and self-confident, carnal wisdom. The two things are by no means incompatible --the men apparently most meek and modest being sometimes the most bold in their speculations, and the most reckless in regard to the great landmarks of truth. It is not so with true modesty, and real "angelic veneration," but all this is sometimes assumed for the purpose of deceiving; and sometimes there is a native appearance of modesty which is by no means an index of the true

feelings of the soul. The most meek and modest men in appearance are sometimes the most proud and reckless in their investigations of the doctrines of religion.

19 and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Our apostle having warned the Colossians against the errors of the Judaizing teachers, comes next to warn them against the practice of the Paganizing Christians, who were directd by their guides to worship the angels, covering their error with a plausible shew of humility, pretending it was presumptuous to go to God immediately, without the mediation of those excellent creatures; but this the apostle tells them was a bold intruding into things they knew nothing of, God having neither revealed nor taught any such thing; and argued, that they were vainly puffed up with the foolish imaginations of their own fleshly minds.

Next he shews, that these angel-worshippers do not acknowledge Christ for the Head of the church, while they apply themselves to angels as mediators; whereas he alone discharges the office of the Head, completely giving life and growth to his whole church, and to every member therof; which members being furnished with spiritual life from him, and knit to him, and one another by the joints and bands of charity and other graces, they grow and increase with such an increase of holiness as is from God, and tends to his glory.

Note here, 1. That the nature of man is prone, extremely prone, to idolatry and false worship.

2. That it is a really idolatry to worship an angel, as it is to worship a worm; for divine worship is only due to a divine person.

Note, 3. That it is a renouncing of Christ, to make use of angels, or any other mediator, besides Christ, unto the Father: not holding the head. It was a notion that the minds of mankind, that God was not to be immediately approached to by sinful men; but that their prayers were to be presented by certain mediators and intercessors, who were

to procure for them the favour of God, and the acceptance of their prayers.

Hence they worshipped angels, and the souls departed of their heroes, whom they canonized, and translated into the number of their inferior gods, by whom they addressed their supplications to their superior gods. With this notion Almighty God was pleased to comply so far, as under the Jewish institution to appoint Moses a mediator betwixt him and them; and now under the Christian dispensation to appoint Jesus Christ to be the only Mediator betwixt God and man.

Note, 4. That it is usual for idolaters, and false worshippers, to cover themselves with a more than ordinary show of humility: Let none beguile you in a voluntary humility.

True it is, that all duties of worship ought to be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed to constrained; but they must not be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed ot instituted or appointed; God doth no more approve of that worship we give him according to our will, than he doth approve of our neglect of that which is according to his own will. But man, vain man, likes any way of worshipping God which is of his own framing, much better than that which is of God's own appointing.

He cautions them to take heed of those who would introduce the worship of angels as mediators between God and them, as the Gentile philosophers did: Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, Col 2:18. It looked like a piece of modesty to make use of the mediation of angels, as conscious to ourselves of our unworthiness to speak immediately to God; but, though it has a show of humility, it is a voluntary, not a commanded humility; and therefore it is not acceptable, yea, it is not warrantable: it is taking that honour which is due to Christ only and giving it to a creature. Besides, the notions upon which this practice was grounded were merely the inventions of men and not by divine revelation,--the proud conceits of human reason, which make a man presume to dive into things, and determine them, without sufficient knowledge and warrant: Intruding into those things which he hath not

seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind--pretending to describe the order of angels, and their respective ministries, which God has hidden from us; and therefore, though there was a show of humility in the practice, there was a real pride in the principle. They advanced those notions to gratify their own carnal fancy, and were fond of being thought wiser than other people. Pride is at the bottom of a great many errors and corruptions, and even of many evil practices, which have great show and appearance of humility.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (touch not; taste not; handle not;

Our apostle being now in the close of this chapter, returns to expostulate, and argues the case with those who were willing to subject themselves to the observation of the old Jewish rites and ceremonies. He argues thus: "If says he, you profess yourselves in your baptism to be spiritually dead with Christ, and to be freed by his death from the Levitical ordinances, why are ye subject to those ordinances? Such are touch not, taste not, handle not; touch not any unclean thing, taste not any forbidden meat, handle not any consecrated vessel; all which observances were to perish necessarily with the very using: And whereas they were set of with a specious shew of wisdom, as if they were voluntary services and free-will offerings to God, he acknowledges, that they had indeed a shew of wisdom, a shew of humility, and seeming to give any honour to the satisfying of the flesh; but all this had nothing of spiritual devotion and piety in it."

Learn hence, 1. That such as do by baptism profess themselves to be dead with Christ to the ceremonial law, may certainly conclude, that the Jewish ceremonies have no more any power over them, or that they ought to yield themselves to the observation of them: If ye be dead with Christ, why are ye subject to ordinances?

Learn, 2. That though God approveth and accepteth willing worship, yet not will-worship, what fair shew soever it may seem to have, either of wisdom, humility, or mortification; whatever is the product of our fancies, is a very fornication in religion, and an abomination

in the sight of God, how pleasing soever it may be in the sight of men; and yet men are most forward to that service of God which is of man's finding out and setting up; man likes it better to worship a god of his own making, than to worship the God that made him; and likes any way of worshipping god which is of his own framing, more than that which is of God's appointing. Ah! Wretched heart of man, which, whilst it seems very zealous to worship and honour God, hath not zeal to do it in any other way than in that which reflects the highest dishonour upon him.

He takes occasion hence to warn them again: "Wherefore, if you be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances? Col 2:20. If as Christians you are dead to the observances of the ceremonial law, why are you subject to them? Such observances as, Touch not, taste not, handle not," Col 2:21,22. Under the law there was a ceremonial pollution contracted by touching a dead body, or any thing offered to an idol; or by tasting any forbidden meats, &c., which all are to perish with the using, having no intrinsic worth in themselves to support them, and those who used them saw them perishing and passing away; or, which tend to corrupt the Christian faith, having no other authority than the traditions and injunctions of men.--Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility. They thought themselves wiser than their neighbours, in observing the law of Moses together with the gospel of Christ, that they might be sure in the one, at least, to be in the right; but, alas! it was but a show of wisdom, a mere invention and pretence. So they seem to neglect the body, by abstaining from such and such meats, and mortifying their bodily pleasures and appetites; but there is nothing of true devotion in these things, for the gospel teaches us to worship God in spirit and truth and not by ritual observances, and through the mediation of Christ alone and not of any angels. Observe,

1. Christians are freed by Christ from the ritual observances of Moses's law, and delivered from that yoke of bondage which God himself had laid upon them.

2. Subjection to ordinances, or human appointments in the worship of God, is highly blamable, and contrary to the freedom and liberty of the gospel. The apostle requires Christians to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, Ga 5:1. And the imposition of them is invading the authority of Christ, the head of the church, and introducing another law of commandments contained in ordinances, when Christ has abolished the old one, Eph 2:15. 3. Such things have only a show of wisdom, but are really folly. It is true wisdom to keep close to the appointments of the gospel, and an entire subjection to Christ, the only head of the church.

22 which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

Which things. Which scrupulous observance of the numerous precepts enjoining rites and ceremonies, the observance of days, and the distinctions between meats and drinks. Have indeed a show of wisdom. Have a great appearance of piety, and of regard for the will of God. They have a show of "wisdom," too, or of a deep acquaintance with divine things. They who insist on them appear to be learned in what constitutes religion, and to have a deep insight into its mysteries. Doubtless they who urged the obligation of these things laid claim to uncommon acquaintance with the nature of religion, and urged the observance of these things on the ground of their tendency to promote piety, just as they always do who insist much on the observance of religious rites and ceremonies. In will worship. Voluntary worship; that is, worship beyond what God strictly requires--supererogatory service. Probably many of these things they did not urge as being strictly required, but as conducing greatly to piety. The plea doubtless was, that piety might be promoted by service rendered beyond what was absolutely enjoined, and that thus there would be evinced a spirit of uncommon piety--a readiness not only to obey all that God required, but even to go beyond this, and to render him voluntary service. There is much plausibility in this; and this has been the

foundation of the appointment of the fasts and festivals of the church; of penances and self-inflicted tortures; of painful vigils and pilgrimages; of works of supererogation; and of the merits of the "saints." A large part of the corruptions of religion have arisen from this plausible, but deceitful argument. God knew best what things it was most conducive to piety for his people to observe; and we are most safe when we adhere most closely to what he has appointed, and observe no more days and ordinances than he has directed. There is much apparent piety about these things; but there is much wickedness of heart at the bottom, and there is nothing that more tends to corrupt pure religion. And humility. Col 2:18. There is a great show of reverence for divine things in the manner in which they pursue their investigations, and in their humble and meek compliance with painful rites and ceremonies; in fastings, abstinence, and penances. Under all this there lurks often the worst kind of pride; for "Pride may be pampered while the flesh grows lean." And neglecting of the body. Putting on sackcloth and ashes; subjecting it to painful fastings and penances; appearing in a form of squalid poverty, as if the body were not worth regarding, and as if the attention were so much engrossed by the nobler care of the soul, as to be entirely regardless of the body. Yet, we may observe,

(1.) God made the body as well as the soul, and has shown his care of it by its "being fearfully and wonderfully made," and by all the provision which he has made for its wants.

(2.) Religion pertains to the body as well as the soul, and should teach a man properly to regard it. Man is bound so to take care of the body, as to have the most health and the longest life possible in the service of his Creator, and so as to be able to employ it in the best manner. There is no religion in ragged or squalid clothing, in a dirty face, in offensive personal habits, in filth and defilement, and in setting at defiance the decencies of life.

(3.) Much affected sanctity may exist where there is a most proud and corrupt heart. A long face, a demure countenance, a studied disregard of the decencies of dress and the courtesies of life, as if they were unworthy of notice, may be the exponent of the most

hateful pride, and of the basest purposes of the soul. A man should be on his guard always against one who, under, pretence of extraordinary sanctity, professes to despise the ordinary dress and usages of society. Not in any honour. That is, there is no real honour in these things; there is nothing to ennoble and elevate the soul; nothing that is to be commended. To the satisfying of the flesh. The only effect is, to satisfy or please the flesh; that is, the carnal and corrupt nature, for so the word flesh is often used in the Scriptures. The effect of these observances, on which so much stress is laid as if they would promote piety, is merely to gratify pride, self-righteousness, the love of distinction, and the other carnal propensities of our nature. There seems to be a great deal of humility and piety in them; there is really little else than pride, selfishness, and ambition.

Colossians-3

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the duty to which we are exhorted; this is expressed both affirmatively and negatively; affirmatively, Seek the things above, and set your affections on them; negatively, Not on the things here on earth; it being impossible to seek and set our affections upon both in an intense degree.
Quest. But what is it to seek those things that are above, and to set our affections upon them?

Ans. In these two words, four things are comprehended;

1. An act of our understanding, that we know the worth of these things.

2. An act of the will, to chuse these things, and with the ardour and vehemency of our affections to love them.

3. An act of industry and endeavour in the pursuit of these things, if by any means we may attain them. Our affections are so many

springs of motion to set our endeavours on work for the obtaining of what we love and desire.

4. It implies a clear preference of the things above to things below, when they come in competition; set your affections more on things above than on the things below, and shew it by your readiness to part with these things. Not on things on the earth. Wealth, honour, pleasure. Our affections should not be fixed on houses and lands; on scenes of fashion and gaiety; on low and debasing enjoyments. He explains this duty (Col 3:2): Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Observe, To seek heavenly things is to set our affections upon them, to love them and let our desires be towards them. Upon the wings of affection the heart soars upwards, and is carried forth towards spiritual and divine objects. We must acquaint ourselves with them, esteem them above all other things, and lay out ourselves in preparation for the enjoyment of them. David gave this proof of his loving the house of God, that he diligently sought after it, and prepared for it, Ps 27:4. This is to be spiritually minded (Ro 8:6), and to seek and desire a better country, that is, a heavenly, Heb 11:14,16. Things on earth are here set in opposition to things above. We must not dote upon them, nor expect too much from them, that we may set our affections on heaven; for heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, and a supreme regard to both is inconsistent; and the prevalence of our affection to one will proportionably weaken and abate our affection to the other.

Observe, 2. What is the object of this act, or what it is that we are to seek and set our affections upon, namely, the things which are above; God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, together with the blessed state and condition of heaven, and the happiness above; as also those dispositions and qualifications which are requisite for the obtaining of this happiness and bringing us to the fruition of it; all these are comprehended in the latitude of the object, the things which are above.

Observe, 3. The arguments which our apostle uses to excite us to this duty:

1. If ye be risen with Christ, that is, if ye believe that Christ is risen, and if ye will bear a conformity and resemblance to him in his resurrection, and be made partakers of the power and virtue of it; for Christ's resurrection is of the power and virtue of it; for Christ's resurrection is not only a pattern, but a principle; it has a power and efficacy in it to raise us up to a spiritual life; If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.

2. A second argument is drawn from Christ's exaltation in heaven: he sitteth on the right hand of God; which words declare the exaltation of his human nature, and his being advanced to be the supreme King and Governor of his church.
Now the force of this argument lies in the relation that is between the Head and the members, between Christ and Christians; as the Head has an influence upon the members, so the members have an affection for the Head, which makes them aspire heavenwards, where their Head is; because their glorified Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God, by the power of his Spirit, draws out their affection towards him: If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things above.

As if St. Paul had said "I'd Christ our Head risen, and ascended into heaven? Let us in our hearts and affections follow him thither, and patiently wait till he receive our souls, and raise our bodies, and take us wholly to himself, that we may be forever with the Lord."

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Here we have a fresh argument to enforce the foregoing exhortation, Seek the things above, for ye are dead, that is, dead to sin, dead to the world, therefore be not over eager in the pursuit of the things below.

How affrighting a sight would it be, to see a dead man rise out of his grave, and converse with the world, and follow the things here below!

As affecting is it to see Christians, who by baptismal profession do own themsleves to be dead to the world, yet buried in the world; and

instead of setting their affections on things above, pursuing, with the full bent of their desires, the things below. Ye are dead, it follows, your life is hid with Christ in God:

Your life, that is, your spiritual life of grace, and your eternal life of glory, they are both hid with Christ, now with God in heaven.
Hid in Christ, 1. As the effect is in the cause, as the life of the branchs is hid in the root, so is the life of a Christian hid in Christ; he is our root.

Again, hid in Christ, that is, 2. Deposited and laid up with Christ, committed to his care and custody, securely put into his hands.

3. Hid with Christ, that is, dispensed by him, and derived from him at his pleasure; of his fulness we receive, when and in what measure he pleaseth.

Note here, 1. Our life, short and uncertain in itself, and common to us with the brutes, deserves not comparatively, the name of life.

Note, 2. That Christ is the believer's life, he is both the author and efficient cause of it, the meritorious cause of it, and the exemplary cause and pattern of it.

Note, 3. That the Christian's life is hid with Christ.
The phrase imports, 1. Security and safety; what is hidden in Christ, and with him, must be safe, and out of the reach of danger; grace is incorruptible seed, that shall never die: The world, Satan, and sin, may assault, but shall not overcome; neither lust within, nor the devil, nor the world, shall be able to vanquish that life which is hid in Christ.

2. It imports obscurity; what is hidden, is concealed: The life of grace is totally hidden from the wicked, and hid, in some sort, from winnowings of temptation, under the prevalencey of corruption; much more is the life of glory hidden, it doth not yet appear; we can no more conceive of it by all we have heard, than we can conceive what the sun is by seeing a glowworm.

3. Our life being hid with Christ, it imports plenty and abundance: I am come, that ye may have life more abundantly, Joh 10:10.

- Our true life lies in the other world: You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God, Col 3:3. The new man has its livelihood thence. It is born and nourished from above; and the perfection of its life is reserved for that state. It is hid with Christ; not hid from us only, in point of secrecy, but hid for us, denoting security. The life of a Christian is hid with Christ. Because I live you shall live also, Joh 14:19. Christ is at present a hidden Christ, or one whom we have not seen; but this is our comfort, that our life is hid with him, and laid up safely with him. As we have reason to love him whom we have not seen (1Pe 1:8), so we may take the comfort of a happiness out of sight, and reserved in heaven for us.

For ye are dead. Dead to the world; dead to sin; dead to earthly pleasures. On the meaning of the word dead, Rom 6:2; Eph 2:1 The idea of the apostle is, that as Christ became literally dead in the tomb, so we, in virtue of our connexion with him, have become dead to sin, to worldly influences, pleasures, and ambition. Or, in other words, we are to be to them as if we were dead, and they had no more influence over us than the things of earth had over him in the grave. Rom 6:2. And your life. There is still life. Though dead to one class of objects, you are alive to others. See the sentiment here expressed explained at large Gall 2:20. Is hid with Christ in God. The language here is taken probably from treasure which is "hid" or concealed in a place of security; and the idea is, that eternal life is an invaluable jewel or treasure, which is laid up with Christ in heaven where God is. There it is safely deposited. It has this security, that it is with the Redeemer, and that he is in the presence of God; and thus nothing can reach it or take it away. It is not left with us, or entrusted to our keeping--for then it might be lost, as we might lose an invaluable jewel; or it might be wrested from us; or we might be defrauded of it; but it is now laid up far out of our sight, and far from the reach of all our enemies, and with One who can

"keep that which we have committed to him against that day," 2Ti 1:12. Our eternal life, therefore, is as secure as it could possibly be made. The true condition of the Christian is, that he is "dead" to this world, but that he has immortal life in prospect, and that is secure, being in the holy keeping of his Redeemer, now in the presence of God. From this it follows that he should regard himself as living for heaven.

4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The Old Life and the New

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

That although the apostle told them in the third verse, that they were dead to sin, yet here, in the fifth verse, he bids them mortify sin; intimating, that the work of mortification, at the best, is but imperfect, and must be carried on daily and progressively; they were mortified but in part; the old man has a strong heart, and is a long time a dying, after it has received its deadly wound: Sin lives a dying life, and dies a lingering death; Mortify therefore, &c.

Note, 2. What it is they are called upon to mortify, their members upon earth; where, by members, we are to understand all the lusts and corruptions of our hearts and natures, all the relics and remains of sin unsubdued and unpurged out of the soul; he instances in fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections and desires and covetousness, which loveth the world above God, and is therefore no better than idolatry.

But why are these called members, and members upon earth?
Ans. They are called members, in allusion to what St. Paul had called sin before, namely, a body of sin Col 2:11; therefore he calls particular lusts members of that body; and also because they require and call for the members of the body, as instruments to bring them

into act; likewise, because these lusts are naturally as dear to men as their bodily members, they can as soon part with a right hand or a right eye, as with a bosom and beloved lust; they are also called members upon the earth, because they are conversant about earthly things, because they will cleave to us as long as we live upon earth; and to intimate, that none of these must be carried to heaven with us, but be mortified on earth.

But what is it to mortify these members?

Ans. To mortify sin is to deny our consent to the solicitations of sin, to suppress the first motions of sin, to enervate the power and activity of sin.

Learn hence, 1. That in the holiest and best of God's children and servants, there are relics and remains of sin, to be daily mortified, and gradually subdued.

Learn, 2. That after God has brought a person into a state of grace, it is his duty, and ought to be his endeavour, daily to mortify sin, and all the remains of unsubdued corruption. A caution, Take heed of concluding sin is mortified, because it is restrained, because the acts of sin are intermitted, because some particular sins are subdued: Is all sin hated of thee, loathed and left by thee? It is more to loath a sin, than it is to leave a sin; sin may be left, and yet be loved; but no man can loath a sin, and love it at the same time.

Learn, 3. That covetousness is a sin, which, above others, a Christian should set himself against, and endeavour to mortify and subdue, it having a sort of idolatry in it, drawing our love, our trust, our fear, our joy, from God, and placing the supremacy of our affections in and upon the creatures. True, the covetous man does not believe his money to be God; but by his inordinate loving of it; and fiducial trusting in it he is as truly guilty of idolatry, as if he bowed his knee unto it: for God more regards the internal acts of the mind, than he doth the external acts of the body.

6 for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.
8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.
9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

In the foregoing verses, St. Paul exhorted the Colossians to mortify external and outward sins, as fornication and uncleanness; here he presses them to mortify internal and spiritual sins, such as anger, wrath, and malice, sins of the heart. The axe of mortification must be laid to the root of inward corruption, spiritual sins, heart sins: Though they are minoris infamia, of less infamy and reproach before men, yet they are majoris reatus, of greater guilt in the sight of God; therefore a sincere Christian has a special respect to these in the work of mortification; put off all these anger, wrath, malice:
Anger, or the sudden motions and raising of passion:
Wrath is anger advanced to an height and
malice is anger accompanied with a desire of revenge, a rooted displeasure:

As jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice is the rage of the devil; it is the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature. No sin renders a man so like to Satan as wrath and malice. A malicious desire of revenge is so far beneath a Christian, that it is the baseness of a man, yea, the spawn of a devil. This sin indulged, destroys the soul, as sure as murder, yea, it is no less than murder in the account of God, He that hateth his brother is a murderer 1John 3:15.
Observe next, The apostle exhorts the Colossians to guard against the sins of the heart. Put off blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying; that is, evil speaking, filthy speaking and false speaking.
Sins of the tongue are to be guarded and watched against, as well as sins of the heart; they are most scandalous, they dishonour God, and discredit religion, and wrong our own souls. The sins of the tongue, are little considered, their great guilt not apprehended, but men must account for their open reproaches, secret backbitings, scoffings, derisions, whereby they endeavour to fix an ignominy upon their neighbour; and particularly, the sin of lying here cautioned against, Lie not one to another.

All lying is here condemned; the officious lie, tending to our own or our neighbour's profit; the pernicious lie, tending to our neighbour's prejudice; the jocular and jocose lie, tending to recreation and sport. The scripture condemneth all, without restriction, All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, Rev 21:8
Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie Rev 22:15. Lying makes a man like the devil, who was a liar as well as a murderer from the beginning.

Observe, lastly, The argument to enforce the exhortation to mortify all sin, the sins of the heart, the sins of the tongue, the sins of the life, and that is drawn from the consideration of their present state; they had in their baptism made a profession to put off the old man with his deeds, that is, their own sinful nature, and put on the new man in baptism, which being renewed by illumination and divine knowledge, and so conformed to the image of God, rendered them now the objects of his special love.

Note here, That there were many ceremonies in baptism used in the primitive church, to which St. Paul alludes in several places in his epistles; as drenching in water, so as to seem buried in and under it, Buried with him in baptism Col 2:12: Likewise putting off their old clothes at going in, and putting on new at their coming out of the water, to which St. Paul alludes here, when he tells them they had, namely, in their baptism, put off the old man, and put on the new.
Whence learn, That there is no argument more moving and effectually exciting unto holiness of life, than that which is taken from our baptismal vow and profession; the obligation of this is very strong, if duly considered.

The apostle makes use of it here as a potent argument, to quicken them to the mortification of all sin, seeing they had in baptism put off the old man, that is, professed and solemnly engaged so to do, and had put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

10 and have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after
the image of him that created him:
11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor
uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all,
and in all.
12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of
mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;
13 forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man
have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.

Our apostle having now finished his exhortation to the practice of that great duty of mortification of sin, called here, a putting off the old man, comes next to mention several graces and virtues, which he exhorts them to be found in the practice of; and this he styles, a putting on the new man; teaching us hereby, that a negative holiness, is not sufficient to salvation; it is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do wll; a man may go to hell for not doing good, as well as for doing wickedly.

Observe farther, The particular graces and virtues which they are exhorted to put on.

1. Bowels of mercy and kindness; that is, a tender pity towards, and an inward sympathy with, those that are in misery; and this expressed in outward acts of succour and relief, according to our ability.

There is a natural pity which man can hardly put off, it is seated in the very nature of man; and accordingly, unmercifulness is a sin against the light of nature, as well as against the law of God:

But there is, besides this, a spiritual pity, which flows from sure love, and that a divine love; now, this is more an act of grace than of nature; this the apostle here exhorts the Colossians to, Put on bowels of mercy; they who have put on, and are clothed with, garments of holiness, will also put on bowls of mercy as a garment.

2. Humbleness of mind; whereby a man, sensible of God's goodness, and his own infirmities, hath an humble apprehension, and a modest estimation of himself: The more holiness anyh person has the more humility he has; humility is a certain evidence of our holiness, because it is a great part of our holiness.

3. Meekness and long-suffering, which moderate anger, and enable us to put up affronts and injuries. This is a spirit and temper divine,

and truly Christ-like; none so abused and affronted as he; but, being reviled, he blessed, and committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. When another hurts thee by unjust provocation, why shouldst thou hurt thyself by sinful passion? Christ was a Lamb for meekness; it doth not become any of his followers to be like lions for fierceness.

4. Forebearance, and mutual forgiveness; Forbearing one another and forgiving one another. No Christians are so perfect, but they are liable to offend one another; he must have no friends, that will have a friend with no faults, and consequently they stand in need of forgiveness from each other.

Learn hence, 1. That Christians are obliged, by the laws of their holy religion, to forbear and forgive one another.

2. They are obliged to imitate Christ in this duty of forgiveness; Christ forgives us universally, freely, sincerely, so as never more to upbraid us with the fault he has forgiven us; such a forgiveness are we to exercise towards our brother. As Christ forgave you; so also do ye.

Observe lastly, The argument which St. Paul makes use of to press the Colossians to the practice of the forementioned duties, and that is drawn from their election and vocation; Put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy. You that had the favour to be chosen of God out of the heathen world, to be his church and people, and are now holy and beloved of God, let the sense of this divine favour oblige you to humility and meekness, to long suffering and mutual forgiveness, yea, to the love and practice of universal holiness.

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Which is the bond of perfectness. The bond of all perfection; the thing which will unite all other things, and make them complete. Comp. the parallel place in Eph 4:3. The idea seems to be, that love will bind all the other graces fast together, and render the whole system complete. Without love, though there might be other graces and virtues, there would be a want of harmony and compactness in our Christian graces--and this was necessary to unite and complete the whole. There is great beauty in the expression, and it contains most important truth. If it were possible to conceive that the other graces could exist among a Christian people, yet there would be a

sad incompleteness, a painful want of harmony and union, if love were not the reigning principle. Nor faith, nor zeal, nor prophecy, nor the power of speaking with the tongue of angels, would answer the purpose. See this sentiment expressed in 1Cor 13, and the effect of love more fully explained in the Notes on that chapter.

Still our apostle makes use of the former metaphor, comparing the graces of the holy Spirit to garments, which he exhorts Christians to put on; he had mentioned the putting on of mercy, meekness, humility, &c. before; now he advises, to put on charity, or the grace of love, as the upper garment over and above all the rest, comparing it to a bond or ligament, which ties and knits all the members of the church together.

Quest. But what is this grace of charity?

Ans. It is a brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all hs fellow-members, in Christ for grace sake; or a gracious propensity of heart towards our neighbour, whereby we will, and do to our power procure all good for him.

Quest. But why does St. Paul compare charity to an upper garment?

Above all, put on charity.

Because, 1. The upper garment is larger and broader than the rest, so ought charity to extend itself to all persons, and upon all occasions.

2. The upper garment is usually fairer than the rest, so doth charity shine brightest amongst all the graces.

3. The upper garment distinguishes the several orders and degrees of men; thus Christians are known by love as by a livery; it is the bond that Christ's sincere disciples wear.

Quest. But how is charity the bond of perfectness?

The meaning is, that it is the most perfect bond of union among Christians, it knitteth together all the scattered members of the church, and makes their graces and gifts subservient to the good of one another, so that the church is hereby made a complete intire body, which was lame without it; in this sense, charity is called the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Rule in your hearts. Preside in your hearts; sit as umpire there, (Doddridge;) govern and control you. The word here rendered rule βραβευετω--is commonly used in reference to the Olympic and other games. It means, to be a director, or arbiter of the public games; to preside over them and preserve order, and to distribute the prizes to the victors. The meaning here is, that the peace which God gives to the soul is to be to us what the brabeutes, or governor at the games, was to those who contended there. It is to preside over and govern the mind; to preserve everything in its place; and to save it from tumult, disorder, and irregularity. The thought is a very beautiful one. The soul is liable to the agitations of passion and excitement--like an assembled multitude of men. It needs something to preside over it, and keep its various faculties in place and order; and nothing is so well fitted to do this as the calm peace which religion gives, a deep sense of the presence of God, the desire and the evidence of his friendship, the hope of his layout, and the belief that he has forgiven all our sins. The "peace of God" will thus calm down every agitated element of the soul; subdue the tumult of passion, and preserve the mind in healthful action and order--as a ruler sways and controls the passions of assembled multitudes of men. To the which also ye are called. To which peace. In one body. To be one body; or to be united as one. Eph 4:4-6. And be ye thankful. For all mercies, and especially for your privileges and hopes as Christians. A spirit of thankfulness, also, would tend much to promote harmony and peace. An ungrateful people is commonly a tumultuous, agitated, restless, and dissatisfied people. Nothing better tends to promote peace and order than gratitude to God for his mercies.

As if the apostle had said, "Let that peace which God has given you within, and calleth you to exercise without, govern your lives, and direct you in all your actions towards men, and live in continual thankfulness to God!"

Here note, That the original word to rule in the heart, signifies to umpire, or to act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife.

Now, this peace, 1. Inwardly hushes and stills all in the soul, the tumultuous affections are up, and in an hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this calms and composes all.

2. Outwardly, peace of conscience produces peaceableness of conversation; where the peace of God rules in the heart, it disposes it to peaceableness in the life.
Now, this consists in these things, namely, in an unwillingnesss to provoke others, in an unaptness to be provoked by others, in a readiness to be to be reconciled when provoked, and in a forwardness to reconcile others that are at variance.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Abundantly, producing the spirit of true wisdom. That doctrine is adapted to make you wise. The meaning is, that they were to lay up the doctrines of the gospel in their hearts; to meditate upon them; to allow them to be their guide, and to endeavour wisely to improve them to the best purpose.

These words come in by way of direction and advice, to help the Colossians in the exercise of the foregoing graces; seeing it is the word of Christ, or the holy scriptures, which teach the forementioned duties, he advises that that word of God may dwell in, and take up its abode with them, richly and plentifully, that they may be furnished thereby with all true and sound wisdom.

Note here, 1. The title given to the holy scriptures, they are the word of Christ, because they have Christ for their author, Christ for their object, and Christ for their end.

Note, 2. The advice given with respect to the word of Christ, Let it dwell: Not come for an hour, but to tarry; not to tarry for a night, but to take up its fixed residence and abode.

Note, 3. Where it should dwell, not in the ear, nor in the head only, not in the memory barely, nor in the affections, but in the heart and soul, Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. Ps 119:11. The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. Ps 37:31

Note, 4. How the word should dwell in us, richly, copiously, and plentifully, in its commands, in its promises, in it threatenings; let the word, the whole word, dwell in you, being diligently searched, heartily received, and carefully observed.
Note, 5. The persons to whom this advice is given by the apostle, all the saints at Colosse, the whole body of the people are injoined an holy familiarity with the Bible, it is to be in their houses, in their hands, and in their hearts, that it may dwell richly in them.

Here our apostle declares one special benefit which the Colossians would receive, by having the word of Christ dwell richly in them; it would enable them to teach and admonish one another, and also to excite and stir up the affections of each other, by singing those psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs therein contained, or such others as were composed by the inspiration and direction of the holy Spirit of God: always remembering, not to sing gracefully only, but with grace; that is, with attention and devotion in our hearts to the Lord. See this explained Eph 5:19,20. The only additional thought here is, that their psalms and hymns were to be regarded as a method of "teaching" and "admonishing;" that is, they were to be imbued with truth, and to be such as to elevate the mind, and withdraw it from error and sin. Dr. Johnson once said, that if he were allowed to make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who made the laws. It is true, in a more important sense, that he who is permitted to make the hymns of a church need care little who preaches, or who makes the creed. He will more effectually mould the sentiments of a church than they who preach or make creeds and confessions. Hence, it is

indispensable, in order to the preservation of the truth, that the sacred songs of a church should be imbued with sound evangelical sentiment.

Learn hence, The singing psalms, both in public assemblies, and private families, and therein praising and blessing of God for mercies received, is a great and necessary duty, to be jointly performed by all persons capable of it.

Learn, 2. That in singing, a special regard must be had, that there be an inward harmony, and a gracious melody in the soul, by the exercise of the understanding, and the orderly motion of the affections; if the heart and affections be not stirred up in this duty, the outward grace, though never so graceful, availeth nothing.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

1. That all our thoughts, words and actions, must and ought to be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to do all by the authority and command of Christ, to do all in the power and strength of Christ, to do all for the honour and glory of Christ, to do all after the pattern and example of Christ.

Learn, 2. That all prayers and thanksgivings, as they are only due to God, so they must be performed by us through Jesus Christ, that so they may find acceptance with God; Giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Social Duties of the New Life

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger,* lest they be discouraged.

22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:
23 and whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;
24 knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.
25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Colossians-4

1 Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.
2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
3 withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:
4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Walk in wisdom. That is, conduct upright and honest. Deal with them on the strictest principles of integrity, so that they may not have occasion to reproach the religion which you profess. Toward them that are without. Without the pale of the church, or who, are not professing Christians. 1Cor 5:12. They were surrounded by heathens, as Christians now are by men of the world. The injunction is one that requires us to act with prudence and propriety (ενσοφια) towards them; and there is, perhaps, not a more important direction in the New Testament than this. Among the reasons for this are the following:

(1.) Men of the world judge of religion, not from the profession, but from the life of its friends.

(2.) They judge of religion, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily walk and conversation of the members of the church.

(3.) They understand the nature of religion so well as to know when its friends are or are not consistent with their profession.

(4.) They set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principle of truth and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. They may be very devout on the Sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict, in the observance of rites and ceremonies--but all these are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless attended with an upright life.

(5.) No professing Christian can possibly do good to others who does not live an upright life. If you have cheated a man out of never so small a sum, it is vain that you talk to him about the salvation of his soul; if you have failed to pay him a debt when it was due, or to finish a piece of work when you promised it, or to tell him the exact truth in conversation, it is vain for you to endeavour to induce him to be a Christian. He will feel, if he does not say-- and he might very properly say--that he wants no religion which will not make a man honest.

(6.) No man will attempt to do much good to others whose own life is not upright. He will be sensible of the inconsistency, and will feel that he cannot do it with any sense of propriety; and the honour of religion, therefore, and the salvation of our fellow-men, demand that, in all our intercourse with others, we should lead lives of the strictest integrity. Redeeming the time. Eph 5:16.

By them without, are meant the Heathen, who are yet without the pale of the visible church; to walk in wisdom toward them, is a duty of great latitude, but imports particularly here, an endeavour to the uttermost to promote their conversion and salvation, by begetting in them a due veneration for the gospel, and a love and liking to the Christian religion.

Learn hence, That private Christians, by walking wisely before them that are yet unconverted effectually to Christianity, may be exceedingly helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel

amongst them. They may pray, and pray in faith, for their conversion, and the further spreading of the gospel, in order to that end. The ardent devotions and the holy conversations of private Christians are excellent means to recommend the gospel and the Christian religion, and to represent them as most amiable and desirable.

Having in the former part of the verse, directed the Colossians to walk wisely before the unconverted Gentiles that were among them, in this latter part of the verse, he advises them to redeem every opportunity, for gaining over those infidels to the Christian religion. A Christian that knows the worth of time, will redeem it, will improve it for the soul, for the benefit of his own soul, and for the advantage of others: How this is done, see the note on Eph 1:16.

The apostle exhorts them further to a prudent and decent conduct towards all those with whom they conversed, towards the heathen world, or those out of the Christian church among whom they lived (Col 4:5): Walk in wisdom towards those who are without. Be careful, in all your converse with them, to get no hurt by them, or contract any of their customs; for evil communications corrupt good manners; and to do not hurt to them, or increase their prejudices against religion, and give them an occasion of dislike. Yea, do them all the good you can, and by all the fittest means and in the proper seasons recommend religion to them.--Redeeming the time; that is, either "improving every opportunity of doing them good, and making the best use of your time in proper duty" (diligence in redeeming time very much recommends religion to the good opinion of others), or else "walking cautiously and with circumspections, to give them no advantage against you, nor expose yourselves to their malice and ill-will," Eph 5:15,16. Walk circumspectly, redeeming the time, because the days are evil, that is, dangerous, or times of trouble and suffering.

6 Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Direction is here given to all Christians for the right government of the tongue, and well ordering of the speech, that it be not corrupt and rotten, filthy or frothy, vain and unprofitable, but mild and courteous, savoury and gracious, wise and discreet.

Note here, 1. That we are not left at random in our ordinary discourse, to let our tongue run riot and talk what we please, without any regard to the edification of others.

Note, 2. That there ought to be both a gracefulness and grace in our speech, some savour of piety, someting that may testify there is grace wrought in ourselves, and tends to the working of grace in others.

Note, 3. That our speech may be thus savoury at all times, it must be seasoned with salt.

1. With the salt of truth: There must be an agreement betwixt the thing and our words, without falsehood; and an agreement betwixt our tongue and our hearts, without dissimulation.

2. With the salt of wisdom and prudence; this will teach us the time when, the manner how, and the measure how much to speak; those words must needs be unsavoury, that have neither truth nor prudence in them.
The people wondered of old at the gracious words which came our of Christ's mouth; and we may justly wonder at the graceless words which come out of the mouths of many that are called Christians.

Final Greetings

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved
brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord:
8 whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might
know your estate, and comfort your hearts;
9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you.
They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.
10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, sister's son to
Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come
unto you, receive him;)
11 and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These
only *are my* fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have
been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you,
always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand
perfect and complete in all the will of God.
13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them
that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.
14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.
15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the
church which is in his house.
16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also
in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle*
from Laodicea.
17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast
received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.
18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds.
Grace be with you. Amen.

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians
[1 Thessalonians]

1 Thessalonians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy,
Unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father,
and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in
our prayers;

Your work of faith.That is, your work showing or evincing faith. The reference is probably to acts of duty, holiness, and benevolence, which proved that they exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Works of faith are those to which faith prompts, and which show that there is faith in the heart. This does not mean, therefore, a work of their own producing faith, but a work which showed that they had faith. And labour of love. Labour produced by love, or showing that you are actuated by love. Such would be all their kindness toward the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted; and all their acts which showed that they loved the souls of men. And patience of hope. Patience in your trials, showing that you have such a hope of future blessedness as to sustain you in your afflictions. It was the hope of heaven through the Lord Jesus that gave them patience. Rom 8:24. "The phrases here are Hebraisms, meaning active faith, and laborious love, and patient hope, and might have been so translated." Doddridge. In our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, your hope is founded only on him. The only hope that we have of heaven is through the Redeemer. In the sight of God and our Father. Before God, even our Father. It is a hope which we have through the merits of the

Redeemer, and which we are permitted to cherish before God; that is, in his very presence. When we think of God; when we reflect that we must soon stand before him, we are permitted to cherish this hope. It is a hope which will be found to be genuine even in the presence of a holy and heart-searching God. This does not mean that it had been merely professed before God, but that it was a hope which they might dare to entertain in the presence of God, and which would bear the scrutiny of his eye.

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

4 knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

Here the apostle produces a further evidence of these Thessalonians' conversion, namely, that they did not only turn from idols to serve God the Father, but did also believe in Jesus Christ his only Son: this act of faith is expressed by waiting, they waited for his Son from heaven, that is, by faith, they expected that Christ, whom the apostle had preached to them, and was gone to heaven, would certainly come again from thence, to deliver his redeemed ones from the wrath to come, that is from the punishment and vengeance eternally due unto them for sin. And the ground of this their expectation was Christ's resurrection from the dead; to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.

Note here, 1. A description, a heart-affecting, yea, a soul- affecting description of that wrath which doth await every wicked and impenitent sinner; it is a wrath to come; after thousands, yea millions of years, that sinners have lain under it; still it is a wrath to come; and they are as far from being delivered from it, as the first hour they fell under it.

Note, 2. That Jesus Christ delivered up himself to death, that he might be a Saviour and deliverer of his people from this wrath; let it break forth when it will, not a drop of it shall ever fall upon any one of them.

Note, 3. That believers may warrantably expect deliverance by Christ from this wrath, seeing God has raised him from the dead.

Note, 4. Therefore, may and ought they to wait and wish, to look and long, for his coming from heaven, when deliverance from wrath will be perfected and completed.

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Note, 4. Therefore, may and ought they to wait and wish, to look and long, for his coming from heaven, when deliverance from wrath will be perfected and completed.

10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead,
even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians-2

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was
not in vain:
2 but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully
entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak
unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

And were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, Acts 16:19, seq. By being beaten and cast into prison. The shame of the treatment consisted in the fact that it was wholly undeserved; that it was contrary to the laws; and that it was accompanied with circumstances designed to make their punishment as ignominious as possible. The Thessalonians knew of this, and Paul was not disposed to palliate the conduct of the Philippians. What was "shameful treatment" he speaks of as such without hesitation. It is not wrong to call things by their right names, and when we have been abused, it is not necessary that we should attempt to smoothe the matter over by saying that it was not so. We were bold in our God. By humble dependence on the support of our God. It was only his powerful aid that could have enabled them to persevere with ardour and zeal in such a work after such treatment. The meaning here is, that they were not deterred from preaching the gospel by the treatment which they had received, but

at the very next important town, and on the first opportunity, they proclaimed the same truth, though there was no security that they might not meet with the same persecution there. Paul evidently appeals to this in order to show them that they were not impostors, and that they were not influenced by the hope of ease or of selfish gains. Men who were not sincere and earnest in their purposes would have been deterred by such treatment as they had received at Philippi. With much contention. Amidst much opposition, and where great effort was necessary. The Greek word here used is αγων (agony,) a word referring usually to the Grecian games. Col 2:1. It means the course, or place of contest; and then the contest itself, the strife, the combat, the effort for victory; and the apostle here means, that, owing to the opposition there, there was need of an effort on his part like the desperate struggles of those who contended for the mastery at the Grecian games. Comp. Notes on 1Cor 9:24-27. The triumph of the gospel there was secured only by an effort of the highest kind, and by overcoming the most formidable opposition.

3 For our exhortation *was* not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

For our exhortation. That is, the exhortation to embrace the gospel. The word seems to be used here so as to include preaching in general. The sense is, that the means which they used to induce them to become Christians were not such as to delude them. Was not of deceit. Was not founded on sophistry. The apostle means to say, that the Thessalonians knew that his manner of preaching was not such as was adopted by the advocates of error.

Nor of uncleanness.--Not such as to lead to an impure life. It was such as to lead to holiness and purity. The apostle appeals to what they knew to be the tendency of his doctrine as an evidence that it was true. Most of the teaching of the heathen philosophers led to a life of licentiousness and corruption. The tendency of the gospel was just the reverse.

Nor in guile. Not by the arts of deceit. There was no craftiness or trick, such as could not bear a severe scrutiny. No point was carried by art, cunning, or stratagem. Everything was done on the most honourable and fair principles. It is much when a man can say that he

has never endeavoured to accomplish anything by mere trick, craft, or cunning. Sagacity and shrewdness are always allowable in ministers as well as others; trick and cunning never. Yet stratagem often takes the place of sagacity, and trick is often miscalled shrewdness. Guile, craft, cunning, imply deception, and can never be reconciled with that entire honesty which a minister of the gospel, and all other Christians, ought to possess. 2Cor 12:16. Comp. Ps 32:2, 34:13, Jn 1:47, 1Pet 2:1,22, Rev 14:5.

4 but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel. Comp. @1Ti 1:11,12. Since there had been committed to us an office so high and holy, and so much demanding sincerity, fidelity, and honesty, we endeavoured to act in all respects in conformity to the trust reposed in us. The gospel is a system of truth and sincerity, and we evinced the same. The gospel is concerned with great realities, and we did not resort to trick and illusion. The office of the ministry is most responsible, and we acted in view of the great account which we must render. The meaning is, that Paul had such a sense of the truth, reality, and importance of the gospel, and of his responsibility, as effectually to keep him from anything like craft or cunning in preaching it. An effectual restrainer from mere management and trick will always be found in a deep conviction of the truth and importance of religion. Artifice and cunning are the usual accompaniments of a bad cause; and, when adopted by a minister of the gospel, will usually, when detected, leave the impression that he feels that he is engaged in such a cause. If an object cannot be secured by sincerity and straight-forward dealing, it is not desirable that it should be secured at all. Even so we speak. In accordance with the nature of the gospel; with the truth and sincerity which such a cause demands. Not as pleasing men. Not in the manner of impostors, who make it their object to please men. The meaning of the apostle is, that he did not aim to teach such doctrines as would flatter men; as would win their applause; or as would gratify their passions or their fancy. We are not to suppose that he desired to offend men; or that he regarded their esteem as of no value; or that he was indifferent whether they were pleased or displeased; but that it was not the direct object of his

preaching to please them. It was to declare the truth, and to obtain the approbation of God, whatever men might think of it. Gal 1:10. Which trieth our hearts. It is often said to be an attribute of God that he tries or searches the hearts of men, 1Chr 28:9, 29:17; Jer 11:20, 17:10, Ps 11:4, Rom 8:27. The meaning here is, that the apostle had a deep conviction of the truth that God knew all his motives, and that all would be revealed in the last day.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God *is* witness:

For neither at any time used we flattering words. Job 32:21; Job 32:22; 2Cor 2:17. The word here rendered "flattering"--κολακεια--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the apostle did not deal in the language of adulation; he did not praise them for their beauty, wealth, talent, or accomplishments, and conceal from them the painful truths about their guilt and danger, He stated simple truth--not refusing to commend men if truth would admit of it, and never hesitating to declare his honest convictions about their guilt and danger. One of the principal arts of the deceiver on all subjects is flattery; and Paul says, that when preaching to the Thessalonians he had carefully avoided it. He now appeals to that fact as a proof of his own integrity. They knew that he had been faithful to their souls. Nor a cloke of covetousness. The word rendered "cloke" here-- προφασις--means, properly, "what is shown or appears before any one;" i.e., show, pretence, pretext, put forth in order to cover one's real intent, Mt 23:14, Mk 12:40, Lk 20:47. The meaning here is, that he did not put on a pretence or appearance of piety for the sake of promoting the schemes of covetousness. The evidence of that was not only what their observed of the general spirit of the apostle, but also the fact that when with them he had actually laboured with his own hands for a support, 1Thes 2:9. It is obvious that there were those there, as sometimes there are now, who, under the pretence of great zeal for religion, were really seeking wealth; and it is possible that it may have been alleged against Paul and his fellow-labourers that they were such persons. God is witness. This is a solemn appeal to God for the truth of what he had said. He refers not only to their own observation, but he calls God himself to witness his sincerity. God knew the truth in the case. There could have been

no imposing on him; and the appeal, therefore, is to one who was intimately acquainted with the truth. Learn hence,

(1.) that it is right, on important occasions, to appeal to God for the truth of what we say.

(2.) We should always so live that we can properly make such an appeal to him.

6 nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when
we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Neither of you, nor yet of others. Nowhere has this been our object. The love of fame is not that which has influenced us. The particular idea in this verse seems to be, that though they had uncommon advantages, as the apostles of Christ, for setting up a dominion or securing an ascendency over others yet they had not availed themselves of it. As an apostle of Christ; as appointed by him to found churches; as endowed with the power of working miracles, Paul had every advantage for securing authority over others and turning it to the purposes of ambition or gain. When we might have been burdensome. Marg., "or, used authority." Some understand this as meaning that they might have demanded a support in virtue of their being apostles; others, as Calvin, and as it is in the margin, that they might have used authority, and have governed them wholly in that manner, exacting unqualified obedience. The Greek properly refers to that which is weighty--ενβαρει --heavy, burdensome. Anything that weighs down, or oppresses --as a burden, sorrow, or authority, would meet the sense of the Greek. It seems probable, from the context, that the apostle did not refer either to authority or to support exclusively, but may have included both. In their circumstances it might have been somewhat burdensome for them to have maintained him and his fellow-labourers, though as an apostle he might have required it. Comp. 1Cor 9:8-15. Rather than be oppressive in this respect, he had chosen to forego his right, and to maintain himself by his own labour. As an apostle also he might have exerted his authority, and might have made use of his great office for the purpose of placing himself at the head of churches, and giving them laws. But he chose to do nothing that would be a burden; he treated them with the gentleness with which a nurse

cherishes her children, 1Thes 2:7, or a father his sons, 1Thes 2:11, and employed only the arts of persuasion. Comp. 2Cor 12:13; 2Cor 12:14; 2Cor 12:15; 2Cor 12:16.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

So, being affectionately desirous of you. The word here rendered "being affectionately desirous" ιμειρω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means to long after, to have a strong affection for. The sense here is, that Paul was so strongly attached to them that he would have been willing to lay down his life for them. We were willing to have imparted unto you. To have given or communicated, Rom 1:11. Not the gospel of God only. To be willing to communicate the knowledge of the gospel was in itself a strong proof of love, even if it were attended with no self-denial or hazard in doing it. We evince a decided love for a man when we tell him of the way of salvation, and urge him to accept of it. We show strong interest for one who is in danger, when we tell him of a way of escape, or for one who is sick, when we tell him of a medicine that will restore him; but we manifest a much higher love when we tell a lost and ruined sinner of the way in which he may be saved. There is no method in which we can show so strong an interest in our fellow-men, and so much true benevolence for them, as to go to them and tell them of the way by which they may be rescued from everlasting ruin. But also our own souls. Or rather lives--ψυχας. Mt 6:25, 20:28, Lk 12:22,23, Mk 3:4. This does not mean that the apostle was willing to be damned, or to lose his soul in order to save them; but that, if it had been necessary, he would have been ready to lay down his life. See Jn 3:16. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Comp. Jn 15:13. His object seems to be to assure them that he did not leave them from any want of love to them, or from the fear of being put to death. It was done from the strong conviction of duty. He appears to have left them because he could not longer remain without exposing others to danger, and without the certainty that there would be continued disturbances. See Acts 17:9,10.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

Notwithstanding our apostle was free, wholly free, from all shadow and appearance of covetousness in the whole course of his ministry, yet it may seem as if some persons (probably the false apostles) did, though with the highest injustice, charge him with it; accordingly, to clear himself from that imputation, here he tells the Thessalonians, he laboured night and day in the business of his calling; making tents to maintain himself, that so he might not be chargeable or burdensome to any of them; or any ways retard or hinder the success of the gospel amongst them; labouring night and day, that we might not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God freely.

Yet observe, this was only a case of necessity; for at other times, and in other places, we find our apostle asserting his own right, and God's appointment, that every one that preacheth the gospel should live of the gospel. 1Cor 9:14

Next our apostle calls upon them to remember his labour and travail, that is his pains and diligence in preaching the gospel; the words signify labour unto weariness, and labour after weariness, his painfulness, both in his preaching, and in his secular calling; and from his calling upon the Thessalonians to remember this, he learns us this lesson of instruction, namely, that it is the standing duty of a people to keep in their constant remembrance the great labour and pains which the faithful ministers of Christ do take amongst them, that so they may be duly thankful, both to God and them, and put a just value upon that spiritual good, which, at any time, that have experienced and received from them; Remember, brethren, our labour and travail.

Observe again, having asserted his laboriousness in preaching to them, he next puts them in remembrance of his exemplariness in conversation amongst them, how holily, justly, and unblameably we

behaved ourselves amongst you; that is, performing his duty with great integrity and uprightness towards God and man, so that none justly could blame him for neglect amongst them; and for the truth of this, he appeals to God as a judge, and to themselves as witnesses; Ye are witnesses and God also.

Learn hence, that it is a great happiness, and unspeakable consolation, both to ministers and people, when the duties of religion, relating to both tables, are performed with such exactness, that they can and dare appeal to one another, as to their holy and unblameable conversation, and to God himself, as to the purity of their aim and sincerity of intention.

10 Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also,* how holily and justly and unblamably
we behaved ourselves among you that believe:
11 as ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one
of you, as a father *doth* his children,
12 that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his
kingdom and glory.

1Thes 2:11

Observe, that still our apostle appeals to their own consciences for his good behaviour amongst them: Ye know: Happy minister, that has a throne in the consciences of his people, unto which he can and dare, at all times, appeal, for the clearing of his innocency and integrity, in and before the face of the whole world!

Observe next, that having compared himself to a nurse before, he resembles himself to a father now, we exhorted you as a father doth his children. As it is the office of a father to direct and instruct, to counsel and exhort his children, so the apostle did exhort, comfort, and charge the Thessalonians, that they be strictly conscientious in the faithful discharge of their whole duty, both to God and man, and patient under all, and all manner of trials and afflictions whatsoever, which they did, or might meet with, in the way of well doing.

Where note, that a mixture of meekness and gentleness, accompanied with authority and gravity is an excellent compostion in the ministers of the gospel: St. Paul having shewn, that, for

gentleness, he was a nursing mother, declareth here, that for authority and gravity, he was an instructing father.

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Not as the word of men. Not of human origin, but as a Divine revelation. You were not led to embrace it by human reasoning, or the mere arts of persuasion, or from personal respect for others, but by your conviction that it was a revelation from God. It is only when the gospel is embraced in this way, that religion will show itself sufficient to abide the fiery trials to which Christians may be exposed. He who is convinced by mere human reasoning, may have his faith shaken by opposite, artful reasoning; he who is won by the mere arts of popular eloquence, will have no faith which will be proof against similar arts in the cause of error; he who embraces religion from mere respect for a pastor, parent, or friend, or because others do, may abandon it when the popular current shall set in a different direction, or when his friends shall embrace different views; but he who embraces religion as the truth of God, and from the love of the truth, will have a faith, like that Of the Thessalonians, which will abide every trial. Which effectually worketh also in you that believe. The word rendered "which" here--ος--may be referred either to "truth" or to "God." The grammatical construction will admit of either, but it is not material which is adopted. Either of them expresses a sense undeniably true, and of great importance. The meaning is, that the truth was made efficacious in the minds of all who became true Christians. It induced them to abandon their sins, to devote themselves to God, to lead pure and holy lives, and enabled them to abide the trials and temptations of life. Comp. Php 2:12, Php 2:13; Heb 13:21. The particular illustration here is, that when they embraced the gospel, it had such an efficacy on their hearts as to prepare them to meet all the terrors of bitter persecution without shrinking.

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen; Literally, "of those who are of your fellow, tribe, or fellow-clansmen," συμφυλετων. The Greek word means "one of the same tribe," and then a fellow-citizen, or fellow-countryman. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The particular reference here seems not to be to the heathen, who were the agents or actors in the scenes of tumult and persecutions, but to the Jews by whom they were led on, or who were the prime-movers in the persecutions which they had endured. It is necessary to suppose that they were principally Jews who were the cause of the persecution which had been excited against them, in order to make the parallelism between the church there and the churches in Palestine exact. At the same time, there was a propriety in saying that, though this parallelism was exact, it was by the "hands of their own countrymen" that it was done; that is, they were the visible agents or actors by whom it was done--the instruments in the hands of others. In Palestine, the Jews persecuted the churches directly, out of Palestine, they did it by means of others. They were the real authors of it, as they were in Judea; but they usually accomplished it by producing an excitement among the heathen, and by the plea that the apostles were making war on civil institutions. This was the case in Thessalonica. "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, set all the city on an uproar." "They drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also," Acts 17:5,6. The same thing occurred a short time after at Berea. "When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people," Acts 17:13; Comp. Acts 14:2. "The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren." "The epistle, therefore, represents the case accurately as the history states it. It was the Jews always who set on foot the persecutions against the apostles and their followers." Paley, Hor. Paul. in loc. It was, therefore, strictly true, as the apostle here states it,

(1.) that they were subjected to the same treatment from the Jews as the churches in Judea were, since they were the authors of the excitement against them; and

(2.) that it was carried on, as the apostle states, "by their own countrymen;" that is, that they were the agents or instruments by which it was done. This kind of undesigned coincidence between the epistle and the history in the Acts of the Apostles, is one of the arguments from which Paley (Hor. Paul.) infers the genuineness of both.

15 who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles. See Acts 17:5,13. No particular instance is mentioned in the life of Paul previous to this, when they had formally commanded him not to preach to the heathen; but no one can doubt that this was one of the leading points of difference between him and them. Paul maintained, that the Jews and Gentiles were now on a level with regard to salvation; that the wall of partition was broken down; that the Jew had no advantages over the rest of mankind in this respect, and that the heathen might be saved without becoming Jews, or being circumcised, Rom 2:25-29; Rom 3:22-31; Col 1:25. The Jews did not hold it unlawful "to speak to the Gentiles," and even to offer to them eternal life, (Mt 23:15;) but it was only on condition that they should become proselytes to their religion, and should observe the institutions of Moses. If saved, they held that it would be as Jews--either originally such, or such by becoming proselytes. Paul maintained just the opposite opinion, that heathens might be saved without becoming proselytes to the Jewish system, and that, in fact, salvation was as freely offered to them as to the children of Abraham. Though there are no express instances in which they prohibited Paul from speaking to the Gentiles recorded before the date of this epistle, yet events occurred afterwards which showed what were their feelings, and such as to make it in the highest degree probable that they had attempted to restrain him. See Acts 22:21,22. "And he [Christ] said unto me [Paul,] Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they [the Jews] gave him audience unto this word,

and then lift up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

Paul's Absence and Concern

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

But we, brethren, being taken from you. There is more implied in the Greek word here rendered, "being taken from you"--απορφανισθεντες--than appears from our translation. It properly has relation to the condition of an orphan, (comp. Jn 14:18,) or one who is bereaved of parents. Then it is used in a more general sense, denoting to be bereaved of; and in this place it does not mean merely that he was "taken from them," but there is included the idea that it was like a painful bereavement. It was such a state as that of one who had lost a parent. No word, perhaps, could have expressed stronger attachment for them. Observe here, that St. Paul having all along, in the chapter before us, compared himself to a tender father, and a nursing mother, for his affectionate love unto, and his solicitous concern for, these Christian converts; he doth in the words before us, declare, that this constrained absence from them, occasioned him no less grief than that of a tender father, when bereft of his beloved children; or that of an indulgent mother, when the child she loves as her own soul is taken violently from her.

We, brethren, being taken from you; the words intimate such a separation as death makes between a father and a child, which rends the parent's heart in sunder, and is like cutting off a limb or member from his body, exquisitely painful; intimating, that the enforced absence of a pastor from his beloved people, though but for a short season, is very afflictive.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

How he expresses his desire and endeavour, his fervent purpose, and fixed resolution to come unto them, to see their face, to refresh them, and be refreshed by them; I endeavoured abundantly to see your

face, but Satan hindered; that is, his instruments, persecutors, lay in wait for him, on the one hand, and caused some dissentions in other churches, which detained him from coming to them; on the other hand, Satan hindered.

Learn thence, that such as obstruct the preaching and propagating of the gospel, and persecute the promoters of it, are Satan's instruments and ministers.

2. That such as do Satan's work, it is fit they should bear this name.

3. Thus The devil shall cast some of you into prison Rev 2:13, that is, his servants: It is fit that master and servant should have both one name.

19 For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

That there are degrees of glory in heaven, probably according to the measures and degrees of service we have done for God on earth; there is, no doubt, an equality of glory there, as to the essentials, but not with respect to the accidentals; besides the joy and satisfaction which the ministers of Christ are partakers of, in heaven, in common with other glorified saints, they have an additional joy and glory from the success of their pious and painful labours, which God has crowned with the conversion and edification of many souls.

Lord! Who would not study, spend, and be spent in the service of such a master? Is it not worth all our labour and sufferings, to appear in the presence of Christ, accompanied with all those souls whom we have instrumentally either brought home, or built up in the most holy faith, either converted, comforted, or confirmed in the way to heaven? To hear one spiritual child say, "Lord, this is the instrument by whom I believed;" another, "This is the minister by whom I was established;" a third, "This is he that quickened me by his example, and provoked me to love, and to good works: O blessed be God, that I ever saw his face, and heard his voice!"

But, Lord, what will it be to hear thy blessed voice saying to us, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of me your Lord; I have kept an exact account of all your fervent prayers for your people, of all your instructive and persuasive sermons, of all your sighs and groans poured forth before me, on behalf of those whom ye would have persuaded to be happy, but could not! Every tear from your eye, and drop of sweat from your face, shall now meet with an eternal recompence; you shall now find me, according to my promise, not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love."

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians-3

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

To be left at Athens alone. Paul had been conducted to Athens from Berea, where he remained until Silas and Timothy could come to him, Acts 17:15. It appears from the statement here, that Timothy had joined him there, but such was his solicitude for the church at Thessalonica, that he very soon after sent him there, and chose to remain himself alone at Athens. Why he did not himself return to Thessalonica, is not stated. It is evidently implied here that it was a great personal inconvenience for him thus to part with Timothy, and to remain alone at Athens, and that he evinced the strong love which he had for the church at Thessalonica by being willing to submit to it. What that inconvenience consisted in, he has not stated, but it is not difficult to understand.

(1.)He was among total strangers, and, when Timothy was gone, without an acquaintance or friend.

(2.) The aid of Timothy was needed in order to prosecute the work which he contemplated. He had requested that Timothy should join him as soon as possible when he left Berea, (Acts 17:15;) and he evidently felt it desirable that in preaching the gospel in that city he should have all the assistance he could obtain. Yet he was willing to

forego those comforts and advantages in order to promote the edification of the church at Thessalonica.

2 and sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

And our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ. A third token of affectionate interest in their welfare. The meaning is, "I did not send one whom I did not want, or who could be of no use here, but one who was a fellow-labourer with me, and whose aid would have been of essential service to me. In parting with him, therefore, for your welfare, I showed a strong attachment for you. I was willing to endure personal inconvenience, and additional toil, in order to promote your welfare," To establish you. To strengthen you; to make you firm στηριξαι. This was to be done by presenting such considerations as would enable them to maintain their faith steadfastly in their trials. And to comfort you concerning your faith. It is evident that they were suffering persecution on account of their faith in the Lord Jesus; that is, for their belief in him as a Saviour. The object of sending Timothy was to suggest such topics of consolation as would sustain them in their trials--that is, that he was the Son of God; that the people of God had been persecuted in all ages; that God was able to support them, etc.

3 that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

It would be most to the purpose, however, to suppose that he means to state the general idea that all Christians are exposed to persecution, and could not hope to avoid it. It would then appear that the Thessalonians had partaken only of the common lot. Still there may have been a special reference to the fact that Paul and his fellow-labourers there were subjected to trims; and if this be the reference, then the idea is, that the Thessalonians should not be "moved" by their trials, for even their teachers were not exempt. Even their enemies could not say that the apostle and his co-workers were impostors, for they had persevered in preaching the gospel when they knew that these trials were coming upon them. The phrase, "we are appointed thereunto," means that such was the Divine arrangement. No one who professed Christianity could hope

to be exempted from trial, for it was the common lot of all believers. Comp. 1Cor 4:9; 2Ti 3:12.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.

For this cause. Since I knew that you were so liable to be persecuted, and since I feared that some might be turned from the truth by this opposition. When I could no longer forbear. 1Thes 3:1. I sent to know your faith. That is, your fidelity, or your steadfastness in the gospel. Lest by some means. Either by allurements to apostasy, set before you by your former heathen friends; or by the arts of false teachers; or by the severity of suffering. Satan has many methods of seducing men from the truth, and Paul was fearful that by some of his arts he might be successful there. The tempter. Satan; for though the Jews were the immediate actors in those transactions, yet the apostle regarded them as being under the direction of Satan, and as accomplishing his purposes. He was, therefore, the real author of the persecutions which had been excited. He is here called the "Tempter," as he is often, (comp. Mt 4,) and the truths taught are;

(1.) that Satan is the great author of persecution; and

(2.) that in a time of persecution--or of trial of any kind--he endeavours to tempt men to swerve from the truth, and to abandon their religion. In persecution, men are tempted to apostatize from God, in order to avoid suffering. In afflictions of other kinds, Satan often tempts the sufferer to murmur and complain; to charge God with harshness, partiality, and severity, and to give vent to expressions that will show that religion has none of its boasted power support the soul in the day of trial. Comp. Job 1:9-11. In all times of affliction, as well as in prosperity, we may be sure that the Tempter" is not far off, and should be on our guard against his wiles.

6 But now when Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good

remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you:

7 therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8 for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Verse 8. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. This is equivalent to saying, "My life and comfort depend on your stability in the faith, and your correct Christian walk." Comp. Martial vi. 70. Non est vivere, sed valere, vita--" Life consists not merely in living, but in the enjoyment of health." See, also, Seneca, Epis. 99, and Manilius, iv. 5, as quoted by Wetstein. The meaning here is, that Paul now enjoyed life; he had that which constituted real life, in the fact that they acted as became Christians, and so as to show that his labour among them had not been in vain. The same thing here affirmed is true of all faithful ministers of the gospel. They feel that they have something that may be called life, and that is worth living for, when those to whom they preach maintain a close walk with God.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you:

Still our apostle perseveres in prayer, on the behalf of his beloved Thessalonians; and the particular mercy he prays for, is, their abundant increase in the grace and duty of love, first amongst themselves and their fellow-brethren in Christ, all Christians far and near; next towards all men, heathens and infidels, their bitter and bloody persecutors not excepted.

Where note, The true property of Christian love; it is,

1. A brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ, for grace sake;

2. A gracious propensity of heart, which a Christian bears for God's sake to all mankind, whereby he wills, and to his power procures, all good for them.

Here a particular and special reason is assigned, why he prayed so fervently for their abounding in love, namely, in order to their establishment in faith and holiness; teaching us, that as true love evidences the co-existence of all graces, so it gives stability and establishment to all graces.

Learn hence, 1. That growth in grace is accompanied with stability both in faith and holiness.

2. That a general and abounding charity, being that by which we become most like unto God, tends exceedingly to our establishment in all grace, and renders us unblameable before God, at the appearance of Christ.

Learn, 3. That there will be no possibility of appearing unblameable before Christ at his coming, without the love and practice of universal holiness in our Christian course.

Learn, 4. That the perfecting of a saint's graces, and rendering him altogether unblameable, without spot or imperfection in grace and holiness, is reserved till Christ's coming. Then, and not till then, shall our holiness be perfected, our love improved to a seraphim's likeness, all burning; then shall we obey with vigour, praise with cheerfulness, delight in God above measure, fear him without torment, trust him without despondency, serve him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like unto him, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality.
Come, then, Lord, down to me, Or take me up to thee.

13 to the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

1 Thessalonians-4

A Life Pleasing to God

1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more.

In these words, we have a general exhortation given to the Thessalonians, that, according to the doctrine and injunctions formerly given them for a holy conversation suitable to the gospel, they would make it their care and endeavour to abound more and more in the exercise of piety, and outstrip themselves in doing their duty toward God and one another; We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, &c.

Where note, 1. With what great condescension and earnestness St. Paul applies himself to them; he styles them his brethren, and exhorts and beseeches them. The ministers of Christ must not only be teachers, but beseechers also, meekly and affectionately entreating persons to be kind to themselves, and comply with their present duty.

Yet observe, 2. With what authority he backs his entreaty; he beseeches and exhorts by the Lord Jesus, that is, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by his authority, and for his sake; so that he that despiseth the gentle exhortations of Christ's ministers, despiseth not men, but God; as the authority of a prince is despised, when his messages by his ambassadors are rejected.

Note, 3. The general and comprehensive duty which they are exhorted to, namely, to walk so as to please God in their daily conversation, to be found in the practice of all the duties and virtues of a good life.

Where note, that St. Paul, in the course of his ministry, did not only explain and unfold gospel mysteries but urge and enforce moral

duties: Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk. This must be a minister's care, to acquaint his people, that as the privileges of Christianity are very great, so the duties it requires are strict and exact; and those which we call moral duties, are an integral part of our religion; he that is not a moral man, is no Christian; let us preach and press second-table duties, with arguments drawn from the first, namely, that they performed in humble obedience to the command of God, and with a single eye at the glory of God, and from an inward principle of love to God, and then we can never preach up morality too much, nor our people practice it too much.

Observe, lastly, the apostle exhorts them to abound more and more, that is, in grace and holiness; Christians are to be thankful for, but not satisfied with, their present measures of grace received; God allows us liberty to enlarge our desires after an abundance of his grace: and happy is it where there is found a holy covetousness going along with the grace of God, as there is an insatiable covetousness going along with the gold and treasure of this world: this, says the apostle here, will please God, when ye abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

This is the will of God, even your sanctification: that is, this is the will of God, eminently and emphatically revealed in his word, that Christians should be holy and pure, chaste and clean: not indulging themselves in those impure and filthy lusts of the flesh, fornication, and all manner of uncleanness, which the Gentiles, who knew not the true God savingly, were addicted to, and, in a most beastly manner, guilty of; but that every one should know how to possess and make use of his body, and all its members, as the vessel and instrument of the soul, in holiness and honour.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle descends from general to particular duties: he exhorted the Thessalonians, 1Thess 4:1, in the general, to walk so as to please God; here he exhorteth them in particular, to purity and chastity, both of heart and life, and to watch against all the violent eruptions of concupiscence in their

earthly members; teaching us, that the ministers of God must not satisfy themselves with giving general exhortations to a good life, but must treat of particular sins and duties, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other; thus doth our apostle here.

Observe, 2. The particular duty exhorted to, sanctification; a comprehensive word, and of a large extent; in the general, it consists in a conformity of our natures to the nature of God, and in a conformity of our lives to the will of God.

In particular, sanctification here stands in opposition to all bodily uncleanness, as the next words do plainly shew, that ye should abstain from fornication, that is, all filthiness and uncleanness contrary to chastity; intimating to us, that as there are no sins that human nature is more inclined to, than the lusts of the flesh; so there are no sins that a Christian should more guard against, and strive to mortify and subdue, as being contrary to that purity of nature and life which the gospel directs, and the Holy Spirit assists unto.

Observe, 3. The argument which our apostle here uses to enforce his exhortation to purity and holiness; This is the will of God; 'tis both the command of God that we should be holy, and the will of God to make us holy; now the signification of God's will ought to be a sufficient inducement to us to desire it, and endeavour after it. This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication.

Observe, 4. The remedy prescribed against all bodily uncleanness, and that is, a careful preserving the vessel of the body free from all fleshly pollution, and in that measure of purity and chastity which is suitable to the honour put upon it by God, in being made a temple for the Holy Ghost, That every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.

Where note, the title given to our body, it is called a vessel; it is, first, the Spirit's vessel, he resides in it as in his temple; and

accordingly, it seems to be an allusion to the consecrated vessels of the temple, in which a more than ordinary cleanness and purity was found:
Secondly, it is the soul's vessel, 'tis its vessel or receptacle, in which, for a time, it is preserved; and it is the instrument of the soul, by which it acts and performs its office and function.

Now, it is every person's, every man and woman's duty, to possess their body, and to be masters of it, not to be possessed by it, or enslaved to it, but to keep it in subjection to, and as the instrument of, the soul; the body is God's curious workmanship, 'tis Christ's precious purchase, 'tis the soul's receptacle, 'tis the Holy Ghost's temple; therefore, to be kept holy, pure, and clean, like the consecrated vessels of the temple.

Observe, 5. Our apostle exhorts the Thessalonians, not only to abstain from the outward act of uncleanness, but to mortify and subdue the inward lust of concupiscence, 1Thess 4:5, or, as the word signifies, the feverish fit, or violent passion of burning desire, which boileth within, through all the members of the body without.

There is a divine art in the exercise of chastity, and no small skill required to keep a man's soul and body free from fleshly uncleanness; in order to which, inordinate desires must be resisted, the outward senses guarded, enticing and ensnaring objects avoided, wanton company declined, meat, drink, and sleep, soberly used, our lawful callings diligently followed, the first motions to uncleanness suppressed, prayer to God renewed; and, if these prevail not, marriage, God's special remedy, holily made use of. Thus may Christians possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, not in the lusts of concupiscence.

4 that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in
sanctification and honor;
5 not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know
not God:
6 that no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because
that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned
you and testified.

It is expressed in these words: That you should abstain from fornication (1Th 4:3), by which we are to understand all uncleanness whatsoever, either in a married or unmarried state. Adultery is of course included, though fornication is particularly mentioned. And other sorts of uncleanness are also forbidden, of which it is a shame even to speak, though they are done by too many in secret. All that is contrary to chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour, is contrary to the command of God in the decalogue, and contrary to that holiness which the gospel requires.

2. There are several arguments to enforce this caution. As,

(1.) This branch of sanctification in particular is the will of God, 1Th 4:3. It is the will of God in general that we should be holy, because he that called us is holy, and because we are chosen unto salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit; and not only does God require holiness in the heart, but also purity in our bodies, and that we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, 2Co 7:1. Whenever the body is, as it ought to be, devoted to God, and dedicated and set apart for him, it should be kept clean and pure for his service; and, as chastity is one branch of our sanctification, so this is one thing which God commands in his law, and what his grace effects in all true believers.

(2.) This will be greatly for our honour: so much is plainly implied, 1Th 4:4. Whereas the contrary will be a great dishonour. And his reproach shall not be wiped away, Pr 6:33. The body is here called the vessel of the soul, which dwells therein (so 1Sa 21:5), and it must be kept pure from defiling lusts. Every one should be careful in this matter, as he values his own honour and will not be contemptible on this account, that his inferior appetites and passions gain not the ascendant, tyrannizing over his reason and conscience, and enslaving the superior faculties of his soul. What can be more dishonourable than for a rational soul to be enslaved by bodily affections and brutal appetites?

(3.) To indulge the lust of concupiscence is to live and act like heathens? Even as the Gentiles who know not God, 1Th 4:5. The Gentiles, and especially the Grecians, were commonly guilty of some sins of uncleanness which were not so evidently forbidden by the light of nature. But they did not know God, nor his mind and will, so well as Christians know, and should know, this his will, namely our sanctification in this branch of it. It is not so much to be wondered at, therefore, if the Gentiles indulge their fleshly appetites and lusts; but Christians should not walk as unconverted Gentiles, in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, &c. (1Pe 4:3), because those who are in Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.

(4.) The sin of uncleanness, especially adultery, is a great piece of injustice that God will be the avenger of; so we may understand those words, That no man go beyond or defraud his brother (1Th 4:6), in any matter--en to pragmati, in this matter of which the apostle is speaking in the preceding and following verses, namely, the sin of uncleanness. Some understand these words as a further warning and caution against injustice and oppression, all fraud and deceit in our dealings with men, which are certainly criminal, and contrary to the gospel. And Christians should not impose upon the ignorance and necessity of those they deal with, and so go beyond them, nor should they by equivocations or lying arts defraud them; and although this may be practised by some and lie long undiscovered, and so go unpunished among men, yet the righteous God will render a recompence. But the meaning may rather be to show the injustice and wrong that in many cases are done by the sin of uncleanness. Not only are fornication and other acts of uncleanness sins against his own body who commits them (1Co 6:18), not only are they very injurious to the sinner himself both in soul and body, but sometimes they are very injurious, and no less than defrauding, acts of injustice to others, particularly to those who are joined together in the marriage covenant and to their posterity. And, as this sin is of such a heinous nature, so it follows that God will be the avenger of it. Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, Heb 13:4. This the apostle had forewarned and testified by his gospel, which, as it contained exceedingly great and

precious promises, so also it revealed from heaven the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness among men, Ro 1:18.

(5.) The sin of uncleanness is contrary to the nature and design of our Christian calling: For God hath called us not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness, 1Th 4:7. The law of God forbids all impurity, and the gospel requires the greatest purity; it calls us from uncleanness unto holiness.

(6.) The contempt therefore of God's law and gospel is the contempt of God himself: He that despises despises God, not man only. Some might possibly make light of the precepts of purity and holiness, because they heard them from men like themselves; but the apostle lets them know that they were God's commands, and to violate them was no less than to despise God. He adds, God hath given Christians his Spirit, intimating that all sorts of uncleanness do in an especial manner grieve the Holy Spirit, and will provoke him to withdraw from us; and also the Holy Spirit is given unto us to arm us against these sins, and to help us to mortify these deeds of the body, that we may live, Ro 8:13.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

For ye yourselves are taught of God. The word here rendered "taught of God" θεοδιδακτοι occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is correctly translated, and must refer here to some direct teaching of God on their own hearts, for Paul speaks of their being so taught by him as to need no special precepts in the case. He probably refers to that influence exerted on them when they became Christians, by which they were led to love all who bear the Divine image. He calls this being "taught of God," not because it was of the nature of revelation or inspiration, but because it was, in fact, the teaching of God in this case, though it was secret and silent. God has many ways of teaching men. The lessons which we learn from his Providence are a part of his instructions. The same

is true of the decisions of our own consciences, and of the secret and silent influence of his Spirit on our hearts, disposing us to love what is lovely, and to do what ought to be done. In this manner all true Christians are taught to love those who bear the image of their Saviour. They feel that they are brethren; and such is their strong attachment to them, from the very nature of religion, that they do not need any express command of God to teach them to love them. It is one of the first--the elementary effects of religion on the soul, to lead us to love "the brethren;" and to do this is one of the evidences of piety about which there need be no danger of deceptions.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

The Thessalonians gave good evidence of their being taught of God by their love to the brethren in all Macedonia, 1Th 4:10. They not only loved those of their own city and society, or such as were near them and just of their own sentiments, but their love was extensive. And a true Christian's is so to all the saints, though distant from him in place, and differing from him in some opinions or practices of less moment.

2 The exhortation itself is to increase more and more in this great grace and duty of brotherly love, 1Th 4:10. Though these Thessalonians had in some sense no need of an exhortation to brotherly love, as if it were wholly wanting, yet they must be exhorted to pray for more, and labour for more. There are none on this side heaven who love in perfection. Those who are eminent in this or any other grace have need of increase therein as well as of perseverance unto the end.

II. Of quietness and industry in their callings.

Observe, 1 The apostle exhorts to these duties: that they should study to be quiet, 1Th 4:11. It is the most desirable thing to have a calm and quiet temper, and to be of a peaceable and quiet behaviour. This tends much to our own and others' happiness; and Christians should study how to be quiet. We should be ambitious

and industrious how to be calm and quiet in our minds, in patience to possess our own souls, and to be quiet towards others; or of a meek and mild, a gentle and peaceable disposition, not given to strife, contention, or division. Satan is very busy to disquiet us; and we have that in our own hearts that disposes us to be disquiet; therefore let us study to be quiet. It follows, Do your own business. When we go beyond this, we expose ourselves to a great deal of inquietude. Those who are busy-bodies, meddling in other men's matters, generally have but little quiet in their own minds and cause great disturbances among their neighbours; at least they seldom mind the other exhortation, to be diligent in their own calling, to work with their own hands; and yet this was what the apostle commanded them, and what is required of us also. Christianity does not discharge us from the work and duty of our particular callings, but teaches us to be diligent therein.

2 The exhortation is enforced with a double argument; namely,

(1.) So we shall live creditably. Thus we shall walk honestly, or decently and creditably, towards those that are without, 1Th 4:12. This will be to act as becomes the gospel, and will gain a good report from those that are strangers, yea, enemies to it. Note, It is a great ornament to religion when the professors of it are of meek and quiet spirits, diligent to do their own business, and not busy-bodies in other men's matters.

(2.) We shall live comfortably, and have lack of nothing, 1Th 4:12. People often by their slothfulness bring themselves into narrow circumstances, and reduce themselves to great straits, and are liable to many wants, when such as are diligent in their own business live comfortably and have lack of nothing. They are not burdensome to their friends, nor scandalous to strangers. They earn their own bread, and have the greatest pleasure in so doing.

11 and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

12 that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

But I would not have you to be ignorant. I would have you fully informed on the important subject which is here referred to. It is quite probable from this, that some erroneous views prevailed among them in reference to the condition of those who were dead, which tended to prevent their enjoying the full consolation which they might otherwise have done. Of the prevalence of these views, it is probable the apostle had been informed by Timothy on his return from Thessalonica, 1Thes 3:6. What they were we are not distinctly informed, and can only gather from the allusions which Paul makes to them, or from the opposite doctrines which he states, and which are evidently designed to correct those which prevailed among them. From these statements, it would appear that they supposed that those who had died, though they were true Christians, would be deprived of some important advantages which those would possess who should survive to the coming of the Lord. There seems some reason to suppose, as Koppe conjectures, (comp. also Saurin, Serra. vol. vi. 1,) that the cause of their grief was two-fold: one that some among them doubted whether there would be any resurrection, (comp. 1 Cor xv. 12,) and that they supposed that they who had died were thus cut off from the hope of eternal happiness, so as to leave their surviving friends to sorrow "as those who had no hope;" the other, that some of them believed that, though those who were dead would indeed rise again, yet it would be long after those who were living when the Lord Jesus would return had been taken to glory, and would always be in a condition inferior to them. See Koppe, in loc. The effect of such opinions as these can be readily imagined. It would be to deprive them of the consolation which they might have had, and should have had, in the loss of their pious friends. They would either mourn over them as wholly cut off from hope, or would sorrow that they were to be deprived of the highest privileges which could result from redemption. It is not to be regarded as wonderful that such views should have prevailed in Thessalonica. There were

those even at Corinth who wholly denied the doctrine of the resurrection, (1Cor 15:12;) and we are to remember that those to whom the apostle now wrote, had been recently converted from heathenism; that they had enjoyed his preaching but a short time; that they had few or no books on the subject of religion; and that they were surrounded by those who had no faith in the doctrine of the resurrection at all, and who were doubtless able--as skeptical philosophers often are now--to urge their objections to the doctrines in such a way as greatly to perplex Christians. The apostle, therefore, felt the importance of stating the exact truth on the subject, that they might not have unnecessary sorrow, and that their unavoidable grief for their departed friends might not be aggravated by painful apprehensions about their future condition.

That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. That is, evidently, as the heathen who had no hope of future life. Comp. Eph 2:12. Their sorrow was caused not only by the fact that their friends were removed from them by death, but from the fact that they had no evidence that their souls were immortal; or that, if they still lived, that they were happy; or that their bodies would rise again. Hence, when they buried them, they buried their hopes in the grave; and so far as they had any evidence, they were never to see them again. Their grief at parting was not mitigated by the belief that the soul was now happy, or by the prospect of again being with them in a better world. It was on this account, in part, that the heathens indulged in expressions of such excessive grief. When their friends died, they hired men to play in a mournful manner on a pipe or trumpet, or women to howl and lament in a dismal manner. They beat their breasts; uttered loud shrieks; rent their garments; tore off their hair; cast dust on their heads, or sat down in ashes. It is not improbable that some among the Thessalonians, on the death of their pious friends, kept up these expressions of excessive sorrow. To prevent this, and to mitigate their sorrow, the apostle refers them to the bright hopes which Christianity had revealed, and points them to the future glorious re-union with the departed pious dead.

Learn hence, (1.) that the world without religion is destitute of hope. It is just as true of the heathen world now as it was of the ancient pagans, that they have no hope of a future state. They have no evidence that there is any such future state of blessedness; and without such evidence there can be no hope. Comp. Eph 2:12.

(2.) That the excessive sorrow of the children of this world, when they lose a friend is not to be wondered at. They bury their bones in the grave. They part, for all that they know or believe, with such a friend for ever. The wife, the son, the daughter, they consign to silence--to decay --to dust, not expecting to meet them again. They look forward to no glorious resurrection, when that body shall rise, and when they shall be re-united to part no more. It is no wonder that they weep--for who would not weep when he believes that he parts with his friends for ever?

(3.) It is only the hope of future blessedness that can mitigate this sorrow. Religion reveals a brighter world --a world where all the pious shall be reunited; where the bonds of love shall be made stronger than they were here; where they shall never be severed again. It is only this hope that can soothe the pains of grief at parting; only when we can look forward to a better world, and feel that we shall see them again-- love them again --love them for ever, that our tears are made dry.

(4.) The Christian, therefore, when he loses a Christian friend, should not sorrow as others do. He will feel, indeed, as keenly as they do, the loss of their society; the absence of their well known faces; the want of the sweet voice of friendship and love; for religion does not blunt the sensibility of the soul, or make the heart unfeeling. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus; and religion does not prevent the warm gushing expressions of sorrow when God comes into a family and removes a friend. But this sorrow should not be like that of the world. It should not be

(a.) such as arises from the feeling that there is to be no future union;

(b.) it should not be accompanied with repining or complaining;

(c.) it should not be excessive, or beyond that which God designs that we should feel. It should be calm, submissive, patient; it should be that which is connected with steady confidence in God; and it should be mitigated by the hope of a future glorious union in heaven. The eye of the weeper should look up through his tears to God. The heart of the sufferer should acquiesce in him, even in the unsearchable mysteries of his dealings, and feel that all is right.

(5.) It is a sad thing to die without hope--so to die as to have no hope for ourselves, and to leave none to our surviving friends that we are happy. Such is the condition of the whole heathen world; and such the state of those who die in Christian lands, who have no evidence that their peace is made with God. As I love my friends, my father, my mother, my wife, my children, I would not have them go forth and weep over my grave as those who have no hope in my death. I would have their sorrow for my departure alleviated by the belief that my soul is happy with my God, even when they commit my cold clay to the dust; and were there no other reason for being a Christian, this would be worth all the effort which it requires to become one. It would demonstrate the unspeakable value of religion, that my living friends may go forth to my grave, and be comforted in their sorrows with the assurance that my soul is already in glory, and that my body will rise again! No eulogium for talents, accomplishments, or learning; no paens of praise for eloquence, beauty, or martial deeds; no remembrances of wealth and worldly greatness, would then so meet the desires which my heart cherishes, as to have them enabled, when standing around my open grave, to sing the song which only Christians can sing:--
Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb, Take this new treasure to thy trust; And give these sacred relics room To seek a slumber in the dust. Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear Invade thy bounds. No mortal woes Can reach the peaceful sleeper here, While angels watch the soft repose. So Jesus slept: God's dying Son Pass'd thro' the grave, and bless'd the bed Rest here, bless saint, till from his throne; The morning break, and pierce the shade. Break from his throne, illustrious morn: Attend, O Earth, his sovereign word;

Restore thy trust--a glorious form-- Call'd to ascend, and meet the Lord. //WATTS//.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Will God bring with him. This does not mean that God will bring them with him from heaven when the Saviour comes--though it will be true that their spirits will descend with the Saviour; but it means that he will bring them from their graves, and will conduct them with him to glory, to be with him. Comp. Jn 14:3. The declaration, as it seems to me, is designed to teach the general truth, that the redeemed are so united with Christ, that they shall share the same destiny as he does. As the head was raised, so will all the members be. As God brought Christ from the grave, so will he bring them; that is, his resurrection made it certain that they would rise. It is a great and universal truth that God will bring all from their graves who "sleep in Jesus;" or that they shall all rise. The apostle does not, therefore, refer so much to the time when this would occur--meaning that it would happen when the Lord Jesus should return--as to the fact that there was an established connection between him and his people, which made it certain that if they died united with him by faith, they would be as certainly brought from the grave as he was. If, however, it means, as Prof. Bush (Anastasis, pp. 266, 267) supposes, that they will be brought with him from heaven, or will accompany him down, it does not prove that there must have been a previous resurrection, for the full force of the language would be met by the supposition that their spirits had ascended to heaven. and would be brought with him to be united to their bodies when raised. If this be the correct interpretation, then there is probably an allusion to such passages as the following, representing the coming of the Lord accompanied by his saints. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee," Zech 14:6. "And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints," Jude 1:14. "Who," says Pres. Dwight, (Serra. 164,) "are those whom God will bring with him at this time? Certainly not the bodies of his saints .... The only answer is, he will bring with him "the spirits of just men made perfect."

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord. By the command, or inspired teaching of the Lord. Prof. Bush (Anastasis, p. 265) supposes that the apostle here alludes to what the Saviour says in Mt 24:30,31. "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." etc. It is possible that Paul may have designed a general allusion to all that the Lord had said about his coming, but there cannot have been an exclusive reference to that passage, for in what he says here there are several circumstances mentioned to which the Saviour in Matthew does not allude. The probability, therefore, is, that Paul means that the Lord Jesus had made a special communication to him on the subject.

Shall not prevent them which are asleep. Shall not precede; anticipate; go before. The word prevent with us is now commonly used in the sense of hinder, but this is never its meaning in the Scriptures. The word, in the time of the translators of the Bible, was used in its primitive and proper sense (proevenio,) meaning to precede, or anticipate. Job 3:12, "Why did the knees prevent me?" That is, why did they anticipate me, so that I did not perish. Ps 79:8, "Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us;" that is, go before us in danger. Ps 119:147, "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried ;" that is, I anticipated it, or I prayed before the morning dawned. Mt 17:26, "Jesus prevented him, saying;" that is, Jesus anticipated him; he commenced speaking before Peter had told him what he had said. Comp. Ps 17:13, 59:10 Ps 88:13, 95:2, 2Sam 22:6,19, Job 30:27, 41:11. The meaning here is, that they who would be alive at the coming of the Lord Jesus, would not be 'changed' and received up into glory before those who were in there graves were raised up.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians-5

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.
2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.
3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.
4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.
5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.
6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

In this passage, there is an allusion to the fact that persons not only sleep in the night, but that they are frequently drunken in the night also. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, when he comes, will find the wicked sunk not only in carnal security, but in sinful indulgences; and that those who are Christians ought not only to be awake and to watch as in the daytime, but to be temperate. They ought to be like persons engaged in the sober, honest, and appropriate employments of the day, and not like those who waste their days in sleep, and their nights in revelry. A man who expects soon to see the Son of God coming to judgment, ought to be a sober man. No one would wish to be summoned from a scene of dissipation to his bar. And who would wish to be called there from the ball-room; from the theatre; from the scene of brilliant worldly amusement? The most gay votary of the world; the most accomplished, and flattered, and joyous patron of the ball-room; the most richly-dressed and admired daughter of vanity, would tremble at the thought of being summoned from those brilliant halls, where pleasure is now found, to the judgment-bar. They would wish to have at least a little time that they might prepare for so solemn a scene. But if so, as this event may at any moment occur, why should they not be habitually sober-minded? Why should they not aim to be always in that state of mind

which they know would be appropriate to meet him? Especially should Christians live with such vigilance and soberness as to be always prepared to meet the Son of God. What Christian can think it appropriate for him to go up to meet his Saviour from the theatre, the ballroom, or the brilliant worldly party? A Christian ought always so to live, that the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven would not excite the least alarm.

The apostle having acquainted the Thessalonians with the privilege of their converted state, that they were the children of the light, having received a light of knowlege, a light of grace and holiness, and a light of joy and comfort from the gospel, he comes next to infer the duties proper and suitable to persons in such a state:
First, negative, Let us not sleep, as do others; sleep is not proper for the day, but the night; the sleep here intended, is the sleep of sin, and of sinful security, whereby all the spiritual senses of a man are bound up, so that he is both unapprehensive of his duty, and regardless of his danger.

Secondly, positive, Let us watch and be sober; that is, let us be always ready and prepared for Christ's coming; and that we may be so, let us be found in the daily exercise of sobriety, at no time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day overtake us unawares; the exercise of these two graces, watchfulness and sobriety, do best together, and can hardly be separated one from another; he that is not sober, cannot be watchful; and he that is not watchful, can never be ready for Christ's coming: let us therefore (says the apostle) watch, and be sober.

Observe next, our apostle subjoins a reason to enforce his exhortation to watchfulness and sobriety, because sleep and drunkenness are works of darkness, performed in the night, and not suitable for the childeren of the day: They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunken in the night. The old heathens had their Bacchanalia, their drunken feast in the night; and in the apostles time, drunkenness was so shameful a vice, that men were ashamed to be seen drunken in the daytime: But, Lord, to what a height of impudence is the intemperance of our age arrived, when

Christians blush not to do that at mid-day, which heathens were ashamed of at midnight!

Observe farther, another reason suggested why we should be thus sober and watchful, namely, because our life is a spiritual warfare: 'Tis now a time of fighting, therefore not of sleeping, and intemperate eating and drinking; soldiers must be upon their guard and well-armed; accordingly St. Paul directs to the two principal pieces of spiritual armour, to guard the most noble and vital parts, namely, the head and the heart; the helmet for the head, the breast-plate for the heart; for these two being the chief fountains of life and sensation, the preserving of them safe is, in effect, the preserving of the whole man; and accordingly, the soldiers that were upon their watch, and kept sentinel, never stood without their helmet and breast-plate. In allusion to which, our apostle here directs us, as Christian soldiers, to put on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation, without which we can never be rightly and duly prepared for our spiritual warfare.

Note here, of what admirable use, faith, love, and hope, are to a Christian; faith fortifies against destructive temptations, love will preserve from apostacy and revolting, and hope will be of universal use unto us in the exercises of our Christian course; it will be a cordial to comfort us, a spur to quicken us, a staff to support us, a bridle to restrain us, a helmet to defend us: Therefore let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

A reason enforcing the apostle's exhortation to holiness of life, For, or because God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ.

Note here, 1. What a Christian is not appointed to; he is not appointed to wrath.

2. What he is appointed to, namely, to obtain salvation.

3. The means by whom a Christian doth obtain salvation, and that is by our Lord Jesus Christ.
Learn, hence, that God's ordination and appointment of us to happiness and salvation, doth not discharge us from care and endeavour after the practice of universal holiness; it is the greatest piece of folly imaginable, from the appointment of the end, to infer the refusal or neglect of the means.

Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus is the person appointed by God the Father, by whom alone all believers shall obtain salvation.

Learn, 3. That nothing short of the death of Christ was sufficient to purchase salvation for us, we obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Learn, 4. That the great end designed by Christ in dying for us, was our living to him, in order to our living with him; a life of grace on earth, is our evidence for a life of glory in heaven; whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Observe lastly, the great and important duty which he exhorts the Thessalonians to perform mutually to each other, and that is, to comfort themselves together with this hope, and to edify and build up one another in faith and holiness; wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, as also ye do; implying, that as it is the duty, so it ought to be the endeavour of Christians to edify one another, both in their graces, and in their comforts.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another,
even as also ye do.

Paul Exhorts the Brethren

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among
you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;
13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be
at peace among yourselves.
14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort
the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.

Now we exhort you, brethren. Marg., beseech. This earnest entreaty is evidently addressed to the whole church, and not to the ministers of the gospel only. The duties here enjoined are such as appertain to all Christians in their appropriate spheres, and should not be left to be performed by ministers only. Warn them. The same word which in 1Thes 5:12 is rendered admonish. It is the duty of every church member, as well as of the ministers of the gospel, affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject. They suppose that it is the duty only of the officers of the church to admonish an erring brother, and hence many become careless and cold and worldly, and no one utters a kind word to them to recall them to a holy walk with God.

That are unruly. Marg., disorderly. The word here used (ατακτος) is one which properly means not keeping the ranks, as of soldiers; and then irregular, confused, neglectful of duty, disorderly. The reference here is to the members of the church who were irregular in their Christian walk. It is not difficult, in an army, when soldiers get out of the line, or leave their places in the ranks, or are thrown into confusion, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state of irregularity and confusion. As little difficult is it, when the members of a church are out of their places, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state. Many a church is like an army where half the soldiers are out of the line; where there is entire insubordination in the ranks, and where not half of them could be depended on for efficient service in a campaign. Indeed, an army

would accomplish little, if as large a proportion of it were irregular, idle, remiss, or pursuing their own aims to the neglect of the public interest, as there are members of the church who can never be depended on in accomplishing the great purpose for which it was organized.

Comfort the feeble-minded. The dispirited; the disheartened; the downcast. To do this is also the duty of each church member. There are almost always those who are in this condition, and it is not easy to appreciate the value of a kind word to one in that state, Christians are assailed by temptation; in making efforts to do good they are opposed and become disheartened; in their contests with their spiritual foes they are almost overcome; they walk through shades of spiritual night, and find no comfort. In such circumstances, how consoling is the voice of a friend! How comforting is it to feel that they are not alone! How supporting to be addressed by one who has had the same conflicts, and has triumphed! Every Christian--especially every one who has been long in the service of his Master--has a fund of experience which is the property of the church, and which may be of incalculable value to those who are struggling now amidst many embarrassments along the Christian way. He who has that experience should help a weak and sinking brother; he should make his own experience of the efficacy of religion in his trials and conflicts, the means of sustaining others in their struggles. There is no one who would not reach out his hand to save a child borne down a rapid stream; yet how often do experienced and strong men in the Christian faith pass by those who are struggling in the "deep waters, where the proud waves have come over their souls!" By these are intended the timorous and faint-hearted, or such as are dejected and of a sorrowful spirit. Some are cowardly, afraid of difficulties, and disheartened at the thoughts of hazards, and losses, and afflictions; now such should be encouraged; we should not despise them, but comfort them; and who knows what good a kind and comfortable word may do them?

To support the weak, 1Th 5:14. Some are not well able to perform their work, nor bear up under their burdens; we should therefore support them, help their infirmities, and lift at one end of the burden,

and so help to bear it. It is the grace of God, indeed, that must strengthen and support such; but we should tell them of that grace, and endeavour to minister of that grace to them. 5. To be patient towards all men, 1Th 5:14. We must bear and forbear. We must be long-suffering, and suppress our anger, if it begin to rise upon the apprehension of affronts or injuries; at least we must not fail to moderate our anger: and this duty must be exercised towards all men, good and bad, high and low. We must not be high in our expectations and demands, nor harsh in our resentments, nor hard in our impositions, but endeavour to make the best we can of every thing, and think the best we can of every body.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man;* but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men.*

See that none render evil for evil. Mt 5:39,44. The meaning here is, that we are not to take vengeance. Comp. Rom 12:17, Rom 12:19. This law is positive, and is universally binding. The moment we feel ourselves acting from a desire to "return evil for evil," that moment we are acting wrong. It may be right to defend our lives, and the lives of our friends; to seek the protection of the law for our persons, reputation, or property, against those who would wrong us; to repel the assaults of calumniators and slanderers; but in no case should the motive be to do them wrong for the evil which they have done us. But ever follow that which is good. Which is benevolent, kind, just, generous. Rom 12:20, Rom 12:21. Both among yourselves, and to all men. The phrase "to all men," seems to have been added to avoid the possibility of misconstruction. Some might possibly suppose that this was a good rule to be observed towards those of their own number, but that a greater latitude in avenging injuries might be allowable towards their enemies out of the church. The apostle, therefore, says that the rule is universal. It relates to the heathen, to infidels, sceptics, and persecutors, as well as to the members of the church. To every man we are to do good as we are able--no matter what they do to us. This is the rule which God himself observes toward the evil and unthankful, (Mt 5:45,) and is one of the original and beautiful laws of our holy religion.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

Pray without ceasing. Rom 12:12. The direction here may be fairly construed as meaning

(1.) that we are to be regular and constant in the observance of the stated seasons of prayer. We are to observe the duty of prayer in the closet, in the family, and in the assembly convened to call on the name of the Lord. We are not to allow this duty to be interrupted or intermitted by any trifling cause. We are so to act that it may be said we pray regularly in the closet, in the family, and at the usual seasons when the church prays to which we belong.

(2.) We are to maintain an uninterrupted and constant spirit of prayer. We are to be in such a frame of mind as to be ready to pray publicly if requested; and when alone, to improve any moment of leisure which we may have when we feel ourselves strongly inclined to pray. That Christian is in a bad state of mind who has suffered himself, by attention to worldly cares, or by light conversation, or by gayety and vanity, or by reading an improper book, or by eating or drinking too much, or by late hours at night among the thoughtless and the vain, to be brought into such a condition that he cannot engage in prayer with proper feelings. There has been evil done to the soul if it be not prepared for communion with God at all times, and if it would not find pleasure in approaching his holy throne.

We can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. So we may praise God for everything that happens to us under his government. A man owes a debt of obligation to him for anything which will recall him from his wanderings, and which will prepare him for heaven. Are there any dealings of God towards men which do not contemplate such an end? Is a man ever made to drink the cup of affliction when no drop of mercy is intermingled? Is he ever visited with calamity which does not in some way contemplate his own temporal or eternal good? Could we see all, we should see that we are never placed in circumstances in which there is not much for which we should thank God. And when, in his dealings, a cloud seems to cover his face, let

us remember the good things without number which we have received, and especially remember that we are in the world of redeeming love, and we shall find enough for which to be thankful. For this is the will of God. That is, that you should be grateful. This is what God is pleased to require you to perform in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the gift of that Saviour he has laid the foundation for that claim, and he requires that you should not be unmindful of the obligation. Heb 13:15.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

Quench not the Spirit. This language is taken from the way of putting out a fire; and the sense is, we are not to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; Possibly there may be an allusion here to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. For it is this Spirit of grace and supplication that helpeth our infirmities, that assisteth us in our prayers and thanksgivings. Christians are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He worketh as fire, by enlightening, enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. We must be careful not to quench this holy fire. This fire may have been regarded as emblematic of devotion, and as denoting that that devotion was never to become extinct. The Holy Spirit is the source of true devotion, and hence the enkindlings of piety in the heart, by the Spirit, are never to be quenched. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or by covering it with any incombustible substance; or by neglecting to supply fuel. If it is to be made to burn, it must be nourished with proper care and attention. The Holy Spirit, in his influences on the soul, is here compared with fire that might be made to burn more intensely, or that might be extinguished. In a similar manner the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up (αναζωπυρειν, kindle up, cause to burn) the gift of God,"2Ti 1:6. Anything that will tend to damp the ardour of piety in the soul; to chill our feelings; to render us cold and lifeless in the service of God, may be regarded as "quenching the Spirit." Neglect of cultivating the Christian graces, or of prayer, of the Bible, of the sanctuary, of a careful watchfulness over the heart, will do it. Worldliness, vanity, levity, ambition, pride, the love of dress, or indulgence in an improper train of

thought, will do it. It is a great rule in religion that all the piety which there is in the soul is the fair result of culture. A man has no more religion than he intends to have; he has no graces of the Spirit which he does not seek; he has no deadness to the world which is not the object of his sincere desire, and which he does not aim to have. Any one, if he will, may make elevated attainments in the divine life; or he may make his religion merely a religion of form, and know little of its power and its consolations.

That it must be a Christian's special care, that the graces of God's Holy Spirit be not quenched in him, nor any of its motions resisted by him. Sin in general quenches the Spirit, as water quenches fire: particularly, sins committed against knowledge and conscience; inordinate love of the world quenches the Spirit, as earth will extinguish fire as well as water.

A cold, customary, formal performance of holy duties, without the exercise of lively faith and holy love in the performance of them, will grieve and quench the Spirit, expecially sensual lusts indulged, and anger, malice, and revenge harboured in the heart: the holy Dove will not rest upon that man that has the heart of a vulture in his breast and bosom; and let us always remember,if we quench the Spirit in his motions, he is also quenched by us in his offices; he doth us many good offices; in prayer, he is our helper, our assistant, he quickens to the duty, and in the duty, and helps our infirmities, and makes intercession for us in our Christian course; he guides us, comforts us and bears witness to our integrity in us: all these good offices will he cease to do for us, if he be quenched in us.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

How close this duty is coupled with the former. Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings; plainly intimating to us, that the Spirit is then dangerously quenched, when prophesying, or the preaching of the word, is sinfully neglected.

Note, 2. That by prophesying here, is not meant foretelling things to come, but the interpretation and application of the holy Scriptures, which we call preaching.

Note, 3. That by not despising it, we are to understand, that it is our obliged duty to put a high value and esteem upon it, to attend to it, and have a great regard for it, to honour the public ministry as an ordinance of God for instruction, conversion, and edification.

Learn, that it is not sufficient that we do not slight the ordinance of preaching, nor declaim against it as vain and useless, (as the manner of some is,) but we are to have an honourable esteem of it, and evidence that esteem by a due attendance upon it: more is intended by the Holy Ghost than is here expressed; for though he only forbids the sins, he intends the duty or grace in strict opposition to the sin, namely, that Christians ought to be so far from despising, that they ought to be very foreward in embracing the ministry and preaching of the word; despise not prophesyings.

We must not despise preaching, though it be plain, and not with enticing words of men's wisdom, and though we be told no more than what we knew before. It is useful, and many times needful, to have our minds stirred up, our affections and resolutions excited, to those things that we knew before to be our interest and our duty.

Despise not prophesyings. On the subject of prophesyings in the early Christian church, 1Cor 14:1, seq. The reference here seems to be to preaching. They were not to undervalue it in comparison with other things. It is possible that in Thessalonica, as appears to have been the case subsequently in Corinth, (comp. 1Cor 14:19, there were those who regarded the power of working miracles, or of speaking in unknown tongues, as a much more eminent endowment than that of stating the truths of religion in language easily understood. It would not be unnatural that comparisons should be made between these two classes of endowments, much to the disadvantage of the latter; and hence may have arisen this solemn caution not to disregard or despise the ability to make known divine truth in intelligible language. A similar counsel may not be inapplicable to us now. The office of setting forth the truth of God is to be the permanent office in the church; that of speaking foreign languages by miraculous endowment, was to be temporary. But the

office of addressing mankind on the great duties of religion, and of publishing salvation, is to be God's great ordinance for converting the world. It should not be despised, and no man commends his own wisdom who contemns it--for

(1.) it is God's appointment--the means which he has designated for saving men.

(2.) There is nothing else that has so much power over mankind as the preaching of the gospel: there is no other institution of heaven or earth, among men, that is destined to exert so wide and permanent an influence as the Christian ministry. (3.) It is an influence which is wholly good. No man is made the poorer, or the less respectable, or more miserable in life or in death, by following the counsels of a minister of Christ when he makes known the gospel.

(4.) He who despises it contemns that which is designed to promote his own welfare, and which is indispensable for his salvation. It remains yet to be shown that any man has promoted his own happiness, or the welfare of his family, by affecting to treat with contempt the instructions of the Christian ministry.

Observe here, 1. The persons to whom this advice is given: to the church of the Thessalonians, not to the ministers, but to the people, Know them that labour among you, &c. 1Thess 5:12

Observe, 2. The advice itself, Prove all things; examine, try, and approve them, with a judgment of private discretion, not of public decision.

Learn, 1. That it is the duty of all Christians to examine the grounds of their faith and religion, and not to take them upon trust; otherwise their embracing the best religion in the world is rather the result of chance than of judgment and choice.

Learn, 2. That although all doctrines and opinions must be tried: yet, only that which is good, must be retained.

Learn, 3. That nothing is to be held fast, but what is first tried: Suppose we hold that which is good, yet if we have not tried and proved it to be good, it is no better to us than that which is evil; to approve before trial is not good, though the thing approved be never so good.

Inference, That this is a strong argument for the perspicuity and sufficiency of the holy scriptures, and against the necessity of a living Judge; for he that must try all things, must also try the doctrine of this living Judge; and therefore, till he has made this trial, must not admit his doctrine as an article of Christian faith; for these words plainly teach, that what we hold fast must be first tried; Try all things, and hold fast that which is good.

Prove all things. Subject everything submitted to you to be believed to the proper test. The word here used (δοκιμαζετε,) is one that is properly applicable to metals, referring to the art of the assayer by which the true nature and value of the metal is tested. 1Cor 3:13. This trial was usually made by fire. The meaning here is, that they were carefully to examine everything proposed for their belief. They were not to receive it on trust; to take it on assertion; to believe it because it was urged with vehemence, zeal, or plausibility. In the various opinions and doctrines which were submitted to them for adoption, they were to apply the appropriate tests from reason and the word of God; and what they found to be true they were to embrace; what was false they were to reject. Christianity does not require men to disregard their reason, or to be credulous. It does not expect them to believe anything because others say it is so. It does not make it a duty to receive as undoubted truth all that synods and councils have decreed; or all that is advanced by the ministers of religion. It is, more than any other form of religion, the friend of free inquiry, and would lead men everywhere to understand the reason of the opinions which they entertain. Comp. Acts 17:11,12, 1Pet 3:15. Hold fast that which is good. Which is in accordance with reason and the word of God; which is adapted to promote the salvation of the soul and the welfare of society. This is just as much a duty as it is to "prove all things." A man who has applied the proper

tests, and has found out what is truth, is bound to embrace it and to hold it fast. He is not at liberty to throw it away, as if it were valueless; or to treat truth and falsehood alike. It is a duty which he owes to himself and to God, to adhere to it firmly, and to suffer the loss of all things rather than to abandon it. There are few more important rules in the New Testament than the one in this passage. It shows what is the true nature of Christianity, and it is a rule whose practical value cannot but be felt constantly in our lives. Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine everything. Error, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands. In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine everything--no matter by whom held; by what councils ordained; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be invested. We are to receive no opinion: until we are convinced that it is true; we are to be subjected to no pains or penalties for not believing what we do not perceive to be true; we are to be prohibited from examining no opinion which our fellow-men regard as true, and which they seek to make others believe. No popular current in favour of any doctrine; no influence which name and rank and learning can give it, is to commend it to us as certainly worthy of our belief. By whomsoever held, we are to examine it freely before we embrace it; but when we are convinced that it is true, it is to be held, no matter what current or popular opinion or prejudice may be against it; no matter what ridicule may be poured upon it; and no matter though the belief of it may require us to die a martyr's death.

And proving all things must be in order to holding fast that which is good. We must not always be seekers, or fluctuating in our minds, like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

This advice genuinely follows upon the former; after we have tried all things, we must hold fast that which is good, and abstain from evil.

Where note, the gradation used by our apostle, we must abstain from evil, from all evil, from all appearance of evil.

Abstain from all appearance of evil. Not only from evil itself, but from that which seems to be wrong. There are many things which are known to be wrong. They are positively forbidden by the laws of heaven, and the world concurs in the sentiment that they are wicked. But there are also many things about which there may be some reasonable doubt. It is not quite easy to determine in the case what is right or wrong. The subject has not been fully examined, or the question of its morality may be so difficult to settle, that the mind may be nearly or quite balanced in regard to it There are many things which, in themselves, may not appear to us to be positively wrong, but winch are so considered by large and respectable portions of the community; and for us to do them would be regarded as inconsistent and improper. There are many things, also, in respect to which there is great variety of sentiment among mankind--where one portion would regard them as proper, and another as improper. There are things, also, where, whatever may be our motive, we may be certain that our conduct will be regarded as improper. A great variety of subjects, such as those pertaining to dress, amusements, the opera, the ball-room, games of chance and hazard, and various practices in the transaction of business, come under this general class; which, though on the supposition that they cannot be proved to be in themselves positively wrong or forbidden, have much the "appearance" of evil, and will be so interpreted by others. The safe and proper rule is to lean always to the side of virtue. In these instances, it may be certain that there will be no sin committed by abstaining; there may be by indulgence. No command of God, or of propriety, will be violated if we decline complying with these customs; but, on the other hand, we may wound the cause of religion by yielding to what possibly is a mere temptation. No one ever does injury or wrong by abstaining from the pleasures of the ball-room, the theatre, or a glass of wine; who can indulge in them, without, in the view of large and respectable portions of the community, doing that which has the "appearance" at least "of evil ?"

This is a good means to prevent our being deceived with false doctrines, or unsettled in our faith; for our Saviour has told us (Joh 7:17), If a man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. Corrupt affections indulged in the heart, and evil practices allowed of in the life, will greatly tend to promote fatal errors in the mind; whereas purity of heart, and integrity of life, will dispose men to receive the truth in the love of it. We should therefore abstain from evil, and all appearances of evil, from sin, and that which looks like sin, leads to it, and borders upon it. He who is not shy of the appearances of sin, who shuns not the occasions of sin, and who avoids not the temptations and approaches to sin, will not long abstain from the actual commission of sin.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.

Final Greetings and Benediction

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27 I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians
[2 Thessalonians]

2 Thessalonians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy,
Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Judgment at Christ's Coming

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;
4 so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:
5 *which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

the endurance of affliction, in a proper manner, by the righteous, is a proof that there will be a righteous judgment of God in the last day.

(1.) It is evidence that there will be a future judgment--since the righteous here suffer so much, and the wicked triumph.

(2.) These things are now permitted in order that the character may be developed, and that the reason of the sentence in the last day may be seen.

(3.) The manner in which these afflictions are borne is an evidence--an indication (ενδειγμα) of what the results of the judgment will be. The word rendered "manifest token," (ενδειγμα,) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means an indication, token, proof, anything that shows, or points out, how a thing is, or is to be, (from ενδεικνυμι, to show, to point out.) The meaning here is, therefore, that the course of events referred to--the persecutions which they endured, and the manner in which they were borne--furnished a proof that there would be a righteous judgment, and also afforded an indication of what the result of that judgment would be. We may, in general, learn what will be the issues of the judgment in the case of an individual from the manner in which he bears trials.

Of the righteous judgment of God. That there will be a just judgment hereafter. The crimes of the wicked who go unpunished on the earth, and the sufferings of the good who are unavenged, are a demonstration that there will be a judgment, when all these inequalities will be adjusted.

That ye may be counted worthy. As the result of your affliction, that you may be fitted for the kingdom of God. This does not mean that Christians will merit heaven by their sufferings, but that they may show that they have such a character that there is a fitness or propriety that they should be admitted there. They may evince, by their patience and resignation, by their deadness to the world, and their holy lives, that they are not disqualified to enter into that kingdom where the redeemed are to dwell. No true Christian will ever feel that he is worthy on his own account, or that he has any claim to eternal life; yet he may have evidence that he has the characteristics to which God has promised salvation, and is fitted to dwell in heaven.

6 seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. The sense is, "There will be a future judgment, because it is proper that God should punish those who now persecute you. It is not right that they should go unpunished,

and triumph for ever. It is not an arbitrary thing, a thing which is indifferent; a thing which may or may not be done; it is a just and proper thing that the wicked should be punished." The doctrine is, that the future punishment of the wicked is just and proper; and that, being just and proper, it will be inflicted. Many suppose that there would be no justice in the eternal punishment of the wicked; that the threatening of that punishment is wholly arbitrary; that it might easily be dispensed with; and that, because it is unjust, it will not be inflicted, and need not be dreaded. But that it is just and proper, a very slight degree of reflection must show. For

(1.) it is inconceivable that God should threaten such punishment unless it were just How can it be reconciled with his perfections that he can hold up before mankind the assurance that any of them will be punished for ever, unless it be right that it should be so? Can we believe that he deliberately threatens what is wrong, or that in the face of the universe, he publicly declares his intention to do what is wrong?

(2.) Men themselves believe that it is just that the wicked should be punished. They are constantly making laws, and affixing penalties to them, and executing them, under the belief that it is right. Can they regard it as wrong in God to do the same thing? Can that be wrong in him which is right in themselves?

(3.) If it be right to punish wickedness here, it is not wrong to punish it in the future world. There is nothing in the two places which can change the nature of what is done. If it be right for God to visit the sinner here with the tokens of his displeasure, there is nothing which can make it wrong to visit him in like manner in the future world. Why should that be wrong in another world which is right and proper in this?

(4.) It will be a righteous thing for God to punish the wicked in a future state, for they are not always punished here as they deserve. No one can seriously maintain that there is an equal distribution of rewards and punishments on the earth. Many a man goes to the grave having received no adequate punishment for his crimes. Many a

murderer, pirate, robber, traitor, and plunderer of nations under the name of a conqueror thus dies. No one can doubt that it would be a "just" thing to punish them here if they could be arrested. Why should it be any the less "just" to punish them when they enter another world? In like manner, many a man lives a life of profligacy; or is an open scoffer; or aims to cast off the government of God; or is a seducer of innocence; and yet lives ill the midst of wealth, and goes down in calmness and. peace to the grave. Ps 73:3-5; Job 21:23-33. Why is it not "just" that such an one should be punished in the future world? Comp. Ps 73:16-20. But, if it be right that God should punish the wicked in the future world, it will be done. For

(1.) there is nothing to hinder him from doing it. He has all power, and has all necessary means of inflicting punishment, entirely at his disposal.

(2.) It would not be right not to do it. It is not right for a magistrate to treat the righteous and the wicked alike, or to show that he has as much regard to the one as to the other.

(3.) It cannot be believed that God has uttered a threatening which he never meant to execute, or to appear before the universe as having held up before men the terror of the most awful punishment which could be inflicted, but which he never intended to carry into effect. Who could have confidence in such a Being? Who could know what to believe when he makes the most solemn declaration?

(4.) The Judge of all the earth will "do right;" and if it be right to declare that "the wicked shall be turned into hell," it will not be wrong to inflict the sentence. And if, on the whole, it be right that the sinner should be punished, it will be done.

7 and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall
be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and
that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
9 who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the
presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction. Mt 25:41,46. The word which is here rendered destruction (ολεθρον,) is different from that which occurs in Mt 25:46, and which is there rendered punishment κολασις. The word ολεθρον --occurs only here and in 1Cor 5:5, 1Thes 5:8, 1Timm 6:9; in each of which places it is rendered destruction. It does not denote annihilation, but is used in the same sense in which we use the word when we say that a thing is destroyed. Thus health is destroyed when it fails; property is destroyed when it is burned, or sunk in the ocean; a limb is-destroyed that is lost in battle; life is destroyed when one dies. In the case before us, the destruction, whatever it be, is

(1.) to be continued for ever; and

(2.) is to be of the nature of punishment. The meaning then must be, that the soul is destroyed as to the great purposes of its being with enjoyment, dignity, honour, holiness, happiness. It will not be annihilated, but will live and linger on in destruction. It seems difficult to conceive how any one can profess to hold that this passage is a part of the word of God, and yet deny the doctrine of future eternal punishment. It would not be possible to state that doctrine in clearer language than this. It never is stated in clearer language in any creed or confession of faith; and if it be not true that the wicked will be punished for ever, it must be admitted that it would not have been possible to reveal the doctrine in human language. From the presence of the Lord. That is, a part of their punishment will consist in being banished from the immediate presence of the Lord. There is a sense in which God is everywhere present, and in that sense he will be in the world where the wicked will dwell, to punish them. But the phrase is also used to denote his more immediate presence; the place where are the symbols of his majesty and glory; the home of the holy and the blessed. It is in that sense that the word is used here; and the idea is, that it will be one of the circumstances contributing to the deeper woe of the place of punishment, that those who dwell there will be banished from that holy abode, and will never be permitted to enter there. And from the glory of his power. The meaning seems to be, that they will not be able to endure the manifestation of his power and majesty when he

shall appear, but will be driven away by it into outer darkness. See 2Thes 2:8. The Saviour, in describing his Second Advent, uses this language: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," Mt 24:30. There will be a great exhibition of both. The power will be seen in the convulsions of nature, which will precede or attend him; in the resurrection of the dead; and in the bringing of all to judgment. And the glory will be seen in his own person; the dignity and number of his attendants; and the honour that shall then be conferred on him as the final Judge of all mankind. By the manifestation of that power and glory the wicked will be driven away into eternal ruin. They will not be able to stand before it, and though, in common with the righteous, they may see the majesty of the Redeemer in the last day, yet they will be driven away to witness it no more.

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints. That is, the redeemed in that day will be the means of promoting his glory, or the universe will see his glory manifested in their redemption. His chief glory, as seen in that day, will be connected with the fact that he has redeemed his people; and he will come in order that all the appropriate honour of such a work may then be manifested, he will be "glorified" then by the numbers that shall have been redeemed; by their patience in the trials through which they have passed; by the triumphs which religion shall have made on the earth; by their praises and songs; and by their ascent with him to the realms of blessedness. And to be admired in all them that believe.This may either mean that he will be admired among or by them that believe; or that the ground of the admiration which he will receive in that day will be what will be seen in them; that is, their graces, their numbers, their joys, their triumphs will be the occasion of producing admiration of him for he will be regarded as the source of it all. Tindal renders it, "and to be made marvellous in all them that believe." The latter interpretation seems to me to be the correct one. The general idea is, that Christ in that day will be manifested in a glorious manner, and that the source of his highest triumphs will be what is seen in the saints. His main honour, when he returns to the world, will not be the outward splendours which will attend his coming, nor the angels that will accompany him, nor the

manifestation of his power over the elements, but the church which he has redeemed. It will then be seen that he is worthy of universal admiration, for having redeemed that church, lie shall then be admired or glorified in his people,

(1.) for having conceived the plan of redeeming them;

(2.) for being willing to become incarnate, and to die to save them;

(3.) for the defence of his church in all its persecutions and trials;

(4.) for raising his people from the dead;

(5.) for the virtues and graces which they will exhibit in that day. This appropriate honour of Christ in the church has never yet been fully seen. His people on earth have, in general, most imperfectly reflected his image. They have in general been comparatively few in number, and scattered upon the earth. They have been poor and despised. Often they have been persecuted, and regarded as the "filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things." The honours of this world, have been withheld from them. The great have regarded it as no honour to be identified with the church, and the proud have been ashamed to be enrolled among the followers of the Lamb. In the last day all this will be changed, and the assembled church will show to admiring worlds how great and glorious is its Redeemer, and how glorious was the work of redemption. Because our testimony among you was believed. The meaning of this seems to be, that they would be among the number of those who would in that day honour the Saviour, because they had embraced what the apostle had preached to them respecting these future scenes. Thus interpreted, this clause should be regarded as connected with 1Thes 1:7, "And to you it is a righteous thing that he should give rest with us, because our testimony among you was believed." That is, you have shown that you are true Christians, and it is proper that you should partake of the triumphs and hopes of that day.

10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired
in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was
believed) in that day.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power:
12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness. That is, make the work of salvation complete and effectual. Oldshausen has well expressed the sense: "May God fill you with all that good which is pleasing to him." The thoughts in the passage are,

(1.) that the purpose towards them on the part of God was one of "goodness" or benevolence;

(2.) that there was a state of mind which would be regarded by him as pleasing, or as his "good pleasure ;" and

(3.) that Paul wished that this might be accomplished in them. desired that there might be in them everything which would be pleasing to God, and which his benevolence was fitted to secure.

2 Thessalonians-2

The Revealing of the Man of Sin

Study it attentively, repeatedly and slowly

This chapter is very important in reference to the rise of that great antichristian power which has exerted, and which still exerts so baleful an influence over the Christian world. Assuming now that it refers to the Papacy, in accordance with the exposition which has been given, there are a few important reflections to which it gives rise.

(1.) The Second Advent of the Redeemer is an event which is distinctly predicted in the Scriptures. This is assumed in this chapter;

and though Paul corrects some errors into which the Thessalonians had fallen, he does not suggest this as one of them. Their error was in regard to the time of his appearing; not the fact.

(2.) The time when he will appear is not made known to men. The apostles did not pretend to designate it, nor did the Saviour himself, Mt 24:36, Mk 13:32, Acts 1:7.

(3.) The course of reasoning in this chapter would lead to the expectation that a considerable time would elapse before the Saviour would appear. The apostles, therefore, did not believe that the end of the world was near, and they did not teach false doctrine on the subject, as infidels have often alleged. No one, who attentively and candidly studies this chapter, it seems to me, can suppose that Paul believed that the Second Advent of the Saviour would occur within a short time, or during the generation when he lived. He has described a long series of events which were to intervene before the Saviour would appear--events which, if the interpretation which has been given is correct, have been in fact in a process of developement from that time to the present, and which, it must have been foreseen, even then, would require a long period before they would be completed. There was to be a great apostasy. There were, at that time, subtle causes at work which would lead to it. They were, however, then held in check and restrained by some foreign influence. But the time would come, when that foreign power would be withdrawn. Then these now hidden and restrained corruptions would develope themselves into this great antichristian power. That power would sustain itself by a series of pretended miracles and lying wonders; and, after all this, would be the second coming of the Son of man. But this would require time. Such a series of events would not be completed in a day, or in a single generation. They would require a succession--perhaps a long succession--of years, before these developements would be complete. It is clear, therefore, that the apostle did not hold that the Lord Jesus would return in that age, and that he did not mean to be understood as teaching it; and consequently it should not be said that he or his fellow-apostles were mistaken in the statements which they have recorded respecting the second coming of the Lord Jesus and the end of the world.

(4.) The apostle Paul was inspired. He has recorded in this chapter a distinct prediction of an important series of events which were to occur at a future, and most of them at quite a remote period. They were such that they could have been foreseen by no natural sagacity, and no human skill. There were, indeed, corruptions existing then in the church, but no mere natural sagacity could have foreseen that they would grow up into that enormous system which would overshadow the Christian world, and live for so many ages.

(5.) If these predictions referred to the Papacy, we may see how we are to regard that system of religion. The simple inquiry, if this interpretation is correct, is, How did the apostle Paul regard that system to which he referred? Did he consider it to be the true church? Did he regard it as a church at all? The language which he uses will enable us easily to answer these questions. He speaks of it as "the apostasy;" he speaks of the head of that system as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the wicked one," and as "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God;" he says that his "coming is after the working of Satan, with lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." Can it be believed, then, that he regarded this as a true church of Jesus Christ? Are these the characteristics of the church as laid down elsewhere in the Scriptures ? Wherever it may lead, it seems clear me that the apostle did not regard that system of which he spoke as having any of the marks of a true church; and the only question which can be raised on this point is, whether the fair interpretation of the passage demands that it shall be considered as referring to the Papacy. Protestants believe that it must be so understood; and Papists have not yet disproved the reasons which they allege for their belief.

(6.) If this be the fair interpretation, then we may see what is the value of the pretended "succession" of the ministry through that system. If such a regular "succession" of ministers from the apostles could be made out, what would it be worth? What is the value of a spiritual descent from pope Alexander VI.? How would it increase the proper respect for the ministerial office, if it could be proved to be derived in a right line from those monsters of incest, ambition, covetousness,

and blood, who have occupied the Papal throne? A Protestant minister should blush and hang his head if it were charged on him that he held his office by no better title than such a derivation. Much less should he make it a matter of glorying, and an argument to prove that he only is an authorized minister, that he has received his office through such men.

(7.) From this chapter we may see the tendency of human nature to degeneracy. The elements of that great and corrupt apostasy existed even in apostolic times. Those elements grew regularly up into the system of the Papacy, and spread blighting and death over the whole Christian world. It is the tendency of human nature to corrupt the best things The Christian church was put in possession of a pure, and lovely and glorious system of religion. It was a religion adapted to elevate and save the race. There was not an interest of humanity which it would not have fostered and promoted; there was not a source of human sorrow which it would not have mitigated or relieved; there were none of the race whom it would not have elevated and purified. Its influence, as far as it was seen, was uniformly of the happiest kind. It did no injury anywhere, but produced only good. But how soon was it voluntarily exchanged for the worst florin of superstition and error that has ever brooded in darkness over mankind! How soon did the light fade, and how rapidly did it become more obscure, until it well-nigh went out altogether! And with what tenacity did the world adhere to the system that grew up under the great apostasy, maintaining it by learning, and power, and laws, and dungeons, and racks, and fagots! What a comment is this on human nature, thus "loving darkness more than light," and error rather than truth!

(8.) The chapter teaches the importance of resisting error at the beginning. These errors had their foundation in the time of the apostles. They were then comparatively small, and perhaps to many they appeared unimportant; and yet the whole Papal system was just the developement of errors, the germs of which existed in their days. Had these been crushed, as Paul wished to crush them, the church might have been saved from the corruption, and woes, and persecutions produced by the Papacy. So error now should always be

opposed--no matter how small or unimportant it may appear. We have no right to connive at it; to patronise it; to smile upon it. The beginnings of evil are always to be resisted with firmness; and if that is done, the triumph of truth will be certain.

(9.) The church is safe. It has now passed through every conceivable form of trial, and still survives, and is now more vigorous and flourishing than it ever was before. It has passed through fiery times of persecution; survived the attempts of emperors and kings to destroy it; and lived while the system of error described here by the apostle Paul has thrown its baleful shade over almost the whole Christian world. It cannot reasonably be supposed that it will be called to pass through such trials again as it has already endured; but whether it does or not, the past history of the church is a guarantee that it will survive all that it is destined to encounter. None but a religion of Divine origin could have continued to live amidst so many corruptions, and so many attempts to destroy it; and in the view of the past history of that church, it is impossible not to come to the conclusion that it has been founded by God himself.

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

We must take heed of false prophets, especially in this matter, who go about to deceive, and that for the most part, after three sorts: for either they brag of fake prophetical revelations, or they bring conjectures and reasons of their own, or use counterfeit writings.

(b) By dreams and fables, which men pretend to be spiritual revelations.

(c) Either by word of mouth, or by written books.

(d) Either by forged letter, or falsely commented upon.

Nor by one who claims to quote a word or letter from us. It is thought that a forged letter had been circulated to which Paul alludes. In the close of this Epistle he shows how his letters may be known to be

genuine. Some suppose, however, that by "letter" he refers to an incorrect interpretation which was placed on his first letter.

Note here, 1. The error which the apostle disproves, namely that the day of Christ, that is, the day of judgment, was then at hand, to come in a few years; which was very true with respect to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, but not as the final judgment.
Learn hence, That the time of Christ's coming to judgment must be patiently expected, but not postively determined.

Note, 2. The effect which this error might produce, namely, trouble and unsettledness of mind: That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled: implying,

(1.) That errors breed trouble and disquietude of mind.

(2.) That Christians should be so established, and have such constancy of mind, that they should not be easily shaken and moved from the faith.

Note, 3. A removal of all the supposed foundations of this error, or the means which these imposters used to entice the Thessalonians to embrace it; and they are three, namely, spirit, word, and letter; Not by spirit, that is, be not shaken in mind by any pretence of spiritual or divine revelation; nor by word, by any pretended message or word from us; nor by letter, that is, nor by any thing contained in our former epistle, or in any spurious and counterfeit writings, passing under the apostle's name: mentioning as if Christ should come in that age wherein they loved. We need not wonder that St. Paul is so careful to obviate this error of the present coming and appearance of Christ, because, should the Thessalonians have depended upon it, and found themselves deceived in their expectation of it, it might have caused great trouble to them, and even shaken their steadfastness in faith.

That ye be not soon shaken in mind. The word here used signifies, properly, to be moved as a wave of the sea, or to be tossed upon the waves, as a vessel is. Then it means to be shaken in any way. See Mt

11:7, 24:29, Lk 6:38, Acts 4:31, Heb 12:26. The reference here is to the agitation or alarm felt from the belief that the day of judgment would soon occur. It is uniformly said in the Scriptures, that the approach of the Lord Jesus to judge the world, will produce a great consternation and alarm. Mt 24:30, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." Rev 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Lk 23:30, "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." Comp. Isa 2:21,22. Of the truth of this, there can be no doubt. We may imagine something of the effects which will be produced by the alarm caused in a community when a belief prevails that the day of judgment is near. It is easy to account for such facts; and no doubt, when the Lord Jesus shall actually come, the effect on the guilty world will be overwhelming. The apostle here says, also, that those who were Christians were "shaken in mind and troubled" by this anticipation. There are, doubtless, many true Christians who would be alarmed at such an event, as there are many who, like Hezekiah, Isa 38:1,2, are alarmed at the prospect of death. Many real Christians might, on the sudden occurrence of such an event, feel that they were not prepared, and be alarmed at the prospect of passing through the great trial which is to determine their everlasting destiny. It is no certain evidence of a want of piety to be alarmed at the approach of death. Our nature dreads death, and though there may be a well-founded hope of heaven, it will not always preserve a delicate physical frame from trembling when it comes. As from us, Perhaps this would be found in the fact that it was not uncommon in the early times of Christianity to attempt to impose forged writings on the churches. Nothing would be more natural for an impostor who wished to acquire influence, than to do this; and that it was often done is well known.

2 that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by
spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ
is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*,
except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be
revealed, the son of perdition;

Let no man deceive you by any means. That is, respecting the coming of the Lord Jesus. This implies that there were then attempts to deceive, and that it was of great importance for Christians to be on their guard. The result has shown that there is almost no subject on which caution is more proper, and on which men are more liable to delusion. The means then resorted to for deception appear, from the previous verse, to have been either an appeal to a pretended verbal message from the apostle, or a pretended letter from him. The means now, consist of a claim to uncommon wisdom in the interpretation of obscure prophecies of the Scriptures. The necessity for the caution here given has not ceased.

For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first. Until all apostasy αποστασια shall have occurred--the great apostasy. There is scarcely any passage of the New Testament which has given occasion to greater diversity of opinion than this. Though the reference seems to be plain, and there is scarcely any prophecy of the Bible apparently more obvious and easy in its general interpretation; yet it is proper to mention some of the opinions which have been entertained of it. Some have referred it to a great apostasy from the Christian church, particularly on account of persecution, which would occur before the destruction of Jerusalem. The "coming of the Lord" they suppose refers to the destruction of the holy city; and, according to this, the meaning is, that there would be a great apostasy before that event would take place. Of this opinion was Vitringa, who refers the" apostasy to a great defection from the faith which took place between the time of Nero and Trajan. Whitby also refers it to an event which was to take place before the destruction of Jerusalem, and supposes that the apostasy would consist in a return from the Christian to the Jewish faith by multitudes of professed converts. The "man of sin," according to him, means the Jewish nation, so characterized on account of its eminent wickedness. Hammond explains the apostasy by the defection to the Gnostics, by the arts of Simon Magus, whom he supposes to be the man of sin; and by the "day of the Lord" he also understands the destruction of Jerusalem. Grotius takes Gaius Caesar, or Caligula, to be the man of sin, and by the apostasy he

understands his abominable wickedness. In the beginning of his government, he says, his plans of iniquity were concealed, and the hopes of all were excited in regard to his reign; but his secret iniquity was subsequently "revealed," and his true character understood. Wetstein understands by the "man of sin, Titus and the Flavian house." He says that he does not understand it of the Roman Pontiff, who "is not one such as the demonstrative pronoun thrice repeated designates, and who neither sits in the temple of God, nor calls himself God; nor Caius, or Simon Gioriac, nor any Jewish impostor, nor Simon Magus." Koppe refers it to the king mentioned in Dan 11:36. According to him, the reference is to a great apostasy of the Jews from the worship of God, and the "man of sin" is the Jewish people. Others have supposed that the reference is to Mohammed, and that the main characteristics of the prophecy may be found in him. Of the Papists, a part affirm that the apostasy is the falling away from Rome in the time of the Reformation; but the greater portion suppose that the allusion is to Antichrist, who, they say, will appear in the world before the great day of judgment, to combat religion and the saints. See these opinions stated at length, and examined, in Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Diss. xxii. Some more recent expositors have referred it to Napoleon Bonaparte; and some (as Oldshausen) suppose that it refers to some one who has not yet appeared, in whom all the characteristics here specified will be found united. Most Protestant commentators have referred it to the great apostasy under the Papacy; and by the "man of sin," they suppose there is allusion to the Roman Pontiff the Pope. It is evident that we are in better circumstances to understand the passage than those were who immediately succeeded the apostles. Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the epistle was written, and the "day of the Lord" has not yet come, and we have an opportunity of inquiring, whether in all that long tract of time any one man can be found, or any series of men have arisen, to whom the description here given is applicable. If so, it is in accordance with all the proper rules of interpreting prophecy, to make such an application. If it be fairly applicable to the Papacy, and cannot be applied in its great features to anything else, it is proper to regard it as having such an original reference. Happily, the expressions which are used by the apostle are, in themselves, not difficult of interpretation, and all that

the expositor has to do is, to ascertain whether in any one great apostasy all the things here mentioned have occurred. If so, it is fair to apply the prophecy to such an event; if not so, we must wait still for its fulfilment. The word rendered "falling away," (αποστασια, apostasy) of so general a character, that it may be applied to any departure from the faith as it was received in the time of the apostles It occurs in the New Testament only here and in Acts 21:21, where it is rendered "to forsake"--" thou teachest all the Jews which are among us to forsake Moses"-- apostasy from Moses-- αποστασιαναπομωσεως. The word means a departing from, or a defection. See the verb used in 1Timm 4:1, "Some shall depart from the faith"--αποστησοςται. 1Timm 4:1. See also Heb 3:12, Lk 8:13, Acts 5:37. The reference here is evidently to some general falling away, or to some great religious apostasy that was to occur, and which would be under one head, leader, or dynasty, and which would involve many in the same departure from the faith, and in the same destruction. The use of the article here, "the apostasy," (Gr.,) Erasmus remarks, "signifies that great and before-predicted apostasy." It is evidently emphatic, showing that there had been a reference to this before, or that they understood well that there was to be such an apostasy. Paul says 2Thes 2:5, that when he was with them, he had told them of these things. The writers in the New Testament often speak of such a defection under the name of Antichrist. Rev 13:14, 1Jn 2:18,22, 4:3, 2Jn 1:7.

And that man of sin. This is a Hebraism, meaning a man of eminent wickedness; one distinguished for depravity. Comp. Jn 17:12; Prov 6:12, in Heb. The use of the article here-- οανθρωπος --"the man of sin," is also emphatic, as in the reference to "the falling away," and shows that there is allusion to one of whom they had before heard, and whose character was well known; who would be the wicked one by way of eminence. See also 2Thes 2:8, "that wicked" οανομος. There are two general questions in regard to the proper interpretation of this appellative: the one is whether it refers to an individual, or to a series of individuals of the same general character, aiming at the accomplishment of the same plans; and the other is, whether there has been any individual, or any series of individuals,

since the time of the apostle, who, by eminence, deserved to be called "the man of sin." That the phrase, "the man of sin," may refer to a succession of men of the same general character, and that it does so refer here, is evident from the following considerations: (1.) The word "king" is used in Dan 7:25, 11:36, to which places Paul seems to allude, to denote a succession of kings. (2.) The same is true of the beast mentioned in Daniel Chapters 7, 8. Rev 13., representing a kingdom or empire through its successive changes and revolutions. (3.) The same is true of the "woman arrayed in purple and scarlet," (Rev 17:4,) which cannot refer to a single woman, but is the emblem of a continued corrupt administration. (4.) It is clear that a succession is intended here, because the work assigned to "the man of sin," cannot be supposed to be that which could be accomplished by a single individual. The statement of the apostle is, that there were then tendencies to such an apostasy, and that "the man of sin" would be revealed at no distant period, and yet that he would continue his work of "lying wonders" until the coming of the Saviour. In regard to this "man of sin," it may be further observed, (1.) that his appearing was to be preceded by "the great apostasy;? and (2.) that he was to continue and perpetuate it. His rise was to be owing to a great departure from the faith, and then he was to be the principal agent in continuing it by "signs and lying wonders." He was not himself to originate the defection, but was to be the creation, or result of it. He was to rise upon it, or grow out of it, and, by artful arrangements adapted to that purpose, was to perpetuate it. The question then is, to whom this phrase, descriptive of a succession of individuals so eminent for wickedness that: the name "the man of sin" could be applied, was designed by the Spirit of inspiration to refer. Bishop Newton has shown that it cannot refer to Caligula, to Simon Magus, to the revolt of the Jews from the Romans, or to the revolt of the Jews from the faith, or to the Flavian family, or to Luther, as some of the Papists suppose, or to one man who will appear just before the end of the world, as others of the Romanists suppose. See his Dissertations on the Prophecies, xxii. pp. 393--402. Comp. Oldshansen, in loc. The argument is too long to be inserted here. But can it be referred to the Papacy? Can it denote the pope of Rome, meaning not a single pope, but the succession? If all the circumstances of the entire passage can be shown to be fairly

applicable to him, or if it can be shown that all that is fairly implied in the language used here has received a fulfilment in him, then it is proper to regard it as having been designed to be so applied, and then this may be numbered among the prophecies that are in part fulfilled. The question now is on the applicability of the phrase "the man of sin" to the pope. That his rise was preceded by a great apostasy, or departure from the purity of the simple gospel, as revealed in the New Testament, cannot reasonably be doubted by any one acquainted with the history of the church. That he is the creation or result of that apostasy, is equally clear. That he is the grand agent in continuing it, is equally manifest. Is the phrase itself one that is properly applicable to him? Is it proper to speak of the pope of Rome, as he has actually appeared, as "the man of sin?" In reply to this, it might be sufficient to refer to the general character of the Papacy, and to its influence in upholding and perpetuating various forms of iniquity in the world. It would be easy to show that there has been no dynasty or system that has contributed so much to uphold and perpetuate sins of various kinds on the earth, as the Papacy. No other one has been so extensively and so long the patron of superstition; and there are vices of the grossest character which have all along been fostered, by its system of celibacy, indulgences, monasteries, and absolutions. But it would be a better illustration of the meaning of the phrase "man of sin," as applicable to the pope of Rome, to look at the general character of the popes themselves. Though there may have been some exceptions, yet there never has been a succession of men of so decidedly wicked character as have occupied the Papal throne since the great apostasy commenced.

Be revealed. Be made manifest. There were at the time when the apostle wrote, two remarkable things, (1.) that there was already a tendency to such an apostasy as he spoke of; and (2.) there was something which as yet prevented the appearance or the rise of the man of sin, 2Thes 2:7. When the hinderance which then existed should be taken out of the way, he would be manifested. 2Thes 2:7.

Unless the falling away - From the pure faith of the gospel, come first. This began even in the apostolic age. But the man of sin, the

son of perdition - Eminently so called, is not come yet. However, in many respects, the Pope has an indisputable claim to those titles. He is, in an emphatical sense, the man of sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled, the son of perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers, destroyed innumerable souls, and will himself perish everlastingly. He it is that opposeth himself to the emperor, once his rightful sovereign; and that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped - Commanding angels, and putting kings under his feet, both of whom are called gods in scripture; claiming the highest power, the highest honour; suffering himself, not once only, to be styled God or vice - god. Indeed no less is implied in his ordinary title, "Most Holy Lord," or, "Most Holy Father." So that he sitteth - Enthroned. In the temple of God - Mentioned Rev 11:1. Declaring himself that he is God - Claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone.

As if the apostle had said, "Let no man deceive you in this article of your faith, by any pretence whatsoever; for before Christ's coming there shall come a great falling away from the catholic faith, and by that means the man of sin will be revealed, who is the son of perdition:"--

Note here, 1. Such a proneness there is in the nature and mind of man to embrace and entertain error, when once vented, that there is need of repeated dissuasives from it, and to guard persons against the poison and infatuation of it. Let no man deceive you by any means.

Note, 2. A general apostasy or defection of the visible church from the faith of Christianity, must be before Christ's coming to judgment; Except there come a falling away first. It is foretold as a thing that would certainly come to pass.

Note, 3. The revelation of Antichrist declared, That man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition; where by the man of sin, understand not a particular individual person, but a society and succession of men, such as is found in and amongst the papacy,

where the sodomy, blasphemy, incest, adultries, sorceries, murders, treasons, which are not only committed, but countenanced; not only acted, but authorized; do most evidently declare that there never was such an apostasy from Christianity since it had a being in the world, as is found amongst them.

Note, 4. This man of sin is also styled the son of perdition.

(1.) Actively, a destroying son, one that brings others to destruction.

(2.) Passively, a son that shall be destroyed; Antichrist and all his adherents shall be destroyed, utterly destroyed, by Jesus Christ, and his kingdom shall perish without any hope of recovery; first destroying, and at last destroyed.

Where note, That our apostle at the first, the very first, mentioning Antichrist, doth declare his destiny; at his first rising he declares his fall and ruin. That man of sin, the son of perdition.

by any means—Greek, "in any manner." Christ, in Mt 24:4, gives the same warning in connection with the same event. He had indicated three ways (2Th 2:2) in which they might be deceived (compare other ways, 2Th 2:9, and Mt 24:5, 24). a falling away—rather as the Greek, "the falling away," or "apostasy," namely, the one of which "I told you" before (2Th 2:5), "when I was yet with you," and of which the Lord gave some intimation (Mt 24:10-12; Joh 5:43). that man of sin be revealed—The Greek order is, "And there have been revealed the man of sin." As Christ was first in mystery, and afterwards revealed (1Ti 3:16), so Antichrist (the term used 1Jo 2:18; 4:3) is first in mystery, and afterwards shall be developed and revealed (2Th 2:7-9). As righteousness found its embodiment in Christ, "the Lord our righteousness," so "sin" shall have its embodiment in "the man of sin." The hindering power meanwhile restrains its manifestation; when that shall be removed, then this manifestation shall take place. The articles, "the apostasy," and "the man of sin," may also refer to their being well known as foretold in Da 7:8, 25, "the little horn speaking great words against the Most High, and thinking to change times and laws"; and Da

11:36, the wilful king who "shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods; neither shall he regard any god." the son of perdition—a title applied besides to Judas (the traitor, Joh 17:12), and to none else. Antichrist (the second "beast" coming up out of the earth); therefore he shall at first be "like a lamb, while he speaks as a dragon" (Re 13:11); "coming in peaceably and by flatteries," "working deceitfully," but "his heart shall be against the holy covenant" (Da 11:21, 23, 28, 30). Seeds of "the falling away" soon appear (1Ti 4:1-3), but the full development and concentration of these anti-Christian elements in one person are still to appear. Contrast the King of Zion's coming as JESUS:

(1) righteous or just;

(2) having salvation;

(3) lowly; whereas Antichrist is:

(1) "the man of (the embodiment of) sin;

(2) the son of perdition;

(3) exalting himself above all that is worshipped. He is the son of perdition, as consigning many to it, and finally doomed to it himself (Re 17:8, 11). "He whose essence and inheritance is perdition" [ALFORD]. As "the kingdom of heaven" is first brought before us in the abstract, then in the concrete, the King, the Lord Jesus; so here, first we have (2Th 2:7) "the mystery of iniquity," then "the iniquitous one" (2Th 2:8). Doubtless "the apostasy" of Romanism (the abstract) is one of the greatest instances of the working of the mystery of iniquity, and its blasphemous claims for the Pope (the concrete) are forerunners of the final concentration of blasphemy in the man of sin, who shall not merely, as the Pope, usurp God's honor as vicegerent of God, but oppose God openly at last.

4 who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Who opposeth. That is, he is distinguished as an opposer of the great system which God has revealed for human salvation, and of those who would serve God in purity in the gospel of his Son. No Protestant will doubt that this has been the character of the Papacy. The opposition of the general system to the gospel; the persecution of Wickliffe, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of the Waldenses and the Reformers; the Inquisition, the cruelties in the reign of Mary, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew in France, are obvious illustrations of this. And exalteth himself above all that is called God. That is, whether among the heathen or the Sews: above a false god, or the true God. This could be true only of one who set aside the Divine laws; who undertook to legislate where God only has a right to legislate, and whose legislation was contrary to that of God. Any claim of a dominion over conscience; or any arrangement to set aside the Divine laws, and to render them nugatory, would correspond with what is implied. in this description. It cannot be supposed that any one would openly claim to be superior to God; but the sense must be, that the enactments and ordinances of the "man of sin" would pertain to the province in which God only can legislate, and that the ordinances made by him would be such as to render nugatory the Divine laws, by appointing others in their place. he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; and thus have the bishops of Rome not only opposed God's authority, and that of the civil magistrates, who are called gods, but have exalted themselves above God and earthly governors, in demanding greater regard to their commands than to the commands of God or the magistrate. As God, he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now, so the antichrist here mentioned is some usurper of God's authority in the Christian church, who claims divine honours; and to whom can this better apply than to the bishops of Rome, to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given, as Dominus Deus noster papa--Our Lord God the pope; Deus alter in terrâ--Another God on earth; Idem est dominium Dei et papæ--The dominion of God and the pope is the same?No one can reasonably doubt that all that is here affirmed may be found in the claims of the pope of Rome. The assumptions of the Papacy have related to the following things:

(1.) To authority above all the inferior orders of the priesthood--above all pastors, bishops, and primates.

(2.) Authority above all kings and emperors, "deposing some, and advancing others, obliging them to prostrate themselves before him, to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, to wait barefooted at his gate, treading even upon the neck, and kicking off the imperial crown with his foot." Newton. Thus Gregory VII made Henry IV wait barefooted at his gate. Thus Alexander III trod upon the neck of Alexander I. Thus Celestin kicked off the imperial crown of Henry VI. Thus the right was claimed, and asserted, of laying nations under interdict, of deposing kings, and of absolving their subjects from their oaths of allegiance. And thus the pope claimed the right over all unknown lands that might be discovered by Columbus, and apportioned the New World as he pleased--in all these things claiming prerogatives which can appertain only to God.

(3.) To authority over the conscience, in matters which can pertain only to God himself, and where he only can legislate. Thus it has been, and is, one of the claims set up for the pope that he is infallible. Thus he "forbids what God has commanded," as the marriage of the clergy, communion in both kinds, the use of the Scriptures for the common people. Thus he has set aside the second commandment by the appointment of image-worship; and thus he claims the power of the remission of sins. Multitudes of things which Christ allows his people are forbidden by the Papacy, and many things are enjoined, or allowed, directly contrary to the Divine legislation.

Or that is worshipped. σεβασμα. This word means an object of worship. See Acts 18:23, where it is rendered devotions. It may be applied to the worship of a heathen divinity, or of the true God. "It may refer to a person, an idol, or a place. Probably Paul refers here to the heroes and other subordinate divinities of the heathen mythology." Oldshausen. No one can doubt that the pope has claimed higher honours, as the vicegerent of Christ, than was ever rendered in the ancient "hero worship." So that he, as God. That is, claiming the honours due to God. This expression would not imply

that he actually claimed to be the true God, but only that he sits in the temple, and manifests himself as if he were God. He claims such honours and such reverence as the true God would if he should appear in human form. It should be observed here, however, that there is much reason to doubt the genuineness of this phrase--"as God" ωςθεον. Mill supposes that it was inserted from the context. It is marked with an asterisk in the Vulgate, the Coptic, and the Syriac, and is omitted by many of the fathers. See Mill and Wetstein. It is rejected by Griesbach and Lachmann, and marked as doubtful by Hahn. It is defended, however, by Matthaei, Koppe, Knapp, and Schott. The sense is not materially affected whether it be regarded as genuine or not. Sitteth in the temple of God. That is, in the Christian church. It is by no means necessary to understand this of the temple at Jerusalem, which was standing at the time this epistle was written, for

(1.) the phrase "the temple of God" is several times used with reference to the Christian church, 2Cor 6:16, Eph 2:21, 1Cor 3:16,17, Rev 3:12; and

(2.) the temple was the proper symbol of the church, and an apostle trained amidst the Hebrew institutions would naturally speak of the church as the temple of God. The temple at Jerusalem was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God on earth. When the Christian church was founded, it was spoken of as the peculiar dwelling-place of God. See the passages referred to above. He dwelt among his people. He was with them, and walked with them, and manifested himself among them-- as he had done in the ancient temple. The usage in the New Testament would not lead us to restrict this language to an edifice, or a "church," as the word is now commonly used, but rather to suppose that it denotes the church as a society; and the idea is, that the Antichrist here referred to would present himself in the midst of that church as claiming the honours due to God alone. In the temple at Jerusalem, God himself presided. There he gave laws to his people; there he manifested himself as God; and there he was worshipped. The reign of the "man of sin" would be as if he should sit there. In the Christian church he would usurp the place which God had occupied in the temple. He would claim

Divine attributes and homage. He would give laws and responses as God did there. He would be regarded as the head of all ecclesiastical power; the source from which all authority emanated; the same in the Christian church which God himself was in the temple. This does not then refer primarily to the pope as sitting in any particular church on any particular occasion, but to his claiming in the church of Christ the authority and homage which God had in the temple at Jerusalem. In whatever place, whether in a cathedral or elsewhere, this authority should be exercised, all that the language here conveys would be fulfilled. No one can fail to see that the authority claimed by the pope of Rome, meets the full force of the language used here by the apostle. Showing himself that he is God. This does not necessarily mean that he actually, in so many words, claimed to be God; but that he usurped the place of God, and claimed the prerogatives of God. If the names of God are given to him, or are claimed by him; if he receives the honours due to God; if he asserts a dominion like that of God, then all that the language fairly implies will be fulfilled. The following expressions, applied to the pope of Rome by Catholic writers without any rebuke from the Papacy, will show how entirely applicable this is to the pretended head of the church. He has been styled "Our Lord God the Pope; another God upon earth: King of kings and Lord of lords. The same is the dominion of God and the Pope. To believe that our Lord God the Pope might not decree as he decreed, is heresy. The power of the Pope is greater than all created power, and extends itself to things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal. The Pope doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than God." See the authority for these extraordinary declarations in Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, xxii. How can it be doubted that the reference here is to the Papacy? Language could not be plainer, and it is not possible to conceive that anything can ever occur which would furnish a more manifest fulfilment of this prophecy. Indeed, interpreted by the claims of the Papacy, it stands among the very clearest of all the predictions in the sacred Scriptures.

Our apostle proceeds in the further description of this man of sin, by a two-fold note of distinction, namely, by his enmity and opposition, and by his dignity and exhaltation.

Observe, 1. His enmity and opposition; He opposeth himself, that is, against Christ, as his name Antichrist signifies, opposing him in his doctrine, in his offices, in his members; corrupting his doctrine, debasing his offices, persecuting his members.

Observe, 2. His dignity and exaltation, which consists of two parts, 1.He exhalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; that is, he exalteth himself above all magistrates, emperors, kings and princes, who are called gods, because representing his person, as his vicegerents, usurping a power over all civil authority, enthroning and dethroning princes at his pleasure.

Observe, 3. His arrogance is set forth, in relation to God himself, that as God he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. By the temple of God, understand the church of God, the external, visible church, which professeth the faith of Christ and bears his name; in this temple of God he sitteth as an officer or bishop: and sits as God, that is, as God upon earth, whom all must adore: kings kissing his feet, emperors holding his stirrup; and claiming the same power that Christ hath in and over the church, namely, an universal supremacy, an absolute authority, and an unerring infallibility.

And the usurped titles given to him declare that he sheweth himself that he is God; he is called supremum numen in terris; "the chief god upon earth;" and that from him it is affirmed, that no appeals are to be made, no, not to God himself; that he can change the sacraments delivered by Christ, and decree contrary to scripture. Now to accept of these flattering titles, and to pretend to such an unlimited power, is to shew himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

Da 11:36, 37 is here referred to. The words used there as to Antiochus Epiphanes, Paul implies, shall even be more applicable to the man of sin, who is the New Testament actual Antichrist, as Antiochus was the Old Testament typical Antichrist. The previous world kingdoms had each one extraordinary person as its

representative head and embodiment (thus Babylon had Nebuchadnezzar, Da 2:38, end; Medo-Persia had Cyrus; Greece had Alexander, and Antiochus Epiphanes, the forerunner of Antichrist); so the fourth and last world kingdom, under which we now live, shall have one final head, the concentrated embodiment of all the sin and lawless iniquity which have been in pagan and papal Rome. Rome's final phase will probably be an unholy alliance between idolatrous superstition and godless infidelity. Who opposeth and exalteth himself—There is but one Greek article to both participles, implying that the reason why he opposeth himself is in order that he may exalt himself above, &c. ALFORD takes the former clause absolutely, "He that withstands (CHRIST)," that is, Antichrist (1Jo 2:18). As at the conclusion of the Old Testament period, Israel apostate allied itself with the heathen world power against Jesus and His apostles (Lu 23:12; and at Thessalonica, Ac 17:5-9), and was in righteous retribution punished by the instrumentality of the world power itself (Jerusalem being destroyed by Rome), Da 9:26, 27; so the degenerate Church (become an "harlot"), allying itself with the godless world power (the "beast" of Revelation) against vital religion (that is, the harlot sitting on the beast), shall be judged by that world power which shall be finally embodied in Antichrist (Zec 13:8, 9; 14:2; Re 17:16, 17). In this early Epistle, the apostate Jewish Church as the harlot, and pagan Rome as the beast, form the historical background on which Paul draws his prophetic sketch of the apostasy. In the Pastoral Epistles, which were later, this prophecy appears in connection with Gnosticism, which had at that time infected the Church. The harlot (the apostate Church) is first to be judged by the beast (the world power) and its kings (Re 17:16); and afterwards the beasts and their allies (with the personal Antichrist at their head, who seems to rise after the judgment on the harlot, or apostate Church) shall be judged by the coming of Jesus Himself (Re 19:20). Anti-Christian tendencies produce different Antichrists: these separate Antichrists shall hereafter find their consummation in an individual exceeding them all in the intensity of his evil character [AUBERLEN]. But judgment soon overtakes him. He is necessarily a child of death, immediately after his ascent as the beast out of the bottomless pit going into perdition (Re 17:8, 11). Idolatry of self, spiritual pride, and rebellion against God, are

his characteristics; as Christ-worship, humility, and dependence on God, characterize Christianity. He not merely assumes Christ's character (as the "false Christs," Mt 24:24), but "opposes" Christ. The Greek implies one situated on an opposite side (compare 1Jo 2:22; 2Jo 7). One who, on the destruction of every religion, shall seek to establish his own throne, and for God's great truth, "God is man," to substitute his own lie, "Man is God" [TRENCH]. above all that is called God— (1Co 8:5). The Pope (for instance, Clement VI) has even commanded the angels to admit into Paradise, without the alleged pains of purgatory, certain souls. But still this is only a foreshadowing of the Antichrist, who will not, as the Pope, act in God's name, but against God. or that is worshipped—Rome here again gives a presage of Antichrist. The Greek is Sebasma; and Sebastus is the Greek for Augustus, who was worshipped as the secular ruler and divine vicegerent. The papacy has risen on the overthrow of Cæsar's power. Antichrist shall exalt himself above every object of worship, whether on earth as the Cæsar, or in heaven as God. The various prefigurations of Antichrist, Mohammed, Rome, Napoleon, and modern infidel secularism, contain only some, not all, his characteristics. It is the union of all in some one person that shall form the full Antichrist, as the union in one Person, Jesus, of all the types and prophecies constituted the full Christ [OLSHAUSEN]. in the temple of God . . . that he is God—"He will reign a time, times, and half a time" (Da 7:25), that is, three and a half years, and will sit in the temple at Jerusalem: then the Lord shall come from heaven and cast him into the take of fire and shall bring to the saints the times of their reigning, the seventh day of hallowed rest, and give to Abraham the promised inheritance" [IRENÆUS, Against Heresies, 30.4]. showing himself—with blasphemous and arrogant DISPLAY (compare a type, Ac 12:21-23). The earliest Fathers unanimously looked for a personal Antichrist. Two objections exist to Romanism being regarded the Antichrist, though probably Romanism will leave its culmination in him:

(1) So far is Romanism from opposing all that is called God, that adoration of gods and lords many (the Virgin Mary and saints) is a leading feature in it;

(2) the papacy has existed for more than twelve centuries, and yet Christ is not come, whereas the prophecy regards the final Antichrist as short-lived, and soon going to perdition through the coming of Christ (Re 17:8, 11). Gregory the Great declared against the patriarch of Constantinople, that whosoever should assume the title of "universal bishop" would be "the forerunner of Antichrist." The papacy fulfilled this his undesigned prophecy. The Pope has been called by his followers, "Our Lord God the Pope"; and at his inauguration in St. Peter's, seated in his chair upon the high altar, which is treated as his footstool, he has vividly foreshadowed him who "exalteth himself above all that is called God." An objection fatal to interpreting the temple of God here as the Church (1Co 3:16, 17; 6:19) is, the apostle would never designate the apostate anti-Christian Church "the temple of God." It is likely that, as Messiah was revealed among the Jews at Jerusalem, so Antimessiah shall appear among them when restored to their own land, and after they have rebuilt their temple at Jerusalem. Thus Da 11:41, 45 (see on Da 11:41; Da 11:45), corresponds, "He shall enter the glorious land (Judea), and he shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas in the glorious holy mountain"; and then (Da 12:1) "Michael, the great prince, shall stand up" to deliver God's people. Compare Note, see on Da 9:26, 27. Also the king of Assyria, type of Antichrist (Isa 14:12-14). "Lucifer" (a title of Messiah, assumed by Antichrist, Re 22:16); "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." "I will sit upon the mount of the congregation (that is, God's place of meeting His people of old, the temple), in the sides of the north (Ps 48:2); I will be like the Most High." Re 11:1, 2, "The temple of God . . . the holy city" (namely, Jerusalem, Mt 4:5), compare Ps 68:18, 29, referring to a period since Christ's ascension, therefore not yet fulfilled (Isa 2:1-3; Eze 40:1-44:31; Zec 14:16-20; Mal 3:1). "In the temple of God," implies that it an internal, not an external, enemy which shall assail the Church. Antichrist shall, the first three and a half years of the prophetical week, keep the covenant, then break it and usurp divine honors in the midst of the week. Some think Antichrist will be a Jew. At all events he will, "by flatteries," bring many, not only of the Gentiles, but also of "the tribes" of Israel (so the Greek for "kindreds," Re 11:8, 9), to own him as their long-

looked-for Messiah, in the same "city where our Lord was crucified." "Sitteth" here implies his occupying the place of power and majesty in opposition to Him who "sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3), and who shall come to "sit" there where the usurper had sat (Mt 26:64). See on Da 9:27; Re 11:2, 3, 9, 11. Compare Eze 38:2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, as to Tyre, the type of Antichrist, characterized by similar blasphemous arrogance.

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

And now ye know what withholdeth. Marg., holdeth. The reference is, to something that then operated to constrain or hold back the obvious tendency of things, so that "the man of sin" should not at once appear, or so that things should not soon so develope themselves as to give rise to this antichristian power. There were causes at work, even then, which would ultimately lead to this; but there was also something which checked the tendency of things, so that the revelation or development of the "man of sin" was put off to a future period. The obvious meaning of this would be, that, when the apostle wrote, there was a tendency to what would occur under the great apostasy, and that this would soon develope itself if it were not restrained. If the reference is to the Papacy, this would consist in corruptions already existing in the church, having a resemblance to those which afterwards existed under that system, or which were the germ of that system. If there were a tendency towards the concentration of all power in an individual in the church,--if there were an assumption of authority by one class of ministers above another,--if there were a denial of the "parity of the clergy," the tendency would have been to that ultimate assumption of authority which is found in the Romish hierarchy. But conjecture is useless as to what was the precise form in which this tendency then began to develope itself. That the corruptions early began in the church which terminated in the Papacy, and which led on directly to it, we know; and that the apostle was able to foresee and predict such a final development, shows that he was under the influence of inspiration. It is not known precisely what is referred to by the phrase "what with- holdeth," τοκατεχον. The phrase means, properly, something that holds back, or restrains. The word here is in the neuter gender, "What withholdeth." In the following verse it is in the masculine

gender, οκατεχων,-- "he that letteth", or withholdeth; and the reference would seem to be to some agency or state of things under the control of an individual, or of some civil power, that then operated as a restraint on the natural tendency of things. Of this, the apostle says, they had had full information; but we can only conjecture what it was. The restraining power of any thing controlled by an individual, or of any government, or the restraining power of God, would meet all that the phrase implies. The most natural interpretation is that which refers it to civil power, meaning that there was something in the form of the existing administration which would prevent this development until that restraint should be removed. The supposition that there was even then a tendency to concentrate all ecclesiastical power at Rome, and that while the civil authority remained there it would not suffer ecclesiastical power to grow to the exorbitant height which it ultimately reached, will meet all that is implied in the language. That he might be revealed in his time.

The man of sin. The meaning is, that there was then a restraint operating which would prevent the development of this antichristian power until the proper time; that is, till the state of the world should be such that in the Divine arrangements it would be proper to permit it. It was not to be permitted until the gospel should be extensively preached, and had had an opportunity of showing its fair effects on the nations; until it had become so planted and established that even the rise of this antichristian power could not effectually uproot it. Had the "man of sin" been permitted to rise at once, the consequence might have been that the new religion would have been crushed so that it could never have revived again. There was then a providential arrangement by which this growth of wickedness should be checked and restrained, until the new religion should take deep root in the earth, and its perpetuity should be secured. Then the great trial was to be permitted under the "man of sin."

His rise is mentioned, 2Th 2:6,7. Concerning this we are to observe two things:--

(1.) There was something that hindered or withheld, or let, until it was taken away. This is supposed to be the power of the Roman empire, which the apostle did not think fit to mention more plainly at that time; and it is notorious that, while this power continued, it prevented the advances of the bishops of Rome to that height of tyranny to which soon afterwards they arrived.

(2.) This mystery of iniquity was gradually to arrive at its height; and so it was in effect that the universal corruption of doctrine and worship in the Romish church came in by degrees, and the usurpation of the bishops of Rome was gradual, not all at once; and thus the mystery of iniquity did the more easily, and almost insensibly, prevail. The apostle justly calls it a mystery of iniquity, because wicked designs and actions were concealed under false shows and pretences, at least they were concealed from the common view and observation. By pretended devotion, superstition and idolatry were advanced; and, by a pretended zeal for God and his glory, bigotry and persecution were promoted. And he tells us that this mystery of iniquity did even then begin, or did already work. While the apostles were yet living, the enemy came, and sowed tares; there were then the deeds of the Nicolaitans, persons who pretended zeal for Christ, but really opposed him. Pride, ambition, and worldly interest of church-pastors and church-rulers, as in Diotrephes and others, were the early working of the mystery of iniquity, which, by degrees, came to that prodigious height which has been visible in the church of Rome.

now ye know—by my having told you. The power must have been one "known" to the Thessalonians. what withholdeth—that which holds him back; "keeps him in check": the power that has restrained the man of sin from his full and final development, is the moral and conservative influence of political states [OLSHAUSEN]: the fabric of human polity as a coercive power; as "he who now letteth" refers to those who rule that polity by which the great upbursting of godlessness is kept down [ALFORD]. The "what withholdeth" refers to the general hindrance; "he who now letteth," to the person in whom that hindrance is summed up. Romanism, as a forerunner of Antichrist, was thus kept in check by

the Romanemperor (the then representative of the coercive power) until Constantine, having removed the seat of empire to Constantinople, the Roman bishop by degrees first raised himself to precedency, then to primacy, and then to sole empire above the secular power. The historical fact from which Paul starts in his prediction was probably the emperor Claudius' expulsion of the Jews, the representative of the anti-Christian adversary in Paul's day, from Rome, thus "withholding" them in some degree in their attacks on Christianity; this suggested the principle holding good to the end of time, and about to find its final fulfilment in the removal of the withholding person or authority, whereupon Antichrist in his worst shape shall start up. that he might be—Greek, "in order that": ye know that which keeps him back, in God's purposes, from being sooner manifested, "in order that he may be revealed in his own time" (that is, the time appointed by God to him as his proper time for being manifested), not sooner (compare Da 11:35). The removal of the withholding power will be when the civil polity, derived from the Roman empire, which is to be, in its last form, divided into ten kingdoms (Re 17:3, 11-13), shall, with its leading representative head for the time being ("he who now letteth," Greek, "withholdeth," as in 2Th 2:6), yield to the prevalent godless "lawlessness" with "the lawless one" as its embodiment. The elect Church and the Spirit cannot well be, as DE BURGH suggests, the withholding power meant; for both shall never be wholly "taken out of the way" (Mt 28:20). However, the testimony of the elect Church, and the Spirit in her, are the great hindrance to the rise of the apostasy; and it is possible that, though the Lord shall have a faithful few even then, yet the full energy of the Spirit in the visible Church, counteracting the energy or "working" of "the mystery of lawlessness" by the testimony of the elect, shall have been so far "taken out of the way," or set aside, as to admit the manifestation of "the lawless one"; and so DE BURGH'S'S view may be right (Lu 18:8; Re 11:3-12). This was a power of which the Thessalonians might easily "know" through Paul's instruction.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

For the mystery of iniquity. On the meaning of the word mystery, Rom 11:25. Comp. 1Cor 2:7, Eph 1:9; Eph 3:3, Col 1:26. It means

properly that which is hidden or concealed; not necessarily that which is unintelligible. The "mystery of iniquity," seems here to refer to some hidden or concealed depravity-some form of sin which was working secretly and silently: and which had not yet developed itself. Any secret sources of iniquity in the church--anything that tended to corrupt its doctrines, and to destroy the simplicity of the faith of the gospel, would correspond with the meaning of the word. Doddridge correctly supposes that this may refer to the pride and ambition of some ministers, the factious temper of some Christians, the imposing of unauthorized severities, the worship of angels, etc. Doth already work. There are elements of these corruptions already existing in the church. Bishop Newton maintains that the foundations of Popery were laid in the apostles' days, and that the superstructure was raised by degrees; and this is entirely in accordance with the statements of the apostle Paul. In his own time, he says, there were things, which, if not restrained, would expand and ripen into that apostasy. He has not told us particularly to what he refers, but there are several intimations in his writings, as well as in other parts of the New Testament, that even in the apostolic age there existed the elements of those corruptions which were afterwards developed and imbodied in the Papacy. Even "then," says bishop Newton, "idolatry was stealing into the church, 1Cor 10:14, and a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." Col 2:18; Col 2:18. "There existed strife and divisions, 1Cor 3:3; an adulterating and handling the word of God deceitfully, 2Cor 2:17, 4:2; a gain of godliness, teaching of things for filthy lucre's sake, 1Timm 6:5, Tit 1:11; a vain observation of festivals, Gal 4:10; a vain distinction of meats, 1Cor 8:8; a neglecting of the body, Col 2:23; traditions, and commandments, and doctrines of men, (Col 2:8,22)." Compare 3Jn 1:9, "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence." These things constituted the elements of the corruptions which were afterwards developed in the Papacy, and which are imbodied in that system. An eye that could see all, would even then have perceived that, if there were no restraint, these incipient corruptions would grow up into that system, and would be expanded into all the corruptions and arrogant claims which have ever characterized it. Comp. 1Jn 4:3. Only he who now letteth. Who now hinders or restrains-- οκατεχων. This is the same word which is used in 2Thes

2:6, and rendered "withholdeth," except that it is there in the neuter gender. There can be no doubt that there is reference to the same restraining power, or the same power under the control of an individual: but what that was, is not quite certain. It was some power which operated as a check on the growing corruptions then existing, and which prevented their full development, but which was to be removed at no distant period, and whose removal would give an opportunity for those corruptions to develope themselves, and for the full revelation of the man of sin. Such a supposition as that the civil power of Rome was such a restraint, operating to prevent the assumption of the ecclesiastical claims of supremacy which afterwards characterized the Papacy, will correspond with all that is necessarily implied in the language. Will let, until he be taken out of the way. This will be an effectual check on these corruptions, preventing their full development, until it is removed, and then the man of sin will appear. The supposition which will best suit this language is, that there was then some civil restraint, preventing the development of existing corruptions, but that there would be a removal, or withdrawing of that restraint; and that then the tendency of the existing corruptions would be seen. It is evident, as Oldshansen remarks, that this resisting or restraining power must be something out of the church, and distinguished from the antichristian tendency itself: von der Kirche und vom Antichristenthum. It is necessary, therefore, to understand this of the restraints of civil power. Was there, then, any fact in history which will accord with this interpretation? The belief among the primitive Christians was, that what hindered the rise of the man of sin was the Roman empire, and therefore "they prayed for its peace and welfare, as knowing that when the Roman empire should be dissolved and broken in pieces, the empire of the man of sin would be raised on its ruins." Bp. Newton. How this revolution was effected, may be seen by the statement of Machiavel. "The emperor of Rome, quitting Rome to dwell at Constantinople," (in the fourth century under Constantine,) "the Roman empire began to decline, but the church of Rome augmented as fast. Nevertheless, until the coming in of the Lombards, all Italy being under the dominion of either emperors or kings, the bishops assumed no more power than what was due to their doctrine and manners; in civil affairs they were subject to the

civil power. But Theodoric, king of the Goths, fixing his seat at Ravenna, was that which advanced their interest, and made them more considerable in Italy, for there being no other prince left in Rome, the Romans were forced for protection to pay greater allegiance to the pope. The Lombards having invaded and reduced Italy into several can- tons, the pope took the opportunity, and began to hold up his head. For being, as it were, governor and principal of Rome, the emperor of Constantinople and the Lombards bare him a respect, so that the Romans (by mediation of their pope) began to treat and confederate with Longinuis, [the emperor's lieutenant,] and the Lombards, not as subjects, but as equals and companions; which said custom continuing, and the pope's entering into alliance sometimes with the Lombards, and sometimes with the Greeks, contracted great reputation to their dignity." (Hist. of Florence, B.i. p 6, of the English translation.) A more extended quotation on this subject, may be seen in Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 407,408. To any one acquainted with the decline and fall of the Roman empire, nothing can be more manifest than the correspondence of the facts in history respecting the rise of the Papacy, and the statement of the apostle Paul here. The simple facts are these.

(1.) There were early corruptions in the church at Rome, as there were elsewhere, but peculiarly there, as Rome was the seat of philosophy and of power.

(2.) There were great efforts made by the bishop of Rome to increase his authority, and there was a steady approximation to what he subsequently claimed--that of being universal bishop.

(3.) There was a constant tendency to yield to him deference and respect in all matters.

(4.) This was kept in check as long as Rome was the seat of the imperial power. Had that power remained there, it would have been impossible for the Roman bishop ever to have obtained the civil and ecclesiastical eminence which he ultimately did. Rome could not have had two heads, both claiming and exercising supreme power; and there never could have been a "revelation of the man of sin."

(5.) Constantine removed the seat of empire to Constantinople; and this removal or "taking away" of the only restraint on the ambitious projects of the Roman bishops, gave all the opportunity which could be desired for the growth of the papal power. In all history there cannot, probably, be found a series of events corresponding more accurately with a prophetic statement than this; and there is every evidence, therefore, that these are the events to which the Spirit of inspiration referred.

He will surely be revealed; for the mystery - The deep, secret power of iniquity, just opposite to the power of godliness, already worketh. It began with the love of honour, and the desire of power; and is completed in the entire subversion of the gospel of Christ. This mystery of iniquity is not wholly confined to the Romish church, but extends itself to others also. It seems to consist of, Human inventions added to the written word. Mere outside performances put in the room of faith and love. Other mediators besides the man Christ Jesus. The two last branches, together with idolatry and bloodshed, are the direct consequences of the former; namely, the adding to the word of God. Already worketh - In the church. Only he that restraineth - That is, the potentate who successively has Rome in his power. The emperors, heathen or Christian; the kings, Goths or Lombards; the Carolingian or German emperors.

the mystery of iniquity—the counterwork to "the mystery of godliness" (1Ti 3:16). Anti-Christianity latently working, as distinguished from its final open manifestation. "Mystery" in Scripture means, not what remains always a secret, but that which is for a while hidden, but in due time manifested (compare Eph 3:4, 5). Satan will resort to a mode of opposition more conformed to the then imminent "appearing" and "presence" of the Saviour, and will anticipate Him with a last effort to maintain the dominion of the world [DE BURGH], just as at His first advent he rushed into open opposition, by taking possession of the bodies of men. "Iniquity," Greek, "lawlessness"; defiant rejection of God's law (compare Note, see on Zec 5:9, Zec 5:10). "Wickedness" (translated by the Septuagint by the same Greek, meaning "lawlessness," which Paul

employs here), embodied there as a woman, answers to "the mystery of iniquity," here embodied finally in "the man of sin": as the former was ultimately banished for ever from the Holy Land to her own congenial soil, Babylon, so iniquity and the man of sin shall fall before Michael and the Lord Himself, who shall appear as the Deliverer of His people (Da 12:1-3; Zec 14:3-9). Compare Mt 12:43. The Jewish nation dispossessed of the evil spirit, the demon of idolatry being cast out through the Babylonian captivity, receives ultimately a worse form of the evil spirit, Christ-opposing self-righteousness. Also, the Christian Church in course of time taken possession of by the demon of Romish idolatry, then dispossessed of it by the Reformation, then its house "garnished" by hypocrisy, secularity, and rationalism, but "swept empty" of living faith, then finally apostatizing and repossessed by "the man of sin," and outwardly destroyed for a brief time (though even then Christ shall have witnesses for Him among both the Jews, Zec 13:9, and Gentiles, Mt 28:20), when Christ shall suddenly come (Da 11:32-45; Lu 18:7, 8). already— (2Jo 9, 10; Col 2:18-23; 1Ti 4:1); compare "even now already" (1Jo 2:18; 4:3) as distinguished from "in his own time" of being revealed hereafter. Antiquity, it appears from hence, is not a justification for unscriptural usages or dogmas, since these were "already," even in Paul's time, beginning to spring up: the written word is the only sure test. "Judaism infecting Christianity is the fuel; the mystery of iniquity is the spark." "It is one and the same impurity diffusing itself over many ages" [BENGEL]. only he who now letteth will let —The italicized words are not in the Greek. Therefore, translate rather, "only (that is, the continuance of the MYSTERY of iniquity-working will be only) until he who now withholdeth (the same Greek as in 2Th 2:6) be taken out of the way." "Only (waiting, Heb 10:13) until he," &c. Then it will work no longer in mystery, but in open manifestation.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

And then shall that Wicked be revealed. ο ανομος, "the wicked one," referring to the "man of sin," and called "the wicked one" because of the eminent depravity of the system of which he was to be the head. 2Thes 2:3. Whom the Lord shall consume. The Lord Jesus.

Acts 1:24. The word consume here αναλωσει means to destroy. See Gall 5:15, Lk 9:54. The word would be applicable to any kind of destruction. The methods by which this will be done are immediately specified--and it is of much importance to understand them, if this refers to the Papacy. With the spirit of his mouth. What goes out of his mouth, or what he speaks; that is word, truth, command, or gospel--all of which he may be regarded as speaking. In Rev 1:16, 19:16,21, it is said of the Redeemer that "a sharp two-edged sword goeth out of his mouth" that is, his word, doctrine, or command--what he speaks --is like a sharp sword. It will cut deep; will lay open the heart; will destroy his enemies. Comp. Isa 11:4, "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The reference in the passage before us is one of the methods which would be employed to "destroy" the man of sin; and the sense is, that it would be by what is spoken by the Redeemer. This may refer either to what he will say at his coming, or to his truth--already spoken; to what has gone from his lips, by whomsoever uttered; and the meaning then is, that one of the grand agencies for destroying this antichristian power is the truth spoken or revealed by the Saviour--that is, his pure gospel. If this latter be the true interpretation, it may mean that the process for his destruction may have commenced long anterior to the personal appearing of the Redeemer, but that the complete destruction of this power will be accomplished by the splendour of his Second Advent. It cannot be denied, however, that the most obvious interpretation is that which refers both clauses in the sentence to the same period--that of his second coming. Still, it is not improper to suppose that it may be implied that his power will be weakened and diminished by the influence of the gospel, though it may not be wholly destroyed until the second coming of the Saviour. And shall destroy. καταργησει. Shall bring to naught; cause to cease; put an end to. This is, in some respects, a stronger word than that which in the former part of the verse is rendered consume. It denotes a more entire destruction than that, though it does not refer so much to any positive agency by which it will be done. In the former word, the attention is directed more to the agency by which the destruction will be effected --to the exertion of some kind of power to do it; in this word the attention is directed rather to the entireness or totality of the destruction. The antichristian

domination will wholly cease, or be entirely destroyed. The words would naturally harmonize with the idea that there would be a somewhat gradual process under the operation of truth toward the destruction of the man of sin, but that the complete annihilation of his power would be by some more manifest exhibition of the personal glory of the Saviour. With the brightness of his coming. This is evidently a Hebraism, meaning his splendid or glorious appearing. The Greek word, however, rendered "brightness"--(επιφανεια, epiphany)--means merely an appearing, or appearance. So it is used in 1Timm 6:14; 2Ti 1:10 4:1,8 Tit 2:13, in all which places it is rendered appearing, and refers to the manifestation of the Saviour when he shall come to judge the world. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament. There is no necessary idea of splendour in the word; and the idea is not, as our translation would seem to convey, that there would be such a dazzling light, or such unsufferable brightness, that all would be consumed before it, but that he would appear, and that this antichristian power would be destroyed by his appearing: that is, by himself when he would return. The agency in doing it would not be his brightness, but himself. It would seem to follow from this, that however this enormous power of wickedness might be weakened by truth, the final triumph over it would be reserved for the Son of God himself on his second return to our world. Yet, if this be so, it need not lessen our zeal in endeavouring to diminish the power of these corruptions; to establish and spread the truth; or to convert the defenders of these errors to a better faith.

whom the Lord—Some of the oldest manuscripts read, "the Lord Jesus." How awful that He whose very name means God-Saviour, should appear as the Destroyer; but the salvation of the Church requires the destruction of her foe. As the reign of Israel in Canaan was ushered in by judgments on the nations for apostasy (for the Canaanites were originally worshippers of the true God: thus Melchisedek, king of Salem, was the "priest of the most high God," Ge 14:18: Ammon and Moab came from righteous Lot), so the Son of David's reign in Zion and over the whole earth, is to be ushered in by judgments on the apostate Christian world. consume . . . and . . . destroy—So Da 7:26, "consume and destroy"; Da 11:45. He

shall "consume" him by His mere breath (Isa 11:4; 30:33): the sentence of judgment being the sharp sword that goeth out of His mouth (Re 19:15, 21). Antichrist's manifestation and destruction are declared in the same breath; at his greatest height he is nearest his fall, like Herod his type (Isa 1:24-27; Ac 12:20-23). As the advancing fire, while still at a distance consumes little insects [CHRYSOSTOM] by its mere heat, so Christ's mere approach is enough to consume Antichrist. The mere "appearance of the coming" of the Lord of glory is sufficient to show to Antichrist his perfect nothingness. He is seized and "cast alive into the take of fire" (Re 19:20). So the world kingdoms, and the kingdom of the beast, give place to that of the Son of man and His saints. The Greek for "destroy" means "abolish" (the same Greek is so translated, 2Ti 1:10); that is, cause every vestige of him to disappear. Compare as to Gog attacking Israel and destroyed by Jehovah (Eze 38:1-39:29), so as not to leave a vestige of him.

These words contain both the risk and ruin of Antichrist, his revelation and destruction.

Observe, 1. The title given to him, o Anomos, the lawless one, he that boasts himself to be above all law, and assumes to himself a power to dispense with all the laws of God, as we well know who does.

Observe, 2. His revelation, Then shall that wicked be revealed. God has revealed Antichrist to the world, let none wilfully shut their eyes against him, but let him be shunned and abhorred; if his adherents will not fall off from him, but be partakers with him in his sins, let them expect to be partakers also with him in his plagues; to continue his adherents is dangerous, but to turn his disciples is more dangerous: for that is a downright apostasy, and flat revolt from Christ to Antichrist. How Almighty God may dispense mercifully with errors imbibed in our education we know not, but to turn our back on the truth wherein we have been educated and instructed, makes it more dangerous to our salvation.

Observe, 3. Antichrist's ruin, Whom the Lord shall consume and destroy.

Here note, That the apostle had no sooner discovered Antichrist's rise, but he presently declares his ruin: The Lord shall destroy him; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ shall destroy him gradually, he shall waste away by little and little; as his rise was, such shall his ruin be: destroyed and consumed he shall be, but not presently; because God has an use for him, work to do for him, to scourge his people, to try his people, to unite his people.

Observe, 4. How Antichrist's ruin is accompolished,

(1.) With the spirit of his mouth, or the breath of his mouth: the expression denotes, the facility and easiness of his destruction: it is done with a breath; the breath of God here denotes the preaching of the gospel, and intimates, that Antichrist's destruction shall be by the ministry of the word, and the victorious evidence of truth; but besides this ministerial word, there will be a providential word, which God will make use of for Antichrist's destruction: the former means we are to use, the latter God is to make use of.
Again,

(2.) The destruction of Antichrist shall be by the brightness of Christ's coming; at Christ's coming to judgment, the final ruin and utter destruction of Antichrist shall be accompolished; let not the church then be discouraged, though Antichrist remains, after all endeavours used for his ruin, it is sufficient we are assured that Antichristianism shall be finally destroyed; for the time, leave we that to God; if it be not till the day of judgment, or Christ's final conquest over all his adversaries, why should not we be contented to tarry for it; seeing infinite wisdom determines the time, as well as the thing itself.

9 *even him,* whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan. Greek, κατενεργειαντουσατανα, According to the energy of Satan; that is, the energetic or efficient operation of Satan. The word rendered

after, it need not be said to one who looks at the Greek, does not refer to time, but is a preposition, meaning according to, in conformity with; meaning that the manner of his appealing would be accompanied by such works as would show that the agency of Satan was employed, and such as he only could produce. It does not mean that the coming of the Lord Jesus would be after Satan had worked in this manner, but that the manifestation of that wicked one would be with such demonstrations of power and wonder as Satan only could effect. The system over which he presides is originated by Satan, and sustained by those things which he alone can perform. On the word Satan, Job 1:6. The idea is, that it would be under the direction and control of the great enemy of God, and that the things on which it would rely for support could be traced to his agency. In all the pretended miracles to which it would appeal, there would be nothing which Satan could not accomplish. With all power. With all the power which Satan can exhibit; meaning, also, that there would be a great exertion of power in the case. It would not be a feeble and imbecile dominion. The dominion of the Papacy has been one of the most powerful on earth. There has been none which has been more dreaded by the nations of the earth--and there have been times when nations trembled, and kings turned pale on their thrones, at the frown of the pope. And signs. This word frequently denotes real miracles, but not necessarily so. It may be applied to pretended miracles as well as real, and is undoubtedly so used here, as it is connected with "lying wonders," and as it is said that the thing wrought would be "after the working of Satan." There is doubtless reference to such "signs and wonders" as the Saviour mentions in Mt 24:24. Mt 24:24. It is hardly necessary to remark that the Papacy has always relied for support on its pretended miracles. Even in our own age the wonders performed by the Prince Hohenloe, and by the pretended seamless garment of the Saviour, have been proclaimed as true miracles, and as furnishing indubitable evidence of the truth of the Roman Catholic system. The dissolving of the blood of St. Januarius, the removal of Pilate's stairs to Rome, and the transportation to Italy of the "house of our Lady," are among the miracles to which there is a constant reference in the Papal communion. In addition to these and to all similar pretensions, there is the power claimed of performing a miracle at the pleasure of the

priest by the change of bread and wine into the "body and blood, the soul and divinity" of the Lord Jesus. In 1756, there was published in London a book entitled, "The miraculous power of the church of Christ, asserted through each successive century, from the apostles down to the present time." The power of working miracles has been one of the standing claims of the Papacy. And lying wonders. False or pretended miracles. They would be such as would be claimed to be miracles; such as would excite wonder; and yet such as were false and delusive. No Protestant assuredly needs to be convinced that this is just the character of the pretended miracles of the Papacy.

Verse 10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. There are two ideas here. The first is, that there would be deceit; and the other is, that it would be for the purpose of promoting unrighteousness or iniquity. The iniquitous system would be maintained by fraudulent methods. No one who has read Pascal's Provincial Letters can ever doubt that this description is applicable to the system of the Jesuits; and no one familiar with the acts of the Papacy, as they have always been practised, can doubt that the whole system is accurately described by this language. The plausible reasoning by which the advocates of that system have palliated and apologised for sins of various kinds, has been among its most remarkable features. In them that perish. Among those who will perish; that is, among the abandoned and wicked. The reference is to men of corrupt minds and lives, over whom this system would have power; countenancing them in their depravity, and fitting them still farther for destruction. The idea is, that these acts would have especial reference to men who would be lost at any rate, and who would be sustained in their wickedness by this false and delusive system. Because they received not the love of the truth. They prefer this system of error and delusion to the simple and pure gospel, by which they might have been saved.

whose coming—The same Greek as was used for the Lord's coming (2Th 2:8) or personal "presence." is—in its essential character. after—according to the working ("energy") of Satan, as opposed to the energy or working of the Holy Spirit in the Church (see on Eph 1:19). As Christ is related to God, so is Antichrist to

Satan, his visible embodiment and manifestation: Satan works through him. Re 13:2, "The dragon gave him (the beast) his power . . . seat . . . great authority." lying wonders—literally, "wonders" or "prodigies of falsehood." His "power, signs, and wonders," all have falsehood for their base, essence, and aim (Joh 8:44), [ALFORD]. In Mt 24:24 Jesus implies that the miracles shall be real, though demoniac, such mysterious effects of the powers of darkness as we read of in the case of the Egyptian sorcerers, not such as Jesus performed in their character, power, or aim; for they are against the revealed Word, and therefore not to be accepted as evidences of truth; nay, on the authority of that sure Word of prophecy (here, and Mt 24:24), to be known and rejected as wrought in support of falsehood (De 13:1-3, 5; Ga 1:8, 9; Re 13:11-15; 19:20). The same three Greek words occur for miracles of Jesus (Ac 2:22; Heb 2:4); showing that as the Egyptian magicians imitated Moses (2Ti 3:1-8), so Antichrist will try to imitate Christ's works as a "sign," or proof of divinity.

deceivableness—rather as Greek, "deceit of (to promote) unrighteousness" (2Th 2:12). in—The oldest manuscripts and versions omit "in." Translate, "unto them that are perishing" (2Co 2:15, 16; 4:3): the victims of him whose very name describes his perishing nature, "the son of perdition"; in contrast to you whom (2Th 2:13) "God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." because—literally, "in requital for"; in just retribution for their having no love for the truth which was within their reach (on account of its putting a check on their bad passions), and for their having "pleasure in unrighteousness" (2Th 2:12; Ro 1:18); they are lost because they loved not, but rejected, the truth which would have saved them. received not—Greek, "welcomed not"; admitted it not cordially. love of the truth—not merely love of truth, but love of THE truth (and of, Jesus who is the Truth, in opposition to Satan's "lie," 2Th 2:9, 11; Joh 8:42-44), can save (Eph 4:21). We are required not merely to assent to, but to love the truth (Ps 119:97). The Jews rejected Him who came in His divine Father's name; they will receive Antichrist coming in his own name (Joh 5:43). Their pleasant sin shall prove their terrible scourge.

10 and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

An account is here given how Antichrist doth acquire and keep up his power in the world: the first and great instrument is Satan; after the working of Satan, is as much as, by the working of Satan, denoting not only his pattern but his influence. The devil has a great hand over wicked men in the world, his way of dealing with them is most efficacious and powerful; he is certainly the first founder and supporter of the Antichristian state.

Observe, 2. The subordinate instrumental means by which Antichrist gained his power in the world; namely, by pretended miracles: With all power, and signs, and lying wonders. Miracles are called powers, because the effects of extraordinary powers; signs, from their use, because they sealed the doctrine to which they are applied; wonders, because they breed astonishment in the minds of beholders. Now Antichrist pretends to all these, but his are lying powers, lying signs, and lying wonders; because the greatest of his pretended miracles are fables, forgeries, impostures, diabolical delusions.

Learn hence, That Antichrist doth uphold and support his kingdom by a false show of signs, wonders, and mighty deeds; they are mira, but not miracula; what he cannot prove by the oracles of God, he endeavours to prove by the miracles of Satan.

1. By the ways and means how they are drawn into this apostasy and defection, and that is, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; where, by unrighteousness, understand his false doctrine and wicked laws, which tend to the making his disciples and followers injurious to God, unjust to men, and cruel to themselves; and by deceivableness, is meant all manner of deceits and wiles, tricks and cunning persuasions, to make the world believe his unrighteous errors to be pure and innocent truths.

Learn, That such as are ringleaders to error, are men of no conscience, but find out all unrighteous ways and means to make

their tenets plausible, and pass for truth; they come with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.

Again, 2. They are described by the doom and misery which await them, they are such as perish; that is, such as are in an actual state of perdition, and, without hastening out of it, are undone for ever. Learn hence, That the subjects of Antichrist's power and seduction are those that perish.

And, 3. They are described by their sin, which is the cause and reason of this doom: Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Where mark, It is not enough to receive the truth in the light of it, but we must also receive it in the love of it, or it will do us no good; to make truth operative, there is required, besides knowledge, faith and love, there may be knowledge without faith, and there may be faith without love, that is, without any affection to the truth believed; it was therefore a pious prayer of St. Austin, Fac me, Domine, &c. "Lord, make me taste that by love, which I taste by knowledge." As the certainity of truth calls for faith, so the amiableness of truth calls for love: if truth be not received into the heart as well as the head, it will not secure against apostasy, nor prevent perishing.

The apostle further describes the reign and rule of this man of sin. Here we are to observe,

(1.) The manner of his coming, or ruling, and working: in general, that it is after the example of Satan, the grand enemy of souls, the great adversary of God and man. He is the great patron of error and lies, the sworn enemy of the truth as it is in Jesus and all the faithful followers of Jesus. More particularly, it is with Satanical power and deceit. A divine power is pretended for the support of this kingdom, but it is only after the working of Satan. Signs and wonders, visions and miracles, are pretended; by these the papal kingdom was first set up, and has all along been kept up, but they have false signs to support false doctrines; and lying wonders, or only pretended miracles that have served their cause, things false in fact, or

fraudulently managed, to impose upon the people: and the diabolical deceits with which the antichristian state has been supported are notorious. The apostle calls it all deceivableness of unrighteousness, 2Th 2:10. Others may call them pious frauds, but the apostle called them unrighteous and wicked frauds; and, indeed, all fraud (which is contrary to truth) is an impious thing. Many are the subtle artifices the man of sin has used, and various are the plausible pretences by which he had beguiled unwary and unstable souls to embrace false doctrines, and submit to his usurped dominion.

(2.) The persons are described who are his willing subjects, or most likely to become such, 2Th 2:10. They are such as love not the truth that they may be saved. They heard the truth (it may be), but they did not love it; they could not bear sound doctrine, and therefore easily imbibed false doctrines; they had some notional knowledge of what was true, but they indulged some powerful prejudices, and so became a prey to seducers. Had they loved the truth, they would have persevered in it, and been preserved by it; but no wonder if they easily parted with what they never had any love to. And of these persons it is said that they perish or are lost; they are in a lost condition, and in danger to be lost for ever. For,

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

And for this cause. Because they chose error, or their hearts love that more than they do truth. The original reason then of their embracing and adhering to the system was not an arbitrary decree on the part of God, but that they did not love the truth. Hence he gave them up to this system of error. If a man strongly prefers error to truth, and sin to holiness, it is not wrong to allow him freely to evince his own preference.

"sends," or "is sending"; the "delusion" is already beginning. God judicially sends hardness of heart on those who have rejected the truth, and gives them up in righteous judgment to Satan's delusions (Isa 6:9, 10; Ro 1:24-26, 28). They first cast off the love of the truth, then God gives them up to Satan's delusions, then they settle down into "believing the lie": an awful climax (1Ki 22:22, 23; Eze 14:9; Job 12:16; Mt 24:5, 11; 1Ti 4:1). strong delusion—Greek, "the

powerful working of error," answering to the energizing "working of Satan" (2Th 2:9); the same expression as is applied to the Holy Ghost's operation in believers: "powerful" or "effectual (energizing) working" (Eph 1:19). Gr., "energy of deceit;" a Hebraism, meaning strong deceit. The agency of God is here distinctly recognised, in accordance with the uniform statements of the Scriptures, respecting evil. Comp. Ex 7:13, 9:12, 10:1,20,27, 11:10, 14:8, De 2:30 Isa 45:7. On the nature of this agency, Jn 12:40. It is not necessary here to suppose that there was any positive influence on the part of God in causing this delusion to come upon them, but all the force of the language will be met, as well as the reasoning of the apostle, by supposing that God withdrew all restraint, and suffered men simply to show that they did not love the truth. God often places men in circumstances to develope their own nature, and it cannot be shown to be wrong that he should do so. If men have no love of the truth, and no desire to be saved, it is not improper that they should be allowed to manifest this. How it happened that they had no "love of the truth," is a different question, to which the remarks of the apostle do not appertain. Comp. Rom 9:17, Rom 9:18; Rom 1:24. That they should believe a lie. This does not affirm that God wished them to believe a lie nor that he would not have preferred that they should believe the truth; nor that he exerted any direct agency to cause them to believe a lie. It means merely that he left them, because they did not love the truth, to believe what was false, and what would end in their destruction. Can any one doubt that this constantly occurs in the world? Men are left to believe impostors; to trust to false guides; to rely on unfounded information; to credit those who live to delude and betray the innocent; and to follow those who lead them to ruin. God does not impose by direct power to preserve them. Can any one doubt this? Yet this is not peculiarly the doctrine of revelation. The fact pertains just as much to the infidel as it does to the believer in Christianity, and he is just as much bound to explain it as the Christian is. It belongs to our world--to us all--and it should not be charged on Christianity as a doctrine pertaining peculiarly to that system.

That they all might be damned. The word damned we commonly apply now exclusively to future punishment, and it has a harsher

signification than the original word. 1Cor 11:29. The Greek word κρινω -- means to judge, determine, decide; and then to condemn, Rom 2:27, 14:22, Jas 4:11; Jn 7:51, Lk 19:22, Acts 13:27. It may be applied to the judgment of the last day, Jn 5:22, 8:50, Acts 17:31, Rom 3:6, 2Ti 4:1, but not necessarily. The word judged, or condemned, would, in this place, express all that the Greek word necessarily conveys. Yet there can be no doubt that the judgment or condemnation which is referred to, is that which will occur when the Saviour will appear. It does not seem to me to be a necessary interpretation of this to suppose that it teaches that God would send a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, in order that all might be damned who did not believe the truth; or that he desired that they should be damned, and sent this as the means of securing it; but the sense is, that this course of events would be allowed to occur, so that ινα not ειςτο all who do not love the truth would be condemned. The particle here used, and rendered "that" (ινα) in connection with the phrase "all might be damned" is employed in two general senses, either as marking the end, purpose, or cause for, or on account of, which anything is done; to the end that, or in order that it may be so and so; or as marking simply the result, event, or upshot of an action, so that, so as that. Robinson, Lex. In the latter case it denotes merely that something will really take place, without indicating that such was the design of the agent, or that what brought it about was in order that it might take place. It is also used, in the later Greek, so as neither to mark the purpose, or to indicate that the event would occur, but merely to point out that to which the preceding words refer. It is not proper, therefore, to infer that this passage teaches that all these things would be brought about in the arrangements of Providence, in order that they might be damned who came under their influence. The passage teaches that such would be the result; that the connection between these delusions and the condemnation of those who were deluded, would be certain. It cannot be proved from the Scriptures that God sends on men strong delusions, in order that they may be damned. No such construction should be put on a passage of Scripture if it can be avoided, and it cannot be shown that it is necessary here. Who believed not the truth. The grounds or reasons why they would be damned are now stated. One would be that they did not believe the truth --not that

God sent upon them delusion in order that they might be damned. That men will be condemned for not believing the truth, and that it will be right thus to condemn them, is everywhere the doctrine of the Scriptures, and is equally the doctrine of common sense. Mk 16:16. But had pleasure in unrighteousness. This is the second ground or reason of their condemnation. If men have pleasure in sin, it is proper that they should be punished. There can be no more just ground of condemnation than that a man loves to do wrong.

The sin of those who are seduced by Antichrist was mentioned in the foregoing verse, the judgment of such is here declared in these verses, which is twofold, delusion in this world, and damnation in the next.
1. Delusion in this world.

Here note, 1. The author of this judgment, God shall send them strong delusions; as it is a sin, God has no hand in it; but as it is a punishment, God has to do in it; there is a judicial traduction or delivering them up to a spirit of error, who do not receive the truth in the love of it, and this without the least shadow of unrighteousness, punishing sin with sin.

Note, 2. The degree or nature of the punishment: delusions, strong delusions: given up to the efficacy of error, which is discovered by the absurdity of those errors which they cleave unto, and by the obstinacy wherewith they cleave unto them.

Learn hence, (1.) That strong delusions may be, and sometimes are, of God's own sending.

(2.) That by God's just judgment there is an infatuation upon the followers and abettors of Antichrist, that they swallow the grossest errors, and believe the strongest delusions, to their own destruction.

Note, 3. The issue and result of this punishment, That they should believe a lie; false doctrines are often called a lie in scripture: all the doctrine of the man of sin, with which he hath deceived the world, under the notion of truth, is one great lie; but beside this, he approves

and applauds the doctrine of equivocation, and teaches, that in many cases it is necessary, and in some very lawful, to lie; these they call pious frauds, but they are indeed diabolical forgeries.

Observe, 2. Their dreadful punishment in the other world, That they all might be damned, &c.
Where mark, the punishment itself, damnation, for filling up the measure of their obduration, together with the justice and equity of it; expressed negatively, they believed not the truth, received it not with simplicity of mind, to be instructed and directed by it; positively, they had pleasure in unrighteousness, in unrighteous doctrines and practices.

Learn hence, 1. That errors in judgment, as well as sins in practice, may bring damnation upon the soul's of men. Error is as damnable as vice, for it is as contrary to the law of God as vice is.

Learn, 2. That though all errors may bring damnation upon men's souls, yet some may be said more especially than others to be damning errors; such are the errors of Antichrist, the man of sin.
Oh, how dangerous then it is to be found amongst his followers! To be sharers with them in their sins, will render us partakers of their plagues.

12 that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

We have the sin and ruin of the subjects of antichrist's kingdom declared, 2Th 2:11,12.

(1.) Their sin is this: They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness: they did not love the truth, and therefore they did not believe it; and, because they did not believe the truth, therefore they had pleasure in unrighteousness, or in wicked actions, and were pleased with false notions. Note, An erroneous mind and vicious life often go together and help forward one another.

(2.) Their ruin is thus expressed: God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie. Thus he will punish men for their

unbelief, and for their dislike of the truth and love to sin and wickedness; not that God is the author of sin, but in righteousness he sometimes withdraws his grace from such sinners as are here mentioned; he gives them over to Satan, or leaves them to be deluded by his instruments; he gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and leaves them to themselves, and then sin will follow of course, yea, the worst of wickedness, that shall end at last in eternal damnation. God is just when he inflicts spiritual judgments here, and eternal punishments hereafter, upon those who have no love to the truths of the gospel, who will not believe them, nor live suitably to them, but indulge false doctrines in their minds, and wicked practices in their lives and conversations.

Chosen to Salvation

13 But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

Our apostle, having in the foregoing verses set forth a fatal apostasy from the sincerity of the Christian faith and worship, here in this verse exempts the Thessalonians from the number of those that were endangered by it; and this he makes mention of, to their great comfort, and with thanksgivings to God: We are bound to give thanks, &c.

Observe here, 1. The titles given to the Thessalonians by our apostle, Brethren, and beloved of the Lord; not beloved of the apostle only, but of the Lord also, both with an antecedent love, bestowing grace upon them, and with a consequent love, believing in his name, and suffering for his sake.

Observe, 2. His obligation to bless God on their behalf, he gave thanks: this showed his esteem of the blessing; he gave thanks always, which showed how deeply he was affected with the blessing, and he owns it as a debt which was due unto them; We are bound to give thanks, &c.

Observe, 3. The matter of his thanksgiving, or the mercy which he was thus thankful for, and that was their election to salvation; We are bound to give thanks, because God hath chosen you.
Whence learn, That God's election either of ourselves or others to salvation, is, and ought to be, great matter of thanksgiving unto God.

Observe, 4. Their election is amplified,

(1.) By the antiquity of it, from the beginning, that is, from all eternity, In the beginning was the word, Joh 1:1 that is, before the beginning, before God began to create any thing, the Word was.

(2.) From the means of its accomplishment; and they are two, one on God's part, the sanctification of the Spirit; the other on their part, the belief of the truth.

Where note, 1. That election is to the means as well as to the end; and without the means, can the end never be attained; he that hath chosen us to salvation, hath chosen us to be holy, and to believe the truth, in order to salvation.

Note, 2. That sanctification and holiness are not the cause of our election, but the effect and fruit of it.

Note, 3. That sanctification being the fruit, it is also the evidence of our election; Sic se apeit decretum, thus the decree of God is made evident to us; the election of God is a secret in the bosom of God, it is only manifested to us by the effects, which are sanctification by the Spirit, and a sound belief of the gospel.
Where mark, a bare belief of the doctrine of the gospel saves none, unless accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit.

Note, 4. The necessary connection between the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, even as between the cause and the

effect, and they do also accompany one another; the gospel was a supernatural doctrine, and it was fit that it should be accompanied with a supernatural operation, how else should it be known to be of God? The gospel and the Spirit are inseparable companions; where the gospel is little known, there is little of the Spirit found: He hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.

But—In delightful contrast to the damnation of the lost (2Th 2:12) stands the "salvation" of Paul's converts. are bound—in duty (2Th 1:3). thanks . . . to God—not to ourselves, your ministers, nor to you, our converts. beloved of the Lord—Jesus (Ro 8:37; Ga 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25). Elsewhere God the Father is said to love us (2Th 2:16; Joh 3:16; Eph 2:4; Col 3:12). Therefore Jesus and the Father are one. from the beginning—"before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4; compare 1Co 2:7; 2Ti 1:9); in contrast to those that shall "worship the beast, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Re 13:8). Some of the oldest manuscripts read as English Version, but other oldest manuscripts and Vulgate read, "as first-fruits." The Thessalonians were among the first converts in Europe (compare Ro 16:5; 1Co 16:15). In a more general sense, it occurs in Jas 1:18; Re 14:4; so I understand it here including the more restricted sense. chosen you—The Greek, is not the ordinary word for "elected," implying His eternal selection; but taken for Himself, implying His having adopted them in His eternal purpose. It is found in the Septuagint (De 7:7; 10:15). through—rather as Greek, "in sanctification" as the element in which the choice to salvation had place (compare 1Pe 1:2), standing in contrast to the "unrighteousness," the element in which Antichrist's followers are given over by God to damnation (2Th 2:12). of the Spirit—wrought by the Spirit who sanctifies all the elect people of God, first by eternally consecrating them to perfect holiness in Christ, once for all, next by progressively imparting it. belief of the truth—contrasted with "believed not the truth" (2Th 2:12).

To the stability of the election of grace, 2Th 2:13. Therefore were they beloved of the Lord, because God had chosen them from the

beginning. He had loved them with an everlasting love. Concerning this election of God we may observe,

(1.) The eternal date of it--it is from the beginning; not the beginning of the gospel, but the beginning of the world, before the foundation of the world, Eph 1:4. Then,

(2.) The end to which they were chosen--salvation, complete and eternal salvation from sin and misery, and the full fruition of all good.

(3.) The means in order to obtaining this end--sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. The decree of election therefore connects the end and the means, and these must not be separated. We are not the elected of God because we were holy, but that we might be holy. Being chosen of God, we must not live as we list; but, if we are chosen to salvation as the end, we must be prepared for it by sanctification as the necessary means to obtain that end, which sanctification is by the operation of the Holy Spirit as the author and by faith on our part. There must be the belief of the truth, without which there can be by true sanctification, nor perseverance in grace, nor obtaining of salvation. Faith and holiness must be joined together, as well as holiness and happiness; therefore our Saviour prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail (Lu 22:32), and for his disciples (Joh 17:17), Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.

14 whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle comforted the Thessalonians in the former verse from their election, in this from their vocation; whereunto, that is, to which salvation, sanctification, and belief of the gospel, God hath called you, by our preaching of the word, to the obtaining of the glory purchased, and conferred by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note here, 1. The author of the Thessalonians' vocation, God the Father; he calleth you, that is, God, who from the beginning chose you to salvation.

None but God,

(1.) Hath authority to call; He only is our proper Lord, and rightful Sovereign, our Creator, and our owner; therefore he has a right to call us to duty, and to require duty from us, Jas 4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.

None but God, 1. Hath power to call; for to effectual calling there is required, not only the invitation of the word, but also the effectual operation of the Spirit; it is a work of divine power to give grace to graceless souls.

Note, 2. The means, that is, the external and outward means, by which they were called; By our gospel, that is, by our preaching of the gospel to you. The ministry of the word is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit for a sinner's effectual vocation, and bringing home to God.

But why doth our apostle call it our gospel? Doth not that derogate from the authority of it, to appropriate it to any man?
No; he calls it not his gospel by way of revelation, but in regard of dispensation only; and his gospel, imported the great pains which he took in preaching of the gospel, and the hazard he ran in dispensing of the gospel to them. It is also a word of esteem, love, and affection; what we love, we call ours.

Note, 3. The end of this calling, which is twofold,

1. Ultimate, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, the glory of heaven, and of the whole man, whole soul and body in heaven, called the glory of Christ, because purchased by him, promised by him, prayed for by him, conferred by him, and enjoyed eternally with.

2. Subordinate, they are called to faith and holiness, in order to salvation: for there must be a likeness between the person calling, and the persons called; without likeness to him we can never love him, and without loving of him must never expect to live with him.

From the whole, learn, That such as are elected and chosen of God, are in time effectually called by faith and holiness to obtain eternal glory and happiness.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

An exhortation to stedfastness and perseverance: Therefore, brethren, stand fast, 2Th 2:15. Observe, He does not say, "You are chosen to salvation, and therefore you may be careless and secure;" but therefore stand fast. God's grace in our election and vocation is so far from superseding our diligent care and endeavour that it should quicken and engage us to the greatest resolution and diligence. So the apostle John having told those to whom he wrote that they had received the anointing which should abide in them, and that they should abide in him (in Christ), subjoins this exhortation, Now abide in him, 1Jo 2:27,28. The Thessalonians are exhorted to stedfastness in their Christian profession, to hold fast the traditions which they had been taught, or the doctrine of the gospel, which had been delivered by the apostle, by word or epistle. As yet the canon of scripture was not complete, and therefore some things were delivered by the apostles in their preaching, under the guidance of the infallible Spirit, which Christians were bound to observe as coming from God; other things were afterwards by them committed to writing, as the apostle had written a former epistle to these Thessalonians; and these epistles were written as the writers were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Note, There is no argument hence for regarding oral traditions in our days, now that the canon of scripture is complete, as of equal authority with the sacred writings. Such doctrines and duties as were taught by the inspired apostles we must stedfastly adhere to; but we have no certain evidence of any thing delivered by them more than what we find contained in the holy scriptures.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

And hold the traditions which ye have been taught. On the word traditions, Mt 15:2. It means properly things delivered over from one to another; then anything orally delivered--any precept,

doctrine, or law. It is frequently employed to denote that which is not written, as contradistinguished from that which is written, (comp. Mt 15:2,) but not necessarily or always; for here the Apostle speaks of the "traditions which they had been taught by his epistle." Comp. 1Cor 11:2. Here it means the doctrines or precepts which they had received from the apostle, whether when he was with them, or after he left them; whether communicated by preaching or by letter. This passage can furnish no authority for holding the "traditions" which have come down from ancient times, and which profess to have been derived from the apostles; for

(1.) there is no evidence that any of those traditions were given by the apostles;

(2.) many of them are manifestly so trifling, false, and contrary to the writings of the apostles, that they could not have been delivered by them;

(3.) if any of them are genuine, it is impossible to separate them from those which are false,

(4.) we have all that is necessary for salvation in the written word; and

(5.) there is not the least evidence that the apostle here meant to refer to any such thing. He speaks only of what had been delivered to them by himself, whether orally or by letter; not of what was delivered from one to another as from him. There is no intimation here that they were to hold anything as from him which they had not received directly from him, either by his own instructions personally or by letter. With what propriety, then, can this passage be adduced to prove that we are to hold the traditions which professedly come to us through a great number of intermediate persons? Nowhere is the evidence here that the church was to hold those unwritten traditions, and transmit them to future times?

Our apostle having abundantly comforted the Thessalonians in the former verses, from their election and vocation, he closes the

chapter with an exhortation to them to perseverance and constancy in the truth; Therefore, brethren, stand fast.

Observe, 1. The illative particle, therefore that is, because God hath chosen and called you, and given you such assurance of his favour, and such advantages against error and seduction, therefore let it be your care to persevere; assurance of salvation doth not encourage negligence, but engage to greater diligence.

Observe, 2. The duty inferred: stand fast; it is a military word, used by captains to their soldiers, to prevent a cowardly and treacherous revolt; he had been describing a great apostasy that would come, now bids them be upon their guard and stand fast.
Observe, 3. The means directed to, in order to their steadfastness and perseverance, namely, to hold the traditions which they had been taught, either by word or by epistle.

Here note, (1.) The act, hold, with a strong hand, hold against all assaults, whether of error or persecution.

(2.) The object, the traditions taught, either by word, or by epistle. Where mark, That all the apostle's doctrines, whether preached when amongst them, or written to them in his absence from them, he calls traditions; so that holding the traditions here, is nothing else but perseverance in apostolical doctrine.

From the whole note, 1. That what assurance soever we have of God's preserving us in the truth, yet are we bound to use all possible care and caution in order to our own preservation.

Note, 2. That it is our duty to stand fast in the faith of Christ, and professions of godliness, whatsoever dangers or temptations we may be exposed to.

Note, 3. That the doctrine of Christianity taught by the apostles is a tradition, and that holding this tradition is the best means for standing fast in the faith of Christ.

Note, 4. That while the apostles were in being, there were two ways of delivering the truth, namely, by word of mouth and writing; Whether by word or our epistle.

Note, 5. That now, when they are long since dead, and we cannot receive the doctrine of life from them by word of mouth, we must stick to the scriptures and written word, against all pretences to unwritten traditions, or pretended revelations, because the scriptures are a perfect rule both for our faith and practice.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself. This expression is equivalent to this: "l pray our Lord Jesus, and our Father, to comfort you." It is really a prayer offered to the Saviour--a recognition of Christ as the source of consolation as well as the Father, and a union of his name with that of the Father in invoking important blessings. It is such language as could be used only by one who regarded the Lord Jesus as Divine. And God even our Father. Gr., "And God, and (και) our Father;" though not incorrectly rendered "even our Father." If it should be contended that the use of the word "and"--" our Lord Jesus Christ, and God," proves that the Lord Jesus is a different being from God--the use of the same word "and" would prove that the "Father" is a different being from God. But the truth is, the apostle meant to speak of the Father and the Son as the common source of the blessing for which he prayed. Which hath loved us. Referring particularly to the Father. The love which is referred to is that manifested in redemption, or which is shown us through Christ. See Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9. And hath given us everlasting consolation. Not temporary comfort, but that which will endure for ever. The joys of religion are not like other joys. They soon fade away;--they always terminate at death ;--they cease when trouble comes, when sickness invades the frame, when wealth or friends depart, when disappointment lowers, when the senses by age refuse to minister as they once did to our pleasures. The comforts of religion depend on no such contingencies. They live through all these changes--attend us in sickness, poverty, bereavement, losses, and age; they are with us in death, and they are perpetual and unchanging beyond the grave. And good hope through grace. Rom 5:2 Rom 5:5. Heb 6:19.

Comfort your hearts. 1Thes 3:2; 1Thes 5:11; 1Thes 5:14. The Thessalonians were in the midst of trials, and Paul prayed that they might have the full consolations of their religion.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted the Thessalonians in the former verses, from their election and vocation, he closes the chapter with an exhortation to them to perseverance and constancy in the truth; Therefore, brethren, stand fast.

Observe, 1. The illative particle, therefore that is, because God hath chosen and called you, and given you such assurance of his favour, and such advantages against error and seduction, therefore let it be your care to persevere; assurance of salvation doth not encourage negligence, but engage to greater diligence.

Observe, 2. The duty inferred: stand fast; it is a military word, used by captains to their soldiers, to prevent a cowardly and treacherous revolt; he had been describing a great apostasy that would come, now bids them be upon their guard and stand fast.
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From what he takes encouragement in his prayer--from the consideration of what God had already done for him and them: Who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 2Th 2:16. Here observe,

1 The love of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for; our election, vocation, justification, and salvation, are all owing to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

2. From this fountain in particular all our consolation flows. And the consolation of the saints is an everlasting consolation. The comforts of the saints are not dying things; they shall not die with them. The spiritual consolations God gives none shall deprive them of; and God will not take them away: because he love them with an everlasting love, therefore they shall have everlasting consolation.

3. Their consolation is founded on the hope of eternal life. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and are not only patient, but joyful, in tribulations; and there is good reason for these strong consolations, because the saints have good hope: their hope is

grounded on the love of God, the promise of God, and the experience they have had of the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God, and it is good hope through grace; the free grace and mercy of God are what they hope for, and what their hopes are founded on, and not on any worth or merit of their own.

What it is that he asks of God for them--that he would comfort their hearts, and establish them in every good word and work, 2Th 2:17. God had given them consolations, and he prayed that they might have more abundant consolation. There was good hope, through grace, that they would be preserved, and he prayed that they might be established: it is observable how comfort and establishment are here joined together. Note therefore,

1. Comfort is a means of establishment; for the more pleasure we take in the word, and work, and ways of God, the more likely we shall be to persevere therein. And,

2. Our establishment in the ways of God is a likely means in order to comfort; whereas, if we are wavering in faith, and of a doubtful mind, or if we are halting and faltering in our duty, no wonder if we are strangers to the pleasures and joys of religion. What is it that lies at the bottom of all our uneasiness, but our unsteadiness in religion? We must be established in every good word and work, in the word of truth and the work of righteousness: Christ must be honoured by our good works and good words; and those who are sincere will endeavour to do both, and in so doing they may hope for comfort and establishment, till at length their holiness and happiness be completed.

17 comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted and affectionately exhorted the Thessalonians in the former verses, now concludes with fervent prayer for them.
Where observe, 1. The persons prayed to: our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father.

Where note, (1.) That prayer must be made to God alone, he only knows all our wants, and he alone is capable of hearing and helping us.

Note, (2.) That Jesus Christ is here invocated, together with God the Father; surely his Godhead is hereby proved, for he that is the object both of internal and external worship, is God: our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, &c.

Observe, 2. The ground of audience and success in prayer: Which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.

Where note, (1.) That God's love to sinners, manifested in their redemption by Jesus Christ, giveth great boldness and encouragement in the duty of prayer.

Note, (2.) That God hath given all believers solid ground of substantial and perpetual consolation; he hath given us everlasting consolation.

Note, (3.) That God has given all believers hope, a good or well-grounded hope of eternal life, and this hope is a great encouragement to the duty of prayer.

Observe, 3. The blessings prayed for: increase of comfort, and perseverance or establishment.

(1.) The apostle prays for increase of comfort; Our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father, comfort your hearts.
Where note, that true comfort flows from God, and that the heart is the proper seat of spiritual comfort. Thou hast put gladness into my heart. Ps 4:7

(2.) For establishment and perseverance; And establish you in every good word and work. By every good word, is meant sound doctrine; by every good work, holiness of life.

Learn hence, That establishment in faith and holiness is a great and necessary blessing, earnestly to be sought of God in prayer; as at all times this blessing is to be sought, so especially in unsettled times, that when we are most in danger of falling by temptation, we may be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

2 Thessalonians-3

Pray for Us

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have
free course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:
2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked
men:
for all *men* have not faith.
3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from
evil.

But the Lord is faithful. Though men cannot be trusted, God is faithful to his promises and his purposes. He may always be confided in; and when men are unbelieving, perverse, unkind, and disposed to do us wrong, we may go to him, and we shall always find in him one in whom we may confide. This is an exceedingly interesting declaration, and is a beautiful illustration of the resource which a truly pious mind will feel that it has. We often have occasion to know, to our sorrow, that "all men have not faith." We witness their infidelity. We see how they turn away from the truth. We see many who once gave some evidence that they had faith, abandon it all; and we see many in the church who seem to have no true faith, and who refuse to lend their aid in promoting the cause of religion. In such circumstances, the heart is disposed to despond, and to ask whether religion can be advanced in the midst of so much indifference and opposition? At such times, how consoling is it to be able to turn, as Paul did, to one who is faithful; who never fails us; and who will certainly accomplish his benevolent purposes. Men may be faithless and false, but God never is. They may refuse to embrace the gospel, and set themselves against it, but God will not abandon his great purposes. Many who are in the church may forget their solemn and sacred vows, and may show no fidelity to the cause

of their Saviour, but God himself will never abandon that cause. To a pious mind it affords unspeakably more consolation to reflect that a faithful God is the Friend of the cause which we love, than it would were all men, in and out of the church, its friends. Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. Jn 17:16. Comp. Eph 6:16. The allusion is to the Evil One, or Satan, and the meaning is, that God would keep them from his wiles.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

And we have confidence in the Lord. Not primarily in you, for you have hearts like others, but in the Lord. It is remarkable that when Paul expresses the utmost confidence m Christians that they will live and act as becomes their profession, his reliance is not on anything in themselves, but wholly on the faithfulness of God. He must be a stranger to the human heart who puts much confidence in it even in its best state. Php 1:6, 4:7, 2Ti 1:12. Comp. Jude 1:24, Rev 3:10, Prov 28:26.

A further ground of hope that God would do this for them, seeing they did and would do the things they were commanded, 2Th 3:4. The apostle had this confidence in them, and this was founded upon his confidence in God; for there is otherwise no confidence in man. Have confidence in no man when left to himself [BENGEL].

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

As if he had said, "That we may not be mistaken in this our confidence, we pray that the Lord will direct your hearts into the love of God, which will constrain you to this obedience."
Where note, That to direct man's heart right into the love of God, is the work of God; The Lord directs your heart into the love of God.
Note farther, That these Thessalonians did love God already for the apostle had before commended their work of faith, their labour of love, and yet here he prays, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God, &c.

Learn hence, That the hearts of the holiest and best of saints do stand in need of a more perfect and constant direction into the love of God; as ships that are best rigged need a pilot, so they that love God must

need to have their love ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory.

Observe farther, From the phrase here used, (direct,) that God works upon us as rational creatures; he changeth the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction, not by violence and compulsion: the Spirit's conduct is sweet, yet powerful; it changes the will, but without offering violence to the freedom and liberty of the will; we are not forced but directed; The Lord direct your hearts.--

Again, the Lord direct your hearts; it implies, there are many things that would wreath and bend, crook and turn, our hearts another way, and direct our love to a contrary object, to the world and the flesh; therefore we had need pray with earnestness, The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God; it follows,--and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Note here, 1. The true character of a sincere Christian; he waits for the coming of Christ: such as love Christ fervently, long for his coming greatly.

Note, 2. How patience qualifies those holy ardours, and longing desires, which the saints have to be with Christ: though love sets us upon the wing to be gone, yet patience commands us to wait Christ's own time for going; vehement love needs the allay of patience; most need much patience to die, but some need as much patience to live: therefore says the apostle, The Lord direct your hearts into a patient waiting for Christ; intimating, that the saints of God have great need of patience to enable them to endure that state of distance and separation from Christ so long as they must endure it in this world: well then might the apostles pray on behalf of the Thessalonians, The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and patient waiting for Christ.

Two things of the greatest importance the apostle prays for:--

1. That their hearts may be brought into the love of God, to be in love with God as the most excellent and amiable Being, the best of

all beings; and this is not only most reasonable and necessary in order to our happiness, but is our happiness itself; it is a great part of the happiness of heaven itself, where this love shall be made perfect. We can never attain to this unless God by his grace direct our hearts aright, for our love is apt to go astray after other things. Note, We sustain a great deal of damage by misplacing our affections; it is our sin and our misery that we place our affections upon wrong objects. If God directs our love aright upon himself, the rest of the affections will thereby be rectified.

2. That a patient waiting for Christ may be joined with this love of God. There is no true love of God without faith in Jesus Christ. We must wait for Christ, which supposes our faith in him, that we believe he came once in flesh and will come again in glory: and we must expect this second coming of Christ, and be careful to get ready for it; there must be a patient waiting, enduring with courage and constancy all that we may meet with in the mean time: and we have need of patience, and need of divine grace to exercise Christian patience, the patience of Christ (as some read the word), patience for Christ's sake and after Christ's example.

And into the patient waiting for Christ. Marg., patience of Christ. The marginal reading is in accordance with the Greek, and seems best to express the apostle's meaning. The prayer of the apostle was, that they might have the love of God in their hearts, and "the patience of Christ;" that is, the same patience which Christ evinced in his trials. They were then suffering affliction and persecution. They needed patience, that they might endure their trials in a proper manner. It was natural for the apostle to refer them to the Saviour, the great example of patience, and to pray that they might have the same which he had. That it does not mean that they were to wait patiently for the appearing of Christ, as our translation seems to imply, is quite clear, because the apostle had just been showing them that he would not appear until after a long series of events had occurred.

patient waiting for Christ—rather as Greek, "the patience (endurance) of Christ," namely, which Christ showed [ALFORD]

(2Th 2:4; 1Th 1:3). ESTIUS, however, supports English Version (compare Re 1:9; 3:10). At all events, this grace, "patience," or persevering endurance, is connected with the "hope" (1Th 1:3, 10) of Christ's coming. In ALFORD'S translation we may compare Heb 12:1, 2, "Run with patience (endurance) . . . looking to JESUS . . . who, for the joy that was before Him, endured the cross"; so WE are to endure, as looking for the hope to be realized at His coming (Heb 10:36, 37).

The Obligation to Work

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Now we command you, brethren. The apostle now 2Thes 3:6-12 turns to an important subject--the proper method of treating those who were idle and disorderly in the church. In the previous epistle he had adverted to this subject, but in the mild language of exhortation. When he wrote that epistle he was aware that there were some among them who were disposed to be idle, and he had tenderly exhorted them "to be quiet, and to mind their own business, and to work with their own hands," 1Thes 4:11. But it seems the exhortation, and the example of Paul himself when there, 1Thes 2:9, had not been effectual in inducing them to be industrious. It became, therefore, necessary to use the strong language of command, as he does here, and to require that if they would not work, the church should withdraw from them. What was the original cause of their idleness, is not known. There seems no reason, however, to doubt that it was much increased by their expectation that the Saviour would soon appear, and that the world would soon come to an end. If this was to be so, of what use would it be to labour? Why strive to accumulate property with reference to the wants of a family, or to a day of sickness, or old age? Why should a man build a house that was soon to be burnt up, or why buy a farm which he was so soon to leave? The effect of the expectation of the speedy appearing of the Lord Jesus has always been to induce men to neglect their worldly affairs, and to lead idle lives. Man, naturally disposed to be idle, wants the stimulus of hope that he is labouring for the future

welfare of himself, for his family, or for society, nor will he labour if he believes that the Saviour is about to appear. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.--1Cor 5:4. That ye withdraw yourselves. 1Timm 6:6. This is the true notion of Christian discipline. It is not primarily that of cutting a man off, or denouncing him, or excommunicating him; it is that of withdrawing from him. We cease to have fellowship with him. We do not regard him any longer as a Christian brother. We separate from him. We do not seek to affect him in any other respect; we do not injure his name or standing as a man, or hold him up to reprobation; we do not follow him with denunciation or a spirit of revenge; we simply cease to recognize him as a Christian brother, when he shows that he is no longer worthy to be regarded as such. We do not deliver him over to the civil arm; we do not inflict any positive punishment on him; we leave him unmolested in all his rights as a citizen, a man, a neighbour, a husband, a father, and simply say that he is no longer one of us as a Christian. How different is this from excommunication, as it has been commonly understood! How different from the anathemas fulminated by the Papacy, and the delivering of the heretic over to the civil power! From every brother that walketh disorderly. 1Cor 5:11, also 1Cor 5:12-13. A "disorderly walk" denotes conduct that is in any way contrary to the rules of Christ. The proper idea of the word used here (ατακτως,) is that of soldiers who do not keep the ranks; who are regardless of order; and then who are irregular in any way. The word would include any violation of the rules of Christ on any subject. And not after the tradition which ye received of us. According to the doctrine which we delivered to you. 2Thes 2:15. This shows that by the word "tradition" the apostle did not mean unwritten doctrines handed down from one to another, for he evidently alludes to what he had himself taught them, and his direction is not that that should be handed down by them, but that they should obey it.

we command you—Hereby he puts to a particular test their obedience in general to his commands, which obedience he had recognized in 2Th 3:4. withdraw—literally, "to furl the sails"; as we say, to steer clear of (compare 2Th 3:14). Some had given up labor as though the Lord's day was immediately coming. He had enjoined mild censure of such in 1Th 5:14, "Warn . . . the unruly";

but now that the mischief had become more confirmed, he enjoins stricter discipline, namely, withdrawal from their company (compare 1Co 5:11; 2Jo 10, 11): not a formal sentence of excommunication, such as was subsequently passed on more heinous offenders (as in 1Co 5:5; 1Ti 1:20). He says "brother," that is, professing Christian; for in the case of unprofessing heathen, believers needed not be so strict (1Co 5:10-13). disorderly—Paul plainly would not have sanctioned the order of Mendicant Friars, who reduce such a "disorderly" and lazy life to a system. Call it not an order, but a burden to the community (BENGEL, alluding to the Greek, 2Th 3:8, for "be chargeable," literally, "be a burden"). the tradition—the oral instruction which he had given to them when present (2Th 3:10), and subsequently committed to writing (1Th 4:11, 12). which he received of us—Some oldest manuscripts read, "ye received"; others, "they received." The English Version reading has no very old authority.

(1.) His commands and directions to the whole church regard,

[1.] Their behaviour towards the disorderly persons who were among them, which is thus expressed (2Th 3:6), to withdraw themselves from such, and afterwards to mark that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet not to count him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother. The directions of the apostle are carefully to be observed in our conduct towards disorderly persons. We must be very cautious in church-censures and church-discipline. We must,

First, Note that man who is suspected or charged with not obeying the word of God, or walking contrary thereto, that is, we must have sufficient proof of his fault before we proceed further.

We must, Secondly, Admonish him in a friendly manner; we must put him in mind of his sin, and of his duty; and this should be done privately (Mt 18:15); then, if he will not hear, we must, Thirdly, Withdraw from him, and not keep company with him, that is, we must avoid familiar converse and society with such, for two reasons, namely, that we may not learn his evil ways; for he who follows

vain and idle persons, and keeps company with such, is in danger of becoming like them. Another reason is for the shaming, and so the reforming, of those that offend, that when idle and disorderly persons see how their loose practices are disliked by all wise and good people they may be ashamed of them, and walk more orderly. Love therefore to the persons of our offending brethren, even when we hate their vices, should be the motive of our withdrawing from them; and even those who are under the censures of the church must not be accounted as enemies (2Th 3:15); for, if they be reclaimed and reformed by these censures, they will recover their credit and comfort, and right to church-privileges as brethren.

[2.] Their general conduct and behaviour ought to be according to the good example the apostle and those who were with him had given them: Yourselves know how you ought to follow us, 2Th 3:7. Those who planted religion among them had set a good example before them; and the ministers of the gospel should be ensamples to the flock. It is the duty of Christians not only to walk according to the traditions of the apostles, and the doctrines they preached, but also according to the good example they set before them, to be followers of them so far as they were followers of Christ.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Benediction

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.
The Lord *be* with you all.
17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in
every epistle: so I write.
18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy
[1 Timothy]

1 Timothy-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is* our hope;

Our Saviour. The name Saviour is as applicable to God the rather as to the Lord Jesus Christ, since God is the great Author of salvation. Lk 1:47. Comp. 1Timm 4:10, Tit 2:10, Jude 1:25.

2 Unto Timothy, *my* own son in the faith:
Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord.

That endearing title which our apostle gives to Timothy, he calls him his son, his own son, his own son in the faith because, as some think, converted by him to the Christian faith; others, that he was more thooughly instructed, edified, and and encouraged, by St. Paul, but converted before; possibly also he may call him his son, because he was as assisting to him, as obsequious and observing of him, as a son is to a father, he being a young man, and the apostle now aged, or it may be he calls him his son, because he resembled him in faith and doctrine, preaching and conversation, as a son resembled a father in face and manners.

Consider Timothy as a spiritual son to St. Paul, begotten to the faith by him, and then the note is this, that the ministers of Christ cannot but bear a fervent and affectionate love to those that are their spiritual children, their sons in the faith, and converted to Christ by their ministry; consider him as an assistant to St. Paul, a co-worker and fellow-labourer with him in the work of the gospel, and thus affectionately beloved by him, and we may learn for our instruction, how fervently the ministers of Christ should love one another, speak respectfully of each other, secure the reputation one

of another, strengthen each other's hearts in the work of God. We have little, God knows, very little love from the world: Lord, how sad is it that we should yet have less one for another! See how the heart of St. Paul and his assistant Timothy were knit together in love like father and son, to the great reputation, as well as the successful furtherance of the gospel.

mercy—added here, in addressing Timothy, to the ordinary salutation, "Grace unto you (Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:3, &c.), and peace." In Ga 6:16, "peace and mercy" occur. There are many similarities of style between the Epistle to the Galatians and the Pastoral Epistles (see Introduction); perhaps owing to his there, as here, having, as a leading object in writing, the correction of false teachers, especially as to the right and wrong use of the law (1Ti 1:9). If the earlier date be assigned to First Timothy, it will fall not long after, or before (according as the Epistle to the Galatians was written at Ephesus or at Corinth) the writing of the Epistle to the Galatians, which also would account for some similarity of style. "Mercy" is grace of a more tender kind, exercised towards the miserable, the experience of which in one's own case especially fits for the Gospel MINISTRY. Compare as to Paul himself (1Ti 1:14, 16; 1Co 7:25; 2Co 4:1; Heb 2:17) [BENGEL]. He did not use "mercy" as to the churches, because "mercy" in all its fulness already existed towards them; but in the case of an individual minister, fresh measures of it were continually needed. "Grace" has reference to the sins of men; "mercy" to their misery. God extends His grace to men as they are guilty; His "mercy" to them as they are miserable [TRENCH]. Ministers need more grace than others, to discharge their duty faithfully; and they need more mercy than others, to pardon what is amiss in them: and if Timothy, so eminent a minister, must be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the increase and continuance of it, how much more do we ministers, in these times, who have so little of his excellent spirit!

Warning against False Doctrine

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

That thou mightest charge some. The word charge here--παραγγειλης-- seems to mean more than is commonly implied by the word as used by us. If it had been a single direction or command, it might have been given by Paul himself before he left, but it seems rather to refer to that continuous instruction which would convince these various errorists, and lead them to inculcate only the true doctrine. As they may have been numerous,--as they may have embraced various forms of error, and as they might have had plausible grounds for their belief, this was evidently a work requiring time, and hence Timothy was left to effect this at leisure. It would seem that the wrath which had been excited against Paul had not affected Timothy, but that he was permitted to remain and labour without molestation. It is not certainly known who these teachers were, but they appear to have been of Jewish origin, and to have inculcated the peculiar sentiments of the Jews respecting the law. That it is the great duty, and ought to be the special care, of the ministers of God, that no new or strange doctrine be broached in the church of Christ; I besought thee--that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Neither give heed to fables. fables—legends about the origin and propagation of angels, such as the false teachers taught at Colosse (Col 2:18-23). "Jewish fables" (Tit 1:14). "Profane, and old wives' fables" (1Ti 4:7; 2Ti 4:4). That is, that they should not bestow their attention on fables, or regard such trifles as of importance. The "fables" here referred to were probably the idle and puerile superstitions and conceits of the Jewish Rabbies. The word rendered fable (μυθος) means properly speech or discourse, to and then fable or fiction, or a mystic discourse. Such things abounded among the Greeks as well as the Jews, but it is probable that the latter here are particularly intended. These were composed of frivolous and unfounded stories, which they regarded as of great importance, and which they seem have desired to incorporate with

the teachings of Christianity. Paul, who had been brought up amidst these superstitions, saw at once how they would tend, to draw off the mind from the truth, and would corrupt the true religion. One of the most successful arts of the adversary of souls has been to mingle fable with truth; and when he cannot overthrow the truth by direct opposition, to neutralize it by mingling with it much that is false and frivolous. Ministers should avoid, as much as may be, what will occasion disputes; and would do well to insist on the great and practical points of religion, about which there can be no disputes; for even disputes about great and necessary truths draw off the mind from the main design of Christianity, and eat out the vitals of religion, which consist in practice and obedience as well as in faith, that we may not hold the truth in unrighteousness.

4 neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister
questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do.*

5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart,
and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned:

Now the end of the commandment. Rom 10:4. In order that Timothy might fulfil the design of his appointment, it was necessary that he should have a correct view of the design of the law. The teachers, to whom he refers, insisted much on its obligation and importance; and Paul designs to say that he did not intend to teach that the law was of no consequence, and was not, when properly understood, obligatory. Its nature and use, however, was not correctly understood by them, and hence it was of great importance for Timothy to inculcate correct views of the purpose for which it was given. The word "commandment" here, some have understood of the gospel, (Doddridge ;) others of the particular command which the apostle here gives to Timothy, (Benson, Clarke, and Macknight ;) but it seems more naturally to refer to all that God had commanded--his whole law. As the error of these teachers arose from improper views of the nature and design of law, Paul says that that design should be understood. It was not to produce distinctions and angry contentions, and was not to fetter the minds of Christians with minute and burdensome observances, but it was to produce love. Is charity. On the meaning of this word, 1Cor 13:1. Out of a pure heart. The love which is genuine must proceed from a holy heart. The commandment was not designed to

secure merely the outward expressions of love, but that which had its seat in the heart. And of a good conscience. A conscience free from guilt. Of course there can be no genuine love to God where the dictates of conscience are constantly violated, or where a man knows that he is continually doing wrong. If a man wishes to have the evidence of love to God, he must keep a good conscience. All pretended love, where a man knows that he is living in sin, is mere hypocrisy. And of faith unfeigned. Undissembled confidence in God. This does seem to be intended specifically of faith in the Lord Jesus, but it means that all true love to God, such as this law would produce, must be based on confidence in him. How can any one have love to him who has no confidence in him? Can we exercise love to a professed friend in whom we have no confidence? Faith, then, is as necessary under the law as it is under the gospel.

6 from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

From which some having swerved. Marg., not aiming at. The word here used αστοχεω-- means properly, to miss the mark; to err; and then, to swerve from. Comp. 1Timm 6:21, 2Ti 2:18. It does not mean that they had ever had that from which they are said to have swerved--for it does not follow that a man who misses a mark had ever hit it--but merely that they failed of the things referred to, and had turned to vain talk. The word "which" (ων,) in the plural, refers not to the law, but to the things enumerated --a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith.

Have turned aside unto vain jangling. Vain talk, empty declamation, discourses without sense. The word here used does not mean contention or strife, but that kind of discourse which is not founded in good sense. They were discourses on their pretended distinctions in the law; on their traditions and ceremonies; on their useless genealogies, and on the fabulous statements which they had appended to the law of Moses.

Desiring to be teachers of the law. That is, to have the credit and reputation of being well versed in the law of Moses, and qualified to explain it to others. This was a high honour among the Jews, and these teachers laid claim to the same distinction. Understanding

neither what they say. That is, they do not understand the true nature and design of that law which they attempt to explain to others. This was true of the Jewish teachers, and equally so of those in the church at Ephesus, who attempted to explain it. They appear to hare explained the law on the principles which commonly prevailed among the Jews, and hence their instructions tended greatly to corrupt the faith of the gospel. They made affirmations of what they knew nothing of, and though they made confident asseverations, yet they often pertained to things about which they had no knowledge. One needs only a slight acquaintance with the manner of teaching among Jewish Rabbies, or with the things found in their traditions, to see the accuracy of this statement of the apostle. A sufficient illustration of this may be found in Allen's "Modern Judaism."

7 desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they
say, nor whereof they affirm.

8 But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully;

9 knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for
the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for
unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of
mothers, for manslayers,

Knowing this. That is, "If any one knows, or admits this, he has the proper view of the design of the law." The apostle does not refer particularly to himself as knowing or conceding this, for then he would have used the plural form of the participle, (see the Greek;) but he means that any one, who had just views of the law, would see that that which he proceeds to specify was its real purpose. The law is not made for a righteous man.--There has been great variety in the interpretation of this passage. Some suppose that the law here refers to the ceremonial laws of Moses, (Clarke, Rosenmuller, Abbot;) others to the denunciatory part of the law, (Doddridge and Bloomfield;) and others that it means that the chief purpose of the law was to restrain the wicked. It seems clear, however, that the apostle does not refer merely to the ceremonial law, for he specifies that which condemns the unholy and profane; the murderers of fathers and mothers; liars and perjured persons. It was not the ceremonial law which condemned these things, but the moral law. It cannot be supposed, moreover, that the apostle meant, to say that

the law was not binding on a righteous man, or that he was under no obligation to obey it--for he everywhere teaches that the moral law is obligatory on all mankind. To suppose also that a righteous man is released from the obligation to obey the law, that is, to do right, is an absurdity. Nor does he seem to mean, as Macknight supposes, that the law was not given for the purpose of justifying a righteous man--for this was originally one of its designs. Had man always obeyed it, he would have been justified by it. The meaning seems to be, that the purpose of the law was not to fetter and perplex those who were righteous, and who aimed to do their duty and to please God, It was not intended to produce a spirit of servitude and bondage. As the Jews interpreted it, it did this, and this interpretation appears to have been adopted by the teachers at Ephesus, to whom Paul refers. The whole tendency of their teaching was to bring the soul into a state of bondage, and to make religion a condition of servitude. Paul teaches, on the other hand, that religion was a condition of freedom, and that the main purpose of the law was not to fetter the minds of the righteous by numberless observances and minute regulations, but that it was to restrain the wicked from sin. This is the case with all law. No good man feels himself fettered and manacled by wholesome laws, nor does he feel that the purpose of law is to reduce him to a state of servitude. It is only the wicked who have this feeling--and in this sense the law is made for a man who intends to do wrong.

law is not made for a righteous man—not for one standing by faith in the righteousness of Christ put on him for justification,and imparted inwardly by the Spirit for sanctification. "One not forensically amenable to the law" [ALFORD]. For sanctification, the law gives no inward power to fulfil it; but ALFORD goes too far in speaking of the righteous man as "not morally needing the law." Doubtless, in proportion as he is inwardly led by the Spirit, the justified man needs not the law, which is only an outward rule (Ro 6:14; Ga 5:18, 23). But as the justified man often does not give himself up wholly to the inward leading of the Spirit, he morally needs the outward law to show him his sin and God's requirements. The reason why the ten commandments have no power to condemn

the Christian, is not that they have no authority over him, but because Christ has fulfilled them as our surety (Ro 10:4).

10 for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

The Jews used it unlawfully, as an engine to divide the church, a cover to the malicious opposition they made to the gospel of Christ; they set it up for justification, and so used it unlawfully. We must not therefore think to set it aside, but use it lawfully, for the restraint of sin. The abuse which some have made of the law does not take away the use of it; but, when a divine appointment has been abused, call it back to its right use and take away the abuses, for the law is still very useful as a rule of life; though we are not under it as under a covenant of works, yet it is good to teach us what is sin and what is duty. It is not made for a righteous man, that is, it is not made for those who observe it; for, if we could keep the law, righteousness would be by the law (Ga 3:21): but it is made for wicked persons, to restrain them, to check them, and to put a stop to vice and profaneness. It is the grace of God that changes men's hearts; but the terrors of the law may be of use to tie their hands and restrain their tongues. A righteous man does not want those restraints which are necessary for the wicked; or at least the law is not made primarily and principally for the righteous, but for sinners of all sorts, whether in a greater or less measure, 1Ti 1:9,10. In this black roll of sinners, he particularly mentions breaches of the second table, duties which we owe to our neighbour; against the fifth and sixth commandments, murderers of fathers and mothers, and manslayers; against the seventh, whoremongers, and those that defile themselves with mankind; against the eighth, menstealers; against the ninth, liars and perjured persons; and then he closes his account with this, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. Some understand this as an institution of a power in the civil magistrate to make laws against such notorious sinners as are specified, and to see those laws put in execution.

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Paul's Thankfulness for Mercy

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that
he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;
13 who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious:
but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

no matter what a man is required to give up in order to become a minister of the gospel, he should be thankful to Christ for putting him into the office. A minister when he comes to die, feels that the highest favour which heaven has conferred on him has been in turning his feet away from the paths of ambition, and the pursuits of ease or gain, and leading him to that holy work to which he has been enabled to consecrate his life.

Who hath enabled me. Who has given me ability or strength for this service. The apostle traced to the Lord Jesus the fact that he was in the ministry at all, and all the ability which he had to perform the duties of thai holy office. It is not necessary here to suppose, as many have done, that he refers to miraculous power conferred on him, but he makes the acknowledgment which any faithful minister would do, that all the strength which he has to perform the duties of his office is derived from Christ. Comp. Jn 15:5; 1Cor 15:10.

He counted me faithful; and none are counted faithful but those whom He makes so. Christ's ministers are trusty servants, and they ought to be so, having so great a trust committed to them.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and
love which is in Christ Jesus.
15 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am
chief.

This is a faithful saying. Gr., "Faithful is the word," or doctrine--ολογος. This verse has somewhat the character of a parenthesis, and seems to have been thrown into the midst of the narrative because the mind of the apostle was full of the subject. He had said that he, a great sinner, had obtained mercy. This naturally led him to think of the purpose for which Christ came into the world--to

save sinners--and to think how strikingly that truth had been illustrated in his own case, and how that case had shown that it was worthy the attention of all. The word rendered "saying," means, in this place, doctrine, position, or declaration. The word "faithful," means assuredly true; it was that which might be depended on, or on which reliance might be placed. The meaning is, that the doctrine that Christ came to save sinners might be depended on as certainly true. Comp. 2Ti 2:11, Tit 3:8. And worthy of all acceptation. Worthy to be embraced or believed by all. This is so because

(1.) all are sinners and need a Saviour. All, therefore, ought to welcome a doctrine which shows them how they may be saved.

(2.) Because Christ died for all. If he had died for only a part of the race, and could save only a part, it could not be said, with any propriety, that the doctrine was worthy of the acceptance of "all". If that were so, what had it to do with all? How could all be interested in it, or benefited by it? If medicine had been provided for only a part of the patients in a hospital, it could not be said that the announcement of such a fact was worthy the attention of all. It would be highly worthy the attention of those for whom it was designed, but there would be a part who would have nothing to do with it; and why should they concern themselves about it? But if it were provided for each one, then each one would have the highest interest in it. So, if salvation has been provided for me, it is a matter claiming my profoundest attention; and the same is true of every human being. If not provided for me, I have nothing to do with it. It does not concern me at all.

(3.) The manner in which the provision of salvation has been made in the gospel is such as to make it worthy of universal acceptation. It provides for the complete pardon of sin, and the restoration of the soul to God. This is done in a way that is honourable to God--maintaining his law and his justice; and, at the same time, it is in a way that is honourable to man. He is treated afterwards as a friend of God and an heir of life. He is raised up from his degradation, and restored to the favour of his Maker. If man were himself to

suggest a way of salvation, he could think of none that would be more honourable to God and to himself; none that would do so much to maintain the law, and to elevate him from all that now degrades him. What higher honour can be conferred on man than to have his salvation sought as an object of intense and earnest desire by one so great and glorious as the Son of God?

(4.) It is worthy of all acceptance, from the nature of the salvation itself. Heaven is offered, with all its everlasting glories, through the blood of Christ--and is not this worthy of universal acceptation? Men would accept of a coronet or crown; a splendid mansion, or a rich estate; a present of jewels and gold, if freely tendered to them; but what trifles are these compared with heaven! If there is anything that is worthy of universal acceptation, it is heaven, for all will be miserable unless they enter there. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The great and peculiar doctrine of the gospel. He "came into the world." He, therefore, had a previous existence. He came. He had, therefore, an object in coming. It makes his gospel more worthy of acceptation, that he had an intention, a plan, a wish, in thus coming into the world. He "came" when he was under no necessity of coming; he came to save, not to destroy; to reveal mercy, not to denounce judgment; to save sinners--the poor, the lost, the wandering, not to condemn them; he came to restore them to the favour of God, to raise them up from their degradation, and to bring them to heaven. Of whom I am chief. Gr., first. The word is used to denote eminence, and it means that he occupied the first rank among sinners. There were none who surpassed him. This does not mean that he had been the greatest of sinners in all respects, but that in some respects he had been so great a sinner, that, on the whole, there were none who had surpassed him. That to which he particularly refers was doubtless the part which he had taken in putting the saints to death; but in connexion with this, he felt, undoubtedly, that he had by nature a heart eminently prone to sin. See Rom

7. Except in the matter of persecuting the saints, the youthful Saul of Tarsus appears to have been eminently moral, and his outward conduct was framed in accordance with the strictest rules of the

law, Php 3:6, Acts 26:4,6. After his conversion, he never attempted to extenuate his conduct, or excuse himself. He was always ready, in all circles, and in all places, to admit, to its fullest extent, the fact that he was a sinner. So deeply convinced was he of the truth of this, that he bore about with him the constant impression that he was eminently unworthy; and hence he does not say merely that he had been a sinner of most aggravated character, but he speaks of it as something that always pertained to him--" of whom I am chief." We may remark

(1.) that a true Christian will always be ready to admit that his past life has been evil;

(2.) that this will become the abiding and steady conviction of the soul; and

(3.) that an acknowledgment that we are sinners is not inconsistent with evidence of piety, and with high attainments in it. The most eminent Christian has the deepest sense of the depravity of his own heart, and of the evil of his past life.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Howbeit for this came. That is, this was on, of the causes, or this was a leading reason. We are not to suppose that this was the only one. God had other ends to answer by his conversion than this; but this was one of the designs why he was pardoned-- that there might be for all ages a permanent proof that sins of the deepest dye might be forgiven. It was well to have one such example at the outset, that a doubt might never arise about the possibility of forgiving great transgressors. The question thus would be settled for ever. That in me first. Not first in the order of time, as our translation would seem to imply, but that in me the first or chief of sinners ενεμοιπρωτω he might show an example. The idea is, that he sustained the first rank as a sinner, and that Jesus Christ designed to show mercy to him as such, in order that the possibility of pardoning the greatest sinners might be evinced, and that no one might afterwards despair of salvation on account of the greatness

of his crimes. Might show forth all long-suffering. The highest possible degree of forbearance, in order that a case might never occur about which there could be any doubt. It was shown by his example that the Lord Jesus could evince any possible degree of patience, and could have mercy on the greatest imaginable offenders. For a pattern. υποτυπωσιν. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 2Ti 1:13, where it is rendered form. It properly means a form, sketch, or imperfect delineation. Then it denotes a pattern or example, and here it means that the case of Paul was an example for the encouragement of sinners in all subsequent times. It was that to which they might look when they desired forgiveness and salvation. It furnished all the illustration and argument which they would need to show that they might be forgiven. It settled the question for ever that the greatest sinners might be pardoned; for as he was "the chief of sinners," it proved that a case could not occur which was beyond the possibility of mercy. Which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. All might learn from the mercy shown to him that salvation could be obtained. From this verse we may learn

(1.) that no sinner should despair of mercy. No one should say that he is so great a sinner that he cannot be forgiven. One who regarded himself as the "chief" of sinners was pardoned, and pardoned for the very purpose of illustrating this truth, that any sinner might be saved. His example stands as the illustration of this to all ages; and were there no other, any sinner might now come and hope for mercy. But there are other examples. Sinners of all ranks and descriptions have been pardoned. Indeed, there is no form of depravity of which men can be guilty, in respect to which there are not instances where just such offenders have been forgiven. The persecutor may reflect that great enemies of the cross like him have been pardoned; the profane man and the blasphemer, that many such have been forgiven; the murderer, the thief, the sensualist, that many of the same character have found mercy, and have been admitted to heaven.

(2.) The fact that great sinners have been pardoned, is a proof that others of the same description may be also. The same mercy that

saved them can save us--for mercy is not exhausted by being frequently exercised. The blood of atonement which has cleansed so many can cleanse us--for its efficacy is not destroyed by being once applied to the guilty soul. Let no one then despair of obtaining mercy because he feels that his sins are too great to be forgiven. Let him look to the past, and remember what God has done. Let him remember the case of Saul of Tarsus; let him think of David and Peter; ... and thousands like them, who have found mercy; and in their examples let him see a full proof that God is willing to save any sinner, no matter how vile, provided he is penitent and believing.

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Now unto the King eternal. This ascription of praise is offered to God in view of the mercy which he had shown to so great a sinner. It is the outbreak of that grateful emotion which swelled his bosom, and which would not be denied expression, when Paul recalled his former life and the mercy of God to his soul. It somewhat interrupts indeed the train of his remarks, but the heart was so full that it demanded utterance. It is just an instance of the joy and gratitude which fill the soul of a Christian when he is led along in a train of reflections which conduct him to the recollection of his former sin and danger, and to the fact that he has obtained mercy and has now the hope of heaven. The apostle Paul not unfrequently, in accordance with a mode of writing that was common among the Hebrews, interposes an expression of praise in the midst of his reasonings. Comp. Rom 1:25, 2Cor 11:31.

Be honour. Let there be all the respect and veneration shown to him which is his due. And glory. Praise. Let him be praised by all for ever. Amen. So be it; an expression of strong affirmation. Jn 3:3. Here it is used to denote the solemn assent of the heart to the sentiment conveyed by the words used. Mt 6:13, 1Cor 14:16.

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Mightest war a good warfare. The Christian life is often compared to a warfare or struggle for victory, comp. Eph 6:10-17, 1Cor 9:7

2Cor 10:4, and the services of the Christian ministry especially are likened to those of a soldier, 2Ti 2:3,4, 4:7. The meaning here is, that he should contend with earnestness as a Christian and a minister in that holy service in which he was engaged, and endeavour to secure the victory. He "wars a good warfare" who is engaged in a righteous cause; who is faithful to his commander and to his post; who is unslumbering in observing the motions of the enemy, and fearless in courage in meeting them; who never forsakes his standard, and who continues thus faithful till the period of his enlistment has expired, or till death. Such a soldier the Christian minister should be.

19 holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck:

Holding faith. Fidelity to the cause in which you are enlisted as a good soldier should do. This does not mean, as it seems to me, that Timothy should hold to the system of doctrines revealed in the gospel, but that he should have that fidelity which a good soldier ought to have. He should not betray his trust. He should adhere to the cause of his Master with unwavering steadfastness. This would include, of course, a belief of the truth, but this is not the leading idea in the phrase. And a good conscience. Acts 23:1. A good conscience, as well as fidelity, is necessary in the service of the Redeemer. A good conscience is that which is well informed in regard to what is right, and where its dictates are honestly followed. Which some having put away. That is, which good conscience some have put from them, or in other words, have not followed its dictates The truth thus taught is, that men make shipwreck of their faith by not keeping a good conscience. They love sin. They follow the leadings of passion. They choose to indulge in carnal propensities. As a matter of course, they must, if they will do this, reject and renounce the gospel. Men become infidels because they wish to indulge in sin. No man can be a sensualist, and yet love that gospel which enjoins purity of life. If men would keep a good conscience, the way to a steady belief in the gospel would be easy. If men will not, they must expect sooner or later to be landed in infidelity. Concerning faith. In respect to the whole subject of faith. They are unfaithful to God, and they reject the whole system of the gospel. "Faith" is sometimes used to denote the gospel--as faith is

the principal thing in the gospel. Have made shipwreck. There is an entire destruction of faith--as a ship is wholly ruined that strikes on a rock and sinks.

Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander. Hymeneus is nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament, except in 2Ti 2:17, where he is mentioned in connection with Philetus as a very dangerous man. An Alexander is mentioned in Acts 19:33, which some have supposed to be the same as the one referred to here. It is not certain, however, that the same person is intended. Acts 19:33. In 2Ti 4:14, Alexander the coppersmith is mentioned as one who had done the apostle "much evil," and there can be little doubt that he is the same person who is referred to here. One of the doctrines which Hymeneus held was that the "resurrection was past already," 2Ti 2:18; but what doctrine Alexander held is unknown. It is not improbable, as he is mentioned here in connection with Hymeneus, that he maintained the same opinion; and, in addition to that, he appears to have been guilty of some personal injury to the apostle. Both also were guilty of blasphemy. Whom I have delivered unto Satan. On the meaning of this expression, 1Cor 5:5. That they may learn not to blaspheme. It cannot be supposed that Satan would undertake to teach them not to blaspheme, or that Paul put them under him as an instructor on that subject. The instructions of Satan tend rather to teach his followers to blaspheme, and none in his school fail to be apt scholars. The meaning here is, that Paul excommunicated them, and not improbably brought upon them, by giving them over to Satan, some physical maladies, that they might be reformed. Comp. 1Cor 5:5. It is not entirely clear what is meant by blaspheme in this place. Comp. 1Timm 1:13 It cannot be supposed that they were open and bold blasphemers, for such could not have maintained a place in the church, but rather that they held doctrines which the apostle regarded as amounting to blasphemy; that is, doctrines which were in fact a reproach on the Divine character. There are many doctrines held by men which are in fact a reflection on the Divine character, and which amount to the same thing as blasphemy. A blasphemer openly expresses views of the Divine character which are a reproach to God; an errorist expresses the same thing in another way--by teaching as true about God that

which represents him in a false light, and to suppose which, in fact, is a reproach. The spirit with which this is done in the two cases may be different; the thing itself may be the same. Let us be careful that we hold no views about God which are reproachful to him, and which, though we do not express it in words, may lead us to blaspheme him in our hearts.

Holding faith and a good conscience, 1Ti 1:19. Those that put away a good conscience will soon make shipwreck of faith. Let us live up to the directions of a renewed enlightened conscience, and keep conscience void of offence (Ac 24:16), a conscience not debauched by any vice or sin, and this will be a means of preserving us sound in the faith; we must look to the one as well a the other, for the mystery of the faith must be held in a pure conscience, 1Ti 3:9. As for those who had made shipwreck of the faith, he specifies two, Hymeneus and Alexander, who had made a profession of the Christian religion, but had quitted that profession; and Paul had delivered them to Satan, had declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and, as some think, had, by an extraordinary power, delivered them to be terrified or tormented by Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme not to contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ and the good ways of the Lord. Observe, The primary design of the highest censure in the primitive church was to prevent further sin and to reclaim the sinner. In this case it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1Co 5:5. Observe,

(1.) Those who love the service and work of Satan are justly delivered over to the power of Satan: Whom I have delivered over to Satan.

(2.) God can, if he please, work by contraries: Hymeneus and Alexander are delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, when one would rather think they would learn of Satan to blaspheme the more.

(3.) Those who have put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, will not stick at any thing, blasphemy not excepted.

(4.) Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for, if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.

20 of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered
unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

St. Paul had exhorted Timothy in the foregoing verse to war a good warfare; here he directs him to two weapons which he would have him use in that warfare, namely, faith, and a good conscience; neither will do alone: not faith without a good conscience, nor a good conscience without faith; hold both faith in thy teaching, and a good conscience in thy practice: hold them fast; for faith stands with a good conscience, and falls with a bad one.

Learn hence, That in the most perilous times, when some lose their graces and comforts, their present peace and future hopes, that we may not lose what we have on earth, and what we look for in heaven, one continual care must be, to get and keep, to have and hold, faith and a good conscience.

And mark the encouragement given to exercise this care; some, through the neglect of it, concerning faith have made shipwreck. Our life is a sea-faring condition; a good conscience is the ark in which we are secure, made by God's own direction, (as was that of Noah,) and pitched within and without, as was his: a window it had in the top to let in the light of heaven, but not the least crack or crevice below, to let in a drop of guilt, or endanger its own safety: it shoots off all the showers that fall downwards, and all the floods that rage upwards. Such a security is an innocent mind and a clear conscience; but if we do not hold fast a good conscience, but let it go, we have seen the last of faith; it sinks, it shipwrecks presently. Concerning faith have made shipwreck.

That is, of the number of those who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience are these two men. They made shipwreck

of faith. But how: by renouncing Christianity expressly? No, but implicitly, by denying the resurrection, and maintaining such doctrines as utterly subverted and totally overthrew the faith.
Whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.
That is, whom I have inflicted the church's censure of excommunication upon, cast them out of the church, and delivered to Satan as God's executioner, who oft-times tormented the person with greivous diseases and bodily pains, called elsewhere, the destruction of the flesh, 1Cor 5:5

Learn hence, That excommunication rightly administered is a very solemn ordinance, a shutting out of heaven him who is justly cast out of the church's communion here on earth.

But observe, The charitable intention of the apostle in denouncing this sentence of excommunication; it was, That they might learn not to blaspheme.
Mark, it was none of Satan's desire, but the apostle's that they might learn not to blaspheme. Satan was then God's executioner, when the church wanted the countenance of the Christian magistrate; and his design was destruction, but the apostle's was reformation; not to ruin, but reclaim.

Learn, That the end of the church's censure, in particular if excommunication, is not to serve to the destruction of the censured, much less to the private revenge of the censurer; but to reform and reclaim the offender, that others may be warned, and the infection stayed: Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

1 Timothy-2

Instructions concerning Prayer

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men;

First of all. That is, as the first duty to be enjoined; the thing that is to be regarded with primary concern. Comp. Lk 12:1; 2Pet 1:20. It does not mean that this was to be the first thing in public worship in the order of time, but that it was to be regarded as a duty of primary importance. The duty of praying for the salvation of the whole world was not to be regarded as a subordinate and secondary thing. Supplications. It is not entirely easy to mark the difference in the meaning of the words used here, and it is not essential. They all relate to prayer, and refer only to the different parts of prayer, or to distinct classes of thought and desire which come before the mind in pleading for others. On the difference between the words supplications and prayers, Heb 5:7. Intercessions. The noun used occurs only in this place and in 1Timm 4:5, of this epistle. The verb, however (εντυγχανω) occurs in Acts 25:24, Rom 8:27,34, 11:2, Heb 7:25. See the meaning explained in the Rom 8:26; Heb 7:25. There is one great Intercessor between God and man, who pleads for our salvation on the ground of what he himself has done, but we are permitted to intercede for others, not on the ground of any merit which they or we possess, but on the ground of the merit of the great Advocate and Intercessor. It is an inestimable privilege to be permitted to plead for the salvation of our fellow-men. Giving of thanks. That is, in behalf of others. We ought to give thanks for the mercy of God to ourselves; it is right and proper also that we should give thanks for the goodness of God to others. We should render praise that there is a way of salvation provided; that no one is excluded from the offer of mercy; and that God is using so many means to call lost sinners to himself. For all men. Prayers should be made for all men--for all need the grace and mercy of God; thanks should be rendered for all, for all may be saved. Does not this direction imply that Christ died for all mankind? How could we give thanks in their behalf if there were no mercy for them, and no way had been provided by which they could be saved? It may

be observed here, that the direction to pray and to give thanks for all men, showed the large and catholic nature of Christianity. It was opposed entirely to the narrow and bigoted feelings of the Jews, who regarded the whole Gentile world as excluded from covenant mercies, and as having no offer of life. Christianity threw down all these barriers, and all men are on a level; and since Christ has died for all, there is ample ground for thanksgiving and praise in behalf of the whole human race.

For kings. On the respect due to rulers, Rom 13:1-7. The meaning here is, that while all men should be the subjects of prayer, those should be particularly remembered before the throne of grace who are in authority. The reason is, that so much depends on their character and plans; that the security of life, liberty, and property, depends so much on them. God has power to influence their hearts, and to incline them to what is just and equal; and hence we should pray that a Divine influence may descend upon them. The salvation of a king is of itself of no more importance than that of a peasant or a slave; but the welfare of thousands may depend on him, and hence he should be made the special subject of prayer. All that are in authority. Marg., "or, eminent place." This does not necessarily mean those who hold office, but refers to any of elevated rank. The happiness of all who are under their control depends greatly on them, and hence we should pray for them that they may be converted men, and inclined to do that which is right. That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. That their hearts may be so inclined to what is right that they may protect us in the enjoyment of religion, and that we may not be opposed or harassed by persecution. This does not mean that their protection would dispose us to lead quiet and peaceful lives, but that under their protection we may be saved from oppression on account of our religion. Christians are disposed of themselves to be peaceful and orderly; they ask of their rulers only that they may not be harassed in the enjoyment of their rights. In all godliness and honesty. In the practice of all our duties towards God, and of all the duties which we owe to men. The word godliness here denotes piety--or the duty which we owe to God; the word honesty refers to our duties to our fellow-men. The Christian asks from civil rulers such protection

that he may be enabled quietly to perform both these classes of duties.

In praying for our governors, we take the most likely course to lead a peaceable and quiet life. The Jews at Babylon were commanded to seek the peace of the city whither the Lord had caused them to be carried captives, and to pray to the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof they should have peace, Jer 29:7. 6. If we would lead a peaceable and quiet life, we must live in all godliness and honesty; we must do our duty to God and man. He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it, 1Pe 3:10,11. Now the reason he gives for this is because this is good in the sight of God our Saviour; that is, the gospel of Christ requires this. That which is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour we should do, and should abound in.

2 for kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Who will have all men to be saved. That is, it is in accordance with his nature, his feelings, his desires. The word will cannot be taken here in the absolute sense, denoting a decree like that by which he willed the creation of the world, for then it would certainly be done. But the word is often used to denote a desire, wish, or what is in accordance with the nature of any one. Thus it may be said of God that he "wills" that his creatures may be happy--because it is in accordance with his nature, and because he has made abundant provision for their happiness--though it is not true that he wills it in the sense that he exerts his absolute power to make them happy. God wills that sickness should be relieved, and sorrow mitigated, and that the oppressed should go free, because it is agreeable to his nature; though it is not true that he wills it in the sense that he exerts his absolute power to produce it. A parent wills the welfare of his child. It is in accordance with his nature, his feelings, his desires; and he makes every needful arrangement for it. If the child is not virtuous and happy, it is his own fault. So God wills that all men should be saved. It would be in accordance with his benevolent nature. He has made ample provision for it. He uses all proper means to secure their salvation.

He uses no positive means to prevent it, and if they are not saved it will be their own fault. For places in the New Testament where the word here translated "will" (θελω) means to desire or wish, Lk 8:20, 23:8, Jn 16:19; Gal 4:20, Mk 7:24, 1Cor 7:7, 11:3, 14:5, Mt 15:28. This passage cannot mean, as many have supposed, that God wills that all kinds of men should be saved, or that some sinners of every rank and class may be saved, because

(1.) the natural and obvious interpretation of the language is opposed to such a sense. The language expresses the desire that "all men" should be saved, and we should not depart from the obvious sense of a passage unless necessity requires it.

(2.) Prayer and thanksgiving 1Timm 2:1 are directed to be offered, not for some of all ranks and conditions, but for all mankind. No exception is made, and no direction is given that we should exclude any of the race from the expressions of our sympathy, and from an interest in our supplications. The reason given here for that prayer is, that God desires that all men should be saved. But how could this be a reason for praying for all, if it means that God desired only the salvation of some of all ranks?

(3.) In 1Timm 2:5,6, the apostle gives reasons showing that God wished the salvation of all men, and those reasons are such as to prove that the language here is to be taken in the most unlimited sense. Those reasons are,

(a) that there is one God over all, and one Mediator between God and men--showing that God is the Father of all, and has the same interest in all; and

(b) that Christ gave himself a ransom for all--showing that God desired their salvation. This verse proves

(1.) that salvation is provided for all --for if God wished all men to be saved, he would undoubtedly make provision for their salvation; and if he had not made such provision, it could not be

said that he desired their salvation, since no one can doubt that he has power to provide for the salvation of all;

(2.) that salvation should be offered to all men--for if God desires it, it is right for his ministers to announce that desire, and if he desires it, it is not proper for them to announce anything contrary to this;

(3.) that men are to blame if they are not saved. If God did not wish their salvation, and if he had made no provision for it, they could not be to blame if they rejected the gospel. If God wishes it, and has made provision for it, and they are not saved, the sin must be their own--and it is a great sin, for there is no greater crime which a man can commit than to destroy his own soul, and to make himself the eternal enemy of his Maker.

3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Our apostle subjoins his reasons for our praying for all men, because Christ came into the world to save all men, 1Tim 1:15 Because it is the desire of God, as well as the design of Christ, that all men should be saved, and because such prayers are good and acceptable in the sight of God.

Learn hence, 1. That to pray for all men, as well enemies as friends, especially and particularly for rulers and magistrates, is good, acceptable, and agreeable to Almighty God, as all acts of obedience to his commanding will are: This is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

Learn, 2. That it is not only all sorts of men that God and Christ desire should be saved, but our Lord willed, together with his Father, the salvation of all men in general, so far as to make a sacrifice sufficient for all, if they repent and believe, and to offer a general pardon to all on condition of acceptance, and to send his ministers amongst all with the word of reconciliation, accompanying it with an hearty desire that all would accept of it; in short, what Christ offered to all, he undoubtedly purchased for all; but he offers to all pardon and life upon condition of

acceptance, therefore he is so far willing that all men should be saved.

Learn, 3. The means and method by which and in which God would have all men to be saved, namely, by coming to the knowledge of the truth; it is evidently false then, which some confidently affirm, that a man may be saved in any religion: no, he cannot come to salvation but by the knowledge of the truth; without the knowledge of God, without faith in Christ, where he has been revealed, and without obedience to the gospel, where it has been made known, there is no possibility of salvation; God would have all men to be saved, by coming to the knowledge of the truth.

One reason why all men are to be prayed for is because there is one God, and that God bears a good will to all mankind. There is one God (1Ti 2:5), and one only, there is no other, there can be no other, for there can be but one infinite. This one God will have all men to be saved; he desires not the death and destruction of any (Eze 33:11), but the welfare and salvation of all. Not that he has decreed the salvation of all, for then all men would be saved; but he has a good will to the salvation of all, and none perish but by their own fault, Mt 23:37. He will have all to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, to be saved in the way that he has appointed and not otherwise. It concerns us to get the knowledge of the truth, because that is the way to be saved; Christ is the way and the truth, and so he is the life.

"Imitate God." Since He wishes that all should be saved, do you also wish it; and if you wish it, pray for it. For prayer is the instrument of effecting such things [CHRYSOSTOM]. Paul does not say, "He wishes to save all"; for then he would have saved all in matter of fact; but "will have all men to be saved," implies the possibility of man's accepting it (through God's prevenient grace) or rejecting it (through man's own perversity). Our prayers ought to include all, as God's grace included all

4 who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God. This is a reason for offering prayer for all men, and for the declaration 1Timm 2:4 that God desires that all men should be saved. The reason is founded in the fact that he is the common Father of all the race, and that he must have the same desire for the welfare of all his children. He has made them of one blood, Acts 17:26, and he must have the same interest in the happiness of all. Comp. Eph 4:6; Rom 3:30. And one Mediator between God and men. Gal 3:19, Gal 3:20; Heb 9:15. This also is given as a reason why prayer should be offered for all, and a proof that God desires their salvation. The argument is, that there is the same Mediator between God and all men. He is not the Mediator between God and a part of the human race, but between "God and men," implying that he desired the salvation of the race. Whatever love there was in giving the Mediator at all, was love for all the race: whatever can be argued from that about the interest which God has in man, is proof of his interest in the race at large. It is proper, therefore, to pray for all. It may be remarked here that there is but one Mediator. There is not one for kings and another for their subjects; one for the rich and another for the poor; one for the master and another for the slave. All are on the same level, and the servant may feel that, in the gift of a Mediator, God regarded him with the same interest that he did his master. It may be added, also, that the doctrine of the Papists, that the saints or the Virgin Mary may act as mediators to procure blessings for us, is false. There is but "one Mediator;" and but one is necessary. Prayer offered to the "saints," or to the "Virgin," is idolatry; and, at the same time, removes the one great Mediator from the office which he alone holds, of making intercession with God. The man Christ Jesus. Jesus was truly and properly a man, having a perfect human body and soul, and is often called a man in the New Testament. But this does not prove that he was not also divine--any more than his being called God, Jn 1:1, 20:28, Rom 9:5, 1Jn 5:20 Heb 1:8, proves that he was not also a man. The use of the word man here was probably designed to intimate that, though he was divine, it was in his human nature that we are to consider him as discharging the office. Doddridge.

5 For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

The apostle's argument runs thus: We ought to pray for all, because there is one God who is good to all, and one Mediator between God and mankind, who took upon him the common nature of all men, and gave himself a satisfactory and sufficient ransom for all, which was in due time testified and borne witness to by us his apostles.

Learn hence, 1. That the only way of friendly intercourse between God and fallen man, is by and through a Mediator. God cannot look upon fallen men out of a Mediator, but as rebels, traitors, and objects of his vindictive wrath; nor can fallen man, without a Mediator, look up to God, but as a provoked majesty, an angry judge, and a consuming fire.

Learn, 2. That there is no other Mediator between God and man, but Jesus Christ, who was both God and man; for though the apostle calls him the Man Christ Jesus, this is not added to exclude the divine nature from the Mediatorship, but emphatically to declare that nature in which he gave himself a ransom for us; the human nature is the matter of our ransom; the divine nature gave worth and value to it; Christ suffered being man, and satisfied being God.

Learn, 3. That this one Mediator, Jesus Christ, gave himself a ransom for all; whoever perishes under the gospel, it is not because no ransom was paid for him, nor because it was not sufficient for him, for it is most notorious that God has issued forth an universal act of grace, offering pardon of sin and eternal salvation to all men without exception, living under the gospel, upon condition of their believing acceptance; if they reject and refuse it, 'tis to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation.--

Learn, 4. That Christ's mediation and intercession is founded upon redemption; because he gave himself a ransom for all therefore is he, and he only, qualified to intercede for all, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of mankind: therefore the distinction of the church of Rome, between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession, is groundless: for who

dares plead with an offended God as an intercessor on the behalf of sinners, that has not first, as a redeemer, satisfied the justice of God for sin? As there was no redemption wrought by any, so there is no intercession to be made by any, but by Christ; as there is but one God, so but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

6 who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Who gave himself a ransom for all. Not for an elect nation, like the Jews, or for the elect individuals arbitrarily selected, but for all men. All men have been redeemed by his blood, if they will accept the ransom. This also is stated as a reason why prayer should be offered for all, and a proof that God desires the salvation of all. The argument is, that as Christ died for all, it is proper to pray for all; and that the fact that he died for all, is proof that God desired the salvation of all. Whatever proof of his desire for their salvation can be derived from this, in relation to any of the race, is proof in relation to all. On the meaning of the phrase "he gave himself a ransom," Mt 20:28; Rom 3:26. On the fact that it was for "all," 2Cor 5:14. ransom—properly of a captive slave. Man was the captive slave of Satan, sold under sin. He was unable to ransom himself, because absolute obedience is due to God, and therefore no act of ours can satisfy for the least offense. Le 25:48 allowed one sold captive to be redeemed by one of his brethren. The Son of God, therefore, became man in order that, being made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, as our elder brother He should redeem us (Mt 20:28; Eph 1:7; 1Pe 1:18, 19). The Greek implies not merely ransom, but a substituted or equivalent ransom: the Greek preposition, "anti," implying reciprocity and vicarious substitution. Who gave himself a ransom for all - Such a ransom, the word signifies, wherein a like or equal is given; as an eye for an eye, or life for life: and this ransom, from the dignity of the person redeeming, was more than equivalent to all mankind.

To be testified in due time. Marg., a testimony. The Greek is, "the testimony in its own times," or in proper times-- τομαρτυριον καιροιςιδιοις. There have been very different explanations of this phrase. The common interpretation, and that which seems to me to be correct, is, that "the testimony of this will be furnished in the

proper time; that is, in the proper time it shall be made known through all the world." See Rosenmuller. Paul affirms it as a great and important truth that Christ gave himself a ransom for all mankind--for Jews and gentiles; for all classes and conditions of men alike. This truth had not always been understood. The Jews had supposed that salvation was designed exclusively for their nation, and denied that it could be extended to others, unless they became Jews. According to them, salvation was not provided for, or offered to heathens as such, but only on condition that they became Jews. In opposition to this, Paul says that it was a doctrine of revelation that redemption was to be provided for all men, and that it was intended that the testimony to this should be afforded at the proper time. It was not fully made known under the ancient dispensation, but now the period had come when it should be communicated to all. Rom 5:6, Gal 4:4.

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not,) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not. That is, by Christ; or I solemnly appeal to Christ--a form of an oath. Rom 9:1. Paul makes a solemn declaration similar to this in regard to his call to the apostleship, in Gal 1:20. For the reasons why he did it, Gal 1:20. It is probable that there were those in Ephesus who denied that he could be an apostle, and hence his solemn declaration affirming it.

8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

That men pray everywhere. Not merely in the temple, or in other sacred places, but in all places. The Jews supposed that there was special efficacy in prayers offered at the temple in Jerusalem; the heathen also had the same view in regard to their temples--for both seemed to suppose that they came nearer to God by approaching his sacred abode. Christianity teaches that God may be worshipped in any place, and that we are at all times equally near him. Jn 4.20 and following. Acts 17:25. The direction here given that men should pray in contradistinction from the, duties of women, specified in the next verse, may be intended to imply that men should conduct the exercises of public worship. The duties of

women pertain to a different sphere. Comp. 1Timm 2:11,12. Lifting up holy hands. To lift up the hands denotes supplication, as it was a common attitude of prayer to spread abroad the hands towards heaven. Comp. Ps 68:31, Ex 9:29,33, 1Kgs 8:22, 2Chr 6:12,13, Isa 1:16. See also Horace Odes, III. xxii. 1; Ovid, M. ix. 701; Livy, v. 21; Seneca, Ep. 21. "Holy hands" here mean hands that are not defiled by sin, and thai have not been employed for any purpose of iniquity. The idea is, that when men approach God they should do it in a pure and holy manner.

Without wrath. That is, without the intermingling of any evil passion; with a calm, peaceful, benevolent mind. There should be nothing of the spirit of contention; there should be no anger towards others; the suppliant should be at peace with all men. It is impossible for a man to pray with comfort, or to suppose that his prayers will be heard, if he cherishes anger. The following exquisite and oft-quoted passage from Jeremy Taylor, is a more beautiful and striking illustration of the effect of anger in causing our prayers to return unanswered than was probably ever penned by any one else. Nothing could be more true, beautiful, and graphic. "Anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and intend propulsion, defence, displeasure, or revenge. It is a short madness, and an eternal enemy to discourse and a fair conversation; it intends its own object with all the earnestness of perception or activity of design, and a quicker motion of a too warm and distempered blood; it is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over; and therefore can never suffer a man to be in a disposition to pray. For prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity and the sister of meekness; and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which

presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, and singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and rise above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconsistent. Descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libation and frequent weighing of its wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel." The Return of Prayers, Works vol. i. 638. Ed. Lond. 1835. And doubting. This. word, as used here, does not mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that we are to come before God without any doubts of our own piety, or in the exercise of perfect faith. The word used (διαλογισμος) means, properly, computation, adjustment of accounts; then reflection, thought; then reasoning, opinion; then debate, contention, strife. Lk 9:46, Mk 9:33,34; Php 2:14. This is the sense evidently in this place. They were not to approach God in prayer in the midst of clamorous disputings and angry contentions. They were not to come When the mind was heated with debate, and irritated by strife for victory. Prayer was to be offered in a calm, serious, sober state of mind, and they who engage in polemical strife, or in warm contention of any kind, are little fitted to unite in the solemn act of addressing God. How often are theologians, when assembled together, so heated by debate, and so anxious for party victory, that they are in no suitable state of mind to pray! How often do even good men, holding different views on the disputed points of religious doctrine, suffer their minds to become so excited, and their temper so ruffled, that they are conscious they are in an unfit state of mind to approach the throne of grace together! That theological debate has gone too far; that strife for victory has become too warm, when the disputants are in such a state of mind that they cannot unite in prayer; when they could not cease their contentions, and with a calm and proper spirit, bow together before the throne of grace.

I will - A word strongly expressing his apostolical authority. Therefore - This particle connects the eighth with the first verse.

That men pray in every place - Public and private. Wherever men are, there prayer should be. Lifting up holy hands - Pure from all known sin. Without wrath - In any kind, against any creature. And every temper or motion of our soul that is not according to love is wrath. And doubting - Which is contrary to faith. And wrath, or unholy actions, or want of faith in him we call upon, are the three grand hinderances of God's hearing our petitions. Christianity consists of faith and love, embracing truth and grace: therefore the sum of our wishes should be, to pray, and live, and die, without any wrath or doubt.

A direction how to pray, 1Ti 2:8. 1. Now, under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, but men must pray every where: no place is amiss for prayer, no place more acceptable to God than another, Joh 4:21. Pray every where. We must pray in our closets, pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, and pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more public or private. 2. It is the will of God that in prayer we should lift up holy hands: Lifting up holy hands, or pure hands, pure from the pollution of sin, washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. I will wash my hands, &c., Ps 26:6. 3. We must pray in charity: Without wrath, or malice, or anger at any person. 4. We must pray in faith without doubting (Jam 1:6), or, as some read it, without disputing, and then it falls under the head of charity.

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

The true idea here is, that her attention to her appearance should be such that she will be offensive to no class of persons; such as to show that her mind is supremely fixed on higher and more important things, and such as to interfere with no duty which she owes, and no good which she can do, either by spending her time needlessly in personal adorning, or by lavishing that money for dress which might do good to others, or by neglecting the proprieties of her station, and making herself offensive to others. In fact, this is applicable for any thing that has any form of evil which we all men and women should refrain from it.

The direction in 1Timm 2:9-12, therefore, is to be understood particularly of the proper deportment of females in the duties of public worship. At the same time, the principles laid down are doubtless such as were intended to apply to them in the other situations in life, for if modest apparel is appropriate in the sanctuary, it is appropriate everywhere. If what is here prohibited in dress is wrong there, it would be difficult to show that it is right elsewhere.

And sobriety. The word here used means properly, sanity; then sober-mindedness, moderation of the desires and passions. It is opposed to all that is frivolous, and to all undue excitement of the passions. The idea is, that in their apparel and deportment they should not entrench on the strictest decorum. Doddridge.

It is a poor ambition to decorate a dying body with gold and pearls. It should not be forgotten that the body thus adorned will soon need other habiliments, and will occupy a position where gold and pearls would be a mockery. When the heart is right; when there is true and supreme love for religion, it is usually not difficult to regulate the subject of dress. Costly array. Expensive dress. This is forbidden, for it is foolish; and the money thus employed may be much more profitably used in doing good. "Costly array" includes that which can be ill afforded, and that which is inconsistent with the feeling that the principal ornament is that of the heart.

10 but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

1 Timothy-3

Qualifications of Bishops

1 This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

Our apostle acquaints Timothy with the dignity, honour, and excellency of the sacred function: He that desireth the office of a bishop, that is, to rule and teach in the church of God, he desireth a good work, that is, honourable employment.

As if our apostle had said, "Know, O Timothy, that as to the office of a bishop, whoever desireth it, doth desire a very great and excellent work; it is not a bare name, title, dignity, a place of honour and command; but a work, a work of vast importance, labour, and difficulty: take heed therefore whom thou dost admit, and of those that are also admitted into the sacred function, to consider the great weight of that important service, to enterprize it with extraordinary dread and caution, looking upon their office not with aspiring but tremendous thoughts:--for who is sufficient for these things?

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Must be blameless. This is a different word (ανεπιληπτος) from that rendered blameless in Lk 1:6, Php 2:15, 3:6, (αμεμπτος) Compare Lk 1:6; Php 3:6. The word here used does not mean that, as a necessary qualification for office, a bishop should be perfect; but that he should be a man against whom no charge of immorality, or of holding false doctrine, is alleged. His conduct should be irreprehensible or irreproachable. Undoubtedly it means that if any charge could be brought against him implying moral obliquity, he is not fit for the office, he should be a man of irreproachable character for truth, honesty, chastity, and general uprightness. The husband of one wife. This need not be understood as requiring that a bishop should be a married man, as Vigilantias, a presbyter in the church at Barcelona in the fourth century, supposed, however desirable, in general, it may be that a minister of the gospel should

be married. But, while this interpretation is manifestly to be excluded as false, there has been much difference of opinion on the question whether the passage means that a minister should not have more than one wife at the same time, or whether it prohibits the marriage of a second wife after the death of the first. On this question the Notes of Bloomfield, Doddridge, and Macknight, may be consulted. That the former is the correct opinion, seems to me to be evident from the following considerations:

(1.) It is the most obvious meaning of the language, and it would doubtless be thus understood by those to whom it was addressed. At a time when polygamy was not uncommon, to say that a man should "have but one wife" would be naturally understood as prohibiting polygamy.

(2.) The marriage of a second wife, after the death of the first, is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as wrong. The marriage of a widow to a second husband is expressly declared to be proper, 1Cor 7:39; and it is not unfair to infer from that permission that it is equally lawful and proper for a man to marry the second time. But if it is lawful for any man, it is right for a minister of the gospel. No reason can be assigned against such marriages in his case, which would not be equally valid in any other. Marriage is as honourable for a minister of the gospel as for any other man, (comp. Heb 13:4; and, as Doddridge has well remarked, "circumstances may be so adjusted that there may be as much reason for a second marriage as for the first, and as little inconvenience of any kind may attend it."

(3.) There was a special propriety in the prohibition, if understood as prohibiting polygamy. It is known that it was extensively practised, and was not regarded as unlawful. Yet one design of the gospel was to restore the marriage relation to its primitive condition; and though it might not have seemed absolutely necessary to require of every man who came into the church to divorce his wives, if he had more than one, yet, in order to fix a brand on this irregular practice, it might have been deemed desirable to require of the ministers of the gospel that they should

have but one wife. Thus the practice of polygamy would gradually come to be regarded as dishonourable and improper, and the example and influence of the ministry would tend to introduce correct views in regard to the nature of this relation. One thing is clear from this passage, that the views of the Papists in regard to the celibacy of the clergy are directly at variance with the Bible. The declaration of Paul in Heb 13:4, is, that "marriage is honourable in all;" and here it is implied that it was proper that a minister should be married. If it were not, why did not Paul prohibit it altogether! Instead of saying that it was improper that a bishop should have more than one wife, why did he not say that it was improper that he should be married at all! Would not a Romanist say so now? Vigilant. This word νηφαλεος occurs only here and in 1Timm 3:11; Tit 2:2. It means, properly, sober, temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine; then sober-minded, watchful, circumspect. Robinson. A minister should have a watchful care over his own conduct. He should be on his guard against sin in any form.

Sober. σωφρονα. Properly, a man of a sound mind; one who follows sound reason, and who is not under the control of passion. The idea is, that he should have his desires and passions well regulated. Perhaps the word prudent would come nearer to the meaning of the apostle than any single word which we have. Of good behaviour. Marg., modest. Coverdale renders it, mannerly. The most correct rendering, according to the modern use of language, would be, that he should be a gentleman. He should not be slovenly in his appearance, or rough and boorish in his manners. He should not do violence to the usages of refined intercourse, nor be unfit to appear respectably in the most refined circles of society. Inattention to personal neatness, and to the rules which regulate refined intercourse, is indicative neither of talent, learning, nor religion; and though they are occasionally--not often--connected with talent, learning, and religion, yet they are never the fruit of either, and are always a disgrace to those who exhibit such incivility and boorishness, for such men ought to know better. A minister of the gospel should be a finished gentleman in his manners, and there is no excuse for him if he is not. His religion, if

he has any, is adapted to make him such. He has usually received such an education as ought to make him such, and in all cases ought to have had such a training. He is admitted into the best society, and has an opportunity of becoming familiar with the laws of refined intercourse. He should be an example and a pattern in all that goes to promote the welfare of mankind, and there are few things so easily acquired that are fitted to do this, as refinement and gentility of manners. No man can do good, on the whole, or in the "long run," by disregarding the rules of refined intercourse; and, other things being equal, the refined, courteous, polite gentleman in the ministry, will always do more good than he who neglects the rules of good-breeding.

Given to hospitality. This is often enjoined on all Christians as a duty of religion. For the reasons of this, and the nature of the duty, Rom 12:3, Heb 13:2. It was a special duty of the ministers of religion, as they were to be examples of every Christian virtue. Apt to teach. Gr., Didactic; that is, capable of instructing, or qualified for the office of a teacher of religion. As the principal business of a preacher of the gospel is to teach, or to communicate to his fellowmen the knowledge of the truth, the necessity of this qualification is obvious. No one should be allowed to enter the ministry who is not qualified to impart instruction to others on the doctrines and duties of religion; and no one should feel that he ought to continue in the ministry, who has not industry, and self-denial, and the love of study enough to lead him constantly to endeavour to increase in knowledge, that he may be qualified to teach others. A man who would teach a people, must himself keep in advance of them on the subjects on which he would instruct them.

3 not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

Not greedy of filthy lucre. Not contentious or avaricious. Gr., Not desirous of base gain. The desire of this is condemned everywhere in the New Testament; but it is especially the duty of a minister of the gospel to be free from it. He has a right to a support, 1Cor 9:1; and following, but there is nothing that more certainly paralyzes the usefulness of a minister of the gospel than the love of money.

There is an instinctive feeling in the human bosom that such a man ought to be actuated by a nobler and a purer principle. As avarice, moreover, is the great sin of the world--the sin that sways more hearts, and does more to hinder the progress of the gospel, than all others combined--it is important in the highest degree that the minister of religion should be an example of what men should be, and that he, by his whole life, should set his face against that which is the main obstruction to the progress of that gospel which he is appointed to preach.

But patient. Modest, mild, gentle. See the word (Gr.) in Php 4:5, Tit 3:2, Jas 3:17, 1Pet 2:18, where it is rendered gentle. The word means that the minister of the gospel should be a man of mild and kind demeanour, such as his Master was. Not a brawler. Comp. 2Ti 2:24. That is, he should not be a man given to contention, or apt to take up a quarrel. The Greek is, literally, Not disposed to fight. Not covetous, Gr., Not a lover of silver; that is, of money. A man should not be put into the ministry who is characteristically a lover of money. Such a one, no matter what his talents may be, has no proper qualification for the office, and will do more harm than good.

4 one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

One that ruleth well his own house. This implies that a minister of the gospel would be, and ought to be, a married man. It is everywhere in the New Testament supposed that he would be a man who could be an example in all the relations of life. The position which he occupies in the church has a strong resemblance to the relation which a father sustains to his household; and a qualification to govern a family well, would be an evidence of a qualification to preside properly in the church. It is probable that, in the early Christian church, ministers were not unfrequently taken from those of mature life, and who were, at the time, at the head of families; and, of course, such would be men who had had an opportunity of showing that they had this qualification for the office. Though, however, this cannot be insisted on now as a previous qualification for the office, yet it is still true that, if he has a family, it is a necessary qualification, and that a man in the

ministry should be one who governs his own house well. A want of this will always be a hinderance to extensive usefulness.

(for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

For if a man know not how to rule. This is a beautiful and striking argument. A church resembles a family. It is, indeed, larger, and there is a greater variety of dispositions in it than there is in a family. The authority of a minister of the gospel in a church is also less absolute than that of a father. But still there is a striking resemblance. The church is made up of an assemblage of brothers and sisters. They are banded together for the same purposes, and have a common object to aim at. They have common feelings and common wants. They have sympathy, like a family, with each other in their distresses and afflictions. The government of the church also is designed to be paternal. It should be felt that he who presides over it, has the feelings of a father; that he loves all the members of the great family; that he has no prejudices, no partialities, no selfish aims to gratify. Now, if a man cannot govern his own family well; if he is severe, partial, neglectful, or tyrannical at home, how can he be expected to take charge of the more numerous "household of faith" with proper views and feelings? If, with all the natural and strong ties of affection, which bind a father to his own children; if, when they are few comparatively in number, and where his eye is constantly upon them, he is unable to govern them aright, how can he be expected to preside in a proper manner over the larger household, where he will be bound with comparatively feebler ties, and where he will be exposed more to the influence of passion, and where he will have a much less constant opportunity of supervision? Confucius, as quoted by Doddridge, has a sentiment strikingly resembling that before us: "It is impossible, that he who knows not how to govern and reform his own family, should rightly govern and reform a people." We may remark, also, in this verse, a delicate and beautiful use of words by the apostle, to prevent the possibility of misapprehension. While he institutes a comparison between the government of a family and that of the church, he guards against the possibility of its being supposed that he would countenance arbitrary authority in the church, even such authority as a father must of necessity employ in his own family.

Hence he uses different words, he speaks of the father as 'ruling' over his own family, or presiding over it --προστηναι; he describes the minister of religion as having a tender care for the church -- επιμελησεται.

6 not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Not a novice. Marg., one newly come to the faith. The Greek word, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, means, properly, that which is newly planted. Thus it would mean a plant that was not strong, or not fitted to bear the severity of storms; that had not as yet struck its roots deep, and could not resist the fierceness of a cold blast. Then the word comes to mean a new convert; one who has had little opportunity to test his own faith, or to give evidence to others that he would be faithful to the trust committed to him. The word does not refer so much to one who is young in years, as one who is young in faith. Still, all the reasons which apply against introducing a very recent convert into the ministry, will apply commonly with equal force against introducing one young in years. Lest being lifted up with pride. We are not to suppose that this is the only reason against introducing a recent convert into the ministry, but it is a sufficient reason. He would be likely to be elated by being intrusted at once with the highest office in the church, and by the commendations and flattery which he might there receive. No condition is wholly proof against this; but he is much less likely to be injured who has had much experience of the depravity of his own heart, and whose mind has been deeply imbued with the spirit of the gospel. He fall into the condemnation of the devil. That is, the same kind of condemnation which the devil fell into; to wit, condemnation on account of pride. It is here intimated, that the cause of the apostasy of Satan was Pride--a cause which is as likely to have been the true one as any other. Who can tell but it may have been produced by some new honour which was conferred on him in heaven, and that his virtue was not found sufficient for the untried circumstances in which he was placed? Much of the apostasy from eminent virtue in this world, arises from this cause; and possibly the case of Satan may have been the most signal instance of this kind which has occurred in the universe. The idea of Paul is, that a young convert should not suddenly be raised

to an exalted station in the church. Who can doubt the wisdom of this direction? The word rendered lifted up, (τυφωθεις,) is from a verb which means, to smoke, to fume, to surround with smoke; then to inflate--as a bladder is with air; and then to be conceited or proud; that is, to be like a bladder filled, not with a solid substance, but with air

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without. Who are without the church; that is, of those who are not Christians. This includes, of course, all classes of those who are not Christians--heathens, infidels, Jews, moral men, and scoffers. The idea is, that he must have a fair reputation with them for integrity of character. His life must be in their view upright must not be addicted to anything which they regard as inconsistent with good morals. His deportment must be such that they shall regard it as not inconsistent with his profession. He must be true, and just, and honest in his dealings with his fellow-men, and so live that they cannot say that he has wronged them. lie must not give occasion for scandal or reproach in his intercourse with the other sex, but must be regarded as a man of a pure life and of a holy walk. The reason for this injunction is too obvious. It is his business to endeavour to do such men good, and to persuade them to become Christians. But no minister of the gospel can possibly do such men good, unless they regard him as an upright and honest man. No matter how he preaches or prays; no matter how orthodox, learned, or apparently devout he may be, all his efforts will be in vain unless they regard him as a man of incorruptible integrity. If they hate religion themselves, they insist justly that since he has professed it, he shall be governed by its principles; or if they feel its importance, they will not be influenced to embrace it by a man that they regard as hypocritical and impure. Go to a man whom you have defrauded, or who regards you as having done or attempted wrong to any other one, and talk to him about the necessity of religion, and he will instinctively say, that he does not want a religion which will not make its professor true, honest, and pure. It is impossible, therefore, for a minister to over-estimate the importance of having a fair character in the view of the world, and no man should be

introduced into the ministry, or sustained in it, who has not a fair reputation. Col 4:5; 1Thes 4:12. Lest he fall into reproach. That is, in such a way as to bring dishonour on the ministerial character. His life will be such as to give men occasion to reproach the cause of religion. And the snare of the devil. The snare which the devil lays to entrap and ruin the ministers of the gospel and all good men. The snare to which reference is here made, is that of blasting the character and influence of the minister of the gospel. The idea is, that Satan lays this snare so to entangle him as to secure this object, and the means which he uses is the vigilance and suspicion of those who are out of the church. If there is anything of this kind in the life of a minister which they can make use of, they will be ready to do it. Hence the necessity, on his part, of an upright and blameless life. Satan is constantly aiming at this thing; the world is watching for it; and if the minister has any propensity which is not in entire accordance with honesty, Satan will take advantage of it, and lead him into the snare.

Qualifications of Deacons

8 Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not double-tongued, not given
to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;
9 holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a
deacon, being *found* blameless.

the mystery of the faith—holding the faith, which to the natural man remains a mystery, but which has been revealed by the Spirit to them (Ro 16:25; 1Co 2:7-10), in a pure conscience (1Ti 1:5, 19). ("Pure," that is, in which nothing base or foreign is intermixed [TITTMANN]). Though deacons were not ordinarily called on to preach (Stephen and Philip are not exceptions to this, since it was as evangelists, rather than as deacons, they preached), yet as being office-bearers in the Church, and having much intercourse with all the members, they especially needed to have this characteristic, which every Christian ought to have. On the word mystery, 1Cor 2:7. It means that which had been concealed, or hidden, but which was now revealed. The word faith, here, is synonymous with the gospel; and the sense is, that he should hold firmly the great

doctrines of the Christian religion, which had been so long. concealed from men, but which were now revealed. The reason is obvious. Though not a preacher, yet his influence and example would be great, and a man who held material error, ought not to be in the office. In a pure conscience. A mere orthodox faith was not all that was necessary, for it was possible that a man might be professedly firm in the belief of the truths of revelation, and yet be corrupt at heart.

And let these also be first proved. That is, tried or tested in regard to the things which were the proper qualifications for the office. This does not mean that they were to be employed as preachers, but that they were to undergo a proper trial in regard to their fitness for the office which they were to fill. They were not to be put into it without any opportunity of knowing what they were. It should be ascertained that they were grave, serious, temperate, trustworthy men; men who were sound in the faith, and who would not dishonour the office. It is not said here, that there should be a formal trial, as if they were candidates for this office; but the meaning is, that they should have had an opportunity of making their character known, and should have gained such respect for their piety, and their other qualifications, that there would be reason to believe that they would perform the functions of the office well. Thus, in Acts 6:3, when deacons were first appointed, the church was directed to "look out seven men of honest report," who might be appointed to the office.

11 Even so *must their* wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Even so must their wives be grave. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Grotius, Bloomfield, and many others, suppose that by the word wives, here, γυναικας, the apostle means deaconesses. Clarke supposes that it refers to women in general. The reason assigned for supposing that it does not refer to the wives of deacons, as such, is, that nothing is said of the qualifications of the wives of bishops --a matter of as much importance as that of the character of the wife of a deacon; and that it cannot be supposed that the apostle would

specify the one, without some allusion to the other. But that the common interpretation, which makes it refer to the wives of deacons, as such, is to be adhered to, seems to me to be clear. For,

(1,) it is the obvious and natural interpretation.

(2.) The word here used--wives--is never used of itself to denote deaconesses.

(3.) If the apostle had meant deaconesses, it would have been easy to express it without ambiguity. Comp. Rom 16:1.

(4.) What is here mentioned is important, whether the same thing is mentioned of bishops or not.

(5.) In the qualifications of bishops, the apostle had made a statement respecting his family, which made any specification about the particular members of the family unnecessary. He was to be one who presided in a proper manner over his own house, or who had a well-regulated family, 1Timm 3:4,5. By a comparison of this passage, also, with Tit 2:3,4, which bears a strong resemblance to this, it would seem that it was supposed that the deacons would be taken from those who were advanced in life, and that their wives would have some superintendence over the younger females of the church. It was, therefore, especially important that they should be persons whose influence would be known to be decidedly favourable to piety. No one can doubt that the character of a woman may be such, that it is not desirable that her husband should be an officer in the church. A bad woman ought not to be intrusted with any additional power or influence. Grave. 1Timm 3:4. Not slanderers. Comp. Tit 2:3, "Not false accusers." The Greek word is διαβολους--devils. It is used here in its original and proper sense, to denote a calumniator, slanderer, or accuser. It occurs in the same sense in 2Ti 3:3, Tit 2:3. Elsewhere in the New Testament, it is uniformly rendered devil, Mt 4:1; and is given to Satan, the prince of the fallen angels, (Mt 9:34,) by way of eminence, as the accuser. Comp. Job 1:6, and following; Rev 12:10. Here it means that they should not be women who were in

the habit of calumniating others, or aspersing their character. Mingling as they would with the church, and having an opportunity to claim acquaintance with many, it would be in their power, if they chose, to do great injury to the character Of others. Sober. 1Timm 3:2. Faithful in all things. To their husbands, to their families, to the church, to the Saviour.

13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

A good degree. The word here used βαθμος occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, a step, as of a stair; and the fair meaning is that of going up higher, or taking an additional step of dignity, honour, or standing. So far as the word is concerned, it may mean either an advance in officer in dignity, in respectability, or in influence. It cannot certainly be inferred that the apostle referred to a higher grade of office; for all that the word essentially conveys is, that, by exercising this office well, a deacon would secure additional respectability and influence in the church. Still, it is possible that those who had performed the duties of this office well were appointed to be preachers. They may have shown so much piety, prudence, good sense, and ability to preside over the church, that it was judged proper that they should be advanced to the office of bishops or pastors of the churches. Such a course would not be unnatural. This is, however, far from teaching that the office of a deacon is a subordinate office, with a view to an ascent to a higher grade. And great boldness in the faith. The word here rendered boldness properly refers to boldness in speaking. See it explained in the Acts 4:13; 2Cor 3:12; Php 1:20. But the word is commonly used to denote boldness of any kind--openness, frankness, confidence, assurance. Jn 7:13,26, Mk 8:32, 2Cor 7:4. As it is here connected with faith--"boldness in the faith"--it means, evidently, not so much public speaking, as a manly and independent exercise of faith in Christ. The sense is, that by the faithful performance of the duties of the office of a deacon, and by the kind of experience which a man would have in that office, he would establish a character of firmness in the faith, which would show that he was a decided Christian. This passage, therefore, cannot be fairly used to prove that the deacon was a preacher, or

that he belonged to a grade of ministerial office from which he was regularly to rise to that of a presbyter.

The Mystery of Our Religion

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee
shortly:
15 but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to
behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living
God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

But if I tarry long. Paul appears to have been uncertain how long circumstances would require him to be absent. He expected to return, but it was possible that his hope of returning soon would be disappointed. That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself. That is, that he might have just views about settling the affairs of the church. In the house of God. This does not mean in a place of public worship, nor does it refer to propriety of deportment there. It refers rather to the church as a body of believers, and to intercourse with them. The church is called the "house of God," because it is that in which he dwells. Formerly, his peculiar residence was in the temple at Jerusalem; now that the temple is destroyed, it is in the church of Christ, among his people. Which is the church of the living God. This seems to have been added to impress the mind of Timothy with the solemn nature of the duty which he was to perform. What he did pertained to the honour and welfare of the church of the living God, and hence he should feel the importance of a correct deportment, and of a right administration of its affairs. The pillar and ground of the truth. There has been no little diversity of opinion among critics whether this phrase is to be taken in connection with the preceding, meaning that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth; or whether it is to be taken in connection with what follows, meaning that the principal support of the truth was the doctrine there referred to--that God was manifest in the flesh. Bloomfield remarks on this: "It is surprising that any who have any knowledge or experience in Greek literature could tolerate so harsh a construction as that which arises from the latter method." The more natural interpretation

certainly is, to refer it to the former; and this is supported by the consideration that it would then fall in with the object of the apostle. His design here seems to be, to impress Timothy with a deep sense of the importance of correct conduct in relation to the church; of the responsibility of those who presided over it; and of the necessity of care and caution in the selection of proper officers. To do this, he reminded him that the truth of God that revealed truth which he had given to save the world--was intrusted to the church; that it was designed to preserve it pure, to defend it, and to transmit it to future times; and that, therefore, every one to whom the administration of the affairs of the church was intrusted, should engage in this duty with a deep conviction of his responsibility. On the construction of the passage, Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, and Clarke, may be consulted. The word "pillar" means a column, such as that by which a building is supported, and then any firm prop or support. Gal 2:9, Rev 3:12. If it refers to the church here, it means that that is the support of the truth, as a pillar is of a building. It sustains it amidst the war of elements, the natural tendency to fall, and the assaults which may be made on it, and preserves it when it would otherwise tumble into ruin. Thus it is with the church. It is intrusted with the business of maintaining the truth, of defending it from the assaults of error, and of transmitting it to future times. The truth is, in fact, upheld in the world by the church. The people of the world feel no interest in defending it, and it is to the church of Christ that it is owing that it is preserved and transmitted from age to age. The word rendered "ground"--εδραιωμα--means properly, a basis, or foundation. The figure here is evidently taken from architecture, as the use of the word pillar is. The proper meaning of the one expression would be, that truth is supported by the church, as an edifice is by a pillar; of the other, that the truth rests on the church, as a house does on its foundation. It is that which makes it fixed, stable, permanent; that on which it securely stands amidst storms and tempests; that which renders it firm when systems of error are swept away as a house that is built on the sand. Comp. Mt 7:24; Mt 7:25-27. The meaning then is, that the stability of the truth on earth is dependent on the church. It is owing to the fact that the church is itself founded on a rock, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, that no storms of persecution can

overthrow it, that the truth is preserved from age to age. Other systems of religion are swept away; other opinions change; other forms of doctrine vanish; but the knowledge of the great system of redemption is preserved on earth unshaken, because the church is preserved, and because its foundations cannot be moved. This does not refer, I suppose, to creeds and confessions, or to the decisions of synods and councils; but to the living spirit of truth and piety in the church itself. As certainly as the church continues to live, so certain it will be that the truth of God will be perpetuated among men.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Learn, That our holy faith, our Christian religion, is a mystery, a great mystery, an unquestionable mystery, a mystery of godliness, a mystery hidden in God, Eph 3:2; hidden in Christ, Col 3:3; hidden in the scriptures, Rev 3:18: hidden in and under the types and shadows of the ceremonial law; nay, hidden even in the gospel itself, for we know but in part; and if Christianity be a mystery, then the knowledge of it is the effect of divine revelation and supernatural discovery, not to be known by the light or benefit of nature, but God reveals it to us by his Spirit.

And, without controversy. Undeniably, certainly. The object of the apostle is to say that the truth which he was about to state admitted of no dispute. Great is the mystery. On the meaning of the word mystery, 1Cor 2:7. The word means that which had been hidden or concealed. The meaning here is not that the proposition which he affirms was mysterious, in the sense that it was unintelligible, or impossible to be understood; but that the doctrine respecting the incarnation and the work of the Messiah, which had been so long kept hidden from the world, was a subject of the deepest importance. This passage, therefore, should not be used to prove that there is anything unintelligible, or anything that surpasses human comprehension, in that doctrine, whatever may be the truth on that point; but that the doctrine which he now proceeds to state, and which had been so long concealed from mankind, was of the utmost

consequence. Of godliness. The word godliness means, properly, piety, reverence or religiousness. It is used here, however, for the gospel scheme, to wit, that which the apostle proceeds to state. This "mystery" which had "been hidden from ages and from generations, and which was now manifest," Col 1:26, was the great doctrine on which depended religion everywhere, or was that which constituted the Christian scheme.

God. Probably there is no passage in the New Testament which has excited so much discussion among critics as this, and none in reference to which it is so difficult to determine the true reading. It is the only one, it is believed, in which the microscope has been employed to determine the lines of the letters used in a manuscript; and, after all that has been done to ascertain the exact truth in regard to it, still the question remains undecided. It is not the object of these Notes to enter into the examination of questions of this nature. A full investigation may be found in Wetstein. The question which has excited so much controversy is, whether the original Greek was θεος, God, or whether it was ος, who, or ο, which. The controversy has turned, to a considerable degree, on the reading in the Codex Alexandrinus; and a remark or two on the method in which the manuscripts of the New Testament were written, will show the true nature of the controversy. Greek manuscripts were formerly written entirely in capital letters, and without breaks or intervals between the words, and without accents. See a full description of the methods of writing the New Testament, in an article by Prof. Stuart in Dr. Robinson's Bibliotheca Sacra, No. 2, pp. 254, seq. The small, cursive Greek letters which are now used, were not commonly employed in transcribing the New Testament, if at all, until the ninth or tenth centuries. It was a common thing to abridge or contract words in the manuscript. Thus, πρ would be used for, πατηρ, father; κς for κυριος, Lord; θς for θεος, God, etc. The words thus contracted were designated by a faint line or dash over them. In this place, therefore, if the original were θX, standing for θεος, God, and the line in the θ and the faint line over it, were obliterated from any cause, it would be easily mistaken for ος, who. To ascertain which of these is the true reading, has been the great question; and it is with reference to this that the microscope has been resorted to in the

examination of the Alexandrian manuscript. It is now generally admitted that the faint line over the word has been added by some later hand, though not improbably by one who found that the line was nearly obliterated, and who meant merely to restore it. Whether the letter O was originally written with a line within it, making the reading, God, it is now said to be impossible to determine, in consequence of the manuscript at this place having become so much worn by frequent examination. The Vulgate and the Syriac read it, who, or which. The Vulgate is, "Great is the sacrament of piety which was manifested in the flesh." The Syriac, "Great is the mystery of godliness, that he was manifested in the flesh." The probability in regard to the correct reading here, as it seems to me, is, that the word, as originally written, was θεος --God. At the same time, however, the evidence is not so clear that it can be properly used in an argument. But the passage is not necessary to prove the doctrine which is affirmed, on the supposition that that is the correct reading. The same truth is abundantly taught elsewhere. Comp. Mt 1:23, Jn 1:14.

Was manifest. Marg., Manifested. The meaning is, appeared in the flesh. In the flesh. In human nature. See this explained Rom 1:3. The expression here looks as though the true reading of the much disputed word was God. It could not have been, it would seem evident, o, which, referring to "mystery," for how could a 'mystery'" be manifested in the flesh? Nor could it be oς, who, unless that should refer to one who was more than a man; for how absurd would it be to say that a "a man was manifested, or appeared in the flesh!" How else could a man appear? The phrase here means that God appeared in human form, or with human nature; and this is declared to be the "great" truth so long concealed from human view, but now revealed as constituting the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. The expressions which follow in this verse refer to God as thus manifested in the flesh; to the Saviour as he appeared on earth, regarded as a divine and human Being. It was the fact that he thus appeared and sustained this character, which made the things which are immediately specified so remarkable, and so worthy of attention. Justified in the Spirit. That is, the incarnate Person above referred

to; the Redeemer, regarded as God and man. The word Spirit here, it is evident, refers to the Holy Spirit; for

(1.) it is not possible to attach any intelligible idea to the phrase, "he was justified by his own spirit, or soul,"

(2.) as the Holy Spirit performed so important a part in the work of Christ, it is natural to suppose there would be some allusion here to him; and

(3.) as the "angels" are mentioned here as having been with him, and as the Holy Spirit is often mentioned in connection with him, it is natural to suppose that there would be some allusion to Him here. The word justified, here, is not used in the sense in which it is when applied to Christians, but in its more common signification. It means to indicate, and the sense is, that he was shown to be the Son of God by the agency of the Holy Ghost; he was thus vindicated from the charges alleged against him. The Holy Spirit furnished the evidence that he was the Son of God, or justified his claims. Thus he descended on him at his baptism, Mt 3:16; he was sent To convince the world of sin, because it did not believe on him, Jn 16:8,9; the Saviour cast out devils by him, Mt 12:28; the Spirit was given to him without measure, Jn 3:34; and the Spirit was sent down, in accordance with his promise, to convert the hearts of men, Acts 2:33. All the manifestations of God to him; all the power of working miracles by his agency; all the influences imparted to the man Christ Jesus, endowing him with such a wisdom as man never had before, may be regarded as an attestation of the Holy Ghost to the divine mission of the Lord Jesus, and of course as a vindication from all the charges against him. In like manner, the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and his agency in the conversion of every sinner, prove the same thing, and furnish the grand argument in vindication of the Redeemer that he was sent from God. To this the apostle refers as a part of the glorious truth of the Christian scheme now revealed--the "mystery of religion;" as a portion of the amazing records, the memory of which the church was to preserve as connected with the redemption of the world. Seen of angels. They were attendants on his ministry, and came to him in times of distress,

peril, and want. Comp. Lk 2:9-13, 22:43; Lk 24:4, Heb 1:6, Mt 4:11. They felt an interest in him and his work, and they gladly came to him in his sorrows and troubles. The design of the apostle is to give an impressive view of the grandeur and glory of that work which attracted the attention of the heavenly hosts, and which drew them from the skies that they might proclaim his advent, sustain him in his temptations, witness his crucifixion, and watch over him in the tomb. The work of Christ, though despised by men, excited the deepest interest in heaven. Comp. 1Pet 1:12. Preached unto the Gentiles. This is placed by the apostle among the "great" things which constituted the "mystery" of religion. The meaning is, that it was a glorious truth that salvation might be, and should be, proclaimed to all mankind, and that this was a part of the important truths made known in the gospel. Elsewhere this is called, by way of eminence, "the mystery of the gospel;" that is, the grand truth, which had not been known until the coming of the Saviour. Eph 6:19; Col 1:26, Col 1:27; Col 4:3. Before his coming, a wall of partition had divided the Jewish and Gentile world. The Jews regarded the rest of mankind as excluded from the covenant mercies of God, and it was one of the principal stumbling-blocks in their way, in regard to the gospel, that it proclaimed that all the race was on a level, that that middle wall of partition was broken down, and that salvation might now be published to all men. Comp. Acts 22:21, Eph 2:14,15, Rom 3:22, 10:11-20. The Jew had no peculiar advantage for salvation by being a Jew; the Gentile was not excluded from the hope of salvation. The plan of redemption was adapted to man as such--without regard to his complexion, country, customs, or laws. The blood of Christ was shed for all, and wherever a human being could be found salvation might be freely offered him. This is a glorious truth; and, taken in all its bearings, and in reference to the views which then prevailed, and which have always more or less prevailed, about the distinctions made among men by caste and rank, there is scarcely any more glorious truth connected with the Christian revelation, or one which will exert a wider influence in promoting the welfare of man. It is a great privilege to be permitted to proclaim that all men in one respect--and that the most important--are on a level; that they are all equally the objects of the Divine compassion; that Christ died for one as really as for another; that

birth, wealth, elevated rank, or beauty of complexion, contribute nothing to the salvation of one man; and that poverty, a darker skin, slavery, or a meaner rank, do nothing to exclude another from the favour of his Maker: Believed on in the world. This also is mentioned among the "great" things which constitute the mystery of revealed religion. But why is this regarded as so remarkable as to be mentioned thus? In point of importance, how can it be mentioned in connection with the fact that God was manifest in the flesh; that he was vindicated by the Holy Ghost; that he was an object of intense interest to angelic hosts; and that his coming had broken down the walls which had separated the world, and placed them now on a level? I answer, perhaps the following circumstances may have induced the apostle to place this among the remarkable things evincing the greatness of this truth:

(1.) The strong improbability arising from the greatness of the "mystery," that the doctrines respecting the incarnate Deity would be believed. Such is the incomprehensible nature of many of the truths connected with the incarnation; so strange does it seem that God would become incarnate; so amazing that he should appear in human flesh and blood, and that the incarnate Son of God should die, that it might be regarded as a wonderful thing that such a doctrine had in fact obtained credence in the world. But it was a glorious truth that all the natural improbabilities in the case had been overcome, and that men had accredited the announcement.

(2.) The strong improbability that his message would be believed, arising from the wickedness of the human heart. Man, in all his history, had shown a strong reluctance to believe any message from God, or any truth whatever revealed by him. The Jews had rejected his prophets, and put them to death, Mt 23, Acts 7, and had at last put his own Son--their Messiah--to death. Man everywhere had shown his strong inclination to unbelief. There is in the human soul no elementary principle or germ of faith in God. Every man is an unbeliever by nature--an infidel first, a Christian afterwards; an infidel as he comes into the world; a believer only as he is made so by grace. The apostle, therefore, regarded it as a glorious fact that the message respecting the Saviour had been believed in the world.

It overcame such a strong and universal reluctance to confide in God, that it showed that there was more than human power in operation to overcome this reluctance.

(3.) The extent to which this had been done may have been a reason why he thought it worthy of the place which he gives it here. It had been embraced, not by a few, but by thousands in all lands where the gospel had been published; and it was proof of the truth of the doctrine, and of the great power of God, that such high mysteries as those relating to redemption, and so much opposed to the natural feelings of the human heart, should have been embraced by so many. The same thing occurs now. The gospel makes its way against the native incredulity of the world, and every new convert is an additional demonstration that it is from God, and a new illustration of the greatness of this mystery. Received up into glory. To heaven. Comp. Jn 17:5. Acts 1:9. This is mentioned as among the "great," or remarkable things pertaining to "godliness," or the Christian revelation, because it was an event which had not elsewhere occurred, and was the crowning grandeur of the work of Christ. It was an event that was fitted to excite the deepest interest in heaven itself. No event of more importance has ever occurred in the universe, of which we have any knowledge, than the re-ascension of the triumphant Son of God to glory, after having accomplished the redemption of a world.

But what is the truth which the churches and ministers are the pillars and grounds of? He tells us (1Ti 3:16) that without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. The learned Camero joins this with what goes before, and then it runs thus: "The pillar and ground of the truth, and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." He supposes this mystery to be the pillar, &c. Observe,

(1.) Christianity is a mystery, a mystery that could not have been found out by reason or the light of nature, and which cannot be comprehended by reason, because it is above reason, though not contrary thereto. It is a mystery, not of philosophy or speculation; but of godliness, designed to promote godliness; and herein it exceeds all the mysteries of the Gentiles. It is also a revealed

mystery, not shut up and sealed; and it does not cease to be a mystery because now in part revealed. But,

(2.) What is the mystery of godliness? It is Christ; and here are six things concerning Christ, which make up the mystery of godliness.

[1.] That he is God manifest in the flesh: God was manifest in the flesh. This proves that he is God, the eternal Word, that was made flesh and was manifest in the flesh. When God was to be manifested to man he was pleased to manifest himself in the incarnation of his own Son: The Word was made flesh, Joh 1:14.

[2.] He is justified in the Spirit. Whereas he was reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, he was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all the calumnies with which he was loaded. He was made sin for us, and was delivered for our offences; but, being raised again, he was justified in the Spirit; that is, it was made to appear that his sacrifice was accepted, and so he rose again for our justification, as he was delivered for our offences, Ro 4:25. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1Pe 3:18.

[3.] He was seen of angels. They worshipped him (Heb 1:6); they attended his incarnation, his temptation, his agony, his death, his resurrection, his ascension; this is much to his honour, and shows what a mighty interest he had in the upper world, that angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels.

[4.] He is preached unto the Gentiles. This is a great part of the mystery of godliness, that Christ was offered to the Gentiles a Redeemer and Saviour; that whereas, before, salvation was of the Jews, the partition-wall was now taken down, and the Gentiles were taken in. I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, Ac 13:47.

[5.] That he was believed on in the world, so that he was not preached in vain. Many of the Gentiles welcomed the gospel which the Jews rejected. Who would have thought that the world, which lay in wickedness, would believe in the Son of God, would take him

to be their Saviour who was himself crucified at Jerusalem? But, notwithstanding all the prejudices they laboured under, he was believed on, &c.

[6.] He was received up into glory, in his ascension. This indeed was before he was believed on in the world; but it is put last, because it was the crown of his exaltation, and because it is not only his ascension that is meant, but his sitting at the right hand of God, where he ever lives, making intercession, and has all power, both in heaven and earth, and because, in the apostasy of which he treats in the following chapter, his remaining in heaven would be denied by those who pretend to bring him down on their altars in the consecrated wafers.

Observe, First, He who was manifest in flesh was God, really and truly God, God by nature, and not only so by office, for this makes it to be a mystery. Secondly, God was manifest in flesh, real flesh. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, Heb 2:14. And, what is more amazing, he was manifest in the flesh after all flesh had corrupted his way, though he himself was holy from the womb. Thirdly, Godliness is a mystery in all its parts and branches, from the beginning to the end, from Christ's incarnation to his ascension. Fourthly, It being a great mystery, we should rather humbly adore it, and piously believe it, than curiously pry into it, or be too positive in our explications of it and determinations about it, further than the holy scriptures have revealed it to us.

1 Timothy-4

Prediction of Apostasy

Study it attentively, repeatedly and slowly

In view of the instructions of this chapter, we may make the following remarks:--

1 The word bishop in the New Testament never means what is now commonly understood by it--a Prelate. It does not denote here, or anywhere else in the New Testament, one who has charge over a diocese composed of a certain district of country, embracing a number of churches with their clergy.

2. There are not "three orders" of clergy in the New Testament. The apostle Paul, in this chapter, expressly designates the characteristics of those who should have charge of the church, but mentions only two--"bishops" and "deacons." The former are ministers of the word, having charge of the spiritual interests of the church; the other are deacons, of whom there is no evidence that they were appointed to preach.--There is no "third" order. There is no allusion to any one who was to be "superior" to the "bishops" and "deacons." As the apostle Paul was expressly giving instructions in regard to the organization of the church, such an omission is unaccountable if he supposed there was to be an order of "prelates" in the church. Why is there no allusion to them? Why is there no mention of their qualifications? If Timothy was himself a prelate, was he to have nothing to do in transmitting the office to others? Were there no peculiar qualifications required in such an order of men which it would be proper to mention? Would it not be respectful, at least, in Paul to have made some allusion to such an office, if Timothy himself held it?

3. There is only one order of preachers in the church. The qualifications of that order are specified with great minuteness and particularity, as well as beauty, 1Timm 3:2-7. No man really needs to know more of the qualifications for this office than could be learned from a prayerful study of this passage.

4. A man who enters the ministry ought to have high qualifications, 1Timm 3:2-7. No man ought, under any pretence, to be put into the ministry who has not the qualifications here specified. Nothing is gained in any department of human labour, by appointing incompetent persons to fill it. A farmer gains nothing by employing a man on his farm who has no proper qualifications for his business; a carpenter, a shoemaker, or a blacksmith, gains nothing by

employing a man who knows nothing about his trade; and a neighbourhood gains nothing by employing a man as a teacher of a school who has no qualifications to teach, or who has a bad character. Such a man would do more mischief on a farm, or in a workshop, or in a school, than all the good which he could do would compensate. And so it is in the ministry. The true object is not to increase the number of ministers, it is to increase the number of those who are qualified for their work, and if a man has not the qualifications laid down by the inspired apostle, he had better seek some other calling.

5. The church is the guardian of the truth, 1Timm 3:15. It is appointed to preserve it pure, and to transmit it to future ages. The world is dependent on it for any just views of truth. The church has the power, and is intrusted with the duty, of preserving on earth a just knowledge of God and of eternal things; of the way of salvation; of the requirements of pure morality:--to keep up the knowledge of that truth which tends to elevate society and to save man. It is intrusted with the Bible, to preserve uncorrupted, and to transmit to distant ages and lands. It is bound to maintain and assert the truth in its creeds and confessions of faith. And it is to preserve the truth by the holy lives of its members, and to show in their walk what is the appropriate influence of truth on the soul. Whatever religious truth there is now on the earth, has been thus preserved and transmitted, and it still devolves on the church to bear the truth of God on to future times and to diffuse it abroad to distant lands.

6. The closing verse of this chapter 1Timm 3:16 gives us a most elevated view of the plan of salvation, and of its grandeur and glory. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to condense more interesting and sublime thought into so narrow a compass as this. The great mystery of the incarnation; the interest of angelic beings in the events of redemption; the effect of the gospel on the heathen world; the tendency of the Christian religion to break down every barrier among men, and to place all the race on a level; its power in overcoming the unbelief of mankind; and the re-ascension of the Son of God to heaven, present a series of most wonderful facts to our contemplation. These things are found in no other system of

religion, and these are worthy of the profound attention of every human being. The manifestation of God in the flesh! What a thought! It was worthy of the deepest interest among the angels, and it claims the attention of men, for it was for men and not for angels that he thus appeared in human form. Comp. 1Pet 1:12.

7. How strange it is that man feels no more interest in these things! God was manifest in the flesh for his salvation, but he does not regard it. Angels looked upon it with wonder; but man, for whom he came, feels little interest in his advent or his work? The Christian religion has broken down the barrier among nations, and has proclaimed that all men may be saved; yet the mass of men look on this with entire unconcern. The Redeemer ascended to heaven, having finished his great work; but how little interest do the mass of mankind feel in this! He will come again to judge the world; but the race moves on, regardless of this truth; unalarmed at the prospect of meeting him; feeling no interest in the assurance that he has come and died for sinners, and no apprehension in view of the fact that he will come again, and that they must stand at his bar. All heaven was moved with his first advent, and will be with his second; but the earth regards it with unconcern. Angelic beings look upon this with the deepest anxiety, though they have no personal interest in it: man, though all his great interests are concentrated on it, regards it as a fable, disbelieves it all, and treats it with contempt and scorn. Such is the difference between heaven and earth--angels and men!

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Verse 1. Now the Spirit. Evidently the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of inspiration. It is not quite certain, from this passage, whether the apostle means to say that this was a revelation then made to him, or whether it was a well-understood thing as taught by the Holy Spirit. He himself elsewhere refers to this same prophecy, and John also more than once mentions it. Comp. 2Thes 2; 1Jn 2:18; Rev 20. From 2Thes 2:6, it would seem that this was a truth which had before been communicated to the apostle Paul, and that he had dwelt on it when he preached the gospel in Thessalonica. There is no probability,

however, in the supposition that so important a subject was communicated directly by the Holy Ghost to other of the apostles. Speaketh expressly. In express words, ρητως. It was not by mere hints, and symbols, and shadowy images of the future. it was in an open and plain manner--in so many words. The object of this statement seems to be to call the attention to Timothy to it in an emphatic manner, and to show the importance of attending to it. That in the latter times. Under the last dispensation, during which the affairs of the world would close. Heb 1.2 It does not mean that this would occur just before the end of the world, but that it would take place during that last dispensation, and that the end of the world would not happen until this should take place. 2Thes 2:3 Some shall depart from the faith. The Greek word here-- αποστησονται, apostesnotai-- is that from which we have derived the word apostate, and would be properly so rendered here. The meaning is, that they would apostatize from the belief of the truths of the gospel. It does not mean that, as individual, they would have been true Christians; but that there would be a departure from the great doctrines which constitute the Christian faith. The ways in which they would do this are immediately specified, showing what the apostle meant here by departing from the faith. They would give heed to seducing spirits, to the doctrines of devils, etc. The use of the word "some", here τινες, does not imply that the number would be small. The meaning is, that certain persons would thus depart, or that there would be an apostasy of the kind here mentioned, in the last days. From the parallel passage in 2Thes 2:3, it would seem that this was to be an extensive apostasy. Giving heed to seducing spirits. Rather than to the Spirit of God. It would be a part of their system to yield to those spirits that led astray. The spirits here referred to are any that cause to err, and the most obvious and natural construction is to refer it to the agency of fallen spirits. Though it may apply to false teachers, yet, if so, it is rather to them as under the influence of evil spirits. This may be applied, so far as the phraseology is concerned, to any false teaching; but it is evident that the apostle had a specific apostasy in view--some great system that would greatly corrupt the Christian faith; and the words here should be interpreted with reference to that. It is true that men in all ages are prone to give heed to seducing spirits; but the thing referred to here is some grand

apostasy, in which the characteristics would be manifested, and the doctrines held, which the apostle proceeds immediately to specify. Comp. 1Jn 4:1. And doctrines of devils. Gr.,

"Teachings of demons"--διδασκαλιαις δαιμονιων. This may either mean teachings respecting demons, or teachings by demons. Whether the phrase here means that, in the apostasy, they would give heed to doctrines respecting demons, or to doctrines which demons taught, cannot, it seems to me, be determined with certainty. If the previous phrase, however, means that they would embrace doctrines taught by evil spirits, it can hardly be supposed that the apostle would immediately repeat the same idea in another form; and then the sense would be, that one characteristic of the time referred to would be the prevalent teaching respecting demons. They would "give heed to," or embrace, some peculiar views respecting demons. The word here rendered devils is δαιμονια-- demons. This word, among the Greeks, denoted the following things:

(1.) A god or goddess, spoken of the heathen gods. Comp. in New Testament, Acts 17:18

(2.) A divine being, where no particular one was specified, the agent or author of good or evil fortune; of death, fate, etc. In this sense it is often used in Homer.

(3.) The souls of men of the golden age, which dwelt unobserved upon the earth to regard the actions of men, and to defend them--tutelary divinities, or geniuses--like that which Socrates regarded as his constant attendant. Xen. Mem. 4. 8. 1.6; Apol. Soc. 4. See Passow.

(4.) To this may be added the common use in the New Testament, where the word denotes a demon in the Jewish sense--a bad spirit, subject to Satan, and under his control; one of the host of fallen angels-- commonly, but not very properly, rendered devil, or devils. These spirits were supposed to wander in desolate places, Mt 12:43. Comp. Isa 13:21, 34:14; or they dwell in the air, Eph 2:2. They were

regarded as hostile to mankind, Jn 8:44; as able to utter heathen oracles, Acts 16:17; as lurking in the idols of the heathen, 1Cor 10:20, Rev 9:20. They are spoken of as the authors of evil, Jas 2:19. Comp. Eph 6:12; and as having the power of taking possession of a person, of producing diseases, or of causing mania, as in the case of the demoniacs, Lkke 4:33, 8:27, Mt 17:18, Mk 7:29,30; and often elsewhere. The doctrine, therefore, which the apostle predicted would prevail, might, so far as the word used is concerned, be either of the following:

(1.) Accordance with the prevalent notions of the heathen respecting false gods; or a falling into idolatry similar to that taught in the Grecian mythology. It can hardly be supposed, however, that he designed to say that the common notions of the heathen would prevail in the Christian church, or that the worship of the heathen gods as such would be set up there.

(2.) An accordance with the Jewish views respecting demoniacal possessions, and the power of exorcising them, If this view should extensively prevail in the Christian church, it would be in accordance with the language of the prediction.

(3.) Accordance with the prevalent heathen notions respecting the departed spirits of the good and the great, who were exalted to the rank of demi-gods; and who, though invisible, were supposed still to exert all important influence in favour of mankind. To these beings, the heathen rendered extraordinary homage. They regarded them as demi-gods. They supposed that they took a deep interest in human affairs. They invoked their aid. They set apart days in honour of them. They offered sacrifices, and performed rites and ceremonies, to propitiate their favour. They were regarded as a sort of mediators or intercessors between man and the superior divinities. If these things are found anywhere in the Christian church, they may be regarded as a fulfilment of this prediction, for they were not of a nature to be foreseen by any human sagacity. Now it so happens, that they are in fact found in the Papal communion, and in a way that corresponds fairly to the meaning of the phrase, as it would have been understood in the time of the apostle. There is,

first, the worship of the Virgin and of the saints, or the extraordinary honours rendered to them--corresponding almost entirely with the reverence paid by the heathen to the spirits of heroes, or to demi-gods. The saints are supposed to have extraordinary power with God, and their aid is implored as intercessors. The Virgin Mary is invoked as "the mother of God," and as having power still to command her Son. The Papists do not, indeed, offer the same homage to the saints which they do to God, but they ask their aid; they offer prayer to them. The following extracts from the catechism of Dr. James Butler, approved and recommended by Dr. Kenrick, "bishop of Philadelphia," expresses the general views of Roman Catholics on this subject. "Q. How do Catholics distinguish between the honour they give to God, and the honour they give to the saints, when they pray to God and the saints? A. Of God alone they beg grace and mercy; and of the saints they only ask the assistance of their prayers. Q. Is it lawful to recommend ourselves to the saints, and ask their prayers? A. Yes; as it is lawful and a very pious practice to ask the prayers of our fellow creatures on earth, and to pray for them." In the "Prayer to be said before mass," the following language occurs, "In union with the holy church and its minister, and invoking the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all the angels and saints; we now offer the adorable sacrifice of the mass," etc. In the "General Confession" it is said, "I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly." So, also, the Council of Trent declared, Sess. 25, Concerning the Invocation of the Saints, "that it is good and useful to supplicate them, and to fly to their prayers, power, and aid; but that they who deny that the saints are to be invoked, or who assert that they do not pray for men, or that their invocation of them is idolatry, hold an impious opinion." See also Peter Dens' Moral Theology, translated by the Rev. J. F. Berg, pp. 342--356. Secondly, in the Papal communion the doctrine of exorcism is still held--implying a belief that evil spirits or demons have power over the human frame; a doctrine which comes fairly under the meaning of the phrase here--"the doctrine respecting demons." Thus, in Dr. Butler's Catechism: "Q. What do you mean by exorcism? A. The rites and prayers instituted

by the church for the casting out devils, or restraining them from hurting persons, disquieting places, or abusing any of God's creatures to our harm. Q. Has Christ given his church any such power over devils? A. Yes, he has. See Mt 10:1, Mk 3:15, Lk 9:1. And that this power was not to die with the apostles, nor to cease after the apostolic age, we learn from the perpetual practice of the church, and the experience of all ages." The characteristic here referred to by the apostle, therefore, is one that applies precisely to the Roman Catholic communion, and cannot be applied with the same fitness to any other association calling itself Christian on earth. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Holy Spirit designed to designate that apostate church.

Speaking lies in hypocrisy. ενυποκρισειψευδολογων. Or rather, "by, or through the hypocrisy of those speaking lies." So it is rendered by Whitby, Benson, Macknight, and others. Our translators have rendered it as if the word translated "speaking lies"-- ψευδολογων referred to demons, or devils δαιμονιων --in the previous verse. But there are two objections to this. One is, that then, as Koppe observes, the words would have been inverted--ψευδολογωνενυποκρισει. The other is, that if that construction is adopted, it must be carried through the sentence, and then all the phrases "speaking lies," "having their conscience seared," "forbidding to marry," etc., must be referred to demons. The preposition εν, in, may denote by or through, and is often so used. If this be the true construction, then it will mean that those who departed from the faith did it by or through the hypocritical teachings of those who spoke lies, or who knew that they were inculcating falsehoods; of those whose conscience was seared; of those who forbade to marry, etc. The meaning then will be, "In the last days certain persons will depart from the faith of the gospel. This apostasy will essentially consist in their giving heed to spirits that lead to error, and in embracing corrupt and erroneous views on demonology, or in reference to invisible beings between us and God. This they will do through the hypocritical teaching of those who inculcate falsehood; whose consciences are seared," etc. The series of characteristics, therefore, which follow, are those of the teachers, not of the taught; of the ministers of the church, not of the great body of the people. The apostle meant to say that this grand

apostasy would occur under the influence of a hypocritical, hardened, and arbitrary ministry, teaching their own doctrines instead of the Divine commands, and forbidding that which God had declared to be lawful. In the clause before us--"speaking lies in hypocrisy"--two things are implied, first, that the characteristic of those referred to would be that they would "speak lies;" second, that this would be done hypocritically. In regard to the first, there can be no doubt among Protestants of its applicability to the Papal communion. The entire series of doctrines respecting the authority of the Pope, purgatory, the Mass, the invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, the Seven Sacraments, the authority of tradition, the doctrine of merit, etc., is regarded as false. Indeed, the system could not be better characterized than by saying that it is a system "speaking lies." The entire scheme attempts to palm falsehood upon the world, in the place of the simple teaching of the New Testament. The only question is, whether this is done "in hypocrisy," or hypocritically. In regard to this, it is not necessary to maintain that there is no sincerity among the ministers of that communion, or that all are hypocritical in their belief and their teaching. The sense is, that this is the general characteristic, or that this is understood by the leaders or prime movers in that apostasy. In regard to the applicability of this to the ministers of the Papal communion, and the question whether they teach what they know to be false, we may observe

(1.) that many of them are men of eminent learning, and there can be no reason to doubt that they know that many of the Catholic legends are false, and many of the doctrines of their faith contrary to the Bible.

(2.) Not a few of the things in that communion must be known by them to be false, though not known to be so by the people. Such are all the pretended miracles wrought by the relics of the saints; the liquefying of the blood of St. Januarius, etc. 2Thes 2:9. As the working of these tricks depends wholly on the priesthood, they must know that they are "speaking lies in hypocrisy."

(3.) The matter of fact seems to be, that when young men who have been trained in the Catholic church, first turn their attention to the ministry, they are sincere. They have not yet been made acquainted with the "mysteries of iniquity" in the communion in which they have been trained, and they do not suspect the deceptions that are practised there. When they pass through their course of study, however, and become acquainted with the arts and devices on which the fabric rests, and with the scandalous lives of many of the clergy, they are shocked to find how corrupt and false the whole system is. But they are now committed. They have devoted their lives to this profession. They are trained now to this system of imposture, and they must continue to practise and perpetuate the fraud, or abandon the church, and subject themselves to all the civil and ecclesiastical disabilities which would now follow if they were to leave and reveal all its frauds and impostures. A gentleman of high authority, and who has had as good an opportunity as any man living to make accurate and extensive observations, stated to me, that this was a common thing in regard to the Catholic clergy in France and Italy. No one can reasonably doubt that the great body of that clergy must be apprized that much that is relied on for the support of the system is mere legend, and that the miracles which are pretended to be wrought are mere trick and imposture. Having their conscience seared with a hot iron. The allusion here is doubtless to the effect of applying a hot iron to the skin. The cauterized part becomes rigid and hard, and is dead to sensibility. So with the conscience of those referred to. It has the same relation to a conscience that is sensitive and quick in its decisions, that a cauterized part of the body has to a thin, delicate, and sensitive skin. Such a conscience exists in a mind that will practise delusion without concern; that will carry on a vast system of fraud without wincing; that will incarcerate, scourge, or burn the innocent without compassion; and that win practise gross enormities, and indulge in sensual gratifications under the mask of piety. While there are many eminent exceptions to an application of this to the Papal communion, yet this description will apply better to the Roman priesthood in the time of Luther found in many other periods of the world--than to any other body of men that ever lived.

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

As if our apostle had said, "Although the mystery of godliness, the doctrine of Christianity, be so clearly revealed, and fully confirmed, yet the spirit of prophecy has very plainly told us, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith once embraced by them, either in whole or in part; turning apostates, by giving heed to impostures and doctrines of men, teaching erors suggested by devils, who cover their lies with hypocritical pretences, and are men of hardened hearts, seared consciences, profligate lives, forbidding some, whom they have seduced, to marry, and commanding them to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them which do believe and know the truth."

Observe here, 1. That the apostasy and defection of a considerable part of the Christian church in the latter times was foreseen and foretold very long before it came to pass: by Daniel, say some, Dan 11:28,38 &c. by St. Paul, say others, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians; and in his first epistle to Timothy, the Spirit speaketh expressly, that some shall depart from the faith, that is, from the doctrine of the faith received; which we know the church of Rome has most notoriously done.

Observe, 2. The cause of this apostasy and defection from Christianity, Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

Quest. But what is here meant by doctrines of devils?

Ans. These (says our reverend archbishop Tillotson) can be no other doctrines than those tending to idolatry, which the scripture every where doth in a particular manner ascribe to the devil, as the inventor and promoter of; therefore he tells us, that, in some ancient copies, the words run thus: In the latter times some shall apostatize from the faith; for they shall worship the dead, having regard to doctrines of devils:-- so that the particular kind of idolatry into which some part of the Christian church should apostatize, is here pointed out, namely, that they should worship souls departed, or the

spirits of dead men, which was part of the heathen idolatry, into which the people of Israel did frequently relapse; these departed souls were called Daemons, and were esteemed a middle sort of divine powers, between the supreme gods and mortal men, whose office it was to be agents and mediators between the gods above and men below; thus is the holy city trodden down by the Gentiles, that is, overwhelmed with the Gentiles' idolatry.

Observe, 3. The persons revolting, who they are foretold to be; not all, but, but some only: In the latter days, some shall depart from the faith; not the whole visible church, but a very great and considerable part of it.

Learn thence, That the true church of Christ was never wholly extinguished, nor the light of the gospel ever quite put out, no, not in the greatest darkness, that ever was, to overwhelm it; some (only) and not all, that shall depart from the faith.

Observe, 4. The persons described who should be the occasion of this apostasy and revolt: namely, such as speak lies in hypocrisy, and have seared consciences, that is, such stupid consciences as have lost the sense of good and evil, and no longer do their office. These lies, which the apostate church of Rome is guilty of, the profound Mr. Mede styles, "Lying miracles, fabulous legends of the acts of saints and sufferings of martyrs, counterfeit writings under the name of the first and best antiquity."
Lord! who could have coined or believed such monstrous stuff as the popish legends are fraught with, but such as are cauterized, past all feeling and tenderness both of conscience and sense itself.

Observe, 5. The doctrines discovered which these apostates would teach, namely, the forbidding marriage to some, and enjoining abstinence from some meats as unlawful and unclean to others, both which are called doctrines of devils, that is, wicked and devilish doctrines.

Learn thence, That the Popish doctrine forbidding marriage, not absolutely to all, but with restrictions and limitation to some, to wit,

their clergy, and all such as shall enter into holy orders, is a devilish and wicked doctrine: for it forbids that which the word alloweth, nay, in some cases commandeth, Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; Heb 13:4 if honourable in all, then surely lawful for all; under the Old Testament, the prophets, priests, and Levites, did marry; under the New, the ministers of God have a power to marry; Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife? 1Cor 9:5 And that they made use of their power is evident from the following words, as well as other apostles and Cephas.

The other wicked doctrine concerning meats is also found in the church of Rome, who by a law to oblige some orders of men, as monks, to abstain from certain meats reducing them thereby from Christian liberty to a conformity to the legal rites, which may well by reckoned as an apostasy from the Christian faith; for although St. Paul, Rom 14:1-23 doth allow the forbearance of some sorts of meats to avoid scandal, yet he doth no where condemn the eating of them as unclean: the doctrine therefore of the church of Rome, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, is wicked and devilish.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had the mystery of godliness summed up; and therefore very fitly, in the beginning of this chapter, we have the mystery of iniquity summed up: The Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith; whether he means the Spirit in the Old Testament, or the Spirit in the prophets of the New Testament, or both. The prophecies concerning antichrist, as well as the prophecies concerning Christ, came from the Spirit. The Spirit in both spoke expressly of a general apostasy from the faith of Christ and the pure worship of God. This should come in the latter times, during the Christian dispensation, for these are called the latter days; in the following ages of the church, for the mystery of iniquity now began to work. Some shall depart from the faith, or there shall be an apostasy from the faith. Some, not all; for in the worst of times God will have a remnant, according to the election of grace. They shall depart from the faith, the faith delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3), which was delivered at once, the sound doctrine of the gospel. Giving heed to seducing

spirits, men who pretended to the Spirit, but were not really guided by the Spirit, 1Jo 4:1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, every one who pretends to the Spirit. Now here observe,

1. One of the great instances of the apostasy, namely, giving heed to doctrines of demons, or concerning demons; that is, those doctrines which teach the worship of saints and angels, as a middle sort of deities, between the immortal God and mortal men, such as the heathen called demons, and worshipped under that notion. Now this plainly agrees to the church of Rome, and it was one of the first steps towards that great apostasy, the enshrining of the relics of martyrs, paying divine honours to them, erecting altars, burning incense, consecrating images and temples, and making prayers and praises to the honour of saints departed. This demon-worship is paganism revived, the image of the first beast.

in the latter times—in the times following upon the times in which he is now writing. Not some remote future, but times immediately subsequent, the beginnings of the apostasy being already discernible (Ac 20:29): these are the forerunners of "the last days" (2Ti 3:1).

depart from the faith—The apostasy was to be within the Church, the faithful one becoming the harlot. In 2Th 2:3 (written earlier), the apostasy of the Jews from God (joining the heathen against Christianity) is the groundwork on which the prophecy rises; whereas here, in the Pastoral Epistles, the prophecy is connected with Gnostic errors, the seeds of which had already been sown in the Church [AUBERLEN] (2Ti 2:18). Apollonius Tyanæus, a heretic, came to Ephesus in the lifetime of Timothy.

The instruments of promoting and propagating this apostasy and delusion.

(1.) It will be done by hypocrisy of those that speak lies, the agents and emissaries of Satan, who promote these delusions by lies and forgeries and pretended miracles, 1Ti 4:2. It is done by their hypocrisy, professing honour to Christ, and yet at the same time

fighting against all his anointed offices, and corrupting or profaning all his ordinances. This respects also the hypocrisy of those who have their consciences seared with a red-hot iron, who are perfectly lost to the very first principles of virtue and moral honesty. If men had not their consciences seared as with a hot iron, they could never maintain a power to dispense with oaths for the good of the catholic cause, could never maintain that no faith is to be kept with heretics, could never divest themselves of all remains of humanity and compassion, and clothe themselves with the most barbarous cruelty, under pretence of promoting the interest of the church.

(2.) Another part of their character is that they forbid to marry, forbid their clergy to marry, and speak very reproachfully of marriage, though an ordinance of God; and that they command to abstain from meats, and place religion in such abstinence at certain times and seasons, only to exercise a tyranny over the consciences of men.

3. On the whole observe,

(1.) The apostasy of the latter times should not surprise us, because it was expressly foretold by the Spirit.

(2.) The Spirit is God, otherwise he could not certainly foresee such distant events, which as to us are uncertain and contingent, depending on the tempers, humours, and lusts of men.

(3.) The difference between the predictions of the Spirit and the oracles of the heathen is remarkable; the Spirit speaks expressly, but the oracles of the heathen were always doubtful and uncertain.

(4.) It is comfortable to think that in such general apostasies all are not carried away, but only some.

(5.) It is common for seducers and deceivers to pretend to the Spirit, which is a strong presumption that all are convinced that this is the most likely to work in us an approbation of what pretends to come from the Spirit.

(6.) Men must be hardened, and their consciences seared, before they can depart from the faith, and draw in others to side with them.

(7.) It is a sign that men have departed from the faith when they will command what God has forbidden, such as saint and angel or demon-worship; and forbid what God has allowed or commanded, such as marriage and meats.

4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be
received with thanksgiving:

5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

For every creature of God is good. Gr., all the creatures, or all that God has created--πανκτισμα: that is, as he made it. Comp. Gen 1:10,12,18,31. It does not mean that every moral agent remains good as long as he is a creature of God, but moral agents, men and angels, were good as they were made at first. Gen 1:31. Nor does it mean that all that God has made is good for every object to which it can be applied. It is good in its place: good for the purpose for which he made it. But it should not be inferred that a thing which is poisonous in its nature is good for food, because it is a creation of God. It is good only in its place, and for the ends for which he intended it. Nor should it be inferred that what God has made is necessarily good after it has been perverted by man. As God made it originally, it might have been used without injury. Apples and peaches were made good, and are still useful and proper as articles of food; rye and indian corn are good, and are admirably adapted to the support of man and beast; but it does not follow that all that man can make of them is necessarily good. He extracts from them a poisonous liquid, and then says that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused." But is this a fair use of this passage of Scripture? True, they are good --they are to be received with gratitude as he made them, and as applied to the uses for which he designed them: but why apply this passage to prove that a deleterious beverage which man has extracted from what God has made, is good also, and good for all the purposes to which it can be applied? As God made these things, they are good. As man perverts them, it is no longer proper to call them the "creation of God," and they may be injurious in the highest degree. This passage, therefore,

should not be adduced to vindicate the use of intoxicating drinks. As employed by the apostle, it had no such reference, nor does it contain any principle which can properly receive any such appellation. And nothing to be refused. Nothing that God has made, for the purposes for which he designed it. The necessity of the case--the "exigency of the passage"--requires this interpretation. It cannot mean that we are not to refuse poison if offered in our food, or that we are never to refuse food that is to us injurious or offensive; nor can it any more mean that we are to receive all that may be offered to us as a beverage. The sense is, that as God made it, and for the purposes for which he designed it, it is not to be held to be evil; or, which is the same thing, it is not to be prohibited as if there were merit in abstaining from it. It is not to be regarded as a religious duty to abstain from food which God has appointed for the support of man.

A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness.

But refuse. That is, refuse to pay attention to them, or reject them. Do not consider them of sufficient importance to occupy your time. Profane. The word here used does not mean that the fables here referred to were blasphemous or impious in their character, but that they had not the character of true religion, 2Ti 2:16. And old wive's. Old women's stories; or such as old women held to be important. The word is used here, as it is often with us, in the sense of silly. Fables. Fictions, or stories that were not founded on fact. The heathen religion abounded with fictions of this kind, and the Jewish teachers were also remarkable for the number of such fables which they had introduced into their system. It is probable that the apostle referred here particularly to the Jewish fables, and the counsel which he gives to Timothy is to have nothing to do with them. And exercise thyself rather unto godliness. Rather than attempt to understand

those fables. Do not occupy your time and attention with them, but rather cultivate piety, and seek to become more holy.

8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

By bodily exercise he meaneth corporal austerities, abstinence from meats and marriage; all the external exercises of religion; these do profit a little, though but a little, in comparsion of the profit of godliness.

Where note, That fastings, humiliations, and watchings, with other bodily exercises, which serve to bring down the pride and wantonness of the body, have their proper and necessary use, and are expressive of a just revenge which a sinner takes upon himself for former excesses; they are, when wisely managed, what God accepts, but the least that God expects from us: Bodily exercise profiteth little.

But observe, The universal usefulness of godliness to all the purposes of life, Godliness is profitable to all things.

1. It is profitable to make a man rich, to help him to get and increase an estate; because it makes a man wise and prudent, diligent and industrious, thrifty and frugal.

2. It is profitable to make a man renowned as well as rich; it is the only way to attain a good name and reputation: the godly man is a worthy and excellent man, and he is an useful and servicable man, and such do seldom miss of a good reputation in the world; those that want goodness themselves, will yet commend it in others.

3. It is profitable for pleasure, as well as for riches and honour; for a life of religion doth increase the relish and sweetness of all our sensible enjoyments, so far is it from abridging us of any earthly delights: and besides, it adds to us a world of pleasures of its own; thus godliness is profitable unto men in all things, having the promise of happiness both in this life, and that which is to come, annexed to it.

9 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.
10 For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach. In making this truth known, that all might be saved, or that salvation was offered to all. The labour was chiefly experienced in carrying this intelligence abroad among the Gentiles; the reproach arose chiefly from the Jews for doing it.

Who is the Saviour of all men. This must be understood as denoting that he is the Saviour of all men in some sense which differs from what is immediately affirmed: "specially of those that believe." There is something pertaining to them in regard to salvation which does not pertain to "all men." It cannot mean that he brings all men to heaven, especially those who believe--for this would be nonsense. And if he brings all men actually to heaven, how can it be especially true that he does this in regard to those who believe? Does it mean that he saves others without believing. But this would be contrary to the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures. See Mk 16:16. When, therefore, it is said that he "is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe, "it must mean that there is a sense in which it is true that he may be called the Saviour of all men, while, at the same time, it is actually true that those only are saved who believe. This may be true in two respects.

(1.) As he is the Preserver of men, (Job 7:20,) for in this sense he may be said to save them from famine, and war, and peril--keeping them from day to day; comp. Ps 107:28;

(2.) as he has provided salvation for all men. He is thus their Saviour, and may be called the common Saviour of all; that is, he has confined the offer of salvation to no one class of men; he has not limited the atonement to one division of the human race; and he actually saves all who are willing to be saved by him. Specially of those that believe. This is evidently designed to limit the previous remark. If it had been left there, it might have been inferred that he would actually save all men. But the apostle held no such doctrine,

and he here teaches that salvation is actually limited to those who believe. This is the speciality or the peculiarity in the salvation of those who actually reach heaven, that they are believers. Mk 16:16. All men, therefore, do not enter heaven, unless all men have faith. But is this so? What evidence is there that the great mass of mankind die believing on the Son of God?

11 These things command and teach.

Let no man despise thy youth. That is, do not act in such a manner that any shall despise you on account of your youth. Act as becomes a minister of the gospel in all things, and in such a way that men will respect you as such, though you are young. It is clear from this that Timothy was then a young man, but his exact age there is no means of determining. It is implied here,

(1.) that there was danger that, by the levity and indiscretion to which youth are so much exposed, the ministry might be regarded with contempt; and

(2.) that it was possible that his deportment should be so grave, serious, and every way appropriate that the ministry would not be blamed, but honoured. The way in which Timothy was to live so that the ministry would not be despised on account of his youth, the apostle proceeds immediately to specify. But be thou an example of the believers. One of the constant duties of a minister of the gospel, no matter what his age. A minister should so live, that if all his people should closely follow his example, their salvation would be secure, and they would make the highest possible attainments in piety. On the meaning of the word rendered example, Php 1:27; 1Thes 1:7. In word. In speech--that is, your manner of conversation. This does not refer to his public teaching--in which he could not probably be an example to them--but to his usual and familiar conversation. In conversation. In general deportment. See this word explained in Php 1:27. In charity. Love to the brethren, and to all. 1Cor 13:1 and following. In spirit. In the government of your passions, and in a mild, meek, forgiving disposition. In faith. At all times, and in all trials, show to believers by your example, how they ought to maintain unshaken confidence in God. In purity. In chasteness of life. See 1Timm 5:2. There should be nothing in your

intercourse with the other sex that would give rise to scandal. The Papists, with great impropriety, understand this as enjoining celibacy--as if there could be no purity in that holy relation which God appointed in Eden, and which he has declared to "be honourable in all," (Heb 13:4,) and which he has made so essential to the well-being of mankind. If the apostle had wished to produce the highest possible degree of corruption in the church, he would have enjoined the celibacy of the clergy and the celibacy of an indefinite number of nuns and monks. There are no other institutions on the earth which have done so much to corrupt the chastity of the race, as those which have grown out of the doctrine that celibacy is more honourable than marriage.

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

St. Paul, being uncertain when he should see this young labourer again, adds farther instructions to those already given him.

And here, 1. He requires him to give attendance to reading, that is, be diligent in private reading the holy scriptures, to enable him to teach, instruct, and exhort others, what they ought to believe and know, and what they ought to practise and do.

Where note, That the illuminations and teachings of the Holy Spirit must not take off any ministers from reading and studying the holy scriptures, but we must fit ourselves the better thereby to exhort, direct, and instruct others.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee. by letting it lie unused. In 2Ti 1:6 the gift is represented as a spark of the Spirit lying within him, and sure to moulder by neglect, the stirring up or keeping in lively exercise of which depends on the will of him on whom it is bestowed (Mt 25:18, 25, 27, 28). The charism or spiritual gift, is that of the Spirit which qualified him for "the work of an evangelist" (Eph 4:11;

2Ti 4:5), or perhaps the gift of discerning spirits, specially needed in his function of ordaining, as overseer [BISHOP HINDS].

An important question arises here, to what the word gift refers :-- whether to natural endowment; to office; or to some supposed virtue which had been conferred by ordination--some transmitted influence which made him holy as a minister of religion, and which was to continue to be transmitted by the imposition of apostolic hands.--The word which is here used, is rendered gift in every place in which it occurs in the New Testament. It is found in the following places, and with the following significations:-- deliverance from peril, 2Cor 1:11; a gift or quality of the mind, 1Co 7:7; gifts of Christian knowledge or consolation, Rom 1:11; 1Cor 1:7; redemption or salvation through Christ, Rom 5:15,16; Rom 6:23, 11:29; the miraculous endowments conferred by the Holy Spirit, Rom 12:6, 1Cor 12:4,9,28,30,31; and the special gift or endowment for the work of the ministry, 1Timm 4:14, 2Ti 1:6, 1Pet 4:10. The gift then referred to here was that by which Timothy was qualified for the work of the ministry. It relates to his office and qualifications -to every thing that entered into his fitness for the work. It does not refer exclusively to any influence that came upon him in virtue of his ordination, or to any new grace that was infused into him by that act, making him either officially or personally more holy than other men, or than he was before--or to any efficacy in the mere act of ordination--but it comprised the whole train of circumstances by which he had been qualified for the sacred office, and recognised as a minister of religion. All this was regarded as a gift, a benefit, or favour, χαρισμα,--and he was not to neglect or disregard the responsibilities and advantages growing out of it. In regard to the manner in which this gift or favour was bestowed, the following things are specified.

(1.) It was the gift of God, 2Ti 1:6. He was to be recognised as its source; and it was not therefore conferred merely by human hands. The call to the ministry, the qualifications for the office, and the whole arrangement by which one is endowed for the work, are primarily to be traced to him as the source.

(2.) It was given to Timothy in accordance with certain predictions which had existed in regard to him--the expectations of those who had observed his qualifications for such an office, and who had expressed the hope that he would one day be permitted to serve the Lord in it.

(3.) It was sanctioned by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. The call of God to the work thus recognised by the church, and the approbation of the Presbytery expressed by setting him apart to the office, should be regarded by Timothy as a part of the "gift" or benefit (charisma) which had been conferred on him, and which he was not to neglect.

(4.) An additional circumstance which might serve to impress the mind of Timothy with the value of this endowment, and the responsibility of this office, was, that Paul himself had been concerned in his ordination, 2Ti 1:6. He who was so much more aged, (2Ti 4:6,7); he who had been a father to him, and who had adopted him and treated him as a son, had been concerned in his ordination; and this fact imposed a higher obligation to perform aright the functions of an office which had been conferred on him in this manner. We are not to suppose, therefore, that there was any mysterious influence conveyed by the act of ordination, or that that act imparted any additional degree of holiness. The endowment for the ministry; the previous anticipations and hopes of friends; and the manner in which he had been inducted into the sacred office, should all be regarded as a benefit or favour of a high order, and as a reason why the gift thus bestowed should not be neglected--and the same things now should make a man who is in the ministry deeply feel the solemn obligations resting on him to cultivate his powers in the highest degree, and to make the most of his talents.

Which was given thee by prophecy. That is, by the Holy Spirit, at his general ordination, or else consecration, to the special see of Ephesus, speaking through the prophets God's will to give him the graces needed to qualify him for his work (1Ti 1:18; Ac 13:1-3); the prophetic declarations and the hopes of pious friends in regard to your future usefulness, have been among the means by which you

have been introduced to the ministry, and should be a reason why you should cultivate your powers, and perform faithfully the duties of your office. 1Timm 1:18.

With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. It was common to lay on the hands in imparting a blessing, or in setting apart to any office. See Mt 19:15, Mk 6:5, Lk 4:40, 13:13, Lev 8:14, Nu 27:23 Acts 28:8, 6:6, 8:17, 13:3. So in Joshua's case (Nu 27:18-20; De 34:9). The gift was connected with the symbolical act of laying on hands. The reference here is undoubtedly to the act by which Timothy was set apart to the office of the ministry. The word rendered presbytery--πρεσβυτεριον, occurs only in two other places in the New Testament--Lk 22:66, where it is rendered elders and Acts 22:5, where it is rendered "estate of the elders." It properly means an assembly of aged men; council of elders. In Lk 22:66, Acts 22:5, it refers to the Jewish sanhedrim. Mt 5:22. In the passage before us, it cannot refer to that body--for they did not ordain men to the Christian ministry--but to some association, or council, or body of elders of the Christian church. It is clear from the passage

(1.) that there was more than one person engaged in this service, and taking part in it when Timothy was ordained, and therefore it could not have been by a prelate or bishop alone.

(2.) That the power conferred, whatever it was, was conferred by the whole body constituting the Presbytery--since the apostle says that the "gift" was imparted, not in virtue of any particular power or eminence in any one individual, but by the "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery."

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

Meditate upon these things. Upon the train of events by which you have been led into the ministry, and upon the responsibilities and duties of the office. Let your mind be deeply impressed with these things; make them the subject of profound and serious thought. Give thyself wholly to them. Gr., "Be in them"--a phrase similar to that of Horace--totus in illis. The meaning is plain. He was to devote his life wholly to this work. He was to have no other grand aim of living.

His time, attention, talents, were to be absorbed in the proper duties of the work. He was not to make that subordinate and tributary to any other purpose, nor was he to allow any other object to interfere with the appropriate duties of that office. He was not to live for money, fame, or pleasure; not to devote his time to the pursuits of literature or science for their own sakes; not to seek the reputation of an elegant or profound scholar; not to aim to be distinguished merely as an accomplished gentleman, or as a skilful farmer, teacher, or author. Whatever was done in any of these departments, was to be wholly consistent with the direction, εντουτοιςισθι--"be in these things"-- be absorbed in the appropriate duties of the ministerial office. It may be remarked here that no man will ever make much of himself, or accomplish much in any profession, who does not make this the rule of his life. He who has one great purpose of life to which he patiently and steadily devotes himself, and to which he makes everything else bend, will uniformly rise to high respectability, if not to eminence. He who does not do this, can expect to accomplish nothing. That thy profiting. Gr. Thy going forward; that is, thy advancement or progress. A minister of the gospel ought to make steady improvement in all that pertains to his office. No man ought to be satisfied with present attainments. To all. Marg., in all things. The margin is the more correct rendering, but either of them makes good sense. It should be apparent to all persons who attend on a stated preaching of a minister of the gospel, that he is making steady advances in knowledge, and wisdom, and piety, and in all things that pertain to the proper performance of the duties of his office. If a man really makes progress, it will be seen and appreciated by others; if he does not, that will be as well understood by his hearers.

Ministers are to be much in meditation. They are to consider beforehand how and what they must speak. They are to meditate on the great trust committed to them, on the worth and value of immortal souls, and on the account they must give at the last.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them:
for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear
thee.

He exhorted him to read the scriptures before, now to meditate upon what he read.
Where note, That if those who were inspired, and divinely qualified, must yet read, meditate, study hard, and employ their whole time to fit themselves for the ministerial work, what shall we think of the ignorance and impudence of our lay-preachers, who, without any such divine qualification, or without any call or commission, without giving themselves wholly to these things, dare presume to teach the scriptures, when they never understood them; nay, can hardly read them!

Meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them. Be in them, says the original, lay out thy whole strength and time in studying God's will, and making known thy people's duty.

Three things are here explicitly condemned in persons set apart for the holy function.

1. Sloth and negligence; it is a painful service we are engaged in, and woe unto us if we be slothful in business, if we be sparing of our pains for fear of shortening our days, and hastening our end; verily the lamp of our lives can never burn out better than in lighting others to heaven.

2. Worldly-mindedness, 1Pe 5:2 feed the flock, but not for filthy lucre: the spiritual man must not so mind earthly things as to make them his principal aim and scope; for if so, he will act accordingly, and defeat all the ends of his ministry. The apostles had no settled maintenance, but their subsistence to seek: yet were wholly in these things. How much should we be so now, who have our maintenance, but their subsistence to seek: yet were wholly in these things. How much should we be so now, who have our maintenance legally secured! How should we seek the kingdom of God, and the welfare of our people's souls, seeing all other things are added to us, in measure, though not in excess!

3. Incumbrance by worldly business: he that must give himself wholly to these things, what leisure can he find for magistracy, for

managing law-suits, for farming of lands, and for secular concerns: we cannot make a business of two things so widely different from each other.

Can we be spiritual persons, and yet mere seculars in our thoughts and care?
Well therefore might St. Paul say to Timothy, But thou, O man of God, flee these things, 1Tim 6:11

Observe lastly, The reason which the apostle subjoins why he would have Timothy do all this: That his profiting may appear to all men; he must read, meditate, pray, and study, that he may improve and profit himself;

Take heed unto thyself. This may be understood as relating to everything of a personal nature that would qualify him for his work. It may be applied to personal piety; to health; to manners; to habits of living; to temper; to the ruling purposes; to the intercourse with others. In relation to personal religion, a minister should take heed

(1.) that he has true piety; and

(2.) that he is advancing in the knowledge and love of God. In relation to morals, he should be upright; to his intercourse with others, and his personal habits, he should be correct, consistent, and gentlemanly, so as to give needless offence to none. The person of a minister should be neat and cleanly; his manners such as will show the fair influence of religion on his temper and deportment; his style of intercourse such as will be an example to the old and the young, and such as will not offend against the proper laws of courtesy and urbanity. There is no religion in a filthy person; in uncouth manners; in an inconvenient and strange form of apparel; in bad grammar, and in slovenly habits--and to be a real gentleman should be as much a matter of conscience with a minister of the gospel as to be a real Christian. Indeed under the full and fair influence of the gospel, the one always implies the other. Religion refines the manners--it does not corrupt them; it makes one

courteous, polite, and kind--it never produces boorish manners, or habits that give offence to the well-bred and the refined. And unto the doctrine. The kind of teaching which you give, or to your public instructions. The meaning is, that he should hold and teach only the truth, he was to "take heed" to the whole business of public instruction that is, both to the matter and the manner. The great object was to get as much truth as possible before the minds of his hearers and in such a way as to produce the deepest impression on them. Continue in them. That is, in these things which have been specified. He was ever to be found perseveringly engaged in the performance of these duties. For in doing thou shalt both save thyself. By holding of the truth, and by the faithful performance of your duties, you will secure the salvation of the soul. We are not to suppose that the apostle meant to teach that this would be the meritorious cause of his salvation, but that these faithful labours would be regarded as an evidence of piety, and would be accepted as such. It is equivalent to saying, that an unfaithful minister of the gospel cannot be saved; one who faithfully performs all the duties of that office with a right spirit, will be. And them that hear thee. That is, you will be the means of their salvation. It is not necessary to suppose that the apostle meant to teach that he would save all that heard him. The declaration is to be understood in a popular sense, and it is undoubtedly true, that a faithful minister will be the means of saving many sinners. The assurance furnishes a ground of encouragement for a minister of the gospel. He may hope for success, and should look for success. He has the promise of God that if he is faithful he shall see the fruit of his labours; and this result of his work is a sufficient reward for all the toils, and sacrifices, and self-denials of the ministry. If a minister should be the means of saving but one soul from the horrors of eternal suffering and eternal sinning, it would be worth the most self-denying labours of the longest life. Yet what minister of the gospel is there, who is at all faithful to his trust, who is not made the honoured instrument of the salvation of many more than one? Few are the devoted ministers of Christ who are not permitted to see evidence even here, that their labour has not been in vain. Let not, then, the faithful preacher be discouraged. A single soul rescued

from death will be a gem in his eternal crown brighter by far than ever sparkled on the brow of royalty.
As if the apostle had said, "Have a special regard to the piety of thy life, and to the purity of thy doctrine, and this continually; so shalt thou do what lieth in thee, to save both thine own soul, and the souls of all thy people."

1. Take heed unto thyself. Our lives must be such as become ministers of God, and preachers of righteousness; for the eyes of God and the whole world are upon us; the observing eye of God, the censorious and insidious eye of the world, who will charge the miscarriages of a single person upon the whole order, and condemn all for the faults of one: therefore let every one take heed unto himself; the honour of our profession requires it, the conscience of our duty challenges it, a due regard to the glory of God and our own reputation commands it.

2. Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be the pure and uncorrupted word of God, expounded agreeably to the sense of the ancient church, and of our own church in particular, which has with the greatest care followed the ancient pattern: many errors are abroad in the world, which have adulterated the truths of the gospel; it is therefore prudential and necessary, that the ministers of God keep at a great distance from every opinion which looks like heretical, and not to come within the reach of suspicion: it is not enough for us to be innocent, unless we appear so.

Note farther, The order of the words: St. Paul bids Timothy first to take heed of his life, and next to his doctrine; not first to his doctrine, and then to his life: Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine. Because the success of our doctrine depends upon the goodness of our lives; it is this must render our doctrine operative and effectual; this is the principal thing; we must do as well as teach: for who will believe him in the pulpit, who contradicts

himself in his conversation? therefore take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine.

Note lastly, The great benefit of this course, and the blessed advantage of it: we shall save ourselves, deliver our own selves by our diligence and care; for the faithful nurse shall be paid, though the child die at the breast; and not only ourselves, but our people also; them that hear us: that is, "We shall do our utmost, and all that lieth in us, to save the souls that are committed to us, that they may be our crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming." God will pronounce us pure and innocent from the blood of all men; and if our people perish, their blood will be upon their own heads; which God avert for his mercy's sake. Amen.

1 Timothy-5

Responsibilities toward Others

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Rebuke not an elder, but entreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren;

Verse 1. Rebuke not an elder. The word elder here is not used in the sense in which it often is, to denote an officer of the church, a presbyter, but in its proper and usual sense, to denote an aged man. This is evident, because the apostle immediately mentions in contradistinction from the elder, "the younger men," where it cannot be supposed that he refers to them as officers. The command to treat the "elder" as a "father," also shows the same thing. By the direction not to rebuke, it is not to he supposed that the minister of the gospel is not to admonish the aged, or that he is not to show them their sins when they go astray, but that he is to do this as he would to a father. He is not to assume a harsh, dictatorial, and denunciatory manner. The precepts of religion always respect the proprieties of life, and never allow us to transgress them, even when the object is to reclaim a soul from error, and to save one who is wandering. Besides, when

this is the aim, it will always be most certainly accomplished by observing the respect due to others on account of office, relation, rank, or age. But entreat him as a father. As you would a father. That is, do not harshly denounce him. Endeavour to persuade him to lead a more holy life. One of the things for which the ancients were remarkable above most of the moderns, and for which the Orientals are still distinguished, was respect for age. Few things are enjoined with more explicitness and emphasis in the Bible than this, Lev 19:32, Job 29, Prov 20:20, 30:17 Comp. Dan 7:9,10, Rev 1:14,15. The apostle would have Timothy, and, for the same reason, every other minister of the gospel, a model of this virtue. And the younger men as brethren. That is, treat them as you would your own brothers. Do not consider them as aliens; strangers, or enemies, but entertain towards them, even when they go astray, the kindly feelings of a brother. This refers more particularly to his private intercourse with them, and to his personal efforts to reclaim them when they had fallen into sin. When these efforts were ineffectual, and they sinned openly, he was to "rebuke them before all," 1Timm 5:20, that others might be deterred from following their example.

With all purity. Nothing could be more characteristic of Paul's manner than this injunction; nothing could show a deeper acquaintance with human nature. He knew the danger which would beset a youthful minister of the gospel when it was his duty to admonish and entreat a youthful female; he knew, too, the scandal to which he might be exposed if, in the performance of the necessary duties of his office, there should be the slightest departure from purity and propriety. He was therefore to guard his heart with more than common vigilance in such circumstances, and was to indulge in no word, or look, or action, which could by any possibility be construed as manifesting an improper state of feeling. On nothing else do the fair character and usefulness of a youthful minister more depend, than on the observance of this precept. Nowhere else does he more need the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the exercise of prudence, and the manifestation of incorruptible integrity, than in the performance of this duty. A youthful minister who fails here, can never recover the perfect purity of an unsullied reputation, and never in subsequent life be wholly free from suspicion. Comp. Mt 5:28.

2 the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

That are widows indeed. Who are truly widows. We associate with the word widow, commonly, not only the idea of the loss of a husband, but many other things that are the usual accompaniments of widowhood--a poor and dependent condition; care and solicitude; sadness and sorrow. This idea is implied in the use of the word employed here--χηρα--which means properly one who is bereaved, (from the adjective χηρος, bereaved,) and which, as Calvin says, conveys the idea of one in distressed circumstances. What Paul regarded as constituting true widowhood, he specifies in verses 1Timm 5:4,5,9,10. He connects with it the idea that she had no persons dependent on her; that she was desolate, and evinced true trust in God; that she was so aged that she would not marry again; and that by her life she had given evidence of possessing a heart of true benevolence, 1Timm 5:10.

3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.

4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

And to requite their parents. To repay them, as far as possible, for all their kindness. This debt can never be wholly repaid, but still a child should feel it a matter of sacred obligation to do as much towards it as possible. For that is good and acceptable before God. It is a duty everywhere enjoined. Comp. Mt 15:5-7; Eph 6:1,2.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

A widow indeed, and desolate. The word rendered desolate means solitary, alone. It does not necessarily imply the idea of discomfort, which we attach to the word desolate. The sense is, that she had no children or other descendants; none on whom she could depend for support. Trusteth in God. She has no one else to look to but God. She has no earthly reliance; and, destitute of husband, children, and property, she feels her dependence, and steadily looks to God for consolation and support. And continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. Continually. 1Timm 2:1. See also the description of Anna in Lk 2:36,37. The apostle regards this as one of the characteristics of those who were "widows indeed," whom

he would have received into the class to be maintained by the church, and to whom the charge of younger members of the church might be intrusted.

6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

But she that liveth in pleasure. Marg., delicately. The Greek word σπαταλαω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Jas 5:5: "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth." It properly means to live in luxury, voluptuously; to indulge freely in eating and drinking; to yield to the indulgence of the appetites. It does not indicate grossly criminal pleasures; but the kind of pleasure connected with luxurious living, and with pampering the appetites. It is probable that in the time of the apostle, there were professedly Christian widows who lived in this manner--as there are such professing Christians of all kinds in every age of the world. Is dead while she liveth". To all the proper purposes of life she is as if she were dead. There is great emphasis in this expression, and nothing could convey more forcibly the idea that true happiness is not to be found in the pleasures of sense. There is nothing in them that answers the purposes of life. They are not the objects for which life was given, and as to the great and proper designs of existence, such persons might as well be dead.

But she is not a widow indeed that lives in pleasure (1Ti 5:6), or who lives licentiously. A jovial widow is not a widow indeed, not fit to be taken under the care of the church. She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives, is no living member of the church, but as a carcase in it, or a mortified member. We may apply it more generally; those who live in pleasure are dead while they live, spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins; they are in the world to no purpose, buried alive as to the great ends of living.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

But if any provide not for his own. The apostle was speaking 1Timm 5:4 particularly of the duty of children towards a widowed mother. In enforcing that duty, he gives the subject, as he often does in similar cases, a general direction, and says that all ought to provide for those who are dependent on them, and that if they did

not do this, they had a less impressive sense of the obligations of duty than even the heathen had. On the duty here referred to, comp. Rom 12:17, 2Cor 8:21. The meaning is, that the person referred to is to think beforehand προνοει of the probable wants of his own family, and make arrangements to meet them. God thus provides for our wants; that is, he sees beforehand what we shall need, and makes arrangements for those wants by long preparation. The food that we eat, and the raiment that we wear, he foresaw that we should need, and the arrangement for the sup- ply was made years since, and to meet these wants he has been carrying forward the plans of his providence in the seasons; in the growth of animals; in the formation of fruit; in the bountiful harvest. So, according to our measure, we are to anticipate what will be the probable wants of our families, and to make arrangements to meet them. The words 'his own,' refer to those who are naturally dependent on him, whether living in his own immediate family or not. There may be many distant relatives naturally dependent on our aid, besides those who live in our own house. And especially for those of his own house. Marg., kindred. The word house, or household, better expresses the sense than the word kindred. The meaning is, those who live in his own family. They would naturally have higher claims on him than those who did not. They would commonly be his nearer relatives, and the fact, from whatever cause, that they constituted his own family, would lay the foundation for a strong claim upon him. He who neglected his own immediate family would be more guilty than he who neglected a more remote relative. He hath denied the faith. By his conduct, perhaps, not openly. He may still be a professor of religion and do this; but he will show that he is imbued with none of the spirit of religion, and is a stranger to its real nature. The meaning is, that he would, by such an act, have practically renounced Christianity, since it enjoins this duty on all. We may hence learn that it is possible to deny the faith by conduct as well as by words; and that a neglect of doing our duty is as real a denial of Christianity as it would be openly to renounce it. Peter denied his Lord in one way, and thousands do the same thing in another. He did it in words; they by neglecting their duty to their families, or their duty in their closets, or their duty in attempting to send salvation to their fellow-men, or

by an openly irreligious life. A neglect of any duty is so far a denial of the faith. And is worse than an infidel. The word here does not mean an infidel, technically so called, or one who openly professes to disbelieve Christianity, but any one who does not believe; that is, any one who is not a sincere Christian. The word, therefore, would include the heathen, and it is to them, doubtless, that the apostle particularly refers. They acknowledged the obligation to provide for their relatives. This was one of the great laws of nature written on their hearts, and a law which they felt bound to obey. Few things were inculcated more constantly by heathen moralists than this duty. Galgacus, in Tacitas, says, "Nature dictates that to every one, his own children and relatives should be most dear." Cicero says, "Every man should take care of his own family"--suos quisque debet tueri. See Rosenmuller, in loc., and also numerous examples of the same kind quoted from Apuleius, Cicero, Plutarch, Homer, Terence, Virgil, and Servius, in Priceaus, in loc. The doctrine here is,

(1.) that a Christian ought not to be inferior to an unbeliever in respect to any virtue;

(2.) that in all that constitutes true virtue he ought to surpass him;

(3.) that the duties which are taught by nature ought to be regarded as the more sacred and obligatory from the fact that God has given us a better religion; and

(4.) that a Christian ought never to give occasion to an enemy of the gospel to point to a man of the world and say, "There is one who surpasses you in any virtue."

"If any (a general proposition; therefore including in its application the widow's children or grandchildren) provide not for his own (relations in general), and especially for those of his own house (in particular), he hath (practically) denied the faith." Faith without love and its works is dead; "for the subject matter of faith is not mere opinion, but the grace and truth of God, to which he that believes gives up his spirit, as he that loves gives up his heart"

[MACK]. If in any case a duty of love is plain, it is in relation to one's own relatives; to fail in so plain an obligation is a plain proof of want of love, and therefore of want of faith. "Faith does not set aside natural duties, but strengthens them" [BENGEL]. Because even an infidel (or unbeliever) is taught by nature to provide for his own relatives, and generally recognizes the duty; the Christian who does not so, is worse (Mt 5:46, 47). He has less excuse with his greater light than the infidel who may break the laws of nature.

One reason why this care must be taken that those who are rich should maintain their poor relations, and not burden the church with them is (1Ti 5:16) that it may relieve those who are widows indeed. Observe, Charity misplaced is a great hindrance to true charity; there should be prudence in the choice of the objects of charity, that it may not be thrown away upon those who are not properly so, that there may be the more for those who are real objects of charity.

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

10 well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

If she have brought up children. Either her own or others. The idea is, if she has done this in a proper manner. If she have lodged strangers. If she has been characterized by hospitality--a virtue greatly commended in the Scriptures. Comp. 1Timm 3:2 If she have washed the saints' feet. It is not certain whether this is to be understood literally, or whether it merely denotes that she had performed offices of a humble and self-denying kind--such as would be shown by washing the feet of others. It was one of the rites of hospitality in the East to wash the feet of the guest, Gen 18:4, and Paul might have spoken of this as having been literally performed. There is not the slightest evidence that he refers to it as a religious rite, or ordinance, any more than he does to the act of bringing up children as a religious rite. Jn 13:1 and following. If she have relieved the afflicted. If it has been her character that she was ready to furnish relief to those who were in distress. If she have

diligently followed every good work. This is one of the characteristics of true piety. A sincere Christian will, like God, be the friend of all that is good, and will be ready to promote every good object according to his ability. He will not merely be the friend of one good cause, to the neglect of others, but he will endeavour to promote every good object, and though from peculiar circumstances, and peculiar dealings of Providence, he may have been particularly interested in some one object of charity, yet every good object will find a response in his heart, and he will be ready to promote it by his influence, his property, and his prayers.

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax
wanton against Christ, they will marry;

12 having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

Having damnation. Or rather, having condemnation; or incurring guilt. This does not mean of necessity that they would lose their souls. See the phrase explained 1Cor 11:29. The meaning is, that they would contract guilt, if they had been admitted among this class of persons, and then married again. The apostle does not say that that would be wrong in itself, 1Timm 5:14, or that they would be absolutely prohibited from it, but that injury would be done if they were admitted among those who were "widows indeed"--who were supported by the church, and who were intrusted with a certain degree of care over the more youthful females--and then should leave that situation. It might give occasion for scandal; it might break in upon the arrangements; it would show that there was a relaxing of the faith, and of the deadness to the world, which they were supposed to have; and it was better that they should be married 1Timm 5:14, without having been thus admitted. Because they have cast of their first faith. This does not mean that they would lose all their religion, or wholly fall away, but that this would show that they had not the strong faith, the deadness to the world, the simple dependence on God, 1Timm 5:5,) and the desire which they had to be weaned from worldly cares and influences, which they once had. When they became widows, all their earthly hopes seemed to be blasted. They were then dead to the world, and felt their sole dependence on God. But if, under the influence of these strong emotions, they were admitted to the "class of widows" in the church, there was no certainty that they would continue in

this state of mind. Time would do much to modify their grief. There would be a reviving love of the world, and under the influence of this they would be disposed to enter into the married relation, and thus show that they had not the strong and simple faith which they had when the blow which made them widows fell heavily upon them.

13 And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

And withal. In addition to the prospect that they may marry again, there are other disadvantages which might follow from such an arrangement, and other evils to be feared, which it is desirable to avoid. They learn to be idle. That is, if supported by the church, and if without the settled principles which might be expected in those more aged and experienced, it may be feared that they will give themselves up to an indolent life. There would be a security in the age and established habits of those more advanced in life, which there could not be in their case. The apostle does not mean that widows are naturally disposed to be idle, but that in the situation referred to, there would be danger of it. Wandering about from house to house. A natural consequence of supposing that they had nothing to do, and a practice not only profitless, but always attended with mischief. Tattlers also. Literally, overflowing; then overflowing with talk--praters, triflers. They would learn all the news; become acquainted with the secrets of families; and of course indulge in much idle and improper conversation. Our word gossippers would accurately express the meaning here. The noun does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The verb occurs in 3Jn 10; rendered, prating against. And busybodies. 2Thes 3:11. The word means, probably, working all round, over-doing, and then an intermeddler. Persons who have nothing to do of their own, commonly find employment by interesting themselves in the affairs of their neighbours. No one likes to be wholly idle; and if any one is not found doing what he ought to do, he will commonly be found engaged in doing what he ought not. Speaking things which they ought not. Revealing the concerns of their neighbours; disclosing secrets; magnifying trifles, so as to exalt themselves into importance, as if they were intrusted with the secrets of others;

inventing stories and tales of gossip, that they may magnify and maintain their own consequence in the community. No persons are commonly more dangerous to the peace of a neighbourhood, than those who have nothing to do.

14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

15 For some are already turned aside after Satan.

For some are already turned aside after Satan. That is, some young widows. The meaning is, that in the respects above mentioned, 1Timm 5:13, they had followed the great Tempter, rather than the Lord Jesus. This is stated as a reason why they should not be admitted into the number of the widows who were to be maintained at the expense of the church, and to whom the care of the younger female members was to be committed.

16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Let them relieve them. That is, let them support them. This was an obvious rule of duty. 1Timm 5:8. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to leave those who are properly dependent on us to be supported by others, when we are able to maintain them ourselves. That it may relieve, etc. That it may have the means of supporting those who are truly dependent. To require or expect the church, therefore, to support those whom we ought ourselves to support, is, in fact, to rob the poor and friendless. In regard to these directions respecting widows, 1Timm 5:3-16, we may remark in general, as the result of the exposition which has been given,

(1.) they were to be poor widows, who had not the means of support themselves.

(2.) They were, probably, to be not merely supported, but to be usefully employed in the service of the church, particularly in overseeing the conduct, and imparting instruction to the female members.

(3.) They were to be of such age and character that there would be security of stability and correctness of deportment; such that they would not be tempted to leave the situation, or to act so as to give occasion of reproach.

(4.) It is by no means certain that this was intended to be a permanent arrangement. It grew probably out of the peculiar customs respecting intercourse between the sexes in the oriental world, and would undoubtedly be proper now in similar circumstances. But it by no means follows that this arrangement is binding on the churches where the customs of society are different. Yet

(5.) the passage inculcates the general principle that the poor widows of the church are to be assisted, when they have no relatives on whom they can naturally depend. No class of people are more helpless than aged widows, and for that class God has always shown a special concern, and his people should do so likewise.

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

Our apostle proceeds next to give Timothy directions concerning elders; not old men in years, but elders in office, such as were employed in the governing of the church, and over and above that service, laboured even unto weariness in preaching of the word, and expounding the Christian doctrine, requiring that double honour be given unto such.

Note here, 1. The elders' work and duty declared; to rule well: wisely to preside over, and discreetly to govern, the church of Christ; also to labour in the word and doctrine; to take pains in preaching the gospel upon all occasions: those that are advanced to the highest eminency in the church will not think themselves above this part of their duty.

Note, 2. The honour and respect challenged on their behalf: double honour is their due, namely, an honour of reverence, and an honour of maintenance, and a double measure of either; some think it an allusion to the first born, who was the priest of the family, and had a double portion amongst his brethren; the Levites succeeded them,

and the ministers of the gospel these; who, when laborious in governing and teaching the church of Christ, deserve more honour and better maintenence than the unkind world is willing to confer upon them; who, instead of double honour, sometimes deny them civil respect.

Note, 3. In that the apostle styles the ministers' maintenance is not to be esteemed in the nature of alms, but of a tribute paid by an inferior to a superior; neither is our maintenance mercenary wages, but such as ought to be given as a testimony of honour, as well as in the nature of a reward. As then they are worthy of, let them never fail to receive, double honour, who rule well, and also labour in the word and doctrine.

18 For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer *is* worthy of his reward.

And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. This expression is found substantially in Mt 10:10, Lk 10:7. It does not occur in so many words in the Old Testament, and yet the apostle adduces it evidently as a quotation from the Scriptures, and as authority in the case. It would seem probable, therefore, that he had seen the gospel by Matthew or by Luke, and that he quoted this as a part of Scripture, and regarded the. Book from which he made the quotation as of the same authority as the Old Testament. If so, then this may be regarded as an attestation of the apostle to the inspiration of the "Gospel" in which it was found.

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

Receive not an accusation. He was not to regard such a charge as well founded unless sustained by two or three witnesses. It is clear from this, that Paul supposed that Timothy would be called on to hear charges against others who were in the ministerial office, and to express his judgment on such cases. There is no reason, however, to suppose that he meant that he should hear them alone, or as a "bishop," for this direction does not make the supposition improper that others would be associated with him. It is just such counsel as would now be given to a Presbyterian or Congregational minister, or such as would be given to an associate justice in a court, on the supposition that a brother judge was at any time to be tried by him

and his colleagues. But before two or three witnesses. Marg., under. The meaning is, unless supported by the testimony of two or three persons, he was not to regard an accusation against a presbyter as proved, if there was but one witness in the case, however positive he might be in his testimony. The reasons for this direction were probably such as these:

(1.) This was the requirement of the Jewish law in all cases, which had thus settled a principle which the apostle seems to have regarded as important, if not obligatory, under the Christian dispensation. See De 17:6, 19:15. Jn 8:17; 2Cor 13:1.

(2.) There would be much greater reason to apprehend that one person might be deceived in the matter on which he bore witness, or might do it from malignant motives, or might be bribed to give false testimony, than that two or three would give such testimony; and the arrangement, therefore, furnished important security for the innocent.

(3.) There might be reason to apprehend that evil-minded persons might be disposed to bring charges against the ministers of the gospel or other officers of the church, and it was important therefore that their rights should be guarded with anxious care. The ministers of religion often give offence to wicked men by their rebukes of sin, (comp. Mk 6:17-20;) wicked men would rejoice to see an accusation against them sustained; the cause of religion would be liable to suffer much when its ministers were condemned as guilty of gross offences, and it is right, therefore, that the evidence in the case should be as free as possible from all suspicion that it is caused by malignity, by hatred of religion, or by conspiracy, or by a desire to see religion disgraced.

(4.) The character of a minister of the gospel is of value, not only to himself and family, as is the case with that of other men, but is of special value to the church, and to the cause of religion. It is the property of the church. The interests of religion depend much on it, and it should not be wantonly assailed; and every precaution should be adopted that Christianity should not be deprived of the advantage which may be derived in its favour from the piety, experience, and

talents of its public defenders. At the same time, however, the wicked, though in the ministry, should not be screened from the punishment which they deserve. The apostle gave no injunction to attempt to cover up their faults, or to save them from a fair trial, he only demanded such security as the nature of the case required, that the trial should be fair. If a minister of the gospel has been proved to be guilty of crime, the honour of religion, as well as simple justice, requires that he shall be punished as he deserves. He sins against great light; he prostitutes a holy office, and makes use of the very reputation which his office gives him, that he may betray the confidence of others; and such a man should not escape. There should be no "benefit of clergy," and neither a black coat, nor bands, nor the lawn should save a villain.

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

Them that sin. That have been proved to have committed sin--referring probably to the elders mentioned in the previous verse, but giving the direction so general a form that it might be applicable to others. Rebuke before all. Before all the church or congregation. The word rebuke properly denotes to reprove or reprehend. It means here that there should be a public statement of the nature of the offence, and such a censure as the case demanded. It extends only to spiritual censures. There is no power given of inflicting any punishment by fine or imprisonment. The power of the church, in such cases, is only to express its strong and decided disapprobation of the wrong done, and if the case demands it, of disowning the offending member or minister. This direction to "rebuke an offender before all," may be easily reconciled with the direction in 1Timm 5:1, "Rebuke not an elder." The latter refers to the private and pastoral intercourse with an elder, and to the method in which he should be treated in such intercourse--to wit, with the feelings due to a father; the direction here refers to the manner in which an offender should be treated, who has been proved to be guilty, and where the case has become public. Then there is to be a public expression of disapprobation. That others also may fear. That they be kept from committing the same offence. Comp. 1Pet 2:14. The end of punishment is not the gratification of the private feelings of him who administers it, but the prevention of crime.

21 I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

I charge thee before God. Comp. Lu 16:28 Ac 20:21. The word rendered charge means, properly, to call to witness; then to affirm with solemn attestations; and then to admonish solemnly, to urge upon earnestly. It is a word which implies that the subject is of great importance. Paul gives this charge as in the presence of God, of the Redeemer, and of the elect angels, and wishes to secure that sense of its solemnity which must arise from the presence of such holy witnesses. And the Lord Jesus Christ. As in the presence of the Lord Jesus; with his eye resting upon you.

And the elect angels. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to speak as if we were in the presence of holy angels, and of the disembodied spirits of the good. Comp. Heb 12:1. No one can prove that the angels, and that the departed spirits of holy men are not witnesses of what we do. Sin, too, should be avoided as if every eye in the universe were upon us. How many things do we do which we would not; how many feelings do we cherish which we would at once banish from our minds, if we felt that the heavens above us were as transparent as glass, and that all the holy beings around the throne were fixing an intense gaze upon us! The word "elect" here seems to imply that there had been some influence used to keep them, and some purpose respecting them, which had not existed in regard to those who had fallen. Saints are called elect because they are chosen of God unto salvation, (Eph 1:4,5;) and it would appear that it is a great law extending through the universe, that both those who remain in a state of holiness, and those who are made holy, are the subjects of purpose and choice on the part of God. The fact only is stated; the reasons which led to the choice, alike in regard to angels and men, are unknown to us. Comp. Mt 11:25. That thou observe these things. Probably referring to all the things which he had enjoined in the previous parts of the epistle. Without preferring one before another. Marg., prejudice. The meaning is without previous judgment--

χωριςπροκριματος--without any prejudice on account of rank, wealth, personal friendship, or predilection of any sort. Let there be entire impartiality in all cases. Justice was beautifully represented by the ancients as holding a pair of scales equally balanced. It is as important that there should be entire impartiality in the church as in civil transactions, and though it is not wrong for a minister of the gospel to have his personal friends, yet in the administration of the affairs of the church, he should remember that all are brethren, and all, of whatever rank, colour, sex, or age, have equal rights. Partiality. Gr., inclination or proclivity--that is, without being inclined to favour one party or person more than another. There should be no purpose to find one guilty, and another innocent; no inclination of heart towards one which would lead us to resolve to find him innocent; and no aversion for another which would make us resolve to find him guilty.

Lay hands suddenly on no man:it seems to be meant of the ordaining of men to the office of the ministry, which ought not to be done rashly and inconsiderately, and before due trial made of their gifts and graces, their abilities and qualifications for it. Some understand it of absolution: "Be not too hasty in laying hands on any; remit not the censure of the church to any, till time be first taken for the proof of their sincerity in their repentance, neither be partakers of other men's sins, implying that those who are too easy in remitting the censures of the church encourage others in the sins which are thus connived at, and make themselves thereby guilty." Observe, We have great need to watch over ourselves at all times, that we do not make ourselves partakers of other men's sins. "Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or being any way accessary to it, in others." Here is, 1. A caution against the rash ordination of ministers, or absolution of those who have been under church-censures: Lay hands suddenly on no man. 2. Those who are rash, either in the one case or the other, will make themselves partakers in other men's sins. 3. We must keep ourselves pure, if we will be pure; the grace of God makes and keeps us pure, but it is by our own endeavours.

Some have understood this of laying on hands to heal the sick (Koppe ;) others of the laying on of hands to absolve penitents; but the obvious meaning is to refer it to ordination. It was usual to lay the hands on the heads of those who were ordained to a sacred office, or appointed to perform an important duty. 1Timm 4:14. Comp. Acts 6:6, 8:17. The idea here is, that TimotHy should not be hasty in an act so important as that of introducing men to the ministry, he should take time to give them a fair trial of their piety; he should have satisfactory evidence of their qualifications, he should not at once introduce a man to the ministry because he gave evidence of piety, or because he burned with an ardent zeal, or because he thought himself qualified for the work. It is clear from this that the apostle regarded Timothy as having the right to ordain to the ministry; but not that he was to ordain alone, or as a prelate. The injunction would be entirely proper on the supposition that others were to be associated with him in the act of ordaining. It is just such as a Presbyterian father in the ministry would give in a charge to his son now; it is in fact just the charge which is now given by Presbyterians and Congregationalists to those who are set apart to the sacred office, in reference to ordaining others. Neither be partakers of other men's sins. This is evidently to be interpreted in connection with the injunction "to lay hands suddenly on no man." The meaning in this connection, is, that Timothy was not to become a participant in the sins of another by introducing him to the sacred office. He was not to invest one with a holy office who was a wicked man or a heretic, for this would be to sanction his wickedness and error. If we ordain a man to the office of the ministry who is known to be living in sin, or to cherish dangerous error, we become the patrons of the sin and of the heresy. We lend to it the sanction of our approbation; and give to it whatever currency it may acquire from the reputation which we may have, or which it may acquire from the influence of the sacred office of the ministry. Hence the importance of caution in investing any one with the ministerial office. But while Paul meant, doubtless, that this should be applied particularly to ordination to the ministry, he has given it a general character. In no way are we to participate in the sins of other men. We are not to be engaged with them in doing wrong; we are not to patronize them in a wicked business; we are not to be known as their

companions or friends; and we are not to partake of their unlawful gains.

The second interpretation given of these words is, that Timothy is here directed how to carry himself in censuring and absolving of penitents: as if St. Paul had said, "When thou hast justly censured an offender, be not too hasty in absolving of him, (for this also was done by imposition of hands,) until some trial be made of his reformation, lest by so doing thou becomest guilty of his future faults: but keep thyself pure from all sin, whose office it is to censure and reprove sin in others." In both these senses have these words been understood, Lay hands suddenly on no man; keep thyself pure.

that is, ordain (1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; Tit 1:5). The connection is with 1Ti 5:19. The way to guard against scandals occurring in the case of presbyters is, be cautious as to the character of the candidate before ordaining him; this will apply to other Church officers so ordained, as well as to presbyters. Thus, this clause refers to 1Ti 5:19, as next clause, "neither be partaker of other men's sins," refers to 1Ti 5:20. ELLICOTT and WIESINGER understand it of receiving back into Church fellowship or absolution, by laying hands on those who had been "rebuked" (1Ti 5:20) and then excommunicated (Mt 18:17); 1Ti 5:20 favors this. But as in 1Ti 4:14, and Ac 6:6; 13:3; 2Ti 1:6, the laying on of hands is used of ordination (compare however as to confirmation, Ac 8:17), it seems better to take it so here.

neither be partaker of other men's sins—by negligence in ordaining ungodly candidates, and so becoming in some degree responsible for their sins. Or, there is the same transition from the elders to all in general who may sin, as in 1Ti 5:19, 20. Be not a partaker in other men's sins by not "rebuking them that sin before all," as well as those that are candidates for the presbytery, as also all "that sin." keep thyself pure—"thyself' is emphatic. "Keep THYSELF" clear of participation in OTHER men's sin by not failing to rebuke them that sin (1Ti 5:20). Thus the transition is easy to 1Ti 5:23, which is concerning Timothy personally; compare also 1Ti 5:24.

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

Drink no longer water.--There has been much difficulty felt in regard to the connection which this advice has with what precedes and what follows. Many have considered the difficulty to be so great that they have supposed that this verse has been displaced, and that it should be introduced in some other connection. The true connection, and the reason for the introduction of the counsel here, seems to me to be this; Paul appears to have been suddenly impressed with the thought--a thought which is very likely to come over a man who is writing on the duties of the ministry--of the arduous nature of the ministerial office. He was giving counsels in regard to an office which required a great amount of labour, care, and anxiety. The labours enjoined were such as to demand all the time; the care and anxiety incident to such a charge would be very likely to prostrate the frame, and to injure the health. Then he remembered that Timothy was yet but a youth: he recalled his feebleness of constitution and his frequent attacks of illness; he recollected the very abstemious habits which he had prescribed for himself, and, in this connection, he urges him to a careful regard for his health, and prescribes the use of a small quantity of wine, mingled with water, as a suitable medicine in his case. Thus considered, this direction is as worthy to be given by an inspired teacher as it is to counsel a man to pay a proper regard to his health, and not needlessly to throw away his life. Comp. Mt 10:23. The phrase, "drink no longer water," is equivalent to "drink not water only." See numerous instances in Wetstein. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

But use a little wine. Mingled with the water--the common method of drinking wine in the East. See Robinson's Bibliotheca Sacra. i. 512, 513. For thy stomach's sake. It was not for the pleasure to be derived from the use of wine, or because it would produce hilarity or excitement, but solely because it was regarded as necessary for the promotion of health; that is, as a medicine. And thine often infirmities. ασθενειας. Weaknesses or sicknesses. The word would include all infirmities of body, but seems to refer here to some attacks of sickness to which Timothy was liable, or to some feebleness of constitution; but beyond this we have no information

in regard to the nature of his maladies. In view of this passage, and as a further explanation of it, we may make the following remarks:

(1.) The use of wine, and of all intoxicating drinks, was solemnly forbidden to the priests under the Mosaic law, when engaged in the performance of their sacred duties, Lev 10:9,10. The same was the case among the Egyptian priests, Clarke. 1Timm 3:3. It is not improbable that the same thing would be regarded as proper among those who ministered in holy things under the Christian dispensation. The natural feeling would be, and not improperly, that a Christian minister should not be less holy than a Jewish priest, and especially when it is remembered that the reason of the Jewish law remained the same--"that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and clean and unclean."

(2.) It is evident from this passage that Timothy usually drank water only, or that, in modern language, he was a "tee-totaller." He was, evidently, not in the habit of drinking wine, or he could not have been exhorted to do it.

(3.) He must have been a remarkably temperate youth to have required the authority of an apostle to induce him to drink even a little wine. See Doddridge. There are few young men so temperate as to require such an authority to induce them to do it.

(4.) The exhortation extended only to a very moderate use of wine. It was not to drink it freely; it was not to drink it at the tables of the rich and the great, or in the social circle; it was not even to drink it by itself; it was to use "a little," mingled with water--for this was the usual method. See Athaeneus Deipno. lib. ix. x. c. 7.

(5.) It was not as a common drink, but the exhortation or command extends only to its use as a medicine. All the use which can be legitimately made of this injunction--whatever conclusion may be drawn from other precepts--is, that it is proper to use a small quantity of wine for medicinal purposes.

(6.) There are many ministers of the gospel, now, alas! to whom under no circumstances could an apostle apply this exhortation--"Drink no longer water only." They would ask, with surprise, what he meant? whether he intended it in irony, and for banter--for they need no apostolic command to drink wine. Or if he should address to them the exhortation, "Use a little wine," they could regard it only as a reproof for their usual habit of drinking much. To many, the exhortation would be appropriate, if they ought to use wine at all, only because they are in the habit of using so much, that it would be proper to restrain them to a much smaller quantity.

(7.) This whole passage is one of great value to the cause of temperance. Timothy was undoubtedly in the habit of abstaining wholly from the use of wine. Paul knew this, and he did not reprove him for it. He manifestly favoured the general habit, and only asked him to depart in some small degree from it, in order that he might restore and preserve his health. So far, and no farther, is it right to apply this language in regard to the use of wine; and the minister who should follow this injunction would be in no danger of disgracing his sacred profession by the debasing and demoralizing sin of intemperance.

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some *men* they follow after.

Some men's sins are open beforehand. This declaration, though it assumes a general form, is to be taken evidently in connection with the general subject of introducing men to the ministry 1Timm 5:22 5:23 is to be regarded as a parenthesis. The apostle had given Timothy a charge 1Timm 5:22 respecting the character of those whom he should ordain. He here says, in reference to that, that the character of some men was manifest. There was no disguise. It was evident to all what it was, and there could be no danger of mistake respecting it. Their conduct was apparent to all. About such men he ought not to hesitate a moment, and, no matter what their talents, or learning, or rank in the community, he ought to have no participation in introducing them to the ministry. Going before to judgment. Their character is well understood. There is no need of waiting for the day of judgment to know what they are. Their deeds so precede their own appearance at the judgment-bar, that the record and the verdict

can be made up before they arrive there, and there will be scarcely need even of the formality of a trial. The meaning here is, that there could be no doubt about the character of such men, and Timothy should not be accessory to their being introduced into the office of the ministry. And some men they follow after. That is, their character is not fully understood here. They conceal their plans. They practise deception. They appear different from what they really are. But the character of such men will be developed, and they will be judged according to their works. They cannot hope to escape with impunity. Though they have endeavoured to hide their evil deeds, yet they will follow after them to the judgment-bar, and will meet them there. The meaning, in this connection, seems to be, that there ought to be circumspection in judging of the qualifications of men for the office of the ministry. It ought not to be inferred from favourable appearances at once, or on slight acquaintance, that they are qualified for the office--for they may be of the number of those whose characters, now concealed or misunderstood, will be developed only on the final trial.

St. Paul had just before exhorted Timothy to keep himself pure from other men's sins, whether candidates or penitents: here comes in subsequent advice, in order thereunto: as if our apostle had said, "Timothy, if thou beest diligent to observe, and not over hasty either in ordaining candidates, or absolving penitents, thou mayest in some measure perceive who are worthy, and who are unworthy. If thou layest thine hands upon those who are actually faulty, thou partakest with them, by being an occasion of their sinning; but if thou canst not discover their faultiness beforehand, though they afterwards prove wicked, it is not thy fault; God will at length detect them, yea, they will discover themselves; and when their faults are manifest, deal with them according to the discipline of the church."

Learn hence, 1. That how much soever sinners attempt the hiding, yet they cnnot actually hide themselves, or their sinnings, from God's sight and knowledge. They cannot be hid, says St. Paul, though men labour much to hide them.

Oh! sinner, there is no way to hide thyself from God: thou mayest by repentance hide thyself in God, in the love, in the favour, in the mercy of God, but from God thou canst not be hid. As the saints' good works are open and manifest in the sight and to the view of God, so they that are otherwise cannot be hid from him who is every where? Or what thing can be our covering from him, in whose sight all things are open? Lord! what will it avail to hide ourselves from men, when we lie open and manifest to the eye of God? They that are otherwise cannot be hid.

going before to judgment—as heralds; crying sins which accuse their perpetrator. The connection seems to me this: He had enjoined Timothy, 1Ti 5:20, "Rebuke them that sin before all": and in 1Ti 5:22, "Neither be partaker of other men's sins," by ordaining ungodly men; having then by a digression at the clause, "keep thyself pure," guarded against an ascetical error of Timothy in fancying purity consisted in asceticism, and having exhorted him to use wine for strengthening him in his work, he returns to the subject of his being vigorous as an overseer in rebuking sin, whether in presbyters or people, and in avoiding participation in men's sins by ordaining ungodly candidates. He says, therefore, there are two classes of sins, as there are two classes of good works: those palpably manifest, and those not so; the former are those on which thou shouldest act decidedly at once when called on, whether to rebuke in general, or to ordain ministers in particular; as to the latter, the final judgment alone can decide; however hidden now they "cannot be hid" then. This could only be said of the final judgment (1Co 4:5; therefore, ALFORD'S reference of this verse to Timothy's judgment in choosing elders must be wrong); all judgments before then are fallible. Thus he implies that Timothy can only be responsible if he connive at manifest, or evident sins; not that those that are otherwise shall escape judgment at last: just as in the case of good works, he can only be responsible for taking into account in his judgments those which are patent to all, not those secret good works which nevertheless will not remain hidden at the final judgment.

25 Likewise also the good works *of some* are manifest beforehand; and
they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

1 Timothy-6

1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed.

Let as many servants. On the word here rendered servants-- δουλοι-- Eph 6:5. The word is that which was commonly applied to a slave, but it is so extensive in its signification as to be applicable to any species of servitude, whether voluntary or involuntary. If slavery existed in Ephesus at the time when this epistle was written, it would be applicable to slaves; if, any other kind of servitude existed, the word would be equally applicable to that. There is nothing in the word itself which essentially limits it to slavery. Examine Mt 13:27, 20:27, Mk 10:44, Lk 2:29, Jn 15:15, Acts 2:18, 4:29, 16:17, Rom 1:1 2Cor 4:5, Jude 1:1, Rev 1:1, 2:20, 7:3. The addition of the phrase "under the yoke," however, shows undoubtedly that it is to be understood here of slavery. As are under the yoke. On the word yoke, Mt 11:29. The phrase here properly denotes slavery, as it would not be applied to any other species of servitude. See Lev 26:13. Dem. 322. 12. ζυγοςδουλοσυνης Rob. Lex. It sometimes denotes the bondage of the Mosaic law as being a severe and oppressive burden. Acts 15:10, Gal 5:1. It may be remarked here that the apostle did not regard slavery as a light or desirable thing. He would not have applied this term to the condition of a wife or a child. Count their own masters worthy of all honour. Treat them with all proper respect. They were to manifest the right spirit themselves, whatever their masters did; they were not to do anything that would dishonour religion. The injunction here would seem to have particular reference to those whose masters were not Christians. In the following verse, the apostle gives particular instructions to those who had pious masters. The meaning here is, that the slave ought to show the Christian spirit towards his master who was not a Christian; he ought to conduct himself so that religion would not be dishonoured; he ought not to give his master occasion to say that the only effect of the Christian religion on the mind of a servant was to make him restless, discontented, dissatisfied, and disobedient. In the humble and trying situation in which he confessedly was--under the yoke of bondage--

he ought to evince patience, kindness, and respect for his master, and as long as the relation continued he was to be obedient. This command, however, was by no means inconsistent with his desiring his freedom, and securing it, if the opportunity presented itself. See Notes on 1Cor 7:21. Comp., on the passage before us, Eph 6:5; Eph 6:6-8, 1Pet 2:18. That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. That religion be not dishonoured and reproached, and that there may be no occasion to say that Christianity tends to produce discontent and to lead to insurrection. If the effect of religion had been to teach all who were servants that they should no longer obey their masters, or that they should rise upon them and assert their freedom by violence, or that their masters were to be treated with indignity on account of their usurped rights over others, the effect would have been obvious. There would have been a loud and united outcry against the new religion, and it could have made no progress in the world. Instead of this, Christianity taught the necessity of patience and meekness, and forbearance in the endurance of all wrong--whether from private individuals, Mt 5:39-41, 1Cor 6:7; or under the oppressions and exactions of Nero, Rom 13:1-7; or amidst the hardships and cruelties of slavery. Let as many servants. On the word here rendered servants-- δουλοι--Eph 6:5. The word is that which was commonly applied to a slave, but it is so extensive in its signification as to be applicable to any species of servitude, whether voluntary or involuntary. If slavery existed in Ephesus at the time when this epistle was written, it would be applicable to slaves; if, any other kind of servitude existed, the word would be equally applicable to that. There is nothing in the word itself which essentially limits it to slavery. Examine Mt 13:27, 20:27, Mk 10:44, Lk 2:29, Jn 15:15, Acts 2:18, 4:29, 16:17, Rom 1:1 2Cor 4:5, Jude 1:1, Rev 1:1, 2:20, 7:3. The addition of the phrase "under the yoke," however, shows undoubtedly that it is to be understood here of slavery. As are under the yoke. On the word yoke, Mt 11:29. The phrase here properly denotes slavery, as it would not be applied to any other species of servitude. See Lev 26:13. Dem. 322. 12. ζυγοςδουλοσυνης Rob. Lex. It sometimes denotes the bondage of the Mosaic law as being a severe and oppressive burden. Acts 15:10, Gal 5:1. It may be remarked here that the apostle did not regard slavery as a light or desirable thing. He would not have applied this term to the condition of a wife or a child.

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2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*,
because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they
are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.
These things teach and exhort.

Where note, That the poorest and meanest professor of Christianity may do much good or much hurt to religion: some might be ready to say "Alas, what credit or discredit can a poor servant do to religion? Much every way: he may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, Titus 2:9 by his Christian behaviour; and the name of God, and his doctrine, may be blasphemed by him, if he be negligent in his duty. None are so inconsiderable but they are capable of serving the great ends of religion, and may honour God in some measure; and are capable of being honoured by him upon earth, and with him in the highest heavens.

The opposition is between those Christian slaves under the yoke of heathen, and those that have believing masters (he does not use the phrase "under the yoke" in the latter case, for service under believers is not a yoke). Connect the following words thus, "Let them (the slaves) not, because they (the masters) are brethren (and so equals, masters and slaves alike being Christians), despise them (the masters)."

And they that have believing masters. Masters who are Christians. It is clear from this, that Paul supposed that, at that time, and under those circumstances, a man might become a Christian who had slaves under him. How long he might continue to hold his fellow-men in bondage, .and yet be a Christian, is, however, quite a different question. It is quite clear, from the New Testament, as well as from facts now, that God may convert men when pursuing any kind of wickedness. The effect of religion, however, in all cases, will be to lead them to cease to do wrong. It is by no means improbable that many of those who had owned slaves, in accordance with the prevailing custom in the Roman empire, may have been converted--for the fact that a man has been living a life of sin does not prevent the possibility of his conversion. There is no evidence that Paul refers here to any who had bought slaves after they were converted; nor is there any intimation of any such transaction among Christians in the New Testament. Nor is there any intimation that he regarded it as right and best that they should continue to hold slaves; nor that he

would approve their making arrangements to persevere in this as a permanent institution. Nor is it to be fairly inferred from this passage that he meant to teach that they might continue this, and yet be entitled to all the respect and confidence due to the Christian name, or be regarded as maintaining a good standing in the church. Whatever may be true on these points, the passage before us only proves that Paul considered that a man who was a slave-holder might be converted, and be spoken of as a "believer," or a Christian. Many have been converted in similar circumstances, as many have in the practice of all other kinds of iniquity. What was their duty after their conversion, was another question; and what was the duty of their "servants," or slaves, was another question still. It is only this latter question which the apostle is here considering. Not despise them, because they are brethren. Not treat them with any want of the respect which is due to their station. The word here used sometimes denotes to neglect, or, not to care for, Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13. Here it is not necessary to suppose that it denotes actual contempt, but only that want of respect which might possibly spring up in the mind if not well instructed, or not on its guard, among those who were servants or slaves. It was to be apprehended that the effect of the master and the slave having both embraced religion would be to produce in the mind of the servant a want of respect and deference for his master. This danger was to be apprehended from the following causes:--

(1.) Christianity taught that all men were made of "one blood," and were by nature equal, Acts 17:26. It was natural, therefore, for the slave to infer that by nature he was equal to his master, and it would be easy to pervert this truth to make him disrespectful and insubordinate.

(2.) They were equal to them as Christians. Christianity taught them that they were all "brethren" in the Lord, and that there was no distinction before God. It might be natural to infer from this, that all distinctions in society were to be abolished, and that, in all respects, the slave was to regard himself as on a level with his master.

(3.) Some, who did not well understand the nature of Christianity, or who might have been disposed to cause trouble, may have taken

advantage of the undeniable truths about the equality of men by nature and by redemption, to produce discontent on the part of the slave. They may have endeavoured to embitter the feelings of the slaves towards their masters who held them in bondage. The effect, it is easy to see, may have been to lead those who were in a state of servitude to manifest open and marked disrespect. In opposition to this, the apostle would have Timothy teach that Christianity did not rudely assail the existing institutions of society, and especially did not teach those who were in subordinate ranks to be disrespectful to those above them. But rather do them service. That is, serve them with more cheerfulness and alacrity than they did before the master was converted; or serve them with the more cheerfulness because they were Christians. The reasons for this were, because the master was now more worthy of affectionate regard, and because the servant might look for better treatment at his hands. Comp. Notes on Eph 6:6.

Because they are faithful. If the common sense of the Greek verb be urged, the sense must be, "Because they (the masters) are faithful and beloved who are sedulously intent on the benefiting" of their servants. That is, because they are believers, or are Christians -πιστοι; the same word which in the beginning of the verse is rendered believing. It does not here mean that they were "faithful" to their servants or their God, but merely that they were Christians. And beloved. Probably, "beloved of God;" for so the word is often used. As they are the friends of God, they who are servants should show them the more respect. The idea is, simply, that one whom God loves should be treated with more respect than if he were not thus beloved; or, a good man deserves more respect than a wicked man. In all the relations of life, we should respect those above us the more in proportion to the excellency of their character. Partakers of the benefit. That is, the benefit which the gospel imparts--for so the connection requires us to understand it. It cannot mean, as many have supposed, that they were "partakers of the benefit of the labours of the servant," or enjoyed the fruits of their labours,--for how could this be a reason for their treating them with the more respect? It would be rather a reason for treating them with less respect, because they were living on the avails of unrequited toil. But the true reason assigned is, that the master had been, by the grace of God, permitted to participate

in the same benefits of salvation as the servant; he had received, like him, the pardon of sin, and he was to be regarded as a fellow-heir of the grace of life. The expression here might be rendered, "they are partakers of, or are devoted to, the good cause." Rob. Lex. The argument is, that they were not infidels, or strangers to religion, or those who would try to hinder the progress of that which was dear to the heart of the servant, but were united with them in that same good work; they participated in the blessings of the same salvation, and they were really endeavouring to further the interests of religion. There ought, therefore, to be the more respect shown to them, and the more cheerful service rendered them.

Those that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren; for this brotherhood relates only to spiritual privileges, not to any outward dignity or advantage (those misunderstood and abuse their religion who make it a pretence for denying the duties that they owe to their relations); nay, rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved. They must think themselves the more obliged to serve them because the faith and love that bespeak men Christians oblige them to do good; and that is all wherein their service consists. Observe, It is a great encouragement to us in doing our duty to our relations if we have reason to think they are faithful and beloved, and partakers of the benefit, that is, of the benefit of Christianity. Again, Believing masters and servants are brethren, and partakers of the benefit; for in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, Ga 3:28. Timothy is appointed to teach and exhort these things. Ministers must preach not only the general duties of all, but the duties of particular relations.

Godliness with Contentment

3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words,
even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is
according to godliness;

If any man teach otherwise. Any otherwise than that respect should be shown to masters; and that a more cheerful and ready service should be rendered because they were Christians. It is evidently

implied here that some might be disposed to inculcate such views of religion as would produce discontent and a spirit of insubordination among those who were held to servitude. Who they were is not known, nor is it known what arguments they would employ to do it, It would seem probable that the arguments which would be employed would be such as these:--that God made all men equal; that all had been redeemed by the same blood; that all true Christians were fellow-heirs of heaven; and that it was wrong to hold a Christian brother in bondage, etc. From Undeniable principles it would seem that they drew the inference that slaves ought at once to assert their freedom; that they should refuse obedience to their masters; and that the tendency of their teaching was, instead of removing the evil by the gradual and silent influence of Christian principles, to produce discontent and insurrection. From some of the expressions here used by the apostle, as characteristic of these teachers, it would seem to be probable that these persons were Jews. They were men given to subtle disputations, and those who doted about questions and verbal disputes, and who were intent on gain, supposing that that which conduced to mere worldly prosperity was of course religion. These characteristics apply well to Jewish teachers. And consent not to wholesome words. Words conducing to a healthful state of the church; that is, doctrines tending to produce order and a due observance of the proprieties of life; doctrines leading to contentment, and sober industry, and the patient endurance of evils. Even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrines of the Saviour--all of which tended to a quiet life, and to a patient endurance of wrongs.

And to the doctrine which is according to godliness. Which tends to produce piety or religion; that is, the doctrine which would be most favourable to an easy and rapid propagation of the gospel. The idea seems to be, that such a state of insubordination and discontent as they would produce, would be unfavourable to the promotion of religion. Who can doubt it?

Paul here warns Timothy to withdraw from those who corrupted the doctrine of Christ, and made it the subject off strife, debate, and controversy: If any man teach otherwise (1Ti 6:3-5), do not preach

practically, do not teach and exhort that which is for the promoting of serious godliness--if he will not consent to wholesome words, words that have a direct tendency to heal the soul--if he will not consent to these, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, We are not required to consent to any words as wholesome words except the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; but to those we must give our unfeigned assent and consent, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. Observe, The doctrine of our Lord Jesus is a doctrine according to godliness; it has a direct tendency to make people godly.

4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

5 perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

But godliness. Piety; religion. The meaning is, that real religion should be regarded as the greatest and most valuable acquisition. With contentment. This word, as now used, refers to a state of mind; a calm and satisfied feeling; a freedom from murmuring and complaining. The idea is, that "piety, connected with a contented mind--or a mind acquiescing in the allotments of life--is to be regarded as the real gain." Tindal gives substantially the same interpretation: "Godliness is great riches, if a man be content with that he hath." Coverdale,--" Howbeit, it is of great advantage, who is so godly, and holdeth him content with that he hath." The word which is used here--αυταρκεια --means, properly, self-sufficiency, and is used here, in a good sense, to denote a mind satisfied with its lot. If there be true religion, united with its proper accompaniment, peace of mind, it is to be regarded as the true riches. The object of the apostle seems to be, to rebuke those who supposed that property constituted everything that was worth living for. He tells them, therefore, that the true gain, the real riches which we ought to seek, is religion, with a contented mind. This does more to promote happiness than wealth can ever do, and this is what should be regarded as the great object of life.

7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

As if the apostle had said, "Although these seducers are for making a gain of godliness, yet we know that godliness is great gain, especially godliness with contentment; with contentment, I say, which it becomes us to have, for we brought nothing into the world with us, and shall carry nothing away with us; having therefore food and raiment, let us be therewith content and satisfied."

Learn hence, 1. That godliness is the sincere practice of the Christian religion, so called, because it directeth and prescribeth to us the true and only way of worshipping and serving God.

Learn, 2. That some men suit their godliness with their worldly ends, they make a trade and saving bargain of it.

Learn, 3. That godliness, or the sincere practice of the Christian religion, is true gain, great gain, yea, the best gain, both for this world, and that which is to come.

Learn, 4. That one great point of godliness, is to be content with what we have, yea, though it be only food and raiment.

Contentment is a sedate and quiet temper of mind about outward things: it is the wisdom and will of God not to give to all alike, but to some more, to others less, of these outward comforts; but nothing besides food and raiment is absolutely necessary, a little will suffice a contented mind; he is not rich that has much, but he that has enough: that man is poor who covets more, having food and raiment, &c.

Observe lastly, The apostle's argument to excite and move the Christian to this duty of contentment, without enlarging his desires inordinately after the world, and the perishing satisfactions of it. For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; where remark, that the note of assurance is fixed rather to our carrying out than to our bringing in; the apostle doth not say, it is certain that we brought nothing into the world, and we shall

carry nothing out: but he says, we brought nothing in, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

The note of assurance is applied to the latter; for this reason I conceive, because though all persons come naked, and bring nothing with them into the world, yet abundance is put upon them, and they are born heirs to vast possessions; but it is obvious to every eye, and most indubitably certain, that they carry nothing away with them.

Death is called an unclothing; it unclothes the body, disrobing it of all its gaudy and glorious attire: yea, it unclothes the bones; our flesh wears off quickly in the grave. We proverbially say of a rich man, he has left a vast estate, left it behind him, carrying neither a foot of land, nor a farthing of money with him; therefore doth St. Paul add, it is certain we can carry nothing out.

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

will be rich—have more than "food and raiment." Greek, "wish to be rich"; not merely are willing, but are resolved, and earnestly desire to have riches at any cost (Pr 28:20, 22). This wishing (not the riches themselves) is fatal to "contentment" (1Ti 6:6). Rich men are not told to cast away their riches, but not to "trust" in them, and to "do good" with them (1Ti 6:17, 18; Ps 62:10).

fall into temptation—not merely "are exposed to temptation," but actually "fall into" it. The falling into it is what we are to pray against, "Lead us not into temptation" (Jas 1:14); such a one is already in a sinful state, even before any overt act of sin. The Greek for "temptation" and "gain" contains a play on sounds—porasmus, peirasmus.

The parties described: they that will be rich, that is, whether God will or no; their hearts are set upon the world, they feel it coming, and have it they will, if by any means, right or wrong, they can come at it, ask nobody's leave, no, not God Almighty's leave, but rich they are resolved to be.

Observe, 2. Their danger represented: they fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish lusts, &c.

Learn hence, That a will and resolution to be rich, is the occasion of much mischief to those that cherish and allow it in themselves; a will to be rich, is to make riches our principal business, our main scope, our great work, to pursue the world with the full bent of our wills: now the bent of our wills is discovered, first, by intention, secondly, by industrious prosecution; when the mind is wholly intent upon getting wealth, and unwearied industry is found in the pursuit of it. Now this is to make a god of the world; for that which is a man's aim, design, and end, is his chief good, and that which is our chiefest good is God. They that will be rich, &c.

Learn, 2. That an hot and over eager pursuit of the world lays a man open to endless temptations, so that it is not only difficult, but impossible, to keep his innocency; and that being irrecoverably lost, drowns a man in perdition and destruction.

But they that will be rich. Further to enforce the duty of contentment, the apostle refers to some of the evils which necessarily attend a desire to be rich. Those evils have been so great and uniform in all ages, and are so necessary accompaniments of that desire, that, even amidst many inconveniences which may attend the opposite condition, we should be contented with our lot. Indeed, if we could see all, it would only be necessary to see the evils which the desire of wealth produces in the world, to make us contented with a most lowly condition of life. Perhaps nothing more would be necessary to make a poor man satisfied with his lot, and grateful for it, than to be acquainted with the perplexities and cares of a rich man. There is more emphasis to be placed on the word will, here, in the phrase "will be rich," than might be supposed from our translation. It is not the sign of the future tense, but implies an actual purpose or design to become rich-- οιβουλομενοι. The reference is to those in whom this becomes the object of earnest desire, and who lay their plans for it. Fall into temptation. That is, they are tempted to do wicked things in order to accomplish their purposes. It is extremely difficult to cherish the desire to be rich, as the leading

purpose of the soul, and to be all honest man. And a snare. Birds are taken in a snare, and wild beasts were formerly. Job 18:8, Job 18:9. The net was sprung suddenly upon them, and they could not escape. The idea here is, that they who have this desire, become so entangled, that they cannot easily escape. They become involved in the meshes of worldliness and sin; their movements are so lettered by cares, and inordinate desires, and by artificial wants, that they are no longer freemen. They become so involved in these things, that they cannot well break away from them if they would. Comp. Prov 28:20.

And into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Desires, such as the love of wealth creates. They are foolish--as being not such as an intelligent and immortal being should pursue; and they are hurtful--as being injurious to morals, to health, and to the soul. Among those desires, are the fondness for display; for a magnificent dwelling, a train of menials, and a splendid equipage; for sumptuous living, feasting, the social glass, company, and riotous dissipation. Which drown men in destruction and perdition. The word which is here rendered, drown βυθιζω means, to sink in the deep, or, to cause to sink; and the meaning here is, that they become submerged as a ship that sinks. The idea of drowning is not properly that of the apostle, but the image is that of a wreck, where a ship and all that is in it, go down together. The destruction is complete. There is a total ruin of happiness, of virtue, of reputation, and of the soul. The ruling desire to be rich leads on a train of follies which ruins everything here, and hereafter. How many of the human family have thus been destroyed!

fall into temptation and a snare, 1Ti 6:9. It is not said, those that are rich, but those that will be rich, that is, that place their happiness in worldly wealth, that covet it inordinately, and are eager and violent in the pursuit of it. Those that are such fall into temptation and a snare, unavoidably; for, when the devil sees which way their lusts carry them, he will soon bait his hook accordingly. He knew how fond Achan would be of a wedge of gold, and therefore laid that before him. They fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Observe,

(1.) The apostle supposes that,

[1.] Some will be rich; that is, they are resolved upon it, nothing short of a great abundance will satisfy.

[2.] Such will not be safe nor innocent, for they will be in danger of ruining themselves for ever; they fall into temptation, and a snare, &c.

[3.] Worldly lusts are foolish and hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition. [4.] It is good for us to consider the mischievousness of worldly fleshly lusts. They are foolish, and therefore we should be ashamed of them, hurtful, and therefore we should be afraid of them, especially considering to what degree they are hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition.

(2.) The apostle affirms that the love of money is the root of all evil, 1Ti 6:10. What sins will not men be drawn to by the love of money? Particularly this was at the bottom of the apostasy of many from the faith of Christ; while they coveted money, they erred from the faith, they quitted their Christianity, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Observe,

[1.] What is the root of all evil; the love of money: people may have money, and yet not love it; but, if they love it inordinately, it will push them on to all evil.

[2.] Covetous persons will quit the faith, if that be the way to get money: Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, 2Ti 4:10. For the world was dearer to him than Christianity. Observe, Those that err from the faith pierce themselves with many sorrows; those that depart from God do but treasure up sorrows for themselves.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

with . . . sorrows—"pains": "thorns" of the parable (Mt 13:22) which choke the word of "faith." "The prosperity of fools destroys them" (Pr 1:32).

Here we have the nature of covetousness, the evil and sin of covetousness, and the mischief and hurt of it declared.

Observe, 1. The nature of it: it is an inordinate love of money, an insatiable desire after wealth.

Observe, 2. The evil and sinfulness of it: it is a root of sin, The root of all evil; the fruit of all sin grows from this root, distrustful care, tormenting fear, anger, malice, envy, deceit, oppression, bribery, perjury, vexatious lawsuits, and the like; nay, farther, covetousness is the root of heresy in judgment, as well as of iniquity in practice. They have erred from the faith: that is, in point of doctrine, as well as in practice; it makes a man believe, as well as act, against the rule of faith, for filthy lucre.

Observe, 3. The mischief and hurt of covetousness declared: it pierces, it pierces through with sorrows, yea, with many sorrows. But whom doth it pierce?

First, others; it pierces the poor, the needy, the widow, the fatherless, all that fall within the reach of its gripping hand; nay, it doth not spare its own master, or slave rather, but pierces him: They pierce themselves through, says the apostle, with many sorrows, with many more, and much worse sorrows, than they pierce others with.

Riches ill gotten, by covetousness or oppression, instead of making their owners heartily merry, make their consciences ache, and give them many a stitch in their side. None can tell what gall and wormwood springs from this bitter root, both to themselves and others: The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some covet after, they err from the faith, piercing themselves through with many sorrows. It is the root of all evil, of sin, and also of trouble and disquiet.

For the love of money is the root of all evil. That is, of all kinds of evil. This is evidently not to be understood as literally true, for there are evils which cannot be traced to the love of money --the evils growing out of ambition, and intemperance, and debasing lusts, and of the hatred of God and of goodness. The expression here is evidently a popular saying--" all sorts of evils grow out of the love of money." Similar expressions often occur in the classic writers. See Wetstein, in loc., and numerous examples quoted by Pricaeus. Of the truth of this, no one can doubt. No small part of the crimes of the world can be traced to the love of gold. But it deserves to be remarked here, that the apostle does not say that "money is the root of all evil," or that it is an evil at all. It is the 'love' of it which is the source of evil. Which while some coveted after. That is, some who were professing Christians. The apostle is, doubtless, referring to persons whose history was known to Timothy, and warning him, and teaching him to warn others, by their example.

They have erred from the faith. Marg., been seduced. The Greek is, they have been led astray from; that is, they have been so deceived, as to depart from the faith. The notion of deception or delusion is in the word, and the sense is, that, deceived by the promises held out by the prospect of wealth, they have apostatized from the faith. It is not implied of necessity that they were ever real Christians. They have been led off from truth and duty, and from all the hopes and joys which religion would have imparted. And have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. With such sorrows as remorse, and painful reflections on their folly, and the apprehension of future wrath. Too late they see that they have thrown away the hopes of religion for that which is at best unworthy the pursuit of an immortal mind; which leads them on to a life of wickedness; which fails of imparting what it promised when its pursuit is successful; and which, in the great majority of instances, disappoints its votaries in respect to its attainment. The word rendered "pierced themselves through"--περιεπειραν--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is a word whose force and emphasis cannot be well expressed in a translation. It is from πειρω, and is made more emphatic by the addition of the preposition περι. The word πειρω, peiro, means,

properly, to pierce through from one end to another, and is applied to meat that is pierced through by the spit when it is to be roasted (Passow;) then it means, to pierce through and through. The addition of the preposition (περι) to the word, conveys the idea of doing this all round; of piercing everywhere. It was not a single thrust which was made, but they are gashed all round with penetrating wounds. Such is the effect on those who cast off religion for the sake of gold. None can avoid these consequences who do this. Every man is in the hands of a holy and just God, and sooner or later he must feel the effects of his sin and folly

The Good Fight of Faith

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

But thou—in contrast to the "some" (1Ti 6:10). Whatever all the world else do. Flee - As from a serpent, instead of coveting these things. man of God—who hast God as thy true riches (Ge 15:1; Ps 16:5; La 3:24). Applying primarily to Timothy as a minister (compare 2Pe 1:21), just as the term was used of Moses (De 33:1), Samuel (1Sa 9:6), Elijah, and Elisha; but, as the exhortation is as to duties incumbent also on all Christians, the term applies secondarily to him (so 2Ti 3:17) as a Christian man born of God (Jas 1:18; 1Jo 5:1), no longer a man of the world raised above earthly things; therefore, God's property, not his own, bought with a price, and so having parted with all right in himself: Christ's work is to be his great work: he is to be Christ's living representative.

it is a title borrowed from the Old Testament, where it is frequently given to the prophets, who revealed the mind and will of God to the people.

Now by giving it to Timothy, the apostle intimates his duty to him, to contemn the world, and flee the eager pursuit of riches. As if the apostle had said, "O Timothy! thou art a minister, and a man of God, solemnly dedicated to his service, and devoted entirely to his glory; see then that thou abhor, and avoid that detestable sin of covetousness. Heavenly truths are the subjects of thy daily study;

Oh! let not earthly things be the object of thy chiefest delight and love; but follow after spiritual riches, namely, righteousness and godliness, faith and love, patience and meekness; that godliness which gives contentment with food and raiment, that faith which assures us of a better and more enduring substance, that righteousness or justice which requires us to let every man enjoy his own, that love which makes us willing to distribute, that patience which makes us willing to submit to a low condition, that meekness which suppresses wrath against those that are injurious to us. All these virtues and graces are necessary to thee as a minister of God; they are certainly indications of a mind free from covetousness, and infallible preservations from it."

Hence he takes occasion to caution Timothy, and to counsel him to keep in the way of God and his duty, and particularly to fulfil the trust reposed in him as a minister. He addresses himself to him as a man of God. Ministers are men of God, and ought to conduct themselves accordingly in every thing; they are men employed for God, devoted to his honour more immediately. The prophets under the Old Testament were called men of God.

1. He charges Timothy to take heed of the love of money, which had been so pernicious to many: Flee these things. It ill becomes any men, but especially men of God, to set their hearts upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God.

2. To arm him against the love of the world, he directs him to follow that which is good. Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness: righteousness in his conversation towards men, godliness towards God, faith and love as living principles, to support him and carry him on in the practice both of righteousness and godliness. Those that follow after righteousness and godliness, from a principle of faith and love, have need to put on patience and meekness--patience to bear both the rebukes of Providence and the reproaches of men, and meekness wherewith to instruct gainsayers and pass by the affronts and injuries that are done us. Observe, It is not enough that men of God flee these things, but they must follow after what is directly contrary thereto. Further, What excellent

persons men of God are who follow after righteousness! They are the excellent of the earth, and, being acceptable to God, they should be approved of men.

3. He exhorts him to do the part of a soldier: Fight the good fight of faith. Note, Those who will get to heaven must fight their way thither. There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations, and the opposition of the powers of darkness. Observe, It is a good fight, it is a good cause, and it will have a good issue. It is the fight of faith; we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, 2Co 10:3,4. He exhorts him to lay hold on eternal life. Observe,

(1.) Eternal life is the crown proposed to us, for our encouragement to war, and to fight the good fight of faith, the good warfare.

(2.) This we must lay hold on, as those that are afraid of coming short of it and losing it. Lay hold, and take heed of losing your hold. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown, Re 3:11.

(3.) We are called to the fight, and to lay hold on eternal life.

(4.) The profession Timothy and all faithful ministers make before many witnesses is a good profession; for they profess and engage to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life; their calling and their own profession oblige them to this.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Fight the good fight of faith. Not about words. The noble conflict in the cause of religion, Eph 6:10-17. 1Cor 9:26; 1Cor 9:27. The allusion is to the contests at the Grecian games. BIRKS thinks this Epistle was written from Corinth, where contests in the national games recurred at stated seasons, which will account for the allusion here as in 1Co 9:24-26. Contrast "strifes of words" (1Ti 6:4). Compare 1Ti 1:18; 2Ti 4:7. The "good profession" is connected with the good fight (Ps 60:4). The whole verse is an allusion to the Olympic games, particularly to that of racing, where the garland or

crown being hung up at the end of the goal, he that came first did lay hold of it, and take it to himself; and because these games were performed in the sight of many spectators, the apostle continues the allusion, and says, Timothy had before many witnesses professed his readiness to suffer for the faith.

Lay hold on eternal life. As the crown of victory that is held out to you. Seize this as eagerly as the competitors at the Grecian games laid hold on the prize. 1Cor 9:25. Whereunto thou art also called. That is, by the Spirit of God, and by the very nature of your profession. God does not 'call' his people that they may become rich; he does not convert them in order that they may devote themselves to the business of gain. They are 'called' to a higher and nobler work. Yet how many professing Christians there are who seem to live as if God had 'called' them to the special business of making money, and who devote themselves to it with a zeal and assiduity that would do honour to such a calling, if this had been the grand object which God had in view in converting them! And hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. That is, either when he embraced the Christian religion, and made a public profession of it in the presence of the church and of the world; or when he was solemnly set apart to the ministry; or as he, in his Christian life, had been enabled publicly to evince his attachment to the Saviour. I see no reason to doubt that the apostle may have referred to the former, and that in early times a profession of religion may have been openly made before the church and the world. Such a method of admitting members to the church would have been natural, and would have been fitted to make a deep impression on others. It is a good thing often to remind professors of religion, of the feelings which they had when they made a profession of religion; of the fact that the transaction was witnessed by the world; and of the promises which they then made to lead holy lives. One of the best ways of stimulating ourselves or others to the faithful performance of duty, is the remembrance of the vows then made; and one of the most effectual methods of reclaiming a backslider, is to bring to his remembrance that solemn hour when he publicly gave himself to God.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

Quickeneth all things—that is, "maketh alive." But the oldest manuscripts read, "preserveth alive"; as the same Greek means in Ac 7:19; compare Ne 9:6. He urges Timothy to faithfulness here by the present manifestation of God's power in preserving all things, as in 1Ti 6:14, by the future manifestation of God's power at the appearing of Christ. The assurance that "eternal life," 1Ti 6:12, will be the result of "fighting the good fight," rests on the fulness and power of Him who is the God of all life, present and to come.

Who gives life to all. Eph 2:1. It is not quite clear why the apostle refers to this attribute of God as enforcing the charge which he here makes. Perhaps he means to say, that God is the source of life, and that as he had given life to Timothy--natural and spiritual--he had a right to require that it should be employed in his service; and that, if, in obedience to this charge and in the performance of his duties, he should be required to lay down his life, he should bear in remembrance, that God had power to raise him up again. This is more distinctly urged in 2Ti 2:8-10. And before Christ Jesus. As in the presence of Christ, and stimulated by his example.

Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. He gives him a solemn charge: I give thee charge in the sight of God that thou do this. He charges him as he will answer it at the great day to that God whose eyes are upon us all, who sees what we are and what we do:--God, who quickens all things, who has life in himself and is the fountain of life. This should quicken us to the service of God that we serve a God who quickens all things. He charges him before Christ Jesus, to whom in a peculiar manner he stood related as a minister of his gospel: Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. Observe, Christ died not only as a sacrifice, but as a martyr; and he witnessed a good confession when he was arraigned before Pilate, saying (Joh 18:36,37), My kingdom is not of this world: I am come to bear witness unto the truth. That good confession of his before Pilate, My kingdom is not of this world,

should be effectual to draw off all his followers, both ministers and people, from the love of this world. Marg., profession. The same Greek word is used which in 1Timm 6:12 is translated profession. The reference is to the fact that the Lord Jesus, when standing at the bar of Pilate, who claimed to have power over his life, did not shrink from an open avowal of the truth. Jn 18:36,37. Nothing can be better fitted to preserve our minds steadfast in the faith, and to enable us to maintain our sacred vows in this world when allured by temptation, or when ridiculed for our religion, than to remember the example of the Lord Jesus. Let us place him before us as he stood at the bar of Pilate--threatened with death in its most appalling form, and ridiculed for the principles which he maintained; let us look on him, friendless and alone, and see with what seriousness, and sincerity, and boldness, he stated the simple truth about himself, and we shall have one of the best securities that we can have, that we shall not dishonour our profession. A clear view of the example of Christ our Saviour, in those circumstances, and a deep conviction that his eye is upon us to discern whether we are steadfast as he was, will do more than all abstract precepts to make us faithful to our Christian calling.

Observe here, what a solemn adjuration and vehement charge is given to Timothy, by our apostle to watch and guard against the sin of covetousness, and avoid the eager pursuit of worldly wealth: I charge thee before God and Christ, that thou keep this commandment spotless and unrebukable, until the coming of Christ, and mayest be found such at his appearing.

Observe, 2. What a glorious display our apostle here makes of the adorable attributes of God; he styles him the God that quickeneth all things, that is all things that have, or shall have life; the blessed and only Potentate, because all power is essential in him, and derived from him; who only hath immortality, that is, an original, primative, simple, independent, essential immortality, that is only proper and peculiar to God; he only is essentially and necessarily of himself immortal; dwelling in the light which is inaccessible, and none can approach unto; and whom no man hath seen, nor can see.

14 that thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukable, until
the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

That thou keep this commandment. Referring particularly to the solemn injunction which he had just given him, to "fight the good fight of faith," but perhaps also including all that he had enjoined on him. Without spot. It seems harsh, and is unusual, to apply the epithet-- "without spot"--ασπιλος--to a command or doctrine, and the passage may be so construed that this may be understood as referring to Timothy himself--" That thou keep the commandment so that thou mayest be without spot and unrebukeable." See Bloomfield, Crit. Dig., in loc. The word here rendered "without spot," occurs in the New Testament only here, and in Jas 1:27, 1Pet 1:19, 2Pet 3:14. It means without any stain or blemish; pure. If applied here to Timothy, it means that he should so keep the command that there would be no stain on his moral character; if to the doctrine, that that should be kept pure.

15 which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only
Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man
can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom
be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

Who only hath immortality. The word here--αθανασια --properly means exemption from death, and seems to mean that God, in his own nature, enjoys a perfect and certain exemption from death. Creatures have immortality only as they derive it from him, and of course are dependent on him for it. He has it by his very nature, and it is in his case underived, and he cannot be deprived of it. It is one of the essential attributes of his being, that he will always exist, and that death cannot reach him. Comp. the expression in Jn 5:26. "The Father hath life in himself," Jn 5:26. Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto. Gr., "Inhabiting inapproachable light." The light where he dwells is so brilliant and dazzling, that mortal eyes could not endure it. This is a very common representation of the dwelling-place of God. See examples quoted in Pricaeus, in loc. Heaven is constantly represented as a place of the most pure and brilliant light, needing not the light of the sun, or the moon, or the stars, Rev 21:23,24; Rev 22:5, and God is

represented as dwelling in that light, surrounded by amazing and inapproachable glory. Comp. Rev 4:6; Eze 1:4, Heb 1:3.

dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto—After life comes mention of light, as in Joh 1:4. That light is unapproachable to creatures, except in so far as they are admitted by Him, and as He goes forth to them [BENGEL]. It is unapproachable on account of its exceeding brightness [THEOPHYLACT]. If one cannot gaze steadfastly at the sun, which is but a small part of creation, by reason of its exceeding heat and power, how much less can mortal man gaze at the inexpressible glory of God [THEOPHYLACT, To Autolycus] (Ps 104:2; 1Jo 1:5). no man hath seen— (Ex 23:20; Joh 1:18; Col 1:15; Heb 11:27; 1Jo 4:12). Perhaps even in the perfect state no creature shall fully see God. Still the saints shall, in some sense, have the blessedness of seeing Him, which is denied to mere man (Mt 5:8; 1Co 13:12; 1Jo 3:2; Re 22:4).

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded. One of the evils to which they are particularly exposed. The idea is, that they should not value themselves on account of their wealth, or look down with pride and arrogance on their inferiors. They should not suppose that they are any better men, or any nearer heaven, because they are wealthy. Property really makes no distinction in the great things that pertain to character and salvation. It does not necessarily make one wise, or learned, or great, or good. In all these things the man who has not wealth may be vastly the superior of him who has; and for so slight and unimportant a distinction as gold can confer, no man should be proud. Besides, let such a man reflect that his property is the gift of God; that he is made rich because God has chosen to arrange things so that he should be; that it is not primarily owing to any skill or wisdom which he has; that his property only increases his responsibility, and that it must all soon be left, and he be as poor as the "beggar that lies at his gate;" and he will see ample reason why he should not be proud. Nor trust in uncertain riches. Marg., The uncertainty of. The margin expresses the meaning of the Greek

more accurately than the text, but the sense is not materially varied. Riches are uncertain because they may soon be taken away. No dependence can be placed on them in the emergencies of life. He who is rich to-day, has no security that he will be tomorrow; and if he shall be rich tomorrow, he has no certainty that his riches will meet his necessities then. A man whose house is in flames, or who is shipwrecked, or whose child lies dying, or who is himself in the agonies of death, can derive no advantage from the fact that he is richer than other men. Lk 12:16 and Lk 12:17-21. That against which Paul here directs Timothy to caution the rich, is that to which they are most exposed. A man who is rich, is very liable to "trust" in his riches, and to suppose that he needs nothing more. Comp. Lk 12:19. He feels that he is not dependent on fellow-men, and he is very likely to feel that he is not dependent on God. It is for this cause that God has recorded so many solemn declarations in his word respecting the instability of riches, (comp. Prov 23:5,) and that he is furnishing so many instructive lessons in his providence, showing how easily riches may suddenly vanish away.

But in the living God.

(1.) He is able to supply all our wants, and to do for us what riches cannot do; and

(2) he never changes, or leaves those who put their trust in him. He is able to meet our wants if in the flames, or in a storm at sea, or when a friend dies, or when we lie down on a bed of death, or wherever we may be in the eternal world. Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. The meaning of this seems to be, that God permits us to enjoy everything. Everything in the works of creation and redemption he has given to man for his happiness, and he should therefore trust in him. He has not merely given wealth for the comfort of men, but he has given everything; and he on whom so many and so great blessings have been bestowed for his comfort, should trust in the great Benefactor himself, and not rely merely on one of his gifts. Comp. 1Cor 3:21; 1Cor 1:22; 1Cor 1:23.

Resuming the subject from above, 1Ti 6:5, 10. The immortality of God, alone rich in glory, and of His people through Him, is opposed to the lust of money (compare 1Ti 6:14-16). From speaking of the desire to be rich, he here passes to those who are rich:

(1) What ought to be their disposition;

(2) What use they ought to make of their riches, and,

(3) The consequences of their so using them.

uncertain riches—rather as Greek, "the uncertainty of riches." They who rest their trust on riches, rest trust on uncertainty itself (Pr 23:5). Now they belong to one person, now to another, and that which has many masters is possessed by none [THEODORET].

living God—The best manuscripts and versions omit "living." He who trusts in riches transfers to them the duty he owes to God [CALVIN].

to enjoy—Greek, "for enjoyment." Not that the heart may cleave to them as its idol and trust (1Ti 4:3). Enjoyment consists in giving, not in holding fast for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them. That they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate: not only to do it, but to do it willingly, for God loves a cheerful giver. He must charge them to think of another world, and prepare for that which is to come by works of charity: Laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that they may take hold on eternal life Non-employment should be far removed, as from man, so from his resources (Jas 5:2, 3) [BENGEL].

Hence we may observe,

(1.) Ministers must not be afraid of the rich; be they ever so rich, they must speak to them, and charge them.

(2.) They must caution them against pride, and vain confidence in their riches: That they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches. Stir them up to works of piety and charity: That they do good, &c.

(3.) This is the way for the rich to lay up in store for themselves for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life; in the way of well-doing we are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, and eternal life will be the end of all, Ro 2:7.

(4.) Here is a lesson for ministers in the charge given to Timothy: Keep that which is committed to thy trust. Every minister is a trustee, and it is a treasure committed to his trust, which he has to keep. The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, avoiding profane and vain babblings; not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls vain babbling, or human learning, which often opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, for that is committed to our trust. Some who have been very proud of their learning, their science, which is falsely so called, have by that been debauched in their principles and been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel, and resolve to live and die by that.

Our apostle having in a very solemn manner exhorted Timothy to avoid that dangerous sin of covetousness himself, in the foregoing verses he doth in these verses require him to lay the same charge upon others, particularly upon worldly rich men; Charge them that are rich.

Observe here, 1. Timothy's duty, not barely to exhort and teach, but to charge and command. True, the ministers of Christ are servants to their people; but servants to their souls, not to their wills, much less to their lusts: there is an authority in our office, which empowers us to command for God, as well as to entreat.

Observe, 2. The subject of this Charge: them that are rich in this world.
Mark, no man is forbidden to be rich, nor yet to use such lawful means by which, through God's blessing thereupon, man may be rich; but rich men need a charge; they want plain dealing from ministers, because they meet with so little of it from other men; for some flatter them, others fear them: God's ministers ought surely to deal fairly with them.

Observe, 3. The charge itself; and this is set down negatively, and affirmatively, both, twofold.

1. The negative matter of the charge, That they be not high-minded; pride of heart, and haughtiness of mind and spirit, is one special sin which great men are subject to.
When God lifts them up by his providence, they lift themselves up by pride: there is a secret malignity in riches when they meet with men's corruptions, to lift them above their due region: though neither the wiser, the holier, the nearer heaven, for all their wealth, nay, perhaps a great deal nearer hell for the abuse of it, yet still the rich think high, look big, breathe scorn, talk with disdain, forgetting that God gives them riches to exalt him, and not themselves.

Next part of the negative charge is, That they trust not in uncertain riches; intimating that creature-confidence, or making an idol or wealth, is the dreadful bane and ruin of rich men; their actions say to the gold, Thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; but the vanity and sinfulness of this appears by the apostle's calling them uncertain riches; uncertain in their abode and continuances with us, uncertain in their promises and pretences to us: we expect more from them than ever we find in them.
Observe, 4. The positive part of the charge;

1. To trust in God, the living God, a bountiful God; he giveth riches; they buy, they do not give, he giveth all things; all the wealth in the world cannot give a mouthful of air or ray of light if God withholds it. God is the giver of all: he giveth richly all things;

the most miserable man cannot number the rich mercies which he doth receive; and he giveth all things richly to enjoy: that is, he gives an heart to take and taste the comfort of what he gives; he gives not only possessions, but fruition. Riches can do none of these things; why then should we trust in uncertain riches and not in the living God?

18 that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

do good—like God Himself (Ps 119:68; Ac 14:17) and Christ (Ac 10:38)That they do good. On the duty enjoined in this verse, Gal 6:10, Heb 13:16. That they be rich in good works. "That their good works may be as abundant as their riches." Ready to distribute. To divide with others. Comp. Acts 4:34. The meaning is that they should be liberal, or bountiful. Willing to communicate. Marg., or sociable. The translation in the text is a more correct rendering of the Greek. The idea is, that they should be willing to share their blessings with others, so as to make others comfortable. Heb 13:16. Comp. the argument of Paul in 2Cor 8:13-15, 2Cor 8:13; 2Cor 8:14, 2Cor 8:15.

Laying up in store for themselves, etc. The meaning of this verse is, that they were to make such a use of their property that it would contribute to their eternal welfare. It might be the means of exalted happiness and honour in heaven, if they would so use it as not to interfere with religion in the soul, and so as to do the most good possible. See the sentiment in this verse explained at length Lk 16:9.

19 laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

21 which some professing have erred concerning the faith.
Grace be with thee. Amen.

Keep that which is committed to thy trust. All that is entrusted to you, and to which reference has been particularly made in this epistle. The honour of the gospel, and the interests of religion, had been specially committed to him; and he was sacredly to guard this

holy trust, and not suffer it to be wrested from him. Avoiding profane and vain babblings. Gr., "Profane, empty words." The reference is to such controversies and doctrines as tended only to produce strife, and were not adapted to promote the edification of the church. 1Timm 1:4; 1Timm 4:7. And oppositions of science falsely so called. Religion has nothing to fear from true science, and the minister of the gospel is not exhorted to dread that. Real science, in all its advances, contributes to the support of religion; and just in proportion as that is promoted will it be found to sustain the Bible, and to confirm the claims of religion to the faith of mankind. See this illustrated at length in Wiseman's Lectures on the connection between science and religion. It is only false or pretended science that religion has to dread, and which the friend of Christianity is to avoid. The meaning here is, that Timothy was to avoid everything which falsely laid claim to being "knowledge" or "science." There was much of this in the world at the time the apostle wrote; and this, more perhaps than anything else, has tended to corrupt true religion since.

that which is committed to thy trust—Greek, "the deposit" (1Ti 1:18; 2Ti 1:12, 14; 2:2). "The true" or "sound doctrine" to be taught, as opposed to "the science falsely so called," which leads to "error concerning the faith" (1Ti 6:21). "It is not thine: it is another's property with which thou hast been entrusted: Diminish it not at all" [CHRYSOSTOM]. "That which was entrusted to thee, not found by thee; which thou hast received, not invented; a matter not of genius, but of teaching; not of private usurpation, but of public tradition; a matter brought to thee, not put forth by thee, in which thou oughtest to be not an enlarger, but a guardian; not an originator, but a disciple; not leading, but following. 'Keep,' saith he, 'the deposit,'; preserve intact and inviolate the talent of the catholic faith. What has been entrusted to thee, let that same remain with thee; let that same be handed down by thee. Gold thou hast received, gold return. I should be sorry thou shouldest substitute aught else. I should be sorry that for gold thou shouldest substitute lead impudently, or brass fraudulently. I do not want the mere appearance of gold, but its actual reality. Not that there is to be no progress in religion in Christ's Church. Let there be so by all means,

and the greatest progress; but then let it be real progress, not a change of the faith. Let the intelligence of the whole Church and its individual members increase exceedingly, provided it be only in its own kind, the doctrine being still the same. Let the religion of the soul resemble the growth of the body,which, though it develops its several parts in the progress of years, yet remains the same as it was essentially" [VINCENTIUS LIRINENSIS, A.D. 434].

(4.) Here is a lesson for ministers in the charge given to Timothy: Keep that which is committed to thy trust. Every minister is a trustee, and it is a treasure committed to his trust, which he has to keep. The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, avoiding profane and vain babblings; not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls vain babbling, or human learning, which often opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, for that is committed to our trust. Some who have been very proud of their learning, their science, which is falsely so called, have by that been debauched in their principles and been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel, and resolve to live and die by that. Observe,

[1.] Ministers cannot be too earnestly exhorted to keep what is committed to their trust, because it is a great trust lodged with them: O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust! as if he had said, "I cannot conclude without charging thee again; whatever thou doest, be sure to keep this trust, for it is too great a trust to be betrayed."

[2.] Ministers are to avoid babblings, if they would keep what is committed to them, because they are vain and profane.

[3.] That science that opposes the truth of the gospel is falsely so called; it is not true science, for if it were it would approve of the gospel and consent to it.

[4.] Those who are so fond of such science are in great danger of erring concerning the faith; those who are for advancing reason above faith are in danger of leaving faith.

Our apostles concludes this his epistle to Timothy with a very passionate and pathetic exhortation to him; that he would maintain the purity of the doctrine of the gospel, and preach that to his hearers, avoiding all idle speculations and philosophical niceties, which the heathen philosophers admire, despising, in the mean time, the plainness and simplicity of the gospel: and he tells him farther, that some Christians, being taken with this sort of learning, have corrupted christianity, turned heretics, erring concerning the faith; to prevent which, he begs for Timothy the grace of God, to preserve, sanctify, and save him.

Learn hence, That in the first beginnings of Christianity, the philosphers, by pretences of great learning, were the greatest despisers and the bitterest enemies of Christianity.

Secondly, That the generality of them were taken up with mere useless notions, instead of necessary and useful knowledge.

Thirdly, That Timothy, and every minister of Christ with him, ought to preach the gospel without any such human mixtures, in the purity and plainness of it; and the people receive it with a simplicity of mind, to be guided and directed by it.

Lastly, That the sanctifying and establishing grace of God is necessary, and indispensably needful, to preserve both ministers and people steadfast in the faith of the gospel, and to persevere in their obedience to it.

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy.

[2 Timothy]

2 Timothy-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son:
Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Be Not Ashamed

3 I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

But how could Paul, before conversion, be said to serve the God of his forefathers with a pure conscience, when he was a persecutor, and the chief of sinners?
Ans. The meaning is, That he worshipped the same God, and the only true God, which his forefathers worshipped, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that he worshipped him in sincerity, according to his conscience, and the measures of light then received.
Learn hence, That the church before Christ had the same faith, the same object of faith, and worshiped God, the same God, under the law, with us under the gospel: I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers. That is, whom both I and my ancestors served. With a pure conscience - He always worshiped God according to his conscience, both before and after his conversion One who stands on the verge of life is much refreshed by the remembrance of his predecessors, to whom he is going.

whom I serve (Ro 1:9) as did my forefathers. He does not mean to put on the same footing the Jewish and Christian service of God; but simply to assert his own conscientious service of God as he had received it from his progenitors (not Abraham, Isaac, &c., whom he calls "the fathers," not "progenitors" as the Greek is here; Ro 9:5). The memory of those who had gone before to whom he is about to be gathered, is now, on the eve of death, pleasant to him; hence also, he calls to mind the faith of the mother and grandmother of Timothy; as he walks in the faith of his forefathers (Ac 23:1; 24:14; 26:6, 7; 28:20), so Timothy should persevere firmly in the faith of his parent and grandparent. Not only Paul, but the Jews who reject Christ, forsake the faith of their forefathers, who looked for Christ; when they accept Him, the hearts of the children shall only be returning to the faith of their forefathers (Mal 4:6; Lu 1:17; Ro 11:23, 24, 28). Probably Paul had, in his recent defense, dwelt on this topic, namely, that he was, in being a Christian, only following his hereditary faith.

Paul reckoned among his forefathers the patriarchs and the holy men of former times, as being of the same nation with himself; though it may be that he also included his more immediate ancestors, who, for anything known to the contrary, may have been distinguished examples of piety. His own parents, it is certain, took care that he should be trained up in the ways of religion. Comp. Php 3:4, Php 3:5; Acts 26:4; Acts 26:5. The phrase "from my forefathers," probably means, after the example of my ancestors. He worshipped the same God; he held substantially the same truths; he had the same hope of the resurrection and of immortality; he trusted to the same Saviour having come, on whom they relied as about to come. His was not, therefore, a different religion from theirs; it was the same religion carried out and perfected. The religion of the Old Testament and the New is essentially the same. Acts 23:6.

Behold here the ministers duty in a more especial manner, to be much in prayer one for another; they stand greatly in need of this mutual help to strengthen each other's hands, and encourage one another's hearts in the ways of God: They should therefore, without ceasing, remember one another at the throne of grace.

4 greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be
filled with joy;
5 when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee,
which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice;
and I am persuaded that in thee also.
6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift
of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

That thou stir up the gift of God. Gr., That thou kindle up as a fire. The original word used here denotes the kindling of a fire, as by bellows, etc. It is not uncommon to compare piety to a flame or a fire, and the image is one that is obvious when we speak of causing that to burn more brightly. The idea is, that Timothy was to use all proper means to keep the flame of pure religion in the soul burning, and more particularly his zeal in the great cause to which he had been set apart. The agency of man himself is needful to keep the religion of the heart warm and glowing. However rich the gifts which God has bestowed upon us, they do not grow of their own accord, but need to be cultivated by our own personal care. Which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. In connection with the presbytery. 1Timm 4:14. This proves that Paul took part in the ordination of Timothy; but it does not prove either that he performed the duty alone, or that the "ordaining virtue," whatever that was, was imparted by him only; for

(1.) it is expressly said 1Timm 4:14, that he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, of which Paul was doubtless one; and

(2.) the language here used, "by the putting on of my hands," is just such as Paul, or any other one of the presbytery, would use in referring to the ordination of Timothy, though they were all regarded as on a level. It is such an expression as an aged Presbyterian, or Congregational, or Baptist minister would address to a son whom he had assisted to ordain. Nothing would be more natural than to remind him that his own hands had been laid on him when he was set apart to the work of the ministry. It would be in the nature of a tender, pathetic, and solemn appeal, bringing all that there was in his own character, age, and relation to the other, to bear on him, in order to

induce him to be faithful to his trust. On other occasions, he would naturally remind him that others had united with him in the act, and that he had derived his authority through the presbytery, just as Paul appeals to Timothy, 1Timm 4:14. But no one would now think of inferring from this, that he meant to be understood as saying that he alone had ordained him, or that all the authority for preaching the gospel had been imparted through his hands, and that those who were associated with him only expressed "concurrence;" that is, that their presence there was only an unmeaning ceremony. What was the "gift of God" which had been conferred in this way, Paul specifies in the next verse. It is "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The meaning is, that these had been conferred by God, and that the gift had been recognised by his ordination. It does not imply that any mysterious influence had gone from the hands of the ordainers, parting any holiness to Timothy which he had not before.

by the putting on of my hands—In 1Ti 4:14, it is "with [not by] the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The apostle was chief in the ordination, and to him "BY" is applied. The presbytery were his assistants; so "with," implying merely accompaniment, is said of them. Paul was the instrument in Timothy's ordination and reception of the grace then conferred; the presbyters were the concurrent participants in the act of ordination; so the Greek, "dia" and "meta." So in ordinations by a bishop in our days, he does the principal act; they join in laying on hands with him.

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear. A timorous and servile spirit. This is said in order to encourage Timothy, who was not improbably modest and diffident. But of power. Power to encounter foes and dangers; power to bear up under trials; power to triumph in persecutions. That is, it is the nature of the gospel to inspire the mind with holy courage. Comp., however, Lk 24:49. And of Love to God and to the souls of men. The tendency of this also, is to "cast out fear," 1Jn 4:18, and to make the mind bold and constant. Nothing will do more to inspire courage, to make a man fearless of danger, or ready to endure privation and persecution, than love. The love of country, and wife, and children, and home, makes the most timid bold

when they are assailed; and the love of Christ and of a dying world nerves the soul to great enterprises, and sustains it in the deepest sorrows. And of a sound mind. The Greek word denotes one of sober mind; a man of prudence and discretion. The state referred to here is that in which the mind is well balanced, and under right influences; in which it sees things in their just proportions and relations; in which it is not feverish and excited, but when everything is in its proper place. It was this state of mind which Timothy was exhorted to cultivate; this which Paul regarded as so necessary to the performance of the duties of his office. It is as needful now for the minister of religion as it was then.

8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Do not be ashamed to bear your testimony to the doctrines taught by the Lord Jesus. Jn 3:11,32,33, 7:7. Comp. Acts 10:42, 20:24; 1Cor 1:6, Rev 22:16. Paul seems to have apprehended that Timothy was in some danger of being ashamed of this gospel, or of shrinking back from its open avowal in the trials and persecutions to which he now saw it exposed him. Nor of me his prisoner. Of the testimony which I have borne to the truth of the gospel. This passage proves that, when Paul wrote this epistle, he was in confinement. Comp. Eph 3:1, 6:20, Php 1:13,14,16; Col 4:3,18, Phm 1:9. Timothy knew that he had been thrown into prison on account of his love for the gospel. To avoid that himself, there might be some danger that a timid young man might shrink from an open avowal of his belief in the same system of truth. But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. The sufferings to which the profession of the gospel may expose you. Comp. Col 1:24. According to the power of God. That is, according to the power which God gives to those who are afflicted on account of the gospel. The apostle evidently supposes that they who were subjected to trials on account of the gospel, might look for Divine strength to uphold them, and asks him to endure those trials, relying on that strength, and not on his own.

9 who hath saved us, and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;

As if the apostle had said, "To fortify thee against the fear of those persecutions, and to arm thee against the shame of those reproaches, which may probably attend thee in the work of the gospel, consider, that the God whom thou servest in this employment, is he that hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling: Called us first, to Christianity, and then to this holy function of the ministry; but to neither of them according to the merit of our works; as if we had done any thing to deserve either of these favours at his hands; but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ before the world began: that is, which from all eternity he decreed and determined to accomplish by Jesus Christ: which gracious purpose of his is now clearly discovered by our Saviour Jesus Christ's coming into the world; who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; that is, made a fuller and clearer discovery of it by the gospel; to preach which gospel I am a commissioned apostle, and for this I suffer; and God help you, when thereunto called, to suffer with me."

Learn hence, 1. That God himself is the author of man's salvation; He hath saved us: That effectual vocation doth accompany salvation; That the Christian's calling is an holy calling; that it is also an act of free and gracious favour in God to call; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.

Learn farther, That God's purpose or eternal decree to save before all time was manifested by Christ's appearing in time; But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Observe also, The happy effects of Christ's appearing:

1. To abolish death; not to root it at present out of the world, but to take away its dominion, its dread and terror, the whole power and disposal of it, I am alive, and have the keys of life and death. Rev 1:18

2. To bring life and immortality to light; that is, immortal life more clearly manifested and discovered.

Note here, 1. That the soul of man is immortal, and that there is another state, an immortal state, which remains for men after this life; otherwise, the justice of God's providence could not be sufficiently vindicated; but upon the supposal of a future state of immortality, it may. An account of the unequal providences of God in this world, is easy to him that believes the certainty of another; as good and evil are at present different in their natures, so shall they be in their rewards.

Note, 2. That the greatest discovery that ever was made of life and immortality to lost sinners, is made by Jesus Christ in the gospel. It was discovered, though darkly, to the Old Testament saints; but the discovery made of it by the gospel, as it was an unexpected discovery, a free and gracious discovery, so was it a more clear, more full, and final discovery of it; Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, &c.

10 but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

11 whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

For the which cause I also suffer these things. That is, I suffer on account of my purpose to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. Col 1:24. Nevertheless I am not ashamed. Comp. Rom 1:16. For I know whom I have believed. Marg., trusted. The idea is, that he understood the character of that Redeemer to whom he had committed his eternal interests, and knew that he had no reason to be ashamed of confiding in him. He was able to keep all that he had intrusted to his care, and would not suffer him to be lost. Isa 28:16. And am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. That is, the soul with all its immortal interests. A man has nothing of higher value to intrust to another than the intereats of his soul, and there is no other act of confidence like that in which he intrusts the keeping of that soul to the Son of God. Learn hence,

(1.) that religion consists in committing the soul to the care of the Lord Jesus; because

(a) we feel that we cannot secure its salvation ourselves;

(b) it is by nature in danger;

(c) if not saved by him, it will not be saved at all.

(2.) That is a great and invaluable treasure which is committed to him.

(a) No higher treasure can be committed to another;

(b) in connection with that the whole question of our happiness on earth and in heaven is intrusted to him, and all depends on his fidelity.

(3.) It is done by the true Christian with file most entire confidence, so that the mind is at rest. The grounds of this confidence are

(a) what is said of the mighty power of the Saviour;

(b) his promises that he will keep all who confide in him, (comp. Jn 10:27-29;)

(c) experience--the fact that those who have trusted in him have found that he is able to keep them.

(4.) This act of committing the soul, with all its interests, to the Saviour, is the true source of peace in the trials of life. This is so because

(a) having done this, we feel that our great interests are secure. If the soul is safe, why need we be disturbed by the loss of health, or property, or other temporal comforts. Those are secondary things. A man who is shipwrecked, and who sees his son or daughter safe with

him on the shore, will be little concerned that a casket of jewels fell overboard--however valuable it might be.

(b) All those trials will soon pass away, and he will be safe in heaven.

(c) These very things may further the great object--the salvation of the soul. A man's great interests may be more safe when in a prison than when in a palace; on a pallet of straw than on a bed of down; when constrained to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," than when encompassed with the wealth of Croesus. Against that day. The day of judgment--called "that day," without anything further to designate it, because it is the great day; "the day for which all other days were made." It seems to have been so much the object of thought and conversation among the early Christians that the apostle supposed that he would be understood by merely referring to it as "that day ;" that is, the day which they were always preaching about, and talking about, and thinking about.

13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Hold fast the form of sound words. 1Timm 1:3. On the Greek word here rendered "form," 1Timm 1:16, where it is rendered pattern. The word means a form, sketch, or imperfect delineation--an outline. Grotius says that it here means "an exemplar, but an exemplar fixed in the mind--an idea." Calvin says that the command is that he should adhere to the doctrine which he had learned, not only in its substance, but in its form. Archbishop Tilotson explains this as meaning the profession of faith which was made by Christians at baptism. There seems to be an allusion to some summary or outline of truth which Paul had given to Timothy, though there is no evidence that it was written. Indeed, there is every presumption that, if it refers to such a summary, it was not committed to writing. If it had been, it would have been regarded as inspired, and would have taken its place in the canon of Scripture. It may be presumed that almost none of the sacred writings would have been more sacredly preserved than such a condensed summary of Christian truth. But there is no improbability in supposing that Paul, either at his ordination, or on some other occasion, may have stated the outlines of the Christian religion to Timothy, that he might have a clear and connected view of the

subject. The passage, therefore, may be used as an argument for the propriety of some brief summary of doctrine as a matter of convenience, though not as having binding authority on the consciences of others.

By sound words, we are to understand the doctrine of the gospel; by a form of sound words, the truths and doctrine of the gospel methodically disposed and digested; to hold it fast, is, not to swerve from it in the course of our ministry, but pertinaciously to adhere to it, not parting with it ourselves, nor suffering it to be adulterated and corrupted by others.
This form of sound words some take to be the articles of our creed, in the words wherein we now have them, probably the same in sense, if not in words. This is called, That good thing 2Tim 1:14 which was committed to Timothy to keep: meaning, that summary of Christian doctrine which was committed to his care and keeping.

Learn hence, 1. That evangelical words are sound words: All gospel-truth is of an healing nature.

Learn, 2. That a form of sound words, or a methodical system, of gospel- truths, is very profitable both for ministers and people.

Learn, 3. That such a form of sound words is very faithfully to be retained, and very carefully to be kept unto.

Learn, 4. That faith and love are the hands whereby we are to hold fast gospel-truth; Hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.

Learn, 5. That as Christians are to hold these evangelical truths fast in their judgments, so are they to hold them forth in their lives and practices: Keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us; that is, the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost will not be wanting to our endeavours, to help our memory, love, and practice, if we be not wanting to ourselves.

14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

15 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.
16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:
17 but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found *me.*

Our apostle having complained of many in Asia forsaking him, in the day of his sufferings in the foregoing verse; in this, he makes a grateful commemoration of the kindness of Onesiphorus towards him, who refreshed him with his Presence and relief, and was not ashamed of his chain, of his imprisonment, as others were.

Learn, 1. It is no new thing for the most holy and innocent servants of Christ to suffer hardship, imprisonment, banishment, yea, even death itself, for the sake of Christ; and when they do so, to have friends forsake, and turn their backs upon them. Prosperity affords many friends, more flatterers; but who regards the prisoner in bonds? who cares for looking upon the dial when the sun is off?

Learn, 2. That not to be ashamed of the saints in the day of their sufferings, but to own them, and administer to them in such a condition, is a certain sign of a sound and sincere Christian. Good Onesiphorus had this, amongst other evidences of his gracious state, that he was not ashamed to own a persecuted Paul in chains. Nay, he searched for the apostle very diligently, and found him; so far was he from hiding his eyes from him, and forsaking him, as the men of Asia did.

Observe next, Our apostle's fervent and affectionate prayer to God, abundantly to recompence this labour of love in Onesiphorus towards him: First, He begs mercy for his whole household, The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus.
Note, 1. How thankful the saints of God are for mercies received from God, by the hands of men.

Note, 2. That acts of Christian chrity to the suffering servants of Christ, do receive a considerable part of their reward, even here, in the hearty and affectionate prayers of the people of God on their

behalf. How well did it fare with Onesiphorus and his household upon the score of St. Paul's prayer, "The Lord shew mercy to the house of Onesiphorus;" next he prays for Onesiphorus himself, The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; that is, in the great day of judgment.

Learn hence, 1. That the holiest of men, and best of saints, will stand in need of mercy, much mercy, when they stand before God at the great day.

Learn, 2. That the merciful Christian, which was here shewn mercy to the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, may expect, and shall find mercy in that day, when they stand in need of mercy. They that shew mercy in the evil day, shall certainly find mercy in the great day; The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

18 The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

2 Timothy-2

A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, Marg. by. Before, or in the presence of, many witnesses. Perhaps he refers to a solemn charge which he gave him, in the presence of the church, when he was ordained. It is by no means improbable that such a charge was given then to a newly-ordained minister, as it is now. On such an occasion, the apostle would be likely to state a summary of Christian doctrine,-- 2Ti 1:13, --and to exhort Timothy to a faithful adherence to it. The same commit thou to faithful men. In the same way as those things have been committed to you. The reference is undoubtedly to ordination to the ministerial office. Timothy was to

see that those only were admitted to the ministry who were qualified to understand the truths of religion, and to communicate them to others. This is a clear warrant for ministers to set apart others to the same sacred office. It does not prove that the people are not at liberty to choose their own pastor, but only that those in the ministry are to set apart others to the same office with themselves. There is, doubtless, to be a succession of ministers in the church; but the true line of the succession is to be found in good men who are qualified to teach, and who have the Spirit of Christ, and not merely in those who have been ordained. Who shall be able to teach others also. On the qualifications of ministers, 1Timm 3:2, also 1Timm 3:3-7.

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Such hardships as a soldier is called to endure. The apostle supposes that a minister of the gospel might be called to endure hardships, and that it is reasonable that he should be as ready to do it as a soldier is. On the hardships which he endured himself, 2Cor 11:23-29. Soldiers often endure great privations. Taken from their homes and friends; exposed to cold, or heat, or storms, or fatiguing marches; sustained on coarse fare, or almost destitute of food, they are often compelled to endure as much as the human frame can bear, and often, indeed, sink under their burdens and die. If, for reward or their country's sake, they are willing to do this, the soldier of the cross should be willing to do it for his Saviour's sake, and for the good of the human race. Hence, let no man seek the office of the ministry as a place of ease. Let no one' come into it merely to enjoy himself. Let no one enter it who is not prepared to lead a soldier's life, and to welcome hard, ship and trial as his portion. He would make a bad soldier, who, at his enlistment, should make it a condition that he should be permitted to sleep on a bed of down, and always be well clothed and fed, and never exposed to peril, or compelled to pursue a wearisome march. Yet do not some men enter the ministry, making these the conditions? And would they enter the ministry on any other terms?

4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life. Having alluded to the soldier, and stated one thing in which the Christian minister is to resemble him, another point of resemblance

is suggested to the mind of the apostle. Neither the minister nor the soldier is to be encumbered with the affairs of this life, and the one should not be more than the other. This is always a condition in becoming a soldier. He gives up his own business during the time for which he is enlisted, and devotes himself to the service of his country. The farmer leaves his plough, and the mechanic his shop, and the merchant his store, and the student his books, and the lawyer his brief; and neither of them expect to pursue these things while engaged in the service of their country. It would be wholly impracticable to carry on the plans of a campaign, if each one of these classes should undertake to prosecute his private business. See this fully illustrated from the Rules of War among the Romans, by Grotius, in loc. Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry, or to engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man's estate, or proctors in the cause of other men. The general principle was, that they were excluded from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which it was thought would divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit. So with the ministers of the gospel. It is equally improper for them to 'entangle' themselves with the business of a farm or plantation; with plans of speculation and gain, and with any purpose of worldly aggrandizement. The minister of the gospel accomplishes the design of his appointment only when he can say in sincerity, that he "is not entangled with the affairs of this life." Comp. 1Cor 9:25-27. That he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. That is, him who has enlisted him, or in whose employ he is. His great object is, to approve himself to him. It is not to pursue his own plans, or to have his own will, or to accumulate property or fame for himself. His will is absorbed in the will of his commander, and his purpose is accomplished if he meet with his approbation. Nowhere else is it so true that the will of one becomes lost in that of another, as in the case of the soldier. In an army it is contemplated that there shall be but one mind, one heart, one purpose, that of the commander; and that the whole army shall be as obedient to that as the members of the human body are to the one will that controls all. The application of this is obvious. The grand purpose of the minister of the gospel is to please Christ. He is to pursue no separate plans, and to have no separate will, of his own; and it is contemplated that

the whole corps of Christian ministers and members of the churches shall be as entirely subordinate to the will of Christ, as an army is to the orders of its chief.

5 And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

Yet is he not crowned except he strives lawfully. In conformity with the rules of the games. See Grotius, in loc. NO one could obtain the prize unless he had complied with all the laws of the games, and had thus given to those with whom he contended, a fair opportunity to succeed. "In those contests, he who transgressed the rules in the least matter, not only failed of the prize, even though the apparent victor, but was sometimes disgraced and punished," Pict. Bib. So the apostle here represents the Christian minister as engaged in a struggle or conflict for the crown. He says, that he could not hope to win it unless he should comply with all the laws by which it is conferred; unless he should subdue every improper propensity; and make an effort like that evinced by the combatants at the Olympic games. Comp. 1Cor 9:26, 1Cor 9:27.

6 The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.

The husbandman that laboureth. The margin is, "labouring first, must be partaker." The idea, according to the translation in the text, is, that there is a fitness or propriety (δει) that the man who cultivates the earth, should enjoy the fruits of his labour. See the same image explained 1Cor 9:10. But if this be the meaning here, it is not easy to see why the apostle introduces it. According to the marginal reading, the word 'first' is introduced in connexion with the word labour--" labouring first, must be partaker." That is, it is a great law that the husbandman must work before he receives a harvest. This sense will accord with the purpose of the apostle. It was to remind Timothy that labour must precede reward; that if a man would reap, he must sow; that he could hope for no fruits, unless he toiled for them. The point was not that the husbandman would be the first one who would partake of the fruits; but that he must first labour before he obtained the reward. Thus understood, this would be an encouragement to Timothy to persevere in his toils, looking onward to the reward. The Greek will bear this construction, though it is not the most obvious one.

7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Consider what I say. 1Timm 4:15. The sense is, "Think of the condition of the soldier, and the principles on which he is enlisted; think of the aspirant for the crown in the Grecian games; think of the farmer, patiently toiling in the prospect of the distant harvest; and then go to your work with a similar spirit." These things are worth attention. When the minister of the gospel thinks of his hardships, of his struggles against an evil world, and of his arduous and constant discouraging toil, let him think of the soldier, of the man who struggles for this world's honours, and of the patient farmer --and be content. How patiently do they bear all, and yet for what inferior rewards! And the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Enable you to see the force of these considerations, and to apply them to your own case. Such are often the discouragements of the ministry; so prone is the mind to despondency, that we need the help of the Lord to enable us to apply the most obvious considerations, and to derive support from the most plain and simple truths and promises.

8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my gospel:

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead. Or rather, perhaps, "Remember Jesus Christ; who was raised from the dead." The idea seems not to be, as our translators supposed, that he was to reflect on the fact that he was raised from the dead; but rather that he was to think of the Saviour himself. "Think of the Saviour, now raised up from the dead after all the sorrows of this life, and let this encourage you to bear your trials." There is nothing better fitted to enable Us to endure the labours and trials of this life, than to think of the Saviour. On the phrase, 'seed of David,' Rom 1:3.

9 wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer. As if I were a violator of the laws. That is, I am treated as if I were a criminal. Even unto bonds. As if I were one of the worst kind of malefactors, Eph 6:20. During the apostle's first imprisonment at Rome, he was permitted to "dwell in his own hired house," though guarded by a soldier, and probably chained to him. Acts 28:16,30. What was his condition in his second

imprisonment, during which this epistle was written, we have no means of knowing with certainty. It is probable, however, that he was subjected to much more rigid treatment than he had been in the first instance. The tradition is, that he and Peter were together in the Mamertine prison at Rome; and the place is still shown in which it is said that they were confined. The Mamertine prisons are of great antiquity. According to Livy, they were constructed by Ancus Marrtius, and enlarged by Servius Tullius. The lower prison is supposed to have been once a quarry, and to have been at one time occupied as a granary. These prisons are on the descent of the Capitoline Mount, towards the Forum. They consist of two apartments, one over the other, built with large, uncemented stones. There is no entrance to either, except by a small aperture in the roof, and by a small hole in the upper floor, leading to the cell below, without any staircase to either. The upper prison is twenty-seven feet long, by twenty wide; the lower one is elliptical, and measures twenty feet by ten. In the lower one is a small spring, which is said at Rome to have arisen at the command of Peter, to enable him to baptize his keepers, Processus and Martianus, with forty-seven companions, whom he converted. No certain reliance can be placed on any part of this tradition, though in itself there is no improbability in supposing that these prisons may have been used for confining Christians, and the apostle Paul among others. Dr. Burton says, that a more horrible place for the confinement of a human being can scarcely be conceived. But the word of God is not bound. This is one of Paul's happy turns of thought. Comp. Acts 26:29.

The meaning is plain. The gospel was prospered. That could not be lettered hand imprisoned. It circulated with freedom, even when he who was appointed to preach it was in chains. See Php 1:13,14. As this was the great matter, his own imprisonment was of comparatively little consequence. What may befall us is of secondary importance. The grand thing is, the triumph of truth on the earth; and well may we bear privations and sorrows, if the gospel moves on in triumph.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also
obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

11 *It is* a faithful saying:

For if we be dead with *him,* we shall also live with *him:*
12 if we suffer, we shall also reign with *him:*
if we deny *him,* he also will deny us:

St. Paul having acquainted Timothy in the foregoing verses with his sufferings, even unto bonds, here he lets him understand and know, why, and for whose sake, he did so cheerfully endure all these things, namely, for the elects sake. Though the rest of the world rejected the gospel, yet the elect would be confirmed by his example, and obtain that salvation which in and through Jesus Christ was offered and tendered to them.

Here note, That there is a certain election of God, which hath infallibly chosen to salvation all those who make their calling and election sure, by perseverance in holiness and good works.

Note, 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ do think no sufferings to much, or too dear, for the sake of God's elect, (for the sake of believing Christians, who are a chosen generation) so that their sufferings may but further their eternal glory, happiness and salvation.

To encourage yet again to a patient enduring of all sorts of afflictions, he assures Timothy, that if we be rendred comformable to Christ in his sufferings, we shall be also in his glory: If we suffer for him, we shall reign with him: if we be dead with him, dead to sin, and dead to the world, we shall also live with him, in conformity to his resurrection; but if for fear of suffering we disown him, he will also deny us; if we believe not, if we be unfaithful and forsake him, yet he will be true to his word, he will not forsake his own cause, but make good his threatenings, his own veracity stands firm, and is as much engaged to execute the threatening, as to fulfil the promise.

13 if we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful:
he cannot deny himself.

An Approved Workman

14 Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers.
15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Study to show thyself approved unto God. Give diligence, 2Pet 1:10, or make an effort so to discharge-the duties of the ministerial office as to meet the Divine approbation. The object of the ministry is not to please men. Such doctrines should be preached, and such plans formed, and such a manner of life pursued, as God will approve. To do this demands study or care--for there are many temptations to the opposite course; there are many things the tendency of which is to lead a minister to seek popular favour rather than the Divine approval. If any man please God, it will be as the result of deliberate intention and a careful life. A workman that needeth not to be ashamed. A man faithfully performing his duty, so that when he looks over what he has done, he may not blush. Rightly dividing the word of truth. The word here rendered "rightly dividing," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to cut straight, to divide right; and the allusion here may be to a steward who makes a proper distribution to each one under his care of such things as his office and their necessities require. Comp. Mt 13:52. Some have supposed that there is an allusion here to the Jewish priest cutting or dividing the sacrifice into proper parts; others, that the allusion is to the Scribes dividing the law into sections; others, to a carver distributing food to the guests at a feast. Robinson (Lex.) renders it, "rightly proceeding as to the word of truth;" that is, rightfully and skilfully teaching the word of truth. The idea seems to be, that the minister of the gospel is to make a proper distribution of that word, adapting his instructions to the circumstances and wants of his hearers, and giving to each that which will be fitted to nourish the soul for heaven.

16 But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus;

St. Paul having now finished the exhortatory part of this chapter, and acquainted Timothy what he would have him practise and do, now comes to a dehortation, advising him what he would have him avoid and shun; and here, first, he bids him shun profane and vain babblings; the vain babblings of the Heathen philosopers, and the profane notions of heretical and seducing teachers, particularly the Gnostics, the followers of Simon Magus and Menander, who were

guilty of an apostasy from Christianity, by turning the resurrection into an allegory; affirming that the resurrection of the soul to piety and virtue, was the only resurrection to be expected, disowning the resurrection of the body, and asserting, that the flesh was unfit to rise.

Observe, secondly, The nature of erroneous doctrine declared; it is of a devouring, spreading and destroying nature, their words will eat asdoth a gangrene.

Quest. How doth a gangrene eat?
Ans. It eats speedily, it eats incurably, it eats mortally, as it is well known the gangrene doth.

Quest. But what is it that heresies eat?
Ans. Faith, peace and godliness; so here, they overthrow the faith of some, and increase unto more ungodliness.

Quest. How comes it to pass that they so eat?
Ans. The spreading and prevailing of heresies, may be ascribed partly to the subtility and activity of seducers, partly to the curiousity and simplicity of the seduced, and partly to the justice of God, for the manifestation of those that are sincere, and the punishment of those that receive not the truth in the love of it.

18 who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Nevertheless the foundation of God is sure. Marg. steady. The meaning is, that though some had been turned away by the arts of these errorists, yet the foundation of the church which God had laid remained firm. Comp. Eph 2:20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." As long as this foundation remained farm, there was no reason to be troubled from the few-instances of apostasy which had occurred. Comp. Ps 11:3. It is not uncommon to compare the church to a building erected on a solid foundation. Eph 2:20,21 1Cor 3:9,10, Mt 16:18.

Having this seal. On seals were often inscriptions, and the thought here is of the inscription. Upon this seal are two inscriptions.

1. The Lord knoweth them that are his. The first cheers with the assurance that the Lord knows his own, and will not forget them.

2. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. The second shows who are his. The Lord knows his people, and his people obey him. Thus they may know that they are known of God.

The word seal is sometimes used to denote the instrument by which an impression is made, and sometimes the impression or inscription itself. A seal is used for security Mt 27:66, or as a mark of genuineness, Rev 9:4. The seal here is one that was affixed to the foundation, and seems to refer to some inscription on the foundation-stone which always remained there, and which denoted the character and design of the edifice. The allusion is to the custom, in rearing an edifice, of inscribing the name of the builder and the design of the edifice on the corner-stone. See Rosenmuller, Alte u. neue Morgenland, No. 405. So the church of Christ is a budding reared by the hands of God. Its foundation has been firmly and securely laid, and on that foundation there is an inscription always remaining, which determines the character of the edifice. The Lord knoweth them that are his. This is one of the inscriptions on the foundation-stone of the church, which seems to mark the character of the building. It always stands there, no matter who apostatizes. It is, at the same time, a fearful inscription --showing that no one can deceive God; that he is intimately acquainted with all who enter that building; and that in the multitudes which enter there, the friends and the foes of God are intimately known. He can separate his own friends from all others, and his constant care will be extended to all who are truly his own, to keep them from failing. This has the appearance of being a quotation, but no such passage is found in the Old Testament in so many words. In Nah 1:7, the following words are found: "And he knoweth them that trust in him;" and it is possible that Paul may have had that in his eye; but it is not necessary to suppose that he designed it as a quotation. A phrase somewhat similar to this is found in Nu

16:5, "The Lord will show who are his," rendered in the Septuagint, "God knoweth who are his;" and Whitby supposes that this is the passage referred to. But whether Paul had these passages in view or not, it is clear that he meant to say that it was one of the fundamental things in religion, that God knew who were his own people, and that he would preserve them from the danger of making shipwreck of their faith.

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. This is the other seal or inscription which is made on the foundation which God has laid. The foundation has two inscriptions-the first implying that God knows all who are his own people; the other, that all who are his professed people should depart from evil. This is not found in so many words in the Old Testament, and, like the former, it is not to be regarded as a quotation. The meaning is, that it is an elementary principle in the true church, that all who become members of it should lead holy lives. It was also true that they would lead holy lives, and amidst all the defections of errorists, and all their attempts to draw away others from the true faith, those might be known to be the true people of God who did avoid evil.

(Isa 52:11). In both clauses there may be an allusion to Nu 16:5, 26, Septuagint. God's part and man's part are marked out. God chooseth and knoweth His elect; our part is to believe, and by the Spirit depart from all iniquity, an unequivocal proof of our being the Lord's (compare De 29:29; Lu 13:23-27). St. Lucian when asked by his persecutors, "Of what country art thou?" replied, "I am a Christian." "What is your occupation? . . . I am a Christian." "Of what family? . . . I am a Christian." [CHRYSOSTOM, Orations, 75]. He cannot be honored with the name Christian, who dishonors by iniquity, Christ, the Author of the name. Blandina's refreshment amidst her tortures was to say, "I am a Christian, and with us Christians no evil is done" [EUSEBIUS, Ecclesiastical History, 5.1]. Apostasy from the faith is sure soon to be followed by indulgence in iniquity. It was so with the false teachers (2Ti 3:2-8, 13).

As if our apostle had said, "Notwithstanding that Hymeneus and Philetus, with others, are fallen away, nevertheless we know that the

foundation of God, his holy covenant, standeth firm and sure, having a seal annexed to it, (as usually contracts have, whereby two parties do oblige themselves mutually to each other,) which seal on God's part has this impress or inscription, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and on our part it is written, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Learn hence, 1. That the covenant of God made with us in Christ Jesus is a firm and sure foundation to build our hopes of perseverance and eternal life upon: The foundation of God standeth sure.

Learn, 2. That the covenant (according to the nature of all covenants) is conditional; on God's promising assistance, acceptance, and rewards; on our part a departing from all iniquity, and an obligation to the love and practice of universal holiness. All that make a profession of Christianity ought to take especial care that their lives may answer their light, their practices correspond with their profession; Christianity being not a speculative science, but a practical art of holy living.

It may be a great comfort to us that the unbelief of men cannot make the promise of God of no effect. Though the faith of some particular persons be overthrown, yet the foundation of God standeth sure (2Ti 2:19); it is not possible that they should deceive the elect. Or it may be meant of the truth itself, which they impugn. All the attacks which the powers of darkness have made upon the doctrine of Christ cannot shake it; it stands firm, and weathers all the storms which have been raised against it. The prophets and apostles, that is, the doctrines of the Old and New Testament, are still firm; and they have a seal with two mottoes upon it, one on the one side, and the other on the other, as is usual in a broad seal. 1. One expresses our comfort--that the Lord knows those that are his, and those that are not; knows them, that is, he owns them, so knows them that he will never lose them. Though the faith of some be overthrown, yet the Lord is said to know the ways of the righteous, Ps 1:6. None can overthrow the faith of any whom God hath chosen. 2. Another declares our duty--that every one who names the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. Those who would have the comfort of the privilege must make conscience

of the duty. If the name of Christ be called upon us, we must depart from iniquity, else he will not own us; he will say in the great day (Mt 7:23), Depart from me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity. Observe,

(1.) Whatever errors are introduced into the church, the foundation of God standeth sure, his purpose can never be defeated.

(2.) God hath some in the church who are his and whom he knows to be his.

(3.) Professing Christians name the name of Christ, are called by his name, and therefore are bound to depart from iniquity; for Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, Tit 2:14.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.

Our apostle had told us at verses 17 and 18, of certain heretics; such as Hymeneus and Philetus, whose doctrines did eat like a canker or gangrene: he tells us here, that it is not to be wondered at, that there should be such persons in the church, because the visible church is God's great house, now it is no uncommon thing in great men's houses, to have vessels of all sorts, some of wood and earth, others of gold and silver, some to honourable uses, and others to dishonourable.

In like manner it is in the church of Christ, there will be number of orthodox and also of heterodox Christians, hypocrites and sincere Christians. He also advises Timothy, therefore, not to be scandalized at them, but to purify himself from them, to keep himself pure from heresy and impiety; hereby he would manifest himself to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use; that is, for the service and glory of God, and disposed for every good work.

Learn hence, That all Christians, but especially the ministers of Christ, ought to be, like the consecrated vessels of the temple,

dedicated and set apart for our Lord's especial use and service: we are not only with other Christians dedicated by baptism, but consecrated at our solemn ordination: so that there is a sacredness upon our persons; and to prostitute ourselves to any lust, is a greater profanation than Belshazzar was guilty of, when he desecrated the holy vessels of the temple.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

Still our apostle proceeds in his holy, cautionary directions to Timothy what to avoid, and what to follow.

He advises him, 1. To avoid and flee youthful lusts: by which may be understood, not only the lusts of the flesh, but also the lusts and vices of the mind, as ambition and pride, vain-glory and ostentation. Where note, That the flesh, with its affections and lusts, are such dangerous enemies to our holiness and salvation, that the holiest of ministers and best of men have need, very great need, to be warned of them, and cautioned against them: flee thou, O Timothy, also youthful lusts.

2. He advises Timothy also to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, that is, controversies and disputes, knowing that such contentious wranglings do but engender strife.

It is not unworthy our observation, that no less than four times in these two epistles, do we meet with this precept from the apostle, to avoid questions and disputes, and to apply to that which is practical, showing of what great importance it is so to do; and we shall meet with it again in the epistle to Titus. Titus 3:9

From whence learn, That disputes about matters which only serve to beget strife and contention, but tend little to edification in faith and holiness, are vain talking, unprofitable disputes, and as such to be avoided.

Observe next, he directs Timothy what to follow, having shown him what to avoid; namely, to follow after righteousness and faith, peace and charity with all persons, but especially with all our brethren and fellow-Christians calling on the same Lord, and professing the same faith with us.

Where note, That we ought to have charity for, to maintain peace with, and by no means to separate from our communion, any person who serves Christ with a pure heart: Follow, says our apostle, charity and peace, with all those that call on the Lord Jesus Christ out of a pure heart.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men,* apt to teach, patient;

And the servant of the Lord. Referring here primarily to the Christian minister, but applicable to all Christians; for all profess to be the servants of the Lord. Must not strive. He may calmly inquire after truth; he may discuss points of morals, or theology, if he will do it with a proper spirit; he may "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," (Jude 1:3;) but he may not do that which is here mentioned as strife. The Greek word-- μαχεσθαι --commonly denotes, to fight to make war, to contend. In Jn 6:52, Acts 7:26, 2Ti 2:24, it is rendered strove, and strive; in Jas 4:2, fight. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the servant of Christ should be a man of peace. He should not indulge in the feelings which commonly give rise to contention, and which commonly characterize it. He should not struggle for mere victory, even when endeavouring to maintain truth; but should do this, in all cases, with a kind spirit, and a mild temper; with entire candour; with nothing designed to provoke and irritate an adversary; and so that, whatever may be the result of the discussion, "the bond of peace" may, if possible, be preserved. Comp. Rom 12:18. But be gentle unto

all men. 1Thes 2:7. The word rendered gentle, does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means that the Christian minister is to be meek and mild towards all, not disputatious and quarrelsome.

Apt to teach. Notes, 1Timm 3:2. Patient. Marg., forbearing. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, patient under evils and injuries. Robinson, Lex. Comp. Eph 4:2; Col 3:13

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. That is, those who embrace error, and array themselves against the truth. We are not to become angry with such persons, and denounce them at once as heretics. We are not to hold them up to public reproach and scorn; but we are to set about the business of patiently instructing them. Their grand difficulty, it is supposed in this direction, is, that they are ignorant of the truth. Our business with them is, calmly to show them what the truth is. If they are angry, we are not to be. If they oppose the truth, we are still calmly to state it to them. If they are slow to see it, we are not to become weary or impatient, Nor, if they do not embrace it at all, are we to become angry with them, and denounce them. We may pity them, but we need not use hard words. This is the apostolic precept about the way of treating those who are in error; and can any one fail to see its beauty and propriety? Let it be remembered, also, that this is not only beautiful and proper in itself; it is the wisest course, if we would bring others over to our opinions. You are not likely to convince a man that you are right, and that he is wrong, if you first make him angry; nor are you very likely to do it, if you enter into harsh contention. You then put him on his guard; you make him a party; and, from self-respect, or pride, or anger, he will endeavour to defend his own opinions, and will not yield to yours. Meekness and gentleness are the very best things, if you wish to convince another that he is wrong. Win his heart first, and then modestly and kindly show him what the truth is, in as few words, and with as unassuming a spirit, as possible, and you have him. If God peradventure will give them repentance, etc. Give them such a view of the error which they have embraced, and such regret for having embraced it, that they shall be willing to admit the truth. After all our care in teaching others the truth, our only dependence is on God for

its success. We cannot be absolutely certain that they will see their error; we cannot rely certainly on any power which argument will have; we can only hope that God may show them their error, and enable them to see and embrace the truth. Compare Acts 11:18. The word rendered peradventure, here μηποτε--means, usually, not even, never; and then, that never, lest ever--the same as lest perhaps. It is translated lest at any time, Mt 4:6, 5:26, 13:15, Mk 4:12, Lk 21:34 lest, Mt 7:6, 13:29, 15:32, et al.; lest haply, Lk 14:12; Acts 5:39. It does not imply that there was any chance about what is said, but rather that there was uncertainty in the mind of the speaker, and that there was need of caution lest something should occur; or, that anything was done, or should be done, to prevent something from happening. It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament in the sense which our translators, and all the critics, so far as I have examined, give to it here--as implying a hope that God would give them repentance, etc. But I may be permitted to suggest another interpretation, which will accord with the uniform meaning of the word in the New Testament, and which will refer the matter to those who had embraced the error, and not to God. It is this: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves--(αντιδιατιθεμενους) lest --μηποτε --God should give them repentance, and they should recover themselves out of the snare of the devil," etc. That is, they put themselves in this posture of opposition so that they shall not be brought to repentance, and recover themselves. They do it with a precautionary view that they may not be thus brought to repentance, and be recovered to God. They take this position of opposition to the truth, intending not to be converted; and this is the reason why they are not converted.

And that they may recover themselves. Marg., awake. The word which is rendered recover in the text and awake in the margin ανανηψωσιν occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, to become sober again, as from inebriation; to awake from a deep sleep; and then, to come to a right mind, as one does who is aroused from a state of inebriety, or from sleep. The representation in this part of the verse implies that while under the influence of error, they were like a man intoxicated, or like one in deep slumber. From this state they were to be roused, as one is from sleep, or as a man is

recovered from the stupor and dullness of intoxication. Out of the snare of the devil. The snare which the devil has spread for them, and in which they have become entangled. There is a little confusion of metaphor here, since in the first part of the verse, they are represented as asleep, or intoxicated; and, here, as taken in a snare. Yet the general idea is clear. In one part of the verse, the influence of error is represented as producing sleep, or stupor; in the other, as being taken in a snare or net; and, in both, the idea is, that an effort was to be made that they might be rescued from this perilous condition.

Who are taken captive by him at his will. Marg., alive. The Greek word means, properly, to take alive; and then to take captive, to win over, Lk 5:10; and then to ensnare, or seduce. Here it means that they had been ensnared by the arts oh Satan unto (εις) his will; that is, they were so influenced by him, that they complied with his will. Another interpretation of this passage should be mentioned here, by which it is proposed to avoid the incongruousness of the metaphor of awaking one from a snare. It is adopted by Doddridge, and is suggested also by Burder, as quoted by Rosenmuller, A.u.n. Morgenland. According to this, the reference is to an artifice of fowlers, to scatter seeds impregnated with some intoxicating drugs, intended to lay birds asleep, that they may draw the snare over them more securely. There can be no doubt that such arts were practised, and it is possible that Paul may have alluded to it. Whatever is the allusion, the general idea is clear. It is an affecting representation of those who have fallen into error.

They are in a deep slumber. They are as if under the fatal influence of some stupefying potion. They are like birds taken alive in this state, and at the mercy of the fowler. They will remain in this condition, unless they shall be roused by the mercy of God; and it is the business of the ministers of religion to carry to them that gospel call, which God is accustomed to bless in showing them their danger. That message should be continually sounded in the ears of the sinner, with the prayer and the hope that God will make it the means of arousing him to seek his salvation.

25 in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

By the servant of the Lord, we are here to understand all the bishops and governors, the pastors and teachers, of the church; by not striving, that they are not to irritate and provoke such as dissent and differ from them; not to strive indecently with the tongue, but by soft and gentle words, by close and hard arguments, endeavour to convince their judgment; for no man that is in an error thinks that he is so; therefore if we go about by violence to rend men's opinions from them, they will but hold them so much the faster; but if we have but so much patience and charity as to unrip their errors by degrees, they will at last fall into pieces of themselves. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all, and patient; it follows farther, in meekness instructing, --if God, peradventure, &c.

Where note, 1. The duty directed to; and that is, without bitterness and passion, but with great lenity and meekness, to instruct the erroneous, even when the oppose the truth; such especially as do it out of ignorance, and for want of better information, are particularly to be pitied, and patiently borne with, together with those who labour under the prejudices and prepossessions of a contrary education; in meekness instructing those that oppose.

Note, 2. The benefit hoped for, and the advantage expected, by such meek and gentle methods of instruction as are here directed to;

1. That Almighty God may peradventure give them repentance, blessing such prudential and pious means for their conversion from error and seduction; and

2. That they may be recovered out of Satan's snares and temptations, they being at present captivated by him according to his will.

Learn, 1. That if erroneous and misled persons will not bear gentle teaching, much less will they yield to sharp invectives, or provoking disputes.

Yet, 2. Disputations wisely managed, like defensive wars, are both useful and necessary in defence of the truth, though they do not bring over gainsayers.

Learn, 3, That until erroneous and misled persons can be brought by consideration to be agents in recovering themselves, no teaching or disputing will be sufficient or effectual to recover them: That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him.

Lastly, error is the devil's snare as well as sin: error is as dangerous as vice; the one is an open road, the other is a by-path, to hell and destruction; consequently, such a Christian as has a due regard to, and value for his own salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as of debauched practices: That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

26 and *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil,
who are taken captive by him at his will.

The servant of the Lord must not strive, 2Ti 2:24. Nothing worse becomes the servant of the Lord Jesus, who himself did not strive nor cry (Mt 12:19), but was a pattern of meekness, and mildness, and gentleness to all, than strife and contention. The servant of the Lord must be gentle to all men, and thereby show that he is himself subject to the commanding power of that holy religion which he is employed in preaching and propagating.--Apt to teach. Those are unapt to teach who are apt to strive, and are fierce and froward. Ministers must be patient, bearing with evil, and in meekness instructing (2Ti 2:25) not only those who subject themselves, but those who oppose themselves. Observe,

1. Those who oppose themselves to the truth are to be instructed; for instruction is the scripture-method of dealing with the erroneous, which is more likely to convince them of their errors than fire and faggot: he does not bid us kill their bodies, under pretence of saving their souls.

2. Such as oppose themselves are to be instructed in meekness, for our Lord is meek and lowly (Mt 11:29), and this agrees well with the character of the servant of the Lord (2Ti 2:24): He must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient. This is the way to convey truth in its light and power, and to overcome evil with good, Ro 12:21.
3. That which ministers must have in their eyes, in instructing those who oppose themselves, must be their recovery: If God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. Observe,

(1.) Repentance is God's gift.

(2.) It is a gift with a peradventure in the case of those who oppose themselves; and therefore, though we are not to despair of the grace of God, yet we must take heed of presuming upon it. To the acknowledging of the truth.

(3.) The same God who gives us the discovery of the truth does by his grace bring us to the acknowledging of it, otherwise our hearts would continue in rebellion against it, for we are to confess with our mouths as well as to believe with our hearts, Ro 10:9,10. And thus sinners recover themselves out of the snare of the devil; see here,

[1.] The misery of sinners: they are in the snare of the devil, and are led captive by him at his will, 2Ti 2:26. They are slaves to the worst of task-masters; he is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, Eph 2:2. They are taken in a snare, and in the worst snare, because it is the devil's; they are as fishes that are taken in n evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare. Further, They are under Ham's curse (a servant of servants shall he be, Ge 9:25), they are slaves to him who is but a slave and vassal.

[2.] The happiness of those who repent: they recover themselves out of this snare, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and they have escaped; and the greater the danger the greater the deliverance. When sinners repent, those who before were led captive by the devil at his will come to be led into the glorious liberty of the

children of God, and have their wills melted into the will of the Lord Jesus. The good Lord recover us all out of the snare.

2 Timothy-3

The Character of Men in the Last Days

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Timothy must not think it strange if there were in the church bad men; for the net of the gospel was to enclose both good fish and bad, Mt 22:47,48. Jesus Christ had foretold (Mt 24:1-51) that there would come seducers, and therefore we must not be offended at it, nor think the worse of religion or the church for it. Even in gold ore there will be dross, and a great deal of chaff among the wheat when it lies on the floor.

I Timothy must know that in the last days (2Ti 3:1), in gospel times, there would come perilous times. Though gospel times were times of reformation in many respects, let him know that even in gospel times there would be perilous times; not so much on account of persecution from without as on account of corruptions within. These would be difficult times, wherein it would be difficult for a man to keep a good conscience. He does not say, "Perilous times shall come, for both Jews and Gentiles shall be combined to root out Christianity;" but "perilous times shall come, for such as have the form of godliness (2Ti 3:5) shall be corrupt and wicked, and do a great deal of damage to the church." Two traitors within the garrison may do more hurt to it than two thousand besiegers without. Perilous times shall come, for men shall be wicked.

Note, 1. Sin makes the times perilous. When there is a general corruption of manners, and of the tempers of men, this makes the times dangerous to live in; for it is hard to keep our integrity in the midst of general corruption.

2 The coming of perilous times is an evidence of the truth of scripture-predictions; if the event in this respect did not answer to the prophecy, we might be tempted to question the divinity of the Bible. 3. We are

all concerned to know this, to believe and consider it, that we may not be surprised when we see the times perilous: This know also.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters,
proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

For men shall be lovers of their own selves. In the professing Church. Compare the catalogue, Ro 1:29, &c., where much the same sins are attributed to heathen men; it shall be a relapse into virtual heathendom, with all its beast-like propensities, whence the symbol of it is "a beast" (Re 13:1, 11, 12, &c.; 17:3, 8, 11). It shall be one of the characteristics of those times, that men shall be eminently selfish, evidently under the garb of religion. 2Ti 3:5. The word here used φιλαυτος--does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means a lover of one's self, selfish. Such a love of self as to lead us to secure our salvation is proper. But this interferes with the rights and happiness of no other persons. the selfishness which is condemned, is that regard to our own interests which interferes with the rights and comforts of others; which makes self the central and leading object of living; and which tramples on all that would interfere with that. As such it is a base and hateful and narrow passion; but it has been so common in the world that no one can doubt the correctness of the prophecy of the apostle that it would exist "in the last times."

Learn hence, That sins, especially great sins, seldom go single and alone, but commonly generate and beget one another. Thus here, self-love begets covetousness, covetousness pride, and pride blasphemy. Thus men fall from one sin to another, and proceed from one degree of wickedness to another

Paul tells Timothy what would be the occasion of making these times perilous, or what shall be the marks and signs whereby these times may be known, 2Ti 3:2, &c.

1. Self-love will make the times perilous. Who is there who does not love himself? But this is meant of an irregular sinful self-love. Men love their carnal selves better than their spiritual selves. Men love to gratify their own lusts, and make provision for them, more than to please God and do their duty. Instead of Christian charity, which takes

care for the good of others, they will mind themselves only, and prefer their own gratification before the church's edification.

2. Covetousness. Observe, Self-love brings in a long train of sins and mischiefs. When men are lovers of themselves, no good can be expected from them, as all good may be expected from those who love God with all their hearts. When covetousness generally prevails, when every man is for what he can get and for keeping what he has, this makes men dangerous to one another, and obliges every man to stand on his guard against his neighbour.

3. Pride and vain-glory. The times are perilous when men, being proud of themselves, are boasters and blasphemers, boasters before men whom they despise and look upon with scorn, and blasphemers of God and of his name. When men do not fear God they will not regard man, and so vice versâ.

4. When children are disobedient to their parents, and break through the obligations which they lie under to them both in duty and gratitude, and frequently in interest, having their dependence upon them and their expectation from them, they make the times perilous; for what wickedness will those stick at who will be abusive to their own parents and rebel against them?

5. Unthankfulness and unholiness make the times perilous, and these two commonly go together. What is the reason that men are unholy and without the fear of God, but that they are unthankful for the mercies of God? Ingratitude and impiety go together; for call a man ungrateful, and you can call him by no worse name. Unthankful, and impure, defiled with fleshly lusts, which is an instance of great ingratitude to that God who has provided so well for the support of the body; we abuse his gifts, if we make them the food and fuel of our lusts.

6. The times are perilous when men will not be held by the bonds either of nature or common honesty, when they are without natural affection, and truce-breakers, 2Ti 3:3. There is a natural affection due to all. Wherever there is the human nature, there should be humanity

towards those of the same nature, but especially between relations. Times are perilous when children are disobedient to their parents (2Ti 3:2) and when parents are without natural affection to their children, 2Ti 3:3. See what a corruption of nature sin is, how it deprives men even of that which nature has implanted in them for the support of their own kind; for the natural affection of parents to their children is that which contributes very much to the keeping up of mankind upon the earth. And those who will not be bound by natural affection, no marvel that they will not be bound by the most solemn leagues and covenants. They are truce-breakers, that make no conscience of the engagements they have laid themselves under.

7. The times are perilous when men are false accusers one of another, diaboloi--devils one to another, having no regard to the good name of others, or to the religious obligations of an oath, but thinking themselves at liberty to say and do what they please, Ps 12:4.

8. When men have no government of themselves and their own appetites: not of their own appetites, for they are incontinent; not of their own passions, for they are fierce; when they have no rule over their own spirits, and therefore are like a city that is broken down, and has no walls; they are soon fired, upon the least provocation.

9. When that which is good and ought to be honoured is generally despised and looked upon with contempt. It is the pride of persecutors that they look with contempt upon good people, though they are more excellent than their neighbours.

10. When men are generally treacherous, wilful, and haughty, the times are perilous (2Ti 3:4)-- when men are traitors, heady, high-minded. Our Saviour has foretold that the brother shall betray the brother to death and the father the child (Mt 10:21), and those are the worst sort of traitors: those who delivered up their Bibles to persecutors were called traditores, for they betrayed the trust committed to them. When men are petulant and puffed up, behaving scornfully to all about them, and when this temper generally prevails, then the times are perilous.

11. When men are generally lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. When there are more epicures than true Christians, then the times are bad indeed. God is to be loved above all. That is a carnal mind, and is full of enmity against him, which prefers any thing before him, especially such a sordid thing as carnal pleasure is.

12. When, notwithstanding all this, they have the form of godliness (2Ti 3:5), are called by the Christian name, baptized into the Christian faith, and make a show of religion; but, how plausible soever their form of godliness is, they deny the power of it. When they take upon them the form which should and would bring along with it the power thereof, they will put asunder what God hath joined together: they will assume the form of godliness, to take away their reproach; but they will not submit to the power of it, to take away their sin. Observe here,

(1.) Men may be very bad and wicked under a profession of religion; they may be lovers of themselves, &c., yet have a form of godliness.

(2.) A form of godliness is a very different thing from the power of it; men may have the one and be wholly destitute of the other; yea, they deny it, at least practically in their lives.

(3.) From such good Christians must withdraw themselves.

3 without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Trucebreakers. The same word in Rom 1:31, is rendered implacable. Rom 1:31. It properly means, without treaty; that is, those who are averse to any treaty or compact. It may thus refer to those who are unwilling to enter into any agreement; that is, either those who are unwilling to be reconciled to others when there is a variance--implacable; or those who disregard treaties or agreements. In either case, this marks a very corrupt condition of society. Nothing would be more indicative of the lowest state of degradation, than that in which all compacts and agreements were utterly disregarded. False accusers. Marg., makebates. The word makebate means one who excites contentions and quarrels. Webster. The Greek here is διαβολοι--devils --the primitive meaning of which is, calumniator, slanderer, accuser. Comp. 1Timm 3:11, where the word is rendered slanderers.

Incontinent. 1Cor 7:5. Literally, without strength; that is, without strength to resist the solicitations of passion, or who readily yield to it. Fierce. The Greek word used here-- ανημερος does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means ungentle, harsh, severe, and is the opposite of gentleness and mildness. Religion produces gentleness; the want of it makes men rough, harsh, cruel. 2Ti 2:24. Despisers of those that are good. In Tit 1:8, it is said of a bishop that he must be "a lover of good men." This, in every condition of life, is a virtue; and hence the opposite of it is here set down as one of the characteristics of that evil age of which the apostle speaks.

4 traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Traitors. This word is used in the New Testament only here and in Lk 6:16, Acts 7:52. It means any one who betrays-- whether it be a friend or his country. Treason has been in all ages regarded as one of the worst crimes that man can commit. Heady. The same word in Acts 19:36, is rendered rashly. It occurs only there and in this place in the New Testament. It properly means falling forwards; prone, inclined, ready to do anything; then precipitate, headlong, rash. It is opposed to that which is deliberate and calm; and here means, that men would be ready to do anything without deliberation, or concern for the consequences. They would engage in enterprises which would only disturb society, or prove their own ruin. High-minded. Literally, puffed up. 1Timm 3:6, where the same word is rendered lifted up with pride. The meaning is, that they would be inflated with pride or self-conceit. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. That is, of sensual pleasures, or vain amusements. This has been, and is, the characteristic of a great part of the world, and has often distinguished even many who profess religion. Of a large portion of mankind it may be said that this is their characteristic, that they live for pleasure; they have no serious pursuits; they brook no restraints which interfere with their amusements, and they greatly prefer the pleasures to be found in the gay assembly, in the ball-room, or in the place of low dissipation, to the friendship of their Creator.

5 having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Having a form of godliness. That is, they profess religion, or are in connexion with the church. This shows that the apostle referred to

some great corruption in the church; and there can be little doubt that he had his eye on the same great apostasy to which he refers in 2Thes 2, 1Timm 4. All these things to which he refers here have been practised and tolerated in that apostate church, while no body of men, at any time, have been more zealous in maintaining a form of godliness; that is, in keeping up the forms of religion. But denying the power thereof. Opposing the real power of religion; not allowing it to exert any influence in their lives. It imposes no restraint on their passions and carnal propensities; but in all respects, except in the form of religion, they live as if they had none. This has been common in the world. The most regular and bigoted adherence to the forms of religion, furnishes no evidence in itself that there is any true piety at heart, or that true religion has any actual control over the soul. It is much easier for men to observe the forms of religion than it is to bring the heart under its controlling influence. From such turn away. Have no intercourse with them as if they were Christians; show no countenance to their religion; do not associate with them. Comp. 2Jn 1:10,11; 2Cor 6:17.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

For of this sort are they which creep into houses. Who go slyly and insidiously into families. They are not open and manly in endeavouring to propagate their views, but they endeavour by their address to ingratiate themselves first with weak women, and through them to influence men. Comp. Tit 1:11. The word translated "creep into," is rendered by Doddridge, insinuate themselves; by Bloomfield, wind their way into, in the manner of serpents; by Bretschneider, deceitfully enter; by Robinson and Passow, go in, enter in. It is not certain that the idea of deceit or cunning is contained in this word, yet the whole complexion of the passage implies that they made their way by art and deceitful tricks. And lead captive silly women. One of the tricks always played by the advocates of error, and one of the ways by which they seek to promote their purposes. Satan began his work of temptation with Eve rather than with Adam, and the advocates of error usually follow his example. There are always weak-minded women enough in any community to give an opportunity of practicing these arts, and often the aims of the imposter and deceiver can be best secured by appealing to them. Such women are easily flattered; they

are charmed by the graceful manners of religious instructors; they lend a willing ear to anything that has the appearance of religion, and their hearts are open to anything that promises to advance the welfare of the world. At the same time, they are just such persons as the propagators of error can rely on. They have leisure; they have wealth; they are busy; they move about in society, and by their activity they obtain an influence, to which they are by no means entitled by their piety or talents. There are, indeed, very many women in the world who cannot be so easily led away as men; but it cannot be denied also that there are those who are just adapted to the purposes of such as seek to spread plausible error. The word rendered silly women, means properly little women, and then weak women.

Laden with sins. With so many sins that they seem to be burdened with them. The idea is, that they are under the influence of sinful desires and propensities, and hence are better adapted to the purposes of deceivers. Led away with divers lusts. With various kinds of passions or desires-- επιθυμιαις --such as pride, vanity, the love of novelty, or a susceptibility to flattery, so as to make them an easy prey to deceivers.

Ever learning. That is, these "silly women;" for so the Greek demands. The idea is, that they seem to be disciples. They put themselves wholly under the care of these professedly religious teachers, but they never acquire the true knowledge of the way of salvation. And never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They may learn many things, but the true nature of religion they do not learn. There are many such persons in the world, who, whatever attention they may pay to religion, never understand its nature. Many obtain much speculative acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity, but never become savingly acquainted with the system; many study the constitution and government of the church, but remain strangers to practical piety; many become familiar with the various philosophical theories of religion, but never become truly acquainted with what religion is; and many embrace visionary theories, who never show that they are influenced by the Spirit of the gospel. Nothing is more common than for persons to be very busy and active in religion, and even to learn

many things about it, who still remain strangers to the saving power of the gospel.

7 ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was.

But they shall proceed no further. There is a certain point beyond which they will not be allowed to go. Their folly will become manifest, and the world will understand it. The apostle does not say how far these false teachers would be allowed to go, but that they would not be suffered always to prosper and prevail. They might be plausible at first, and lead many astray; they might, by art and cunning, cover up the real character of their system, but there would be a fair development of it, and it would be seen to be folly. The apostle here may be understood as declaring a general truth in regard to error. It often is so plausible at first, that it seems to be true. It wins the hearts of many persons, and leads them astray. It flatters them personally, or it flatters them with the hope of a better state of things in the church and the world. But the time will always come when men will see the folly of it. Error will advance only to a certain point, when it will be seen to be falsehood and folly, and when the world will arise and cast it off. In some cases, this point may be slower in being reached than in others; but there is a point, beyond which error will not go.

For their folly shall be manifest unto all men. The world will see and understand what they are, and what they teach. By smooth sophistry, and cunning arts, they will not be able always to deceive mankind.

As their's also was. That of Jannes and Jambres. That is, it became manifest to all that they could not compete with Moses and Aaron; that their claims to the power of working miracles were the mere arts of magicians, and that they had set up pretensions which they could not sustain. Comp. Ex 8:18,19. In regard to the time to which the apostle referred in this description, it has already been observed 2Ti 3:1, that it was probably to that great apostasy of the "latter days," which he has described in 2Thes 2, 1Timm 4. But there seems to be no reason to doubt that he had his eye immediately on some persons

who had appeared then, and who had evinced some of the traits which would characterize the great apostasy, and whose conduct showed that the great "falling away" had already commenced. In 2Thes 2:7, he says that the "mystery of iniquity" was already at work, or was even then manifesting itself; and there can be no doubt that the apostle saw that there had then commenced what he knew would yet grow up into the great defection from the truth. In some persons, at that time, who had the form of godliness, but who denied its power; who made use of insinuating arts to proselyte the weak and the credulous; who endeavoured to imitate the true apostles, perhaps by attempting to work miracles, as Jannes and Jambres did, he saw the germ of what was yet to grow up into so gigantic a system of iniquity as to overshadow the world. Yet he consoled Timothy with the assurance that there was a point beyond which the system of error would not be allowed to go, but where its folly must be seen, and where it would be arrested.

Paul's Last Charge to Timothy

10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose,
faith, long-suffering, charity, patience,
11 persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at
Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all
the Lord delivered me.

A special mean is here propounded, how Timothy and his successors may be preserved from the seduction of false teachers, namely, by setting before themselves the example of the great apostle St. Paul; we are more easily led by precedents than by precepts; therefore the apostle propounds his own example as a pattern; Thou hast fully known my doctrine, my manner of life and conversation, my purpose to adhere to, my faith in Christ, my long-suffering and patience in undergoing persecution for him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, and how God was graciously pleased to deliver me out of all.

Learn hence, 1. That younger ministers ought especially to observe the doctrine and conversation of the elder, the pious way and walking of the graver ministers, and must follow them. Aged Paul propounds his

virtues to young Timothy for imitation; Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life; my doctrine to be sound and sincere, my life to be holy and unblameable.

Learn, 2. That it is both lawful and laudable, at sometimes, and upon some occasions, to mention both the graces which God hath wrought in us, and also the sufferings and persecutions which we endure and undergo for him; Thou knowest what persecutions I endured at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

Learn, 3. That always opposition, and often persecution, attends the preaching of the gospel wherever it goes. St. Paul went to Antioch, from Antioch to Iconium, from Iconium to Lystra, preaching the gospel; but pesecution followed him hard at the heels wherever he went. But observe how the goodness of God accompanied him too; Out of them all the

Lord delivered me; not only our dangers, but our deliverances also, must be recorded and observed.

Observe, farther, How the apostle argues, from his own persecutions in particular, to all the godly's persecutions in general; Yea, and all that will live godlily in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution;

Mark, Not this or that godly man, but all, every one without exception; the better the men, the sooner persecuted; the devil shoots his arrow at the whitest and fairest mark.
Again, all that will, he doth not say, All that wish well to godliness, but All that will, all that are absolutely resolved so to do.

And farther, if he will live, if he can or will keep his godliness in his heart, and not discover it in his life, he may escape hatred and persecution: but if he will live religiously, let him look for persecution.

Observe, farther, It is said, He that will live godlily, and not civilly, but living godlily, exposes to the world's scorn and hatred; In a word, his godliness in Christ Jesus, that is, such godliness as is exerted in the virtue, strength, and power of Christ Jesus particularly.

Godliness in Christ Jesus is real and true godliness; 'tis exact godliness, 'tis an active godliness, 'tis a prevailing godliness, it is a world condemning godliness; such godliness cannot escape the world's hatred.

Learn, That all those that shew forth the power of religion in an holy conversation, must certainly look for persecution.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Paul takes occasion from the reference to his own persecutions, to say that his case was not peculiar. It was the common lot of all who endeavoured to serve their Redeemer faithfully; and Timothy himself, therefore, must not hope to escape from it. The apostle had a particular reference, doubtless, to his own times; but he has put his remark into the most general form, as applicable to all periods. It is undoubtedly true at all times, and will ever be, that they who are devoted Christians--who live as the Saviour did --and who carry out his principles always, will experience some form of persecution. The essence of persecution consists in subjecting a person to injury or disadvantage on account of his opinions. It is something more than meeting his opinions by argument, which is always right and proper; it is inflicting some injury on him: depriving him of some privilege, or right; subjecting him to some disadvantage, or placing him in less favourable circumstances, on account of his sentiments. This may be either an injury done to his feelings, his family, his reputation, his property, his liberty, his influence; it may be by depriving him of an office which he held, or preventing him from obtaining one to which he is eligible; it may be by subjecting him to fine or imprisonment, to banishment, torture, or death. If, in any manner, or in any way, he is subjected to disadvantage on account of his religious opinions, and deprived of any immunities and rights to which he would be otherwise entitled, this is persecution. Now, it is doubtless as true as it ever was, that a man who will live as the Saviour did, will, like him, be subjected to some such injury or disadvantage. On account of his opinions, he may be held up to ridicule, or treated with neglect, or excluded from society to which his attainments and manners would otherwise introduce him, or

shunned by those who might otherwise value his friendship. These things may be expected in the best times, and under the most favourable circumstances; and it is known that a large part of the history of the world, in its relation to the church, is nothing more than a history of persecution. It follows, from this,

(1.) that they who make a profession of religion, should come prepared to be persecuted. It should be considered as one of the proper qualifications for membership in the church, to be willing to bear persecution, and to resolve not to shrink from any duty in order to avoid it.

(2.) They who are persecuted for their opinions, should consider that this may be one evidence that they have the Spirit of Christ, and are his true friends. They should remember that, in this respect, they are treated as the Master was, and are in the goodly company of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs; for they were all persecuted. Yet,

(3.) if we are persecuted, we should carefully inquire, before we avail ourselves of this consolation, whether we are persecuted because we "live godly in Christ Jesus," or for some other reason. A man may embrace some absurd opinion, and call it religion; he may adopt some mode of dress irresistibly ludicrous, from the mere love of singularity, and may call it conscience; or he may be boorish in his manners, and uncivil in his deportment, outraging all the laws of social life, and may call this "deadness to the world;" and for these, and similar things, he may be contemned, ridiculed, and despised. But let him not infer, therefore, that he is to be enrolled among the martyrs, and that he is certainly a real Christian. That persecution which will properly furnish any evidence that we are the friends of Christ, must be only that which is "for righteousness' sake," Mt 5:10, and must be brought upon us in an honest effort to obey the commands of God.

(4.) Let those who have never been persecuted in any way, inquire whether it is not an evidence that they have no religion. If they had been more faithful, and more like their Master, would they have always escaped? And may not their freedom from it prove that they

have surrendered the principles of their religion, where they should have stood firm, though the world were arrayed against them? It is easy for a professed Christian to avoid persecution, if he yields every point in which religion is opposed to the world. But let not a man who will do this, suppose that he has any claim to be numbered among the martyrs, or even entitled to the Christian name.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them;*

Several arguments are here made use of, by St. Paul, to press Timothy to the duty of perseverance in the doctrine of Christ, contained in the holy scriptures; the first is drawn from the authority of the person from whom he had received that doctrine, to wit, St. Paul himself, an inspired apostle of Jesus Christ.

Continue in the things which thou hast learned; that is, from me, and by me as an authorized apostle. All the servants of God, but especially the ministers of God, must continue constant in the faith, and steadfast in the truth received.

The second argument of Timothy's adhering to the doctrine of the scriptures, is drawn from his long acquaintance with the scriptures, even from his childhood, yea, from his infancy: From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, &c. And the argument lies thus, "Thou, O Timothy, hast learnt the scriptures from thy infancy; now what a shame would it be for thee, who hast been taught so early the true religion, to turn from it and forsake it; from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, from a suckling, as the word signifies." From whence learn, That it is the duty of parents to instruct their children betimes in the holy and good word of God; we read before of the care that Timothy's mother and grandmother took in that matter,

Observe, 2. The title given to the word of God, - the holy scriptures; they are holy in their author, holy in their matter, holy in their penman, holy in their end and design, which is to make us holy, Joh

16:17. The word of God is not only pure but purifying, not only clean but cleansing.

Observe, 3. the high commendation given of the word, It is able to make thee wise unto salvation; no knowledge can bring us to salvation without the knowledge of the holy scriptures; the philosophers will teach you moral wisdom, but not a word of salvation by a Redeemer, without whom our salvation is impossible; it is here added, -wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Learn, thence, that the holy scriptures, though they instruct us in the way of salvation, yet cannot save us without faith in Christ Jesus.

15 and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which
are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in
Christ Jesus.
16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for
doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in
righteousness:

Our apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to Timothy to persevere in his study of the holy scriptues, by an argument drawn,

1. From the dignity and authority of the scriptures; 2. From their utility; 3. From their perfection.

1. From their dignity and authority,They are given by the inspiration of God: that is, they are not the contrivance of any man's wit and fancy, but a revelation of the mind and will of God; and those that wrote them were excited to it, and assisted in it, by the Spirit of God; no part of scripture had either angels or men for its author, but every part of scripture is divinely inspired or breathed by God, both for matter and order, style and words.

A second argument is drawn from the utility and sufficiency of the holy scriptures; they are profitable for doctrine and instruction, teaching us what to know and believe in order to salvation,

concerning God, and Christ, and ourselves, &c. for reproof of error, and confutation of false doctrines, for correction of sin and evil manners, for instruction in righteousness, directing us how to lead a holy and righteous life, according to the will of God.

A third argument is taken from the perfection of them; they are able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works; that is, to make the ministers of Christ complete in knowledge, faith, and holiness, every way fitted for their work and duty, as Christians, and as ministers.

Observe here, 1. That the scriptures of the Old Testament, and not of the New, must be the scriptures here intended, they being the only scriptures which Timothy had known from a child; that was before the scriptures of the new Testament were written.

Observe, 2. That the apostle doth not say that these scriptures were of themselves sufficient to make Timothy wise unto salvation, but only that with faith in Christ Jesus they were sufficient for that end; much more then must the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament together, when accompanied with faith in Jesus Christ, be sufficent for that end.

Observe, 3. That the scriptures are a perfect, plain, and sufficient rule, in all things necessary to salvation.

1. They are a perfect rule; because the writers of them were inspired, and consequently their writings are infallible.

2. They are a plain rule; otherwise they would be no rule at all, of no more use to direct our faith and practice than a sun-dial in a dark room is to tell us the hour of the day. A rule that is not plain, whatever it may be in itself, is of no use to us till it is made plain.

3. They are a sufficient rule; they are able to make the man of God perfect, and wise to salvation. Here the church of Rome distinguishes, and says, the scriptures are sufficient to salvation, but

not to instruction, to whom one of the martyrs replied, "If so, God send me the salvation and you the instruction."

It is conceived by some that this was the last epistle that ever St. Paul wrote; if so, this is the last charge that ever he gave, and concerns us the more to attend to the solemnity of it. The chapter before us is St. Paul's Cygnea Cantio, his last and sweetest song; by a spiritual sagacity he saw his end approaching, and the time of his martyrdom to be at hand; he therefore, like a dying man, adjures TImothy in a most awful and tremendous manner, to preach the word with all diligence and care, which he had so highly extolled in the foregoing chapter, as being able to make all persons wise unto salvation.

And is profitable. It is useful, it is adapted to give instruction, to administer reproof, etc. If "all" Scripture is thus valuable, then we are to esteem no part of the Old Testament as worthless. There is no portion of it, even now, which may not be fitted, in certain circumstances, to furnish us valuable lessons, and, consequently, no part of it which could be spared from the sacred canon. There is no part of the human body which is not useful in its place, and no part of it which can be spared without sensible loss. For doctrine. For teaching or communicating instruction. Comp. 1Timm 4:16. For reproof. On the meaning of the word here rendered reproof ελεγχος--Heb 11:1. It here means, probably, for convincing; that is, convincing a man of his sins, of the truth and claims of religion, etc., Jn 16:8. For correction. The word here used--επανορθωσις--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly, a setting to rights, reparation, restoration, (from επανορθοω, to right up again, to restore;) and here means, the leading to a correction or amendment of life--a reformation. The meaning is, that the Scriptures are a powerful means of reformation, or of putting men into the proper condition in regard to morals. After all the means which have been employed to reform mankind; all the appeals which are made to them on the score of health, happiness, respectability, property, and long life, the word of God is still the most powerful and the most effectual means of recovering those who have fallen into vice. No reformation can be permanent which is not based on the principles of the word of God. For instruction in righteousness. Instruction in regard to the

principles of justice, or what is right. Man needs not only to be made acquainted with truth, to be convinced of his error, and to be reformed; but he needs to be taught what is right, or what is required of him, in order that he may lead a holy life. Every reformed and regenerated man needs instruction, and should not be left merely with the evidence that he is reformed, or converted, he should be followed with the principles of the word of God, to show him how he may lead an upright life. The Scriptures furnish the rules of holy living in abundance, and thus they are adapted to the whole work of recovering man, and of guiding him to heaven.

17 that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy-4

1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

Verse 1. I charge thee therefore before God. 1Timm 5:21. Who shall judge the quick and the dead. That is, the Lord Jesus; for he is to be the Judge of men, Mt 25:31-46, 2Cor 5:10. The word quick means living, Acts 10:42; Eph 2:1; and the idea is, that he would be alike the Judge of all who were alive when he should come, and of all who had died. 1Thes 4:16, 1Thes 4:17. In view of the fact that all, whether preachers or hearers, must give up their account to the final Judge, Paul charges Timothy to be faithful; and what is there which will more conduce to fidelity in the discharge of duty, than the thought that we must soon give up a solemn account of the manner in which we have performed it? At his appearing. That is, the judgment shall then take place. This must refer to a judgment yet to take place, for the Lord Jesus has not yet "appeared" the second time to men; and, if this be so, then there is to be a resurrection of the dead. On the meaning of the word rendered appearing, 2Thes 2:8. It is there rendered brightness. Comp. 1Timm 6:14, 2Ti 1:10, Tit 2:13. And his kingdom. Or, at the setting up of his kingdom. The idea of his reigning, or setting up his kingdom, is not unfrequently associated with the idea of his coming. See Mt 16:28. The meaning is, that, at his second advent, the extent and majesty of his kingdom will be fully

displayed. It will be seen that he has control over the elements, over the graves of the dead, and over all the living. It will be seen that the earth and the heavens are under his sway, and that all things there acknowledge him as their sovereign Lord. In order to meet the full force of the language used by Paul here, it is not necessary to suppose that he will set up a visible kingdom on the earth, but only that there will be an illustrious display of himself as a king, and of the extent and majesty of the empire over which he presides. Comp. Rom 14:11; Php 2:10.

2 preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Preach the word. The word of God; the gospel. This was to be the main business of the life of Timothy, and Paul solemnly charges him, in view of the certain coming of the Redeemer to judgment, to be faithful in the performance of it. Be instant. Rom 12:12, The meaning here is, that he should be constant in this duty. Literally, to stand by, or to stand fast by; that is, he was to be pressing or urgent in the performance of this work. He was always to be at his post, and was to embrace every opportunity of making known the gospel. What Paul seems to have contemplated was not merely that he should perform the duty at stated and regular times; but that he should press the matter as one who had the subject much at heart, and never lose an opportunity of making the gospel known.

In season. ευκαιρως. In good time; opportunely. Comp. Mt 16:16, Lk 22:6, Mk 14:11. The sense is, when it could be conveniently done; when all things were favourable, and when there were no obstructions or hinderances. It may include the stated and regular seasons for public worship, but is not confined to them. Out of season. ακαιρως. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is the opposite of the former, and means that a minister is to seek opportunities to preach the gospel even at such periods as might be inconvenient to himself, or when there might be hinderances and embarrassments, or when there was no stated appointment for preaching. He is not to confine himself to the appointed times of worship, or to preach only when it will be perfectly convenient for himself; but he is to have such an interest and earnestness in the work, that it will lead him to do it in the face

of embarrassments and discouragements, and whenever he can find an opportunity. A man who is greatly intent on an object will seek every opportunity to promote it. He will not confine himself to stated times and places, but will present it everywhere, and at all times. A man, therefore, who merely confines himself to the stated seasons of preaching the gospel, or who merely reaches when it is convenient to himself, should not consider that he has come up to the requirement of the rule laid down by the apostle. He should preach in his private conversation, and in the intervals of his public labours, at the side of the sick bed, and wherever there is a prospect of doing good to any one. If his heart is full of love to the Saviour and to souls, he cannot help doing this. Reprove. Or convince. 2Ti 3:16. The meaning is, that he was to use such arguments as would convince men of the truth of religion, and of their own need of it. Rebuke. Rebuke offenders. Tit 2:15. See the use of the word in Mt 8:26, 12:16, (rendered charged;) Mt 16:22, 17:18; Mt 19:13, 20:31, Lk 4:35,39, 17:3, 18:15, Jude 1:9. In the New Testament the word is used to express a judgment of what is wrong, or contrary to one's will, and hence to admonish or reprove. It implies our conviction that there is something evil, or some fault in him who is rebuked. The word in this verse rendered reprove, does not imply this, but merely that one may be in error, and needs to have arguments presented to convince him of the truth. That word also implies no superior authority in him who does it. He presents reasons, or argues the case, for the purpose of convincing. The word here rendered rebuke, implies authority or superiority, and means merely that we may say that a thing is wrong, and administer a rebuke for it, as if there were no doubt that it was wrong. The propriety of the rebuke rests on our authority for doing it, not on the arguments which we present. This is based on the presumption that men often know that they are doing wrong, and need no arguments to convince them of it. The idea is, that the minister is not merely to reason about sin, and convince men that it is wrong; but he may solemnly admonish them not to do it, and warn them of the consequences. Exhort. Rom 12:8. With all long-suffering. That is, with a patient and persevering spirit if you are opposed. 2Ti 2:25. Comp. Rom 2:4. Comp. Rom 9:22, 2Cor 6:6, Gal 5:22; Eph 4:2, Col 1:11, 3:12, 1Timm 1:16. And doctrine. Teaching, or patient instruction.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;
but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers,
having itching ears;

For the time will come, etc. Probably referring to the time mentioned in 2Ti 3:1, seq. When they will not endure sound doctrine. Greek, healthful doctrine; i.e., doctrine contributing to the health of the soul, or to salvation. At that time they would seek a kind of instruction more conformable to their wishes and feelings. But after their own lusts. They will seek such kind of preaching as will accord with their carnal desires; or such as will palliate their evil propensities, and deal gently with their vices. Comp. Isa 30:10, "Speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits." Shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. The word rendered heap επισωρευω--does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means to heap up upon, to accumulate; and here to multiply. The word rendered itching--κνηθω--also occurs only in this place in the New Testament. It means to rub, to scratch; and then to tickle, and here to feel an itching for something pleasing or gratifying. The image is derived from the desire which we have when there is an itching sensation, to have it rubbed or scratched. Such an uneasiness would these persons have to have, some kind of instruction that would allay their restless and uneasy desires, or would gratify them. In explanation of this passage we may observe,

(1.) that there will be always religious teachers of some kind, and that, in proportion as error and sin abound, they will be multiplied. The apostle here says, that by turning away from Timothy, and from sound instruction, they would not abandon all religious teachers, but would rather increase and multiply them. Men often declaim much against a regular ministry, and call it priestcraft; and yet, if they were to get rid of such a ministry, they would by no means escape from all kinds of religious teachers. The deeper the darkness, and the more gross the errors, and the more prevalent the wickedness of men, the more will a certain kind of religious teachers abound, and the more it will cost to support them.

(2.) In such classes of persons as the apostle here refers to, there is a restless, uneasy desire to have some kind of preachers. They have

"itching ears." They will be ready to run after all kinds of public instructors. They will be little pleased with any, and this will be one reason why they will have so many. They are fickle, and unsettled, and never satisfied. desire to hear the truth, and to learn the way of salvation, is a good desire. But this can be better gratified by far under the patient and intelligent labour of a single religious teacher, than by running after many teachers, or than by frequent changes. How much would a child learn if he were constantly running from one school to another?

(3.) Such persons would have teachers according to "their own lusts;" that is, their own tastes, or wishes. They would have those who would coincides with their whims; who would foster every vagary which might enter their imagination; who would countenance every wild project for doing good; who would be the advocates of the errors which they held; and who would be afraid to rebuke their faults. These are the principles on which many persons choose their religious teachers. The true principle should be, to select those who will faithfully declare the truth, and who will not shrink from exposing and denouncing sin, wherever it may be found.

4 and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

But watch thou in all things. Be vigilant against error and against sin, and faithful in the performance of duty. Mt 25:13; 1Cor 16:13. Endure afflictions. 2Ti 2:3. The Greek word here is the same which is there rendered "endure hardness." Do the work of an evangelist. On the word evangelist, Acts 21:8. The phrase here means, do the work of preaching the gospel, or of one appointed to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. This is the proper business of all ministers, whatever other rank they may maintain. Whether it was ever regarded as the proper duty of a separate class of men to do this, Eph 5:11. Make full proof of thy ministry. Marg., fulfil. Comp. Rom 14:5. The word here used denotes, properly, to bear or bring fully; then to persuade fully; and then to make fully assured of, to give full proof of. The meaning here seems to be, to furnish full evidence of what is the design of the Christian ministry, and of what it is adapted to

accomplish, by the faithful performance of all its duties. Timothy was so to discharge the duties of his office as to furnish a fair illustration of what the ministry could do, and thus to show the wisdom of the Saviour in its institution. This should be the aim of all the ministers of the gospel. Each one should resolve, by the blessing of God, that the ministry, in his hands, shall be allowed, by a fair trial, to show to the utmost what it is adapted to do for the welfare of mankind.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

For I am now ready to be offered. This conviction of the apostle that he was about to die, is urged as a reason why Timothy should be laborious and faithful in the performance of the duties of his office. His own work was nearly done. He was soon to be withdrawn from the earth, and whatever benefit the world might have derived from his experience or active exertions, it was now to be deprived of it. He was about to leave a work which he much loved, and to which he had devoted the rigour of his life, and he was anxious that they who were to succeed him should carry on the work with all the energy and zeal in their power. This expresses the common feeling of aged ministers as death draws near. The word "ready," in the phrase "ready to be offered," conveys an idea which is not in the original. It implies a willingness to depart, which, whether true or not, is not the idea conveyed by the apostle. His statement is merely of the fact that he was about to die, or that his work was drawing to a close. No doubt he was "ready," in the sense of being willing and prepared, but this is not the idea in the Greek. The single Greek word rendered "I am ready to be offered"--σπενδομαι--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Php 2:17, where it is translated, "if I be offered." See it explained Php 2:17. The allusion here, says Burder (in Rosenmuller's A. u. n. Morgenland,) is to the custom which prevailed among the heathen generally, of pouring wine and oil on the head of a victim when it was about to be offered in sacrifice. The idea of the apostle then is, that he was in the condition of the victim on whose head the wine and oil had been already poured, and which was just about to be put to death; that is, he was about to die. Every preparation had been made, and he only awaited the blow which was to strike him down. The meaning is not that he was to be a sacrifice; it is that his death was about to occur. Nothing more remained to be

done but to die. The victim was all ready, and he was sure that the blow would soon fall. What was the ground of his expectation, he has not told us. Probably there were events occurring in Rome which made it morally certain that though he had once been acquitted, he could not now escape. At all events, it is interesting to contemplate an aged and experienced Christian on the borders of the grave, and to learn what were his feelings in the prospect of his departure to the eternal world. Happily, Paul has in more places than one (comp. Php 1:23) stated his views in such circumstances, and we know that his religion then did not fail him. He found it to be in the prospect of death what he had found it to be through all his life--the source of unspeakable consolation; and he was enabled to look calmly onward to the hour which should summon him into the presence of his Judge. And the time of my departure is at hand. Gr., dissolving, or dissolution. So we speak of the dissolution of the soul and body. The verb from which the noun (αναλυσις,) is derived (αναλυω,) means to loosen again; to undo. It is applied to the act of unloosing or casting off the fastenings of a ship, preparatory to a departure. The proper idea in the use of the word would be, that he had been bound to the present world, like a ship to its moorings, and that death would be a release. He would now spread his sails on the broad ocean of eternity. The true idea of death is that of loosening the bands that confine us to the present world; of setting us free, and permitting the soul to go forth, as with expanded sails, on its eternal voyage. With such a view of death, why should a Christian fear to die?

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

8 henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

A crown of righteousness. That is, a crown won in the cause of righteousness, and conferred as the reward of his conflicts and efforts in the cause of holiness. It was not the crown of ambition; it was not a garland won in struggles for earthly distinction; it was that which was the appropriate reward of his efforts to be personally holy, and to spread the principles of holiness as far as possible through the world. Which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me. The Lord Jesus, appointed to judge the world, and to dispense the rewards of

eternity. It will be seen, in the last day, that the rewards of heaven are not conferred in an arbitrary manner, but that they are bestowed because they ought to be, or that God is righteous and just in doing it. No man will be admitted to heaven who ought not, under all the circumstances of the case, to be admitted there; no one will be excluded who ought to have been saved. At that day. That is, the time when he will come to judge the world, Mt 25.

And not to me only. "Though my life has been spent in laboriously endeavouring to spread his religion; though I have suffered much, and laboured long; though I have struggled hard to win the prize, and now have it full in view, yet I do not suppose that it is to be conferred on me alone. It is not like the wreath of olive, laurel, pine, or parsley, 1Cor 9:25, which could be conferred only on one victor, 1Cor 9:24; but here every one may obtain the crown who strives for it. The struggle is not between me and a competitor in such a sense that, if I obtain the crown, he must be excluded; but it is a crown which he can obtain as well as I. As many as run--as many as fight the good fight--as many as keep the faith--as many as love his appearing, may win the crown as well as I." Such is religion, and such is the manner in which its rewards differ from all others. At the Grecian games, but one could obtain the prize, 1Cor 9:24. All the rest who contended in those games, no matter how numerous they were, or how skilfully they contended, or how much effort they made, were of course subjected to the mortification of a failure, and to all the ill-feeling and envy to which such a failure might give rise. So it is in respect to all the prizes which this world can bestow. In a lottery, but one can obtain the highest prize; in a class in college, but one can secure the highest honour in the scramble for office, no matter how numerous the competitors may be, or what may be their merits, but one can obtain it. All the rest are liable to the disappointments and mortifications of defeat.

Not so in religion. No matter how numerous the competitors', or how worthy any one of them may be, or how pre-eminent above his brethren, yet all may obtain the prize; all may be crowned with a diadem of life of equal brilliancy. No one is excluded because another is successful; no one fails of the reward because another obtains it.

Who, then, would not make an effort to win the immortal crown? Unto all them also that love his appearing. That is, unto all who desire his second coming. To believe in the second advent of the Lord Jesus to judge the world, and to desire his return, became a kind of a criterion by which Christians Were known. No others but true Christians were supposed to believe in that, and no others truly desired it. Comp. Rev 1:7, 22:20. It is so now. It is one of the characteristics of a true Christian, that he sincerely desires the return of his Saviour, and would welcome his appearing in the clouds of heaven.

Personal Instructions

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:
10 for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.
11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Only Luke is with me. Luke, the author of the gospel which bears his name, and of the Acts of the Apostles. For a considerable part of the ministry of Paul, he was his travelling companion, comp. Acts 16:10; and we know that he went with him to Rome, Acts 27:1. Take Mark. John Mark, Acts 15:37. He was the son of a sister of Barnabas, and had been the travelling companion of Barnabas and Paul. There had been a temporary alienation between Paul and him, Acts 15:38, but this passage proves that that had been removed, and that Paul was reconciled to him.

For he is profitable to me for the ministry. In what way he would be profitable he does not say; nor is it known why Mark was at that time with Timothy. It may be observed however, that this is such language as Paul might be expected to use of Mark, after what had occurred, as recorded in Acts 15:38. He felt that he was now about to die. If he suspected that there was on the part of Mark any lingering apprehension that the great apostle was not entirely reconciled to him, or retained a recollection of what had formerly occurred, nothing would be more natural than that at this trying time of his life,

Paul should summon him to his side, and express towards him the kindest emotions. It would soothe any lingering irritation in the mind of Mark to receive such a message.

12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

13 The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring *with thee,* and the books, *but* especially the parchments.

And the books. It is impossible to determine what books are meant here. They may have been portions of the Old Testament, or classic writings, or books written by other Christians, or by himself. It is worthy of remark, that even Paul did not travel without books, and that he found them in some way necessary for the work of the ministry. Especially the parchments. The word here used, (μεμβρανος, whence our word membrane,) occurs only in this place in the New Testament, and means skin, membrane, or parchment. Dressed skins were among the earliest materials for writing, and were in common use before the art of making paper from rags was discovered. These "parchments" seem to have been something different from "books," and, probably, refer to some of his own writings. They may have contained notes, memorandums, journals, or unfinished letters. It is, of course, impossible now to determine what they were. Benson supposes they were letters which he had received from the churches; Macknight, that they were the originals of the letters which he had written; Bishop Bull, that they were a kind of common-place book, in which he inserted hints and extracts of the most remarkable passages in the authors which he read. All this, however, is mere conjecture.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

15 of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge.

17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me. Though all men forsook me, yet God did not. This expresses an universal truth in regard to the faithfulness of God. See Ps 27:10. Comp. Job 5:17-19, Isa 43:1,2. That by me the preaching might be fully known. The word preaching here probably means the gospel as preached by him. The word rendered "might be fully known" πληροφορηθη means, "might obtain full credence;" that is, might be fully confirmed, so that others might be assured of its truth. The apostle, doubtless, means that on his trial, though forsaken by all men, he was enabled to be so steadfast in his profession of the truth, and so calm in the prospect of death, that all who witnessed his trial, saw that there was a reality in religion, and that the gospel was founded in truth. He had maintained as a preacher that the gospel was able to support the soul in trial, and he was now able to illustrate its power in his own case. He had proclaimed the gospel as the true system of religion, and he was now able to bear testimony to it with the prospect of approaching martyrdom. The sentiment of this passage then is, that the truth of the gospel is made known, or that men may become fully assured of it, by the testimony which is borne to it by its friends in the near prospect of death. One of the most important means of establishing the truth of the gospel in the world, has been the testimony borne to it by martyrs, and the spirit of unwavering confidence in God which they have evinced. And now, one of the most important methods of keeping up the knowledge of the value of religion in the world, and of convincing men of the truth of Christianity, is the spirit evinced by its friends when they are about to die. Men judge much, and justly, of the value of a system of religion by its power to comfort in the day of calamity, and to sustain the soul when about to enter on an untried state of being. That system is of little value to mankind which leaves us in the day of trial; that is of inestimable worth which will enable us to die with the firm hope of a brighter and better world. Christian, having served his God faithfully in life, may, therefore, be eminently useful when he comes to die.

And that all the Gentiles might hear. Paul was at this time in Rome. His trial was before a heathen tribunal, and he was surrounded by Pagans. Rome, too, was then the centre of the world, and at all times there was a great conflux of strangers thee. His trial, therefore, gave

him an opportunity of testifying to the truth of Christianity before Gentile rulers; and in such circumstances, that the knowledge of his sufferings, and of the religion for which he suffered, might be conveyed by the strangers who witnessed it to the ends of the world. His main object in life was, to make the gospel known to the Gentiles, and he had thus an opportunity of furthering that great cause, even on what he supposed might be the trial which would determine with him the question of life or death. Comp. Rom 1:10. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. This may either mean that he was delivered from Nero, compared with a lion, or, literally, that he was saved from being thrown to lions in the amphitheatre, as was common in Rome. 1Cor 15:32. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare tyrants and persecutors with ravenous wild beasts. Comp. Ps 22:13,21, Jer 2:30. Nero is called a lion by Seneca, and it was usual among heathen writers to apply the term in various senses to princes and warriors. See Grotius, in loc. The common interpretation here has been, that this refers to Nero, and there is no improbability in the interpretation. Still, it is quite as natural to suppose, that the punishment which had been appointed for him, or to which he would have been subjected, was, to be thrown to lions, and that in some way, now unknown to us, he had been delivered from it. Paul attributes his deliverance entirely to the Lord; but what instrumental agency there may have been, he does not specify.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work. He does not say from death, for he expected now to die. See 2Ti 4:6. But he was assured that God would keep him from shrinking from death when the hour approached; from apostasy, and from the manifestation of an improper spirit when he came to die. And will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. So keep me from evil that I shall reach his heavenly kingdom. See 2Ti 4:8. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Paul was accustomed to introduce a doxology in his writings when his heart was full, (comp. Rom 9:5,) and in no place could it be more appropriate than here, when he had the fullest confidence that he was soon to be brought to heaven. If man is ever disposed to ascribe glory to God, it is on such an occasion. And the Lord shall deliver me from

every evil work. He does not say from death, for he expected now to die. See 2Ti 4:6. But he was assured that God would keep him from shrinking from death when the hour approached; from apostasy, and from the manifestation of an improper spirit when he came to die. And will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. So keep me from evil that I shall reach his heavenly kingdom. See 2Ti 4:8. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Paul was accustomed to introduce a doxology in his writings when his heart was full, (comp. Rom 9:5,) and in no place could it be more appropriate than here, when he had the fullest confidence that he was soon to be brought to heaven. If man is ever disposed to ascribe glory to God, it is on such an occasion.

Final Greetings

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.
20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick.
21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and
Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.
22 The Lord Jesus Christ *be* with thy spirit. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul to
Titus
[Titus]

Titus-1

Salutation

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;
2 in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

These verses contain the apostle's salutation, and the first part of this chapter;
in which observe, 1. The person saluting, described by his name, Paul; by his general office, a servant of God; by his special office, an apostle of Jesus Christ; by the end of his office, to preach the faith, and thereby to promote the faith of God's elect, and to bring persons to the acknowledgment of the doctrine of the gospel, which is truth according to godliness.

Learn hence, That the great design and end of preaching the gospel, is, to produce faith in the heart, and holiness or godliness in the life, of those that sit under it; not that common, notional, and intellectual faith, which is ofttimes found in unholy persons: but that lively faith, which is elsewhere called the faith of the operation of God, and here, the faith of God's elect; even such a faith as is the parent and principle of obedience.

Observe, 2. The apostle declares a farther end of his office, namely, to raise Christians up to a lively hope and expectation of that eternal life, which that God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the world began.

But how could God then promise, when there was none to promise to?

Ans. The promise was made to Christ, and in him to all his members: for there was a federal transaction betwixt the Father and the Son from all eternity; the Son promised to give his soul an offering for sin, and the Father engaged that he should see his seed, and the travail of his soul.

Observe, 3. How God, who promised us in Christ eternal life before all time, did accompolish and make good that word in the fulness of time.

Verse 3. He hath in due time manifested his word through preaching; that is, What God so long ago purposed in himself, and promised to his Son, he hath in the fittest appointed season made manifest by the preaching of the gospel, which is committed to me by the appointment of God and Christ.

Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation is much more clearly revealed to us that live under the gospel, than it was to the fathers of the Old Testament. Life and immortality, that is, the clearer knowledge and more full assurance of eternal life, is now brought about by the preaching of the gospel.

Observe, 4. The person saluted, Titus, described by his relation. St. Paul's son in the faith; he begat him by his ministry unto God, was the instrument of his conversion unto Christianity; his son after the common faith.

Where note, That the church has but one faith common to all Christians, it has one common object of faith, Christ crucified; it has one common end of faith, eternal salvation; this is the end of every believer's faith and hope.

Observe lastly, The salutation itself: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour; that is, all spiritual, temporal, and eternal blessings, I most heartily wish unto you, from God the Father, and Jesus Christ our worthy Mediator.

Learn hence, That whatever spiritual grace or temporal blessings we now receive from God, is from him not barely as a Creator, but as a Father, a gracious Father in Christ, in whom he pours forth the immensity of his love upon us, and through whom he conveys all kind of blessings unto us.

3 but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

4 To Titus, *mine* own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Qualifications of Elders and Bishops

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting. Marg., left undone. The Greek is, "the things that are left;" that is, those which were left unfinished; referring, doubtless, to arrangements which had been commenced, but which for some cause had been left incomplete. Whether this had occurred because he had been driven away by persecution, or called away by important duties demanding his attention elsewhere, cannot now be determined. The word rendered, "set in order"-- επιδιορθωση-- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to make straight upon, and then to put further to rights, to arrange further. Robinson, Lex.--- There were things left unfinished which he was to complete. One of these things, and perhaps the principle, was, to appoint elders in the various cities where the gospel had been preached. And ordain. The word ordain has now acquired a technical signification which it cannot be shown that it has in the New Testament. It means, in common usage, to "invest with a ministerial function or sacerdotal power; to introduce, and establish, and settle in the pastoral office with the customary forms and solemnities," (Webster;) and it may be added, with the idea always connected with it, of the imposition of hands, But the word used here does not necessarily convey this meaning, or imply that Titus was to go through what would now

be called an ordination service. It means to set, place, or constitute; then, to set over any thing, as a steward or other officer (see Mt 24:45, Lk 12:42, Acts 6:3,) though without reference to any particular mode of investment with an office. See the word, ordain, explained in the Acts 1:22, 14:23. Titus was to appoint or set them over the churches, though with what ceremony is now unknown. There is no reason to suppose that he did this except as the result of the choice of the people. Comp. Acts 6:3. Elders. Gr., Presbyters. See the word explained Acts 14:23. These elders, or presbyters, were also called bishops (comp. 1Timm 3:1), for Paul immediately, in describing their qualifications, calls them bishops-- "ordain elders in every city--if any be blameless --FOR a bishop must be blameless," etc. If the elders and bishops in the times of the apostles were of different ranks, this direction would be wholly unmeaning. It would be the same as if the following directions were given to one who was authorized to appoint officers over an army: "Appoint captains over each company, who shall be of good character, and acquainted with military tactics, for a brigadier-General must be of good character, and acquainted with the rules of war." --That the same rank is denoted also by the terms presbyter and bishop here, is further apparent because the qualifications which Paul states as requisite for the "bishop" are not those which pertain to a prelate or a diocesan bishop, but to one who was a pastor of a church, or an evangelist. It is clear, from Tit 1:7, that those whom Titus was to appoint were "bishops;" and yet it is absurd to suppose that the apostle meant prelatical bishops, for no one can believe that such bishops were to be appointed in "every city" of the island. According to all modern notions of Episcopacy, one such bishop would have been enough for such an island as Crete, and indeed it has been not unfrequently maintained that Titus himself was in fact the bishop of that diocese. But if these were not prelates who were to be ordained by Titus, then it is clear that the term "bishop" in the New Testament is given to the Presbyters or elders; that is, to all ministers of the gospel. That usage should never have been departed from. In every city. Crete was anciently celebrated for the number of its cities. In one passage, Homer ascribes to the island an hundred cities, (Il ii. 649 ;) in another, ninety (Od. xix. 174.) It may be presumed that many

of these cities were towns of no very considerable size, and yet it would seem probable that each one was large enough to have a church, and to maintain the gospel. Paul, doubtless, expected that Titus would travel over the whole island, and endeavour to introduce the gospel in every important place.

6 if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

Having faithful children. 1Timm 3:4,6. That is, having a family well-governed, and well-trained in religion. The word here -πιστα-- applied to the children, and rendered faithful, does not necessarily mean that they should be truly pious, but it is descriptive of those who had been well-trained, and were in due subordination. If a man's family were not of his character--if his children were insubordinate, and opposed to religion--if they were decided infidels or scoffers, it would show that there was such a deficiency in the head of the family that he could not be safely entrusted with the government of the church. 1Timm 3:5. It is probably true also, that the preachers at that time would be selected, as far as practicable, from those whose families were all Christians. There might be great impropriety in placing a man over a church, a part of whose family were Jews or Heathens. Not accused of riot. That is, whose children were not accused of riot. This explains what is meant by faithful. The word rendered riot ασωτια is translated excess in Eph 5:18, and riot in Tit 1:6, 1Pet 4:4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, though the word riotous is found in Lk 15:13. See it explained Eph 5:18. The meaning here is, that they should not be justly accused of this; this should not be their character. It would, doubtless, be a good reason now why a man should not be ordained to the ministry that he had a dissipated and disorderly family.

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

For . . . must—The emphasis is on "must." The reason why I said "blameless," is the very idea of a "bishop" (an overseer of the flock; he here substitutes for "presbyter" the term which expresses his duties) involves the necessity for such blamelessness, if he is to have influence over the flock.

steward of God—The greater the master is, the greater the virtues required in His servant [BENGEL], (1Ti 3:15); the Church is God's house, over which the minister is set as a steward (Heb 3:2-6; 1Pe 4:10, 17). Note: ministers are not merely Church officers, but God's stewards; Church government is of divine appointment.

not self-willed—literally, "self-pleasing"; unaccommodating to others; harsh, the opposite of "a lover of hospitality" (Tit 1:6); so Nabal (1Sa 25:1-44); self-loving and imperious; such a spirit would incapacitate him for leading a willing flock, instead of driving. Comp. 2Pet 2:10. The word-- αυθαδης not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, properly, self-complacent; and then, assuming, arrogant, imperious, Rob. Lex. The gist of the offence--the very "head and front"--is that of being self-complacent; a trait of character which of necessity, makes a man imperious, dogmatical, impatient of contradiction, and unyielding. Such a man, evidently, is not fit for the office of a minister of the gospel.

not given to wine—(See on 1Ti 3:3; 1Ti 3:8).

not given to filthy lucre—not making the Gospel a means of gain (1Ti 3:3, 8). In opposition to those "teaching for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit 1:11; 1Ti 6:5; 1Pe 5:2).

8 but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

But a lover of hospitality. 1Timm 3:2. A lover of good men. Marg., "or things." The Greek (φιλαγαθος) means, a lover of good, and may apply to anything that is good. It may refer to good men, as included under the general term good; and there is no more essential qualification of a bishop than this. A man who sustains the office of a minister of the gospel, should love every good object, and be ever ready to promote it; and he should love every good man, no matter in what denomination or country he may be found--no matter what his complexion, and no matter what his rank in life. Comp. Php 4:8. Sober. 1Timm 3:2. Just. Upright in his dealings with all. A minister can do little good who is not. Comp.

Php 4.8. Holy. Pious, or devout. Faithful in all his duties to God. 1Timm 2:8. Temperate. εγκρατη. Having power or control over all his passions. We apply the term, now, with reference to abstinence from intoxicating liquors. In the Scriptures, it incudes not only that, but also much more. It implies control over all our passions and appetites. See it explained Acts 24:25. Comp. 1Cor 7:9 1Cor 9:25; Gal 5:23.

9 holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Holding fast the faithful word. That is, the true doctrines of the gospel. This means, that he is to hold this fast, in opposition to one who would wrest it away, and in opposition to all false teachers, and to all systems of false philosophy. He must be a man who is firm in his belief of the doctrines of the Christian faith, and a man who can be relied on to maintain and defend those doctrines in all circumstances. Comp. 2Thes 2:15. As he hath been taught. Marg., in teaching. Gr., "according to the teaching." The sense is, according to that doctrine as taught by the inspired teachers of religion. It does not mean as he had individually been taught; but he was to hold the faith as it was delivered by those whom the Saviour had appointed to make it known to mankind. The phrase, "the doctrine," or "the teaching," had a sort of technical meaning, denoting the gospel as that which had been communicated to mankind, not by human reason, but by teaching. That he may be able by sound doctrine. By sound teaching, or instruction. 1Timm 1:10; 1Timm 4:16. He was not to dictate, or to denounce; but to seek to convince by the statement of the truth. 2Ti 2:25. Both to exhort and to convince. To persuade them, or to bring them over to your views by kind exhortation, and by the instruction which shall convince. The former method is to be used where men know the truth, but need encouragement to follow it; the latter, where they are ignorant, or are opposed to it. Both exhortation and argument are to be used by the ministers of religion. The gainsayers. Opposers. Literally, those who speak against; that is, against the truth. Rom 10:21.

10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:

A reason is here subjoined by our apostle, why Titus should take such special care to fill the church with able guides, namely, because there was a multitude of false teachers dispersed abroad, and scattered up and down everywhere, particularly the judaizing doctors, those of the circumcision, mentioned Acts 15:1 who would make Christianity nothing more that a supplement to the law of Moses. These he tells Titus must have their mouths stopped, not by force, for Titus had no power of the sword, but by confutation; he must take care to ordain such as might silence them, though not satisfy them. For mark the efficacy of error, and the power of seduction, they subvert whole houses, they make proselytes without number.

Learn hence, That such is the strength of error, and the weakness and unsteadiness of many Christians, that whole households may be subverted by the most gross deceivers. If the apostle's converts were thus easily and universally misled, no wonder if ours be so.

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers. There are many persons who are indisposed to submit to authority, (see the word unruly in Tit 1:6;) many who are vain talkers --who are more given to talk, than to the duties of practical religion, (see the character of "Talkative," in the Pilgrim's Progress;) and many who live to deceive others under the mask of religion. They make great pretensions to piety; they are fluent in argument, and they urge their views in a plausible manner. Specially they of the circumcision. Jews, spoken of here as "of the circumcision" particularly, because they urged the necessity of circumcision in order that men might be saved. Acts 15:1. This proves that there were not a few Jews in the island of Crete.

11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses,
teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

Whose mouths must be stopped. The word here rendered stopped επιστομιζειν--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to check, or curb, as with a bridle; to restrain, or bridle in; and then, to put to silence. It is, of course, implied here, that this was to be done in a proper way, and in accordance with the spirit of the gospel. The apostle gives Timothy no civil power to do it, nor does he direct him to call in the aid of the civil arm. All the

agency which he specifies as proper for this, is that of argument and exhortation. These are the proper means of silencing the advocates of error; and the history of the church shows that the ministers of religion can be safely intrusted with no other. Comp. Ps 32:8,9. Who subvert whole houses. Whole families. Comp. Mt 23:14 2Ti 3:6. That is, they turn them aside from the faith. Teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. For gain. That is, they inculcate such doctrines as will make themselves popular, and as will give them access to the confidence of the people. They make it their first object to acquire influence as ministers of religion, and then abuse that in order to obtain money from the people. This they would doubtless do under many pretences; such as, that it was needful for the support of the gospel, or for the relief of the poor, or, perhaps, for the assistance of distant Christians in persecution. Religion is the most powerful principle that ever governs the mind; and if a man has the control of that, it is no difficult thing to induce men to give up their worldly possessions. In all ages, there have been impostors who have taken advantage of the powerful principle of religion, to obtain money from their deluded followers. No people can be too vigilant in regard to pretended religious teachers; and while it is undoubtedly their duty to contribute liberally for the support of the gospel, and the promotion of every good cause, it is no less their duty to examine with care every proposed object of benevolence, and to watch with an eagle eye those who have the disbursement of the charities of the church. It is very rare that ministers ought to have much to do with disposing of the funds given for benevolent purposes; and when they do, they should in all cases be associated with their lay brethren. See Paley's Horae Paulinae, ch. iv., No. 1, 3, note. Comp. 1Cor 16:3. On the phrase "filthy lucre," 1Timm 3:3.

12 One of themselves, *even* a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians *are* always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

One of themselves. That is, one of the Cretans. The quotation here shows, that Paul had his eye not only on the Jewish teachers there, but on the native Cretans. The meaning is, that, alike in reference to Jewish teachers and native-born Cretans, there was need of the utmost vigilance in the selection of persons for the ministry. They all had well-known traits of character, which made it proper that

no one should be introduced into the ministry without extreme caution. It would seem, also, from the reasoning of Paul here, that the trait of character here referred to pertained not only to the native Cretans, but also to the character of the Jews residing there; for he evidently means that the caution should extend to all who dwelt on the island. Even a prophet of their own. Or, a poet; for the word prophet προφητης-- like the Latin word vates, was often applied to poets, because they were supposed to be inspired of the muses, or to write under the influence of inspiration. So Virgil, Ecl. 9, 32: Et me fecere poetam Pierides ..... me quoque dicunt vatera pastores. Varro, Ling. Lat. 6, 3: Vates poetse dicti sunt. The term prophet was also given by the Greeks to one who was regarded as the interpreter of the gods, or who explained the obscure responses of the oracles. As such an interpreter--as one who thus saw future events, he was called a prophet; and as the poets claimed much of this kind of knowledge, the name was given to them. It was also given to one who was regarded as eminently endowed with wisdom, or who had that kind of sagacity by which the results of present conduct might be foreseen, as if he was under the influence of a kind of inspiration. The word might have been applied to the person here referred to --Epimenides--in this latter sense, because he was eminently endowed with wisdom. He was one of the seven wise men of Greece. He was a contemporary of Solon, and was born at Phaestus, in the island of Crete, B. C. 659, and is said to have reached the age of 157 years. Many marvellous tales are told of him, (see Anthon, Class. Dic.,) which are commonly supposed to be fabulous, and which are to be traced to the invention of the Cretans. The event in his life which is best known is, that he visited Athens, at the request of the inhabitants, to prepare the way by sacrifices for the introduction of the laws of Solon. He was supposed to have intercourse with the gods, and it was presumed that a peculiar sacredness would attend the religious services in which he officiated. On this account, also, as well as because he was a poet, the name prophet may have been given him. Feuds and animosities prevailed at Athens, which it was supposed such a man might allay, and thus prepare them for the reception of the laws of Solon. The Athenians wished to reward him with wealth and public honours; but he refused to accept of any remuneration, and only

demanded a branch of the sacred olive tree, and a decree of perpetual friendship between Athens and his native city. After his death, divine honours were paid to him by the Cretans. He wrote a poem on the Argonantic expedition, and other poems, which are now entirely lost. The quotation here is supposed to be made from a treatise on oracles and responses, which is also lost. The Cretans are always liars. This character of the Cretans is abundantly sustained by the examples adduced by Wetstein. To be a Cretan, became synonymous with being a liar, in the same way as to be a Corinthian, became synonymous with living a licentious life. Compare Introduction to 1Cor 1:1. Thus the scholiast says, παροιμιαεστιτοκρητιζεινεπιτουψευδεσθαι to act the Cretan, is a proverb for to lie. The particular reason why they had this character abroad, rather than other people, is unknown. Bishop Warburton supposes that they acquired it by claiming to have among them the tomb of Jupiter, and by maintaining that all the gods, like Jupiter, were only mortals who had been raised to divine honours. Thus the Greeks maintained that they always proclaimed a false-hood by asserting this opinion. But their reputation for falsehood seems to have arisen from some deeper cause than this, and to have pertained to their general moral character. They were only more eminent in what was common among the ancient heathen, and what is almost universal among the heathen now. Comp. Eph 4:25. Evil beasts. In their character, beasts or brutes of a ferocious or malignant kind. This would imply, that there was a great want of civilization, and that their want of refinement was accompanied with what commonly exists in that condition--the unrestrained indulgence of wild and ferocious passions. See examples of the same manner of speaking of barbarous and malicious men in Wetstein. Slow bellies. Mere gormandizers. Two vices seem here to be attributed to them, which indeed commonly go together--gluttony and sloth. An industrious man will not be likely to be a gormandizer, and a gormandizer will not often be an industrious man. The mind of the poet, in this, seems to have conceived of them first as an indolent, worthless people; and then immediately to have recurred to the cause--that they were a race of gluttons: a people whose only concern was the stomach. Comp. Php 3:19. On the connexion between gluttony and sloth, see the examples in

Wetstein. Seldom have more undesirable, and, in some respects, incongruous qualities, been grouped together in describing any people. They were false to a proverb, which was, indeed, consistent enough with their being ferocious--though ferocious and wild nations are sometimes faithful to their word; but they were, at the same time, ferocious and lazy, fierce and gluttonous--qualities which are not often found together. In some respects, therefore, they surpassed the common depravity of human nature, and blended in themselves ignoble properties which, among the worst people, are usually found existing alone. To mingle apparently contradictory qualities of wickedness in the same individual or people, is the height of depravity; as to blend in the same mind apparently inconsistent traits of virtuous character, or those which exist commonly, in their highest perfection, only alone, is the highest virtue.

13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may
be sound in the faith;

This witness is true. That is, this testimony, long before borne by one of their own number, was true when the apostle wrote to Titus. The fact that this was the general character of the people, was a reason why he should be on his guard in introducing men into the ministry, and in the arrangement of affairs pertaining to the church. That it was true, see proofs in Wetstein. Wherefore rebuke them. 2Ti 4:2. Sharply. αποτομως--cuttingly, severely--from αποτεμνω, to cut off. The word is used here in the sense of severity, meaning that the reproof should be such as would be understood, and would show them plainly the wickedness of such traits of character, he was not to be mealy-mouthed, but he was to call things by their right names, and not to spare their faults. When men know that they are doing wrong, we should tell them so in few words; if they do not know it, it is necessary to teach them, in order to convince them of their error. That they may be sound in the faith. That they may not allow the prevailing vices to corrupt their views of religion. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, etc. 1Timm 1:4. And commandments of men that turn from the truth. Mt 15:3, Mt 15:4-6.

14 not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that
turn from the truth.

15 Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Unto the pure all things are pure. Rom 14:14; Rom 14:20. There is probably an allusion here to the distinctions made in respect to meats and drinks among the Jews. Some articles of food were regarded as "clean," or allowed to be eaten; and some as "unclean," or forbidden. Paul says, that those distinctions ceased under the Christian dispensation, and that to those who had a conscience not easily troubled by nice and delicate questions about ceremonial observances, all kinds of food might be regarded as lawful and proper. Comp. 1Timm 4:4, 1Timm 4:5. If a man habitually maintains a good conscience in the sight of God, it will be accepted of him whether he do or do not abstain from certain kinds of food. Comp. Col 2:16. This passage, therefore, should not be interpreted as proving that all things are right and lawful for a Christian, or that whatever he may choose to do will be regarded as pure, but as primarily referring to distinctions in food, and meaning that there was no sanctity in eating one kind of food, and no sin in another, but that the mind was equally pure whatever was eaten. The phrase has a proverbial cast, though I know not that it was so used. The principle of the declaration is, that a pure mind--a truly pious mind will not regard the distinctions of food and drink; of festivals, rites, ceremonies, and days, as necessary to be observed in order to promote its purity. The conscience is not to be burdened and enslaved by these things, but is to be controlled only by the moral laws which God has ordained. But there may be a somewhat higher application of the words-- that every ordinance of religion; every command of God; every event that occurs in Divine Providence, tends to promote the holiness of one who is of pure heart. He can see a sanctifying tendency in everything, and can derive from all that is commanded, and all that occurs, the means of making the heart more holy. While a depraved mind will turn every such thing to a pernicious use, and make it the means of augmenting its malignity and corruption, to the pure mind it will be the means of increasing its confidence in God, and of making itself more holy. To such a mind everything may become a means of grace. But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure. Everything

is made the means of increasing their depravity. No matter what ordinances of religion they observe; what distinctions of meats, or drinks, or days they regard, and what events of Providence occur, all are the occasion of augmented depravity. Such distinctions in food they make the means of fostering their pride and producing self-righteousness; the mercies of God they abuse to pamper their own lusts, and the afflictive events of Divine Providence they make the occasion of murmuring and rebellion. Naturally corrupt at heart, no ordinances of religion, and no events of Providence, make them any better, but all tend to deepen their depravity. A sentiment similar to this is found in the classic writers. Thus Seneca, Epis. 98. Malus animus omnia in malum vertit, etiam quse specie optimi venerunt. So again (de Beneficiis v. 12,) Quemadmodum stomachus morbo vitiatus, et colliques bilem, quoscunque acceperit cibos mutat--ita animus ceecus quicquid illi commiseris, id onus suum, et perniciem facit.

But even their mind and conscience is defiled. It is not a mere external defilement--a thing which they so much dread--but a much worse kind of pollution, that which extends to the soul and the conscience. Everything which they do tends to corrupt the inner man more and more, and to make them really more polluted and abominable in the sight of God. The wicked, while they remain impenitent, are constantly becoming worse and worse. They make everything the means of increasing their depravity, and even those things which seem to pertain only to outward observances, are made the occasion of the deeper corruption of the heart.

Here note, The honourable title which a gracious and merciful God puts upon good men, notwithstanding they have much impurity and sin inhering in them, and many sinful weaknesses and infirmities cleaving to them, yet God calls them pure; Unto the pure, &c. They are now initially so, and shall ere long be perfectly so.
Note, 2. A privilege purchased for them by the blood of Christ, and that is the lawful liberty and use of meats, &c. under the gospel, which were prohibited by, and forbidden under, the ceremonial law: Unto the pure, all things are now pure.

Mark, he doth not say, to the defiled all things are unclean, but, nothing is pure; they pollute all they touch. To an unsanctified man nothing is sanctified; whatever he does is unclean, either in the matter, in the manner, or in the end, of his doing it; and the reason follows, because their mind and conscience are defiled. No wonder the streams are polluted, when the fountains are poisoned things lawful and good they abuse and turn to sin; they suck poison out of that from which others draw sweetness; their mind and conscience, those leading faculties, being defiled, a taint is communicated to all they do. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, Pr 15:8. And Pr 21:4, The ploughing of the wicked is sin, not in itself, but as done by him; the carnality of the mind and heart mars all the labour of the hand. The mind and conscience are defiled, partly by blindness, partly by stupidity and senselessness.

all things—external, "are pure" in themselves; the distinction of pure and impure is not in the things, but in the disposition of him who uses them; in opposition to "the commandments of men" (Tit 1:14), which forbade certain things as if impure intrinsically. "To the pure" inwardly, that is, those purified in heart by faith (Ac 15:9; Ro 14:20; 1Ti 4:3), all outward things are pure; all are open to, their use. Sin alone touches and defiles the soul (Mt 23:26; Lu 11:41). Their moral consciousness of the conformity or discrepancy between their motives and acts on the one hand, and God's law on the other. A conscience and a mind defiled are represented as the source of the errors opposed in the Pastoral Epistles (1Ti 1:19; 3:9; 6:5).

16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

They profess that they know God. That is, the Jewish teachers particularly, who are referred to in Tit 1:14. All those persons were professors of religion, and claimed that they had a peculiar knowledge of God. But in works they deny him. Their conduct is such as to show that they have no real acquaintance with him. Being abominable. In their conduct. The word here used--βδελυκτοι--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means that which is detestable, or to be held in abhorrence. And disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Marg., void of

judgment. On the word here used-- αδοκιμος, Rom 1:28; 2Cor 13:5. It means here, that in reference to everything that was good, their conduct was such that it could not be approved, or deserved disapprobation. It was for this reason; from the character of the people of the island of Crete, and of those who claimed to be teachers there enforcing the obligation of the Mosaic law, that it was so important for Titus to exercise special care in introducing men into the ministry, and in completing the arrangements contemplated in the organization of the churches there. Yet, is this character confined to them? Are there none now who profess that they know God, but in works deny him; whose conduct is such that it ought to be abhorred; who are disobedient to the plain commands of God, and whose character in respect to all that pertains to true piety, is to be disapproved by the truly pious, and will be by God at the last day? Alas! taking the church at large, there are many such; and the fact that there are such persons, is the grand hinderance to the triumphs of religion on the earth. "The way to heaven is blocked up by dead professors of religion."

Behold here the dismal character of many hypocritical persons in the Jewish church. They professed the knowledge of God, the true God, but in their works, in their actions, they denied him, and so became abominable both to God and man, disobedient to the law, and averse to every good work.

Here learn, 1. That hypocrites are generally great professors, they profess great knowledge of God, and great zeal for him.
2. That to deny God is a very heinous sin, and an abominable wickedness; (1Ti 5:8; 2Ti 2:12; 3:5).

There is a twofold denial of God, first, in words expressly and openly; secondly, in practice, closely and consequentially. They, themselves, are abominable—though laying so much stress on the contracting of abomination from outward things (compare Le 11:10-13; Ro 2:22). They are reprobate—rejected as worthless when tested (see on Ro 1:28; 1Co 9:27; 2Ti 3:8).

They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him. There may be at once a professing of God, and a denial of him: many a man's practice speaks aloud, that there is no God, when he makes a fair confession and profession of him with his mouth and tongue.

Learn, 3. That no sorts of persons are so odious to God, and abominable in his sight, as those who make a profession of his holy name and truth, but walk contrary in their lives to their profession.

But are not these judaizers (as you call them) men who profess religion, and speak well of God, and Christ, and righteousness of life, and should they be so severely taxed? Answer, They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, Tit 1:16. There are many who in word and tongue profess to know God, and yet in their lives and conversations deny and reject him; their practice is a contradiction to their profession. They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness, Eze 33:31. Being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. The apostle, instructing Titus to rebuke sharply, does himself rebuke sharply; he gives them very hard words, yet doubtless no harder than their case warranted and their need required. Being abominable--bdelyktoi, deserving that God and good men should turn away their eyes from them as nauseous and offensive. And disobedient--apeitheis, unpersuadable and unbelieving. They might do divers things; but it was not the obedience of faith, nor what was commanded, or short of the command. To every good work reprobate, without skill or judgment to do any thing aright. See the miserable condition of hypocrites, such as have a form of godliness, but without the power; yet let us not be so ready to fix this charge on others as careful that it agree not to ourselves, that there be not in us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but that we be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with

the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God, Php 1:10,11.

Titus-2

The Teaching of Sound Doctrine

1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:
2 that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

That the aged men. All aged men--for there is no reason to suppose that the apostle refers particularly to those who were in office, or who were technically elders, or presbyters. If he had, he would have used the common word-- πρεσβυτερος presbyter (see Mt 15:2, 16:21, 21:23, 26:3,47,57,59, 1Timm 5:1,17,19, Tit 1:5 Jas 5:14, 1Pet 5:1,) instead of the unusual word-- πρεσβυτης an old or aged man--a word which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in Lk 1:18, "For I am an old man," and Phm 1:9, "being such an one as Paul the aged." It is in no instance applied to an office. Besides, the instructions which Titus was to give to such men was not that which peculiarly pertained to elders as officers in the church, but to all old men. The idea is, that he was to adapt his instructions to the peculiar character of different classes of his hearers. The aged needed special instructions, and so did the young. Be sober. Marg., vigilant. See the word explained 1Timm 3:2, where it is rendered vigilant. In 1Timm 3:11, the same word is rendered sober. Grave. Serious. 1Timm 3:8. Compare Php 4:8, where the same word is rendered honest. Temperate. σωφρονας. Rather, prudent, or sober-minded. See it explained 1Timm 3:2, where it is rendered sober. Also, Tit 1:8. Sound in faith. 1Timm 1:10; Tit 1:13. In charity. In love. 1Cor 13:1, seq. The meaning is, that an old man should evince love for all, especially for those who are good. He should have overcome, at his time of life, all the fiery, impetuous, envious, wrathful passions of his early years, and his mind should be subdued into sweet benevolence to all mankind. In patience. In the infirmities of old age--in the trials resulting from the loss of the friends of their early years --in their loneliness in the world, they should show that the effect of all God's dealings with them has been

to produce patience. The aged should submit to the trials of their advanced years, also, with resignation--for they will soon be over. A few more sighs, and they will sigh no more; a little longer bearing up under their infirmities, and they will renew their youth before the throne of God.

3 The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

The aged women likewise. Not only those who may have the office of deaconnesses, but all aged females. That they be in behaviour as becometh holiness. Marg., holy women. The Greek word is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It means appropriate to a sacred place or person, or becoming to religion. Their conduct should be such as the gospel requires. Not false accusers. Marg., make-bates. Gr., διαβολους, the word commonly applied to the devil--as the accuser. See it explained 1Timm 3:11, where it is rendered slanderers. Not given to much wine. 1Timm 3:3. Teachers of good things. That is, instructing the younger--whether their own children, or whether they sustain the office of deaconess, and are appointed to give instruction to younger females. Comp. 1Timm 5:2-6.

4 that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

That they may teach the young women to be sober. Marg., wise --a word similar to that which in Tit 2:2 is rendered temperate, and in 1Timm 3:2, sober. The meaning is, that they should instruct them to have their desires and passions well regulated, or under proper control. To love their husbands, φιλανδρους. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. In Eph 5:25, Paul directs husbands to love their wives, and in Eph 5:33, the wife to reverence her husband, and here he says that it should be one of the first duties enjoined on the wife that she should love her husband. All happiness in the marriage relation is based on mutual love. When that departs, happiness departs. No wealth or splendour in a dwelling--no gorgeousness of equipage or apparel-- no magnificence of entertainment or sweetness of music--and no forms of courtesy and politeness, can be a compensation for the want of affection. Mutual love between a husband and wife will diffuse comfort through the

obscurest cottage of poverty; the want of it cannot be supplied by all that can be furnished in the palaces of the great. To love their children. Nature prompts to this, and yet there are those so depraved that they have no maternal affection. Rom 1:31. Religion reproduces natural affection when sin has weakened or destroyed it, and it is the design of Christianity to recover and invigorate all the lost or weakened sensibilities of our nature.

To be discreet. The same word rendered in Tit 2:2, temperate, and explained in Tit 2:4. Chaste. Pure--in heart, and in life. Keepers at home. That is, characteristically attentive to their domestic concerns, or to their duties in their families. A similar injunction is found in the precepts of the Pythagoreans-- τανγαρ γυναικαδειοικουρενκαιενδονμενεν. See Creuzer's Symbolik, iii. 120. This does not mean, of course, that they are never to go abroad, but they are not to neglect their domestic affairs; they are not to be better known abroad than at home; they are not to omit their own duties, and become "busy-bodies" in the concerns of others. Religion is the patron of the domestic virtues, and regards the appropriate duties in a family as those most intimately connected with its own progress in the world. It looks benignly on all which makes home a place of contentment, intelligence, and peace. It does not flourish when domestic duties are neglected; and whatever may be done abroad, or whatever self-denial and zeal in the cause of religion may be evinced there, or whatever call there may be for the labours of Christians there, or however much good may be actually done abroad, religion has gained nothing, on the whole, if, in order to secure these things, the duties of a wife and mother at home have been disregarded. Our first duty is at home, and all other duties will be well performed just in proportion as that is. Good. In all respects, and in all relations.

To a wife, a mother, a sister, there can be no higher characteristic ascribed, than to say that she is good. What other trait of mind will enable her better to perform her appropriate duties of life? What other will make her more like her Saviour? Obedient to their own husbands. Eph 5:22, seq. Col 3:18. That the word of God be not blasphemed. That the gospel may not be injuriously spoken of (Mt

9:3,) on account of the inconsistent lives of those who profess to be influenced by it. The idea is, that religion ought to produce the virtues here spoken of, and that when it does not, it will be reproached as being of no value.

5 *to be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

6 Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded.

Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded. Marg., discreet. On the meaning of the Greek word used here (σωφρονειν,) Tit 2:2; Tit 2:4. The idea is, that they should be entreated to be prudent, discreet, serious in their deportment; to get the mastery over their passions and appetites; to control the propensities to which youth are subject; and that there should be such self-government, under the influence of religion, as to avoid excess in everything. A well-governed mind, superior to the indulgence of those passions to which the young are prone, will express the meaning of the word here. They should be "steady in their behaviour, superior to sensual temptations, and constant in the exercise of every part of self-government." Doddridge. The reasons for this are obvious.

(1.) The hopes of the church depend much on them.

(2.) A young man who cannot govern himself, gives little promise of being useful or happy.

(3.) Indulgence in the propensities to which young men are prone, will, sooner or later, bring ruin to the body and the soul.

(4.) They are just at the period of life when they are exposed to peculiar temptations, and when they need to exercise a peculiar guardianship over their own conduct.

(5.) Like others, they may soon die; and they should be habitually in such a frame of mind, as to be prepared to stand before God. A young man who feels that he may be soon in the eternal world, cannot but be sensible of the propriety of having a serious mind, and of living and acting as in the immediate presence of his Maker and Judge.

7 In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works. Not merely teaching others, but showing them by example how they ought to live. On the word rendered pattern (τυπον, type,) see Heb 8:6; 1Cor 10:6; Php 3:17. In doctrine. In your manner of teaching. 1Timm 4:16. Showing uncorruptness. The word here used does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means, here, the same as purity--that which is not erroneous, and which does not tend to corrupt or vitiate the morals of others, or to endanger their salvation. Everything in his teaching was to be such as to make men purer and better. Gravity. See this word explained 1Timm 2:2, where it is rendered honesty. Comp. 1Timm 3:4, where it is rendered gravity. It does not elsewhere occur. See the use of the adjective, however, in Php 4:8, 1Timm 3:8,11, Tit 2:2 The word properly means venerableness; then, whatever will insure respect, in character, opinions, deportment. The sense here is, that the manner in which a preacher delivers his message, should be such as to command respect, he should evince good sense, undoubted piety, an acquaintance with his subject, simplicity, seriousness, and earnestness, in his manner. Sincerity. See this word (αφθαρσια) explained Eph 6:24. It is rendered immortality in Rom 2:7, 2Ti 1:10; incorruption, in 1Cor 15:42,50,53,54; and sincerity, Eph 6:24, and in the place before us. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means incorruption, incapacity of decay; and, therefore, would be here synonymous with purity. It should be said, however, that it is wanting in many Mss., and is rejected in the later editions of the New Testament by Wetstein, Tittman, and Hahn.

Sound speech. 1Timm 1:10. He was to use language that would be spiritually healthful (υγιη;) that is, true, pure, uncorrupted.--This word, and its correlatives, is used in this sense, in the New Testament, only by the apostle Paul. It is commonly applied to the body, meaning that which is healthful, or whole. See Lk 5:31, 6:10, 7:10, 15:27, Mt 12:13, 15:31, Mk 3:5, 5:34 Jn 5:4,6,9,11,14,15, 7:23, Acts 4:10, 3Jn 1:2. For Paul's use of the word, see 1Timm 1:10, 6:3, 2Ti 1:13, 4:3, Tit 1:9,13, 2:1,2,8. It does not elsewhere occur. That cannot be condemned. Such as cannot be shown to be weak, or

unsound; such that no one could find fault with it, or such as an adversary could not take hold of and blame. This direction would imply purity and seriousness of language, solidity of argument, and truth in the doctrines which he maintained.

St. Paul having directed Titus what doctrine to preach, comes now to instruct him what example to lead, in all things show thyself a pattern of good works; as if he had said, In all the good which thou exhortest thy hearers to, be an eminent pattern of it thyself; that they may see that visibly in thy life, which thou pressest upon them by thy preaching. By piety and good works second thy doctrine; there must be a sweet harmony between a minister's doctrine and his conversation; otherwise he pulls down faster than he builds up: an heterodox conversation will carry an orthodox preacher to hell.
He closes this admonition to Titus concerning preaching, with this solemn charge, namely, that his doctrine be sound and profitable, sincere without mixture, grave without levity, sound words that can never be confuted by gainsayers, which must be expected; but happy will you be if they can have nothing justly to charge your doctrine or conversation with.

Learn hence, that the ministers of God have ever had, and must always expect, some that will withstand, oppose, and gainsay them, as long as there is a devil in the world: and so long as the ministers of God endeavour to batter down the walls of his kingdom, he will raise up storms about their ears.

Learn, 2. That it is the duty, and must be the care and endeavour, of all the ministers of God, to oblige themselves to such an exemplary piety of conversation, as may stop the mouth of slander. That the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say against them.

8 sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the
contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.
9 *Exhort* servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to
please *them* well in all things; not answering again;

Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters. See this explained Eph 6:5, seq., 1Timm 6:1-4.

Not answering again. Marg., gainsaying. Not contradicting, or not disobeying. They were to do what the master required, if it did not interfere with the rights of conscience, without attempting to argue the matter--without disputing with the master--and without advancing their own opinions. Where this relation exists, no one can doubt that this is a proper frame of mind for a servant. It may be observed, however, that all that is here said would be equally appropriate, whether the servitude was voluntary or involuntary. A man who becomes voluntarily a servant, binds himself to obey his master cheerfully and quietly, without gainsaying, and without attempting to reason the matter with him, or propounding his own opinions, even though they may be much wiser than those of his employer, he makes a contract to obey his master, not to reason with him, or to instruct him.

Not purloining. Not to appropriate to themselves what belongs to their masters. The word purloin means, literally, to take or carry away for one's self; and would be applied to an appropriation to one's self of what pertained to a common stock, or what belonged to one in whose employ we are--as the embezzlement of public funds. Here it means that the servant was not to apply to his own use what belonged to his master; that is, was not to pilfer --a vice to which, as all know, servants, and especially slaves, are particularly exposed. See the word explained Acts 5:2. But showing all good fidelity. In labouring, and in taking care of the property intrusted to them. That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. That they may show the fair influence of religion on them, in all respects, making them industrious, honest, kind, and obedient. They were to show that the effect of the religion which they professed was to make them better fitted to discharge tile duties of their station in life, however humble; or that its influence on them was desirable in every respect. In this way, they might hope also that the minds of their masters might be reached, and that they might be brought to respect and love the gospel. Learn, hence,

(1.) that one in the most humble walk of life may so live as to be an ornament to religion, as well as one favoured with more advantages.

(2.) That servants may do much good, by so living as to show to all around them that there is a reality in the gospel, and to lead others to love it.

(3.) If, in this situation of life, it is a duty so to live as to adorn religion, it cannot be less so in more elevated situations. A master should feel the obligation not to be surpassed in religious character by his servant.

10 not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn
the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.
11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all
men,

That bringeth salvation. Marg., to all men, hath appeared. That is, in the margin, "the grace which brings salvation to all men has been revealed." The marginal reading is most in accordance with the Greek, though it will bear either construction. If that which is in the text be adopted, it means that the plan of salvation has been revealed to all classes of men; that is, that it is announced or revealed to all the race that they may be saved. Comp. Col 1:23. If the other rendering be adopted, it means that that plan was fitted to secure the salvation of all men; that none were excluded from the offer; that provision had been made for all, and all might come and be saved. Whichever interpretation be adopted, the sense here will not be essentially varied. It is, that the gospel was adapted to man as man, and therefore might include servants as well as masters; subjects, as well as kings; the poor, as well as the rich; the ignorant, as well as the learned. See 1Timm 2:1,2; Acts 17:26.

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should
live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
13 looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the
great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Teaching us. That is the "grace of God" so teaches us; or that system of religion which is a manifestation of the grace of God, inculcates the great and important duties which Paul proceeds to state. That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. "That by denying ourselves of these, or refusing to practise them, we should lead a holy life." The word ungodliness, here means all that would be included under the word impiety; that is, all failure in the performance of our proper

duties towards God. Rom 1:18. The phrase "worldly lusts," refers to all improper desires pertaining to this life--the desire of wealth, pleasure, honour, sensual indulgence. It refers to such passions as the men of this world are prone to, and would include all those things which cannot be indulged in with a proper reference to the world to come. The gross passions would be of course included, and all those more re- fined pleasures also which constitute the characteristic and peculiar enjoyments of those who do not live unto God. We should live soberly. See the word soberly (σωφρονως) explained Tit 2:2, Tit 2:4. It means that we should exercise a due restraint on our passions and propensities. Righteously. Justly. This refers to the proper performance of our duties to our fellowmen; and it means that religion teaches us to perform those duties with fidelity, according to all our relations in life; to all our promises and contracts; to our fellow-citizens and neighbours; to the poor, and needy, and ignorant, and oppressed; and to all those who are providentially placed in our way who need our kind offices. Justice to them would lead us to act as we would wish that they would towards us. And godly. Piously; that is, in the faithful performance of our duties to God. We have here, then, an epitome of all that religion requires:

(1.) Our duty to ourselves--included in the word "soberly," and requiring a suitable control over our evil propensities and passions;

(2.) our duty to our fellow-men in all the relations we sustain in life; and

(3.) our duty to God--evinced in what will be properly regarded as a pious life. He that does these things, meets all the responsibilities of his condition and relations; and the Christian system, requiring the faithful performance of these duties, shows how admirably it is adapted to man.

Observe here, 1. The character given of that reward which the gospel promises to them that live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present world; this is described,

1. By its futurity, it is hope, something expected, and to come;

2. By its transcendency, it is a blessed hope.
Learn, That the Christian's hope (for the good things hoped for) is laid up, not in this, but in the other world; because this world, and this present state, is not capable of that happiness which the Christian hopes for. It is too great, it is too good, for earth, it is laid up in heaven.

Observe, 2. The time and season when this glorious reward and blessed hope shall be dispensed reward and blessed hope shall be dispensed and given forth unto the godly, and that is, at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

14 who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity,
and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Who gave himself for us. Eph 5:2. That he might redeem us from all iniquity. The word here rendered redeem λυτροω, occurs only here and in Lk 24:21, 1Pet 1:18. The noun, however-- λυτρον, lutron, occurs in Mt 20:28, and Mk 10:45, where it is rendered ransom. See it explained Mt 20:28. It is here said that the object of his giving himself was to save his people from all iniquity. See this explained Mt 1:21. And purify unto himself.

(1.) Purify them, or make them holy. This is the first and leading object. Heb 9:14.

(2.) Unto himself: that is, they are no longer to be regarded as their own, but as redeemed for his own service, and for the promotion of his glory. 1Cor 6:19, 1Cor 6:20. A peculiar people, 1Pet 2:9. The word here used (περιουσιος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, having abundance; and then one's own, what is special, or peculiar, (Rob. Lex.;) and here means that they were to be regarded as belonging to the Lord Jesus. It does not mean, as the word would seem to imply--and as is undoubtedly true--that they are to be a peculiar people in the sense that they are to be unlike others, or to have views and principles peculiar to themselves; but that they belong to the "Saviour" in contradistinction from belonging to themselves--"peculiar," or his own in the sense that a man's property is his own, and does not belong to others. This

passage, therefore, should not be used to prove that Christians should be unlike others in their manner of living, but that they belong to Christ as his redeemed people. From that it may indeed be inferred that they should be unlike others, but that is not the direct teaching of the passage. Zealous of good works. As the result of their redemption; that is, this is one object of their having been redeemed. Eph 2:10.

15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Titus-3

Be Careful to Maintain Good Works

1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

2 to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.

Observe here, that in those early days of Christianity, great scandal was brought upon religion by the undutiful carriage of servants and subjects towards their masters and magistrates; and this upon a false notion of Christian liberty, advanced and propagated by the false apostles, judaizing teachers, and gnostic libertines; whereupon he requires Titus to put Christians in mind of their duty in that particular, and to inculcate it earnestly upon them, that the Christian religion might not be slandered upon this account. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers.

Learn hence, that the duty of subjection to governors and governments, and of obedience to magistrates and rulers, is of very great importance, and ought to be enforced and frequently inculcated upon the people by the ministers of God; because by nature all men desire liberty, and to cast off the yoke of God. Every one would rule and govern, although the duty of subjection be much the easier duty.

2. From St. Paul's pressing Titus to preach up the doctrine of obedience and subjection to governors and government, learn, That there is no such way and method to bring the world to live regularly

under government, like planting the gospel among them, and making them subject to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calumny and evil-speaking has been a reigning vice in all ages, and a greater guilt is contracted by it than men apprehend; every man ought to be as just to his neighbour's reputation as his own:
if what we report of another we know to be false, it is downright lying;
if what we report of others we believe to be false, it is slander;
if what evil we report of others be really true, and we know it to be so, yet it is defamation, and contrary to that charity and goodness which Christianity requires;
for to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without necessity, is certainly a sin, and included in this apostolic prohibition: to think and speak evil of others, is not only a bad thing, but a sign of a bad man; and in many cases it is as great charity to conceal an evil we hear of our neighbour, as it is to relieve him in his distress.
The next exhortation is, to be no brawlers; in the original, no fighters; that is, neither with tongue nor hand, but meek and gentle, putting up a double wrong, rather than revenge a single injury, using all meekness towards all men. Meekness pacifies wrath, and conquers animosity to a wonder, making him tame and gentle, who by opposition is furious and implacable: the hardest flint is sooner broken upon a pillow or cushion that gently yieldeth, than upon a bar of iron that furiously resisteth

To speak evil of no man. Gr., "to blaspheme (βλασφημειν, compare Mt 9:3) no one." Doddridge renders it, "Calumniate no one." The idea is, that we are not to slander, revile, or defame any one. We are not to say anything to any one, or of any one, which will do him injury. We are never to utter anything which we know to be false about him, or to give such a colouring to his words or conduct as to do him wrong in any way. We should always so speak to him and of him in such a way that he will have no reason to complain that he is an injured man. It may be necessary, when we are called to state what we know of his character, to say things which are not at all in his favour, or things which he has said or done that were wrong; but

(1.) we should never do this for the purpose of doing him injury, or so as to find a pleasure in it; and

(2.) where it is necessary to make the statement, it should be so as to do him no injustice. We should give no improper colouring. We should exaggerate no circumstance. We should never attempt to express ourselves about his motives, or charge on him bad motives--for we know not what his motives were. We should state every palliating circumstance of which we have knowledge, and do entire justice to it. We should not make the bad traits of his character prominent, and pass over all that is good. In a word, we should show that we would rather find him to be a good man than a bad man--even if the result should be that we had been mistaken in our opinions. It is better that we should have been mistaken, than that he should be a bad man.

3 For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another.

For we ourselves. We who are Christians. There is no reason for supposing, as Benson does, that this is to be understood as confined to Paul himself. There are some things mentioned here which were not probably true of him before his conversion, and the connexion does not require us to suppose that he referred particularly to himself. He is stating a reason why those to whom Titus was appointed to preach should be urged to lead holy lives, and especially to manifest a spirit of order, peace, kindness, and due subordination to law. In enforcing this, he says, that those who were now Christians had formerly been wicked, disorderly, and sensual, but that under the influence of the gospel, they had been induced to lead better lives. The same gospel which had been effectual in their case, might be in others. To others it would be an encouragement to show that there were cases in which the gospel had been thus efficacious, and those who were appointed to preach it might refer to their own example as a reason why others should be persuaded to lead holy lives. In preaching to others, also, they were not to be proud or arrogant. They were to remember that they were formerly in the same condition with those whom they addressed, and whom they exhorted to reformation.

They were not to forget that what they had that was superior to others they owed to the grace of God, and not to any native goodness. He will exhort the wicked to repentance most effectually who remembers that his own former life was wicked; he will evince most of the proper spirit in doing it who has the deepest sense of the errors and folly of his own past ways. Foolish. See this word explained in Lk 24:26, where it is rendered fools. Comp. Rom 1:14, where it is rendered unwise; and Gal 3:1,3, 1Timm 6:9, where it is rendered foolish. Disobedient. To law, to parents, to civil authority, to God. This is the natural character of the human heart. See Lk 1:17, Rom 1:30 2Ti 3:2, Tit 1:16, where the same word occurs. Deceived. By the great enemy, by false teachers, by our own hearts, and by the flattery of others. It is a characteristic of man by nature that he sees nothing in its true light, but walks along amidst constant, though changing and very beautiful illusions. Comp. Mt 24:4,6,11; 2Ti 3:13, 1Pet 2:25, Rev 12:9, 18:23, where the same word occurs. See also Rev 20:3,8,10, where the same word is applied to that great deceiver who has led the world astray. Every one who is converted feels, and is ready to confess, that before conversion he was deceived as to the comparative value of things, as to the enjoyment which he expected to find in scenes of pleasure and riot, and often in what seemed to him well-formed plans. Serving divers lusts and pleasures. Indulging in the various corrupt passions and propensities of the soul. We were so under their influence that it might be said we were their servants, or were slaves to them (δουλευοντες;) that is, we implicitly obeyed them. Rom 6:16,17. Living in malice. Gr., in evil ενκακια; that is, in all kinds of evil. Rom 1:29, where the word is rendered maliciousness. And envy. Displeasure at the happiness and prosperity of others. Rom 1:29. Hateful. στυγητοι. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, that our conduct was such as to be worthy of the hatred of others. Of whom, before his conversion, is not this true? And hating one another. There was no brotherly love; no true affection for others. There was ill-will felt in the heart, and it was evinced in the life. This is an apt description of the state of the heathen world before the gospel shines on it, and it may be regarded as the characteristic of all men before conversion. They have no true love for one another, such as they ought to cherish, and they are liable constantly to give indulgence to feelings which

evince hatred. In contentions, and strifes, and litigations, and wars, this feeling is constantly breaking out. All this is suggested here as a reason why Christians should now be gentle and mild toward those who are evil. Let us remember what we were, and we shall not be disposed to treat others harshly. When a Christian is tempted to unkind thoughts or words towards others, nothing is more appropriate for him than to reflect on his own past life.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

But after that. Gr., when-- οτε. The meaning is, that "when the love of God was manifested in the plan of salvation, he saved us from this state by our being washed and purified." The idea is not, that "the love of God appeared" after we had sinned in this way; but that when his mercy was thus displayed we were converted from our sins, and made pure in his sight. The kindness. ηχρηστοτης, --the goodness, or the benignity. The word is rendered goodness and good in Rom 2:4; 3:12; Rom 11:22, thrice; kindness, 2Cor 6:6, Eph 2:7, Col 3:12; Tit 3:4; and gentleness, Gal 5:22. The act of redeeming us was one of great kindness, or goodness. And love of God. Marg., pity. The Greek word is φιλανθρωπια-- philanthropy--the love of man. The plan of salvation was founded on love to man, and was the highest expression of that love. Jn 3:16. The Greek of this verse is, "When the kindness and love of God our Saviour to man was manifested, he saved us," (Tit 3:5,) to wit, from those sins of which we had before been guilty.

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Not by works of righteousness which we have done. The plan was not based on our own good works, nor are our own good works now the cause of our salvation. If men could have been saved by their own good works, there would have been no need of salvation by the Redeemer; if our own deeds were now the basis of our title to eternal life, the work of Christ would be equally unnecessary. It is a great and fundamental principle of the gospel that the good works of men come in for no share in the justification of the soul. They are in no sense a consideration on account of which God pardons a man, and receives him to favour. The only basis of justification is the merit of

the Lord Jesus Christ; and in the matter of justification before God, all the race is on a level. Eph 2:8,9. But according to his mercy.

(1.) It had its origin in mercy;

(2.) it is by mere mercy or compassion, and not by justice;

(3.) it is an expression of great mercy; and

(4.) it is now in fact conferred only by mercy. Whatever we have done or can do, when we come to receive salvation from the hand of God, there is no other element which enters into it but mercy. It is not because our deeds deserve it; it is not because we have by repentance and faith wrought ourselves into such a state of mind that we can claim it; but, after all our tears, and sighs, and prayers, and good deeds, it is a mere favour. Even then God might justly withhold it if he chose, and no blame would be attached to him if he should suffer us to sink down to ruin. He saved us. That is, he began that salvation in us which is to be completed in heaven. A, man who is already renewed and pardoned may be spoken of as saved--for

(1.) the work of salvation is begun, and

(2.) when begun it will certainly be completed. Php 1:6. By the washing of regeneration. In order to a correct understanding of this important passage, it is necessary to ascertain whether the phrase here used refers to baptism, and whether anything different is intended by it from what is meant by the succeeding phrase--" renewing of the Holy Ghost."--The word rendered washing (λουτρον) occurs in the New Testament only in this place and in Eph 5:26, where also it is rendered washing--" That he might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word." The word properly means a bath; then water.for bathing; then the act of bathing, washing, ablution. Passow and Robinson. It is used by Homer to denote a warm or cold bath; then a washing away, and is thus applied to the drink-offerings in sacrifice, which were supposed to purify or wash away sin. Passow. The word here does not mean laver, or the vessel for washing in, which would be expressed by λουτηρ, louter;

and this word cannot be properly applied to the baptismal font. The word in itself would naturally be understood as referring to baptism, (comp. Acts 22:16,) which was regarded as the emblem of washing away sins, or of cleansing from them. I say it was the emblem, not the means of purifying the soul from sin. If this be the allusion, and it seems probable, then the phrase "washing of regeneration" would mean "that outward washing or baptism which is the emblem of regeneration," and which is appointed as one of the ordinances connected with salvation. Mk 16:16. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is not affirmed in his phrase that baptism is the means of regeneration; or that grace is necessarily conveyed by it; and still less that baptism is regeneration, for no one of these is a necessary interpretation of the passage, and should not be assumed to be the true one. The full force of the language will be met by the supposition that it means that baptism is the emblem or symbol of regeneration, and, if this is the case, no one has a right to assume that the other is certainly the meaning. And that this is the meaning is further clear, because it is nowhere taught in the New Testament that baptism is regeneration, or that it is the means of regeneration. The word rendered regeneration (παλιγγενεσια, palingenesia) occurs in the New Testament only here and in Mt 19:28,--"in the regeneration when the Son of man," etc. It means, properly, a new-birth, reproduction, or renewal. It would properly be applied to one who should be begotten again in this sense, that a new life was commenced in him in some way corresponding to his being made to live at first. To the proper idea of the word, it is essential that there should be connected the notion of the commencement of life in the man, so that he may be said to live anew; and as religion is in the Scriptures represented as life, it is properly applied to the beginning of that kind of life by which man may be said to live anew. This word, occurring only here and in Mt 19:28, and there indubitably not referring to baptism, should not be here understood as referring to that, or be applied to that, for

(1.) that is not the proper meaning of the word;

(2.) there is no Scripture usage to sanction it;

(3.) the connexion here does not demand it;

(4.) the correlatives of the word (Jn 3:3,5,6,8, 1Pet 1:3) are applied only to that great moral change which is produced by the Holy Ghost; and

(5.) it is a dangerous use of the word. Its use in this sense leaves the impression that the only change needful for man is that which is produced by being regularly baptized. On almost no point has so much injury been done in the church as by the application of the word regeneration to baptism. It affects the beginning of religion in the soul; and if a mistake is made there, it is one which must pervade all the views of piety. And renewing of the Holy Ghost. This is an important clause, added by Paul apparently to save from the possibility of falling into error. If the former expression, "the washing of regeneration," had been left to stand by itself, it might have been supposed possibly that all the regeneration which would be needed would be that which would accompany baptism. But he avoids the possibility of this error, by saying that the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is an indispensable part of that by which we are saved. It is necessary that this should exist in addition to that which is the mere emblem of it--the washing of regeneration --for without this the former would be unmeaning and unavailing. It is important to observe that the apostle by no means says that this always follows from the former, nor does he affirm that it ever follows from it--whatever may be tile truth on that point--but he asserts that this is that on which our salvation depends. The word rendered renewing (ανακαινωσις--anakainosis) occurs only here and in Rom 12:2, where it is also rendered renewing. Compare Rom 12:2 The verb (ανακαινοω--anakainoo) occurs in 2Cor 4:16, Col 3:19, in both which places it is rendered renewed, and the corresponding word, ανακαινιζω --anakainidzo, in Heb 6:6. The noun properly means making new again; a renewing; a renovation. Comp. H. Planck in Bib. Repos., i. 677. It is a word which is found only in the writings of Paul and in ecclesiastical Greek writers. It would be properly applied to such a change as the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, making one a new man; that is, a man new, so far as religion is concerned--new in his views, feelings, desires, hopes, plans, and

purposes. He is so far different from what he was before, that it may be said he enters on a new life. Eph 4:23,24. The "renewing of the Holy Ghost" of course means that which the Holy Ghost produces, recognising the fact, everywhere taught in the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit is the Author of the new creation. It cannot mean, as Koppe supposes, the renewing of the mind itself, or producing a holy spirit in the soul.

Not by—Greek, "Out of"; "not as a result springing from works," &c. of righteousness—Greek, "in righteousness," that is, wrought "in a state of righteousness": as "deeds . . . wrought in God." There was an utter absence in us of the element ("righteousness") in which alone righteous works could be done, and so necessarily an absence of the works. "We neither did works of righteousness, nor were saved in consequence of them; but His goodness did the whole" [THEOPHYLACT]. we—emphatically opposed to "His." mercy—the prompting cause of our salvation individually: "In pursuance of His mercy." His kindness and love to man were manifested in redemption once for all wrought by Him for mankind generally; His mercy is the prompting cause for our individual realization of it. Faith is presupposed as the instrument of our being "saved"; our being so, then, is spoken of as an accomplished fact. Faith is not mentioned, but only God's part. as Paul's object here is not to describe man's new state, but the saving agency of God in bringing about that state, independent of all merit on the man's part (see on Tit 3:4). by—Greek, "through"; by means of. the washing—rather, "the laver," that is, the baptismal font. of regeneration—designed to be the visible instrument of regeneration. "The apostles are wont to draw an argument from the sacraments to prove the thing therein signified, because it ought to be a recognized principle among the godly, that God does not mark us with empty signs, but by His power inwardly makes good what He demonstrates by the outward sign. Wherefore baptism is congruously and truly called the laver of regeneration. We must connect the sign and thing signified, so as not to make the sign empty and ineffectual; and yet not, for the sake of honoring the sign, to detract from the Holy Spirit what is peculiarly His" [CALVIN], (1Pe 3:21). Adult candidates for baptism are presupposed to have had repentance and faith (for Paul

often assumes in faith and charity that those addressed are what they profess to be, though in fact some of them were not so, 1Co 6:11), in which case baptism would be the visible "laver or regeneration" to them, "faith being thereby confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer to God" [Article XXVII, Church of England]. Infants are charitably presumed to have received a grace in connection with their Christian descent, in answer to the believing prayers of their parents or guardians presenting them for baptism, which grace is visibly sealed and increased by baptism, "the laver of regeneration." They are presumed to be then regenerated, until years of developed consciousness prove whether they have been actually so or not. "Born of (from) water and (no 'of' in Greek) the Spirit." The Word is the remote and anterior instrument of the new birth; Baptism, the proximate instrument. The Word, the instrument to the individual; Baptism, in relation to the Society of Christians. The laver of cleansing stood outside the door of the tabernacle, wherein the priest had to wash before entering the Holy Place; so we must wash in the laver of regeneration before we can enter the Church, whose members are "a royal priesthood." "Baptism by the Spirit" (whereof water baptism is the designed accompanying seal) makes the difference between Christian baptism and that of John. As Paul presupposes the outward Church is the visible community of the redeemed, so he speaks of baptism on the supposition that it answers to its idea; that all that is inward belonging to its completeness accompanied the outward. Hence he here asserts of outward baptism whatever is involved in the believing appropriation of the divine facts which it symbolizes, whatever is realized when baptism fully corresponds to its original design. So Ga 3:27; language holding good only of those in whom the inward living communion and outward baptism coalesce. "Saved us" applies fully to those truly regenerate alone; in a general sense it may include many who, though put within reach of salvation, shall not finally be saved. "Regeneration" occurs only once more in New Testament, Mt 19:28, that is, the new birth of the heaven and earth at Christ's second coming to renew all material things, the human body included, when the creature, now travailing in labor-throes to the birth, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Regeneration, which now begins in the believer's soul, shall then be

extended to his body, and thence to all creation. and renewing—not "the laver ('washing') of renewing," but "and BY the renewing," &c., following "saved us." To make "renewing of the Holy Ghost" follow "the laver" would destroy the balance of the clauses of the sentence, and would make baptism the seal, not only of regeneration, but also of the subsequent process of progressive sanctification ("renewing of the Holy Ghost"). Regeneration is a thing once for all done; renewing is a process daily proceeding. As "the washing," or "laver," is connected with "regeneration," so the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is connected with "shed on us abundantly" (Tit 3:6).

(6.) Here is the outward sign and seal thereof in baptism, called therefore the washing of regeneration. The work itself is inward and spiritual; but it is outwardly signified and sealed in this ordinance. Water is of a cleansing and purifying nature, does away the filth of the flesh, and so was apt to signify the doing away of the guilt and defilement of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ, though that aptness alone, without Christ's institution, would not have been sufficient. This it is that makes it of this signification on God's part, a seal of righteousness by faith, as circumcision was, in the place of which it succeeds; and on ours an engagement to be the Lord's. Thus baptism saves figuratively and sacramentally, where it is rightly used. Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord, Ac 22:16. So Eph 5:26, That he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water by the word. Slight not this outward sign and seal, where it may be had according to Christ's appointment; yet rest not in the outward washing, but look to the answer of a good conscience, without which the external washing will avail nothing. The covenant sealed in baptism binds to duties, as well as exhibits and conveys benefits and privileges; if the former be not minded, in vain are the latter expected. Sever not what God has joined; in both the outer and inner part is baptism complete; as he that was circumcised became debtor to the whole law (Ga 5:3), so is he that is baptized to the gospel, to observe all the commands and ordinances thereof, as Christ appointed. Disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you, Mt 28:19,20. This is the outward sign and seal of salvation, baptism, called here the washing of regeneration.

(7.) Here is the principal efficient, namely, the Spirit of God; it is the renewing of the Holy Ghost; not excluding the Father and the Son, who in all works without themselves are concurring; nor the use of means, the word and sacraments, by which the Spirit works; through his operation it is that they have their saving effect. In the economy of our salvation, the applying and effecting part is especially attributed to the Holy Spirit. We are said to be born of the Spirit, to be quickened and sanctified by the Spirit, to be led and guided, strengthened and helped, by the Spirit. Through him we mortify sin, perform duty, walk in God's ways; all the acts and operations of the divine life in us, the works and fruits of righteousness without us, all are through this blessed and Holy Spirit, who is therefore called the Spirit of life, and of grace and holiness; all grace is from him. Earnestly therefore is he to be sought, and greatly to be heeded by us, that we quench not his holy motions, nor resist and oppose him in his workings. Res delicatula est Spiritus--The Spirit is a tender thing. As we act towards him, so may we expect he will to us; if we slight, and resist, and oppose his workings, he will slacken them; if we continue to vex him, he will retire. Grieve not therefore the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption, Eph 4:30. The Spirit seals by his renewing and sanctifying, his witnessing and assuring work; he distinguishes and marks out for salvation, and fits for it; it is his work: we could not turn to God by any strength of our own, any more than we can be justified by any righteousness of our own.

6 which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

That is, which Holy Spirit was in its gifts and graces plentifully poured forth upon us, and dwelleth in us, not essentially, but energetically, illuminating, guiding, strengthening, and confirming of us: and the end of God herein is, That being justified by his grace, that is, by faith in his Son, we should be made heirs of eternal life, according to the hope which the promises of God have given us thereof.

Learn hence, 1. That all the grace which is so plentiful poured forth upon believers, is by the means and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Learn, 2. That justification being a sinner's absolution from guilt and punishment by the satisfaction of Christ the Redeemer, is yet an act of special grace and free favour in God, That being justified by his grace.
Learn, 3. That it is the blessed privilege of all justified persons, that they are now heirs to, and shall ere long be possessors of, eternal life; they shall ere long have in hand, what they now possess in hope: Being justified by grace, we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

7 that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according
to the hope of eternal life.

8 *This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm
constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to
maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto
men.

This is a faithful saying. 1Timm 1:15. The reference here is to what he had been just saying, meaning that the doctrine which he had stated about the method of salvation was in the highest degree important, and entirely worthy of belief. And these things I will that thou affirm constantly. Make them the constant subject of your preaching. That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. This shows that Paul supposed that the doctrines of the gospel were fitted to lead men to holy living. Comp. Tit 3:1, and Php 4:8. The "good works," here refer not merely to acts of benevolence and charity, but to all that is upright and good--to an honest and holy life. These things are good and profitable unto men. That is, these doctrines which he had stated were not mere matters of speculation, but they were fitted to promote human happiness, and they should be constantly taught.

9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and
strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

10 A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition,
reject;

As if the apostle had said, Avoid and shun, and refuse communion with, him that doth obstinately persist in dangerous errors and heresies, and accordingly let him be excommunicated.

Learn hence, 1. Who is an heretic in the apostle's sense; even he who is preverted from the true faith, and holds opinions which subvert the foundations of it; and one who is condemned in his own conscience, and sins against his own convictions: for the apostle here bids Titus not to inform him of his fault, which shows him that the crime lay not in his head, in his understanding, but in his will and affections: for no man who acts according to his judgment and conscience, how erroneous soever, is self-condemned in that action.

Learn, 2. That even heretics themselves ought to be tenderly and lovingly dealt with, so long as there is any hope that they may be gained or won.

Learn, 3. That the charity of the church, in her censure of excomminication, aims rather at the cutting off errors than of persons.

But because, after all, there will be heresies and heretics in the church, the apostle next directs Titus what to do in such a case, and how to deal with such, Tit 3:10. He who forsakes the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, who broaches false doctrines and propagates them to the corrupting of the faith in weighty and momentous points, and breaks the peace of the church about them, after due means used to reclaim him, must be rejected. "Admonish him once and again, that, if possible, he may be brought back, and thou mayest gain thy brother; but, if this will not reduce him, that others be not hurt, cast him out of the communion, and warn all Christians to avoid him."-- Knowing that he that is such is subverted (turned off from the foundation) and sinneth grievously, being self-condemned. Those who will not be reclaimed by admonitions, but are obstinate in their sins and errors, are subverted and self-condemned; they inflict that punishment upon themselves which the governors of the church should inflict upon them: they throw themselves out of the church, and throw off its communion, and so are self-condemned.

Observe, 1. How great an evil real heresy is, not lightly therefore to be charged upon any, though greatly to be taken heed of by all. Such a one is subverted or perverted--a metaphor from a building so ruined as to render it difficult if not impossible to repair and raise it up again. Real heretics have seldom been recovered to the true faith: not so much defect of judgment, as perverseness of the will, being in the case, through pride, or ambition, or self-willedness, or covetousness, or such like corruption, which therefore must be taken heed of: "Be humble, love the truth and practise it, and damning heresy will be escaped."

2. Pains and patience must be used about those that err most grievously. They are not easily and soon to be given up and cast off, but competent time and means must be tried for their recovery.

3. The church's means even with heretics are persuasive and rational. They must be admonished, instructed, and warned; so much nouthesia imports.

4. Upon continued obstinacy and irreclaimableness, the church has power, and is obliged, to preserve its own purity, by severing such a corrupt member which discipline may by God's blessing become effectual to reform the offender, or if not it will leave him the more inexcusable in his condemnation.

11 knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

A man that is an heretic. The word heretic is now commonly applied to one who holds some fundamental error of doctrine, "a person who holds and teaches opinions repugnant to the established faith, or that which is made the standard of orthodoxy." Webster. The Greek word here used (αιρετικος-- haireticos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The corresponding noun (αιρεσις-- hairesis) occurs in the following places: Acts 5:17, 15:5, 24:5 Acts 26:5, 28:22, where it is rendered sect; and Acts 24:14 1Cor 11:19, Gall 5:20, 2Pet 2:1, where it is rendered heresy, and heresies. Acts 24:14. The true notion of the word is that of one who is a promoter of a sect or party. The man who makes divisions in a church, instead of aiming to promote unity, is the one who is intended. Such a man may form sects and parties on

some points of doctrine on which he differs from others, or on some custom, religious rite, or peculiar practice; he may make some unimportant matter a ground of distinction from his brethren, and may refuse to have fellowship with them, and endeavour to get up a new organization. Such a man, according to the Scripture usage, is a heretic, and not merely one who holds a different doctrine from that which is regarded as orthodoxy. The spirit of the doctrine here is the same as in Rom 16:17, and the same class of persons is referred to. "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have received; and avoid them." Rom 16:17. The word here used is defined by Robinson, (Lex.,) "one who creates dissensions, introduces errors--a factious person." It is not found in classic Greek, but often in ecclesiastical writers. See Suicer's Thesau. After the first and second admonition. Comp. Mt 18:15-17. That is, do not do it hastily and rashly. Give him an opportunity to explain himself, and to repent and abandon his course. No man is to be cut off without giving him a proper opportunity to vindicate his conduct, and to repent if he has done wrong. If, after the first and second admonition, a man, who is undoubtedly doing wrong, will not repent, then he is to be cut off. The apostle does not say in what way this admonition is to be given, or whether it should be public or private. The language which he uses would justify either, and the method which is to be adopted is doubtless to be determined by circumstances. The thing which is to be reached is, that his fault is to be fairly set before his mind. Reject. παραιτου. This word is rendered excuse in Lk 14:18,19; refuse, Acts 25:11, 1Timm 4:7, 5:11, Heb 12:25 avoid, 2Ti 2:23; and entreated, Heb 12:19. Its prevailing meaning, as used in connections like the one before us, is, to reject in relation to an office; that is, to decline appointing one to an office. It probably had a primary reference to that here, and meant that a man who was given to making dissensions, or who was a factious person, should not be admitted to an office in the church. The general direction would also include this--that he should not be admitted to the church. He is neither to be owned as a member, nor admitted to office. Comp. Mt 18:17: "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." In regard to this passage, then, we may observe,

(1.) that the utmost limit which this allows is mere exclusion. It does not allow us to follow the offender with injury.

(2.) It does not authorize us to oppose one on account of his mere private opinions. The essential idea is that of a factious, division-making man; a man who aims to form sects and parties, whether on account of opinions, or from any other cause.

(3.) It does not make it right to deliver such a man over to the "secular arm," or to harm him in body, soul, property, or reputation. It gives no power to torture him on the rack, or with thumb-screws, or to bind him to the stake. It authorizes us not to recognise him as a Christian brother, or to admit him to an office in the church --but beyond this it gives us no right to go. He has a right to his own opinion still, so far as we are concerned, and we are not to molest him in the enjoyment of that right.

(4.) It demands that, when a man is undoubtedly a heretic in the sense here explained, there should be the utmost kindness towards him, in order if possible to reclaim him. We should not begin by attacking and denouncing his opinions; or by formally arraigning him; or by blazoning his name abroad as a heretic; but he is to be dealt with in all Christian kindness and brotherly fidelity. He is to be admonished more than once by those who have the right to admonish him; and then, and then only, if he does not repent, he is to be simply avoided. That is to be an end of the matter so far as we are concerned. The power of the church there ceases. It has no power to deliver him over to any one else for persecution or punishment, or in any way to meddle with him. He may live where he pleases; pursue his own plans; entertain his own opinions or company, provided he does not interfere with us; and though we have a right to examine the opinions which he may entertain, yet our work with him is done. If these principles had been observed, what scenes of bloody and cruel persecution in the church would have been avoided!

Knowing that he that is such is subverted. Literally, is turned out; or, is changed, i.e., for the worse. He has gone from the right way, and therefore he should be rejected. And sinneth, being condemned of

himself. His own conscience condemns him. He will approve the sentence, for he knows that he is wrong; and his self-condemnation will be punishment sufficient. His own course, in attempting a division or schism in the church, shows him that it is right that he should be separated from the communion of Christians. He that attempts to rend the church, without a good reason, should himself be separated from it.

Personal Instructions

12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to
come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.
13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that
nothing be wanting unto them.
14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses,
that they be not unfruitful.

And let ours. Our friends; that is, those who were Christians. Paul had just directed Titus to aid Zenas and Apollos himself; and he here adds that he wished that others who were Christians would be characterized by good works of all kinds. To maintain good works. Marg., profess honest trades. The Greek will admit of the interpretation in the margin, or will include that; but there is no reason why the direction should be supposed to have any peculiar reference to an honest mode of livelihood, or why it should be confined to that. It rather means, that they should be distinguished for good works, including benevolent deeds, acts of charity, honest toil, and whatever would enter into the conception of an upright life. Tit 3:8. For necessary uses. Such as are required by their duty to their families, and by the demands of charity. Tit 3:8. That they be not unfruitful. That it may be seen that their religion is not barren and worthless, but that it produces a happy effect on themselves and on society. Jn 15:16; Eph 4:28.

Benediction

15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the
faith.
Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul to
Philemon
[Philemon]

Philemon-1

Salutation

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother,
Unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer,
2 and to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to
the church in thy house:
3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ.

Philemon's Love and Faith

4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,
5 hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord
Jesus, and toward all saints;
6 that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the
acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.
7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of
the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Paul Pleads for Onesimus

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that
which is convenient,

The marvellous condescending humility of our apostle in these expressions: As an apostle he was the highest ruler and officer in the church of God, and had the fullest authority and power that a person could have upon earth, to command, require, and enjoin Philemon to the practice of his duty; but he tells him, though he might be bold to enjoin, yet he rather chose to beseech: For love's sake I rather beseech thee.

hence, That church rulers and governors, although they have a commanding power and authority, which upon occasion they may and must make use of; yet they should choose much rather in love to entreat, hoping that will work more kindly and effectually upon the minds of persons.

Observe, 2. The argument St. Paul uses as a ground of entreaty: I Paul desire and beseech thee, I Paul the aged, I Paul a prisoner.

Note, he urges his years as an argument for granting his request; that he was aged, and an aged minister of Christ: if honour be due to an aged person walking in the ways of righteousness, much more is it so to an aged minister, gray-headed in the service of Christ, and having faithfully discharged his duty there. He also urges his sufferings as well as his years; I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. The sufferings of Christ's ministers in the cause of God should by no means lessen and diminish, but rather augment and increase, that reverence, regard, and respect, which is deservedly due and payable unto them.

Observe, 3. The person whom he thus intercedes with affection for: Onesimus, whom he calls his son begotten in his bonds; that is, his spiritual son, converted to Christianity by his ministry, when he was in prison.

Where note, That endearing love, and that fervent affection, which the ministers of Christ bear to their converts, to such as they have gained unto Christ; it equals, nay, perhaps exceeds, the natural affections of parents towards their own children

9 yet for love's sake I rather beseech *thee,* being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

11 which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

12 whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

13 whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have
ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:
14 but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not
be as it were of necessity, but willingly.
15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest
receive him for ever;
16 not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially
to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the
Lord?
17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.
18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* aught, put that on mine
account;
19 I Paul have written *it* with mine own hand, I will repay *it:* albeit I do
not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.
20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in
the Lord.
21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that
thou wilt also do more than I say.
22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your
prayers I shall be given unto you.

Final Greetings

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus;
24 Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.
25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the
Hebrews
[Hebrews]

Hebrews-1

God Has Spoken by His Son

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

God, who at sundry times. The commencement of this epistle varies from all the others which Paul wrote. In every other instance, he at first announces his name, and the name of the church or of the individual to whom he wrote. In regard to the reason why he here varies from that custom, see the Introduction, & 3. This commences with the full acknowledgment of his belief, that God had made important revelations in past times, but that now he had communicated his will in a manner that more especially claimed their attention. This announcement was of particular importance here. He was writing to those who had been trained up in the full belief of the truths taught by the prophets. As the object of the apostle was to show the superior claims of the gospel, and to lead them from putting confidence in the rites instituted in accordance with the directions of the Old Testament, it was of essential importance that he should admit that their belief of the inspiration of the prophets was well founded, he was not an infidel, he was not disposed to call in question the Divine origin of the books which were regarded as given by inspiration, he fully admitted all that had been held by the Hebrews on that head, and yet showed that the new revelation had more important claims to their attention. The word rendered "at sundry times" --πολυμερως-- means, in many parts. It refers here to the fact, that the former revelation had

been given in various parts. It had not all been given at once. It had been communicated from time to time, as the exigencies of the people required, and as God chose to communicate it. At one time it was by history, then by prophecy, by poetry, by proverbs, by some solemn and special message, etc. The ancient revelation was a collection of various writings, on different subjects, and given at different times; but now God had addressed us by his Son--the one great Messenger, who had come to finish the Divine communications, and to give a uniform and connected revelation to mankind. The contrast here is between the numerous separate parts of the revelation given by the prophets, and the oneness of that given by his Son. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

And in divers manners πολυτροπως. In many ways. It was not all in one mode. He had employed various methods in communicating his will. At one time it was by direct communication, at another by dreams, at another by visions, etc. In regard to the various methods which God employed to communicate his will, see Introduction to Isaiah, & 7. In contradistinction from these, God had now spoken by his Son. He had addressed us in one uniform manner. It was not by dreams, or visions; it was a direct communication from him. The word used here, also, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. In times past. Formerly; in ancient times. The series of revelations began, as recorded by Moses, with Adam, (Gen 3.) and terminated with Malachi--a period of more than three thousand five hundred years. From Malachi to the time of the Saviour, there were no recorded Divine communications; and the whole period of written revelation, or when the Divine communications were recorded from Moses to Malachi, was about a thousand years. Unto the fathers. To our ancestors; to the people of ancient times. By the prophets. The word prophet, in the Scriptures, is used in a wide signification. It means not only those who predict future events, but those who communicate the Divine will on any subject. Rom 12:6; 1Cor 14:1. It is used here in that large

sense--as denoting all those by whom God had made communications to the Jews in former times.

2 hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Hath in these last days. In this the final dispensation; or in this dispensation under which the affairs of the world will be wound up. Phrases similar to this occur frequently in the Scriptures. They do not imply that the world was soon coming to an end, but that that was the last dispensation, the last period of the world. There had been the patriarchal period, the period under the law, the prophets, etc., and this was the period during which God's last method of communication would be enjoyed, and under which the world would close. It might be a very long period, but it would be the last one; and, so far as the meaning of the phrase is concerned, it might be the longest period, or longer than all the others put together, but still it would be the last one. Acts 2:17; Isa 2:2. Spoken unto us. The word "us" here does not of necessity imply that the writer of the epistle had actually heard him, or that they had heard him to whom the epistle was written. It means that God had now communicated his win to man by his Son. It may be said, with entire propriety, that God has spoken to us by his Son, though we have not personally heard or seen him. We have what he spoke, and caused to be recorded, for our direction. By his Son. The title commonly given to the Lord Jesus, as denoting his peculiar relation to God. It was understood, by the Jews, to denote equality with God, (Jn 5:18; comp. Jn 10:33,36,) and is used with such a reference here. Rom 1:4, where the meaning of the phrase "Son of God" is fully considered. It is implied here, that the fact, that the Son of God has spoken to us, imposes the highest obligations to attend to what he has said; that he has authority superior to all those who have spoken in past times; and that there will be peculiar guilt in refusing to attend to what he has spoken. See Heb 2:1-4; comp. Heb 12:25. The reasons for the superior respect which should be shown to the revelations of the Son of God may be such as these:---

(1.) His rank and dignity. He is: the equal with God, (Jn 1:1,) and is himself called God in this chapter, Heb 1:8. He has a right, therefore, to command, and when he speaks men should obey.

(2.) The clearness of the truths which he communicated to man, on a great variety of subjects, that are of the highest moment to the world. Revelation has been gradual--like the breaking of the day in the east. At first there is a little light; it increases and expands till objects become more and more visible, and then the sun rises in full-orbed glory. At first we discern only the existence of some object--- obscure and undefined; then we can trace-its outline; then its colour, its size, its proportions, its drapery--till it stands before us fully revealed. So it has been with revelation. There is a great variety of subjects which we now see clearly, which were very imperfectly understood by the teaching of the prophets, and would be now if we had only the Old Testament. Among them are the following:--

(a.) The character of God. Christ came to make him known as a merciful Being, and to show how he could be merciful as well as just. The views given of God by the Lord Jesus are far more clear than any given by the ancient prophets; compared with those entertained by the ancient philosophers, they are like the sun compared with the darkest midnight.

(b.) The way in which man may be reconciled to God, The New Testament-- which may be considered as that which God "has spoken to us by his Son" --has told us how the great work of being reconciled to God can be effected. The Lord Jesus told us that he came to "give his life a ransom for many;" that he laid down his life for his friends; that he was about to die for man; that he would draw all men to him. The prophets indeed-- particularly Isaiah --threw much light on these points. But the mass of the people did not understand their revelations. They pertained to future events--always difficult

to be understood. But Christ has told us the way of salvation; and he has made it so plain, that he who runs may read.

(c.) The moral precepts of the Redeemer are superior to those of any and all that had gone before him. They are elevated, pure, expansive, benevolent--such as became the Son of God to proclaim. Indeed, this is admitted on all hands. Infidels are constrained to acknowledge, that all the moral precepts of the Saviour are eminently pure and benignant. If they were obeyed, the world would be filled with justice, truth, purity, and benevolence. Error, fraud, hypocrisy, ambition, wars, licentiousness, and intemperance, would cease; and the opposite virtues would diffuse happiness over the face of the world. Prophets had indeed delivered many moral precepts of great importance, but the purest and most extensive body of just principles and of good morals on earth are to be found in the teachings of the Saviour.

(d.) He has given to us the clearest view which man has had of the future state; and he has disclosed, in regard to that future state, a class of truths of the deepest interest to mankind, which were before wholly unknown or only partially revealed.

1. He has revealed the certainty of a state of future existence--in opposition to the Sadducees of all ages. This was denied, before he came, by multitudes; and where it was not, the arguments by which it was supported were often of the feeblest kind. The truth was held by some--like Plato and his followers--but the arguments on which they relied were feeble, and such as were unfitted to give rest to the soul. The truth they had obtained by TRADITION; the arguments were THEIR OWN.

2. He revealed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This before was doubted or denied by nearly all the world. It was held to be absurd and impossible. The Saviour taught its certainty; he raised up more than one to show that it was

possible; he was himself raised, to put the whole matter beyond debate.

3. He revealed the certainty of future judgment--the judgment of all mankind.

4. He disclosed great and momentous truths respecting the future state. Before he came, all was dark. The Greeks spoke of Elysian fields, but they were dreams of the imagination; the Hebrews had some faint notion of a future state, where all was dark and gloomy, with perhaps an occasional glimpse of the truth that there is a holy and blessed heaven; but to the mass of mind, all was obscure. Christ revealed a heaven, and told us of a hell. He showed us that the one might be gained, and the other avoided. He presented important motives for doing it; and, had he done nothing more, his communications were worthy the profound attention of mankind. I may add,

That the Son of God has claims on our attention from the MANNER in which he spoke, He spoke as one having "authority," Mt 7:29. He spoke as a witness of what he saw and knew, Jn 3:11. He spoke without doubt or ambiguity of God, and heaven, and hell. His is the language of one who is familiar with all that he describes; who saw all, who knew all. There is no hesitancy or doubt in his mind of the truth of what he speaks; and he speaks as if his whole soul were impressed with its unspeakable importance. Never were so momentous communications made to men of hell as fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus, (Mt 23:33 ;) never were announcements made so fitted to awe and appall a sinful world. Whom he hath appointed heir of all things. See Ps 2:8; comp. Rom 8:17. This is language taken from the fact that he is "the SON of God." If a Son, then he is an heir --for so it is usually among men. This is not to be taken literally, as if he inherits anything as a man does. An heir is one who inherits anything after the death of its possessor--usually his father. But this cannot be applied in this sense to the Lord Jesus. The language is used to denote his rank and dignity as the Son of God. As such, all things are

his, as the property of the father descends to his son at his death. The word rendered heir-- κληρονομος--means, properly,

(1.) one who acquires anything by lot; and

(2.) an heir in the sense in which we usually understand the word. It may also denote a possessor of anything received as s portion, or of property of any kind. See Rom 4:13,14. It is, in every instance, rendered heir in the New Testament. Applied to Christ, it means that, as the Son of God, he is possessor or lord of all things, or that all things are his. Comp. Acts 2:36, 10:36; Jn 17:10, 16:15. "All things that the Father hath are mine." The sense is, that all things belong to the Son of God. Who is so rich, then, as Christ? Who so able to endow his friends with enduring and abundant wealth? By whom. By whose agency; or who was the actual agent in the creation. Grotius supposes that this means, "on account of whom;" and that the meaning is, that the universe was formed with reference to the Messiah, in accordance with an ancient Jewish maxim, But the more common and classical usage of the word rendered by, (δια,) when it governs a genitive, as here, is to denote the instrumental cause; the agent by which anything is done. See Mt 1:22, 2:5,15,23, Lk 18:31, Jn 1:17 Acts 2:22,43, 4:16, 12:9, Rom 2:16, 5:5. It may be true that the universe was formed with reference to the glory of the Son Of God, and that this world was brought into being in order to show his glory; but it would not do to establish that doctrine on a passage like this. Its obvious and proper meaning is, that he was the agent of the creation--a truth that is elsewhere abundantly taught. See Jn 1:3,10, Col 1:16, Eph 3:9, 1Cor 8:6. This sense, also, better agrees with the design of the apostle in this place. His object is to set forth the dignity of the Son of God. This is better shown by the consideration that he was the Creator of all things, than that all things were made for him. The worlds. The universe, or creation. So the word here-- αιων--is undoubtedly used in Heb 11:3. The word properly means age--an indefinitely long period of time; then

perpetuity, ever, eternity--always being. For an extended investigation of the meaning of the word, the reader may consult an essay by Prof. Stuart, in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, for 1829, pp. 406--452. From the sense of age, or duration, the word comes to denote the present and future age; the present world, and the world to come; the present world, with all its cares, anxieties, and evils; the men of this world--a wicked generation, etc. Then it means the world --the material universe--creation as it is. The only perfectly clear use of the word in this sense in the New Testament is in Heb 11:3, and there there can be no doubt. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The passage before us will bear the same interpretation, and this is the most obvious and intelligible. What would be the meaning of saying that the ages or dispensations were made by the Son of God? The Hebrews used the word-- --olam--in the same sense. It properly means age, duration; and thence it came to be used by them to denote the world--made up of ages or generations; and then the world itself. This is the fair, and, as it seems to me, the only intelligible interpretation of this passage--an interpretation amply sustained by texts referred to above, as demonstrating that the universe was made by the agency of the Son of God Comp. Heb 1:10, and Jn 1:3.

3 who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Who being the brightness of his glory. This verse is designed to state the dignity and exalted rank of the Son of God, and is exceedingly important with reference to a correct view of the Redeemer. Every word which is employed is of great importance, and should be clearly understood in order to a correct apprehension of the passage. First, In what manner does it refer to the Redeemer? To his Divine nature? To the mode of his existence before he was incarnate? Or to him as he appeared on earth? Most of the ancient commentators

supposed that it referred to his Divine dignity before he became incarnate; and proceed to argue, on that supposition, on the mode of the Divine existence. The true solution seems to me to be, that it refers to him as incarnate, but still has reference to him as the incarnate Son of God. It refers to him as Mediator, but not simply or mainly as a man. It is rather to him as Divine--thus, in his incarnation, being the brightness of the Divine glory, and the express image of God. That this is the correct view is apparent, I think, from the whole scope of the passage. The drift of the argument is, to show his dignity as he has spoken to us, (Heb 1:1,) and not in the period antecedent to his incarnation. It is to show his claims to our reverence as sent from Gods the last and greatest of the messengers which God has sent to man. But, then, it is a description of him as he actually is ---the incarnate Son of God; the equal of the Father in human flesh: and this leads the writer to dwell on his Divine character, and to argue from that, Heb 1:8,10-12. I have no doubt, therefore, that this description refers to his Divine nature, but it is the Divine nature as it appears in human flesh. An examination of the words used will prepare us for a more clear comprehension of the sense. The word glory--δοξα-- properly, a seeming, an appearance; and then (1.) praise, applause, honour; (2.) dignity, splendour, glory; (3.) brightness, dazzling light; and (4.) excellence, perfection, such as belongs to God, and such as there is in heaven. It is probably used here, as the word-- is often among the Hebrews, to denote splendour, brightness, and refers to the Divine perfections as resembling a bright light, or the sun. The word is applied to the sun and stars, 1Cor 15:40,41; to the light which Paul saw on the way to Damascus, Acts 22:11; to the shining of Moses' face, 2Cor 3:7; to the celestial light, which surrounds the angels, Rev 18:1; and glorified saints, Lk 9:31,32; and to the dazzling splendour or majesty in which God is enthroned. 2Thes 1:9, 2Pet 1:17, Rev 15:8, 21:11,23. Here there is a comparison of God with the sun; he is encompassed with splendour and majesty; he is a being of light and of infinite perfection. It refers to all in God that is bright, splendid, glorious; and the

idea is, that the Son of God is the brightness of it all. The word rendered brightness απαυγασμα --occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, reflected splendour, or the light which emanates from a luminous body. The rays or beams of the sun are its "brightness," or that by which the sun is seen and known. The sun itself we do not see; the beams which flow from it we do see. The meaning here is, that if God be represented under the image of a luminous body, as he is in the Scriptures, (see Ps 84:11, Mal 4:2,) then Christ is the radiance of that light, the brightness of that luminary. Stuart. He is that by which we perceive God, or by which God is made known to us in his real perfections. Comp. Jn 1:18; Jn 14:9. It is by him only that the true character and glory of God is known to men. This is true in regard to the great system of revelation; but it is especially true in regard to the views which men have of God. Mt 11:27: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The human soul is dark respecting the Divine character, until it is enlightened by Christ. It sees no beauty, no glory in his nature--nothing that excites wonder, or that wins the affections, until it is disclosed by the Redeemer. Somehow it happens--account for it as men may--that there are no elevating, practical views of God in the world; no views that engage and hold the affections of the soul; no views that are transforming and purifying, but those which are derived from the Lord Jesus. A man becomes a Christian, and at once he has elevated practical views of God. He is, to him, the most glorious of all beings. He finds supreme delight in contemplating his perfections. But he may be a philosopher or an infidel, and though he may profess to believe in the existence of God, yet the belief excites no practical influence on him; he sees nothing to admire--nothing which leads him to worship him. Comp. Rom 1:21. And the express image. The word here used χαρακτηρ likewise occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is that from which our word character is derived. It properly means, a graying, tool; and then something engraved or stamped--a character --as, a

letter, mark, sign. The image stamped on coins, seals, wax, expresses the idea; and the sense here is, that if God be represented under the idea of a substance, or being, then Christ is the exact resemblance of that, as an image is of the stamp or die. The resemblance between a stamp and the figure which is impressed is exact; and so is the resemblance between the Redeemer and God. See Col 1:15: "Who is the image of the invisible God." Of his person. The word person, with us, denotes an individual being, and is applied to human beings, consisting of body and soul. We do not apply it to anything dead--not using it with reference to the body when the spirit is gone. It is applied to man-- with individual and separate consciousness and will; with body and soul; with an existence separate from others. It is evident that it cannot be used in this sense when applied to God, and that this word does not express the true idea of the passage here. Tindal renders it, more accurately, substance. The word in the original υποστασις --whence our word hypostasis means, literally, a foundation, or substructure. Then it means, a well-founded trust, firm expectation, oonttdence, firmness, boldness; and then reality, substance, essential nature. In the New Testament, it is rendered confident, or confidence, (2Cor 9:4, 11:17, Heb 3:14;) substance, (Heb 11:1;) and person in the passage before us. It is not elsewhere used. Here it properly refers to the essential nature of God--that which distinguishes him from all other beings and which, if I may so say, constitutes him God; and the idea is, that, the Redeemer is the exact resemblance of that. This resemblance consists, probably, in the following things--though perhaps the enumeration does not include all-- but in these he certainly resembles God, or is his exact image. (1.) In his original mode of being, or before the incarnation. Of this we know little. But he had a "glory with the Father before the world was," Jn 17:5. He was "in the beginning with God, and was God," Jn 1:1. He was in intimate union with the Father, and was one with him, in certain respects; though in certain other respects, there was a distinction. I do not see any evidence in the Scriptures of the doctrine of "eternal generation," and it is

certain that that doctrine militates against the proper eternity of the Son of God. The natural and fair meaning of that doctrine would be, that there was a time when he had not an existence, and when he began to be, or was begotten. But the Scripture doctrine is, that he had a strict and proper eternity. I see no evidence that he was, in any sense, a derived being--deriving his existence and his divinity from the rather. The Fathers of the Christian church, it is believed, held that the Son of God, as to his Divine, as well as his human nature, was derived from the Father. Hence the Nicene creed speaks of him as begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light very God of very God, begotten, not made" --language implying derivation in his Divine nature. They held, with one voice, that he was God; but it was in this manner. See Stuart, Excursus III on the Epistle to the Hebrews. But this is incredible, and impossible. A derived being cannot, in any proper sense, be God; and if there is any attribute which the Scriptures have ascribed to the Saviour with peculiar clearness, it is that of proper eternity, Rev 1:11,18, Jn 1:1. It may have been, that it was by him that the perfections of God were made known, before the incarnation, to the angelic world, but on that point the Scriptures are silent. (2.) On earth he was the brightness of the Divine glory, and the express image of his person. (a.) It was by him, eminently, that God was made known to men--as it is by the beams of the sun that that is made known. (b.) He bore an exact resemblance to God. He was just such a being as we should suppose God to be, were he to become incarnate, and to act as a man. He was the embodied representation of the Deity. He was pure--like God. He was benevolent--like God. He spake to the winds and storms--like God. He healed diseases--like God. He raised the dead--like God. He wielded the power which God only can wield, and he manifested a character in all respects like that which we should suppose God would evince, if he appeared in human flesh, and dwelt among men. And this is saying much. It is, in fact, saying that the account in the Gospels is real, and that the Christian religion is true. Uninspired men could never have drawn such a character as

that of Jesus Christ, unless that character had actually existed. The attempt has often been made to describe God, or to show how he would speak and act if he came down to earth. Thus the Hindoos speak of the incarnations of Vishnu; and thus Homer, and Virgil, and most of the ancient poets, speak of the appearance of the gods, and describe them as they were supposed to appear. But how different from the character of the Lord Jesus! They are full of passion, and lust, and anger, and contention, and strife; they come to mingle in battles, and to take part with contending armies, and they evince the same spirit as men, and are merely men of great power, and more gigantic passions; but Christ is God IN HUMAN NATURE. The form is that of man; the Spirit is that of God. He walks, and eats, and sleeps as a man; he thinks, and speaks, and acts like God. He was born as a man--but the angels adored him as God. As a man he ate; yet, by a word, he created food for thousands, as if he were God. Like a man he slept on a pillow, while the vessel was tossed by the waves; like God he rose, and rebuked the winds, and they were still. As a man he went, with affectionate interest, to the house of Martha and Mary. As a man he sympathized with them in their affliction, and wept at the grave of their brother; like God he spoke, and the dead came forth to the land of the living. As a man he travelled through the land of Judea. lie was without a home; yet everywhere the sick were laid at his feet, and health came from his touch, and strength from the words of his lips--as if he were God. As a man he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane; he bore his cross to Calvary; he was nailed to the tree; yet then the heavens grew dark, and the earth shook, and the dead arose--as if he were God. As a man he slept in the cold tomb; like God he rose, and brought life and immortality to light. He lived on earth as a man--he ascended to heaven like God. And in all the life of the Redeemer, in all the variety of trying situations in which he was placed, there was not a word or action which was inconsistent with the supposition that he was the incarnate God. There was no failure of any effort to heal the sick or to raise the dead; no look, no word, no deed, that is not perfectly consistent with

this supposition; but, on the contrary, his life is full of events which can be explained on no other supposition than that he was the appropriate shining forth of the Divine glory, and the exact resemblance of the essence of God. There are not two Gods, as there are not two suns when the sun shines. It is the one God, in a mysterious and incomprehensible manner, shining into the world in the face of Jesus Christ. 2Cor 4:6. As the wax bears the perfect image of the seal--perfect not only in the outline, but in the filling up--in all the lines, and features, and letters, so is it with the Redeemer. There is not one of the Divine perfections which has not the counterpart in him; and if the glory of the Divine character is seen at all by men, it will be Been in and through him. And upholding all things by the word of his power. That is, by his powerful word, or command. The phrase "word of his power' is a Hebraism, and means his efficient command. There could not be a more distinct ascription of divinity to the Son of God than this. He upholds or sustains all things--i. e. the universe. It is not merely the earth; not only its rocks, mountains, seas, animals, and men, but it is the universe--all distant worlds. How can he do this who is not God? He does it by his word--his command. What a conception! That a simple command should do all this: So the world was made when God "spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast," Ps 33:9. So the Lord Jesus commanded the waves and the winds, and they were still, (Mt 8:26,27;) so he spoke to diseases, and they departed--and to the dead, and they arose. Comp. Gen 1:3. I know not how men can explain away this ascription of infinite power to the Redeemer. There can be no higher idea of omnipotence than to say, that he upholds all things by his word; and assuredly he who can hold up this wast universe, so that it does not sink into anarchy or into nothing, must be God. The same power Jesus claimed for himself. See Mt 28:18. When he had by himself purged our sins. "By himself"--not by the blood of bulls and lambs, but by his own blood. This is designed to bring in the grand feature of the Christian scheme, that the purification made for sin was by his blood, instead of the blood which was shed in the temple-

service. The word here rendered "purged" means purified, or "expiated". Jn 15:2 The literal rendering is, "having made purification for our sins." The purification or cleansing, which he effected, was by his blood. See 1Jn 1:7: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." This the apostle here states to have been the great object for which he came, and having done this, he sat down on the right hand of God. See Heb 7:27, 9:12-14. It was not merely to teach that he came; it was to purify the hearts of men, to remove their sins, and to put an end of sacrifice by the sacrifice of himself. Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Of God. Mk 16:19 Eph 1:20, seq.

4 being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Being made so much better. Being exalted so much above the angels. The word "better" here does not refer to moral character, but to exaltation of rank. As Mediator; as the Son of God in our nature, he is exalted far above the angels. Than the angels. Than all angels of every rank. Eph 1:21; comp. 1Pet 3:22: "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." He is exalted to his mediatorial throne, and all things are placed beneath his feet. As he hath by inheritance. Or in virtue of his name--the Son of God; an exaltation such as is implied in that name. As a son has a rank in a family above servants; as he has a control over the property above that which servants have, so it is with the Mediator. He is the Son of God: angels are the servants of God, and the servants of the church. They occupy a place in the universe, compared with that which he occupies, similar to the place which servants in a family occupy compared with that which a son has. To illustrate and prove this is the design of the remainder of this chapter. The argument which the apostle insists on is, that the title "THE Son of God" is to be given to him alone. It has been conferred on no others. Though the angels, and though saints are called in general "sons of God," yet the title "THE Son of God" has been given to him only. As the apostle was writing to Hebrews, he makes his appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures alone for the

confirmation of this opinion, A more excellent name. To wit, the name Son. It is a more honourable and exalted name than has ever been bestowed on them. It involves more exalted privileges, and entitles him on whom it is bestowed to higher respect and honour than any name ever bestowed on them.

The Son Superior to Angels

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

For unto which oft he angels, etc. The object of this is to prove that the Son of God, who has spoken to men in these last days, is superior to the angels. As the apostle was writing to those who had been trained in the Jewish religion, and who admitted the authority of the Old Testament, of course he made his appeal to that, and undoubtedly referred for proof to those places which were generally admitted to relate to the Messiah. Abarbanel says, that it was the common opinion of the Jewish doctors, that the Messiah would be exalted above Abraham, Moses, and the angels. Stuart. There is a difficulty, as we shall see, in applying the passages which follow to the Messiah--a difficulty which we may find it not easy to explain. Some remarks will be made on the particular passages as we go along. In general, it may be observed here,

(1.) That it is to be presumed that those passages were, in the time of Paul, applied to the Messiah. He seems to argue from them as though this was commonly understood,and is at no pains to prove it.

(2.) It is to be presumed, that those to whom he wrote would at once admit this to be so. If this were not so, we cannot suppose that he would regard this mode of reasoning as at all efficacious, or adapted to convince those to whom he wrote.

(3.) He did not apprehend that the application which he made of these texts would be called in question by the countrymen

of those to whom he wrote. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the application was made in accordance with the received opinions, and the common interpretation.

(4.) Paul had been instructed, in early life, in the doctrines of the Jewish religion, and made fully acquainted with all their principles of interpretation. It is to be presumed, therefore, that he made these quotations in accordance with the prevalent belief, and with principles which were well understood and admitted,

(5.) Every age and people have their own modes of reasoning. They may differ from others, and others may regard them as unsound, and yet, to that age and people, they are satisfactory and conclusive. The ancient philosophers employed modes of reasoning which would not strike us as the most forcible, and which, perhaps, we should not regard as tenable. So it is with the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Mohammedans now. So it was with the writers of the dark ages, who lived under the influence of the scholastic philosophy. They argue from admitted principles in their country and time--just as we do in ours. Their reasoning was as satisfactory to them, as ours is to us.

(6.) In a writer of any particular age we are to expect to find the prevailing mode of reasoning, and appeals to the usual arguments on any subject. We are not to look for methods of argument founded on the inductive philosophy in the writings of the schoolmen, or in the writings of the Chinese or the Hindoos. It would be unreasonable to expect it. We are to expect that they will be found to reason in accordance with the customs of their time; to appeal to such arguments as were commonly alleged; and, if they are reasoning with an adversary, to make use of the points which he concedes, and to urge them as fitted to convince him. And this is not wrong. It may strike him with more force than it does us; it may be that we can see that is not the most solid mode of reasoning, but still it may not be in itself an improper method. That the

writers of the New Testament should have used that mode of reasoning sometimes, is no more surprising than that we find writers in China reasoning from acknowledged principles, and in the usual manner there; or than that men in our own land, reason on the principles of the inductive philosophy. These remarks may not explain all the difficulties in regard to the proof-texts adduced by Paul in this chapter, but they may remove some of them, and may so prepare the way that we may be able to dispose of them all as we advance. In the passage which is quoted in this verse, there is not much difficulty in regard to the propriety of its being thus used. The difficulty lies in the subsequent quotations in the chapter.

Said he at any time. He never used language respecting the angels, like that which he employs respecting his Son. He never applied to any one of them the name Son.

Thou art my Son. The name "sons of God," is applied in the Scriptures to saints, and may have been given to the angels. But the argument here is, that the name "my son" has never been given to any one of them particularly, and by eminence. In a large, general sense, they are the sons of God, or the children of God; but the name is given to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, in a peculiar sense, implying a peculiar relation to him, and a peculiar dominion over all things. This passage is quoted from Ps 2.--a Psalm that is usually believed to pertain particularly to the Messiah, and one of the few Psalms that have undisputed reference to him. Acts 4:25; Acts 13:33.

This day. Acts 13:33, where this passage is applied to the resurrection of Christ from the dead;--proving that the phrase "this day" does not refer to the doctrine of eternal generation, but to the resurrection of the Redeemer--"the FIRST-BEGOTTEN of the dead," Rev 1:6. Thus Theodoret says of the phrase "this day"--" It does not express his eternal generation, but that which is connected with time." The argument of the apostle here does not turn on the time when this was said, but on the fact that this was said to him, and not

to any one of the angels; and this argument will have equal force, whether the phrase be understood as referring to the fact of his resurrection, or to his previous existence. The structure and scope of the second Psalm refers to his exaltation after the kings of the earth set themselves against him, and endeavoured to cast off his government from them. In spite of that, and subsequent to that, he would set his King, which they had rejected, on his holy hill of Zion. See Ps 2:2-6.

Have I begotten thee. See this place explained Acts 13:33. It must, from the necessity of the case, be understood figuratively; and must mean substantially, "I have constituted, or appointed thee." If it refers to his resurrection, it means that that resurrection was a kind of begetting to life, or a beginning of life, see Rev 1:5. And yet, though Paul (Acts 13:33) has applied it to the resurrection of the Redeemer, and though the name "Son of God" is applied to him on account of his resurrection, (Rom 1:4,) yet I confess this does not seem to me to come up to all that the writer here intended. The phrase, "THE Son of God," I suppose, properly denotes that the Lord Jesus sustained a relation to God, designated by that name, corresponding to the relations which he sustained to man, designated by the name "the Son of man." The one implied that he had a peculiar relation to God, as the other implied that he had a peculiar relation to man. This is indisputable. But on what particular account the name was given him, or how he was manifested to be the Son of God, has been the great question. Whether the name refers to the mode of his existence before the incarnation, and to his being begotten from eternity, or to the incarnation and the resurrection, has long been a point on which men have been divided in opinion. The natural idea conveyed by the title, `THE Son of God,' is, that he sustained a relation to God which implied more than was human or angelic; and this is certainly the drift of the argument of the apostle here. I do not see, however, that he refers to the doctrine of `eternal generation,' or that he means to teach that. His point is, that

God had declared and treated him as a Son--as superior to the angels and to men, and that this was shown in what had been said of him in the Old Testament. This would be equally clear, whether there is reference to the doctrine of eternal generation or not. The sense is, "he is more than human." He is more than angelic, He has been addressed and treated as a Son--which none of the angels have. They are regarded simply as ministering spirits. They sustain subordinate stations, and are treated accordingly. He, on the contrary, is the brightness of the Divine glory, he is treated and addressed as a Son. In his original existence this was so. In his incarnation this was so. When on earth this was so; and in his resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, he was treated in all respects as a Son--as superior to all servants, and to all "ministering spirits." The exact reference, then, of the phrase "this day have I begotten thee," in the Psalm, is to the act of constituting him, in a public manner, the Son of God; and refers to God's setting him as King on the "holy hill of Zion"--or making him King over the church and the world, as Messiah; and this was done eminently, as Paul shows (Acts 13) by the resurrection. It was based, however, on what was fit and proper. It was not arbitrary. There was a reason why he should thus be exalted, rather than a man or an angel; and this was, that he was the God incarnate, and had a nature that qualified him for universal empire, and he was thus appropriately called "THE Son of God."

And again, I will be to him a Father. This passage is evidently quoted from 2Sam 7:14. A sentiment similar to this is found in Ps 89:20-27. As these words were originally spoken, they referred to Solomon. They occur in a promise to DAVID, that he should not fail to have an heir to sit on his throne, or that his throne should be perpetual. The promise was particularly designed to comfort him in view of the fact, that God would not suffer him to build the temple, because his hands had been defiled with blood. To console him, in reference to that, God promises him far greater honour than that would be. He promises that the house should be built by one of his own

family, and that his family and kingdom should be established for ever. That, in this series of promises, the Messiah was included, as a descendant of David, was the common opinion of the Jews, of the early Christians, and has been of the great body of interpreters. It was certainly from such passages as this, that the Jews derived the notion, which prevailed so universally in the time of the Saviour, that the Messiah was to be the Son or the descendant of David. See Mt 22:42-45, 9:27, 15:22, 20:30,31, Mk 10:47,48, Lk 18:38,39, Mt 12:23; Mt 21:9, Jn 7:42, Rom 1:3, Rev 5:5, 22:16. That opinion was universal. No one doubted it; and it must have been common for the Jews to apply such texts as this to the Messiah. Paul would not have done it, in this instance, unless it had been usual. Nor was it improper. If the Messiah was to be a descendant of David, then it was natural to apply these promises, in regard to his posterity, in an eminent and peculiar sense to the Messiah. They were a part of the promises which included him, and which terminated in him. The promise, therefore, which is here made is, that God would be to him, in a peculiar sense, a Father, and he should be a Son. It does not, as I suppose, pertain, originally, exclusively to the Messiah, but included him as a descendant of David. To him it would be applicable in an eminent sense; and if applicable to him at all, it proved all that the passage here is adduced to prove--that the name Son is given to the Messiah, a name not given to angels. That is just the point on which the argument turns. What is implied in the bestowment of that name, is another point on which the apostle discourses in the other parts of the argument. I have no doubt, therefore, that while these words originally might have been applicable to Solomon, or to any of the other descendants of David who succeeded him on the throne, yet they at last terminated, and were designed to, in the Messiah, to whom pre-eminently God would be a Father. Comp. Introduction to Isaiah, & 7, iii. (3,) and Isa 7:16.

6 And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

And again. Marg., When he bringeth in again. The proper construction of this sentence probably is, "But when, he the moreover, brings in," etc. The word "again" refers not to the fact that Son of God is brought again into the world, implying that he had been introduced before; but it refers to the course of the apostle's argument, or to the declaration which is made about the Messiah in another place. "The name Son is not only given to him as above, but also in another place, or on another occasion, when he brings in the first-begotten into the world."

When he bringeth in. When he introduces. So far as the language here is concerned, this might refer to the birth of the Messiah; but it is evident, from the whole connexion, that the writer meant to refer to something that is said in the Old Testament. This is plain, because the passage occurs among quotations designed to prove specific point--that the Son of God, the Author of the Christian system, was superior to the angels. A declaration of the writer here, however true and solemn, would not have answered the purpose. A proof-text was wanting; a text which would be admitted, by those to whom he wrote, to bear on the point under consideration. The meaning then is, "that on another occasion, different from those to which he had referred, God, when speaking of the Messiah, or when introducing him to mankind, had used language showing that he was superior to the angels." The meaning of the phrase, "when he bringeth in," therefore, I take to be, when he introduces him to men; when he makes him known to the world--to wit, by the declaration which he proceeds immediately to quote.

The first-begotten. Christ is called the "first-begotten," with reference to his resurrection from the dead, in Rev 1:5, Col 1:18. It is probable here, however, that the word is used, like the word first-born, or first-begotten, among the Hebrews, by way of eminence. As the first-born was the principal heir, and had peculiar privileges, so the Lord Jesus Christ sustains a similar rank in the universe of which God is the Head and

Father. Jn 1:14, where the word, "only-begotten," is used to denote the dignity and honour of the Lord Jesus. Into the world. When he introduces him to mankind, or declares what he is to be.

He saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. Much difficulty has been experienced in regard to this quotation, for it cannot be denied that it is intended to be a quotation. In the Septuagint these very words occur in De 32:43, where they are inserted in the Song of Moses. But they are not in the Hebrew; nor are they in all the copies of the Septuagint. The Hebrew is, "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries.", The Septuagint is, "Rejoice ye heavens with him and let all the angels of God worship him. Let the nations rejoice with his people, and let all the sons of God be strong in him, for he has avenged the blood of his sons." But there are objections to our supposing that the apostle had this place in his view, which seem to me to settle the matter.

(1.) One is, that the passage is not in the Hebrew; and it seems hardly credible that, in writing to Hebrews, and to those residing in the very country where the Hebrew Scriptures were constantly used, he should adduce, as a proof-text on an important doctrine, what was not in their Scriptures.

(2.) A second is, that it is omitted in all the ancient versions, except the Septuagint.

(3.) A third is, that it is impossible to believe that the passage in question, in Deuteronomy, had any reference to the Messiah. It does not relate to his "introduction" to the world. It would not occur to any reader that it had any such reference. The context celebrates the victory over the enemies of Israel which God will achieve. After saying that "his arrows would be drunk with blood, and that his sword would devour flesh with the blood of the slain and of captives, from the time when he begins to take vengeance on an enemy," the

Septuagint (not the Hebrew) immediately asserts, "let the heavens rejoice at the same time with him, and let all the angels of God worship him." That is: "Let the inhabitants of the heavenly world rejoice in the victory of God over the enemies of his people, and let them pay their adoration to him." But the Messiah does not appear to be alluded to anywhere in the context; much less described as "introduced into the world." There is, moreover, not the slightest evidence that it was ever supposed by the Jews to have any such reference; and though it might be said that the apostle merely quoted language that expressed his meaning--as we often do when we are familiar with any well-known phrase that will exactly suit our purpose and convey an idea--yet, it should be remarked, that this is not the way in which this passage is quoted. It is a proof-text, and Paul evidently meant to be understood as saying, that that passage had a fair reference to the Messiah. It is evident, moreover, that it would be admitted to have such a reference by those to whom he wrote. It is morally certain, therefore, that this was not the passage which the writer intended to quote. The probability is, that the writer here referred to Ps 97:7, (in the Sept. Ps 96:7.) In that place, the Hebrew is, "worship him all ye gods " --all ye elohim. In the Septuagint it is, "Let all his angels worship him ;" where the translation is literal, except that the word God--"angels of God" --is used by the apostle instead of his-- "all his angels"--as it is in the Septuagint. The word "gods" elohim is rendered by the word angels, but the word may have that sense. Thus it is rendered by the Seventy, in Job 20:15; and in Ps 8:6, 138:1. It is well known, that the word elohim may denote kings and magistrates, because of their rank and dignity; and is there anything improbable in the supposition that, for a similar reason, the word may be given also to angels? The fair interpretation of the passage, then, would be, to refer it to angelic beings; and the command, in Ps 97, is for them to do homage to the being there referred to. The only question then is, whether the Psalm can be regarded properly as having any reference to the Messiah? Did the apostle fairly and properly use this language as referring to him?

On this we may remark,

(1.) That the fact that he uses it thus may be regarded as proof that it would be admitted to be proper by the Jews in his time, and renders it probable that it was in fact so used.

(2.) Two Jewish rabbins of distinction--Raschi and Kimchi--affirm, that all the Psalms, from 93, to 101 are to be regarded as referring to the Messiah. Such was, and is, the opinion of the Jews.

(3.) There is nothing in the Psalm which forbids such a reference, or which can be shown to be inconsistent with it. Indeed, the whole Psalm might be taken as beautifully descriptive of the "introduction" of the Son of God into the world, or as a sublime and glorious description of his advent. Thus, in Ps 97:1, the earth is called on to rejoice that the Lord reigns. In Ps 97:2-5, he is introduced or described as coming in the most magnificent manner--clouds and darkness attend him; a fire goes before him; the lightnings play; and the hills melt like wax --a sublime description of his coming, with appropriate symbols, to reign, or to judge the world. In Ps 97:6, it is said that all people shall see his glory; in Ps 97:7, that all who worship graven images shall be confounded, and all the angels are required to do him homage, and in vers. Ps 97:8-12, the effect of his advent is described as filling Zion with rejoicing, and the hearts of the people of God with gladness. It cannot be proved, therefore, that this Psalm had no reference to the Messiah; but the presumption is that it had, and that the apostle has quoted it not only as it was usually regarded in his time, but as it was designed by the Holy Ghost. If so, then it proves, what the writer intended, that the Son of God should be adored by the angels; and, of course, that he was superior to them. It proves also more. Whom would God require the angels to adore? A creature? A man? A fellow-angel? To ask these questions is to answer them. He could

require them to worship none but God, and the passage proves that the Son of God is divine.

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son *he saith,* Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever:

But unto the Son he saith. In Ps 45:6,7. The fact that the writer of this epistle makes this application of the Psalm to the Messiah, proves that it was so applied in his time, or that it would be readily admitted to be applicable to him. It has been generally admitted, by both Jewish and Christian interpreters, to have such a reference. Even those who have doubted its primary applicability to the Messiah, have regarded it as referring to him in a secondary sense. Many have supposed that it referred to Solomon in the primary sense, and that it has a secondary reference to the Messiah. To me it seems most probable that it had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. It is to be remembered, that the hope of the Messiah was the peculiar hope of the Jewish people. The coming of the future King, so early promised, was the great event to which they all looked forward with the deepest interest. That hope inspired their prophets and their bards, and cheered the hearts of the nation in the time of despondency. The Messiah, if I may so express it, was the hero of the Old Testament--more so than Achilles is of the Iliad, and AEneas of the AEniad. The sacred poets were accustomed to employ all their most magnificent imagery in describing him, and to present him in every form that was beautiful in their conception, and that would be gratifying to the pride and hopes of the nation. Every thing that is gorgeous and splendid in description is lavished on him; and they were never under any apprehension of attributing to him too great magnificence in his personal reign; too great beauty of moral character; or too great an extent of dominion. That which would be regarded by them as a magnificent description of a monarch, they freely applied to him; and this is evidently the case in this Psalm. That the description may have been, in part, derived from the view of Solomon in the magnificence of his

court, is possible, but no more probable than that it was derived from the general view of the splendour of any oriental monarch, or than that it might have been the description of a monarch which was the pure creation of inspired poetry. Indeed, I see not why this Psalm should ever have been supposed to be applicable to Solomon. His name is not mentioned. It has no peculiar applicability to him. There is nothing that would apply to him which would not also apply to many an oriental prince. There are some things in it which are much less applicable to him than to many others. The king here described is a conqueror. He girds his sword on his thigh, and his arrows are sharp in the hearts of his foes, and the people are subdued under him. This was not true of Solomon. His was a reign of peace and tranquillity, nor was he ever distinguished for war. On the whole, it seems clear to me, that this Psalm is designed to be a beautiful poetic description of the Messiah as king. The images are drawn from the usual characteristics of an oriental prince; and there are many things in the poem--as there, are in parables--for the sake of keeping, or veri-similitude, and which are not, in the interpretation, to be cut to the quick. The writer imagined to himself a magnificent and beautiful prince: a prince riding prosperously in his conquests; swaying a permanent and wide dominion; clothed in rich and splendid vestments; eminently upright and pure; and scattering blessings everywhere--and that prince was the Messiah. The Psalm, therefore, I regard as relating originally and exclusively to Christ; and though, in the interpretation, the circumstances should not be unduly pressed, nor an attempt be made to spiritualize them, yet the whole is a glowing and most beautiful description of Christ as a King. The same principles of interpretation should be applied to it which are applied to parables, and the same allowance be made for the introduction of circumstances for the sake of keeping, or for finishing the story. If this be the correct view, then Paul has quoted the Psalm in conformity exactly with its original intention, as he undoubtedly quoted it as it was understood in his time.

Thy throne. A throne is the seat on which a monarch sits, and is here the symbol of dominion, because kings, when acting as rulers, sit on thrones. Thus a throne becomes the emblem of authority or empire. Here it means, that his rule or dominion would be perpetual- "for ever and ever" --which assuredly could not be applied to Solomon.

O God. This certainly could not be applied to Solomon; but applied to the Messiah, it proves what the apostle is aiming to prove--that he is above the angels. The argument is that a name is given to him which is never given to them. They are not called God in any strict and proper sense. The argument here requires us to understand this word as used in a sense more exalted than any name which is ever given to angels, and though it may be maintained that the name Elohim is given to magistrates or to angels, yet here the argument requires us to understand it as used in a sense superior to what it ever is when applied to an angel--or of course to any creature, since it was the express design of the argument to prove that the Messiah was superior to the angels. The word God should be taken in its natural and obvious sense, unless there is some necessary reason for limiting it. If applied to magistrates (Ps 82:6) it must be so limited. If applied to the Messiah there is no such necessity, (Jn 1:1, Isa 10:6, 1Jn 5:20, Php 2:6,) and it should be taken in its natural and proper sense. The form here--οθεος in the vocative case and not the nominative. It is the usual form of the vocative in the Septuagint, and nearly the only form of it. Stuart. This, then, is a direct address to the Messiah, calling him God; and I see not why it is not to be used in the usual and proper sense of the word. Unitarians proposed to translate this, "God is thy throne;" but how can God be a throne of a creature? What is the meaning of such an expression? Where is there one parallel? And what must be the nature of that cause which renders such an argument necessary?--This refers, as it seems to me, to the Messiah as king. It does not relate to his mode of existence before the incarnation, but to him as the magnificent monarch of his people. Still the ground or reason

why this name is given to him is that he is divine. It is language which properly expresses his nature. He must have a divine nature, or such language would be improper. I regard this passage, therefore, as full proof that the Lord Jesus is divine; nor is it possible to evade this conclusion by any fair interpretation of it. It cannot be wrong to address him as God; nor addressing him as such, not to regard him as divine.

Is for ever and ever. This could not, in any proper sense, apply to Solomon. As applied to the Messiah, it means that his essential kingdom will be perpetual, Lk 1:33. As Mediator his kingdom will be given up to the Father, or to God, without reference to a mediatorial work, (1Cor 15:24,28--1Cor 15:24; 1Cor 15:28,) but his reign over his people will be perpetual. There never will come a time when they shall not obey and serve him, though the peculiar form of his kingdom, as connected with the work of mediation, will be changed. The form of the organized church, for example, will be changed--for there shall be no necessity for it in heaven--but the essential dominion and power of the Son of God will not cease. He shall have the same dominion which he had before he entered on the work of mediation; and that will be eternal. It is also true, that, compared with earthly monarchs, his kingdom shall be perpetual. They soon die. Dynasties pass away. But his empire extends from age to age, and is properly a perpetual dominion. The fair and obvious interpretation of this passage would satisfy me, were there nothing else, that this Psalm had no reference to Solomon, but was designed originally as a description of the Messiah, as the expected King and Prince of his people.

A sceptre of righteousness. That is, a right or just sceptre. The phrase is a Hebraism. The former expression described the perpetuity of his kingdom; this describes its equable nature. It would be just and equal. Isa 11:5. A sceptre is a staff or wand usually made of wood, five or six feet long, and commonly overlaid with gold, or ornamented with golden rings. Sometimes, however, the sceptre was made of ivory, or

wholly of gold. It was borne in the hands of kings as an emblem of authority and power. Probably it had its origin in the staff or crook of the shepherd-- as kings were at first regarded as the shepherds of their people. Thus Agamemnon is commonly called, by Homer, the shepherd of the people. The sceptre thus becomes the emblem of kingly office and power--as when we speak of swaying a sceptre;-- and the idea here is, that the Messiah would be a King, and that the authority which he would wield would be equitable and just. He would not be governed, as monarchs often are, by mere caprice, or by the wishes of courtiers and flatterers; he would not be controlled by mere will, and the love of arbitrary power; but the execution of his laws would be in accordance with the principles of equity and justice. How well this accords with the character of the Lord Jesus we need not pause to show. Comp. Isa 11:2, seq.

a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Thou hast loved righteousness. Thou hast been obedient to the law of God, or holy and upright. Nothing can be more truly adapted to express the character of any one, than this is to describe the Lord Jesus, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled," who "did no sin, and in whose mouth no guile was found;" but it is with difficulty that this can be applied to Solomon. Assuredly, for a considerable part of his life, this declaration could not well be appropriate to him; and it seems to me, that it is not to be regarded as descriptive of him at all. It is language prompted by the warm and pious imagination of the Psalmist, describing the future Messiah and, as applied to him, is true to the letter.

Therefore God, even thy God. The word even inserted here by the translators, weakens the force of the expression. This might be translated, "O God, thy God hath anointed thee." So it is rendered by Doddridge, Clarke, Stuart, and others. The Greek will bear this construction, as well the Hebrew in Ps

45:7. In the margin in the Psalm it is rendered, "O God." This is the most natural construction, as it accords with what is just said before. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever. Thou art just and holy, therefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee." It is not material, however, which construction is adopted.

Hath anointed thee. Anciently kings and priests were consecrated to their office by pouring oil on their heads. See Lev 8:12, Nu 3:3; 1Sam 10:1, 2Sam 2:7, Ps 2:6, Isa 61:1, Acts 4:27, 10:38; Mt 1:1 The expression "to anoint," therefore, comes to mean, to consecrate to office, or to set apart to some public work. This is evidently the meaning in the Psalm, where the whole language refers to the appointment of the personage there referred to to the kingly office.

The oil of gladness. This probably means the perfumed oil that was poured on the head, attended with many expressions of joy and rejoicing. The inauguration of the Messiah, as king would be an occasion of rejoicing and triumph. Thousands would exult at it--as in the coronation of a king; and thousands would be made glad by such a consecration to the office of Messiah. Above thy fellows. Above thine associates; that is, above all, who sustain the kingly office. He would be more exalted than all other kings. Doddridge supposes that it refers to angels, who might have been associated with the Messiah in the government of the world. But the more natural construction is, to suppose that it refers to kings, and to mean that he was the most exalted of all.

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.

And. That is, "To add another instance;" or, "to the Son he saith in another place, or in the following language." This is connected with Heb 1:8. "Unto the Son he saith, (Heb 1:8,) Thy throne, etc.--and (Heb 1:10) he also saith, Thou Lord," etc. That this is the meaning is apparent, because

(1.) the object of the whole quotation is to show the exalted character of the Son of God, and

(2.) an address here to JEHOVAH would be wholly irrelevant. Why, in an argument designed to prove that the Son of God was superior to the angels, should the writer break out in an address to JEHOVAH, in view of the fact that he had laid the foundations of the world, and that he himself would continue to live when the heavens should be rolled up and pass away? Such is not the manner of Paul, or of any other good writer; and it is clear that the writer here designed to adduce this as applicable to the Messiah. Whatever difficulties there may be about the principles on which it is done, and the reason why this passage was selected for the purpose, there can be no doubt about the design of the writer. He meant to be understood as applying it to the Messiah, beyond all question, or the quotation is wholly irrelevant, and it is inconceivable why it should have been made.

Thou, Lord. This is taken from Ps 102:25-27. The quotation is made from the Septuagint, with only a slight variation, and is an accurate translation of the Hebrew. In the Psalm, there can be no doubt that JEHOVAH is intended. This is apparent on the face of the Psalm, and particularly because the name JEHOVAH is introduced Ps 102:1,12, and because he is addressed as the Creator of all things, and as immutable. No one, on reading the Psalm, ever would doubt that it referred to God; and, if the apostle meant to apply it to the Lord Jesus, it proves most conclusively that he is divine. In regard to the difficult inquiry, why he applied this to the Messiah, or on what principle such an application can be vindicated, we may perhaps throw some light by the following remarks. It must be admitted, that probably few persons, if any, on reading the Psalm, would suppose that it referred to the Messiah; but

(1.) the fact that the apostle thus employs it, proves that it was understood, in his time, to have such a reference, or, at least, that those to whom he wrote would admit that it had such a reference. On no other principle would he have used it in an

argument. This is at least of some consequence, in showing what the prevailing interpretation was.

(2.) It cannot be demonstrated that it had no such reference--for such was the habit of the sacred writers in making the future Messiah the theme of their poetry, that no one can prove that the writer this Psalm did not design that the Messiah should be the subject of his praise here.

(3.) There is nothing in the Psalm which may not be applied to the Messiah; but there is much in it that is peculiarly applicable to him. Suppose, for example, that the Psalmist, Ps 102:1-11, in his complaints, represents the people of God, before the Redeemer appeared, as lowly, sad, dejected, and afflicted, speaking of himself as one of them, and as a fair representative of that people, the remainder of the Psalm will well agree with the promised redemption. Thus, having described the sadness and sorrow of the people of God, he speaks of the fact that God would arise and have mercy upon Zion, (Ps 102:13,14,) that the heathen would fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth would see his glory, (Ps 102:15,) and that when the Lord should build up Zion he would appear in his glory, Ps 102:16. To whom else could this be so well applied as to the Messiah? To what time so well as to his time? Thus, too, in Ps 102:20, it is said that the Lord would look down from heaven "to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose them that are appointed to death"--language remarkably resembling that used by Isaiah, Isa 61:1 which the Saviour applies to himself, in Lk 4:17-21. The passage then quoted by the apostle (Ps 102:25-27) is designed to denote the immutability of the Messiah, and the fact that in him all the interests of the church were safe. He would not change. He had formed all things, and he would remain the same. His kingdom would be permanent, amidst all the changes occurring on earth, and his people had no cause of apprehension or alarm, Ps 102:28.

(4.) Paul applies this language to the Messiah, in accordance with the doctrine which he had stated, (Heb 1:2,) that it was by him that God "made the worlds." Having stated that, he seems to have felt that it was not improper to apply to him the passages occurings in the Old Testament that speak of the work of creation. The argument is this. "He was, in fact, the Creator of all things. But, to the Creator, there is applied language in the Scriptures which shows that he was far exalted above the angels. He would remain the same, while the heavens and the earth should fade away. His years are enduring and eternal. Such a Being MUST be superior to the angels; such a Being must be divine." The words "Thou, Lord" συκυριε are not in the Hebrew of the Psalm, though they are in the Septuagint. In the Hebrew, in the Psalm, (Ps 102:24,) it is an address to God--"I said, O my God"-- --but there can be no doubt that the Psalmist meant to address JEHOVAH, and that the word God is used in its proper sense, denoting divinity. See Ps 102:1,12, of the Psalm. In the beginning. See Gen 1:1. When the world was made. Comp. Jn 1:1, where the same phrase is applied to the Messiah --

"In the beginning was the Word." Hast laid the foundation of the earth. Hast made the earth. This language is such as is common in the Scriptures, where the earth is represented as laid on a foundation, or as supported. It is figurative language, derived from the act of rearing an edifice. The meaning here is, that the Son of God was the original Creator or Founder of the universe. He did not merely arrange it out of pre-existing materials, but he was properly its Creator or Founder. And the heavens art the works of thine hands. This must demonstrate the Lord Jesus to be divine. He that made the vast heavens must be God. No creature could perform a work like that; nor can we conceive that power to create the vast array of distant worlds could possibly be delegated. If that power could be delegated, there is not an attribute of Deity which may not be, and thus all our notions of what constitutes divinity would be utterly confounded. The word "heavens" here must mean all parts of the universe except the earth, see Gen 1:1 The word

hands is used, because it is by the hands that we usually perform any work.

11 They shall perish, but thou remainest:
and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
12 and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be
changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.
13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right
hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

But to which of the angels. The apostle adduces one other proof of the exaltation of the Son of God above the angels. He asks where there is an instance in which God had addressed any one of the angels, and asked him to sit at his right hand until he should subdue his enemies under him? Yet that high honour had been conferred on the Son of God; and he was therefore far exalted above them. Sit on my right hand. Heb 1:3. This passage is taken from Ps 90:1--a Psalm that is repeatedly quoted in this epistle as referring to the Messiah, and the very passage before us is applied by the Saviour to himself, in Mt 22:43,44, and by Peter it is applied to him in Acts 2:34,35. There can be no doubt, therefore, of its applicability to the Messiah. Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Until I reduce them to entire subjection. A footstool is what is placed under the feet when we sit on a chair; and the phrase here means that an enemy is entirely subdued. Comp. 1Cor 15:25. The phrase, to make an enemy a footstool, is borrowed from the custom of ancient warriors, who stood on the necks of vanquished kings, on the occasion of celebrating a triumph over them, as a token of their complete prostration and subjection. Isa 10:6.--The enemies here referred to are the foes of God and of his religion; and the meaning is, that the Messiah is to be exalted until all those foes are subdued. Then he will give up the kingdom to the Father. 1Cor 15:24, seq. The exaltation of the Redeemer, to which the apostle refers here, is to the mediatorial throne. In this he is exalted far above the angels. His foes are to be subdued to him, but angels are to be employed as mere instruments in that great work.

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Are they not all. There is not one of them that is elevated to the high rank of the Redeemer. Even the most exalted angel is employed in the comparatively humble office of a ministering spirit, appointed to aid the heirs of salvation.

Ministering spirits. A ministering spirit is one that is employed to execute the will of God. The proper meaning of the word here-- λειτουργικα (whence our word liturgy) is, pertaining to public service, or the service of the people (λαος;) and is applied particularly to those who were engaged in the public service of the temple. They were those who rendered aid to others; who were helpers or servants. Such is the meaning as used here. They are employed to render aid or assistance to others--to wit, to Christians.

Sent forth. Appointed by God for this. They are sent; are under his control; are in a subordinate capacity. Thus Gabriel was sent forth to convey an important message to Daniel. Dan 9:21-23.

To minister. For the aid or succour of such. They come to render them assistance and, if employed in this humble office, how much inferior to the dignity of the Son of God--the Creator and Ruler of the worlds!

Who shall be heirs of salvation. To the saints; to Christians. They are called "heirs of salvation," because they are adopted into the family of God, and are treated as his sons. Rom 8:14, seq. The main point here is, that the angels are employed in a much more humble capacity than the Son of God; and, therefore, that he sustains a far more elevated rank. But while the apostle has proved, that he has incidentally stated an exceedingly interesting and important doctrine, that the angels are employed to further the salvation of the people of God, and to aid them in their journey to heaven. In this doctrine there is nothing absurd. It is no more improbable that

angels should be employed to aid man, than that one man should aid another; certainly not as improbable as that the Son of God should come down, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," (Mt 20:28,) and that he performed on earth the office of a servant, Jn 13:1-15. Indeed, it is a great principle of the Divine administration, that one class of God's creatures are to minister to others; that one is to aid another--to assist him in trouble, to provide for him when poor, and to counsel him in perplexity. We are constantly deriving benefit from others, and are dependent on their counsel and help. Thus, God has appointed parents to aid their children; neighbours to aid their neighbours; the rich to aid the poor; and all over the world the principle is seen, that one is to derive benefit from the aid of others. Why may not the angels be employed in this service? They are pure, benevolent, powerful; and as man was ruined in the fall by the temptation offered by one of an angelic, though fallen nature, why should not others of angelic, unfallen holiness, come to assist in repairing the evils which their fallen, guilty brethren have inflicted on the race? To me there seems to be a beautiful propriety in bringing aid from another race, as ruin came from another race; and that as those endowed with angelic might, though with fiendish malignity, ruined man, those with angelic might, but heavenly benevolence, should aid in his recovery and salvation. Farther, it is, from the necessity of the case, a great principle, that the weak shall be aided by the strong; the ignorant by the enlightened; the impure by the pure; the tempted by those who have not fallen by temptation. All over the world we see this in operation; and it constitutes the beauty of the moral arrangements on the earth; and why shall not this be extended to the inhabitants of other abodes? Why shall not angels, with their superior intelligence, benevolence, and power, come in to perfect this system, and show how much adapted it is to glorify God? In regard to the ways in which angels become ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, the Scriptures have not fully informed us; but facts are mentioned, which will furnish some light on this inquiry. What they do now may be learned from the Scripture account of what they have done-

-as it seems to be a fair principle of interpretation, that they are engaged in substantially the same employment in which they have ever been. The following methods of angelic interposition in behalf of man are noted in the Scripture.

(1.) They feel a deep interest in man. Thus the Saviour says, "There is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," Lk 15:10.

(2.) Thus also he says, when speaking of the "little ones" that compose his church, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," Mt 18:10.

(3.) They feel a special interest in all that relates to the redemption of man. Thus Peter says of the things pertaining to redemption, "which things the angels desire to look into," 1Pet 1:12. In accordance with this they are represented as praising God over the fields of Bethlehem, where the shepherds were to whom it was announced that a Saviour was born, (Lk 2:13;) an angel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah, (Lk 1:26;) an angel declared to the shepherds that he was born, (Lk 2:10;) the angels came and ministered to him in his temptation, (Mt 6:11;) an angel strengthened him in the garden of Gethsemane, (Lk 22:43;) angels were present in the sepulchre where the Lord Jesus had been laid, to announce his resurrection to his disciples, (Jn 20:12;) and they re-appeared to his disciples on Mount Olivet, to assure them that he would return, and receive his people to himself, Acts 1:10.

(4.) They appear for the defence and protection of the people of God. Thus it is said, (Ps 34:7,) "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Thus two angels came to hasten Lot from the cities of the Plain, and to rescue him from the impending destruction, Gen 19:1,15. Thus an angel opened the prison doors of the apostles, and delivered them when they had been confined by the Jews, Acts 5:19. Thus the angel of the Lord delivered

Peter from prison, when he had been confined by Herod, Acts 12:7,8.

(5.) Angels are sent to give us strength to resist temptation. Aid was thus furnished to the Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane, when there "appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him," Lk 22:43. The great trial there seems to have been somehow connected with temptation; some influence of the power of darkness, or of the prince of evil, Lk 22:53; comp. Jn 14:30. In this aid which they rendered to the tempted Redeemer, and in the assistance which they render to us when tempted, there is a special fitness and propriety. Man was at first tempted by a fallen angel. No small part--if not all the temptations in the world--are under the direction now of fallen angels. They roam at large, "seeking whom they may devour," 1Pet 5:8. The temptations which occur in life, the numerous allurements which beset our path, all have the marks of being under the control of dark and malignant spirits. What, therefore, can be more appropriate, than for the pure angels of God to interpose and aid man against the skill and wiles of their fallen and malignant fellow-spirits ? Fallen angelic power and skill--power and skill far above the capability and the strength of man--are employed to ruin us; and how desirable is it for like power and skill, under the guidance of benevolence, to come in to aid us!

(6.) They support us in affliction. Thus an angel brought a cheering message to Daniel; the angels were present to give comfort to the disciples of the Saviour, when he had been taken from them by death, and when he ascended to heaven. Why may it not be so now, that important consolations, in some way, are imparted to us by angelic influence? And

(7.) they attend dying saints, and conduct them to glory. Thus the Saviour says of Lazarus, that-when he died he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom," Lk 16:22. Is there any impropriety in supposing that the same thing may

be done still? Assuredly, if anywhere heavenly aid is needed, it is when the spirit leaves the body. If anywhere a guide is needed, it is when the ransomed soul goes up the unknown path to God. And if angels are employed on any messages of mercy to mankind, it is proper that it should be when life is closing, and the spirit is about to ascend to heaven. Should it be said that they are invisible, and that it is difficult to conceive how we can be aided by beings whom we never see, I answer--I know that they are unseen. They no longer appear, as they once did, to be the visible protectors and defenders of the people of God. But no small part of the aid which we receive from others comes from sources unseen by us. We owe more to unseen benefactors than to those whom we see; and the most grateful of all aid, perhaps, is that which is furnished by a hand which we do not see, and from quarters which we cannot trace. How many an orphan is benefited by some unseen and unknown benefactor! So it may be a part of the great arrangements of Divine Providence, that many of the most needed and acceptable interpositions for our welfare should come to us from invisible sources, and be conveyed to us from God by unseen hands.

Hebrews-2

So Great Salvation

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip.

Verse 1. Therefore. Gr. "On account of this" διατουτο that is, on account of the exalted dignity and rank of the Messiah, as stated in the previous chapter. The sense is, "Since Christ, the Author of the new dispensation, is so far exalted above the prophets, and even the angels, we ought to give the more earnest attention to all that has been Spoken."

We ought. It is fit or proper that we should attend to those things. When the Son of God speaks to men, every consideration makes it appropriate that we should attend to what is spoken.

To give the more earnest heed. To give the more strict attention. To the things which we have heard. Whether directly from the Lord Jesus, or from his apostles. It is possible, that some of those to whom the apostle was writing had heard the Lord Jesus himself preach the gospel; others had heard the same truths declared by the apostles.

Lest at any time. We ought to attend to those things at all times. We ought never to forget them; never to be indifferent to them. We are sometimes interested in them, and then we feel indifferent to them; sometimes at leisure to attend to them, and then the cares of the worlds, or a heaviness and dulness of mind, or a cold and languid state of the affections, renders us indifferent to them and they are suffered to pass out of the mind without concern. Paul says, that this ought never to be done! At no time should we be indifferent to those things. They are always important to us, and we should never be in a state of mind when they would be uninteresting. At all times; in all places; and in every situation of life, we should feel that the truths of religion are of more importance to us than all other truths, and nothing should be suffered to efface their image from the heart.

We should let them slip. Marg, Run out as leaking vessels. Tindal renders this, "lest we be split." The expression here has given rise to much discussion as to its meaning; and has been very differently translated. Doddridge renders it, "lest we let them flow out of our minds." Prof. Stuart, "lest at any time we should slight them." Whitby, "that they may not entirely slip out of our memories." The word here used παραρρεω -- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The Septuagint translators have used the word but once. Prov 3:21, "Son, do not pass by, μηπαραρρυης but keep my counsel;" that is, do

not pass by my advice by neglect, or suffer it to be disregarded. The word means, according to Passow, to flow by, to flow over; and then, to go by, to fall, to flow away. It is used to mean, to flow near, to flow by--as of a river; to glide away, to escape--as from the mind, i.e. to forget; and to glide along--as a thief does by stealth. See Robinson's Lex. The Syriac and Arabic translators have rendered it, that we may not fall. After all that has been said on the meaning of the word here, (compare Stuart, in loc.,) it seems to me, that the true sense of the expression is that of flowing or gliding by--as a river; and that the meaning here is, that we should be very cautious that the important truths spoken by the Redeemer and his apostles should not be suffered to glide by us without attention, or without profit. We should not allow them to be like a stream that glides on by us without benefiting us; that is, we should endeavour to secure and retain them as our own. The truth taught is, that there is great danger, now that the true system of religion has been revealed, that it will not profit us, but that we shall lose all the benefit of it. This danger may arise from many sources--some of which are the following:--

(1.) We may not feel that the truths revealed are important; and before their importance is felt, they may be beyond our reach. So we are often deceived in regard to the importance of objects; and before we perceive their value, they are irrecoverably gone. So it is often with time, and with the opportunities of obtaining an education, or of accomplishing any object which is of value. The opportunity is gone before we perceive its importance. So the young suffer the most important period of life to glide away before they perceive its value; and the opportunity of making much of their talents is lost, because they did not embrace the suitable opportunities.

(2.) By being engrossed in business. We feel that that is now the most important thing. That claims all our attention. We have no time to pray, to read the Bible, to think of religion, for the cares of the world engross all the time--and the

opportunities of salvation glide insensibly away, until it is too late.

(3.) By being attracted by the pleasures of life. We attend to them now, and are drawn along from one to another, until religion is suffered to glide away with all its hopes and consolations; and we perceive, too late, that we have let the opportunity of salvation slip for ever. Allured by those pleasures, the young neglect it; and new pleasures, starting up in future life, carry on the delusion, until every favourable opportunity for salvation has passed away;

(4.) We suffer favourable opportunities to pass by without improving them. Youth is by far the best time, as it is the most appropriate time, to become a Christian--and yet how easy is it to allow that period to slip away, without becoming interested in the Saviour! One day glides on after another, and one week, one month, one year passes away after another--like a gently-flowing stream--until all the precious time of youth has gone, and we are not Christians. So a revival of religion is a favourable time--and yet many suffer this to pass by without becoming interested in it. Others are converted, and the heavenly influences descend all around us, but we are unaffected; and the season, so full of happy and heavenly influences, is gone, to return no more.

(5.) We let the favourable season slip, because we design to attend to it at some future period of life. So youth defers it to manhood--manhood to old age--old age to a death-bed, and then neglects it--until the whole of life has glided away, and the soul is not saved. Paul knew man. He knew how prone he was to let the things of religion slip out of the mind; and hence the earnestness of his caution that we should give heed to the subject now, lest the opportunity of salvation should soon glide away. When once passed, it can never be recalled. Learn hence,

(1.) The truths of religion will not benefit us, unless we give heed to them. It will not save us that the Lord Jesus has come and spoken to men, unless we are disposed to listen. It will not benefit us that the sun shines, unless we open our eyes. Books will not benefit us, unless we read them; medicine, unless we take it; nor will the fruits of the earth sustain our lives, however rich and abundant, they may be, if we disregard and neglect them. So with the truths of religion. There is truth enough to save the world--but the world disregards and despises it.

(2.) It needs not great sins to destroy the soul. Simple neglect will do it as certainly as atrocious crimes. Every man has a sinful heart that will destroy him, unless he makes an effort to be saved. And it is not merely the great sinner, therefore, who is in danger. It is the man who neglects his soul--whether a moral or an immoral man, a daughter of amiableness, or a daughter of vanity and vice.

As if our apostle had said, Seeing Christ is so excellent in his person, and seeing the gospel has such a glorious author as the blessed Jesus let us take great heed that we esteem his person, revere his authority, reverence his ministry and message, and that our memories be not like leaking vessels, suffering the word at any time to slip and run from us.

Learn hence, 1. The consideration of the revelation of the gospel of the Son of God, is a powerful motive to an high estimation of it, Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed; that is, knowing the excellency of his person, and the sublimity of his doctrine.

2. The true and only way of honouring our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is by diligent attendance and obedience to his word: where there is no faith in, nor love unto, Jesus Christ, the author and dispenser of the gospel.

3. There are sundry times and seasons wherin, and several ways and means whereby, men are in great danger of losing the word, if they attend not diligently to its preservation. Lest at any time; some lose the word in a time of prosperity, others in a time of persecution, some in a time of temptation.

4. The word heard is not lost without great sin, as well as with the inevitable ruin of the souls of men. If we suffer the word to slip out of our memories, that we forget it; out of our hearts, that we despise it; out of our lives, that we are disobedient to it; it is lost as to us, and will end in our loss, yea, in our ruin at the last.

5. The only way to prevent this sin and danger, under the word, is by a very diligent attendance upon it, and giving mor earnest heed to the things contained in it: we are to attend to the word before we hear, to bring us to it; to attend upon it in hearing, that it may be remembered by us; and after we have heard it, that it may be practised by us.
This consideration, that it is the word of Christ, the great an mighty God, the wisdom of the Father, that we are going forth to hear, will engage us to give the more earnest heed to the things we hear, lest at any time we should let them slip.

The apostle proceeds in the plain profitable method of doctrine, reason, and use, through this epistle. Here we have the application of the truths before asserted and proved; this is brought in by the illative particle therefore, with which this chapter begins, and which shows its connection with the former, where the apostle having proved Christ to be superior to the angels by whose ministry the law was given, and therefore that the gospel dispensation must be more excellent than the legal, he now comes to apply this doctrine both by way of exhortation and argument.

I. By way of exhortation: Therefore we ought to give the more diligent heed to the things which we have heard, Heb 2:1. This is the first way by which we are to show our esteem of

Christ and of the gospel. It is the great concern of every one under the gospel to give the most earnest heed to all gospel discoveries and directions, to prize them highly in his judgment as matters of the greatest importance, to hearken to them diligently in all the opportunities he has for that purpose, to read them frequently, to meditate on them closely, and to mix faith with them. We must embrace them in our hearts and affections, retain them in our memories, and finally regulate our words and actions according to them.

II. By way of argument, he adds strong motives to enforce the exhortation.

1. From the great loss we shall sustain if we do not take this earnest heed to the things which we have heard: We shall let them slip. They will leak, and run out of our heads, lips, and lives, and we shall be great losers by our neglect. Learn,

(1.) When we have received gospel truths into our minds, we are in danger of letting them slip. Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not without much care retain what is poured into them; this proceeds from the corruption of our natures, the enmity and subtlety of Satan (he steals away the word), from the entanglements and snares of the world, the thorns that choke the good seed.

(2.) Those meet with an inconceivable loss who let gospel truths, which they had received, slip out of their minds; they have lost a treasure far better than thousands of gold and silver; the seed is lost, their time and pains in hearing lost, and their hopes of a good harvest lost; all is lost, if the gospel be lost.

(3.) This consideration should be a strong motive both to our attention to the gospel and our retention of it; and indeed, if we do not well attend, we shall not long retain the word of God; inattentive hearers will soon be forgetful hearers.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

For if the word spoken by angels. The revelation in the Old Testament. It was indeed given by Jehovah; but it was the common opinion of the Hebrews, that it was by the ministry of angels. Acts 7:38; Acts 7:53, and Gal 3:19, where this point is fully considered. As Paul was discoursing here of the superiority of the Redeemer to the angels, it was to the point to refer to the fact that the law had been given by the ministry of angels.

Was steadfast. Was firm-- βεβαιος--settled, established. It was not vacillating and fluctuating. It determined what crime was, and it was firm in its punishment. It did not yield to circumstances; but, if not obeyed in all respects, it denounced punishment. The idea here is not that everything was fulfilled, but it is, that the law so given could not be violated with impunity. It was not safe to violate it, but it took notice of the slightest failure to yield perfect obedience to its demands.

And every transgression. Literally, going beyond, passing by. It means every instance of disregarding the law.

And disobedience. Every instance of not hearing the law παρακοη and hence every instance of disobeying it. The word here stands opposite to hearing it, or attending to it--and the sense of the whole is, that the slightest infraction of the law was sure to be punished. It made no provision for indulgence in sin; it demanded prompt, implicit, and entire Obedience.

Received a Just recompense of reward. Was strictly punished. Subjected to equal retribution. This was the character of the law. It threatened punishment for each and every offence, and made no allowance for transgression in any form. Comp. Nu 15:30,31.

How shall we escape. How shall we escape the just recompense due to transgressors? What way is there of being saved from punishment, if we suffer the great salvation to be neglected, and do not embrace its offers ? The sense is, that there is no other way of salvation, and the neglect of this will be followed by certain destruction. Why it will, the apostle proceeds to show, by stating that this plan of salvation was proclaimed first by the Lord himself, and had been confirmed by the most decided and amazing miracles.

If we neglect. It is not merely if we commit great sins; not if we are murderers, adulterers, thieves, infidels, atheists, scoffers. It is, if we merely neglect this salvation--if we do not embrace it--if we suffer it to pass unimproved. Neglect is enough to ruin a man. A man who is in business need not commit forgery or robbery to ruin himself; he has only to neglect his business, and his ruin is certain. A man who is lying on a bed of sickness need not cut his throat to destroy himself; he has only to neglect the means of restoration, and he will be ruined. A man floating in a skiff above Niagara, need not move an oar or make an effort to destroy himself; he has only to neglect using the oar at the proper time, and he will certainly be carried over the cataract. Most of the calamities of life are caused by simple neglect. By neglect of education, children grow up in ignorance; by neglect, a farm grows up to weeds and briars ; by neglect, a house goes to decay; by neglect of sowing, a man will have ho harvest; by neglect of reaping, the harvest would rot in the fields. No worldly interest can prosper where there is neglect; and why may it not be so in religion? There is nothing in earthly affairs, that is valuable, that will not be ruined if it is not attended to; and why may it not be so with the concerns of the soul? Let no one infer, therefore, that because he is not a drunkard, or an adulterer, or a murderer, that therefore he will be saved. Such an inference would be as irrational as it would be for a man to infer, that because he is not a murderer his farm will produce a harvest, or that because he is not an adulterer, therefore his merchandise will take care of itself.

Salvation would be worth nothing if it cost no effort; and there will be no salvation where no effort is put forth.

So great salvation. Salvation from sin and from hell. It is called great, because

(1) its Author is great. This is perhaps the main idea in this passage. It "began to be spoken by the Lord;" it had for its author the Son of God, who is so much superior to the angels; whom the angels were required to worship, (Heb 1:6;) who is expressly called God, (Heb 1:8;) who made all things, and who is eternal, (Heb 1:10-12.) A system of salvation promulgated by him must be of infinite importance, and have a claim to the attention of man.

(2.) It is great, because it saves from great sins. It is adapted to deliver from all sins, no matter how aggravated. No one is saved who one feels that his sins are small, or that they are of no consequence. Each sees his sins to be black and aggravated; and each one who enters heaven, will go there feeling and confessing that it is a great salvation which has brought such a sinner there. Besides, this salvation delivers from all sin--no matter how gross and aggravated. The adulterer, the murderer, the blasphemer, may come and be saved; and the salvation which redeems such sinners from eternal ruin is great.

(3.) It is great, because it saves from great dangers. The danger of an eternal hell besets the path of each one. All do not see it; and all will not believe it when told of it. But this danger hovers over the path of every mortal. The danger of an eternal hell! Salvation from everlasting burnings! Deliverance from unending ruin! Surely that salvation must be great which shall save from such a doom! If that salvation is neglected, that danger still hangs over each and every man. The gospel did not create that danger it came to deliver from it. Whether the gospel be true or false, each man is by nature exposed to eternal death--just as each one is exposed to

temporal death, whether the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection be true or false. The gospel comes to provide a remedy for dangers and woes--it does not create them; it comes to deliver men from great dangers--not to plunge them into them. Lacking the gospel, and before it was preached at all, men were in danger of everlasting punishment; and that system which came to proclaim deliverance from such a danger is great.

(4.) The salvation itself is great in heaven. It exalts men to infinite honours, and places on their heads an eternal crown. Heaven, with all its glories, is offered to us; and such a deliverance, and such an elevation to eternal honours, deserves to be called GREAT. If that is neglected, there is no other salvation; and man must be inevitably destroyed.

(5.) It is great, because it was effected by infinite displays of power, and wisdom, and love. It was procured by the incarnation and humiliation of the Son of God. It was accomplished amidst great sufferings and self-denials. It was attended with great miracles. The tempest was stilled, and the deaf were made to hear and the blind to see, and the dead were raised, and the sun was darkened, and the rocks were rent. The whole series of wonders connected with the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus, was such as the world had not elsewhere seen, and such as was fitted to hold the race in mute admiration and astonishment. If this be so, then religion is no trifle. It is not a matter of little importance, whether we embrace it or not. It is the most momentous of all the concerns that pertain to man; and has a claim on his attention which nothing else can have. Yet the mass of men live in the neglect of it. It is not that they are professedly Atheists, or Deists, or that they are immoral or profane; it is not that they oppose it, and ridicule it, and despise it; it is that they simply neglect it. They pass it by, They attend to other things. They are busy with their pleasures, or in their counting-houses-in their workshops, or on their farms; they are engaged in politics or in book-making; and they neglect religion NOW as a thing of

small importance--proposing to attend to it hereafter, as if they acted on the principle, that everything else was to be attended to before religion. Which at the first. Gr. Which received the beginning of being spoken. The meaning is correctly expressed in our translation. Christ began to preach the gospel; the apostles followed him. John prepared the way, but the Saviour was properly the first preacher of the gospel. By the Lord. By the Lord Jesus. Actst 1:24. And was confirmed unto us, etc. They who heard him preach--that is, the apostles--were witnesses of what he said, and certified us of its truth. When the apostle here says "us," he means the church at large. Christians were assured of the truth of what the Lord Jesus spake, by the testimony of the apostles; or the apostles communicated it to those who had not heard him in such a manner, as left no room for doubt.

3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him;*

The apostle having set forth the transcendant dignity of Christ's person and office, and shown that he was a more excellent priest than Aaron, a more excellent king than Melchizedek, hereupon he infers, that such as despise the gospel, the doctrine of this blessed Jesus, are far mare inexcusable than those that were the transgressors of the law of Moses.

If the word spoken by angels were steadfast; that is if the law given by the ministry of angels was firm and inviolable, and all the transgressors of it were justly and severely punished; how can we escape perishing, if we neglect the gospel, which makes a discovery of that great salvation which was purchased by Christ for lost sinners?
The apostle's argument is drawn (a minoriad majus) from the less to the greater. Thus, if Almighty God was so severe against the violation of a far meaner institution, to wit the law given by the ministry and dispensation of angels; how can we escape that neglect to hear and obey the gospel, which makes a tender, yea, the only tender of salvation to a lost world?

Note here, 1. The great care which God Almighty takes to make lost sinners happy, namely by offering them a great salvation.
Note, 2. The great care which every one of us ought to take in order to our own happiness and salvation, and that is, not to neglect it.

Note, 3. The great guilt which they contract, and the inevitable punishment God will inflict on such as do neglect this great salvation, How shall they escape?
Learn hence, 1. That there is salvation; great in its author, Christ Jesus; great in the price paid for it, the blood of Jesus; great in regard of the evils it saves us from, sin, Satan, the curse of the law, death and hell; great in respect of the gracious privileges it interests believers in.

Learn, 2. That notwithstanding this salvation is so great, yet there are some that neglect it.

Learn, 3. That it is impossible for such neglecters to escape.

Quest. 1. What shall they not escape?
Ans. The curse of the law, the wrath of God, the sentence of Christ denounced and the sentence of Christ inflicted.

Quest. 2. Why shall they not escape?
Ans. Because such persons sin against the remedy, the only remedy, which the wisdom of God hath found out for man's recovery; and accordingly the mouth of God hath spoken it, the hand of God hath written it, and the oath of God hath confirmed it, that such sinners shall not escape: such as sin against the remedy, must perish without the remedy.

4 God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

God also bearing them witness. By miracles. Giving them the sanction of his authority, or showing that they were sent by

him. No man can work a miracle by his own power. When the dead are raised, the deaf made to hear, and the blind to see, by a word, it is the power of God alone that does it. He thus becomes a witness to the Divine appointment of him by whose instrumentality the miracle is wrought; or furnishes an attestation that what he says is true. Acts 14:3. With signs and wonders. These words are usually connected in the New Testament. The word rendered signs σημειον-- means any miraculous event that is fitted to show that what had been predicted by a prophet would certainly take place. See Mt 12:38. Compare Isa 7:1. A wonder -τερας-- denotes a portent, or prodigy--something that is fitted to excite wonder or amazement-and hence a miracle. The words together refer to the various miracles which were performed by the Lord Jesus and his apostles, designed to confirm the truth of the Christian religion. And with divers miracles. Various miracles--such as healing the sick, raising the dead, etc. The miracles were not of one class merely, but were various, so that all pretence of deception should be taken away. And gifts of the Holy Ghost. Marg. Distributions, The various influences of the Holy Spirit enabling them to speak different languages, and to perform works beyond the power of man. 1Cor 12:4-11. According to his own will. As he chose. He acted as a sovereign in this. He gave them where he pleased, and imparted them in such measure as he chose. The sense of this whole passage is--"The gospel has been promulgated to man in a solemn manner. It was first published by the Lord of glory himself. It was confirmed by the most impressive and solemn miracles. It is undoubtedly a revelation from heaven; was given in more solemn circumstances than the law of Moses, and its threatenings are more to be dreaded than those of the law. Beware, therefore, how you trifle with it, or disregard it. It cannot be neglected with safety; its neglect or rejection must be attended with condemnation."

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection. In this verse the apostle returns to the subject which he had been discussing in Chapter 1--the superiority of the Messiah to the angels. From that subject he had been diverted, (Heb 2:1-4,) by showing them what must be the consequences of defection from Christianity, and the danger of neglecting it. Having shown that, he now proceeds with the discussion, and shows that an honour had been conferred on the Lord Jesus which had never been bestowed on the angels--to wit, the supremacy over this world. This he does by proving, from the Old Testament, that such a dominion was given to man, (Heb 2:6-8,) and that this dominion was in fact exercised by the Lord Jesus, Heb 2:9. At the same time, he meets an objection which a Jew would be likely to make. It is, that Jesus appeared to be far inferior to the angels. He was a man of a humble condition. He was poor, and despised. He had none of the external honour which was shown to Moses--the founder of the Jewish economy; none of the apparent honour which belonged to angelic beings. This implied objection he removes, by showing the reason why he became so. It was proper, since he came to redeem man, that he should be a man, and not take on himself the nature of angels; and, for the same reason, it was proper that he should be subjected to sufferings, and be made a man of sorrows, Heb 2:10-17. The remark of the apostle in the verse before us is, that God had never put the world in subjection to the angels, as he had to the Lord Jesus. They had no jurisdiction over it; they were mere ministering spirits; but the world had been put under the dominion of the Lord Jesus. The world to come. The word here rendered world οικουμενη means, properly, the inhabited or inhabitable world. See Mt 24:14; Lk 2:1, 4:5, 21:27, (Gr. ;) Acts 11:28, 17:6, 31, 19:27, 24:5, Rom 10:18; Heb 1:6, Rev 3:10, 12:9, 16:14 -in all which places, but one, it is rendered world. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The proper meaning is, the world or earth considered as inhabitable--and here the jurisdiction refers to the control

over man, or the dwellers on the earth. The phrase, "the world to come," occurs not unfrequently in the New Testament. Comp. Eph 2:7, 1Cor 10:11, Heb 6:5. The same phrase, "the world to come, --occurs often in the Jewish writings. According to Buxtorf (Lex. Ch. Talm. Rub.) it means, as some suppose, "the world which is to exist after this world is destroyed, and after the resurrection of the dead, when souls shall be again united to their bodies." By others it is supposed to mean "the days of the Messiah, when he shall reign on the earth." To me it seems to be clear that the phrase here means, the world under the Messiah-- the world, age, or dispensation which was to succeed the Jewish, and which was familiarly known to them as "the world to come;" and the idea is, that that world, or age, was placed under the jurisdiction of the Christ, and not of the angels. This point the apostle proceeds to make out. Isa 2:2.

6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

But one in a certain place testified. The apostle was writing to those who were supposed to be familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, and where it would be necessary only to makes reference in general, without mentioning the name. The place which is quoted here is Ps 8:4-6. The argument of the apostle is this--that there stood in the sacred Scriptures a declaration, that "all things were placed under the control and jurisdiction of MAN," but that that had not yet been accomplished. It was not true (Heb 2:8) that all things were subject to him; and the complete truth of that declaration would be found only in the jurisdiction conferred on the Messiah--THE MAN, by way of eminence--the incarnate Son of God. It would not occur to any one probably in reading the Psalm, that the verse here quoted had any reference to the Messiah. It seems to relate to the dominion which God had given man over his works in this lower world, or to the fact that he was made lord over all things. That dominion is apparent, to a considerable extent, everywhere, and is a standing proof of the truth of what is recorded in Gen 1:26, that God originally gave dominion to

man over the creatures on earth--since it is only by this supposition that it can be accounted for, that the horse, and the elephant, and the ox, and even the panther and the lion, are subject to the control of man. The argument of Paul seems to be this:-- "Originally this control was given to man. It was absolute and entire. All things were subject to him, and all obeyed. Man was made a little lower than the angels, and was the undisputed lord of this lower world. He was in a state of innocence. But he rebelled, and this dominion has been in some measure lost. It is found complete only in the second man, the Lord from heaven, (1Cor 15:47,) the Lord Jesus, to whom this control is absolutely given. He comes up to the complete idea of man--man as he was in innocence, and man as he was described by the Psalmist, as having been made a little lower than the angels, and having entire dominion over the world." Much difficulty has been felt by commentators in regard to this passage, and to the principle on which it is quoted. The above seems to me to be that which is most probably true. There are two other methods by which an attempt has been made to explain it. One is, that Paul uses the words here by way of allusion, or accommodation, (Doddridge;) as words that will express his meaning, without designing to say that the Psalm originally had any reference to the Messiah. Most of the later commentators accord with this opinion. The other opinion is, that David originally referred to the Messiah--that he was deeply and gratefully affected in view of the honour that God had conferred on him; and that in looking down by faith on the posterity that God had promised him, (see 2Sam 7:14,) he saw one among his own descendants to whom God would give this wide dominion, and expresses himself in the elevated language of praise. This opinion is defended by Prof. Stuart. See his Com. On the Hebrews, Excursus IX.

What is man, etc. What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice? Why has God conferred on him so signal honours? Why has he placed him over the works of his hands? He seems so insignificant; his life is so much like a vapour;

he so soon disappears, that the question may well be asked why this extraordinary dominion is given him? He is so sinful, also, and so unworthy; so much unlike God, and so passionate and revengeful; is so prone to abuse his dominion, that it may be well asked why God has given it to him? Who would suppose that God would give such a dominion over his creatures to one who was so prone to abuse it, as man has shown himself to be? He is so feeble, also, compared with other creatures--even of those which are made subject to him-that the question may well be asked why God has conceded it to him? Such questions may be asked when we contemplate man as he is. But similar questions may be asked, if, as was probably the case, the Psalm here be supposed to have had reference to man as he was created. Why was one so feeble, and so comparatively without strength, placed over this lower world, and the earth made subject to his control? Why is it that, when the heavens are so vast and glorious, (Ps 8:3,) God has taken such notice of man? Of what consequence can he be amidst works so wonderful? "When I look on the heavens, and survey their greatness and their glory," is the sentiment of David, "why is it that man has attracted so much notice, and that he has not been wholly overlooked in the vastness of the works of the Almighty? Why is it, that instead of this he has been exalted to so much dignity and honour?" This question, thus considered, strikes us with more force now, than it could have struck David. Let any one sit down, and contemplate the heavens as they are disclosed by the discoveries of modern astronomy, and he may well ask the question, "What is man that he should have attracted the attention of God, and been the object of so much care?" The same question would not have been inappropriate to David, if the Psalm be supposed to have had reference originally to the Messiah, and if he was speaking of himself particularly as the ancestor of the Messiah. "What is man; what am I; what can any of my descendants be, who must be of mortal frame, that this dominion should be given him? Why should any of a race so feeble, so ignorant, so imperfect, be exalted to such honour?" We may ask the question here, and it may be asked

in heaven with pertinency and with power, "Why was man so honoured, as to be united to the Godhead? Why did the Deity appear in the human form? What was there in man that should entitle him to this honour of being united to the Divinity, and of being thus exalted above the angels?" The wonder is not yet solved; and we may well suppose that the angelic ranks look with amazement --but without envy--on the fact, that man, by his union with the Deity in the person of the Lord Jesus, has been raised above them in rank and in glory.

Or the son of man. This phrase means the same as man, and is used merely to give variety to the mode of expression. Such a change or variety in words and phrases, when the same thing is intended, occurs constantly in Hebrew poetry. The name "son of man" is often given to Christ, to denote his intimate connexion with our race, and the interest which he felt in us, and is the common term which the Saviour uses when speaking of himself. Here it means man, and may be applied to human nature everywhere--and therefore to human nature in the person of the Messiah.

That thou visitest him. That thou shouldst regard him, or treat him with so much honour. Why is he the object of so much interest to the Divine Mind?

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;
thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over
the works of thy hands:

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Marg. A little while inferior to. The Greek may here mean, a little inferior in rank, or inferior for a little time. But the probable meaning is, that it refers to inferiority of rank. Such is its obvious sense in Ps 8, from which this is quoted. The meaning is, that God had made man but little inferior to the angels in rank. He was inferior, but still God had exalted him almost to their rank. Feeble, and weak, and dying as he was, God had exalted him, and had given him a dominion and a rank almost like that of the angels. The wonder of the Psalmist is, that God had given to human nature so much honour--a wonder that is not at all

diminished, when we think of the honour done to man by his connexion with the Divine nature in the person of the Lord Jesus. If, in contemplating the face as it appears; if, when we look at the dominion of man over the lower world, we are amazed that God has bestowed so much honour on our nature, how much more should we wonder that he has honoured man by his connexion with the Divinity. Paul applies this to the Lord Jesus. His object is to show that he is superior to the angels. In doing this, he shows that he had a nature given him in itself but little inferior to the angels, and then that that had been exalted to a rank and dominion far above theirs. That such honour should be put on man is what is fitted to excite amazement, and well may one continue to ask why it has been done? When we survey the heavens, and contemplate their glories, and think of the exalted rank of other beings, we may well inquire why has such honour been conferred on man? Thou crownedst him with glory and honour. That is, with exalted honour. Glory and honour here are nearly synonymous. The meaning is, that elevated honour had been conferred on human nature. A most exalted and extended dominion had been given to man, which showed that God had greatly honoured him. This appeared eminently in the person of the Lord Jesus, "the exalted Man," to whom this dominion was given in the widest extent. And didst set him over, etc. Man has been placed over the other works of God

(1.) by the original appointment, (Gen 1:26;)

(2.) man at large--though fallen, sinful, feeble, dying;

(3.) man, eminently in the person of the Lord Jesus, in whom human nature has received its chief exaltation. This is what is particularly in the eye of the apostle--and the language of the Psalm will accurately express this exaltation.

8 thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.
For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

Thou hast put all things in subjection, etc. Ps 8:6. That is, all things are put under the control of man, or, thou hast given him dominion over all things. For in that he put all in subjection. The meaning of this is, that "the fair interpretation of the passage in the Psalm is, that the dominion of man, or of human nature over the earth, was to be absolute and total. Nothing was to be excepted. But this is not now the fact in regard to man in general, and can be true only of human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus. There the dominion is absolute and universal." The point of the argument of the apostle may be this:--"It was the original appointment (Gen 1:26) that man should have dominion over this lower world, and be its absolute lord and sovereign. Had he continued in innocence, this dominion would have been entire and perpetual. But he fell, and we do not now see him exerting this dominion. What is said of the dominion of man can be true only of human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus, and there it is completely fulfilled." But now we see not yet all things put under him. That is, "It is not now true that all things are subject to the control of man. There is indeed a general dominion over the works of God, and over the inferior creation. But the control is not universal. A large part of the animal creation rebels, and is brought into subjection only with difficulty. The elements are not entirely under his control; the tempest and the ocean rage; the pestilence conveys death through city and hamlet; the dominion of man is a broken dominion. His government is an imperfect government. The world is not yet put wholly under his dominion, but enough has been done to constitute a pledge that it will yet be done. It will be fully accomplished only in him who sustains our nature, and to whom dominion is given over the worlds."

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

But we see Jesus. "We do not see that man elsewhere has the extended dominion of which the Psalmist speaks. But we see the fulfillment of it in Jesus, who was crowned with glory and

honour, and who has received a dominion that is superior to that of the angels." The point of this is, not that he suffered, and not that he tasted death for every man; but that on account of this, or as a reward for thus suffering, he was crowned with glory and honour, and that he thus fulfilled all that David (Ps 8) had said of the dignity and honour of man. The object of the apostle is to show that he was exalted, and in order to this he shows why it was--. to wit, because he had suffered death to redeem man. Comp. Php 2:8,9. Who was made a little lower than the angels. That is, as a man, or when on earth. His assumed rank was inferior to that of the angels. He took upon himself, not the nature of angels, Heb 2:16, but the nature of man. The apostle is probably here answering some implied objections to the rank which it was claimed that the Lord Jesus had, or which might be urged to the views which he was defending. Those objections were mainly two: first, that Jesus was a man; and, secondly, that he suffered and died. If that was the fact, it was natural to ask how he could be superior to the angels? How could he have had the rank which was claimed for him? This he answers by showing, first, that his condition as a man was voluntarily assumed--" he was made lower than the angels;" and, secondly, by showing that, as a consequence of his sufferings and death, he was immediately crowned with glory and honour. This state of humiliation became him in the great work which he had undertaken, and he was immediately exalted to universal dominion--and, as Mediator, was raised to a rank far above the angels. For the suffering of death. Marg. By. The meaning of the preposition here rendered "for," (διᾳ, here governing the accusative,) is, "on account of; "that is, Jesus, on account of the sufferings of death, or in virtue of that, was crowned with glory and honour. His crowning was the result of his condescension and sufferings. Php 2:8,9. It does not here mean as our translation would seem to imply, that he was made a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death, but that as a reward for having suffered death He was raised up to the right hand of God.

Crowned with glory and honour. That is, at the right hand of God. He was raised up to heaven, Acts 2:33, Mk 16:19. The meaning is, that he was crowned with the highest honour on account of his sufferings. Comp. Php 2:8,9, Heb 12:2, 5:7-9, Eph 1:20-23. That he. Or rather, "since he by the grace of God tasted death for every man." The sense is, that after he had thus tasted death, and as a consequence of it, he was thus exalted. The word here rendered "that" οπως --means usually and properly, that, so that, in order that, to the end that, etc. But it may also mean, when, after that, after. Acts 3:19. This is the interpretation which is given by Prof. Stuart, (in loc,) and this interpretation seems to be demanded by the connexion. The general interpretation of the passage has been different. According to that, the sense is, "We see Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, so as that, by the grace of God, he might taste of death for every man." See Robinson's Lex. on the word οπως, and Doddridge on the place. But it is natural to ask when Jesus was thus crowned with glory and honour? It was not before the crucifixion --for he was then poor and despised. The connexion seems to require us to understand this of the glory to which he was exalted in heaven, and this was after his death, and could not be in order that he might taste of death. I am disposed, therefore, to regard this as teaching that the Lord Jesus was exalted to heaven in virtue of the atonement which he had made--and this accords with Php 2:8,9, Heb 12:2. It accords both with the fact in the case, and with the design of the apostle in the argument before us. By the grace of God. By the favour of God, or by his benevolent purpose towards men. It was not by any claim which man had, but was by his special favour. Should taste death. Should die; or, should experience death. See Mt 16:28. Death seems to be represented as something bitter and unpalatable--something unpleasant--as an object may be to the taste. Or the language may be taken from a cup--since to experience calamity and sorrow is often represented as drinking a cup of woes, Ps 11:6, 73:10, 75:8, Isa 51:17, Mt 20:22, 26:39.

For every man. For all υπερπαντος-- for each and all -- whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, high or low, elect or non-elect. How could words affirm more clearly, that the atonement made by the Lord Jesus was unlimited in its nature and design? How can we express that idea in more clear or intelligible language? That this refers to the atonement is evident--for it says that he "tasted death" for them. The friends of the doctrine of general atonement do not desire any other than Scripture language in which to express their belief. It expresses it exactly-- without any need of modification or explanation. The advocates of the doctrine of limited atonement cannot thus use Scripture language to express their belief. They cannot incorporate it with their creeds, that the Lord Jesus "tasted death for EVERY MAN." They are compelled to modify it, to limit it, to explain it, in order to prevent error and misconception. But that system cannot be true which requires men to shape and modify the plain language of the Bible, in order to keep men from error. 2Cor 5:14, where this point is considered at length. Learn hence, (Heb 2:6-9,) from the incarnation of the Son of God, and his exaltation to heaven, what an honour has been conferred on human nature. When we look on the weakness and sinfulness of our race, we may well ask, What is man, that God should honour him or regard him? He is the creature of a day. He is feeble and dying. He is lost and degraded. Compared with the universe at large, he is a speck, an atom. He has done nothing to deserve the Divine favour or notice; and when we look at the race at large, we can do it only with sentiments of the deepest humiliation and mortification. But when we look at human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus, we see it honoured there to a degree that is commensurate with all our desires, and that fills us with wonder. We feel that it is an honour to human nature; that it has done much to elevate man--when we look on such a man as Howard or Washington. But how much more has that nature been honoured in the person of the Lord Jesus! (1.) What an honour to us it was, that he should take our nature into intimate union with himself--passing by the angelic hosts, and becoming a man!

(2.) What an honour it was, that human nature there was so pure and holy; that man--everywhere else so degraded and vile--could be seen to be noble, and pure, and god-like! (3.) What an honour it was, that the Divinity should speak to men in connexion with human nature, and perform such wonderful works; that the pure precepts of religion should come forth from human lips--the great doctrines of eternal life be uttered by a man; and that from human hands should go forth power to heal the sick, and to raise the dead! (4.) What an honour to man it was, that the atonement for sin should be made in his own nature, and that the universe should be attracted to that scene where one in our form, and with flesh and blood like our own, should perform that great work. (5) What an honour it is to man, that his own nature is exalted far above all heavens! That one in our form sits on the throne of the universe! That adoring angels fall prostrate before him! That to him is entrusted all power in heaven and on earth! (6.) What an honour to man, that one in his nature should be appointed to judge the worlds! That one in our own form, and with a nature like ours, shall sit on the throne of judgment, and pronounce the final doom on angels and men! That assembled millions shall be constrained to bow before him, and receive their eternal doom from his hands! That prince and potentate, the illustrious dead of all past times, and the mighty men who are yet to live, shall all appear before him, and all receive from him there the sentence of their final destiny! I see, therefore, the most honour done to my nature as a man-- not in the deeds of proud conquerors; not in the lives of sages and philanthropists; not in those who have carried their investigations farthest into the obscurities of matter and of mind; not in the splendid orators, poets, and historians of other times, or that; now live--much as I may admire them, or feel it an honour to belong to a race which has produced such illustrious men--but in the fact, that the Son of God has chosen a Body like my own in which to dwell; in the expressible loveliness evinced in his pure morals, his benevolence, his blameless life; in the great deeds that he performed on earth; in the fact, that it was this form that was

chosen in which to make atonement for sin; in the honours that now cluster around him in heaven, and the glories that shall attend him when he shall come to judge the world.

"Princes to his imperial name Bend their bright sceptres down; Dominions, thrones, and powers rejoice To see him wear the crown. "Archangels sound his lofty praise Through every heavenly street; And lay their highest honours down, Submissive at his feet. "Those Soft, those blessed feet of his, That once rude iron tore, High on a throne of light they stand, And all the saints adore. "His head, the dear, majestic head, That cruel thorns did wound; See--what immortal glories shine, And circle it around ! "This is the Man, the exalted Man, Whom we, unseen, adore; But when our eyes behold his face, Our hearts shall love him more."

10 For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

For it became him. There was a fitness or propriety in it. It was such an arrangement as became God to make, in redeeming many, that the great agent by whom it was accomplished, should be made complete in all respects by sufferings. The apostle evidently means by this to meet an objection that might be offered by a Jew to the doctrine which he had been stating--an objection drawn from the fact, that Jesus was a man of sorrows, and that his life was a life of affliction. This he meets by stating that there was a fitness and propriety in that fact. There was a reason for it --a reason drawn from the plan and character of God. It was fit, in the nature of the case, that he should be qualified to be a complete or perfect Saviour--a Saviour just adapted to the purpose undertaken, by sufferings. The reasons of this fitness the apostle does not state. The amount of it probably was, that it became him, as a Being of infinite benevolence--as one who wished to provide a perfect system of redemption--to subject his Son to such sufferings as should completely qualify him to be a Saviour for all men. This subjection to his humble condition, and to his many woes, made him such a Saviour as man needed, and qualified him fully for his work. There was

a propriety that he who should redeem the suffering and the lost should partake of their nature; identify himself with them; and share their woes, and the consequences of their sins.

For whom are all things. With respect to whose glory the whole universe was made; and with respect to whom the whole arrangement for salvation has been formed. The phrase is synonymous with "the Supreme Ruler;" and the idea is, that it became the Sovereign of the universe to provide a perfect scheme of salvation--even though it involved the humiliation and death of his own Son.

And by whom are all things. By whose agency everything is made. As it was by his agency, therefore, that the plan of salvation was entered into, there was a fitness that it should be perfect. It was not the work of fate or chance, and there was a propriety that the whole plan should bear the mark of the infinite wisdom of its Author.

In bringing many sons unto glory. To heaven. This was the plan--it was to bring many to heaven who should be regarded and treated as his sons. It was not a plan to save a few--but to save many. Learn hence,

(1.) that the plan was full of benevolence.

(2.) No representation of the gospel should ever be made which will leave the impression that a few only, or a small part of the whole race, will be saved. There is no such representation in the Bible, and it should not be made. God intends, taking the whole race together, to save a large part of the human family. Few in ages that are past, it is true, may have been saved, few now are his friends and are travelling to heaven; but there are to be brighter days on earth. The period is to arrive when the gospel shall spread over all lands; and during that long period of the millennium, innumerable millions will be brought under its saving power, and be admitted to heaven. All exhibitions of the gospel are wrong

which represent it as narrow in its design, narrow in its offer, and narrow in its result.

To make the captain of their salvation. The Lord Jesus, who is represented as the leader or commander of the army of the redeemed-- "the sacramental host of God's elect." The word "captain" we apply now to an inferior officer--the commander of a "company" of soldiers. The Greek word --αρχηγος--is a more general term, and denotes, properly, the author or source of any thing; then a leader, chief, prince. In Acts 3:15, it is rendered prince--" and killed the prince of life." So in Acts 5:31--"Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour." In Heb 12:2, it is rendered author: "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Comp. Heb 12:2.

Perfect through sufferings. Complete by means of sufferings; that is, to render him wholly qualified for his work, so that he should be a Saviour just adapted to redeem man. This does not mean that he was sinful before, and was made holy by his sufferings; nor that he was not in all respects a perfect man before;--but it means, that by his sufferings he was made wholly fitted to be a Saviour of men; and that therefore the fact of his being a suffering man was no evidence, as a Jew might have urged, that he was not the Son of God. There was a completeness, a filling up, of all which was necessary to his character as a Saviour, by the sufferings which he endured. We are made morally better by afflictions, if we receive them in a right manner--for we are sinful, and need to be purified in the furnace of affliction; Christ was not made better, for he was before perfectly holy, but he was completely endowed for the work which he came to do, by his sorrows. Nor does this mean here precisely that he was exalted to heaven as a reward for his sufferings, or that he was raised up to glory as a consequence of them--which was true in itself--but that he was rendered complete, or fully qualified to be a Saviour by his sorrows, he was rendered thus complete,

(1.) because his suffering in all the forms that flesh is liable to, made him an example to all his people who shall pass through trials. They have before them a perfect model to show them how to bear afflictions. Had this not occurred, he could not have been regarded as a complete or perfect Saviour--that is, such a Saviour as we need.

(2.) He is able to sympathize with them, and to succour them in their temptations, Heb 2:18.

(3.) By his sufferings an atonement was made for sin. He would have been an imperfect Saviour--if the name Saviour could have been given to him at all--if he had not died to make an atonement for transgression. To render him complete as a Saviour, it was necessary that he should suffer and die; and when he hung on the cross in the agonies of death, he could appropriately say, "It is finished." The work is complete, All has been done that could be required to be done; and man may now have the assurance that he has a perfect Saviour--perfect not only in moral character, but perfect in his work, and in his adaptedness to the condition of men." Comp. Heb 5:8,9; Lk 13:32.

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

For both he that sanctifieth. This refers evidently to the Lord Jesus. The object is to show that there was such a union between him and those for whom he died, as to make it necessary that he should partake of the same nature, or that he should be a suffering man, Heb 2:14. He undertook to redeem and sanctify them. He called them brethren, he identified them with himself. There was, in the great work of redemption, a oneness between him and them, and hence it was necessary that he should assume their nature--and the fact, therefore, that he appeared as a suffering man, does not at all militate with the doctrine that he had a more exalted nature, and was even above the angels. Prof. Stuart endeavours to prove that the word sanctify here is used in the sense of, to make expiation or atonement, and that the

meaning is, "he who maketh expiation, and they for whom expiation is made." Bloomfield gives the same sense to the word, as also does Rosenmuller. That the word may have such a signification it would be presumptuous in any one to doubt, after the view which such men have taken of it; but it may be doubted whether this idea is necessary here. The word sanctify is a general term, meaning, to make holy or pure; to consecrate, set apart, devote to God; to regard as holy, or to hallow. Applied to the Saviour here, it may be used in this general sense--that he consecrated, or devoted himself to God--as eminently the consecrated or holy one --the Messiah, (Jn 17:19:) applied to his people, it may mean that they, in like manner, were the consecrated, the holy, the pure on earth. There is a richness and fairness in the word when so understood, which there is not when it is limited to the idea of expiation; and it seems to me that it is to be taken in its richest and fullest sense, and that the meaning is, "the great consecrated Messiah--the Holy One of God--and his consecrated and holy followers, are all of one."

All of one. Of one family; spirit; Father; nature. Father of these significations will suit the connexion, and some such idea must be understood; The meaning is, that they were united, or partook of something in common, so as to constitute a oneness, or a brotherhood; and that since this was the case, there was a propriety in his taking their nature. It does not mean that they were originally of one nature or family; but that it was understood in the writings of the prophets that the Messiah should partake of the nature of his people, and that therefore, though he was more exalted than the angels, there was a propriety that he should appear in the human form. Comp. Jn 17:21. For which cause. That is, because he is thus united with them, or has undertaken their redemption.

He is not ashamed. As it might be supposed that one so exalted and pure would be. It might have been anticipated that the Son of God would refuse to give the name brethren to

those who were so humble, and sunken, and degraded, as those whom he came to redeem. But he is willing to be ranked with them, and to be regarded as one of their family.

To call them brethren. To acknowledge himself as of the same family, and to speak of them as his brothers. That is, he is so represented as speaking of them in the prophecies respecting the Messiah--for this interpretation the argument of the apostle demands. It was material for him to show that he was so represented in the Old Testament. This he does in the following verses.

Saying. This passage is found in Ps 22:22. The whole of that Psalm has been commonly referred to the Messiah; and in regard to such a reference there is less difficulty than attends most of the other portions of the Old Testament that are usually supposed to relate to him. The following verses of the Psalm are applied to him, or to transactions connected with him, in the New Testament, Ps 22:1,8,18; and the whole Psalm is so strikingly descriptive of his condition and sufferings, that there can be no reasonable doubt that it had an original reference to him. There is much in the Psalm that cannot be well applied to David; there is nothing which cannot be applied to the Messiah; and the proof seems to be clear, that Paul quoted this passage in accordance with the original sense of the Psalm. The point of the quotation here is not that he would "declare the name" of God, but that he gave the name brethren to those whom he addressed.

I will declare thy name. I will make thee known. The word "name" is used, as it often is, to denote God himself. The meaning is, that it would be a part of the Messiah's work to make known to his disciples the character and perfections of God--or to make them acquainted with God. He performed this. In his parting prayer (Jn 17:6) he says, "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." And again, Jnn 17:26, "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it."

Unto my brethren. The point of the quotation is in this. He spoke of them as brethren. Paul is showing that he was not ashamed to call them such. As he was reasoning with those who had been Jews, and as it was necessary, as a part of his argument, to show that what he maintained respecting the Messiah was found in the Old Testament, he makes his appeal to that, and shows that the Redeemer is represented as addressing his people as brethren. It would have been easy to appeal to facts, and to have shown that the Redeemer used that term familiarly in addressing his disciples, (comp. Mt 12:48,49, 25:40, 28:10, Lk 8:21; Jn 20:17,) but that would not have been pertinent to his object. It is full proof to us, however, that the prediction in the Psalm was literally fulfilled.

In the midst of the church. That is, in the assembly of my brethren. The point of the proof urged by the apostle lies in the first part of the quotation. This latter part seems to have been adduced, because it might assist their memory to have the whole verse quoted; or because it contained an interesting truth respecting the Redeemer--though not precisely a proof of what he was urging; or because it implied substantially the same truth as the former member. It shows that he was united with his church; that he was one of them; and that he mingled with them as among brethren. Will I sing praise. That the Redeemer united with his disciples in singing praise, we may suppose to have been in the highest degree probable--though, I believe, but a single case is mentioned--that at the close of the Supper which he instituted to commemorate his death, Mt 26:30. This, therefore, proves what the apostle intended--that the Messiah was among them as his brethren, that he spoke to them as such, and mingled in their devotions as one of their number.

And again. That is, it is said in another place, or language is used of the Messiah in another place, indicating the confidence which he put in God, and showing that he partook

of the feelings of the children of God, and regarded himself as one of them. I will put my trust in him. I will confide in God; implying (1.) a sense of dependence on God, and (2.) confidence in him. It is with reference to the former idea that the apostle seems to use it here--as denoting a condition where there was felt to be need of Divine aid. His object is to show that he took part with his people, and regarded them as brethren; and the purpose of this quotation seems to be, to show that he was in such a situation as to make an expression of dependence proper. He was one with his people, and shared their dependence and their piety--using language which showed that he was identified with them, and could mingle with the tenderest sympathy in all their feelings. It is not certain from what place this passage is quoted. In Ps 18:3, and the corresponding passage in 2Sam 22:3, the Hebrew is --"I will trust in him;" but this Psalm has never been regarded as having any reference to the Messiah, even by the Jews-- and it is difficult to see how it could be considered as having any relation to him. Most critics therefore, as Rosenmuller, Calvin, Koppe, Bloomfield, Stuart, etc., regard the passage as taken from Isa 8:17. The reasons for this are, (1.) that the words are the same in the Septuagint as in the epistle to the Hebrews; (2.) the apostle quotes the next verse immediately as applicable to the Messiah; (3.) no other place occurs where the same expression is found. Isa 8:17, is "I will wait for him," or I will trust in him -- rendered by the Septuagint πεποιθωςεσομαιεπαυτω-- the same phrase precisely as is used by Paul--and here can be no doubt that he meant to quote it here. The sense in Isaiah is, that he had closed his message to the people; he had been directed to seal up the testimony; he had exhorted the nation to repent, but he had done it in vain; and he had now nothing to do but to put his trust in the Lord, and commit the whole cause to him. His only hope was in God; and he calmly and confidently committed his cause to him. Paul evidently designs to refer this to the Messiah; and the sense as applied to him is--"The Messiah in using this language expresses himself as a man. It is men who exercise dependence on God; and by the use of this language he speaks

as one who had the nature of man, and who expressed the feelings of the pious, and showed that he was one of them, and that he regarded them as brethren." There is not much difficulty in the argument of the passage; nor it is seen that in such language he must speak as a man, or as one having human nature; but the main difficulty is on the question how this and the verse following can be applied to the Messiah? In the prophecy they seem to refer solely to Isaiah, and to be expressive of his feelings alone-- the feelings of a man who saw little encouragement in his work, and who having done all that he could do, at last put his sole trust in God. In regard to this difficult and yet unsettled question, the reader may consult my introduction to Isaiah, & 7. The following remarks may serve in part to remove the difficulty. (1.) The passage in Isaiah (Isa 8:17,18) occurs in the midst of a number of predictions relating to the Messiah--preceded and followed by passages that had an ultimate reference undoubtedly to him. See Isa 7:14, 9:1-7 and Notes on those passages. (2.) The language, if used of Isaiah, would as accurately and fitly express the feelings and the condition of the Redeemer. There was such a remarkable similarity in the circumstances, that the same language would express the condition of both. Both had delivered a solemn message to men; both had come to exhort them to turn to God, and to put their trust in him, and both with the same result. The nation had disregarded them alike; and now their only hope was to confide in God; and the language here used would express the feelings of both--" I will trust in God. I will put confidence in him, and look to him." (3.) There can be little doubt that, in the time of Paul, this passage was regarded by the Jews as applicable to the Messiah. This is evident, because (a.) Paul would not have so quoted it as a proof-text, unless it would be admitted to have such a reference by those to whom he wrote; and (b.) because, in Rom 9:32,33, it is evident that the passage in Isa 8:14, is regarded as having reference to the Messiah, and as being so admitted by the Jews. It is true that this may be considered merely as an argument ad hominem--or an argument from what was admitted by those with whom he was reasoning,

without vouching for the precise accuracy of the manner in which the passage was applied--but that method of argument is admitted elsewhere, and why should we not expect to find the sacred writers reasoning as other men do, and especially as was common in their own times? The apostle is showing them, that according to their own Scripture, and in accordance with principles which they themselves admitted, it was necessary that the Messiah should be a man and a sufferer; that he should be identified with his people, and be able to use language which would express that condition. In doing this, it is not remarkable that he should apply to him language which they admitted to belong to him, and which would accurately describe his condition. (4.) It is not necessary to suppose that the passage in Isaiah had an original and primary reference to the Messiah. It is evident from the whole passage that it had not. There was a primary reference to Isaiah himself, and to his children as being emblems of certain truths. But still there was a strong resemblance, in certain respects, between his feelings and condition and those of the Messiah. There was such a resemblance, that the one would not unaptly symbolize the other. There was such a resemblance that the mind--probably of the prophet himself, and of the people--would look forward to the more remote, but similar event--the coming and the circumstances of the Messiah. So strong was this resemblance, and so much did the expressions of the prophet here accord with his declarations elsewhere pertaining to the Messiah, that in the course of time they came to be regarded as relating to him in a very important sense, and as destined to have their complete fulfillment when he should come. As such they seem to have been used in the time of Paul; and no one can PROVE that the application was improper. Who can demonstrate that God did not intend that those transactions referred to by Isaiah should be designed as symbols of what would occur in the time of the Redeemer? They were certainly symbolical actions--for they are expressly so said to have been by Isaiah himself, (Isa 8:18;) and none can demonstrate that they might not have had an ultimate reference to the Redeemer. And

again. In another verse, or in another declaration; to wit, Isa 7:18. Behold I and the children which God hath given me. This is only a part of the passage in Isaiah, and seems to have been partially quoted, because the point of the quotation consisted in the fact, that he sustained to them somewhat of the relation of a parent towards his children--as having the same nature, and being identified with them in interest and feeling. As it is used by Isaiah, it means that he and his children were "for signs and emblems" to the people of his time--to communicate and confirm the will of God, and to be pledges of the Divine favour and protection. Isa 7:18. As applied to the Messiah, it means that he sustained to his people a relation so intimate, that they could be addressed and regarded as his children. They were of one family; one nature. He became one of them, and had in them all the interest which a father has in his sons, He had, therefore, a nature like ours; and though he was exalted above the angels, yet his relation to man was like the most tender and intimate earthly connexions, showing that he took part in the same nature with them. The point is that he was a man; that since those who were to be redeemed partook of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same, (Heb 2:14,) and thus identified himself with them.

12 saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren,
in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.
13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again,
Behold I and the children which God hath given me.
14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,
he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death
he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the
devil;

Forasmuch then. Since; or because. As the children. Those who were to become the adopted children of God; or who were to sustain that relation to him. Are partakers of flesh and blood. Have a human and not an angelic nature. Since they are men, he became a man. There was a fitness or propriety that he should partake of their nature. 1Cor 15:50; Mt 16:17.

He also himself, etc. He also became a man, or partook of the same nature with them. Jn 1:14. That through death. By dying. It is implied here,

(1.) that the work which he undertook of destroying him that had the power of death was to be accomplished by his own dying; and

(2.) that, in order to this, it was necessary that he should be a man. An angel does not die, and therefore he did not take on him the nature of angels; and the Son of God, in his Divine nature, could not die, and therefore he assumed a form in which he could die--that of a man. In that nature the Son of God could taste of death; and thus he could destroy him that had the power of death. He might destroy. That he might subdue, or that he might overcome him, and destroy his dominion. The word destroy here is not used in the sense of closing life, or of killing, but in the sense of bringing into subjection, or crushing his power. This is the work which the Lord Jesus came to perform--to destroy the kingdom of Satan in the world, and to set up another kingdom in its place. This was understood by Satan to be his object. Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24. That had the power of death. I understand this as meaning that the devil was the cause of death in this world, he was the means of its introduction, and of its long and melancholy reign. This does not affirm anything of his power of inflicting death in particular instances--whatever may be true on that point--but that death was a part of his dominion; that he introduced it; that he seduced man from God, and led on the train of woes which result in death. He also made it terrible. Instead of being regarded as falling asleep, or being looked on without alarm, it becomes, under him, the means of terror and distress. What power Satan may have in inflicting death in particular: instances no one can tell. The Jewish Rabbins speak much of Samuel, "the angel of death"-- --who they supposed had the control of life, and was the great messenger employed in closing it. The Scriptures, it is believed, are silent on that point. But that Satan was the means of

introducing "death into the world, and all our woe," no one can doubt; and over the whole subject, therefore, he may be said to have had power. To destroy that dominion; to rescue man; to restore him to life; to place him in a world where death is unknown; to introduce a state of things where not another one would ever die, was the great purpose for which the Redeemer came. What a noble object! What enterprise in the universe has been so grand and noble as this! Surely an undertaking that contemplates the annihilation of DEATH; that designs to bring this dark dominion to an end, is full of benevolence, and commends itself to every man as worthy of his profound attention and gratitude. What woes are caused by death in this world! They are seen everywhere. The earth is "arched with graves." In almost every dwelling death has been doing his work of misery. The palace cannot exclude him; and he comes unbidden into the cottage. He finds his way to the dwelling of ice in which the Esquimaux and the Greenlander live; to the tent of the Bedouin Arab, and the wandering Tartar; to the wigwam of the Indian, and to the harem of the Turk; to the splendid mansion of the rich, as well as to the abode of the poor. That reign of death has now extended near six thousand years, and will travel on to future times--meeting each generation, and consigning the young, the vigorous, the lovely, and the pure, to dust. Shall that gloomy reign continue forever? Is there no way to arrest it? Is there no place where death can be excluded? Yes: heaven --and the object of the Redeemer is to bring us there.

And deliver them. Not all of them in fact, though the way is open for all. This deliverance relates

(1.) to the dread of death. He came to free them from that.

(2.) From death itself--that is, ultimately to bring them to a world where death shall be unknown. The dread of death may be removed by the work of Christ, and they who had been subject to constant alarms on account of it may be brought to look on it with calmness and peace; and ultimately they will

be brought to a world where it will be wholly unknown. The dread of death is taken away, or they are delivered from that, because

(a.) the cause of that dread--to wit, sin--is removed. 1Cor 15:54, 1Cor 15:55.

(b.) Because they are enabled to look to the world beyond with triumphant joy. Death conducts them to heaven. A Christian has nothing to fear in death; nothing beyond the grave. In no part of the universe has he any thing to dread, for God is his friend, and he will be his protector everywhere. On the dying bed; in the grave; on the way up to the judgment; at the solemn tribunal; and in the eternal world, he is under the eye and the protection of his Saviour--and of what should he be afraid? Who through fear of death. From the dread of dying --that is, whenever they think of it, and they think of it so often as to make them slaves of that fear. This obviously means the natural dread of dying, and not particularly the fear of punishment beyond. It is that indeed which often gives its principal terror to the dread of death; but still the apostle refers here evidently to natural death--as an object which men fear. All men have, by nature, this dread of dying-- and perhaps some of the inferior creation have it also. It is certain that it exists in the heart of every man, and that God has implanted it there for some wise purpose. There is the dread

(1.) of the dying pang, or pain.

(2.) Of the darkness and gloom of mind that attends it.

(3.) Of the unknown world beyond--the "evil that we know not of."

(4.) Of the chilliness, and loneliness, and darkness of the grave.

(5.) Of the solemn trial at the bar of God.

(6.) Of the condemnation which awaits the guilty--the apprehension of future woe. There is no other evil that we fear so much as we do DEATH, and there is nothing more clear than that God intended that we should have a dread of dying. The REASONS why he designed this are equally clear.

(1.) One may have been to lead men to prepare for it-- which otherwise they would neglect.

(2.) Another, to deter them from committing self-murder where nothing else would deter them. Facts have shown that it was necessary that there should be some strong principle in the human bosom to prevent this crime, and even the dread of death does not always do it. So sick do men become of the life that God gave them; so weary of the world; so overwhelmed with calamity; so oppressed with disappointment and cares, that they lay violent hands on themselves, and rush unbidden into the awful presence of their Creator. This would occur more frequently by far than it now does, if it were not for the salutary fear of death which God has implanted in every bosom.

God designed that man should be deterred from rushing uncalled into his awful presence, by this salutary dread of death, and his implanting this feeling in the human heart is one of the most striking and conclusive proofs of a moral government over the world. This instinctive dread of death can be overcome only by religion --and then man does not NEED it to reconcile him to life. He becomes submissive to trials, he is willing to bear all that is laid on him. He resigns himself to the dispensations of Providence, and feels that life, even in affliction, is the gift of God, and is a valuable endowment. He now dreads self-murder as a crime of deep dye, and religion restrains him and keeps him by a more mild and salutary restraint than the dread of death. The man who has true religion is willing to live or to die; he feels that life is the gift of God, and that he will take it away in the best time

and manner; and feeling this, he is willing to leave all in his hands, We may remark,

(1.) how much do we owe to religion! It is the only thing that will effectually take away the dread of death, and yet secure this point--to make man willing to live in all the circumstances where God may place him. It is possible that philosophy or stoicism may remove, to a great extent, the dread of death--but then it will be likely to make a man willing to take his life if he is placed in trying circumstances. Such an effect it had on Cato in Utica; and such an effect it had on Hume, who maintained that suicide was lawful, and that to turn a current of blood from its accustomed channel was of no more consequence than to change the course of any other fluid!

(2.) In what a sad condition is the sinner! Thousands there are who never think of death with composure, and who, all their life long, are subject to bondage through the fear of it. They never think of it if they can avoid it; and when it is forced upon them, it fills them with alarm. They attempt to drive the thought away. They travel; they plunge into business; they occupy the mind with trifles; they drown their fears in the intoxicating bowl: but all this tends only to make death more terrific and awful when the reality comes. If man were wise, he would seek an interest in that religion which, if it did nothing else, would deliver him from the dread of death; and the influence of the gospel in this respect, if it exerted no other, is worth to a man all the sacrifices and self-denials which it would ever require. All their life-time subject to bondage. Slaves of fear; in a depressed and miserable condition, like slaves under a master. They have no freedom; no comfort; no peace. From this miserable state Christ comes to deliver man. Religion enables him to look calmly on death and the judgment, and to feel that all will be well.

15 and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on
him the seed of Abraham.
17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Wherefore in all things. In respect to his body; his soul; his rank and character. There was a propriety that he should be like them, and should partake of their nature. The meaning is, that there was a fitness that nothing should be wanting in him in reference to the innocent propensities and sympathies of human nature.

It behoved him. It became him; or there was a fitness and propriety in it. The reason why it was proper, the apostle proceeds to state. Like unto his brethren.

Like unto those who sustained to him the relation of brethren; particularly as he undertook to redeem the descendants of Abraham, and as he was a descendant of Abraham himself, there was a propriety that he should be like them. He calls them brethren; and it was proper that, he should show that he regarded them as such by assuming their nature.

That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.

(1.) That he might be merciful; that is, compassionate. That he might know how to pity us in our infirmities and trials, by having a nature like our own.

(2.) That he might be faithful; that is, perform with fidelity all the functions pertaining to the office of high priest. The idea is, that it was needful that he should become a man; that he should experience, as we do, the infirmities and trials of life; and that, by being a man, and partaking of all that pertained

to man except his sins, he might feel how necessary it was that there should be fidelity in the office of high priest. Here were a race of sinners and sufferers. They were exposed to the wrath of God. They were liable to everlasting punishment. The judgment impended over the race, and the day of vengeance hastened on. All now depended on the Great High Priest. All their hope was in his fidelity to the great office which he had undertaken. If he were faithful, all would be safe; if he were unfaithful, all would be lost. Hence the necessity that he should enter fully into the feelings, fears, and dangers of man; that he should become one of the race, and be identified with them, so that he might be qualified to perform with faithfulness the great trust committed to him.

High priest. The Jewish high priest was the successor of Aaron, and was at the head of the ministers of religion among the Jews. He was set apart with solemn ceremonies--clad in his sacred vestments--and anointed with oil, Ex 29:6-9, Lev 8:2. He was by his office the general judge of all that pertained to religion, and even of the judicial affairs of the Jewish nation, De 17:8-12, 19:17, 21:5, 33:9,10. He only had the privilege of entering the most holy place once a year, on the great day of expiation, to make atonement for the sins of the whole people, Lev 16:2, etc. He was the oracle of truth--so that, when clothed in his proper vestments, and having on the Urim and Thummim, he made known the will of God in regard to future events. The Lord Jesus became, in the Christian dispensation, what the Jewish high priest was in the old; and an important object of this epistle is to show that he far surpassed the Jewish high priest, and in what respects the Jewish high priest was designed to typify the Redeemer. Paul, therefore, early introduces the subject, and shows that the Lord Jesus came to perform the functions of that sacred office, and that he was eminently endowed for it.

In things pertaining to God. In offering sacrifice; or in services of a religious nature. The great purpose was to offer sacrifice, and make intercession; and the idea is, that Jesus

took on himself our nature that he might sympathize with us; that thus he might be faithful to the great trust committed to him--the redemption of the world. Had he been unfaithful, all would have been lost, and the world would have sunk down to woe.

To make reconciliation. By his death as a sacrifice. The word here used-- ιλασκομαι--occurs but in one other place in the New Testament, (Lk 18:13,) where it is rendered, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" that is, reconciled to me. The noun ιλασμος-- propitiation) is used in 1Jn 2:2, 4:10. The word here means, properly, to appease, to reconcile, to conciliate; and hence to propitiate AS TO SINS; that is, to propitiate God in reference to sins, or to render him propitious. The Son of God became a man, that he might so fully enter into the feelings of the people as to be faithful, and that he might be qualified, as a high priest, to perform the great work of rendering God propitious in regard to sins. How he did this is fully shown in the subsequent parts of the epistle.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

For in that he himself, etc. Because he has suffered, he is able to sympathize with sufferers. Being tempted. Or, being tried. The Greek word here used is more general in its meaning than the English word tempted. It means to put to the proof; to try the nature or character of; and this may be done either

(1.) by subjecting a person to afflictions or sufferings, that his true character may be tried--that it may be seen whether he has sincere piety and love to God; or

(2.) by allowing one to fall into temptation--properly so called--where some strong inducement to evil is presented to the mind, and where it becomes thus a trial of virtue. The Saviour was subjected to both these in as severe a form as was ever presented to men. His sufferings surpassed all others; and the temptations of Satan (Mt 4) were presented in the most alluring form in which he could exhibit them. Being

proved or tried in both these respects, he showed that he had a strength of virtue which could bear all that could ever occur to seduce him from attachment to God; and at the same time to make him a perfect model for those who should be tried in the same manner. He is able to succour, etc. This does not mean that he would not have had power to assist others if he had not gone through these sufferings, but that he is now qualified to sympathize with them from the fact that he has endured like trials.

"He knows what sore temptations mean, For he has felt the same."

The idea is that one who has himself been called to suffer, is able to sympathize with those who suffer; one who has been tempted, is able to sympathize with those who are tempted in like manner; one who has been sick is qualified to sympathize with the sick; one who has lost a child, can sympathize with him who follows his beloved son or daughter to the grave; one who has had some strong temptation to sin urged upon himself, can sympathize with those who are now tempted; one who has never been sick, or who has never buried a friend, or been tempted, is poorly qualified to impart consolations in such scenes. Hence it is, that ministers of the gospel are often--like their Master--much persecuted and afflicted, that they may be able to assist others, Hence they are called to part with the children of their love; or to endure long and painful sicknesses; or to pass through scenes of poverty and want, that they may sympathize with the most humble and afflicted of their flock. And they should be willing to endure all this; for

(1.) thus they are like their Master, (comp. Col 1:24, Php 3:10;) and

(2.) they are thus enabled to be far more extensively useful. Many a minister owes a large part of his usefulness to the fact that he has been much afflicted; and for those afflictions,

therefore, he should unfeignedly thank God. The idea which is here expressed by the apostle; that one is enabled to sympathize with others from having himself suffered, was long since beautifully expressed by Virgil:--

"Me quoque per multos similis fortuna labores. Jactatam, hac demum voluit consistere terra. Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco." AEn. I. 628. "For I myself, like you, have been distressed, Till heaven afforded me this place of rest: Like you, an alien in a land unknown, I learn to pity Woes so like my own." Dryden.

Jesus is thus able to alleviate the sufferer. In all our temptations and trials let us remember

(1.) that he suffered more--infinitely more--than we can do, and that in all our sorrows we shall never reach what he endured. We enter no region of trial where he has not gone beyond us; we tread no dark and gloomy way where he has not gone before us.

(2.) Let us remember that he is to us a brother, for he "is not ashamed to call us brethren." He had a nature like ours; he condescended to appear as one of our race, with all the innocent propensities and passions of a man. What matchless condescension! And what an honour for us to be permitted to address him as an "elder brother," and to know that he feels a deep sympathy in our woes!

(3.) Let us then, in all times of affliction, look to him. Go not, suffering Christian, to philosophy; attempt not to deaden your feelings by the art of the Stoic; but go at once to the Saviour--the great, sympathizing High Priest, who is able to succour you--and rest your burdens on him.

"His heart is made of tenderness, His soul is fill'd with love. "Touched with a sympathy within, He knows our feeble

frame; He knows what sore temptations mean, For he has felt the same. "Then let our humble faith address His mercy and his power; We shall obtain delivering grace, In every trying hour."

Hebrews-3

Christ Superior to Moses

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

Wherefore. That is, since Christ sustains such a character as has been stated in the previous chapter; since he is so able to succour those who need assistance; since he assumed our nature that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, his character ought to be attentively considered, and we ought to endeavour fully to understand it.

Holy brethren. The name brethren is often given to Christians to denote that they are of one family. It is possible, also, that the apostle may have used the word here in a double sense--denoting that they were his brethren as Christians, and as Jews. The word holy is applied to them to denote that they were set apart to God, or that they were sanctified. The Jews were often called a "holy people," as being consecrated to God; and Christians are holy, not only as consecrated to God, but as sanctified.

Partakers of the heavenly calling. On the meaning of the word calling, Eph 4:1 The "heavenly calling" denotes the calling which was given to them from heaven, or which was of a heavenly nature. It pertained to heaven, not to earth; it came from heaven, not from earth; it was a calling to the reward

and happiness of heaven, and not to the pleasures and honours of the world.

Consider. Attentively ponder all that is said of the Messiah. Think of his rank; his dignity; his holiness; his sufferings; his death; his resurrection, ascension, intercession. Think of him, that you may see the claims to a holy life; that you may learn to bear trials; that you may be kept from apostasy. The character and work of the Son of God are worthy of the profound and prayerful consideration of every man; and especially every Christian should reflect much on him. Of the friend that we love we think much; but what friend have we like the Lord Jesus?

The Apostle. The word apostle is nowhere else applied to the Lord Jesus. The word means one who is sent--and in this sense it might be applied to the Redeemer as one sent by God, or as by way of eminence THE one sent by him. But the connexion seems to demand that there should be some allusion here to one who sustained a similar rank among the Jews; and it is probable that the allusion is to Moses, as having been the great apostle of God to the Jewish people, and that Paul here means to say, that the Lord Jesus, under the new dispensation, filled the place of Moses and of the high priest under the old, and that the office of "apostle" and "high priest," instead of being now separated, as it was between Moses and Aaron under the old dispensation, was now blended in the Messiah. The name apostle is not indeed given to Moses directly in the Old Testament, but the verb from which the Hebrew word for apostle is derived is frequently given him. Thus, in Ex 3:10, it is said, "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh." And in Heb 3:13, "The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you." So also in Heb 3:14,15, of the same chapter. From the word there used-- to send, the word denoting apostle --is derived; and it is not improbable that Moses would be regarded as being, by way of eminence, THE one sent by God. Further, the Jews applied the word --apostle, to the minister of the synagogue; to him

who presided over its affairs, and who had the general charge of the services there; and in this sense it might be applied by way of eminence to Moses, as being the general director and controller of the religious affairs of the nation, and as sent for that purpose. The object of Paul is to show that the Lord Jesus, in the Christian system--as the great apostle sent from God--sustained a rank and office similar to this, but superior in dignity and authority.

And High Priest. One great object of this epistle is, to compare the Lord Jesus with the high priest of the Jews, and to show that he was in all respects superior. This was important, because the office of high priest was that which eminently distinguished the Jewish religion, and because the Christian religion proposed to abolish that. It became necessary, therefore, to show that all that was dignified and valuable in that office was to be found in the Christian system. This was done by showing that in the Lord Jesus was found all the characteristics of a high priest, and that all the functions which had been performed in the Jewish ritual were performed by him, and that all which had been prefigured by the Jewish high priest was fulfilled in him. The apostle here merely alludes to him, or names him as the high priest, and then postpones the consideration of his character, in that respect, till after he had compared him with Moses.

Of our profession. Of our religion; of that religion which we profess. The apostle and high priest whom we confessed as ours when we embraced the Christian religion.

2 who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house.

Who was faithful. Heb 2:17. He performed with fidelity all the functions entrusted to him. To him that appointed him. Marg. Made. The word made, however, is used in the sense

of constituted or appointed. The meaning is, that he was faithful to God. Perhaps Paul urges on them the necessity of considering his fidelity in order to keep them from the danger of apostasy. A leading object of this epistle was to preserve those whom he addressed from apostatizing from God, amidst the temptations and trials to which they were exposed. In doing this, what could be a more powerful argument than to direct their attention to the unwavering constancy and fidelity of the Lord Jesus? The importance of such a virtue in the Saviour is manifest. It is seen everywhere; and all the great interests of the world depend on it. A husband should maintain inviolate fidelity towards a wife, and a wife towards her husband; a child should be faithful to a parent, a clerk and apprentice to his employer, a lawyer to his client, a physician to his patient, an ambassador to the government that commissions him. No matter what may be the temptations in the way; in all these, and in all other relations, there should be inviolate fidelity. The welfare of the world depended on the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus. Had he failed in that, all would have been lost. His fidelity was worthy of the more attentive consideration, from the numerous temptations which beset his path, and the attempts which were made to turn him aside from his devotedness to God. Amidst all the temptations of the adversary, and all the trials through which he passed, he never for a moment swerved from fidelity to the great trust which had been committed to his hands. What better example to preserve them, from the temptations to apostasy, could the apostle propose to the Christians whom he addressed? What, in these temptations and trials, could be more appropriate than for them to "consider" the example of the great Apostle and High Priest of their profession? What more proper for us now, in the trials and temptations of our lives, than to keep that great and glorious example continually before our eyes? As also Moses was faithful, Fidelity to God was remarkable in Moses. In all the provocations and rebellions of the Jews, he was firm and unwavering. This is affirmed of him in Nu 12:7, to which place the apostle here alludes:--"My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all

his house." The word house, as applied to Moses, is used probably in the sense of family, as it often is, and refers to the family over which he presided--that is, the Jewish nation. The whole Jewish people were a household, or the family of God, and Moses was appointed to preside over it, and was faithful in the functions of his office there.

3 For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house.

For this man. The Lord Jesus. The word "man" is understood, but there can be no doubt that he is referred to. Was counted worthy. Was more worthy; or is more worthy. The word here used does not refer to anything that had been said of him, or to any estimate which had been made of him. It means simply that he was worthy of more honour than Moses. How he was so Paul proceeds to show. Of more glory δοξης. Honour, dignity, regard. He really had a higher rank, and was worthy of more respect. This was saying much for the Messiah; and that it was proper to say this Paul proceeds to show. He did not attempt in any way to undervalue Moses and his institutions. He gave him all the honour which the Jews were themselves disposed to render him. He admitted that he had been eminently faithful in the station where God had placed him; and he then proceeds to show that the Lord Jesus was entitled to honour superior to that, and that hence the Christian religion had more to attach its friends to it than the Jewish had. Inasmuch as he who hath builded the house. The idea here is, either that he who is the maker of a house--the architect-- is worthy of more respect than the house itself; or that he who is the founder of a family is worthy of more honour than the family of which he is the founder. It seems to me that the former is the meaning--for the latter is not always true. The founder of a family may be really deserving of much less respect than some of his descendants. But it is always true that the architect is worthy of more respect than the house which he makes. He exhibits intellect and skill.

The house, however splendid, has neither. The plan of the house was drawn by him; its beauty, its proportions, its ornaments, are what he made them, and but for him they would not have existed, Michael Angelo was worthy of more honour than "St. Peter's" at Rome; and Sir Christopher Wren worthy of more than St. Paul's at London. Galileo is more worthy of praise than the telescope, and Fulton more than a steam-engine. All the evidence of skill and adaptedness that there is in the invention had its origin in the inventor; all the beauty of the statue or the temple had its origin in the mind of him that designed it, an author is worthy of more honour than a book; and he that forms a work of art is worthy of more respect than the work itself. This is the idea here. Paul assumes that all things owed their origin to the Son of God, Heb 1:2,8,10. He was the Author of the universe; the Source of all wise and well-founded systems; the Originator of the Jewish dispensation, over which Moses presided. Whatever beauty or excellence there might have been, therefore, in that system, was to be traced to him; and whatever ability even Moses displayed was imparted by him. Christ is really the head of the family over which Moses presided, and has claims, therefore, to higher honour as such.

4 For every house is builded by some *man;* but he that built all things *is* God.

For every house is builded by some man. The words in this verse are plain, and the sentiment in it clear. The only difficulty is in seeing the connexion, and in understanding how it is intended to bear on what precedes, or on what follows. It is clear that every house must have a builder, and equally clear that God is the Creator of all things. But what is the meaning of this passage in this connexion? What is its bearing on the argument? If the verse was entirely omitted, and the fifth verse read in connexion with the third, there would be apparently nothing wanting to complete the sense of the writer, or to finish the comparison which he had commenced. Various ways have been adopted to explain the difficulty. Perhaps the following observations may remove it, and express the true sense.

(1.) Every family must have a founder; every dispensation an author; every house a builder. There must be some one, therefore, over all dispensations --the old and the new--the Jewish and the Christian.

(2.) Paul assumes that the Lord Jesus was Divine. He had demonstrated this in Heb 1; and he argues as if this were so, without now stopping to prove it, or even to affirm it expressly.

(3.) God must be over all things. He is Creator of all; and he must therefore be over all. As the Lord Jesus, therefore, is Divine, he must be over the Jewish dispensation as well as the Christian--or he must, as God, have been at the head of that--or over his own family or household.

(4.) As such, he must have a glory and honour which could not belong to Moses. He, in his Divine character, was the Author of both the Jewish and the Christian dispensations; and he must, therefore, have a rank far superior to that of Moses--which was the point which the apostle designed to illustrate. The meaning of the whole may be thus expressed:-- "The Lord Jesus is worthy of more honour than Moses, He is so, as the maker of a house deserves more honour than the house. He is Divine. In the beginning he laid the foundation of the earth, and was the agent in the creation of all things, Heb 1:2,10. He presides, therefore, over everything; and was over the Jewish and Christian dispensations--for there must have been some one over them, or the author of them, as really as it must be true that every house is built by some person. Being, therefore, over all things, and at the head of all dispensations, he MUST be more exalted than Moses." This seems to me to be the argument--- an argument which is based on the supposition that he is at the head of all things, and that he was the agent in the creation of all worlds. This view will make all consistent. The Lord Jesus will be seen to have a claim to a far higher honour than Moses, and Moses

will be seen to have derived his honour, as a servant of the Mediator, in the economy which he had appointed. ❖

5 And Moses verily *was* faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

Moses was faithful--as a servant. Not as the head of the dispensation; not as having originated it; but as in the employ and under the direction of its great Founder and Author--the Messiah. As such a servant he deserves all the honour for fidelity which has ever been claimed for him, but it cannot be the honour which is due to him who is at the head of the family or house. Paul assumed that Moses was a servant, and argued on that supposition, without attempting to prove it, because it was so often affirmed in the Old Testament, and must have been conceded by all the Jews. In numerous instances he is spoken of as "THE servant of the Lord." See Josh 1:1,2, 9:24 1Chr 6:49; 2Chr 24:9, Neh 10:29, Dan 9:11, Ex 14:31, 1Kgs 8:56, Ps 105:26. As this point was undisputed, it was only necessary to show that the Messiah was superior to a servant, in order to make the argument clear. For a testimony. To bear witness to those truths which were to be revealed; that is, he was the instrument of the Divine communications to the people, or the medium by which God made his will known. He did not originate the truths himself; but he was the mere medium by which God made known his truth to his people--a servant whom he employed to make his will known. The word "after" here is not necessary in order to a just translation of this passage, and obscures the sense. It does not mean that he was a witness of those truths which were to be spoken subsequently to his time, under another dispensation; nor those truths which the apostle proposed to consider in another part of the epistle, as Doddridge supposes; but it means merely that Moses stood forth as a public witness of the truths which God designed to reveal, or which were to be spoken. God did not speak to his people directly, and face to face, but he spoke through Moses, as an organ or medium. The sense is, Moses was a mere servant of God to communicate his will to man.

6 but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

But Christ as a son over his own house. He is not a servant. To the whole household or family of God he sustains the same relation which a son and heir in a family does to the household. That relation is far different from that of a servant. Moses was the latter; Christ was the former. To God he sustained the relation of a Son, and recognised him as his Father, and sought in all things to do his will; but over the whole family of God--the entire Church of all dispensations--he was like a son over the affairs of a family. Compared with the condition of a servant, Christ is as much superior to Moses as a son and heir is to the condition of a servant. A servant owns nothing; is heir to nothing; has no authority, and no right to control anything, and is himself wholly at the will of another. A son is the heir of all; has a prospective right to all; and is looked up to by all with respect. But the idea here is not merely that Christ is a son; it is that as a son he is placed over the whole arrangements of the household, and is one to whom all is entrusted as if it were his own. Whose house we are. Of whose family we are a part, or to which we belong. That is, we belong to the family over which Christ is placed, and not to that which was subject to Moses. If we hold fast. A leading object of this epistle is to guard those to whom it was addressed against the danger of apostasy. Hence this is introduced on all suitable occasions; and the apostle here says, that the only evidence which they could have that they belonged to the family of Christ, would be that they held fast the confidence which they had unto the end. If they did not do that, it would demonstrate that they never belonged to his family, for evidence of having belonged to his household was to be furnished only by perseverance to the end. The confidence. The word here used originally means, the liberty of speaking boldly and without restraint; then it means boldness, or confidence in general. And the rejoicing. The word here used means, properly, glorying, boasting, and then rejoicing. These words are used here in an adverbial

signification, and the meaning is, that the Christian has a confident and a rejoicing hope. It is

(1.) confident--bold--firm. It is not like the timid hope of the pagan, and the dreams and conjectures of the philosopher; it is not that which gives way at every breath of opposition; it is bold, firm, and manly. It is

(2.) rejoicing--triumphant, exulting. Why should not the hope of heaven fill with joy? Why should not he exult who has the prospect of everlasting happiness? Unto the end. To the end of life. Our religion, our hope, our confidence in God, must be persevered in to the end of life, if we would have evidence that we are his children. If hope is cherished for a while, and then abandoned; if men profess religion, and then fall away--no matter what were their raptures and triumphs--it proves that they never had any real piety. No evidence can be strong enough to prove that a man is a Christian, unless it leads him to persevere to the end of life.

A Rest for the People of God

7 Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,

8 harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Wherefore. In view of the fact that the Author of the Christian dispensation has a rank far superior to that of Moses. Because Christ has claims on us far greater than those which Moses had, let us hearken to his voice, and dread his displeasure. As the Holy Ghost saith. In Ps 95:7-11. This is full proof that, in the estimation of the author of this epistle, the writer of this Psalm was inspired. The Holy Ghost speaks through the word which he has revealed. The apostle quotes this passage, and applies it to those whom he addressed, because the admonition was as pertinent and important under the Christian dispensation as it was under the Jewish. The danger

of hardening the heart by neglecting to hear his voice was as great, and the consequences would be as fearful and alarming.--We should regard the solemn warnings in the Old Testament against sin, and against the danger of apostasy, as addressed by the Holy Ghost to us. They are as applicable to us as they were to those to whom they were at first addressed; and we need all the influence of such appeals, to keep us from apostasy, as much as they did. Today. Now; at present. At the very time when the command is addressed to you. It is not to be put off till tomorrow. All God's commands relate to the present--to this day--to the passing moment. He gives us no commands about the future, he does not require us to repent; and to turn to him to-morrow, or ten years hence. The reasons are obvious.

(1.) Duty pertains to the present. It is our duty to turn from sin, and to love him now.

(2.) We know not that we shall live to another day. A command, therefore, could not extend to that time, unless it were accompanied with a revelation that we should live till then--and such a revelation God does not choose to give. Every one, therefore, should feel that whatever commands God addresses to him are addressed to him now. Whatever guilt he incurs by neglecting those commands is incurred now. For the present neglect and disobedience each one is to answer--and each one must give account to God for what he does TODAY. If ye will hear. In case you are willing to hearken to God, listen now, and do not defer it to a future period.--There is much in a willingness to hear the voice of God. A willingness to learn is usually the precursor of great attainments in knowledge. A willingness to reform is usually the precursor of reformation. Get a man willing to break off his habits of profaneness or intemperance, and usually all the rest is easy. The great difficulty in the mind of a sinner is in his will. He is unwilling to hear the voice of God; unwilling that he should reign over him; unwilling now to attend to

religion. While this unwillingness lasts he will make no efforts, and he sees, or creates, a thousand difficulties in the way of his becoming a Christian. But when that unwillingness is overcome, and he is disposed to engage in the work of religion, difficulties vanish, and the work of salvation becomes easy. His voice. The voice of God speaking to us

(1.) in his written word;

(2.) in the preached gospel;

(3.) in our own consciences;

(4.) in the events of his Providence;

(5.) in the admonitions of our relatives and friends. Whatever conveys to us the truth of God, or is adapted to impress that on us, may be regarded as his voice speaking to us. He thus speaks to us every day in some of these ways; and every day, therefore, he may entreat us not to harden our hearts.

Harden not your hearts. Do not render the heart insensible to the Divine voice and admonition. A hard heart is that where the conscience is seared and insensible; where truth makes no impression; where no religious effect is produced by afflictions; where preaching is listened to without interest; and where the mind is unaffected by the appeals of friends. The idea here is, that a refusal to listen to the voice of God is connected with a hardening of the heart. It is in two ways.

(1.) The very refusal to do this tends to harden it. And

(2.) in order to resist the appeals of God, men must resort to the means of voluntarily hardening the heart. This they do by setting themselves against the truth; by the excuses which they offer for not becoming Christians; by plunging into sin in order to avoid serious impressions; and by direct resistance of the Holy Ghost. No inconsiderable part of the efforts of sinners consists in endeavouring to produce insensibility in their minds to the truth and the appeals of God. As in the provocation. Literally, in the embittering-- Then it means that which embitters or provokes the mind--as disobedience. Here it refers to what they did to embitter the mind of God against them; that is, to the course of conduct which was adopted to provoke him to wrath. In the day of temptation. In the time of temptation--the word day being used here, as it is often, to denote an indefinite period, or time in general. The word temptation here refers to the various provocations by which they tried the patience of God. They rebelled against him; they did that which put the Divine patience and forbearance to a trial. It does not mean that they tempted God to do evil, but that his long-suffering was tried by their sins. In the wilderness. The desert through which they passed. The word wilderness, in the Scriptures, commonly means a desert. Mt 3:1. "One provocation was in demanding bread at Sin; a second for want of water at Massah or Meribah; a third time at Sinai with the golden calf; a fourth time at Taberah for want of flesh; a fifth time at Kadesh, when they refused to go up into Canaan, and the oath came that they should die in the wilderness. A like refusal may prevent us from entering into rest."--Dr. J. P. Wilson, MS. Notes.

Proved me. "As if they would have made an experiment how much it was possible for me to bear." Doddridge. The meaning is, they put my patience to a thorough trial. And saw my works. That is, my miracles, or my interpositions in their behalf. They saw the wonders at the Red Sea, the descent on Mount Sinai, the supply of manna, etc.; and yet, while seeing those works, they rebelled. Even while sinners look on the

doings of God, and are surrounded by the proofs of his power and goodness, they rebel, and provoke him to anger. Men sin when God is filling their houses with plenty; when he opens his hand daily to supply their wants; when they behold the manifestations of his goodness on the sea and on the land; and even in the midst of all the blessings of redemption they provoke him to wrath. Forty years. The whole time during which they were passing from Egypt to the promised land. This may mean, either that they saw his works forty years, or that they tempted him forty years. The sense is not materially affected, whichever interpretation is preferred.

Wherefore I was grieved. On the word grieved, Eph 4:30. The word here means that he was offended with, or that he was indignant at them. They do alway err in their heart. Their long trial of forty years had been sufficient to show that it was a characteristic of the people that they were disposed to wander from God. Forty years are enough to show what the character is. They had seen his works; they had been called to obey him; they had received his law; and yet their conduct, during that time, had shown that they were not disposed to obey him. So of an individual. A man who has lived in sin forty years; who during all that time has rebelled against God, and disregarded all his appeals; who has lived for himself, and not for his Maker, has shown what his character is. Longer time is unnecessary; and if God should then cut him down, and consign him to hell, he could not be blamed for doing it. A man who during forty years will live in sin, and resist all the appeals of God, shows what is in his heart; and no injustice is done if then he is summoned before God, and he swears that he shall not enter into his rest. And they have not known my ways. They have been rebellious. They have not been acquainted with the true God; or they have not approved my doings. The word know is often used, in the Scriptures, in the sense of approving, or loving. Mt 7:23.

9 when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in *their* heart;
and they have not known my ways.
11 So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

So I sware in my wrath. God is often represented in the Scriptures as swearing--and usually as swearing by himself, or by his own existence. Of course this is figurative, and denotes a strong affirmation, or a settled and determined purpose. An oath with us implies the strongest affirmation, or the expression of the most settled and determined purpose of mind. The meaning here is, that so refractory and perverse had they showed themselves, that he solemnly resolved that they should never enter into the land of Canaan.

They shall not enter into my rest. Marg. As in the original, if they shall enter. That is, they shall not enter. The word if has this negative meaning in Hebrew, and this meaning is transferred to the Greek word if. Comp. 1Sam 3:17, 2Sam 3:35, 2Kgs 6:31. It is called "my rest" here; meaning that it was such rest as God had provided, or such as he enjoyed. The particular rest referred to here was that of the land of Canaan, but which was undoubtedly regarded as emblematic of the "rest" in heaven. Into that rest God solemnly said they should never enter. They had been rebellious. All the means of reclaiming them had failed. God had warned and entreated them; he had caused his mercies to pass before them, and had visited them with judgments in vain; and he now declares, that for all their rebellion they should be excluded from the promised land. God speaks here in the manner of men. Men are affected with feelings of indignation in such circumstances, and God makes use of such language as expresses such feelings. But we are to understand it in a manner consistent with his character, and we are not to suppose that he is affected with the same emotions which agitate the bosoms of men. The meaning is, that he formed and expressed a deliberate and solemn purpose, that they should never enter into the promised land. Whether this rest refers here to heaven, and whether the meaning is that God

would exclude them from that blessed world, will be more appropriately considered in the next chapter. The particular idea is, that they were to be excluded from the promised land, and that they should fall in the wilderness. No one can doubt, also, that their conduct had been such as to show that the great body of them were unfit to enter into heaven.

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Take heed, brethren. In view of the conduct of the rebellious Jews, and of their fearful doom, be on your guard lest you also be found to have had the same feelings of rebellion and unbelief. See to it, that under the new dispensation, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of the gospel, you be not found to manifest such feelings as shall exclude you from the heavenly world. The principle has been settled by their unbelief, that they who oppose God will be excluded from his rest. That may be shown under all dispensations, and in all circumstances; and there is not less danger of it under the gospel, than there was when the fathers were conducted to the promised land. You are travelling through a wilderness--the barren wilderness of this world. You are exposed to trials and temptations. You meet with many a deadly and mighty foe. You have hearts prone to apostasy and sin. You are seeking a land of promise--a land of rest. You are surrounded by the wonders of almighty power, and by the proofs of infinite beneficence. Disobedience and rebellion in you will as certainly exclude you from heaven, as their rebellion did them from the promised land; and as their great sin was unbelief, be on your guard lest you manifest the same.

An evil heart of unbelief. An evil, unbelieving heart. The word unbelief is used to qualify the word heart by a Hebraism--a mode of speech that is common in the New Testament. An unbelieving heart was the cause of their apostasy, and what worked their ruin will produce ours. The root of their evil was a want of confidence in God--and this is what is meant here by a heart of unbelief. The great difficulty on earth everywhere is a want of confidence in God and this

has produced all the ills that man has ever suffered. It led to the first apostasy; and it has led to every other apostasy, and will continue to produce the same effects to the end of the world. The apostle says that this heart of unbelief is "evil." Men often feel that it is a matter of little consequence whether they have faith or not, provided their conduct is right; and hence they do not see or admit the propriety of what is said about the consequences of unbelief in the Scriptures. But what do they say about a want of confidence between a husband and wife? Are there no evils in that? What husband can sleep with quietness on his pillow, if he has no confidence in the virtue of his wife? What child can have peace who has no confidence in a parent? How can there be prosperity in a community, where there is no confidence in a bank or an insurance office, or where one merchant has no confidence in another; where a neighbour has no confidence in his neighbour; where the sick have no confidence in a physician; and where, in general, all confidence is broken up between man and man? If I wished to produce the deepest distress in any community, and had the power, I would produce the same want of confidence between man and man which there is now between man and his Maker. I would thus take away sleep from the pillow of every husband and wife, every parent and child; and make every man wretched, with the feeling that all the property which he had was insecure. Among men, nothing is seen to be productive of greater evil than a want of confidence or faith; and why should not the same evil exist in the Divine administration? And if want of confidence produces such results between man and man, why should it not produce similar, or greater miseries, where it occurs in relation to God? There is not an evil that man endures which might not be alleviated or removed by confidence in God; and hence one great object of the Christian religion is, to restore to man his lost confidence in the God that made him.

In departing from the living God. Manifested in departing from him; or leading to a departure from him. The idea is, that such a heart of unbelief would be connected with apostasy

from God. All apostasy first exists in the heart, and then is manifested in the life. They who indulge in unbelief in any form, or in regard to any subject, should remember that this is the great source of all alienation from God, and that if indulged it will lead to complete apostasy. They who wish to live a life of piety should keep the heart right, he that lives "by the faith of the Son of God" is safe; and none is safe but he.

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

But exhort one another daily. This is addressed to the members of the churches; and it follows, therefore,

(1.) that it is their duty to exhort their brethren; and

(2.) that it is their duty to do it daily; that is, constantly. See Heb 10:24, 1Thes 4:18, 5:11; Rom 12:8. While this is the special duty of the ministers of the gospel, 1Timm 6:2, 2Ti 4:2; Tit 2:6,15, it is also the duty of all the members of the churches --and a most important, but much neglected duty. This does not refer to public exhortation, which more appropriately pertains to the ministers of the gospel, but to that private watch and care which the individual members of the church should have over one another. But in what cases is such exhortation proper? What rules should regulate it ? I answer, It may be regarded as a duty, or is to be performed in such cases as the following:--

(1.) Intimate friends in the church should exhort and counsel one another; should admonish each other of their faults; and should aid one another in the divine life.

(2.) Parents should do the same thing to their children. They are placed particularly under their watch and care. A pastor cannot often see the members of his flock in private; and a parent may greatly aid him in his work by watching over the members of their families who are connected with the church.

(3.) Sabbath school teachers may aid much in this duty. They are to be assistants to parents and to pastors. They often have under their care youthful members of the churches. They have an opportunity of knowing their state of mind, their temptations, and their dangers, better than the pastor can have. It should be theirs, therefore, to exhort them to a holy life.

(4.) The aged should exhort the young. Every aged Christian may thus do much for the promotion of religion. His experience is the property of the church; and he is bound so to employ it, as to be useful in aiding the feeble, reclaiming the wandering, recovering the backslider, and directing the inquiring. There is a vast amount of spiritual capital of this kind in the church that is unemployed, and that might be made eminently useful in helping others to heaven.

(5.) Church members should exhort one another. There may not be the intimacy of personal friendship among all the members of a large church, but still the connexion between them should be regarded as sufficiently tender and confidential to make it proper for any one to admonish a brother who goes astray. They belong to the same communion. They sit down at the same Supper of the Lord. They express their assent to the same articles of faith. They are regarded by the community as united. Each member sustains a portion of the honour and the responsibility of the whole; and each member should feel that he has a right, and that it is his duty, to admonish a brother if he goes astray. Yet this duty is greatly neglected. In what church is it performed! How often do church-members see a fellow-member go astray, without any exhortation or admonition! How often do they hear reports of the inconsistent lives of other members, and perhaps contribute to the circulation of these reports themselves, without any pains taken to inquire whether they are true! How often do the poor fear the rich members of the church, or the rich despise the poor, and see each other live in sin, without any attempt to entreat or save them! I would not

have the courtesies of life violated. I would not have any assume a dogmatical or dictatorial air. I would have no one step out of his proper sphere of life. But the principle which I would lay down is, that the fact of church-membership should inspire such confidence, as to make it proper for one member to exhort another whom he sees going astray. Belonging to the same family; having the same interest in religion; and all suffering when one suffers, why should they not be allowed tenderly and kindly to exhort one another to a holy life?

While it is called To-day. While life lasts; or while you may be permitted to use the language, "To-day hear the voice of God." The idea is, that the exhortation is not to be intermitted. It is to be our daily business to admonish and exhort one another. Christians are liable every day to go astray; every day they need aid in the divine life; and they who are fellow;heirs with them of salvation should be ever ready to counsel and advise them.

Lest any of you be hardened. Heb 3:8. It is possible for Christians to become, in a sense, hardened. Their minds become less sensitive than they were to the claims of duty, and their consciences become less tender. Hence the propriety of mutual exhortation, that they may always have the right feeling, and may always listen to the commands of God.

The deceitfulness of sin. Eph 4:22. Sin is always deceitful. It promises more than it performs. It assures us of pleasure which it never imparts. It leads us on beyond what was supposed when we began to indulge in it. The man who commits sin is always under a delusion; and sin, if he indulges it, will lead him on from one step to another, until the heart becomes entirely hardened. Sin puts on plausible appearances and pretences; it assumes the name of virtue; it offers excuses and palliations, until the victim is snared; and then, spell-bound, he is hurried on to every excess. If sin was always seen in its true aspect when man is tempted to commit it, it would

be so hateful that he would flee from it with the utmost abhorrence. What young man would become a drunkard, if he saw, when he began, exactly the career which he would run? What young man, now vigorous and healthful, and with fair prospects of usefulness and happiness, would ever touch the intoxicating bowl, if he saw what he would be when he became a sot? What man would ever enter the room of the gambler, if he saw just where indulgence would soon lead him, and if, at the commencement he saw exactly the woe and despair which would inevitably ensue? Who would become a voluptuary and a sensualist, if he saw exactly the close of such a career? Sin deceives, deludes, blinds. Men do not, or will not, see the fearful results of indulgence. They are deluded by the hope of happiness or of gain; they are drawn along by the fascinations and allurements of pleasure, until the heart becomes hard and the conscience seared--and then they give way without remorse. From such a course the apostle would have Christians guarded by kind and affectionate exhortation. Each one should feel that he has an interest in keeping his brother from such a doom; and each Christian, thus in danger should be willing to listen to the kind exhortation of a Christian brother.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

For we are made partakers of Christ. We are spiritually united to the Saviour. We become one with him. We partake of his Spirit and allotments. The sacred writers are accustomed to describe the Christian as being closely united to the Saviour, and as being one with him. Jn 15:1, seq., Jn 17:21; Jn 17:23; Eph 5:30; 1Cor 12:27. The idea is, that we participate in all that pertains to him. It is a union of feeling and affection; a union of principle and of congeniality; a union of dependence as well as love; a union where nothing is to be imparted by us, but everything gained; and a union, therefore, on the part of the Redeemer of great condescension. It is the union of the branch to the vine, where the branch is supported and nourished by the vine, and not the union of the ivy and the oak, where the ivy has its own roots, and merely clings around

the oak and climbs up upon it. What else can be said so honourable of man as that he is "a partaker of Christ;" that he shares his feelings here, and that he is to share his honours in a brighter world? Compared with this, what is it to participate with the rich and the gay in their pleasures; what would it be to share in the honours of conquerors and kings?

If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast. Heb 3:6. If we continue to maintain the same confidence which we had in the beginning, or which we showed at the commencement of our Christian life. At first, they had been firm in the Christian hope. They evinced true and strong attachment to the Redeemer. They were ardent and devoted to his cause. If they continued to maintain that to the end, that is, the end of life; if, in the midst of all temptations and trials they adhered inflexibly to the cause of the Savior, they would show that they were true Christians, and would partake of the blessedness of the heavenly world with the Redeemer. The idea is, that it is only perseverance in the ways of religion that constitutes certain evidence of piety. Where piety is manifested through life, or where there is an untiring devotion to the cause of God, there the evidence is clear and undoubted. But where there is at first great ardour, zeal, and confidence, which soon dies away, then it is clear that they never had any real attachment to him and his cause. It may be remarked here, that the "beginning of the confidence" of those who are deceived, and who know nothing about religion at heart, is often as bold as where there is true piety. The hypocrite makes up in ardour what he lacks in sincerity; and he who is really deceived, is usually deceived under the influence of some strong and vivid emotion, which he mistakes for true religion. Often the sincere convert is calm, though decided, and sometimes is even timorous and doubting; while the self-deceiver is noisy in profession, and clamorous in his zeal, and much disposed to blame the lukewarmness of others. Evidence of piety, therefore, should not be built on that early zeal; nor should it be concluded, that because there is ardour, there is of necessity genuine religion.

Ardour is valuable, and true religion is ardent; but there is other ardour than that which the gospel inspires. The evidence of genuine piety is to be found in that which will bear us up under trials, and endure amidst persecution and opposition. The doctrine here is, that it is necessary to persevere if we would have the evidence of true piety. This doctrine is taught everywhere in the Scriptures. Persevere in what? I answer, not

(1.) merely in a profession of religion. A man may do that, and have no piety.

(2.) Not in zeal for party or sect. The Pharisees had that to the end of their lives.

(3.) Not in mere honesty, and correctness of external deportment. A man may do that in the church, as well as out of it, and yet have no religion. But we should persevere

(1) in the love of God and of Christ--in conscious, ardent, steady attachment to Him to whom our lives are professedly devoted.

(2) In the secret duties of religion: in that watchfulness over the heart; that communion with God; that careful study of the Bible; that guardianship over the temper; and in that habitual intercourse with God in secret prayer which is appropriate to a Christian, and which marks the Christian character.

(3) In the performance of the public duties of religion: in leading a Christian life, as distinguished from a life of worldliness and vanity--a life of mere morality and honesty--a life such as thousands lead who are out of the church. There

is something which distinguishes a Christian from one who is not a Christian; a religious from an irreligious man. There is something in religion; something which serves to characterize a Christian; and unless that something is manifested, there can be no evidence of true piety. The Christian is to be distinguished in temper, feeling, deportment, aims, plans, from the men of this World; and unless those characteristics are shown in the life and deportment, there can be no well-founded evidence of religion. Learn,

(1.) that it is not mere feeling that furnishes evidence of religion.

(2.) That it is not mere excitement that constitutes religion.

(3.) That it is not mere ardour.

(4.) That it is not mere zeal. All these may be temporary. Religion is something that lasts through life. It goes with a man everywhere. It is with him in trial. It forms his plans; regulates his temper; suggests his words; prompts to his actions. It lives with him in all his external changes, and goes with him through the dark valley of death, and accompanies him up to the bar of God, and is with him for ever.

15 while it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice,
harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

When they had heard. Had heard God speaking to them, and giving them his commands. Did provoke.Provoked him to anger; or their conduct was such as was fitted to produce indignation. Heb 3:8. Howbeit. αλλα. But. This particle "in a series of questions, and standing at the head of a question, means, but, further. It serves to connect, and give intensity to

the interrogation." Stuart. Paul means to ask, with emphasis, whether the great mass of those who came out of Egypt did not apostatize at the same time he means to intimate that there is no security that they who have witnessed remarkable manifestations of the greatness of God, and who have partaken of extraordinary mercies, will not apostatize and perish. As the Hebrews, who heard God speak from Mount Sinai, revolted and perished, so it is possible that they who witness the mercies of God in redemption may be in danger of abusing all those mercies, and of perishing. By the example, therefore, of the disobedient Israelites, he would admonish professed Christians of their danger.

17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

But with whom was he grieved forty years? With whom was he angry? Heb 3:10. Was it not with them that had sinned? That had sinned in various ways --by rebellion, murmuring, unbelief. As God was angry with them for their sins, we have the same reason to apprehend that he will be angry with us if we sin; and we should, therefore, be on our guard against that unbelief which would lead us to depart from him, Heb 3:12. Whose carcases fell, Nu 14:29. That is, they all died, and were left on the sands of the desert. The whole generation was strewed along in the way to Canaan. All of those who had seen the wonders that God had done in the land of Ham---who had been rescued in so remarkable a manner from oppression--were thus cut down, and died in the deserts through which they were passing, Nu 26:64,65. Such an example of the effects of revolt against God, and of unbelief, was well fitted to admonish Christians in the time of the apostle, and is fitted to admonish us now, of the danger of the sin of unbelief. We are not to suppose that all of those who thus died were excluded from heaven. Moses and Aaron were among the number of those who were not permitted to enter the promised land, but of their piety there can be no doubt. Beyond all question, also, there were many others of that generation who were truly pious. But, at different times, they seem all to have partaken of the prevalent feelings of

discontent, and were all involved in the sweeping condemnation that they should die in the wilderness.

18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

But to them that believed not. That did not confide in God. De 1:32: "Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." In consequence of this want of faith, God solemnly sware unto them that they should not enter into the promised land. De 1:34,35: "And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, save Caleb," etc. The distinct reason, therefore, assigned by --Moses, why they did not enter the promised land, was a want of faith; and this accords directly with the design of the apostle here. He is exhorting those whom he addresses to beware of an evil heart of unbelief, Heb 3:12. He says that it was such a heart that excluded the Hebrews from the promised land. The same thing, says he, must exclude you from heaven--the promised home of the believer; and if that firm confidence in God and his promises which he requires is wanting, you will be excluded from the world of eternal rest.

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

It was unbelief that kept them out of Canaan. Hence, the lesson which is given more fully in the next chapter. These warnings show us that the Hebrew Christians addressed were subjected to trials, and some of them in danger of apostasy, falling away through unbelief. Hence, the fate of Israel in the wilderness is pointed out. If unbelief shut out the Israelites from the rest in Canaan, unbelief will shut the gates of heavenly rest to those who have started on the way.

So we see, etc. We see, from the direct testimony of the Old Testament, that unbelief was the reason why they were excluded from the promised land. Let us learn, in view of the reasoning and exhortations here--

(1.) The evil of unbelief. It excluded that whole generation, consisting of many hundred thousand souls, from the land of promise--the land to which they had looked with ardent hopes, and with warm desires. It will exclude countless millions from heaven. A want of confidence in God is the great source of evil in this world, and will be the cause of wretchedness to all eternity of unnumbered hosts. But surely that was not a small or unimportant thing which strewed the desert with the bones of that whole generation whom God had, in so remarkable a manner, rescued from Egyptian servitude. And that cannot be a small matter which wile cause multitudes to sink down to infinite wretchedness and despair.

(2.) Let us, who are professed Christians, be cautious against indulging unbelief in our hearts. Our difficulties all begin there. We lose confidence in God. We doubt his promises, his oaths, his threatenings. In dark and trying times we begin to have doubts about the wisdom of his dealings, and about his goodness. Unbelief once admitted into the heart is the beginning of many woes. When a man loses confidence in God, he is on a shoreless ocean that is full of whirlpools, and rocks, and quicksands, and where it is impossible to find a secure anchorage. There is nothing to which he may moor his driven bark; and he will never find safety or peace till he comes back to God.

(3.) Let us live a life of faith. Let us so live that we may say with Paul, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." So living, we shall have peace. The mind will be at rest. Storms and tempests may blow, but we shall be secure. Others

may be troubled in the vicissitudes of life, but our minds will be at peace.

(4.) Let us live expecting the future "rest" that remains for us. Let us keep our eye fixed upon it. To us there is a rest promised, as there was to the Hebrews whom God had delivered from the land of oppression; and we may by faith attain to that, "rest," as they might have reached the land of Canaan.

(5.) Let us persevere to the end. He that draws back must be lost. He that does not endure to the end of life, in the ways of religion, can never have been a Christian. There is nothing which will furnish certain evidence of religion, unless our piety is such as to lead us to persevere till death. The man who enters on the professed Christian life expecting to fall away, or who can look upon the possibility of falling away without concern, has never known anything of the nature of true religion, he cannot be a Christian. He may have had raptures and visions; he may be a loud professor, and a noisy and zealous partisan, but he has no evidence that he has ever known anything about religion. That religion which is not connected with a firm and determined purpose, by the grace of God, to persevere to the end of life, is no true religion; and a man who expects to fall away and go back again to the world, or who can look at such an idea without alarm, should regard it as a settled matter that he has no true knowledge of God.

(6.) No man should delay the work of salvation to a future time. To-day is the accepted time; to-day the only time of which we have any security. God speaks to-day, and to-day his voice should be heard. No man on any subject should defer till to-morrow what ought to be done to-clay. He who defers religion till a future time neglects his own best interest;

violates most solemn obligations; and endangers his immortal soul. What security can any one have that he will live to see another day? What evidence has he that he will be any more disposed to attend to his salvation then than he is now? What evidence can he have that he will not provoke God by this course, and bring condemnation on his soul? Of all delusions, that is the most wonderful by which dying men are led to defer attention to the concerns of the soul to a future period of life. Nowhere has Satan such advantage as in keeping this delusion before the mind; and if in respect to anything the voice of warning and alarm should be lifted loud and long, it is in reference to this. Oh, why will not men be wise to-day? Why will they not embrace the offer of salvation now? Why will they not at once make sure of eternal happiness? And why, amidst the changes and trials of this life, will they not so secure the everlasting inheritance as to feel that that is safe--that there is one thing at least that cannot be shaken and disturbed by commercial embarrassment and distress; one thing secure, though friends and kindred are torn away from them; one thing safe when their own health fads, and they lie down on the bed where they will bid adieu to all earthly comforts, and from which they will never rise.

Hebrews-4

1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

1. Let us therefore fear. Let us be apprehensive that we may possibly fail of that rest. The kind of fear which is recommended here is that which leads to caution and care. A man who is in danger of losing his life or health should be watchful; a seaman that is in danger of running on a lee-shore should be on his guard. So we who have the offer of heaven, and who yet are in danger of losing it, should take all possible precautions lest we fail of it,

Lest a promise being left us. Paul assumes here that there is such a promise. In the subsequent part of the chapter, he goes

more into the subject, and proves from the Old Testament that there is such a promise made to us. It is to be remembered, that Paul had not the New Testament then to appeal to, as we have, which is perfectly clear on the subject, but that he was obliged to appeal to the Old Testament. This he did, not only because the New Testament was not then written, but because he was reasoning with those who had been Hebrews, and who regarded the authority of the Old Testament as decisive. If his reasoning to us appears somewhat obscure, we should put ourselves in his place, and should remember that the converts then had not the full light which we have now in the New Testament.

Of entering into his rest. The rest of God--the rest of the world where he dwells. It is called his rest, because it is that which he enjoys, and which he alone can confer. There can be no doubt that Paul refers here to heaven, and means to say that there is a promise left to Christians of being admitted to the enjoyment of that blessed world where God dwells.

Any of you should seem to come short of it. The word "seem" here is used as a form of gentle and mild address, implying the possibility of thus coming short. The word here-- δοκεω - is often used so as to appear to give no essential addition to the sense of a passage, though it is probable that it always gave a shading to the meaning. Thus the phrase esa videatur is often used by Cicero at the end of a period, to denote merely that a thing was--though he expressed it as though it merely seemed to be. Such language is often used in argument or in conversation as a modest expression, as when we say a thing seems to be so and so, instead of saying "it is." In some such sense Paul probably used the phrase here--perhaps as expressing what we would by this language--" lest it should appear at last that any of you had come short of it." The phrase "come short of it" is probably used with reference to the journey to the promised land, where they who came out of Egypt came short of that land, and fell in the wilderness. They did not reach it. --This verse teaches the important truth, that

though heaven is offered to us, and that a "rest" is promised to us if we seek it, yet that there is reason to think that many may fail of reaching it who had expected to obtain it. Among those will be the following classes:--

(1.) Those who are professors of religion, but who have never known anything of true piety.

(2.) Those who are expecting to be saved by their own works, and are looking forward to a world of rest on the ground of what their own hands can do.

(3.) Those who defer attention to the subject, from time to time, until it becomes too late. They expect to reach heaven, but they are not ready to give their hearts to God now, and the subject is deferred from one period to another, until death arrests them unprepared.

(4.) Those who have been awakened to see their guilt and danger, and who have been almost, but not quite, ready to give up their hearts to God. Such were Agrippa, Felix, the young ruler, (Mk 10:21;) and such are all those who are almost but not quite prepared to give up the world, and to devote themselves to the Redeemer. To all these the promise of "rest" is made, if they will accept of salvation as it is offered in the gospel; all of them cherish a hope that they will be saved; and all of them are destined alike to be disappointed. With what earnestness, therefore, should we strive that we may not fail of the grace of God!

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them. This translation by no means conveys the sense of the original. According to this, it would seem that the Gospel, as we understand it, or the whole plan of salvation, was communicated to them, as well as to us. But this is by no means the idea. The discussion has reference only to the

promise of rest; and the assertion of the apostle is, that this good news of a promise of rest is made to us, as really as it was made to them. "Rest" was promised to them in the land of Canaan--an emblem of the eternal rest of the people of God. That was unquestioned, and Paul took it for granted. His object now is, to show that a promise of "rest" is as really made to us as it was to them, and that there is the same danger of failing to secure it as there was then. It was important for him to show that there was such a promise made to the people of God in his time; and as he was discoursing of those who were Hebrews, he of course made his appeal to the Old Testament. The literal translation would be, "For we are evangelized--εσμενευηγγελισμενοι-- as well as they." The word evangelize means, to communicate good news, or glad tidings; and the idea here is, that the good news or glad tidings of "rest" is announced to us as really as it was to them. This the apostle proves in the following verses. But the word preached. Marg. Of hearing. The word preach we also use now, in a technical sense, as denoting a formal proclamation of the gospel by the ministers of religion.

But this is not the idea here. It means, simply, the word which they heard; and refers particularly to the promise of "rest" which was made to them. That message was communicated to them by Moses.

Did not profit them. They derived no advantage from it. They rejected and despised it, and were, therefore, excluded from the promised land. It exerted no influence over their hearts and lives, and they lived and died as though no such promise had been made. Thus many persons live and die now. The offer of salvation is made to them. They are invited to come, and be saved. They are assured that God is willing to save them, and that the Redeemer stands with open arms to welcome them to heaven. They are trained up under the gospel; are led early in life to the sanctuary; are in the habit of attending on the preaching of the gospel all their days; but still what they hear exerts no saving influence on their hearts.

At the close of life, all that could be truly said of them is, that they have not been profited; it has been no real advantage to them, in regard to their final destiny, that they have enjoyed so many privileges.

Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Marg. "Or, because they were not united by faith to" There are some various readings on this text, and one of these has given occasion to the version in the margin. Many Mss., instead of the common reading--συγκεκραμενος which the word mixed would be united to ολογος "the word," have another reading--συγκεκραμενους according to which the word mixed would refer to "them," and would mean that they who heard the word and rejected it were not mixed, or united, with those who believed it. The former reading makes the best sense, and is the best sustained; and the idea is, that the message which was preached was not received into the heart by faith. They were destitute of faith, and the message did not profit them. The word mixed is supposed by many of the best critics to refer to the process of which food is made nutritive, by being properly mixed with the saliva and the gastric juice, and thus converted into chyme and chyle, and then changed into blood. If suitably mired in this manner, it contributes to the life and health of the bodily frame; if not, it is the means of disease and death. So it is supposed the apostle meant to say of the message which God sends to man. If properly received--if mixed or united with faith--it becomes the means of spiritual support and life; if not, it furnishes no alhnent to the soul, and will be of no advantage. As food, when properly digested, incorporates itself with the body, and gives it support, so those critics suppose it to be of the word of God, that it incorporates itself with the internal and spiritual man, and gives it support and life: It may be doubted, however, whether the apostle had any such allusion as this, and whether it is not rather a refinement of the critics than of Paul. The word used here properly denotes a mixing or mingling together, like water and wine, 2 Mac. xv. 39; a uniting together in proper proportions and order, as of the body, 1Cor 12:24; and it may

refer here merely to a proper union of faith with the word, in order that it might be profitable. The idea is, that merely to hear the message of life with the outward ear will be of no advantage. It must be believed, or it will be of no benefit. The message is sent to mankind at large. God declares his readiness to save all. But this message is of no advantage to multitudes--for such reasons as these:--

(1.) Many do not attend to it at all. They do not even listen respectfully to it. Multitudes go not near the place where the gospel is proclaimed; and many, when there, and when they seem to attend, have their minds and hearts on other things.

(2.) Many do not believe it. They have doubts about the whole subject of religion, or about the particular doctrines of the gospel; and while they do not believe it, how can they be benefited by it? How can a man be profited by the records of history if he does not believe them? How can one be benefited by the truths of science if he does not believe them? And if a man was assured that by going to a certain place he might close a bargain that would be a great advantage to him, of what use would this information be to him if he did not believe a word of it? So of the knowledge of salvation; the facts of the history recorded in the Bible; the offset of eternal life.

(3.) Men do not allow the message of life to influence their conduct, and of course it is of no advantage to them. Of what use can it be, if they steadily resist all the influence which it would have, and ought to have, on their lives? They live as though it were ascertained that there is no truth in the Bible; no reason for being influenced by the offered hope of eternal life, or alarmed by the threatened danger of eternal death. Resolved to pursue a course of life that is at variance with the commands of God, they cannot be profited by the message of salvation. Having no faith which influences and controls the heart, they are not in the least benefited by the offer of heaven. When they die, their condition is in no wise made better by

the fact, that they were trained up in a pious family; that they were instructed in the Sabbath-school; that they had the Bible in their dwellings, and that they sat regularly under a preached gospel. For any advantage to be derived from all this in the future world, they might as well have never heard the message of life. Nay it would have been better for them. The only effect of these privileges is to harden them in guilt, and to sink them deeper in hell. 2Cor 2:16.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For we which have believed do enter into rest. That is, it is a certain fact that believers will enter into rest. That promise is made to "believers;" and as we have evidence that we come under the denomination of believers, it will follow that we have the offer of rest as well as they. That this is so the apostle proceeds to prove; that is, he proceeds to show, from the Old Testament, that there was a promise to "believers" that they would enter into rest. Since there was such a promise, and since there was danger that by unbelief that "rest" might be lost, he proceeds to show them the danger, and to warn them of it.

As he said, etc. See Heb 3:11. The meaning of this passage is this:-- "God made a promise of rest to those who believe. They to whom the offer was first made failed, and did not enter in. It must follow, therefore, that the offer extended to others, since God designed that some should enter in, or that it should not be provided in vain. To them it was a solemn declaration, that unbelievers should not enter in--and this implied that believers would. As we now, "says he, "sustain the character of believers, it follows that to us the promise of rest is now made, and we may partake of it."

If they shall enter, etc. That is, they shall not enter in. See Heb 3:11. The "rest" here spoken of, as reserved for Christians,

must be different from that of the promised land. It is something that pertains to Christians now, and it must, therefore, refer to the "rest" that remains in heaven.

Although the works were finished, etc. This is a difficult expression. What works are referred to? it may be asked. How does this bear on the subject under discussion? How can it be a proof that there remains a "rest" to those who believe now? This was the point to be demonstrated; and this passage was designed clearly to bear on that point. As it is in our translation, the passage seems to make no sense whatever. Tindal renders it, "And that spake he verily long after that the works were made from the foundation of the world laid," which makes much better sense than our translation. Doddridge explains it as meaning, "And this may lead us further to reflect on what is elsewhere said concerning his works as they were finished from the foundation of the world." But it is difficult to see why they should reflect on his works just then, and how this would bear on the case in hand. Prof. Stuart supposes that the word "rest" must be understood here before "works," and translates it, "Shall not enter into my rest--to wit, rest from the works which were performed when the world was founded." Prof. Robinson (Lex.) explains it as meaning, "The rest here spoken of, 'MY rest,' could not have been God's resting from his works, (Gen 2:2,) for this rest, the Sabbath, had already existed from the creation of the world." Dr. J.P. Wilson (MSS. Notes) renders it, "For we who have believed do enter into rest (or a cessation) indeed (καιτοι) of the works done (among men) from the beginning of the world." Amidst this variety of interpretation it is difficult to determine the true sense. But perhaps the main thought may be collected from the following remarks.

(1.) The Jews, as the people of God, had a rest promised them in the land of Canaan. Of that they failed by their unbelief.

(2.) The purpose of the apostle was to prove that there was a similar promise made to the people of God long subsequent to that, and to which all his people were invited.

(3.) That rest was not that of the promised land, it was such as God had himself when he had finished the work of creation. That was peculiarly his rest--the rest of God, without toil or weariness, and after his whole work was finished.

(4.) His people were invited to the same rest--the rest of God--to partake of his felicity; to enter into that bliss which he enjoyed when he had finished the work of creation. The happiness of the saints was to be like that. It was to be, in their case, also a rest from toil--to be enjoyed at the end of all that they had to do. To prove that Christians were to attain to such a rest was the purpose which the apostle had in view--showing that it was a general doctrine pertaining to believers in every age, that there was a promise of rest for them. I would, then, regard the middle clause of this verse as a parenthesis, and render the whole," For we who are believers shall enter into rest--[the rest] indeed which occurred when the works were finished at the foundation of the world--as he said [in one place] as I have sworn in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest." That was the true rest--such rest or repose as God had when he finished the work of creation--such as he has now in heaven. This gives the highest possible idea of the dignity and desirableness of that "rest" to which we look forward--for it is to be such as God enjoys, and is to elevate us more and more to him. What more exalted idea can there be of happiness than to participate in the calmness, the peace, the repose, the freedom from raging passions, from wearisome toil, and from agitating cares, which God enjoys? Who, torn with conflicting passions here, wearied with toil, and distracted with care, ought not to feel it a privilege to look forward to that rest? Of this rest the Sabbath and the promised land were emblems. They to whom the promise was made did not enter in; but some shall enter in, and the promise therefore pertains to us.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise,
And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.
5 And in this *place* again,
If they shall enter into my rest.
6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and
they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of
unbelief:

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein. That is, "Since there is a rest spoken of in the Scriptures, implying that it is to be enjoyed by some, and since they to whom it was first promised did not inherit it, it follows that it must still be in reserve." This is the conclusion which the apostle draws from the argument in the previous verses, and is connected with Heb 4:9, where he says that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God"--the point to which the whole argument tended. The statement in Heb 4:7,8, is to be regarded as an interruption in stating the conclusion, or as the suggestion of a new thought or a new argument bearing on the subject, which he sets down even while stating the conclusion from his argument. It has the appearance of being suggested to him as a new thought of importance, and which he preferred to place even in the midst of the summing up of the argument rather than omit it altogether. It denotes a state of mind full of the subject, and where one idea came hastening after another, and which it was deemed important to notice, even though it should seem to be out of place. The position in this verse (Heb 4:6) is, that it was a settled or indisputable matter that some would enter into rest. The implied argument to prove this is,

(1.) that there was a "rest" spoken of which deserved to be called a divine rest, or the "rest of God;"

(2) it could not be supposed that God would prepare such a rest in vain; for it would follow, that if he had fitted up a world of rest he designed that it should be occupied. As he knew, therefore, that they to whom it was first offered would not enter in, it must be that he designed it for some others, and

that it remained to be occupied by us now. And they to whom it was first preached, Marg. The Gospel. Gr. Evangelized; that is, to whom the good news of the rest was first announced--the Israelites. Entered not in because of unbelief. Heb 3:19.

7 again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Again, he limiteth. He designates, or definitely mentions. The word rendered limiteth οριζει means to bound, to set a boundary--as of a field, or farm; and then, to determine or fix definitely, to designate, appoint. Here it means, that he specifies particularly, or mentions expressly. A certain day. A particular time; he mentions TO-DAY particularly. That is, in the time of David, he uses the word "to-day," as if there was then an offer of rest, and as if it were then possible to enter into it. The object of the additional thought was to show that the offer of rest was not confined to the Israelites, to whom it was first made; that David regarded it as existing in his day; and that man might even then be invited to come and partake of the rest that was promised. "Nearly five hundred years after the time when the Israelites were going to the promised land, and when the offer of rest was made to them, we hear David speaking of rest still; rest which was offered in his time, and which might then be lost by hardening the heart. It could not be, therefore, that the offer of rest pertained merely to the promised land. It must be something in advance of that. It must be something existing in the time of David. It must be an offer of heaven." "A Jew might feel the force of this argument more than we do; still it is conclusive to prove the point under consideration, that there was a rest spoken of long after the offer of the promised land, and that all the promises could not have pertained to that". Saying in David. In a Psalm composed by David, or rather, perhaps, saying by David; that is, God spake by him. To-day. Now; that is, even in the time of David. After so long a time. That is, so long after the first promise was made; to wit, about five hundred years. These are the words of Paul, calling attention to the fact, that so long a time after the entrance into the promised

land there was still a speaking of "to-day," as if even then they were called to partake of the rest. As it is said. To quote it exactly; or to bring the express authority of the Scriptures. It is expressly said even after that long time, "To-day--or Now--if you will hear his voice." All this is to prove that even in that time, there was an offer of rest.

8 For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

For if Jesus Marg. "That is, Joshua." The Syriac renders it, "Joshua the Son of Nun." Jesus is the Greek mode of writing Joshua, and there can be no doubt that Joshua is here intended. The object is to prove that Joshua did not give the people of God such a rest as to make it improper to speak of a "rest" after that time. "If Joshua had given them a complete and final rest; if, by his conducting them to the promised land, all had been done which had been contemplated by the promise, then it would not have been alluded to again, as it was in the time of David." Joshua did give them a rest in the promised land; but it was not all which was intended, and it did not exclude the promise of another and more important rest. Then would he not. Then God would not have spoken of another time when that rest could be obtained. The "other day" here referred to is that which is mentioned before by the phrase "to-day," and refers to the time in which it is spoken of long after Joshua, to wit, in the time of David.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

There remaineth, therefore, a rest. This is the conclusion to which the apostle comes. The meaning is this, that according to the Scriptures there is now a promise of rest made to the people of God. It did not pertain merely to those who were called to go to the promised land, nor to those who lived in the time of David, but it is still true that the promise of rest pertains to all the people of God of every generation. The reasoning by which the apostle comes to this conclusion is briefly this.

(1.) That there was a rest called "the rest of God"--spoken of in the earliest period of the world--implying that God meant that it should be enjoyed.

(2.) That the Israelites, to whom the promise was made, failed of obtaining that which was promised by their unbelief.

(3.) That God intended that some should enter into his rest--since it would not be provided in vain.

(4.) That long after the Israelites had fallen in the wilderness, we find the same reference to a rest which David in his time exhorts those whom he addressed to endeavour to obtain.

(5.) That if all that had been meant by the word rest, and by the promise, had been accomplished when Joshua conducted the Israelites to the land of Canaan, we should not have heard another day spoken of when it was possible to forfeit that rest by unbelief. It followed, therefore, that there was something besides that; something that pertained to all the people of God, to which the name rest might still be given, and which they were exhorted still to obtain. The word rest in this verse σαββατισμος Sabbatism, in the margin is rendered keeping of a Sabbath. It is a different word from σαββατον --the Sabbath; and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is not found in the Septuagint. It properly means, a keeping Sabbath-- from σαββατιζω to keep Sabbath. This word, not used in the New Testament, occurs frequently in the Septuagint, Ex 16:30, Lev 23:32, 26:35 2Chr 36:21 and in 3 Esd. i. 58; 2 Mac. vi. 6. It differs from the word Sabbath. That denotes the time--the day, this, the keeping, or observance of it; the festival. It means here, a resting, or an observance of sacred repose--and refers undoubtedly to heaven, as a place of eternal rest with God. It cannot mean the rest in the land of

Canaan--for the drift of the writer is to prove that that is not intended. It cannot mean the Sabbath, properly so called--for then the writer would have employed the usual word σαββατον--Sabbath. It cannot mean the Christian Sabbath--for the object is not to prove that there is such a day to be observed; and his reasoning about being excluded from it by unbelief and by hardening the heart would be irrelevant. It must mean, therefore, heaven--the world of spiritual and eternal rest; and the assertion is, that there is such a resting, or keeping of a Sabbath in heaven for the people of God. Learn hence,

(1.) that heaven is a place of cessation from wearisome toil. It is to be like the "rest" which God had after the work of creation, (Heb 4:4) Heb 4:4, and of which that was the type and emblem. There will be employment there, but it will be without fatigue; there will be the occupation of the mind, and of whatever powers we may possess, but without weariness. Here we are often worn down and exhausted. The body sinks under continued toil, and falls into the grave. There the slave will rest from his toil; the man here oppressed and broken down by anxious care will cease from his labours. We know but little of heaven; but we know that a large part of what now oppresses and crushes the frame will not exist there. Slavery will be unknown; the anxious care for support will be unknown, and all the exhaustion which proceeds from the love of gain, and from ambition, will be unknown. In the wearisome toils of life, then, let us look forward to the rest that remains in heaven; and as the labourer looks to the shades of the evening, or to the Sabbath, as a period of rest, so let us look to heaven as the place of eternal repose.

(2.) Heaven will be like a Sabbath. The best description of it is to say it is an eternal Sabbath. Take the Sabbath on earth, when best observed, and extend the idea to eternity, and let there be separated all idea of imperfection from its

observance, and that would be heaven. The Sabbath is holy; so is heaven. It is a period of worship; so is heaven. It is for praise, and for the contemplation of heavenly truth; so is heaven. The Sabbath is appointed that we may lay aside worldly cares and anxieties for a little season here; heaven, that we may lay, them aside for ever.

(3.) The Sabbath here should be like heaven. It is designed to be its type and emblem. So far as the circumstances of the case will allow, it should be just like heaven. There should be the same employments; the same joys; the same communion with God. One of the best rules for employing the Sabbath aright is, to think what heaven will be, and then to endeavour to spend it in the same way. One day in seven at least should remind us of what heaven is to be; and that day may be, and should be, the most happy of the seven.

(4.) They who do not love the Sabbath on earth are not prepared for heaven. If it is to them a day of tediousness; if its hours move heavily; if they have no delight in its sacred employments, what would an eternity of such days be? How would they be passed? Nothing can be clearer than that if we have no such happiness in a season of holy rest, and in holy employments here, we are wholly unprepared for heaven. To the Christian it is the subject of the highest joy in anticipation, that heaven is to be one long, unbroken SABBATH--an eternity of successive Sabbath hours. But what, to a sinner, could be a more repulsive and gloomy prospect than such an eternal Sabbath?

(5.) If this be so, then what a melancholy view is furnished as to the actual preparation of the great mass of men for heaven! How is the Sabbath now spent? In idleness; in business; in travelling; in hunting and fishing; in light reading and conversation; in sleep; in visiting; in riding, walking,

lounging, ennui; in revelry and dissipation; in any and every way except the right way; in every way except in holy communion with God. What would the race be if once translated to heaven as they are! What a prospect would it be to this multitude to have to spend an eternity, which would be but a prolongation of the Sabbath of holiness!

(6.) Let those who love the Sabbath rejoice in the prospect of eternal rest in heaven. In our labour let us look to that world where wearisome toil is unknown; in our afflictions, let us look to that world where tears never fall; and when our hearts are pained by the violation of the Sabbath all around us, let us look to that blessed world where such violation will cease for ever. It is not far distant. A few steps will bring us there. Of any Christian it may be said that perhaps his next Sabbath will be spent in heaven--near the throne of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

For he that is entered into rest. That is, the man who is so happy as to reach heaven, will enjoy a rest similar to that which God had when he finished the work of creation. It will be

(1) a cessation from toil; and

(2) it will be a rest similar to that of God--the same kind of enjoyment, the same freedom from care, anxiety, and labour, How happy, then, are they who have entered into heaven! Their toils are over. Their labours are done. Never again will they know fatigue. Never more will they feel anxious care. Let us learn then,

(1.) not to mourn improperly for those who have left us, and gone to heaven. Happy in the rest of God, why should not we rejoice? Why wish them back again in a world of toil?

(2.) Let us in our toils look forward to the world of rest. Our labours will all be over. The weary man will lay down his burden; the exhausted frame will know fatigue no more. Rest is sweet at night after the toils of day; how much more sweet will it be in heaven after the toils of life! Let us

(3) labour while it is called to-day. Soon we shall cease from our work. All that we have to do is to be done soon. We shall soon cease from our work, as God did from his. What we have to do for the salvation of children, brothers, sisters, friends, and for the world, is to be done soon. From the abodes of bliss we shall not be sent forth to speak to our kindred of the blessedness of that world, or to admonish our friends to escape from the place of despair. The pastor will not come again to warn and invite his people; the parent will not come again to tell his children of the Saviour and of heaven; the neighbour will not come to admonish his neighbour. Comp. Lk 16:24-29. We shall ALL have ceased from our work, as God did from his; and never again shall we speak to a living friend to invite him to heaven.

11 Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing there is such and eternal glorious rest prepared for, and promised to believers then it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour of everyone of us to secure our title to it, and our interest in it, by a stedfast faith, and persevering obedience, lest, following the example of our forefathers in the wilderness, we fall and perish as they did."

Learn hence, 1. That there is a rest promised to us uder the gospel, as there was to the Jews of old under the dispensation of the law.

Learn, 2. That the Jews heretofore, by sin in general, by unbelief and disobedience in particular, did fall short of the rest proposed to them, and never entered into it, but were destroyed by the just indignation of God.

Learn, 3. That in the Israelites' sin and God's displeasure, in the event of the one, and in the effects of the other, there was an example set forth, of what would be our own lot and portion if through unbelief we fall short of the rest which the gospel proposed to us: Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. It is our duty to improve examples, lest we be made examples of divine displeasure.

Learn, 4. That we cannot rationally have tha least expectation of escaping vengeance under the guilt of those sins, which others, in like manner, being guilty of, having not escaped; for with God there is no respect of persons. Did the Israelites miss of the earthly Canaan? So shall we of the heavenly, through unbelief.

12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

For the word of God. The design of this and the following verse is obvious. It is to show that we cannot escape the notice of God; that all insincerity, unbelief, hypocrisy, will be detected by him; and that since our hearts are perfectly open before him, we should be sincere, and should not attempt to deceive him. The sense is, that the truth of God is all-penetrating and searching, and that the real thoughts and intents of the heart will be brought to light; and that if there is insincerity and self-deception, there can be no hope of escape. There has been a great variety of opinion here about the meaning of the phrase "the word of God." Some have supposed that it means the Lord Jesus; others the whole of the

divine revelation; others the gospel; others the particular threatening referred to here. The "word of God" is that which God speaks--whether it be a promise or a threatening; whether it be law or gospel; whether it be a simple declaration or a statement of a doctrine. The idea here is, that what God had said is fitted to detect hypocrisy, and to lay open the true nature of the feelings of the soul, so that there can be no escape for the guilty. His truth is adapted to bring out the real feelings, and to show man exactly what he is. Truth always has this power --whether preached, or read, or communicated by conversation, or impressed upon the memory and conscience by the Holy Spirit. There can be no escape from the penetrating, searching application of the word of God. That truth has power to show what man is, and is like a penetrating sword that lays open the whole man. Comp. Isa 49:2 The phrase "the word of God" here may be applied, therefore, to the truth of God, however made known to the mind. In some way it will bring out the real feelings, and show what man is.

Is quick. Gr. ζων--living. It is not dead, inert, and powerless. It has a living power, and is energetic and active. It is adapted to produce this effect.

And powerful. Mighty. Its power is seen in awakening the conscience; alarming the fears; laying bare the secret feelings of the heart; and causing the sinner to tremble with the apprehension of the coming judgment. All the great changes in the moral world for the better, have been caused by the power of truth. They are such as the truth in its own nature is fitted to effect; and, if we may judge of its power by the greatness of the revolutions produced, no words can over-estimate the might of the truth which God has revealed.

Sharper than any two-edged sword. Literally, two-mouthed sword διστομον. The word mouth was given to the sword because it seemed to devour all before it. It consumed or destroyed, as a wild beast does. The comparison of the word

of God to a sword, or to an arrow, is designed to show its power of penetrating the heart, Eccl 12:11. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." Comp. Isa 49:2; "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." Rev 1:16: "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" Rev 2:12,16, 19:15. The comparison is common in the classics, and in Arabic poetry. See Gesenius, on Isa 49:2 The idea is that of piercing, or penetrating; and the meaning here is, that the word of God reaches the heart--the very centre of action and lays open the motives and feelings of the man. It was common among the ancients to have a sword with two-edges. The Roman sword was commonly made in this manner. The fact that it had two edges made it more easy to penetrate, as well as to cut with every way. Piercing even to the dividing asunder. Penetrating so as to divide.

Soul and spirit. The animal life from the immortal soul. The former word here--ψυχη-- soul--is evidently used to denote the animal life, as distinguished from the mind or soul. The latter word-- πνευμα--spirit--means the soul; the immaterial and immortal part; that which lives when the animal life is extinct, This distinction occurs in 1Thes 5:23" your whole spirit. and soul, and body ;" and it is a distinction which we are constantly in the habit of making. There is the body in man--the animal life--and the immortal part that leaves the body when life is extinct. Mysteriously united, they constitute one man. When the animal life is separated from the soul, or when the soul leaves the animated body, the body dies, and life is extinct. To separate the one from the other is, therefore, the same as to take life--and this is the idea here, that the word of God is like a sharp sword that inflicts deadly wounds. The sinner "dies;" that is, he becomes dead to his former hopes, or is "slain" by the law. Rom 7:9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." This is the power referred to here--the power of destroying the hopes of the sinner; cutting him down under

conviction; and prostrating him, as if a sword had pierced his heart.

And of the joints and marrow. The figure is still continued of the sword that takes life. Such a sword would seem to penetrate even the joints and marrow of the body. It would separate the joints, and pierce through the very bones to the marrow. A similar effect, Paul says, is produced by truth. It seems to penetrate the very essence of the soul, and lay it all open to the view.

And is a discerner of the thoughts. It shows what the thoughts and intentions are. Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield, and some others, suppose that the reference here is to God speaking by his word. But the more natural construction certainly is, to refer it to the word or truth of God. It is true that God searches the heart, and knows the thoughts; but that is not the truth which is prominent here. It is, that the thoughts and intents of the heart are brought out to view by the word of God. And can any one doubt this? See Rom 7:7. Is it not true that men are made to see their real character under the exhibition of the truth of God? That in the light of the law they see their past lives to be sinful? That the exhibition of truth calls to their recollection many long forgotten sins? And that their feelings are brought out when the truth of God is proclaimed? Men then are made to look upon their motives as they had never done before, and to see in their hearts feelings whose existence they would not have suspected, if it had not been for the exhibition of the truth. The exhibition of the truth is like pouring down the beams of the sun at midnight on a dark world; and the truth lays open the real feelings of the sinner, as that sun would disclose the clouds of wickedness that are now performed under cover of the night. Many a man has a deep and fixed hostility to God, and to his gospel, who might never be sensible of it, if the truth was not faithfully proclaimed. The particular idea here is, that the truth of God will detect the feelings of the hypocrite and self-deceiver. They cannot always conceal their emotions, and the time will

come when truth, like light poured into the soul, will reveal their unbelief and their secret sins. They who are cherishing a hope of salvation, therefore, should be on their guard lest they mistake the name for the reality. Let us learn from this verse,

(1,) the power of truth. It is fitted to lay open the secret feelings of the soul. There is not an effect produced in awakening a sinner, or in his conviction, conversion, and Sanctification, which the truth is not adapted to produce. The truth of God is not dead; nor fitted to make man worse; nor designed merely to show its own weakness, and to be a mere occasion on which the Holy Spirit acts on the mind; --it is, in its own nature, FITTED to produce just the effects which are produced when it awakens, convicts, converts, and sanctifies the soul.

(2.) The truth should be preached with the feeling that it is adapted to this end. Men who preach should endeavour to understand the nature of the mind and of the moral feelings, as really as he who would inflict a deadly wound should endeavour to understand enough about anatomy to know where the heart is, or he who administers medicine should endeavour to know what is adapted to remove certain diseases. And he who has no belief in the efficacy of truth to produce any effect, resembles one who should suppose that all knowledge of the human system was needless to him who wished and who should cut at random-- to perform a surgical operations piously leaving it with God to direct the knife; or he who should go into a hospital of patients, and administer medicines indiscriminately-devoutly saying, that all healing must come from God, and that the use of medicine was only to show its own weakness! Thus many men seem to preach. Yet, for aught that appears, truth is just as wisely adapted to save the soul, as medicine is to heal the sick; and why, then, should not a preacher be as careful to study the nature of

truths and its adaptedness to a particular end, as a student of the healing art is to understand the adaptedness of medicine to cure disease? The true way of preaching is, to feel that truth is adapted to the end in view; to select that which is best fitted for that end; to preach as if the whole result depended on getting that truth before the mind and into the heart, and then to leave the whole result with God--as a physicians with right feelings, will exert all his skill to save his patient, and then commit the whole question of life and health to God. He will be more likely to praise God intelligently who believes that he has wisely adapted a plan to the end in view, than he who believes that God works only at random.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight. There is no being who is not wholly known to God. All his thoughts, feelings, plans, are distinctly understood. Of the truth of this there can be no doubt. The design of the remark here is, to guard those to whom the apostle was writing from self-deception --since they could conceal nothing from God.

All things are naked. Exposed; uncovered. There is nothing that can be concealed from God, Ps 139:11,12.

"The veil of night is no disguise, No screen from thy all-searching eyes; Thy hands can seize thy foes as soon Through midnight shades as blazing noon."

And opened τετραχηλισμενα. The word here used -- τραχηλιζω -- properly means,

(1.) to lay bare the neck, or to bend it back so as to expose the throat to being cut.

(2.) To expose; to lay open in any way. Why the word is used here has been a matter of inquiry. Some have supposed that the phrase is derived from offering sacrifice, and from the fact that the priest carefully examined the victim, to see whether it was sound, before it was offered. But this is manifestly a forced exposition. Others have supposed that it is derived from the custom of bending back the head of a criminal, so as to look full in his face, and recognise him, so as not to be mistaken; but this is equally forced and unnatural. This opinion was first proposed by Erasmus, and has been adopted by Clarke and others, Bloomfield, following, as he says, the interpretation of Chrysostom, Grotius, (though this is not the sentiment of Grotius,) Beza, Alting, Hammond, and others, supposes the allusion to be to the custom of cutting the animal down the back-bone through the spinal marrow, and thus of laying it open entirely. This sense would well suit the connexion. Grotius supposes that it means to strip off the skin by dividing it at the neck, and then removing it. This view is also adopted substantially by Doddridge. These explanations are forced, and imply a departure, more or less, from the proper meaning of the Greek word. The most simple and obvious meaning is usually the best in explaining the Bible. The word which the apostle employs relates to the neck; τραχηλος ---and not to the spinal marrow, or the skin. The proper meaning of the verb is, to bend the neck back, so as to expose it in front when an animal is slain. Passow. Then it means, to make bare; to remove everything like covering; to expose a thing entirely--as the naked neck is for the knife. The allusion here is undoubtedly to the sword which Paul had referred to in the previous verse, as dividing the soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow; and the meaning is, that in the hand of God, who held that sword, everything was exposed. We are, in relation to that, like an animal whose neck is bent back, and laid bare, and ready for the slaughter. Nothing hinders God from striking; there is nothing that can prevent that sword from penetrating the heart any more than, when the neck of the animal is bent back and laid bare, there

is anything that can hinder the sacrificing priest from thrusting the knife into the throat of the victim. If this be the true interpretation, then what an affecting view does it give of the power of God, and of the exposedness of man to destruction! All is bare, naked, open. There is no concealment; no hinderance; no power of resistance. In a moment God can strike, and his dreadful sentence shall fall on the sinner like the knife on the exposed throat of the victim. What emotions should the sinner have who feels that he is exposed each moment to the sentence of eternal justice --to the sword of God--as the animal with bent-back neck is exposed to the knife! And what solemn feeling should all have who remember that all is naked and open before God! Were we transparent, so that the World could see all we are, who would dare go abroad? Who would wish the world to read all his thoughts and feelings for a single day? Who would wish his best friends to look in upon his naked soul, as we can look into a room through a window? Oh, what blushes and confusion; what a hanging down of the head, and what an effort to escape from the gaze of men would there be, if every one knew that all his secret feelings were seen by every person whom he met! Social enjoyment would end; and the now gay and blithe multitudes in the streets would become processions of downcast and blushing convicts. And yet all these are known to God. He reads every thought; sees every feeling; looks through the whole soul. How careful should we be to keep our heart pure; how anxious that there should be nothing in the soul that we are not willing to have known!

With whom we have to do. Literally, with whom is our account. Our account; our reckoning is to be with him before whom all is naked and open. We cannot, therefore, impose on him. We cannot pass off hypocrisy for sincerity. He will judge us according to truth, not according to appearances; and his sentence, therefore, will be just. A man who is to be tried by one who knows all about him, should be a pure and holy man.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest. The apostle here resumes the subject which had been slightly hinted at in Heb 2:17, 3:1, and pursues it to the end of chapter 10. The object is to show that Christians have a great High Priest as really as the Jews had; to show wherein he surpassed the Levitical priesthood; to show how all that was said of the Aaronic priesthood, and all the types pertaining to that priesthood, were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus; and to state and illustrate the nature of the consolations which Christians might derive from the fact that they had such an High Priest. One of the things on which the Jews most valued their religion, was the fact that it had such a minister of religion as their high priest--the most elevated functionary of that dispensation. It came, therefore, to be of the utmost importance to show that Christianity was not inferior to the Jewish religion in this respect, and that the High Priest of the Christian profession would not suffer in point of dignity, and in the value of the blood with which he would approach God, and in the efficacy of his intercession, when compared with the Jewish high priest. Moreover, it was a doctrine of Christianity that the Jewish ritual was to pass away; and its temple services cease to be observed. It was, therefore, of vast importance to show why hey passed away, and how they were superseded. To do this, the apostle is led into this long discussion respecting their nature. He shows that they were designed to be typical. He proves that they could not purify the heart, and give peace to the conscience. He proves that they were all intended to point to something future, and to introduce the Messiah to the world; and that when this object was accomplished, their great end was secured, and they were thus all fulfilled. In no part of the Bible can there be found so full an account of the design of the Mosaic institutions as in chapter 5 through 10 of this epistle; and were it not for this, the volume of inspiration would be incomplete. We should be left in the dark on some

of the most important subjects in revelation; we should ask questions for which we could find no certain answer. The phrase "great High Priest" here is used with reference to a known usage among the Jews. In the time of the apostle the name high priest pertained not only to him who actually held the office, and who had the right to enter into the holy of holies, but to his deputy, and to those who had held the office, but who had retired from it; and perhaps also the name was given to the head of each one of the twenty-four courses or classes into which the priests were divided. Comp. Lk 1:5; Mt 26:3. The name "great high priest" would designate him who actually held the office, and was at the head of all the other priests; and the idea here is, not merely that the Lord Jesus was a Priest, but that he was at the head of all; in the Christian economy he sustained a rank that corresponded with that of the great high priest in the Jewish.

That is passed into the heavens. Heb 9:12,24. The Jewish high priest went once a year into the most holy place in the temple, to offer the blood of the atonement. Heb 9:7. Paul says that the Christian High Priest has gone into heaven. He has gone there also to make intercession, and to sprinkle the blood of the atonement on the mercy-seat. Heb 9:24; Heb 9:25.

Jesus the Son of God. Not a descendant of Aaron, but one greater-- the Son of God. Heb 1:2.

Let us hold fast our profession. Heb 9:23; Heb 3:14. This is the drift and scope of the epistle-- to show that Christians should hold fast their profession, and not apostatize. The object of the apostle now is to show why the fact, that we have such a High Priest, is a reason why we should hold fast our professed attachment to him. These reasons--which are drawn out in the succeeding chapters--are such as the following.

(1.) We may look to him for assistance--since he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Heb 4:15,16.

(2.) The impossibility of being renewed again if we should fall away from him, since there is but one such High Priest, and since the sacrifice for sin can never be repeated, Heb 6.

(3.) The fact that all the ancient types were fulfilled in him, and that everything which there was in the Jewish dispensation, to keep men from apostasy, exists much more powerfully in the Christian scheme.

(4.) The fact that they who rejected the laws of Moses died without mercy, and much more any one who should reject the Son of God must expect more certain and fearful severity, Heb 10:27-30. By considerations such as these, the apostle aims to show them the danger of apostasy, and to urge them to a faithful adherence to their Christian profession.

15 For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin.

For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched. Our High Priest is not cold and unfeeling. That is, we have one who is abundantly qualified to sympathize with us in our afflictions, and to whom, therefore, we may look for aid and support in trials. Had we a high priest who was cold and heartless; who simply performed the external duties of his office, without entering into the sympathies of those who came to seek for pardon; who had never experienced any trials, and who felt himself above those who sought his aid, we should necessarily feel disheartened in attempting to overcome our sins, and to live to God. His coldness would repel us; his stateliness would awe us; his distance and reserve would keep us away, and perhaps render us indifferent to all desire to be saved. But tenderness and sympathy attract those who are feeble, and kindness does more than anything else to encourage those who have to encounter difficulties and dangers. Heb 2:16, also Heb 2:17-18. Such tenderness and sympathy has our great High Priest. But was in all points tempted like as we are. Tried as we are. Heb 2:18. He was subjected to all the kinds of trial to which we can be, and he

is, therefore, able to sympathize with us, and to aid us. He was tempted--in the literal sense; he was persecuted; he was poor; he was despised; he suffered bodily pain; he endured the sorrows of a lingering and most cruel death. Yet without sin. 1Pet 2:22: "Who did no sin." Isa 53:9: "He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth." Heb 7:26: "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." The importance of this fact, that the great High Priest of the Christian profession was "without sin," the apostle illustrates at length in chapters 7 through 9. He here merely alludes to it, and says that one who was "without sin" was able to assist those who were sinners, and who put their trust in him.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace. "The throne of grace!" What a beautiful expression! A throne is the seat of a sovereign; a throne of grace is designed to represent a sovereign seated to dispense mercy and pardon. The illustration or comparison here may have been derived from the temple service. In that service God is represented as seated in the most holy place on the mercy-seat. The high priest approaches that seat or throne of the Divine Majesty with the blood of the atonement, to make intercession for the people, and to plead for pardon. Heb 9:7, 9:8. That scene was emblematic of heaven. God is seated on a throne of mercy. The great High Priest of the Christian calling, having shed his own blood to make expiation, is represented as approaching God, and pleading for the pardon of men. To a God willing to show mercy he comes with the merits of a sacrifice sufficient for all, and pleads for their salvation. We may, therefore, come with boldness, and look for pardon. We come not depending on our own merits, but we come where a sufficient sacrifice has been offered for human guilt, and where we are assured that God is merciful. We may, therefore, come without hesitancy, or trembling, and ask for all the mercy that we need. That we may obtain mercy. This is what we want first. We need pardon--as the first thing when we come to

God. We are guilty and self-condemned--and our first cry should be for mercy-- mercy. A man who comes to God, not feeling his need of mercy, must fail of obtaining the Divine favour; and he will be best prepared to obtain that favour who has the deepest sense of his need of forgiveness. And find grace. Favour--strength, help, counsel, direction, support, for the various duties and trials of life. This is what we next need--we all need--we always need. Even when pardoned, we need grace to keep us from sin, to aid us in duty, to preserve us in the day of temptation. And feeling our need of this, we may come and ask of God all that we want for this purpose. Such is the assurance given us; and to this bold approach to the throne of grace all are freely invited. In view of it, let us:

(1) rejoice that there is a throne of grace. What a World would this be if God sat on a throne of justice only, and if no mercy were ever to be shown to men! Who is there who would not be overwhelmed with despair? But it is not so. He is on A THRONE OF GRACE. By day and by night; from year to year; from generation to generation, he is on such a throne. In every land he may be approached, and in as many different languages as men speak may they plead for mercy. In all times of our trial and temptation we may be assured that he is seated on that throne, and, wherever we are, we may approach him with acceptance.

(2) We need the privilege of coming before such a throne. We are sinful, and need mercy; we are feeble, and need grace to help us. There is not a day of Our lives in which we do not need pardon; not an hour in which we do not need grace.

(3) How obvious are the propriety and necessity of prayer! Every man is a sinner, and should pray for pardon; every man is weak, feeble, dependent, and should pray for grace. Not till a man can prove that he has never done any sin should he maintain that he has no need of pardon; not till he can show that he is able alone to meet the storms and temptations of life

should he feel that he has no need to ask for grace. Yet who can feel this? And how strange it is that all men do not pray!

(4) It is easy to be forgiven. All that needs to be done is to plead the merits of our great High Priest, and God is ready to pardon. Who would not be glad to be able to pay a debt in a manner so easy? Yet how few there are who are willing to pay the debt to justice thus!

(5.) It is easy to obtain all the grace that we need. We have only to ask for it--and it is done. How easy then to meet temptation, if we would! How strange that any should rely on their own strength, when they may lean on the arm of God!

(6.) If men are not pardoned, and if they fall into sin and ruin, they alone are to blame. There Is A THRONE OF GRACE. It is always accessible. There is A GOD. He is always ready to pardon. There Is A REDEEMER. He is the great High Priest of men. He is always interceding, His merits may always be pleaded as the ground of our salvation. Why then, oh why, should any remain unforgiven, and perish? On them alone the blame must lie. In their own bosoms is the reason why they are not saved.

Hebrews-5

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Verse 1. For every high priest. That is, among the Jews, for the remarks relate to the Jewish system. The Jews had one high priest who was regarded as the successor of Aaron. The word "high priest" means chief priest; that is, a priest of higher rank and office than others. By the original regulation the Jewish high priest was to be of the family of Aaron, (Ex

29:9,) though in later times the office was frequently conferred on others. In the time of the Romans it had become venal, and the Mosaic regulation was disregarded, 2 Mac. iv. 7; Jos. Ant. xv. 3, 1. It was no longer held for life, so that there were several persons at one time to whom was given the title of high priest. The high priest was at the head of religious affairs, and was the ordinary judge of all that pertained to religion, and even of the general justice of the Hebrew commonwealth, De 17:8-12, 19:17; De 21:5, 23:9,10. He only had the privilege of entering the most holy place once a year, on the great day of atonement, to make expiation for the sins of the people, Lev 16. He was to be the son of one who had married a virgin, and was to be free from any corporeal defect, Lev 21:13. The dress of the high priest was much more costly and magnificent than that of the inferior order of priests, Ex 39:1-9. He wore a mantle or robe--meil-- of blue, with the borders embroidered with pomegranates in purple and scarlet; an ephod-- --made of cotton, with crimson, purple, and blue, and ornamented with gold, worn over the robe or mantle, without sleeves, and divided below the arm-pits into two parts or halves, of which one was in front, covering the breast, and the other behind, covering the back. In the ephod was a breastplate of curious workmanship, and on the head a mitre. The breastplate was a piece of broidered work about ten inches square, and was made double, so as to answer the purpose of a pouch or bag. It was adorned with twelve precious stones, each one having the name of one of the tribes of Israel. The two upper corners of the breastplate were fastened to the ephod, and the two lower to the girdle. The cut is supposed to give an illustration of this part of the dress of the high priest. It is copied from Taylor's Fragments, appended to Calmet. As there is frequent reference to the high priest of the Jews in this epistle, and as he performed so important an office among the Hebrews, it may be useful to have a view of the appearance of this officer in fall dress. The following cuts will illustrate this.

The first represents him with the robe and the ephod. On each shoulder is seen an onyx stone, Upon each of which were engraved the names of six of the tribes of the children of Israel. The breastplate is also seen with a wrought chain of gold fastened to each corner, and passing under the arms and over each shoulder. The dress is described at length in Ex 28. The second cut, exhibits the dress of the high priest on the day of expiation, and is very plain and simple, consisting only of plain linen, with a sash and girdle, Lev 16:4,23.

Taken from among men. There may be an allusion here to the fact, that the great High Priest of the Christian dispensation had a higher than human origin, and was selected from a rank far above men. Or it may be that the meaning is, that every high priest on earth--including, all under the old dispensation and the great High Priest of the new--is ordained with reference to the welfare of men, and to bring some valuable offering for man to God.

Is ordained for men. Is set apart or consecrated for the welfare of men. The Jewish high priest was set apart to his office with great solemnity. See Ex 29.

In things pertaining to God. In religious matters, or with reference to the worship and service of God. He was not to be a civil ruler, nor a teacher of science, nor a military leader, but his business was to superintend the affairs of religion.

That he may offer both gifts. That is, thank-offerings, or oblations, which would be the expressions of gratitude. Many such offerings were made by the Jews under the laws of Moses, and the high priest was the medium by whom they were to be presented to God.

And sacrifices for sins. Bloody offerings; offerings made of slain beasts. The blood of expiation was sprinkled by him on the mercy-seat, and he was the appointed medium by which

such sacrifices were to be presented to God. Heb 4:6, seq. We may remark here,

(1.) that the proper office of a priest is to present a sacrifice for sin.

(2.) It is improper to give the name priest to a minister of the gospel. The reason is, that he offers no sacrifice; he sprinkles no blood. He is appointed to "preach the word," and to lead the devotions of the church, but not to offer sacrifice. Accordingly, the New Testament preserves entire consistency on this point, for the name priest is never once given to the apostles, or to any other minister of the gospel. Among the Papists there is consistency--though gross and dangerous error--in the use of the word priest. They believe that the minister of religion offers up "the real body and blood of our Lord;" that the bread and wine are changed by the words of consecration into the "body and blood, the soul and divinity, of the Lord Jesus," (Decrees of the Council of Trent;) and that this is really offered by him as a sacrifice. Accordingly, they "elevate the host;" that is, lift up or offer the sacrifice, and require all to bow before it and worship; and with this view they are consistent in retaining the word priest. But why should this name be applied to a Protestant minister, who believes that all this is blasphemy, and who claims to have no sacrifice to offer when he comes to minister before God? The great sacrifice --the one sufficient atonement--has been offered; and the ministers of the gospel are appointed to proclaim that truth to men, not to offer sacrifices for sin.

2 who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are
out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Who can have compassion. Marg. Reasonably bear with. The idea is that of sympathizing with. The high priest is taken from among men, in order that he may have a fellow-feeling for those on whose behalf he officiates. Sensible of his own ignorance, he is able to sympathize with those who are

ignorant; and compassed about with infirmity, he is able to succour those who have like infirmities. And on them that are out of the way. The erring and the guilty. If he were taken from an order of beings superior to men, he would be less qualified to sympathize with those who felt that they were sinners, and who needed pardon. For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. Heb 7:28. He is liable to err; he is subject to temptation; he must die, and appear before God: and encompassed with these infirmities, he is better qualified to minister in behalf of guilty and dying men. For the same reason it is that the ministers of the gospel are chosen from among men. They are of like passions with others. They are sinners; they are dying men. They can enter into the feelings of those who are conscious of guilt; they can sympathize with those who tremble in dread of death; they can partake of the emotions of those who expect soon to appear before God.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron.

And no man taketh this honour to himself. No one has a right to enter on this office unless he has the qualifications which God has prescribed. There were fixed and definite laws in regard to the succession in the office of the high priest, and to the qualifications of him who should hold the office. But he that is called of God, as was Aaron. Aaron was designated by name. It was necessary that his successors should have as clear evidence that they were called of God to the office, as though they had been mentioned by name. The manner in which the high priest was to succeed to the office was designated in the law of Moses, but in the time of Paul these rules were little regarded. The office had become venal, and was conferred at pleasure by the Roman rulers. Still it was true that, according to the law, to which alone Paul here refers, no one might hold this office but he who had the qualifications which Moses prescribed, and which showed that he was called of God. We may remark here,

(1.) that this does not refer so much to an internal as to an external call. He was to have the qualifications prescribed in the law; but it is not specified that he should be conscious of an internal call to the office, or be influenced by the Holy Spirit to it. Such a call was, doubtless, in the highest degree desirable, but it was not prescribed as an essential qualification.

(2.) This has no reference to the call to the work of the Christian ministry, and should not be applied to it. It should not be urged as a proof-text to show that a minister of the gospel should have a "call" directly from God, or that he should be called according to a certain order of succession. The object of Paul is not to state this, whatever may be the truth on this point. His object is to show that the Jewish high priest was called of God to his office in a certain way, showing that he held the appointment from God, and that therefore it was necessary that the great High Priest of the Christian profession should be called in a similar manner. To this alone the comparison should be understood as applicable.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

So also Christ glorified not himself. Jn 8:54. The meaning is, that Jesus was not ambitious; that he did not intrude himself into the great office of high priest; he did not enter upon its duties without being regularly called to it. Paul claimed that Christ held that office; but, as he was not descended from Aaron, and as no one might perform its duties without being regularly called to it, it was incumbent on him to show that Jesus was not an intruder, but had a regular vocation to that work. This he shows by a reference to two passages of the Old Testament. But he that said unto him. That is, he who said to him, "Thou art my son," exalted him to that office He received his appointment from him. This was decisive in the case; and this was sufficient, if it could be made out; for the only claim which Aaron and his successors could have to the office, was the fact that they had received their appointment

from God. Thou art my Son. Ps 2:7. See this passage explained Acts 13:33. It is here used with reference to the designation to the priestly office, though in the Psalm more particularly to the anointing to the office of king. The propriety of this application is founded on the fact, that the language in the Psalm is of so general a character, that it may be applied to any exaltation of the Redeemer, or to any honour conferred on him. It is here used with strict propriety, for Paul is saying that Jesus did not exalt himself, and in proof of that he refers to the fact that God had exalted him by calling him his "Son."

6 As he saith also in another *place,* Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

As he said also in another place. Ps 110:4. Thou art a Priest ever. It is evident here that the apostle means to be understood saying that the Psalm referred to Christ-and this is one of instances of quotation from the Old. Testament respecting wh there can be no doubt. Paul makes winch of this argument i subsequent part of this epistle, Heb 7, and reasons as if no o would deny that the Psalm had a reference to the Messiah. It clear, from this, that the Psalm was understood by the Jews at t time to have such a reference, and that it was so universa admitted that no one would call it in question. That the Psa refers to the Messiah has been the opinion of nearly all Christ commentators, and has been admitted by the Jewish Rabbins general also. The evidence that it refers to the Messiah is such the following.

(1.) It is a Psalm of David, and yet is spoken of One who was superior to him, and whom he called his "Lord," Ps 110:1.

(2.) It cannot be referred to JEHOVAH himself, for he is expressly Ps 110:1 distinguished from him who is here addressed.

(3.) It cannot be referred to any one in the time of David, for there was no one to whom he would attribute this character of superiority but God.

(4.) For the same reason there was no one among his posterity, except the Messiah, to whom he would apply this language.

(5.) It is expressly ascribed by the Lord Jesus to himself, Mt 22:43,44.

(6.) The scope of the Psalm is such as to be applicable to the Messiah, and there is no part of it which would be inconsistent with such a reference. Indeed, there is no passage of the Old Testament of which it would be more universally conceded that there was a reference to the Messiah than this Psalm. Thou art a Priest. He is not here called a high priest, for Melchisedek did not bear that title, nor was the Lord Jesus to be a high priest exactly in the sense in which the name was given to Aaron and his successors. A word is used, therefore, in a general sense, to denote that he would be a print simply, or would sustain the priestly office. This was all that was needful to the present argument, which was, that he was designated by God to the priestly office, and that he had not intruded himself into it. For ever. This was an important circumstance, of which the apostle makes much use in another part of the epistle. Heb 7:8, Heb 7:23 Heb 7:24. The priesthood of the Messiah was not to change from hand to hand; it was not to be laid down at death; it was to remain unchangeably the same. After the order. The word rendered order-- τάξις ~means, "a setting in order--hence arrangement or disposition. It may be applied to ranks of soldiers; to the gradations of office; or to any rank which men sustain in society. To say that he was of the same order with Melchisedek, was to say that he was of the same rank or station. He was like him in his designation to the office. In what respects he was like him the apostle shows more fully in Heb

7. One particular in which there was a striking resemblance, which did not exist between Christ and any other high-priest,

was that Melchisedek was both a priest and a king. None of the kings of the Jews were priests; nor were any of the priests ever elevated to the office of king. But in Melchisedek these offices were united; and this fact constituted a striking resemblance between him and the Lord Jesus. It was on this principle that there was such pertinency in quoting here the passage from Ps 2. See Heb 5:5. The meaning is, that Melchisedek was of a peculiar rank or order; that he was not numbered with the Levitical priests, and that there were important features in his office which differed from theirs. In those features it was distinctly predicted that the Messiah would resemble him.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Who. That is, the Lord Jesus--for so the connexion demands. The object of this verse and the two following is, to show that the Lord Jesus had that qualification for the office of priest to which he had referred Heb 5:2. It was one important qualification for that office, that he who sustained it should be able to show compassion, to aid those that were out of the way, and to sympathize with sufferers; in other words, they were themselves encompassed with infirmity, and thus were able to succour those who were subjected to trials. The apostle shows now that the Lord Jesus had those qualifications, as far as it was possible for one to have them who had no sin. In the days of his flesh he suffered intensely; he prayed with fervour; he placed himself in a situation where he learned subjection and obedience by his trials; and in all things he went far beyond what had been evinced by the priests under the ancient dispensation.

In the days of his flesh. When he appeared on earth as a man. Flesh is used to denote human nature, and especially human nature as susceptible of suffering. The Son of God still is united to human nature, but it is human nature glorified; for in his case, as in all others, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1Cor 15:50. He has now a glorified body,

Php 3:21, such as the redeemed will have in the future world. Comp, Rev 1:13-17. The phrase "days of his flesh," means the time when he was incarnate, or when he lived on earth in human form. The particular time here referred to, evidently, was the agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

Prayers and supplications. These words are often used to denote the same thing. If there is a difference, the former--δεησεις--means, petitions which arise from a sense of need,--from δεομαι-- want, to need; the latter refers usually to supplication for protection, and is applicable to one who, under a sense of guilt, flees to an altar with the symbols of supplication in his hand. Suppliants in such cases often carried an olive-branch as an emblem of the peace which they sought.

A fact is mentioned by Livy respecting the Locrians that may illustrate this passage. "Ten delegates from the Locrians, squalid and covered with rags, came into the hall where the consuls were sitting, extending the badges of suppliants--olive branches--according to the custom of the Greeks; and prostrated themselves on the ground before the tribunal, with a lamentable cry," Lib xxix. c. 16. The particular idea in the word here used ικετηρια is, petition for protection,help, or shelter, (Passow;) and this idea accords well with the design of the passage. The Lord Jesus prayed as one who had need, and as one who desired protection, shelter, or help. The words here, therefore, do not mean the same thing, and are not merely intensive, but they refer to distinct purposes which the Redeemer had in his prayers. He was about to die, and, as a man, he needed the Divine help; he was, probably, tempted in that dark hour, Jn 12:30, and he fled to God for protection.

With strong crying. This word does not mean weeping, as the word "crying" does familiarly with us. It rather means an outcry, the voice of wailing and lamentation. It is the cry for help of one who is deeply distressed, or in danger; and refers here to the earnest petition of the Saviour when in the agony of Gethsemane, or when on the cross. It is the intensity of the

voice which is referred to, when it is raised by an agony of suffering. Comp. Lk 22:44: "He prayed more earnestly." Mt 27:46: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice--My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" See also Mt 26:38,39, 27:60.

And tears. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, Jn 11:35, and over Jerusalem, Lk 19:41. It is not expressly stated by the Evangelists that he wept in the garden of Gethsemane, but there is no reason to doubt that he did. In such an intense agony as to cause a bloody sweat, there is every probability that it would be accompanied with tears. We may remark then,

(1.) that there is nothing dishonourable in tears, and that man should not be ashamed, on proper occasions, to weep. The fact that the Son of God wept is a full demonstration that it is not disgraceful to weep. God has so made us as to express sympathy for others by tears. Religion does not make the heart insensible and hard, as stoical philosophy does; it makes it tender and susceptible to impression.

(2.) It is not improper to weep. The Son of God wept--and if he poured forth tears it cannot be wrong for us. Besides, it is a great law of our nature, that in suffering we should find relief by tears. God would not have so made us if it had been wrong.

(3.) The fact that the Son of God thus wept should be allowed deeply to affect our hearts.
"He wept that we might weep;" Each sin demands a tear."
He wept that he might redeem us; we should weep that our sins were so great as to demand such bitter woes for our salvation. That we had sinned; that our sins caused him such anguish; that he endured for us this bitter conflict, should make us weep. Tear should answer to tear, and sigh respond to sigh, and groan to groan, when we contemplate the sorrows of the Son of God in accomplishing our redemption. That man must have a hard heart who has never had an emotion when he has reflected that the Son of God wept, and bled, and died for him. Unto him that

was able. To God. He alone was able then to save. In such a conflict man could not aid; and the help of angels, ready as they were to assist him, could not sustain him. We may derive aid from man in trial; we may be comforted by sympathy and counsel; but there are sorrows where God only can uphold the sufferer. That God was able to uphold him, in his severe conflict, the Redeemer could not doubt; nor need we doubt it, in reference to ourselves, when deep sorrows come over our souls. To save him from death. It would seem from this, that what constituted the agony of the Redeemer was the dread of death, and that he prayed that he might be saved from that. This might be, so far as the language is concerned, either the dread of death on the spot by the intensity of his sufferings and by the power of the tempter, or it might be the dread of the approaching death on the cross. As the Redeemer, however, knew that he was to die on the cross, it can hardly be supposed that he apprehended death in the garden of Gethsemane. What he prayed for was, that, if it were possible, he might be spared from a death so painful as he apprehended, Mt 26:39. Feeling that God had power to save him from that mode of dying, the burden of his petition was, that, if human redemption could be accomplished without such sufferings, it might please his Father to remove that cup from him. And was heard. In Jn 11:42, the Saviour says, "I know that thou hearest me always." In the garden of Gethsemane he was heard. His prayer was not disregarded, though it was not literally answered. The cup of death was not taken away; but his prayer was not disregarded. What answer was given--what assurance or support was imparted to his soul--we are not informed. The case, however, shows us,

(1.) that prayer may be heard even when the sufferings which are dreaded, and from which we prayed to be delivered, may come upon us. They may come with such assurances of Divine favour, and such supports, as will be full proof that the prayer was not disregarded.

(2.) That prayer offered in faith may not be always literally answered. No one can doubt that Jesus offered the prayer of faith; and it is as little to be doubted, if he referred in the prayer to the death on the cross, that it was not literally answered. Comp, Mt 26:39.

In like manner it may occur now, that prayer shall be offered with every right feeling, and with an earnest desire for the object, which may not be literally answered. Christians, even in the highest exercise of faith, are not inspired to know what is best for them; and, as long as this is the case, it is possible that they may ask for things which it would not be best to have granted. They who maintain that the prayer of faith is always literally answered, must hold that the Christian is under such a guidance of the Spirit of God that he cannot ask anything amiss. 2Cor 12:9.

In that he feared. Marg. For his piety. Coverdale, "Because he had God in honour." Tindal, "Because he had God in reverence." Prof. Stuart renders it, "And was delivered from that which he feared." So also Doddridge. Whitby, "Was delivered from his fear." Luther renders it, "And was heard for that he had God in reverence"--dass er Gott in Ehren hatte. Beza renders it, "His prayers being heard, he was delivered from fear." From this variety in translating the passage, it will be seen at once that it is attended with difficulty. The Greek is, literally, "from fear or reverence" --αποτηςευλαβειας. The word occurs in the New Testament only in one other place, Heb 12:28, where it is rendered "fear." "Let us serve him with reverence and godly fear." The word properly means, caution, circumspection; then timidity, fear; then the fear of God, reverence, piety. Where the most distinguished scholars have differed as to the meaning of a Greek phrase, it would be presumption in me to attempt to determine its sense. The most natural and obvious interpretation, however, as it seems to me, is, that it means that he was heard on account of his reverence for God; his profound veneration; his submission. Such was his piety that the prayer was heard, though it was not literally

answered. A prayer may be heard, and yet not literally answered; it may be acceptable to God, though it may not consist with his arrangements to bestow the very blessing that is sought. The posture of the mind of the Redeemer, perhaps, was something like this. He knew that he was about to be put to death in a most cruel manner. His tender and sensitive nature, as a man, shrank from such a death. As a man he went, under the pressure of his great sorrows, and pleaded that the cup might be removed, and that man might be redeemed by a less fearful scene of suffering. That arrangement, however, could not be made. Yet the spirit which he evinced; the desire to do the will of God; the resignation, and the confidence in his Father which he evinced, were such as were acceptable in his sight. They showed that he had unconquerable virtue; that no power of temptation, and no prospect of the intensest woes which human nature could endure, could alienate him from piety, To show this was an object of inestimable value, and, much as it cost the Saviour, was worth it all. So now it is worth much to see what Christian piety can endure; What strong temptations it can resist; and what strength it has to bear up under accumulated woes: and even though the prayer of the pious sufferer is not directly answered, yet that prayer is acceptable to God, and the result of such a trial is worth all that it costs.

8 though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Though he were a Son. Though the Son of God. Though he sustained this exalted rank, and was conscious of it, yet he was willing to learn experimentally what is meant by obedience in the midst of sufferings. Yet learned he obedience. That is, he learned experimentally and practically. It cannot be supposed that he did not know what obedience was; or that he was indisposed to obey God before he suffered; or that he had, as we have, perversities of nature, leading to rebellion, which required to be subdued by suffering;--but that he was willing to test the power of obedience in sufferings; to become personally and practically acquainted with the nature of such obedience in the midst of protracted woes. Comp. Php 2:8. The

object here is, to show how well fitted the Lord Jesus was to be a Saviour for man-kind; and the argument is, that he has set us an example, and has shown that the most perfect obedience may be manifested in the deepest sorrows of the body and the soul. Learn hence, that one of the objects of affliction is to lead us to obey God. In prosperity we forget it. We become self-confident and rebellious. Then God lays his hand upon us; breaks up our plans; crushes our hopes; takes away our health; and teaches us that we must be submissive to his will. Some of the most valuable lessons of obedience are learned in the furnace of affliction; and many of the most submissive children of the Almighty have been made so, as the result of protracted woes.

9 and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal
salvation unto all them that obey him;

And being made perfect. That is, being made a complete Saviour--a Saviour fitted in all respects to redeem men. Sufferings were necessary to the completeness or the finish of his character as a Saviour--not to his moral perfection, for he was always without sin. See this explained Heb 2:10. He became the Author, That is, he was the procuring cause (αιτιος) of salvation. It is to be traced wholly to his sufferings and death. Heb 2:10. Unto all them that obey him. It is not to save those who live in sin. Only those who obey him have any evidence that they will be saved. Jn 14:15.

10 called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The Danger of Slothfulness and Apostasy

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered,
seeing ye are dull of hearing.

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that
one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of
God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong
meat.

For when for the time. Considering the time which has elapsed since you were converted. You have been Christians long

enough to be expected to understand such doctrines. This verse proves that those to whom he wrote were not recent converts.

Ye ought to be teachers. You ought to be able to instruct others. He does not mean to say, evidently, that they ought all to become public teachers, or preachers of the gospel, but that they ought to be able to explain to others the truths of the Christian religion. As parents, they ought to be able to explain them to their children; as neighbours, to their neighbours; or as friends, to those who were inquiring the way to life.

Ye have need. That is, probably the mass of them had need. As a people, or a church, they had shown that they were ignorant of some of the very elements of the gospel.

Again. This shows that they had been taught, on some former occasions, what were the first principles of religion, but they had not followed up the teaching as they ought to have done.

The first principles. The very elements; the rudiments; the first lessons--such as children learn before they advance to higher studies. See the word here used explained Rom 4:3, under the word "elements." The Greek word is the same.

Of the oracles of God. Of the Scriptures, or what God has spoken. Rom 3:2 The phrase here may refer to the writings of the Old Testament, and particularly to those parts which relate to the Messiah; or it may include all that God had at that time revealed, in whatever way it was preserved. In 1Pet 4:11, it is used with reference to the Christian religion, and to the doctrines which God had revealed in the gospel. In the passage before us it may mean, the Divine oracles or communications, in whatever way they had been made known. They had shown that they were ignorant of the very rudiments of the Divine teaching.

And are become such. There is more meant in this phrase than that they simply were such persons. The word rendered "are

become" γινομαι--sometimes implies a change of state, or a passing from one state to another--well expressed by the phrase "are become." See Mt 5:45, 4:3, 13:32, 6:16, 10:25, Mk 1:17, Rom 7:3,4. The idea here is, that they had passed from the hopeful condition in which they were when they showed that they had an acquaintance with the great principles of the gospel, and that they had become such as to need again the most simple form of instruction. This agrees well with the general strain of the epistle, which is to preserve them from the danger of apostasy. They were verging towards it, and had come to that state where, if they were recovered, it must be by being again taught the elements of religion.

Have need of milk. Like little children. You can bear only the most simple nourishment. The meaning is, that they were incapable of receiving the higher doctrines of the gospel, as much as little children are incapable of digesting solid food. They were, in fact, in a state of spiritual infancy.

And not of strong meat. Greek. "Strong food." The word meat, with us, is used now to denote only animal food. Formerly, it meant food in general. The Greek word here means nourishment.

13 For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Hebrews-6

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

And this will we do. We will make these advances towards a higher state of knowledge and piety. Paul had confidence that they would do it Heb 6:9,10; and though they had lingered long around the elements of Christian knowledge, he believed that they would yet go on to make higher attainments. If God permit. This is not to be interpreted as if God was unwilling that they should make such advances, or if it were doubtful whether he would allow it if they made an honest effort, and their lives were spared; but it is a phrase used to denote their dependence on him. It is equivalent to saying, "if he would spare their lives, their health, and their reason; if he would continue the means of grace, and would impart his Holy Spirit; if he would favour their efforts, and crown them with success, they would make these advances." In reference to anything that we undertake, however pleasing to God in itself, it is proper to recognise our entire dependence on God. See Jas 4:13-16. Comp. Jn 15:5.

4 For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

For it is impossible. It is needless to say that the passage here Heb 6:4-6 has given occasion to much controversy, and that the opinions of commentators and of the Christian world are yet greatly divided in regard to its meaning. On the one hand, it is held that the passage is not intended to describe those who are true Christians, but only those who have been awakened and enlightened, and who then fall back; and on the other, it is maintained that it refers to those who are true Christians, and who then apostatize. The contending parties have been Calvinists and Armenians; each party, in general, interpreting it according to the views which are held on the question about falling from grace. I shall endeavour, as well as I may be able, to state the true meaning of the passage, by an examination of the words and phrases in detail: observing here, in general, that it seems to me that it refers to true Christians; that the object is to keep them from apostasy; and that it teaches that, if they should apostatize, it would be

impossible to renew them again, or to save them. That it refers to true Christians will be apparent from these considerations:--

(1.) Such is the sense which would strike the great mass of readers. Unless there were some theory to defend, the great body of readers of the New Testament would consider the expression here used as describing true Christians.

(2.) The connexion demands such an interpretation. The apostle was addressing Christians. He was endeavouring to keep them from apostasy. The object was not to keep those who were awakened and enlightened from apostasy, but it was to preserve those who were already in the Church of Christ from going back to perdition. The kind of exhortation appropriate to those who were awakened and convicted, but who were not truly converted, would be to become converted; not to warn them of the danger of falling away. Besides, the apostle would not have said of such persons that they could not be converted and saved. [But of sincere Christians it might be said, with the utmost propriety, that they could not be renewed again, and be saved, if they should fall away--because they rejected the only plan of salvation after they had tried it, and renounced the only scheme of redemption after they had tasted its benefits. If that plea could not save them, what could? If they neglected that, by what Other means could they be brought to God?

(3.) This interpretation accords, as I suppose, with the exact meaning of the phrases which the apostle uses. An examination of those phrases will show that he refers to those who are sincere believers. The phrase "it is impossible," obviously and properly denotes absolute impossibility. It has been contended, by Storr and others, that it denotes only great difficulty. But the meaning which would at first strike all readers would be, that the thing could not be done; that it was not merely very difficult, but absolutely impracticable. The word--αδυνατον--occurs only in the New Testament in the

following places, in all which it denotes that the thing could not be done. Mt 19:26, Mk 10:27: "With men this is impossible;" that is, men could not save one who was rich; implying that the thing was wholly beyond human power. Lk 18:27: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God"---referring to the same case. Acts 14:8 "A man of Lystra, impotent in his feet;" that is, who was wholly unable to walk. Rom 8:3: "For what the law could not do;" what was absolutely impossible for the law to accomplish; that is, to save men. Heb 6:18: "In which it was impossible for God to lie." Heb 10:4: "It is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin." And Heb 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."--In all of these instances denoting absolute impossibility. These passages show that it is not merely a great difficulty to which the apostle refers, but that he meant to say that the thing was wholly impracticable; that it could not be done. And if this be the meaning, then it proves that if those referred to should fall away, they could never be renewed; their case was hopeless, and they must perish:--that is, if a true Christian should apostatize, or fall from grace, he never could be renewed again, and could not be saved. Paul did not teach that he might fall away and be renewed again as often as he pleased. He had other views of the grace of God than this; and he meant to teach, that if a man should once cast off true religion, his case was hopeless, and he must perish: and by this solemn consideration--the only one that would be effectual in such a case--he meant to guard them against the danger of apostasy.

For those who were once enlightened. The phrase "to be enlightened" is one that is often used in the Scriptures, and may be applied either to one whose understanding has been enlightened to discern his duty, though he is not converted, (comp. Jn 1:9;) or, more commonly, to one who is truly converted. Eph 1:18. It does not of necessity refer to true Christians, though it cannot be denied that it more obviously suggests the idea that the heart is truly changed, and that it is more commonly used in that sense. Comp. Ps 19:8. Light, in

the Scriptures, is the emblem of knowledge, holiness, and happiness; and there is no impropriety here in understanding it in accordance with the more decisive phrases which follow, as referring to true Christians.

And have tasted. To taste of a thing means, according to the usage in the Scriptures, to experience, or to understand it. The expression is derived from the fact, that the taste is one of the means by which we ascertain the nature or quality of an object. Comp. Mt 16:28, Jn 8:51; Heb 2:9. The proper idea here is, that they had experienced the heavenly gift, or had learned its nature.

The heavenly gift. The gift from heaven, or which pertains to heaven. Jn 4:10. The express!on properly means, some favour or gift which has descended from heaven; and may refer to any of the benefits which God has conferred on man in the work of redemption. It might include the plan of salvation; the forgiveness of sins; the enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, or any one of the graces which that spirit imparts. The use of the article, however,--" the heavenly gift,"--limits it to something special, as being conferred directly from heaven; and the connexion would seem to demand that we understand it of some peculiar favour which could be conferred only on the children of God. It is an expression which may be applied to sincere Christians; it is at least doubtful whether it can with propriety be applied to any other.

And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Partakers of the influences of the Holy Ghost--for it is only in this sense that we can partake of the Holy Spirit. We partake of food when we share it with others; we partake of pleasure when we enjoy it with others; we partake of spoils in war when they are divided between us and others. So we partake of the influences of the Holy Spirit when we share these influences conferred on his people. This is not language which can properly be applied to any one but a true Christian; and

though it is true that an unpardoned sinner may be enlightened and awakened by the Holy Spirit, yet the language here used is not such as would be likely to be employed to describe his state. It is too clearly expressive of those influences which renew and sanctify the soul. It is as elevated language as can be used to describe the joy of the Christian, and is undoubtedly used in that sense here. If it is not, it would be difficult to find any language which would properly express the condition of a renewed heart. Grotius, Bloomfield, and some others, understood this or the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. But this is not necessary, and does not accord well with the general description here, which evidently pertains to the mass of those whom the apostle addressed.

And have tasted the good word of God. That is, either the doctrines which he teaches, and which are good or pleasant to the soul; or the word of God which is connected with good, that is, which promises good. The former seems to be the correct meaning--that the word of God, or the truth which he taught, was itself a good. It was that which the soul desired, and in which it found comfort and peace. Comp. Ps 119:103, 141:6. The meaning here is, that they had experienced the excellency of the truth of God; they had seen and enjoyed its beauty. This is language which cannot be applied to an impenitent sinner. He has no relish for the truth of God; sees no beauty in it; derives no comfort from it. It is only the true Christian who has pleasure in its contemplation, and who can be said to "taste" and enjoy it. This language describes a state or mind of which every sincere Christian is conscious, It is that of pleasure in the word of God. He loves the Bible; he loves the truth of God that is preached. He sees an exquisite beauty in that truth. It is not merely in its poetry; in its sublimity; in its argument; but he has now a taste or relish for the truth itself, which he had not before his conversion. Then he might have admired the Bible for its beauty of language, or for its poetry; he might have been interested in preaching for its eloquence or power of argument; but now his love is for the truth. Comp. Ps 19:10. There is no book that he so

much delights in as the Bible; and no pleasure is so pure as that which he has in contemplating the truth. Comp. Josh 21:45, 23:16.

And the powers of the world to come. Or of the "coming age." "The age to come" was a phrase in common use among the Hebrews, to denote the future dispensation, the times of the Messiah. The same idea was expressed by the phrases, "the last times," "the end of the world," etc., which are of so frequent occurrence in the Scriptures. They all denoted an age which was to succeed the old dispensation; the time of the Messiah; or the period in which the affairs of the world would be wound up. Isa 2:2. Here it evidently refers to that period; and the meaning is, that they had participated in the peculiar blessings to be expected in that dispensation--to wit, in the clear views of the way of salvation, and the influences of the Holy Spirit on the soul. The word "powers" here implies that in that time there would be some extraordinary manifestation of the power of God. An unusual energy would be put forth to save men, particularly as evinced by the agency of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Of this "power" the apostle here says they of whom he spake had partaken. They had been brought under the awakening and renewing energy which God put forth under the Messiah, in saving the soul. They had experienced the promised blessings of the new and last dispensation; and the language here is such as appropriately describes Christians, and as indeed can be applicable to no other. It may be remarked respecting the various expressions used here, Heb 6:4,5,

(1.) that they are such as properly denote a renewed state. They obviously describe the condition of a Christian; and though it may be not certain that any one of them, if taken by itself, would prove that the person to whom it was applied was truly converted, yet, taken together, it is clear that they are designed to describe such a state. If they are not, it would be difficult to find any language which would be properly

descriptive of the character of a sincere Christian. I regard the description here, therefore, as that which is clearly designed to denote the state of those who were born again, and were the true children of God; and it seems plain to me, that no other interpretation would have ever been thought of, if this view had not seemed to conflict with the doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints."

(2.) There is a regular gradation here from the first elements of piety in the soul to its highest developments; and, whether the apostle so designed it or not, the language describes the successive steps by which a true Christian advances to the highest stage of Christian experience. The mind is

(a.) enlightened; then

(b.) tastes the gift of heaven, or has some experience of it; then

(c.) it is made to partake of the influences of the Holy Ghost; then

(d.) there is experience of the excellence and loveliness of the word of God; and

(e.) finally, there is a participation of the full "powers" of the new dispensation--of the extraordinary energy which God puts forth in the gospel to sanctify and save the soul.

If they shall fall away. Literally, "and having fallen away." "There is no if in the Greek in this place--' having fallen away.'" Dr. J. P. Wilson. It is not an affirmation that any had actually fallen away, or that, in fact, they would do it; but the statement is, that on the supposition that they had fallen away, it would be impossible to renew them again. It is the same as supposing a case which, in fact, might never occur:--as if we should say, "had a man fallen down a precipice, it would be impossible to save him;" or, "had the child fallen into the

stream, he would certainly have been drowned." But though this literally means "having fallen away," yet the sense, in the connexion in which it stands, is not improperly expressed by our common translation. The Syriac has given a version Which is remarkable, not as a correct translation, but as showing what was the prevailing belief in the time in which it was made, (probably the first or second century,) in regard to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. "For it is impossible that they who have been baptized, and who have tasted the gift which is from heaven, and have received the spirit of holiness, and have tasted the good word of God, and the power of the coming age, should again sin, so that they should be renewed again to repentance, and again crucify the Son of God, and put him to ignominy." The word rendered "fall away" means, properly, "to fall near by any one;" "to fall in with, or meet;" and thus to fall aside from, to swerve or deviate from; and here means undoubtedly to apostatize from, and implies an entire renunciation of Christianity, or a going back to a state of Judaism, heathenism, or sin. The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is material to remark here, that the apostle does not say that any true Christian ever had fallen away. He makes a statement of what would occur on the supposition that such a thing should happen -but a statement may be made of what would occur on the supposition that a certain thing should take place, and yet it be morally certain that the event never would happen. It would be easy to suppose what would happen if the ocean should overflow a continent, or if the sun should cease to rise, and still there be entire certainty that such an event never would occur.

To renew them again. Implying that they had been before renewed, or had been true Christians. The word again"--παλιν --supposes this; and this passage, therefore, confirms the considerations suggested above, showing that they were true Christians who were referred to. They had once repented, but it would be impossible to bring them to this state again. The

declaration, of course, is to be read in connexion with the first clause of Heb 6:4, "It is impossible to renew again to repentance those who once were true Christians, should they fall away." I know of no declaration more unambiguous than this. It is a positive declaration. It is not that it would be very difficult to do it; or that it would be impossible for man to do it, though it might be done by God; it is an unequivocal and absolute declaration that it would be utterly impracticable that it should be done by any one, or by any means; and this, I have no doubt, is the meaning of the apostle. Should a Christian fall from grace, he must perish. HE NEVER COULD BE SAVED The reason of this the apostle immediately, adds.

Seeing. This word is not in the Greek, though the sense is expressed. The Greek literally is, "having again crucified to themselves the Son of God." The reason here given is, that the crime would be so great, and they would so effectually exclude themselves from the only plan of salvation, that they could not be saved. There is but one way of salvation. Having tried that, and then renounced it, how could they then be saved? The case is like that of a drowning man. If there was but one plank by which he could be saved, and he should get on that, and then push it away and plunge into the deep, he must die. Or if there was but one rope by which the shore could be reached from a wreck, and he should cut that and cast it off, he must die. Or if a man were sick, and there was but one kind of medicine that could possibly restore him, and he should deliberately dash that away, he must die. So in religion. There is but one way of salvation. If a man deliberately rejects that, he must perish.

They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh. Our translators have rendered this as if the Greek were-- ανασταυρουνταςπαλιν-- crucify again, and so it is rendered by Chrysostom, by Tindal, Coverdale, Beza, Luther, and others. But this is not properly the meaning of the Greek. The

word αναστανροω is an intensive word, and is employed instead of the usual word "to crucify," only to denote emphasis. It means that such an act of apostasy would be equivalent to crucifying him in an aggravated manner. Of course this is to be taken figuratively. It could not be literally true that they would thus crucify the Redeemer. The meaning is, that their conduct would be as if they had crucified him; it would bear a strong resemblance to the act by which the Lord Jesus was publicly rejected and condemned to die. The act of crucifying the Son of God was the great crime which outpeers any other deed of human guilt. Yet the apostle says, that should they who had been true Christians fall away, and reject him, they would be guilty of a similar crime. It would be a public and solemn act of rejecting him. It would show that if they had been there they would have joined in the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" The intensity and aggravation of such a crime perhaps the apostle meant to indicate by the intensive or emphatic ανα in the ανασταυρουντας. Such an act would render their salvation impossible, because

(1.) the crime would be aggravated beyond that of those who rejected him and put him to death--for they knew not what they did; and

(2.) because it would be a rejection of the only possible plan of salvation, after they had had experience of its power and known its efficacy. The phrase "to themselves," Tindal renders, "as concerning themselves." Others, "as far as in them lies," or as far as they have ability to do. Others, "to their own heart." Probably Grotius has suggested the true sense. "They do it for themselves. They make the act their own. It is as if they did it themselves; and they are to be regarded as having done the deed." So we make the act of another our own when we authorize it beforehand, or approve of it after it is done.

And put him to an open shame. Make him a public example; or hold him up as worthy of death on the cross. See the same word explained in Mt 1:19, in the phrase, "make her a public example." The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Their apostasy and rejection of the Saviour would be like holding him up publicly as deserving the infamy and ignominy of the cross. A great part of the crime attending the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, consisted in exhibiting him to the passing multitude as deserving the death of a malefactor. Of that sin they would partake who should reject him, for they would thus show that they regarded his religion as an imposture, and would, in a public manner, hold him up as worthy only of rejection and contempt. Such, it seems to me, is the fair meaning of this much-disputed passage--a passage which Would never have given so much perplexity if it had not been supposed that the obvious interpretation would interfere with some prevalent articles of theology. The passage proves that if true Christians should apostatize, it would be impossible to renew and save them. If then it should be asked whether I believe that any true Christian ever did, or ever will fall from grace, and wholly lose his religion, I would answer unhesitatingly, No. Comp. Jn 10:27,28, Rom 8:38,39, Gal 5:4. If then it be asked what was the use of a warning like this, I answer,

(1.) It would show the great sin of apostasy from God if it were to occur. It is proper to state the greatness of an act of sin, though it might never occur, in order to show how it would be regarded by God.

(2.) Such a statement might be one of the most effectual means of preserving from apostasy. To state that a fall from a precipice would cause certain death, would be one of the most certain means of preserving one from falling; to affirm that arsenic would be certainly fatal, is one of the most effectual means of preventing its being taken; to know that fire certainly destroys, is one of the most sure checks from the danger. Thousands have been preserved from going over the

Falls of Niagara by knowing that there would be no possibility of escape; and so effectual has been this knowledge, that it has preserved all from such a catastrophe, except the very few who have gone over by accident. So in religion. The knowledge that apostasy would be fatal, and there could be no hope of being saved should it once occur, would be a more effectual preventive of the danger than all the other means that could be used. If a man believed that it would be an easy matter to be restored again, should he apostatize, he would feel little solicitude in regard to it; and it has occurred, in fact, that they who suppose that this may occur, have manifested little of the care to walk in the paths of strict religion, which should have been evinced.

(3.) It may be added, that the means used by God to preserve his people from apostasy have been entirely effectual. There is no evidence that one has ever fallen away who was a true Christian, Comp. Jn 10:27,28, and 1Jn 2:19; and to the end of the world it will be true, that the means which he uses to keep his people from apostasy will not in a single instance fail.

5 and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

By the enlightened here, understand those that were baptized and embraced Christianity: The ancients called baptism illumination, and baptized persons the enlightened; because of that divine illumination which was conveyed to the minds of men by the knowledge of Christianity.

By tasting the heavenly gift, and being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, understand such as had not only heard of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but had some experience of them themselves; as also of the spiritual benefits conferred upon them in baptism, by the Holy Spirit.

By tasting the good word of God understand some relish of the truth and goodness of the gospel, some pleasure in entertaining it, by reason of the gracious promises of eternal life and happiness contained in it.

The gospel that proclaimed remission of sins, was a good word; this good word they saw confirmed by miracles,

tongues, and prophecy, and so could not but be convinced of the truth of it, which is here called a tasting it; who have tasted the good word of God; it follows, and the powers of the world to come; that is, the power of the gospel-age; for the "world to come," in the language of the prophets, doth signify the times of the Messiah: And thus, the powers of the world to come, are the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon men, in order to the propagation of the gospel; such were the gifts of healing, casting out devils, woking miracles. Others, by tasting the powers of the world to come, understand some apprehensions of the resurrection and furture judgement, with affections suitable thereunto.

Now concerning these, says our apostle, if they fall away; that is, if they shall, after all this apostatize from this profession, out of love to this present world, or from fear of persecution and sufferings, if they shall relapse either to Heathenism or Judaism, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance; that is, it is a thing very difficult, hardly to be hoped for, that such willful apostates should be restored again by repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; that is, they virtually, and in effect crucify him over again, and as much as in them lies; for, by denying and renouncing of him, they declare him to be an imposter, and consequently worthy of death.

So that the plain sense of the words seem to be this: "If those that are baptized, and have received the doctrine of the gospel, and are endowed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, shall yet, after this, apostatize from Christianity, it is very difficult, and next to an impossibility, to recover such again by repentance; seeing they are guilty of as great a crime, as if, in their own persons, they had put to death, and ignominiously used the Son of God."

Here note, That it is not a partial apostasy from the Christian religion, by any particular vicious practice, but a total apostasy from Christianity, and more especially to the Heathen idolatry, which is here intended.

From the whole learn, 1. That they which have been enlightened, awakened, and made partakers of the gifts and

graces of the Holy Spirit in some measure, and tasted the sweetness of the word and ways of God in some degree, may yet fall away.
2. That if such do fall away, it is very difficult, though not altogether impossible, to renew them again to repentence: and that for these reasons;
1. Because of the greatness and heinous nature of the sin, it being a downright apostasy from God, against the clearest light and knowledge, and fullest conviction of a man's mind; and the highest affront to the Son of God, who revealed the Christian religion to the world, and sealed it with his blood.
2. Because those who are guilty of this sin, do renounce and cast off the means of their recovery, and therefore it becomes extremely difficult to renew them again to repentance: they reject Christ and his holy gospel, and refuse the only remedy appointed for their recovery.
3. Because it is so high a provocation to God, to withdraw his grace and Holy Spirit from such persons, by the power and efficacy whereof they should be brought to repentance: God justly leaving those who so unworthily leave him.
Lord! how fearful and fatal a condition is it, to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; to decay in religion, and apostatize from grace; to have had some work of the Spirit and word upon our hearts, so as to have light and love, some taste and savour of religion, some desires after, and hopes of heaven; and, after all, to cool and give over, to revolt and backslide, and have our latter end worse than our beginning?

6 if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.

He shows how far persons may go in religion, and, after all, fall away, and perish for ever, Heb 6:4,5.

(1.) They may be enlightened. Some of the ancients understand this of their being baptized; but it is rather to be understood of notional knowledge and common illumination, of which persons may have a great deal, and yet come short of heaven. Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened (Nu

24:3), and yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness.

(2.) They may taste of the heavenly gift, feel something of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in his operations upon their souls, causing them to taste something of religion, and yet be like persons in the market, who taste of what they will not come up to the price of, and so but take a taste, and leave it. Persons may taste religion, and seem to like it, if they could have it upon easier terms than denying themselves, and taking up their cross, and following Christ.

(3.) They may be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, that is, of his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; they may have cast out devils in the name of Christ, and done many other mighty works. Such gifts in the apostolic age were sometimes bestowed upon those who had no true saving grace.

(4.) They may taste of the good word of God; they may have some relish of gospel doctrines, may hear the word with pleasure, may remember much of it, and talk well of it, and yet never be cast into the form and mould of it, nor have it dwelling richly in them.

(5.) They may have tasted of the powers of the world to come; they may have been under strong impressions concerning heaven, and dread of going to hell. These lengths hypocrites may go, and, after all, turn apostates. Now hence observe,

[1.] These great things are spoken here of those who may fall away; yet it is not here said of them that they were truly converted, or that they were justified; there is more in true saving grace than in all that is here said of apostates.

[2.] This therefore is no proof of the final apostasy of true saints. These indeed may fall frequently and foully, but yet they will not totally nor finally from God; the purpose and the power of God, the purchase and the prayer of Christ, the promise of the gospel, the everlasting covenant that God has made with them, ordered in all things and sure, the indwelling of the Spirit, and the immortal seed of the word, these are their security. But the tree that has not these roots will not stand.

2 The apostle describes the dreadful case of such as fall away after having gone so far in the profession of the religion.

(1.) The greatness of the sin of apostasy. It is crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame. They declare that they approve of what the Jews did in crucifying Christ, and that they would be glad to do the same thing again if it were in their power. They pour the greatest contempt upon the Son of God, and therefore upon God himself, who expects all should reverence his Son, and honour him as they honour the Father. They do what in them lies to represent Christ and Christianity as a shameful thing, and would have him to be a public shame and reproach. This is the nature of apostasy.

(2.) The great misery of apostates.

[1.] It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. It is extremely hazardous. Very few instances can be given of those who have gone so far and fallen away, and yet ever have been brought to true repentance, such a repentance as is indeed a renovation of the soul. Some have thought this is the sin against the Holy Ghost, but without ground. The sin here mentioned is plainly apostasy both from the truth and the

ways of Christ. God can renew them to repentance, but he seldom does it; and with men themselves it is impossible.

[2.] Their misery is exemplified by a proper similitude, taken from the ground that after much cultivation brings forth nothing but briers and thorns; and therefore is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned, Heb 6:8. To give this the greater force here is observed the difference that there is between the good ground and the bad, that these contraries, being set one over against the other, illustrate each other. First Here is a description of the good ground: It drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it. Believers do not only taste of the word of God, but they drink it in; and this good ground bringeth forth fruit answerable to the cost laid out, for the honour of Christ and the comfort of his faithful ministers, who are, under Christ, dressers of the ground. And this fruit-field or garden receives the blessing. God declares fruitful Christians blessed, and all wise and good men account them blessed: they are blessed with increase of grace, and with further establishment and glory at last. Secondly, Here is the different case of the bad ground: It bears briers and thorns; it is not only barren of good fruit, but fruitful in that which is bad, briers and thorns, fruitful in sin and wickedness, which are troublesome and hurtful to all about them, and will be most so to sinners themselves at last; and then such ground is rejected. God will concern himself no more about such wicked apostates; he will let them alone, and cast them out of his care; he will command the clouds that they rain no more upon them. Divine influences shall be restrained; and that is not all, but such ground is nigh unto cursing; so far is it from receiving the blessing, that a dreadful curse hangs over it, though as yet, through the patience of God, the curse is not fully executed. Lastly, Its end is to be burned. Apostasy will be punished with everlasting burnings, the fire that shall never be quenched. This is the sad end to which apostasy leads, and therefore Christians should go on and grow in grace, lest, if

they do not go forward, they should go backward, till they bring matters to this woeful extremity of sin and misery.

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

For the earth. The design of the apostle by this comparison is apparent. It is to show the consequences of not making a proper use of all the privileges which Christians have, and the effect which would follow should those privileges fail to be improved. He says, it is like the earth. If that absorbs the rain, and produces an abundant harvest, it receives the Divine blessing. If not, it is cursed, or is worthless. The design is to show that if Christians should become like the barren earth, they would be cast away and lost.

Which drinketh in the rain. A comparison of the earth as if it were "thirsty"--a comparison that is common in all languages.

That cometh oft upon it. The frequent showers that fall. The object is, to describe fertile land which is often watered with the rains of heaven. The comparison of "drinking in" the rain is designed to distinguish a mellow soil which receives the rain, from hard or rocky rand where it runs off.

And bringeth forth herbs. The word herbs we now limit, in common discourse, to the small vegetables which die every year, and which are used as articles of food, or to such in general as have not ligneous or hard woody stems. The word here means anything which is cultivated in the earth as an article of food, and includes all kinds of grains. Meet for them. Useful or appropriate to them.

By whom it is dressed. Marg. "for whom." The meaning is, on account of whom it is cultivated. The word "dressed" here means cultivated. Comp. Gen 2:15.

Receiveth blessing from God. Receives the Divine approbation. It is in accordance with his wishes and plans, and he stories upon it and blesses it. He does not curse it, as he does the desolate and barren soil. The language is figurative, and must be used to denote that which is an object of the Divine favour. God delights in the harvests which the earth brings forth; in the effects of dews and rains and suns, in causing beauty and abundance; and on much fields of beauty and plenty he looks down with pleasure. This does not mean, as I suppose, that he renders it more fertile and abundant, for

(1.) it cannot be shown that it is true that God thus rewards the earth for its fertility; and

(2.) such an interpretation would not accord well with the scope of the passage. The design is to show that a Christian who makes proper use of the means of growing in grace which God bestows upon him, and who does not apostatize, meets with the Divine favour and approbation. His course accords with the Divine intention and wishes, and he is a man on whom God will smile--as he seems to on the fertile earth.

8 but that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.

But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected. That is, by the farmer or owner. It is abandoned as worthless. The force of the comparison here is, that God would thus deal with those who professed to be renewed if they should be like such a worthless field.

And is nigh unto cursing. Is given over to execration, or is abandoned as useless. The word cursing means, devoting to destruction. The sense is not that the owner would curse it in words, or imprecate a curse on it, as a man does who uses profane language, but the language is taken here from the more common use of the word curse--as meaning to devote to destruction. So the land would be regarded by the farmer.

It would be valueless, and would be given up to be overrun with fire.

Whose end is to be burned. Referring to the land. The allusion here is to the common practice, among the Oriental and Roman agriculturists, of burning bad and barren lands. An illustration of this is afforded by Pliny. "There are some who burn the stubble on the field, chiefly upon the authority of Virgil: the principal reason for which is, that they may burn the seeds of weeds," Nat. Hist. xviii. 30. The authority of Virgil, to which Pliny refers, may be found in Georg. i. 84.

"Saepe etiam steriles incendere profuit agros, Atque levem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis."

"It is often useful to set fire to barren lands, and burn the light stubble in crackling flames." The object of burning land in this way was to render it available for useful purposes; or to destroy noxious weeds, and thorns, and underbrush. But the object of the apostle requires him to refer merely to the fact of the burning, and to make use of it as an illustration of an act of punishment. So, Paul says, it would be in the dealings of God with his people. If, after all attempts to secure holy living, and to keep them in the paths of salvation, they should evince none of the spirit of piety, all that could be done would be to abandon them to destruction, as such a field is overrun with fire. It is not supposed that a true Christian will fall away and be lost; but we may remark,

(1.) that there are many professed Christians who seem to be in danger of such ruin. They resist all attempts to produce in them the fruits of good living as really as some pieces of ground do to secure a harvest. Corrupt desires, pride, envy, uncharitableness, covetousness, and vanity, are as certainly seen in their lives as thorns and briers are on a bad soil. Such briers and thorns you may cut down again and again; you may

strike the plough deep, and seem to tear away all their roots; you may sow the ground with the choicest grain, but soon the briers and the thorns will again appear and be as troublesome as ever. No pains will subdue them or secure a harvest. So with many a professed Christian. He may be taught, admonished, rebuked, and afflicted, but all will not do. There is essential and unsubdued perverseness in his soul, and, despite all the attempts to make him a holy man, the same bad passions are continually breaking out anew.

(2.) Such professing Christians are "nigh unto cursings." They are about to be abandoned for ever. Unsanctified and wicked in their hearts, there is nothing else which can be done for them, and they must be lost! What a thought! A professing Christian "nigh unto cursing!" A man, the efforts for whose salvation are about to cease for ever, and who is to be given over as incorrigible and hopeless! For such a man--in the church or out of it--we should have compassion. We have some compassion for an ox which is so stubborn that he will not work, and which is to be put to death; for a horse which is so fractious that he cannot be broken, and which is to be killed; for cattle which are so unruly that they cannot be restrained, and which are only to be fattened for the slaughter; and even for a field which is desolate and barren, and which is given up to be overrun with briers and thorns; but how much more should we pity a man, all the efforts for whose salvation fail, and who is soon to be abandoned to everlasting destruction!

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things. We confidently hope for better things respecting you. We trust that you are true Christians; that you will produce the proper fruits of holiness; that you will be saved. Things that accompany salvation. Things that pertain to salvation. The Greek phrase here means, "near to salvation," or things that are conjoined with salvation. So Coverdale renders it, "and that salvation is nigher." The form of expression seems to refer to what was said in Heb 6:8.

The land overrun with briers was nigh to cursing; the things which Paul saw in them were nigh to salvation. From this verse it is evident

(1.) that the apostle regarded them as sincere Christians, and

(2.) that he believed they would not fall away. Though he had stated what must be the inevitable consequence if Christians should apostatize, yet he says that, in their case, he had a firm conviction that it would not occur. There is no inconsistency in this. We may be certain that if a man should take arsenic it would kill him; and yet we may have the fullest conviction that he will not do it. Is not this verse a clear proof that Paul felt that it was certain that true Christians would never fall away and be lost? If he supposed that they might, how could he be persuaded that it would not happen to them? Why not to them as well as to others? Learn hence, that while we assure men that if they should fall away they would certainly perish, we may nevertheless address them with the full persuasion that they will be saved.

10 For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

For God is not unrighteous. God will do no wrong. He will not forget or fail to reward the endeavours of his people to promote his glory, and to do good. The meaning here is, that by their kindness in ministering to the wants of the saints, they had given full evidence of true piety. If God should forget that, it would be "unrighteous,"

(1.) because there was a propriety that it should be remembered; and

(2.) because it is expressly promised that it shall not fail of reward, Mt 10:42. Your work. Particularly in ministering to the wants of the saints. Labour of love. Deeds of benevolence when there was no hope of recompense, or when love was the motive in doing it. Which ye have shewed toward his name.

Toward him--for the word name is often used to denote the person himself. They had showed that they loved God by their kindness to his people. Mt 25:40: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." In that ye have ministered to the saints. You have supplied their wants. This may refer either to the fact that they contributed to supply the wants of the poor members of the church, (comp. Gal 2:10, or it may refer to some special acts of kindness which they had shown to suffering and persecuted Christians. It is not possible now to know to what particular acts the apostle refers. We may learn,

(1.) that to show kindness to Christians, because they are Christians, is an important evidence of piety.

(2.) It will in no case be unrewarded. God is not "unjust ;" and he will remember an act of kindness shown to his people--even though it be nothing but giving a cup of cold water.

11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

And we desire that every one of you. We wish that every member of the church should exhibit the same endeavour to do good, until they attain to the full assurance of hope. It is implied here, that the full assurance of hope is to be obtained by a persevering effort to lead a holy life. The same diligence. The same strenuous endeavour, the same ardour and zeal. To the full assurance of hope. In order to obtain the full assurance of hope. The word rendered "full assurance," means firm persuasion, and refers to a state of mind where there is the fullest conviction, or where there is no doubt. See Col 2:2, 1Thes 1:6 Heb 10:22 comp. Lk 1:1, Rom 4:21, 14:5, 2Ti 4:6,17, where the same word, in different forms, occurs. Hope is a compound emotion, Eph 2:12 made up of an earnest desire for an object, and a corresponding expectation of obtaining it. The hope of heaven is made up of an earnest wish to reach heaven, and a corresponding expectation of it, or reason to believe that it will be ours. The full assurance of that hope exists where there is the highest desire of heaven, and such

corresponding evidence of personal piety, as to leave no doubt that it will be ours.

To the end. To the end of life. The apostle wished that they would persevere in such acts of piety to the end of their course, as to have their hope of heaven fully established, and to leave no doubt on the mind that they were sincere Christians. Learn hence,

(1.) that full assurance of hope is to be obtained only by holy living.

(2.) It is only when that is persevered in that it can be obtained.

(3.) It is not by visions and raptures, by dreams and revelations, that it can now be acquired, for God imparts no such direct revelation now.

(4.) It is usually only as the result of a life of consistent piety that such an assurance is to be obtained. No man can have it who does not persevere in holy living; and they who do obtain it usually secure it only near the end of a life of eminent devotedness to God. God could impart it at once when the soul is converted; but such is the tendency of man to indolence and sloth, that even good men would then relax their efforts, and sit down contented, feeling that they had now the undoubted prospect of heaven. As it is, it is held out as a prize to be won--as that whose acquisition is to cheer us in our old age, when the warfare is over, and when, amidst the infirmities of years, and in the near prospect of death, we need special consolation. Comp. 2Ti 4:6,7.

That ye be not slothful. Indolent; inactive. This was what he was especially desirous of guarding them against. By diligent and strenuous effort only could they secure themselves from the danger of apostasy. But followers. Imitators--that you may live as they lived. Of them who through faith and patience. By faith, or confidence in God, and by patience in suffering--

referring to those who in times of trial had remained faithful to God, and had been admitted to heaven. In Heb 11 the apostle has given a long list of such persevering and faithful friends of God. See Notes on that chapter.

12 that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

For when God made promise to Abraham. That he would bless him, and multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, Gen 22:16,17. The object of introducing this example here is to encourage those to whom the apostle was writing to persevere in the Christian life. This he does by showing that God had given the highest possible assurance of his purpose to bless his people by an oath. Reference is made to Abraham in this argument probably, for two reasons.

(1.) To show the nature of the evidence which Christians have that they will be saved, or the ground of encouragement--being the same as that made to Abraham, and depending, as in his case, on the promise of God; and

(2.) because the example of Abraham was just in point. He had persevered. He had relied firmly and solely on the promise of God. He did this when appearances were much against the fulfilment of the promise, and he thus showed the advantage of perseverance and fidelity in the cause of God. Because he could swear by no greater. There is no being greater than God. In taking an oath among men it is always implied that the appeal is to one of superior power, who is able to punish for its infraction. But this could not occur in the case of God himself. There was no greater being than himself, and the oath, therefore, was by his own existence. He sware by himself. Gen 22:16: "By myself have I sworn." Comp. Isa 45:23. In an oath of this kind God pledges his veracity; declares that the event shall be as certain as his existence; and secures it by all the perfections of his nature. The usual form of the oath is, "As I live, saith the Lord." See Nu 14:21,28; Eze 33:11.

Verse 14. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee. That is, I will certainly bless thee. The phrase is a Hebrew mode of expression, to denote emphasis or certainty--indicated by the repetition of a word. Comp. Gen 16:10, Ex 8:10, Joel 3:14, Jud 5:30, 15:16. Multiplying I will multiply thee. I will greatly increase thee--I will grant thee an exceedingly numerous posterity.

14 saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.

And so, after he had patiently endured. After he had waited for a long time. He did not faint or grow weary, but he persevered in a confident expectation of the fulfilment of what God had so solemnly promised. He obtained the promise. Evidently the promise referred to in the oath--that he would have a numerous posterity. The apostle intimates that he had waited for that a long time; that his faith did not waver, and that in due season the object of his wishes was granted. To see the force of this, we are to remember,

(1.) that when he was called by God from Haran, and when the promise of a numerous posterity was made to him, he was seventy-five years old, Gen 12:1-6.

(2.) Twenty-four years elapsed after this, during which he was a sojourner in a strange land, before the manner in which this promise would be fulfilled was made known to him, Gen 17:1-16.

(3.) It was only when he was a hundred years old, and when he had persevered in the belief of the truth of the promise against all the natural improbabilities of its accomplishment, that he received the pledge of its fulfilment in the birth of his son Isaac, Gen 21:1-5.

(4.) The birth of that son was a pledge that the other blessings implied in the promise would be granted, and in that pledge Abraham may be said to have "received the promise." He did not actually see the numerous posterity of which he was to be the honoured ancestor, nor the Messiah who was to descend from him, nor the happy influences which would result to mankind from the fulfilment of the promise. But he saw the certainty that all this would occur; he saw by faith the Messiah in the distance, (Jn 8:56,) and the numerous blessings which would result from his coming. It was a remarkable instance of faith, and one well fitted to the purpose of the apostle. It would furnish ample encouragement to the Christians to whom he wrote to persevere their course, and to avoid the dangers of apostasy. If Abraham persevered when appearances were so much against the fulfilment of what had been promised, then Christians should persevere under the clearer light, and with the more distinct promises of the gospel.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath:
18 that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Wherein God. On account of which, or since an oath had this effect, God was willing to appeal to it, in order to assure his people of salvation.

Willing more abundantly. In the most abundant manner, or to make the case as sure as possible. It does not mean more abundantly than in the case of Abraham, but that he was willing to give the most ample assurance possible. Coverdale renders it, correctly, "very abundantly."

The heirs of promise. The heirs to whom the promise of life pertained; that is, all who were interested in the promises made to Abraham--thus embracing the heirs of salvation now.

The immutability of his counsel. His fixed purpose, he meant to show, in the most solemn manner, that his purpose would not change. The plans of God never change; and all the hope which we can have of heaven is founded on the fact that his purpose is immutable. If he changed his plans; if he was controlled by caprice; if he willed one thing to-day and another thing tomorrow, who could confide in him or who would have any hope of heaven? No one would know what to expect; and no one could put confidence in him. The farmer ploughs and sows because he believes that the laws of nature are settled and fixed; the mariner ventures into unknown seas because the needle points in one direction; we plant an apple-tree because we believe it will produce apples, a peach because it will produce peaches, a pear because it will produce a pear. But suppose there were no settled laws--that all was governed by caprice--who would know what to plant? Who then would plant anything? So in religion. If there were nothing fixed and settled, who would know what to do? If God should change his plans by caprice, and save one man by faith today and condemn another for the same faith tomorrow; or if he should pardon a man today and withdraw the pardon tomorrow, what security could we have of salvation? How grateful, therefore, should we be, that God has an immutable counsel, and that this is confirmed by a solemn oath! No one could honour a God that had not such an immutability of purpose; and all the hope which man can have of heaven is in the fact that He is unchanging.

Confirmed it by an oath. Marg. Interposed himself. Tindal and Coverdale, "added an oath." The Greek is, "interpose with an oath"-- εμεσιτευσενορκω. The word here used-- μεσιτευω -- means, to mediate or intercede for one; and then to intervene or interpose. The meaning here is, that he interposed an oath between himself and the other party by way of a confirmation or pledge.

That by two immutable things. What the "two immutable things" here referred to are, has been made a matter of question

among commentators. Most expositors, as Doddridge, Whitby, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and Calvin, suppose that the reference is to the promise and the oath of God, each of which would be a firm ground of the assurance of salvation, and in each of which it would be impossible for God to lie. Prof. Stuart supposes that the reference is to two oaths--the oath made to Abraham, and that by which the Messiah was made High Priest according to the order of Melchisedek, Ps 110:4, Heb 5:6,10. He supposes that thus the salvation of believers would be amply secured, by the promise that Abraham should have a Son, the Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed, and in the oath that his Son should be High Priest for ever. But to this interpretation it may be objected that the apostle seems to refer to two things distinct from each other in their nature, and not to two acts of the same kind. There are two kinds of security referred to, whereas the security furnished according to this interpretation would be the same--that arising from an oath. However numerous the oaths might be, still it would be security of the same kind; and if one of them were broken, no certainty could be derived from the other. On the supposition, however, that he refers to the promise and the oath, there would be two kinds of assurance, of different kinds. On the supposition that the promise was disregarded--if such a supposition may be made--still there would be the security of the oath and thus the assurance of salvation was two-fold. It seems to me, therefore, that the apostle refers to the promise and to the oath of God, as constituting the two grounds of security for the salvation of his people. Those things were both unchangeable; and when his word and oath are once passed, what he promises is secure.

In which it was impossible for God to Lie. That is, it would be contrary to his nature; it is not for a moment to be supposed. Comp. Tit 1:2: "God--that cannot lie." The impossibility is a moral impossibility, and the use of the word here explains the Sense in which the words impossible, cannot, etc., are often used in the Scriptures. The meaning here is, that such was the

love of God for truth, such his holiness of character, that he could not speak falsely.

We might have a strong consolation. The strongest of which the mind can conceive. The consolation of a Christian is not in his own strength; his hope of heaven is not in any reliance on his own powers. His comfort is, that God has promised eternal life to his people, and that He cannot prove false to his word, Tit 1:2.

Who have fled for refuge. Referring to the fact that one charged with murder fled to the city of refuge, or laid hold on an altar for security. So we, guilty and deserving of death, have fled to the hopes of the gospel in the Redeemer.

To lay hold upon. To seize and hold fast--as one does an altar when he is pursued by the avenger of blood. The hope set before us.

The hope of eternal life offered in the gospel. This is set before us as our refuge, and to this we flee when we feel that we are in danger of death. On the nature of hope, Eph 2:12.

19 which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul. Hope accomplishes for the soul the same thing which an anchor does for a ship. It makes it fast and secure. An anchor preserves a ship when the waves beat and the wind blows; and as long as the anchor holds, so long a ship is safe, and the mariner apprehends no danger. So with the soul of the Christian. In the tempests and trials of life, his mind is calm as long as his hope of heaven is firm. If that gives way, he feels that all is lost. Among the heathen writers, hope is often compared with an anchor. So Socrates said, "To ground hope on a false supposition, is like trusting to a weak anchor." Again--"A ship ought not to trust to one anchor, nor life to one hope." Both sure and stedfast. Firm and secure. This refers to the anchor. That is fixed in the sand, and the vessel is secure. And which

entereth into that within the veil. The allusion to the anchor here is dropped, and the apostle speaks simply of hope. The "veil" here refers to that which, in the temple, divided the holy from the most holy place. Mt 21:12. The place "within the veil"--the most holy place--was regarded as God's peculiar abode, where he dwelt by the visible symbol of his presence. That holy place was emblematic of heaven; and the idea here is, that the hope of the Christian enters into heaven itself; it takes hold on the throne of God; it is made firm by being fastened there. It is not the hope of future riches, honours, or pleasures in this life--for such a hope would not keep the soul steady; it is the hope of immortal blessedness and purity in the world beyond.

20 whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Whither. To which most holy place--heaven. The forerunner. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. A forerunner προδρομος--is one who goes before others to prepare the way. The word is applied to light troops sent forward as scouts. Diod. Sic. 17.17. Comp. "Wisdom of Solomon," (Apoc.,) xii. 8: "Thou didst send wasps, forerunners of thy host, to destroy them by little and little." The meaning here is, that Jesus went first into the heavenly sanctuary. He led the way. He has gone there on our account, to prepare a place for us, Jn 14:3. Having such a friend and advocate there, we should be firm in the hope of eternal life; and, amidst the storms and tempests around us, we should be calm. Made an High Priest for ever. Heb 5:6; Heb 5:10/ To illustrate this fact was the object for which this discussion was introduced, and which had been interrupted by the remarks occurring in this chapter on the danger of apostasy. Having warned them of this danger, and exhorted them to go on to make the highest attainments possible in the divine life, the apostle resumes the discussion respecting Melchizedek, and makes the remarks which he intended to make respecting this remarkable man. See Heb 5:11. (g) "the forerunner" Heb 4:14 (h) "Melchisedec" Heb 7:17

Hebrews-7

The Priestly Order of Melchizedek

1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

For this Melchisedec. Heb 5:6. The name, Melehisedek, from which the apostle derives a portion of his argument here, is Hebrew and is correctly explained as meaning king of righteousness--being compounded of two words --king and righteousness. Why this name was given to this man is unknown. Names, however, were frequently given on account of some quality or characteristic of the man. Isa 8:18. This name may have been given on account of his eminent integrity. The apostle calls attention to it Heb 7:2 as a circumstance worthy of notice, that his name, and the name of the city where he reigned, were so appropriate to one who, as a priest, was the predecessor of the Messiah. The account of Melchisedek, which is very brief, occurs in Gen 14:18-20. The name occurs in the Bible only in Gen 14, Ps 110:4, and in this epistle. Nothing else is certainly known of him. Grotius supposes that he is the same man who, in the history of Sanchoniathon, is called συδυκ--Sydyc. It has indeed been made a question by some whether such a person ever actually existed, and consequently whether this be a proper name. But the account in Genesis is as simple an historical record as any other in the Bible. In that account there is no difficulty whatever. It is said simply, that when Abraham was returning from a successful military expedition, this man, who, it seems, was well known, and who was respected as a priest of God, came out to express his approbation of what he had done, and to refresh him with bread and wine. As a tribute of gratitude to him, and as a thank-offering to God, Abraham gave him a tenth part of the spoils which he had taken. Such an occurrence was by no means improbable, nor would it have been attended with any special difficulty if it had not been for the use which the apostle makes of it in this epistle. Yet on no subject has there been a greater

variety of opinion than in regard to this man. The bare recital of the opinions which have been entertained of him would fill a volume. But in a case which seems to be plain, from the Scripture narrative, it is not necessary even to enumerate these opinions. They only serve to show how easy it is for men to mystify a clear statement of history, and how fond they are of finding what is mysterious and marvellous in the plainest narrative of facts. That he was Shem; as the Jews suppose, or that he was the Son of God himself, as many Christian expositors have maintained, there is not the slightest evidence. That the latter opinion is false is perfectly clear; for if he were the Son of God, with what propriety could the apostle say that he "was made like the Son of God," Heb 7:3; that is, like himself; or that Christ was constituted a priest "after the order of Melchisedec;" that is, that he was a type of himself? The most simple and probable opinion is that given by Josephus, that he was a pious Canaanitish prince; a personage eminently endowed by God, and who acted as the priest of his people. That he combined in himself the offices of priest and king furnished to the apostle a beautiful illustration of the offices sustained by the Redeemer, and was, in this respect, perhaps the only one whose history is recorded in the Old Testament who would furnish such an illustration. That his genealogy was not recorded, while that of every other priest mentioned was so careful traced and preserved, furnished another striking illustration. In this respect, like the Son of God, he stood alone. He was not in a line of priests; he was preceded by no one in the sacerdotal office, nor was he followed by any. That he was superior to Abraham, and consequently to all who descended from Abraham; that a tribute was rendered to him by the great ancestor of all the fraternity of Jewish priests, was just an illustration which suited the purpose of Paul. His name, therefore, the place where he reigned, his solitariness, his lone conspicuity in all the past, his dignity, and perhaps the air of mystery thrown over him in the brief history in Genesis, furnished a beautiful and striking illustration of the solitary grandeur, and the inapproachable eminence of the priesthood of the Son of God. There is no evidence that Melchisedek was

designed to be a type of the Messiah, or that Abraham so understood it. Nothing of this kind is affirmed; and how shall we affirm it when the sacred oracles are silent?

King of Salem. Such is the record in Gen 14:18. The word Salem----means, peace; and from this fact the apostle derives his illustration in Heb 7:2. He regards it as a fact worth remarking on, that the name of the place ever which he ruled expressed so strikingly the nature of the kingdom over which the Messiah was placed. In regard to the place here denoted by the name Salem, the almost uniform opinion has been that it was that afterwards known as Jerusalem. The reasons for this opinion are,

(1.) that it is a part of the name Jerusalem itself--the name Jerus, altered from Jebus, having been afterwards added, because it was the residence of the Jebusites.

(2.) The name Salem is itself given to Jerusalem. Ps 86:2: "In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion."

(3.) Jerusalem would be in the direction through which Abraham would naturally pass on his return from the slaughter of the kings. He had pursued them unto Dan, Gen 14:14, and he was returning to Mamre, that is, Hebron, Gen 14:13. On his return, therefore, he would pass in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Rosenmuller, however, supposes that by the name here Jerusalem is not intended, but the whole region occupied by the Jebusites and Hittites, or the royal seat of this region, situated not far from the cities of the plain--the vale of Siddim, where Sodom and Gomorrah were situated. But I see no reason for doubting that the common opinion, that Jerusalem is intended, is correct. That place was favourably situated for a capital of a nation or tribe; was easily fortified; and would be likely to be early selected as a royal residence,

Priest of the most high God. This is the account which is given of him in Gen 14:18. The leading office of priest was to offer sacrifice. This duty was probably first performed by the father of the family, (comp. Job 1:5; see also Gen 8:20, 22:2; and when he was dead it devolved on the eldest son. It would seem, also, that in the early ages, among all nations whose records have reached us, the office of priest and king were united in the same person. It was long before it was found that the interests of religion would be promoted by having the office of priest pertain to an order of men set apart for this special work, That Melchisedek, who was a king, should also be a priest, was not, therefore, remarkable. The only thing remarkable is, that he should have been a priest of the true God. In what way he became acquainted with Him, is wholly unknown. It may have been by tradition preserved from the times of Noah, as it is possible that the arrival of Abraham in that land may have been in some way the means of acquainting him with the existence and character of JEHOVAH. The fact shows, at least, that the knowledge of the true God was not extinct in the world.

Who met Abraham. He came out to meet him, and brought with him bread and wine. Why he did this, is not mentioned. It was probably as an expression of gratitude to Abraham for having freed the country from oppressive and troublesome invaders, and in order to furnish refreshments to the party which Abraham headed, who had become weary and exhausted with the pursuit. There is not the slightest evidence that the bread and wine which he brought forth was designed to typify the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as has been sometimes supposed. Comp. Bush on Gen 14:18. What did he know of this ordinance? And why should we resort to such a supposition, when the whole case may be met by a simple reference to the ancient rites of hospitality, and by the fact that the deliverance of the country by Abraham from a grievous invasion made some expression of gratitude on the part of this pious king in the highest degree proper?

Returning from the slaughter of the kings. Amraphel, king of Shiner, Arioch, king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and "Tidal, king of nations," who had invaded the valley where Sodom and Gomorrah were, and had departed with a great amount of booty. Those kings Abraham had pursued beyond Dan, and to the neighbourhood of Damascus, and had smitten them, and recovered the spoil.

And blessed him. For the important service which he had rendered in taking vengeance on these invaders; in freeing the land from the apprehension of being invaded again; and in recovering the valuable booty which they had taken away. From Heb 7:6,7, it appears that this act of blessing was regarded as that of one who was superior to Abraham: that is, he blessed him as a priest and a king. As such he was superior in rank to Abraham, who never claimed the title of king, and who is not spoken of as a priest.

2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all. That is, a tenth part of all the spoils which he had taken, Gen 14:20; thus acknowledging that, in dignity of office, Melchisedek was greatly his superior, Heb 7:4,6,8. This does not appear to have been, on the part of Abraham, so much designed as a present to Melchisedek personally, as an act of pious thankfulness to God. He doubtless recognised in Melchisedek one who was a minister of God, and to him, as such, he devoted the tenth of all which he had taken, as a proper acknowledgment of the goodness of God and of his claims. From this it is evident that the propriety of devoting a tenth part of what was possessed to God, was regarded as a duty before the appointment of the Levitical law. Some expression of this kind is obviously demanded, and piety seems early to have fixed on the tenth part as being no more than a proper proportion to consecrate to the service of religion, for the propriety of the use which the apostle makes of this fact, Heb 7:4, Heb 7:6; Heb 7:8.

First being. The first idea in the interpretation of his name and office, etc. First being mentioned as king of righteousness, and then as king of peace.

King of righteousness. The literal translation of the name Melchisedek. Heb 7:1 The argument implied in this by the remarks of the apostle is, that he bore a name which made him a proper emblem of the Messiah. There was a propriety that one in whose "order" the Messiah was to be found should have such a name. It would be exactly descriptive of him; and it was worthy of observation, that he of whose "order" it was said the Messiah would be should have had such a name. Paul does not say that this name was given to him with any such reference, or that it was designed to be symbolical of what the Messiah would be; but that there was a remarkable coincidence; that it was a fact which was worth at least a passing thought. This is a kind of remark that might occur to any one to make, and where the slight use which Paul makes of it would not be improper anywhere; but it cannot be denied, that to one accustomed to the Jewish mode of reasoning--accustomed to dwell much on hidden meanings, and to trace out concealed analogies--it would be much more obvious and striking than it is with us. We are to place ourselves in the situation of those to whom Paul wrote--trained up with Jewish feelings, and Jewish modes of thought--and to ask how this would strike their minds. And this is no more unreasonable than it would be in interpreting a Greek classic, or a work of a Hindoo philosopher, that we should endeavour to place ourselves in the situation of the writer, and of those for whom he wrote, and ascertain what ideas would be conveyed to them by certain expressions. It is not meant by these observations that there was really no intrinsic force in what Paul here said respecting the import of the name. There was force; and all the use which he makes of it is proper. His meaning appears to be merely that it was a fact worthy of remark, that the name had a meaning which corresponded so entirely with the character of Him who was to be a high priest of the same "order."

And after that. He is mentioned after that with another appellation equally significant.

King of peace. A literal translation of the appellation "king of Salem," Heb 7:1 The idea of Paul is, that it was worthy of remark that the appellation which he bore was appropriate to one whose ministry, it was said, the priesthood of the Messiah would resemble.

3 without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Without father. The phrase without father απατωρ --means, literally, one who has no father; one who has lost his father; one who is an orphan. Then it denotes one who is born after the death of his father; then one whose father is unknown--spurious. Passow. The word occurs often in these senses in the classic writers, for numerous examples of which the reader may consult Wetstein, in loc. It is morally certain, however, that the apostle did not use the word here in either of these senses, for there is no evidence that Melchizedek was fatherless in any of these respects. It was very important, in the estimation of the Jews, that the line of their priesthood should be carefully kept; that their genealogies should be accurately marked and preserved; and that their direct descent from Aaron should be susceptible of easy and certain proof. But the apostle says that there was no such genealogical table in regard to Melchizedek. There was no record made of the name either of his father, his mother, or any of his posterity. He stood alone. It is simply said that such a man came out to meet Abraham--and that is the first and the last which we hear of him and of his family. Now, says the apostle, it is distinctly said Ps 110:4 that the Messiah was to be a priest according to his order: and in this respect there is a remarkable resemblance, so far as the point of his being a priest--which was the point under discussion--was concerned. The Messiah thus, as a priest, STOOD ALONE. His name does not appear in the line of priests. He pertained to another tribe, Heb 7:14. No one of his ancestors is mentioned as a priest; and: as a priest he has no

descendants and no followers. He has a lonely conspicuity similar to that of Melchisedek; a standing unlike that of any other priest. This should not, therefore, be construed as meaning that the genealogy of Christ could not be traced out--which is not true, for Mt 1 and Lk 3 have carefully preserved it; but that he had no genealogical record as a priest. As the reasoning of the apostle pertains to this point only, it would be unfair to construe it as implying that the Messiah was to stand unconnected with any ancestor, or that his genealogy would be unknown. The meaning of the word rendered "without father" here is, therefore, one the name of whose father is not recorded in the Hebrew genealogies.

Without mother. The name of whose mother is unknown, or is not recorded in the Hebrew genealogical tables. Philo calls Sarah-- αμητορα--without mother, probably because her mother is not mentioned in the sacred records. The Syriac has given the correct view of the meaning of the apostle. In that version it is, "Of whom neither the father nor mother are recorded in the genealogies." The meaning here is not that Melchisedek was of low and obscure origin, as the terms "without father and without mother" often signify in the classic writers, and in Arabic, (comp. Wetstein ;) for there is no reason to doubt that Melchisedek had an ancestry as honourable as other kings and priests of his time. The simple thought is, that the name of his ancestry does not appear in any record of those in the priestly office. Without descent, Marg, pedigree. The Greek word αγενεαλογητος -- means, without genealogy; whose descent is unknown. He is merely mentioned himself, and nothing is said of his family or of his posterity. Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. This is a much more difficult expression than any of the others respecting Melchizedek. The obvious meaning of the phrase is, that, in the records of Moses, neither the beginning nor the close of his life is mentioned. It is not said when he was born, or when he died; nor is it said that he was born, or that he died. The apostle adverts to this particularly, because it was so unusual in the records of Moses, who is in general so careful to mention the

birth and death of the individuals whose lives he mentions. Under the Mosaic dispensation everything respecting the duration of the sacerdotal office was determined accurately by the law. In the time of Moses, and by his arrangement, the Levites were required to serve from the age of thirty to fifty, Nu 4:3,23,36,43,47; Nu 8:24,26. After the age of fifty, they were released from the more arduous and severe duties of their office. In later periods of the Jewish history they commenced their duties at the age of twenty, 1Chr 23:24,27. The priests also, and the high priest, entered on their office at thirty years of age, though it is not supposed that they retired from it at any particular period of life. The idea of the apostle here is, that nothing of this kind occurs in regard to Melchizedek. No period is mentioned when he entered on his office; none when he retired from it. From anything that appears in the sacred record it might be perpetual--though Paul evidently did not mean to be understood as saying that it was so. It cannot be that he meant to say that Melehizedek had no beginning of days literally, that is, that he was from eternity; or that he had no end of life literally, that is, that he would exist for ever--for this would be to make him equal with God. The expression used must be interpreted according to the matter under discussion, and that was the office of Melchizedek as a priest. Of that no beginning is mentioned, and no end. That this is the meaning of Paul there can be no doubt; but there is a much more difficult question about the force and pertinency of this reasoning--about the use which he means to make of this fact, and the strength of the argument which he here designs to employ. This inquiry cannot easily be settled. It may be admitted, undoubtedly, that it would strike a Jew with much more force than it would any other person; and to see its pertinency we ought to be able to place ourselves in their condition, and to transfer to ourselves, as far as possible, their state of feeling. It was mentioned in Ps 110:4, that the Messiah was to be a "priest after the order of Melchizedek." It was natural, then, to turn to the only record which existed of him--the very brief narrative in Gen 14. There the account is simple and plain--that he was a pious Canaanitish king, who officiated

as a priest. In what point then, it would be asked, was the Messiah to resemble him? In his personal character; his office; his rank; or in what he did? It would be natural, then, to run out the parallel, and seize upon the points in which Melchizedek differed from the Jewish priests which would be suggested on reading that account for it was undoubtedly in those points that the resemblance between Christ and Melchizedek was to consist. Here the record was to be the only guide, and the points in which he differed from the Jewish priesthood, according to the record, were such as these.

(1.) That there is no account of his ancestry as a priest--neither father nor mother being mentioned--as was indispensable in the records of the Levitical priesthood.

(2.) There was no account of any descendants in his office, and no reason to believe that he had any, and he thus stood alone.

(3.) There was no account of the commencement or close of his office as a priest, but, so far as the record goes, it is just as it would have been if his priesthood had neither beginning nor end. It was inevitable, therefore, that those who read the Psalm, and compared it with the account in Gen 14, should come to the conclusion that the Messiah was to resemble Melchizedek in some such points as these--for these are the points in which he differed from the Levitical priesthood; and to run out these points of comparison is all that the apostle has done here. It is just what would be done by any Jew, or indeed by any other man; and the reasoning grew directly out of the two accounts in the Old Testament. It is not, then, quibble or quirk --it is sound reasoning, based on these two points:

(1) that it was said in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek; and

(2) that the only points, according to the record, in which there was anything peculiar about the priesthood of Melchizedek, or in which he differed from the Levitical priesthood, were such

as those which Paul specifies, he reasons from the record; and though there is, as was natural, something of a Jewish cast about it, yet it was the only kind of reasoning that was possible in the case.

But made like. The word here used means, to be made like, to be made to resemble; and then to be like, to be compared with. Our translation seems to imply that there was a Divine agency or intention by which Melchizedek was made to resemble the Son of God; but this does not seem to be the idea of the apostle. In the Psalm it is said that the Messiah would resemble Melchizedek in his priestly office, and this is doubtless the idea here. Paul is seeking to illustrate the nature and perpetuity of the office of the Messiah by comparing it with that of Melchizedek. Hence he pursues the idea of this resemblance; and the true sense of the word used here is, "he was like, or he resembled the Son of God." So Tindal and Coverdale render it, "is likened unto the Son of God." The points of resemblance are those which have been already suggested:

(1) in the name--king of righteousness, and king of peace;

(2) in the fact that he had no ancestors or successors in the priestly office;

(3) that he was, according to the record, a perpetual priest--there being no account of his death; and perhaps

(4) that he united in himself the office of king and priest. It may be added, that the expression here, "was made like unto the Son of God," proves that he was not himself the Son of God, as many have supposed. How could he be "made like" himself? How could a comparison be formally made between Christ and himself?

Abideth a priest continually. That is, as far as the record in Genesis goes--for it was according to this record that Paul was reasoning. This clause is connected with Heb 7:1; and, the

intermediate statements are of the nature of a parenthesis, containing important suggestions respecting the character of Melchizedek, which would be useful in preparing the readers for the argument which the apostle proposed to draw from his rank and character. The meaning is, that there is no account of his death, or of his ceasing to exercise the priestly office; and in this respect he may be compared with the Lord Jesus. All other priests cease to exercise their office by death, Heb 7:23; but of the death of Melchizedek there is no mention. It must have been true that the priesthood of Melchizedek terminated at his death; and it will be also true that that of Christ will cease when his Church shall have been redeemed, and when he shall have given up the mediatorial kingdom to the rather, 1Cor 15:25-28. The expression, "abideth a priest continually," therefore, is equivalent to saying that he had a perpetual priesthood, in contradistinction from those whose office terminated at a definite period, or whose office passed over into the hands of others. Heb 7:24.

4 Now consider how great this man *was,* unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Now consider how great this man was. The object of the apostle was to exalt the rank and dignity of Melchizedek. The Jews had a profound veneration for Abraham; and if it could be shown that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, then it would be easy to demonstrate the superiority of Christ, as a priest, to all who descended from Abraham. Accordingly he argues, that he to whom even the patriarch Abraham showed so much respect, must have had an exalted rank. Abraham, according to the views of the East, the illustrious ancestor of the Jewish nation, was regarded as superior to any of his posterity, and of course was to be considered as of higher rank and dignity than the Levitical priests, who were descended from him. Even the patriarch Abraham. One so great as he is acknowledged to have been. On the word patriarch, Acts 2:29. It occurs only in Acts 2:29, 7:8,9, and in this place. Gave the tenth of the spoils. Heb 7:2 The argument here is, that Abraham acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek by thus devoting the usual part of the spoils of war, or of what

was possessed, to God by his hands, as the priest of the Most High. Instead of making a direct consecration by himself, he brought them to him as a minister of religion, and recognised in him one who had a higher official standing in the matter of religion than himself. The Greek word rendered spoils--ακροθινιον--means, literally, the top of the heap, from ακρον, top, and θιν, heap. The Greeks were accustomed, after a battle, to collect the spoils together, and throw them into a pile, and then, before they were distributed, to take off a portion from the top, and devote it to the gods, Xen. Cyro. vii. 6, 36; Herod. i. 86, 90; viii. 121, 122; Dion. Hal. ii. In like manner it was customary to place the harvest in a heap; and, as the first thing, to take off a portion from the top to consecrate as a thank-offering to God. The word then came to denote the first-fruits which were offered to God, and then the best of the spoils of battle. It has that sense here, and denotes the spoils or plunder which Abraham had taken of the discomfited kings.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

And verily they that are of the sons of Levi. The meaning of this verse is, that the Levitical priests had a right to receive tithes of their brethren, but still that they were inferior to Melchizedek. The apostle admits that their superiority to the rest of the people was shown by the fact that they had a right to require of them the tenth part of the productions of the land for their maintenance, and for the support of religion. But still he says that their inferiority to Melchizedek, and consequently to Christ as a priest, was shown by the fact that the illustrious ancestor of all the Jewish people, including the priests as well as others, had confessed his inferiority to Melchizedek by paying him tithes. Who receive the office of the priesthood. Not all the descendants of Levi were priests. The apostle, therefore, specifies particularly those who "received this office," as being those whom he specially designed, and as those whose inferiority to Christ as a priest it was his object to show. Have a commandment to take tithes. Have by the law a

commission, or a right to exact tithes of the people, De 14:22,27-29.

6 but he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of
Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

But he whose descent is not counted from them. Melchizedek. The word descent is, in the margin, pedigree. The meaning is, that he was not in the same genealogy--μηγενεαλογουμενος--he was not of the order of Levitical priests. That Melchizedek is meant there can be no doubt; at the same time, also, the thought is presented with prominence, on which Paul so much insists, that he was of a different order from the Levitical priesthood. And blessed him. Blessed him as a priest of God; blessed him in such a manner as to imply acknowledged superiority. See Heb 7:1. That had the promises. The promise that he should have a numerous posterity; that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. See Heb 6:12-16.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

And without all contradiction. It is an admitted principle; a point about which there can be no dispute. The less is blessed of the better. The act of pronouncing a blessing is understood to imply superiority of rank, age, or station. So when a father lays his hand on his children and blesses them, it is understood to be the act of one superior in age, venerableness, and authority; when a prophet pronounced a blessing on the people, the same thing was understood; and the same is true, also, when a minister of religion pronounces a blessing on a congregation. It is the act of one who is understood to sustain an office above the people on whom the blessing is pronounced. This was understood of the Saviour when parents brought their children to him to lay his hands on them and bless them, Mt 19:13; and the same was true of Jacob, when flying he blessed the sons of Joseph, Heb 11:21, Gen 48:5-20. The word less here means the one of inferior rank; who is less in office, honour, or age. It does not imply inferiority of moral or religious character, for this is not the point under consideration. The word better means one who is of superior office or rank, not one who has necessarily a purer or holier

character. That Melchizedek was thus superior to Abraham, Paul says, is implied by the very declaration that he "blessed him." It is also seen to be true by the whole comparison. Abraham was a petty prince; an Emir--the head of a company of Nomades, or migratory shepherds, having, it is true, a large number of dependents, but still not having the rank here given to Melchizedek. Though called a prophet, Gen 20:7, yet he is nowhere called either a priest or a king. In these respects, it was undoubted that he was inferior to Melchizedek.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth them,*
of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

And here men that die receive tithes. Another point showing the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood. They who thus received tithes, though by the right to do this they asserted a superiority over their brethren, were mortal. Like others, they would soon die; and in regard to the most essential things they were on a level with their brethren. They had no exemption from sickness, affliction, or bereavement, and death came to them with just as much certainty as he approached other men. The meaning of this is, that they are mortal like their brethren, and the design is to show the inferiority of their office by this fact. Its obvious and natural signification, in the apprehension of the great mass of readers, would not be, as the meaning has been supposed to be, that it refers "to the brief and mutable condition of the Levitical priesthood." See Stuart, in loco. Such an interpretation would not occur to any one if it were not to avoid the difficulty existing in the correlative member of the verse, where it is said of Melchizedek that "he liveth." But is the difficulty avoided then? Is it not as difficult to understand what is meant by his having an immutable and perpetual priesthood, as it is to know what is meant by his not dying literally ? Is the one any more true than the other whatever difficulties, therefore, there may be, we are bound to adhere to the obvious sense of the expression here; a sense which furnishes also a just and forcible ground of comparison. It seems to me, therefore, that the simple meaning of this passage is, that under the Levitical economy those who received tithes were mortal, and were thus placed in strong contrast with him

of whom it was said, "he liveth." Thus they were inferior to him--as a mortal is inferior to one who does not die; and thus also they must he inferior to him who was made a priest after the "order" of him who thus "lived."

But there. In contrast with "here" in the same verse. The reference here is to the account of Melchizedek: "Here" in the Levitical economy, men received tithes who are mortal; "there," in the account of Melchizedek, the case is different.

He receiveth them. Melchizedek -- for so the connexion evidently demands.

Of whom it is witnessed. Of whom the record is. There is not, in Genesis, indeed any direct record that he lives, but there is the absence of a record that he died; and this seems to have been regarded as, in fact, a record of permanency in the office, or as having an office which did not pass over to successors by the death of the then incumbent.

That he liveth. This is an exceedingly difficult expression, and one which has always greatly perplexed commentators. The fair and obvious meaning is, that all the record we have of Melchizedek is, that he was "alive;" or, as Grotius says, the record is merely that he lived. We have no mention of his death, from anything that the record shows, it might appear that he continued to live on, and did not die. Arguing from the record, therefore, there is a strong contrast between him and the Levitical priests, all of whom we know are mortal, Heb 7:23. The apostle is desirous of making out a contrast between them and the priesthood of Christ, on this point, among others; and in doing this he appeals to the record in the Old Testament, and says that there was a case which furnished an intimation that the priestly office of the Messiah was not to pass over from him to others by death. That case was, that he was expressly compared Ps 110:4 with Melchizedek, and that in the account of Melchizedek there was no record of his death. As to the force of this argument, it must be admitted that it would strike

a Jew more impressively than it does most readers now; and it may not be improbable that the apostle was reasoning from some interpretation of the passages in Gen 14 and Ps 110, which was then prevalent, and which would then be conceded on all hands to be correct. If this was the admitted interpretation, and if there is no equivocation, or mere trick in the reasoning--as there cannot be shown to be--why should we not allow to the Jew a peculiarity of reasoning as we do to all other people? There are modes of reasoning and illustration in all nations, in all societies, and in all professions, which do not strike others as very forcible. The ancient philosophers had methods of reasoning which now seem weak to us; the lawyer often argues in a way which appears to be a mere quirk or quibble, and so the lecturer in science sometimes reasons. The cause of all this may not be always that there is real quibble or quirk, in the mode of argumentation, but that he who reasons in this manner has in his view certain points which he regards as undisputed which do not appear so to us; or that he argues from what is admitted in the profession, or in the school where he is taught, which are not understood by those whom he addresses. To this should be added also the consideration, that Paul had a constant reference to the Messiah, and that it is possible that in his mind there was here a transition from the type to the antitype, and that the language which he uses may be stronger than if he had been speaking of the mere record of Melchizedek if he had found it standing by itself. Still his reasoning turns mainly on the fact, that in the case of Melchizedek there was no one who had preceded him in that office, and that he had no successor, and, in regard to the matter in hand, it was all one as if he had been a perpetual priest, or had continued still alive.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in
Abraham.

And as I may so say. So to speak--ωςεποςειπειν. For numerous examples in the classic writers of this expression, see Wetstein, in loc. It is used precisely as it is with us when we say, "so to speak," or, "if I may be allowed the

expression." It is employed when what is said is not strictly and literally true, but when it amounts to the same thing, or when about the same idea is conveyed. "It is a softening down of an expression which a writer supposes his readers may deem too strong, or which may have the appearance of excess or severity. It amounts to an indirect apology for employing an unusual or unexpected assertion or phrase." Prof. Stuart. Here Paul could not mean that Levi had actually paid tithes in Abraham--for he had not then an existence; or that Abraham was his representative--for there had been no appointment of Abraham to act in that capacity by Levi; or that the act of Abraham was imputed or reckoned to Abraham--for that was not true, and would not have been pertinent to the case if it were so. But it means, that in the circumstances of the case, the same thing occurred in regard to the superiority of Melchizedek, and the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood, as if Levi had been present with Abraham, and had himself actually paid tithes on that occasion. This was so because Abraham was the distinguished ancestor of Levi; and when an ancestor has done an act implying inferiority of rank to another, we feel as if the whole family, or all the descendants, by that act recognised the inferiority, unless something occurs to change the relative rank of the persons. Here nothing indicating any such change had occurred. Melchizedek had no descendants of which mention is made, and the act of Abraham, as the head of the Hebrew race, stood therefore as if it were the act of all who descended from him.

Levi. The ancestor of the whole Levitical priesthood, and from whom they received their name. He was the third son of Jacob and Leah, and was born in Mesopotamia. On account of the conduct of Simeon and Levi towards Shechem, for the manner in which he had treated their sister Dinah, Gen 34:25, and which Jacob characterized as "cruelty," Gen 49:5,6, Jacob said that they should be "scattered in Israel," Gen 49:7. Afterwards the whole tribe of Levi was chosen by God to execute the various functions of the priesthood, and were

"scattered" over the land, having no inheritance of their own, but deriving their subsistence from the offerings of the people. Nu 3:6, seq. Levi is here spoken of as the ancestor of the tribe, or collectively to denote the entire Jewish priesthood.

Who receiveth tithes. That is, his descendants, the priests and Levites, receive tithes.

Payed tithes in Abraham. It is the same as if he had payed tithes in or by Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

For he was yet in the loins of his father. Abraham is here called the father of Levi, by a common use of the word, referring to a more remote ancestor than the literal father. The meaning of the apostle is that he was even then, in a certain sense, in the loins of Abraham, when Melchizedek met him; or it was all the same as if he were there, and had then an existence. The relation which subsisted between him and Abraham, in the circumstances of the case, implied the same thing as if he had then been born, and had acted for himself by paying tithes. Instances of this occur constantly. A father sells a farm, to which his son would be heir, and it is the same as if the son had sold it. He has no more control over it than if he had been present and disposed of it himself. A father acknowledges fealty to a government for a certain title or property which is to descend to his heirs, and it is all one as if the heir had himself done it; and it is not improper to say that it is the same as if he had been there and acted for himself. For some valuable remarks on the nature of the reasoning here employed, see Stuart on the Hebrews, Eursus xiv. The reasoning here is, indeed, especially such as would be fitted to impress a Jewish mind, and perhaps more forcibly than it does ours. The Jews valued themselves on the dignity and honour of the Levitical priesthood, and it was important to show them on their own principles, and according to their

own sacred writings, that the great ancestor of all the Levitical community had himself acknowledged his inferiority to one who was declared also in their own writings Ps 110 to be like the Messiah, or who was of the same "order." At the same time, the reasoning concedes nothing false, and conveys no wrong impression. It is not mere fancy or accommodation, nor is it framed on allegory or cabalistic principles. It is founded in truth, and such as might be used anywhere, where regard was shown to pedigree, or respect was claimed on account of the illustrious deeds of an ancestor. It would be regarded as sound reasoning in a country like England, where titles and ranks are recognised, and where various orders of nobility exist. The fact that a remote ancestor had done homage or fealty to the ancestor of another class of titled birth would be regarded as proof of acknowledged inferiority in the family, and might be used with force and propriety in an argument. Paul has done no more than this.

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood. As the Jews supposed. They were accustomed to regard the system as perfect, It was an appointment of God, and they were tenacious of the opinion that it was to be permanent, and that it needed no change. But Paul says that this could not be. Even from their own Scriptures it was apparent that a priest was to arise of another order, and of a more permanent character; and this, he says, was full proof that there was defect of some kind in the previous order. What this defect was he does not here specify, but the subsequent reasoning shows that it was in such points as these--that it was not permanent; that it could not make the worshippers perfect; that the blood which they offered in sacrifice could not take away sin, and could not render those who offered it holy. Comp. Heb 7:19,23,24, Heb 10:1-4. For under it the people received the law. This assertion seems necessary in order to establish the point maintained in Heb

7:12, that if the priesthood is changed there must be also a change of the law. In order to this it was necessary to admit that the law was received under that economy, and that it was a part of it, so that the change of one involved also the change of the other. It was not strictly true that the whole law was given after the various orders of Levitical priests were established--for the law on Sinai, and several other laws were given before that distinct arrangement was made; but it was true

(1) that a considerable part of the laws of Moses were given under that arrangement; and

(2) that the whole of the ceremonial observances was connected with that. They were parts of one system, and mutually dependent on each other. This is all that the argument demands. What further need was there, etc. "If that system would lead to perfection; if it was sufficient to make the conscience pure, and to remove sin, then there was no necessity of any other. Yet the Scriptures have declared that there would be another Of a different order, implying that there was some defect in the former." This reasoning is founded on the fact that there was an express prediction of the coming of a priest of a different "order," Ps 110:4, and that this fact implied that there was some deficiency in the former arrangement. To this reasoning it is impossible to conceive that there can be any objection.

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For the priesthood being changed. According to the prediction in Ps 110 that it would be. When that occurs, the consequence specified will also follow. There is made of necessity a change also of the law. The law so far as it grew out of that, or was dependent on it. The connexion requires us to understand it only of the law so far as it was connected with the Levitical priesthood. This could not apply to the ten commandments--for they were given before the institution of the priesthood; nor

could it apply to any other part of the moral law, for that was not dependent on the appointment of the Levitical priests. But the meaning is, that since a large number of laws--constituting a code of considerable extent and importance--was given for the regulation of the priesthood, and in reference to the rites of religion, which they were to observe or superintend, it followed that when their office was superseded by one of a wholly different order, the law which had regulated them vanished also, or ceased to be binding. This was a very important point in the introduction of Christianity, and hence it is that it is so often insisted on in the writings of Paul. The argument to show that there had been a change or transfer of the priestly office, he proceeds to establish in the sequel.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For he of whom these things are spoken. The Lord Jesus, the Messiah, to whom they had reference. The things here spoken of pertain to his office as priest; his being of the order of Melchizedek. The apostle here assumes it as a point concerning which there could be no dispute, that these things referred to the Lord Jesus. Those whom he addressed would not be disposed to call this in question, and his argument had conducted him to this conclusion. Pertaineth to another tribe. To the tribe of Judah, Heb 7:14. Of which no man gave attendance at the altar. The priestly office pertained only to the tribe of Levi. No one of the tribe of Judah had any part in the performance of the duties of that office. This was settled by the Jewish law.

In the foregoing verses, our apostle had asserted the change of the Priesthood, and there with the changing of the law. In these verses he proves it by the translation of the Priesthood, and therewith the changing of the law. In these verses he proves it by the translation of the Priesthood to another tribe; namely, from Levi to Judah. The Levitical Priesthood was confined to one certain tribe, that of Levi, and to one certain family, that of Aaron:

Whence it follows, that the tribe being changed, and God having instituted a Priest of another tribe, the Priesthood must be changed also. Now it being evident, that Christ sprang not of the Tribe of Levi, but out of Judah, the apostle from the changing of the tribe, strongly infers the change of the Priesthood.

Note here, 1. How it was a fruit of the manifold wisdom of God, and a very great mercy and favour to give the law, but a far greater to take it away.

2. If under the law, the whole worship of God did so depend on the Priesthood, that that failing, the whole worship was to cease, as being no more acceptable to God, how much more will all worship under the New Testament be rejected by him, if there be not a due regard therein to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great and only High Priest of his church.

14 For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe
Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah. It is well known; it cannot be a matter of dispute. About the fact that the Lord Jesus was of the tribe of Judah there could be no doubt. Comp. Mt 1:3. But probably the apostle means here to refer to more than that simple fact. It was a doctrine of the Old Testament, and was admitted by the Jews, that the Messiah was to be of that tribe. See Gen 49:10; Isa 11:1, Mic 5:2, Mt 11:6, This was an additional consideration to show that there was to be a change of some kind in the office of the priesthood, since it was declared Ps 110 that the Messiah was to be a priest. The fact that the Messiah is to be of the tribe of Judah is still admitted by the Jews. As their distinction of tribes now, however, is broken up, and as it is impossible for them to tell who belongs to the tribe of Judah, it is held by them that when he comes this-will be made known by miracle. Of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. That is, in the

Mosaic laws respecting the office of priest this tribe is not mentioned. All the arrangements pertain to the tribe of Judah.

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest,

Verse 15. And it is yet far more evident. Not that our Lord would spring out of Judah, but the point which he was endeavouring to establish; that there must be a change of the priesthood, was rendered still more evident from another consideration. A strong proof of the necessity of such a change of the priesthood was furnished from the fact that the Messiah was to be of the tribe of Judah; but a much stronger because, as a priest, he was to be of the order of Melchizedek--that is, he was of the same rank with one who did not even belong to that tribe. After the similitude, Resembling; that is, he was to be of the order of Melchizedek.

Who is made. That is, the other priest is made--to wit, the Messiah. He was made a priest by a peculiar law. Not after the law of a carnal commandment. Not according to the law of a commandment pertaining to the flesh. The word carnal means fleshly; and the idea is, that the law under which the priests of the old dispensation were made was external, rather than spiritual; it related more to outward observances than to the keeping of the heart. That this was the nature of the Mosaic ritual in the main, it was impossible to doubt, and the apostle proceeds to argue from this undeniable truth. But after the power of an endless life. By an authority of endless duration, That is, it was not concerned mainly with outward observances, and did not pass over from one to another by death, but was unchanging in its character, and spiritual in its nature. It was enduring and perpetual as a priesthood, and was thus far exalted above the service performed by the priests under the former dispensation.

16 who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

For there is verily a disannulling. A setting aside. The law which existed before in regard to the priesthood becomes now abrogated, in consequence of the change which has been made in the priesthood. Heb 7:12. Of the commandment. Relating to the office of priest, or to the ceremonial rites in general. This does not refer to the moral law, as if that was abrogated, for

(1) the reasoning of the apostle does not pertain to that, and

(2) that law cannot be abrogated. It grows out of the nature of things, and must be perpetual and universal. Going before. Going before the Christian dispensation, and introducing it. For the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. That is, it was not adapted to save man; it had not power to accomplish what was necessary to be done in human salvation. It answered the end for which it was designed--that of introducing a more perfect plan, and then vanished as a matter of course. It did not expiate guilt; it did not give peace to the conscience; it did not produce perfection, (Heb 7:11,) and therefore it gave place to a better system.

For the law made nothing perfect. The Levitical, ceremonial law. It did not produce a perfect state; it did not do what was desirable to be done for a sinner. Heb 8:11. That law, as such, did not reconcile man to God; it did not make an atonement; it did not put away guilt; in one word, it did not restore things to the condition in which they were before the law was broken and man became a sinner. If man were saved under that system--as many undoubtedly were--it was not in virtue of any intrinsic efficacy which it possessed, but in virtue of that great Sacrifice which it typified. But the bringing in of a better hope did. Marg. "But it was." The correct rendering is, probably, "but there is the bringing in of a better hope by which we have access to God." The law could not effect this. It left the conscience guilty, and sin unexpiated. But there is

now the introduction of a better system by which we can approach a reconciled God. The "better hope" here refers to the more sure and certain expectation of heaven introduced by the gospel. There is a better foundation for hope; a more certain way of obtaining the Divine favour than the law could furnish. By the which. By which better hope; that is, by means of the ground of hope furnished by the gospel--to wit, that God is now reconciled, and that we can approach him with the assurance that he is ready to save us. We draw nigh unto God. We have access to him. Rom 5:1; Rom 5:2.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did;* by the which we draw nigh unto God.

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest:*

21 (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek:)

For those priests were made without an oath. The Levitical priests were set apart and consecrated without their office being confirmed to them by an oath on the part of God. They received it by regular descent, and when they arrived at a suitable age they entered on it of course. Jesus received his office by special appointment, and it was secured to him by an oath. The word rendered "oath" is, in the margin, "swearing of an oath". This is the proper meaning of the Greek word, but the sense is not materially varied. But this with an oath. This priest, the Lord Jesus, became a priest in virtue of an oath. The Lord sware. Heb 6:3. The reference here is to Ps 110:4 "The Lord hath sworn." and will not repent. That is, will not regret, or will not alter his mind through regret--for this is the meaning of the Greek word.

22 by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

By so much. Inasmuch as an oath is more solemn than a mere appointment. The meaning is, that there is all the additional security in the suretyship of Jesus which arises from the solemnity of an oath. It is not implied that God would not be true to his mere promise, but the argument here is derived from the custom of speaking among men. An oath is regarded

as much more sacred and binding than a mere promise; and the fact that God has sworn in a given case furnishes the highest security that what he has promised will be performed. Was Jesus made a surety. The word surety εγγυος-- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, nor is it found in the Septuagint. It properly means, a bondsman; one who pledges his name, property, or influence, that a certain thing shall be done. When a contract is made, a debt contracted, or a note given, a friend often becomes the security in the case, and is himself responsible if the terms of the contract are not complied with. In the case of the new covenant between God and man, Jesus is the "security," or the bondsman. But of what, and to whom, is he the surety? It cannot be that he is a bondsman for God that he will maintain the covenant, and be true to the promise which he makes, as Crellius supposes, for we need no suck "security" of the Divine faithfulness and veracity. It cannot be that he becomes responsible for the Divine conduct in any way--- for no such responsibility is needed or possible. But it must mean, that he is the security or bondsman on the part of man; He is the pledge that we shall be saved. He becomes responsible, so to speak, to law and justice, that no injury shall be done by our salvation, though we are sinners. He is not a security that we shall be saved, at any rate, without holiness, repentance, faith, or true religions for he never could enter into a suretyship of that kind; but his suretyship extends to this point, that the law shall be honoured; that all its demands shall be met; that we may be saved though we have violated it, and that its terrific penalty shall not fall upon us. The case is this:-- A sinner becomes a true penitent, and enters heaven. It might be said that he does this over a broken law; that God treats the good and bad alike, and that no respect has been paid to the law or the penalty in his salvation. Here the great Surety comes in, and says that it is not so. He has become responsible for this; he the surety, the pledge, that all proper honour shall be paid to justice, and that the same good effects shall ensue as if the penalty of the law had been fully borne. He himself has died to honour the law, and to open a way by which its penalty may be fully

remitted consistently with justice, and he becomes the everlasting pledge or security to law, to justice, to the universe, that no injury shall result from the pardon and salvation of the sinner. According to this view, no man can rely on the suretyship of Jesus but he who expects salvation on the terms of the gospel. The suretyship is not at all that he shall be saved in his sins, or that he shall enter heaven no matter what life he leads; it is only that if he believes, repents, and is saved, no injury shall be clone to the universe, no dishonour to the law. For this the Lord Jesus is responsible. Of a better testament. Rather, "of a better covenant." The former covenant, was that which God made with his people under the Mosaic dispensation: the new covenant is that made by means of Christ. This is better, because (1) the terms are more simple and easy; (2) the observances and rites are much less onerous and hard; (3) it relates to all men, not being confined to the Jewish people; (4) it is now sure. The former was administered through the instrumentality of the Levitical priesthood, this by the Son of God; that was transitory and changing, this is permanent and eternal.

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 but this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Wherefore he is able also. As he ever lives, and ever intercedes, he has power to save. He does not begin the work of salvation, and then relinquish it by reason of death, but he lives on as long as it is necessary that anything should be done for the salvation of his people. We need a Saviour who has power and Christ has shown that he has all the power which is needful to rescue man from eternal death. To the uttermost. This does not mean simply for ever--but that he has power to save them so that their salvation shall be complete ειςτοπαντελες. He does not abandon the work midway; he does not begin a work which he is unable to finish. He can aid

us as long as we need anything done for our salvation; he can save all who will entrust their salvation to his hands. That come unto God by him. In his name; or depending on him. To come to God, is to approach him for pardon and salvation. Seeing he ever liveth. He does not die as the Jewish priests did. To make intercession for them. Rom 8:34. He constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason why we should be saved. The precise mode, however, in which he makes intercession in heaven for his people is not revealed. The general meaning is, that he undertakes their cause, and assists them in overcoming their foes and in their endeavours to live a holy life. Comp. 1Jn 2:1. He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; secures the aid which we need against our foes; and is the pledge or security for us that the law shall be honoured, and the justice and truth of God maintained, though we are saved. It is reasonable to presume that this is somehow by the presentation of the merits of his great sacrifice, and that that is the ground on which all this grace is obtained. As that is infinite, we need not fear that it will ever be exhausted.

26 For such a high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

For such an High Priest became us. Was fitted to our condition. That is, there was that in our character and circumstances which demanded that a high priest for us should be personally holy. It was not requisite merely that he should have great power; or that he should be of a rank superior to that of the Jewish priesthood; but there was a special propriety that he should surpass all others in moral purity. Other priests were mere mortal men, and it was necessary that their office should pass to other hands: they were sinful men also, and it was necessary that sacrifices should be made for themselves as well as others. We need, however, a different priest. We need not only one who ever lives, but one who is perfectly holy, and who has no need to bring an offering for himself, and all the merit of whose sacrifice, therefore, may be ours. Such an high priest we have in the person of the Lord Jesus; and there is no truth more

interesting, and no proposition more susceptible of proof, than that. HE IS EXACTLY FITTED TO MAN. In his moral character, and in the great work which he has accomplished, he is just such a Saviour as is adapted to the wants of ignorant, fallen, wretched, sinful man. He is benevolent, and pities our woes; wise, and is able to enlighten our ignorance; compassionate, and ready to forgive our faults. He has made such an sacrifice. It was necessary to put away our guilt, and offers such intercession as we need to have offered for us in order that we may be preserved from falling. Who is holy. Not merely outwardly righteous, but pure in heart. Harmless. Not injuring any one. To no one did he do wrong. Neither to their name, person, or property, did he ever do injury; nor will he ever. He is the only one who has lived on earth of whom it could be said that he never, in any way, did wrong to another. Undefiled. By sin; by any improper desire or passion. He was unstained by crime; "unspotted from the world." Sin always defiles the soul; but from every such pollution the Lord Jesus was free. Separate from sinners. That is, he did not associate with them as such. He did not partake of their feelings, plans, pleasures. Though he mingled with them, yet it was merely to do them good; and in all his life there was an entire separation from the feelings, principles, and views of a sinful world. And made higher than the heavens. Exalted above the visible heavens; that is, at the right hand of God. Eph 1:21, Php 2:9. We needed a high priest who is thus exalted, that he may manage our cause before the throne of God.

27 who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Who needeth not daily, as those High priests. As the Jewish priests. This is an additional circumstance introduced to show the superior excellency of the High Priest of the Christian profession, and to show also how he was fitted to our wants. The Jewish high priest was a sinful man. He had the same fallen and corrupt nature as others. He needed an expiatory sacrifice for his own sins as really as they did for theirs. When he approached God to offer sacrifice, it was needful to make

an atonement for himself; and when all was done, it was still a sacrifice offered by a sinful man. But it was not so in the case of Jesus. He was so holy that he needed no sacrifice for himself, and all that he did was in behalf of others. Besides, it was necessary that the sacrifices in the Jewish service should be constantly repeated. They were imperfect. They were mere types and shadows. They who offered them were frail, sinful men. It became necessary, therefore, to repeat them every day to keep up the proper sense of their transgressions, and to furnish a suitable acknowledgment of the tendency to sin alike among the people and the priests. Neither in the nature of the offering, nor in the character of those who made it, was there any sufficient reason why it should cease to be offered, and it was therefore repeated day by day. But it was not so with the Lord Jesus. The offering which he made, though presented but once, was so ample and perfect, that it had sufficient merit for all the sins of the world, and needed never to be repeated. It is not probable that the Jewish high priest himself personally officiated at the offering of sacrifice every day; but the meaning here is, that it was done daily, and that there was need of a daily sacrifice in his behalf. As one of the Jewish people, the sacrifice was offered on his account, as well as on the account of others--for he partook of the common infirmities and sinfulness of the nation. For this he did once. That is, once for all εφαπαξ. He made such an atonement that it was not needful that it should be repeated. Thus he put an end to sacrifice; for when he made the great atonement it was complete, and there was no need that any more blood should be shed for human guilt.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Who is consecrated for evermore. Marg., Perfected. Heb 2:10. The idea is, that the appointment is complete and permanent. It does not pass from one to the other. It is perfect in all the arrangements, and will remain so for ever.

Hebrews-8

The Mediator of a New Covenant

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

Now of the things which we have spoken. Or, "of the things of which we are speaking," (Stuart;) or, as we should say, of what is said. The Greek does not necessarily mean things that had been spoken, but may refer to all that he was saying, taking the whole subject into consideration. This is the sum. Or, this is the principal thing; referring to what he was about to say, not what he had said. Our translators seem to have understood this as referring to a summing up, or recapitulation of what he had said--and there can be no doubt that the Greek would bear this interpretation. But another exposition has been proposed, adopted by Bloomfield, Stuart, Michaelis, and Storr, among the moderns, and found also in Sindas, Theodoret, Theophylact, and others, among the ancients. It is that which regards the word rendered sum κεφαλαιον as meaning the principal thing; the chief matter; the most important point. The reason for this interpretation is, that the apostle in fact goes into no recapitulation of what he had said, but enters on a new topic relating to the priesthood of Christ. Instead of going over what he had demonstrated, he enters on a more important point, that the priesthood of Christ is performed in heaven, and that he has entered into the true tabernacle there. All which preceded was type and shadow, this was that which the former economy had adumbrated. In the previous chapters the apostle had shown that he who sustained this office was superior in rank to the Jewish priests; that they were frail and dying, and that the office in their hands was changing from one to another, but that that of Christ was permanent and abiding. He now comes to consider

the real nature of the office itself; the sacrifice which was offered; the substance of which all in the former dispensation was the type. This was the principle thing κεφαλαιον the head, the most important matter; and the consideration of this is pursued through chapters 8-10. We have such an High Priest. That is settled; proved; indisputable. The Christian system is not destitute of that which was regarded as so essential to the old dispensation--the office of a high priest. Who is set on the right hand of a throne, etc. He is exalted to honour and glory before God. The right hand was regarded as the place of principle honour; and when it is said that Christ is at the right hand of God, the meaning is, that he is exalted to the highest honour in the universe. Mk 16:19.

2 a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the
Lord pitched, and not man.

A minister of the sanctuary. Marg. "or holy things." Gr. τωναγιων. The Greek may either mean the sanctuary--denoting the Holy of Holies--or holy things. The word sanctuary kodesh--was given to the tabernacle or temple as a holy place, and the plural form which is here used-- ταγια--was given to the most holy place by way of eminence --the full form of the name being-- --kodesh kodushim, or, αγιαγιων hagia hagion, (Jahn's Arche. & 328,) or, as it is here used, simply as ταγια. The connexion seems to require us to understand it of the most holy place, and not of holy things. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, the great High Priest, has entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven, of which that in the tabernacle was an emblem. For a description of the most holy place in the temple, Mt 21:12. And of the true tabernacle. The real tabernacle in heaven, of which that among the Hebrews was but this type. The word tabernacle σκηνη means, properly, a booth, hut, or tent, and was applied to the tent which Moses was directed to build as the place for the worship of God. That tabernacle, as the temple was afterwards, was regarded as the peculiar abode of God on earth. Here the reference is to heaven, as the dwelling place of God, of which that tabernacle was the emblem or symbol.

It is called the "true tabernacle," as it is the real dwelling of God, of which the one made by Moses was but the emblem. It is not moveable and perishable like that made by man, but is unchanging and eternal. Which the Lord pitched, and not man. The word pitched is adapted to express the setting up of a tent. When it is said that "the Lord pitched the true tabernacle"--that is, the permanent dwelling in heaven--the meaning is, that heaven has been fitted up by God himself, and that whatever is necessary to constitute that an appropriate abode for the Divine majesty has been done by him. To that glorious dwelling the Redeemer has been received, and there he performs the office of High Priest in behalf of man. In what way he does this the apostle specifies in the remainder of this chapter, and in chapters 9 and 10.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

For every High Priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. This is a general statement about the functions of the high priest. It was the peculiarity of the office; it constituted its essence, that some gift or sacrifice was to be presented. This was indisputable in regard to the Jewish high priest, and this is involved in the nature of the priestly office everywhere. A priest is one who offers sacrifice, mainly in behalf of others. The principles involved in the office are,

(1.) that there is need that some offering or atonement should be made for sin; and,

(2.) that there is a fitness or propriety that some one should be designated to do it. If this idea that a priest must offer sacrifice be correct, then it follows that the name priest should not be given to any one who is not appointed to offer sacrifice. It should not therefore be given to the ministers of the gospel, for it is no part of their work to offer sacrifice--the great sacrifice for sin having been once offered by the Lord Jesus, and not being again to be repeated. Accordingly, the writers in the New Testament are perfectly uniform and consistent on

this point. The name priest is never once given to the ministers of the gospel there. They are called ministers, ambassadors, pastors, bishops, overseers, etc., but never priests. Nor should they be so called in the Christian church. The name priest, as applied to Christian ministers, has been derived from the papists. They hold that the priest does offer as a sacrifice the real body and blood of Christ in the mass, and holding this, the name priest is given to the minister who does it consistently. It is not indeed right or Scriptural--for the whole doctrine on which it is based is absurd and false--but while that doctrine is held the name is consistent. But with what show of consistency or propriety can the name be given to a Protestant minister of the gospel?

Wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. That the Lord Jesus should make an offering. That is, since he is declared to be a priest, and since it is; essential to the office that a priest should make an offering, it is indispensable that he should bring a sacrifice to God. He could not be a priest, on the acknowledged principles on which that office is held, unless he did it. What the offering was which the Lord Jesus made the apostle specifies more fully in Heb 9:11-14 Heb 9:25,26

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

5 who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

But now hath he obtained. That is, Christ.

A more excellent ministry. A service of a higher order, or of a more exalted nature. It was the real and substantial service of which the other was but the emblem; it pertained to things

in heaven, while that was concerned with the earthly tabernacle; it was enduring, while that was to vanish away. 2Cor 3:6, seq.

By how much. By as much as the new covenant is more important than the old, by so much does his ministry exceed in dignity that under the ancient dispensation,

He is the Mediator. Gal 3:19, Gal 3:19, where the word Mediator is explained. It means here that Christ officiates between God and man according to the arrangements of the new covenant.

Of a better covenant. Marg. "Or testament." This word properly denotes a disposition, arrangement, or ordering of things; and, in the Scriptures, is employed to describe the arrangement which God has made to secure the maintenance of his worship on earth, and the salvation of men. It is uniformly used in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to denote the covenant which God makes with men. The word which properly denotes a covenant or compact συνθηκη--suntheke, is never used. The writers of the New Testament evidently derived its use from the Septuagint; but why the authors of that version employed it as denoting a will, rather than the proper one denoting a compact, is unknown. It has been supposed by some, and the conjecture is not wholly improbable, that it was because they were unwilling to represent God as making a compact or agreement with men, but chose rather to represent him as making a mere arrangement or ordering of things. Compare Heb 8:8, and Heb 9:16,17. This is a better covenant than the old, inasmuch as it relates mainly to the heart; to the pardon of sin; to a spiritual and holy religion. See Heb 8:10. The former related more to external rites and observances, and was destined to vanish away. See Heb 8:13.

Which was established upon better promises. The promises in the first covenant pertained mainly to the present life. They were promises of length of days; of increase of numbers; of seed-time and harvest; of national privileges; and of extraordinary peace, abundance, and prosperity. That there was also the promise of eternal life it would be wrong to doubt; but this was not the main thing. In the new covenant, however, the promise of spiritual blessings becomes the principal thing. The mind is directed to heaven; the heart is cheered with the hopes of immortal life; the favour of God and the anticipation of heaven are secured in the most ample and solemn manner.

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

For finding fault with them. Or rather, "finding fault, he says is, with the Jewish people-for they had had nothing to do in giving the covenant, but with the covenant itself. "Stating its defects, he had said to them that he would give them one more perfect, and of which that was only preparatory. So Grottos, Stuart, Rosenmuller, and Erasmus understand it. Doddridge, Koppe, and many others understand it as it is in our translation, as implying that the fault was found with the people, and they refer to the passage quoted from Jeremiah for proof, where the complaint is of the people. The Greek may bear either construction; but may we not adopt a somewhat different interpretation still? May not this be the meaning? "For, using the language of complaint, or language that implied that there was defect or error, he speaks of another covenant." According to this, the idea would be, not that he found fault specifically either with the covenant or the people, but generally that he used language which implied that there was defect somewhere when he promised another and a better covenant. The word rendered "finding fault" properly means, to censure, or to blame. It is rendered in Mk

7:2 "they found fault," to wit, with those who ate with unwashed hands; in Rom 9:19, "why doth he yet find fault?" It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is language used where wrong has been done; where there is ground of complaint; where it is desirable that there should be a change. In the passage here quoted from Jeremiah, it is not expressly stated that God found fault either with the covenant or with the people, but that he promised that he would give another covenant, and that it should be different from that which he gave them when they came out of Egypt--implying that there was defect in that, or that it was not faultless. The whole meaning is, that there was a deficiency which the giving of a new covenant would remove.

He saith. In Jer 31:31-34. The apostle has not quoted the passage literally as it is in the Hebrew, but he has retained the substance, and the sense is not essentially varied. The quotation appears to have been made partly from the Septuagint, and partly from the memory. This often occurs in the New Testament.

Behold. This particle is designed to call attention to what was about to be said as important, or as having some special claim to notice. It is of very frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, being much more freely used by the sacred writers than it is in the classic authors.

The days come. The time is coming. This refers doubtless to the times of the Messiah. Phrases such as these, "in the last days," "in after times," and "the time is coming," are often used in the Old Testament to denote the last dispensation of the world --the dispensation when the affairs of the world would be wound up. See the phrase explained in the Notes, Heb 1:2, and Isa 2:2. There can be no doubt that, as it is used by Jeremiah, it refers to the times of the gospel.

When I will make a new covenant. A covenant that shall contemplate somewhat different ends; that shall have

different conditions, and that shall be more effective in restraining from sin. The word covenant here refers to the arrangement, plan, or dispensation into which he would enter in his dealings with men. On the meaning of the word, Acts 7:8, and Heb 9:16,17. The word covenant with us commonly denotes a compact or agreement between two parties that are equal, and who are free to enter into the agreement or not. In this sense, of course, it cannot be used in relation to the arrangement which God makes with man. There is

(1) no equality between them, and

(2) man is not at liberty to reject any proposal which God shall make. The word, therefore, is used in a more general sense, and more in accordance with the original meaning of the Greek word. It has been above remarked, Heb 8:6, that the proper word to denote covenant, or compact-- συνθηκη syntheke --is never used either in the Septuagint or in the New Testament; another word διαθηκη -- diathake--being carefully employed. Whether the reason there suggested for the adoption of this word in the Septuagint be the real one or not, the fact is indisputable. I may be allowed to suggest, as possible, here an additional reason why this so uniformly occurs in the New Testament. It is, that the writers of the New Testament never meant to represent the transactions between God and man as a compact or covenant, properly so called. They have studiously avoided it; and their uniform practice, in making this nice distinction between the two words, may show the real sense in which the Hebrew word rendered covenant , berith -is used in the Old Testament. The word which they employ-- διαθηκη -never means a compact or agreement as between equals. It remotely and secondarily means a will, or testament-- and hence our word "New Testament." But this is not the sense in which it is used in the Bible--for God has never made a will in the sense of a testamentary disposition of what belongs to him. We are referred, therefore, in order to arrive at the true Scripture view of this whole matter, to the original meaning of the word--

diatheke διθηκη --as denoting a disposition, arrangement, plan; then that which is ordered, a law, precept, promise, etc. Unhappily, we have no single word which expresses the idea, and hence a constant error has existed in the church--either keeping up the notion of a compact--as if God could make one with men; or the idea of a will--equally repugnant to truth. The word διαθηκη is derived from a verb--διατιθημι--meaning, to place apart, to set in order; and then to appoint, to make over, to make an arrangement with. Hence the word διαθηκη diatheke--means, properly, the arrangement or disposition which God made with men in regard to salvation; the system of statutes, directions, laws, and promises, by which men are to become subject to him, and to be saved. The meaning here is, that he would make a new arrangement, contemplating, as a primary thing, that the law should be written in the heart; an arrangement which would be peculiarly spiritual in its character, and which would be attended with the diffusion of just views of the Lord.

With the house of Israel. The family, or race of Israel--for so the word house is often used in the Scriptures and elsewhere. The word "Israel" is used in the Scriptures in the following senses.

(1.) As a name given to Jacob, because he wrestled with the angel of God and prevailed as a prince, Gen 32:28.

(2.) As denoting all who were descended from him-- called "the children of Israel"--or the Jewish nation.

(3.) As denoting the kingdom of the ten tribes--or the kingdom of Samaria, or Ephraim--that kingdom having taken the name Israel in contradistinction from the other kingdom, which was called Judah.

(4.) As denoting the people of God in general--his true and sincere friends--his church. Rom 2:28, Rom 2:29; Rom 9:6. In this place, quoted from Jeremiah, it seems to be used to

denote the kingdom of Israel in contradistinction from that of Judah, and together they denote the whole people of God, or the whole Hebrew nation, This arrangement was ratified and confirmed by the gift of the Messiah, and by implanting his laws in the heart. It is not necessary to understand this as refering to the whole of the Jews, or to the restoration of the ten tribes; but the words Israel and Judah are used to denote the people of God in general; and the idea is, that with the true Israel under the Messiah the laws of God would be written in the heart, rather than be mere external observances. And with the house of Judah. The kingdom of Judah. This kingdom consisted of two tribes--Judah and Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was, however, small, and the name was lost in that of Judah.

9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers,
in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the
land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant,
and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Not according to the covenant, etc. An arrangement or dispensation relating mainly to outward observances, and to temporal blessings. The meaning is, that the new dispensation would be different from that which was made with them when they came out of Egypt. In what respects it would differ is specified in Heb 8:10-12.

Because they continued not in my covenant. In Jeremiah, in the Hebrew, this is, "while my covenant they brake." That is, they failed to comply with the conditions on which I promised to bestow blessings upon them. In Jeremiah this is stated as a simple fact; in the manner in which the apostle quotes it, it is given as a reason why he would give a new arrangement. The apostle has quoted it literally from the Septuagint, and the sense is not materially varied. The word rendered "because" οτι may mean "since"--"since they did not obey that covenant, and it was ineffectual in keeping them from sin, showing that it was not perfect or complete in regard to what was needful to be done for man, a new arrangement shall be made that will be without defect." This accords with the reasoning of the

apostle; and the idea is, simply, that an arrangement may be made for man, adapted to produce important ends in one state of society or one age of the world, which would not be well adapted to him in another, and which would not accomplish all which it would be desirable to accomplish for the race. So an arrangement may be made for teaching children which would not answer the purpose of instructing those of mature years, and which at that time of life may be-superseded by another. A system of measures may be adapted to the infancy of society, or to a comparatively rude period of the world, which would be ill adapted to a more advanced state of society. Such was the Hebrew system. It was well adapted to the Jewish community in their circumstances, and answered the end then in view. It served to keep them separate from other people; to preserve the knowledge and the worship of the true God, and to introduce the gospel dispensation.

And I regarded them not. In Jeremiah this is, "Although I was an husband unto them." The Septuagint is as it is quoted here by Paul. The Hebrew is, --which may be rendered, "although I was their Lord;" or, as it is translated by Gesenius, "and I rejected them." The word --means,

(1.) to be lord or master over anything, (Isa 26:13;)

(2.) to become the husband of any one, (De 21:13, 24:1;)

(3.) with --to disdain, to reject. So Jer 3:14. It is very probable that this is the meaning here, for it is not only adopted by the Septuagint, but by the Syriac. So Abulwalid, Kimchi, and Rabbi Tanchum understood it. The Arabic word means, to reject, to loathe, to disdain. All that is necessary to observe here is, that it cannot be demonstrated that the apostle has not given the true sense of the prophet. The probability is, that the Septuagint translators would give the meaning which was commonly understood to be correct, and there is still more probability that the Syriac translator would adopt the true sense; for

(1) the Syriac and Hebrew languages strongly resemble each other; and

(2) the old Syriac version--the Peshito--is incomparably a better translation than the Septuagint. If this, therefore, be the correct translation, the meaning is, that since they did not regard and obey the laws which he gave them, God would reject them as his people, and give new laws better adapted to save men. Instead of regarding and treating them as his friends, he would punish them for their offences, and visit them with calamities.

10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God,
and they shall be to me a people:

For this is the covenant. This is the arrangement, or the dispensation, which shall succeed the old one.

With the house of Israel. With the true Israel; that is, with all those whom he will regard and treat as his friends.

After those days. This may either mean, "after those days I will put my laws in their hearts," or, "I will make this covenant with them after those days." This difference is merely in the punctuation, and the sense is not materially affected. It seems to me, however, that the meaning of the Hebrew in Jeremiah is, "in those after days" Isa 2:1, "I will put my laws into their mind;" that is, in that subsequent period, called in Scripture "the after times," "the last days;" "the ages to come," meaning the last dispensation of the world. Thus interpreted, the sense is, that this would be done in the times of the Messiah.

I will put my laws into their mind. Marg. Give. The word give in Hebrew is often used in the sense of put. The meaning here

is, that they would not be mere external observances, but would affect the conscience and the heart. The laws of the Hebrews pertained mainly to external rites and ceremonies; the laws of the new dispensation would relate particularly to the inner man, and be designed to control the heart. The grand peculiarity of the Christian system is, that it regulates the conscience and the principles of the soul rather than external matters. It prescribes few external rites, and those are exceedingly simple, and are merely the proper expressions of the pious feelings supposed to be in the heart; and all attempts either to increase the number of these rites, or to make them imposing by their gorgeousness, have done just so much to mar the simplicity of the gospel, and to corrupt religion.

And write them in their hearts. Marg. Upon. Not on tables of stone or brass, but on the soul itself. That is, the obedience rendered will not be external. The law of the new system will have living power, and bind the faculties of the soul to obedience. The commandment there will be written in more lasting characters than if engraved on tables of stone.

And I will be to them a God. This is quoted literally from the Hebrew. The meaning is, that he would sustain to them the appropriate relation of a God; or, if the expression may be allowed, he would be to them what a God should be, or what it is desirable that men should find in a God. We speak of a father's acting in a manner appropriate to the character of a father; and the meaning here is, that he would be to his people all that is properly implied in the name of God. He would be their Lawgiver, their Counsellor, their Protector, their Redeemer, their Guide. He would provide for their wants, defend them in danger, pardon their sins, comfort them in trials, and save their souls, he would be a faithful friend, and would never leave them nor forsake them. It is one of the inestimable privileges of his people that JEHOVAH is their God. The living and ever-blessed Being who made the heavens sustains to them the relation of a Protector and a

Friend, and they may look up to heaven feeling that he is all which they could desire in the character of a God.

And they shall be to me a people. This is not merely stated as a fact, but as a privilege. It is an inestimable blessing to be regarded as one of the people of God, and to feel that we belong to him--that we are associated with those whom he loves, and whom he treats as his friends.

11 and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man
his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me,
from the least to the greatest.

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, etc. That is, no one shall be under a necessity of imparting instruction to another, or of exhorting him to become acquainted with the Lord. This is designed to set forth another of the advantages which would attend the new dispensation. In the previous verse it had been said that one advantage of that economy would be, that the law would be written on the heart, and that they who were thus blessed would be regarded as the people of God. Another advantage over the old arrangement or covenant is here stated. It is that the knowledge of the Lord and of the true religion, would be deeply engraved on the minds of all, and that there would be no necessity for mutual exhortation and counsel. "They shall have a much more certain and effectual teaching than they can derive from another." Doddridge. This passage does not refer to the fact that the true religion will be universally diffused, but that among those who are interested in the blessings of the new covenant there would be an accurate and just knowledge of the Lord. In some way they would be so taught respecting his character that they would not need the aid to be derived from others. All under that dispensation, or sustaining to him the relation of "a people," would, in fact, have a correct knowledge o[illegible] the Lord. This could not be said of the old dispensation, for

(1.) their religion consisted much in outward observances.

(2.) It was not to such an extent as the new system a dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

(3.) There were not as many means as now for learning the true character of God.

(4.) The fullest revelations had not been made to them of that character. That was reserved for the coming of the Saviour, and under him it was intended that there should be communicated the full knowledge of the character of God. Many Mss, and those among the best, here have πολιτην citizen--fellow-citizen, instead of πλησιον, neighbour; and this is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, Rosenmuller, Knapp, Stuart, and by many of the fathers. It is also in the version of the LXX. in the place quoted from Jeremiah. It is not easy to determine the true reading, but; the word neighbour better accords with the meaning of the Hebrew -and there is strong authority from the MSS. and the versions for this reading.

And every man his brother. Another form of expression, meaning that there would be no necessity that one should teach another.

Saying, Know the Lord. That is, become acquainted with God; learn his character and his will. The idea is, that the true knowledge of Jehovah would prevail as a characteristic of those times.

For all shall know me. That is, all those referred to; all who are interested in the new covenant, and who are partakers of its blessings. It does not mean that all persons, in all lands, would then know the Lord--though the time will come when that will be true; but the expression is to be limited by the point under discussion. That point is not that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole world, but that all who are interested in the new dispensation will have a much more full and clear knowledge of God than was possessed under the old. Of the truth of this no one can doubt. Christians have a

much more perfect knowledge of God and of his government than could have been learned merely from the revelations of the Old-Testament.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,
and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, etc. That is the blessing of pardon will be much more richly enjoyed under the new dispensation than it was under the old. This is the fourth circumstance adduced in which the new covenant will surpass the old. That was comparatively severe in its inflictions, (see Heb 10:28;) marked every offence with strictness, and employed the language of mercy much less frequently than that of justice. It was a system where law and justice reigned; not where mercy was the crowning and prevalent attribute, it was true that it contemplated pardon, and made arrangements for it; but it is still true that this is much more prominent in the new dispensation than in the old. It is there the leading idea. It is that which separates it from all other systems. The entire arrangement is one for the pardon of sin in a manner consistent with the claims of law and justice, and it bestows the benefit of forgiveness in the most ample and perfect manner on all who are interested in the plan. In fact, the peculiarity by which the gospel is distinguished from all other systems, ancient and modern, philosophic and moral, pagan and deistical, is, that it is a system making provision for the forgiveness of sin, and actually bestowing pardon on the guilty. This is the centre, the crown, the glory of the new dispensation. God is merciful to the unrighteousness of men; and their sins are remembered no more. Will I remember no more. This is evidently spoken after the manner of men, and in accordance with human apprehension. It cannot mean literally that God forgets that men are sinners, but it means that he treats them as if this were forgotten. Their sins are not charged upon them, and they are no more punished than if they had passed entirely out of the recollection. God treats them with just as much kindness, and regards them with as sincere affection, as if their sins ceased

wholly to be remembered, or, which is the same thing, as if they had never sinned.

13 In that he saith, A new *covenant,* he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. That is, the use of the word "new" implies that the one which it was to supersede was "old." New and old stand in contradistinction from each other. Thus we speak of a new and old house, a new and old garment, etc. The object of the apostle is to show that, by the very fact of the arrangement for a new dispensation differing so much from the old, it was implied of necessity that that was to be superseded, and would vanish away. This was one of the leading points at which he arrived. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. This is a general truth which would be undisputed, and which Paul applies to the ease under consideration. An old house, or garment; an ancient tree; an aged man---all have indications that they are soon to disappear. They cannot be expected to remain long. The very fact of their growing old Is an indication that they will soon be gone. So Paul says it was with the dispensation that was represented as old. It had symptoms of decay. It had lost the rigour which it had when it was fresh and new; it had every mark of an antiquated and a declining system; and it had been expressly declared that a new and more perfect dispensation was to be given to the world. Paul concluded, therefore, that the Jewish system must soon disappear.

Hebrews-9

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.
2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary.
3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all;
4 which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

Which had the golden censer. The censer was a fire-pan, made for the purpose of carrying fire, in order to burn incense on it in the place of worship. The forms of the censer were various; but the following cuts will represent those which are most common. Some difficulty has been felt respecting the statement of Paul here, that the "golden censer" was in the most holy place, from the fact that no such utensil is mentioned by Moses as pertaining to the tabernacle; nor in the description of Solomon's temple, which was modelled after the tabernacle, is there any account of it given. But the following considerations will probably remove the difficulty.

(1.) Paul was a Jew, and was familiar with what pertained to the temple, and gave such a description of it as would be in accordance with what actually existed in his time. The fact that Moses does not expressly mention it does not prove that, in fact, no such censer was laid up in the most holy place.

(2.) Aaron and his successors were expressly commanded to burn incense in a "censer" in the most holy place before the

mercy-seat. This was to be done on the great day of atonement, and but once in a year, Lev 16:12,13.

(3.) There is every probability that the censer that was used on such an occasion was made of gold. All the implements that were employed in the most holy place were made of gold, or overlaid with gold, and it is in the highest degree improbable that the high priest would use any other on so solemn an occasion. Comp. 1Kgs 7:50.

(4.) As the golden censer was to be used only once in a year, it would naturally be laid away in some secure situation--and none would so obviously occur as the most holy place. There it would be perfectly safe. No one was permitted to enter there but the high priest; and being preserved there it would be always ready for his use. The statement of Paul, therefore, has the highest probability, and undoubtedly accords with what actually occurred in the tabernacle and the temple. The object of the incense burned in worship was to produce an agreeable fragrance or smell. Lk 1:9.

And the ark of the covenant. This ark or chest was made of shittim-wood, was two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and the same in height, Ex 25:10. It was completely covered with gold, and had a lid, which was called the "mercy-seat," on which rested the Shekinah, the symbol of the Divine Presence between the out. stretched wings of the cherubim. It was called "the ark of the covenant," because within it were the two tables of the covenant, or the law of God written on tables of stone. It was a simple chest, coffer, or box, with little ornament, though rich in its materials. A golden crown or moulding ran around the top, and it had rings and staves in its sides by which it might be borne, Ex 25:12-16. This ark was regarded as the most sacred of all the appendages of the tabernacle. Containing the law, and being the place where the symbol of the Divine Presence was manifested, it was regarded as peculiarly holy; and in the various wars and revolutions in the Hebrew commonwealth,

it was guarded with peculiar care. After the passage over the Jordan it remained for some time at Gilgal, (Josh 4:19,) whence it was removed to Shiloh, 1Sam 1:3. From hence the Israelites took it to their camp, apparently to animate them in battle, but it was taken by the Philistines, 1Sam 4. The Philistines, however, oppressed by the hand of God, resolved to return it, and sent it to Kirjath-Jearim, 1Sam 7:1. In the reign of Saul it was at Nob. David conveyed it to the house of Obed-Edom, and thence to his palace on Mount Zion. 2Sam 6. At the dedication of the temple it was placed in the Holy of Holies by Solomon, where it remained for many years. Subsequently, it is said, the wicked kings of Judah, abandoning themselves to idolatry, established idols in the most holy place itself; and the priests removed the ark, and bore it from place to place to secure it from profanation. Calmet. When Josiah ascended the throne he commanded the priests to restore the ark to its place in the sanctuary, and forbade them to carry it about from one place to another as they had before done, 2Chr 35:3. The subsequent history of the ark is unknown. It is probable that it was either destroyed when the city of Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, or that it was carried with other spoils to Babylon. There is no good reason to suppose that it was ever in the second temple; and it is generally admitted by the Jews that the ark of the covenant was one of the things that were wanting there. Abarbanel says, that the Jews flatter themselves that it will be restored by the Messiah.

Wherein, That is, in the ark for so the construction naturally requires. In 1Kgs 8:9, however, it is said that there was nothing in the ark, "save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb:" and it has been supposed by some that the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron were not in the ark, but that they were in capsules, or ledges made on its sides for their safe keeping, and that this should be rendered "by the ark." But the apostle uses the same language respecting the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron which he does about the two tables of stone; and as they were certainly in the ark, the fair

construction here is that the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron were in it also. The account in Ex 16:32-34, Nu 17:10, is, that they were laid up in the most holy place, "before the testimony," and there is no improbability whatever in the supposition that they were in the ark, Indeed that would be the most safe place to keep them, as the tabernacle was often taken down, and removed from place to place. It is clear, from the passage in 1Kgs 8:9, that they were not in the ark in the temple, but there is no improbability in the supposition that before the temple was built they might have been removed from the ark and lost. When the ark was carried from place to place, or during its captivity by the Philistines, it is probable they were lost, as we never hear of them afterwards.

The golden pot. In Ex 16:33, it is simply a "pot," without specifying the material. In the Septuagint it is rendered "golden pot;" and as the other utensils of the sanctuary were of gold, it may be fairly presumed that this was also.

That had manna. A small quantity of manna which was to be preserved as a perpetual remembrance of the food which they had eaten in their long journey in the wilderness, and of the goodness of God in miraculously supplying their wants. As the manna, also, would not of itself keep, Ex 16:20, the fact that this was to be laid up to be preserved from age to age was a perpetual miracle in proof of the presence and faithfulness of God. On the subject of the manna, see Bush's Notes on Ex 16:15.

And Aaron's rod that budded. That budded and blossomed as a proof that God had chosen him to minister to him. The princes of the tribes were disposed to rebel, and to call in question the authority of Aaron. To settle the matter each one was required to take a rod or staff of office, and to bring it to Moses with the name of the tribe to which it appertained written on it. These were laid up by Moses in the tabernacle; and it was found, on the next day, that the rod marked with the name of Levi had budded and blossomed, and produced

almonds. In perpetual remembrance of this miracle, the rod was preserved in the ark, Nu 17. Its subsequent history is unknown. It was not in the ark when the temple was built; nor is there any reason to suppose that it was preserved to that time.

And the tables of the covenant. The two tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written. They were expressly called "the words of the covenant" in Ex 34:28. On the word covenant, Ex 34:28. Heb 9:6 and Heb 9:17 of this chapter. These two tables were in the ark at the time the temple was dedicated, 1Kgs 8:9. Their subsequent history is unknown. It is probable that they shared the fate of the ark, and were either carried to Babylon, or were destroyed when the city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

5 and over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God.*

7 But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people:

But into the second. The second apartment or room, called the most holy place, Heb 9:3. Went the High priest alone once every year. On the great day of atonement, Ex 30:10. On that day he probably entered the holy of holies three or four times, first to burn incense, Lev 16:12; then to sprinkle the blood of the bullock on the mercy-seat, Lev 16:14; then he was to kill the goat of the sin-offering, and bring that blood within the veil, and sprinkle it also on the mercy-seat; and then, perhaps, he entered again to bring out the golden censer. The Jewish tradition is, that he entered the holy of holies four times on that day. After all, however, the number of times is not certain, nor is it material; the only important point being that he entered it only on one day of the year, while the holy place was entered every day. Not without blood. That is, he bare with him blood to sprinkle on the mercy-seat. This was the blood of the bullock and of the goat--borne in at two different

times. Which he offered for himself. The blood of the bullock was offered for himself and for his house or family--thus keeping impressively before his own mind and the mind of the people the fact that the priests, even of the highest order, were sinners, and needed expiation like others, Lev 16:11. And for the errors of the people. The blood of the goat was offered for them, Lev 16:15. The word rendered errors--αγνοημα --denotes, properly, ignorance, involuntary error; and then error or fault in general--the same as the Hebrew from -- to err. The object was to make expiation for all the error and sins of the people, and this occurred once in the year. The repetition of these sacrifices was a constant remembrance of sin; and the design was, that neither the priests nor the people should lose sight of the fact that they were violators of the law of God.

8 the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

The Holy Ghost. Who appointed all this. The whole arrangement in the service of the tabernacle is represented as having been under the direction of the Holy Ghost, or this was one of his methods of teaching the great truths of religion, and of keeping them before the minds of men. Sometimes that Spirit taught by direct revelation; sometimes by the written word; and sometimes by symbols. The tabernacle, with its different apartments, utensils, and services, was a permanent means of keeping important truths before the minds of the ancient people of God. This signifying. That is, showing this truth, or making use of this arrangement to impress this truth on the minds of men, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. That the way into the holiest of all. Into heaven--of which the most holy place in the tabernacle was undoubtedly designed to be an emblem. It was the place where the visible symbol of God--the Shekinah--dwelt; where the blood of propitiation was sprinkled, and was, therefore, an appropriate emblem of that holy heaven where God dwells, and whence pardon is obtained by the blood of the atonement. Was not yet made manifest. The way to heaven was not

opened, or fully understood. It was not known how men could appear before God, or how they could come with the hope of pardon. That way has now been opened by the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven, and by the assurance that all who will may come in his name. While as the first tabernacle was yet standing. As long as it stood, and the appointed services were held in it. The idea is, that until it was superseded by a more perfect system it was a proof that the way to heaven was not yet fully and freely opened, and that the Holy Ghost designed that it should be such a proof. The apostle does not specify in what the proof consisted, but it may have been in something like the following.

(1.) It was a mere symbol, and not the reality--showing that the true way was not yet fully understood.

(2.) It was entered but once a year--showing that there was not access at all times.

(3.) It was entered only by the high priest--showing that there was not free and full access to all the people.

(4.) It was accessible only by Jews--showing that the way in which all men might be saved was not then fully revealed. The sense is, that it was a system of types and shadows, in which there were many burdensome rites, and many things to prevent men from coming before the symbol of the Divinity, and was therefore an imperfect system. All these obstructions are now removed; the Saviour--the great High Priest of his people--has entered heaven, and "opened it to all true believers," and all of every nation may now have free access to God. See Heb 9:12; comp. Heb 10:19-22.

9 which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Which was a figure for the time then present. That is, as long as the tabernacle stood. The word rendered figure--παραβολη-- is not the same as type --τυπος, (Rom 5:14; Actst

7:43,44; Jnn 20:25, 1Cor 10:6,11, Php 3:17, --but is the word commonly rendered parable, Mt 13:3,10,13,18,24,31,33-36,53, 15:15 et saepe, and means, properly, a placing side by side; then, a comparison, or similitude, Here it is used in the sense of image, or symbol--something to represent other things. The idea is, that the arrangements and services of the tabernacle were a representation of important realities, and of things which were more fully to be revealed at a future period. There can be no doubt that Paul meant to say that this service in general was symbolical or typical, though this will not authorize us to attempt to spiritualize every minute arrangement of it. Some of the things in which it was typical are specified by the apostle himself; and wisdom and safety in explaining the arrangements of the tabernacle and its services consist in adhering very closely to the explanations furnished by the inspired writers. An interpreter is on an open Sea, to be driven he knows not whither, when he takes leave of these safe pilots. Both gifts. Thank-offerings. And sacrifices. Bloody offerings. The idea as, that all kinds of offerings to God were made there. That could not make him that did the service perfect. That could not take away sin, and remove the stains of guilt on the soul. Heb 7:11; comp. Heb 8:7, 7:27, 10:1,11.

As pertaining to the conscience. They related mainly to outward and ceremonial rites; and even when offerings were made for sin, the conscience was not relieved. They could not expiate guilt; they could not make the soul pure; they could not of themselves impart peace to the soul by reconciling it to God. They could not fully accomplish what the conscience needed to have done in order to give it peace. Nothing will do this but the blood of the Redeemer.

Which stood only in meats and drinks. The idea is, that the ordinances of the Jews, in connexion with the services of religion, consisted much of laws pertaining to what was lawful to eat and drink, etc. A considerable part of those laws related to the distinction between clean and unclean beasts,

and to such arrangements as were designed to keep them externally distinct from other nations. It is possible, also, that there may be a reference here to meat and drink offerings. On the grammatical difficulties of this verse, see Stuart on the Hebrews, in loc.

And divers washings. The various ablutions which were required in the service of the tabernacle and the temple--washing of the hands, of the victim that was to be offered, etc, It was for this purpose that the laver was erected in front of the tabernacle, Ex 30:18, 31:9 Ex 35:16, and that the brazen sea and the lavers were constructed in connexion with the temple of Solomon, 2Chr 4:3-5; 1Kgs 7:26. The Greek word here is baptisms. On its meaning, Mt 3:6; Mk 7:4.

And carnal ordinances. Marg. "Or, rites or ceremonies." Or, "Ordinances of the flesh;" that is, which pertained to the flesh, or to external ceremonies. The object was rather to keep them externally pure than to cleanse the conscience and make them holy in heart.

Imposed on them. Laid on them--επικειμενα. It does not mean that there was any oppression or injustice in regard to these ordinances, but that they were appointed for a temporary purpose.

Until the time of reformation. The word here rendered reformation --διορθωσις means, properly, emendation, improvement, reform. It refers to putting a thing in a right condition; making it better; or raising up and restoring that which is fallen down. Passow. Here the reference is undoubtedly to the gospel, as being a better system--a putting things where they ought to be. Comp. Acts 3:21. The idea here is, that those ordinances were only temporary in their nature, and were designed to endure till a more perfect system should be introduced. They were of value to introduce that better system; they were not adapted to purify the conscience and remove the stains of guilt from the soul.

10 *which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation.

11 But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

But Christ being come. Now that the Messiah has come, a more perfect system is introduced, by which the conscience may be made free from guilt.

An High Priest of good things to come. See Heb 10:1 The apostle having described the tabernacle, and shown wherein it was defective in regard to the real wants of sinners, proceeds now to describe the Christian system, and to show how that met the real condition of man, and especially how it was adapted to remove sin from the soul. The phrase, "high priest of good things to come," seems to refer to those "good things" which belonged to the dispensation that was to come; that is, the dispensation under the Messiah. The Jews anticipated great blessings in that time. They looked forward to better things than they enjoyed under the old dispensation. They expected more signal proofs of the Divine favour; a clearer knowledge of the way of pardon; and more eminent spiritual enjoyments. Of these, the apostle says that Christ, who had come, was now the high priest. It was he by whom they were procured; and the time had actually arrived when they might enjoy the long-anticipated good things under the Messiah.

By a greater and more perfect tabernacle. The meaning is, that Christ officiated as High Priest in a much more magnificent and perfect temple than either the tabernacle or the temple under the old dispensation. He performed the great functions of his priestly office--the sprinkling of the blood of the atonement--in heaven itself, of which the most holy place in the tabernacle was but the emblem. The Jewish high priest entered the sanctuary made with hands to minister before God; Christ entered into heaven itself. The word "by" here

διᾳ means, probably, through; and the idea is, that Christ passed through a more perfect tabernacle on his way to the mercy-seat in heaven than the Jewish high priest did when: he passed through the outer tabernacle, Heb 9:2, and through the veil into the most holy place. Probably the idea in the mind of the writer was that of the Saviour passing through the visible heavens above us, to which the veil, dividing the holy from the most holy place in the temple, bore some resemblance. Many, however, have understood the word "tabernacle" here as denoting the body of Christ, (see Grotius and Bloomfield, in loc.;) and according to this the idea is, that Christ, by means of his own body and blood offered as a sacrifice, entered into the Most Holy Place in heaven. But it seems to me that the whole scope of the passage requires us to understand it of the more perfect temple in heaven where Christ performs his ministry, and of which the tabernacle of the Hebrews was but the emblem. Christ did not belong to the tribe of Levi; he was not an high priest of the order of Aaron; he did not enter the holy place on earth, but he entered the heavens, and perfects the work of his ministry there.

Not made with hands. A phrase that properly, describes heaven as being fitted up by God himself. 2Cor 5:1.

Not Of this building. Gr. "of this creation κτισεως. The meaning is, that the place where he officiates is not fitted up by human power and art, but is the work of God. The object is to show that his ministry is altogether more perfect than that which could be rendered by a Jewish priest, and performed in a temple which could not have been reared by human skill and power.

12 neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us.*

Neither by the blood of goats and calves. The Jewish sacrifice consisted of the shedding of the blood of animals. On the great day of attonement the high priest took with him into the most holy place

(1.) the blood of a young bullock, Lev 16:3,11, which is here called the blood of a "calf," which he offered for his own sin; and

(2.) the blood of a goat, as a sin-offering for others, Lev 16:9,15. It was by, or by means of διαˊ blood thus sprinkled on the mercy-seat, that the high priest sought the forgiveness of his own sins and the sins of the people. But by his own blood. That is, by his own blood shed for the remission of sins. The meaning is, that it was in virtue of his own blood, or by means of that, that, he sought the pardon of his people. That blood was not shed for himself--for he had no sin--and consequently there was a material difference between his offering and that of the Jewish high priest. The difference related to such points as these,

(1.) The offering which Christ made was wholly for others; that of the Jewish priest for himself as well as for them.

2.) The blood offered by the Jewish priest was that of animals; that offered by the Saviour was his own.

(3.) That offered by the Jewish priest was only an emblem or type--for it could not take away sin; that offered by Christ had a real efficacy, and removes transgression from the soul.

He entered into the holy place. Heaven. The meaning is, that as the Jewish high priest bore the blood of the animal into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it there as the means of expiation, so the offering which Christ has to make in heaven, or the consideration on which he pleads for the pardon of his people, is the blood which he shed on Calvary. Having made the atonement, he now pleads the merit of it as a reason why sinners should be saved. It is not, of course, meant that he literally bore his own blood into heaven--as the high priest

did the blood of the bullock and the goat into the sanctuary; or that he literally sprinkled it on the mercy-seat there; but that that blood, having been shed for sin, is now the ground of his pleading and intercession for the pardon of sin--as the sprinkled blood of the Jewish sacrifice was the ground of the pleading of the Jewish high priest for the pardon of himself and the people.

Having obtained eternal redemption for us. That is, by the shedding of his blood. On the meaning of the word redemption, Gal 3:13. The redemption which the Lord Jesus effected for his people is eternal. It will continue for ever. It is not a temporary deliverance leaving the redeemed in danger of falling into sin and ruin, but it makes salvation secure, and in its effects extends through eternity. Who can estimate the extent of that love which purchased for us such a redemption? Who can be sufficiently grateful that he is thus redeemed? The doctrine in this verse is, that the blood of Christ is the means of redemption, or atones for sin. In the following verses the apostle shows that it not only makes atonement for sin, but that it is the means of sanctifying or purifying the soul.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;

For if the blood of bulls and of goats. Referring still to the great day of atonement, when the offering made was the sacrifice of a bullock and a goat.

And the ashes of an heifer. For an account of this, see Nu 19:2-10. In Heb 9:9 it is said that the ashes of the heifer, after it was burnt, should be kept "for a water of separation; it is a purification for sin." That is, the ashes were to be carefully preserved; and, being mixed with water, were sprinkled on those who were from any cause ceremonially impure. The reason for this appears to have been that the heifer was considered as a sacrifice whose blood has been offered, and the application of the ashes to which she had been burnt was regarded as an evidence of participation in that sacrifice. It

was needful, where the laws were so numerous respecting eternal pollutions, or where the members of the Jewish community were regarded as so frequently "unclean" by contact with dead bodies, and in various other ways, that there should be some method in which they could be declared to be cleansed from their "uncleanness." The nature of these institutions also required that this should be in connexion with sacrifice; and in order to this it was arranged that there should be this permanent sacrifice--the ashes of the heifer that had been sacrificed --of which they could avail themselves at any time, without the expense and delay of making a bloody offering specifically for the occasion. It was, therefore, a provision of convenience; and at the same time was designed to keep up the idea that all purification was somehow connected with the shedding of blood.

Sprinkling the unclean. Mingled with water, and sprinkled on the unclean. The word unclean here refers to such as had been defiled by contact with dead bodies, or when one had died in the family, etc. See Nu 19:11-22.

Sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh. Makes holy so far as the flesh or body is concerned. The uncleanness here referred to related to the body only, and of course the means of cleansing extended only to that. It was not designed to give peace to the conscience, or to expiate moral offences. The offering thus made removed the obstructions to the worship of God, so far as to allow him who had been defiled to approach him in a regular manner. Thus much the apostle allows was accomplished by the Jewish rites. They had an efficacy in removing ceremonial uncleanness; and in rendering it proper that he who had been polluted should be permitted again to approach and worship God. The apostle goes on to argue that, if they had such an efficacy, it was fair to presume that the blood of Christ would have far greater efficacy, and would reach to the conscience itself and make that pure.

14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

How much more shall the blood of Christ. As being infinitely more precious than the blood of an animal could possibly be. If the blood of an animal had any efficacy at all, even in removing ceremonial pollutions, how much more is it reasonable to suppose may be effected by the blood of the Son of God!

Who through the eternal Spirit. This expression is very difficult, and has given rise to a great variety of interpretation.--Some Mss., instead of eternal here, read holy, making it refer directly to the Holy Spirit. See Wetstein. These various readings, however, are not regarded as of sufficient authority to lead to a change in the text, and are of importance only as showing that it was an early opinion that the Holy Spirit is here referred to. The principal opinions which have been entertained respecting this phrase are the following.

(1.) That which regards it as referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. This was the opinion of Owen, Doddridge, and Archbishop Tillotson.

(2.) That which refers it to the divine:nature of Christ. Among those who have maintained this opinion are Beza, Ernesti, Wolf, Vitriuga, Storr, and the late Dr. J.P. Wilson, MSS. Notes.

(3.) Others, as Grotius, Rosenmuller, Koppe, understand it as meaning endless or immortal life, in contradistinction from the Jewish sacrifices which were of a perishable nature, and which needed so often to be repeated.

(4.) Others regard it as referring to the glorified person of the Saviour, meaning that, in his exited or spiritual station in heaven, he presents the efficacy of blood,

(5.) Others suppose that it means Divine influence; and that the idea is, that Christ was actuated and filled with a Divine influence when he offered up himself as a sacrifice--an influence which was not of a temporal and fleeting nature, but which was eternal in its efficacy. This is the interpretation preferred by Prof. Stuart. For an examination of these various opinions, see his "Excursus xviii." on this epistle. It is difficult, if not impossible, to decide what is the true meaning of the passage amidst this diversity of opinion; but there are some reasons which seem to me to make it probable that the Holy Spirit is intended, and that the idea is, that Christ made his great sacrifice under the extraordinary influences of that Eternal Spirit. The reasons which lead me to this opinion are the following.

(1.) It is that which would occur to the great mass of the readers of the New Testament. It is presumed that the great body of sober, plain, and intelligent readers of the Bible, on perusing the passage, suppose that it refers to the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity. There are few better and safer rules for the interpretation of a volume designed like the Bible for the mass of mankind, than to abide by the sense in which they understand it.

(2.) This interpretation is one which is most naturally conveyed by the language of the original. The phrase, the spirit τοπνευμα has so far a technical and established meaning in the New Testament as to denote the Holy Ghost, unless there is something in the connexion which renders such an application improper. In this case there is nothing certainly which necessarily forbids such an application. The high names and classical authority of those who have held this opinion are a sufficient guarantee of this.

(3.) This interpretation accords with the fact, that the Lord Jesus is represented as having been eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit. Comp. Jn 3:34. Though he

was Divine, yet he was also a man, and as such was under influences similar to those, of other pious men. The Holy Spirit is the source and sustainer of all piety in the soul; and it is not improper to suppose that the man Christ Jesus was, in a remarkable manner, influenced by the Holy Ghost in his readiness to obey God, and to suffer according to his will.

(4.) If there was ever an occasion on which we may suppose he was influenced by the Holy Ghost, that of his sufferings and death here referred to may be supposed eminently to have been such an one. It was expressive of the highest state of piety--of the purest love to God and man--which has ever existed in the human bosom; it was the most trying time of his own life; it was the period when there would be the most strong temptation to abandon his work; and, as the redemption of the whole world was dependent on that act, it is reasonable to suppose that the richest heavenly grace would be there imparted to him, and that he would then be eminently under the influence of that Spirit which was granted not "by measure unto him." Jn 3:34.

(5.) This representation is not inconsistent with the belief that the sufferings and death of the Redeemer were voluntary, and had all the merit which belongs to a voluntary transaction. Piety in the heart of a Christian now is not less voluntary because it is produced and cherished by the Holy Ghost, nor is there less excellence in it because the Holy Ghost imparts strong faith in the time of temptation and trial. It seems to me, therefore, that the meaning of this expression is, that the Lord Jesus was led by the strong influences of the Spirit of God to devote himself as a sacrifice for sin. It was not by any temporary influence--not by mere excitement; it was by the influence of the Eternal Spirit of God; and the sacrifice thus offered could, therefore, accomplish effects which would be eternal in their character. It was not like the offering made by the Jewish high priest, which was necessarily renewed every year, but it was under the influence of one who was eternal, and the effects of whose influence might be everlasting. It

may be added, that if this is a correct exposition it follows that the Holy Ghost is eternal, and must therefore be Divine.

Offered himself. That is, as a sacrifice. He did not offer a bullock or a goat, but he offered himself. The sacrifice of one's self is the highest offering which he can make: in this case it was the highest which the universe had to make.

Without spot. Marg. "Or, fault." The animal that was offered in the Jewish sacrifices was to be without blemish. See Lev 1:10, 22:19-22. It was not to be lame, or blind, or diseased. The word which is here used and rendered "without spot" αμωμος--refers to this fact, that there was no defect or blemish. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, the great Sacrifice, was perfect. See Heb 7:26.

Purge your conscience. That is, cleanse, purify, or sanctify your conscience. The idea is, that this offering would take away whatever rendered the conscience defiled or sinful. The offerings of the Jews related in the main to external purification, and were not adapted to give peace to a troubled conscience. They could render the worshipper externally pure, so that he might draw near to God, and not be excluded by any ceremonial pollution or defile. merit; but the mind, the heart, the conscience, they could not make pure. They could not remove that which troubles a man when he recollects that he has violated a holy law and has offended God, and when he looks forward to an awful judgment-bar. The word conscience here is not to be understood as a distinct and independent faculty of the soul, but as the soul or mind itself reflecting and pronouncing on its own acts. The whole expression refers to a mind alarmed by the recollection of guilt--for it is guilt only that disturbs a man s conscience. Guilt originates in the soul remorse and despair; guilt makes a man troubled when he thinks of death and the judgment; it is guilt only which alarms a man when he thinks of a holy God; and it is nothing but guilt that makes the entrance into another world terrible and awful. If man had no guilt he would

never dread his Maker, nor would the presence of his God be ever painful to him, Gen 3:6-10; if a man had no guilt he would not fear to die--for what have the innocent to fear anywhere? The universe is under the government of a God of goodness and truth, and, under such a government, how can those who have done no wrong have anything to dread? The fear of death, the apprehension of the judgment to come, and the dread of God, are strong and irrefragable proofs that every man is a sinner. The only thing, therefore, which ever disturbs the conscience, and makes death dreadful, and God an object of aversion, and eternity awful, is GUILT. If that is removed, man is calm and peaceful; if not, he is the victim of wretchedness and despair.

From dead works. From works that are deadly in their nature, or that lead to death. Or it may mean from works that have no spirituality, and no life. By "works" here the apostle does not refer to their outward religious acts particularly, but to the conduct of the life---to what men do; and the idea is, that their acts are not spiritual and saving, but such as lead to death. See Heb 6:1.

To serve the living God. Not in outward form, but in sincerity and in truth; to be his true friends and worshippers. The phrase, "the living God," is commonly used in tile Scriptures to describe the true God as distinguished from idols, which are represented as dead, or without life, Ps 115:4-7. The idea in this verse is, that it is only the sacrifice made by Christ which can remove the stain of guilt from the soul. It could not be done by the blood of bulls and of goats--for that did not furnish relief to a guilty conscience--but it could be done by the blood of Christ. The sacrifice which he made for sin was so pure and of such values that God can consistently pardon the offender, and restore him to his favour. That blood, too, can give peace--for Christ poured it out in behalf of the guilty. It is not that he took part with the sinner against God; it is not that he endeavours to convince him who has a troubled

conscience that he is needlessly alarmed, or that sin is not as bad as it is represented to be, or that it does not expose the soul to danger. Christ never took the part of the sinner against God; he never taught that sin was a small matter, or that it did not expose to danger. He admitted all that is said of its evil. But he provides for giving peace to the guilty conscience by shedding his blood that it may be forgiven, and by revealing a God of mercy who is willing to receive the offender into favour, and to treat him as though he had never sinned. Thus the troubled conscience may find peace; and thus, though guilty, man may be delivered from the dread of the wrath to come.

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

And for this cause. With this view; that is, to make an effectual atonement for sin, and to provide a way by which the troubled conscience may have peace. He is the Mediator. Gal 3:19,20. He is the Mediator between God and man in respect to that new covenant which he has made, or the new dispensation by which men are to be saved. He stands between God and man--the parties at variance--and undertakes the work of mediation and reconciliation. Of the new testament. Not testament--for a testament, or will, needs no mediator; but of the new covenant, or the new arrangement or disposition of things under which he proposes to pardon and save the guilty. Heb 9:16,17. That by means of death. His own death as a sacrifice for sin. The old covenant or arrangement also contemplated death but it was the death of an animal. The purposes of this were to be effected by the death of the Mediator himself; or this covenant was to be ratified in his blood. For the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament. The covenant or arrangement under Moses. The general idea here is, that these were offences for which no expiation could be made by the sacrifices under that dispensation, or from which the blood

then shed could not redeem. This general idea may include two particulars.

(1.) That they who had committed transgressions under that covenant, and who could not be fully pardoned by the imperfect sacrifices then made, would receive a full forgiveness of all their sins in the great day of account through the blood of Christ. Though the blood of bulls and goats could not expiate, yet they offered that blood in faith; they relied on the promised mercy of God; they looked forward to a perfect sacrifice; and now the blood of the great atonement, offered as a full expiation for all their sins, would be the ground of their acquittal in the last day.

(2.) That the blood of Christ would now avail for the remission of all those sins which could not be expiated by the sacrifices offered under the law. It not only contemplated the remission of all the offences committed by the truly pious under that law, but would now avail to put away sin entirely. No sacrifice which men could offer would avail, but the blood of Christ would remove all that guilt. That they which are called. Alike under the old covenant and the new. Might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. That is, the fulfilment of the promise; or that they might be made partakers of eternal blessings. That blood is effectual alike to save those under the ancient covenant and the new--so that they will be saved in the same manner, and unite in the same song of redeeming love.

16 For where a testament *is,* there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

For where a testament is. This is the same word διαθηκη which, in Heb 8:6, is rendered covenant. For the general signification of the word, Heb 8:6. There is so much depending, however, on the meaning of the word, not only in the interpretation of this passage, but also of other parts of the Bible, that it may be proper to explain it here more at length. The word διαθηκη --occurs in the New Testament thirty-three times. It is translated covenant in the common version, in Lk

1:72; Acts 3:26, 7:8, Rom 9:4, 11:27, Gal 3:15,17, 4:24, Eph 2:12, Heb 8:6,8,9,10; Heb 9:4, 10:16, 12:24, 13:20. In the remaining places it is rendered testament: Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20, 1Cor 11:25, 2Cor 3:6,14; Heb 7:22, 9:15-17,20, Rev 11:19. In four of those instances, Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20 and 1Cor 11:25, it is used with reference to the institution or celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the Septuagint it occurs not far from three hundred times; in considerably more than two hundred of which, it is the translation of the Hebrew word Berith. In one instance, Zech 11:14, it is the translation of the word brotherhood; once, De 9:5, of --word; once, Jer 34:18, of "words of the covenant;" once, Lev 26:11, of tabernacle; once, Ex 31:7, of testimony; it occurs once, Eze 16:8, where the reading of the Greek and Hebrew text is doubtful; and it occurs three times, 1Sam 11:2, 20:8, 1Kgs 8:9, where there is no corresponding word in the Hebrew text. From this use of the word by the authors of the Septuagint, it is evident that they regarded it as the proper translation of the Hebrew Berith, and as conveying the same sense which that word does. It cannot be reasonably doubted that the writers of the New Testament were led to the use of the word, in part at least, by. the fact that they found it occurring so frequently in the version m common use; but it cannot be doubted, also, that they regarded it as fairly conveying the sense of the word Berith. On no principle can it be supposed that inspired and honest men would use a word, in referring to transactions in the Old Testament, which did not fairly convey the idea which the writers of the Old Testament meant to express. The use being thus regarded as settled, there are some facts in reference to it which are of great importance in interpreting the New Testament, and in understanding the nature of the "covenant" Which God makes with man. These facts are the following.

(1.) The word διαθηκη diatheke--is not that which properly denotes compact, agreement, or covenant. That word is συνθηκη --syntheke-- or, in other forms, συνθεσις and συνθεσια; or if the word diatheke is used in that signification

it is only remotely, and as a secondary meaning. See Passow; comp. the Septuagint in Isa 28:15, 30:1; Dan 11:6, and Wisdom i. 16; I Mac. x. 26; 2 Mac. xiii. 25; xiv. 26. It is not the word which a Greek would have employed to denote a compact or covenant, He would have employed it to denote a disposition, ordering, or arrangement of things, whether of religious rites, civil customs, or property; or if used with reference to a compact, it would have been with the idea of an arrangement or ordering of matters, not with the primary notion of an agreement with another.

(2.) The word properly expressive of a covenant or compact συνθηκη is never used in the New Testament. In all the allusions to the transactions between God and man, this word never occurs. From some cause, the writers and speakers in the New Testament seem to here supposed that the word would leave an impression which.they did not wish to leave. Though it might have been supposed that, in speaking of the various transactions between God and man, they would have selected this word, yet with entire uniformity they have avoided it. No one of them--though the word διαθηκη diatheke--has been used by no less than six of them--has been betrayed in a single instance into the use of the word συνθηκη syntheke, or has differed from the other writers in the language employed. This cannot be supposed to be the result of concert or collusion, but it must have been founded on some reason which operated equally on all their minds.

(1.) In like manner, and with like remarkable uniformity, the word συνθηκη syntheke--is never used in the Septuagint with reference to any arrangement or "covenant" between God and man. Once indeed in the Apocrypha, and but once, it is used in that sense. In the three only other instances in Which it occurs in the Septuagint, it is with reference to compacts between man and man, Isa 28:16, 30:1, Dan 11:6. This remarkable fact, that the authors of that version never use the word to denote any transaction between God and man, shows

that there must have been some reason for it which acted on their minds with entire uniformity.

(2.) It is no less remarkable that neither in the Septuagint nor the New Testament is the word διαθηκη--diatheke--ever used in the sense of will or testament, unless it be in the case before us. This is conceded on all hands, and is expressly admitted by Prof. Stuart, (Com Heb p. 439,) though he defends this use of the word in this passage. A very important inquiry presents itself here which has never received a solution generally regarded as satisfactory. It is why the word διαθηκη --diatheke--was selected by the writers of the New Testament to express the nature of the transaction between God and man in the plan of salvation. It might be said, indeed, that they found this word uniformly used in the Septuagint, and that they employed it as expressing the idea which they wished to convey, with sufficient accuracy. But this is only removing the difficulty one step farther back. Why did the Seventy adopt this word? Why did they not rather use the common and appropriate Greek word to express the notion of a covenant? A suggestion on this subject has already been made in the Heb 8:6. Comp. Bib. Repository, vol. xx. p. 55. Another reason may, however, be suggested for this remarkable fact which is liable to no objection. It is, that in the apprehension of the authors of the Septuagint, and of the writers of the New Testament, the word διαθηκη diatheke--in its original and proper signification, fairly conveyed the sense of the Hebrew word Berith, and that the word συνθηκη syntheke--or compact, agreement, would not express that; and that they never meant to be understood as conveying the idea, either that God entered into a COMPACT or COVENANT with man, or that he made a WILL. They meant to represent him as making an arrangement, a disposition, an ordering of things, by which his service might be kept up among his people, and by which men might be saved; but they were equally remote from representing him as making a compact, or a will. In support of this there may be alleged

(1.) the remarkable uniformity in which the word διαθηκη diatheke-- is used, showing that there was some settled principle from which they never departed; and

(2.) used mainly the meaning of the word itself. Prof. Stuart has, undoubtedly, given the accurate original sense of the word. "The real, genuine, and original meaning of διαθηκη diatheke--is, arrangement, disposition, or disposal of a thing," p. 440. The word from which it is derived-- διατιθημι means, to place apart or asunder; and then to set, arrange, dispose in a certain order. Passow. From this original signification is derived the use which the word has, with singular uniformity, in the Scriptures. It denotes the arrangement, disposition, or ordering of things which God made in relation to mankind, by which he designed to keep up his worship on earth, and to save the soul. It means neither covenant nor will; neither compact nor legacy; neither agreement nor testament. It is an arrangement of an entirely different order from either of them, and the sacred writers, with an uniformity which could have been secured only by the presiding influence of the One Eternal Spirit, have avoided the suggestion that God made with man either a compact or a will. We have no word which precisely expresses this idea; and hence our conceptions are constantly floating between a compact and a will, and the views which we have are as unsettled as they are unscriptural. The simple idea is, that God has made an arrangement by which his worship may be celebrated and souls saved. Under the Jewish economy this arrangement assumed one form; under the Christian another. In neither was it a compact or covenant between two parties in such a sense that one party would be at liberty to reject the terms proposed; in neither was it a testament or will, as if God had left a legacy to man; but in both there were some things in regard to the arrangement such as are found in a covenant or compact. One of those things--equally appropriate to a compact between man and man, and to this arrangement the apostle refers to

here, that it implied in all cases the death of the victim. If these remarks are well founded, they should be allowed materially to shape our views in the interpretation of the Bible. Whole treatises of divinity have been written on a mistaken view of the meaning of this word--understood as meaning covenant. Volumes of angry controversy have been published on the nature of the "covenant" with Adam, and on its influence on his posterity. The only literal, "covenant" which can be supposed in the plan of redemption is that between the Father and the Son--though even the existence of such a covenant is rather the result of devout and learned imagining than of any distinct statement in the volume of inspiration. The simple statement there is, that God has made an arrangement for salvation, the execution of which he has entrusted to his Son, and has proposed it to man to be accepted as the only arrangement by which man can be saved, and which he is not at liberty to disregard. There has been much difference of opinion in reference to the meaning of the passage here, and to the design of the illustration introduced. If the word used--διαθηκη--means testament, in the sense of a will, then the sense of that passage is, that "a will is of force only when he who made it dies, for it relates to a disposition of his property after his death." The force of the remark of the apostle then would be, that the fact that the Lord Jesus made or expressed his will to mankind, implied that he would die to confirm it; or that since in the ordinary mode of making a will it was of force only when he who made it was dead, therefore it was necessary that the Redeemer should die, in order to confirm and ratify that which he made. But the objections to this, which appears to have been the view of our translators, seem to me to be insuperable. They are these.

(1.) The word διαθηκη --diatheke--is not used in this sense in the New Testament elsewhere. See the remarks above.

(2.) The Lord Jesus made no such will. He had no property, and the commandments and instructions which he gave to is disciples were not of the nature of a will or testament.

(3.) Such an illustration would not be pertinent to the design of the apostle, or in keeping with his argument. He is comparing the Jewish and Christian dispensations, and the point of comparison in this chapter relates to the question about the efficacy of sacrifice in the two arrangements, he showed that the arrangement for blood-shedding by sacrifice entered into both; that the high priest of both offered blood as an expiation; that the holy place was entered with blood, and that consequently there was death in both the arrangements or dispensations. The former arrangement or dispensation was ratified with blood, and it was equally proper that the new arrangement should be also. The point of comparison is not that Moses made a will or testament which could be of force only when he died, and that the same thing was required in the new dispensation, but it is that the former covenant was ratified by blood, or by the death of a victim, and that it might be expected that the new dispensation would be confirmed, and that it was, in fact, confirmed in the same manner. In this view of the argument what pertinency would there be in introducing an illustration respecting a will and the manner in which it became efficient. Heb 9:18. It seems clear, therefore, to me, that the word rendered testament here is to be taken in the sense in which it is ordinarily used in the New Testament. The opinion that the word here means such a Divine arrangement as is commonly denoted a "covenant," and not testament, is sanctioned by not a few names of eminence in criticism, such as Pierce, Doddridge, Michaelis, Steadel, and the late Dr. J.P. Wilson. Bloomfield says that the connexion here demands this. The principal objections to this view are,

(1.) that it is not proved that no covenants or compacts were valid, except such as were made by the intervention of sacrifices.

(2.) That the word rendered testator διαθεμενος --cannot refer to the death of an animal slain for the purpose of ratifying a

covenant, but must mean either a testator or a contractor, i.e. one of two contracting parties.

(3.) That the word rendered dead Heb 9:17-- νεκροις--means only dead men, and never is applied to the dead bodies of animals. See Stuart on the Heb. p. 442. These objections to the supposition that the passage refers to a covenant or compact, Prof. Stuart says are, in his view, insuperable, and they are certainly entitled to grave consideration. Whether the view above presented is one which can be sustained, we may be better able to determine after an examination of the words and phrases which the apostle uses. Those objections which depend wholly on the philological argument derived from the words used will be considered, of course, in such an examination. It is to be remembered at the outset,

(1.) that the word διαθηκη -diatheke--is never used in the New Testament in the sense of testament or will, unless in this place;

(2.) that it is never used in this sense in the Septuagint; and

(3.) that the Hebrew word --Berith--never has this signification. This is admitted. See Stuart on the Heb. pp. 439, 440. It must require very strong reasons to prove that it has this meaning here, and that Paul has employed the word in a sense differing from its uniform signification elsewhere in the Bible. Compare, however, the remarks of Prof, Stuart ia Biblical Repository, vol. xx. p. 364. There must also of necessity be. αναγκη--That is, it is necessary in order to confirm the covenant, or it would not be binding in cases where this did not occur. The necessity in the case is simply to make it valid or obligatory. So we say now, there must "necessarily" be a seal, or a deed would not be valid. The fair interpretation of this is, that this was the common and established custom in making a "covenant" with God, or confirming the arrangement with him in regard to salvation. To this it is objected, (see the first objection above,) that "it is

yet to be made out that no covenants were valid except those by the intervention of sacrifices." In reply to this, we may observe,

(1.) that the point to be made out is not that this was a custom in compacts between man and man, but between man and his Maker. There is no evidence, as it seems to me, that the apostle alludes to a compact between man and man. The mistake on this subject has arisen partly from the use of the word "testament" by our translators, in the sense of will--supposing that it must refer to some transaction relating to man only; and partly from the insertion of the word "men" in Heb 9:17, in the translation of the phrase--επινεκροις upon the dead," or "over the dead."- But it is not necessary to suppose that there is a reference here to any transaction between man and man at all, as the whole force of the illustration introduced by the apostle will be retained if we suppose him speaking only of a covenant between man and God. Then his assertion will be simply that, in the arrangement between God and man, there was a necessity of the death of something, or of the shedding of blood in order to ratify it. This view will save the necessity of proof that the custom of ratifying compacts between man and man by sacrifice prevailed. Whether that can be made out or not, the assertion of the apostle may be true, that in the arrangement which God makes with man, sacrifice was necessary in order to confirm or ratify it.

(2.) The point to be made out is, not that such a custom is or was universal among all nations, but that it was the known and regular opinion among the Hebrews that a sacrifice was necessary in a "covenant "with God, in the same way as if we should say that a deed was not valid without a seal, it would not be necessary to show this in regard to all nations, but only that it is the law or the custom in the nation where the writer lived, and at the time when he lived. Other nations may have very different modes or confirming or ratifying a deed and the

same nation may have different methods at various times. The fact or custom to which I suppose there is allusion here, is that of sacrificing an animal to ratify the arrangement between man and his Maker, commonly called a "covenant;" In regard to the existence of such a custom, particularly among the Hebrews? we may make the following observations. It was the common mode of ratifying the "covenant" between God and man. That was done over a sacrifice, or by the shedding of blood. So the covenant with Abraham was ratified by slaying an heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. The animals were divided and a burning lamp passed between them, Gen 15:9,18. So the covenant made with the Hebrews in the wilderness was ratified in the same manner, Ex 24:6, seq. Thus, in Jer 34:18, God speaks of the "men that had transgressed his covenant which they had made before him when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof." See also Zech 9:11. Indeed, all the Jewish sacrifices were regarded as a ratification of the covenant. It was never supposed that it was ratified or confirmed in a proper manner without such a sacrifice. Instances occur, indeed, in which there was no sacrifice offered when a covenant was made between man and man, see Gen 23:16, 24:9, De 25:7,9, Ruth 4:7; but these cases do not establish the point that the custom did not prevail of ratifying a covenant with God by the blood of sacrifice. Further; the terms used in the Hebrew in regard to making a covenant with God, prove that it was understood to be ratified by sacrifice, or that the death of a victim was necessary. . Berith "to cut a covenant"--the word karath meaning to cut; to cut off; to cut down; and the allusion being to the victims offered in sacrifice, and cut in pieces on occasion of entering into a covenant. See Gen 15:10, Jer 34:18,19. The same idea is expressed in the Greek phrases ορκιατεμνειντεμνεινσπονδας, and in the Latin icere faedus. Comp. Virgil, AEn, viii. 641.

Et caesa jungebant faedera porca

These considerations show that it was the common sentiment, alike among the Hebrews and the heathen, that a covenant with God was to be ratified or sanctioned by sacrifice; and the statement of Paul here is, that the death of a sacrificial victim was needful to confirm or ratify such a covenant with God. It was not secure, or confirmed, until blood was thus shed. This was well understood among the Hebrews, that all their covenant transactions with God were to be ratified by a sacrifice; and Paul says that the same principle must apply to any arrangement between God and men. Hence he goes on to show that it was necessary that a sacrificial victim should die in the new Covenant which God established by man through the Mediator. See Heb 9:23. This I understand to be the sum of the argument here. It is not that every contract made between man and man was to be ratified or confirmed by a sacrifice--for the apostle is not discussing that point; but it is that every similar transaction with God must be based on such a sacrifice, and that no covenant with him could be complete without such a sacrifice. This was provided for in the ancient dispensation by the sacrifices which were constantly offered in their worship; in the new, by the one great Sacrifice offered on the cross. Hence all our approaches to God are based on the supposition of such a sacrifice, and are, as it were, ratified over it. We ratify or confirm such a covenant arrangement, not by offering the sacrifice anew, but by recalling it in a proper manner when we celebrate the death of Christ, and when, in view of his cross, we solemnly pledge ourselves to be the Lord's.

The death of the testator. According to our common version, the death of him who makes a will. But if the views above expressed are correct, this should be rendered the covenanter, or "the victim set apart to be slain." The Greek will admit of the translation of the word διαθεμενος --diathemenos --by the word covenanter, if the word διαθηκη diatheke--is rendered covenant. To such a translation here as would make the word refer to a victim slain in order to ratify a covenant, it is

objected that "the word has no such meaning anywhere else. It must either mean a testator, or a contractor, i. e. one of two covenanting parties. But where is the death of a person covenanting made necessary in order to confirm the covenant? Prof. Stuart, in loc. To this objection I remark respectfully,

(1.) that the word is never used in the sense of testator, either in the New Testament or the Old, unless it be here. It is admitted of the word διαθηκη, diatheke--by Prof. Smart himself, that it never means will, or testament, unless it be here, and it is equally true of the word used here that it never means one who makes a will. If, therefore, it should be that a meaning quite uncommon, or wholly unknown in the usage of the Scriptures, is to be assigned to the use of the word here, why should it be assumed that that unusual meaning should be that of making a will, and not that of confirming a covenant?

(2.) If the apostle used the word διαθηκη-- diatheke --in the sense of a covenant in this passage, nothing is more natural than that he should use the corresponding word διαθεμενος--diathemenos--in the sense of that by which a covenant was ratified. He wished to express the idea that the covenant was alway ratified by the death of a victim--a sacrifice of an animal under the law, and the sacrifice of the Redeemer under the gospel-- and no word would so naturally convey that idea as the one from which the word covenant was derived. It is to be remembered, also, that there was no word to express that thought. Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek furnished such a word; nor have we now any word to express that thought, but are obliged to use circumlocution to convey the idea. The word covenanter would not do it; nor the words victim or sacrifice. We can express the idea only by some phrase like this--" the victim set apart to be slain to ratify the covenant." But it was not an unusual thing for the apostle Paul to make use of a word in a sense quite peculiar to himself. Comp. 2Cor 4:17.

(3.) The word διατιθημι diatithemi--properly means, to place apart, to set in order, to arrange. It is rendered appoint in Lk 22:29; made and make, with reference to a covenant, Actst 3:25, Heb 8:10, 10:16. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in the passage before us. The idea of placing, laying, disposing, arranging, etc, enters into the word--as to place wares or merchandize for sale, to arrange a contract, etc. See Passow. The fair meaning of the word here may be, whatever goes to arrange, dispose, or settle the covenant, or to make the covenant secure and firm. If the reference be to a compact, it cannot relate to one of the contracting parties, because the death of neither is necessary to confirm it. But it may refer to that which was well known as an established opinion, that a covenant with God was ratified only by a sacrifice. Still, it must be admitted that this use of the word is not elsewhere found, and the only material question is, whether it is to be presumed that the apostle would employ a word in a single instance, in a peculiar signification, where the connexion would not render it difficult to be understood. This must be admitted, that he might, whichever view is taken of the meaning of this passage; for, on the supposition that he refers here to a will, it is conceded that he uses the word in a sense which does not once occur elsewhere either in the Old Testament or the New. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here may, without impropriety, be regarded as referring to the victim that was slain in order to ratify a covenant with God; and that the meaning is, that such a covenant was not regarded as confirmed until the victim was slain. It may be added that the authority of Michaelis, Macknight, Doddridge, Bloomfield, and Dr. J.P. Wilson, is a proof that such an interpretation cannot be a very serious departure from the proper use of a Greek word.

17 For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

For a testament. Such an arrangement as God enters into with man. See the remarks on Heb 9:16. Is of force. Is ratified, or

confirmed--in the same way as a deed or compact is confirmed by affixing a seal. After men are dead. επινεκροις. "Over the dead." That is, in accordance with the view given above, after the animal is dead; or over the body of the animal slain for sacrifice, and to confirm the covenant. "For a covenant is completed or confirmed over dead sacrifices, seeing it is never of force as long as the victim set apart for its ratification is still living." MSS. Notes of Dr. J. P. Wilson. To this interpretation it is objected, that "νεκροις--nekrois--means only dead men; but men surely were not sacrificed by the Jews, as a mediating sacrifice in order to confirm a covenant." Prof. Stuart, in loc. In regard to this objection, and to the proper meaning of the passage, we may remark,

(1,) that the word "men" is not in the Greek, nor is it necessarily implied, unless it be in the use of the Greek word rendered dead. The proper translation is, "upon, or over the dead." The use of the word "men" here by our translators would seem to limit it to the making of a will.

(2.) It is to be presumed, unless there is positive proof to the contrary, that the Greeks and Hebrews used the word dead as it is used by other people, and that it might refer to deceased animals, or vegetables, as well as to men. A sacrifice that had been offered was dead; a tree that had fallen was dead; an animal that had been torn by other wild animals was dead. It is possible that a people might have one word to refer to dead men, and another to dead animals, and another to dead vegetables; but what is the evidence that the Hebrews or the Greeks had such words?

(3.) What is the meaning of this very word--νεκρος nekros-,in Heb 6:1, 9:14, of this very epistle, when it is applied to works--"dead works"--if it never refer to anything but men? Comp. Jas 2:17,20,26, Eph 2:1,5, Rev 3:1. In Eccl 9:4, it is applied to a dead lion. I suppose, therefore, that the Greek phrase here will admit of the interpretation which the "exigency of the place" seems to demand, and that the idea is,

that a covenant with God was ratified over the animals slain ill sacrifice, and was not considered as confirmed until the sacrifice was killed. Otherwise. Since--επει. That is, unless this takes place it will be of no force. It is of no strength. It is not strong--ισχυει--it is not confirmed or ratified. While the testator liveth. Or while the animal selected to confirm the covenant is alive. It can be confirmed only by its being slain. A full examination of the meaning of this passage (Heb 9:16,17) may be found in an article in the Biblical Repository, vol. xx. pp. 51--71, and in Prof. Stuart's reply to that article. Bib. Repos. xx. pp. 356--381.

18 Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.

Whereupon. οθεν--Whence. Or since this is a settled principle, or an indisputable fact, it occurred in accordance with this, that the first covenant was confirmed by the shedding of blood. The admitted principle which the apostle had stated, that the death of the victim was necessary to confirm the covenant, was the reason why the first covenant was ratified with blood. If there were any doubt about the correctness of the interpretation given above, that Heb 9:16,17 refer to a covenant, and not a will, this verse would seem to be enough to remove it. For how could the fact, that a will is not binding until he who makes it is dead, be a reason why a covenant should be confirmed by blood? What bearing would such a fact have on the question, whether it ought or ought, not to be confirmed in this manner. Or how could that fact, though it is universal, be given as a reason to account for the fact that the covenant made by the instrumentality of Moses was ratified by blood? No possible connexion can be seen in such reasoning. But admit that Paul had stated, Heb 9:16, Heb 9:17, a general principle that in all covenant transactions with God the death of a victim was necessary, and everything is plain. We then see why he offered the sacrifice and sprinkled the blood. It was not on the basis of such reasoning as this: "The death of a man who makes a will is indispensable before the will is of binding force, THEREFORE it was that Moses confirmed the covenant

made with our fathers by the blood of a sacrifice; "but by such reasoning as this: "It is a great principle that in order to ratify a covenant between God and his people a victim should be slain, therefore it was that Moses ratified the old covenant in this manner, and therefore it was also that the death of a victim was necessary under the new dispensation." Here the reasoning of Paul is clear and explicit; but who could see the force of the former? Prof. Stuart indeed connects this verse with Heb 9:15, and says that the course of thought is, "The new covenant of redemption from sin was sanctioned by the death of Jesus; consequently, or wherefore, οθεν, the old covenant, which is a type of the new, was sanctioned by the blood of victims." But is this the reasoning of Paul? Does he say that because the blood of a Mediator was to be shed under the new dispensation, and because the old was a type of this, that THEREFORE the old was confirmed by blood? Is he not rather accounting for the shedding of blood at all, and showing that it was necessary that the blood of the Mediator should be shed, rather than assuming that, and from that arguing that a typical shedding of blood was needful? Besides, on this supposition, why is the statement in Heb 9:16,17 introduced? What bearing have these verses in the train of thought? What are they but an inexplicable obstruction? The first testament. Or rather covenant-- the word testament being supplied by the translators.

Was dedicated. Marg. Purified. The word used to ratify, to confirm, to consecrate, to sanction. Literally, to renew.

Without blood. It was ratified by the blood of the animals that were slain in sacrifice. The blood was then sprinkled on the principal objects that were regarded as holy under that dispensation.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people. When he had recited all the law, and had given all the commandments entrusted Him to deliver, Ex 24:8

He took the blood of calves and of goats. This passage has given great perplexity to commentators from the fact that Moses, in his account of the transactions connected with the ratification of the covenant with the people, Ex 24:3 mentions only a part of the circumstances here referred to. He says nothing of the blood of calves and of goats; nothing of water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop; nothing of sprinkling the book, the tabernacle, or the vessels of the ministry. It has been made a question, therefore, whence Paul obtained a knowledge of these circumstances? Since the account is not contained in the Old Testament, it must have been either by tradition or by direct inspiration. The latter supposition is hardly probable, for

(1.)the information here can hardly be regarded as of sufficient importance to have required an original revelation; for the illustration would have had sufficient force to sustain his conclusion if the literal account in Exodus only had been given, that Moses sprinkled the people; but

(2.) such an original act of inspiration here would not have been consistent with the object of the apostle. In that argument it was essential that he should state only the facts about the ancient dispensation which were admitted by the Hebrews themselves. Any statement of his own about things which they did not concede to be true, or which was not well understood as a custom, might have been called in question, and would have done much to invalidate the entire force of the argument. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the facts here referred to had been preserved by tradition; and in regard to this, and the authority due to such a tradition, we may remark,

(1.) that it was well known that the Jews had a great number of traditions which they carefully preserved;

(2.) that there is no improbability in the supposition that many events in their history would be preserved in this manner, since in the small compass of a volume like the Old Testament it cannot be presumed that all the events of their nation had been recorded;

(3.) though they had many traditions of a trifling nature, and many which were false, (comp. Mt 15:2,) yet they doubtless had many that were true; (4.) in referring to those traditions, there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul may have been guided by the Spirit of inspiration in selecting only those which were true; and (5.) nothing is more probable than what is here stated. If Moses sprinkled "the people;" if he read "the book of the law" then, (Ex 24:7;) and if this was regarded as a solemn act of ratifying a covenant with God, nothing would be more natural than that he should sprinkle the book of the covenant, and even the tabernacle and its various sacred utensils. We are to remember, also, that it was common among the Hebrews to sprinkle blood for the purpose of consecrating, or as an emblem of purifying. Thus Aaron and his sons and their garments were sprinkled with blood when they were consecrated to the office of priests, Ex 29:19-21; the blood of sacrifices was sprinkled on the altar, Lev 1:5,11, 3:2,13; and blood was sprinkled before the veil of the sanctuary, Lev 4:16,17; comp. Lev 6:27, 7:14. So Josephus speaks of the garments of Aaron and of his sons being sprinkled with "the blood of the slain beasts, and with spring water." "Having consecrated them and their garments," he says, "for seven days together, he did the same to the tabernacle, and the vessels thereto belonging, both with oil and with the blood of bulls and of rams," Ant. B. iii. chap. viii. & 6. These circumstances show the strong probability of the truth of what is here affirmed by Paul, while it is impossible to prove that Moses did not sprinkle the book and the tabernacle in the manner stated. The mere omission by

Moses cannot demonstrate that it was not done. On the phrase "the blood of calves and of goats," Heb 9:12.

With water. Agreeably to the declaration of Josephus that "spring water was used." In Lev 14:49-51, it is expressly mentioned that the blood of the bird that was killed to cleanse a house from the plague of leprosy should be shed over running water, and that the blood and the water should be sprinkled on the walls. It has been suggested also, (see Bloomfield,) that the use of water was necessary in order to prevent the blood from coagulating, or so as to: make it possible to sprinkle it.

And scarlet wool. Marg, Purple. The word here used denotes crimson, or deep scarlet. The colour was obtained from a small insect which was found adhering to the shoots of a species of oak in Spain and in Western Asia, of about the size of a pea. It was regarded as the most valuable of the colours for dyeing, and was very expensive. Why the wool used by Moses was of this colour is not known unless it be because it was the most expensive of colours, and thus accorded with everything employed in the construction of the tabernacle and its utensils. Wool appears to have been used in order to absorb and retain the blood.

And hyssop. That is, a bunch of hyssop intermingled with the wool, or so connected with it as to constitute a convenient instrument for sprinkling. Comp. Lev 14:51. Hyssop is a low shrub, regarded as one of the smallest of the plants, and her me put in contrast with the cedar of Lebanon. It sprung out of the rocks or walls, 1Kgs 4:33, and was used for purposes of purification. The term seems to have comprised not only the common hyssop, but also lavender and other aromatic plants. Its fragrance, as well as its size, may have suggested the idea of using it in the sacred services of the tabernacle. The appearance of the hyssop is represented by the foregoing engraving.

And sprinkled both the book, This circumstance is not mentioned by Moses, but it has been shown above not to be improbable. Some expositors, however, in order to avoid the difficulty in the passage, have taken this in connexion with the word λαβων -rendered, "he took" "--meaning, "taking the blood, and the book itself;" but the more natural and proper construction is, that the book was sprinkled with the blood.

And all the people. Moses says, "and sprinkled it on the people," Ex 24:8. We are not to suppose that either Moses or Paul designs to say that the blood was actually sprinkled on each one of the three millions of people in the wilderness; but the meaning doubtless is, that the blood was sprinkled over the people, though in fact it might have fallen on a few. So a man now standing on an elevated place, and surrounded by a large assembly, if he should sprinkle water over them from the place where he stood, might be said to sprinkle it on the people, though in fact but few might have been touched by it. The act would be equally significant whether the emblem fell on few or many.

Saying, This is the blood of the testament. Of the covenant. Heb 9:16,17. That is, this is the blood by which the covenant is ratified. It was the means used to confirm it; the sacred and solemn form by which it was made sure. When this was done, the covenant between God and the people was confirmed --as a covenant between man and man is when it is sealed. Which God hath enjoined unto you. In Ex 24:8, "which God hath made with you. The language used by Paul, "which God hath enjoined" -- ενετειλατο-- commanded--shows that he did not regard this as strictly of the nature of a covenant, or compact. When a compact is made between parties, one does not enjoin or command the other, but it is a mutual agreement. In the transactions between God and man, though called Berith--or διαθηκη--diatheke--the idea of a covenant or compact is so far excluded that God never loses his right to command or enjoin. It is not a transaction between equals, or an agreement; it is a solemn arrangement on the part of God which he

proposes to men, and which he enjoins them to embrace; which they are not indeed at liberty to disregard, but which, when embraced, is appropriately ratified by some solemn act on their part. Compare Heb 8:6.

20 saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

21 Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

He sprinkled--both the tabernacle. This circumstance is not stated by Moses. On the probability that this was done, Heb 9:19. The account of setting up the tabernacle occurs in Ex 40. In that account it is said that Moses anointed the tabernacle with the holy anointing oil, Heb 9:9-11. Josephus (Ant. B. III. ch. viii. & 6) says that he consecrated it, and the vessels thereto belonging, with the blood of bulls and of rams. This was undoubtedly the tradition in the time of Paul, and no one can prove that it is not correct. And all the vessels of the ministry. Employed in the service of God. The altar, the laver, (Ex 40:10,11,) the censers, dishes, bowls, etc., which were used in the tabernacle.

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

And almost all things. It is a general custom to purify everything by blood. This rule was not universal, for some things were purified by fire and water, (Nu 31:22,23,) and some by water only, Nu 31:24, Lev 16:26,28. But the exceptions to the general rule were few. Almost everything in the tabernacle and temple service was consecrated or purified by blood. And without shedding of blood is no remission. Remission or forgiveness of sins. That is, though some things were purified by fire and water, yet when the matter pertained to the forgiveness of sins, it was universally true that no sins were pardoned except by the shedding of blood. Some impurities might be removed by water and fire, but the stain of sin could be removed only by blood. This declaration referred, in its primary meaning, to the Jewish rites; and the sense is, that under that dispensation it was universally true that in order to the forgiveness of sin blood must be shed. But

it contains a truth of higher order and importance still. It is universally true that sin never has been, and never will be forgiven, except in connexion with and in virtue of the shedding of blood. It is on this principle that the plan of salvation by the atonement is based, and on this that God in fact bestows pardon on men. There is not the slightest evidence that any man has ever been pardoned except through the blood shed for the remission of sins. The infidel who rejects the atonement has no evidence that his sins are pardoned; the man who lives in the neglect of the gospel, though he has abundant evidence that he is a sinner, furnishes none that his sins are forgiven; and the Mohamadin and the heathen can point to no proof that their sins are blotted out. It remains to be demonstrated that one single member of the human family has ever had the slightest evidence of pardoned sin, except through the blood of expiation. In the Divine arrangement there is no principle better established than this, that all sin which is forgiven is remitted through the blood of the atonement; a principle which has never been departed from hitherto, and which never will be. It follows, therefore,

(1.) that no sinner can hope for forgiveness except through the blood of Christ;

(2.) that if men are ever saved they must be willing to rely on the merits of that blood;

(3.) that all men are on a level in regard to salvation, since all are to be saved in the same way; and

(4.) that there will be one and the same song in heaven--the song of redeeming love.

23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The patterns of things in the heavens. The tabernacle and its various utensils. Heb 8:5. Be purified with these. With water and blood, and by these ceremonies. But the heavenly things themselves. The heavenly tabernacle or sanctuary into which Christ has entered, and where he performs the functions of his ministry. The use of the word purified here applied to heaven, does not imply that heaven was before unholy, but it denotes that it is now made accessible to sinners; or that they may come and worship there in an acceptable manner. The ancient tabernacle was purified or consecrated by the blood of the victims slain, so that men might approach with acceptance and worship; the heavens by purer blood are rendered accessible to the guilty. The necessity for "better sacrifices" in regard to the latter was, that it was designed to make the conscience pure, and because the service in heaven is more holy than any rendered on earth. With better sacrifices than these. To wit, the sacrifice made by the offering of the Lord Jesus on the cross. This infinitely surpassed in value all that had been offered under the Jewish dispensation.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands. Into the temple or tabernacle. The Jewish high priest alone entered into the most holy place; and the other priests into the holy place. Jesus, being of the tribe of Judah, and not of Levi, never entered the temple proper. He had access only to the courts of the temple, in the same way as any other Jew had. Mt 21:12. He has entered into the true temple--heaven of which the earthly tabernacle was the type. Which are the figures of the true. Literally, the antitypes αντιτυπα. The word properly means that which is formed after a model, pattern, or type; and then that which corresponds to something, or answers to, it. The idea here is, that the type or fashion--the true figure or form--was shown to Moses in the Mount, and

then the tabernacle was made after that model, or corresponded to it. The true original figure is heaven itself; the tabernacle was an antitype of that--or was so formed as in some sense to correspond to it. That is, it corresponded in regard to the matters under consideration--the most holy place denoted heaven; the mercy-seat and the shekinah were symbols of the presence of God, and of the fact that he shows mercy in heaven; the entrance of the high priest was emblematical of the entrance of the Redeemer into heaven; the sprinkling of the blood there was a type of what the Redeemer would do in heaven. Now to appear in the presence of God for us. As the Jewish high priest appeared before the shekinah, the symbol of the Divine Presence in the tabernacle, so Christ appears before God himself in our behalf in heaven. He has gone to plead for our salvation; to present the merits of his blood as a permanent reason why we should be saved, Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25.

25 nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

And as it is appointed unto men once to die. Or, "since it is appointed unto men to die once only." The object of this is to illustrate the fact that Christ died but once for sin, and that is done by showing that the most important events pertaining to man occur but once. Thus it is with death. That does not, and cannot occur many times. It is the great law of our being, that men die but once, and hence the same thing was to be expected to occur in regard to him who made the atonement. It could not be supposed that this great law pertaining to man would be departed from in the case of him who died to make the atonement, and that he would repeatedly undergo the pains of death. The same thing was true in regard to the judgment. Man is to be judged once, and but once. The decision is to be final, and is not to be repeated. In like

manner, there was a fitness that the great redeemer should die but once, and that his death should, without being repeated, determine the destiny of man. There was a remarkable oneness in the great events which most affected men; and neither death, the judgment, nor the atonement could be repeated. In regard to the declaration here, that "it is appointed unto men once to die," we may observe,

(1,) that death is the result of appointment, Gen 3:19, It is not the effect of chance, or hap-hazard. It is not a "debt of nature." It is not the condition to which man was subject by the laws of his creation. It is not to be accounted for by the mere principles of physiology. God could as well have made the heart to play for ever as for fifty years. Death is no more the regular result of physical laws than the guillotine and the gallows are. It is, in all cases, the result of intelligent appointment, and for an adequate cause.

(2.) That cause, or the reason of that appointment, is sin. Rom 6:23. This is the adequate cause; this explains the whole of it. Holy beings do not die. There is not the slightest proof that an angel in heaven has died, or that any perfectly holy being has ever died, except the Lord Jesus. In every death, then, we have a demonstration that the race is guilty; in each case of mortality we have an affecting memento that we are individually transgressors.

(3.) Death occurs but once in this world. It cannot be repeated, if we should desire to have it repeated. Whatever truths or facts, then, pertain to death; whatever lessons it is calculated to convey, pertain to it as an event which is not to occur again. That which is to occur but once in an eternity of existence acquires, from that very fact, if there were no other circumstances, an immense importance. What is to be done but once, we should wish to be done well. We should make all proper preparation for it; we should regard it with singular

interest. If preparation is to be made for it, we should make all which we expect ever to make. A man who is to cross the ocean but once--to go away from his home never to return--should make the right kind of preparation. He cannot come back to take that which he has forgotten; to arrange that which he has neglected; to give counsel which he has failed to do; to ask forgiveness for offences for which he has neglected to seek pardon. And so of death. A man who dies, dies but once. He cannot come back again to make preparation, if he has neglected it; to repair the evils which he has caused by a wicked life; or to implore pardon for sins for which he had failed to ask forgiveness. Whatever is to be done with reference to death, is to be done once for all before he dies.

(4.) Death occurs to all. "It is appointed unto men"--to the race. It is not an appointment for one, but for all. No one is appointed by name to die; and not an individual is designated as one who shall escape. No exception is made in favour of youth, beauty, or blood; no rank or station is exempt; no merit, no virtue, no patriotism, no talent, can purchase freedom from it. In every other sentence which goes out against men, there may be some hope of reprieve. Here there is none. We cannot meet an individual who is not under sentence of death. It is not only the poor wretch in the dungeon, doomed to the gallows, who is to die --it is the rich man in his palace; the gay trifler in the assembly room; the friend that we embrace and love; and she whom we meet in the crowded saloon of fashion, with all the graces of accomplishment and adorning. Each one of these is just as much under sentence of death as the poor wretch in the cell, and the execution on any one of them may occur before his. It is, too, for substantially the same cause, and is as really deserved. It is for sin that all are doomed to death; and the fact that we must die should be a constant remembrance of our guilt.

(5.) As death is to occur to us but once, there is a cheering interest in the reflection that when it is passed it is passed for ever. The dying pang, the chill, the cold sweat, are not to be repeated. Death is not to approach us often--he is to be allowed to come to us but once. When we have once passed through the dark valley, we shall have the assurance that we shall never tread its gloomy way again. Once, then, let us be willing to die--since we can die but once; and let us rejoice in the assurance which the gospel furnishes, that they who die in the Lord leave the world to go where death in any form is unknown. But after this the judgment. The apostle does not say how long after death this will be, nor is it possible for us to know, Acts 1:7; Mt 24:36. We may suppose, however, that there will be two periods in which there will be an act of judgment passed on those who die.

(1.) Immediately after death, when they pass into the eternal world, when their destiny will be made known to them. This seems to be necessarily implied in the supposition that they will continue to live, and to be happy or miserable after death. This act of judgment may not be formal and public, but will be such as to show them what must be the issues of the final day; and as the result of that interview with God, they will be made happy or miserable until the final doom shall be pronounced.

(2.) The more public and formal act of judgment, when the whole world will be assembled at the bar of Christ, Mt 25. The decision of that day will not change or reverse the former; but the trial will be of such a nature as to bring out all the deeds done on earth, and the sentence which will be pronounced will be in view of the universe, and will fix the everlasting doom. Then the body will have been raised; the affairs of the world will be wound up; the elect will all be gathered in, and the state of retribution will commence, to continue for ever. The main thought of the apostle here may be, that after death will commence a state of retribution which can never change. Hence there was a propriety that Christ

should die but once. In that future world he would not die to make atonement, for there all will be fixed and final. If men, therefore, neglect to avail themselves of the benefits of the atonement here, the opportunity will be lost for ever. In that changeless state, which constitutes the eternal judgment, no sacrifice will be again offered for sin; there will be no opportunity to embrace that Saviour who was rejected here on earth.

28 so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

So Christ was once offered. As men are to die but once, and as all beyond the grave is fixed by the judgment, so that his death there would make no change in the destiny, there was a propriety that he should die but once for sin. The argument is, there is one probation only, and therefore there was need of but one sacrifice, or of his dying but once. If death were to occur frequently in the existence of each individual, and if each intermediate period were a state of probation, then there might be a propriety that an atonement should be made with reference to each state. Or if beyond the grave there were a state of probation still, then also there might be a propriety that an atoning sacrifice should be offered there. But since neither of these things is true, there was a fitness that the great Victim should die but once. To bear the sins of many.

To suffer and die on account of their sins. Isa 53:6, Isa 53:11; Gal 3:13. The phrase does not mean

(1.) that Christ was a sinner--for that was in no sense true. See Heb 7:26. Nor

(2.) that he literally bore the penalty due to transgression--for that is equally untrue. The penalty of the law for sin is all which the law when executed inflicts on the offender for his transgress loud and includes, in fact, remorse of conscience, overwhelming despair, and eternal punishment. But Christ

did not suffer for ever, nor did he experience remorse of conscience, nor did he endure utter despair. Nor

(3.) does it mean that he was literally punished for our sins. Punishment pertains only to the guilty. An innocent being may suffer for what another does, but there is no propriety in saying that he is punished for it. A father suffers much from the misconduct of a son, but we do not say that he is punished for it; a child suffers much from the intemperance of a parent, but no one would say that it was a punishment on the child. Men always connect the idea of criminality with punishment; and when we say that a man is punished, we suppose at once that there is guilt. The phrase here means simply, that Christ endured sufferings in his own person which, if they had been inflicted on us, would have been the proper punishment of sin. He who was innocent interposed, and received on himself what was descending to meet us, and consented to be treated as he would have deserved if he had been a sinner. Thus he bore what was due to us; and this in Scripture phrase is what is meant by bearing our iniquities. Isa 53:4.

And unto them that look for him. To his people. It is one of the characteristics of Christians that they look for the return of their Lord, 1Timm 2:13, 2Pet 3:12; comp. 1Thes 1:10. They fully believe that he will come. They earnestly desire that he will come, 2Ti 4:8, Rev 22:20. They are waiting for his appearing, 1Thes 1:10. He left the world and ascended to heaven, but he will again return to the earth, and his people are looking for that time as the period when they shall be raised up from their graves; when they shall be publicly acknowledged to be his, and when they shall be admitted to heaven. Jn 14:3.

Shall he appear the second time. He first appeared as the Man of sorrows to make atonement for sin. His second appearance will be as the Lord of his people, and the Judge of the quick and the dead, Mt 25:31; see Acts 1:11. The apostle does not say when this would be, nor is any intimation given in the

Scriptures when it will occur. It is, on the contrary, everywhere declared that this is concealed from men, (Acts 1:7, Mt 24:36;) and all that is known respecting the time is, that it will be suddenly, and at an unexpected moment, Mt 24:42,44,50.

Without sin. That is, when he comes again he will not make himself a sin-offering; or will not come in order to make atonement for sin. It is not implied that when he came the first time he was in any sense a sinner, but that he came then with reference to sin, or that the main object of his incarnation was to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" When he comes the second time, it will be with reference to another object.

Unto salvation. That is, to receive his friends and followers to eternal salvation. He will come to save them from all their sins and temptation; to raise them from their graves; to place them at his right hand in glory, and to confirm them in the everlasting inheritance which he has promised to all who truly love him, and who wait for his appearing.

In view of this anticipated return of the Redeemer, we may remark---

(1.) There is a propriety that the Lord Jesus should thus return. He came once to be humbled, despised, and put to death; and there is a fitness that he should come to be honoured in his own world.

(2.) Every person on earth is interested in the fact that he will return, for "every eye shall see him," Rev 1:7. All who are now in their graves, and all who now live, and all who will hereafter live, will behold the Redeemer in his glory.

(3.) It will not be merely to gaze upon him, and to admire his magnificence that they will see him. It will be for greater and more momentous purposes--with reference to an eternal doom.

(4.) The great mass of men are not prepared to meet him. They do not believe that he will return; they do not desire that he should appear; they are not ready for the solemn interview which they will have with him. His appearing now would overwhelm them with surprise and horror. There is nothing in the future which they less expect and desire than the second coming of the Son of God; and in the present state of the world his appearance would produce almost universal consternation and despair. It would be like the coming of the flood of waters on the old world; like the sheets of fire on the cities of the plain, or as death now comes to the great mass of those who die.

(5.) Christians are prepared for his coming. They believe in it; they desire it; they are expecting it. In this they are distinguished from all the world besides; and they would be ready to hail his coming as that of a friend, and to rejoice in his appearance as that of their Saviour.

(6.) Let us, then, live in habitual preparation for his advent. To each one of us he will come soon; to all he will come suddenly. Whether he come to remove us by death, or whether in the clouds of heaven to judge the world, the period is not far distant when we shall see him. Yes, our eyes shall behold the Son of God in his glory! That which we have long desired--a sight of our Saviour, who died for us--shall soon, very soon, be granted unto us. No Christian begins a week or a day in which there is not a possibility that before its close he may have seen the Son of God in his glory; none lies down upon his bed at night who may not, when the morning dawns upon this world, be gazing with infinite delight on the glories of the great Redeemer in the heavens.

Hebrews-10

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.

For the law, having a shadow. That is, the whole of the Mosaic economy was a shadow; for so the word law is often used. The word shadow here refers to a rough outline of anything, a mere sketch, such as a carpenter draws with a piece of chalk, or such as an artist delineates when he is about to make a picture. He sketches an outline of the object which he designs to draw, which has some resemblance to it, but is not "the very image;" for it is not yet complete. The words rendered "the very image" refer to a painting or statue which is finished, where every part is an exact copy of the original. The "good things to come" here refer to the future blessings which would be conferred on man by the gospel. The idea is, that under the ancient sacrifices there was an imperfect representation; a dim outline of the blessings which the gospel would impart to men. They were a typical representation; they were not such that it could be pretended that they would answer the purpose of the things themselves Which they were to represent, and would make those who offered them perfect. Such a rude outline --such a mere sketch, or imperfect delineation--could no more answer the purpose of saving the soul than the rough sketch which an architect makes would answer the purpose of a house, or than the first outline which a painter draws would answer the purpose of a perfect and finished portrait. All that could be done by either would be to convey some distant and obscure idea of what the house or the picture might be, and this was all that was done by the law of Moses. Can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually. The sacrifices here particularly referred to were those which were offered on the great day of atonement. These were regarded as the most sacred and efficacious of all; and yet the apostle says

that the very fact that they were offered every year showed that there must be some deficiency about them, or they would have ceased to be offered. Make the comers there unto perfect. They could not free them from the stains of guilt; they could not give ease to a troubled conscience; there was in them no efficacy by which sin could be put away. Comp. Heb 7:11, 9:9.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Marg. "Or they would have." The sense is the same. The idea is, that the very fact that they were repeated showed that there was some deficiency in them as to the matter of cleansing the soul from sin. If they had answered all the purposes of a sacrifice in putting away guilt, there would have been no need of repeating them in this manner. They were, in this respect, like medicine. If that which is given to a patient heals him, there is no need of repeating it; but if it is repeated often it shows that there was some deficiency in it, and if taken periodically through a man's life, and the disease should still remain, it would show that it was not sufficient to effect his cure. So it was with the offerings made by the Jews. They were offered every year, and indeed every day, and still the disease of sin remained. The conscience was not satisfied; and the guilty felt that it was necessary that the sacrifice should be repeated again and again.

Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. That is, if their sacrifices had so availed as to remove their past sins, and to procure forgiveness, they would have had no more trouble of conscience on account of them. They would not have felt that it was necessary to make these sacrifices over and over again in order to find peace. When a man has full evidence that an atonement has been-made which will meet all the demands of the law, and which secures the remission of sin, he feels that it is enough. It is all that the case demands, and his conscience may have peace. But when he does not feel this, or has not evidence that his sins are all forgiven, those sins will rise to remembrance,

and he will be alarmed. He may be punished for them after all. Thence it follows, that if a man wants peace he should have good evidence that his sins are forgiven through the blood of the atonement. No temporary expedient; no attempt to cover them up; no effort to forget them will answer the purpose. They must be blotted out if he will have peace--and that can be only through a perfect sacrifice. By the use of the word rendered "conscience" here, it is not meant that he who was pardoned would have no consciousness that he was a sinner, or that he would forget it, but that he would have no trouble of conscience; he would have no apprehension of future wrath. The pardon of sin does not cause it to cease to be remembered. He who is forgiven may have a deeper conviction of its evil than he had ever had before. But he will not be troubled or distressed by it as if it were to expose him to the wrath of God. The remembrance of it will humble him; it will serve to exalt his conceptions of the mercy of God and the glory of the atonement, but it will no longer overwhelm the mind with the dread of hell. This effect, the apostle says, was not produced on the minds of those who offered sacrifices every year. The very fact that they did it showed that the conscience was not at peace.

3 But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year.

4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

As the legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, so it was impossible they should. There was an essential defect in them. 1. They were not of the same nature with us who sinned. 2. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts offered to the justice and government of God. They were not of the same nature that offended, and so could not be suitable. Much less were they of the same nature that was offended; and nothing less than the nature that was offended could make the sacrifice a full satisfaction for the offence. 3. The beasts offered up under the law could not consent to put themselves in the sinner's room and place. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must

voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. The reference here is to the sacrifices which were made on the great day of the atonement, for on that day the blood of bulls and of goats alone was offered. Heb 9:7. Paul here means to say, doubtless, that it was not possible that the blood of those animals should make a complete expiation so as to purify the conscience, and so as to save the sinner from deserved wrath. According to the Divine arrangement, expiation was made by those sacrifices for offences of various kinds against the ritual law of Moses, and pardon for such offences was thus obtained. But the meaning here is, that there was no efficacy in the blood of a mere animal to wash away a moral offence. It could not repair the law; it could not do anything to maintain the justice of God; it had no efficacy to make the heart pure. The mere shedding of the blood of an animal never could make the soul pure. This the apostle states as a truth which must be admitted at once as indisputable; and yet it is probable that many of the Jews had imbibed the opinion that there was such efficacy in blood shed according to the Divine direction, as to remove all stains of guilt from the soul. Heb 9:9,10.

5 Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice
and offering thou wouldest not,
but a body hast thou prepared me:

Wherefore. This word shows that the apostle means to sustain what he had said by a reference to the Old Testament itself. Nothing could be more opposite to the prevailing Jewish opinions about the efficacy of sacrifice than what he had just said. It was, therefore, of the highest importance to defend the position which he had laid down by authority which they would not presume to call in question, and he therefore makes his appeal to their own Scriptures.

When he cometh into the world. When the Messiah came, for the passage evidently referred to him. The Greek is,

"Wherefore coming into the world, he saith." It has been made a question when this is to be understood as spoken--whether when he was born, or when he entered on the work of his ministry. Grotius understands it of the latter. But it is not material to a proper understanding of the passage to determine this. The simple idea is, that since it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, Christ coming into the world made arrangements for a better sacrifice.

He saith. That is, this is the language denoted by his great undertaking; this is what his coming to make an atonement implies. We are not to suppose that Christ formally used these words on any occasion--for we have no record that he did--but this language is that which appropriately expresses the nature of his work. Perhaps also the apostle means to say, that it was originally employed in the Psalm from which it is quoted in reference to him, or was indited by him with reference to his future advent.

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not. This is quoted from Ps 40:6,8. There has been much perplexity felt by expositors in reference to this quotation; and, after all which has been written, it is not entirely removed. The difficulty relates to these points.

(1.) To the question whether the Psalm originally had any reference to the Messiah. The Psalm appears to have pertained merely to David, and it would probably occur to no one on reading it to suppose that it referred to the Messiah, unless it had been so applied by the apostle in this place.

(2.) There are many parts of the Psalm, it has been said, which cannot, without a very forced interpretation, be applied to Christ. See Psl. 40:2,12,14-16.

(3.) The argument of the apostle in the expression, "a body hast thou prepared me," seems to be based on a false translation of

the principles he has done it.--It is not the design of these Notes to go rate an extended examination of questions of this nature. Such examination must be sought in more extended commentaries, and in treatises expressly relating to points of this kind. On the design of Ps 40, and its applicability to the Messiah, the reader may consult Prof. Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus xx., and Kuinoel, in loc. After the most attentive examination which I can give of the Psalm, it seems to me probable that it is one of the Psalms which had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah, and that the apostle has quoted it just as it was meant to be understood by the Holy Spirit, as applicable to him. The reasons for this opinion are briefly these.

(1.) There are such Psalms, as is admitted by all. The Messiah was the hope of the Jewish people; he was made the subject of their most sublime prophecies; and nothing was more natural than that he should be the subject of the songs of their sacred bards. By the spirit of inspiration they saw him in the distant future in the various circumstances in which he would be placed, and they dwelt with delight upon the vision. Comp. Intro. to Isaiah, & 7. iii.

(2.) The fact that it is here applied to the Messiah is a strong circumstance to demonstrate that it had an original applicability to him. This proof is of two kinds. First, that it is so applied by an inspired apostle, which with all who admit his inspiration seems decisive of the question. Second, the fact that he so applied it shows that this was an ancient and admitted interpretation. The apostle was writing to those who had been Jews, and whom he was desirous to convince of the truth of what he was alleging in regard to the nature of the Hebrew sacrifices. For this purpose it was necessary to appeal to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; but it cannot be supposed that he would adduce a passage for proof whose relevancy would not be admitted. The presumption is that the passage was in fact commonly applied as here.

(3.) The whole of the Psalm may be referred to the Messiah without anything forced or unnatural. The Psalm throughout seems to be made up of expressions used by a suffering person, who had indeed been delivered from some evils, but who was expecting many more. The principal difficulties in the way of such an interpretation, relate to the following points.

(a.) In Psl. 40:2, the speaker in the Psalm says, "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock," and on the ground of this he gives thanks to God. But there is no real difficulty in supposing that this may refer to the Messiah. His enemies often potted against his life; laid snares for him, and endeavoured to destroy him; and it may be that he refers to some deliverance from such machinations. If it is objected to this that it is spoken of as having been uttered "when he came into the world," it may be replied, that that phrase does not necessarily refer to the time of his birth, but that he uttered this sentiment some time during the period of his incarnation. "He, coming into the world for the purpose of redemption, made use of this language." In a similar manner we would say of Lafayette, that "he, coming to the United States to aid in the cause of liberty, suffered a wound in battle." That is, during the period in which he was engaged in. this cause, he suffered in this manner.

(b.) The next objection or difficulty relates to the application of Psl. 40:12 to the Messiah, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." To meet this, some have suggested that he refers to the sins of men which he took upon himself, and which he here speaks of as his own. But it is not true that the Lord Jesus so took upon himself the sins of others that they could be called his. They were not his, for he was in every sense" holy, harmless, and undefiled." The true solution of this difficulty probably is, that the word rendered iniquity means, calamity, misfortune, trouble. See Ps 31:10, 1Sam 28:10, 2Kgs 7:9, Ps 38:6; comp. Ps 49:6. The proper idea in the word is that of turning away,

curving, making crooked; and it is thus applied to anything which is perverted or turned from the right way; as when one is turned from the path of rectitude: or commits sin; when one is turned from the way of prosperity or happiness, or is exposed to calamity. This seems to be the idea demanded by the scope of the Psalm, for it is not a penitential Psalm, in which the speaker is recounting his sins, but one in which he is enumerating his sorrows; praising God in the first part of the Psalm for some deliverance already experienced, and supplicating his interposition in view of calamities that he saw to be corning upon him. This interpretation also seems to be demanded in Ps 49:12 of the Psalm by the parallelism. In the former part of the verse, the word to which "iniquity" corresponds is not sin, but evil, i.e. calamity.

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about; Mine iniquities [calamities] hard taken hold upon me."

If the word, therefore, be used here as it often is, and as the scope of the Psalm and the connexion seem to demand, there is no solid objection against applying this verse to the Messiah.

(c.) A third objection to this application of the Psalm to the Messiah is, that it cannot be supposed that he would utter such imprecations on his enemies as are found in Psl. 40:14,15: "Let them be ashamed and confounded; let them be driven backward; let them be desolate." To this it may be replied, that such imprecations are as proper in the mouth of the Messiah as of David; but particularly, it may be said also, that they are improper in the mouth of neither. Both David and the Messiah did, in fact, utter denunciations against the enemies of piety and of God. God does the same thing in his word and by his Providence. There is no evidence of any malignant feeling in this; nor is it inconsistent with the highest benevolence. The lawgiver who says that the murderer shall die, may have a heart full of benevolence; the judge who sentences him to death, may do it with eyes filled with tears. The objections, then, are not of such a nature that it is improper to regard this Psalm: as wholly applicable to the Messiah.

(4.) The Psalm cannot be applied with propriety to David, nor do we know of any one to whom it can be but to the Messiah. When was it true of David that he said that he "had come to do the will of God in view of the fact that God did not require sacrifice and offerings? In what "volume of a book" was it written of him before his birth, that he "delighted to do the will of God?" When was it true, that he had "preached righteousness in the great congregation?" These expressions are such as can be applied properly only to the Messiah, as Paul does here; and taking all these circumstances together, it will probably be regarded as the most proper interpretation to refer the whole Psalm at once to the Redeemer, and to suppose that Paul has used it in strict accordance with its original design. The other difficulties referred to will be considered in the exposition of the passage. The difference between sacrifice and offering is, that the former refers to bloody sacrifices; the latter, to any oblation made to God--as a thank-offering; an offering of flour, oil, etc. Isa 1:11. When it is said, "Sacrifice and, offering thou wouldest not," the meaning is not that such oblations were in no sense acceptable to God--for as his appointment, and when offered with a sincere heart, they doubtless were; but that they were not as acceptable to him as obedience, and especially as the expression is used here, that they could not avail to secure the forgiveness of sins. They were not in their own nature such as was demanded to make an expiation for sin, and hence a body was prepared for the Messiah by which a more perfect sacrifice could be made. The sentiment here expressed occurs more than once in the Old Testament. Thus, 1Sam 15:22, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Hoss 6:6, "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." Comp. Ps 51:16,17, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." This was an indisputable principle of the Old Testament, though it was much obscured and forgotten in the common estimation among the Jews. In accordance with this principle, the Messiah came to render obedience of the highest order,

even to such all extent that he was willing to lay down his own life.

But a body hast thou prepared me. This is one of the passages which has caused a difficulty in understanding this quotation from the Psalm. The difficulty is, that it differs from the Hebrew, and that the apostle builds an argument upon it. It is not unusual indeed in the New Testament, to make use of the language of the Septuagint, even where it varies somewhat from the Hebrew; and where no argument is based on such a passage, there can be no difficulty in such a usage, since it is not uncommon to make use of the language of others to express our own thoughts. But the apostle does not appear to have made such a use of the passage here, but to have applied it in the way of argument. The argument, indeed, does not rest wholly, perhaps not principally, on the fact that a "body had been prepared" for the Messiah; but still this was evidently, in the view of the apostle, an important consideration, and this is the passage on which the proof of this is based. The Hebrew (Ps 40:6) is, "Mine ears hast thou opened;" or, as it is in the margin, "digged." The idea there is, that the ear had been, as it were, excavated, or dug out, so as to be made to hear distinctly; that is, certain truths had been clearly revealed to the speaker; or perhaps it may mean that he had been made "readily and attentively obedient" Stuart. Comp. Is 1:5, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." In the Psalm, the proper connexion would seem to be, that the speaker had been made obedient, or had been so led that he was disposed to do the will of God. This may be expressed by the fact that the ear had been opened so as to be quick to hear, since an indisposition to obey is often expressed by the fact that the ears are stopped. There is manifestly no allusion here, as has been sometimes supposed, to the custom of boring through the ear of a servant with an awl, as a sign that he was willing to remain and serve his master, Ex 21:6; De 15:17. In that ease, the outer circle, or rim of the ear, was bored through with an awl; here the idea is that of hollowing out, digging, or excavating --a

process to make the passage clear, not to pierce the outward ear. The Hebrew in the Psalm the Septuagint translates, "a body hast thou prepared me," and this rendering has been adopted by the apostle, various ways have been resorted to of explaining the fact that the translators of the Septuagint rendered it in this manner, none of which are entirely free from difficulty. Some critics, as Cappell, Ernesti, and others, have endeavoured to show that it is probable that the Septuagint reading in Ps 40:6, was-- ωτιονκατηρτισωμοι "my ear thou hast prepared;" that is, for obedience. But of this there is no proof, and indeed it is evident that the apostle quoted it as if it were σωμα, body. See Heb 5:10. It is probably altogether impossible now to explain the reason why the translators of the Septuagint rendered the phrase as they did; and this remark may be extended to many other places of their version. It is to be admitted here, beyond all doubt, whatever consequences may follow,

(1.) that their version does not accord with the Hebrew;

(2.) that the apostle has quoted their version as it stood, without attempting to correct it;

(3.) that his use of the passage is designed, to some extent at least, as proof of what he was demonstrating. The leading idea, the important and essential point in the argument, is, indeed, not that a body was prepared, but that He came to do the will of God; but still it is clear that the apostle meant to lay some stress on the fact that a body had been prepared for the Redeemer. Sacrifice and offering, by the bodies of lambs and goats, were not what was required; but, instead of that, the Messiah came to do the will of God by offering a more perfect sacrifice, and in accomplishing that it was necessary that he should be endowed with a body. But on what principle the apostle has quoted a passage to prove this which differs from the Hebrew, I confess I cannot see, nor do any of the explanations offered commend themselves as satisfactory. The

only circumstances which seem to furnish any relief to the difficulty are these two--

(1.) that the main point in the argument of the apostle was not that "a body had been prepared," but that the Messiah came to do the "will of God," and that the preparation of a body for that was rather an incidental circumstance; and

(2) that the translation by the Septuagint was not a material departure from the scope of the whole Hebrew passage. The main thought--that of doing the will of God in the place of offering sacrifice--was still retained; the opening of the ears, i.e., rendering the person attentive and disposed to obey, and the preparing of a body in order to obedience, were not circumstances so unlike as to make it necessary for the apostle to re-translate the whole passage in order to the main end which he had in view. Still, I admit that these considerations do not seem to me to be wholly satisfactory. Those who are disposed to examine the various opinions which have been entertained of this passage may find them in Kuinoel, in loc., Rosenmuller, Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus xx., and Kennicott on Ps 40:7. Kennicott supposes that there has been a change in the Hebrew text, and that instead of the present reading oznaim, ears, the reading was oz, guph--then a body; and that these words became united by the error of transcribers, and by a slight change then became as the present copies of the Hebrew text stands. This conjecture is ingenious; and if it were ever allowable to follow a mere conjecture, I should be disposed to do it here. But there is no authority from mss. for any change, nor do any of the old versions justify it, or agree with this, except the Arabic.

6 in burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. This is not quoted literally from the Psalm, but the sense is retained. The reading there is, "burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required." The quotation by the apostle is taken from the Septuagint, with the change of a single word,

which does not materially affect the sense--the word ουκευδοκησας ouk eudokesas-" thou hast no pleasure," instead of ουκηθελησας ouk ethelesas "thou dost not will." The idea is, that God had no pleasure in them as compared with obedience. He preferred the latter, and they could not be made to come in the place of it, or to answer the same purpose. When they were performed with a pure heart, he was doubtless pleased with the offering. As used here in reference to the Messiah, the meaning is, that they would not be what was required of him. Such offerings would not answer the end for which he was sent into the world, for that end was to be accomplished only by his being "obedient unto death."

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

Then said I. I the Messiah. Paul applies this directly to Christ, showing that he regarded the passage in the Psalm as referring to him as the speaker. Lo, I come. Come into the world, Psl 40:6. It is not easy to see how this could be applied to David in any circumstance of his life. There was no situation in which he could say that, since sacrifices and offerings were not what was demanded, he came to do the will of God in the place or stead of them. The time here referred to by the word "then" is, when it was manifest that sacrifices and offerings for sin would not answer all the purposes desirable, or when in view of that fact the purpose of the Redeemer is conceived as formed to enter upon a work which would effect what they could not.

In the volume of the book it is written of me. The word here rendered "volume"--κεφαλις-- means, properly, a little head; and then a knob, and here refers, doubtless, to the head or knob of the rod on which the Hebrew manuscripts were rolled. Books were usually so written as to be rolled up; and when they were read they were unrolled at one end of the manuscript, and rolled up at the other as fast as they were read. Lk 4:17. The rods on which they were rolled had small heads, either for the purpose of holding them or for ornament; and hence the name head came metaphorically to be given to the roll or volume. But what volume is here intended? And where is that

written which is here referred to if David was the author of the Psalm from which this is quoted, (Ps 40) then the book or volume which was then in existence must have been principally, if not entirely, the five books of Moses, and perhaps the books of Job, Joshua, and Judges, with probably a few of the Psalms. It is most natural to understand this of the Pentateuch, or the five books of Moses, as the word "volume," at that time, would undoubtedly have most naturally suggested that. But plainly, this could not refer to David himself, for in what part of the law of Moses, or in any of the volumes then extant, can a reference of this kind be found to David? There is no promise, no intimation that he would come "to do the will of God" with a view to effect that which could not be done by the sacrifices prescribed by the Jewish law. The reference of the language, therefore, must be to the Messiah--to some place where it is represented that he would come to effect by his obedience what could not be done by the sacrifices and offerings under the law. But still, in the books of Moses, this language is not literally found, and the meaning must be, that this was the language which was there implied respecting the Messiah; or this was the substance of the description given of him, that he would come to take the place of those sacrifices, and by his obedience unto death would accomplish what they could not do. They had a reference to him; and it was contemplated, in their appointment, that their inefficiency would be such that there should be felt a necessity for a higher sacrifice, and when he should come they would all be done away. The whole language of the institution of sacrifices, and of the Mosaic economy, was, that a Saviour would hereafter come to do the will of God in making an atonement for the sin of the world. That there are places in the books of Moses which refer to the Saviour is expressly affirmed by Christ himself, (Jn 5:46) 46,) and by the apostles, (comp. Acts 26:23,) and that the general spirit of the institutions of Moses had reference to him is abundantly demonstrated in this epistle. The meaning here is, "I come to do thy will in making an atonement, for no other offering would expiate sin. That I would do this is the language

of the Scriptures which predict my coming, and of the whole spirit and design of the ancient dispensation"

To do thy will, 0 God. This expresses the amount of all that the Redeemer came to do. He came to do the will of God

(1) by perfect obedience to his law, and

(2) by making an atonement for sin--becoming "obedient unto death," Php 2:8. The latter is the principal thought here, for the apostle is showing that sacrifice and offering such as were made under the law would not put away sin, and that Christ came, in contradistinction from them, to make a sacrifice that would be efficacious. Everywhere in the Scriptures it is held out as being the "will of God" that such an atonement should be made. There was salvation in no other way, nor was it possible that the race should be saved unless the Redeemer drank that cup of bitter sorrows. See Mt 26:39. We are not to suppose, however, that it was by mere arbitrary will that those sufferings were demanded. There were good reasons for all that the Saviour was to endure, though those reasons are not all made known to us.

8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein;* which are offered by the law;

Above, when he said. That is, the Messiah. The word "above" refers here to the former part of he quotation. That is, "having in the former part of what was quoted said that God did not require sacrifices, in the latter part he says that he came to do the will of God in the place of them." Sacrifice and offering and burnt, offerings, etc. These words are not all used in the Psalm from which the apostle quotes, but the idea is, that the specification there included all kinds of offerings. The apostle dwells upon it because it was important to show that the same remark applied to all the sacrifices which could be offered by man. When the Redeemer made the observation about the inefficacy of sacrifices, he meant that there was none of them which would be sufficient to take away sin.

9 then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Then said he. In another part of the passage quoted. When he had said that no offering which man could make would avail, then he said that he would come himself. He taketh away the first. The word "first" here refers to sacrifices and offerings, he takes them away; that is, he shows that they are of no value in removing sin. He states their inefficacy, and declares his purpose to abolish them. That he may establish the second. To wit, the doing of the will of God. The two stand in contrast with each other; and he shows the inefficacy of the former, in order that the necessity for his coming to do the will of God may be fully seen. If they had been efficacious, there would have been no need of his coming to make an atonement.

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all.*

By the which will. That is, by his obeying God in the manner specified. It is in virtue of his obedience that we are sanctified. The apostle immediately specifies what he means, and furnishes the key to his whole argument, when he says that it was through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. It was not merely his doing the will of God in general, but it was the specific thing of offering his body in the place of the Jewish sacrifices. Comp. Php 2:8. Whatever part his personal obedience had in our salvation, yet the particular thing here specified is, that it was his doing the will of God by offering himself as a sacrifice for sin that was the means of our sanctification. We are sanctified. We are made holy. The word here is not confined to the specific work which is commonly called sanctification--or the process of making the soul holy after it is renewed, but it includes everything by which we are made holy in the sight of God. It embraces, therefore, justification and regeneration as well as what is commonly known as sanctification. The idea is, that whatever there is in our hearts which is holy, or whatever influences are brought to bear upon us to make us holy, is all to be traced to the fact that the Redeemer became obedient unto death, and was willing to offer his body as a sacrifice for sin. Through the offering of the

body. As a sacrifice. A body just adapted to such a purpose had been prepared for him, Heb 10:5. It was perfectly holy; it was so organized as to be keenly sensitive to suffering; it was the dwelling-place of the incarnate Deity. Once for all. In the sense that it is not to be offered again. Heb 9:28. This idea is repeated here because it was very important to be clearly understood, in order to show the contrast between the offering made by Christ, and those made under the law. The object of the apostle is to exalt the sacrifice made by him above those made by the Jewish high priests. This he does by showing that such was the efficacy of the atonement made by him that it did not need to be repeated; the sacrifices made by them, however, were to be renewed every year.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering
oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

And every Priest standeth daily ministering. That is, this is done every day. It does not mean literally that every priest was daily concerned in offering sacrifices, for they took turns according to their courses, (Lk 1:5,) but that this was done each day, and that every priest was to take his regular place in doing it, Nu 28:3. The object of the apostle is to prove, that under the Jewish economy sacrifices were repeated constantly, showing their imperfection, but that under the Christian economy the great Sacrifice had been offered once, which was sufficient for all. And offering oftentimes the same sacrifices. The same sacrifices were offered morning and evening every day.

12 but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever,
sat down on the right hand of God;

But this Man. The Lord Jesus. The word man is not in the original here. The Greek is literally "but this;" to wit, this priest. The apostle does not state here whether he was a man, or a being of a higher order, he merely mentions him as a priest, in contradistinction from the Jewish priests. After he had offered one sacrifice for sins. By dying on the cross. This he did but once; this could not be repeated; and need not be repeated, for it was sufficient for the sins of the world. For ever sat down. That is, he sat down then to return no more for the

purpose of offering sacrifice for sin. He will no more submit himself to scenes of suffering and death to expiate human guilt.

13 from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

From henceforth expecting. Or, waiting. He waits there until this shall be accomplished according to the promise made to him that all things shall be subdued under him. 1Cor 15:25 and following. Till his enemies. There is an allusion here to Ps 110:1, where it is said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The enemies of the Redeemer are Satan, the wicked of the earth, and all the evil passions of the heart. The idea is, that all things are yet to be made subject to his will --either by a cheerful and cordial submission to his authority, or by being crushed beneath his power. The Redeemer, having performed his great work of redemption by giving himself as a sacrifice on the cross, is represented now as calmly waiting until this glorious triumph is achieved, and this promise is fulfilled. We are not to suppose that he is inactive, or that he takes no share in the agency by which this is to be done, but the meaning is, that he looks to the certain fulfilment of the promise. His footstool. That is, they shall be thoroughly and completely subdued. The same idea is expressed in 1Cor 15:25, by saying that all his enemies shall be put under his feet. The language arose from the custom of conquerors in putting their feet on the necks of their enemies, as a symbol of subjection. See Josh 10:24; Isa 26:5, Isa 26:6.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

For by one offering. By offering himself once on the cross. The Jewish priest offered his sacrifices often, and still they did not avail to put away sin; the Saviour made one sacrifice, and it was sufficient for the sins of the world.

He hath perfected for ever, He hath laid the foundation of the eternal perfection. The offering is of such a character that it secures their final freedom from sin, and wilt make them for ever holy. It cannot mean that those for whom he died are made

at once perfectly holy, for that is not true; but the idea is, that the offering was complete, and did not need to be repeated; and that it was of such a nature as entirely to remove the penalty due to sin, and to lay the foundation for their final eternal holiness. The offerings made under the Jewish law were so defective that there was a necessity for repeating them every day; the offering made by the Saviour was so perfect that it needed not to be repeated, and that it secured the complete and final salvation of those who avail themselves of it.

Them that are sanctified. Those who are made holy by that offering. It does not mean that they are as yet wholly sanctified, but that they have been brought under the influence of that gospel which sanctifies and saves. Heb 2:11, 9:13. The doctrine taught in this verse is, that all those who are, in any measure; sanctified, will be perfected for ever. It is not a temporary work which has been begun in their souls, but one which is designed to be carried forward to perfection. In the atonement made by the Redeemer there is the foundation laid for their eternal perfection, and it was with reference to that, that it was offered. Respecting this work and the consequences of it, we may remark, that there is

(1.) perfection in its nature, it being of such a character that it needs not to be repeated;

(2.) there is perfection in regard to the pardon of sin--all past sins being forgiven to those who embrace it, and being for ever forgiven; and

(3.) there is to be absolute perfection, for them for ever. They will be made perfect at some future period, and when that shall take place it will be to continue for ever and ever.

15 *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

16 This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord;

I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

17 and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

18 Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin.

Now where remission of these is. Remission or forgiveness of sins; that is, of the sins mentioned in the previous verse. There is no more offering for sin. If those sins are wholly blotted out, there is no more need of sacrifice to atone for them, any more than there is need to pay a debt again which has been once paid. The idea of Paul is, that in the Jewish dispensation there was a constant repeating of the remembrance of sins by the sacrifices which were offered, but that in reference to the dispensation under the Messiah sin would be entirely cancelled. There would be one great and all-sufficient sacrifice; and when there was faith in that offering, sin would be absolutely forgiven. If that was the case, there would be no occasion for any further sacrifice for it, and the offering need not be repeated. This circumstance, on which the apostle insists so much, made a very important difference between the new covenant and the old. In the one, sacrifices were offered every day; in the other, the sacrifice once made was final and complete: in the one case, there was no such forgiveness, but that the offender was constantly reminded of his sins by the necessity of the repetition of sacrifice; in the other, the pardon was so complete that all dread of wrath was taken away, and the sinner might look up to God as calmly and joyfully as if he had never been guilty of transgression.

Let Us Draw Near and Hold Fast

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Having therefore, brethren. The apostle, in this verse, enters on the hortatory part of his epistle, which continues to the end of it. He had gone into an extensive examination of the Jewish and Christian systems; he had compared the Founders of the two--Moses and the Son of God--and shown how far superior

the latter was to the former; he had compared the Christian great High Priest with the Jewish high priest, and shown his superiority; he had compared the sacrifices under the two dispensations, and showed that in all respects the Christian sacrifice was superior to the Jewish --that it was an offering that cleansed from sin; that it was sufficient when once offered, without being repeated, while the Jewish offerings were only typical, and were unable to put away sin; and he had shown that the great High Priest of the Christian profession had opened a way to the mercy-seat in heaven, and was himself now seated there; and having shown this, he now exhorts Christians to avail themselves fully of all their advantages, and to enjoy, to the widest extent, all the privileges now conferred on them. One of the first of these benefits was, that they had now free access to the mercy-seat.

Boldness to enter into the holiest. Marg. liberty. The word rendered boldness-- παρρησιαν-- properly means, boldness of speech, or freedom, where one speaks all that he thinks, Acts 4:13; and then it means boldness in general, license, authority, pardon. Here the idea is, that before Christ died and entered into heaven, there was no such access to the throne of grace as man needed. Man had no offering which he could bring that would make him acceptable to God. But now the way was open. Access was free for all, and all might come with the utmost freedom. The word holiest here is taken from the holy of holies in the temple, Heb 9:3, and is there applied to heaven, of which that was the emblem. The entrance into the most holy place was forbidden to all but the high priest; but now access to the real "holy of holies" was granted to all, in the name of the great High Priest of the Christian profession.

By the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is the means by which this access to heaven is procured. The Jewish high priest entered the holy of holies with the blood of bullocks and of rams, Heb 9:7; but the Saviour offered his own blood, and that became the means by which we may have access to God.

20 by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us,
through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

By a new and living way. By a new method or manner. It was a mode of access that was till then unknown. No doubt many were saved before the Redeemer came, but the method by which they approached God was imperfect and difficult. The word which is here rendered new --προσφατον-- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means slain, or killed thereto; i.e. newly killed, just dead; and then fresh, recent. Passow. It does not so much convey the idea that it is new in the sense that it had never existed before, as new in the sense that it is recent, or fresh. It was a way which was recently disclosed, and which had an the freshness of novelty. It is called a "living way," because it is a method that imparts life, or because it leads to life and happiness. Doddridge renders it "ever living way," and supposes, in accordance with the opinion of Dr. Owen, that the allusion is to the fact that under the old dispensation the blood was to be offered as soon,as it was shed, and that it could not be offered when it was cold and coagulated. The way by Christ was, however, always open. His blood was, as it were, always warm, and as if it had been recently shed. This interpretation seems to derive some support from the word which is rendered "new." See above. The word living, also, has often the sense of perennial, or perpetual, as when applied to a fountain always running, in opposition to a pool that dries up, Jn 4:10, and the new way to heaven may be called living in all these respects. It is a way that conducts to life. It is ever-living--as if the blood which was shed always retained the freshness of that which is flowing from tho vein. And it is perpetual and constant---like a fountain that always flows--for it is by a sacrifice whose power is perpetual and unchanging.

Which he hath consecrated for us. Marg. "or, new made." The word here used means, properly, to renew, and then to initiate, to consecrate, to sanction. The idea is, that he has dedicated this way for our use; as if a temple or house were set apart for our service. It is a path consecrated by him for the service and

salvation of man; a way of access to the eternal sanctuary for the sinner which has been set apart by the Redeemer for this service alone.

Through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. The Jewish high priest entered into the most holy place through the veil that divided the holy from the most holy place. That entrance was made by his drawing the veil aside, and thus the interior sanctuary was laid open. But there has been much difficulty felt in regard to the sense of the expression here used. The plain meaning of the expression is, that the way to heaven was opened by means or through the veil that is, of his body or through the medium of the flesh of Jesus; sacrificed for sin, as the most holy place in the temple was entered by means or through the medium of the veil. We are not to suppose, however, that the apostle meant to say there was, in all respects, a resemblance between the veil and the flesh of Jesus, nor that the veil was in any manner typical of his body, but there was a resemblance in the respect under considerations---to wit, in the fact that the holy place was rendered accessible by withdrawing the veil, and that heaven was rendered accessible through the slain body of Jesus. The idea is, that there is by means both of the veil of the temple, and of the body of Jesus, a medium of access to God. God dwelt in the most holy place in the temple behind the veil by visible symbols, and was to be approached by removing the veil; and God dwells in heaven, in the most holy place there, and is to be approached only through the offering of the body of Christ. Prof. Stuart supposes that the point of the comparison may be, that the veil of the temple operated as a screen to hide the visible symbol of the presence of God from human view, and that in like manner the body of Jesus might be regarded as a "kind of temporary, tabernacle, or veil of the Divine nature which dwelt within him," and that "as the veil of the tabernacle concealed the glory of Jehovah in the holy of belies, from the view of men, so Christ's flesh or body screened or concealed the higher nature from our view, which dwelt within this veil, as God did within the veil of the temple." See this and other

views explained at length in the larger commentaries. It does not seem to me to be necessary to attempt to carry out the point of the comparison in all respects. The simple idea which seems to have been in the mind of the apostle was, that the veil of the temple and the body of Jesus were alike in this respect, that they were the medium of access to God. It is by the offering of the body of Jesus; by the fact that he was clothed with flesh, and that in his body he made all atonement for sin, and that with his body raised up from the dead he has ascended to heaven, that we have access now to the throne of mercy.

21 and *having* a high priest over the house of God;

And having an High Priest over the house of God. Over the spiritual house of God; that is, the church. Comp. Heb 3:1-6. Under the Jewish dispensation there was a great high priest, and the same is true under the Christian dispensation, This the apostle had shown at length in the previous part of the epistle. The idea here is, that as under the former dispensation it was regarded as a privilege that the people of God might have access to the mercy-seat by means of the high priest, so it is true, in a much higher sense, that we may now have access to God through our greater and more glorious High Priest.

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us draw near with a true heart. In prayer and praise; in every act of confidence and of worship. A sincere heart was required under the ancient dispensation; it is always demanded of men when they draw near to God to worship him. See Jn 4:23,24. Every form of religion which God has revealed requires the worshippers to come with pure and holy hearts.

In full assurance of faith. See the word here used explained in the Heb 6:11. The "full assurance of faith" means unwavering confidence; a fullness of faith in God which leaves no room for doubt. Christians are permitted to come thus because God has revealed himself through the Redeemer as in every way deserving their fullest confidence. No one approaches God in an acceptable manner who does not come to him in this

manner. What parent would feel that a child came with any right feelings to ask a favour of him who had not the fullest confidence in him?

Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. By the blood of Jesus. This was fitted to make the conscience pure. The Jewish cleansing or sprinkling with blood related only to that which was external, and could not make the conscience perfect, Heb 9:9; but the Sacrifice offered by the Saviour was designed to give peace to the troubled mind, and to make it pure and holy. An "evil conscience" is a consciousness of evil, or a conscience oppressed with sin; that is, a conscience that accuses of guilt. We are made free from such a conscience through the atonement of Jesus, not because we become convinced that we have not committed sin, and not because we are led to suppose that our sins are less than we had otherwise supposed--for the reverse of both these is true--but because our sins are forgiven, and since they are freely pardoned they no longer produce remorse and the fear of future wrath. A child that has been forgiven may feel that he has done very wrong, but still he will not be then overpowered with distress in view of his guilt, or with the apprehension of punishment.

And our bodies washed with pure water. See Tit 3:5 Ac 22:16. Alford, Prof. Stuart, Delitzch, Moll, Meyer and most commentators refer the passage to baptism. That is undoubtedly the thought of the sacred writer; the heart and spirit are cleansed by the blood of Christ and the body sanctified by washing in pure water, effecting the purification of the whole man.

23 Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering;
for he *is* faithful that promised;

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. To secure this was one of the leading designs of this epistle, and hence the apostle adverts to it so frequently. It is evident that those to whom he wrote were suffering persecution, Heb 12 and that there was great danger that they would apostatize. As these persecutions came probably from the Jews, and as the

aim was to induce them to return to their former opinions, the object of the apostle is to show that there was in the Christian scheme every advantage of which the Jews could boast; everything pertaining to the dignity of the great Founder of the system, the character of the High Priest, and the nature and value of the sacrifices offered; and that all this was possessed far more abundantly in the permanent Christian system than in that which was typical in its character, and which were designed soon to vanish away. In view of all this, therefore, the apostle adds that they should hold fast the profession of their faith, without being shaken by their trials, or by the arguments of their enemies. We have the same inducement to hold fast the profession of our faith--for it is the same religion still; we have the same Saviour, and there is held out to us still the same prospect of heaven. For he is faithful that promised. To induce them to hold fast their profession, the apostle adds this additional consideration. God, who had promised eternal life to them, was faithful to all that he had said. he arrangement here is,

(1.) That since God is so faithful to us, we ought to be faithful to him.

(2.) The fact that he is faithful is an encouragement to us. We are dependent on him for grace to hold fast our profession. If he were to prove unfaithful, we should have no strength to do it. But this he never does; and we may be assured that all that he has promised he will perform. To the service of such a God, therefore, we should adhere without wavering. Comp. 1Cor 10:13.

24 and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

And let us consider one another. Let us so regard the welfare of others as to endeavour to excite them to persevere in the Christian life. The idea is, that much might be done in securing perseverance and fidelity by mutual, kind exhortation. They were not to be selfish; they were not to regard their own interests only, (Php 2:4;) they were to have a kind sympathy in

the concerns of each other. They had, as Christians have now, the Same duties to perform, and the same trials to meet, and they should strengthen each other in their trials, and encourage them in their work. To provoke unto love. We use the word provoke now in a somewhat different sense, as meaning to offend, to irritate, to incense; but its original meaning is, to arouse, to excite, to call into action, and it is used in this sense here. The Greek is, literally, "unto a paroxysm of love" εις παροξυσμον; the word paroxysm meaning excitement or impulse; and the idea is, that they were to endeavour to arouse or excite each other to the manifestation of love. The word is that which properly expresses excitement, and means that Christians should endeavour to excite each other. Men are sometimes afraid of excitement in religion. But there is no danger that Christians will ever be excited to love each other too much, or to perform too many good works.

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is;* but exhorting *one another:* and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. That is, for purposes of public worship. Some expositors have understood the word here rendered assembling--επισυναγωγην--as meaning the society of Christians, or the church; and they have supposed that the object of the apostle here is, to exhort them not to apostatize from the church. The arguments for this opinion may be seen at length in Kuinoel, in loc. But the more obvious interpretation is that which is commonly adopted, that it refers to public worship. The Greek word (the noun) is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 2Thes 2:1, where it is rendered gathering together. The verb is used in Mt 23:3 Mt 24:31, Mk 1:33, 13:27, Lk 12:1, 13:34, in all which places it is rendered gathered together. It properly means an act of assembling, or a gathering together, and is nowhere used in the New Testament in the sense of an assembly, or the church. The command, then, here is, to meet together for the worship of God, and it is enjoined on Christians as an important duty to do it. It is implied, also, that there is blame or fault where this is "neglected."

As the manner of some is. Why those here referred to neglected public worship is not specified. It may have been from such causes as the following:

(1.) Some may have been deterred by the fear of persecution, as those who were thus assembled would be more exposed to danger than others.

(2.) Some may have neglected the duty because they felt no interest in it--as professing Christians now sometimes do.

(3.) It is possible that some may have had doubts about the necessity and propriety of this duty, and on that account may have neglected it.

(4.) Or it may perhaps have been, though we can hardly suppose that this reason existed, that some may have neglected it from a cause which now sometimes operates--from dissatisfaction with a preacher, or with some member or members of the church, or with some measure in the church. Whatever were the reasons, the apostle says that they should not be allowed to operate, but that Christians should regard it as a sacred duty to meet together for the worship of God. None of the causes above suggested should deter men from this duty. With all who bear the Christian name--with all who expect to make advances in piety and religious knowledge, it should be regarded as a sacred duty to assemble together for public worship. Religion is social; and our graces are to be strengthened and invigorated by waiting together on the Lord. There is an obvious propriety that men should assemble together for the worship of the Most High, and no Christian can hope that his graces will grow, or that he can perform his duty to his Maker, without uniting thus with those who love the service of God.

But exhorting one another. That is, in our assembling together--a direction which proves that it is proper for Christians to

exhort one another when they are gathered together for public worship. Indeed, there is reason to believe that the preaching in the early Christian assemblies partook much of the character of mutual exhortation.

And so much the more as ye see the day approaching. The term "day" here refers to some event which was certainly anticipated, and which was so well understood by them that no particular explanation was necessary. It was also some event that was expected soon to occur, and in relation to which there were indications then of its speedily arriving. If it had not been something which was expected soon to happen, the apostle would have gone into a more full explanation of it, and would have stated at length what these indications were. There has been some diversity of opinion about what is here referred to, many commentators supposing that the reference is to the anticipated second coming of the Lord Jesus to set up a visible kingdom on the earth; and others to the fact-that the period was approaching when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and when the services of the temple were to cease. So far as the language is concerned, the reference might be to either event, for the word a "day" is applied to both in the New Testament. The word would properly be understood as referring to an expected period, when something remarkable was to happen, which ought to have an important influence on their character and conduct. In support of the opinion that it refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and not to the coming of the Lord Jesus to set up a visible kingdom, we may adduce the following considerations:

(1.) The term used-"day"--will as properly refer to that event as to any other. It is a word which would be likely to suggest the idea of distress, calamity, or judgment of some kind, for so it is often used in the Scriptures. Comp. Ps 37:13, 1Sam 26:10, Jer 30:7, Eze 21:15; Isa 2:12.

(2.) Such a period was distinctly predicted by the Saviour, and the indications which would precede it were clearly pointed

out, see Mt 24. That event was then so near, that the Saviour said that "that generation would not pass" until the prediction had been fulfilled, Mt 24:34.

(3.) The destruction of Jerusalem was an event of great importance to the Hebrews, and to the Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle was directed; and it might be reasonable to suppose that the apostle Paul would refer to it.

(4.) It is not improbable that, at the time of writing this epistle, there were indications that that day was approaching. Those indications were of so marked a character, that when the time approached they could not well be mistaken, (see Mt 24:6-12,24,26), and it is probable that they had already begun to appear.

(5.) There were no such indications that the Lord Jesus was about to appear to set up a visible kingdom. It was not a fact that that was about to occur, as the result has shown; nor is there any positive proof that the mass of Christians were expecting it, and no reason to believe that the apostle Paul had any such expectation. See 2Thes 2:1-5.

(6.) The expectation that the destruction of Jerusalem was referred to, and was about to occur, was just that which might be expected to produce the effect on the minds of the Hebrew Christians which the apostle here refers to. It was to be a solemn and fearful event. It would be a remarkable manifestation of God. It would break up the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the nation, and would scatter them abroad. It would require all the exercise of their patience and faith in passing through these scenes. It might be expected to be a time when many would be tempted to apostatize; and it was proper, therefore, to exhort them to meet together, and to strengthen and encourage each other as they saw that that event was drawing near. The argument, then, would be this: The danger against which the apostle desired to guard those to whom he was writing was that of apostasy from Christianity to

Judaism. To preserve them from this, he urges the fact that the downfall of Judaism was near, and that every indication which they saw of its approach ought to be allowed to influence them, and to guard them from that danger. It is for reasons such as these that I suppose the reference here is not to the "second advent" of the Redeemer, but to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. At the same time, it is not improper to use this passage as an exhortation to Christians to fidelity when they shall see that the end of the world draws nigh, and when they shall perceive indications that the Lord Jesus is about to come. And so of death. We should be the more diligent when we see the indications that the great Messenger is about to come to summon us into the presence of our final Judge. And who does not know that he is approaching him with silent and steady footsteps, and that even now he may Be very near? Who can fail to see himself indications that the time approaches when he must lie down and die? Every pang that we suffer should remind us of this, and when the hair changes its hue, and time makes furrows in the cheek, and the limbs become feeble, we should regard them as premonitions that he is coming, and should be more diligent as we see that he is drawing near.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth. If, after we are converted and become true Christians, we should apostatize, it would be impossible to be recovered again, for there would be no other sacrifice for sin; no way by which we could be saved. This passage, however, like Heb 6:4-6, has given rise to much difference of opinion. But that the above is the correct interpretation seems evident to me from the following considerations:

(1.) It is the natural and obvious interpretation, such as would occur probably to ninety nine readers in a hundred, if there were no theory to support, and no fear that it would conflict with some other doctrine.

(2.) It accords with the scope of the epistle, which is to keep those whom the apostle addressed from returning again to the Jewish religion, under the trials to which they were subjected.

(3.) It is in accordance with the fair meaning of the language--the words, "after that we have received the knowledge of the truth," referring more naturally to true conversion than to any other state of mind.

(4.) The sentiment would not be correct if it referred to any but real Christians. It would not be true that one who had been somewhat enlightened, and who then sinned "wilfully," must look on fearfully to the judgment, without a possibility of being saved. There are multitudes of cases where such persons are saved. They willfully resist the Holy Spirit; they strive against him; they for a long time refuse to yield, but they are brought again to reflection, and are led to give their hearts to God.

(5.) It is true, and always will be true, that if a sincere Christian should apostatize, he could never be converted again. Heb 6:4-6. The reasons are obvious. He would have tried the only plan of salvation, and it would have failed. He would have embraced the Saviour, and there would not have been efficacy enough in his blood to keep him, and there would be no more powerful Saviour, and no more efficacious blood of atonement. He would have renounced the Holy Spirit, and would have shown that his influences were not effectual to keep him, and there would be no other agent of greater power to renew and save him after he had apostatized. For these reasons it seems clear to me that this passage refers to true Christians, and that the doctrine here taught is, that if such an one should apostatize, he must look forward only to the terrors of the judgment, and to final condemnation. Whether this, in fact, ever occurs, is quite another question. In regard to that inquiry, see Heb 6:4, and following. If this view be correct, we may add, that the passage should not be regarded as applying to what is commonly known as the "sin against the Holy

Ghost," or "the unpardonable sin." The word rendered "wilfully"--εκουσιως -- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 1Pet 5:2, where it is rendered willingly--" taking the oversight thereof [of the church] not by constraint, but willingly". It properly means, willingly, voluntarily, of our own accord, and applies to cases where no constraint is used. It is not to be construed here strictly, or metaphysically, for all sin is voluntary, or is committed willingly, but must refer to a deliberate act, where a man MEANS to abandon his religion, and to turn away from God. If it were to be taken with metaphysical exactness, it would demonstrate that every Christian who ever does anything wrong, no matter how small, would be lost. But this cannot, from the nature of the case, be the meaning. The apostle well knew that Christians do commit such sins, (see Rom 7:1) and following and his object here is not to set forth the danger of such sins, but to guard Christians against apostasy from their religion. In the Jewish law, as is indeed the case everywhere, a distinction is made between sins of oversight, inadvertence, or ignorance, (Lev 4:2,13,22,27, 5:15; Nu 15:24,27-29. Comp. Acts 3:17, 17:30,) and sins of presumption; sins that are deliberately and intentionally committed. See Ex 21:14, Nu 15:30, De 17:12, Ps 19:13. The apostle here has reference, evidently, to such a distinction, and means to speak of a decided and deliberate purpose to break away from the restraints and obligations of the Christian religion.

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. Should a man do this, there is no sacrifice for sins which could save him. He would have rejected deliberately the only atonement made for sin, and there will be no other made. It is as if a man should reject the only medicine that could heal him, or push away the only boat that could save him when shipwrecked. See Heb 6:6. The sacrifice made for sin by the Redeemer is never to be repeated, and if that is deliberately rejected, the soul must be lost.

27 but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment. The word "certain" here does not mean fixed, sure, inevitable, as our translation would seem to imply. The Greek is the same as "a τις fearful expectation," etc. So it is rendered by Tindall. The idea is, that if there was voluntary apostasy after having embraced the Christian religion, there could be nothing but an expectation of the judgment to come. There could be no other hope but that through the gospel, and as this would have been renounced, it would follow that the soul must perish. The "fearful apprehension" or expectation here does not refer so much to what would be in the mind itself, or what would be experienced, as to what must follow. It might be that the person referred to would have no realizing sense of all this, and still his situation be that of one who had nothing to expect but the terrors of the judgment to come. And fiery indignation. Fire is often used in the Scriptures as an emblem of fierce punishment. The idea is, that the person referred to could expect nothing but the wrath of God. Which shall devour the adversaries. All who become the adversaries or enemies of the Lord. Fire is often said to devour, or consume, and the meaning here is, that those who should thus become the enemies of the Lord must perish.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

He that despised Moses' law. That is, the apostate from the religion of Moses. It does not mean that in all cases the offender against the law of Moses died without mercy, but only where offences were punishable with death, and probably the apostle had in his eye particularly the case of apostasy from the Jewish religion. The subject of apostasy from the Christian religion is particularly under discussion here and it was natural to illustrate this by a reference to a similar case under the law of Moses. The law in regard to apostates from the Jewish religion was positive. There was no reprieve, De 13:6-10. Died without mercy. That is, there was no provision for pardon. Under two or three witnesses. It was the settled law among the Hebrews, that in all cases involving capital punishment, two or three witnesses should be necessary. That is, no one was to be

executed unless two persons certainly bore testimony, and it was regarded as important, if possible, that three witnesses should concur in the statement. The object was the security of the accused person if innocent. The principle in the law was, that it was to be presumed that two or three persons would be much less likely to conspire to render a false testimony than one would be, and that two or three would not be likely to be deceived in regard to a fact which they had observed.

29 of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy. That is, he who renounces Christianity ought to be regarded as deserving a much severer punishment than the man who apostatized from the Jewish religion, and if he ought to be so regarded he will be--for God will treat every man as he ought to be treated. This must refer to future punishment, for the severest punishment was inflicted on the apostate from the Jewish religion which can be in this world--death; and yet the apostle here says that a severer punishment than that would be deserved by him who should apostatize from the Christian faith. The reasons why so much severer punishment would be deserved are such as these: The Author of the Christian system was far more exalted than Moses, the founder of the Jewish system; he had revealed more important truths; he had increased and confirmed the motives to holiness; he had furnished more means for leading a holy life; he had given himself as a sacrifice to redeem the soul from death; and he had revealed with far greater clearness the truth that there is a heaven of glory and of holiness. He who should apostatize from the Christian faith, the apostle goes on to say, would also be guilty of the most aggravated crime of which man could be guilty --the crime of trampling under foot the Son of God, of showing contempt for his holy blood, and despising the Spirit of grace.

Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God. This language is taken either from the custom of ancient conquerors who were accustomed to tread on the necks of their enemies in token of their being subdued, or from the fact that men tread on that which they despise and contemn. The idea is, that he who should apostatize from the Christian faith would act as if he should indignantly and contemptuously trample on God's only Son. What crime could be more aggravated than this?

And hath counted the blood of the covenant. The blood of Jesus by which the new covenant between God and man was ratified. Mt 9:16-20. Comp. Mt 26:28.

Wherewith he was sanctified. Made holy, or set apart to the service of God. The word sanctify is used in both these senses. Prof. Stuart renders it, "by which expiation is made;" and many others, in accordance with this view, have supposed that it refers to the Lord Jesus. But it seems to me that it refers to the person who is here supposed to renounce the Christian religion, or to apostatize from it. The reasons for this are such as these.

(1.) It is the natural and proper meaning of the word here rendered sanctified. This word is commonly applied to Christians in the sense that they are made holy. See Acts 20:32, 26:18, 1Cor 1:2, Jude 1:1. Comp. Jn 10:36, 17:17.

(2.) It is unusual to apply this word to the Saviour. It is true, indeed, that he says, (Jn 17:19,) "for their sakes I sanctify myself," but there is no instance in which he says that he was sanctified by his own blood. And where is there an instance in which the word is used as meaning "to make expiation?"

(3.) The supposition that it refers to one who is here spoken of as in danger of apostasy, and not of the Lord Jesus, agrees with the scope of the argument. The apostle is showing the great guilt, and the certain destruction, of one who should apostatize from the Christian religion. In doing this, it was natural to

speak of the dishonour which would thus be done to the means which had been used for his sanctification--the blood of the Redeemer. It would be treating it as if it were a common thing, or as if it might be disregarded, like anything else which was of no value.

An unholy thing. Gr. common; often used in the sense of unholy. The word is so used because that which was holy was separated from a common to a sacred use. What was not thus consecrated was free to all, or was for common use, and hence also the word is used to denote that which is unholy.

And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. The Holy Spirit, called the "Spirit of grace," because he confers favour or grace on men. The meaning of the phrase "done despite unto"--ενυβρισας --is, "having reproached, or treated with malignity or contempt?" The idea is, that if they were thus to apostatize, they would by such an act treat the Spirit of God with disdain and contempt. It was by him that they had been renewed; by him that they had been brought to embrace the Saviour, and to love God; by him that they had any holy feelings or pure desires; and if they now apostatized from religion, such an act would be, in fact, treating the Holy Spirit with the highest indignity. It would be saying that all his influences were valueless, and that they needed no help from him. From such considerations, the apostle shows that if a true Christian were to apostatize nothing would remain for him but the terrific prospect of eternal condemnation. He would have rejected the only Saviour; he would have, in fact, treated him with the highest indignity; he would have considered his sacred blood, shed to sanctify men, as a common thing, and would have shown the highest disregard for the only agent who can save the soul--the Spirit of God. How could such an one afterwards be saved? The apostle does not indeed say that any one ever would thus apostatize from the true religion, nor is there any reason to believe that such a case ever has occurred; but if it should occur the doom would be inevitable. How dangerous, then, is every step which would lead to such a precipice! And

how strange and unscriptural the opinion held by so many that sincere Christians may "fall away," and be renewed again and again!

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me,
I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again,
The Lord shall judge his people.

For we know him that hath said. We know who has said this--God. They knew this because it was recorded in their own sacred books. Vengeance belongeth unto me, etc. This is found in De 32:35. See it explained in Rom 12:19. It is there quoted to show that we should not avenge ourselves; it is here quoted to show that God will certainly inflict punishment on those who deserve it. If any should apostatize in the manner here referred to by the apostle, they would, says he, be guilty of great and unparalleled wickedness, and would have the certainty that they must meet the wrath of God. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. This is quoted from De 32:35. That is, he will judge them when they deserve it, and punish them if they ought to be punished. The mere fact that they are his people will not save them from punishment if they deserve it, any more than the fact that one is a beloved child will save him from correction when he does wrong. This truth was abundantly illustrated in the history of the Israelites; and the same great principle would be applied should any sincere Christian apostatize from his religion. He would have before him the certainty of the most fearful and severe of all punishments.

31 *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. There may be an allusion here to the request of David to "fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men," when it was submitted to him for the sin of numbering the people, whether he would choose seven years of famine, or flee three months before his enemies, or have three days of pestilence, 2Sam 24. He preferred "to fall into the hands of the Lord," and God smote seventy thousand men by the pestilence. The idea here is, that to fall into the hands of the Lord, after having despised his mercy and rejected his salvation, would be

terrific; and the fear of this should deter from the commission of the dreadful crime. The phrase "living God" is used in the Scripture in opposition to idols. God always lives; his power is Capable of being always exerted. He is not like the idols of wood or stone which have no life, and which are not to be dreaded, but he always lives. It is the more fearful to fall into his hands because he will live for ever. A man who inflicts punishment will die, and the punishment will come to an end; but God will never cease to exist, and the punishment which he is capable of inflicting to-day he will be capable of inflicting for ever and ever. T

o fall into his hands, therefore, for the purpose of punishment--which is the idea here--is fearful,

(1.) because he has all power, and can inflict just what punishment he pleases;

(2) because he is strictly just, and will inflict the punishment which ought to be inflicted;

(3) because he lives for ever, and can carry on his purpose of punishment to eternal ages; and

(4) because the actual inflictions of punishment which have occurred show what is to be dreaded. So it was on the old world; on the cities of the plain; on Babylon, Idumea, Capernaum, and Jerusalem; and so it is in the world of woe--the eternal abodes of despair, where the worm never dies. All men must, in one sense, fall into his hands. They must appear before him. They must be brought to his bar when they die. How unspeakably important it is, then, now to to embrace his offers of salvation, that we may not fall into his hands as a righteous avenging Judge, and sink beneath his uplifted arm for ever!

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

But call to remembrance the former days. It would seem from this, that at the time when the apostle wrote this epistle they were suffering some severe trials, in which they were in great danger of apostatizing from their religion. It is also manifest that they had on some former occasion endured a similar trial, and had been enabled to bear it with a Christian spirit, and with resignation. The object of the apostle now is to remind them that they were sustained under those trials, and he would encourage them now to similar patience by the recollection of the grace then conferred on them. What was the nature of their former trials, or of that which they were then experiencing, is not certainly known. It would seem probable, however, that the reference in both instances is to some form of persecution by their own countrymen. The meaning is, that when we have been enabled to pass through trials once, we are to make the remembrance of the grace then bestowed on us a means of supporting and encouraging us in future trials.

After ye were illuminated. After you became Christians, or were enlightened to see the truth. This phrase, referring here undoubtedly to the fact that they were Christians, may serve to explain the disputed phrase in Heb 6:4. Heb 6:4.

A great fight of afflictions. The language here seems to be taken from the Grecian Games. The word "fight" means, properly, contention, combat, such as occurred in the public games. Here the idea is, that in the trials referred to they had a great struggle; that is, a struggle to maintain their faith without wavering, or against those who would have led them to apostatize from their religion. Some of the circumstances attending this conflict are alluded to in the following verses.

Partly. That is, your affliction consisted partly in this. The Greek is, "this"--specifying one kind of affliction that they were called to endure.

Whilst ye were made a gazing-stock. θεατριζομενοι, --you were made a public spectacle, as if in a theatre; you were held up to public view, or exposed to public scorn when this was done, or in precisely what manner, we are not told. It was not an uncommon thing, however, for the early Christians to be held up to reproach and scorn, and probably this refers to some time when it was done by rulers or magistrates. It was a common custom among the Greeks and Romans to lead criminals, before they were put to death, through the theatre, and thus to expose them to the insults and reproaches of the multitude. See the proofs of this adduced by Kuinoel on this passage. The language here seems to have been taken from this custom, though there is no evidence that the Christians to whom Paul refers had been treated in this manner.

By reproaches. Reproached as being the followers of Jesus of Nazareth; probably as weak and fanatical.

And afflictions. Various sufferings inflicted on them. They were not merely reviled in words, but they were made to endure positive sufferings of various kinds.

And partly, while ye became companions of them that were so used. That is, even when they had not themselves been subjected to these trials, they had sympathized with those who were. They doubtless imparted to them of their property, sent to them relief, and identified themselves with them. It is not known to what particular occasion the apostle here refers. In the next verse he mentions one instance in which they had done this, in aiding him when he was a prisoner.

33 partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds. You sympathized with me when a prisoner, and sent to my relief. It is not known

to what particular instance of imprisonment the apostle here refers. It is probable, however, that it was on some occasion when he was a prisoner in Judea, for the persons to whom this epistle was sent most,probably resided there. Paul was at one time a prisoner more than two years at Cesarea, (Acts 24:27,) and during this time he was kept-in the charge of a centurion, and his friends had free access to him, Acts 24:23. It would seem not improbable that this was the occasion to which he here refers.

And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. The plunder of your property. It was not an uncommon thing for the early Christians to be plundered. This was doubtless a part of the "afflictions" to which the apostle refers in this case. The meaning is, that they yielded their property not only without resistance, but with joy. They, in common with all the early Christians, counted it a privilege and honour to suffer in the cause of their Master. Php 3:10, Php 4:13. Men may be brought to such a state of mind as to part with their property with joy. It is not usually the case; but religion will enable a man to do it. Knowing in yourselves. Marg., "or, that ye have in yourselves; or, for yourselves." The true rendering is, "knowing that ye have for yourselves." It does not refer to any internal knowledge which they had of this, but to the fact that they were assured that they had laid up for themselves a better inheritance in heaven. That ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Better than any earthly possession, and more permanent. It is

(1.) better--it is worth more --it gives more comfort--it makes a man really richer. The treasure laid up in heaven is worth more to a man than all the wealth of Croesus. It will give him more solid peace and comfort; will better serve his turn in the various situations in which he may be placed in life, and will do more on the whole to make him happy, is not said here that property is worth nothing to a man--which is not true, if he uses it well--but that the treasures of heaven are worth more.

(2.) It is more enduring. Property here soon vanishes. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away, or at any rate all that we possess must soon be left. But in heaven all is permanent and secure. No calamity of war, pestilence or famine; no change of times; no commercial embarrassment; no failure of a crop, or a bank; no fraud of sharpers and swindlers, and no act of a pick-pocket or highwayman can take it away; nor does death ever come there to remove the inhabitants of heaven from their "mansions." With this hope, therefore, Christians may cheerfully see their earthly wealth vanish, for they can look forward to their enduring and their better inheritance.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

Cast not away therefore your confidence. Gr. "your boldness;" referring to their confident hope in God. They were not to cast this away, and to become timid, disheartened, and discouraged. They were to bear up manfully under all their trials, and to maintain a steadfast adherence to God and to his cause. The command is not to "cast this away." Nothing could take it from them if they trusted in God, and it could be lost only by their own neglect or imprudence. Rosenmuller supposes (Alte und Neue Morgenland, in loc.) that there may be an allusion here to the disgrace which was attached to the act of a warrior if he cast away his shield, Among the Greeks this was a crime which was punishable with death. Alexander ab Alexand. Gen. Dier. L. ii. c. 13. Among the ancient Germans, Tacitus says, that to lose the shield in battle was regarded as the deepest dishonour, and that those who were guilty of it were not allowed to be present at the sacrifices or in the assembly of the people. Many, says he, who had suffered this calamity, closed their own lives with the halter under the loss of honour. Tac. Germ. c. 6. A similar disgrace would attend the Christian soldier if he should cast away his shield of faith. Comp. Eph 6:16. Which hath great recompence of reward. It will furnish a reward by the peace of mind which it gives here, and will be connected with the rewards of heaven.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of
God, ye might receive the promise.

For ye have need of patience. They were then suffering, and in all trials we have need of patience. We have need of it because there is in us so much disposition to murmur and repine; because our nature is liable to sink under sufferings; and because our trials are often protracted. All that Christians can do in such cases is to be patient--to lie calmly in the hands of God, and submit to his will day by day, and year by year. See Jas 1:3,4; Rom 5:4. That after ye have done the will of God. That is, in bearing trials, for the reference here is particularly to afflictions. Ye might receive the promise. The promised inheritance or reward--in heaven. It is implied here that this promise will not be received unless we are patient in our trials, and the prospect of this reward should encourage us to endure them.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

For yet a little while. There seems to be an allusion here to what the Saviour himself said, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me," Jn 16:16. Or more probably, it may be to Hab 2:3: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The idea which the apostle means to convey evidently is, that the time of their deliverance from their trials was not far remote. And he that shall come will come. The reference here is, doubtless, to the Messiah. But what "coming" of his is referred to is more uncertain. Most probably the idea is, that the Messiah, who was coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to overthrow the Jewish power, (Mt 25,) would soon do this. In this way he would put a period to their persecutions and trials, as the power of the Jewish people to afflict them would be at an end. A similar idea occurs in Lk 21:28, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Lk 21:8. The Christians

in Palestine were oppressed, reviled, and persecuted by the Jews. The destruction of the city and the temple would put an end to that power, and would be, in fact, the time of deliverance for those who had been persecuted. In the passage before us, Paul intimates that that period was not far distant. Perhaps there were already "signs" of his coming, or indications that he was about to appear; and he therefore urges them patiently to persevere in their fidelity to him during the little time of trial that remained. The same encouragement and consolation may be employed still. To all the afflicted it may be said, that "he that shall come will come" soon. The time of affliction is not long. Soon the Redeemer will appear to deliver his afflicted people from all their sorrows; to remove them from a world of pain and tears; and to raise their bodies from the dust, and to receive them to mansions where trials are for ever unknown. Jn 14:3, 1Thes 4:13-18.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Now the just shall live by faith. This is a part of the quotation from Habakkuk, Hab 2:3,4, which was probably commenced in the previous verse. See the passage fully explained Romm 1:7. The meaning in the connexion in which it stands here, in accordance with the sense in which it was used by Habakkuk, is, that the righteous should live by continued confidence in God. They should pass their lives, not in doubt, and fear, and trembling apprehension, but in the exercise of a calm trust in God. In this sense it accords with the scope of what the apostle is here saying, he is exhorting the Christians whom he addressed to perseverance in their religion, even in the midst of many persecutions. To encourage this he says, that it was a great principle that the just--that is, all the pious--ought to live in the constant exercise of faith in God. They should not confide in their own merits, works, or strength. They should exercise constant reliance on their Maker, and he would keep them even unto eternal life. The sense is, that a persevering confidence or belief in the Lord will preserve us amidst all the trials and calamities to which we are exposed.

But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. This also is a quotation from Hab 2:4, but from the Septuagint, not from the Hebrew. Why the authors of the Septuagint thus translated the passage it is impossible now to say. The Hebrew is rendered, in the common version, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;" or more literally, "Behold the scornful; his mind shall not be happy," (Stuart;) or, as Gesenius renders it, "See, he whose soul is unbelieving shall, on this account, be unhappy." The sentiment there is, that the scorner or unbeliever in that day would be unhappy, or would not prosper--, . The apostle has retained the general sense of the passage; and the idea which he expresses is, that the unbeliever, or he who renounces his religion, will incur the Divine displeasure. He will be a man exposed to the Divine wrath; a man on whom God cannot look but with disapprobation. By this solemn consideration, therefore, the apostle urges on them the importance of perseverance, and the guilt and danger of apostasy from the Christian faith. If such a case should occur, no matter what might have been the former condition, and no matter what love or zeal might have been evinced, yet such an apostasy would expose the individual to the certain wrath of God. His former love could not save him, any more than the former obedience of the angels saved them from the horrors of eternal chains and darkness, or than the holiness in which Adam was created saved him and his posterity from the calamities which his apostasy incurred.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

But we are not of them, etc. We who are true Christians do not belong to such a class. In this the apostle expresses the fullest conviction that none of those to whom he wrote would apostatize. The case which he had been describing was only a supposable case, not one which he believed would occur. He had only been stating what must happen if a sincere Christian should apostatize. But he did not mean to say that this would occur in regard to them, or in any case. He made a statement of a general principle under the Divine

administration, and he designed that this should be a means of keeping them in the path to life. What could be a more effectual means than the assurance that if a Christian should apostatize he must inevitably perish for ever? See the sentiment in this verse illustrated at length in the Heb 6:4 and following. (c) "draw back" Heb 10:26 (++) "perdition" "Destruction" (&) "believe" "have faith"

Hebrews-11

Faith

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for. On the general nature of faith, Mk 16:10. The margin here is, "ground, or confidence." There is scarcely any verse of the New Testament more important than this, for it states what is the nature of all true faith, and is the only definition of it which is attempted in the Scriptures. Eternal life depends on the existence and exercise of faith, (Mk 16:16,) and hence the importance of an accurate understanding of its nature. The word rendered substance --υποστασις--occurs in the New Testament only in the following places. In 2Cor 9:4, 11:17, Heb 3:14, where it is rendered confident and confidence; and in Heb 1:3, where it is rendered person, and in the passage before us. Comp. Heb 1:3. Prof. Stuart renders it here confidence; Chrysostom, "Faith gives reality or substance to things hoped for." The word properly means that which is placed under, (Germ. Unterstellen;) then ground, basis, foundation, support. Then it means, also. reality, substance, existence, in contradistinction from that which is unreal, imaginary, or deceptive, (tauschung.) Passow. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here has reference to something which imparts reality in the view of the mind to those things which are not seen, and which

serves to distinguish them from those things which are unreal and illusive. It is that which enables us to feel and act as if they were real, or which causes them to exert an influence over us as if we saw them. Faith does this on all other subjects as well as religion. A belief that there is such a place as London or Calcutta, leads us to act as if this were so, if we have occasion to go to either; a belief that money may be made in a certain undertaking, leads men to act as if this were so: a belief in the veracity of another leads us to act as if this were so. As long as the faith continues, whether it be well-founded or not, it gives all the force of reality to that which is believed. We feel and act just as if it were so, or as if we saw the object before our eyes. This, I think, is the clear meaning here. We do not see the things of eternity. We do not see God, or heaven, or the angels, or the redeemed in glory, or the crowns of victory, or the harps of praise; but we have faith in them, and this leads us to act as if we saw them. And this is, undoubtedly, the fact in regard to all who live by faith, and who are fairly under its influence.

Of things hoped for. In heaven. Faith gives them reality in the view of the mind. The Christian hopes to be admitted into heaven; to be raised up in the last day from the slumbers of the tomb; to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy. Under the influence of faith he allows these things to control his mind as if they were a most affecting reality.

The evidence of things not seen. Of the existence of God; of heaven; of angels; of the glories of the world prepared for the redeemed. The word rendered evidence ελεγχος occurs in the New Testament only in this place and in 2Ti 3:16, where it is rendered reproof. It means, properly, proof, or means of proving, to wit, evidence; then proof which convinces another of error or guilt; then vindication or defence; then summary or contents. See Pussow. The idea of evidence which goes to demonstrate the thing under consideration, or which is adapted to produce conviction in the mind, seems to be the elementary idea in the word. So when a proposition is demonstrated; when

a man is arraigned, and evidence is furnished of his guilt, or when he establishes his innocence; or when one by argument refutes his adversaries, the idea of convincing argument enters into the use of the word in each case. This, I think, is clearly the meaning of the word here. "Faith in the Divine declarations answers all the purposes of a convincing argument, or is itself a convincing argument to the mind, of the real existence of those things which are not seen." But is it a good argument? Is it rational to rely on such a means of being convinced? Is mere faith a consideration which should ever convince a rational mind? The infidel says no; and we know there may be a faith which is no argument of the truth of what is believed. But when a man who has never seen it believes that there is such a place as London, his belief in the numerous testimonies respecting it which he has heard and read is, to his mind, a good and rational proof of its existence, and he would act on that belief without hesitation. When a son credits the declaration or the promise of a father who has never deceived him, and acts as though that declaration and promise were true, his faith is to him a ground of conviction and of action, and he will act as if these things were so. In like manner the Christian believes what God says. He has never seen heaven; he has never seen an angel; he has never seen the Redeemer; he has never seen a body raised from the grave; but he has evidence which is satisfactory to his mind that God has spoken on these subjects, and his very nature prompts him to confide in the declarations of his Creator. Those declarations are, to his mind, more convincing proof than anything else would be. They are more conclusive evidence than would be the deductions on his own reason; far better and more rational than all the reasonings and declarations of the infidel to the contrary. He feels and acts, therefore, as if these things were so--for his faith in the declarations of God has convinced him that they are so. The object of the apostle, in this chapter, is not to illustrate the nature of what is called saving faith, but to show the power of unwavering confidence in God in sustaining the soul, especially in times of trial; and particularly in leading us to act, in view of promises and of things not seen, as if they were so.

"Saving faith" is the same kind of confidence directed to the Messiah--the Lord Jesus--as the Saviour of the soul.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed. The first instance of the strength of faith, which the apostle refers to, is that by which we give credence to the declarations of the Scriptures about the work of creation, Gen 1:3, This is selected first, evidently, because it is the first thing that occurs in the Bible, or is the first thing there narrated in relation to which there is the exercise of faith. He points to no particular instance in which this faith was exercise--for none is especially mentioned--but refers to it as an illustration of the nature of faith which every one might observe in himself. The faith here exercised is confidence in the truth of the Divine declarations in regard to the creation. The meaning is, that our knowledge on this subject is a mere matter of faith in the Divine testimony. It is not that we could reason this out, and demonstrate that the worlds were thus made; it is not that profane history goes back to that period and informs us of it; it is simply that God has told us so in his word. The strength of the faith, in this case, is measured

(1.) by the fact that it is mere faith--that there is nothing else on which to rely in the case, and

(2.) by the greatness of the truth believed. After all the acts of faith which have ever been exercised in this world, perhaps there is none which is really more strong, or which requires higher confidence in God, than the declaration that this vast universe has been brought into existence by a word!

We understand. We attain to the apprehension of; we receive and comprehend the idea. Our knowledge of this fact is derived only from faith, and not from our own reasoning.

That the worlds. In Gen 1:1, it is "the heaven and the earth." The phrase which the apostle uses denotes a plurality of worlds, and is proof that he supposed there were other worlds besides our earth. How far his knowledge extended on this point we have no means of ascertaining; but there is no reason to doubt that he regarded the stars as "worlds," in some respects, like our own. On the meaning of the Greek word used here, Heb 1:2 The plural form is used there also, and in both cases, it seems to me, not without design.

Were framed. It is observable that the apostle does not here use the word make or create. That which he does use --καταρτιζω--means, to put in order, to arrange, to complete, and may be applied to that which before had an existence, and which is to be put in order or re-fitted, Mt 4:24, Mk 1:19, Mt 21:16, Heb 10:5. The meaning here is, that they were set in order by the word of God. This implies the act of creation, but the specific idea is that of arranging them in the beautiful order in which they are now. Doddridge renders it "adjusted." Kuinoel, however, supposes that the word is used here in the sense of form or make. It has probably about the meaning which we attach to the phrase "fitting up anything"--as, for example, a dwelling--and includes all the previous arrangements, though the thing which is particularly denoted is not the making, but the arrangement. So in the work here referred to. "We arrive at the conviction that the universe was fitted up or arranged, in the present manner, by the word of God."

By the word of God. This does not mean here, by the Logos, or the second Person of the Trinity, for Paul does not use that term here or elsewhere. The word which he employs is ρημα--rema--meaning, properly, a word spoken, and in this place command. Comp. Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20, Ps 33:6; -"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." In regard to the agency of the Son of God in the work of the creation, see Heb 1:2; comp. Jn 1:3.

So that things which are seen. The point of the remark here is, that the visible creation was not moulded out of pre-existing materials, but was made out of nothing. In reference to the grammatical construction of the passage, see Stuart, Comm. in loc. The doctrine taught is, that matter was not eternal; that the materials of the universe, as well as the arrangements, were formed by God, and that all this was done by a simple command. The argument here, so far as it is adapted to the purpose of the apostle, seems to be, that there was nothing which appeared, or which was to be seen, that could lay the foundation of a belief that God made the worlds; and, in like manner, our faith now is not to be based on what "appears," by which we could infer or reason out what would be, but that we must exercise strong confidence in Him who had power to create the universe out of nothing. If this vast universe has been called into existence by the mere word of God, there is nothing which we may not believe he has ample power to perform.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

By faith Abel offered. See Gen 4:4,5. In the account in Genesis of the offering made by Abel, there is no mention of faith --as is true also indeed of most of the instances referred to by the apostle. The account in Genesis is, simply, that Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Men have speculated much as to the reason why the offering of Abel was accepted, and that of Cain rejected; but such speculation rests on no certain basis, and the solution of the apostle should be regarded as decisive and satisfactory, that in the one case there was faith, in the other not. It could not have been because an offering of the fruits of the ground was not pleasing to God, for such an offering was commanded under the Jewish law, and was not in itself improper. Both the brothers selected that which was to them most obvious; which they had reared with their own hands; which they regarded as

most valuable. Cain had cultivated the earth, and he naturally brought what had grown under his care; Abel kept a flock, and he as naturally brought what he had raised: and had the temper of mind in both been the same, there is no reason to doubt that the offering of each would have been accepted. To this conclusion we are led by the nature of the case, and the apostle advances substantially the same sentiment--for he says that the particular state of mind on which the whole turned was, that the one had faith and the other not. How the apostle himself was informed of the fact, that it was faith which made the difference, he has not informed us. The belief that he was inspired will, however, relieve the subject of this difficulty--for, according to such a belief, all his statements here, whether recorded in the Old Testament or not, are founded in truth. It is equally impossible to tell with certainty what was the nature of the faith of Abel. It has been commonly asserted that it was faith in Christ---looking forward to his coming, and depending on his sacrifice when offering that which was to be a type of him. But of this there is no positive evidence, though, from Heb 12:24, it seems to be not improbable. Sacrifice, as a type of the Redeemer's great offering, was instituted early in the history of the world. There can be no reason assigned for the offering of blood as an atonement for sin, except that it had originally a reference to the great atonement which was to be made by blood; and as the salvation of man depended on this entirely, it is probable that that would be one of the truths which would be first communicated to man after the fall. The bloody offering of Abel is the first of the kind which is definitely mentioned in the Scriptures, (though it is not improbable that such sacrifices were offered by Adam, comp. Gen 3:21,) and consequently Abel may be regarded as the recorded head of the whole typical system, of which Christ was the antitype and the fulfilment. Heb 12:24.

A more excellent sacrifice. πλειοναθυσιαν -as rendered by Tindal, "more plenteous sacrifice;" or as Wickliffe renders it, more literally, "a much more sacrifice;" that is, a more full or

complete sacrifice; a better sacrifice. The meaning is, that it had in it much more to render it acceptable to God. In the estimate of its value, the views of him who offered it would be more to be regarded than the nature of the offering itself By which.

By which sacrifice so offered. The way in which he obtained the testimony of Divine approbation was by the sacrifice offered in this manner. It was not merely by faith; it was by the offering of a sacrifice in connexion with, and under the influence of faith.

He obtained witness that he was righteous. That is, from God. His offering, made in faith, was the means of his obtaining the Divine testimonial that he was a righteous man. Heb 11:2. This is implied in what is said in Gen 4:4: "And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering;" that is, he regarded it as the offering of a righteous man.

God testifying of his gifts. In what way this was done is not mentioned either here or in Genesis. Commentators have usually supposed that it was by fire descending from heaven to consume the sacrifice. But there is no evidence of this, for there is no intimation of it in the Bible. It is true that this frequently occurred when an offering was made to God, (see Gen 15:17, Lev 9:24, Jud 6:21, 1Kgs 18:38;) but the sacred writers give us no hint that this happened in the case of the sacrifice made by Abel; and since it is expressly mentioned in other cases and not here, the presumption rather is that no such miracle occurred on the occasion. So remarkable a fact--the first one in all history if it were so--could hardly have failed to be noticed by the sacred writer. It seems to me, therefore, that there was some method by which God "testified" his approbation of the offering of Abel which is unknown to us, but in regard to what it was conjecture is vain.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

By faith Enoch was translated. The account of Enoch is found in Gen 5:21-24. It is very brief, and is this, that "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." There is no particular mention of his faith; and the apostle attributes this to him, as in the case of Abel, either because it was involved in the very nature of piety, or because the fact was communicated to him by direct revelation. In the account in Genesis, there is nothing inconsistent with the belief that Enoch was characterized by eminent faith, but it is rather implied in the expression, "he walked with God." Comp. 2Cor 5:7. It may also be implied in what is said by the apostle Jude, (Jude 1:14,15,) that "he prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," etc. From this it would appear that he was a preacher; that he predicted the coming of the Lord to judgment, and that he lived in the firm belief of what was to occur in future times. Moses does not say expressly that Enoch was translated. He says "he was not, for God took him." The expression "he was not," means he was no more among men; or he was removed from the earth. This language would be applicable to any method by which he was removed, whether by dying, or by being translated. A similar expression respecting Romulus occurs in Livy, (i. 16,) Nec deinde in tetris Romulus fuit. The translation of the Septuagint on this part of the verse in Genesis is, ουχευρισκετο--"was not found;" that is, he disappeared. The authority for what the apostle says here that he "was translated," is found in the other phrase in Genesis, "God took him." The reasons which led to the statement that he was translated without seeing death, or that show that this is a fair conclusion from the words in Genesis, are such as these.

(1.) There is no mention made of his death, and in this respect the account of Enoch stands by itself. It is, except in this case, the uniform custom of Moses to mention the age and the death of the individuals whose biography he records, and in many cases this is about all that is said of them. But in regard to Enoch there is this remarkable exception, that no record is

made of his death-showing that there was something unusual in the manner of his removal from the world.

(2.) The Hebrew word used by Moses, found in such a connexion, is one which would rather suggest the idea that he had been taken, in some extraordinary manner from the world. That word----means, to take--with the idea of taking to one's self. Thus, Gen 8:20, "Noah took of all beasts, and offered a burnt-offering." Thus it is often used in the sense of taking a wife --that is, to one's self, (Gen 4:19, 6:2, 12:19, 19:14;) and then it is used in the sense of taking away, Gen 14:12, 27:35, Job 1:21 Gen 12:20, Ps 31:13, Jer 15:15. The word, therefore, would naturally suggest the idea that he had been taken by God to himself, or had been removed in an extraordinary manner from the earth. This is confirmed by the fact that the word is not used anywhere in the Scriptures to denote a removal by death, and that in the only other instance in which it (is used in relation to a removal from this world, it occurs in the statement respecting the translation of Elijah. "And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel, came forth to Elisha, and said to him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away () thy master from thy head to-day?" 2Kgs 2:3,6; comp. Heb 11:11. This transaction, where there could be no doubt about the manner of the removal, shows in what sense the word is used in Genesis.

(3.) It was so understood by the translators of the Septuagint. The apostle has used the same word in this place which is employed by the Seventy in Gen 5:24--μετατιθημι. This word means to transpose, to put in another place; and then to transport, transfer, translate, Acts 7:16, Heb 7:12. It properly expresses the removal to another place, and is the very word which would be used on the supposition that one was taken to heaven without dying.

(4.) This interpretation of the passage in Genesis by Paul is in accordance with the uniform interpretation of the Jews. In the Targum of Onkelos it is evidently supposed that Enoch was

translated without dying. In that Targum the passage in Gen. v. 24 is rendered, "And Enoch walked in the fear of the Lord, and was not, for the Lord did not put him to death"-- " So also in Ecclesiasticus or the Son of Sirach, v: (xlix. 14,) "But upon the earth was no man created like Enoch; for he was taken from the earth." These opinions of the Jews and of the early translators, are of value only as showing that the interpretation which Paul has put upon Gen 5:24 is the natural interpretation. It is such as occurs to separate writers, without collusion, and this shows that this is the meaning most naturally suggested by the passage. That he should not see death. That is, that he should not experience death, or be made personally acquainted with it. The word taste often occurs in the same sense. Heb 2:9, "That he should taste death for every man," Comp Mt 16:28, Mk 9:1, Lk 9:27. And was not found. Gen 5:24: "And he was not." That is, he was not in the land of the living. Paul retains the word used in the Septuagint. He had this testimony, that he pleased God. Implied in the declaration in Gen 5:22, that he "walked with God." This denotes a state of friendship between God and him, and of course implies that his conduct was pleasing to God. The apostle appeals here to the sense of the account in Genesis, but does not retain the very words. The meaning here is not that the testimony respecting Enoch was actually given before his translation, but that the testimony relates to his having pleased God before he was removed. Stuart. In regard to this instructive fragment of history, and to the reasons why Enoch was thus removed, we may make the following remarks.

(1.) The age in which he lived was undoubtedly one of great wickedness. Enoch is selected as the only one of that generation signalized by eminent piety, and he appears to have spent his life in publicly reproving a sinful generation, and in warning them of the approaching judgment, Jude 1:14,16. The wickedness which ultimately led to the universal deluge seems already to have commenced in the earth, and Enoch, like Noah, his great-grandson, was raised up as a preacher of righteousness to reprove a sinful generation.

(2.) It is not improbable that the great truths of religion in that age were extensively denied; and probably, among other things, the future state, the resurrection, the belief that man would exist in another world, and that it was maintained that death was the end of being--was an eternal sleep. If so, nothing could be better adapted to correct the prevailing evils than the removal of an eminent man, without dying, from the world. His departure would thus confirm the instructions of his life; and his removal, like the death of saints often now, would serve to make an impression which his living instructions would not.

(3.) His removal is, in itself, a very important and instructive fact in history. It has occurred in no other instance except that of Elijah; nor has any other living man been translated to heaven except the Lord Jesus. That fact was instructive in a great many respects.

(a.) It showed that there was a future state --another world.

(b.) It showed that the body might exist in that future state--though doubtless so changed as to adapt it to the condition of things there.

(c.) It prepared the world to credit the account of the ascension of the Redeemer. If Enoch and Elijah were removed thus without dying, there was no intrinsic improbability that the Lord Jesus would be removed after having died and risen again.

(d.) It furnishes a demonstration of the doctrine that the saints will exist hereafter, which meets all the arguments of the sceptic and the infidel. One single fact overturns all the mere speculations of philosophy, and renders nugatory all the objections of the sceptic. The infidel argues against the truth of the resurrection, and of the future state, from the difficulties attending the doctrine. A single case of one who has been

raised up from the dead, or who has been removed to heaven, annihilates all such arguments--for how can supposed difficulties destroy a well authenticated fact?

(e,) It is an encouragement to piety. It shows that God regards his friends; that their fidelity and holy living please him; and that in the midst of eminent wickedness and a scoffing world, it is possible so to live as to please God. The conduct of this holy man, therefore, is an encouragement to us to do our duty, though we stand alone; and to defend the truth, though all who live with us upon the earth deny and deride it.

(4.) The removal of Enoch shows that the same thing would be possible in the case of every saint. God could do it in other cases, as well as in his, with equal ease. That his friends, therefore, are suffered to remain on the earth--that they linger on in enfeebled health, or are crushed by calamity, or are stricken: down by the pestilence as others are, is not because God could not remove them, as Enoch was, without dying, but because there is some important reason why they should remain, and linger, and suffer, and die. Among those reasons may be such as the following:

(a.) The regular operation of the laws of nature, as now constituted, require it. Vegetables die; the inhabitants of the deep die; the fowls that fly in the air, and the beasts that roam over hills and plains die; and man, by his sins, is brought under the operation of this great universal law. It would be possible, indeed, for God to save his people from this law, but it would require the interposition of continued miracles; and it is better to have the laws of nature regularly operating, than to have them constantly set aside by Divine interposition.

(b.) The power of religion is now better illustrated in the way in which the saints are actually removed from the earth, than it would be if they were all translated. Its power is now seen in its enabling us to overcome the dread of death, and in its supporting us in the pains and sorrows of the departing hour.

It is a good thing to discipline the soul so that it will not fear to die; it shows how superior religion is to all the forms of philosophy, that it enables the believer to look calmly forward to his own certain approaching death. It is an important matter to keep this up from age to age, and to show to each generation that religion can overcome the natural apprehension of the most fearful calamity which befalls a creature--death; and can make man calm in the prospect of lying beneath the clods of the valley, cold, dark, alone, to moulder back to his native dust. (c.) The death of the Christian does good. It preaches to the living. The calm resignation, the peace, the triumph of the dying believer, is a constant admonition to a thoughtless and wicked world. The deathbed of the Christian proclaims the mercy of God from generation to generation, and there is not a dying saint who may not, and who probably does not do great good in the closing hours of his earthly being.

(d.) It may be added, that the present arrangement falls in with the general laws of religion, that we are to be influenced by faith, not by sight. If all Christians were removed like Enoch, it would be an argument for the truth of religion addressed constantly to the senses. But this is not the way in which the evidence of the truth of religion is proposed to man. It is submitted to his understanding, his conscience, his heart; and in this there is of design a broad distinction between religion and other things. Men act, in other matters, under the influence of the senses; it is designed that in religion they shall act under the influence of higher and nobler considerations, and that they shall be influenced not solely by a reference to what is passing before their eyes, but to the things which are not seen.

6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him:* for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

But without faith it is impossible to please him. Without confidence in God--in his fidelity, his truth, his wisdom, his promises. And this is as true in other things as ill religion. It is impossible for a child to please his father unless he has confidence in him. It is impossible for a wife to please her

husband, or a husband a wife, unless they have confidence in each other. If there is distrust and jealousy on either part, there is discord and misery. We cannot be pleased with a professed friend unless he has such confidence in us as to believe our declarations and promises, The same thing is true of God. He cannot be pleased with the man who has no confidence in him; who doubts the truth of his declarations and promises; who does not believe that his ways are right, or that he is qualified for universal empire. The requirement of faith or confidence in God is not arbitrary; it is just what we require of our children, and partners in life, and friends, as the indispensable condition of our being pleased with them.

For he that cometh to God. In any way--as a worshipper. This is alike required in public worship, in the family, and in secret devotion.

Must believe that he is. That God exists. This is the first thing required in worship. Evidently we cannot come to him in an acceptable manner if we doubt his existence. We do not see him, but we must believe that he is; we cannot form in our mind a correct image of God, but this should not prevent a conviction that there is such a Being. But the declaration here implies more than that there should be a general persuasion of the truth that there is a God. It is necessary that we have this belief in lively exercise in the act of drawing near to him, and that we should realize that we are actually in the presence of the all-seeing JEHOVAH.

And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This is equally necessary as the belief that he exists. If we could not believe that God would hear and answer our prayers, there could be no encouragement to call upon him. It is not meant here that the desire of the reward is to be the motive for seeking God--for the apostle makes no affirmation on that point; but that it is impossible to make an acceptable approach to him unless we have this belief.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

By faith Noah. It is less difficult to see that Noah must have been influenced by faith than that Abel and Enoch were. Everything which Noah did, in reference to the threatened deluge, was done in virtue of simple faith or belief of what God said. It was not because he could show from the course of events that things were tending to such a catastrophe; or because such an event had occurred before, rendering it probable that it would be likely to occur again; or because this was the common belief of men, and it was easy to fall into this himself. It was simply because God had informed him of it, and he put unwavering reliance on the truth of the Divine declaration.

Being warned of God. Gen 6:13. The Greek word here used means divinely admonished. Comp. Gen 8:5.

Of things not seen as yet. Of the flood which was yet future. The meaning is, that there were no visible signs of it; there was nothing which could be a basis of calculation that it would occur. This admonition was given an hundred and twenty years before the deluge, and of course long before there could have been any natural indications that it would occur.

Moved with fear. Marg. Being wary. The Greek word ευλαβηθεις ---occurs only here and in Acts 23:10: "The chief captain fearing lest Paul," etc. The noun occurs in Heb 5:7: "And was heard in that he feared," Heb 5:7) and Heb 12:28: "With reverence and godly fear." The verb properly means, to act with caution, to be circumspect, and then to fear, to be afraid. So far as the word is concerned, it might mean here that Noah was influenced by the dread of what was coming, or it

may mean that he was influenced by proper caution and reverence for God. The latter meaning agrees better with the scope of the remarks of Paul, and is probably the true sense. His reverence and respect for God induced him to act under the belief that what he had said was true, and that the calamity which he had predicted would certainly come upon the world.

Prepared an ark to the saving of his house. In order that his family might be saved, Gen 6:14-22. The salvation here referred to was preservation from the flood.

By the which. By which faith.

He condemned the world. That is, the wicked world around him. The meaning is, that by his confidence in God, and his preparation for the flood, he showed the wisdom of his own course and the folly of theirs. We have the same phrase now in common use, where one who sets a good example is said to "condemn others." He shows the guilt and folly of their lives by the contrast between his conduct and theirs. The wickedness of the sinner is condemned not only by preaching, and by the admonitions and threatenings of the law of God, but by the conduct of every good man. The language of such a life is as plain a rebuke of the sinner as the most fearful denunciations of Divine wrath.

And became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. The phrase, "heir of righteousness," here means, properly, that he acquired, gained, or became possessed of that righteousness. It does not refer so much to the mode by which it was done, as if it were by inheritance, as to the fact that he obtained it. The word heir is used in this general sense in Rom 4:13,14, Tit 3:7, Heb 1:2, 6:17. Noah was not the heir to that righteousness by inheriting it from his ancestors, but in virtue of it he was regarded as among the heirs or sons of God, and as being a possessor of that righteousness which is connected with faith.

The phrase "righteousness which is by faith" refers to the fact that he was regarded and treated as a righteous man. Rom 1:17. It is observable here, that it is not said that Noah had specific faith in Christ, or that his being made heir of the righteousness of faith depended on that, but it was in connexion with his believing what God said respecting the deluge. It was faith or confidence in God which was the ground of his justification, in accordance with the general doctrine of the Scriptures that it is only by faith that man can be saved, though the specific mode of faith was not that which is required now under the gospel. In the early ages of the world, when few truths were revealed, a cordial belief of any of those truths showed that there was real confidence in God, or that the principle of faith was in the heart; in the fuller revelation which we enjoy, we are not only to believe those truths, but specifically to believe in Him who has made the great atonement for sin, and by whose merits all have been saved who have entered heaven. The same faith or confidence in God which led Noah to believe what God said about the deluge would have led him to believe what he has said about the Redeemer; and the same confidence in God which led him to commit himself to his safe keeping in an ark on the world of waters, would have led him to commit his soul to the safe keeping of the Redeemer, the true Ark of safety. As the principle of faith, therefore, existed in the heart of Noah, it was proper that he should become, with others, an "heir of the righteousness by faith."

In regard to the circumstances which show the strength of his faith, we may make the following remarks.

(1.) It pertained to a very distant future event. It looked forward to that which was to happen after a lapse of an hundred and twenty years. This was known to Noah, (Gen 6:3;) and, at this long period before it occurred, he was to begin to build an ark to save himself and family--to act as though this would be undoubtedly true. This is a much longer period than man now is required to exercise faith before that is realized which is the object of belief. Rare is it that three-score years intervene

between the time when a man first believes in God and when he enters into heaven; much more frequently it is but a few months or days; not an instance now occurs in which the period is lengthened out to an hundred and twenty years.

(2.) There was no outward evidence that what Noah believed would occur. There were no appearances in nature which indicated that there would be such a flood of waters after more than a century had passed away. There were no breakings up of the fountains of the deep; no marks of the far-distant storm gathering on the sky, which could be the basis of the calculation. The word of God was the only ground of evidence; the only thing to which he could refer gainsayers and revilers. It is so now. There are no visible signs of the coming of the Saviour to judge the world. Yet the true believer feels and acts as if it were so--resting on the sure word of God.

(3.) The course of things was much against the truth of what Noah believed. No such event had ever occurred. There is no evidence that there had ever been a storm of rain half sufficient to drown the world; or that there had ever been the breaking up of the deep, or that there had ever been a partial deluge. For sixteen hundred years the course of nature had been uniform, and all the force of this uniformity would be felt and urged when it should be alleged that this was to be disturbed, and to give place to an entire new order of events. Comp. 2Pet 3:4. The same thing is now felt in regard to the objects of the Christian faith. The course of events is uniform. The laws of nature are regular and steady. The dead do not leave their graves. Seasons succeed each other in regular succession; men are born, live, and die, as in former times; fire does not wrap the earth in flames; the elements do not melt with fervent heat; seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter follow each other, and "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." How many probabilities are there now, therefore, as there were in the time of Noah, against that which is the object of faith!

(4.) It is not improbable that when Noah proclaimed the approaching destruction of the world by a deluge, the possibility of such an event was strongly denied by the philosophers of that age. The fact that such an event could have occurred has been denied by infidel philosophers in our own times, and attempts have been gravely made to show that the earth did not contain water enough to cover its surface to the height mentioned in the Scriptures, and that no condensation of the vapour in the atmosphere could produce such an effect. It is not improbable that some such arguments may have been used in the time of Noah, and it is morally certain that he could not meet those arguments by any philosophy of his own. There is no reason to think that he was endowed with such a knowledge of chemistry as to be able to show that such a thing was possible, or that he had such an acquaintance with the structure of the earth as to demonstrate that it contained within itself the elements of its own destruction. All that he could oppose to such speculations was the simple declaration of God; and the same thing is also true now in regard to the cavils and philosophical arguments of infidelity. Objections drawn from philosophy are often made against the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; the destruction of the earth by the agency of fire; and even the existence of the soul after death. These difficulties may be obviated partly by science; but the proof that these events will occur does not depend on science. It is a matter of simple faith; and all that we can in fact oppose to these objections is the declaration of God. The result showed that Noah was not a fool or a fanatic in trusting to the word of God against the philosophy of his age; and the result will show the same of the Christian in his confiding in the truth of the Divine declarations against the philosophy of his age.

(5.) It is beyond all question that Noah would be subjected to much ridicule and scorn, he would be regarded as a dreamer; a fanatic; an alarmist; a wild projector. The purpose of making preparation for such an event as the flood to occur after the lapse of an hundred and twenty years, and when there were no indications of it, and all appearances were against it, would be

regarded as in the highest degree wild and visionary. The design of building a vessel which would outride the storm, and which would live in such an open sea, and which would contain all sorts of animals with the food for them for an indefinite period, could not but have been regarded as eminently ridiculous. When the ark was preparing, nothing could have been a more happy subject for scoffing and jibes. In such an age, therefore, and in such circumstances, we may suppose that all the means possible would have been resorted to, to pour contempt on such an undertaking. They who had wit, would find here an ample subject for its exercise; if ballads were made then, no more fertile theme for a profane song could be desired than this; and in the haunts of revelry, intemperance, and pollution, nothing would furnish a finer topic to give point to a jest, than the credulity and folly of the old man who was building the ark. It would require strong faith to contend thus with the wit, the sarcasm, the contempt, the raillery, and the low jesting, as well as with the wisdom and philosophy of a whole world. Yet it is a fair illustration of what occurs often now, and of the strength of that faith in the Christian heart which meets meekly and calmly the scoffs and jeers of a wicked generation.

(6.) All this would be heightened by delay. The time was distant. What now completes four generations would have passed away before the event predicted would occur, Youth grew up to manhood, and manhood passed on to old age, and still there were no signs of the coming storm. That was no feeble faith which could hold on in this manner for an hundred and twenty years, believing unwaveringly that all which God had said would be accomplished. But it is an illustration of faith in the Christian church now. The church maintains the same confidence in God from age to age--and, regardless of all the reproaches of scoffers, and all the arguments of philosophy, still adheres to the truths which God has revealed. So with individual Christians. They look for the promise. They are expecting heaven. They doubt not that the time will come when they will be received to glory; when their bodies will be

raised up glorified and immortal, and when sin and sorrow will be no more. In the conflicts and trials of life, the time of their deliverance may seem to be long delayed. The world may reproach them, and Satan may tempt them to doubt whether all their hope of heaven is not delusion. But their faith fails not; and though hope seems delayed, and the heart is sick, yet they keep the eye on heaven. So it is in regard to the final triumphs of the gospel. The Christian looks forward to the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea. Yet that time may seem to be long delayed. Wickedness triumphs. A large part of the earth is still filled with the habitations of cruelty. The progress of the gospel is slow. The church comes up reluctantly to the work. The enemies of the cause exult and rejoice, and ask, with scoffing triumph, Where is the evidence that the nations will be converted to God? They suggest difficulties; they refer to the numbers, and to the opposition of the enemies of the true religion; to the might of kingdoms, and to the power of fixed opinion, and to the hold which idolatry has on mankind; and they sneeringly inquire. At what period will the world be converted to Christ? Yet, in the face of all difficulties, and arguments, and sneers, faith confides in the promise of the Father to the Son, that the "heathen shall be given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession," Ps 2:8. The faith of the true Christian is as strong in the fulfilment of this promise, as that of Noah was in the assurance that the guilty world would be destroyed by a flood of waters.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

By faith Abraham. There is no difficulty in determining that Abraham was influenced by faith in God. The case is even stronger than that of Noah, for it is expressly declared, Gen 15:6, "And he believed, in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Comp. Rom 4:1, and following. In the illustrations of the power of faith in this chapter, the apostle appeals to two instances m which it was exhibited by

Abraham, "the father of the faithful." Each of these required confidence in God of extraordinary strength, and each of them demanded a special and honourable mention. The first was that when he left his own country to go to a distant land of strangers, (Heb 11:8-10;) the other when he showed his readiness to sacrifice his own son in obedience to the will of God, Heb 11:17-19.

When he was called. Gen 12:1: "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

Into a Place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed. To Palestine, or the land of Canaan, though that was not indicated at the time.

And he went out not knowing whither he went. Gen 12:4. Abraham at that time took with him Sarai, and Lot the son of his brother, and "the souls that they had gotten in Haran." Terah, the father of Abraham, started on the journey with them, but died in Haran, Gen 11:31,32. The original call was made to Abraham, Gen 12:1, Acts 7:2,3; but he appears to have induced his father and his nephew to accompany him. At this time he had no children, (Gen 11:30,) though it seems probable that Lot had, Gen 12:6. Some, however, understand the expression in Gen 12:6, "and the souls they had gotten in Haran," as referring to the servants or domestics that they had in various ways procured, and to the fact that Abraham and Lot gradually drew around them a train of dependents and followers who were disposed to unite with them, and accompany them wherever they went. The Chaldee Paraphrast understands it of the proselytes which Abraham had made there--"All the souls which he had subdued under the law." When it is said that Abraham "went out not knowing whither he went," it must be understood as meaning that he was ignorant to what country he would in fact be led. If it be supposed that he had some general intimatian of the nature of that country, and of the direction in which it was situate, yet it

must be remembered that the knowledge of geography was then exceedingly imperfect; that this was a distant country; that it lay beyond a pathless desert, and that probably no traveller had ever come from that land to apprize him what it was. All this serves to show what was the strength of the faith of Abraham.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. The land of Canaan that had been promised to him and his posterity. He resided there as if he were a stranger and sojourner. He had no possessions there which he did not procure by honest purchase; he owned no land in fee-simple, except the small piece which he bought for a burial-place. See Gen 23:7-20. In all respects he lived there as if he had no peculiar right in the soil; as if he never expected to own it; as if he were in a country wholly owned by others. He exercised no privileges which might not have been exercised by any foreigner, and which was not regarded as a right of common--that of feeding his cattle in any unoccupied part of the land; and he would have had no power of ejecting any other persons, excepting that which any one might have enjoyed by the pre-occupancy of the pasture grounds. To all intents and purposes he was a stranger. Yet he seems to have lived in the confident and quiet expectation that that land would, at some period, come into the possession of his posterity. It was a strong instance of faith that he should cherish this belief for so long a time, when he was a stranger there--when he gained no right in the soil, except in the small piece that was purchased as a burial-place for his wife--and when he saw old age coming on, and still the whole land in the possession of others.

Dwelling in tabernacles. In tents, the common mode of living in countries where the principal occupation is that of keeping flocks and herds. His dwelling thus in moveable tents looked little like its being his permanent possession.

With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. That is, the same thing occurred in regard to them which had to Abraham. They also lived in tents. They acquired no fixed property, and no title to the land, except to the small portion purchased as a burial-place. Yet they were heirs of the same promise as Abraham, that the land would be theirs. Though it was still owned by others, and filled with its native inhabitants, yet they adhered to the belief that it would come into the possession of their families. In their movable habitations-- in their migrations from place to place--they seem never to have doubted that the fixed habitation of their posterity was to be there, and: that all that had been promised would be certainly fulfilled.

10 for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

For he looked for a city which hath foundations. It has been doubted to what the apostle here refers. Grotius and some others suppose that he refers to Jerusalem, as a permanent dwelling for his posterity in contradistinction from the unsettled mode of life which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob led. But there is no evidence that Abraham looked forward to the building of such a city, for no promise was made to him of this kind; and this interpretation falls evidently below the whole drift of the passage. Comp. Heb 11:12:14-16, 12:22, 13:14. Phrases like that of "the city of God," "a city with foundations," "the new Jerusalem," and "the heavenly Jerusalem" in the time of the apostle, appear to have acquired a kind of technical signification. They referred to the area--of which Jerusalem, the seat of the worship of God, seems to have been regarded as the emblem. Thus in Heb 12:22, the apostle speaks of the "heavenly Jerusalem," and in Heb 13:14, he says, "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In Rev 21:2, John says that he "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven," and proceeds in that chapter and the following to give a most beautiful description of it. Even so early as the time of Abraham, it would seem that the future blessedness of the

righteous was foretold under the image of a splendid City reared on permanent foundations. It is remarkable that Moses does not mention this as an object of the faith of Abraham, and it is impossible to ascertain the degree of distinctness which this had in is view. It is probable that the apostle, in speaking of his faith in this particular, did not rely on any distinct record, or even any tradition, but spoke of his piety in the language which, he would use to characterize religion of any age, or in any individual, he was accustomed, in common with others of his time, to contemplate the future blessedness of the righteous under the image of a beautiful city; a place where the worship of God would be celebrated for ever--a city of which Jerusalem was the most striking representation to the mind of a Jew. It was natural for him to speak of strong piety in this manner wherever it existed, and especially in such a case as that of Abraham, who left his own habitation to wander in a distant land. This fact showed that he regarded himself as a stranger and sojourner; and yet he had a strong expectation of a fixed habitation, and a permanent inheritance. He must, therefore, have looked on to the permanent abodes of the righteous; the heavenly city ;--and though he had an undoubted confidence that the promised land would be given to his posterity, yet, as he did not possess it himself, he must have looked for his own permanent abode to the fixed residence of the just in heaven. This passage seems to me to prove that Abraham had an expectation of future happiness after death. There is not the slightest evidence that he supposed there would be a magnificent and glorious capital where the Messiah would personally reign, and where the righteous dead, raised from their graves, would dwell in the second advent of the Redeemer. All that the passage fairly implies is, that while Abraham expected the possession of the promised land for his posterity, yet his faith looked beyond this for a permanent home in a future world.

Whose builder and maker is God. Which would not be reared by the agency of man, but of which God was the immediate and direct architect. This shows conclusively, I think, that the

reference in this allusion to the "city" is not to Jerusalem, as Grotius supposes; but the language is just such as will appropriately describe heaven, represented as a city reared without human hands or art, and founded and fashioned by the skill and power of the Deity; Comp. 2Cor 5:1 The language here applied to God as the "architect" or framer of the universe is often used in the classic writers. See Kuinoel and Wetstein. The apostle here commends the faith of Abraham as eminently strong. The following hints will furnish topics of reflection to those who are disposed to inquire more fully into its strength.

(1.) The journey which he undertook was then a long and dangerous one. The distance from Haran to Palestine, by a direct route, was not less than four hundred miles, and this journey lay across a vast desert --a part of Arabia Deserta. That journey has always been tedious and perilous; but to see its real difficulty, we must put ourselves into the position in which the world was four thousand years ago. There was no knowledge of the way; no frequented path; no facility for travelling; no turnpike or railway; and such a journey then must have appeared incomparably more perilous than almost any which could now be undertaken.

(2.) He was going among strangers. Who they were he knew not; but the impression could not but have been made on his mind that they were strangers to religion, and that a residence among them would be anything but desirable.

(3.) He was leaving country, and home, and friends; the place of his birth and the graves of his fathers, with the moral certainty that he would see them no more.

(4.) He had no right to the country which he went to receive. He could urge no claim on the ground of discovery, or inheritance, or conquest, at any former period; but though he went in a peaceful manner, and with no power to take it, and could urge no claim to it whatever, yet he went with the

utmost confidence that it would be his. He did not even expect to buy it--for he had no means to do this, and it seems never to have entered his mind to bargain for it in any way, except for the small portion that he needed for a burying ground.

(5.) He had no means of obtaining possession. He had no wealth to purchase it; no armies to conquer it; no title to it which could be enforced before the tribunals of the land. The prospect of obtaining it must have been distant, and probably he saw no means by which it was to be done. In such a case, his only hope could be in God.

(6.) It is not impossible that the enterprise in that age might have been treated by the friends of the patriarch as perfectly wild and visionary. The prevailing religion evidently was idolatry, and the claim which Abraham set up to a special call from the Most High, might have been deemed entirely fanatical. To start off on a journey through a pathless desert; to leave his country and home, and all that he held dear, when he himself knew not whither he went; to go with no means of conquest, but with the expectation that the distant and unknown land would be given him, could not but have been regarded as a singular instance of visionary hope. The whole transaction, therefore was in the highest degree an act of simple confidence in God, where there was no human basis or calculation, and where all the principles on which men commonly act would have led him to pursue just the contrary course. It is, therefore, not without reason, that the faith of Abraham is so commended.

11 Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them,* and

embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

These all died in faith. That is those who had been just mentioned--Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. It was true of Abel and Noah also, that they died in faith, but they are not included in this declaration, for the "promises" were not particularly entrusted to them; and if the word "these" be made to include them, it must include Enoch also, who did not die at all. The phrase here used, "these all died in faith," does not mean that they died in the exercise or possession of religion, but more strictly that they died not having possessed what was the object of their faith. They had been looking for something future, which they did not obtain during their lifetime, and died believing that it would yet be theirs.

Not having received the promises. That is, not having received the fulfilment of the promises; or the promised blessings. The promises themselves they had received. Comp. Lk 24:49, Acts 1:4,11,16, Gal 3:14 Heb 11:33,39. In all these places the word promise is used by metonymy for the thing promised.

But having seen them afar off. Having seen that they would be fulfilled in future times. Comp. Jn 8:56. It is probable that the apostle here means that they saw the entire fulfilment of all that the promises embraced in the future that is, the bestowment of the land of Canaan, the certainty of a numerous posterity, and of the entrance into the heavenly Canaan --the world of fixed and permanent rest. According to the reasoning of the apostle here, the "promises" to which they trusted included all these things.

And were persuaded of them. Had no doubt of their reality.

And embraced them. This word implies more than our word embrace frequently does; that is, to receive as true. It means, properly, to draw to one's self; and then to embrace, as one does a friend from whom he has been separated. It then means

to greet, salute, welcome, and here means a joyful greeting of those promises; or a pressing them to the heart, as we do a friend. It was not a cold and formal reception of them, but a warm and hearty welcome. Such is the nature of true faith when it embraces the promises of salvation. No act of pressing a friend to the bosom is ever more warm and cordial.

And confessed that they were strangers. Thus Abraham said, Gen 23:4, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." That is, he regarded himself as a foreigner; as having no home and no possessions there. It was on this ground that he proposed to buy a burial place of the sons of Heth.

And pilgrims. This is the word-- παρεπιδημος--which is used by Abraham, as rendered by the Seventy in Gen 23:4, and which is there translated "sojourner" in the common English version. The word pilgrim means, properly, a wanderer, a traveller, and particularly one who leaves his own country to visit a holy place. This sense does not quite suit the meaning here, or in Gen 23:4. The Hebrew word-- means, properly, one who dwells in a place, and particularly one who is a mere resident without the rights of; a citizen. The Greek word means a by-resident; one who lives by another or among a people not his own. This is the idea here. It is not that they confessed themselves to be wanderers, or that they had left their home to visit a holy place, but that they resided as mere sojourners in a country that was not theirs. What might be their ultimate destination, or their purpose, is not implied in the meaning of the word. They were such as reside awhile among another people, but have no permanent home there.

On the earth. The phrase here used--επιτηςγης--might mean merely on the land of Canaan, but the apostle evidently uses it in a larger sense as denoting the earth in general. There can be no doubt that this accords with the views which the patriarchs had--regarding themselves not only as strangers in the land of Canaan, but feeling that the same thing was true

in reference to their whole residence upon the earth--that it was not their permanent home.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

They might have had opportunity to have returned. The journey was not so long or perilous that they could not have retraced their steps, it would have been no more difficult or dangerous for them to do that than it was to make the journey at first. This shows that their remaining as strangers and sojourners in the land of Canaan was voluntary. They preferred it, with all its inconveniences and hardships, to return to their native land. The same thing is true of all the people of God now. If they choose to return to the world, and to engage again in all its vain pursuits, there is nothing to hinder them. There are "opportunities" enough. There are abundant inducements held out. There are numerous gay and worldly friends who would regard it as a matter of joy and triumph to have them return to vanity and folly again. They would welcome them to their society; rejoice to have them participate in their pleasures; and be willing that they should share in the honours and the wealth of the world. And they might do it. There are multitudes of Christians who could grace, as they once did, the ball-room; who could charm the social party by song and wit; who could rise to the highest posts of office, or compete successfully with others in the race for the acquisition of fame. They have seen and tasted enough of the vain pursuits of the world, to satisfy them with their vanity; they are convinced of the sinfulness of making these things the great objects of living; their affections are now fixed on higher and nobler objects, and they choose not to return to those pursuits again, but to live as strangers and sojourners on the earth--for there is nothing more voluntary than religion.

16 But now they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. That is, at the time referred to when they confessed that they were strangers and sojourners, they showed that they sought a better country than the one which they had left. They lived as if they had no expectation of a permanent residence on earth, and were looking to another world. The argument of the apostle here appears to be based on what is apparent from the whole history, that they had a confident belief that the land of Canaan would be given to "their posterity; but as for themselves they had no expectation of permanently dwelling there, but looked to a home in the heavenly country. Hence they formed no plans for conquest; they laid claim to no title in the soil; they made no purchases of farms for cultivation; they lived and died without owning any land, except enough to bury their dead. All this appears as if they looked for a final home in a "better country, even an heavenly."

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Since they had such an elevated aim, he was willing to speak of himself as their God and Friend. They acted as became his friends, and he was not ashamed of the relation which he sustained to them. The language to which the apostle evidently refers here is that which is found in Ex 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." We are not to suppose that God is ever ashamed of anything that he does. The meaning here is, that they had acted in such a manner that it was fit that he should show towards them the character of a Benefactor, Protector, and Friend.

For he hath prepared for them a city. Such as they had expected--a heavenly residence, Heb 11:10. There is evidently here a reference to heaven, represented as a city--the New Jerusalem--prepared for his people by God himself. Comp. Mt 25:34. Thus they obtained what they had looked for by faith. The wandering and unsettled patriarchs to whom the promise was made, and who showed all their lives that they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims, were admitted to the home of permanent rest; and their posterity was ultimately

admitted to the possession of the promised land. Nothing could more certainly demonstrate that the patriarchs believed in a future state than this passage. They did not expect a permanent home on earth. They made no efforts to enter into the possession of the promised land themselves. They quietly and calmly waited for the time when God would give it to their posterity; and, in the meantime, for themselves they looked forward to their permanent home in the heavens. Even in this early period of the world, therefore, there was the confident expectation of the future state. Comp. Mt 22:31. We may remark, that the life of the patriarchs was, in all essential respects, such as we should lead. They looked forward to heaven; they sought no permanent possessions here; they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. So should we be. In our more fixed and settled habits of life; in our quiet homes; in our residence in the land in which we were born, and in the society of old and tried friends, we should yet regard ourselves as "strangers and sojourners." We have here no fixed abode. The houses in which we dwell will soon be occupied by others; the paths in which we go will soon be trod by the feet of others; the fields which we cultivate will soon be ploughed and sown and reaped by others. Others will read the books which we read; sit down at the tables where we sit; lie on the beds where we repose; occupy the chambers where we shall die, and from whence we shall be removed to our graves. If we have any permanent home, it is in heaven; and that we have the faithful lives of the patriarchs teach us, and the unerring word of God everywhere assures us.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,

By faith Abraham. The apostle had stated one strong instance of the faith of Abraham, and he now refers to one still more remarkable--the strongest illustration of faith, undoubtedly, which has ever been evinced in our world.

When he was tried. The word here used is rendered tempted in Mt 4:1,3, 16:1, 19:3, 22:18,35, and in twenty-two other places in the New Testament; prove, in Jn 6:6; hath gone about, in

Acts 24:6; examine, 2Cor 13:6; and tried, in Rev 2:2,10, 3:10. It does not mean here, as it often does, to place inducements before one to lead him to do wrong, but to subject his faith to a trial in order to test its genuineness and strength. The meaning here is, that Abraham was placed in circumstances which showed what was the real strength of his confidence in God.

Offered up Isaac. That is, he showed that he was ready and willing to make the sacrifice, and would have done it if he had not been restrained by the voice of the angel, Gen 22:11,12. So far as the intention of Abraham was concerned, the deed was done, for he had made every preparation for the offering, and was actually about to take the life of his son.

And he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son. The promises particularly of a numerous posterity. The fulfilment of those promises depended on him whom he was now about to offer as a sacrifice. If Abraham had been surrounded with children, or if no special promise of a numerous posterity had been made to him, this act would not have been so remarkable. It would, in any case, have been a strong act of faith; it was peculiarly strong in his case, from the circumstances that he had an only son, and that the fulfilment of the promise depended on his life.

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Gen 21:12. A numerous posterity had been promised to him. It was there said expressly that this promise was not to be fulfilled through the son of Abraham by the bond-woman Hagar, but through Isaac. Of course, it was implied that Isaac was to reach manhood; and yet, notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding Abraham fully believed it, he prepared deliberately, in obedience to the Divine command, to put him to death. The phrase, "thy seed be called," means, that his posterity was to be named after Isaac, or was to descend only from him. The word "called," in the Scriptures, is often equivalent to the verb to be. See Isa 56:7. To name or call a

thing, was the same as to say that it was, or that it existed. It does not mean here that his spiritual children were to be called or selected from among the posterity of Isaac, but that the posterity promised to Abraham would descend neither from Ishmael nor the sons of Keturah, but in the line of Isaac. This is a strong circumstance insisted on by the apostle, to show the strength of Abraham's faith. It was shown not only by his willingness to offer up the child of his old age--his only son by his beloved wife, but by his readiness, at the command of God, to sacrifice even him on whom the fulfilment of the promises depended.

18 of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead. And that he would do it; for so Abraham evidently believed, and this idea is plainly implied in the whole narrative. There was no other way in which the promise could be fulfilled; and Abraham reasoned justly in the case. He had received the promise of a numerous posterity, he had been told expressly that it was to be through this favourite child, he was now commanded to put him to death as a sacrifice, and he prepared to do it. To fulfil these promises, therefore, there was no other way possible but for him to be raised up from the dead, and Abraham fully believed that it would be done. The child had been given to him at first in a supernatural manner, and he was prepared, therefore, to believe that he would be restored to him again by miracle. He did not doubt that he who had given him to him at first, in a manner so contrary to all human probability, could restore him again in a method as extraordinary, He therefore, anticipated that he would raise him up immediately from the dead. That this was the expectation of Abraham is apparent from the narrative in Gen 22:6: "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder, and worship, and come again to you;" in the plural--"and we will return;" that is, I and Isaac will return, for no other persons went with them, Gen 22:6. As Abraham went with the full expectation of

sacrificing Isaac, and as he expected Isaac to return with him, it follows that he believed that God would raise him up immediately from the dead.

From whence also he received him in a figure. There has been great difference of opinion as to the sense of this passage, but it seems to me to be plain. The obvious interpretation is, that he then received him by his being raised up from the altar as if from the dead. He was to Abraham dead. He had given him up. He had prepared to offer him as a sacrifice. He lay there before him as one who was dead. From that altar he was raised up by direct Divine interposition, as if he was raised from the grave, and this was to Abraham a figure or a representation of the resurrection. Other interpretations may be seen in Stuart, in loc. The following circumstances will illustrate the strength of Abraham's faith in this remarkable transaction.

(1.) The strong persuasion on his mind that God had commanded this. In a case of this nature--where such a sacrifice was required--how natural would it have been for a more feeble faith to have doubted whether the command came from God! It might have been suggested to such a mind that this must be a delusion, or a temptation of Satan; that God could not require such a thing; and that whatever might be the appearance of a Divine command in the cases there must be some deception about it. Yet Abraham does not appear to have reasoned about it at all, or to have allowed the strong feelings of a father to come in to modify his conviction that God had commanded him to give up his son. What an example is this to us! And how ready should we be to yield up a son--an only son--when God comes himself and removes him from us.

(2.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact that, in obedience to the simple command of God, all the strong feelings of a father were overcome. On the one hand, there were his warm affections for an only son; and on the other, there was the simple command of God. They came in collisions but Abraham did not hesitate a moment. The strong

paternal feeling was sacrificed at once. What an example this, too, for us! When the command of God and our own attachments come into collision, we should not hesitate a moment. God is to be obeyed. His command and arrangements are to be yielded to, though most tender ties are rent asunder, and though the heart bleeds.

(3.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact that, in obedience to the command of God, he resolved to do what in the eyes of the world would be regarded as a most awful crime. There is no crime of a higher grade than the murder of a son by the hand of a father. So it is now estimated by the world, and so it would have been in the time of Abraham. All the laws of God and of society appeared to be against the act which Abraham was about to commit, and he went forth not ignorant of the estimate which the world would put on this deed if it were known. How natural, in such circumstances, would it have been to argue, that God could not possibly give such a command; that it was against all the laws of heaven and earth; that there was required in this what God and man alike must and would pronounce to be wrong and abominable! Yet Abraham did not hesitate. The command of God in the case was, to his mind, a sufficient proof that this was right; and it should teach us that whatever our Maker commands us should be done--no matter what may be the estimate affixed to it by human laws, and no matter how it may be regarded by the world.

(4.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact, that there was a positive promise of God to himself which would seem to be frustrated by what he was about to do. God had expressly promised to him a numerous posterity, and had said that it was to be through this son. How could this be if he was put to death as a sacrifice? And how could God command such a thing when his promise was thus positive? Yet Abraham did not hesitate. It was not for him to reconcile these things; it was his to obey. He did not doubt that somehow all that God had said would prove to be true; and as he saw but one way in which it

could be done--by his being immediately restored to life--he concluded that that was to be the way. So when God utters his will to us, it is ours simply to obey. It is not to inquire in what way his commands or revealed truth can be reconciled with other things. He will himself take care of that. It is ours at once to yield to what he commands, and to believe that somehow all that he has required and said will be consistent with everything else which he has uttered.

(5.) The strength of the faith of Abraham was seen in his belief that God would raise his son from the dead. Of that he had no doubt. But what evidence had he of that? It had not been promised. No case of the kind had ever occurred; and the subject was attended with all the difficulties which attend it now. But Abraham believed it; for, first, there was no other way in which the promise of God could be fulfilled; and, second, such a thing would be no more remarkable than what had already occurred. It was as easy for God to raise him from the dead as it was to give him at first, contrary to all the probabilities of the case---and he did not, therefore, doubt that it would be so. Is it less easy for us to believe the doctrine of the resurrection than it was for Abraham? Is the subject attended with more difficulties now than it was then? The faith of Abraham, in this remarkable instance, shows us that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, notwithstanding the limited revelations then enjoyed, and all the obvious difficulties of the case, was early believed in the world; and as those difficulties are no greater now, and as new light has been shed upon it by subsequent revelations, and especially as, in more than one instance, the dead have been actually raised, those difficulties should not be allowed to make us doubt it, now.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. See Gen 27:26-40. The meaning is, that he pronounced

a blessing on them in respect to their future condition. This was by faith in God, who had communicated it to him, and in full confidence that he would accomplish all that was here predicted. The act of faith here was simply that which believes that all that God says is true. There were no human probabilities at the time when these prophetic announcements were made, which could have been the basis of his calculation; but all that he said must have rested merely on the belief that God had revealed it to him. A blessing was pronounced on each, of a very different nature, but Isaac had no doubt that both would be fulfilled.

By faith Jacob, when he was a dying. Gen 47:31 Gen 48:1-20. That is, when he was about to die. He saw his death near when he pronounced this blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

And worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. This is an exact quotation from the Septuagint in Gen 47:31. The English version of that place is, "and Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head," which is a proper translation, in the main, of the word --mittch. That word, however, with different points----mattch, means, a branch, a bough, a rod, a staff, and the translators of the Septuagint have so rendered it. The Masoretic points are of no authority, and either translation, therefore, would be proper. The word rendered "head" in Gen 47:31-- "bed's head"----rosh, means, properly, head, but may there mean the top of anything, and there is no impropriety in applying it to the head or top of a staff. The word rendered in Gen 47:31, bowed----implies, properly, the idea of worshipping. It is bowing, or prostration for the purpose of worship or homage. Though the Septuagint and the apostle here have, therefore, given a somewhat different version from that commonly given of the Hebrew, and sustained by the Masoretic pointing, yet it cannot be demonstrated that the version is unauthorized, or that it is not a fair translation of the Hebrew. It has also the probabilities of the case in its favour. Jacob was tenderly affected in view of the goodness of God,

and of the assurance that he would be conveyed from Egypt when he died, and buried in the land of his fathers. Deeply impressed with this, nothing was more natural than that the old man should lean reverently forward, and incline his head upon the top of his staff, and adore the covenant faithfulness of his God. Such an image is much more natural and probable than that he should "bow upon his bed's head"--a phrase which at best is not very intelligible. If this be the true account, then the apostle does not refer here to what was done when he "blessed the sons of Joseph," but to an act expressive of strong faith in God which had occurred just before. The meaning then is, "By faith when about to die he blessed the sons of Joseph; and by faith also, he reverently bowed before God in the belief that when he died his remains would be conveyed to the promised land, and expressed his gratitude in an act of worship, leaning reverently on the top of his staff." The order in which these things are mentioned is of no consequence, and thus the whole difficulty in the case vanishes. Both the acts here referred to were expressive of strong confidence in God.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

By faith Joseph, when he died. When about to die. See Gen 50:24,25. Made mention of the departing of the children of Israel. Marg. "remembered." The meaning is, that he called this to their mind; he spake of it. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." This prediction of Joseph could have rested only on faith in the promise of God. There were no events then occurring which would be likely to lead to this, and nothing which could be a basis of calculation that it would be so, except what God had spoken. The faith of Joseph, then, was simple confidence in God; and its strength was seen in his firm conviction that what had been promised would be fulfilled, even when there were no appearances that, to human view, justified it. And gave commandment concerning his bones. Gen 50:25,26. And Joseph took an oath of the children of

Israel; saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." He had such a firm belief that they would possess the land of promise, that he exacted an oath of them that they would remove his remains with them, that he might be buried in the land of his fathers. He could not have exacted this oath, nor could they have taken it, unless both he and they had a sure confidence that what God had spoken would be performed.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

By faith Moses, when he was born. That is, by the faith of his parents. The faith of Moses himself is commended in the following verses. The statement of the apostle here is that his parents were led to preserve his life by their confidence in God. They believed that he was destined to some great purpose, and that he would be spared, notwithstanding all the probabilities against it, and all the difficulties in the case.

Was hid three months of his parents. By his parents. In Ex 2:2, it is said that it was done by his mother. The truth doubtless was, that the mother was the agent in doing it--since the concealment, probably, could be better effected by one than where two were employed--but that the father also concurred in it is morally certain. The concealment was at first, probably in their own house. The command seems to have been (Ex 1:22,) that the child should be cast into the river as soon as born. This child was concealed in the hope that some way might be found out by which his life might be spared.

Because they saw he was a proper child. A fair, or beautiful child-- αστειον. The word properly means, pertaining to a city, (from αστυ, a city;) then urbane, polished, elegant; then fair, beautiful. In Acts 7:20, it is said that he was "fair to God," (Marg. ;) that is, exceedingly fair, or very handsome. His extraordinary beauty seems to have been the reason which particularly influenced his parents to attempt to preserve him.

It is not impossible that they supposed that his uncommon beauty indicated that he was destined to some important service in life, and that they were on that account the more anxious to save him.

And they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Requiring that all male children should be given up to be thrown into the Nile. That is, they were not so alarmed, or did not so dread the king, as to be induced to comply with the command. The strength of the faith of the parents of Moses appears,

(1.) because the command of Pharaoh to destroy all the male children was positive, but they had so much confidence in God as to disregard it.

(2.) Because there was a strong improbability that their child could be saved. They themselves found it impossible to conceal him longer than three months; and when it was discovered, there was every probability that the law would be enforced, and that the child would be put to death. Perhaps there was reason also to apprehend that the parents would be punished for disregarding the authority of the king.

(3.) Because they probably believed that their child was destined to some important work. They thus committed him to God instead of complying with the command of an earthly monarch; and, against strong probabilities in the case, they believed that it was possible that in some way he might be preserved alive. The remarkable result showed that their faith was not unfounded.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

By faith Moses. He had confidence in God when he called him to be the leader of his people. He believed that he was able to deliver them; and he so trusted in him that he was willing, at his command, to forego the splendid prospects which opened before him in Egypt. When he was come to

years. Gr. "being great;" that is, when he was grown up to manhood. He was at that time forty years of age. Acts 7:23. He took this step, therefore, in the full maturity of his judgment, and when there was no danger of being influenced by the ardent passions of youth. Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. When saved from the ark in which he was placed on the Nile, he was brought up for the daughter of Pharaoh, Ex 2:9. He seems to have been adopted by her, and trained up as her own son. What prospects this opened before him is not certainly known. There is no probability that he would be the heir to the crown of Egypt, as is often affirmed, for there is no proof that the crown descended in the line of daughters; nor, if it did, is there any probability that it would descend on an adopted son of a daughter. But his situation could not but be regarded as highly honourable, and as attended with great advantages. It gave him the opportunity of receiving the best education which the times and country afforded--an opportunity of which he seems to have availed himself to the utmost. Acts 7:22. It would doubtless be connected with important offices in the state. It furnished the opportunity of a life of ease and pleasure--such as they commonly delight in who reside at courts. And it doubtless opened before him the prospect of wealth, for there is no improbability in supposing that he would be the heir of the daughter of a rich monarch. Yet all this, it is said, he "refused." There is indeed no express mention made of his formally and openly refusing it, but his leaving the court, and identifying himself with his oppressed countrymen was, in fact, a refusal of these high honours, and of these brilliant prospects. It is not impossible that, when he became acquainted with his real history, there was some open and decided refusal, on his part, to be regarded as the son of the daughter of this heathen monarch. By faith Moses. He had confidence in God when he called him to be the leader of his people. He believed that he was able to deliver them; and he so trusted in him that he was willing, at his command, to forego the splendid prospects which opened before him in Egypt. When he was come to years. Gr. "being great;" that is,

when he was grown up to manhood. He was at that time forty years of age. Acts 7:23. He took this step, therefore, in the full maturity of his judgment, and when there was no danger of being influenced by the ardent passions of youth. Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. When saved from the ark in which he was placed on the Nile, he was brought up for the daughter of Pharaoh, Ex 2:9. He seems to have been adopted by her, and trained up as her own son. What prospects this opened before him is not certainly known. There is no probability that he would be the heir to the crown of Egypt, as is often affirmed, for there is no proof that the crown descended in the line of daughters; nor, if it did, is there any probability that it would descend on an adopted son of a daughter. But his situation could not but be regarded as highly honourable, and as attended with great advantages. It gave him the opportunity of receiving the best education which the times and country afforded--an opportunity of which he seems to have availed himself to the utmost. Acts 7:22. It would doubtless be connected with important offices in the state. It furnished the opportunity of a life of ease and pleasure--such as they commonly delight in who reside at courts. And it doubtless opened before him the prospect of wealth, for there is no improbability in supposing that he would be the heir of the daughter of a rich monarch. Yet all this, it is said, he "refused." There is indeed no express mention made of his formally and openly refusing it, but his leaving the court, and identifying himself with his oppressed countrymen was, in fact, a refusal of these high honours, and of these brilliant prospects. It is not impossible that, when he became acquainted with his real history, there was some open and decided refusal, on his part, to be regarded as the son of the daughter of this heathen monarch.

25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. With those whom God had chosen to be his people--the Israelites, They were then oppressed and downtrodden; but they were the descendants of Abraham, and were those whom

God had designed to be his peculiar people. Moses saw that if he cast in his lot with them, he must expect trials. They were poor, and crushed, and despised--a nation of slaves. If he identified himself with them, his condition would be like theirs--one of great trial; if he sought to elevate and deliver them, such an undertaking could not but be one of great peril and hardship. Trial and danger, want and care, would follow from any course which he could adopt, and he knew that an effort to rescue them from bondage must be attended with the sacrifice of all the comforts and honour which he enjoyed at court. Yet he "chose" this. He on the whole preferred it. He left the court, not because he was driven away; not because there was nothing there to gratify ambition; or to be a stimulus to avarice; and not on account of harsh treatment--for there is no intimation that he was not treated with all the respect and honour due to his station, his talents, and his learning, but because he deliberately preferred to share the trials and sorrows of the friends of God. So every one who becomes a friend of God, and casts in his lot with his people, though he may anticipate that it will be attended with persecution, with poverty, and with scorn, prefers this to all the pleasures of a life of gaiety and sin, and to the most brilliant prospects of wealth and fame which this world can offer.

Than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. We are not to suppose that Moses, even at the court of Pharaoh, was leading a life of vicious indulgence. The idea is, that sins were practised there such as those in which pleasure is sought; and that if he had remained there it must have been because he loved the pleasures of a sinful court and a sinful life, rather than the favour of God. We may learn from this,

(1.) that there is a degree of pleasure in sin. It does not deserve to be called happiness and the apostle does not call it so. It is "pleasure," excitement, hilarity, merriment, amusement. Happiness is more solid and enduring than "pleasure;" and solid happiness is not found in the ways of sin. But it cannot be denied that there is a degree of pleasure which maybe

found in amusement; in the excitement of the ballroom; in feasting and revelry; in sensual enjoyments. All which wealth and splendour, music and dancing, sensual gratifications, and the more refined pursuits in the circles of fashion can furnish, may be found in a life of irreligion; and if disappointment, and envy, and sickness, and mortified pride, and bereavements do not occur, the children of vanity and sin can find no inconsiderable enjoyment in these things. They say they do; and there is no reason to doubt the truth of their own testimony in the case. They call it a "life of pleasure;" and it is not proper to withhold from it the appellation which they choose to give it. It is not the most pure or elevated kind of enjoyment, but it would be unjust to deny that there is any enjoyment in such a course.

(2.) It is only "for a season." It will all soon pass away. Had Moses lived at the court of Pharaoh all his days, it would have been only for a little "season." These pleasures soon vanish, for

(a.) life itself is short at best; and if a career of "pleasure" is pursued through the whole of the ordinary period allotted to man, it is very brief

(b.) Those who live for pleasure often abridge their own lives. Indulgence brings disease in its train, and the votaries of sensuality usually die young. The art has never been yet discovered of combining intemperance and sensuality with length of days. If a man wishes a reasonable prospect of long life, he must be temperate and virtuous. Indulgence in vice wears out the nervous and muscular system, and destroys the powers of life--just as a machine without balance-wheel or governor would soon tear itself to pieces.

(c.) Calamity, disappointment, envy, and rivalship, mar such a life of pleasure--and he who enters on it, from causes which he cannot control, finds it very short. And,

(d.) compared with eternity, oh how brief is the longest life spent in the ways of sin. Soon it must be over--and then the unpardoned sinner enters on an immortal career where pleasure is for ever unknown!

(3.) In view of all the "pleasures" which sin can furnish, and in view of the most brilliant prospects which this world can hold out, religion enables man to pursue a different path. They who become the friends of God are willing to give up all those fair and glittering anticipations, and to submit to whatever trials may be incident to a life of self-denying piety. Religion, with all its privations and sacrifices, is preferred, nor there ever is occasion to regret the choice. Moses deliberately made that choice: nor in all the trials which succeeded it--in all the cares incident to his great office in conducting the children of Israel to the promised land--in all their ingratitude and rebellion--is there the least evidence that he ever once wished himself back again that he might enjoy "the pleasures of sin" in Egypt.

26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Esteeming the reproach of Christ. Marg. "For;" that is, on account of Christ. This means either that he was willing to bear the reproaches incident to his belief that the Messiah would come, and that he gave up his fair prospects in Egypt with that expectation; or that he endured such reproaches as Christ suffered; or the apostle uses the expression as a sort of technical phrase, well understood in his time, to denote sufferings endured in the cause of religion. Christians at that time would naturally describe all sufferings on account of religion as endured in the cause of Christ; and Paul, therefore, may have used this phrase to denote sufferings in the cause of religion--meaning that Moses suffered what, when the apostle wrote, would be called "the reproaches of Christ." It is not easy, or perhaps possible, to determine which of these interpretations is the correct one. The most respectable names may be adduced in favour of each, and every reader must be left to adopt his own view of that which is correct. The

original will admit of either of them. The general idea is, that he would be reproached for the course which he pursued. He could not expect to leave the splendours of a court, and undertake what he did, without subjecting himself to trials. He would be blamed by the Egyptians for his interference in freeing their "slaves," and in bringing so many calamities upon their country, and he would be exposed to ridicule for his folly in leaving his brilliant prospects at court to become identified with an oppressed and despised people. It is rare that men are zealous in doing good without exposing themselves both to blame and to ridicule.

Greater riches. Worth more; of greater value. Reproach itself is not desirable; but reproach, when a man receives it in an effort to do good to others, is worth more to him than gold, 1Pet 4:13,14. The scars which an old soldier has received in the defence of his country are more valued by him than his pension; and the reproach which a good man receives in endeavouring to save others is a subject of greater joy to him than would be all the wealth which could be gained in a life of sin.

Than the treasures in Egypt. It is implied here, that Moses had a prospect of inheriting large treasures in Egypt, and that he voluntarily gave them up to be the means of delivering his nation from bondage. Egypt abounded in wealth; and the adopted son of the daughter of the king would naturally be heir to a great estate.

For he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. The "recompence of the reward" here referred to must mean the blessedness of heaven--for he had no earthly reward to look to. He had no prospect of pleasure, or wealth, or honour, in his undertaking. If he had sought these, so far as human sagacity could foresee, he would have remained at the court of Pharaoh. The declaration here proves that it is right to have respect to the rewards of heaven in serving God. It does not prove that this was the only or the main motive which induced

Moses to abandon his prospects at court; nor does it prove that this should be our main or only motive in leading a life of piety. If it were, our religion would be mere selfishness. But it is right that we should desire the rewards and joys of heaven, and that we should allow the prospect of those rewards and joys to influence us as a motive to do our duty to God, and to sustain us in our trials. Comp. Php 3:8-11,13,14.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith he forsook Egypt. Some have understood this of the first time in which Moses forsook Egypt, when he fled into Midian, as recorded in Ex 2; the majority of expositors have supposed that it refers to the time when he left Egypt to conduct the Israelites to the promised land. That the latter is the time referred to is evident from the fact that it is said that he did "not fear the wrath of the king." When Moses first fled to the land of Midian it is expressly said that he went because he did fear the anger of Pharaoh for his having killed an Egyptian, Ex 2:14,15. He was at that time in fear of his life; but when he left Egypt at the head of the Hebrew people, he had no such apprehensions. God conducted him out with "an high hand;" and throughout all the events connected with that remarkable deliverance, he manifested no dread of Pharaoh, and had no apprehension from what he could do. He went forth, indeed, at the head of his people when all the power of the king was excited to destroy them, but he went confiding in God; and this is the faith referred to here. For he endured. He persevered, amidst all the trials and difficulties connected with his leading forth the people from bondage. As seeing him who is invisible. As if he saw God. He had no more doubt that God had called him to this work, and that he would sustain him, than if he saw him with his bodily eyes. This is a most accurate account of the nature of faith. Comp. Heb 11:1.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Through faith he kept the passover. Gr., "he made πεποιηκε - -the passover," which means more, it seems to me, than that

he merely kept or celebrated it. It implies that he instituted this rite, and made the arrangements for its observance. There is reference to the special agency, and the special faith which he had in its institution. The faith in the case was confidence that this would be the means of preserving the firstborn of the Israelites, when the angel should destroy the firstborn of the Egyptians, and also that it would be celebrated as a perpetual memorial of this great deliverance. On the Passover, Mt 26:2.

And the sprinkling of blood. The blood of the paschal lamb on the lintels and door-posts of the houses, Ex 12:22.

Lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. "The firstborn of the Egyptians, Ex 12:23. The apostle has thus enumerated some of the things which illustrated the faith of Moses. The strength of his faith may be seen by a reference to some of the circumstances which characterized it.

(1.) It was such confidence in God as to lead him to forsake the most flattering prospects of worldly enjoyment. I see no evidence, indeed, that he was the heir to the throne; but he was evidently heir to great wealth; he was encompassed with all the means of worldly pleasure; he had every opportunity for a life of literary and scientific pursuits; he was eligible to high and important trusts; he had a rank and station which would be regarded as one of the most honoured and enviable on earth. None of those who are mentioned before in this chapter were required to make just such sacrifices as this. Neither Abel, nor Noah, nor Enoch, was called to forsake such brilliant worldly prospects; and though Abraham was called to a higher act of faith when commanded to give up his beloved son, yet there were some circumstances of trial in the case of Moses, illustrating the nature of faith, which did not exist in the case of Abraham. Moses, in the maturity of life, and with everything around him that is usually regarded by men as objects of ambition, was ready to forego it all. So, wherever true faith exists, there is a readiness to abandon the

hope of gain, and brilliant prospects of distinction, and fascinating pleasures, in obedience to the command of God.

(2.) Moses entered on an undertaking wholly beyond the power of man to accomplish, and against every human probability of success. It was no less than that of restoring to freedom two millions of downtrodden, oppressed, and dispirited slaves, and conducting aged and feeble men, tender females, helpless children, with numerous flocks and herds, across barren wastes to a distant land. He undertook this against the power of probably the most mighty monarch of his time; from the midst of a warlike nation; and when the whole nation would be kindled into rage at the loss of so many slaves, and when he might expect that all the power of their wrath would descend on him and his undisciplined and feeble hosts. He did this when he had no wealth that he could employ to furnish provisions or the means of defence; no armies at his command to encircle his people on their march; and even no influence among the people himself, and with every probability that they would disregard him. Comp. Ex 3:11, 4:1. He did this when the whole Hebrew people were to be aroused to willingness to enter on the great undertaking; when there was every probability that they would meet with formidable enemies in the way, and when there was nothing human whatever on which the mind could fix as a basis of calculation of success. If there ever was any undertaking commenced opposed to every human probability of success, it was that of delivering the Hebrew people, and conducting them to the promised land. To human view it was quite as hopeless and impracticable as it would be now for a stranger from Africa, claiming to be a native prince there, and to have a commission from God, to liberate the two and a half millions of slaves in this country, and conduct them to the land of their fathers. In all the difficulties and discouragements of the undertaking of Moses, therefore, his only hope of success must have arisen from his confidence in God.

(3.) It was an undertaking where there were many certain trials before him. The people whom he sought to deliver were poor and oppressed. An attempt to rescue them would bring down the wrath of the mighty monarch under whom they were. They were a people unaccustomed to self-government, and, as the result proved, prone to ingratitude and rebellion. The journey before him lay through a dreary waste, where there was every prospect that there would be a want of food and water, and where he might expect to meet with formidable enemies. In all these things his only hope must have been in God. It was he only who could deliver them from the grasp of the tyrant; who could conduct them through the wilderness; who could provide for their wants in the desert; and who could defend a vast multitude of women and children from the enemies which they would be likely to encounter.

(4.) There was nothing in this to gratify ambition, or to promise an earthly reward. All these prospects he gave up when he left the court of Pharaoh. To be the leader of a company of emancipated slaves through a pathless desert to a distant land, had nothing in itself that could gratify the ambition of one who had been bred at the most magnificent court on earth, and who had enjoyed every advantage which the age afforded to qualify him to fill any exalted office. The result showed that Moses never designed to be himself the king of the people whom he led forth, and that he had no intention of aggrandizing his own family in the case.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land:* which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land. Ex 14:22,29. That is, it was only by confidence in God that they were able to do this. It was not by power which they had to remove the waters, and to make a passage for themselves; and it was not by the operation of any natural causes. It is not to be supposed that all who passed through the Red Sea had

saving faith. The assertion of the apostle is, that the passage was made in virtue of strong confidence in God, that if it had not been for this confidence the passage could not have been made at all. Of this no one can entertain a doubt who reads the history of that remarkable transaction. Which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned. Ex 14:27,28. Evidently referred to here as showing the effects of not having faith in God, and of what must inevitably have befallen the Israelites if they had had no faith. The destruction of the Egyptians by the return of the waters, in accordance with natural laws, showed that the Israelites would have been destroyed in the passage, if a Divine energy had not been employed to prevent it. On the passage through the Red Sea, see Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol..i., pp. 81--86.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, etc. Josh 6:12-20. That is, it was not by any natural causes, or by any means that were in themselves adapted to secure such a result. It was not because they fell of themselves; nor because they were assailed by the hosts of the Israelites; nor was it because there was any natural tendency in the blowing of horns to cause them to fall. None of these things were true; and it was only by confidence in God that means so little adapted to such a purpose could have been employed at all; and it was only by continued faith in him that they could have been persevered in day by day, when no impression whatever was made. The strength of the faith evinced on this occasion appears from such circumstances as these: that there was no natural tendency in the means used to produce the effect; that there was great apparent improbability that the effect would follow that they might be exposed to much ridicule from those within the city for attempting to demolish their strong walls in this manner, and from the fact that the city was encircled day after day without producing any result. This may teach us the propriety and necessity of faith in similar circumstances. Ministers of the gospel often preach where there seems to be as little prospect of beating down the opposition in the human

heart by the message which they deliver, as there was of demolishing the walls of Jericho by the blowing of rams' horns, They blow the gospel trumpet from week to week and month to month, and there seems to be no tendency in the strong citadel of the heart to yield. Perhaps the only apparent result is to excite ridicule and scorn. Yet let them not despair. Let them blow on. Let them still lift up their voice with faith in God, and in due time the walls of the citadel will totter and fall. God has power over the human heart, as he had over Jericho; and in our darkest day of discouragement, let us remember that we are never in circumstances indicating less probability of success, from any apparent tendency in the means used to accomplish the result, than those were who encompassed this heathen city. With similar confidence in God we may hope for similar success.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

By faith the harlot Rahab. She resided in Jericho, Josh 2:1. When Joshua crossed the Jordan, he sent two men as spies to her house, and she saved them by concealment from the enemies that would have destroyed their lives. For this act of hospitality and kindness, they assured her of safety when the city should be destroyed, and directed her to give an indication of her place of abode to the invading Israelites, that her house might be spared, Josh 2:18,19. In the destruction of the city, she was accordingly preserved, Josh 6. The apostle seems to have selected this case as illustrating the nature of faith, partly because it occurred at Jericho, of which he had just made mention, and partly to show that strong faith had been exercised not only by the patriarchs, and by those who were confessed to be great and good, but by those in humble life, and whose earlier conduct had been far from the ways of virtue. Calvin. Much perplexity has been felt in reference to this case, and many attempts have been made to remove the difficulty. The main difficulty has been that a woman of this character should be enumerated among those who were eminent for piety; and many expositors have endeavoured to show that the word rendered harlot does not necessarily

denote a woman of abandoned character, but may be used to denote a hostess. This definition is given by Schleusner, who says that the word may mean one who prepares and sells food, and who receives strangers to entertain them. Others have supposed that the word means an idolatress, because those devoted to idolatry were frequently of abandoned character. But there are no clear instances in which the Greek word and the corresponding Hebrew word----is used in this sense. The usual and the fair meaning of the word is that which is given in our translation, and there is no good reason why that signification should not be retained here. It is not implied by the use of the word here, however, that Rahab was an harlot at the time to which the apostle refers; but the meaning is, that this had been her character, so that it was proper to designate her by this appellation.

In regard to this case, therefore, and in explanation of the difficulties which have been felt in reference to it, we may remark,

(1.) that the obvious meaning of this word here and of the corresponding place in Josh 2:4 is, that she had been a woman of abandoned character, and that she was known as such. That she might have been also a hostess, or one who kept a house of entertainment for strangers, is at the same time by no means improbable, since it not unfrequently happened, in ancient as well as modern times, that females of this character kept such houses. It might have been the fact that her house was known merely as a house of entertainment that led the spies who went to Jericho to seek a lodging there. It would be natural that strangers coming into a place should act in this respect as all other travellers did, and should apply for entertainment at what was known as a public house.

(2.) There is no improbability in supposing that her course of life had been changed either before their arrival, or in consequence of it. They were doubtless wise and holy men. Men would not be selected for an enterprise like this in whom

the leader of the Hebrew army could not put entire confidence. It is not unfair, then, to suppose that they were men of eminent piety as well as sagacity. Nor is there any improbability in supposing that they would acquaint this female with the history of their people, with their remarkable deliverance from Egypt, and with the design for which they were about to invade the land of Canaan. There is evidence that some such representations made a deep impression on her mind, and led to a change in her views and feelings, for she not only received them with the usual proofs of hospitality, but jeoparded her own life in their defence, when she might easily have betrayed them. This fact showed that she had a firm belief that they were what they professed to be---the people of God--and that she was willing to identify her interests with theirs.

(3.) This case--supposing that she had been a woman of bad character, but now was truly converted--does not stand alone. Other females of a similar character have been converted, and have subsequently led lives of piety; and though the number is not comparatively great, yet the truth of God has shown its power in renewing and sanctifying some at least of this, the most abandoned and degraded class of human beings. "Publicans and harlots," said the Saviour, "go into the kingdom of God," Mt 21:31. Rahab seems to have been one of them; and her case shows that such instances of depravity are not hopeless. This record, therefore, is one of encouragement for the most abandoned sinners; and one too which shows that strangers, even in a public house, may do good to those who have wandered far from God and virtue, and that we should never despair of saving the most abandoned of our race.

(4.) There is no need of supposing that the apostle in commending this woman approved of all that she did. That she was not perfect is true. That she did some things which cannot be vindicated is true also--and who does not? But admitting all that may be said about any imperfection in her

character, (comp. Josh 2:4,) it was still true that she had strong faith--and that is all that the apostle commends. We are under no more necessity of vindicating all that she did, than we are all that David or Peter did--or all that is now done by those who have the highest claims to virtue.

(5.) She had strong faith. It was only a strong belief that Jehovah was the true God, and that the children of Israel were his people, which would have led her to screen these strangers at the peril of her own life; and when the city was encompassed, and the wails fell and the tumult of battle raged, she showed her steady confidence in their fidelity, and in God, by using the simple means on which she was told the safety of herself and her family depended, Josh 6:22,23.

With them that believed not. The inhabitants of the idolatrous city of Jericho. The margin is, "were disobedient." The more correct rendering, however, is, as in the text, believed not. They evinced no such faith as Rahab had, and they were therefore destroyed.

Received the spies with peace. With friendliness and kindness, Josh 2:1, seq.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthah; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets:

33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

Women received their dead raised to life again. As in the case of the woman of Zarephath, whose child was restored to life by Elijah, 1Kgs 17:19-22; and of the son of the Shunammite

woman, whose child was restored to life by Elisha, 2Kgs 4:18-37.

And others were tortured. The word which is here used τυμπανιζω to tympanize, refers to a form of severe torture which was sometimes practised. It is derived from τυμπανον--tympanum --a drum, tabret, timbrel; and the instrument was probably so called from resembling the drum or the timbrel. This instrument consisted in the East of a thin wooden rim covered over with skin, as a tambourine is with us. See it described in the Isa 5:12. The engine of torture here referred to probably resembled the drum in form, on which the body of a criminal was bent so as to give greater severity to the wounds which were inflicted by scourging. The lash would cut deeper when the body was so extended, and the open gashes exposed to the air would increase the torture. See 2 Mac. vi. 19--29. The punishment here referred to seems to have consisted of two things--the stretching upon the instrument, and the scourging. See Robinson's Lex., and Stuart, in loc. Bloomfield, however, supposes that the mode of the torture can be best learned from the original meaning of the word τυμπανον --tympanum--as meaning

(1.) a beating-stick, and

(2.) a beating-post, which was in the form of a T, thus suggesting the posture of the sufferer. This beating, says he, was sometimes administered with sticks or rods; and sometimes with leather thongs inclosing pieces of lead. The former account, however, better agrees with the usual meaning of the word.

Not accepting deliverance. When it was offered them; that is, on condition that they would renounce their opinions, or do what was required of them. This is the very nature of the spirit of martyrdom.

That they might obtain a better resurrection. That is, when they were subjected to this kind of torture they were looked upon as certainly dead. To have accepted deliverance than, would have been a kind of restoration to life or a species of resurrection. But they refused this, and looked forward to a more honourable and glorious restoration to life; a resurrection, therefore, which would be better than this. It would be in itself more noble and honourable, and would be permanent, and therefore better. No particular instance of this kind is mentioned in the Old Testament; but, amidst the multitude of cases of persecution to which good men were subjected, there is no improbability in supposing that this may have occurred. The case of Eleazer, recorded in 2 Mac. Vi., so strongly resembles what the apostle says here, that it is very possible he may have had it in his eye. The passage before us proves that the doctrine of the resurrection was understood and believed before the coming of the Saviour, and that it was one of the doctrines which sustained and animated those who were called to suffer on account of their religion. In the prospect of death under the infliction of torture on account of religion, or under the pain produced by disease, nothing will better enable us to bear up under the suffering than the expectation that the body will be restored to immortal rigour, and raised to a mode of life where it will be no longer susceptible of pain. To be raised up to that life is a "better resurrection" than to be saved from death when persecuted, or to be raised up from a bed of pain.

36 and others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

And others had trial of cruel mockings. Referring to the scorn and derision which the ancient victims of persecution experienced. This has been often experienced by martyrs, and doubtless it was the case with those who suffered on account of their religion before the advent of the Saviour as well as afterwards. Some instances of this kind are mentioned in the Old Testament, (2Kgs 2:23, 1Kgs 22:24;) and it was frequent in the time of the Maccabees. And scourging. Whipping. This was a common mode of punishment, and was usually

inflicted before a martyr was put to death. Mt 10:17, Mt 27:26. For instances of this, see Jer 20:2; 2 Mac. vii. 1; v. 17.

37 they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

They were stoned. A common method of punishment among the Jews. Mt 21:35,44. Thus Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, was stoned. See 2Chr 24:21; comp. 1Kgs 21:1-14. It is not improbable that this was often resorted to in times of popular tumult, as in the case of Stephen, Acts 7:59; comp. Jn 10:31, Acts 14:5. In the time of the terrible persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes, and under Manasseh, such instances also probably occurred.

They were sawn asunder. It is commonly supposed that Isaiah was put to death in this manner. For the evidence of this, see Introduction to Isaiah, & 2. It is known that this mode of punishment, though not common, did exist in ancient times. Among the Romans, the laws of the twelve tables affixed this as the punishment of certain crimes; but this mode of execution was very rare, since Aulius Gellius says, that in his time no one remembered to have seen it practised. It appears, however, from Suetonius, that the emperor Caligula often condemned persons of rank to be sawn through the middle. Calmet, writing above a hundred years ago, says, "I am assured that the punishment of the saw is still in use among the Switzers, and that they put it in practice not many years ago upon one of their countrymen, guilty of a great crime, in the plain of Grenelles, near Paris. They put him into a kind of coffin, and sawed him lengthwise, beginning at the head, as a piece of wood is sawn." Pict. Bib. It was not an unusual mode of punishment to cut a person asunder, and to suspend the different parts of the body to walls and towers as a warning to the living. See 1Sam 31:10, and Morier's Second Journey to Persia, p. 96.

Were tempted. On this expression, which has given much perplexity to critics, see the Notes of Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield,

and Kuinoel. There is a great variety of reading in the Mss. and editions of the New Testament, and many have regarded it as an interpolation. The difficulty which has been felt in reference to it has been, that it is a much milder word than those just used, and that it is hardly probable that the apostle would enumerate this among those which he had just specified, as if to be tempted deserved to be mentioned among sufferings of so severe a nature. But it seems to me, there need be no real difficulty in the case. The apostle here, among other sufferings which they were called to endure, may have referred to the temptations which were presented to the martyrs, when about to die, to abandon their religion and live. It is very possible to conceive that this might have been among the highest aggravations of their sufferings. We know that in latter times it was a common practice to offer life to those who were doomed to a horrid death, on condition that they would throw incense on the altars of a heathen god, and we may easily suppose that a temptation of that kind, artfully presented in the midst of keen tortures, would greatly aggravate their sufferings. Or suppose when a father was about to be put to death for his religion, his wife and children were placed before him, and should plead with him to save his life by abandoning his religion, we can easily imagine that no pain of the rack would cause so keen torture to the soul as their cries and tears would. Amidst the sorrows of martyrs, therefore, it was not improper to say that they were tempted, and to place this among their most aggravated woes. For instances of this nature, see 2 Mac. vi. 21, 22; vii. 17, 24.

Were slain with the sword. As in the case of the eighty-five priests slain by Doeg, (1Sam 22:18;) and the prophets, of whose slaughter by the sword Elijah complains, 1Kgs 19:10.

They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins. Driven away from their homes, and compelled to clothe themselves in this rude and uncomfortable manner. A dress of this kind, or a dress made of hair, was not uncommon with the prophets,

and seems indeed to have been regarded as an appropriate badge of their office. See 2Kgs 1:8; Zech 13:4.

Being destitute, afflicted, tormented. The word tormented here means tortured. The apostle expresses here in general what in the previous verses he had specified in detail.

38 of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

Of whom the world was not worthy. The world was so wicked that it had no claim that such holy men should live in it. These poor, despised, and persecuted men, living as outcasts and wanderers, were of a character far elevated above the world. This is a most beautiful expression. It is at once a statement of their eminent holiness, and of the wickedness of the rest of mankind. They wandered in deserts, etc. On the Scripture meaning of the word desert or wilderness, Mt 3:1. This is a description of persons driven away from their homes, and wandering about from place to place to procure a scanty subsistence. Comp. 1 Mac, i. 53; 2 Mac. v. 27; vi. 7. The instances mentioned in the Books of Maccabees are so much in point, that there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul referred to some such cases, if not these very cases. As there is no doubt about their historic truth, there was no impropriety in referring to them, though they are not mentioned in the canonical books of Scripture. One of those cases may be referred to as strikingly illustrating what is here said. "But Judas Maccabeus, with nine others, or thereabout, withdrew himself into the wilderness, and lived in the mountains after the manner of beasts, with his company, who fed on herbs continually, lest they should be partakers of the pollution," 2 Mac. v. 27.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith. They were all commended and approved on account of their confidence in God. Heb 11:2.

Received not the promise. That is, did not receive the fulfilment of the promise; or did not receive all that was promised. They all still looked forward to some future blessings. Heb 11:13.

God having provided some better thing for us. Marg., foreseen. That is, "God having provided, or determined on giving some better thing than any of them realized, and, which we are now permitted to enjoy." That is, God gave them promises; but they were not allowed to see their fulfilment. We are permitted now to see what they referred to, and in part, at least, to witness their completion; and though the promise was made to them, the fulfilment more particularly pertains to us.

That they without us should not be made perfect. That is, complete. The whole system of revelation was not complete at once, or in one generation. It required successive ages to make the system complete, so that it might be said that it was finished, or perfect. Our existence, therefore, and the developments in our times, were as necessary to the perfection of the system as the promise made to the patriarchs. And as the system would not have been complete if the blessings had been simply conferred on us without the previous arrangements, and the long scheme of introductory measures, so it would not have been complete if the promises had been merely given to them without the corresponding fulfilment in our times. They are like the two parts of a tally. The fathers had one part in the promises, and we the other in the fulfilment, and neither would have been complete without the other. The "better things," then, referred to here as possessed by Christians, are the privilege of seeing those promises fulfilled in the Messiah; the blessings resulting from his atonement; the more expanded views which they have under the gospel; the brighter hopes of heaven itself, and the clearer apprehension of what heaven will be, which they are permitted to enjoy. This, therefore, accords entirely with the argument which the apostle is pursuing--which is, to show

that the Christians whom he addressed should not apostatize from their religion. The argument is, that in numerous instances, as specified, the saints of ancient times, even under fiery trials, were sustained by faith in God, and that, too, when they had not seen the fulfilment of the promises, and when they had much more obscure views than we are permitted to enjoy. If they, under the influence of the mere promise of future blessings, were enabled thus to persevere, how much more reason is there for us to persevere, who have been permitted, by the coming of the Messiah, to witness the perfection of the system!

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

There is no part of the New Testament of more value than this chapter; none which deserves to be more patiently studied, or which may be more frequently applied to the circumstances of Christians. These invaluable records are adapted to sustain us in times of trial, temptation, and persecution; to show us what faith has done in days that are past, and what it may do still in similar circumstances. Nothing can better show the value and the power of faith, or of true religion, than the records in this chapter. It has done what nothing else could do. It has enabled men to endure what nothing else would enable them to bear; and it has shown its power in inducing them to give up, at the command of God, what the human heart holds most dear. And among the lessons which we may derive from the study of this portion of divine truth, let us learn from the example of Abel to continue to offer to God the sacrifice of true piety which he requires, though we may be taunted or opposed by our nearest kindred; from that of Enoch to walk with God, though surrounded by a wicked world, and to look to the blessed translation to heaven which awaits all the righteous; from that of Noah to comply with all the directions of God, and to make all needful preparations for the future events which he has predicted, in which we are to be interested--as death, judgment, and eternity--though the events may seem to be remote, and though there may be no visible indications of their coming, and though the world may

deride our faith and our fears; from that of Abraham to leave country, and home, and kindred, if God calls us to, and to go just where he commands, through deserts and wilds, and among strange men; and like him, also, to be ready to give up the dearest objects of our earthly affection, even when attended with all that can try or torture our feelings of affection-- feeling that God, who gave, has a right to require their removal in his own way; and that, however much we may fix our hopes on a dear child, he can fulfil all his purposes and promises to us though such a child should be removed by death; from that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to regard ourselves as strangers and pilgrims on earth, having here no permanent home, and seeking a better country; from that of Moses to be willing to leave all the pomp and splendour of the world, all our brilliant prospects and hopes, and to welcome poverty, reproach, and suffering, that we may identify ourselves with the people of God; by the remembrance of the host of worthies who met danger, and encountered mighty foes, and vanquished them, let us learn to go forth in our spiritual conflicts against the enemies of our souls and of the church, assured of victory; and from the example of those who were driven from the abodes of men, and exposed to the storms of persecution, let us learn to bear every trial, and to be ready, at any moment, to lay down our lives in the cause of truth and of God. Of all those holy men who made these sacrifices, which of them ever regretted it, when he came calmly to look over his life, and to review it on the borders of the eternal world? None. Not one of them ever expressed regret that he had given up the world; or that he had obeyed the Lord too early, too faithfully, or too long. Not Abraham, who left his country and kindred; not Moses, who abandoned his brilliant prospects in Egypt; not Noah, who subjected himself to ridicule and scorn for an hundred and twenty years; and not one of those who were exposed to lions, to fire, to the edge of the sword, or who were driven away from society as outcasts, to wander in pathless deserts, or to take up their abodes in caverns, ever regretted the course which they had chosen. And who of them all now regrets it?

Who, of these worthies, now looks from heaven and feels that he suffered one privation too much, or that he has not had an ample recompense for all the ills he experienced in the cause of religion? So we shall feel when from the bed of death we look over the present life, and look out on eternity. Whatever our religion may have cost us, we shall not feel that we began to serve God too early, or served him too faithfully. Whatever pleasure, gain, or splendid prospects we gave up in order to become Christians, we shall feel that it was the way of wisdom, and shall rejoice that we were able to do it. Whatever sacrifices, trials, persecution, and pain, we may meet with, we shall feel that there has been more than a compensation in the consolations of religion, and in the hope of heaven, and that by every sacrifice we have been the gainers. When we reach heaven, we shall see that we have not endured one pain too much, and that through whatever trials we may have passed, the result is worth all which it has cost. Strengthened, then, in our trials by the remembrance of what faith has done in times that are past; recalling the example of those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, let us go cheerfully on our way. Soon the journey of trials will be ended, and soon what are now objects of faith will become objects of fruition; and in their enjoyment, how trifling and brief will seem all the sorrows of our pilgrimage below! There is no part of the New Testament of more value than this chapter; none which deserves to be more patiently studied, or which may be more frequently applied to the circumstances of Christians. These invaluable records are adapted to sustain us in times of trial, temptation, and persecution; to show us what faith has done in days that are past, and what it may do still in similar circumstances. Nothing can better show the value and the power of faith, or of true religion, than the records in this chapter. It has done what nothing else could do. It has enabled men to endure what nothing else would enable them to bear; and it has shown its power in inducing them to give up, at the command of God, what the human heart holds most dear. And among the lessons which we may derive from the study of this portion of divine truth, let us learn from the example of

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Hebrews-12

The Chastening of the Lord

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Verse 1. Wherefore. In view of what has been said in the previous chapter. Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. The apostle represents those to whom he had referred in the previous chapter as looking on to witness the efforts which Christians make, and the manner in which they live. There is allusion here, doubtless, to the ancient games. A great multitude of spectators usually occupied the circular seats in the amphitheatre, from which they could easily behold the combatants. 1Cor 9:24, seq. In like manner the apostle represents Christians as encompassed with the multitude of worthies to whom he had referred in the previous chapter. It cannot be fairly inferred from this that he means to say that all those ancient worthies were actually looking at the conduct of Christians, and saw their conflicts. It is a figurative representation, such as is common, and means that we ought to act as if they were in sight, and cheered us on. How far the spirits of the just who are departed from this world are permitted to behold what is done on earth--if at all--is not revealed in the Scriptures. The phrase "a cloud of witnesses," means many witnesses, or a number so great that they seem to be a cloud. The comparison of a multitude of persons to a cloud is common in the classic writers. See Homer's Il. iv. 274, xxiii. 133; Statius, i. 340, and other instances adduced in Wetstein, in loc. Comp. 1Thes 4:17.

Let us lay aside every weight. The word rendered weight -- ογκον-- means that which is crooked or hooked, and thence

anything that is attached or suspended by a hook--that is, by its whole weight, and hence means weight. See Passow. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The word is often used in the classic writers in the sense of swelling, tumour, pride. Its usual meaning is that of weight or burden; and there is allusion here, doubtless, to the runners in the games, who were careful not to encumber themselves with anything that was heavy. Hence their clothes were so made as not to impede their running, and hence they were careful in their training not to overburden themselves with food, and in every way to remove what would be an impediment or hindrance. As applied to the racers, it does not mean that they began to run with anything like a burden, and then threw it away--as persons sometimes aid their jumping by taking a stone in their hands to acquire increased momentum--but that they were careful not to allow anything that would be a weight or an encumbrance. As applied to Christians, it means that they should remove all which would obstruct their progress in the Christian course. Thus it is fair to apply it to whatever would be an impediment in our efforts to win the crown of life. It is not the same thing in all persons. In one it may be pride; in another, vanity; in another, worldliness; in another, a violent and almost ungovernable temper; in another, a corrupt imagination; in another, a heavy, leaden, insensible heart; in another, some improper and unholy attachment. Whatever it may be, we are exhorted to lay it aside; and this general direction may be applied to anything which prevents our making the highest possible attainment in the divine life. Some persons would make much more progress if they would throw away many of their personal ornaments; some if they would disencumber themselves of the heavy weight of gold which they are endeavouring to carry with them. So some very light objects, in themselves considered, become material encumbrances. Even a feather or a ring--such may be the fondness for these toys--may become such a weight that they will never make much progress towards the prize.

And the sin which doth so easily beset us. The word which is here rendered "easily beset" --ευπεριστατον--euperistaton--does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means, "standing well around;" and hence denotes that which is near, or at hand, or readily occurring. So Chrysostom explains it. Passow defines it as meaning, "easy to encircle." Tindal renders it, "the sin that hangeth on us." Theodoret and others explain the word as if derived from περιστασις --peristasis--a word which sometimes means affliction, peril--and hence regard it as denoting that which is full of peril, or the sin which so easily subjects one to calamity. Bloom, field supposes, in accordance with the opinion of Grotius, Crellius, Kypke, Kuinoel, and others, that it means "the sin which especially winds around us and hinders our course," with allusion to the long Oriental garments. According to this, the meaning would be, that as a runner would be careful not to encumber himself with a garment which would be apt to wind around his legs in running, and hinder him, so it should be with the Christian, who especially ought to lay aside everything which resembles this that is, all sin which must impede his course. The former of these interpretations however, is most commonly adopted, and best agrees with the established sense of the word. It will then mean that we are to lay aside every encumbrance, particularly or especially--for so the word Kai," and," should be rendered here--the sins to which we are most exposed. Such sins are appropriately called "easily-besetting sins." They are those to which we are particularly liable. They are such sins as the following:

(1.) Those to which we are particularly exposed by our natural temperament or disposition. In some this is pride, in others indolence, or gaiety, or levity, or avarice, or ambition, or sensuality.

(2.) Those in which we freely indulged before we became Christians. They will be likely to return with power, and we are far more likely, from the laws of association, to fall into them than into any other. Thus a man who has been

intemperate is in special danger from that quarter; a man who has been an infidel is in special danger of scepticism; one who has been avaricious, proud, gay, or ambitious, is in special danger, even after conversion, of again committing these sins.

(3.) Sins to which we are exposed by our profession, by our relations to others, or by our situation in life. They whose condition will entitle them to associate with what are regarded as the more elevated classes of society, are in special danger of indulging in the methods of living and of amusement that are common among them; they who are prospered in the world are in danger of losing the simplicity and spirituality of their religion; they who hold a civil office are in danger of becoming mere politicians, and of losing the very form and substance of piety.

(4.) Sins to which we are exposed from some peculiar weakness in our character. On some points we may be in no danger. We may be constitutionally so firm as not to be especially liable to certain forms of sin. But; every man has one or more weak points, in his character; and it is there that he is particularly exposed. A bow may be in the main very strong. All along its length there may be no danger of its giving way--save at one place where it has been made too thin, or where the material was defective--and if it ever breaks, it will of course be at that point. That is the point, therefore, which needs to be guarded and strengthened. So in reference to character. There is always some weak point which needs especially to be guarded, and our principal danger is there. Self-knowledge, so necessary in leading a holy life, consists much in searching out those weak points of character where we are most exposed; and our progress in the Christian course will be determined much by the fidelity with which we guard and strengthen them.

And let us run with patience the race that is set before us. The word rendered "patience" rather means in this place

perseverance. We are to run the race without allowing ourselves to be hindered by any obstructions, and without giving out or fainting in the way. Encouraged by the example of the multitudes who have run the same race before us, and who are now looking out upon us from heaven where they dwell, we are to persevere as they did to the end.

2 looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Looking unto Jesus, As a farther inducement to do this the apostle exhorts us to look to the Saviour. We are to look to his holy life; to his patience and perseverance in trials; to what he endured in order to obtain the crown, and to his final success and triumph.

The author and finisher of our faith. The word "our" is not in the original here, and obscures the sense. The meaning is, he is the first and the last as an example of faith, or of confidence in God--occupying in this, as in all other things, the preeminence, and being the most complete model that can be placed before us. The apostle had not enumerated him among those who had been distinguished for their faith, but he now refers to him as above them all; as a case that deserved to stand by itself. It is probable that there is a continuance here of the allusion to the Grecian games which the apostle had commenced in the previous verse. The word "author" αρχηγον-- (marg, beginner)-- means, properly, the source, or cause of anything; or one who makes a beginning. It is rendered in Acts 3:16, Acts 5:31, prince; in Heb 2:10, captain; and in the place before us, author. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The phrase, "the beginner of faith," or the leader on of faith, would express the idea. He is at the head of all those who have furnished an example of confidence in God, for he was himself the most illustrious instance of it. The expression, then, does not mean properly that he produces faith in us, or that we believe because he causes us to believe --whatever may be the truth about that--

but that he stands at the head as the most eminent example that can be referred to on the subject of faith. We are exhorted to look to him, as if at the Grecian games there was one who stood before the racer who had previously carried away every palm of victory; who had always been triumphant, and with whom there was no one who could be compared. The word finisher-- τελειωτην--corresponds in meaning with the word author. It means that he is the completer as well as the beginner; the last as well as the first. As there has been no one hitherto who could be compared with him, so there will be no one hereafter. Comp. Rev 1:8,11 "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last." The word does not mean that he was the "finisher" of faith, in the sense that he makes our faith complete, or perfects it--whatever may be true about that--but that he occupies this elevated position of being beyond comparison above all others. Alike in the commencement and the close, in the beginning of faith and in its ending, he stands pre-eminent. To this illustrious model we should look--as a racer would on one who had been always so successful that he surpassed all competitors and rivals. If this be the meaning, then it is not properly explained, as it is commonly, (see Bloomfield and Stuart, in loc.,) by saying that the word here is synonymous with rewarder, and refers to the βραβευτης--brabeutes-or the distributor of the prize. Comp. Col 3:15. There is no instance where the word is used in this sense in the New Testament, (comp. Passow,) nor would such an interpretation present so beautiful and appropriate a thought as the one suggested above.

Who for the joy that was set before him. That is, who in view of all the honour which he would have at the right hand of God, and the happiness which he would experience from the consciousness that he had redeemed a world, was willing to bear the sorrows connected with the atonement.

Endured the cross. Endured patiently the ignominy and pain connected with the suffering of death on the cross.

Despising the shame. Disregarding the ignominy of such a mode of death. It is difficult for us now to realize the force of the expression, "enduring the shame of the cross," as it was understood in the time of the Saviour and the apostles. The views of the world have changed, and it is now difficult to divest the "cross" of the associations of honour and glory which the word suggests, so as to appreciate the ideas which encompassed it then. There is a degree of dishonour which we attach to the guillotine, but the ignominy of a death on the cross was greater than that; there is disgrace attached to the block, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that; there is a much deeper infamy attached to the gallows, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that. And that word--the cross--which when now proclaimed in the ears of the refined, the intelligent, and even the gay, excites an idea of honour in the ears of the people of Athens, of Corinth, and of Rome, excited deeper disgust than the word gallows does with us, for it was regarded as the appropriate punishment of the most infamous of mankind. We can now scarcely appreciate these feelings, and of course the declaration that Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame," does not make the impression on our minds in regard to the nature of his sufferings, and the value of his example, which it should do. When we now think of the "cross," it is not of the multitude of slaves, and robbers, and thieves, and rebels, who have died on it, but of the one great victim whose death has ennobled even this instrument of torture, and encircled it with a halo of glory. We have been accustomed to read of it as an imperial standard in war in the days of Constantine, and as the banner under which armies have marched to conquest; it is intermingled with the sweetest poetry; it is a sacred thing in the most magnificent cathedrals; it adorns the altar, and is even an object of adoration; it is in the most elegant engravings; it is worn by beauty and piety as an ornament near the heart; it is associated with all that is pure in love, great in self-sacrifice, and holy in religion. To see the true force of the expression here, therefore, it is necessary to divest

ourselves of these ideas of glory which encircle the "cross," and to place ourselves in the times and lands in which, when the most infamous of mankind were stretched upon it, it was regarded for such men as an appropriate mode of punishment. That infamy Jesus was willing to bear; and the strength of his confidence in God, his love for man, and the depth of his humiliation, was shown in the readiness and firmness with which he went forward to such a death.

And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Exalted to the highest place of dignity and honour in the universe. Mk 6:19; Eph 1:20, seq. The sentiment here is, "Imitate the example of the great Author of our religion. He, in view of the honour and joy before him, endured the most severe sufferings to which the human frame can be subjected, and the form of death which is regarded as the most shameful. So, amidst all the severe trials to which you are exposed on account of religion, patiently endure all--for the glorious rewards, the happiness and the triumph of heaven, are before you."

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

For consider him. Attentively reflect on his example, that you may be able to bear your trials in a proper manner. That endured such contradiction of sinners. Such opposition. The reference is to the Jews of the time of the Saviour, who opposed his plans, perverted his sayings, and ridiculed his claims. Yet, regardless of their opposition, he persevered in the course which he had marked out, and went patiently forward in the execution of his plans. The idea is, that we are to pursue the path of duty, and follow the dictates of conscience, let the world say what they will about it. In doing this, we cannot find a better example than the Saviour. No opposition of sinners ever turned him from the way which he regarded as right; no ridicule ever caused him to abandon any of his plans; no argument, or expression of scorn, ever caused him for a moment to deviate from his course. Lest ye be

wearied and faint in your minds. The meaning is, that there is great danger of being disheartened and wearied out by the opposition which you meet with. But with the bright example of one who was never disheartened, and who never became weary in doing the will of God, you may persevere. The best means of leading a faithful Christian life, amidst the opposition which we may encounter, is to keep the eye steadily fixed on the Saviour.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. The general sense of this passage is, "You have not yet been called, in your Christian struggles, to the highest kind of sufferings and sacrifices. Great as your trials may seem to have been, yet your faith has not yet been put to the severest test. And since this is so, you ought not to yield in the conflict with evil, but manfully resist it." In the language here used, there is undoubtedly a continuance of the allusion to the agonistic games--the strugglings and wrestlings for mastery there. In those games, the boxers were accustomed to arm themselves for the fight with the caestus. This, at first, consisted of strong leathern thongs wound around the hands, and extending only to the wrist, to give greater solidity to the fist. Afterwards these were made to extend to the elbow, and then to the shoulder; and, finally, they sowed pieces of lead or iron in them, that they might strike a heavier and more destructive blow. The consequence was, that those who were engaged in the fight were often covered with blood, and that resistance "unto blood" showed a determined courage, and a purpose not to yield. But though the language here may be taken from this custom, the fact to which the apostle alludes, it seems to me, is the struggling of the Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane, when his conflict was so severe, that great drops of blood fell down to the ground. Mt 26:42, seq. It is, indeed, commonly understood to mean that they had not yet been called to shed their blood as martyrs in the cause of religion. See Stuart, Bloomfield, Doddridge, Clarke, Whitby, Kuinoel, etc. Indeed, I find in none of the commentators what seems to me to be the true sense of this passage, and what

gives an exquisite beauty to it, the allusion to the sufferings of the Saviour in the garden. The reasons which lead me to believe that there is such an allusion are briefly these.

(1.) The connexion. The apostle is appealing to the example of the Saviour, and urging Christians to persevere amidst their trials by looking to him. Nothing would be more natural, in this connexion, than to refer to that dark night when, in the severest conflict with temptation which he ever encountered, he so signally showed his own firmness of purpose, and the effects of resistance on his own bleeding body, and his signal victory, in the garden of Gethsemane.

(2.) The expression, "striving against sin," seems to demand the same interpretation. On the common interpretation, the allusion would be merely to their resisting persecution; but here the allusion is to some struggle in their minds against committing sin. The apostle exhorts them to strive manfully and perseveringly against sin in every form, and especially against the sin of apostasy. To encourage them, he refers them to the highest instance on record where there was a "striving against sin"--the struggle of the Redeemer in the garden with the great enemy, who there made his most violent assault, and where the resistance of the Redeemer was so great as to force the blood through his pores. What was the exact form of the temptation there, we are not informed. It may have been to induce him to abandon his work even then, and to yield, in view of the severe sufferings of his approaching death on the cross. If there ever was a point where temptation would be powerful, it would be there. When a man is about to be put to death, how strong is the inducement to abandon his purpose, his plans, or his principles, if he may save his life! How many, of feeble virtue, have yielded just there! If to this consideration we add the thought that the Redeemer was engaged in a work never before undertaken; that he designed to make an atonement never before made; that he was about to endure sorrows never before endured; and that on the decision of that moment depended the ascendency of sin or

holiness on the earth, the triumph or the fall of Satan's kingdom, the success or the defeat of all the plans of the great adversary of God and man; and that, on such an occasion as this, the tempter would use all his power to crush the lonely and unprotected Man of sorrows in the garden of Gethsemane, it is easy to imagine what may have been the terror of that fearful conflict, and what virtue it would require in him to resist the concentrated energy of Satan's might, to induce him even then to abandon his work. The apostle says of those to whom he wrote, that they had not yet reached that point. Comp. Heb 5:7.

(3.) This view furnishes a proper climax to the argument of the apostle for perseverance. It presents the Redeemer before the mind as the great Example; directs the mind to him in various scenes of his life--as looking to the joy before him--disregarding the ignominy of his sufferings-- enduring the opposition of sinners--and then in the garden as engaged in a conflict with his great foe, and so resisting sin that, rather than yield, he endured that fearful mental struggle which was attended with such remarkable consequences. This is the highest consideration which could be presented to the mind of a believer to keep him from yielding in the conflict with evil; and if we could keep him in the eye, resisting even unto blood, rather than yield in the least degree, it would do more than all other things to restrain us from sin. How different his case from ours? How readily we yield to sin! We offer a faint and feeble resistance, and then surrender. We think it will be unknown; or that others do it; or that we may repent of it; or that we have no power to resist it; or that it is of little consequence, and our resolution gives way. Not so the Redeemer. Rather than yield in any form to sin, he measured strength with the great adversary when alone with him in the darkness of the night, and gloriously triumphed! And so would we always triumph if we had the same settled purpose to resist sin in every form, even unto blood.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation. This exhortation is found in Prov 3:11,12. The object of the apostle in introducing it here is, to show that afflictions were designed, on the part of God, to produce some happy effects in the lives of his people, and that they ought, therefore, to bear them patiently. In the previous verses, he directs them to the example of the Saviour. In this verse and the following, for the same object, he directs their attention to the design of trials, showing that they are necessary to our welfare, and that they are, in fact, proof of the paternal care of God. This verse might be rendered as a question, "And have ye forgotten?" etc. This mode of rendering it will agree somewhat better with the design of the apostle.

Which speaketh unto you. Which may be regarded as addressed to you; or which invokes a principle as applicable to you as to others. He does not mean that when Solomon used the words he had reference to them particularly, but that he Used them with reference to the children of God, and they might therefore be applied to them. In this way we may regard the language of the Scriptures as addressed to us.

As unto children. As if he were addressing children. The language is such as a father uses.

My son. It is possible that in these words Solomon may have intended to address a son literally, giving him paternal counsel; or he may have spoken as the head of the Jewish people, designing to address all the pious, to whom he sustained, as it were, the relation of a father. Or it is possible, also, that it may be regarded as the language of God himself addressing his children. Whichever supposition is adopted, the sense is substantially the same.

Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. Literally, "Do not regard it as a small matter, or as a trivial thing"--ολιγωρει. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The word here rendered chastening παιδεια--and also in Heb 12:6-8, and Heb 12:9, "corrected"--παιδευτας--does not refer to affliction in general, but that kind of affliction which is designed to correct us for our faults, or which is of the nature of discipline. The verb properly relates to the training up of a child--including instruction, counsel, discipline, and correction, (see this use of the verb in Acts 7:22, 2Ti 2:25, Tit 2:12,) and then especially discipline, or correction for faults --to correct, chastise, chasten, 1Cor 11:32, 2Cor 6:9, Rev 3:19. This is the meaning here; and the idea is, not that God will afflict his people in general, but that if they wander away he will correct them for their faults. He will bring calamity upon them as a punishment for their offences, and in order to bring them back to himself, he will not suffer them to wander away unrebuked and unchecked, but will mercifully reclaim them, though by great sufferings. Afflictions have many objects, or produce many happy effects. That referred to here is, that they are means of reclaiming the wandering and erring children of God, and are proofs of his paternal care and love. Comp. 2Sam 7:14, 12:13,14, Ps 89:31-34; Prov 3:11,12. Afflictions, which are always sent by God, should not be regarded as small matters, for these reasons:

(1.) The fact that they are sent by God. Whatever he does is of importance, and is worthy the profound attention of men.

(2.) They are sent for some important purpose, and they should be regarded, therefore, with attentive concern. Men despise them when

(1.) they treat them with affected or real unconcern;

(2.) when they fail to receive them as Divine admonitions, and regard them as without any intelligent design; and

(3.) when they receive them with expressions of contempt, and speak of them and of the government of God with scorn. It should be a matter of deep concern, when we are afflicted in any manner, not to treat the matter lightly, but to derive from our trials all the lessons which they are adapted to produce on the mind.

Nor faint, etc. Bear up patiently under them. This is the second duty. We are first to study their character and design; and, secondly, to bear up under them, however severe they may be, and however long they may be continued. "Avoid the extremes of proud insensibility and entire dejection." Doddridge.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. This is also a quotation from Prov. 3. It means that it is a universal rule that God sends trials on those whom he truly loves. It does not, of course, mean that he sends chastisement which is not deserved; or that he sends it for the mere purpose of inflicting pain. That cannot be. But it means that, by his chastisements, he shows that he has a paternal care for us. He does not treat us with neglect and unconcern, as a father often does his illegitimate child. The very fact that he corrects us shows that he has towards us a father's feelings, and exercises towards us a paternal care. If he did not, he would let us go on without any attention, and leave us to pursue a course of sin that would involve us in ruin. To restrain and govern a child; to correct him when he errs, shows that there is a parental solicitude for him, and that he is not an outcast. And as there is in the life of every child of God something that deserves correction, it happens that it is universally true that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Whom he receives or acknowledges as his child. This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint. The Hebrew is, "even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

The general sense of the passage is retained, as is often the case in the quotations from the Old Testament. The meaning is the same as in the former part of the verse, that every one who becomes a child of God is treated by him with that watchful care which shows that he sustains towards him the paternal relation.

6 for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

If ye endure chastening. That is, if you undergo, or are called to experience correction. It does not mean here, "if you endure it patiently, or if you bear up under it," but if you are chastised or corrected by God." The affirmation does not relate to the manner of bearing it, but to the fact that we are disciplined. God dealeth with you as with sons. He does not cast you off, and regard you as if you were in no way related to him. For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? That is, he evinces towards his son the care which shows that he sustains the relation of a father. If he deserves correction, he corrects him; and he aims, by all proper means, to exhibit the appropriate care and character of a father. And as we receive such attention from an earthly parent, we ought to expect to receive similar notice from our Father in heaven.

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

But if ye be without chastisement. If you never meet with anything that is adapted to correct your faults, to subdue your temper, to chide your wanderings, it would prove that you were in the condition of illegitimate children--cast off and disregarded by their father. Whereof all are partakers. All who are the true children of God. Then are ye bastards, and not sons. The reference here is to the neglect with which such children are treated, and to the general want of care and discipline over them:--

"Lost in the world's wide range; enjoined no aim, Prescribed no duty. and assigned no name." Savage.

In the English law, a bastard is termed nullius filiua,. Illegitimate children are usually abandoned by their father. The care of them is left to the mother, and the father endeavours to avoid all responsibility, and usually to be concealed and unknown. His own child he does not wish to recognize; he neither provides for him, nor instructs him, nor governs him, nor disciplines him. A father who is worthy of the name, will do all these things. So Paul says it is with Christians. God has not cast them off. In every way he evinces towards them the character of a father. And if it should be that they passed along through life without any occurrence that would indicate the paternal care and attention designed to correct their faults, it would show that they never had been his children, but were cast off and wholly disregarded. This is a beautiful argument; and we should receive every affliction as full proof that we are not forgotten by the High and Holy One who condescends to sustain the character, and to evince towards us, in our wanderings, the watchful care of a Father.

9 Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us,* and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Furthermore. As an additional consideration to induce us to receive chastisement with submission. The argument in this verse is derived from the difference in the spirit and design with which we are corrected by God and by an earthly parent. In God everything is without any intermingling of passion or any improper feeling. In an earthly parent there is often much that is the result of hasty emotion, of an irascible temper, perhaps of the mere love of power. There is much that is inflicted without due reflection, and that produces only pain in the bosom of the parent himself in the recollection. Yet, with all this imperfection of parental government, we were patient and unmurmuring. How much more should we submit to one whose paternal discipline is caused by no excited feeling; by no love of power; by no want of reflection, and which never furnishes occasion for regret!

Fathers of our flesh. Earthly fathers; those from whom we have derived our being here. They are contrasted here with God who is called "the Father of spirits," not because the father does not sustain the paternal relation to the soul as well as the body, but to designate the nature of the dominion over us. The dominion of God is that which pertains to a spiritual kingdom, having more direct reference to the discipline of the soul, and being designed to prepare us for the spiritual world; that of the earthly father pertains primarily to our condition here, and the discipline is designed to subdue our unruly passions, to teach us to restrain our appetites, to inculcate maxims of health and prosperity, and to prevent those things which would impede our happiness in the present world. See, however, many curious instances of the manner in which these phrases were used by the Jewish writers, collected by Wetstein.

We gave them reverence. We submitted to them; honoured them; loved them. Painful at the time as correction may have been, yet when we have fully understood the design of it, we have loved them the more. The effect of such discipline, properly administered, is to produce real veneration for a parent--for he who, in a timely and appropriate manner restrains his child is the only one who will secure ultimate reverence and respect.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection. Since God's government is so much more perfect; since he has so much better right to control us; and since his administration is free from all the defects which attend parental discipline on earth, there is a much higher reason for bowing with submission and reverence to him. The Father of spirits. Thus in Nu 16:22, God is called the God of the spirits of all flesh." So also Nu 27:16; comp. Job 33:4. The idea seems to be, that as the soul is the most important part of man, this name is given to God by way of eminence, or he is eminently and supremely our Father. It was his to create the immortal part, and to that spirit

which is never to die he sustains the relation of Father. The earthly father is parent to the man as mortal; God is the Father of man as immortal. God is himself a Spirit. Angels and human souls, therefore, may be represented as peculiarly his offspring. It is the highest designation which could be given to God to say that he is at the head of the universe of mind; not implying that he is not also at the head of the material universe, but designing to bring into view this high characteristic of the Almighty, that all created minds throughout the universe sustain to him the relation of children. To this Great Being we should, therefore, more cheerfully subject ourselves than to an earthly parent.

And live. Meaning that his fatherly chastisements are adapted to secure our spiritual life. He corrects us that he may promote our final happiness, and his inflictions are the means of saving us from eternal death.

10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

For they verily for a few days. That is, with reference to a few days, (προς;) or it was a chastisement that had reference mainly to this short life. The apostle seems to bring in this circumstance to contrast the dealings of earthly parents with those of God. One of the circumstances is, that the corrections of earthly parents had a muck less important object than those of God. They related to this life--a life so brief that it may be said to continue but a "few days." Yet, in order to secure the benefit to be derived for so short a period from fatherly correction, we submitted without murmuring. Much more cheerfully ought we to submit to that discipline from the hand of our heavenly Father which is designed to extend its benefits through eternity. This seems to me to afford a better sense than that adopted by Professor Stuart and others, that it means, "during our childhood or minority;" or than that proposed by Doddridge, that it refers both to our earthly parents and to our heavenly Father.

After their own pleasure. Marg. "as seemed good, or meet, to them." Meaning that it was sometimes done arbitrarily, or from caprice, or under the influence of passion. This is an additional reason why we should submit to God, We submitted to our earthly parents, though their correction was sometimes passionate, and was designed to gratify their own pleasure, rather than to promote our good. There is much of this kind of punishment in families; but there is none of it under the administration of God.

But he for our profit. Never from passion, from caprice, from the love of power or superiority, but always for our good. The exact benefit which he designs to produce we may not be able always to understand; but we may be assured that no other cause influences him than a desire to promote our real welfare; and as he can never be mistaken in regard to the proper means to secure that, we may be assured that our trials are always adapted to that end.

That we might be partakers of his holiness. Become so holy that it may be said that we are partakers of the very holiness of God. Comp. 2Pet 1:4. This is the elevated object at which God aims by our trials. It is not that he delights to produce pain; not that he envies us, and would rob us of our little comforts; not that he needs what We prize to increase his own enjoyment, and therefore rudely takes it away; and not that he acts from caprice--now conferring a blessing, and then withdrawing it without any reason: it is, that he may make us more pure and holy, and thus promote our own best interest. To be holy as God is holy; to be so holy that it may be said that we "are partakers of his holiness," is a richer blessing than health, and property, and friends, without it; and when by the exchange of the one we acquire the other, we have secured infinitely more than we have lost. To obtain the greater good, we should be willing to part with the less; to secure the everlasting friendship and favour of God, we should be willing, if necessary, to surrender the last farthing

of our property; the last friend that is left us; the last feeble and fluttering pulsation of life in our veins.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. It does not impart pleasure, nor is this its design. All chastisement is intended to produce pain, and the Christian is as sensitive to pain as others. His religion does not blunt his sensibilities, and make him a stoic, but it rather increases his susceptibility to suffering. The Lord Jesus, probably, felt pain, reproach, and contempt, more keenly than any other human being ever did; and the Christian feels the loss of a child, or bodily suffering, as keenly as any one. But while religion does not render him insensible to suffering, it does two things--

(1.) it enables him to bear the pain without murmuring, and

(2.) it turns the affliction into a blessing on his soul. Nevertheless afterward. In future life. The effect is seen in a pure life, and in a more entire devotedness to God. We are not to look for the proper fruits of affliction while we are suffering, but afterwards. It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. It is a tree that bears good fruit and we do not expect the fruit to form and ripen at once. It may be long maturing, but it will be rich and mellow when it is ripe. It frequently requires a long time before all the results of affliction appear--as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden orange. When those fruits are ripened they are

(1.) fruits "of righteousness." They make us more holy, more dead to sin and the world, and more alive to God. And they are

(2.) "peaceable." They produce peace, calmness, submission in the soul. They make the heart more tranquil in its confidence in God, and more disposed to promote the religion of peace. The apostle speaks of this as if it were a universal truth in regard to Christians who are afflicted. And it is so, There is no Christian who is not ultimately benefited by trials, and who is not able at some period subsequently to say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." When a Christian comes to die, he does not feel that he has had one trial too many, or one which he did not deserve. He can then look back and see the effect of some early trial, so severe that he once thought he could hardly endure it, spreading a hallowed influence over his future years, and scattering its golden fruit all along the pathway of life. I have never known a Christian who was not benefited by afflictions; I have seen none who was not able to say that his trials produced some happy effect on his religious character, and on his real happiness in life. If this be so, then no matter how severe our trials, we should submit to them without a murmur. The more severe they are, the more we shall yet be blessed--on earth or in heaven.

Warning against Rejecting God's Grace

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Wherefore. In view of the facts which have been now stated --that afflictions are sent from God, and are evidences of his paternal watchfulness. Lift up the hands which hang down. As if from weariness and exhaustion. Renew your courage; make a new effort to bear them. The hands fall by the side when we are exhausted with toil, or worn down by disease. Isa 35:3, from which place this exhortation is taken. And the feeble knees. The knees also become enfeebled by long effort, and tremble as if their strength were gone. Courage and resolution may do much, however, to make them firm, and it is to this that the apostle exhorts those to whom he wrote. They were to make every effort to bear up under their trials.

The hope of victory will do much to strengthen one almost exhausted in battle; the desire to reach home invigorates the frame of the weary traveller. So it is with the Christian. In persecution and sickness and bereavement, he may be ready to sink under his burdens. The hands fall, and the knees tremble, and the heart sinks within us. But confidence in God, and the hope of heaven, and the assurance that all this is for our good, will reinvigorate the enfeebled frame, and enable us to bear what we once supposed would crush us to the dust. A courageous mind braces a feeble body, and hope makes it fresh for new conflicts.

13 and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

And make straight paths for your feet. Marg., even. The word here used means, properly, straight, in the sense of upright, erect, Acts 14:10; but it is here used in the sense of straight horizontally, that is, level, plain, smooth. The meaning is, that they were to remove all obstacles out of the way, so that they need not stumble and fall. There is probably an allusion here to Prov 4:25-27, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." The idea is, that by every proper means they were to make the way to heaven as plain and easy as possible. They were to allow no obstructions in the path over which the lame and feeble might fall. Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. A lame man needs a smooth path to walk in. The idea is here, that everything which would prevent those in the church who were in any danger of falling--the feeble, the unestablished, the weak--from walking in the path to heaven, or which might be an occasion to, them of falling, should be removed. Or it may mean, that in a road that was not level, those who were lame would be in danger of spraining, distorting, or wrenching a lame limb; and the counsel is, that whatever would have a tendency to this should be removed. Divested of the figure, the passage means, that everything should be removed which would hinder any one from walking in the

path to life. But let it rather be healed. As in the case of lameness, pains should be taken to heal it rather than to suffer it to be increased by careless exposure to a new sprain or fracture, so it should be in our religious and moral character. Whatever is defective we should endeavour to restore to Soundness, rather than to suffer the defect to be increased. Whatever is feeble in our faith or hope; whatever evil tendency there is in our hearts, we should endeavour to strengthen and amend, lest it should become worse, and we should entirely fall.

14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Follow peace with all men. Do not give indulgence to those passions which lead to litigations, strifes, wars. Rom 14:19. The connexion here requires us to understand this mainly of persecutors. The apostle is referring to the trials which those whom he addressed were experiencing. Those trials seem to have arisen mainly from persecution, and he exhorts them to manifest a spirit of kindness towards all, even though they were engaged in persecuting them. This is the temper of the gospel. We are to make war with sin, but not with men; with bad passions and corrupt desires, but not with our fellow-worms.

And holiness. Instead of yielding to contending passions and to a spirit of war; instead of seeking revenge on your persecutors and foes, make it rather your aim to be holy, Let that be the object of your pursuit; the great purpose of your life. Men might in such cases counsel them to seek revenge; the spirit of religion would counsel them to strive to be holy. In such times they were in great danger of giving indulgence to evil passions, and hence the special propriety of the exhortation to endeavour to be holy.

Without which no man shall see the Lord. That is, shall see him in peace; or shall so see him as to dwell with him. All will see him in the day of judgment; but to "see" one is often used in the sense of being with one, dwelling with one,

enjoying one. Mt 5:8. The principle here stated is one which is never departed from, Rev 21:27; Isa 35:8, 52:1, 60:21, Joel 3:17, Mt 13:41, 1Cor 6:9,10. No one has ever been admitted to heaven in his sins; nor is it desirable that any one ever should be. Desirable as it is that lost men should be happy, yet it is benevolence which excludes the profane, the impious, and the unbelieving from heaven--just as it is benevolence to a family to exclude profligates and seducers, and as it is benevolence to a community to confine thieves and robbers in prison. This great principle in the Divine administration will always be adhered to; and hence they who are expecting to be saved without holiness or religion are destined to certain disappointment. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God will not admit one unrepenting and unpardoned sinner to heaven. It was the importance and the certainty of this principle which made the apostle insist on it here with so much earnestness. Amidst all their trials, when exposed to persecution, and when everything might tempt them to the indulgence of feelings which were the opposite of holiness, they were to make it their great object to be like God. For this they were to seek, to strive, to labour, to pray. This with us, in all our trials, should also be the great aim of life. How deeply affecting, then, is the inquiry, whether we have that holiness which is indispensable to salvation! Let us not deceive ourselves. We may have many things else--many things which are in themselves desirable, but without this one thing we shall never see the Lord in peace. We may have wealth, genius, learning, beauty, accomplishments, houses, lands, books, friends--but without religion they will be all in vain. Never can we see God in peace without a holy heart; never call we be admitted into heaven without that religion which will identify us with the angels around the throne!

15 looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you,* and thereby many be defiled;

Looking diligently. This phrase implies close attention. It is implied that there are reasons why we should take special care. Those reasons are found in the propensities of our hearts

to evil; in the temptations of the world; in the allurements to apostasy presented by the great adversary of our souls.

Lest any man fail. As every man is in danger, it is his personal duty to see to it that his salvation be secure.

Fail of the grace of God. Marg. fall from. The Greek is, "lest any one be wanting or lacking"--υστερων. There is no intimation in the words used here that they already had grace, and might fall way--whatever might be true about that--but that there was danger that they might be found at last to be deficient in that religion which was necessary to save them. Whether this was to be by losing the religion which they now had, or by the fact that they never had any--however near they may have come to it--the apostle does not here intimate, and this passage should not be used in the discussion of the question about falling from grace. It is a proper exhortation to be addressed to any man in the church, or out of it, to inquire diligently whether there is not reason to apprehend that when he comes to appear before God he will be found to be wholly destitute of religion.

Lest any root of bitterness springing up. Any bitter root. There is, doubtless, an allusion here to De 29:18: "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." The allusion there is to those who were idolaters, and who instead of bearing the fruits of righteousness, and promoting the piety and happiness of the nation, would bear the fruits of idolatry, and spread abroad irreligion and sin. The allusion, in both cases, is to a bitter plant springing up among those that were cultivated for ornament or use, or to a tree bearing bitter and poisonous fruit, among those that produced good fruit. The reference of the apostle is to some person who should produce a similar effect in the church--to one who should inculcate false doctrines; or who should apostatize; or who should lead

an unholy life, and thus be the means of corrupting and destroying others. They were to be at especial pains that no such person should start up from among themselves, or be tolerated by them. Trouble you. By his doctrines and example. And thereby many be defiled. Led away from the faith, and corrupted. One wicked man, and especially one hypocrite in the church, may be the means of destroying many others.

16 lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Lest there be any fornicator. The sin here referred to is one of those which would spread corruption in the church, and against which they ought to be especially on their guard. Allusion is made to Esau as an example, who, himself a corrupt and profane man, for a trifle threw away the highest honour which as a son he could have. Many have regarded the word here used as referring to idolatry, or defection from the true religion to a false one--as the word is often used in the Old Testament--but it is more natural to understand it literally. The crime here mentioned was one which abounded everywhere in ancient times, as it does now, and it was important to guard the church against it. Acts 15:20; 1Cor 6:18.

Or profane person. The word profane here refers to one who, by word or conduct, treats religion with contempt, or has no reverence for that which is sacred. This may be shown by words; by the manner; by a sneer; by neglect of religion; or by openly renouncing the privileges which might be connected with our salvation. The allusion here is to one who should openly cast off all the hopes of religion for indulgence in temporary pleasure, as Esau gave up his birthright for a trifling gratification. In a similar manner the young, for temporary gratification, neglect or despise all the privileges and hopes resulting from their being born in the bosom of the church; from being baptized and consecrated to God; and from being trained up in the lap of piety.

As Esau. It is clearly implied here that Esau sustained the character of a fornicator and a profane person, The former appellation is probably given to him to denote his licentiousness, shown by his marrying many wives, and particularly foreigners, or the daughters of Canaan. See Gen 36:2; comp. Gen 26:34,35. The Jewish writers abundantly declare that that was his character. See Wetstein, in loc. In proof that the latter appellation--that of a profane person--belonged to him, see Gen 25:29-34. It is true that it is rather by inference, than by direct assertion, that it is known that he sustained this character. The birthright, in his circumstances, was a high honour. The promise respecting the inheritance of the land of Canaan, the coming of the Messiah, and the preservation of the true religion, had been given to Abraham and Isaac, and was to be transmitted by them. As the eldest son, all the honour connected with this, and which is now associated with the name Jacob, would have properly appertained to Esau. But he undervalued it. He lived a licentious life. He followed his corrupt propensities, and gave the reins to indulgence. In a time of temporary distress, also, he showed how little he really valued all this by bartering it away for a single meal of victuals. Rather than bear the evils of hunger for a short period, and evidently in a manner implying a great undervaluing of the honour which he held as the firstborn son in a pious line, he agreed to surrender all the privileges connected with his birth. It was this which made the appellation appropriate to him; and this will make the appellation appropriate in any similar instance.

Who for one morsel of meat. The word meat here is used, as it is commonly in the Scriptures, in its primitive sense in English to denote, food, Gen 25:34. The phrase here, "morsel of meat," would be better rendered by "a single meal."

Sold his birthright. The birthright seems to have implied the first place or rank in the family; the privilege of offering sacrifice and conducting worship in the absence or death of the father; a double share of the inheritance; and in this

instance the honour of being in the line of the patriarchs, and transmitting the promises made to Abraham and Isaac. What Esau parted with we can easily understand by reflecting on the honours which have clustered around the name of Jacob.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

For ye know how that afterward, etc. When he came to his father, and earnestly besought him to reverse the sentence which he had pronounced. See Gen 27:34-40. The "blessing" here referred to was not that of the birthright, which he knew he could not regain, but that pronounced by the father Isaac on him whom he regarded as his first born son. This Jacob obtained by fraud, when Isaac really meant to bestow it on Esau. Isaac appears to have been ignorant wholly of the bargain which Jacob and Esau had made in regard to the birthright, and Jacob and his mother contrived in this way to have that confirmed which Jacob had obtained of Esau by contract. The sanction of the father, it seems, was necessary, before it could be made sure; and Rebecca and Jacob understood that the dying blessing of the aged patriarch would establish it all. It was obtained by dishonesty on the part of Jacob, but so far as Esau was concerned it was an act of righteous retribution for the little regard he had shown for the honour of his birth.

For he found no place of repentance. Marg. "Way to change his mind." That is, no place for repentance in the mind of Isaac, or no way to change his mind. It does not mean that Esau earnestly sought to repent and could not, but that when once the blessing had passed the lips of his father he found it impossible to change it. Isaac firmly declared that he had pronounced the blessing, and though it had been obtained by fraud, yet, as it was of the nature of a Divine prediction it could not now be changed. He had not indeed intended that it should be thus. He had pronounced a blessing on another which had been designed for him. But still the benediction had been given. The prophetic words had been pronounced.

By Divine direction the truth had been spoken, and how could it be changed? It was impossible now to reverse the Divine purposes in the case, and hence the "blessing" must stand as it had been spoken. Isaac did, however, all that could be done. He gave a benediction to his son Esau, though of far inferior value to that which he had pronounced on the fraudulent Jacob, Gen 27:39,40.

Though he sought it carefully with tears. Gen 27:34. He sought to change the purpose of his father, but could not do it. The meaning and bearing of this passage, as used by the apostle, may be easily understood.

(1.) The decision of God, on the human character and destiny, will soon be pronounced. That decision will be according to truth, and cannot be changed.

(2.) If we should despise our privileges, as Esau did his birthright, and renounce our religion, it would be impossible to recover what we had lost. There would be no possibility of changing the Divine decision in the case, for it would be determined for ever. This passage, therefore, should not be alleged to show that a sinner cannot repent, or that he cannot find "place for repentance," or assistance to enable him to repent, or that tears and sorrow for sin would be of no avail, for it teaches none of these things; but it should be used to keep us from disregarding our privileges, from turning away from the true religion, from slighting the favours of the gospel, and from neglecting religion till death comes; because when God has once pronounced a sentence excluding us from his favour, no tears, or pleading, or effort of our own can change him. The sentence which he pronounces on the scoffer, the impenitent, the hypocrite, and the apostate, is one that will abide for ever without change. This passage, therefore, is in accordance with the doctrine more than once stated before in this epistle, that if a Christian should really apostatize, it would be impossible that he should be saved. Heb 6:1, seq.

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

For ye are not come. To enforce the considerations already urged, the apostle introduces this sublime comparison between the old and new dispensations, Heb 12:18-24. The object, in accordance with the principal scope of the epistle, is to guard them against apostasy. To do this, he shows that under the new dispensation there was much more to bind them to fidelity, and to make apostasy dangerous, than there was under the old. The main point of the comparison is, that under the Jewish dispensation everything was adapted to awe the mind, and to restrain by the exhibition of grandeur and of power; but that under the Christian dispensation, while there was as much that was sublime, there was much more that was adapted to win and hold the affections. There were revelations of higher truths. There were more affecting motives to lead to obedience. There was that of which the former was but the type and emblem. There was the clear revelation of the glories of heaven, and of the blessed society there, all adapted to prompt to the earnest desire that they might be our own. The considerations presented in this passage, constitute the climax of the argument so beautifully pursued through this epistle, showing that the Christian system was far superior, in every respect, to the Jewish. In presenting this closing argument, the apostle first refers to some of the circumstances attending the former dispensation, which were designed to keep the people of God from apostasy, and then the considerations of superior weight existing under the Christian economy.

The mount that might be touched. Mount Sinai. The meaning here is, that that mountain was palpable, material, touchable--in contradistinction from the Mount Zion to which the church had now come, which is above the reach of the external senses, Heb 12:22. The apostle does not mean that it was permitted to the Israelites to touch Mount Sinai--for this was strictly forbidden, Ex 19:12; but he evidently alludes to that prohibition, and means to say that a command forbidding

them to "touch" the mountain, implied that it was a material or palpable object. The sense of the passage is, that every circumstance that occurred there was fitted to fill the soul with terror. Everything accompanying the giving of the law, the setting of bounds around the mountain which they might not pass, and the darkness and tempest on the mountain itself, was adapted to overawe the soul. The phrase, "the touchable mountain"--if such a phrase is proper --would express the meaning of the apostle here. The "Mount Zion" to which the church now has come, is of a different character. It is not thus visible and palpable. It is not enveloped in smoke and flame, and the thunders of the Almighty do not roll and re-echo among its lofty peaks as at Horeb; yet it presents stronger motives to perseverance in the service of God. And that burned with fire. Ex 19:18. Comp. De 4:11, 33:2. Nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. See Ex 19:16. For ye are not come. To enforce the considerations already urged, the apostle introduces this sublime comparison between the old and new dispensations, Heb 12:18-24. The object, in accordance with the principal scope of the epistle, is to guard them against apostasy. To do this, he shows that under the new dispensation there was much more to bind them to fidelity, and to make apostasy dangerous, than there was under the old. The main point of the comparison is, that under the Jewish dispensation everything was adapted to awe the mind, and to restrain by the exhibition of grandeur and of power; but that under the Christian dispensation, while there was as much that was sublime, there was much more that was adapted to win and hold the affections. There were revelations of higher truths. There were more affecting motives to lead to obedience. There was that of which the former was but the type and emblem. There was the clear revelation of the glories of heaven, and of the blessed society there, all adapted to prompt to the earnest desire that they might be our own. The considerations presented in this passage, constitute the climax of the argument so beautifully pursued through this epistle, showing that the Christian system was far superior, in every respect, to the Jewish. In presenting this closing argument, the

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19 and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

For they could not endure that which was commanded. They could not sustain the awe produced by the fact that God uttered his commands himself. The meaning is not that the commands themselves were intolerable, but that the manner in which they were communicated inspired a terror which they could not bear. They feared that they should die. Ex 20:19 And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned. Ex 19:13. The prohibition was, that neither beast nor man should touch it on pain of death. The punishment was to be either by stoning, or being "shot through." Or thrust through with a dart. Ex 19:13. "Or shot through." This phrase, however, though it is found in the common editions of the New Testament, is wanting in all the more valuable manuscripts; in all the ancient versions; and it occurs in none of the Greek ecclesiastical writers, with one exception. It is omitted now by almost all editors of the New Testament. It is beyond all doubt an addition of later times, taken from the Septuagint of Ex 19:13. Its omission does not injure the sense.

21 and so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, etc. This is not recorded in the account of the giving of the law in Exodus, and it has been made a question on what authority the apostle made this declaration respecting Moses. In De 9:19, Moses indeed says of himself, after he had come down from the mountain, and had broken the two tables of stone that were in his hand, that he was greatly afraid of the anger of the Lord on account of the sin of the people. "I was afraid of the anger

and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you;" and it has been supposed by many that this is the passage to which the apostle here alludes. But it is very evident that was spoken in a different occasion from the one which is referred to in the passage before us. That was after the law was promulgated, and Moses had descended from the mount; and it was not said in view of the terrors of the scene when the law was given, but of the apprehension of the wrath of God against the people for their sin in making the golden calf. I know not how to explain this, except by the supposition that the apostle here refers to some tradition that the scene produced this effect on his mind. In itself, it is not improbable that Moses thus trembled with alarm, (comp. Ex 19:16,) nor that the remembrance of it should have been handed down among the numerous traditions which the Jews transmitted from age to age. There must have been many things that occurred in their journey through the wilderness which are not recorded in the Books of Moses. Many of them would be preserved naturally in the memory of the people, and transmitted to their posterity; and though those truths might become intermingled with much that was fabulous, yet it is not irrational to suppose that an inspired writer may have adduced pertinent and true examples from these traditions of what actually occurred. It was one method of preserving the truth, thus to select such instances of what actually took place from the mass of traditions, which were destined to perish, as would be useful in future times. The circumstance here mentioned was greatly fitted to increase the impression of the sublimity and fearfulness of the scene. Moses was accustomed to commune with God. He had met him at the "bush," and had been addressed by him face to face; and yet so awful were the scenes at Horeb, that even he could not bear it with composure. What may we, then, suppose to have been the alarm of the body of the people, when the mind of the great leader himself was thus overpowered!

22 but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

But ye are come unto mount Sion. You who are Christians; all who are under the new dispensation. The design is to contrast the Christian dispensation with the Jewish, and to show that its excellences and soul; advantages were far superior to the religion of their fathers. It had more to win the affections; more to elevate the more to inspire with hope. It had less that was terrific and alarming; it appealed less to the fears and more to the hopes of mankind; but still apostasy from this religion could not be less terrible in its consequences than apostasy from the religion of Moses. In the passage before us, the apostle evidently contrasts Sinai with Mount Zion;and means to say that there was more about the latter that was adapted to win the heart, and to preserve allegiance, than there was about the former. Mount Zion literally denoted the southern hill in Jerusalem, on which a part of the city was built. That part of the city was made by David and his successors the residence of the court, and soon the name Zion was given familiarly to the whole city. Jerusalem was the centre of religion in the land; the place where the temple stood, and where the worship of God was celebrated, and where God dwelt by a visible symbol, and it became the type and emblem of the holy abode where He dwells in heaven. It cannot be literally meant here that they had come to the Mount Sion in Jerusalem, for that was as true of the whole Jewish people as of those whom the apostle addressed; but it must mean that they had come to the Mount Zion of which the holy city was an emblem; to the glorious mount which is revealed as the dwelling-place of God, of angels, of saints. That is, they had "come" to this by the revelations and hopes of the gospel. They were not, indeed, literally in heaven, nor was that glorious city literally on earth; but the dispensation to which they had been brought was that which conducted them directly up to the city of the living God, and to the holy mount where he dwelt above. The view was not confined to an earthly mountain enveloped in smoke and flame, but opened at once on the holy place where God abides. By the phrase, "ye are come," the apostle means that this was the characteristic of the new dispensation, that it

conducted them there, and that they were already, in fact, inhabitants of that glorious city. They were citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, (comp. Php 3:20,) and were entitled to its privileges.

And unto the city of the living God. The city where the living God dwells--the heavenly Jerusalem. Comp. Heb 11:10. God dwelt by a visible symbol in the temple at Jerusalem--and to that his people came under the old dispensation. In a more literal and glorious sense his abode is in heaven, and to that his people have now come.

The heavenly Jerusalem. Heaven is not unfrequently represented as a magnificent city, where God and angels dwell; and the Christian revelation discloses this to Christians as certainly their final home. They should regard themselves already as dwellers in that city, and live and act as if they saw its splendour, and partook of its joy. In regard to this representation of heaven as a city where God dwells, the following places may be consulted: Heb 11:10,14-16, 12:28, 13:14 Gal 4:26, Rev 3:12 Rev 21:2,10-27. It is true that Christians have not yet seen that city by the bodily eye, but they look to it with the eye of faith. It is revealed to them; they are permitted by anticipation to contemplate its glories, and to feel that it is to be their eternal home. They are permitted to live and act as if they saw the glorious God whose dwelling is there, and were already surrounded by the angels and the redeemed. The apostle does not represent them as if they were expecting that it would be visibly set up on the earth, but as being now actually dwellers in that city, and bound to live and act as if they were amidst its splendours.

And to an innumerable company of angels. The Greek here is, "to myriads [or ten thousands] of angels in an assembly or joyful convocation." The phrase, "tens of thousands," is often used to denote a great and indefinite number. The word rendered "general assembly," (Heb 12:23)-- πανηγυρις-- refers, properly, to "an assembly or convocation of the whole

people in order to celebrate any public festival or solemnity, as the public games or sacrifices." Rob. Lex. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and refers here to the angels viewed as assembled around the throne of God, and celebrating his praises. It should be regarded as connected with the word angels, referring to their convocation in heaven, and not to the church of the first-born. This construction is demanded by the Greek. Our common translation renders it as if it were to be united with the church-- "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn;" but the Greek will not admit of this construction. The interpretation which unites it with the angels is adopted now by almost all critics, and in almost all the editions of the New Testament. On the convocation of angels, Job 1:6. The writer intends, doubtless, to contrast that joyful assemblage of the angels in heaven with those who appeared in the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. God is always represented as surrounded by hosts of angels in heaven. See De 33:2, 1Kgs 22:19, Dan 7:10, Ps 68:17; comp. Heb 12:1; see also Rev 5:2, Mt 26:53, Lk 2:13. The meaning is, that under the Christian dispensation Christians, in their feelings and worship, become united to this vast host of holy angelic beings. It is, of course, not meant that they are visible, but they are seen by the eye of faith. The argument here is, that as, in virtue of the Christian revelation, we become associated with those pure and happy spirits, we should not apostatize from such a religion, for we should regard it as honourable and glorious to be identified with them.

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

And church of the firstborn. That is, you are united with the church of the firstborn. They who were firstborn among, the Hebrews enjoyed peculiar privileges, and especially pre-eminence of rank. Col 1:15. The reference here is, evidently, to those saints who had been distinguished for their piety, and who may be supposed to be exalted to peculiar honours in heaven--such as the patriarchs, prophets, martyrs. The

meaning is, that by becoming Christians we have become, in fact, identified with that happy and honoured church, and that this is a powerful motive to induce us to persevere. It is a consideration which should make us adhere to our religion amidst all temptations and persecutions, that we are identified with the most eminently holy men who have lived, and that we are to share their honours and their joys. The Christian is united in feeling, in honour, and in destiny, with the excel. lent of all the earth and of all times, he should feel it, therefore, an honour to be a Christian; he should yield to no temptation which would induce him to part from so goodly a fellowship.

Which are written in heaven. Marg. enrolled. The word here was employed by the Greeks to denote that one was enrolled as a citizen, or entitled to the privileges of citizenship. Here it means. that the names of the persons referred to were registered or enrolled among the inhabitants of the heavenly world. Lk 10:20. And to God the Judge of all. God, who will pronounce the final sentence on all mankind. The object of the reference here to God as Judge does not appear to be to contrast the condition of Christians with that of the Jews, as is the case in some of the circumstances alluded to, but to bring impressively before their minds the fact that they sustained a peculiarly near relation to him from whom all were to receive their final allotment. As the destiny of all depended on him, they should be careful not to provoke his wrath. The design of the apostle seems to be to give a rapid glance of what there was in heaven, as disclosed by the eye of faith to the Christian, which should operate as a motive to induce him to persevere in his Christian course. The thought that seems to have struck his mind in regard to God was, that he would do right to all. They had, therefore, everything to fear if they revolted from him; they had everything to hope if they bore their trials with patience, and persevered to the end. And to the spirits of just men made perfect. Not only to the more eminent saints--the "church of the firstborn"--but to all who were made perfect in heaven. They were not only united

with the imperfect Christians on earth, but with those who have become completely delivered from sin, and admitted to the world of glory. This is a consideration which ought to influence the minds of all believers. They are even now united with all the redeemed in heaven. They should so live as not to be separated from them in the final day. Most Christians have among the redeemed already not a few of their most tenderly beloved friends. A father may be there; a mother, a sister, a smiling babe. It should be a powerful motive with us so to live as to be prepared to be reunited with them in heaven.

24 and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. This was the crowning excellence of the new dispensation, in contradistinction from the old. They had been made acquainted with the true Messiah; they were united to him by faith; they had been sprinkled with his blood. Heb 7:22, and Heb 8:6. The highest consideration which can be urged to induce any one to persevere in a life of piety is the fact that the, Son of God has come into the world and died to save sinners. Comp. Heb 12:2, seq. of this chapter.

And to the blood of sprinkling. The blood which Jesus shed, and which is sprinkled upon us to ratify the covenant. Heb 9:18, seq.

That speaketh better things than that of Abel. Or, "than Abel; "the words "that of" being supplied by the translators. In the original there is no reference to the blood of Abel shed by Cain, as our translators seem to have supposed; but the allusion is to the faith of Abel, or to the testimony which he bore to a great and vital truth of religion. The meaning here is, that the blood of Jesus speaks better things than Abel did; that is, that the blood of Jesus is the reality of which the offering of Abel was a type. Abel proclaimed by the sacrifice which he made the great truth, that salvation could be only by a bloody offering--but he did this only in a typical and obscure manner; Jesus proclaimed it in a more distinct and

better manner by the reality. The object here is to compare the Redeemer with Abel, not in the sense that the blood shed in either case calls for vengeance, but that salvation by blood is more clearly revealed in the Christian plan than in the ancient history; and hence illustrating, in accordance with the design of this epistle, the superior excellency of the Christian scheme over all which had preceded it. There were other points of resemblance between Abel and the Redeemer, but on them the apostle does not insist. Abel was a martyr, and so was Christ; Abel was cruelly murdered, and so was Christ; there was aggravated guilt in the murder of Abel by his brother, and so there was in that of Jesus by his brethren--his own countrymen; the blood of Abel called for vengeance, and was followed by a fearful penalty on Cain, and so was the death of the Redeemer on his murderers--for they said, "his blood be on us and on our children," and are yet suffering under the fearful malediction then invoked;--but the point of contrast here is, that the blood of Jesus makes a more full, distinct, and clear proclamation of the truth, that salvation is by blood, than the offering made by Abel did. The apostle alludes here to what he had said in Heb 11:4. Heb 11:4. Such is the contrast between the former and the latter dispensations; and such the motives to perseverance presented by both. In the former, the Jewish, all was imperfect, terrific, and alarming. In the latter, everything was comparatively mild, winning, alluring, animating. Terror was not the principal element; but heaven was opened to the eye of faith, and the Christian was permitted to survey the Mount Zion--the New Jerusalem--the angels--the redeemed--the blessed God-- the glorious Mediator--and to feel that that blessed abode was to be his home. To that happy world he was tending; and with all these pure and glorious beings he was identified. Having stated and urged this argument, the apostle, in the remainder of the chapter, warns those whom he addressed in a most solemn manner against a renunciation of their Christian faith.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape,* if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:

Him that speaketh. That is, in the gospel. Do not turn away from him who has addressed you in the new dispensation, and called you to obey and serve him. The meaning is, that God had addressed them in the gospel as really as he had done the Hebrews on Mount Sinai, and that there was as much to be dreaded in disregarding his voice now as there was then. He does not speak, indeed, amidst lightnings, and thunders, and clouds, but he speaks by every message of mercy; by every invitation; by every tender appeal He spake by his Son, (He 1:2;) he speaks by the Holy Spirit, and by all his calls and warnings in the gospel. For if they escaped not. If they who heard God under the old dispensation, who refused to obey him, were cut off. Heb 10:28. Who refused him that spake on earth. That is, Moses. The contrast here is between Moses and the Son of God, the head of the Jewish and the head of the Christian dispensation. Moses was a mere man, and spake as such, though in the name of God. The Son of God was from above, and spake as an inhabitant from heaven.

26 whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

Whose voice then shook the earth. When he spake at Mount Sinai. The meaning is, that the mountain and the region around quaked, Ex 19:18. The "voice" here referred to is that of God speaking from the holy mount. But now hath he promised, saying. The words here quoted are taken from Hag 2:6, where they refer to the changes which would take place under the Messiah. The meaning is, that there would be great revolutions in his coming, as if the universe were shaken to its centre. The apostle evidently applies this passage, as it is done in Haggai, to the first advent of the Redeemer. I shake not the earth only. This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but the sense is retained. In Haggai it is, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." The apostle lays

emphasis on the fact that not only the earth was to be shaken, but also heaven. The shaking of the earth here evidently refers to the commotions among the nations that would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. But also heaven. This may refer either

(1) to the extraordinary phenomena in the heavens at the birth, the death, and the ascension of Christ;

(2) to the revolutions in morals and religion which would be caused by the introduction of the gospel, as if everything were to be changed--expressed by "a shaking of the heavens and the earth;" or

(3) it may be more literally taken as denoting that there was a remarkable agitation in the heavens--in the bosoms of its inhabitants--arising from a fact so wonderful as that the Son of God should descend to earth, suffer, and die. I see no reason to doubt that the latter idea may have been included here; and the meaning of the whole then is, that while the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, fearful and solemn as it was, was an event that merely shook the earth in the vicinity of the holy Mount, the introduction of the gospel agitated the universe. Great changes upon the earth were to precede it; one revolution was to succeed another preparatory to it, and the whole universe would be moved at an event so extraordinary. The meaning is, that the introduction of the gospel was a much more solemn and momentous thing than the giving of the law--and that therefore it was much more fearful and dangerous to apostatize from it.

27 And this *word,* Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

And this word, Yet once more. That is, this reference to a great agitation or commotion in some future time. This is designed as an explanation of the prophecy in Haggai; and the idea is, that there would be such agitations that everything which was not fixed on a permanent and immovable basis

would be thrown down as in an earthquake. Everything which was temporary in human institutions; everything which was wrong in customs and morals; and everything in the ancient system of religion which was merely of a preparatory and typical character, would be removed. What was of permanent value would be retained, and a kingdom would be established which nothing could move. The effect of the gospel would be to overturn everything which was of a temporary character in the previous system, and everything in morals which was not founded on a solid basis, and to set up, in the place of it, principles which no revolution and no time could change. The coming of the Saviour, and the influence of his religion on mankind, had this effect in such respects as the following.

(1.) All that was of a sound and permanent nature in the Jewish economy was retained; all that was typical and temporary was removed. The whole mass of sacrifices and ceremonies, that were designed to prefigure the Messiah, of course then ceased; all that was of permanent value in the law of God, and in the principles of religion, was incorporated in the new system and perpetuated.

(2.) The same is true in regard to morals. There was much truth on the earth before the time of the Saviour; but it was intermingled with much that was false. The effect of his coming has been to distinguish what is true and what is false; to give permanency to the one, and to cause the other to vanish.

(3.) The same is true of religion. There are some views of religion which men have by nature which are correct; there are many which are false. The Christian religion gives permanence and stability to the one, and causes the other to disappear. And in general it may be remarked, that the effect of Christianity is to give stability to all that is founded on truth, and to drive error from the world. Christ came that he might destroy all the systems of error--that is, all that could be shaken on earth, and to confirm all that is true. The result

of all will be, that he will preside over a permanent kingdom, and that his people will inherit "a kingdom which cannot be moved," Heb 12:28.

The removing of those things that are shaken. Marg., more correctly, "may be.". The meaning is, that those principles of religion and morals which were not founded on truth, would be removed by his coming.

As of things that are made. Much perplexity has been felt by expositors in regard to this phrase, but the meaning seems to be plain. The apostle is contrasting the things which are fixed and stable with those which are temporary in their nature, or which are settled on no firm foundation. The former he speaks of as if they were uncreated and eternal principles of truth and righteousness. The latter he speaks of as if they were created and therefore liable, like all things which are "made," to decay, to change, to dissolution, That those things which cannot be shaken may remain. The eternal principles of truth, and law, and righteousness. These would enter into the new kingdom which was to be set up, and of course that kingdom would be permanent. These are not changed or modified by time, circumstances, human opinions, or laws. They remain the same from age to age, in every land, and in all worlds. They have been permanent in all the fluctuations of opinion; in all the varied forms of government on earth; in all the revolutions of states and empires. To bring out these is the result of the events of Divine Providence, and the object of the coming of the Redeemer; and on these principles that great kingdom is to be reared which is to endure for ever and ever.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved. We who are Christians. We pertain to a kingdom that is permanent and unchanging. The meaning is, that the kingdom of the Redeemer is never to pass away. It is not, like the

Jewish dispensation, to give place to another, nor is there any power that can destroy it. Mt 16:18. It has now endured for eighteen hundred years, amidst all the revolutions on earth, and in spite of all the attempts which have been made to destroy it; and it is now as vigorous and stable as it ever was. The past has shown that there is no power of earth or hell that can destroy it, and that in the midst of all revolutions this kingdom still survives. Its great principles and laws will endure on earth till the end of time, and will be made permanent in heaven. This is the only kingdom in which we can be certain that there will be no revolution; the only empire which is destined never to fall.

Let us have grace whereby we may serve God. Marg. "let us hold fast." The Greek is, literally, let us have grace; the meaning is, "let us hold fast the grace or favour which we have received in being admitted to the privileges of that kingdom." The object of the apostle is to keep them in the reverent fear and service of God. The argument which he presents is, that this kingdom is permanent. There is no danger of its being overthrown. It is to continue on earth to the end of time; it is to be established in heaven for ever. If it were temporary, changeable, liable to be overthrown at any moment, there would be much less encouragement to perseverance. But in a kingdom like this there is every encouragement, for there is the assurance

(1.) that all our interests there are safe;

(2.) that all our exertions will be crowned with ultimate success;

(3.) that the efforts which we make to do good will have a permanent influence on mankind, and will bless future ages; and

(4.) that the reward is certain. A man subject to a government about whose continuance there would be the utmost

uncertainty, would have little encouragement to labour with a view to any permanent interest. In a government where nothing is settled, where all policy is changing, and where there are constantly vacillating plans, there is no inducement to enter on any enterprize demanding time and risk. But where the policy is settled; where the principles and the laws are firm; where there is evidence of permanency, there is the highest encouragement. The highest possible encouragement of this kind is in the permanent and established kingdom of God. All other governments may be revolutionized--this never will be; all others may have a changeful policy--this has none; all others will be overthrown --this never will. With reverence and godly fear. With true veneration for God, and with pious devotedness.

29 for our God *is* a consuming fire.

For our God is a consuming fire. This is a further reason why we should serve God with profound reverence and unwavering fidelity. The quotation is made from De 4:24: "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The object of the apostle here seems to be, to show that there was the same reason for fearing the displeasure of God under the new dispensation which there was under the old. It was the same God who was served. There had been no change in his attributes, or in the principles of his government. He was.no more the friend of sin now than he was then; and the same perfections of his nature which would then lead him to punish transgression would also lead him to do it now. His anger was really as terrible, and as much to be dreaded, as it was at Mount Sinai; and the destruction which he would inflict on his foes would be as terrible now as it was then. The fearfulness with which he would come forth to destroy the wicked might be compared to a fire that consumed all before it. Mk 9:44-46. The image here is a most fearful one, and is in accordance with all the representations of God in the Bible, and with all that we see in the Divine dealings with wicked men, that punishment, as inflicted by him, is awful and overwhelming. So it was on the old world; on the cities of the plain; on the hosts of Sennacherib; and on Jerusalem;--and so

it has been in the calamities of pestilence, war, flood, and famine, with which God has visited guilty men. By all these tender and solemn considerations, therefore, the apostle urges the friends of God to perseverance and fidelity in his service. His goodness and mercy; the gift of a Saviour to redeem us; the revelation of a glorious world; the assurance that all may soon be united in fellowship with the angels and the redeemed; the certainty that the kingdom of the Saviour is established on a permanent basis, and the apprehension of the dreadful wrath of God against the guilty, all should lead us to persevere in the duties of our Christian calling, and to avoid those things which would jeopard the eternal interests of our souls.

Hebrews-13

Service Well-pleasing to God

1 Let brotherly love continue.
2 Be not fogtful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Let brotherly love continue.Implying that it now existed among them. The apostle had no occasion to reprove them for the want of it, as he had in regard to some to whom he wrote, but he aims merely to impress on them the importance of this virtue, and to caution them against the danger of allowing it ever to be interrupted. Jn 13:34.

For thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Without knowing that they were angels. As Abraham (Gen 18:2, seq.) and Lot did, Gen 19. The motive here urged for doing it is, that by entertaining the stranger we may perhaps be honoured with the presence of those whose society will be to us an honour and a blessing. It is not well for us to miss the opportunity of the presence, the conversation, and the prayers of the good. The influence of such guests in a family is worth more than it costs to entertain them. If there is danger that we may sometimes receive those of an opposite character, yet it

is not wise, on account of such possible danger, to lose the opportunity of entertaining those whose presence would be a blessing. Many a parent owes the conversion of a child to the influence of a pious stranger in his family; and the hope that this may occur, or that our own souls may be blessed, should make us ready, at all proper times, to welcome the feet of the stranger to our doors. Many a man, if he had been accosted as Abraham was at the door of his tent by strangers, would have turned them rudely away; many a one in the situation of Lot would have sent the unknown guests rudely from his door; but who can estimate what would have been the results of such a course on the destiny of those good men and their families? For a great number of instances in which the heathen were supposed to have entertained the gods, though unknown to them, see Wetstein, in loc.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; *and* them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Remember them that are in bonds. All who are bound; whether prisoners of war; captives in dungeons; those detained in custody for trial; those who are imprisoned for righteousness' sake; or those held in slavery. The word used here will include all instances where bonds, shackles, chains were ever used. Perhaps there is an immediate allusion to their fellow-Christians who were suffering imprisonment on account of their religion, of whom there were doubtless many at that time; but the principle will apply to every case of those who are imprisoned or oppressed. The word remember implies more than that we are merely to think of them. Comp. Ex 20:8, Eccl 12:1. It means that we are to remember them with appropriate sympathy; or as we should wish others to remember us if we were in their circumstances. That is, we are

(1.) to feel deep compassion for them;

(2.) we are to remember them in our prayers;

(3.) we are to remember them, as far as practicable, with aid for their relief. Christianity teaches us to sympathize with all the oppressed, the suffering, and the sad; and there are more of this class than we commonly suppose, and they have stronger claims on our sympathy than we commonly realize. In this land there are not far from ten thousand confined in prison: the father separated from his children; the husband from his wife; the brother from his sister; and all cut off from the living world. Their fare is coarse, and their couches hard, and the ties which bound them to the living world are rudely snapped asunder. Many of them are in solitary dungeons; all of them are sad and melancholy men. True, they are there for crime; but they are men--they are our brothers. They have still the feelings of our common humanity, and many of them feel their separation from wife and children and home as keenly as we would. That God who has mercifully made our lot different from theirs has commanded us to sympathize with them--and we should sympathize all the more when we remember that but for his restraining grace we should have been in the same condition. There are in this land of "liberty," also, nearly three millions who are held in the hard bondage of slavery. There is the father, the mother, the child, the brother, the sister. They are held as property; liable to be sold; having no right to the avails of their own labour; exposed to the danger of having the tenderest ties sundered at the will of their master; shut out from the privilege of reading the word of God; fed on coarse fare; living in wretched hovels; and often subjected to the painful inflictions of the lash at the caprice of a passionate driver. Wives and daughters are made the victims of degrading sensuality, without the power of resistance or redress; the security of home is unknown; and they are dependent on the will of another man whether they shall or shall not worship their Creator. We should remember them, and sympathize with them as if they were our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, or sons and daughters. Though of different colour, yet the same blood flows in their veins as in ours, (Acts 17:26;) they are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. By nature they have the same right to "life, liberty, and

the pursuit of happiness," which we and our children have; and to deprive them of that right is as unjust as it would be to deprive us and ours of it. They have a claim on our sympathy, for they are our brethren. They need it, for they are poor and helpless. They should have it, for the same God who has kept us from that hard lot has commanded us to remember them. That kind remembrance of them should be shown in every practicable way. By prayer; by plans contemplating their freedom; by efforts to send them the gospel; by diffusing abroad the principles of liberty and of the rights of man; by using our influence to arouse the public mind in their behalf, we should endeavour to relieve those who are in bonds, and to hasten the time when "the oppressed shall go free." On this subject Is 48:6.

As bound with them. There is great force and beauty in this expression. Religion teaches us to identify ourselves with all who are oppressed, and to feel what they suffer as if we endured it ourselves. Infidelity and atheism are cold and distant. They stand aloof from the oppressed and the sad. But Christianity unites all hearts in one; binds us to all the race, and reveals to us, in the case of each one oppressed and injured, a brother.

And them which suffer adversity. The word here used refers, properly, to those who are maltreated, or who are injured by others. It does not properly refer to those who merely experience calamity. As being yourselves also in the body.

As being yourselves exposed to persecution and suffering, and liable to be injured. That is, do to them as you would wish them to do to you if you were the sufferer. When we see an oppressed and injured man, we should remember that it is possible that we may be in the same circumstances, and that then we shall need and desire the sympathy of others.

4 Marriage *is* honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Marriage is honourable in all. The object here is to state that honour is to be shown to the marriage relation. It is not to be undervalued by the pretence of the superior purity of a state of celibacy, as if marriage were improper for any class of men, or any condition of life; and it should not be dishonoured by any violation of the marriage contract. The course of things has shown that there was abundant reason for the apostle to assert, with emphasis, that "marriage was an honourable condition of life." There has been a constant effort made to show that celibacy was a more holy state; that there was something in marriage that rendered it dishourable for those who were in the ministry, and for those of either sex who would be eminently pure. This sentiment has been the cause of more abomination in the world than any other single opinion claiming to have a religious sanction. It is one of the supports on which the Papal system rests, and has been one of the principal upholders of all the corruptions in monasteries and nunneries. The apostle asserts, without any restriction or qualification, that marriage is honourable in all; and this proves that it is lawful for the ministers of religion to marry, and that the whole doctrine of the superior purity of a state of celibacy is false. See this subject examined 1Cor 7. And the bed undefiled. Fidelity to the marriage vow. But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. All licentiousness of life, and all violations of the marriage covenant, will be severely punished by God. 1Cor 6:9. The sins here referred to prevailed everywhere, and hence there was the more propriety for the frequent and solemn injunctions to avoid them which we find in the Scriptures.

5 *Let your* conversation *be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said,
I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Let your conversation. Your conduct--for so the word conversation is used in the Scriptures. Php 1:27. Be without covetousness. Eph 5:3; Col 3:5. And be to content with such things as ye have. Php 4:11,12; Mt 6:25, seq. The particular reason here given for contentment is, that God has promised never to leave his people. Compare with this the beautiful

argument of the Saviour in Mt 6:25, seq. For he hath said. That is, God has said. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. See De 31:6, Josh 1:5; 1Chr 28:20. Substantially the same expression is found in each of those places, and all of them contain the principle on which the apostle here relies, that God will not forsake his people.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper,
and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

So that we may boldly say. Without any hesitation or doubt. In all times of perplexity and threatening want; in all times when we scarcely know whence the supplies for our necessities are to come, we may put our trust in God, and be assured that he will not leave us to suffer. In the facts which occur under the providential dealings, there is a ground for confidence on this subject which is not always exercised even by good men. It remains yet to be shown that they who exercise simple trust in God for the supply of their wants are ever forsaken. Comp. Ps 37:25. The Lord is my helper. Substantially this sentiment is found in Ps 27:1, Ps 118:6. The apostle does not adduce it as a quotation, but as language which a true Christian may employ. The sentiment is beautiful, and full of consolation. What can we fear if we have the assurance that the Lord is on our side, and that he will help us? Man can do no more to us than he permits, and of course no more than will be for our own good; and, under whatever trials we may be placed, we need be under no painful apprehensions, for God will be our Protector and our Friend.

7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken
unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end
of *their* conversation.

Remember them which have the rule over you. Marg., "are the guides." The word here used means, properly, leaders, guides, directors. It is often applied to military commanders. Here it means teachers--appointed to lead or guide them to eternal life. It does not refer to them so much as rulers or governors, as teachers or guides. In Heb 13:17, however, it is used in the former sense. The duty here enjoined is that of remembering them; that is, remembering their counsel, their

instructions, their example. Who have spoken to you the word of God. Preachers; either apostles or others. Respect is to be shown to the ministerial office by whomsoever it is borne. Whose faith follow. That is, imitate. Heb 6:12. Considering the end of their conversation. Of their conduct; of their manner of life. The word here rendered the end--εκβασις -- occurs only here and in 1Cor 10:13, where it is rendered "a way of escape." It properly means, a going out, an egress, and is hence spoken of as a going out from life, or as an exit from the world-- death. This is probably the meaning here. It does not mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever, was the aim or end for which they lived--for the Greek will not bear that construction; but it means that they were attentively to contemplate the end or the issue of the conduct of those holy teachers--the close or going out of all that they did; to wit, in a peaceful death. Their faith sustained them. They were enabled to persevere in a Christian course, and did not faint or fail. There is allusion, doubtless, to those who had been their religious instructors, and who had died in the faith of the gospel, either by persecution, or by an ordinary death; and the apostle points to them as examples of that to which he would exhort those whom he addressed--of perseverance in the faith until death. Thus explained, this verse does not refer to the duty of Christians towards living teachers, but toward those who are dead. Their duty towards living teachers is enforced in Heb 13:17. The sentiment here is, that the proper remembrance of those now deceased, who were once our spiritual instructors and guides, should be allowed to have an important influence in inducing us to lead a holy life. We should remember them with affection and gratitude; we should recall the truths which they taught, and the exhortations which they addressed to us; we should cherish, with kind affection, the memory of all that they did for our welfare, and we should not forget the effect of the truths which they taught in sustaining their own souls when they died.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, etc. As this stands in our common translation it conveys an idea which is not in the original. It would seem to mean that Jesus Christ, the unchangeable Saviour, was the end or aim of the conduct of those referred to, or that they lived to imitate and glorify him. But this is by no means the meaning in the original. There it stands as an absolute proposition, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" that is, that he is unchangeable. The evident design of this independent proposition here is, to encourage them to persevere by showing that their Saviour was always the same; that he who had sustained his people in former times was the same still, and would be the same for ever. The argument here, therefore, for perseverance is founded on the immutability of the Redeemer. If he were fickle, vacillating, changing in his character and plans; if to-day he aids his people, and to-morrow will forsake them; if at one time he loves the virtuous, and at another equally loves the vicious; if he formed a plan yesterday which he has abandoned today; or if he is ever to be a different being from what he is now, there would be no encouragement to effort. Who would know what to depend on? Who would know what to expect tomorrow? For who could have any certainty that he could ever please a capricious or a vacillating being? Who could know how to shape his conduct if the principles of the Divine administration were not always the same? At the same time, also, that this passage furnishes the strongest argument for fidelity and perseverance, it is an irrefragable proof of the divinity of the Saviour. It asserts immutability--sameness in the past, the present, and to all eternity --but of whom can this be affirmed but God? It would not be possible to conceive of a declaration which would more strongly assert immutability than this.

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. That is, they should have settled and fixed points of belief, and not

yield to every new opinion which was started. The apostle does not exhort them to adhere to an opinion merely because they had before held it, or because it was an old opinion, nor does he forbid their following the leadings of truth, though they might be required to abandon what they had before held; but he cautions them against that vacillating spirit, and that easy credulity, which would lead them to yield to any novelty, and to embrace an opinion because it was new or strange. Probably the principal reference here is to the Judaizing teachers, and to their various doctrines about their ceremonial observances and traditions. But the exhortation is applicable to Christians at all times. A religious opinion, once embraced on what was regarded a good evidence, or in which we have been trained, should not be abandoned for slight causes. Truth, indeed, should always be followed, but it should be only after careful inquiry.

For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. This is the proper foundation of adherence to the truth. The heart should be established with the love of God, with pure religion, and then we shall love the truth, and leave it in the right manner. If it is the head merely which is convinced, the consequence is bigotry, pride, narrow-mindedness. If the belief of the truth has its seat in the heart; it will be accompanied with charity, kindness, good-will to all men. In such a belief of the truth it is a good thing to have the heart established. It will produce

(1.) firmness and stability of character;

(2.) charity and kindness to others;

(3.) consolation and support in trials and temptations. When a man is thrown into trials and temptations, he ought to have some settled principles on which he can rely; some fixed points of belief that will sustain his soul.

Not with meats. The meaning is, that it is better to have the heart established with grace, or with the principles of pure religion, than with the most accurate knowledge of the rules of distinguishing the clean from the unclean among the various articles of food. Many such rules were found in the law of Moses, and many more had been added by the refinements of Jewish rulers and by tradition. To distinguish and remember all these required no small amount of knowledge, and the Jewish teachers, doubtless, prided themselves much on it. Paul says that it would be much better to have the principles of grace in the heart than all this knowledge; to have the mind settled on the great truths of religion than to be able to make the most accurate and learned distinctions in this matter. The same remark may be made about a great many other points besides the Jewish distinctions respecting meats. The principle is, that it is better to have the heart established in the grace of God, than to have the most accurate knowledge of the distinctions which are made on useless or unimportant subjects of religion. This observation would extend to many of the shibboleths of party; to many of the metaphysical distinctions in a hair-splitting theology; to many of the points of controversy which divide the Christian world. Which have not profited, etc, Which have been of no real benefit to their souls. 1Cor 8:8.

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

Heb 13:10 Verse 10. We have an altar. We who are Christians. The Jews had an altar on which their sacrifices were offered which was regarded as sacred, and of the benefit of which no others might partake. The design of the apostle is to show that the same thing substantially, so far as privilege and sanctifying influence were concerned, was enjoyed by Christians. The "altar" to which he here refers is evidently the

cross on which the great sacrifice was made. Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. A part of the meat offered in sacrifice among the Jews became the property of the priests and Levites, and they had, by the law, a right to this, as a part of their support. See Lev 6:25,26, Nu 18:9,10. But the apostle says that there is a higher and more valuable sacrifice of which they have no right to partake while they remain in the service of the "tabernacle" or temple; that is, while they remain Jews. The participation in the great Christian sacrifice appertained only to those who were the friends of the Redeemer; sad however much they might value themselves on the privilege of partaking of the sacrifices offered under the Jewish law, that of partaking of the great sacrifice made by the Son of God was much greater. Which serve the tabernacle. Heb 9:2,3. The Jewish priests and Levites.

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

For the bodies of those beasts, etc. The word here rendered "for"--γαρ--would be here more properly rendered "moreover." Stuart. The apostle is not urging a reason for what he had said in the previous verse, but is suggesting anew consideration to excite those whom he addressed to fidelity and perseverance. In the previous verse the consideration was, that Christians are permitted to partake of the benefits of a higher and more perfect sacrifice than the Jews were, and therefore should not relapse into that religion. In this verse the consideration is, that the bodies of the beasts that were burned were taken without the camp, and that in like manner the Lord Jesus suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, and that we should be willing to go out with him to that sacrifice, whatever reproach or shame it might be attended with. Whose blood is brought into the sanctuary, etc. Heb 9:7,12. Are burned without the camp. Lev 4:12,21, 16:27. The "camp" here refers to the time when the Israelites were in the wilderness, and lived in encampments. The same custom was observed after the temple was built, by conveying the body of the animal slain for a sin-offering, on the great day of

atonement, beyond the walls of Jerusalem to be consumed there. "Whatever," says Grotius, "was not lawful to be done in the camp, afterwards was not lawful to be done in the city."

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood. That there might be a conformity between his death for sin and the sacrifices which typified it. It is implied here that it was voluntary on the part of Jesus that he suffered out of the city; that is, it was so ordered by Providence that it should be so. This was secured by his being put to death as the result of a judicial trial, and not by popular tumult. See Notes on Isa 53:8. If he had been killed in a tumult, it is possible that it might have been done as in other cases, (comp. the case of Zacharias, son of Barachias, Mt 23:35,) even at the altar is he was subjected, however, to a judicial process, his death was effected with more deliberation, and in the usual form. Hence he was conducted out of the city, because no criminal was executed within the walls of Jerusalem. Without the gate. Without the gate of Jerusalem, Jn 19:17,18. The place where he was put to death was called Golgotha, the place of a skull, and hence the Latin word which we commonly use in speaking of it, Calvary, Lk 23:33; comp. Mt 27:33. Calvary, as it is now shown, is within the walls of Jerusalem; but there is no reason to believe that is the place where the Lord Jesus was crucified, for that was outside of the walls of the city. The precise direction from the city is not designated by the sacred writers, nor are there any historical records, or traditional marks, by which it can now be known where the exact place was. All that we know on the subject from the New Testament is, that the name was Golgotha; that the place of the crucifixion and sepulchre were near each other; that they were without the gate, and nigh to the city, and that they were in a frequented spot, Jn 19:20. "This would favour the conclusion that the place was probably upon a great road leading from one of the gates; and such a spot would only be found upon the western or northern sides of the city, on the roads leading towards Joppa or Damascus." See the question about the place of the

crucifixion examined at length in Robinson's Bibli. Research., vol. ii., pp. 69--80, and Bibliotheca Sacra, No. 1.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp. As if we were going forth with him when he was led away to be crucified. He was put to death as a malefactor. He was the object of contempt and scorn. He was held up to derision, and was taunted and reviled on his way to the place of death, and even on the cross. To be identified with him there, to follow him, to sympathize with him, to be regarded as his friend, would have subjected one to similar shame and reproach. The meaning here is, that we should be willing to regard ourselves as identified with the Lord Jesus, and to bear the same shame and reproaches which he did. When he was led away, amidst scoffing and reviling, to be put to death, would we, if we had been there, been willing to be regarded as his followers, and to have gone out with him as Iris avowed disciples and friends? Alas, how many are there who profess to love him when religion subjects them to no reproach, who would have shrunk from following him to Calvary! Bearing his reproach. Sympathizing with him; or bearing such reproach as he did. See 1Pet 4:13. Comp. Hen 12:2; Php 3:10; Col 1:24.

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

For here we have no continuing city, etc. We do not regard this as our final home, or our fixed abode, and we should be willing to bear reproaches during the little time that we are to remain here. Comp. Heb 11:10, seq. If, therefore, in consequence of our professed attachment to the Saviour, we should be driven away from our habitations, and compelled to wander, we should be willing to submit to it, for our permanent home is not here, but in heaven. The object of the writer seems to be to comfort the Hebrew Christians on the supposition that they would be driven by persecution from the city of Jerusalem, and doomed to wander as exiles. He tells them that their Lord was led from that city to be put to death, and they should be willing to go forth also; that their permanent home was not Jerusalem, but heaven; and they

should be willing, in view of that blessed abode, to be exiled from the city where they dwelt, and made wanderers in the earth.

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to his name.

By him therefore. The Jews approached God by the blood of the sacrifice, and by the ministry of their high priest. The exhortation of the apostle here is founded on the general course of argument in the epistle. "In view of all the considerations presented respecting the Christian High Priest--his dignity, purity, and love, his sacrifice and his intercession--let us persevere in offering through him praise to God." That is, let us persevere in adherence to our religion. The sacrifice of praise. For all the mercies of redemption. The Jews, says Rosenmuller, (Alte u. neue Morgenland, in loc.,) had a species of offerings which they called peace--offerings, or friendship-offerings. They were designed not to produce peace or friendship with God, but to preserve it. Burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, were all on account of transgression, and were designed to remove transgression. But in their peace-offerings, the offerer was regarded as one who stood in the relation of a friend with God, and the oblation was a sign of thankful acknowledgment for favours received; or they were connected with vows in order that further blessings might be obtained; or they were brought voluntarily as a means to continue themselves in the friendship and favour of God, Lev 7:11,12. Comp. Jenning's Jew. Ant. i. 335. That is, the fruit of our lips. The phrase, "fruit of the lips," is a Hebraism, meaning what the lips produce; that is, words. Comp. Prov 18:20, Hoss 14:2. Giving thanks to his name. To God; the name of one being often put for the person himself. Praise now is one of the great duties of the redeemed. It Will be their employment for ever.

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

But to do good, and to communicate, forget not. To communicate or impart to others; that is, to share with them what we have. The Greek word means, having in common

with others. The meaning is, that they were to show liberality to those who were in want, and were to take special pains not to forget this duty. We are prone to think constantly of our own interests, and there is great danger of forgetting the duty which we owe to the poor and the needy. On the duty here enjoined, Gal 6:10. For with such sacrifices God is well pleased. He is pleased with the sacrifices of prayer and of praise; with the offerings of a broken and a contrite heart; but he is especially pleased with the religion which leads us to do good to others. This was eminently the religion of his Son, the Lord Jesus; and to this all true religion prompts. The word "sacrifices" here is not taken in a strict sense, as denoting that which is offered as an expiation for sin, or in the sense that we are, by doing good, to attempt to make atonement for our transgressions, but in the general sense of an offering made to God. God is pleased with this, (1.) because it shows in us a right state of heart; (2.) because it accords with his own nature. He does good continually, and he is pleased with all who evince the same spirit.

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

Obey them that have the rule over you. Marg., guide. See Notes on ver. 7. The reference here is to their religious teachers, and not to civil rulers. They were to show them proper respect, and to submit to their authority in the church, so far as it was administered in accordance with the precepts of the Saviour. The obligation to obedience does not, of course, extend to anything which is wrong in itself, or which would be a violation of conscience. The doctrine is, that subordination is necessary to the welfare of the church, and that there ought to be a disposition to yield all proper obedience to those who are set over us in the Lord. Comp. 1Thes 5:12, 1Thes 5:13.

And submit yourselves. That is, to all which they enjoin that is lawful and right. There are, in relation to a society,

(1,) those things which God has positively commanded--which are always to be obeyed.

(2.) Many things which have been agreed on by the society as needful for its welfare--and these are to be submitted to unless they violate the rights of conscience; and

(3.) many things which are, in themselves, a matter of no express Divine command, and of no formal enactment by the community. They are matters of convenience; things that tend to the order and harmony of the community, and of the propriety of these, "rulers" in the church and elsewhere should be allowed to judge, and we should submit to them patiently. Hence, in the church, we are to submit to all the proper regulations for conducting public worship; for the promotion of religion; and for the administration of discipline.

For they watch for your souls. They have no selfish aim in this. They do not seek "to lord it over God's heritage." It is for your own good that they do this, and you should, therefore, submit to these arrangements. And this shows, also, the true principle on which authority should be exercised in a church. It should be in such a way as to promote the salvation of the people; and all the arrangements should be with that end. The measures adopted, therefore, and the obedience enjoined, should not be arbitrary, oppressive, or severe, but should be such as will really promote salvation.

As they that must give account. To God. The ministers of religion must give account to God for their fidelity, for all that they teach, and for every measure which they adopt, they must soon be called into judgment. There is, therefore, the best security that, under the influence of this solemn truth, they will pursue only that course which will be for your good.

That they may do it with joy, and not with grief. μηστεναζοντες -not sighing, or groaning; as they would who had been unsuccessful. The meaning is, that they should so obey, that when their teachers came to give up their account, they need not do it with sorrow over their perverseness and disobedience.

For this is unprofitable for you. That is, their giving up their account in that manner--as unsuccessful in their efforts to save you--would not be of advantage to you, but would be highly injurious. This is a strong mode of expressing the idea that it must be attended with imminent peril to their souls to have their religious teachers go and give an account against them. As they would wish, therefore, to avoid that, they should render to them all proper honour and obedience.

18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Pray for us. This is a request which the apostle often makes in his own behalf and in behalf of his fellow-labourers in the gospel. See 1Thes 5:25. Eph 6:18,19. For we trust we have a good conscience, etc. Acts 24:16. The apostle here appeals to the uprightness of his Christian life as a reason why he might claim their sympathy, he was conscious of an aim to do good; he sought the welfare of the church; and having this aim he felt that he might appeal to the sympathy of all Christians in his behalf. It is only when we aim to do right, and to maintain a good conscience, that we can with propriety ask the prayers of others, or claim their sympathy. And if we are "willing in all things to live honestly," we may expect the sympathy, the prayers, and the affections of all good men.

19 But I beseech *you* the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

It is here first in the letter he mentions himself, in a way so unobtrusive, as not to prejudice his Hebrew readers against him, which would have been the result had he commenced this as his other Epistles, with authoritatively announcing his name and apostolic commission.

That I may be restored to you the sooner. It is here clearly implied that the writer was deterred from visiting them by some adverse circumstances over which he had no control. This might be either by imprisonment, or sickness, or the want of a convenient opportunity of reaching them. The probability is, judging particularly from the statement in Heb 13:23, that he was then a prisoner, and that his detention was on that account. See Intro. & 4, (6.) The language here is such as Paul would use on the supposition that he was then a prisoner at Rome--and this is a slight circumstance going to show the probability that the epistle was composed by him.

Benediction and Final Greetings

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Now the God of peace. God who is the Author, or the Source of peace. 1Thes 5:23. The word peace in the New Testament is used to denote every kind of blessing or happiness. It is opposed to all that would disturb or trouble the mind, and may refer, therefore, to reconciliation with God; to a quiet conscience; to the evidence of pardoned sin; to health and prosperity; and to the hope of heaven. Jn 14:27. That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. Acts 2:32 1Cor 15:15. It is only by the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus that we have peace, for it is only by him that we have the prospect of an admission into heaven. That great shepherd of the sheep. Jn 10:1,14. The idea here is, that it is through the tender care of that great Shepherd that true happiness is bestowed on the people of God. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant. The blood shed to ratify the everlasting covenant that God makes with his people. Heb 9:14, Heb 9:15-23. This phrase, in the original, is not connected, as it is in our

translation, with his being raised from the dead; nor should it be so rendered, for what can be the sense of "raising Christ from the dead by the blood of the covenant?" In the Greek it is, "The God of peace, who brought again from the dead the shepherd of the sheep, great by the blood of the everlasting covenant, our Lord Jesus," etc. The meaning is, that he was made or constituted the great Shepherd of the sheep--the great Lord and Ruler of his people, by that blood. That which makes him so eminently distinguished; that by which he was made superior to all others who ever ruled over the people of God, was the fact that he offered the blood by which the eternal covenant was ratified. It is called everlasting or eternal, because (1.) it was formed in the councils of eternity, or has been an eternal plan in the Divine Mind; and (2.) because it is to continue for ever. Through such a covenant God can bestow permanent and solid "peace" on his people, for it lays the foundation of the assurance of eternal happiness.

Make you perfect. The apostle here does not affirm that they were then perfect, or that they would be in this life. The word here used--καταρτιζω-means, to make fully ready, to put in full order; to make complete. The meaning here is, that Paul prayed that God would fully endow them with whatever grace was necessary to do his will and to keep his commandments. See the word explained Heb 11:3. It is an appropriate prayer to be offered at all times, and by all who love the church, that God would make all his people perfectly qualified to do all his will. Working in you. Marg. Doing. The idea here is, that the only hope that they would do the will of God was, that he would, by his own agency, cause them to do what was well-pleasing in his sight: Comp. Php 2:12. It is not from any expectation that man would do it himself Through Jesus Christ. The idea is, that God does not directly and by his own immediate agency convert and sanctify the heart, but it is through the gospel of Christ, and all good influences on the soul must be expected through the Saviour. To whom be glory for ever and ever. That is, to Christ; for so the connexion

evidently demands. It is not uncommon for the apostle Paul to introduce doxologies in this way in the midst of a letter. Rom 9:4.

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

23 Know ye that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

Suffer the word of exhortation. Referring to the arguments and counsels in this whole epistle--which is, in fact, a practical exhortation to perseverance in adhering to the Christian religion amidst all the temptations which existed to apostasy. For I have written a letter unto you in few words. This does not mean that this epistle is short compared with the others that the author had written, for most of the epistles of Paul are shorter than this. But it means, that it was brief compared with the importance and difficulty of the subjects of which he had treated. The topics introduced would have allowed a much more extended discussion, but in handing them he had made use of as few words as possible. No one can deny this who considers the sententious manner of this epistle. As an illustration of this, perhaps we may remark, that it is easy to expand the thoughts of this epistle into ample volumes of exposition, and that in fact it is difficult to give an explanation of it without a commentary that shall greatly surpass in extent the text. None can doubt, also, that the author of this epistle could have himself greatly expanded the thoughts and the illustrations if he had chosen. It is with reference to such considerations, probably, that he says that the epistle was brief.

Know ye not that our brother Timothy is set at liberty. Or, is sent away. So it is rendered by Prof. Stuart, and others. On the meaning of this, and its importance in determining who was the author of the epistle, see the Intro. & 2, (5,) 4, and Prof. Stuart's Intro. & 19. This is a strong circumstance showing that Paul was the author of the epistle, for from the first acquaintance of Timothy with Paul he is represented as his constant companion, and spoken of as a brother. 2Cor 1:1

Php 1:1; Col 1:1; Phm 1:1. There is no other one of the apostles who would so naturally have used this term respecting Timothy; and this kind mention is made of him here because he was so dear to the heart of the writer, and because he felt that they to whom he wrote would also feel an interest in his circumstances. As to the meaning of the word rendered "set at liberty"--απολελυμενον--there has been much difference of opinion, whether it means "set at liberty from confinement," or "sent away on some message to some other place." That the latter is the meaning of the expression appears probable from these considerations.

(1.) The connexion seems to demand it. The writer speaks of him as if he were now away, and as if he hoped that he might soon return. "With whom, if he come shortly, I will see you." This is language which would be used rather of one who had been sent on some embassy, than of one who was just released from prison. At all events, he was at this time away, and there was some expectation that he might soon return. But on the supposition that the expression relates to release from imprisonment, there would be an entire incongruity in the language. It is not, as we should then suppose, "our brother Timothy is now released from prison, and therefore I will come soon with him and see you;" but, "our brother Timothy is now sent away, and if he return soon, I will come with him to you."

(2.) In Php 2:19,23, Paul, then a prisoner at Rome, speaks of the hope which he entertained that he would be able to send Timothy to them, as soon as he should know how it would go with him. He designed to retain him until that point was settled, as his presence with him would be important until then, and then to send him to give consolation to the Philippians, and to look into the condition of the church. Now the passage before us agrees well with the supposition that that event had occurred: that Paul had ascertained with sufficient clearness that he would be released, so that he

might be permitted yet to visit the Hebrew Christians; that he had sent Timothy to Philippi, and was waiting for his return; that as soon as he should return he would be prepared to visit them; and that in the mean time, while Timothy was absent, he wrote to them this epistle.

(3.) The supposition agrees well with the meaning of the word here used--απολυω. It denotes, properly, to let loose from; to loosen; to unbind; to release, to let go free; to put away, or divorce; to dismiss simply, or let go, or send away. See Mt 14:15, 22, 23; Mt 15:32, 39, Lk 9:12, et al. Comp. Rob. Lex. and Stuart's Intro. % 19. The meaning, then, I take to be this, that Timothy was then sent away on some important embassage; that the apostle expected his speedy return; and that then he trusted that he would be able, with him, to visit those to whom this epistle was written.

24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints.
They of Italy salute you.
25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of James

[James]

James-1

Salutation

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,
Greeting.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

My brethren. Not brethren as Jews, but as Christians. Compare Jas 2:1. Count it all joy. Regard it as a thing to rejoice in; a matter which should afford you happiness. You are not to consider it as a punishment, a curse, or a calamity, but as a fit subject of felicitation. Mt 5:12. When ye fall into divers temptations. On the meaning of the word temptations, Mt 4:1. It is now commonly used in the sense of placing allurements before others to induce them to sin, and in this sense the word seems to be used in Jas 1:13-14. Here, however, the word is used in the sense of trials, to wit, by persecution, poverty, calamity of any kind. These cannot be said to be direct inducements or allurements to sin, but they try the faith, and they show whether he who is tried is disposed to adhere to his faith in God, or whether he will apostatize. They so far coincide with temptations, properly so called, as to test the religion of men. They differ from temptations, properly so called, in that they are not brought before the mind for the express purpose of inducing men to sin. In this sense, it is true that God never tempts men, Jas 1:13-14. On the sentiment in the passage before us, 1Pet 1:6-7. The word divers here refers to the various kinds of trials which they might experience--sickness, poverty, bereavement, persecution, etc. They were to count it a matter of joy that their religion was subjected to anything that tried it. It is well for us to have the reality of our religion tested, in whatever way it may be done.

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Patience is one of the fruits of such a trial, and the grace of patience is worth the trial which it may cost to procure it. This is one of the passages which show that James was acquainted with the writings of Paul. See the Introduction to James chapter 5, Jas 5:1 The sentiment expressed here is found in Rom 5:3. Rom 5:3. Paul has carried the sentiment out farther, and shows that tribulation produces other effects than patience. James only asks that patience may have its perfect work, supposing that every Christian grace is implied in this.

3 knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

But let patience have her perfect work. Let it be fairly developed. Let it produce its appropriate effects without being hindered. Let it not be obstructed in its fair influence on the soul, by murmurings, complaining, or rebellion. Patience under trials is fitted to produce important effects on the soul, and we are not to hinder them in any manner by a perverse spirit, or by opposition to the will of God. Every one who is afflicted should desire that the fair effects of affliction should be produced on his mind, or that there should be produced in his soul precisely the results which his trials are adapted to accomplish. That ye may be perfect and entire. The meaning of this is explained in the following phrase--"wanting nothing;" that is, that there may be nothing lacking to complete your character. There may be the elements of a good character; there may be sound principles, but those principles may not be fully carried out so as to show what they are. Afflictions, perhaps, more than anything else, will do this; and we should therefore allow them to do all that they are adapted to do in developing what is good in us. The idea here is, that it is desirable not only to have the elements or principles of piety in the soul, but to have them fairly carried out, so as to show what is their real tendency and value. 1Pet 1:7. On the word perfect, as used in the Scriptures, Job 1:1 The word rendered entire, (ολοκληροι,) means, whole in every part. 1Thes 5:23. The word occurs only in these two places. The corresponding noun (ολοκληριαν) occurs in Acts 3:16, rendered perfect soundness. Wanting nothing. "Being left in nothing;" that is, everything being complete, or fully carried out.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

If any of you lack wisdom. Probably this refers particularly to the kind of wisdom which they would need in their trials, to enable them to bear them in a proper manner; for there is nothing in which Christians more feel the need of heavenly wisdom than in regard to the manner in which they should bear trials, and what they should do in the perplexities, and disappointments, and bereavements that come upon them: but the language employed is so general, that what is here said may be applied to the need of wisdom in all respects. The particular kind of wisdom which we need in trials is to enable us to understand their design and tendency; to perform our duty under them, or the new duties which may grow out of them; to learn the lessons which God designs to teach, for he always designs to teach us some valuable lessons by affliction; and to cultivate such

views and feelings as are appropriate under the peculiar forms of trial which are brought upon us, to find out the sins for which we have been afflicted, and to learn how we may avoid them in time to come. We are in great danger of going wrong when we are afflicted; of complaining and murmuring; of evincing a spirit of insubmission, and of losing the benefits which we might have obtained if we had submitted to the trial in a proper manner. So in all things we "lack wisdom." We are shortsighted; we have hearts prone to sin; and there are great and important matters pertaining to duty and salvation on which we cannot but feel that we need heavenly guidance.

Let him ask of God. That is, for the specific wisdom which he needs; the very wisdom which is necessary for him in the particular case. It is proper to bear the very case before God; to make mention of the specific want; to ask of God to guide us in the very matter where we feel so much embarrassment. It is one of the privileges of Christians, that they may not only go to God and ask him for that general wisdom which is needful for them in life, but that whenever a particular emergency arises, a case of perplexity and difficulty in regard to duty, they may bring that particular thing before his throne, with the assurance that he will guide them. Compare Ps 25:9; Isa 37:14; Joel 2:17.

That giveth to all men liberally. The word men here is supplied by the translators, but not improperly, though the promise should be regarded as restricted to those who ask. The object of the writer was to encourage those who felt their need of wisdom, to go and ask it of God; and it would not contribute anything to furnish such a specific encouragement to say of God that he gives to all men liberally whether they ask or not. In the Scriptures, the promise of Divine aid is always limited to the desire. No blessing is promised to man that is not sought; no man can feel that he has a right to hope for the favour of God, who does not value it enough to pray for it; no one ought to obtain it, who does not prize it enough to ask for it. Compare Mt 7:7-8. The word rendered liberally, (απλως,) means, properly, simply; that is, in simplicity, sincerity, reality. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the corresponding noun occurs in Rom 12:8; 2Cor 1:12; 11:3, rendered simplicity; in 2Cor 8:2; 2Cor 9:13, rendered liberality and liberal; 2Cor 9:11, rendered bountifulness; and Eph 6:5; Col 3:22, rendered singleness, scil., of

the heart. The idea seems to be that of openness, frankness, generosity; the absence of all that is sordid and contracted; where there is the manifestation of generous feeling, and liberal conduct, In a higher sense than in the case of any man, all that is excellent in these things is to be found in God; and we may therefore come to him feeling that in his heart there is more that is noble and generous in bestowing favours than in any other being. There is nothing that is stinted and close; there is no partiality; there is no withholding of his favour because we are poor, and unlettered, and unknown.

And upbraideth not. Does not reproach, rebuke, or treat harshly. He does not coldly repel us, if we come and ask what we need, though we do it often and with importunity. Compare Lk 18:1-7. The proper meaning of the Greek word is to rail at, reproach, revile, chide; and the object here is probably to place the manner in which God bestows his favours in contrast with what sometimes occurs among men. He does not reproach or chide us for our past conduct; for our foolishness; for our importunity in asking. He permits us to come in the most free manner, and meets us with a spirit of entire kindness, and with promptness in granting our requests. We are not always sure, when we ask a favour of a man, that we shall not encounter something that will be repulsive, or that will mortify us; we are certain, however, when we ask a favour of God, that we shall never be reproached in an unfeeling manner, or meet with a harsh response.

And it shall be given him. Compare Jer 29:12-13, "Then shall ye call upon me, and go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart." See also Mt 7:7-8; 21:22; Mk 11:24; 1Jn 3:22; 5:14. This promise, in regard to the wisdom that may be necessary for us, is absolute; and we may be sure that if it be asked in a proper manner it will be granted us. There can be no doubt that it is one of the things which God is able to impart; which will be for our own good; and which, therefore, he is ever ready to bestow. About many things there might be doubt whether, if they were granted, they would be for our real welfare, and therefore there may be a doubt whether it would be consistent for God to bestow them; but there can be no such doubt about wisdom. That is always for our good; and we may be sure, therefore, that we shall obtain that, if the request be made

with a right spirit. If it be asked in what may expect he will bestow it on us, it may be replied,

(1,) That it is through his word--by enabling us to see clearly the meaning of the sacred volume, and to understand the directions which he has there given to guide us;

(2,) by the secret influences of his Spirit

(a) suggesting to us the way in which we should go, and

(b) inclining us to do that which is prudent and wise; and,

(3,) by the events of his Providence making plain to us the path of duty, and removing the obstructions which may be in our path. It is easy for God to guide his people; and they who "watch daily at the gates, and wait at the posts of the doors" of wisdom, (Prov 8:34,) will not be in danger of going astray, Ps 25:9.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

But let him ask in faith. See the passages referred to in Jas 1:5. Mt 7:7, and Heb 11:6 to obtain any favour from God if there is not faith; and where, as in regard to the wisdom necessary to guide us, we are sure that it is in accordance with his will to grant it to us, we may come to him with the utmost confidence, the most entire assurance, that it will be granted. In this case, we should come to God without a doubt that, if we ask with a proper spirit, the very thing that we ask will be bestowed on us. We cannot in all other cases be so sure that what we ask will be for our good, or that it will be in accordance with his will to bestow it; and hence we cannot in such cases come with the same kind of faith. We can then only come with unwavering confidence in God, that he will do what is right and best; and that if he sees that what we ask will be for our good, he will bestow it upon us. Here, however, nothing prevents our coming with the assurance that the very thing which we ask will be conferred on us. Nothing wavering. μηδενδιακρινομενος. "Doubting or hesitating as to nothing, or in no respect." See Acts 20:20; 11:12. In regard to the matter under consideration, there is to be no hesitancy, no doubting, no vacillation of the mind. We are to come to God with the utmost confidence and assurance. For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the

sea, etc. The propriety and beauty of this comparison will be seen at once. The wave of the sea has no stability. It is at the mercy of every wind, and seems to be driven and tossed every way. So he that comes to God with unsettled convictions and hopes, is liable to be driven about by every new feeling that may spring up in the mind. At one moment, hope and faith impel him to come to God; then the mind is at once filled with uncertainty and doubt, and the soul is agitated and restless as the ocean. Compare Isa 57:20. Hope on the one hand, and the fear of not obtaining the favour which is desired on the other, keep the mind restless and discomposed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. Compare Heb 11:6. A man can hope for favour from God only as he puts confidence in him. He sees the heart; and if he sees that there is no belief in his existence or his perfections--no real trust in him--no reliance on his promises, his wisdom, his grace--it cannot be proper that he should grant an answer to our petitions. That will account sufficiently for the fact that there are so many prayers unanswered; that we so frequently go to the throne of grace, and are seat empty away. A man that goes to God in such a state of mind, should not expect to receive any favour.

A double-minded man. The word here used (διψυχος) occurs only here and in Jas 4:8. It means, properly, one who has two souls; then one who is wavering or inconstant. It is applicable to a man who has no settled principles; who is controlled by passion; who is influenced by popular feeling; who is now inclined to one opinion or course of conduct, and now to another. Is unstable in all his ways. That is, not merely in regard to prayer, the point particularly under discussion, but in respect to everything. From the instability which the wavering must evince in regard to prayer, the apostle takes occasion to make the general remark concerning such a man, that stability and firmness could be expected on no subject. The hesitancy which he manifested on that one subject would extend to all; and we might expect to find such a man irresolute and undetermined in all things. This is always true. If we find a man who takes hold of the promises of God with firmness; who feels the deepest assurance when he prays that God will hear prayer; who always goes to him without hesitation in his perplexities and trials,

never wavering, we shall find one who is firm in his principles, steady in his integrity, settled in his determinations, and steadfast in his plans of life--a man whose character we shall feel that we understand, and in whom we can confide. Such a man eminently was Luther; and the spirit which is thus evinced by taking firmly hold of the promises of God is the best kind of religion.

8 A double-minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

BURKITT

Our apostle having finished his necessary digression concerning prayer, in the foregoing verses, returns now to his former argument, concerning bearing affliction with joy; and urges a strong reason here to enforce the duty, Let the brother of low degree; that is, such a Christian as is brought low by persecution and sufferings for Christ, let him rejoice that God has exalted him, and made him rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom: nothing is more certain, than that the greatest abuses and sufferings for Christ, are an honour and exaltation to us; he adds, But let the rich rejoice in that he is made low, that is, when he loses any thing for Christ; as if the apostle had said, "Let the poor Christian rejoice, in that he is spiritually exalted, and the rich man rejoice, in that he is spiritually humbled; a rich man's humility is his glory."

Observe next, the apostle rendereth a reason why the rich man should have a lowly mind, in the midst of his flourishing conditon, because all the pomp and grandeur of riches fades like a flower; and he himself also is beautiful, but fading; fair, but vanishing: and he pursues this similitude of a flower in the eleventh verse, shewing, that as the flower fadeth presently before the heat of the scorching sun, so the rich man fades, and all his riches are both transitory and passing.

Learn hence, that it ought to comfort a Christian that suffers loss for Christ by persecution, to consider, that the things which he loseth for the sake of Christ, are things of a fading nature, which could not have been kept long by him, had they not been rent from him; by

parting with that which he could not keep, he makes sure of that which he can never lose; well therefore may the rich man rejoice in his humiliation; Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, and the rich that he is made low.

BARNES
Let the brother of low degree. This verse seems to introduce a new topic, which has no other connexion with what precedes than that the apostle is discussing the general subject of trials. Compare Jas 1:2. Turning from the consideration of trials in general, he passes to the consideration of a particular kind of trials, that which results from a change of circumstances in life, from poverty to affluence, and from affluence to poverty. The idea which seems to have been in the mind of the apostle is, that there is a great and important trial of faith in any reverse of circumstances; a trial in being elevated from poverty to riches, or in being depressed from a state of affluence to want. Wherever change occurs in the external circumstances of life, there a man's religion is put to the test, and there he should feel that God is trying the reality, of his faith. The phrase "of low degree" (ταπεινος) means one in humble circumstances; one of lowly rank or employment; one in a condition of dependence or poverty. It stands here particularly opposed to one who is rich; and the apostle doubtless had his eye, in the use of this word, on those who had been poor.

Rejoice. Margin, glory. Not because, being made rich, he has the means of sensual gratification and indulgence; not because he will now be regarded as a rich man, and will feel that he is above want; not even because he will have the means of doing good to others. Neither of these was the idea in the mind of the apostle; but it was, that the poor man that is made rich should rejoice because his faith and the reality of his religion are now tried; because a test is furnished which will show, in the new circumstances in which he is placed, whether his piety is genuine. In fact, there is almost no trial of religion which is more certain and decisive than that furnished by a sudden transition from poverty to affluence, from adversity to prosperity, from sickness to health. There is much religion in the world that will bear the ills of poverty, sickness, and persecution, or that will bear the temptations arising from prosperity, and even affluence, which will not bear the transition from one to the other; as there is many a human frame that could become accustomed to

bear either the steady heat of the equator, or the intense cold of the north, that could not bear a rapid transition from the one to the other. Php 4:12.

In that he is exalted. A good man might rejoice in such a transition, because it would furnish him the means of being more extensively useful; most persons would rejoice because such a condition is that for which men commonly aim, and because it would furnish them the means of display, of sensual gratification, or of ease; but neither of these is the idea of the apostle. The thing in which we are to rejoice in the transitions of life is, that a test is furnished of our piety; that a trial is applied to it which enables us to determine whether it is genuine. The most important thing conceivable for us is to know whether we are true Christians, and we should rejoice in everything that will enable us to settle this point.

Here the apostle exhorts suffering Christians to patience, by the example of the Old-Testament saints, who were exceeding dear to God, employed in special services for God, yet exercised with long and sharp affliction for him. Now, their nature was as tender and as frail as ours, and we have the same blessed Spirit to comfort and assist us with them.
Note thence, 1. That the examples of excellent persons who have gone in the thorny path of affliction before us, and beaten it for us, are for excellent use to suppress our fears, to support our spirits under all our conflicts, and to rouse our courage in all our encounters.

Note, 2. That it is our great duty to eye the encourging examples of those that have trod the path of sufferings before us, and strive to imitate and follow such worthy patterns. The first sufferers had the hardest task; strange and untried torments are most terrible; they knew not the strength of their enemy which they were to engage, but we fight with an enemy which has been often beaten and triumphed over by our brethren that went before us; certainly we that live in these last times have the best helps ever any had to subdue our fears; Take we then the prophets, and primitive saints, for an example both of grievous sufferings and of great patience.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat. Isaiah (Isa 40:7) employs the word wind, referring to a burning wind that dries up the flowers. It is probable that the apostle also refers not so much to the sun itself, as to the hot and fiery wind called the simoom, which often rises with the sun, and which consumes the green herbage of the fields. So Rosenmuller and Bloomfield interpret it. It withereth the grass. Isa 40:7. It withereth the stalk, or that which, when dried, produces hay or fodder--the word here used being commonly employed in the latter sense. The meaning is, that the effect of the hot wind is to wither the stalk or spire which supports the flower, and when that is dried up, the flower itself falls. This idea will give increased beauty and appropriateness to the figure --that man himself is blasted and withered, and then that all the external splendour which encircled him falls to the ground, like a flower whose support is gone. And the grace of the fashion of it perisheth. Its beauty disappears. So shall the rich man fade away an his ways. That is, his splendour, and all on which he prided himself, shall vanish. The phrase "in his ways," according to Rosenmuller, refers to his counsels, his plans, his purposes; and the meaning is, that the rich man, with all by which he is known, shall vanish. A man's "ways," that is, his mode of life, or those things by which he appears before the world, may have somewhat the same relation to him which the flower has to the stalk on which it grows, and by which it is sustained. The idea of James seems to be, that as it was indisputable that the rich man must soon disappear, with all that he had of pomp and splendour in the view of the world, it was well for him to be reminded of it by every change of condition; and that he should therefore rejoice in the providential dispensation by which his property would be taken away, and by which the reality of his religion would be tested. We should rejoice in anything by which it can be shown whether we are prepared for heaven or not.

Trial and Temptation

12 Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation. The apostle seems here to use the word temptation in the most general sense, as denoting anything that will try the reality of religion, whether affliction, or persecution, or a direct inducement to sin placed before the mind. The word temptation appears in this chapter to be used in two senses; and the question may arise, why the apostle so employs it. Compare Jas 1:2,13. But, in fact, the word temptation is in itself of so general a character as to cover the whole usage, and to justify the manner in which it is employed. It denotes anything that will try or test the reality of our religion; and it may be applied, therefore, either to afflictions or to direct solicitations to sin--the latter being the sense in which it is now commonly employed. In another respect, also, essentially the same idea enters into both the ways in which the word is employed. Affliction, persecution, sickness, etc., may be regarded as, in a certain sense, temptations to sin; that is, the question comes before us whether we will adhere to the religion on account of which we are persecuted, or apostatize from it, and escape these sufferings; whether in sickness and losses we will be patient and submissive to that God who lays his hand upon us, or revolt and murmur. In each and every case, whether by affliction, or by direct allurements to do wrong, the question comes before the mind whether we have religion enough to keep us, or whether we will yield to murmuring, to rebellion, and to sin. In these respects, in a general sense, all forms of trial may be regarded as temptation. Yet in the following verse (Jas 1:13) the apostle would guard this from abuse. So far as the form of trial involved an allurement or inducement to sin, he says that no man should regard it as from God. That cannot be his design. The trial is what he aims at, not the sin. In the verse before us he says, that whatever may be the form of the trial, a Christian should rejoice in it, for it will furnish an evidence that he is a child of God. For when he is tried. In any way--if he bears the trial.

He shall receive the crown of life. 2Ti 4:8. It is possible that James had that passage in his eye. Compare the Introduction to James 5 (Jas 5:1). Which the Lord hath promised. The sacred writers often speak of such a crown as promised, or as in reserve for the children of God, 2Ti 4:8; 1Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10; 3:11; 4:4. Them that love him. A common expression to denote those who are truly pious, or who are his friends. It is sufficiently distinctive to characterize them, for the great mass of men do not love God. Compare Rom 1:30.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. Jas 1:12. The apostle here seems to have had his eye on whatever there was in trial of any kind to induce us to commit sin--whether by complaining, by murmuring, by apostasy, or by yielding to sin. So far as that was concerned, he said that no one should charge it on God. He did nothing in any way with a view to induce men to do evil. That was only an incidental thing in the trial, and was no part of the Divine purpose or design. The apostle felt evidently that there was great danger, from the general manner in which the word temptation was used, and from the perverse tendency of the heart, that it would be charged on God that he so arranged these trials, and so influenced the mind, as to present inducements to sin. Against this, it was proper that an inspired apostle should bear his solemn testimony; so to guard the whole subject as to show that whatever there was in any form of trial that could be regarded as an inducement or allurement to sin, is not the thing which he contemplated in the arrangement, and does not proceed from him. It has its origin in other causes; and if there was nothing in the corrupt human mind itself leading to sin, there would be nothing in the Divine arrangement that would produce it.

For God cannot be tempted with evil. Marg., evils. The sense is the same. The object seems to be to show that, in regard to the whole matter of temptation, it does not pertain to God. Nothing can be presented to his mind as an inducement to do wrong, and as little can he present anything to the mind of man to induce him to sin. Temptation is a subject which does not pertain to him. He stands aloof from it altogether. In regard to the particular statement here, that "God cannot be tempted with evil," or to do evil, there can be no doubt of its truth, and it furnishes the highest security for the welfare of the universe. There is nothing in him that has a tendency to wrong; there can be nothing presented from without to induce him to do wrong.

(1.) There is no evil passion to be gratified, as there is in men.

(2.) There is no want of power, so that an allurement could be presented to seek what he has not.

(3.) There is no want of wealth, for he has infinite resources, and all that there is or can be is his, Ps 50:10-11.

(4.) There is no want of happiness, that he should seek happiness in sources which are not now in his possession. Nothing, therefore, could be presented to the Divine Mind as an inducement to do evil. Neither tempteth he any man. That is, he places nothing before any human being with a view to induce him to do wrong. This is one of the most positive and unambiguous of all the declarations in the Bible, and one of the most important. It may be added, that it is one which stands in opposition to as many feelings of the human heart as perhaps any other one. We are perpetually thinking--the heart suggests it constantly --that God does place before us inducements to evil, with a view to lead us to sin. This is done in many ways.

(a) Men take such views of his decrees as if the doctrine implied that he meant that we should sin, and that it could not be otherwise than that we should sin.

(b) It is felt that all things are under his control, and that he has made his arrangements with a design that men should do as they actually do.

(c) It is said that he has created us with just such dispositions as we actually have, and knowing that we would sin.

(d) It is said that, by the arrangements of his Providence, he actually places inducements before us to sin, knowing that the effect will be that we will fall into sin, when he might easily have prevented it.

(e) It is said that he suffers some to tempt others, when he might easily prevent it if he chose, and that this is the same as tempting them himself. Now, in regard to these things, there may be much which we cannot explain, and much which often troubles the heart even of the good; yet the passage before us is explicit on one point, and all these things must be held in consistency with that --that God does not place inducements before us with a view that we should sin, or in order to lead us into sin. None of his decrees, or his arrangements, or his desires, are based on that, but all have some

other purpose and end. The real force of temptation is to be traced to some other source--to ourselves, and not to God. See Jas 1:14.

14 but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own It lust. That is, the fountain or source of all temptation is in man himself. is true that external inducements to sin may be placed before him, but they would have no force if there was not something in himself to which they corresponded, and over which they might have power. There must be some "lust;" some desire; some inclination; something which is unsatisfied now, which is made the foundation of the temptation, and which gives it all its power. If there were no capacity for receiving food, or desire for it, objects placed before us appealing to the appetite could never be made a source of temptation; if there were nothing in the soul which could be regarded as the love of acquisition or possession, gold would furnish no temptation; if there were no sensual propensities, we should be in that quarter above the power of temptation. In each case, and in every form, the power of the temptation is laid in some propensity of our nature, some desire of that which we do not now possess. The word rendered "lust" in this place, (επιθυηιας,) is not employed here in the narrow sense in which it is now commonly used, as denoting libidinousness. It means desire in general; an earnest wish for anything, Eph 4:22. It seems here to be used with reference to the original propensities of our nature--the desires implanted in us, which are a stimulus to employment--as the desire of knowledge, of food, of power, of sensual gratifications; and the idea is, that a man may be drawn along by these beyond the prescribed limits of indulgence, and in the pursuit of objects that are forbidden. He does not stop at the point at which the law requires him to stop, and is therefore guilty of transgression. This is the source of all sin. The original propensity may not be wrong, but may be perfectly harmless--as in the case of the desire of food, etc. Nay, it may furnish a most desirable stimulus to action; for how could the human powers be called forth, if it were not for this? The error, the fault, the sin, is not restraining the indulgence where we are commanded to do it, either in regard to the objects sought, or in regard to the degree of indulgence. And enticed. Entrapped, caught; that is, he is seized by this power, and held fast; or he is led along and beguiled, until he falls into sin, as in a snare that springs suddenly upon him.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Then when lust hath conceived. Compare Job 15:35. The allusion here is obvious. The meaning is, when the desire which we have naturally is quickened, or made to act, the result is that sin is produced. As our desires of good lie in the mind by nature, as our propensities exist as they were created, they cannot be regarded as sin, or treated as such; but when they are indulged, when plans of gratification are formed, when they are developed in actual life, the effect is sin. In the mere desire of good, of happiness, of food, of raiment, there is no sin; it becomes sin when indulged in an improper manner, and when it leads us to seek that which is forbidden-- to invade the rights of others, or in any way to violate the laws of God. The Rabbins have a metaphor which strongly expresses the general sense of this passage: "Evil concupiscence is at the beginning like the thread of a spider's web; afterwards it is like a cart rope."--Sanhedrin, fol. 99,

It bringeth forth sin. The result is sin--open, actual sin. When that which is conceived in the heart is matured, it is seen to be sin. The design of all this is to show that sin is not to be traced to God, but to man himself; and in order to this, the apostle says that there is enough in the heart of man to account for all actual sin, without supposing that it is caused by God. The solution which he gives is, that there are certain propensities in man which, when they are suffered to get themselves out, will account for all the sin in the world. In regard to those native propensities themselves, he does not say whether he regards them as sinful and blameworthy or not; and the probability is, that he did not design to enter into a formal examination, or to make a formal statement, of the nature of these propensities themselves. He looked at man as he is--as a creature of God--as endowed with certain animal propensities--as seen, in fact, to have strong passions by nature; and he showed that there was enough in him to account for the existence of sin, without bringing in the agency of God, or charging it on him. In reference to those propensities, it may be observed that there are two kinds, either of which may account for the existence of sin, but which are frequently both combined. There are, first, our natural propensities; those which we have as men, as endowed with an animal nature, as having constitutional desires to be gratified, and wants to be supplied. Such

Adam had in innocence; such the Saviour had; and such are to be regarded as in no respect in themselves sinful and wrong. Yet they may, in our case, as they did in Adam, lead us to sin, because, under their strong influence, we may be led to desire that which is forbidden, or which belongs to another. But there are, secondly, the propensities and inclinations which we have as the result of the fall, and which are evil in their nature and tendency; which as a matter of course, and especially when combined with the former, lead to open transgression. It is not always easy to separate these, and in fact they are often combined in producing the actual guilt of the world. It often requires a close analysis of a man's own mind to detect these different ingredients in his conduct, and the one often gets the credit of the other. The apostle James seems to have looked at it as a simple matter of fact, with a common sense view, by saying that there were desires (επιθυμιας) in a man's own mind which would account for all the actual sin in the world, without charging it on God. Of the truth of this, no one can entertain a doubt.

And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. The result of sin, when it is fully carried out, is death--death in all forms. The idea is, that death, in whatever form it exists, is to be traced to sin, and that sin will naturally and regularly produce it. There is a strong similarity between this declaration and that of the apostle Paul, (Rom 6:21-23;) and it is probable that James had this passage in his eye. Rom 6:21-23 and Rom 5:12. Any one who indulges in a sinful thought or corrupt desire, should reflect that it may end in death--death temporal and eternal. Its natural tendency will be to produce such a death. This reflection should induce us to check an evil thought or desire at the beginning. Not for one moment should we indulge in it, for soon it may secure the mastery, and be beyond our control; and the end may be seen in the grave, and the awful world of woe.

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. This is said as if there were great danger of error in the point under consideration. The point on which he would guard them, seems to have been in respect to the opinion that God was the author of sin, and that the evils in the world are to be traced to him. There was great danger that they would embrace that opinion, for experience has shown that it is a danger into which men are always prone to fall. Some of the sources of this danger

have been already alluded to. Jas 1:13. To meet the danger, he says that, so far is it from being true that God is the source of evil, he is in fact the author of all that is good: every good gift, and every perfect gift, (Jas 1:17,) is from him, Jas 1:18.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Every good gift and every perfect gift. The difference between good and perfect here, it is not easy to mark accurately. It may be that the former means that which is benevolent in its character and tendency; the latter that which is entire, where there is nothing even apparently wanting to complete it; where it can be regarded as good as a whole and in all its parts. The general sense is, that God is the author of all good. Everything that is good on the earth we are to trace to him; evil has another origin. Compare Mt 13:28. Is from above. From God, who is often represented as dwelling above--in heaven.

And cometh down from the Father of lights. From God, the source and fountain of all light. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of knowledge, purity, happiness; and God is often represented as light. Compare 1Jn 1:5; 1Timm 6:16. There is, doubtless, an allusion here to the heavenly bodies, among which the sun is the most brilliant. It appears to us to be the great original fountain of light, diffusing its radiance over all worlds. No cloud, no darkness seems to come from the sun, but it pours its rich effulgence on the farthest part of the universe. So it is with God. There is no darkness in him, (1Jn 1:5;) and all the moral light and purity which there is in the universe is to be traced to him. The word Father here is used in a sense which is common in Hebrew, (Mt 1:1,) as denoting that which is the source of anything, or that from which anything proceeds. Isa 9:6.

With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. The design here is clearly to contrast God with the sun in a certain respect. As the source of light, there is a strong resemblance. But in the sun there are certain changes. It does not shine on all parts of the earth at the same time, nor in the same manner all the year. It rises and sets; it crosses the line, and seems to go far to the south, and sends its rays obliquely on the earth; then it ascends to the north, recrosses the line, and sends its rays obliquely on southern regions.

By its revolutions it produces the changes of the seasons, and makes a constant variety on the earth in the productions of different climes. In this respect God is not indeed like the sun. With him there is no variableness, not even the appearance of turning. He is always the same, at all seasons of the year, and in all ages; there is no change in his character, his mode of being, his purposes and plans. What he was millions of ages before the worlds were made, he is now; what he is now, he will be countless millions of ages hence. We may be sure that whatever changes there may be in human affairs; whatever reverses we may undergo; whatever oceans we may cross, or whatever mountains we may climb, or in whatever worlds we may hereafter take up our abode, God is the same. The word which is here rendered variableness (παραλλαγη) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means change, alteration, vicissitude, and would properly be applied to the changes observed in astronomy. See the examples quoted in Wetstein. The phrase rendered shadow of turning would properly refer to the different shade or shadow cast by the sun from an object, in its various revolutions, in rising and setting, and in its changes at the different seasons of the year.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Of his own will. Gr., willing, βουληθεις. The idea is, that the fact that we are "begotten" to be his children is to be traced solely to his will. He purposed it, and it was done. The antecedent in the case on which all depended was the sovereign will of God. Jn 1:13. Eph 1:5. When it is said, however, that he has done this by his mere will, it is not to be inferred that there was no reason why it should be done, or that the exercise of his will was arbitrary, but only that his will determined the matter, and that is the cause of our conversion. It is not to be inferred that there are not in all cases good reasons why God wills as he does, though those reasons are not often stated to us, and perhaps we could not comprehend them if they were. The object of the statement here seems to be to direct the mind up to God as the source of good and not evil; and among the most eminent illustrations of his goodness is this, that by his mere will, without any external power to control him, and where there could be nothing but benevolence, he has adopted us into his family, and given us a most exalted condition, as renovated beings, among his creatures. Begat he us. The Greek word here is the same which in Jas 1:15 is rendered "bringeth forth"--" sin bringeth forth death." The word is

perhaps designedly used here in contrast with that, and the object is to refer to a different kind of production, or bringing forth, under the agency of sin, and the agency of God. The meaning here is, that we owe the beginning of our spiritual life to God.

With the word of truth. By the instrumentality of truth. It was not a mere creative act, but it was by truth as the seed or germ. There is no effect produced in our minds in regeneration which the truth is not fitted to produce, and the agency of God in the case is to secure its fair and full influence on the soul.

That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Compare Eph 1:12. For the meaning of the word rendered first-fruits, Rom 8:23. Compare Rom 11:6; 16:5; 1Cor 15:20,23; 16:15; Rev 14:4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It denotes, properly, that which is first taken from anything; the portion which was usually offered to God. The phrase here does not primarily denote eminence in honour or degree, but refers rather to time--the first in time; and in a secondary sense it is then used to denote the honour attached to that circumstance. The meaning here is, either

(1) that, under the gospel, those who were addressed by the apostles had the honour of being first called into his kingdom as a part of that glorious harvest which it was designed to gather in this world, and that the goodness of God was manifested in thus furnishing the first-fruits of a most glorious harvest; or

(2) the reference may be to the rank and dignity which all who are born again would have among the creatures of God in virtue of the new birth.

Hearing and Doing the Word

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren. The connexion is this: "Since God is the only source of good; since he tempts no man; and since by his mere sovereign goodness, without any claim on our part, we have had the high honour conferred on us of being made the first-fruits of his creatures, we ought to be ready to hear his voice, to subdue all

our evil passions, and to bring our souls to entire practical obedience." The necessity of obedience, or the doctrine that the gospel is not only to be learned but practised, is pursued at length in this and the following chapter. The particular statement here (Jas 1:19-21) is, that religion requires us to be meek and docile; to lay aside all irritability against the truth, and all pride of opinion, and all corruption of heart, and to receive meekly the engrafted word. See the analysis of the chapter.

Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak. That is, primarily, to hear God; to listen to the instructions of that truth by which we have been begotten, and brought into so near relation to him. At the same time, though this is the primary sense of the phrase here, it may be regarded as inculcating the general doctrine that we are to be more ready to hear than to speak; or that we are to be disposed to learn always, and from any source. Our appropriate condition is rather that of learners than instructors; and the attitude of mind which we should cultivate is that of a readiness to receive information from any quarter. The ancients have some sayings on this subject which are well worthy of our attention. "Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak." "The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and to keep it within proper bounds." See Benson. So Valerius Maximus, vii. 2: "How noble was the response of Xenocrates! When he met the reproaches of others with a profound silence, some one asked him why he alone was silent? Because, says he, I have sometimes had occasion to regret that I have spoken, never that I was silent." See Wetstein. So the son of Sirach, "Be swift to hear, and with deep consideration (ενμακροθυμια) give answer," chap. v. 11. So the Rabbins have some similar sentiments. "Talk little, and work much," Pirkey Aboth. c. i. 15. "The righteous speak little, and do much; the wicked speak much, and do nothing," Bava Metsia, fol. 87. A sentiment similar to that before us is found in Eccl 5:2, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God." So Prov 10:19, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin;" Prov 13:3, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life;" Prov 15:2, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."

Slow to wrath. That is, we are to govern and restrain our temper; we are not to give indulgence to excited and angry passions. Compare Prov 16:32, "He that is slow to anger is greater than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." See also on this subject, Job 5:2; Prov 11:17; 13:10; 14:16; 15:18; 19:19; 22:24; 25:28; Eccl 7:9; Rom 12:17; 1Th 5:14; 1Pe 3:8. The particular point here is, however, not that we should be slow to wrath as a general habit of mind, which is indeed most true, but in reference particularly to the reception of the truth. We should lay aside all anger and wrath, and should come to the a calm in a investigation of truth with mind, and an imperturbed spirit. A state of wrath or anger is always unfavourable to the investigation of truth. Such an investigation demands a calm spirit, and he whose mind is excited and enraged is not condition to see the value of truth, or to weigh the evidence for it.

20 for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Does not produce in the life that righteousness which God requires. Its tendency is not to incline us to keep the law, but to break it; not to induce us to embrace the truth, but the opposite. The meaning of this passage is not that our wrath will make God either more or less righteous; but that its tendency is not to produce that upright course of life, and love of truth, which God requires. A man is never sure of doing right under the influence of excited feelings; he may do that which is in the highest sense wrong, and which he will regret all his life. The particular meaning of this passage is, that wrath in the mind of man will not have any tendency to make him righteous. It is only that candid state of mind which will lead him to embrace the truth which can be hoped to have such an effect.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Wherefore. In view of the fact that God has begotten us for his own service; in view of the fact that excited feeling tends only to wrong, let us lay aside all that is evil, and submit ourselves wholly to the influence of truth.

Lay apart all filthiness. The word here rendered filthiness, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly filth; and then is applied to evil conduct considered as disgusting or offensive.

Sin may be contemplated as a wrong thing; as a violation of law; as evil in its nature and tendency, and therefore to be avoided; or it may be contemplated as disgusting, offensive, loathsome. To a pure mind, this is one of its most odious characteristics; for, to such a mind, sin in any form is more loathsome than the most offensive object can be to any of the senses.

And superfluity of naughtiness. Literally, "abounding of evil." It is rendered by Doddridge, "overflowing of malignity;" by Tindal, "superfluity of maliciousness;" by Benson, "superfluity of malice;" by Bloomfield, "petulance." The phrase "superfluity of naughtiness": or of evil, does not exactly express the sense, as if we were only to lay aside that which abounded, or which is superfluous, though we might retain that which does not come under this description; but the object of the apostle is to express his deep abhorrence of the thing referred to by strong and emphatic language. He had just spoken of sin in one aspect, as filthy, loathsome, detestable; here he designs to express his abhorrence of it by a still more emphatic description, and he speaks of it not merely as an evil, but as an evil abounding, overflowing; an evil in the highest degree. The thing referred to had the essence of evil in it, (κακια;) but it was not merely evil, it was evil that was aggravated, that was overflowing, that was eminent in degree, (περισσεια.) The particular reference in these passages is to the reception of the truth; and the doctrine taught is, that a corrupt mind, a mind full of sensuality and wickedness, is not favourable to the reception of the truth. It is not fitted to see its beauty, to appreciate its value, to understand its just claims, or to welcome it to the soul. Purity of heart is the best preparation always for seeing the force of truth. And receive with meekness. That is, open the mind and heart to instruction, and to the fair influence of truth. Meekness, gentleness, docility, are everywhere required in receiving the instructions of religion, as they are in obtaining knowledge of any kind. Mt 18:2-3.

The engrafted word. The gospel is here represented under the image of that which is implanted or engrafted from another source; by a figure that would be readily understood, for the art of engrafting is everywhere known. Sometimes the gospel is represented under the image of seed sown, (compare Mk 6:14, seq.;) but here it is under the figure of a shoot implanted or engrafted, that produces fruit of

its own, whatever may be the original character of the tree into which it is engrafted. Rom 11:17. The meaning here is, that we should allow the principles of the gospel to be thus engrafted on our nature; that however crabbed or perverse our nature may be, or however bitter and vile the fruits which it might bring forth of its own accord, it might, through the engrafted word, produce the fruits of righteousness.

Which is able to save your souls. It is not, therefore, a weak and powerless thing, merely designed to show its own feebleness, and to give occasion for God to work a miracle; but it has power, and is adapted to save. Rom 1:16; 1Cor 1:18; 2Ti 3:15.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

These words are a direction given for the right hearing of, and due profiting by the word of God.
In order to the former, our apostle shews,

1. What we must lay aside, namely, all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness; that is, all sensual lusts, and angry passions.

And, 2. Receive with meekness, calmness, and submission, the engrafted word; that is, the word planted and sown in our hearts by the hands of Christ's ministers: which is able to save our souls, that is, from hell and damnation; yet does not the word save of itself, but God by the word; the power of the word is not intrinsical, but extrinsical, derived from God, whose the word is.

Learn hence, 1. That as all sin in general, so anger, wrath, and malice in particular, ought to be laid aside by us at all times, but then especially when we go forth to hear the word of God.

Learn, 2. That the word must be received with all meekness of spirit, if we would hear it with profit and advantage; there must not be found with us either a wrathful fierceness, or a proud stubbornness, or a contentious wrangling, but humility and brokenness of spirit,

dociblilty and tractableness of spirit, under the word, otherwise all our hearing will be an addition to our sin, and an aggravation of our condemnation.

Learn, 3. That he word must not only be apprehended and received by us, but implanted and engrafted in us, or it will never be able to save our souls; receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Quest. But how may we know when the word is an engrafted word? Ans. When it is a fruitful word, The word of the truth of the gospel is come unto you, and bringeth forth fruit Col 1:6.

Learn, 4. Though hearing of the word be a duty, yet it must not be rested in; be hearers, but not only hearers. Alas! bare hearing of the word is the least part of Christianity, and the lightest part of Christianity; though we be intelligent hearers, though we be very diligent and attentive hearers, though we be affectionate hearers, yea, though we make great proficiency in knowlege by our hearing, yet all this will deceive us at last, if nothing farther be added to it.

Therefore, learn, 5. That the doers of the word are the best hearers, yea, the only hearers in God's account: not to hear at all is atheistical, and produces no religion; to hear, and not to know and be affected with what we hear, is stoical, and breeds a blind religion; to know, and not to do, is Pharisaical, and breeds a lame religion; the practical hearer is the only approved hearer in the account of God: A good understanding have they that do they commandments, Ps 111:10.

Lastly, without this, all our hearing is but self-deceiving; and this is the most shameful deceit, the most dangerous deceit, and, if timely care and endeavours prevent not, an irreparable and eternal deceit: Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only. Obey the gospel, and do not merely listen to it. Compare Mt 7:21. Deceiving your own selves. It is implied here, that by merely hearing the word but not doing it, they would deceive their own souls. The nature of this deception was this, that they would imagine that that was all which was required, whereas the main thing was that they should be obedient. If a man supposes that by a mere punctual attendance on preaching, or a respectful attention to it, he has done all that is required of him, he is labouring under a most gross self- deception. And yet there are multitudes who seem to imagine that they have done all that is demanded of them when they have heard attentively the word preached. Of its influence on their lives, and its claims to obedience, they are utterly regardless.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

For if any be, etc. The ground of the comparison in these verses is obvious. The apostle refers to what all persons experience, the fact that we do not retain a distinct impression of ourselves after we have looked in a mirror. While actually looking in the mirror, we see all our features, and can trace them distinctly; when we turn away, the image and the impression both vanish. When looking in the mirror, we can see all the defects and blemishes of our person; if there is a scar, a deformity, a feature of ugliness, it is distinctly before the mind; but when we turn away, that is "out of sight, and out of mind." When unseen it gives no uneasiness, and, even if capable of correction, we take no pains to remove it. So when we hear the word of God. It is like a mirror held up before us. In the perfect precepts of the law, and the perfect requirements of the gospel, we see our own short-comings and defects, and perhaps think that we will correct them. But we turn away immediately, and forget it all. If, however, we were "doers of the word," we should endeavour to remove all those defects and blemishes in our moral character, and to bring our whole souls into conformity with what the law and the gospel require. The phrase "natural face," (Gr., face of birth,) means, the face or appearance which we have in virtue of our natural birth. The word glass here means mirror. Glass was not commonly used for mirrors among the ancients, but they were made of polished plates of metal. Isa 3:24, and Job 37:18.

24 for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein,* he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

But whoso looketh. παρακυψας. This word means, to stoop down near by anything; to bend forward near, so as to look at anything more closely. 1Pet 1:12. The idea here is that of a close and attentive observation. The object is not to contrast the manner of looking in the glass, and in the law of liberty, implying that the former was a "careless beholding," and the latter an attentive and careful looking, as Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others suppose; for the word used in the former case (κατενοησε) implies intense or accurate observation, as really as the word used here; but the object is to show that if a man would attentively look into, and continue in the law of liberty, and not do as one who went away and forgot how he looked, he would be blessed. The emphasis is not in the manner of looking, it is on the duty of continuing or persevering in the observance of the law. The perfect law of liberty. Referring to the law of God, or his will, however made known, as the correct standard of conduct. It is called the perfect law, as being wholly free from all defects; being just such as a law ought to be. Compare Ps 19:7. It is called the law of liberty, or freedom, because it is a law producing freedom from the servitude of sinful passions and lusts. Compare Ps 119:45; Rom 6:16, seq. And continueth therein. He must not merely look at the law, or see what he is by comparing himself with its requirements, but he must yield steady obedience to it. Jn 14:21. This man shall be blessed in his deed. Marg., doing. The meaning is, that he shall be blessed in the very act of keeping the law. It will produce peace of conscience; it will impart happiness of a high order to his mind; it will exert a good influence over his whole soul. Ps 19:11, "In keeping of them there is great reward."

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

If any man among you seem to be religious. Pious, or devout. That is, if he does not restrain his tongue, his other evidences of religion are worthless. A man may undoubtedly have many things in his character which seem to be evidences of the existence of religion in his heart, and yet there may be some one thing that shall show that all those evidences are false. Religion is designed to produce an effect on our whole conduct; and if there is any one thing in

reference to which it does not bring us under its control, that one thing may show that all other appearances of piety are worthless.

And bridleth not his tongue. Restrains or curbs it not, as a horse is restrained with a bridle. There may have been some reason why the apostle referred to this particular sin which is now unknown to us; or he may perhaps have intended to select this as a specimen to illustrate this idea, that if there is any one evil propensity which religion does not control, or if there is any one thing in respect to which its influence is not felt, whatever other evidences of piety there may be, this will demonstrate that all those appearances of religion are vain. For religion is designed to bring the whole man under control, and to subdue every faculty of the body and mind to its demands. If the tongue is not restrained, or if there is any unsubdued propensity to sin whatever, it proves that there is no true religion. But deceiveth his own heart. Implying that he does deceive his heart by supposing that any evidence can prove that he is under the influence of religion if his tongue is unrestrained. Whatever love, or zeal, or orthodoxy, or gift in preaching or in prayer he may have, this one evil propensity will neutralize it all, and show that there is no true religion at heart. This man's religion is vain. As all religion must be which does not control all the faculties of the body and the mind. The truths, then, which are taught in this verse are,

(1,) that there may be evidences of piety which seem to be very plausible or clear, but which in themselves do not prove that there is any true religion. There may be much zeal, as in the case of the Pharisees; there may be much apparent love of Christians, or much outward benevolence; there may be an uncommon gift in prayer; there may be much self-denial, as among those who withdraw from the world in monasteries or nunneries; or there may have been deep conviction for sin, and much joy at the time of the supposed conversion, and still there be no true religion. Each and all of these things may exist in the heart where there is no true religion.

(2.) A single unsubdued sinful propensity neutralizes all these things, and shows that there is no true religion. If the tongue is not subdued; if any sin is indulged, it will show that the seat of the evil has not been reached, and that the soul, as such, has never been brought into subjection to the law of God. For the very essence of

all the sin that there was in the soul may have been concentrated on that one propensity. Everything else which may be manifested may be accounted for on the supposition that there is no religion; this cannot be accounted for on the supposition that there is any.

1. That there have been, are, and ever will be, many professors of religion, who seem, and only seem to be religious.

Observe, 2. That an unbridled and ungoverned tongue, is a certain sign and evidence of a man's being only seemingly religious; it seems there were many unbridled tongues in the apostle's days, amongst the professors of Christianity, which put the apostle upon spending the whole third chapter about the government of the tongue; the grace and word of God are bridles, which we are to put on, to restrain us from sinful and excessive speaking.

Observe, 3. That such a man as pretends to religion, and seems to be religious, without bridling and governing of his tongue, all his religion is but vain and self-deceiving: Vain, that is, empty; in shew and appearance only, nothing in truth, and in reality: or vain, that is ineffectual; it doth not perform its office, it does not answer its end, their religion will do them no good, stand them in no stead; that faith, that hope, those prayers which will consist with the reigning evils of the tongue, are vain and self-deceiving; that religion, which cannot tame the tongue, will never save the soul; though some evils of the tongue may consist with grace, yet an unbridled tongue cannot consist with it: deceit in our lips is as bad as falsehood in our dealings, and virulence in our tongue as bad as violence in our hands; and if thy religion be vain, all is vain to thee; thy hopes are vain, thy comforts are vain. The sum is, that an unbridled tongue, in a religious professor, is enough to prove his religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Pure religion. On the word here rendered religion, (θρησκεια,) Col 2:18. It is used here evidently in the sense of piety, or as we commonly employ the word religion. The object of the apostle is

to describe what enters essentially into religion; what it will do when it is properly and fairly developed. The phrase "pure religion," means that which is genuine and sincere, or which is free from any improper mixture.

And undefiled before God and the Father. That which God sees to be pure and undefiled, Rosenmuller supposes that there is a metaphor here taken from pearls or gems, which should be pure, or without stain. Is this. That is, this enters into it; or this is religion such as God approves. The apostle does not say that this is the whole of religion, or that there is nothing else essential to it; but his general design clearly is, to show that religion will lead to a holy life, and he mentions this as a specimen, or an instance of what it will lead us to do. The things which he specifies here are in fact two:

(1.) That pure religion will lead to a life of practical benevolence; and

(2) that it will keep us unspotted from the world. If these things are found, they show that there is true piety. If they are not, there is none. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. To go to see, to look after, to be ready to aid them. This is an instance or specimen of what true religion will do, showing that it will lead to a life of practical benevolence. It may be remarked in respect to this,

(1,) that this has always been regarded as an essential thing in true religion; for

(a) it is thus an imitation of God, who is "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows in his holy habitation," Ps 68:6; and who has always revealed himself as their friend, De 10:18; 14:29; Ps 10:14; Ps 82:3; Isa 1:17; Jer 7:7; 49:11; Hos 14:3;

(b) religion is represented as leading its friends to do this, or this is required everywhere of those who claim to be religious, Isa 1:17; De 24:17; 14:29; Ex 22:22; Job 29:11-13.

(2.) Where this disposition to be the real friend of the widow and the orphan exists, there will also exist other corresponding things

which go to make up the religious character. This will not stand alone. It will show what the heart is, and prove that it will ever be ready to do good. If a man, from proper motives, is the real friend of the widow and the fatherless, he will be the friend of every good word and work, and we may rely on him in any and every way in doing good. And to keep himself unspotted from the world. Rom 12:2; Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15-17. That is, religion will keep us from the maxims, vices, and corruptions which prevail in the world, and make us holy. These two things may, in fact, be said to constitute religion. If a man is truly benevolent, he bears the image of that God who is the fountain of benevolence; if he is pure and uncontaminated in his walk and deportment, he also resembles his Maker, for he is holy. If he has not these things, he cannot have any well-founded evidence that he is a Christian; for it is always the nature and tendency of religion to produce these things. It is, therefore, an easy matter for a man to determine whether he has any religion; and equally easy to see that religion is eminently desirable. Who can doubt that that is good which leads to compassion for the poor and the helpless, and which makes the heart and the life pure?

Observe here, 1. That the apostle doth not set down the whole of religion, but an eminent part and instance of it only: pure religion is this, that is, this is the practice of religion, without which all religion is vain; this is an eminent fruit, which springs from the root of pure religion; if pure religon live in the heart, the fruits of pious charity will appear in the life.

Observe, 2. The acts of charity, when they flow from a religious principle, do commence acts of worship; to visit the widow and fatherless, considered in itself, may be only an act of indifferency and civil courtesy; but when it is performed as an act of duty, in obedience to the command of God, or as an act of mercy and pity, for the supply of their wants by our purse, or for the comforting of their hearts by our counsel; being thus done out of conscience, it is as acceptable to God as an act of worship, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

Observe, 3. How the apostle joins charity and purity together; a pretense to the one without the other discovers the insincerity of both; the relieving of the afflicted, and a life unspotted, must go together, or God accept of neither: Pure religion is this, to visit the widow, and keep himself unspotted from the world; that is, from the defilement and pollutions of the world by the lusts thereof; plainly intimating,

1. That the world is a filthy place, a dirty defiling thing. What company almost can you come into, generally speaking, that is not sooty and leprous? How hard is it to converse with them, and not be polluted and infected by them? Even as hard as it is to touch pitch, and not be defiled.

2. That it is our duty, and ought to be our daily endeavour, to keep ourselves as unstained by, and unspotted from the world as we can: and that we may escape the pollutions which are in the world through lust, let us be instant in prayer, diligent in our watch, that if we cannot make the world better, that shall never make us worse.

3. That we should more and more grow weary of the world, and long for heaven, where there is nothing that defileth, where we shall have pure hearts, pure company, every thing agreeable, and this not for a few years, but for everlasting ages. Lord! when shall we ascend on high to live with thee in purity?

James-2

Warning against Partiality

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

My brethren. Perhaps meaning brethren in two respects--as Jews, and as Christians. In both respects the form of address would be proper. Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the distinguishing thing in the Christian religion, for it is this by which man is justified, and hence it comes to be put for religion itself.

1Timm 3:9. The meaning here is, "Do not hold such views of the religion of Christ, as to lead you to manifest partiality to others on account of their difference of rank or outward circumstances." The Lord of glory. The glorious Lord; he who is glorious himself, and who is encompassed with glory. 1Cor 2:8. The design here seems to be to show that the religion of such a Lord should be in no way dishonoured. With respect of persons. That is, you are not to show respect of persons, or to evince partiality to others on account of their rank, wealth, apparel, etc. Compare Prov 24:23; 28:21; Lev 19:15; De 1:17; De 10:17; 2Ch 19:7; Ps 40:4. Acts 10:34; and Rom 2:11 to see the subject explained.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

For if there come unto your assembly. Marg., as in Gr., synagogue. It is remarkable that this is the only place in the New Testament where the word synagogue is applied to the Christian church. It is probably employed here because the apostle was writing to those who had been Jews; and it is to be presumed that the word synagogue would be naturally used by the early converts from Judaism to designate a Christian place of worship, or a Christian congregation, and it was probably so employed until it was superseded by a word which the Gentile converts would be more likely to employ and which would, in fact, be better and more expressive--the word church. The word synagogue (συναγωγην) would properly refer to the whole congregation, considered as assembled together, without respect to the question whether all were truly pious or not; the word church (εκκλησια) would refer to the assembly convened for worship as called out, referring to the fact that they were called out from the world, and convened as worshippers of God, and would, therefore, be more applicable to a body of spiritual worshippers. It is probable that the Christian church was modelled, in its general arrangements, after the Jewish synagogue; but there would be obviously some disadvantages in retaining the name, as applicable to Christian worship. It would be difficult to avoid the associations connected with the name, and hence it was better to adopt some other name which would be free from this disadvantage, and on which might be engrafted all the ideas which it was necessary to connect with the notion of the Christian organization. Hence the word church, liable to no such objection as that of synagogue, was soon adopted, and ultimately

prevailed, though the passage before us shows that the word synagogue would be in some places, and for a time, employed to designate a Christian congregation. We should express the idea here by saying, "If a man of this description should come into the church."

A man with, a gold ring. Indicative of rank or property. Rings were common ornaments of the rich; and probably then, as now, of those who desired to be esteemed to be rich. For proof that they were commonly worn, see the quotations in Wetstein, in loc.

In goodly apparel. Rich and splendid dress. Compare Lk 16:19.

A poor man in vile raiment. The Greek here is, filthy, foul; the meaning of the passage is, in sordid, shabby clothes. The reference here seems to be, not to those who commonly attended on public worship, or who were members of the church, but to those who might accidentally drop in to witness the services of Christians. See 1Cor 14:24.

3 and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing. If you show him superior attention on account of his rich and gay apparel, giving him a seat by himself, and treating others with neglect or contempt. Religion does not forbid proper respect to rank, to office, to age, or to distinguished talents and services, though even in such cages it does not require that we should feel that such persons have any peculiar claims to salvation, or that they are not on a level with all others, as sinners before God; it does not forbid that a man who has the means of procuring for himself an eligible pew in a church should be permitted to do so; but it requires that men shall be regarded and treated according to their moral worth, and not according to their external adorning; that all shall be considered as in fact on a level before God, and entitled to the privileges which grow out of the worship of the Creator. A stranger coming into any place of worship, no matter what his rank, dress, or complexion, should be treated with respect, and everything should be done that can be to win his heart to the service of God.

And say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place. Marg., as in Gr., well, or seemly; that is, in an honourable place near the pulpit; or in some elevated place where he would be conspicuous. The meaning is, you treat him with distinguished marks of respect on the first appearance, merely from the indications that he is a rich man, without knowing anything about his character. And say to the poor, Stand thou there. Without even the civility of offering him a seat at all. This may be presumed not often to occur in a Christian church; yet it practically does sometimes, when no disposition is evinced to furnish a stranger with a seat. Or sit here under my footstool. Perhaps some seats in the places of worship were raised, so that even the footstool would be elevated above a lower seat. The meaning is, that he would be treated as if he were not worth the least attention.

4 are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

To prevent the growing evil condemned in the foregoing verse, of undervaluing those that are rich in grace, because poor in estate, the apostle in this verse declares how God himself gives countenance to the contrary practice; he confers a threefold dignity upon them; they are chosen by him, they are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven now as if the apostle said, "Are they fit to be despised by you, that are thus highly dignified and enriched by God?" And to stir up their attention to what he speaks, he ushers in his interrogation with this, Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world? &c.

Learn hence, that such as are poor in this world, and disesteemed of men, may yet be chosen of God, rich in grace, and heirs of glory. This he does, to demonstrate the sovereignty and freeness of his grace, and the glory of his wisdom. The first choice that Christ made of persons to be his followers were poor men; and ever since, generally speaking, they are the poor that receive the gospel: God has more rent, and better paid him, from a smokey cottage than from many stately palaces, where men wallow in wealth, and forget God.

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

And draw you before the judgment-seats. That is, they are your persecutors rather than your friends. It was undoubtedly the case that many of the rich were engaged in persecuting Christians, and that on various pretenses they dragged them before the judicial tribunals.

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

Do they not blaspheme that worthy name. This is another argument to show that the rich had no special claim to the honour which they were disposed to show them. The "worthy name" here referred to is, doubtless, the name of the Saviour. The thing here affirmed would, of course, accompany persecution. They who persecuted Christians, would revile the name which they bore. This has always occurred. But besides this, it is no improbable supposition that many of those who were not disposed to engage in open persecution, would revile the name of Christ, by speaking contemptuously of him and his religion. This has been sufficiently common in every age of the world, to make the description here not improper. And yet nothing has been more remarkable than the very thing adverted to here by James, that notwithstanding this, many who profess to be Christians have been more disposed to treat even such persons with respect and attention than they have their own brethren, if they were poor; that they have cultivated the favour, sought the friendship, desired the smiles, aped the manners, and coveted the society of such persons, rather than the friendship and the favour of their poorer Christian brethren. Even though they are known to despise religion in their hearts, and not to be sparing of their words of reproach and scorn towards Christianity; though they are known to be blasphemers, and to have the most thorough contempt for serious, spiritual religion, yet there is many a professing Christian who would prefer to be at a party given by such persons than at a prayer-meeting where their poorer brethren are assembled; who would rather be known by the world to be the associates and friends of such persons, than of those humble believers who can make no boast of rank or wealth, and who are looked down upon with contempt by the great and the gay.

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:

If ye fulfil the royal law. That is, the law which he immediately mentions requiring us to love our neighbour as ourselves. It is called a "royal law," or kingly law, on account of its excellence or

nobleness; not because it is ordained by God as a king, but because it has some such prominence and importance among other laws as a king has among other men; that is, it is majestic, noble, worthy of veneration. It is a law which ought to govern and direct us in all our intercourse with men--as a king rules his subjects. According to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Lev 19:18. Compare Mt 19:19. See it explained by the Saviour, in the parable of the good Samaritan, Lk 10:25-37. In regard to its meaning, Mt 19:19. Ye do well. That is, "if you fairly comply with the spirit of this law, you do all that is required of you in regulating your intercourse with others. You are to regard all persons as your neighbours, and are to treat them according to their real worth; you are not to be influenced in judging of them, or in your treatment of them, by their apparel, or their complexion, or the circumstances of their birth, but by the fact that they are fellow-beings." This is another reason why they should not show partiality in their treatment of others, for if, in the true sense, they regarded all others as "neighbours," they would treat no one with neglect or contempt.

9 but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin. You transgress the plain law of God, and do wrong. See the references on Jas 2:1. And are convinced of the law as transgressors. Gr., "By the law." The word convinced is now used in a somewhat different sense from what it was formerly. It now commonly refers to the impression made on a man's mind by showing him the truth of a thing which before was doubted, or in respect to which the evidence was not clear. A man who doubted the truth of a report or a proposition may be convinced or satisfied of its truth; a man who has done wrong, though he supposed he was doing what was proper, may be convinced of his error. So a man may be convinced that he is a sinner, though before he had no belief of it, and no concern about it; and this may produce in his mind the feeling which is technically known as conviction, producing deep distress and anguish. Jn 16:8. Here, however, the word does not refer so much to the effect produced on the mind itself, as to the fact that the law would hold such an one to be guilty; that is, the law pronounces what is done to be wrong. Whether they would be personally convinced of it, and troubled about it as convicted sinners, would be a different question, and one to which the apostle

does not refer; for his object is not to show that they would be troubled about it, but to show that the law of God condemned this course, and would hold them to be guilty. The argument here is not from the personal distress which this course would produce in their own minds, but from the fact that the law of God condemned it.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point,* he is guilty of all.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law. All except the single point referred to. The apostle does not say that this in fact ever did occur, but he says that if it should, and yet a man should have failed in only one particular, he must be judged to be guilty. The case supposed seems to be that of one who claimed that he had kept the whole law. The apostle says that even if this should be admitted for the time to be true in all other respects, yet, if he had failed in any one particular--in showing respect to persons, or in anything else--he could not but be held to be a transgressor. The design of this is to show the importance of yielding universal obedience, and to impress upon the mind a sense of the enormity of sin from the fact that the violation of any one precept is in fact an offence against the whole law of God. The whole law here means all the law of God; all that he has required; all that he has given to regulate us in our lives.

And yet offend in one point. In one respect; or shall violate any one of the commands included in the general word law. The word offend here means, properly, to stumble, to fall; then to err or fail in duty. Mt 5:29; Mt 26:31.

He is guilty of all. He is guilty of violating the law as a whole, or of violating the law of God as such; he has rendered it impossible that he should be justified and saved by the law. This does not affirm that he is as guilty as if he had violated every law of God; or that all sinners are of equal grade because all have violated some one or more of the laws of God; but the meaning is, that he is guilty of violating the law of God as such; he shows that he has not the true spirit of obedience; he has exposed himself to the penalty of the law, and made it impossible now to be saved by it. His acts of obedience in other respects, no matter how many, will not screen him from the charge of being a violator of the law, or from its penalty. He must be held and treated as a transgressor for that

offence, however upright he may be in other respects, and must meet the penalty of the law as certainly as though he had violated every commandment. One portion of the law is as much binding as another, and if a man violates any one plain commandment, he sets at nought the authority of God. This is a simple principle which is everywhere recognised, and the apostle means no more by it than occurs every day. A man who has stolen a horse is held to be a violator of the law, no matter in how many other respects he has kept it, and the law condemns him for it. He cannot plead his obedience to the law in other things as a reason why he should not be punished for this sin; but however upright he may have been in general, even though it may have been through a long life, the law holds him to be a transgressor, and condemns him. He is as really condemned, and as much thrown from the protection of law, as though he had violated every command. So of murder, arson, treason, or ally other crime. The law judges a man for what he has done in this specific case, and he cannot plead in justification of it that he has been obedient in other things. It follows, therefore, that if a man has been guilty of violating the law of God in any one instance, or is not perfectly holy, he cannot be justified and saved by it, though he should have obeyed it in every other respect, any more than a man who has been guilty of murder can be saved from the gallows because he has, in other respects, been a good citizen, a kind father, an honest neighbour, or has been compassionate to the poor and the needy. He cannot plead his act of truth in one case as an offset to the sin of falsehood in another; he cannot defend himself from the charge of dishonesty in one instance by the plea that he has been honest in another; he cannot urge the fact that he has done a good thing as a reason why he should not be punished for a bad one. He must answer for the specific charge against him, and none of these other things can be an offset against this one act of wrong. Let it be remarked, also, in respect to our being justified by obedience to the law, that no man can plead before God that he has kept all his law except in one point. Who is there that has not, in spirit at least, broken each one of the ten commandments? The sentiment here expressed by James was not new with him. It was often expressed by the Jewish writers, and seems to have been an admitted principle among the Jews. See Wetstein, in loc, for examples.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.

Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. On the phrase, "the law of liberty," Jas 1:26; and Jas 4:11. The meaning is, that in all our conduct we are to act under the constant impression of the truth that we are soon to be brought into judgment, and that the law by which we are to be judged is that by which it is contemplated that we shall be set free from the dominion of sin. In the rule which God has laid down in his word, called "the law of liberty," or the rule by which true freedom is to be secured, a system of religion is revealed by which it is designed that man shall be emancipated not only from one sin, but from all. Now, it is with reference to such a law that we are to be judged; that is, we shall not be able to plead on our trial that we were under a necessity of sinning, but we shall be judged under that law by which the arrangement was made that we might be free from sin. If we might be free from sin; if an arrangement was made by which we could have led holy lives, then it will be proper that we shall be judged and condemned if we are not righteous. The sense is, "In all your conduct, whatever you do or say, remember that you are to be judged, or that you are to give an impartial account; and remember also that the rule by which you are to be judged is that by which provision is made for being delivered from the dominion of sin, and brought into the freedom of the gospel." The argument here seems to be, that he who habitually feels that he is soon to be judged by a law under which it was contemplated that he might be, and should be, free from the bondage of sin, has one of the strongest of all inducements to lead a holy life.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy. This is obviously an equitable principle, and is one which is everywhere found in the Bible. Prov 21:13, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but will not be heard." 2Sam 22:26-27, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury". Compare Ps 18:25-26; Mt 6:15; 7:1-2. The idea which the apostle seems to design to convey here is, that there will certainly be a

judgment, and that we must expect that it will be conducted on equitable principles; that no mercy is to be shown when the character is not such that it will be proper that it should be; and that we should habitually feel in our conduct that God will be impartial, and should frame our lives accordingly.

And mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Marg., glorieth. Gr., Boasts, glories, or exults. The idea is that of glorying over, as where one is superior to another, or has gained a victory over another. The reference all along here is to the judgment, the trial of the great day; and the apostle is stating the principles on which the trial at that day will be conducted--on which one class shall be condemned and the other acquitted and saved. In reference to one class, the wicked, he says that where there has been no mercy shown to others--referring to this as one evidence of piety--that is, where there is no true piety, there will be judgment without mercy; in the other case there will be, as it were, a triumph of mercy, or mercy will appear to have gained a victory over judgment. Strict justice would indeed plead for their condemnation, but the attribute of mercy will triumph, and they will be acquitted. The attributes of mercy and justice would seem to come in conflict, but mercy would prevail. This is a true statement of the plan of salvation, and of what actually occurs in the redemption of a sinner. Justice demands, as what is her due, that the sinner should be condemned; mercy pleads that he may be saved--and mercy prevails. It is not uncommon that there seems to be a conflict between the two. In the dispensations of justice before human tribunals, this often occurs. Strict justice demands the punishment of the offender; and yet there are cases when mercy pleads, and when every man feels that it would be desirable that pardon should be extended to the guilty, and when we always rejoice if mercy triumphs. In such a case, for example, as that of Major Andre, this is strikingly seen. On the one hand, there was the undoubted proof that he was guilty; that he had been taken as a spy; that by the laws of war he ought to be put to death; that as what he had done had tended to the ruin of the American cause, and as such an act, if unpunished, would always expose an army to surprise and destruction, he ought, in accordance with the law of nations, to die. On the other hand, there were his youth, his high attainments, his honourable connexions, his brilliant hopes, all pleading that he might live, and that he might be pardoned. In the bosom of Washington, the promptings of justice and mercy thus came into

collision. Both could not be gratified, and there seemed to be but one course to be pursued. His sense of justice was shown in the act by which he signed the death-warrant; his feelings of compassion in the fact that when he did it his eyes poured forth a flood of tears. How every generous feeling of our nature would have been gratified if mercy could have triumphed, and the youthful and accomplished officer could have been spared! In the plan of salvation, this does occur. Respect is done to justice, but mercy triumphs. Justice indeed pleaded for the condemnation of the sinner, but mercy interposed, and he is saved. Justice is not disregarded, for the great Redeemer of mankind has done all that is needful to uphold it; but there is the most free and full exercise of mercy, and, while the justice of God is maintained, every benevolent feeling in the breast of all holy beings can be gratified in the salvation of countless thousands.

Faith without Works Is Dead

14 What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith? The apostle here returns to the subject adverted to in Jas 1:22-27, the importance of a practical attention to the duties of religion, and the assurance that men cannot be saved by a mere opinion, speculative or merely by holding correct sentiments. He doubtless had in his eye those who abused the doctrine of justification by faith, by holding that good works are unnecessary to salvation, provided they maintain an orthodox belief. As this abuse probably existed in the time of the apostles, and as the Holy Ghost saw that there would be danger that in later times the great and glorious doctrine of justification by faith would be thus abused, it was important that the error should be rebuked, and that the doctrine should be distinctly laid down that good works are necessary to salvation. The apostle, therefore, in the question before us, implicitly asserts that faith would not "profit" at all unless accompanied with a holy life, and this doctrine he proceeds to illustrate in the following verses. Jas 2:1, the analysis of this chapter; and Jas 5:1, the Introduction to chapter 5, (2.). In order to a proper interpretation of this passage, it should be observed that the stand-point from which the apostle views this subject is not before a man is converted, inquiring in what way he may be justified before God, or on what ground his sins may

be forgiven; but it is after a man is converted, showing that that faith can have no value which is not followed by good works; that is, that it is not real faith, and that good works are necessary if a man would have evidence that he is justified. Thus understood, all that James says is in entire accordance with what is taught elsewhere in the New Testament. Can faith save him? It is implied in this question that faith cannot save him, for very often the most emphatic way of making an affirmation is by asking a question. The meaning here is, that that faith which does not produce good works, or which would not produce holy living if fairly acted out, will save no man, for it is not genuine faith.

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
16 and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

If a brother or sister be naked, etc. The comparison in these verses is very obvious and striking. The sense is, that faith in itself, without the acts that correspond to it, and to which it would prompt, is as cold, and heartless, and unmeaning, and useless, as it would be to say to one who was destitute of the necessaries of life, "depart in peace." In itself considered, it might seem to have something that was good; but it would answer none of the purposes of faith unless it should prompt to action. In the case of one who was hungry or naked, what he wanted was not good wishes or kind words merely, but the acts to which good wishes and kind words prompt. And so in religion, what is wanted is not merely the abstract state of mind which would be indicated by faith, but the life of goodness to which it ought to lead. Good wishes and kind words, in order to make them what they should be for the welfare of the world, should be accompanied with corresponding action. So it is with faith. It is not enough for salvation without the benevolent and holy acts to which it would prompt, any more than the good wishes and kind words of the benevolent are enough to satisfy the wants of the hungry, and to clothe the naked, without correspondent action. Faith is not and cannot be shown to be genuine, unless it is accompanied with corresponding acts; as our good wishes for the poor and needy can be shown to be genuine, when we have the means of aiding them, only by actually ministering to their necessities. In the one case, our wishes would be shown to he unmeaning and heartless; in the other,

our faith would be equally so. In regard to this passage, therefore, it may be observed,

(1,) that in fact faith is of no more value, and has no more evidence of genuineness when it is unaccompanied with good works, than such empty wishes for the welfare of the poor would be when unaccompanied with the means of relieving their wants. Faith is designed to lead to good works. It is intended to produce a holy life; a life of activity in the service of the Saviour. This is its very essence; it is what it always produces when it is genuine. Religion is not designed to be a cold abstraction; it is to be a living and vivifying principle.

(2.) There is a great deal of that kindness and charity in the world which is expressed by mere good wishes. If we really have not the means of relieving the poor and the needy, then the expression of a kind wish may be in itself an alleviation to their Sorrows, for even sympathy in such a case is of value, and it is much to us to know that others feel for us; but if we have the means, and the object is a worthy one, then such expressions are mere mockery, and aggravate rather than soothe the feelings of the sufferer. Such wishes will neither clothe nor feed them; and they will only make deeper the sorrows which we ought to heal. But how much of this is there in the world, when the sufferer cannot but feel that all these wishes, however kindly expressed, are hollow and false, and when he cannot but feel that relief would be easy!

(3.) In like manner there is much of this same kind of worthless faith in the world--faith that is dead; faith that produces no good works; faith that exerts no practical influence whatever on the life. The individual professes indeed to believe the truths of the gospel; he may be in the church of Christ; he would esteem it a gross calumny to be spoken of as an infidel; but as to any influence which his faith exerts over him, his life would be the same if he had never heard of the gospel. There is not one of the truths of religion which is bodied forth in his life; not a deed to which he is prompted by religion; not an act which could not be accounted for on the supposition that he has no true piety. In such a case, faith may with propriety be said to be dead. Being alone. Marg., by itself. The sense is, "being by itself;" that is, destitute of any accompanying fruits or results, it shows that it is dead. That which is alive bodies itself forth, produces

effects, makes itself visible; that which is dead produces no effect, and is as if it were not.1Jn 3:18

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

St. James brings in these words by way of dialogue, between a sincere believer that has true faith, and a falsehearted hypocrite that only pretends to it; thus, "Thou sayest thou hast true faith, though thou hast no works to evidence its truth; I say, I have true faith, because I have good works, which are the genuine effects and fruits of it. Come we now to the trial and let it appear who saith truth, thou or I; if thou that hast no works sayest true, prove thy faith to be true some other way. Works thou hast none, shew thy faith then be something else; but that is impossible, therefore thou vainly boastest of that which thou hast not; but, on the other side, says the sincere believer, I can make good what I say, proving the truth of my faith by the fruits of it is my works; this is a real demonstration that my faith is no vain ostentation as your's is." This way of arguing is very convincing; it grips the conscience of the hypocrite, and covers him with shame and confusion of face.

Learn hence, that good works are the evidences by which Christ will judge of our faith now, and according to which Christ will judge of us, and our faith at the great day. These two, faith and good works, ought to be as inseparable as light and the sun, as fire and heat. Obedience is the daughter of faith, and faith the parent and principle of obedience.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

As if the apostle had said, "Be thou either Jew of Christian, thou believest that there is a God, and assentest to the articles of religion: herein thou doest well, but this is no more than what the devils do: for they also believe and tremble; and if thou hast no better faith, and no better fruits of thy faith than they, thou hast the same reason to tremble which they have."

Observe here, 1. That a bare and naked assent to the truths of the gospel, yea, to the fundamental truths and articles of religion, is not faith that will justify and save. The devils have it, yet have no hopes of salvation with it; they believe that there is a God, and a Christ that died for others, though not for them; so that an atheist that does not

believe a God, is worse than a devil; for he believes that there is a God, whose being the Atheist denies.
Observe, 2. That horror is the fruit and effect of the devil's faith; the more they know of God, the more they dread him; the more they think of him, the more they tremble at him. O God! All knowledge of thee out of Christ is uncomfortable; thine attributes, which are in themselves dreadful and terrible, being beheld by us in thy Son, do yield comfort and sweetness to us; The devils believe, but tremble.

Thou believest that there is one God. One of the great and cardinal doctrines of religion is here selected as an illustration of all. The design of the apostle seems to have been to select one of the doctrines of religion, the belief of which would--if mere belief in any doctrine could--save the soul; and to show that even this might be held as an article of faith by those who could be supposed by no s one to have any claim to the name of Christian. He selects therefore, the great fundamental doctrine of all religion--the doctrine of the existence of one Supreme Being--and shows that if even this were held in such a way as it might be, and as it was held by devils, it could not save men. The apostle here is not to be supposed to be addressing such an one as Paul, who held to the doctrine that we are justified by faith; nor is he to be supposed to be combating the doctrine of Paul, as some have maintained, (Jas 2:1, the Introduction;) but he is to be regarded as addressing one who held, in the broadest and most unqualified sense, that provided there was faith, a man would be saved. To this he replies, that even the devils might have faith of a certain sort, and faith that would produce sensible effects on them of a certain kind, and still it could not be supposed that they had true religion, or that they would be saved. Why might not the same thing occur in regard to man?

Thou doest well. So far as this is concerned, or so far as it goes. It is a doctrine which ought to be held, for it is one of the great fundamental truths of religion.

The devils. The demons, (ταδαιμονια.) There is, properly, but one being spoken of in the New Testament as the devil--οδιαβολος, and οσαταν--though demons are frequently spoken of in the plural number. They are represented as evil spirits, subject to Satan, or under his control, and engaged with him in carrying out his plans of

wickedness. These spirits or demons were supposed to wander in desert and desolate places, (Mt 12:43,) or to dwell in the atmosphere, (Eph 2:2;) they were thought to have the power of working miracles, but not for good, (Rev 16:14; compare Jn 10:21;) to be hostile to mankind, (Jn 8:44;) to utter the heathen oracles, (Acts 16:17;) to lurk in the idols of the heathen, (1Cor 10:20;) and to take up their abodes in the bodies of men, afflicting them with various kinds of diseases, Mt 7:22; 9:34; Mt 10:8; 17:18; Mk 7:29-30; Lk 4:33; 8:27,30, et sape. It is of these evil spirits that the apostle speaks when he says this they believe.

Also, believe. That is, particularly, they believe in the existence of the one God. How far their knowledge may extend respecting God, we cannot know; but they are never represented in the Scriptures as denying his existence, or as doubting the great truths of religion. They are never described as atheists. That is a sin of this world only. They are not represented as skeptics. That, too, is a peculiar sin of the earth; and probably, in all the universe besides, there are no beings but those who dwell on this globe, who doubt or deny the existence of God, or the other great truths of religion.

And tremble. The word here used (φρισσω) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to be rough, uneven, jaggy, sc., with bristling hair; to bristle, to stand on end, as the hair does in a fright; and then to shudder or quake with fear, etc. Here the meaning is, that there was much more in the case referred to than mere speculative faith. There was a faith that produced some effect, and an effect of a very decided character. It did not, indeed, produce good works, or a holy life, but it made it manifest that there was faith; and, consequently, it followed that the existence of mere faith was not all that was necessary to save men, or to make it certain that they would be secure, unless it were held that the devils would be justified and saved by it. If they might hold such faith, and still remain in perdition, men might hold it, and go to perdition. A man should not infer, therefore, because he has faith, even that faith in God which will fill him with alarm, that therefore he is safe. He must have a faith which will produce another effect altogether--that which will lead to a holy life.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

But wilt thou know. Will you have a full demonstration of it; will you have the clearest proof in the case. The apostle evidently felt that the instances to which he was about to refer, those of Abraham and Rahab, were decisive. O vain man. The reference by this language is to a man who held an opinion that could not be defended. The word vain here used, (κενος,) means properly empty, as opposed to full--as empty hands, having nothing in them; then fruitless, or without utility or success; then false, fallacious. The meaning here, properly, would be "empty," in the sense of being void of understanding; and this would be a mild and gentle way of saying of one that he was foolish, or that he to maintained an argument that was without sense. James means, doubtless, represent it as a perfectly plain matter, a matter about which no man of sense could have any reasonable doubt. If we must call a man foolish, as is sometimes necessary, let us use as mild and inoffensive a term as possible--a term which, while it will convey our meaning, will not unnecessarily wound and irritate. That faith without works is dead. That the faith which does not produce good works is useless in the matter of salvation, he does not mean to say that it would produce no effect, for in the case of the demons it did produce trembling and alarm; but that it would be valueless in the matter of salvation. The faith of Abraham and of Rahab was entirely different from this.

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Was not Abraham our father. Our progenitor, our ancestor; using the word father, as frequently occurs in the Bible, to denote a remote ancestor. Mt 1:1. A reference to his and probably most of those to whom this epistle was addressed were of this character. Jas 2:1, the Introduction.

Justified by works. That is, in the sense in which James is maintaining that a man professing religion is to be justified by his works. He does not affirm that the ground of acceptance with God is that we keep the law, or are perfect; or that our good works make an atonement for our sins, and that it is on their account that we are pardoned; nor does he deny that it is necessary that a man should believe in order to be saved. In this sense he does not deny that men are justified by faith; and thus he does not contradict the doctrine of the apostle Paul. But he does teach that where there are no good

works, or where there is not a holy life, there is no true religion; that that faith which is not productive of good works is of no value; that if a man has that faith only, it would be impossible that he could be regarded as justified, or could be saved; and that consequently, in that large sense, a man is justified by his works; that is, they are the evidence that he is a justified man, or is regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker. The point on which the apostle has his eye is the nature of saving faith; and his design is to show that a mere faith which would produce no more effect than that of the demons did, could not save. In this he states no doctrine which contradicts that of Paul. The evidence to which he appeals in regard to faith, is good works and a holy life; and where that exists it shows that the faith is genuine. The case of Abraham is one directly in point. He showed that he had that kind of faith which was not dead. he gave the most affecting evidence that his faith was of such a kind as to lead him to implicit obedience, and to painful sacrifices. Such an act as that referred to--the act of offering up his son--demonstrated, if anything could, that his faith was genuine, and that his religion was deep and pure. In the sight of heaven and earth it would justify him as a righteous man, or would prove that he was a righteous man. In regard to the strength of his faith, and the nature of his obedience in this sacrifice, Heb 11:19. That the apostle here cannot refer to the act of justification as the term is commonly understood, referring by that to the moment when he was accepted of God as a righteous man, is clear from the fact that in a passage of the Scriptures which he himself quotes, that is declared to be consequent on his believing: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." The act here referred to occurred long subsequent to that, and was thus a fulfilment or Confirmation of the declaration of Scripture, which says that "he believed God." It showed that his faith was not merely speculative, but was an active principle, leading to holy living. Jas 2:23. This demonstrates that what the apostle refers to here is the evidence by which it is shown that a man's faith is genuine, and that he does not refer to the question whether the act of justification, where a sinner is converted, is solely in consequence of believing. Thus the case proves what James purposes to prove, that the faith which justifies is only that which leads to good works.

When he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar. This was long after he believed, and was an act which, if any could, would show that his

faith was genuine and sincere. On the meaning of this passage, Heb 11:17.

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

How faith wrought with his works. συνηργει. Co-operated with. The meaning of the word is, to work together with any one; to co-operate, (1Cor 16:16; 2Cor 6:1;) then to aid, or help, (Mk 16:20;) to contribute to the production of any result, where two or more persons or agents are united. Compare Rom 8:28. The idea here is, that the result in the case of Abraham, that is, his salvation, or his religion, was secured, not by one of these things alone, but that both with contributed to it. The result which was reached, to wit, his acceptance God, could not have been obtained by either one of them separately, but both, in some sense, entered into it. The apostle does not say that, in regard to the merit which justifies, they came in for an equal share, for he makes no affirmation on that point; he does not deny that in the sight of God, who foresees and knows all things, he was regarded as a justified man the moment he believed, but he looks at the result as it was, at Abraham as he appeared under the trial of his faith, and says that in that result there was to be seen the co-operation of faith and good works. Both contributed to the end, as they do now in all cases where there is true religion. And by works was faith made perfect. Made complete, finished, or entire. It was so carried out as to show its legitimate and fair results. This does not mean that the faith in itself was defective before this, and that the defect was remedied by good works; or that there is any deficiency in what the right kind of faith can do in the matter of justification, which is to be helped out by good works; but that there was that kind of completion which a thing has when it is fully developed, or is fairly carried out.

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith. That is, the fair and full meaning of the language of Scripture was expressed by this act, showing in the highest sense that his faith was genuine; or the declaration that he truly believed, was confirmed or established by this act. His faith was shown to be genuine; and the fair meaning of the declaration that he believed God was carried out in the subsequent act. The passage here referred to occurs in Gen 15:6.

That which it is said Abraham believed, or in which he believed God, was this: "This shall not be thine heir, (viz., Eliezer of Damascus,) but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir." And again, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be," Gen 15:3-5. The act of confiding in these promises, was that act of which it is said that "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The act of offering his son on the altar, by which James says the Scripture was fulfilled, occurred some twenty years afterwards. That act confirmed or fulfilled the declaration. It showed that his faith was genuine, and that the declaration that he believed in God was true; for what could do more to confirm that, than a readiness to offer his own son at the command of God? It cannot be supposed that James meant to say that Abraham was justified by works without respect to faith, or to deny that the primary ground of his justification in the sight of God was faith, for the very passage which he quotes shows that faith was the primary consideration: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed," etc. The meaning, therefore, can only be, that this declaration received its fair and full expression when Abraham, by an act of obedience of the most striking character, long after he first exercised that faith by which he was accepted of God, showed that his faith was genuine. If he had not thus obeyed, his faith would have been inoperative and of no value. As it was, his act showed that the declaration of the Scripture that, he "believed," was well founded.

Abraham believed God, and it was imputed, etc. Rom 4:3 for a full explanation of this passage.

And he was called the Friend of God. In virtue of his strong faith and obedience. See 2Chr 20:7: "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" Isa 41:8, "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." This was a most honourable appellation; but it is one which, in all eases, will result from true faith and obedience.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Ye see then. From the course of reasoning pursued, and the example referred to. How that by works a man is justified, and not by faith

only. Not by a cold, abstract, inoperative faith. It must be by a faith that shall produce good works, and whose existence will be shown to men by good works. As justification takes place in the sight of God, it is by faith, for he sees that the faith is genuine, and that it will produce good works if the individual who exercises faith shall live; and he justifies men in view of that faith, and of no other. If he sees that the faith is merely speculative; that it is cold and dead, and would not produce good works, the man is not justified in his sight. As a matter of fact, therefore, it is only the faith that produces good works that justifies; and good works, therefore, as the proper expression of the nature of faith, foreseen by God as the certain result of faith, and actually as seen by performed men, are necessary in order to justification. In other words, no man will be justified who has not a faith which will produce good works, and which is of an operative and practical character. The ground of justification in the case is faith, and that only; the evidence of it, the carrying it out, the proof of the existence of the faith, is good works; and thus men are justified and saved not by mere abstract and cold faith, but by a faith necessarily connected with good works, and where good works perform an important part. James, therefore, does not contradict Paul, but he contradicts a false explanation of Paul's doctrine, he does not deny that a man is justified in the sight of God by faith, for the very passage which he quotes shows that he believes that; but he does deny that a man is justified by a faith which would not produce good works, and which is not expressed by good works; and thus he maintains, as Paul always did, that nothing else than a holy life can show that a man is a true Christian, and is accepted of God.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works? In the same sense in which Abraham was, as explained above--showing by her act that her faith was genuine, and that it was not a mere cold and speculative assent to the truths of religion. Her act showed that she truly believed God. If that act had not been performed, the fact would have shown that her faith was not genuine, and she could not have been justified. God saw her faith as it was; he saw that it would produce acts of obedience, and he accepted her as righteous. The act which she performed was the public manifestation of her faith, the evidence that she was justified. Heb 11:31 for a full explanation of the case of Rahab. It may be observed here, that we are not to

suppose that everything in the life and character of this woman is commended. She is commended for her faith, and for the fair expression of it; a faith which, as it induced her to receive the messengers of the true God, and to send them forth in peace, and as it led her to identify herself with the people of God, was also influential, we have every reason to suppose, in inducing her to abandon her former course of life. When we commend the faith of a man who has been a profane swearer, or an adulterer, or a robber, or a drunkard, we do not commend his former life, or give a sanction to it. We commend that which has induced him to abandon his evil course, and to turn to the ways of righteousness. The more evil his former course has been, the more wonderful, and the more worthy of commendation, is that faith by which he is reformed and saved.

26 For as the body without the spirit [*or,* breath] is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

For as the body without the spirit is dead. Marg., breath. The Greek word πνευμα is commonly used to denote spirit or soul, as referring to the intelligent nature. The meaning here is the obvious one, that the body is animated or kept alive by the presence of the soul, and that when that is withdrawn, hope departs. The body has no life independent of the presence of the soul. So faith without works is dead also. There is as much necessity that faith and works should be united to constitute true religion, as there is that the body and soul should be united to constitute a living man. If good works do not follow, it is clear that there is no true and proper faith; none that justifies and saves. If faith produces no fruit of good living, that fact proves that it is dead, that it has no power, and that it is of no value. This shows that James was not arguing against real and genuine faith, nor against its importance in justification, but against the supposition that mere faith was all that was necessary to save a man, whether it was accompanied by good works or not. He maintains that if there is genuine faith it will always be accompanied by good works, and that it is only that faith which can justify and save. If it leads to no practical holiness of life, it is like the body without the soul, and is of no value whatever. James and Paul both agree in the necessity of true faith in order to salvation; they both agree that the tendency of true faith is to produce a holy life; they both agree that where there is not a holy life there is no true religion, and that a man cannot be saved. We may learn, then, from the whole doctrine of the New Testament on the subject, that unless we believe in the Lord

Jesus we cannot be justified before God; and that unless our faith is of that kind which will produce holy living, it has no more of the characteristics of true religion than a dead body has of a living man.

James-3

The Tongue

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Verse 1. My brethren, be not many masters. "Be not many of you teachers." The evil referred to is that where many desired to be teachers, though but few could be qualified for the office, and though, in fact, comparatively few were required. A small number, well qualified, would better discharge the duties of the office, and do more good, than many would; and there would be great evil in having many crowding themselves unqualified into the office. The word here rendered masters (διδασκαλοι) should have been rendered teachers. It is so rendered in Jn 3:2; Acts 13:1; Rom 2:20; 1Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; 1Timm 2:11; 4:3; Heb 5:12; though it is elsewhere frequently rendered master. It has, however, in it primarily the notion of teaching, (διδασκω,) even when rendered master; and the word master is often used in the New Testament, as it is with us, to denote an instructor--as the "schoolmaster". Compare Mt 10:24-25; 22:16; Mk 10:17; 12:19, et al. The word is not properly used in the sense of master, as distinguished from a servant, but as distinguished from a disciple or learner. Such a position, indeed, implies authority, but it is authority based not on power, but on superior qualifications. The connexion implies that the word is used in that sense in this place; and the evil reprehended is that of seeking the office of public instructor, especially the sacred office. It would seem that this was a prevailing fault among those to whom the apostle wrote. This desire was common among the Jewish people, who coveted the name and the office of Rabbi, equivalent to that here used, (compare Mt 23:7,) and who were ambitious to be doctors and teachers. See Rom 2:19; 1Timm 1:7. This fondness for the office of teachers they naturally carried with them into the Christian church when they were converted, and it is this which the apostle here rebukes. (A proof of some importance that this prevailed in the early Christian church, among those who had been Jews, is

furnished by a passage in the Apocryphal work called "The Ascension of Isaiah the Prophet;" a work which Dr. Lawrence. the editor, supposes was written not far from the apostolic age. "in those days (the days of the Messiah) shall many be attached to office, destitute of wisdom; multitudes of iniquitous elders and pastors, injurious to their flocks, and addicted to rapine, nor shall the holy pastors themselves diligently discharge their duty" chap. iii. 23-24). The same spirit the passage before us would rebuke now, and for the same reasons; for although a man should be willing to become a public instructor in religion when called to it by the Spirit and Providence of God, and should esteem it a privilege when so called, yet there would be scarcely anything more injurious to the cause of true religion, or that would tend more to produce disorder and confusion, than a prevailing desire of the prominence and importance which a man has in virtue of being a public instructor. If there is anything which ought to be managed with extreme prudence and caution, it is that of introducing men into the Christian ministry. Compare 1Timm 5:22; Acts 1:15-26; 13:2-3.

Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation, (μειζονκριμα) Or rather, a severer judgment; that is, we shall have a severer trial, and give a stricter account. The word here used does not necessarily mean condemnation, but judgment, trial, account; and the consideration which the apostle suggests is not that those who were public teachers would be condemned, but that there would be a much more solemn account to be rendered by them than by other men, and that they ought duly to reflect on this in seeking the office of the ministry. He would carry them in anticipation before the judgment-seat, and have them determine the question of entering the ministry there. No better "stand-point" can be taken in making up the mind in regard to this work; and if that had been the position assumed in order to estimate the work, and to make up the mind in regard to the choice of this profession, many a one who has sought the office would have been deterred from it; and it may be added, also, that many a pious and educated youth would have sought the office, who has devoted his life to other pursuits. A young man, when about to make choice of a calling in life, should place himself by anticipation at the judgment-bar of Christ, and ask himself how human pursuits and plans will appear there. If that were the point of view taken, how many would have been deterred from the ministry

who have sought it with a view to honour or emolument! How many, too, who have devoted themselves to the profession of the law, to the army or navy, or to the pursuits of elegant literature, would have felt that it was their duty to serve God in the ministry of reconciliation? How many at the close of life, in the ministry and out of it, feel, when too late to make a change, that they have wholly mistaken the purpose for which they should have lived!

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

For in many things we offend all. We all offend. The word here rendered offend, means to stumble, to fall; then to err, to fail in duty; and the meaning here is, that all were liable to commit error, and that this consideration should induce men to be cautious in seeking an office where an error would be likely to do so much injury. The particular thing, doubtless, which the apostle had in his eye, was the peculiar liability to commit error, or to do wrong with the tongue. Of course, this liability is very great in an office where the very business is public speaking. If anywhere the improper use of the tongue will do mischief, it is in the office of a religious teacher; and to show the danger of this, and the importance of caution in seeking that office, the apostle proceeds to show what mischief the tongue is capable of effecting. If any man offend not in word. In his speech; in the use of his tongue.

The same is a perfect man. Perfect in the sense in which the apostle immediately explains himself; that he is able to keep every other member of his body in subjection. His object is not to represent the man as absolutely spotless in every sense, and as wholly free from sin, for he had himself just said that "all offend in many things;" but the design is to show that if a man can control his tongue, he has complete dominion over himself, as much as a man has over a horse by the bit, or as a steersman has over a ship if he has hold of the rudder. He is perfect in that sense, that he has complete control over himself, and will not be liable to error in anything. The design is to show the important position which the tongue occupies, as governing the whole man. On the meaning of the word perfect, Job 1:1.

And able also to bridle the whole body. To control his whole body, that is, every other part of himself, as a man does a horse by the bridle. The word rendered "to bridle," means to lead or guide with a bit; then to rein in, to check, to moderate, to restrain. A man always has complete government over himself if he has the entire control of his tongue. It is that by which he gives expression to his thoughts and passions; and if that is kept under proper restraint, all the rest of his members are as easily controlled as the horse is by having the control of the bit.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us;
and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of
fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm,
whithersoever the governor listeth.

Behold also the ships. This illustration is equally striking and obvious. A ship is a large object. It seems to be unmanageable by its vastness, and it is also impelled by driving storms. Yet it is easily managed by a small rudder; and he that has control of that, has control of the ship itself. So with the tongue. It is a small member as compared with the body; in its size not unlike the rudder as compared with the ship. Yet the proper control of the tongue in respect to its influence on the whole man, is not unlike the control of the rudder in its power over the ship. Which though they be so great. So great in themselves, and in comparison with the rudder. Even such. bulky and unwieldy objects are controlled by a very small thing. And are driven of fierce winds. By winds that would seem to leave the ship beyond control. It is probable that by the "fierce winds" here as impelling the ship, the apostle meant to illustrate the power of the passions in impelling man. Even a man under impetuous passion would be restrained, if the tongue is properly controlled, as the ship driven by the winds is by the helm. Yet are they turned about with a very small helm. The ancient rudder or helm was made in the shape of an oar. This was very small when compared with the size of the vessels about as small as the tongue is as compared with the body. Whithersoever the governor listeth. As the helmsman pleases. It is entirely under his control.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.
Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

Even so, the tongue is a little member. Little compared with the body--as the bit or the rudder is, compared with the horse or the ship;

And boasteth great things. The design of the apostle is to illustrate the power and influence of the tongue. This may be done in a great many respects: and the apostle does it by referring to its boasting; to the effects which it produces, resembling that of fire, (Jas 3:6;) to its untameableness, (Jas 3:8-9;) and to its giving utterance to the most inconsistent and incongruous thoughts, Jas 3:9-10. The particular idea here is, that the tongue seems to be conscious of its influence and power, and boasts largely of what it can do. The apostle means doubtless to convey the idea that it boasts not unjustly of its importance. It has all the influence in the world, for good or for evil, which it claims. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Marg., wood. The Greek word (υλη) means a wood, forest, grove; and then fire-wood, fuel. This is the meaning here. The sense is, that a very little fire is sufficient to ignite a large quantity of combustible materials, and that the tongue produces effects similar to that. A spark will kindle a lofty pile; and a word spoken by the tongue may set a neighbourhood or a village "in a flame."

6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

And the tongue is a fire. In this sense, that it produces a "blaze," or a great conflagration. It produces a disturbance and an agitation that may be compared with the conflagration often produced by a spark.

A world of iniquity. A little world of evil in itself. This is a very expressive phrase, and is similar to one which we often employ, as when we speak of a town as being a world in miniature. We mean by it that it is an epitome of the world; that all that there is in the work is represented there on a small scale. So when the tongue is spoken of as being "a world of iniquity," it is meant that all kinds of evil that are in the world are exhibited there in miniature; it seems to concentrate all sorts of iniquity that exist on the earth. And what evil is there which may not be originated or fomented by the tongue? What else is there that might with so much propriety be represented as a little world of iniquity? With all the good which it does, who can estimate the amount of evil which it causes. Who can measure the evils which arise from scandal, and slander, and profaneness, and perjury, and falsehood, and blasphemy, and obscenity, and the inculcation of error, by the tongue? Who can gauge the amount of

broils, and contentions, and strifes, and wars, and suspicions, and enmities, and alienations among friends and neighbours, which it produces? Who can number the evils produced by the "honeyed" words of the seducer; or by the tongue of the eloquent in the maintenance of error, and the defence of wrong? If all men were dumb, what a portion of the crimes of the world would soon cease! If all men would speak only that which ought to be spoken, what a change would come over the face of human affairs!

So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body. It stains or pollutes the whole body. It occupies a position and relation so no portion which is not affected by it. Of the truth of this, no one can have any doubt. There is nothing else pertaining to us as moral and intellectual beings, which exerts such an influence over ourselves as the tongue. A man of pure conversation is understood and felt to be pure in every respect; but who has any confidence in the virtue of the blasphemer, or the man of obscene lips, or the calumniator and slanderer? We always regard such a man as corrupt to the core.

And setteth on fire the course of nature. The margin is, "the wheel of nature." The Greek word also (τροχος) means a wheel, or anything made far revolving and running. Then it means the course run by a wheel; a circular course or circuit. The word rendered nature, (γενεσις,) means, procreation, birth, nativity; and therefore the phrase means, literally, the wheel of birth--that is, the wheel which is set in motion at birth, and which runs on through life.--Rob. Lex. sub voce γενεσις. It may be a matter of doubt whether this refers to successive generations, or to the course of individual life. The more literal sense would be that which refers to an individual; but perhaps the apostle meant to speak in a popular sense, and thought of the affairs of the world as they roll on from age to age, as all enkindled by the tongue, keeping the world in a constant blaze of excitement. Whether applied to an individual life, or to the world at large, every one can see the justice of the comparison. One naturally thinks, when this expression is used, of a chariot driven on with so much speed that its wheels by their rapid motion become self-ignited, and the chariot moves on amidst flames.

And it is set on fire of hell. Hell, or Gehenna, is represented as a place where the fires continually burn: Mt 5:22. The idea here is, that that which causes the tongue to do so much evil derives its origin from hell. Nothing could better characterize much of that which the tongue does, than to say that it has its origin in hell, and has the spirit which reigns there. The very spirit of that world of fire and wickedness--a spirit of falsehood, and slander, and blasphemy, and pollution--seems to inspire the tongue. The image which seems to have been before the mind of the apostle was that of a torch which enkindles and burns everything as it goes along--a torch itself lighted at the fires of hell. One of the most striking descriptions of the woes and curses which there may be in hell, would be to portray the sorrows caused on the earth by the tongue.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

For every kind of beasts. The apostle proceeds to state another thing showing the power of the tongue, the fact that it is ungovernable, and that there is no power of man to keep it under control. Everything else but this has been tamed. It is unnecessary to refine on the expressions used here, by attempting to prove that it is literally true that every species of beasts, and birds, and fishes has been tamed. The apostle is to be understood as speaking in a general and popular sense, showing the remarkable power of man over those things which are by nature savage and wild. The power of man in taming wild beasts is wonderful. Indeed, it is to be remembered that nearly all those beasts which we now speak of as "domestic" animals, and which we are accustomed to see only when they are tame, were once fierce and savage races. This is the ease with the horse, the ox, the ass, (Job 11:12; and Job 39:5,) the swine, the dog, the cat, etc. The editor of the Pictorial Bible well remarks, "There is perhaps no kind of creature, to which man has access, which might not be tamed by him with proper perseverance. The ancients seem to have made more exertions to this end, and with much better success, than ourselves. The examples given by Pliny, of creatures tamed by men, relate to elephants, lions, and tigers, among beasts; to the eagle, among birds; to asps, and others serpents; and to crocodiles, and various fishes, among the inhabitants of the water. Nat. Hist. viii. 9, 16, 17; x. 5, 44. The lion was very commonly tamed by the ancient Egyptians, and trained to assist both in hunting

and in war." Notes in loc. The only animal which it has been supposed has defied the power of man to tame it, is the hyena, and even this, it is said, has been subdued, in modern times. There is a passage in Euripides which has a strong resemblance to this of James:-- βραχυτοισθενοςανερος, αλλαποικιλιαςπραπιδων δαμαφυλαποντου, χθονιωνταεριωντεπαιδευματα

"Small is the power which nature has given to man; but, by various acts of his superior understanding, he has subdued the tribes of the sea, the earth, and the air." Compare on this subject, the passages quoted by Pricaeus in the Critici Sacri, in loc.

And of birds. It is a common thing to tame birds, and even the most wild are susceptible of being tamed. A portion of the feathered race, as the hen, the goose, the duck, is thoroughly domesticated. The pigeon, the martin, the hawk, the eagle, maybe; and perhaps there are none of that race which might not be made subject to the will of man.

And of serpents. The ancients showed great skill in this art, in reference to asps and other venomous serpents, and it is common now in India. In many instances, indeed, it is known that the fangs of the serpents are extracted; but even when this is not done, they who practise the art learn to handle them with impunity.

And of things, in the sea. As the crocodile, mentioned by Pliny. It may be affirmed with confidence that there is no animal which might not, by proper skill and perseverance, be rendered tame, or made obedient to the will of man. It is not necessary, however, to understand the apostle as affirming that literally every animal has been tamed, or ever can be. He evidently speaks in a popular sense of the great power which man undeniably has over all kinds of wild animals--over the creation beneath him.

8 but the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

But the tongue can no man tame. This does not mean that it is never brought under control, but that it is impossible effectually and certainly to subdue it. It would be possible to subdue and

domesticate any kind of beasts, but this could not be done with the tongue, It is an unruly evil. An evil without restraint, to which no certain effectual check can be applied. Of the truth of this no one can have any doubt, who looks at the condition of the world. Full of deadly poison. That is, it acts on the happiness of man, and on the peace of society, as poison does on the human frame. The allusion here seems to be to the bite of a venomous reptile. Compare Ps 140:3, "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips." Rom 3:13, "With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." Nothing would better describe the mischief that may be done by the tongue. There is no sting of a serpent that does so much evil in the world; there is no poison more deadly to the frame than the poison of the tongue is to the happiness of man. Who, for example, can stand before the power of the slanderer? What mischief can be done in society that can be compared with that which he, may do?

'Tis slander;' Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie All corners of the world: kings, queens, and states, Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave This viperous slander enters. Shakspere, in Cymbeline

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Therewith bless we God. We men do this; that is, all this is done by the tongue. The apostle goes not mean that the same man does this, but that all this is done by the same organ--the tongue. Even the Father. Who sustains to us the relation of a Father. The point in the remark of the apostle is, the absurdity of employing the tongue in such contradictory uses as to bless one who has to us the relation of a Father and to curse any being, especially those who are made in his image. The word bless here is used in the sense of praise, thank, worship.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. The meaning here may be, either that out of the mouth of man two such opposite things proceed, not referring to the same individual, but to different persons; or, out of the mouth of the same individual. Both of these are true; and both are equally incongruous and wrong. No organ should be devoted to uses so unlike, and the mouth should be

employed in giving utterance only to that which is just, benevolent, and good. It is true, however, that the mouth is devoted to these opposite employments; and that while one part of the race employ it purposes of praise, the other employ it in uttering maledictions. It is also true of many individuals that at one time they praise their Maker, and then, with the sane organ, calumniate, and slander, and revile their fellow-men. After an act of solemn devotion in the house of God, the professed worshipper goes forth with the feelings of malice in his heart, and the language of slander, detraction, or even blasphemy on his lips. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. They are as incongruous as it would be for the same fountain to send forth both salt water and fresh; or for the same tree to bear different kinds of fruit.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs ? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Such a thing is impossible in nature, and equally absurd in morals. A fig-tree bears only figs; and so the tongue ought to give utterance only to one class of sentiments and emotions. These illustrations are very striking, and show the absurdity of that which the apostle reproves. At the same time, they accomplish the main purpose which he had in view, to repress the desire of becoming public teachers without suitable qualifications. They show the power of the tongue; they show what a dangerous power it is for a man to wield who has not the proper qualifications; they show that no one should put himself in the position where he may wield this power without such a degree of tried prudence, wisdom, discretion, and piety, that there shall be a moral certainty that he will use it aright.

The Wisdom from Above

13 Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? This is spoken with reference to the work of public teaching; and the meaning of the apostle is, that if there were such persons among them, they should be selected for that office. The characteristics here stated as necessary qualifications, are wisdom and knowledge. Those, it would seem, on which reliance had been placed, were

chiefly those which were connected with a ready elocution, or the mere faculty of speaking. The apostle had stated the dangers which would follow if reliance were placed on that alone, and he now says that something more is necessary, that the main qualifications for the office are wisdom and knowledge. No mere power of speaking, however eloquent it might be, was a sufficient qualification. The primary things to be sought in reference to that office were wisdom and knowledge, and they who were endowed with these things should be selected for public instructors.

Let him shew out of a good conversation. From a correct and consistent life and deportment. On the meaning of the word conversation, Php 1:27. The meaning here is, that there should be an upright life, and that this should be the basis in forming the judgment in appointing persons to fill stations of importance, and especially in the office of teaching in the church.

His works. His acts of uprightness and piety. He should be a man of a holy life.

With meekness of wisdom. With a wise and prudent gentleness of life; not in a noisy, arrogant, and boastful manner. True wisdom is always meek, mild, gentle; and that is the wisdom which is needful, if men would become public teachers. It is remarkable that the truly wise man is always characterized by a calm spirit, a mild and placid demeanour, and by a gentle, though firm, enunciation of his sentiments. A noisy, boisterous, and stormy declaimer we never select as a safe counsellor. He may accomplish much in his way by his bold eloquence of manner, but we do not put him in places where we need far-reaching thought, or where we expect the exercise of profound philosophical views. In an eminent degree, the ministry of the gospel should be characterized by a calm, gentle, and thoughtful wisdom--a wisdom which shines in all the actions of the life.

As if our apostle had said, "If any among you desire to approve yourselves more knowing than others, wiser and better than others, as you would be thought when you censure and despise others, shew it to the world by a better conversation, by your abounding

fruitfulness in good works, and by such meekness of spirit as will be an evidence of true wisdom."

Hence we learn, that the wise man is a meek and patient man; as pride and folly, so wisdom and meekness, are companions; the more wisdom a man has, the more he can check himself, and curb his passion: Moses is renowned in Scripture for his wisdom, and for meekness; we all affect the reputation of wisdom, let us discover it by humility, in being lowly within ourselves: and by our meekness in bearing with and forbearing one another; yet must our meekness be a wise meekness, it must be opposite to fierceness, but not to zeal; Moses was very meek in his own cause, but as hot as fire in the cause of God; meekness and zeal are consistent, let us then shew out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle points at the root of all tongue evils; we pretend zeal and justice, zeal for God, and doing right to ourselves; but the true cause is envy, called bitter envying, as being bitter in its root, bitter in its fruit, bitter to others, bitter to ourselves; this is a painful evil, an unprofitable evil, a foolish, sinful evil; it makes another's good our grief.
But why so?

The good of another is no hurt to us; we have not the less because another has more; Leah's fruitfulness was no cause of Rachel's barrenness; why then should it be the occasion of Rachel's envy? Thy portion is not impaired because thy brother's is increased.

Observe, 2. How envy and strife are here joined together; if you have envying and strife in your hearts; when envy is found in the heart, strife will soon be found in the tongue, for envy is the mother of strife; natural corruption doth most of all betray itself by envy; it has an early spring, and a late autumn: we have it as soon as we come into the world, and it is a hard matter to leave it before we go out of it again: children suck it in with their milk, and the old man buries it in his coffin.

Observe, 3. What are the bitter effects and fruits of envy and strife, namely, confusion, and every evil work; an envious spirit is an unquiet and wicked spirit; the devil worketh by no instruments more than by envious, discontented, and malicious persons; pride and envy were the two first sins that crept into the world; the first man was ruined by pride, the second destroyed by envy, the whole world could not hold two brothers when the one was envied by the other: Cain's envy tasted blood, and verily the sinner's envy thirsts after it; well therefore may the apostle say, Where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

This wisdom descendeth not from above. 1Cor 3:3. The wisdom here referred to is that carnal or worldly wisdom which produces strife and contention; that kind of knowledge which leads to self-conceit, and which prompts a man to defend his opinions with overheated zeal. In the contentions which are in the world, in church and state, in neighbourhoods and families, at the bar, in political life, and in theological disputes, even where there is the manifestation of enraged and irascible feeling, there is often much of a certain kind of wisdom. There is learning, shrewdness, tact, logical skill, subtle and skilful argumentation--"making the worse appear the better reason;" but all this is often connected with a spirit so narrow, bigoted, and contentious, as to show clearly that it has not its origin in heaven. The spirit which is originated there is always connected with gentleness, calmness, and a love of truth. But is earthly. Has its origin in this world, and partakes of its spirit. It is such as men exhibit who are governed only by worldly maxims and principles. Sensual. Marg., natural. The meaning is, that it has its origin in our sensual rather than in our intellectual and moral nature. It is that which takes counsel of our natural appetites and propensities, and not of high and spiritual influences. Devilish. Demoniacal, (δαιμονιωδης) Such as the demons exhibit. Jas 2:19. There may be indeed talent in it, but there is the intermingling of malignant passions, and "it leads to contentions, strifes, divisions, and "every evil work."

16 For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion. Marg.:, tumult, or unquietness. Everything is unsettled and agitated. There is no mutual confidence; there is no union of plan and effort; there is no co-operation in promoting a common object; there is no stability in any plan; for a purpose, though for good, formed by one portion, is defeated by another. And every evil work. The truth of this no one can have any doubt who has observed the effects in a family or neighbourhood where a spirit of strife prevails. Love and harmony of course are banished; all happiness disappears; all prosperity is at an end. In place of the peaceful virtues which ought to prevail, there springs up every evil passion that tends to mar the peace of a community. Where this spirit prevails in a church, it is of course impossible to expect any progress in Divine things; and in such a church any effort to do good is vain.

"The Spirit, like a peaceful dove, Flies from the realms of noise and strife."

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

But the wisdom that is from above. 1Cor 2:6. The wisdom which has a heavenly origin, or which is from God. The man who is characterized by that wisdom will be pure, peaceable, etc. This does not refer to the doctrines of religion, but to its spirit.

Is first pure. That is, the first effect of it on the mind is to make it pure. The influence on the man is to make him upright, sincere, candid, holy. The word here used (αγνος) is that which would be applied to one who is innocent, or free from crime or blame. Compare Php 4:8; 1Timm 5:22; 1Jn 3:3, where the word is rendered, as here, pure; 2Cor 7:11, where it is rendered clear, [in this matter;] 2Cor 11:2; Tit 2:5; 1Pet 3:2, where it is rendered chaste. The meaning here is, that the first and immediate effect of religion is not on the intellect, to make it more enlightened; or on the imagination, to make it more discursive and brilliant; or on the memory and judgment, to make them clearer and stronger; but it is to purify the heart, to make the man upright, inoffensive, and good. This passage should not be applied, as it often is, to the doctrines of religion, as if it were the first duty of a church to keep itself free from errors in

doctrine, and that this ought to be sought even in preference to the maintenance of peace--as if it meant that in doctrine a church should be "first pure, then peaceable;" but it should be applied to the individual consciences of men, as showing the effect of religion on the heart and life. The first thing which it produces is to make the man himself pure and good; then follows the train of blessings which the apostle enumerates as flowing from that. It is true that a church should be pure in doctrinal belief, but that is not the truth taught here. It is not true that the Scripture teaches, here or elsewhere, that purity of doctrine is to be preferred to a peaceful spirit; or that it always leads to peaceful spirit; or that it is proper for professed Christians and Christian ministers to sacrifice, as is often done, a peaceful spirit, in an attempt to preserve purity of doctrine. Most of the persecutions in the church have grown out of this maxim. This led to the establishment of the Inquisition; this kindled the fires of Smithfield; this inspirited Laud and his friends; this has been the origin of no small part of the schisms in the church. A pure spirit is the best promoter of peace, and will do more than anything else to secure the prevalence of truth.

Then peaceable. The effect of true religion --the wisdom which is from above--will be to dispose a man to live in peace with all others. Rom 14:19; Heb 12:14.

Gentle. Mild, inoffensive, clement. The word here used (επιεικης) is rendered moderation in Php 4:6; patient in 1Timm 3:3; and gentle in Tit 3:2; Jas 3:17; 1Pet 2:18. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. Every one has a clear idea of the virtue of gentleness--gentleness of spirit, of deportment, and of manners; and every one can see that that is the appropriate spirit of religion. 2Cor 10:1. It is from this word that we have derived the word gentleman; and the effect of true religion is to make every one, in the proper and best sense of the term, a gentleman. How can a man have evidence that he is a true Christian, who is not such? The highest title which can be given to a man is that he is a Christian gentleman.

And easy to be entreated. The word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means easily persuaded, compliant. Of course, this refers only to cases where it is right and proper to be easily persuaded and complying. It cannot refer to things which are in themselves wrong. The sense is, that he who is under the influence

of the wisdom which is from above, is not a stiff, stern, obstinate, unyielding man. He does not take a position, and then hold it whether right or wrong; he is not a man on whom no arguments or persuasions can have any influence. He is not one who cannot be affected by any appeals which may be made to him on the grounds of patriotism, justice, or benevolence; but is one who is ready to yield when truth requires him to do it, and who is willing to sacrifice his own convenience for the good of others. See this illustrated in the ease of the apostle Paul, in 1Cor 9:20-22. 1Cor 9:20-22.

Full of mercy. Merciful; disposed to show compassion to others. This is one of the results of the wisdom that is from above, for it makes us like God, the "Father of mercies." Mt 5:7.

And good fruits. The fruits of good living; just, benevolent, and kind actions. Php 1:11; 2Cor 9:10. Compare Jas 2:14-26. Without partiality. Marg., "or wrangling." The word here used (αδιακριτος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, not to be distinguished. Here it may mean either of the following things:

(a) not open to distinction or doubt; that is, unambiguous, so that there shall be no doubt about its origin or nature;

(b) making no distinction, that is, in the treatment of others, or impartial towards them; or

(c) without strife, from διακρινω, to contend. The second meaning here suggested seems best to accord with the sense of the passage; and according to this the idea is, that the wisdom which is from above, or true religion, makes us impartial in our treatment of others: that is, we are not influenced by a regard to dress, rank, or station, but we are disposed to do equal justice to all, according to their moral worth, and to show kindness to all, according to their wants. See Jas 2:1-4. And without hypocrisy. What it professes to be; sincere. There is no disguise or mask assumed. What the man pretends to be, he is. This is everywhere the nature of true religion. It has nothing of its own of which to be ashamed, and which needs to be concealed; its office is not to hide or conceal anything that is wrong. It neither is a mask, nor does it need a mask. If such is the nature of the "wisdom which is from above," who is there that

should be ashamed of it? Who is there that should not desire that its blessed influence should spread around the world?

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

And the fruit of righteousness. That which the righteousness here referred to produces, or that which is the effect of true religion. The meaning is, that righteousness or true religion produces certain results on the life, like the effects of seed sown in good ground. Righteousness or true religion as certainly produces such effects, as seed that is sown produces a harvest.

Is sown in peace. Is scattered over the world in a peaceful manner. That is, it is not done amidst contentions, and brawls, and strifes. The farmer sows his seed in peace. The fields are not sown amidst the tumults of a mob, or the excitements of a battle or a camp. Nothing is more calm, peaceful, quiet, and composed, than the farmer, as he walks with measured tread over his fields, scattering his seed. So it is in sowing the "seed of the kingdom," in preparing for the great harvest of righteousness in the world. It is done by men of peace; it is done in peaceful scenes, and with a peaceful spirit; it is not in the tumult of war, or amidst the hoarse brawling of a mob. In a pure and holy life; in the peaceful scenes of the sanctuary and the Sabbath; by noiseless and unobtrusive labourers, the seed is scattered over the world, and the result is seen in an abundant harvest in producing peace and order.

Of them that make peace. By those who desire to produce peace, or who are of a peaceful temper and disposition. They are engaged everywhere in scattering these blessed seeds of peace, contentment, and order; and the result shall be a glorious harvest for themselves and for mankind--a harvest rich and abundant on earth and in heaven. The whole effect, therefore, of religion, is to produce peace. It is all peace--peace in its origin and in its results; in the heart of the individual, and in society; on earth, and in heaven. The idea with which the apostle commenced this chapter seems to have been that such persons only should be admitted to the office of public teachers. From that, the mind naturally turned to the effect of religion in general; and he states that in the ministry and out of it; in the heart of the individual and on society at large; here and hereafter,

the effect of religion is to produce peace. Its nature is peaceful as it exists in the heart, and as it is developed in the world; and wherever and however it is manifested, it is like seed sown, not amid the storms of war and the contentions of battle, but in the fields of quiet husbandry, producing in rich abundance a harvest of peace. In its origin, and in all its results, it is productive only of contentment, sincerity, goodness, and peace. Happy he who has this religion in his heart; happy he who with liberal hand scatters its blessings broadcast over the world!

James-4

Friendship with the World

1 From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

Barnes:

From whence come wars and fightings among you? Marg., brawlings. The reference is to strifes and contentions of all kinds; and the question then, as it is now, was an important one, what was their source or origin? The answer is given in the succeeding part of the verse. Some have supposed that the apostle refers here to the contests and seditions existing among the Jews, which afterwards broke out in rebellion against the Roman authority, and which led to the overthrow of the Jewish nation. But the more probable reference is to domestic broils, and to the strifes of sects and parties; to the disputes which were carried on among the Jewish people, and which perhaps led to scenes of violence, and to popular outbreaks among themselves. When the apostle says "among you," it is not necessary to suppose that he refers to those who were members of the Christian church as actually engaged in these strifes, though he was writing to such; but he speaks of them as a part of the Jewish people, and refers to the contentions which prevailed among them as a people--contentions in which those who were Christian converts were in great danger of participating, by being drawn into their controversies, and partaking of the spirit of strife which existed among their countrymen. It is known that such a spirit of contention prevailed among the Jews at that time in an eminent degree, and it was well to put those among them who professed to be Christians

on their guard against such a spirit, by stating the causes of all wars and contentious. The solution which the apostle has given of the causes of the strifes prevailing then, will apply substantially to all the wars which have ever existed on the earth.

Come they not hence, even of your lusts? Is not this the true source of all war and contention? The word rendered lusts is in the margin rendered pleasures. This is the usual meaning of the word, (ηδονη;) but it is commonly applied to the pleasures of sense, and thence denotes desire, appetite, lust. It may be applied to any desire of sensual gratification, and then to the indulgence of any corrupt propensity of the mind. The lust or desire of rapine, of plunder, of ambition, of fame, of a more extended dominion, would be properly embraced in the meaning of the word. The word would equally comprehend the spirit-which leads to a brawl in the street, and that which prompted to the conquests of Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon. All this is the same spirit evinced on a larger or smaller scale.

That war in your members. The word member (μελος) denotes, properly, a limb or member of the body; but it is used in the New Testament to denote the members of the body collectively; that is, the body itself as the seat of the desires and passions, Rom 6:13,19; 7:5,23; Col 3:5. The word war here refers to the conflict between those passions which have their seat in the flesh, and the better principles of the mind and conscience, producing a state of agitation and conflict. Rom 7:23. Compare Gal 5:17. Those corrupt passions which have their seat in the flesh, the apostle says are the causes of war. Most of the wars which have occurred in the world can be traced to what the apostle here calls lusts. The desire of booty, the love of conquest, the ambition for extended rule, the gratification of revenge, these and similar causes have led to all the wars that have desolated the earth. Justice, equity, the fear of God, the spirit of true religion, never originated any war, but the corrupt passions of men have made the earth one great battle-field. If true religion existed among all men, there would be no more war. War always supposes that wrong has been done on one side or the other, and that one party or the other, or both, is indisposed to do right. The spirit of justice,

equity, and truth, which the religion of Christ would implant in the human heart, would put an end. to war for ever.

Burkitt:

The Jews, to whom St. James directed this epistle, had at that time great wars and fightings, not only with their neighbours, but even among themselves: in every city there were wars and fightings among them.

Now, the apostle here puts it to their consciences to tell and declare whence these animosities and contentions, those wars and fightings, did proceed; come they not hence, even from your lusts?
Plainly intimating, that the cause of all civil dissentions are men's corruptions: War stirs first within, before it breaks forth without; were there not a fight in ourselves, there would be no fighting with others. Lust within is the make-bait in all societies and communities without. Pride and covetousness, envy and ambition, make men injurious to one another; worldly and sensual lusts first war in ourselves, before they disturb the common peace.

JFB:

whence—The cause of quarrels is often sought in external circumstances, whereas internal lusts are the true origin. wars, &c.—contrasted with the "peace" of heavenly wisdom. "Fightings" are the active carrying on of "wars." The best authorities have a second "whence" before "fightings." Tumults marked the era before the destruction of Jerusalem when James wrote. He indirectly alludes to these. The members are the first seat of war; thence it passes to conflict between man and man, nation and nation. come they not, &c.—an appeal to their consciences. lusts—literally, "pleasures," that is, the lusts which prompt you to "desire" (see on Jas 4:2) pleasures; whence you seek self at the cost of your neighbor, and hence flow "fightings." that war—"campaign, as an army of soldiers encamped within" [ALFORD] the soul; tumultuously war against the interests of your fellow men, while lusting to advance self. But while warring thus against others they (without his knowledge) war against the soul of the man himself, and against the Spirit; therefore they must be "mortified" by the Christian.

MHC:

The apostle here reproves the Jewish Christians for their wars, and for their lusts as the cause of them: Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members, Jam 4:1 The Jews were a very seditious people, and had therefore frequent wars with the Romans; and they were a very quarrelsome divided people, often fighting among themselves; and many of those corrupt Christians against whose errors and vices this epistle was written seem to have fallen in with the common quarrels. Hereupon, our apostle informs them that the origin of their wars and fightings was not (as they pretended) a true zeal for their country, and for the honour of God, but that their prevailing lusts were the cause of all. Observe hence, What is sheltered and shrouded under a specious pretence of zeal for God and religion often comes from men's pride, malice, covetousness, ambition, and revenge. The Jews had many struggles with the Roman power before they ere entirely destroyed. They often unnecessarily embroiled themselves, and then fell into parties and factions about the different methods of managing their wars with their common enemies; and hence it came to pass that, when their cause might be supposed good, yet their engaging in it and their management of it came from a bad principle. Their worldly and fleshly lusts raised and managed their wars and fightings; but one would think here is enough said to subdue those lusts; for, 1. They make a war within as well as fightings without. Impetuous passions and desires first war in their members, and then raise feuds in their nation. There is war between conscience and corruption, and there is war also between one corruption and another, and from these contentions in themselves arose their quarrels with each other. Apply this to private cases, and may we not then say of fightings and strifes among relations and neighbours they come from those lusts which war in the members? From lust of power and dominion, lust of pleasure, or lust of riches, from some one or more of these lusts arise all the broils and contentions that are in the world; and, since all wars and fightings come from the corruptions of our own hearts, it is therefore the right method for the cure of contention to lay the axe to the root, and mortify those lusts that war in the members.

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Ye lust, and have not. That is, you wish to have something which you do not now possess, and to which you have no just claim, and this prompts to the effort to obtain it by force. You desire extension of territory, fame, booty, the means of luxurious indulgence, or of magnificence and grandeur, and this leads to contest and bloodshed. These are the causes of wars on the large scale among nations, and of the contentions and strifes of individuals. The general reason is, that others have that which we have not, and which we desire to have; and not content with endeavouring to obtain it, if we can, in a peaceful and honest manner, and not willing to content ourselves without its possession, we resolve to secure it by force. Socrates is reported by Plato to have said on the day of his death, "nothing else but the body and its desires cause wars, Seditions, and contests of every kind; for all wars arise through the possession of wealth."--Phaedo of Plato, by Taylor, London, 1793, p. 158. The system of wars in general, therefore, has been a system of great robberies, no more honest or honourable than the purposes of the foot-pad, and more dignified only because it involves greater skill and talent. It has been said that "to kill one man makes a murderer, to kill many makes a hero." So it may be said, that to steal a horse, or to rob a house, makes a man a thief or burglar; to fire a dwelling subjects him to the punishment of arson; but to plunder kingdoms and provinces, and to cause cities, towns, and hamlets to be wrapped in flames, makes an illustrious conqueror, and gives a title to what is deemed a bright page in history. The one enrols the name among felons, and consigns the perpetrator to the dungeon or the gibbet; the other, accompanied with no more justice, and with the same spirit, sends the name down to future times as immortal. Yet in the two the all-discerning eye of God may see no difference except in the magnitude of the crime, and in the extent of the injury which has been inflicted. In his way, and according to the measure of his ability, the felon who ends his life in a dungeon, or on the gibbet, is as worthy of grateful and honoured remembrance as the conqueror: triumphing in the spoils of desolated empires.

Ye kill. Marg., "or envy." The marginal reading "envy" has been introduced from some doubt as to the correct reading of the text, whether it should be φονευτε, ye kill, or φθονειτε, ye envy. The latter reading has been adopted by Erasmus, Schmidius, Luther, Beza, and some others, though merely from conjecture. There is no authority from the manuscripts for the change. The correct reading

undoubtedly is, ye kill. This expression is probably to be taken in the sense of having a murderous disposition, or fostering a brutal and murderous spirit. It is not exactly that they killed or committed murder previous to "desiring to have," but that they had such a covetous desire of the possessions of others as to produce a murderous and bloody temper. The spirit of murder was at the bottom of the whole; or there was such a desire of the possessions of others as to lead to the commission of this crime. Of what aggressive wars which have ever existed is not this true?

Desire to have. That is, what is in the possession of others.

And cannot obtain. By any fair and honest means; by purchase or negotiation: and this leads to bloody conquests. All wars might have been avoided if men had been content with what they had, or could rightfully obtain, and had not desired to have what was in the possession of others, which they could not obtain by honest and honourable means. Every war might have been avoided by fair and honourable negotiation.

Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Notwithstanding you engage in contentions and strifes, you do not obtain what you seek after. If you sought that from God which you truly need, you would obtain it, for he would bestow upon you all that is really necessary. But you seek it by contention and strife, and you have no security of obtaining it. He who seeks to gain anything by war seeks it in an unjust manner, and cannot depend on the Divine help and blessing. The true way of obtaining anything: which we really need is to seek it from God by prayer, and then to make use of just and fair means of obtaining it, by industry and honesty, and by a due regard for the rights of others. Thus sought, we shall obtain it if it would be for our good; if it is withheld, it will be because it is best for us that it should not be ours. In all the wars which have been waged on the earth, whether for the settlement of disputed questions, for the adjustment of boundaries, for the vindication of violated rights, or for the permanent extension of empire, how rare has it been that the object which prompted to the war has been secured! The course of events has shown that, indisposed as men are to do justice, there is much more probability

of obtaining the object by patient negotiation than there is by going to war.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Ye ask, and receive not. That is, some of you ask, or you ask on some occasions. Though seeking in general what you desire by strife, and without regard to the rights of others, yet you sometimes pray. It is not uncommon for men who go to war to pray, or to procure the services of a chaplain to pray for them. It sometimes happens that the covetous and the quarrelsome; that those who live to wrong others, and who are fond of litigation, pray. Such men may be professors of religion. They keep up a form of worship in their families. They pray for success m their worldly engagements, though those engagements are all based on covetousness. Instead of seeking property that they may glorify God, and do good; that they may relieve the poor and distressed; that they may be the patrons of learning, philanthropy, and religion, they do it that they may live in splendour, and be able to pamper their lusts. It is not indeed very common that persons with such ends and aims of life pray, but they sometimes do it; for, alas! there are many professors of religion who have no higher aims than these, and not a few such professors feel that consistency demands that they should observe some form of prayer. If such persons do not receive what they ask for, if they are not prospered in their plans, they should not set it down as evidence that God does not hear prayer, but as evidence that their prayers are offered for improper objects, or with improper motives.

Because ye ask amiss. Ye do it with a view to self-indulgence and carnal gratification.

That you may consume it upon your lusts. Marg., pleasures. This is the same word which is used in Jas 4:1, and rendered lusts. The reference is to sensual gratifications; and the word would include all that comes under the name of sensual pleasure, or carnal appetite. It was not that they might have a decent and comfortable living, which would not be improper to desire, but that they might have the means of luxurious dress and living; perhaps the means of gross sensual gratifications. Prayers offered that we may have the means of sensuality and voluptuousness, we have no reason to suppose God will answer, for he has not promised to hear such prayers; and it

becomes every one who prays for worldly prosperity, and for success in business, to examine his motives with the closest scrutiny. Nowhere is deception more likely to creep in than into such prayers; nowhere are we more likely to be mistaken in regard to our real motives, than when we go before God and ask for success in our worldly employments.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5 Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

Ye adulterers and adultresses. These words are frequently used to denote those who are faithless towards God, and are frequently applied to those who forsake God for idols, Hos 3:1; Isa 57:3,7; Ezekiel chapters 16 and 23. It is, not necessary to suppose that the apostle meant that those to whom he wrote were literally guilty of the sins here referred to; but he rather refers to those who were unfaithful to their covenant with God by neglecting their duty to him, and yielding themselves to the indulgence of their own lusts and passions. The idea is, "You have in effect broken your marriage covenant with God by loving the world more than him; and, by the indulgence of your carnal inclinations, you have violated those obligations to self-mortification and self-denial to which you were bound by your religious engagements." To convince them of the evil of this, the apostle shows them what was the true nature of that friendship of the world which they sought. It may be remarked here, that no terms could have been found which would have shown more decidedly the nature of the sin of forgetting the covenant vows of religion for the pleasures of the world, than those which the apostle uses here. It is a deeper crime to be unfaithful to God than to any created being; and it will yet be seen that even the violation of the marriage contract, great as is the sin, is a slight offence compared with unfaithfulness towards God,'

Know ye not that the friendship of the world. Compare 1Jn 2:15. The term world here is to be understood not of the physical world as God made it, for we could not well speak of the "friendship" of that, but of the community, or people, called "the world," in contradistinction from the people of God. Compare Jn 12:31; 1Cor 1:20; 1Cor 3:19; Gal 4:3; Col 2:8. The "friendship of the world,"

(φιλιατουκοσμου,) is the love of that world; of the maxims which govern it, the principles which reign there, the ends that are sought, the amusements and gratifications which characterize it as distinguished from the church of God. It consists in setting our hearts on t hose things; in conforming to them; in making them the object of our pursuit with the same spirit with which they are sought by those who make no pretensions to religion. Rom 12:2.

Is enmity with God. Is in fact hostility against God, since that world is arrayed against him. It neither obeys his laws, submits to his claims, nor seeks to honour him. To love that world is, therefore, to be arrayed against God; and the spirit which would lead us to this is, in fact, a spirit of hostility to God.

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world. "Whoever" he may be, whether in the church or out of it. The fact of being a member of the church makes no difference in this respect, for it is as easy to be a friend of the world in the church as out of it. The phrase "whosoever will" (βουληθη) implies purpose, intention, design. It supposes that the heart is set on it; or that there is a deliberate purpose to seek the friendship of the world. It refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and vanities; to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships. Wherever there is a manifested purpose to find our chosen friends and associates there rather than among Christians; wherever there is a greater desire to enjoy the smiles and approbation of the world than there is to enjoy the approbation of God and the blessings of a good conscience; and wherever there is more conscious pain because we have failed to win the applause of the world, or have offended its rotaries, and have sunk ourselves in its estimation, than there is because we have neglected our duty to our Saviour, and have lost the enjoyment of religion, there is the clearest proof that the heart wills or desires to be the "friend of the world."

Is the enemy of God. This is a most solemn declaration, and one of fearful import in its bearing on many who are members of the

church. It settles the point that any one, no matter what his professions, who is characteristically a friend of the world, cannot be a true Christian. In regard to the meaning of this important verse, then, it may be remarked,

(1,) that there is a sense in which the love of this world, or of the physical universe, is not wrong. That kind of love for it as the work of God, which perceives the evidence of his wisdom and goodness and power in the various objects of beauty, usefulness, and grandeur, spread around us, is not evil. The world as such-- the physical structure of the earth, of the mountains, forests, flowers, seas, lakes, and vales--is full of illustrations of the Divine character and it cannot be wrong to contemplate those things with interest, or with warm affection toward their Creator.

(2.) When that world, however, becomes our portion; when we study it only as a matter of science, without "looking through nature up to nature's God.;" when we seek the wealth which it has to confer, or endeavour to appropriate as our supreme portion its lands, its minerals, its fruits; when we are satisfied with what it yields, and when in the possession or pursuit of these things, our thoughts never rise to God; and when we partake of the spirit which rules in the hearts of those who avowedly seek this world as their portion, though we profess religion, then the love of the world becomes evil, and comes in direct conflict with the spirit of true religion.

(3.) The statement in this verse is, therefore, one of most fearful import for many professors of religion. There are many in the church who, so far as human judgment can go, are characteristically lovers of the world. This is shown

(a) by their conformity to it in all in which the world is distinguished from the church as such;

(b) in their seeking the friendship of the world, or their finding their friends there rather than among Christians;

(c) in preferring the amusements of the world to the scenes where spiritually-minded Christians find their chief happiness;

(d) in pursuing the same pleasures that the people of the world do, with the same expense, the same extravagance, the same luxury;

(e) in making their worldly interests the great object of living, and everything else subordinate to that. This spirit exists in all cases where no worldly interest is sacrificed for religion; where everything that religion peculiarly requires is sacrificed for the world. If this be so, then there are many professing Christians who are the "enemies of God." Php 3:18. They have never known what is true friendship for him, and by their lives they show that they can be ranked only among his foes. It becomes every professing Christian, therefore, to examine himself with the deepest earnestness to determine whether he is characteristically a friend of the world or of God; whether he is living for this life only, or is animated by the high and pure principles of those who are the friends of God. The great Searcher of hearts cannot be deceived, and soon our appropriate place will be assigned us, and our final Judge will determine to which class of the two great divisions of the human family we belong--to those who are the friends of the world, or to those who are the friends of God.

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

But he giveth more grace. The reference here is undoubtedly to God. Some have regarded this clause as a continuation of the quotation in the previous verse, but it is rather to be considered as a declaration of the apostle himself. The writer had just spoken of envy, and of the crimes which grew out of it. He thought of the wars and commotions of the earth, and of the various lusts which reigned among men. In the contemplation of these things, it seems suddenly to have occurred to him that all were not under the influence of these things; that there were cases where men were restrained, and where a spirit opposite to these things prevailed. Another passage of Scripture struck his mind, containing the truth that there was a class of men to whom God gave grace to restrain these passions, and to subdue these carnal propensities. They were the humble, in

contradistinction to the proud; and he states the fact that "God giveth more grace;" that is, that in some instances he confers more grace than in the cases referred to; to some he gives more grace to overcome their evil passions, and to subdue their corrupt inclinations, than he does to others. The meaning may be thus expressed: "It is true that the natural spirit in man is one that tends to envy, and thus leads to all the sad consequences of envy. But there are instances in which higher grace or favour is conferred; in which these feelings are subdued, and these consequences are prevented. They are not indeed to be found among the proud, whom God always resists; but they are to be found among the meek and the humble. Wherefore submit yourselves to his arrangements; resist the devil; draw nigh to God; purify yourselves, and weep over your past offences, and you shall find that the Lord will lift you up, and bestow his favour upon you," Jas 4:10,

Wherefore he saith. The reference here is to Prov 3:34, "Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly." The quotation is made exactly from the Septuagint, which, though not entirely literal, expresses the sense of the Hebrew without essential inaccuracy. This passage is also quoted in 1Pet 5:5.

God resisteth the proud. The proud are those who have an inordinate self-esteem; who have a high and unreasonable conceit of their own excellence or importance. This may extend to anything; to beauty, or strength, or attainments, or family, or country, or equipage, or rank, or even religion. A man may be proud of anything that belongs to him, or which can in any way be construed as a part of himself, or as pertaining to him. This does not, of course, apply to a correct estimate of ourselves, or to the mere knowledge that we may excel others. One may know that he has more strength, or higher attainments in learning or in the mechanic arts, or greater wealth than others, and yet have properly no pride in the case. He has only a correct estimate of himself, and he attaches no undue importance to himself on account of it. His heart is not lifted up; he claims no undue deference to himself; he concedes to all others what is their due; and he is humble before God, feeling that all that he has, and is, is nothing in his sight, he is willing to occupy his appropriate place in the sight of God and men, and to be esteemed just as he is.

Pride goes beyond this, and gives to a man a degree of self-estimation which is not warranted by anything that he possesses. God looks at things as they are; and hence he abhors and humbles this arrogant claim, Lev 26:19; Job 33:17; Ps 59:12; Prov 8:13 ; Prov 16:18; 29:13; Isa 23:9; 28:1; Dan 4:37; Zech 10:11. This resistance of pride he shows not only in the explicit declarations of his word, but in the arrangements of his providence and grace.

(1.) In his providence, in the reverses and disappointments which occur; in the necessity of abandoning the splendid mansion which we had built, or in disappointing us in some favourite plan by which our pride was to be nurtured and gratified.

(2.) In sickness, taking away the beauty, and strength on which we had so much valued ourselves, and bringing us to the sad condition of a sick bed.

(3.) In the grave, bringing us down to corruption and worms. Why should one be proud who will soon become so offensive to his best friends that they will gladly hide him in the grave?

(4.) In the plan of salvation he opposes our pride. Not a feature of that plan is fitted to foster pride, but all is adapted to make us humble.

(a) The necessity for the plan--that we are guilty and helpless sinners;

(b)the selection of a Saviour--one who was so poor, and who was so much despised by the world, and who was put to death, on a cross;

(c) our entire dependence on him for salvation, with the assurance that we have no merit of our own, and that salvation is all of grace; (d) the fact that we are brought to embrace it only by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and that if we were left to ourselves we should never have one right thought or holy desire--all this is fitted to humble us, and to bring us low before God. God has done nothing to foster the self-estimation of the human heart; but how much has he done to "stain the pride of all glory!" Isa 23:9. But giveth grace unto the humble. The meaning is, that he shows them favour; he bestows upon them the grace needful to secure their salvation. This he does

(1,) because they feel their need of his favour;

(2,) because they will welcome his teaching and value his friendship;

(3,) because all the arrangements of his grace are adapted only to such a state of mind. You cannot teach one who is so wise that he already supposes he knows enough; you cannot bestow grace on one who has no sense of the need of it. The arrangements of salvation are adapted only to an humble heart.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. That is, in his arrangements for obtaining his favour. Yield to what he has judged necessary for your welfare in the life that is, and your salvation in the life to come. The duty here enjoined is that of entire acquiescence in the arrangements of God, whether in his providence or grace. All these are for our good, and submission to them is required by the spirit of true humility. The object of the command here, and in the succeeding injunctions to particular duties, is to show them how they might obtain the grace which God is willing to bestow, and how they might overcome the evils against which the apostle had been endeavouring to guard them. The true method of doing this is by submitting ourselves in all things to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. While you yield to God in all things, you are to yield to the devil in none. You are to resist and oppose him in whatever way he may approach you, whether by allurements, by flattering promises, by the fascinations of the world, by temptation, or by threats. See 1Pet 5:9. Satan makes his way, and secures his triumphs, rather by art, cunning, deception, and threatenings, than by true courage; and when opposed manfully, he flies. The true way of meeting him is by direct resistance, rather than by argument; by steadfastly refusing to yield in the slightest degree, rather than by a belief that we can either convince him that he is wrong, or can return to virtue when we have gone a certain length in complying with his demands. No one is safe who yields in the least to the suggestions of the tempter; there is no one who is not safe if he does not yield. A man, for example, is always safe from intemperance if he resists all allurements to

indulgence in strong drink, told never yields in the slightest degree; no one is certainly safe if he drinks even moderately.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double-minded.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Compare 2Chr 15:2. This declaration contains a great and important principle in religion. If we wish the favour of God, we must come to him; nor can we hope for his mercy, unless we approach him and ask him for it. We cannot come literally any nearer to God than we always are, for he is always round about us; but we may come nearer in a spiritual sense. We may address him directly in prayer; we may approach him by meditation on his character; we may draw near to him in the ordinances of religion. We can never hope for his favour while we prefer to remain at a distance from him; none who in fact draw near to him will find him unwilling to bestow on them the blessings which they need.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners. There may possibly be an allusion here to Isa 1:15-16: "Your hands are full of blood; wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil." The heart is the seat of motives and intentions--that by which we devise anything; the hands, the instruments by which we execute our purposes. The hands here are represented as defiled by blood, or by acts of iniquity. To wash or cleanse the hands was, therefore, emblematic of putting away transgression, Mt 27:24. Compare De 21:6; Ps 26:6. The heathen and the Jews were accustomed to wash their hands before they engaged in public worship. The particular idea here is, that in order to obtain the favour of God, it is necessary to put away our sins; to approach him with a desire to be pure and holy. The mere washing of the hands, in itself, could not recommend us to his favour; but that of which the washing of the hands would be all emblem, would be acceptable in his sight. It may be inferred from what is said here that no one can hope for the favour of God who does not abandon his transgressions. The design of the apostle is, evidently, to state one of the conditions on which we can make an acceptable approach to God. It is indispensable that we come with a purpose and desire to wash ourselves from all iniquity, to put away from us all our

transgressions. So David said, "I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord," Ps 26:6.

And purify your hearts. That is, do not rest satisfied with a mere external reformation; with putting away your outward transgressions. There must be a deeper work than that; a work which shall reach to the heart, and which shall purify the affections. This agrees with all the requisitions of the Bible, and is in accordance with what must be the nature of religion. If the heart is wrong, nothing can be right. If, while we seek an external reformation, we still give indulgence to the secret corruptions of the heart, it is clear that we can have no true religion.

Ye double minded. Jas 1:8. The apostle here seems to have had his eye on those who were vacillating in their purposes; whose hearts were not decidedly fixed, but who were halting between good and evil, The heart was not right in such persons. It was not settled and determined in favour of religion, but vibrated between that and the world. The proper business of such persons, therefore, was to cleanse the heart from disturbing influences, that it might settle down in unwavering attachment to that which is good.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep. That is, evidently, on account of your sins. The sins to which the apostle refers are those which he had specified in the previous part of the chapter, and which he had spoken of as so evil in their nature, and so dangerous in their tendency. The word rendered "be afflicted" means, properly, to endure toil or hardship; then to endure affliction or distress; and here means, that they were to afflict themselves--that is, they were to feel distressed and sad on account of their transgressions. Compare Ezr 8:21. The other words in this clause are those which are expressive of deep grief or sorrow. The language here used shows that the apostle supposed that it was possible that those who had done wrong should voluntarily feel sorrow for it, and that, therefore, it was proper to call upon them to do it. Let your laughter be turned to mourning. It would seem that the persons referred to, instead of suitable sorrow and humiliation on account of sin, gave themselves to joyousness, mirth, and revelry. See a similar instance

in Isa 22:12-13. It is often the case, that those for whom the deep sorrows of repentance would be peculiarly appropriate, give themselves to mirth and vanity. The apostle here says that such mirth did not become them. Sorrow, deep and unfeigned, was appropriate on account of their sins, and the sound of laughter and of revelry should be changed to notes of lamentation. To how many of the assemblies of the vain, the gay, and the dissipated, might the exhortation in this passage with propriety be now addressed! Your joy to heaviness. The word here rendered heaviness occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means dejection, sorrow. It is not gloom, melancholy, or moroseness, but it is sorrow on account of sin, God has so made us that we should feel sorrow when we are conscious that we have done wrong, and it is appropriate that we should do so.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. Compare Mt 23:12. Jas 4:6. That is, be willing to take your appropriate place in the dust on account of your transgressions. This is to be "in the sight of the Lord," or before him. Our sins have been committed against him; and their principal aggravation, whoever may have been wronged by them, and great as is their criminality in other respects, arises from that consideration. Ps 51:4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Lk 15:18, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." As the Being against whom we have sinned is the only one who can pardon, it is proper that we should humble ourselves before him with penitent confession. And he shall lift you up. He will exalt you from the condition of a broken-hearted penitent to that of a forgiven child; will wipe away your tears, remove the sadness of your heart, fill you with joy, and clothe you with the garments of salvation. This declaration is in accordance with all the promises in the Bible, and with all the facts which occur on the earth, that God is willing to show mercy to the humble and contrite, and to receive those who are truly penitent into his favour. Compare Lk 15:22.

Judging a Brother

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

MHC:

We are cautioned against the sin of evil-speaking: Speak not evil one of another, brethren, Jam 4:11. The Greek word, katalaleite, signifies speaking any thing that may hurt or injure another; we must not speak evil things of others, though they be true, unless we be called to it, and there be some necessary occasion for the; much less must we report evil things when they are false, or, for aught we know, may be so. Our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice. This, which Solomon makes a necessary part of the character of his virtuous woman, that she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness (Pr 31:26), must needs be a part of the character of every true Christian. Speak not evil one of another,

1. Because you are brethren. The compellation, as used by the apostle here, carries an argument along with it. Since Christians are brethren, they should not defile nor defame one another. It is required of us that we be tender of the good name of our brethren; where we cannot speak well, we had better say nothing than speak evil; we must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others, divulging things that are secret, merely to expose them, nor in making more of their known faults than really they deserve, and, least of all, in making false stories, and spreading things concerning them of which they are altogether innocent. What is this but to raise the hatred and encourage the persecutions of the world, against those who are engaged in the same interests with ourselves, and therefore with whom we ourselves must stand or fall? "Consider, you are brethren."

2. Because this is to judge the law: He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. The law of Moses says, Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people, Le 19:16. The law of Christ

is, Judge not, that you be not judged, Mt 7:1 The sum and substance of both is that men should love one another. A detracting tongue therefore condemns the law of God, and the commandment of Christ, when it is defaming its neighbour. To break God's commandments is in effect to speak evil of them, and to judge them, as if they were too strict, and laid too great a restraint upon us. The Christians to whom James wrote were apt to speak very hard things of one another, because of their differences about indifferent things (such as the observance of meats and days, as appears from Ro 14:1-23): "Now," says the apostle, "he who censures and condemns his brother for not agreeing with him in those things which the law of God has left indifferent thereby censures and condemns the law, as if it had done ill in leaving them indifferent. He who quarrels with his brother, and condemns him for the sake of any thing not determined in the word of God, does thereby reflect on that word of God, as if it were not a perfect rule. Let us take heed of judging the law, for the law of the Lord is perfect; if men break the law, leave that to judge them; if they do not break it, let us not judge them." This is a heinous evil, because it is to forget our place, that we ought to be doers of the law, and it is to set up ourselves above it, as if we were to be judges of it. He who is guilty of the sin here cautioned against is not a doer of the law, but a judge; he assumes an office and a place that do not belong to him, and he will be sure to suffer for his presumption in the end. Those who are most ready to set up for judges of the law generally fail most in their obedience to it.

Barnes:

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. It is not known to whom the apostle here particularly refers, nor is it necessary to know. It is probable that among those whom he addressed there were some who were less circumspect in regard to speaking of others than they should be, and perhaps this evil prevailed. There are few communities where such an injunction would not be proper at any time, and few churches where some might not be found to whom the exhortation would be appropriate. Eph 4:31; also 1Pet 2:1 The evil here referred to is that of talking against others---against their actions, their motives, their manner of living, their families, etc. Few things are more common in the world; nothing is more decidedly against the true spirit of religion.

He that speaketh evil of his brother. Referring here probably to a Christian brother, or to a fellow Christian. The word may however be used in a larger sense to denote any one--a brother of the human race. Religion forbids both, and would restrain us from all evil speaking against any human being.

And judgeth his brother. His motives, or his conduct. Mt 7:1.

Speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. Instead of manifesting the feelings of a brother, he sets himself up as judge, and not only a judge of his brother, but a judge of the law. The law here referred to is probably the law of Christ, or the rule which all Christians profess to obey. It is that which James elsewhere calls the "law of liberty," (Jas 1:25;) the law which released men from the servitude of the Jewish rites, and gave them liberty to worship God without the restraint and bondage (Acts 15:10; Gal 4:21-31) implied in that ancient system of worship; and the law by which it was contemplated that they should be free from sin. It is not absolutely certain to what the apostle refers here, but it would seem probable that it is to some course of conduct which one portion of the church felt they were at liberty to follow, but which another portion regarded as wrong, and for which they censured them. The explanation which will best suit the expressions here used, is that which supposes that it refers to some difference of opinion which existed among Christians, especially among those of Jewish origin, about the binding nature of the Jewish laws, in regard to circumcision, to holy days, to ceremonial observances, to the distinctions of meats, etc. A part regarded the law on these subjects as still binding, another portion supposed that the obligation in regard to these matters had ceased by the introduction of the gospel. Those who regarded the obligation of the Mosaic law as still binding, would of course judge their brethren, and regard them as guilty of a disregard of the law of God by their conduct. We know that differences of opinion on these points gave rise to contentions, and to the formation of parties in the church, and that it required all the wisdom of Paul and of the other apostles to hush the contending elements to peace. Col 2:16-18. To some such source of contention the apostle doubtless refers here; and the meaning probably is, that they who held the opinion that all the Jewish ceremonial laws were still binding on Christians, and who judged and condemned their

brethren who did not [observe them], by such a course judged and condemned "the law of liberty" under which they acted--the law of Christianity that had abolished the ceremonial observances, and released men from their obligation. The judgment which they passed, therefore, was not only on their brethren, but was on that law of Christianity which had given greater liberty of conscience, and which was intended to abolish the obligation of the Jewish ritual. The same thing now occurs when we judge others for a course which their consciences approve, because they do not deem it necessary to comply with all the rules which we think to be binding. Not a few of the harsh judgments which one class of religionists pronounce on others, are in fact judgments on the laws of Christ. We set up our own standards, or our own interpretations, and then we judge others for not complying with them, when in fact they may be acting only as the law of Christianity, properly understood, would allow them to do. They who set up the claim to a right to judge the conduct of others, should be certain that they understand the nature of religion themselves. It may be presumed, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that others are as conscientious as we are; and it may commonly be supposed that they who differ from us have some reason for what they do, and may be desirous of glorifying their Lord and Master, and that they may possibly be right. It is commonly not safe to judge hastily of a man who has turned his attention to a particular subject, or to suppose that he has no reasons to allege for his opinions or conduct.

But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. It is implied here that it is the simple duty of every Christian to obey the law. He is not to assume the office of a judge about its propriety or fitness; but he is to do what he supposes the law to require of him, and is to allow others to do the same. Our business in religion is not to make laws, or to declare what they should have been, or to amend those that are made; it is simply to obey those which are appointed, and to allow others to do the same, as they understand them. It would be well for all individual Christians. and Christian denominations, to learn this, and to imbibe the spirit of charity to which it would prompt.

Burkitt:

These words, as generally delivered by our apostle, are a disuasive from the sin of detraction, or speaking evil of one another, either by secret whispering, or open backbiting; a very common but most unbecoming sin amongst Christians. What pleasure do some persons take in divulging the faults of others, in aggravating their faults, in defrauding them of their necessary excuse and mitigation, though at the same time they are conscious of it, by lessening their good actions through the suppostion of their false aims and ends? It is an injurious and unworthy jealousy, when a person's actions are fair, to suspect his intentions, by mentioning his failings, but suppressing his worth and excellencies. It becomes Christians neither to give way to this growing evil themselves, nor give ear to it in others.

But there seems to be something special and particular in these words, which respects the Jews, to whom this epistle is directed; as if the apostle had said, "Give over your reproach and censoriousness against the Gentile Christians, who do not observe your ceremonial law, your feasts, your sabbath, your circumcision; for both the law of Christ, and the law of Moses, which you profess to own, do bind you to love your neighbour as yourself, and forbids such uncharitalbe censures; So that by condemning your brethren, you condemn the law, and set yourselves above it; and all this in contempt of the law, and the lawgiver, who is one, and is able both to save and to destroy."

JFB:

Having mentioned sins of the tongue (Jas 3:5-12), he shows here that evil-speaking flows from the same spirit of exalting self at the expense of one's neighbor as caused the "fightings" reprobated in this chapter (Jas 4:1). Speak not evil—literally, "Speak not against" one another. brethren—implying the inconsistency of such depreciatory speaking of one another in brethren. speaketh evil of the law—for the law in commanding, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Jas 2:8), virtually condemns evil-speaking and judging [ESTIUS]. Those who superciliously condemn the acts and words of others which do not please themselves, thus aiming at the reputation of sanctity, put their own moroseness in the place of the law, and claim to themselves a power of censuring above the law of God, condemning what the law permits [CALVIN]. Such a one acts

as though the law could not perform its own office of judging, but he must fly upon the office [BENGEL]. This is the last mention of the law in the New Testament. ALFORD rightly takes the "law" to be the old moral law applied in its comprehensive spiritual fulness by Christ: "the law of liberty."

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

There is one lawgiver. There is but one who has a right to give law. The reference here is undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Legislator of the church. This, too, is a most important and vital principle, though one that has been most imperfectly understood and acted on. The tendency everywhere has been to enact other laws than those appointed by Christ--the laws of synods and councils--and to claim that Christians are bound to observe them, and should be punished if they do not. But it is a fundamental principle in Christianity that no laws are binding on the conscience, but those which Christ has ordained; and that all attempts to make other laws pertaining to religion binding on the conscience is a usurpation of his prerogatives. The church is safe while it adheres to this as a settled principle; it is not safe when it submits to any legislation in religious matters as binding the conscience.

Who is able to save and to destroy. Compare Mt 10:28. The idea here would seem to be, that he is able to save those whom you condemn, and to destroy you who pronounce a judgment on them. Or, in general, it may mean that he is intrusted with all power, and is abundantly able to administer his government; to restrain where it is necessary to restrain; to save where it is proper to save; to punish where it is just to punish. The whole matter pertaining to judgment, therefore, may be safely left in his hands; and, as he is abundantly qualified for it, we should not usurp his prerogatives.

Who art thou that judgest another? "Who art thou, a weak and frail and erring mortal, thyself accountable to that Judge, that thou shouldest interfere, and pronounce judgment on another, especially when he is doing only what that Judge permits him to do?" Rom 14:4 for this sentiment explained at length. Also Rom 2:1, and Mt 7:1. There is nothing more decidedly condemned in the Scriptures

than the habit of pronouncing a judgment on the motives and conduct of others. There is nothing in which we are more liable to err, or to indulge in wrong feelings; and there is nothing which God claims more for himself as his peculiar prerogative.

Boast Not of Tomorrow

13 Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

Go to now. The apostle here introduces a new subject, and refers to another fault which was doubtless prevalent among them, as it is everywhere, that of a presumptuous confidence respecting the future, or of forming plans stretching into the future, without any proper sense of the uncertainty of life, and of our absolute dependence on God. The phrase "go to now," (αγενυν,) is a phrase designed to arrest attention, as if there were something that demanded their notice, and especially, as in this case, with the implied thought that that to which the attention is called is wrong. See Jas 5:1. Compare Gen 11:7; Isa 1:18.

Ye that say. You that form your plans in this manner, or that speak thus confidently of what you will do in the future. The word say here probably refers to what was in their thoughts, rather than to what was openly expressed.

To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city. That is, they say this without any proper sense of the uncertainty of life, and of their absolute dependence on God.

And continue there a year. Fixing a definite time; designating the exact period during which they would remain, and when they would leave, without any reference to the will of God. The apostle undoubtedly means to refer here to this as a mere specimen of what he would reprove. It cannot be supposed that he refers to this single case alone as wrong. All plans are wrong that are formed in the same spirit. "The practice to which the apostle here alludes," says the editor of the Pictorial Bible, "is very common in the East to this day, among a very respectable and intelligent class of merchants. They

convey the products of one place to some distant city, where they remain until they have disposed of their own goods and have purchased others suitable for another distant market; and thus the operation is repeated, until, after a number of years, the trader is enabled to return prosperously to his home. Or again, a shopkeeper or a merchant takes only the first step in this process--conveying to a distant town, where the best purchases of his own line are to be made, such goods as are likely to realize a profit, and returning, without any farther stop, with a stock for his own concern. These operations are seldom very rapid, as the adventurer likes to wait opportunities for making advantageous bargains; and sometimes opens a shop in the place to which he comes, to sell by retail the goods which he has bought." The practice is common in India. See Roberts' Oriental Illustrations.

And buy and sell, and get gain. It is not improbable that there is an allusion here to the commercial habits of the Jews at the time when the apostle wrote. Many of them were engaged in foreign traffic, and for this purpose made long journeys to distant trading cities, as Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, etc.--BloomSeld.

14 whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow. They formed their plans as if they knew; the apostle says it could not be known. They had no means of ascertaining what would occur; whether they would live or die; whether they would be prospered, or would be overwhelmed with adversity. Of the truth of the remark made by the apostle here, no one can doubt; but it is amazing how men act as if it were false. We have no power of penetrating the future so as to be able to determine what will occur in a single day or a single hour, and yet we are almost habitually forming our plans as if we saw with certainty all that is to happen. The classic writings abound with beautiful expressions respecting the uncertainty of the future, and the folly of forming our plans as if it were known to us. Many of those passages, some of them almost precisely in the words of James, may be seen in Grotius and Pricseus, in loc. Such passages occur in Anacreon, Euripides, Menander, Seneca, Horace, and others, suggesting an obvious but much-neglected thought, that the

future is to us all unknown. Man cannot penetrate it; and his plans of life should be formed in view of the possibility that his life may be cut off and all his plans fail, and consequently in constant preparation for a higher world. For what is your life? All your plans must depend of course on the continuance of your life; but what a frail and uncertain thing is that! How transitory and evanescent as a basis on which to build any plans for the future! Who can calculate on the permanence of a vapour? Who can build any solid hopes on a mist?

It is even a vapour. Marg., For it is. The margin is the more correct rendering. The previous question had turned the attention to life as something peculiarly frail, and as of such a nature that no calculation could be based on its permanence. This expression gives a reason for that, to wit, that it is a mere vapour. The word vapour, (ατμις,) means a mist, an exhalation, a smoke; such a vapour as we see ascending from a stream, or as lies on the mountain side in the morning, or as floats for a little time in the air, but which is dissipated by the rising sun, leaving not a trace behind. The comparison of life with a vapour is common, and is as beautiful as it is just. Job says,

0 remember that my life is wind; Mine eye shall no more see good. Job 7:7.

So the Psalmist,

For he remembered that they were but flesh. A wind that passeth away and that cometh not again. Ps 78:39.

Compare 1Chr 29:15; Job 14:10-11.

And then vanisheth away. Wholly disappears. Like the dissipated vapour, it is entirely gone. There is no remnant, no outline, nothing that reminds us that it ever was. So of life. Soon it disappears altogether. The works of art that man has made, the house that he has built, or the book that he has written, remain for a little time, but the life has gone. There is nothing of it remaining--any more than there is of the vapour which in the morning climbed silently up the mountain side. The animating principle has vanished for ever. On

such a frail and evanescent thing, who can build any substantial hopes?

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

For that ye ought to say. Instead of what you do say, "we will go into such a city," you ought rather to recognise your absolute dependence on God, and feel that life and success are subject to his will. The meaning is not that we ought always to be saying that in so many words, for this might become a mere ostentatious form, offensive by constant unmeaning repetition; but we are, in the proper way, to recognise our dependence on him, and to form all our plans with reference to his will. If the Lord will, etc. This is proper, because we are wholly dependent on him for life, and as dependent on him for success, he alone can keep us, and he only can make our plans prosperous. In a thousand ways he can thwart our best-laid schemes, for all things are under his control. We need not travel far in life to see how completely all that we have is in the hands of God, or to learn how easily he can frustrate us if he pleases. There is nothing on which the success of our plans depends over which we have absolute control; there is nothing, therefore, on which we can base the assurance of success but his favour.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

But now ye rejoice in your boastings. That is, probably, in your boastings of what you can do; your reliance on your own skill and sagacity. You form your plans for the future as if with consummate wisdom, and are confident of success. You do not anticipate a failure; you do not see how plans so skilfully formed can fail. You form them as if you were certain that you would live; as if secure from the numberless casualties which may defeat your schemes. All such rejoicing is evil. It is founded on a wrong view of yourselves and of what may occur. It shows a spirit forgetful of our dependence on God; forgetful of the uncertainty of life; forgetful of the many ways by which the best-laid plans may be defeated. We should never boast of any wisdom or skill in regard to the future. A day, an hour may defeat our best-concerted plans, and show us that we have not the slightest power to control coming events.

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. That is, he is guilty of sin if he does not do it. Cottoa Mather

adopted it as a principle of action, "that the ability to do good in any case imposes an obligation to do it." The proposition in the verse before us is of a general character, but probably the apostle meant that it should refer to the point specified in the previous verses--the forming of plans respecting the future. The particular meaning then would be, "that he who knows what sort of views he should take in regard to the future, and how he should form his plans in view of the uncertainty of life, and still does not do it, but goes on recklessly, forming his plans boastingly and confident of success, is guilty of sin against God." Still, the proposition will admit of a more general application. It is universally true that if a man knows what is right, and does not do it, he is guilty of sin. If he understands what his duty is; if he has the means of doing good to others; if by his name, his influence, his wealth, he can promote a good cause; if he can, consistently with other duties, relieve the distressed, the poor, the prisoner, the oppressed; if he can send the gospel to other lands, or can wipe away the tear of the mourner; if he has talents by which he can lift a voice that shah be heard in favour of temperance, chastity, liberty, and religion, he is under obligations to do it: and if, by indolence, or avarice, or selfishness, or the dread of the loss of popularity, he does not do it, he is guilty of sin before God. No man can be released from the obligation to do good in this world to the extent of his ability; no one should desire to be. The highest privilege conferred on a mortal, besides that of securing the salvation of his own soul, is that of doing good to others--of alleviating sorrow, instructing ignorance, raising up the bowed down, comforting those that mourn, delivering the wronged and the oppressed, supplying the wants of the needy, guiding inquirers into the way of truth, and sending liberty, knowledge, and salvation around the world. If a man does not do this when he has the means, he sins against his own soul, against humanity, and against his Maker; if he does it cheerfully and to the extent of his means, it likens him more than anything else to God.

James-5

Warning to the Rich

1 Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*.

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

Barnes:

Ye rich men. Not all rich men, but only that class of them who are specified as unjust and oppressive. There is no sin in merely being rich; where sin exists peculiarly among the rich, it arises from the manner in which wealth is acquired, the spirit which it tends to engender in the heart, and the way in which it is used. Lk 6:24 and also 1Timm 6:9.

Weep and howl. Gr., "Weep howling." This would be expressive of very deep distress. The language is intensive in a high degree, showing that the calamities which were coming upon them were not only such as would produce tears, but tears accompanied with loud lamentations. In the East, it is customary to give expression to deep sorrow by loud out cries. Compare Isa 13:6; 14:31; 15:2; 16:7; Jer 4:8; 47:2; Joel 1:5.

For your miseries that shall come upon you. Many expositors, as Benson, Witby, Macknight, and others, suppose that this refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and to the miseries which would be brought in the siege upon the Jewish people, in which the rich would be the peculiar objects of cupidity and vengeance. They refer to passages in Josephus, which describe particularly the sufferings to which the rich were exposed; the searching of their houses by the zealots, and the heavy calamities which came upon them and their families. But there is no reason to suppose that the apostle referred particularly to those events. The poor as well as the rich suffered in that siege, and there were no such special judgements then brought upon the rich as to show that they were the marked objects of the Divine displeasure. It is much more natural to suppose that the apostle means to say that such men as he here refers to exposed themselves always to the wrath of God, and that they had great reason to weep in the anticipation of his vengeance. The sentiments here expressed by the apostle are not applicable merely to the Jews of his time. If there is any class of men which has special reason to dread the wrath of God at all times, it is just the class of men here referred to.

Your riches are corrupted. The word here rendered corrupted (σηπω) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means, to cause to rot, to corrupt, to destroy. The reference here is to their hoarded treasures; and the idea is, that they had accumulated more than they needed for their own use; and that, instead of distributing them to do good to others, or employing them in any useful way, they kept them until they rotted or spoiled. It is to be remembered, that a considerable part of the treasures which a man in the East would lay up, consisted of perishable materials, as garments, grain, oil, etc. Such articles of property were often stored up, expecting that they would furnish a supply for many years, in case of the prevalence of famine or wars. Compare Lk 12:18-19. A suitable provision for the time to come cannot be forbidden; but the reference here is to cases in which great quantities had been laid up, perhaps while the poor were suffering, and which were kept until they became worthless. Your garments are moth-eaten. The same idea substantially is expressed here in another form. As the fashions in the East did not change as they do with us, wealth consisted much in the garments that were laid up for show or for future use. Mt 6:19. Q. Curtius says that when Alexander the Great was going to take Persepolis, the riches of all Asia were gathered there together, which consisted not only of a great abundance of gold and silver, but also of garments, Lib. vi. c. 5. Horace tells us that when Lucullus the Roman was asked if he could lend a hundred garments for the theatre, he replied that he had five thousand in his house, of which they were welcome to take part or all. Of course, such property would be liable to be moth-eaten; and the idea here is, that they had amassed a great amount of this kind of property which was useless to them, and which they kept until it became destroyed.

Your gold and silver is cankered. That is, that you have heaped together, by injustice and fraud, a large amount, and have kept it from those to whom it is due, (Jas 5:4,) until it has become corroded. The word rendered is cankered, (κατιωται) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly means, to cause to rust; to rust out, (Passow;) to be corroded with rust, (Robinson;) to be spotted with rust. It is true that gold and silver do not properly rust, or become oxidized, and that they will not be corroded like iron and steel; but by being kept long in a damp place they will contract a dark colour, resembling rust in appearance. This seems to be the idea in the mind of the apostle. He speaks of gold and silver as they

appear after having been long laid up without use; and undoubtedly the word which he uses here is one which would to an ancient have expressed that idea, as well as the mere literal idea of the rusting or oxidizing of metals. There is no reason to suppose that the word was then used in the strict chemical sense of rusting, for there is no reason to suppose that the nature of oxidization was then fully understood. And the rust of them. Another word is used here--ιος. This properly denotes something sent out or emitted, (from ημι,) and is applied to a missile weapon, as an arrow; to poison, as emitted from the tooth of a serpent; and to rust, as it seems to be emitted from metals. The word refers to the dark discoloration which appears on gold and silver, when they have remained long without use. Shall be a witness against you. That is, the rust or discoloration shall bear testimony against you that the money is not used as it should be, either in paying those to whom it is due, or in doing good to others. Among the ancients, the gold and silver which any one possessed was laid up in some secret and safe place. Isa 45:3. There were no banks then in which money might be deposited; there were few ways of investing money so as to produce regular interests; there were no corporations to employ money in joint operations; and it was not very common to invest money in the purchase of real estate, and stocks and mortgages were little known. And shall eat your flesh as it were fire. This cannot be taken literally. It must mean that the effect would be as if it should corrode or consume their very flesh; that is, the fact of their laying up treasures would be followed by painful consequences. The thought is very striking, and the language in which it is conveyed is singularly bold and energetic. The effect of thus heaping up treasure will be as corroding as fire in the flesh. The reference is to the punishment which God would bring on them for their avarice and injustice--effects that will come on all now for the same offences. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. The day of judgment; the dosing scenes of this world. You have been heaping up treasure; but it will be treasure of a different kind from what you have supposed. It is treasure not laid up for ostentation, or luxury, or use in future life, but treasure the true worth of which will be seen at the judgment-day. So Paul speaks of "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom 2:5. There are many who suppose they are accumulating property that may be of use to them, or that may secure them the reputation of possessing great wealth, who are in fact accumulating a most fearful treasure against the day of final

retribution. Every man who is rich should examine himself closely to see whether there is anything in the manner in which he has gained his property, or in which he now holds it, that will expose him to the wrath of God in the last day. That on which he so much prides himself may yet bring down on him the vengeance of heaven; and in the day of judgment he may curse his own madness and folly in wasting his probation in efforts to amass property.

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your In fields. the previous verses the form of the sin which the apostle specified was that they had hoarded their property, he now states another form of their guilt, that, while doing this, they had withheld what was due from the very labourers who had cultivated their fields, and to whose labour they were indebted for what they had. The phrase, "who have reaped down your fields," is used to denote labour in general. This particular thing is specified, perhaps, because the reaping of the harvest seems to be more immediately connected with the accumulation of property. What is said here, however, will apply to all kinds of labour. It may be remarked, also, that the sin condemned here is one that may exist not only in reference to those who are hired to cultivate a farm, but to all in our employ, to day-labourers, to mechanics, to seamen, etc. It will apply, in an eminent degree, to those who hold others in slavery, and who live by their unrequited toils. The very essence of slavery is, that the slave shall produce by his labour so much more than he receives for his own maintenance as to support the master and his family in indolence. The slave is to do the work which the master would otherwise be obliged to do; the advantage of the system is supposed to be that the master is not under a necessity of labouring at all. The amount which the slave receives is not presumed to be what is a fair equivalent for what he does, or what a freeman could be hired for; but so much less than his labour is fairly worth, as to be a source of so much gain to the master. If slaves were fairly compensated for their labour; if they received what was understood to be a just price for what they do, or what they would be willing to bargain for if they were free, the system would at once come to an end. No owner of a slave would keep him if he did not suppose that out of his unrequited toil he might make money, or might be relieved himself from the necessity of labour, he who hires a freeman to reap down his fields pays what the freeman regards as a fair equivalent for what he does; he who employs a slave does not give what the slave would regard as an

equivalent, and expects that what he gives will be so much less than an equivalent, that he may be free alike from the necessity of labour and of paying him what he has fairly earned. The very essence of slavery, therefore, is fraud; and there is nothing to which the remarks of the apostle here are more applicable than to that unjust and oppressive system. Which is of you kept back by fraud. The Greek word here used (αποστερεω) is rendered defraud, in Mk 10:10; 1Cor 6:7-8; 7:5; and destitute, in 1Timm 6:5. It occurs nowhere else, except in the passage before us. It means to deprive of, with the notion that that to which it is applied was due to one, or that he had a claim on it. The fraud referred to in keeping it back, may be anything by which the payment is withheld, or the claim evaded--whether it be mere neglect to pay it; or some advantage taken in making the bargain; or some evasion of the law; or mere vexatious delay; or such superior power that he to whom it is due cannot enforce the payment; or such a system that he to whom it is fairly due is supposed in the laws to have no rights, and to be incapable of suing or being sued. Any one of these things would come under the denomination of fraud. Crieth. That is, cries out to God for punishment. The voice of this wrong goes up to heaven. And the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. That is, he hears them, and he will attend to their cry. Compare Ex 22:27. They are oppressed and wronged; they have none to regard their cry on earth, and to redress their wrongs, and they go and appeal to that God who will regard their cry, and avenge them. On the phrase "Lord of sabaoth," or Lord of hosts, for so the word sabaoth means, Isa 1:9, and Rom 9:29. Perhaps by the use of the word here it is implied that the God to whom they cry--the mighty Ruler of all worlds-- is able to vindicate them. It may be added, that the cry of the oppressed and the wronged is going up constantly from all parts of the earth, and is always heard by God. In his own time he will come forth to vindicate the oppressed, and to punish the oppressor. It may be added, also, that if what is here said were regarded as it should be by all men, slavery, as well as other systems of wrong, would soon come to an end. If everywhere the workman was fairly paid for his earnings; if the poor slave who cultivates the fields of the rich were properly compensated for his toil; if he received what a freeman would contract to do the work for; if there was no fraud in withholding what he earns, the system would soon cease in the earth. Slavery could not live a day if this were done. Now there is no such compensation; but the cry of

oppressed millions will continue to go up to heaven, and the period must come when the system shall cease. Either the master must be brought to such a sense of right that he will be disposed to do justice, and let the oppressed go free; or God will so impoverish the lands where the system prevails as to make all men see that the system is unprofitable and ruinous as compared with free labour; or the oppressed will somehow become so acquainted with their own strength and their rights that they shall arise and assert their freedom; or under the prevalence of true religion better views will prevail, and oppressors, turned to God, shall relax the yoke of bondage; or God will so bring heavy judgments in his holy providence on the oppressors, that the system of slavery will everywhere come to an end on the earth. Nothing is more certain than that the whole system is condemned by the passage of Scripture before us; that it is contrary to the genuine spirit of Christianity, and that the prevalence of true religion would bring it to an end. Probably all slave holders feel that to place the Bible in the hands of slaves, and to instruct them to read it, would be inconsistent with the perpetuity of the system. Yet a system which cannot survive the most full and free circulation of the sacred Scriptures, must be founded in wrong.

JFB:

ye rich—who have neglected the true enjoyment of riches, which consists in doing good. James intends this address to rich Jewish unbelievers, not so much for themselves, as for the saints, that they may bear with patience the violence of the rich (Jas 5:7), knowing that God will speedily avenge them on their oppressors [BENGEL]. miseries that shall come—literally, "that are coming upon you" unexpectedly and swiftly, namely, at the coming of the Lord (Jas 5:7); primarily, at the destruction of Jerusalem; finally, at His visible coming to judge the world.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

These words may be considered wither relatively or absolutely. Consider them, 1. With relation to the Jews, to whom they were written immmediately, and they are a prediction or denuncitation of that judgment which was coming upon the right men in the Jewish

nation; which prediction, Josephus assures us, was fulfilled by the slaughter and spoiling of the rich Jews throughout Galilee and Judea, the zealots sparing none but the poor and low. Thus did the vengeance of God, and does to this day, pursue and follow that wicked people, who killed the Lord of Life, and their own prophets, who brought judgment on themselves to the uttermost.

Consider the words absolutely in themselves, and they are a severe and cutting reprehension to covetous rich men, for their sordid sparing of that wealth which God had given them for public service. And the apostle gives us,

1. A description of their sin.

2. A declaration of their punishment.

Observe, 1. A description of the sin of the covetous rich worldlings, they chose rather to have their goods to be corrupted and spoiled, than to be employed to good uses; their victuals might have refreshed the bowels of the hungry, but they rather suffered them to putrify and stink; the garments which lay useless in their wardrobes, might have clothed the backs of their naked brethren, but they had rather let them be moth eaten; their gold and silver might have been applied to many good uses, but they had rather it should be cankered, and rust in their chests.

Observe, 2. The punishment denounced against them for this their sin, the rust of their gold and silver shall witness against them; that is, their consciences shall at once convince them of their base covetousness, and torment them for it; and this corroding of their consciences shall have an impression upon their bodies, it shall eat their flesh as it were fire; and all that treasure which, with wrong to others, and violation of their own consciences, they had heaped together, was but heaped up for the spoiler, and the violence of the last days.

Learn from the whole, 1. That it is hard to possess riches without sin; a hard matter to have them, and not be hindered from heaven by them.

Learn, 2. That a covetous hoarding, and sordid sparing of wealth, which our suffering brethren want, brings a curse both upon our persons and estates.

3. That more miseries, and dreadful judgments, shall come upon wicked rich men, which, if believingly apprehended, would cause them now to weep and howl. We do not hurt with our wealth, say some; aye, but what good do you do with it? Where are the poor members of Christ, whom ye have relieved with the superfluities of your table? But can many say truly, they have done no harm with their estates?
Lord! what carelessness in religion, what contempt of God, what riot and excess is found amongst many that abound in wealth, who expend more upon a lust in one day, than would maintain a poor family many years.

Learn, 4. That in the day of judgment, not only our actions, but all the circumstances of our actions, shall be brought forth, and produced as arguments of conviction; the rusty iron, the cankered silver, the moth eaten clothes, shall be produced; the stones of the wall, built by oppression, shall cry, "Lord, we were built by oppression and violence;" and the beam out of the timber shall answer it, True, Lord, even so it is, Hab 2:11 The circumstances of men's sins at the great day will be as so many memorials to put them in mind of guilt, and God in mind of vengeance: Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of it shall be witness against you.

4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Let us consider the address to sinners; and here we find James seconding what his great Master had said: Woe unto you that are rich; for you have received your consolation, Lu 6:24. The rich people to whom this word of warning was sent were not such as professed the Christian religion, but the worldly and unbelieving Jews, such as are here said to condemn and kill the just, which the Christians had no power to do; and though this epistle was written

for the sake of the faithful, and was sent principally to them, yet, by an apostrophe, the infidel Jews may be well supposed here spoken to. They would not hear the word, and therefore it is written, that they might read it. It is observable, in the very first inscription of this epistle, that it is not directed, as Paul's epistles were, to the brethren in Christ, but, in general, to the twelve tribes; and the salutation is not, grace and peace from Christ, but, in general, greeting, Jam 1:1 The poor among the Jews received the gospel, and many of them believed; but the generality of the rich rejected Christianity, and were hardened in their unbelief, and hated and persecuted those who believed on Christ. To these oppressing, unbelieving, persecuting, rich people, the apostle addresses himself in the Jam 5:1-6.

1. He foretels the judgments of God that should come upon them, Jam 5:1-3. they should have miseries come upon them, and such dreadful miseries that the very apprehension of them was enough to make them weep and howl--misery that should arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness, and misery that should be completed by these things witnessing against them at the last, to their utter destruction; and they are now called to reason upon and thoroughly to weigh the matter, and to think how they will stand before God in judgment: Go to now, you rich men.

(1.) "You may be assured of this that very dreadful calamities are coming upon you, calamities that shall carry nothing of support nor comfort in them, but all misery, misery in time, misery to eternity, misery in your outward afflictions, misery in your inward frame and temper of mind, misery in this world, misery in hell. You have not a single instance of misery only coming upon you, but miseries. The ruin of your church and nation is at hand; and there will come a day of wrath, when riches shall not profit men, but all the wicked shall be destroyed."

(2.) The very apprehension of such miseries as were coming upon them is enough to make them weep and howl. Rich men are apt to say to themselves (and others are ready to say to them), Eat, drink, and be merry; but God says, Weep and howl. It is not said, Weep

and repent, for this the apostle does not expect from them (he speaks in a way of denouncing rather than admonishing); but, "Weep and howl, for when your doom comes there will be nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Those who live like beasts are called howl like such. Public calamities are most grievous to rich people, who live in pleasure, and are secure and sensual; and therefore they shall weep and howl more than other people for the miseries that shall come upon them.

(3.) Their misery shall arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness. "Corruption, decay, rust, and ruin, will come upon all your goodly things: Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten, Jam 5:2. Those things which you now inordinately affect will hereafter insupportably wound you: they will be of no worth, of no use to you, but, on the contrary, will pierce you through with many sorrows; for,"

(4.) "They will witness against you, and they will eat your flesh as it were fire," Jam 5:3. Things inanimate are frequently represented in scripture as witnessing against wicked men. Heaven, earth, the stones of the field, the production of the ground, and here the very rust and canker of ill-gotten and ill-kept treasures, are said to witness against impious rich men. They think to heap up treasure for their latter days, to live plentifully upon when they come to be old; but, alas! they are only heaping up treasures to become a prey to others (as the Jews had all taken from them by the Romans), and treasures that will prove at last to be only treasures of wrath, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Then shall their iniquities, in the punishment of them, eat their flesh as it were with fire. In the ruin of Jerusalem, many thousands perished by fire; in the last judgment the wicked shall be condemned to everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels. The Lord deliver us from the portion of wicked rich men! and, in order to this, let us take care that we do not fall into their sins, which we are next to consider.

2 The apostle shows what those sins are which should bring such miseries. To be in so deplorable a condition must doubtless be owing to some very heinous crimes.

(1.) Covetousness is laid to the charge of this people; they laid by their garments till they bred moths and were eaten; they hoarded up their gold and silver till they were rusty and cankered. It is a very great disgrace to these things that they carry in them the principles of their own corruption and consumption--the garment breeds the moth that frets it, the gold and silver breeds the canker that eats it; but the disgrace falls most heavily upon those who hoard and lay up these things till they come to be thus corrupted, and cankered, and eaten. God gives us our worldly possessions that we may honour him and do good with them; but if, instead of this, we sinfully hoard them up, thorough and undue affection towards them, or a distrust of the providence of God for the future, this is a very heinous crime, and will be witnessed against by the very rust and corruption of the treasure thus heaped together.

(2.) Another sin charged upon those against whom James writes is oppression: Behold, the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, &c., Jam 5:4. Those who have wealth in their hands get power into their hands, and then they are tempted to abuse that power to oppress such as are under them. The rich we here find employing the poor in their labours, and the rich have as much need of the labours of the poor as the poor have of wages from the rich, and could as ill be without them; but yet, not considering this, they kept back the hire of the labourers; having power in their hands, it is probable that they made as hard bargains with the poor as they could, and even after that would not make good their bargains as they should have done. This is a crying sin, an iniquity that cries so as to reach the ears of God; and, in this case, God is to be considered as the Lord of sabaoth, or the Lord of hosts, Kyriou sabaoth, a phrase often used in the Old-Testament, when the people of God were defenseless and wanted protection, and when their enemies were numerous and powerful. The Lord of hosts, who has all ranks of beings and creatures at his disposal, and who sets all in their several places, hears the oppressed when they cry by reason of the cruelty or injustice of the oppressor, and he will give orders to some of those hosts that are under him (angels, devils, storms, distempers, or the like) to avenge the wrongs done to those who are dealt with unrighteously and unmercifully.

Take heed of this sin of defrauding and oppressing, and avoid the very appearances of it.

(3.) Another sin here mentioned is sensuality and voluptuousness. You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton, Jam 5:5. God does not forbid us to use pleasure; but to live in them as if we lived for nothing else is a very provoking sin; and to do this on the earth, where we are but strangers and pilgrims, where we are but to continue for a while, and where we ought to be preparing for eternity--this, this is a grievous aggravation of the sin of voluptuousness. Luxury makes people wanton, as in Ho 13:6, According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. Wantonness and luxury are commonly the effects of great plenty and abundance; it is hard for people to have great plenty and abundance; it is hard for people to have great estates, and not too much indulge themselves in carnal, sensual pleasures: "You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter: you live as if it were every day a day of sacrifices, a festival; and hereby your hearts are fattened and nourished to stupidity, dulness, pride, and an insensibility to the wants and afflictions of others." Some may say, "What harm is there in good cheer, provided people do not spend above what they have?" What! Is it no harm for people to make gods of their bellies, and to give all to these, instead of abounding in acts of charity and piety? Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging the appetites of their bodies? Surely that which brought flames upon Sodom, and would bring these miseries for which rich men are here called to weep and howl, must be a heinous evil! Pride, and idleness, and fullness of bread, mean the same thing with living in pleasure, and being wanton, and nourishing the heart as in a day of slaughter.

(4.) Another sin here charged on the rich is persecution: You have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you, Jam 5:6. This fills up the measure of their iniquity. They oppressed and acted very unjustly, to get estates; when they had them, they gave way to luxury and sensuality, till they had lost all sense and feeling of the wants or afflictions of others; and then they persecute and kill without remorse. They pretend to act legally indeed, they condemn

before they kill; but unjust prosecutions, whatever colour of law they may carry in them, will come into the reckoning when God shall make inquisition for blood, as well as massacres and downright murders. Observe here, The just may be condemned and killed: but then again observe, When such do suffer, and yield without resistance to the unjust sentence of oppressors, this is marked by God, to the honour of the sufferers and the infamy of their persecutors; this commonly shows that judgments are at the door, and we may certainly conclude that a reckoning-day will come, to reward the patience of the oppressed and to break to pieces the oppressor. Thus far the address to sinners goes.

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth. One of the things to which the rich are peculiarly addicted. Their wealth is supposed to be of value, because it furnishes them the means of doing it. Compare Lk 12:19; 16:19. The word translated "lived in pleasure," (τρυφαω,) occurs only here in the New Testament. It means, to live delicately, luxuriously, at ease. There is not in the word essentially the idea of vicious indulgence, but that which characterizes those who live for enjoyment. They lived in ease and affluence on the avails of the labours of others; they indulged in what gratified the taste, and pleased the ear and the eye, while those who contributed the means of this were groaning under oppression. A life of mere indolence and ease, of delicacy and luxury, is nowhere countenanced in the Bible; and even where unconnected with oppression and wrong to others, such a mode of living is regarded as inconsistent with the purpose for which God made man, and placed him on the earth. See Lk 12:19-20. Every man has high and solemn duties to perform, and there is enough to be done on earth to give employment to every human being, and to fill up every hour in a profitable and useful way.

And been wanton. This word now probably conveys to most minds a sense which is not in the original. Our English word is now commonly used in the sense of lewd, lustful, lascivious. It was, however, formerly used in the sense of sportive, joyous, gay, and was applied to anything that was variable or fickle. The Greek word used here (σπαταλαω) means, to live luxuriously or voluptuously. 1Timm 5:6, where the word is explained. It does not refer necessarily to gross

criminal pleasures, though the kind of living here referred to often leads to such indulgences. There is a close connexion between what the apostle says here, and what he refers to in the previous verses--the oppression of others, and the withholding of what is due to those who labour. Such acts of oppression and wrong are commonly resorted to in order to obtain the means of luxurious living, and the gratification of sensual pleasures. In all countries where slavery exists, the things here referred to are found in close connexion. The fraud and wrong by which the reward of hard toil is withheld from the slave is connected with indolence and sensual indulgence on the part of the master.

Ye have nourished your hearts. Or, yourselves--the word hearts here being equivalent to themselves. The meaning is, that they appeared to have been fattening themselves, like stall-fed beasts, for the day of slaughter. As cattle are carefully fed, and are fattened with a view to their being slaughtered, so they seemed to have been fattened for the slaughter that was to come on them--the day of vengeance. Thus many now live. They do no work; they contribute nothing to the good of society; they are mere consumers--fruges consumere nati; and, like stall-fed cattle, they seem to live only with reference to the day of slaughter, and to the recompense which awaits them after death.

As in a day of slaughter. There has been much variety in the interpretation of this expression. Robinson (Lex.) renders it, "like beasts in the day of slaughter, without care or forethought." Rosenmuller (Morgenland) supposes that it means, as in a festival; referring, as he thinks, to the custom among the ancients of having a feast when a part of the animal was consumed in sacrifice, and the rest was eaten by the worshippers. So Benson. On such occasions, indulgence was given to appetite almost without limit; and the idea then would be, that they had given themselves up to a life of pampered luxury. But probably the more correct idea is, that they had fattened themselves as for the day of destruction; that is, as animals are fattened for slaughter. They lived only to eat and drink, and to enjoy life. But, by such a course, they were as certainly preparing for perdition, as cattle were prepared to be killed by being stall-fed.

6 Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

Ye have condemned and killed the just. τονδικαιον-- the just one, or the just man--for the word used is in the singular number. This may either refer to the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ---meaning that their conduct towards his people had been similar to the treatment of the Saviour, and was in fact a condemnation and crucifixion of him afresh; or, that by their rejection of him in order to live in sin, they in fact condemned him and his religion; or, that they had condemned and killed the just man--meaning that they had persecuted those who were Christians; or, that by their harsh treatment of others in withholding what was due to them, they had deprived them of the means of subsistence, and had, as it were, killed the righteous. Probably the true meaning is, that it was one of their characteristics that they had been guilty of wrong towards good men. Whether it refers, however, to any particular act of violence, or to such a course as would wear out their lives by a system of oppression, injustice, and fraud, cannot now be determined.

And he doth not resist you. Some have supposed that this refers to God, meaning that he did not oppose them; that is, that he bore with them patiently while they did it. Others suppose that it should be read as a question--"and doth he not resist you?" meaning that God would oppose them, and punish them for their acts of oppression and wrong. But probably the true reference is to the "just man" whom they condemned and killed; meaning that they were so powerful that all attempts to resist them would be vain, and that the injured and oppressed could do nothing but submit patiently to their acts of injustice and violence. The sense may be either that they could not oppose them--the rich men being so powerful, and they who were oppressed so feeble; or that they bore their wrongs with meekness, and did not attempt it. The sins, therefore, condemned in these verses, (Jas 5:1-6,) and for which it is said the Divine vengeance would come upon those referred to, are these four:

(1,) that of hoarding up money when it was unnecessary for their real support and comfort, and when they might do so much good with it, (compare Mt 6:19;)

(2,) that of keeping back the wages which was due to those who cultivated their fields; that is, keeping back what would be a fair

compensation for their toil--applicable alike to hired men and to slaves;

(3,) that of giving themselves up to a life of ease, luxury, and sensual indulgence; and,

(4,) that of wronging and oppressing good and just men-- men, perhaps in humble life, who were unable to vindicate their rights, and who had none to undertake their cause; men who were too feeble to offer successful resistance, or who were restrained by their principles from attempting it. It is needless to say that there are multitudes of such persons now on the earth, and that they have the same reason to dread the Divine vengeance which the same class had in the time of the apostle James.

Patience and Prayer

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.
Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth,
and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter
rain.

Be patient therefore, brethren. That is, under such wrongs as the apostle had described in the previous verses. Those whom he addressed were doubtless suffering under those oppressions, and his object was to induce them to bear their wrongs without murmuring and without resistance. One of the methods of doing this was by showing them, in an address to their rich oppressors, that those who injured and wronged them would be suitably punished at the day of judgment, or that their cause was in the hands of God; and another method of doing it was by the direct inculcation of the duty of patience. Mt 5:38 and also through verse 45. The margin here is, be long patient, or suffer with long patience. The sense of the Greek is, "be long-suffering, or let not your patience be exhausted. Your courage, rigour, and forbearance is not to be short-lived, but is to be enduring. Let it continue as long as there is need of it, even to the coming of the Lord. Then you will be released from sufferings."

Unto the coming of the Lord. The coming of the Lord Jesus--either to remove you by death, or to destroy the city of Jerusalem and bring to an end the Jewish institutions, or to judge the world and receive

his people to himself. The "coming of the Lord" in any way was an event which Christians were taught to expect, and which would be connected with their deliverance from troubles. As the time of his appearing was not revealed, it was not improper to refer to that as an event that might possibly be near; and as the removal of Christians by death is denoted by the phrase "the coming of the Lord"--that is, his coming to each one of us--it was not improper to speak of death in that view. On the general subject of the expectations entertained among the early Christians of the second advent of the Saviour, 1Cor 15:51 and also 2Thes 2:2-3.

Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. The farmer waits patiently for the grain to grow. It requires time to mature the crop, and he does not become impatient. The idea seems to be, that we should wait for things to develop themselves in their proper season, and should not be impatient before that season arrives. In due time we may expect the harvest to be ripened. We cannot hasten it. We cannot control the rain, the sun, the seasons; and the farmer therefore patiently waits until in the regular course of events he has a harvest. So we cannot control and hasten the events which are in God's own keeping; and we should patiently wait for the developments of his will, and the arrangements of his providence, by which we may obtain what we desire.

And hath long patience for it. That is, his patience is not exhausted. It extends through the whole time in which, by the Divine arrangements, he may expect a harvest.

Until he receive the early and latter rain. In the climate of Palestine there are two rainy seasons, on which the harvest essentially depends--the autumnal and the spring rains--called here and elsewhere in the Scriptures the early and the latter rains. See De 11:14; Job 29:23; Jer 5:24. The autumnal or early rains of Scripture, usually commence in the latter half of October or the beginning of November; not suddenly, but by degrees, which gives opportunity for the husbandman to sow his fields of wheat and barley. The rains come mostly from the west or south-west, continuing for two or three days at a time, and failing especially during the nights. The wind then chops round to the north or east, and several days of fine

weather succeed. During the months of November and December the rains continue to fall heavily; afterwards they return only at longer intervals, and are less heavy; but at no period during the winter do they entirely cease to occur. Snow often falls in Jerusalem, in January and February, to the depth of a foot or more, but it does not last long. Rain continues to fall more or less through the month of March, but it is rare after that period. At the present time there are not any particular periods of rain, or successions of showers, which might be regarded as distinct rainy seasons. The whole period from October to March now constitutes only one continued rainy season, without any regularly intervening time of prolonged fair weather. Unless, therefore, there has been some change in the climate since the times of the New Testament, the early and the latter rains for which the husbandman waited with longing, seem rather to have implied the first showers of autumn, which revived the parched and thirsty earth, and prepared it for the seed; and the latter showers of spring, which continued to refresh and forward the ripening crops and the vernal products of the fields. In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene.--Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol. ii., pp. 96-100.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Be ye also patient. As the farmer is. In due time, as he expects the return of the rain, so you may anticipate deliverance from your trials.

Stablish your hearts. Let your purposes and your faith be firm and unwavering. Do not become weary and fretful; but bear with constancy all that is laid upon you, until the time of your deliverance shall come.

For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Compare Rev 22:10,12,20; 1Cor 15:51. It is clear, I think, from this place, that the apostle expected that that which he understood by "the coming of the Lord" was soon to occur; for it was to be that by which they would obtain deliverance from the trials which they then endured. See Jas 5:7. Whether it means that he was soon to come to judgment, or to bring to an end the Jewish policy and to set up his kingdom on the earth, or that they would soon be removed by death, cannot be determined from the mere use of the language. The most natural

interpretation of the passage, and one which will accord well with the time when the epistle was written, is, that the predicted time of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24) was at hand; that there were already indications that that would soon occur; and that there was a prevalent expectation among Christians that that event would be a release from many trials of persecution, and would be followed by the setting up of the Redeemer's kingdom. Perhaps many expected that the judgment would occur at that time, and that the Saviour would set up a personal reign on the earth. But the expectation of others might have been merely--what is indeed all that is necessarily implied in the predictions on the subject--that there would be after that a rapid and extensive spread of the principles of the Christian religion in the world. The destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple would contribute to that by bringing to an end the whole system of Jewish types and sacrifices; by convincing Christians that there was not to be one central rallying-point, thus destroying their lingering prejudices in favour of the Jewish mode of worship; and by scattering them abroad through the world to propagate the new religion. The epistle was written, it is supposed, some ten or twelve years before the destruction of Jerusalem, (Intro., & 3,) and it is not improbable that there were already some indications of that approaching event.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Grudge not one against another. Marg., "groan, grieve." The Greek word (στεναζω) means, to sigh, to groan, as of persons in distress, (Rom 8:23;) and then to sigh or groan through impatience, fretfulness, ill-humour; and hence to murmur, to find fault, to complain. The exact idea here is, not that of grudging in the sense of dissatisfaction with what others possess, or of being envious; it is that of being fretful and impatient--or, to use a common word which more exactly expresses the sense, that of grumbling. This may arise from many causes; either because others have advantages which we have not, and we are discontented and unhappy, as if it were wrong in them to have such enjoyments; or because we, without reason, suppose they intend to slight and neglect us; or because we are ready to take offence at any little thing, and to "pick a quarrel" with them. There are some persons who are always grumbling. They have a sour, dissatisfied, discontented temper; they see no excellence in other persons; they are displeased that others are more prospered,

honoured, and beloved than they are themselves; they are always complaining of what others do, not because they are injured, but because others seem to them to be weak and foolish; they seem to feel that it becomes them to complain if everything is not done precisely as in their estimation it should be. It is needless to say that this spirit--the offspring of pride--will make any man lead a wretched life; and equally needless to say that it is wholly contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Compare Lk 3:14; Php 4:11; 1Timm 6:8; Heb 13:5.

Lest ye be condemned. That is, for judging others with this spirit--for this spirit is in fact judging them. Mt 7:1.

Behold, the judge standeth before the door. The Lord Jesus, who is soon to come to judge the world. See Jas 5:8. He is, as it were, even now approaching the door--so near that he can hear all that you say.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Take, my brethren, the prophets. That is, in your trials and persecutions. To encourage them to the exercise of patience, he points them to the example of those who had trod the same thorny path before them. The prophets were in general a much persecuted race of men; and the argument on which the apostle relies from their example is this:

(1,) that if the prophets were persecuted and tried, it may be expected that other good men will be;

(2,) that they showed such patience in their trials as to be a model for us. An example of suffering affliction. That is, they showed us how evils are to be borne.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. The word rendered "we count them happy," (μακαριζομεν,) occurs only here and in Lk 1:48, where it is rendered "shall call me blessed." The word μακαριος, (blessed, or happy,) however, occurs often. See Mt 5:3-11; 11:6; Mt 13:6, et saepe. The sense here is, we speak of their patience with

commendation. They have done what they ought to do, and their name is honoured and blessed. Ye have heard of the patience of Job. As one of the most illustrious instances of patient sufferers. See Job 1:21. The book of Job was written, among other reasons, to show that true religion would bear any form of trial to which it could be subjected. See Job 1:9-11; Job 2:5-6. And have seen the end of the Lord. That is, the end or design which the Lord had in the trials of Job, or the result to which he brought the case at last--to wit, that he showed himself to be very merciful to the poor sufferer; that he met him with the expressions of his approbation for the manner in which he bore his trials; and that he doubled his former possessions, and restored him to more than his former happiness and honour. See Job 42. Augustine, Luther, Wetstein, and others, understand this as referring to the death of the Lord Jesus, and as meaning that they had seen the manner in which he suffered death, as an example for us. But, though this might strike many as the true interpretation, yet the objections to it are insuperable.

(1.) It does not accord with the proper meaning of the word end, (τελος.) That word is in no instance applied to death, nor does it properly express death. It properly denotes an end, term, termination, completion: and is used in the following senses:

(a) to denote the end, the termination, or the last of anything, Mk 3:26; 1Cor 15:24; Lk 21:9; Heb 7:3;

(b) an event, issue, or result, Mt 26:58; Rom 6:21; 2Cor 11:18;

(c) the final purpose,, that to which all the parts tend, and in which they terminate, 1Timm 1:5;

(d) tax, custom, or tribute--what is paid for public ends or purposes, Mt 17:25; Rom 13:7.

(2.) This interpretation, referring it to the death of the Saviour, would not accord with the remark of the apostle in the close of the verse, "that the Lord is very merciful." That is, what he says was "seen," or this was what was particularly illustrated in the case referred to. Yet this was not particularly seen in the death of the Lord Jesus. He was indeed most patient and submissive in his death, and it is true that he showed mercy to the penitent malefactor; but this

was not the particular and most prominent trait which he evinced in his death. Besides, if it had been, that would not have been the thing to which the apostle would have referred here. His object was to recommend patience under trials, not mercy shown to others; and this he does by showing

(a) that Job was an eminent instance of it, and

(b) that the result was such as to encourage us to be patient. The end or the result of the Divine dealings in his case was, that the Lord was "very pitiful and of tender mercy;" and we may hope that it will be so in our case, and should therefore be encouraged to be patient under our trials. That the Lord is very pitiful. As he showed deep compassion in the case of Job, we have equal reason to suppose that he will in our own.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

Is any among you afflicted? By sickness, bereavement, disappointment, persecutions, loss of health or property. The word used here refers to suffering evil of any kind, (κακοπαθει.)

Let him pray. That is, prayer is appropriate to trial. The mind naturally resorts to it, and in every way it is proper. God only can remove the source of sorrow; he can grant unto us "a happy issue out of all our afflictions;" he can make them the means of sanctifying the soul. Compare 2Chr 33:12; Ps 34:4; 107:6,13,28. It matters not what is the form of the trial, it is a privilege which all have to go to God in prayer. And it is an inestimable privilege. Health fails, friends die, property is lost, disappointments come upon us, danger threatens, death approaches--and to whom shall we go but to God? He ever lives. He never fails us or disappoints us if we trust in him, and his ear is ever open to our cries. This would be a sad world indeed, if it were not for the privilege of prayer. The last resource of millions who suffer--for millions suffer every day--would be taken away, if men were denied the access to the throne of grace. As it is, there is no one so poor that he may not pray; no one so disconsolate

and forsaken that he may not find in God a friend; no one so broken-hearted that he is not able to bind up his spirit. One of the designs of affliction is to lead us to the throne of grace; and it is a happy result of trials if we are led by our trials to seek God in prayer.

Is any merry? The word merry now conveys an idea which is not properly found in the original word here. It refers now, in common usage, to light and noisy pleasure; to that which is jovial; to that which is attended with laughter, or which causes laughter, as a merry jest. In the Scriptures, however, the word properly denotes cheerful, pleasant, agreeable, and is applied to a state of mind free from trouble--the opposite of affliction-happy, Prov 15:13,16; 17:22; Isa 24:7; Lk 15:23-24,29,32. The Greek word used here (ευθυμει) means, literally, to have the mind well, (ευ and θυμος;) that is, to have it happy, or free from trouble; to be cheerful.

Let him sing psalms. That is, if any one is happy; if he is in health, and is prospered; if he has his friends around him, and there is nothing to produce anxiety; if he has the free exercise of conscience and enjoys religion, it is proper to express that in notes of praise. Compare Eph 5:19-20. On the meaning of the word here rendered "sing psalms," Eph 5:9, where it is rendered making melody. It does not mean to sing psalms in contradistinction from singing hymns, but the reference is to any songs of praise. Praise is appropriate to such a state of mind. The heart naturally gives utterance to its emotions in songs of thanksgiving. The sentiment in this verse is well expressed in the beautiful stanza,

In every joy that crowns my days, In every pain I bear, My heart shall find delight in praise, Or seek relief in prayer. Mrs. Williams.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

Is any sick among you? In the previous verse the reference was to affliction in general, and the duty there urged was one that was applicable to all forms of trial. The subject of sickness, however, is so important, since it so often occurs, that a specific direction was desirable. That direction is to call in the aid of others to lead our thoughts, and to aid us in our devotions, because one who is sick is less able to direct his own reflections and to pray for himself than he

is in other forms of trial. Nothing is said here respecting the degree of sickness, whether it is that which would be fatal if these means were used or not; but the direction pertains to any kind of illness.

Let him call for the elders of the church. Gr., presbyters. Acts 15:2; and also Acts 11:30. It cannot be supposed that this refers to the apostles, for it could not be that they would be always accessible; besides, instructions like this were designed to have a permanent character, and to be applicable to the church at all times and in all places. The reference, therefore, is doubtless to the ordinary religious teachers of the congregation; the officers of the church intrusted with its spiritual interests. The spirit of the command would embrace those who are pastors, and any others to whom the spiritual interests of the congregation are confided--ruling elders, deacons, etc. If the allusion is to the ordinary officers of the church, it is evident that the cure to be hoped for (Jas 5:15) was not miraculous, but was that to be expected in the use of appropriate means accompanied by prayer. It may be added, as worthy of note, that the apostle says they should "call" for the elders of the church; that is, they should send for them. They should not wait for them to hear of their sickness, as they might happen to, but they should cause them to be informed of it, and give them an opportunity of visiting them and praying with them. Nothing is more common than for persons--even members of the church--to be sick a long time, and to presume that their pastor must know all about it; and then they wonder that he does not come to see them, and think hard of him because he does not. A pastor cannot be supposed to know everything; nor can it be presumed that he knows when persons are sick, any more than he can know anything else, unless he is apprized of it; and many hard thoughts, and many suspicions of neglect would be avoided, if, when persons are sick, they would in some way inform their pastor of it. It should always be presumed of a minister of the gospel that he is ready to visit the sick. But how can he go unless he is in some way apprized of the illness of those who need his counsel and his prayers? The sick send for their family physician; why should they presume that their pastor will know of their illness any more than that their physician will?

And let them pray over him. With him, and for him. A man who is sick is often little capable of praying himself; and it is a privilege to have some one to lead his thoughts in devotion. Besides, the prayer

of a good man may be of avail in restoring him to health, Jas 5:15. Prayer is always one important means of obtaining the Divine favour, and there is no place where it is more appropriate than by the bedside of sickness. That relief from pain may be granted; that the mind may be calm and submissive; that the medicines employed may be blessed to a restoration to health; that past sins may be forgiven; that he who is sick may be sanctified by his trials; that he may be restored to health, or prepared for his "last change"--all these are subjects of prayer which we feel to be appropriate in such a case, and every sick man should avail himself of the aid of those who "have an interest at the throne of grace," that they may be obtained.

In the name of the Lord. By the authority or direction of the Lord; or as an act in accordance with his will, and that will meet with his approbation. When we do anything that tends to promote virtue, to alleviate misery, to instruct ignorance, to save life, or to prepare others for heaven, it is right to feel that we are doing it in the name of the Lord. Compare for such uses of the phrase "in the name of the Lord," and "in my name," Mt 10:22; 18:6,20, Mt 19:29; 24:9; Mk 9:41; 13:13; Lk 21:12,17; Rev 2:3; Col 3:17. There is no reason to think that the phrase is used here to denote any peculiar religious rite or "sacrament." It was to be done in the name of the Lord, as any other good deed is.

15 and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

And the prayer of faith. The prayer offered in faith, or in the exercise of confidence in God. It is not said that the particular form of the faith exercised shall be that the sick man will certainly recover; but there is to be unwavering confidence in God, a belief that he will do what is best, and a cheerful committing of the cause into his hands. We express our earnest wish, and leave the case with him. The prayer of faith is to accompany the use of means, or all means would be ineffectual without the blessing of God. Shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up. This must be understood, as such promises are everywhere, with this restriction, that they will be restored to health if it shall be the will of God; if he shall deem it for the best. It cannot be taken in the absolute and unconditional sense, for then, if these means were used, the sick person would always recover, no matter how often he might be sick, and he need never die. The design is to encourage them to the use of these means with

a strong hope that it would be effectual. It may fairly be inferred from this statement,

(1,) that there would be cases in large numbers where these means would be attended with this happy result; and,

(2,) that there was so much encouragement to do it that it would be proper in any case of sickness to make use of these means. It may be added, that no one can demonstrate that this promise has not been in numerous instances fulfilled. There are instances, not a few, where recovery from sickness seems to be in direct answer to prayer, and no one can prove that it is not so. Compare the case of Hezekiah, in Isa 38:1-5. And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Perhaps there maybe a particular allusion here to sins which may have brought on the sickness as a punishment. In that case the removal of the disease. in answer to prayer would be an evidence that the sin was pardoned. Compare Mt 9:2. But the promise may be understood in a more general sense as denoting that such sickness would be the means of bringing the sins of the past life to remembrance, especially if the one who was sick had been unfaithful to his Christian vows; and that the sickness in connexion with the prayers offered would bring him to true repentance, and would recover him from his wanderings. On backsliding and erring Christians sickness often has this effect; and the subsequent life is so devoted and consistent as to show that the past unfaithfulness of him who has been afflicted is forgiven. This passage (Jas 5:14-15) is important, not only for the counsel which it gives to the sick, but because it has been employed by the Roman Catholic communion as almost the only portion of the Bible referred to sustain one of the peculiar rites of their religion-- that of "extreme unction"--a "sacrament," as they suppose, to be administered to those who are dying. It is of importance, therefore, to inquire more particularly into its meaning. There can be but three views taken of the passage:

That it refers to a miraculous healing by the apostles, or by other early ministers of religion who were endowed with the power of healing diseases in this manner. This is the interpretation of Doddridge, Macknight, Benson, and others. But to this view the objections seem to me to be insuperable.

(a) Nothing of this kind is said by the apostle, and this is not necessary to be supposed in order to a fair interpretation of the passage.

(b) The reference, as already observed, is clearly not to the apostles, but to the ordinary officers of the church--for such a reference would be naturally understood by the word presbyters; and to suppose that this refers to miracles, would be to suppose that this was a common endowment of the ordinary ministers of religion. But there was no promise of this, and there is no evidence that they possessed it. In regard to the extent of the promise, "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover," Mk 16:17.

(c) If this referred to the power of working miracles, and if the promise was absolute, then death would not have occurred at all among the early disciples. It would have been easy to secure a restoration to health in any instance where a minister of religion was at hand. II. It is supposed by the Roman Catholics to give sanction to the practice of "extreme unction," and to prove that this was practised in the primitive church. But the objections to this are still more obvious.

(a) It was not to be performed at death, or in the immediate prospect of death, but in sickness at any time. There is no hint that it was to be only when the patient was past all hope of recovery, or in view of the fact that he was to die. But "extreme unction," from its very nature, is to be practised only where the patient is past all hope of recovery.

(b) It was not with a view to his death, but to his living, that it was to be practised at all. It was not that he might be prepared to die, but that he might he restored to health--"and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." But "extreme unction" can be with no such reference, and no such hope. It is only with the expectation that the patient is about to die; and if there were any expectation that he would be raised up even by this ordinance, it could not be administered as "extreme unction."

(c) The ordinance practised as "extreme unction" is a rite wholly unauthorized in the Scriptures, unless it be by this passage. There

are instances indeed of persons being embalmed after death. It was a fact also that the Saviour said of Mary, when she poured ointment on his body, that she "did it for his burial," or with reference to his burial, (Mt 26:12;)but the Saviour did not say that it was with reference to his death, or was designed in any way to prepare him to die, nor is there any instance in the Bible in which such a rite is mentioned. The ceremony of extreme unction has its foundation in two things: first, in superstition, in the desire of something that shall operate as a charm, or that shall possess physical efficiency in calming the apprehensions of a troubled conscience, and in preparing the guilty to die; and, second, in the fact that it gives immense power to the priesthood. Nothing is better adapted to impart such power than a prevalent belief that a minister of religion holds in his hands the ability to alleviate the pangs of the dying, and to furnish a sure passport to a world of bliss. There is deep philosophy in that which has led to the belief of this doctrine--for the dying look around for consolation and support, and they grasp at anything which will promise ease to a troubled conscience, and the hope of heaven. The gospel has made arrangements to meet this state of mind in a better way--in the evidence which the guilty may have that by repentance and faith their sins are blotted out through the blood of the cross. III. The remaining supposition, therefore, and, as it seems to me, the true one, is, that the anointing with oil was, in accordance with a common custom, regarded as medicinal, and that a blessing was to be invoked on this as a means of restoration to health. Besides what has been already said, the suggestions may be made in addition:

(a) This was, as we have seen, a common usage in the East, and is to this day.

(b) This interpretation meets all that is demanded to a fair understanding of what is said by the apostle.

(c) Everything thus directed is rational and proper. It is proper to call in the ministers of religion in time of sickness, and to ask their counsels and their prayers. It is proper to make use of the ordinary means of restorate to health. It was proper then, as it is now, to do this "in the name of the Lord;" that is, believing that it is in accordance with his benevolent arrangements, and making use of

means which he has appointed. And it was proper then, as it is now, having made of those means, to implore the Divine blessing on them, and to feel that their efficacy depends wholly on him. Thus used, there was ground of hope and of faith in regard to the recovery of the sufferer; and no one can show that in thousands of instances in the apostles' day, and since, the prayer of faith, accompanying the proper use of means, may not have raised up those who were on the borders of the grave, and who but for these means would have died.

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Confess your faults one to another. This seems primarily to refer to those who were sick, since it is added, "that ye may be healed." The fair interpretation is, that it might be supposed that such confession would contribute to a restoration to health. The case supposed all along here (see Jas 5:15) is, that the sickness referred to had been brought upon the patient for his sins, apparently as a punishment for some particular transgressions. 1Cor 11:30. In such a case, it is said that if those who were sick would make confession of their sins, it would, in connexion with prayer, be an important means of restoration to health. The duty inculcated, and which is equally binding on all now, is, that if we are sick, and are conscious that we have injured any persons, to make confession to them. This indeed is a duty at all times, but in health it is often neglected, and there is a special propriety that such confession should be made when we are sick. The particular reason for doing it which is here specified is, that it would contribute to a restoration to health--"that ye may be healed." In the case specified, this might be supposed to contribute to a restoration to health from one of two causes:

(1.) If the sickness had been brought upon them as a special act of Divine visitation for sin, it might be hoped that when the confession was made the hand of God would be withdrawn; or

(2) in any case, if the mind was troubled by the recollection of guilt, it might be hoped that the calmness and peace resulting from confession would be favourable to a restoration to health. The former case would of course be more applicable to the times of the apostles; the latter would pertain to all times. Disease is often greatly aggravated by the trouble of mind which arises from conscious guilt;

and, in such a case, nothing will contribute more directly to recovery than the restoration of peace to the soul agitated by guilt and by the dread of a judgment to come. This may be secured by confession--confession made first to God, and then to those who are wronged. It may be added, that this is a duty to which we are prompted by the very nature of our feelings when we are sick, and by the fact that no one is willing to die with guilt on his conscience; without having done everything that he can to be at peace with all the world. This passage is one on which Roman Catholics rely to demonstrate the propriety of "auricular confession," or confession made to a priest with a view to an absolution of sin. The doctrine which is held on that point is, that it is a duty to confess to a priest, at certain seasons, all our sins, secret and open, of which we have been guilty; all our improper thoughts, desires, words, and actions; and that the priest has power to declare on such confession that the sins are forgiven. But never was any text less pertinent to prove a doctrine than this passage to demonstrate that. For,

(1,) the confession here enjoined is not to be made by a person in health, that he may obtain salvation, but by a sick person, that he may be healed.

(2.) As mutual confession is here enjoined, a priest would be as much bound to confess to the people as the people to a priest.

(3.) No mention is made of a priest at all, or even of a minister of religion, as the one to whom the confession is to be made.

(4.) The confession referred to is for "faults" with reference to "one another," that is, where one has injured another; and nothing is said of confessing faults to those whom we have not injured at all.

(5.) There is no mention here of absolution, either by a priest or any other person.

(6.) If anything is meant by absolution that is scriptural, it may as well be pronounced by one person as another; by a layman as a clergyman. All that it can mean is, that God promises pardon to those who are truly penitent, and this fact may as well be stated by

one person as another. No priest, no man whatever, is empowered to say to another either that he is truly penitent, or to forgive sin. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" None but he whose law has been violated, or who has been wronged, can pardon an offence. No third person can forgive a sin which a man has committed against a neighbour; no one but a parent can pardon the offences of which his own children have been guilty towards him; and who call put himself in the place of God, and presume to pardon the sins which his creatures have committed against him?

(7.) The practice of "auricular confession" is "evil, and only evil, and that continually." Nothing gives so much power to a priesthood as the supposition that they have the power of absolution. Nothing serves so much to pollute the soul as to keep impure thoughts before the mind long enough to make the confession, and to state them in words. Nothing gives a man so much power over a female as to have it supposed that it is required by religion, and appertains to the sacred office, that all that passes in the mind should be disclosed to him. The thought which but for the necessity of confession would have vanished at once; the image which would have departed as soon as it came before the mind but for the necessity of retaining it to make confession--these are the things over which a man would seek to have control, and to which he would desire to have access, if he wished to accomplish purposes of villany. The very thing which a seducer would desire would be the power of knowing all the thoughts of his intended victim; and if the thoughts which pass through the soul could be known, virtue would be safe nowhere. Nothing probably under the name of religion has ever done more to corrupt the morals of a community than the practice of auricular confession.

And pray one for another. One for the other; mutually. Those who have done injury, and those who are injured, should pray for each other. The apostle does not seem here, as in Jas 5:14-15, to refer particularly to the prayers of the ministers of religion, or the elders of the church, but refers to it as a duty appertaining to all Christians.

That ye may be healed. Not with reference to death, and therefore not relating to "extreme unction," but in order that the sick may be restored again to health. This is said in connexion with the duty of confession, as well as prayer; and it seems to be implied that both might contribute to a restoration to health. Of the way in which prayer would do this, there can be no doubt; for all healing comes from God, and it is reasonable to suppose that this might be bestowed in answer to prayer. Of the way in which confession might do this, see the remarks already made. We should be deciding without evidence if we should say that sickness never comes now as a particular judgment for some forms of sin, and that it might not be removed if the suffering offender would make full confession to God, or to him whom he has wronged, and should resolve to offend no more. Perhaps this is, oftener than we suppose, one of the methods which God takes to bring his offending and backsliding children back to himself, or to warn and reclaim the guilty. When, after being laid on a bed of pain, his children are led to reflect on their violated vows and their unfaithfulness, and resolve to sin no more, they are raised up again to health, and made eminently useful to the church. So calamity, by disease or in other forms, often comes upon the vicious and the abandoned. They are led to reflection and to repentance. They resolve to reform, and the natural effects of their sinful course are arrested, and they become examples of virtue and usefulness in the world.

The effectual fervent prayer. The word effectual is not the most happy translation here, since it seems to do little more than to state a truism--that a prayer which is effectual is availing--that is, that it is effectual. The Greek word (ενεργουμενη) would be better rendered by the word energetic, which indeed is derived from it. The word properly refers to that which has power; which in its own nature is fitted to produce an effect. It is not so much that it actually does produce an effect, as that it is fitted to do it. This is the kind of prayer referred to here. It is not listless, indifferent, cold, lifeless, as if there were no vitality in it, or power, but that which is adapted to be efficient--earnest, sincere, hearty, persevering. There is but a single word in the original to answer to the translation effectual fervent. Macknight and Doddridge suppose that the reference is to a kind of prayer "inwrought by the Spirit," or the "inwrought prayer;"

but the whole force of the original is expressed by the word energetic, or earnest.

Of a righteous man. The quality on which the success of the prayer depends is not the talent, learning, rank, wealth, or office of the man who prays, but the fact that he is a "righteous man," that is, a good man; and this may be found in the ranks of the poor, as certainly as the rich; among laymen, as well as among the ministers of religion; among slaves, as well as among their masters.

Availeth much. ισχυει. Is strong; has efficacy; prevails. The idea of strength or power is that which enters into the word; strength that overcomes resistance and secures the object. Compare.Mt 7:28; Acts 19:16; Rev 12:8. It has been said that "prayer moves the arm that moves the world;" and if there is anything that can prevail with God, it is prayer-- humble, fervent, earnest petitioning. We have no power to control him; we cannot dictate or prescribe to him; we cannot resist him in the execution of his purposes; but we may ASK him for what we desire, and he has graciously said that such asking may effect much for our own good and the good of our fellow-men. Nothing has been more clearly demonstrated in the history of the world than that prayer is effectual in obtaining blessings from God, and in accomplishing great and valuable purposes. It has indeed no intrinsic power; but God has graciously purposed that his favour shall be granted to those who call upon him, and that what no mere human power can effect should be produced by his power in answer to prayer.

17 Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

Elias. The common way of writing the word Elijah in the New Testament, Mt 11:14; 16:14; 17:3, etc.

Was a man subject to like passions as we are. This does not mean that Elijah was passionate in the sense in which that word is now commonly used; that is, that he was excitable or irritable, or that he was the victim of the same corrupt passions and propensities to which other men are subject; but that he was like afflicted; that he

was capable of suffering the same things, or being affected in the same manner. In other words, he was a mere man, subject to the same weaknesses and infirmities as other men. Acts 14:15. The apostle is illustrating the efficacy of prayer. In doing this, he refers to an undoubted case where prayer had such efficacy. But to this it might be objected that Elijah was a distinguished prophet, and that it was reasonable to suppose that his prayer would be heard. It might be said that his example could not be adduced to prove that the prayers of those who were not favoured with such advantages would be heard; and especially that it could not be argued from his case that the prayers of the ignorant, and of the weak, and of children and of servants, would be answered. To meet this, the apostle says that he was a mere man, with the same natural propensities and infirmities as other men, and that therefore his case is one which should encourage all to pray. It was an instance of the efficacy of prayer, and not an illustration of the power of a prophet.

And he prayed earnestly. Greek, "He prayed with prayer"--a Hebraism, to denote that he prayed earnestly. Compare Lk 22:15. This manner of speaking is common in Hebrew. Compare 1Sam 26:25; Ps 118:18, Lam 1:2 The reference here is undoubtedly to 1Kgs 17:1. In that place, however, it is not said that Elijah prayed, but that he said, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these three years, but according to my word." Either James interprets this as a prayer, because it could be accomplished only by prayer, or he states what had been handed down by tradition as the way in which the miracle was effected. There can be no reasonable doubt that prayer was employed in the case, for even the miracles of the Saviour were accomplished in connexion with prayer, Jn 11:41-42.

That it might not rain. Not to gratify any private resentment of his, but as a punishment on the land for the idolatry which prevailed in the time of Ahab. Famine was one of the principal methods by which God punished his people for their sins. And it rained not on the earth. On the land of Palestine, for so the word earth is frequently understood in the Bible. Lk 2:1. There is no reason to suppose that the famine extended beyond the country that was subject to Ahab. By the space. For the time. Of three years and six months. Lk 4:25 to see this explained. Compare Lightfoot, Horae Hebraicae, on Lk 4:25.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

This epistle concludes with an exhortation to do all we can in our places to promote the conversion and salvation of others, Jam 5:19,20. Some interpret these verses as an apology which the apostle is making for himself that he should so plainly and sharply reprove the Jewish Christians for their many faults and errors. And certainly James gives a very good reason why he was so much concerned to reclaim them from their errors, because in thus doing he should save souls, and hide a multitude of sins. But we are not to restrain this place to the apostle's converting such as erred from the truth; no, nor to other ministerial endeavours of the like nature, since it is said, "If any err, and one convert him, let him be who he will that does so good an office for another, he is therein an instrument of saving a soul from death." Those whom the apostle here calls brethren, he yet supposes liable to err. It is no mark of a wise or a holy man to boast of his being free from error, or to refuse to acknowledge when he is in an error. But if any do err, be they ever so great, you must not be afraid to show them their error; and, be they ever so weak and little, you must not disdain to make them wiser and better. If they err from the truth, that is, from the gospel (the great rule and standard of truth), whether it be in opinion or practice, you must endeavour to bring them again to the rule. Errors in judgment and in life generally go together. There is some doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical miscarriage. There is no one habitually bad, but upon some bad principle. Now to convert such is to reduce them from their error, and to reclaim them from the evils they have been led into. We are not presently to accuse and exclaim against an erring brother, and seek to bring reproaches and calamities upon him, but to convert him: and, if by all our endeavours we cannot do this, yet we are nowhere empowered to persecute and destroy him. If we are instrumental in the conversion of any, we are said to convert them, though this be principally and efficiently the work of God. And, if we can do no more towards the conversion of sinners, yet we may do this--pray for the grace and Spirit of God to convert and change them. And let those that are in any way serviceable to convert others know what will be the happy consequence of their doing this: they may take great comfort in it at present, and they will meet with a crown at last. He that is said to err from the truth in Jam 5:19 is

described as erring in his way in Jam 5:20, and we cannot be said to convert any merely by altering their opinions, unless we can bring them to correct and amend their ways. This is conversion--to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and not to turn him from one party to another, or merely from one notion and way of thinking to another. He who thus converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death. There is a soul in the case; and what is done towards the salvation of the soul shall certainly turn to good account. The soul being the principal part of the man, the saving of that only is mentioned, but it includes the salvation of the whole man: the spirit shall be saved from hell, the body raised from the grave, and both saved from eternal death. And then, by such conversion of heart and life, a multitude of sins shall be hid. A most comfortable passage of scripture is this. We learn hence that though our sins are many, even a multitude, yet they may be hid or pardoned; and that when sin is turned from or forsaken it shall be hid, never to appear in judgment against us. Let people contrive to cover or excuse their sin as they will, there is no way effectually and finally to hide it but by forsaking it. Some make the sense of this text to be, that conversion shall prevent a multitude of sins; and it is a truth beyond dispute that many sins are prevented in the party converted, many also may be prevented in others that he may have an influence upon, or may converse with. Upon the whole, how should we lay out ourselves with all possible concern for the conversion of sinners! It will be for the happiness and salvation of the converted; it will prevent much mischief, and the spreading and multiplying of sin in the world; it will be for the glory and honour of God; and it will mightily redound to our comfort and renown in the great day. Those that turn many to righteousness, and those who help to do so, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth. Either doctrinally and speculatively, by embracing error; or practically, by falling into sinful practices. Either of these may be called "erring from the truth," because they are contrary to what the truth teaches and requires. What is here said does not appear to have any connexion with what precedes, but the apostle seems to have supposed that such a case might occur; and, in the conclusion of the epistle, he called their attention to the importance of endeavouring to save an erring brother, if such an instance should happen. The exhortation would be proper in addressing a letter to any church, or in publicly

addressing any congregation. And one convert him. This does not mean convert him as a sinner, or regenerate him, but turn him from the error of his way; bring him back from his wanderings; re-establish him in the truth, and in the practice of virtue and religion. So far as the word used here is concerned, (επιστρεψη,) he who had erred from the truth, and who was to be converted, may have been a true Christian before. The word means simply to turn, sc., from his way of error. Lk 22:32.

20 let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Our apostle concludes his epistle with an exhortation to the duty of fraternal correction and Christian admonition: "If, says he, any one among you, who hath made an outward profession of Christianity, shall, for fear of persecution, or otherwise turn aside from the rule of the gospel, whether in matters of faith or practice, such a person, either Minister or private Christian, as shall be instrumental, by prayer, reproof, or counsel to recover him out of that wandering and backsliding condition, shall have the honour to save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins; that is, he shall be a means of bringing him to a sight of his sins, and to seek a pardon of them, which is the only true and happy way of hiding and of covering of them."

Learn hence, 1. It is not sufficient that every one takes care of his own soul, but he must also watch over the souls of others; there is no brother so mean in the Christian church, but the care of his salvation belongeth to all in the Christian communion.

Learn, 2. What great honour God puts upon the creature, in calling him a Saviour to a restored and converted brother, he shall save a soul from death: but when God puts the glory of his own work upon the head of the creature, what cause has he to lay the crown of his excellency at the foot of God? When the honour of the supreme Cause is put upon the instrument, the instrument ought to ascribe all the efficacy and efficiency to the first cause, saying, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise. Amen.

shall hide a multitude of sins—not his own, but the sins of the converted. The Greek verb in the middle voice requires this. Pr 10:12 refers to charity "covering" the sins of others before men; James to one's effecting by the conversion of another that that other's sins be covered before God, namely, with Christ's atonement. He effects this by making the convert partaker in the Christian covenant for the remission of all sins. Though this hiding of sins was included in the previous "shall save," James expresses it to mark in detail the greatness of the blessing conferred on the penitent through the converter's instrumentality, and to incite others to the same good deed.

The First Epistle Of Peter
[1 Peter]

1 Peter-1

Salutation

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,
Asia, and Bithynia,

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. On the word apostle, Rom 1:1; 1Cor 9:1, seq.

To the strangers. In the Greek, the word "elect" (1Pet 1:2) occurs here: εκλεκτοιςπαρεπιδημοις, "to the elect strangers." He here addresses them as elect; in the following verse he shows them in what way they were elected. See the Notes there. The word rendered strangers occurs only in three places in the New Testament; Heb 11:13, 1Pet 2:11, where it is rendered pilgrims, and in the place before us. Heb 11:13. The word means, literally, a by-resident, a sojourner among a people not one's own.--Robinson. There has been much diversity of opinion as to the persons here referred to: some supposing that the epistle was written to those who had been Jews, who were now converted, and who were known by the common appellation among their countrymen as "the scattered abroad," or the "dispersion ;" that is, those who were strangers or sojourners away from their native land; others, that the reference is to those who were called, among the Jews, "proselytes of the gate," or those who were admitted to certain external privileges among the Jews, (Mt 23:15;) and others, that the allusion is to Christians as such, without reference to their origin, and who are spoken of as strangers and pilgrims. That the apostle did not write merely to those who had been Jews, is clear from 1Pet 4:3,4, (comp. Intro. & 1;) and it seems probable that he means here Christians as such, without reference to their origin, who were scattered through the various provinces of Asia Minor. Yet it seems also probable that he did not use the term as denoting that they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," or

with reference to the fact that the earth was not their home, as the word is used in Heb 11:13; but that he used the term as a Jew would naturally use it, accustomed, as he was, to employ it as denoting his own countrymen dwelling in distant lands, he would regard them still as the people of God, though dispersed abroad; as those who were away from what was properly the home of their fathers. So Peter addresses these Christians as the people of God, now scattered abroad; as similar in their condition to the Jews who had been dispersed among the Gentiles. Comp. the Intro., & 1. It is not necessarily implied that these persons were strangers to Peter, or that he had never seen them; though this was not improbably the fact in regard to most of them.

Scattered. Greek, of the dispersion, (διασπορας;) a term which a Jew would be likely to use who spoke of his countrymen dwelling among the heathen. Jn 7:35, Jas 1:1, where the same Greek word is found. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. Here, however, it is applied to Christians as dispersed or scattered abroad,

Throughout Pontus, etc. These were provinces of Asia Minor. Their position may be seen in the map prefixed to the Acts of the Apostles. On the situation of Pontus, Acts 2:9.

Elect. That is, chosen. The meaning here is, that they were in fact chosen. The word does not refer to the purpose to choose, but to the fact that they were chosen or selected by God as his people. It is a word commonly applied to the people of God as being chosen out of the world, and called to be his. The use of the word does not determine whether God had a previous eternal purpose to choose them or not. That must be determined by something else than the mere use of the term. This word has reference to the act of selecting them, without throwing any light on the question why it was done. See Mt 24:22,24,31, Mk 13:20, Lk 18:7, Rom 8:33; Col 3:12. Comp. Jn 15:16. The meaning is, that God had, on some account, a preference for them above others as his people, and had chosen them from the midst of others to be heirs of salvation. The word should be properly understood as applied to the act of choosing them, not to the purpose to choose them; the fact of his selecting them to be his, not the doctrine that he would choose them; and is a word,

therefore, which should be freely and gratefully used by all Christians, for it is a word in frequent use in the Bible, and there is nothing for which men should be more grateful than the fact that God has chosen them to salvation. Elsewhere we learn that the purpose to choose them was eternal, and that the reason of it was his own good pleasure. Eph 1:4,5. We are here also informed that it was in accordance with "the foreknowledge of God the Father."

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The Father is regarded, in the Scriptures, as the Author of the plan of salvation, and as having chosen his people to life, and given them to his Son to redeem and save, Jn 6:37,65, 17:2,6,11. It is affirmed here that the fact that they were elect was in some sense in accordance with the "foreknowledge of God." On the meaning of the phrase, Rom 8:29. The passage does not affirm that the thing which God "foreknew," and which was the reason of their being chosen, was, that they would of themselves be disposed to embrace the offer of salvation. The foreknowledge referred to might have been of many other things as constituting the reason which operated in the case; and it is not proper to assume that it could have been of this alone. It may mean that God foreknew all the events which would ever occur, and that he saw reasons why they should be selected rather than others; or that he foreknew all that could be made to bear on their salvation; or that he foreknew all that he would himself do to secure their salvation; or that he foreknew them as having been designated by his own eternal counsels; or that he foreknew all that could be accomplished by their instrumentality; or that he saw that they would believe; but it should not be assumed that the word means necessarily any one of these things. The simple fact here affirmed, which no one can deny, is, that there was foreknowledge in the case on the part of God. It was not the result of ignorance or of blind chance that they were selected. But if foreknown, must it not be certain? How could a thing which is foreknown be contingent or doubtful? The essential idea here is, that the original choice was on the part of God, and not on their part, and that this choice was founded on what he before knew to be best. He undoubtedly saw good and sufficient reasons why the choice should fall on them. I do not know that the reasons why he did it are revealed, or that they could be fully comprehended by us if they were. I am quite certain that it is not stated that it is because they would be more disposed of

themselves to embrace the Saviour than others; for the Scriptures abundantly teach, what every regenerated person feels to be true, that the fact that we are disposed to embrace the Saviour is to be traced to a Divine influence on our hearts, and not to ourselves. See Jn 6:65, Rom 9:16, Tit 3:5, Ps 110:2,3.

Through sanctification of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The Greek is, "by (εν) sanctification of the Spirit;" that is, it was by this influence or agency. The election that was purposed by the Father was carried into effect by the agency of the Spirit in making them holy. The word rendered sanctification (αγιασμος) is not used here in its usual and technical sense to denote the progressive holiness of believers, but in its more primitive and usual sense of holiness. 1Cor 1:30. It means here the being made holy; and the idea is, that we become in fact the chosen or elect of God by a work of the Spirit on our hearts making us holy; that is, renewing us in the Divine image. We are chosen by the Father, but it is necessary that the heart should be renewed and made holy by a work of grace, in order that we may actually become his chosen people. Though we are sinners, he proposes to save us; but we are not saved in our sins, nor can we regard ourselves as the children of God until we have evidence that we are born again. The purpose of God to save us found us unholy, and we become in fact his friends by being renewed in the temper of our mind. A man has reason to think that he is one of the elect of God, just so far as he has evidence that he has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and so far as he has holiness of heart and life, AND NO FARTHER.

Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This expresses the design for which they had been chosen by the Father, and renewed by the Spirit. It was that they might obey God, and lead holy lives. On the phrase "unto obedience," Rom 1:5. The phrase "unto sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," means to cleansing from sin, or to holiness, since it was by the sprinkling of that blood that they were to be made holy. See it explained Heb 9:18, seq. Heb 12:24.

Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Rom 1:7. The phrase "be multiplied" means, "may it abound," or "may it be conferred abundantly on you." From this verse we may learn that they who are

chosen should be holy. Just in proportion as they have evidence that God has chosen them at all, they have evidence that he has chosen them to be holy; and, in fact, all the evidence which any man can have that he is among the elect, is that he is practically a holy man, and desires to become more and more so. No man can penetrate the secret counsels of the Almighty. No one can go up to heaven, and inspect the book of life to see if his name be there. No one should presume that his name is there without evidence. No one should depend on dreams, or raptures, or visions, as proof that his name is there. No one should expect a new revelation declaring to him that he is among the elect. All the proof which any man can have that he is among the chosen of God, is to be found in the evidences of personal piety; and any man who is willing to be a true Christian may have all that evidence in his own case. If any one, then, wishes to settle the question whether he is among the elect or not, the way is plain. Let him become a true Christian, and the whole matter is determined, for that is all the proof which any one has that he is chosen to salvation. Till a man is willing to do that, he should not complain of the doctrine of election. If he is not willing to become a Christian and to be saved, assuredly he should not complain that those who are think that they have evidence that they are the chosen of God.

2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:
Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The Christian's Hope and Salvation

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Cor 1:3.

Which according to his abundant mercy. Marg., as in the Greek, much. The idea is, that there was great mercy shown them in the fact that they were renewed. They had no claim to the favour, and the favour was great. Men are not begotten to the hope of heaven

because they have any claim on God, or because it would not be right for him to withhold the favour. Eph 2:4.

Hath begotten us again. The meaning is, that as God is the Author of our life in a natural sense, so he is the Author of our second life by regeneration. The Saviour said, (Jn 3:3,) that "except a man be born again" or begotten again, γεννηθηανωθεν, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Peter here affirms that that change had occurred in regard to himself and those whom he was addressing. The word used here as a compound (αναγενναω) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, though it corresponds entirely with the words used by the Saviour in Jn 3:3,5,7. Perhaps the phrase "begotten again" would be better in each instance where the word occurs, the sense being rather that of being begotten again, than of being born again.

Unto a lively hope. The word lively we now use commonly in the sense of active, animated, quick; the word here used, however, means living, in contradistinction from that which is dead. The hope which they had, had living power. It was not cold, inoperative, dead. It was not a mere form--or a mere speculation--or a mere sentiment; it was that which was vital to their welfare, and which was active and powerful. On the nature of hope, Rom 8:24. Comp. Eph 2:12.

By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the foundation of our hope. It was a confirmation of what he declared as truth when he lived; it was a proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; it was a pledge that all who are united to him will be raised up. 1Cor 15:1, seq. 2Ti 1:10; 1Thes 4:14.

To an inheritance. Through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus we now cherish the hope of that future inheritance in heaven. On the word inheritance, Acts 20:32; Eph 1:11, Eph 1:14, Eph 1:18; Col 1:12. Christians are regarded as the adopted children of God, and heaven is spoken of as their inheritance--as what their Father will bestow on them as the proof of his love.

Incorruptible. It will not fade away and vanish, as that which we inherit in this world does. See the word explained 1Cor 9:25. The meaning here is, that the inheritance will be imperishable, or will endure for ever. Here, to whatever we may be heirs, we must soon part with the inheritance; there it will be eternal.

And undefiled. Heb 7:26; Heb 13:4; Jas 1:27. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. As applied to an inheritance, it means that it will be pure. It will not have been obtained by dishonesty, nor will it be held by fraud; it will not be such as will corrupt the soul, or tempt to extravagance, sensuality, and lust, as a rich inheritance often does here; it will be such that its eternal enjoyment will never tend in any manner to defile the heart. "How many estates," says Benson, "have been got by fraudulent and unjust methods; by poisoning, or in some other way murdering the right heir; by cheating of helpless orphans; by ruining the fatherless and widows; by oppressing their neighbours, or grinding the faces of the poor, and taking their garments or vineyards from them! But this future inheritance of the saints is stained by none of these vices; it is neither got nor detained by any of these methods; nor shall persons polluted with vice have any share in it." Here no one can be heir to an inheritance of gold or houses without danger of soon sinking into indolence, effeminacy, or vice; there the inheritance may be enjoyed for ever, and the soul continually advance in, knowledge, holiness, and the active service of God.

And that fadeth not away. Gr. αμαραντον. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the word αμαραντινος (amarantine) occurs in @1Pe 5:4, applied to a crown or garland. The word is properly applied to that which does not fade or wither, in contradistinction from a flower that fades. It may then denote anything that is enduring, and is applied to the future inheritance of the saints to describe its perpetuity in all its brilliance and splendour, in contrast with the fading nature of all that is earthly. The idea here, therefore, is not precisely the same as is expressed by the word "incorruptible." Both words indeed denote perpetuity, but that refers to perpetuity in contrast with decay; this denotes perpetuity in the sense that everything there will be kept in its original brightness and beauty. The crown of glory, though worn for millions of ages, will

not be dimmed; the golden streets will lose none of their lustre; the flowers that bloom on the banks of the river of life will always be as rich in colour, and as fragrant, as when we first beheld them.

Reserved in heaven for you. Marg., us. The difference in the text margin arises from the various readings in MSS. The common reading is "for you." The sense is not materially affected. The idea is, that it is an inheritance appointed for us, and kept by one who can make it sure to us, and who will certainly bestow it upon us. Mt 25:34; Jn 14:2; Col 1:5.

Who are kept by the power of God. That is, "kept" or preserved in the faith and hope of the gospel; who are preserved from apostasy, or so kept that you will finally obtain salvation. The word which is here used and rendered kept, (φρουρεω--phroureo,) is rendered in 2Cor 11:32, kept with a garrison; in Gal 3:23, and here, kept; in Php 4:7, shall keep. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means to keep, as in a garrison or fortress; or as with a military watch. The idea is, that there was a faithful guardianship exercised over them to save them from danger, as a castle or garrison is watched to guard it against the approach of an enemy. The meaning is, that they were weak in themselves, and were surrounded by temptations; and that the only reason why they were preserved was, that God exerted his power to keep them. The only reason which any Christians have to suppose they will ever reach heaven, is the fact that God keeps them by his own power. Comp. Php 1:6; 2Ti 1:12; 2Ti 4:18. If it were left to the will of man; to the strength of his own resolutions; to his power to meet temptations, and to any probability that he would of himself continue to walk in the path of life, there would be no certainty that any one would be saved.

Through faith. That is, he does not keep us by the mere exertion of power, but he excites faith in our hearts, and makes that the means of keeping us. As long as we have faith in God, and in his promises, we are safe. When that fails, we are weak; and if it should fail altogether, we could not be saved. Eph 2:8.

Unto salvation. Not preserved for a little period, and then suffered to fall away, but so kept as to be saved. We may remark here that Peter, as well as Paul, believed in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. If he did not, how could he have addressed these Christians in this manner, and said that they were "kept by the power of God unto salvation". What evidence could he have had that they would obtain salvation, unless he believed in the general truth that it was the purpose of God to keep all who were truly converted?

Ready to be revealed in the last time. That is, when the world shall close. Then it shall be made manifest to assembled worlds that such an inheritance was "reserved" for you, and that you were "kept" in order to inherit it. Mt 25:34. This verse, then, teaches that the doctrine that the saints will persevere and be saved, is true. They are "kept by the power of God to salvation;" and as God has all power, and guards them with reference to this end, it cannot be but that they will be saved. It may be added,

(a.) that it is very desirable that the doctrine should be true. Man is so weak and feeble, so liable to fall, and so exposed to temptation, that it is in itself every way a thing to be wished that his salvation should be in some safer hands than his own.

(b.) If it is desirable that it should be true, it is fair to infer that it is true, for God has made all the arrangements for the salvation of his people which are really desirable and proper.

(c.) The only security for the salvation of any one is founded on that doctrine. If it were left entirely to the hands of men, even the best of men, what assurance could there be that any one could be saved Did not Adam fall? Did not holy angels fall? Have not some of the best of men fallen into sin? And who has such a strength of holiness that he could certainly confide in it to make his own salvation sure? Any man must know little of himself, and of the human heart, who supposes that he has such a strength of virtue that he would never fall away if left to himself. But if this be so, then his only hope of salvation is in the fact that God intends to "keep his people by his own power through faith unto salvation"

4 to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice. In which hope of salvation. The idea is, that the prospect which they had of the future inheritance was to them a source of the highest joy, even in the midst of their many sufferings and trials. On the general grounds for rejoicing, Rom 5:1, Rom 5:2; Php 3:1; Php 4:4; 1Thes 5:16. 1Pet 1:8. The particular meaning here is, that the hope which they had of their future inheritance enabled them to rejoice even in the midst of persecutions and trials. It not only sustained them, but it made them happy. That must be a valuable religion which will make men happy in the midst of persecutions and heavy calamities.

Though now for a season. A short period--ολιγον. It would be in fact only for a brief period, even if it should continue through the whole of life. 2Cor 4:17: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment." It is possible, however, that Peter supposed that the trials which they then experienced would soon pass over. They may have been suffering persecutions which he hoped would not long continue.

If need be. This phrase seems to have been thrown in here to intimate that there was a necessity for their afflictions, or that there was "need" that they should pass through these trials. There was some good to be accomplished by them, which made it desirable and proper that they should be thus afflicted. The sense is, "since there is need;" though the apostle expresses it more delicately by suggesting the possibility that there might be need of it, instead of saying absolutely that there was need. It is the kind of language which we would use in respect to one who was greatly afflicted, by suggesting to him, in the most tender manner, that there might be things in his character which God designed to correct by trials, instead of saying roughly and bluntly that such was undoubtedly the fact. We would not say to such a person, "you certainly needed this affliction to lead you to amend your life:" but, it may be that there is something in your character which makes it desirable, or that God

intends that some good results shall come from it which will show that it is wisely ordered."

Ye are in heaviness. Gr., "Ye are sorrowing," λυπηθεντες; you are sad, or grieved, Mt 14:9, 17:23.

Through manifold temptations. Through many kinds of trials, for so the word rendered temptation (πειρασμος) means, Jas 1:2,12. Mt 4:1, 6:13. The meaning here is, that they now endured many things which were fitted to try or test their faith. These might have consisted of poverty, persecution, sickness, or the efforts of others to lead them to renounce their religion, and to go back to their former state of unbelief. Any one or all of these would try them, and would show whether their religion was genuine. On the various ways which God has of trying his people, Isa 28:23, seq.

7 that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

That the trial of your faith. The putting of your religion to the test, and showing what is its real nature. Jas 1:3,12. Being much more precious than of gold. This does not mean that their faith was much more precious than gold, but that the testing of it, (δοκιμιον,) the process of showing whether it was or was not genuine, was a much more important and valuable process than that of testing gold in the fire. More important results were to be arrived at by it, and it was more desirable that it should be done. That perisheth. Not that gold perishes by the process of being tried in the fire, for this is not the fact, and the connexion does not demand this interpretation. The idea is, that gold, however valuable it is, is a perishable thing. It is not an enduring, imperishable, indestructible thing, like religion. It may not perish in the fire, but it will in some way, for it will not endure for ever. Though it be tried with fire. This refers to the gold. See the Greek. The meaning is, that gold, though it will bear the action of fire, is yet a destructible thing, and will not endure for ever. It is more desirable to test religion than it is gold, because it is more valuable. It pertains to that which is eternal and indestructible, and it is therefore of more importance to show its true quality, and to free it from every improper mixture. Might be found unto praise. That is, might be found to be genuine, and such as to meet the praise or commendation of the final Judge. And honour. That honour might

be done to it before assembled worlds. And glory. That it might be rewarded with that glory which will be then conferred on all who have shown, in the various trials of life, that they had true religion. At the appearing of Jesus Christ. To judge the world. Comp. Mt 25:31, Acts 1:11, 1Thes 4:16, 2Thes 2:8, 1Timm 6:14, 2Ti 4:1,8, Tit 2:13. From these two verses (1Pet 1:6,7) we may learn: I. That it is desirable that the faith of Christians should be tried.

(a.) It is desirable to know whether that which appears to be religion is genuine, as it is desirable to know whether that which appears to be gold is genuine. To gold we apply the action of intense heat, that we may know whether it is what it appears to be; and as religion is of more value than gold, so it is more desirable that it should be subjected to the proper tests, that its nature may be ascertained. There is much which appears to be gold, which is of no value, as there is much which appears to be religion, which is no value. The one is worth no more than the other, unless it is genuine.

(b.) It is desirable in order to show its true value. It is of great importance to know what that which is claimed to be gold is worth for the purposes to which gold is usually applied; and so it is in regard to religion. Religion claims to be of more value to man than anything else. It asserts its power to do that for the intellect and the heart which nothing else can do; to impart consolation in the various trials of life which nothing else can impart; and to give a support which nothing else can on the bed of death. It is very desirable, therefore, that in these various situations it should show its power; that is, that its friends should be in these various conditions, in order that they may illustrate the true value of religion.

(c.) It is desirable that true religion should be separated from all alloy. There is often much alloy in gold, and it is desirable that it should be separated from it, in order that it may be pure. So it is in religion. It is often combined with much that is unholy and impure; much that dims its lustre and mars its beauty; much that prevents its producing the effect which it would otherwise produce. Gold is, indeed, often better, for some purposes, for having some alloy mixed with it; but not so with religion. It is never better for having a little pride, or vanity, or selfishness, or meanness, or worldliness, or sensuality mingled with it; and that which will remove these things from our religion will be a favour to us.

II. God takes various methods of trying his people, with a design to test the value of their piety, and to separate it from all impure mixtures.

(1.) He tries his people by prosperity--often as decisive a test of piety as can be applied to it. There is much pretended piety, which will bear adversity, but which will not bear prosperity. The piety of a man is decisively tested by popularity; by the flatteries of the world; by a sudden increase of property; and in such circumstances it is often conclusively shown that there is no true religion in the soul.

(2.) He tries his people in adversity. He lays his hand on them heavily, to show

(a.) whether they will bear up under their trials, and persevere in his service;

(b.) to show whether their religion will keep them from murmuring or complaining;

(c.) to show whether it is adapted to comfort and sustain the soul.

(3.) He tries his people by sudden transition from one to the other. We get accustomed to a uniform course of life, whether it be joy or sorrow; and the religion which is adapted to a uniform course may be little fitted to transitions from one condition of life to another. In prosperity we may have shown that we were grateful, and benevolent, and disposed to serve God; but our religion will be subjected to a new test, if we are suddenly reduced to poverty. In sickness and poverty, we learn to be patient and resigned, and perhaps even happy. But the religion which we then cultivated may be little adapted to a sudden transition to prosperity; and in such a transition, there would be a new trial of our faith. That piety which shone so much on a bed of sickness, might be little fitted to shine in circumstances of sudden prosperity. The human frame may become accustomed either to the intense cold of the polar regions, or to the burning heats of the equator; but in neither case might it bear a transition from one to the other. It is such a transition that is a more

decisive test of its powers of endurance than either intense heat or cold, if steadily prolonged.

III. Religion will bear any trial which may be applied to it, as gold will bear the action of fire. IV. Religion is imperishable in its nature. Even the most fine gold will perish. Time will corrode it, or it will be worn away by use, or it will be destroyed at the universal conflagration; but time and use will not wear out religion, and it will live on through the fires that will consume everything else. V. Christians should be willing to pass through trials.

(a.) They will purify their religion, as the fire will remove dross from gold.

(b.) They will make it shine more brightly, as gold does when it comes out of the furnace.

(c.) They disclose more fully its value.

(d.) They will furnish an evidence that we shall be saved; for that religion which will bear the tests that God applies to it in the present life, will bear the test of the final trial.

8 whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Whom having not seen, ye love. This epistle was addressed to those who were "strangers scattered abroad," 1Pet 1:1, and it is evident that they had not personally seen the Lord Jesus. Yet they had heard of his character, his preaching, his sacrifice for sin, and his resurrection and ascension, and they had learned to love him.

(1.) It is possible to love one whom we have not seen. Thus we may love God, whom no "eye hath seen," 1Jn 4:20; and thus we may love a benefactor, from whom we have received important benefits, whom we have never beheld.

(2.) We may love the character of one whom we have never seen, and from whom we may never have received any particular favours. We may love his uprightness, his patriotism, his benignity, as represented to us. We might love him the more if we should become

personally acquainted with him, and if we should receive important favours from him; but it is possible to feel a sense of strong admiration for such a character in itself.

(3.) That may be a very pure love which we have for one whom we have never seen. It may be based on simple excellence of character; and in such a case there is the least chance for any intermingling of selfishness, or any improper emotion of any kind.

(4.) We may love a friend as really and as strongly when he is absent, as when he is with us. The wide ocean that rolls between us and a child, does not diminish the ardour of our affection for him; and the Christian friend that has gone to heaven, we may love no less than when he sat with us at the fireside.

(5.) Millions, and hundreds of millions, have been led to love the Saviour, who have never seen him. They have seen--not with the bodily eye, but with the eye of faith--the inimitable beauty of his character, and have been brought to love him with an ardour of affection which they never had for any other one.

(6.) There is every reason why we should love him.

(a.) His character is infinitely lovely.

(b.) He has done more for us than any other one who ever lived among men. He died for us, to redeem our souls, he rose, and brought life and immortality to light. He ever lives to intercede for us in heaven. He is employed in preparing mansions of rest for us in the skies, and he will come and take us to himself, that we may be with him for ever. Such a Saviour ought to be loved, is loved, and will be loved. The strongest attachments which have ever existed on earth have been for this unseen Saviour. There has been a love for him stronger than that for father, or mother, or wife, or sister, or home, or country. It has been so strong, that thousands have been willing, on account of it, to bear the torture of the rack or the stake. It has been so strong, that thousands of youth of the finest minds, and the most flattering prospects of distinction, have been willing to leave the comforts of a civilized land, and to go among the benighted heathen, to tell them the story of a Saviour's life and death. It has been so strong, that unnumbered multitudes have longed, more than

they have for all other things, that they might see him, and be with him, and abide with him for ever and ever. Php 1:23. In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing. He is now in heaven, and to mortal eyes now invisible, like his Father. Faith in him is the source and fountain of our joy. It makes invisible things real, and enables us to feel and act, in view of them, with the same degree of certainty if we saw them. Indeed, the conviction to the mind of a true believer that there is a Saviour, is as certain and as strong as if he saw him; and the same may be said of his conviction of the existence of heaven, and of eternal realities. If it should be said that filth may deceive us, we may reply,

(1.) May not our bodily senses also deceive us? Does the eye never deceive? Are there no optical illusions? Does the ear never deceive? Are there no sounds which are mistaken? Do the taste and the smell never deceive? Are we never mistaken in the report which they bring to us? And does the sense of feeling never deceive? Are we never mistaken in the size, the hardness, the figure of objects which we handle? But,

(2.) for all the practical purposes of life, the senses are correct guides, and do not in general lead us astray. So,

(3.) there are objects of faith about which we are never deceived, and where we do act and must act with the same confidence as if we had personally seen them. Are we deceived about the existence of London, or Paris, or Canton, though we may never have seen either? May not a merchant embark with perfect propriety in a commercial enterprise, on the supposition that there is such a place as London or Canton, though he has never seen them? Would he not be reputed mad, if he should refuse to do it on this ground? And so, may not a man, in believing that there is a heaven, and in forming his plans for it, though he has not yet seen it, act as rationally and as wisely as he who forms his plans on the supposition that there is such a place as Canton? Ye rejoice. Ye do rejoice; not merely ye ought to rejoice. It may be said of Christians that they do in fact rejoice; they are happy. The people of the world often suppose that religion makes its professors sad and melancholy. That there are those who have not great comfort in their religion, no one indeed can doubt; but this arises from several causes entirely independent of their religion. Some have melancholy temperaments, and are not happy in

anything. Some have little evidence that they are Christians, and their sadness arises not from religion, but from the want of it. But that true religion does make its possessors happy, any one may easily satisfy himself by asking any number of sincere Christians, of any denomination, whom he may meet. With one accord they will say to him that they have a happiness which they never found before; that however much they may have possessed of the wealth, the honours, and the pleasures of the world--and they who are now Christians have not all of them been strangers to these things--they never knew solid and substantial peace till they found it in religion. And why should they not be believed? The world would believe them in other things; why will they not when they declare that religion does not make them gloomy, but happy. With joy unspeakable. A very strong expression, and yet verified in thousands of cases among young converts, and among those in the maturer days of piety. There are thousands who can say that their happiness when they first had evidence that their sins were forgiven, that the burden of guilt was rolled away, and that they were the children of God, was unspeakable. They had no words to express it, it was so full and so new.

"Tongue can never express The sweet comfort and peace of a soul in its earliest love."

And so there have been thousands of mature Christians who can adopt the same language, and who could find no words to express the peace and joy which they have found in the love of Christ, and the hope of heaven. And why are not all Christians enabled to say constantly that they "rejoice with joy unspeakable?" Is it not a privilege which they might possess? Is there anything in the nature of religion which forbids it? Why should not one be filled with constant joy who has the hope of dwelling in a world of glory for ever? Comp. Jn 14:27, 16:22. And full of glory. (1.) Of anticipated glory--of the prospect of enjoying the glory of heaven. (2.) Of present glory--with a joy even now which is of the same nature as that in heaven; a happiness the same in kind, though not in degree, as that which will be ours in a brighter world. The saints on earth partake of the same kind of joy which they will have in heaven; for

the happiness of heaven will be but an expansion, a prolongation, and a purifying of that which they have here. Eph 1:14.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. The result or object of your faith; that is, what your faith is designed and adapted to secure. Rom 10:4. The word rendered receiving is used here as indicating that they would surely obtain that. They even now had such peace and joy in believing, that it furnished undoubted evidence that they would be saved; and such that it might be said that even now they were saved. The condition of one who is a true Christian here is so secure that it may even now be called salvation.

9 receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.

10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you:

Of which salvation. Of the certainty that this system of religion, securing the salvation of the soul, would be revealed. The object of this reference to the prophets seems to be to lead them to value the religion which they professed more highly, and to encourage them to bear their trials with patience. They were in a condition, in many respects, far superior to that of the prophets. They had the full light of the gospel. The prophets saw it only at a distance and but dimly, and were obliged to search anxiously that they might understand the nature of that system of which they were appointed to furnish the comparatively obscure prophetic intimations.

The prophets. This language would imply that this had been a common and prevalent wish of the prophets. Have enquired. This word is intensive. It means that they sought out, or scrutinized with care the revelations made to them, that they might understand exactly what was implied in that which they were appointed to record in respect to the salvation which was to be made known through the Messiah. See the following places where the same word is used which occurs here: Lk 11:50,51, Acts 15:17, Rom 3:11, Heb 11:6, 12:17.

And searched diligently. εξερευναω Comp. Dan 9:2,3. The word here used means to search out, to trace out, to explore. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament, though one of the words from

which this is compounded (ερευναω) occurs. Jn 5:39, Jn 8:52, Rom 8:27, 1Cor 2:10, Rev 2:23. The idea is, that they perceived that in their communications there were some great and glorious truths which they did not fully comprehend, and that they diligently employed their natural faculties to understand that which they were appointed to impart to succeeding generations. They thus became students and interpreters for themselves of their own predictions. They were not only prophets, but men. They had souls to be saved in the same way as others. They had hearts to be sanctified by the truth; and it was needful, in order to this, that truth should be applied to their own hearts in the same way as to others. The mere fact that they were the channels or organs for imparting truth to others would not save them, any more than the fact that a man now preaches truth to others will save himself, or than the fact that a sutler delivers bread to an army will nourish and support his own body.

Who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Of the favour that should be shown to you in the gospel. Though the predictions which they uttered appeared to the men of their own times, and perhaps to themselves, obscures yet they were in fact prophecies of what was to come, and of the favours which, under another dispensation, would be bestowed upon the people of God. The apostle does not mean to say that they prophesied particularly of those persons to whom he was then writing, but that their prophecies were in fact for their benefit, for the things which they predicted had actually terminated on them, The benefit was as real as though the predictions had been solely on their account.

11 searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Searching what. That is, examining their own predictions with care, to ascertain what they meant. They studied them as we do the predictions which others have made; and though the prophets were the medium through which the truth was made known, yet their own predictions became a subject of careful investigation to themselves. The expression here used in the original, rendered "what," (ειςτινα,) literally, "unto what," may mean, so far as the Greek is concerned, either "what time," or "what people," or "what person;" that is, with reference to what person the prophecies were really uttered. The

latter, it seems to me, is the correct interpretation, meaning that they inquired in regard to him, who he would be, what would be his character, and what would be the nature of the work which he would perform. There can be no doubt that they understood that their predictions related to the Messiah; but till it is not improper to suppose that it was with them an interesting inquiry what sort of a person he would be, and what would be the nature of the work which he would perform. This interpretation of the phrase ειςτινα, (unto what or whom,) it should be observed, however, is not that which is commonly given of the passage. Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Whitby, Benson, and Grotius suppose it to refer to time, meaning that they inquired at what time, or when these things would occur. Macknight thinks it refers to people, (λαον,) meaning that they diligently inquired what people would put him to death. But the most obvious interpretation in that which I have suggested above, meaning that they made particular inquiry to whom their prophecies related--what was his rank and character, and what was to be the nature of his work. What would be a more natural inquiry for them than this? What would be more important? And how interesting is the thought that when Isaiah, for example, had given utterance to the sublime predictions which we now have of the Messiah, in his prophecies, he sat himself down with the spirit of a little child, to learn by prayer and study, what was fully implied in the amazing words which the Spirit had taught him to record! How much of mystery might seem still to hang around the subject! And how intent would such a mind be to know what was the full import of those words!

Or what manner of time. This phrase, in Greek, (ποιονκαιρον,) would properly relate, not to the exact time when these things would occur, but to the character or condition of the age when they would take place; perhaps referring to the state of the world at that period, the preparation to receive the gospel, and the probable manner in which the great message-would be received. Perhaps, however, the inquiry in their minds pertained to the time when the predictions would be fulfilled, as well as to the condition of the world when the event takes place. The meaning of the Greek phrase would not exclude this latter sense. There are not unfrequent indications of time in the prophets, (comp. Dan 9:24, seq.;) and these indications were of so clear a character, that when the Saviour actually appeared there was a general expectation that the event would then occur. Mt 2:2.

The Spirit of Christ which was in them. This does not prove that they knew that this was the Spirit of Christ, but is only a declaration of Peter that it was actually so. It is not probable that the prophets distinctly understood that the Spirit of inspiration, by which they were led to foretell future events, was peculiarly the Spirit of Christ. They understood that they were inspired; but there is no intimation, with which I am acquainted, in their writings, that they regarded themselves as inspired by the Messiah. It was not improper, however, for Peter to say that the Spirit by which they were influenced was in fact the Spirit of Christ, so called because that Spirit which suggested these future events to them was given as the great Medium of all revealed truth to the world. Comp. Heb 1:3, Jn 1:9, 14:16,26, 16:7, Isa 49:6. It is clear from this passage,

(1.) that Christ must have had an existence before his incarnation; and,

(2.) that he must have understood then what would occur to him when he should become incarnate; that is, it must have been arranged or determined beforehand.

Did signify. Meant to intimate or manifest to them, (εδηλου;) or what was implied in the communications made to them.

When it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ. As Isaiah, Isa 53; Dan 9:25-27. They saw clearly that the Messiah was to suffer; and doubtless this was the common doctrine of the prophets, and the common expectation of the pious part of the Jewish nation. Yet it is not necessary to suppose that they had clear apprehensions of his sufferings, or were able to reconcile all that was said on that subject with what was said of his glory and his triumphs. There was much about those sufferings which they wished to learn, as there is much still which we desire to know. We have no reason to suppose that there were any views of the sufferings of the Messiah communicated to the prophets except what we now have in the Old Testament; and to see the force of what Peter says, we ought to imagine what would

be our views of him if all that we have known of Christ as history were obliterated, and we had only the knowledge which we could derive from the Old Testament. As has been already intimated, it is probable that they studied their own predictions, just as we would study them if we had not the advantage of applying to them the facts which have actually occurred.

And the glory that should follow. That is, they saw that there would be glory which would be the result of his sufferings, but they did not clearly see what it would be. They had some knowledge that he would be raised from the dead, Ps 16:8-11; comp. Acts 2:25-28; they knew that he would "see of the travail of his soul, and would be satisfied," (Isa 53:11;) they had some large views of the effects of the gospel on the nations of the earth, Isa 11; Isa 25:7,8; Isa 60; Isa 66. But there were many things respecting his glorification which it cannot be supposed they clearly understood; and it is reasonable to presume that they made the comparatively few and obscure intimations in their own writings in relation to this, the subject of profound and prayerful inquiry.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Unto whom it was revealed. They were not permitted to know fully the import of the predictions which they were made the instruments of communicating to mankind, but they understood that they were intended for the benefit of future ages. That not unto themselves. We are not to suppose that they derived no benefit from their own predictions; for, as far as they understood the truth, it was as much adapted to sanctify and comfort them as it is us now: but the meaning is, that their messages had reference mainly to future times, and that the full benefit of them would be experienced only in distant ages. Heb 11:39,40.

Unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you. Not unto us by name, but their ministrations had reference to the times of the Messiah; and those to whom Peter wrote, in common with all Christians, were those who were to enjoy the fruits of the communications which they made. The word reported means announced, or made known. By them that have preached the gospel

unto you. The apostles, who have made known unto you, in their true sense, the things which the prophets predicted, the import of which they themselves were so desirous of understanding.

With the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Accompanied by the influences of the Holy Ghost bearing those truths to tile heart, and confirming them to the soul. It was the same Spirit which inspired the prophets which conveyed those truths to the souls of the early Christians, and which discloses them to true believers in every age. Comp. Jn 16:13,14, Acts 2:4, 10:44,45. The object of Peter by thus referring to the prophets, and to the interest which they took in the things which those to whom he wrote now enjoyed, seems to have been, to impress on them a deep sense of the value of the gospel, and of the great privileges which they enjoyed. They were reaping the benefit of all the labours of the prophets. They were permitted to see truth clearly, which the prophets themselves saw only obscurely. They were, in many respects, more favoured than even those holy men had been. It was for them that the prophets had spoken the word of the Lord; for them and their salvation that a long line of the most holy men that the world ever saw, had lived, and toiled, and suffered; and while they themselves had not been allowed to understand the full import of their own predictions, the most humble believer was permitted to see what the most distinguished prophet never saw. See Mt 13:17.

Which things the angels desire to look into. The object of this reference to the angels is the same as that to the prophets. It is to impress on Christians a sense of the value of that gospel which they had received, and to show them the greatness of their privileges in being, made partakers of it. It had excited the deepest interest among the most holy men on earth, and even among the inhabitants of the skies. They were enjoying the full revelation of what even the angels had desired more fully to understand, and to comprehend which they had employed their great powers of investigation. The things which are here referred to, εις α -unto which, are those which the prophets were so desirous to understand--the great truths respecting the sufferings of Christ, the glory which would follow, and the nature and effects of the gospel. In all the events pertaining to the redemption of a world they felt a deep interest. The word which is

rendered "to look," (παρακυψαι,) is rendered stooping down, and stooped down, in Lk 24:12, Jn 20:5,11; looketh, in Jas 1:25; and look, in the place before us. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means, to stoop down near by anything; to bend forward near, in order to look at anything more closely.--Robinson, Lex. It would denote that state where one, who was before at so great a distance that he could not dearly see an object, should draw nearer, stooping down in order that he might observe it more distinctly. It is possible, as Grotius supposes, that there may be an allusion here to the posture of the cherubim over the mercy-seat, represented as looking down with an intense gaze, as if to behold what was in the ark. But it is not necessary to suppose that this is the allusion, nor is it absolutely certain that that was the posture of the cherubim. Heb 9:5. All that is necessarily implied in the language is, that the angels had an intense desire to look into these things; that they contemplated them with interest and fixed attention, like one who comes near to an object, and looks narrowly upon it. In illustration of this sentiment, we may make the following suggestions: I The angels, doubtless, desire to look into all the manifestations of the character of God, wherever those manifestations are made.

(1.) It is not unreasonable to suppose that, to a great degree, they acquire the knowledge of God as all other creatures do. They are not omniscient, and cannot be supposed to comprehend at glance all his doings.

(2.) They doubtless employ their faculties, substantially as we do, in the investigation of truth; that is, from things known they seek to learn those that are even unknown.

(3.) It is not unreasonable to suppose that there are many things in relation to the Divine character and plans, which they do not yet understand. They know, undoubtedly, much more than we do; but there are plans and purposes of God which are yet made known to none of his creatures. No one can doubt that these plans and purposes must be the object of the attentive study of all holy created minds.

(4.) They doubtless feel a great interest in the welfare of other beings--of their fellow-creatures, wherever they are. There is in the universe one great brotherhood, embracing all the creatures of God.

(5.) They cannot but feel a deep interest in man--a fallen creature, tempted, suffering, dying, and exposed to eternal death. This they have shown in every period of the world's history. Heb 1:14. II. It is probable, that in each one of the worlds which God has made, there is some peculiar manifestation of his glory and character; something which is not to be found at all in any other world, or, if found, not in so great perfection; and that the angels would feel a deep interest in all these manifestations, and would desire to look into them.

(1.) This is probable from the nature of the case, and from the variety which we see in the form, size, movements, and glory of the heavenly orbs. There is no reason to suppose, that on any one of those worlds all the glory of the Divine character would be manifest, which he intends to make known to the universe.

(2.) This is probable from what we can now see of the worlds which he has made. We know as yet comparatively little of the heavenly bodies, and of the manifestations of the Deity; and yet, as far as we can see, there must be far more striking exhibitions of the power, and wisdom, and glory of God, in many or of those worlds that roll above us, than there are on our earth. On the body of the sun--on the planets Jupiter and Saturn, so vast in comparison with the earth--there must be far more impressive exhibitions of the glory of the Creator, than there is on our little planet. Saturn, for example, is 82,000 miles in diameter, 1100 times as large as our earth; it moves at the rate of 22,000 miles an hour; it is encircled by two magnificent rings, 5000 miles apart, the innermost of which is 21,000 miles from the body of the planet, and 22,000 miles in breadth, forming a vast illuminated arch over the above the brightness of our moon, and giving a most beautiful to the heavens there. It is also, doubtless, true of all which God has made, that in each one of them there may some peculiar manifestation of the glory of the Deity.

(3.) The universe therefore, seems fitted up to give eternal employment to mind in contemplating it; and, in the worlds which God has made, is enough to employ the study of his creatures for ever. On our own world, the most diligent and pious student of the works of God might spend many thousand years, and then leave much, very much, which he did not comprehend; and it may yet be the eternal employment of holy minds to range from world to world, and in each new world to find much to study and to admire; much that shall proclaim the wisdom, power, love, and goodness of God, which had not elsewhere been seen.

(4.) Our world, therefore, though small, a mere speck in creation, may have something to manifest the glory of the Creator which may not exist in any other. It cannot be its magnitude; for, in that respect, it is among the smallest which God has made. It may not be the height and the majesty of our mountains, or the length and beauty of our rivers, or the fragrance of our flowers, or the clearness of our sky; for, in these respects, there may be much more to admire in other worlds: it is the exhibition of the character of God in the work of redemption; the illustration of the way in which a sinner may be forgiven; the manifestation of the Deity as incarnate, assuming permanently a union with one of his own creatures. This, so far as we know, is seen in no other part of the universe; and this is honour enough for one world. To see this, the angels may be attracted down to earth. When they come, they come not to contemplate our works of art, our painting and our sculpture, or to read our books of science or poetry: they come to gather around the cross, to minister to the Saviour, to attend on his steps while living, and to watch over his body when dead; to witness his resurrection and ascension, and to bless, with their offices of kindness, those whom he died to redeem, Heb 1:4.

III. What, then, is there in our world which we may suppose would attract their attention? What is there which they would not see in other worlds? I answer, that the manifestation of the Divine character in the plan of redemption, is that which would peculiarly attract their attention here, and lead them from heaven down to earth.

(1.) The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God would be to them an object of the deepest interest. This, so far as we know, or have reason to suppose, has occurred nowhere else. There is no evidence that in any other world God has taken upon himself the form of one of his own creatures dwelling there, and stooped to live and act like one of them; to mingle with them; to share their feelings; and to submit to toil, and want, and sacrifice, for their welfare.

(2.) The fact that the guilty could be pardoned would attract their attention, for

(a.) it is elsewhere unknown, no inhabitant of heaven having the need of pardon, and no offer of pardon having been made to a rebel angel.

(b.) There are great and difficult questions about the whole subject of forgiveness, which an angel could easily see, but which he could not so easily solve. How could it be done consistently with the justice and truth of God? How could he forgive, and yet maintain the honour of his own law, and the stability of his own throne. There is no more difficult subject in a human administration than that of pardon; and there is none which so much perplexes those who are intrusted with executive power.

(3.) The way in which pardon has been shown to the guilty here would excite their deep attention. It has been in a manner entirely consistent with justice and truth; showing, through the great sacrifice made on the cross, that the attributes of justice and mercy may both be exercised: that, while God may pardon to any extent, he does it in no instance the expense of justice and truth. This blending of the attributes of the Almighty in beautiful harmony; this manifesting of mercy to the guilty and the lost; this raising up a fallen and rebellious race to the favour and friendship of God; and this opening before a dying creature the hope of immortality, was what could be seen by the angels nowhere else: and hence it is no wonder that they hasten with such interest to our world, to learn the mysteries of redeeming love. Every step in the process of recovering a sinner must be new to them, for it is unseen elsewhere; and the whole work, the atonement, the pardon and renovation of the sinner, the conflict of the child of God with his spiritual foes, the supports

of religion in the time of sickness and temptation, the bed of death, the sleep in the tomb, the separate flight of the soul to its final abode, the resurrection of the body, and the solemn scenes of the judgment, all must open new fields of thought to an angelic mind, and attract the heavenly inhabitants to our world, to learn here what they cannot learn in their own abodes, however otherwise bright, where sin, and suffering, and death, and redemption are unknown. In view of these truths we may add:

(1.) The work of redemption is worthy of the study of the profoundest minds. Higher talent than any earthly talent has been employed in studying it; for, to the most exalted intellects of heaven, it has been a theme of the deepest interest. No mind on earth is too exalted to be engaged in this study; no intellect here is so profound that it would not find in this study a range of inquiry worthy of itself.

(2.) This is a study that peculiarly appropriate to man. The angels have no other interest in it than that which arises from a desire to know God, and from a benevolent regard for the welfare of others; we have a personal interest in it of the highest kind. It pertains primarily to us. The plan was formed for us. Our eternal all depends upon it. The angels would be safe and happy if they did not fully understand it; if we do not understand it, we are lost for ever. It has claims to their attention as a wonderful exhibition of the character and purposes of God, and as they are interested in the welfare of others; it claims our attention because our eternal welfare depends on our accepting the offer of mercy made through a Saviour's blood.

(3.) How amazing, then, how wonderful, is the indifference of man to this and glorious work! How wonderful, that neither as a matter of speculation, nor of personal concern, he can be induced to look into these things! "How wonderful that all other subjects engross his attention, and excite inquiry; but that for this he feels no concern, and that here he finds nothing to interest him! It is not unreasonable to suppose, that amidst all the other topics of wonder in this plan as seen by angels, this is not the least--that man by nature takes no interest in it; that in so stupendous a work, performed in his own world, he feels no concern; that he is unmoved when he is told that even God became incarnate, and appeared on the earth where he

himself dwells; and that, busy and interested as he is in other things, often of a most trifling nature, he has no concern for that on which is suspended his own eternal happiness. If heaven was held in mute astonishment when the Son of God left the courts of glory to be poor, to be persecuted, to bleed, to die, not less must be the astonishment than when, from those lofty heights, the angelic hosts look down upon a race unconcerned amidst wonders such as those of the incarnation and the atonement!

Call to Holy Living

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind. The allusion here is to the manner in which the Orientals were accustomed to dress. They wear loose, flowing robes, so that, when they wished to run, or to fight, or to apply themselves to any business, they are obliged to bind their garments close around them. Mt 5:38, seq. The meaning here is, that they were to have their minds in constant preparation to discharge the duties, or to endure the trials of life--like those who were prepared for labour, for a race, or for a conflict. Be sober. 1Timm 3:2; Tit 1:8. And hope to the end. Marg., perfectly. The translation in the text is the most correct. It means, that they were not to become faint or weary in their trials. They were not to abandon the hopes of the gospel, but were to cherish those hopes to the end of life, whatever opposition they might meet with, and however much might be done by others to induce them to apostatize. Comp. Heb 10:35. Heb 10:36. For the grace that is to be brought unto you. For the favour that shall then be bestowed upon you; to wit, salvation. The word brought here means, that this great favour which they hoped for would be borne to them by the Saviour on his return from heaven. At the revelation of Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in his glory; that is, when he comes to judge the world. 2Thes 1:7.

14 as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

As obedient children. That is, conduct yourselves as becomes the children of God, by obeying his commands; by submitting to his will; and by manifesting unwavering confidence in him as your

Father, at all times. Not fashioning yourselves. Not forming or modelling your life. Comp. Rom 12:2 The idea is, that they were to have some model or example, in accordance with which they were to frame their lives, but that they were not to make their own former principles and conduct the model. The Christian is to be as different from what he was himself before conversion as he is from his fellow-men. He is to be governed by new laws, to aim at new objects, and to mould his life in accordance with new principles. Before conversion, he was

(a.) supremely selfish;

(b.) he lived for personal gratification;

(c.) he gave free indulgence to his appetites and passions, restrained only by a respect for the decencies of life, and by a reference to his own health, property, or reputation, without regard to the will of God;

(d.) he conformed himself to the customs and opinions around him, rather than to the requirements of his Maker;

(e.) he lived for worldly aggrandizements, his supreme object being wealth or fame; or

(f.) in many cases, those who are now Christians, gave indulgence to every passion which they wished to gratify, regardless of reputation, health, property, or salvation. Now they are to be governed by a different rule, and their own former standard of morals and of opinions is no longer their guide, but the will of God. According to the former lusts in your ignorance. When you were ignorant of the requirements of the gospel, and gave yourselves up to the unrestrained indulgence of your passions.

15 but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. Lev 11:44. This command was addressed at first to the Israelites, but it is with equal propriety addressed to Christians, as the professed people of compared. The foundation of the command is, that they professed to be his people, and that as his people they ought to be like their God.

Mic 4:5. It is a great truth, that men everywhere will imitate the god whom they worship. They will form their character in accordance with his. They will regard what he does as right. They will attempt to rise no higher in virtue than the god whom they adore, and they will practise freely what he is supposed to do or approve. Hence, by knowing what are the characteristics of the gods which are worshipped by any people, we may form a correct estimate of the character of the people themselves; and hence, as the God who is the object of the Christian's worship is perfectly holy, the character of his worshippers should also be holy. And hence, also, we may see that the tendency of true religion is to make men pure. As the worship of the impure gods of the heathen moulds the character of the worshippers into their image, so the worship of Jehovah moulds the character of his professed friends into his image, and they become like him.

16 because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear:

And if ye call on the Father. That is, if you are true Christians, or truly pious--piety being represented in the Scriptures as calling on God, or as the worship of God. Acts 9:11; Gen 4:26, 1Kgs 18:24, Ps 116:17, 2Kgs 5:11, 1Chr 16:8, Joel 2:32, Rom 10:13; Zeph 3:9, 1Cor 1:2, Acts 2:21. The word "Father" here is used evidently not to denote the Father in contradistinction to the Son, but as referring to God as the Father of the universe. 1Pet 1:14 "As obedient children." God is often spoken of as the Father of the intelligent beings whom he has made. Christians worship him as a Father--as one having all the feelings of a kind and tender parent towards them. Ps 103:13, seq. Who without respect of persons. Impartiality. Who is not influenced in his treatment of men by a regard to rank, wealth, beauty, or any external distinction. Acts 10:34, Rom 2:11. Judgeth according to every man's work. He judges each one according to his character; or to what he has done, Rev 22:12. 2Cor 5:10. The meaning is, "You worship a God who will judge every man according to his real character, and you should therefore lead such lives as he can approve." Pass the time of your sojourning. "Of your temporary residence on earth. This is not your permanent home, but you are strangers and sojourners." Heb 11:13. In fear. Php 2:12 Heb 12:28. With true reverence or veneration for God and his law.

Religion is often represented as the reverent fear of God, De 6:2,13,24, Prov 1:7, 3:13, 14:26,27, et saepe al.

18 forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

For as much as ye know. This is an argument for a holy life, derived from the fact that they were redeemed, and from the manner in which their redemption had been effected. There is no more effectual way to induce true Christians to consecrate themselves entirely to God, than to refer them to the fact that they are not their own, but have been purchased by the blood of Christ. That ye were not redeemed. On the word rendered redeemed, (λυτροω lutroo,) Tit 2:14. The word occurs in the New Testament only in Lk 24:21, Tit 2:14, and in this place. The noun (λυτρον--lutron) is found in Mt 20:28, Mk 10:45, rendered ransom. For the meaning of the similar word, απολυτρωσις -- (apolutrosis,) Rom 3:24. This word occurs in Lk 21:28, Rom 3:24, 8:23, 1Cor 1:30, Eph 1:7,14, 4:30, Col 1:14; Heb 9:15, in all which places it is rendered redemption; and in Heb 11:35, where it is rendered deliverance. The word here means that they were rescued from sin and death by the blood of Christ, as the valuable consideration on account of which it was done; that is, the blood, or the life of Christ offered as a sacrifice, effected the same purpose in regard to justice and to the maintenance of the principles of moral government, which the punishment of the sinner himself would have done. It was that which God was pleased to accept in the place of the punishment of the sinner, as answering the same great ends in his administration. The principles of his truth and justice could as certainly be maintained in this way as by the punishment of the guilty themselves. If so, then there was no obstacle to their salvation; and they might, on repentance, be consistently pardoned and taken to heaven.

With corruptible things, as silver and gold. On the word corruptible, as applicable to gold, 1Pet 1:7. Silver and gold usually constitute the price or the valuable consideration paid for the redemption of captives. It is clear that the obligation of one who is redeemed, to love his benefactor, is in proportion to the price which is paid for his ransom. The idea here is, that a price far more valuable than any amount of silver or gold had been paid for the redemption of the

people of God, and that they were under proportionate obligation to devote themselves to his service. They were redeemed by the life of the Son of God offered in their behalf; and between the value of that life and silver and gold there could be no comparison.

From your vain conversation. Your vain conduct, or manner of life. 1Pet 1:15. The word vain, applied to conduct, (ματαιας,) means properly empty, fruitless. It is a word often applied to the worship of idols, as being nothing, worthless, unable to help, (Acts 14:15, 1Kgs 16:13, 2Kgs 17:15, Jer 2:5,8,19); and is probably used in a similar sense in this place. The apostle refers to their former worship of idols, and to all the abominations connected with that service, as being vain and unprofitable; as the worship of nothing real, (comp. 1Cor 8:4), "We know that an idol is nothing in the world;" and as resulting in a course of life that answered none of the proper ends of living. From that they had been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Received by tradition from your fathers. The mode of worship which had been handed down from father to son. The worship of idols depends on no better reason than that it is that which has been practised in ancient times; and it is kept up now in all lands, in a great degree, only by the fact that it has had the sanction of the venerated men of other generations.

But with the precious blood of Christ. On the use of the word blood, and the reason why the efficacy of the atonement is said to be in the blood, Rom 3:25. The word precious (τιμιος,) is a word which would be applied to that which is worth much; which is costly. Comp. for the use of the noun (τιμη) in this sense, Mt 27:6, "The price of blood;" Acts 4:34, 5:2,3, 7:16. See also for the use of the adjective, (τιμιος,) Rev 17:4, "gold and precious stones." Rev 18:12, "vessels of most precious wood." Rev 21:11, "a stone most precious." The meaning here is, that the blood of Christ had a value above silver and gold; it was worth more, to wit,

(1.) in itself--being a more valuable thing and

(2.) in effecting our redemption. It accomplished what silver and gold could not do. The universe had nothing more valuable to offer, of which we can conceive, than the blood of the Son of God. As of

a lamb. That is, of Christ regarded as a lamb offered for sacrifice. Jn 1:29. Without blemish and without spot. Such a lamb only was allowed to be offered in sacrifice, Lev 22:20-24, Mal 1:8. This was required,

(1.) because it was proper that man should offer that which was regarded as perfect in its kind; and,

(2.) because only that would be a proper symbol of the great sacrifice which was to be made by the Son of God. The idea was thus kept up from age to age that he, of whom all these victims were the emblems, would be perfectly pure.

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Still our apostle is pressing Christians to the love and practice of holiness, and a reverential fear of God, by fresh arguments and motives, particularly from their redemption; saying, that they could not but be sensible that they were redeemed with a very costly price, not with silver and gold, which yet would ransom kings, but by the precious blood of Christ, whom the paschal lamb typified, and who was from eternity fore-ordained to the office of a mediator, though he was not manifested in the flesh till these last days, for the good and benefit of those who by him do believe in God that raised Christ from the dead, and gloriously exalted him at his right hand, upon which account their faith and hope may safely and comfortably rest in God.

Note here, 1. The thraldom, bondage, and slavery, of our sinful state before we were redeemed.

Note, 2. The impotency and inability of all outward things, be they never so rich, precious, and costly, to redeem and ransom an enslaved sinner. Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold. All the gold and silver in the world was no ransom for one soul, nay, the blood of all the creatures in the world offered up in sacrifice to the justice of God, could have been no sufficient compensation.

Note, 3. That the redemption of every soul cost no less than the precious blood of the Son of God, that spotless Lamb, who by the sacrifice of his death atoned divine displeasure.

Note, 4. That God the Father fore-ordained Jesus Christ his Son to this blessed office of a Redeemer before the foundation of the world, though he was not manifest in the flesh till these last times.

Note, 5. That by Christ the Redeemer we are taught to know God, and to believe in him who raised Christ from the dead.
Here observe, How the Socinians wrest and misapply this text, where we are said by Christ to believe in God. Thus they argue, "He by whom we believe in God, is not that God in whom we believe, because the means of faith can never be the object of faith; but Christ is he: the apostle says here, by whom we believe in God, therefore Christ is not God."

Ans. Christ, considered in his human nature, in which he died, and was raised for us, is he by whom we believe in God, that is, own him to be able to raise us from the dead; but this hinders not his being God according to his divine nature, by which he did actually raise himself from the dead, Joh 10:18.

20 who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world. That is, it was foreordained, or predetermined, that he should be the great atoning Sacrifice for sin. On the meaning of the word foreordained, (προγινωσκω,) see Rom 8:29. The word is rendered which knew, Acts 26:5; foreknew and foreknow, Rom 8:29, 11:2; foreordainedin 1Pet 1:20; and know before, 2Pet 2:17. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The sense is, that the plan was formed, and the arrangements made for the atonement, before the world was created. Before the foundation of the world. That is, from eternity. It was before man was formed; before the earth was made; before any of the material universe was brought into being; before the angels were created. Mt 15:34, Jn 17:24, Eph 1:4.

Who by him do believe in God. Faith is sometimes represented particularly as exercised in God, and sometimes in Christ. It is always a characteristic of true religion that a man has faith in God.

Mk 11:22. That raised him up from the dead. Acts 2:24; Acts 3:15, Acts 3:26; Acts 4:10; Acts 5:30; Acts 13:30; Rom 4:24; 1Cor 15:15. And gave him glory. By exalting him at his own right hand in heaven, Php 2:9, 1Timm 3:16, Eph 1:20,21. That your faith and hope might be in God. That is, by raising up the Lord Jesus, and exalting him to heaven, he has laid the foundation of confidence in his promises, and of the hope of eternal life. 1Pet 1:3. Comp. 1Cor 15; Col 1:27, 1Thes 1:3; 1Timm 1:1.

21 who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Seeing ye have purified your souls. Greek, "Having purified your souls." The apostles were never afraid of referring to human agency as having an important part in saving the soul. Comp. 1Cor 4:15. No one is made pure without personal intention or effort--any more than one becomes accomplished or learned without personal exertion. One of the leading effects of the agency of the Holy Spirit is to excite us to make efforts for our own salvation; and there is no true piety which is not the fair result of culture, as really as the learning of a Porson or a Parr, or the harvest of the farmer. The amount of effort which we make "in purifying our souls" is usually also the measure of our attainments in religion. No one can expect to have any true piety beyond the amount of effort which he makes to be conformed to God, any more than one can expect wealth, or fame, or learning, without exertion. In obeying the truth. That is, your yielding to the requirements of truth, and to its fair influence on your minds, has been the means of your becoming pure. The truth here referred to is, undoubtedly, that which is revealed in the gospel--the great system of truth respecting the redemption of the world. Through the Spirit. By the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is his office to apply truth to the mind; and however precious the truth may be, and however adapted to secure certain results on the soul, it will never produce those effects without the influences of the Holy Spirit. compare Tit 3:5,6. Jn 3:5. Unto unfeigned love of the brethren. The effect of the influence of the Holy Spirit in applying the truth has been to produce sincere love to all who are true Christians. Comp. Jn 13:34; 1Thes 4:9. See also 1Jn 3:14-18. See that ye love one another with a pure

heart fervently. Comp. Heb 13:1; Jnn 13:34; Jn 13:35; Eph 5:2 The phrase "with a pure heart fervently," means

(1.) that it should be genuine love, proceeding from a heart in which there is no guile or hypocrisy; and

(2.) that it should be intense affection, (εκτενως;) not cold and formal, but ardent and strong. If there is any reason why we should love true Christians at all, there is the same reason why our attachment to them should be intense. This verse establishes the following points:

(1.) That truth was at the foundation of their piety. They had none of which this was not the proper basis; and in which the foundation was not as broad as the superstructure. There is no religion in the world which is not the fair developement of truth; which the truth is not fitted to produce.

(2.) They became Christians as the result of obeying the truth; or by yielding to its fair influence on the soul. Their own minds complied with its claims; their own hearts yielded; there was the exercise of their own volitions. This expresses a doctrine of great importance.

(a.) There is always the exercise of the powers of the mind in true religion; always a yielding to truth; always a voluntary reception of it into the soul.

(b.) Religion is always of the nature of obedience. It consists in yielding to what is true and right; in laying aside the feelings of opposition, and in allowing the mind to follow where truth and duty lead.

(c.) This would always take place when the truth is presented to the mind, if there were no voluntary resistance. If all men were ready to yield to the truth, they would become Christians. The only reason why all men do not love and serve God, is that they refuse to yield to what they know to be true and right.

(3.) The agency by which this was accomplished was that of the Holy Ghost. Truth is adapted in itself to a certain end or result, as seed is adapted to produce a harvest. But it will no more of itself

produce its appropriate effects on the soul, than seed will produce a harvest without rains, and dews, and suns. In all cases, therefore, the proper effect of truth on the soul is to be traced to the influence of the Holy Spirit, as the germination of the seed in the earth is to the foreign cause that acts on it. No man was ever converted by the mere effect of truth without the agency of the Holy Ghost, any more than seed germinates when laid on a hard rock.

(4.) The effect of this influence of the Holy Spirit in applying the truth is to produce love to all who are Christians. Love to Christian brethren springs up in the soul of every one who is truly converted: and this love is just as certain evidence that the seed of truth has germinated in the soul, as the green and delicate blade that peeps up through the earth is evidence that the seed sown has been quickened into life. Comp. 1Thes 4:9; 1Jn 3:14. We may learn hence,

(a.) that truth is of inestimable value. It is as valuable as religion itself, for all the religion in the world is the result of it.

(b.) Error and falsehood are mischievous and evil in the same degree. There is no true religion which is the fair result of error; and all the pretended religion that is sustained by error is worthless.

(c.) If a system of religion, or a religious measure or doctrine, cannot be defended by truth, it should be at once abandoned. Comp. Job 13:7.

(d.) We should avoid the places where error is taught. Prov 19:27, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

(e.) We should place ourselves under the teachings of truth, for there is truth enough in the world to occupy all our time and attention; and it is only by truth that our minds can be benefited.

23 being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

But of incorruptible. By truth, communicating a living principle to the soul which can never decay. Comp. 1Jn 3:9: "His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." By the word of God. Jas 1:18: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,

that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Comp. Jn 1:13. It is the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures that Divine truth is made the instrument of quickening the soul into spiritual life. Which liveth and abideth for ever. This expression may either refer to God, as living for ever, or to the word of God, as being for ever true. Critics are about equally divided in the interpretation. The Greek will bear either construction. Most of the recent critics incline to the latter opinion--that it refers to the word of God, or to his doctrine. So Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Bloomfield, Wolf, Macknight, Clarke. It seems to me, however, that the more natural construction of the Greek is to refer it to God, as ever-living or enduring; and this interpretation agrees well with the connexion. The idea then is, that as God is everliving, that which is produced directly by him in the human soul, by the instrumentality of truth, may be expected also to endure for ever. It will not be like the offspring of human parents, themselves mortal, liable to early and certain decay, but may be expected to be as enduring as its ever-living Creator.

24 For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

For all flesh is as grass. That is, all human beings, all men. The connexion here is this: The apostle, in the previous verse, had been contrasting that which is begotten by man with that which is begotten by God, in reference to its permanency. The former was corruptible and decaying; the latter abiding. The latter was produced by God, who lives for ever; the former by the agency of man, who is himself corruptible and dying. It was not unnatural, then, to dwell upon the feeble, frail, decaying nature of man, in contrast with God; and the apostle, therefore, says that "all flesh, every human being, is like grass. There is no stability in anything that man does or produces, he himself resembles grass that soon fades and withers; but God and his word endure for ever the same." The comparison of a human being with grass, or with flowers, is very beautiful, and is quite common in the Scriptures. The comparison turns on the fact, that the grass or the flower, however green or beautiful it may be, soon loses its freshness; is withered; is cut down, and dies. Thus in Ps 103:15,16:

"As for man, his days are as grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth, For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, And the place thereof shall know it no more."

So in Isa 40:6-8; a passage which is evidently referred to by Peter in this place:--

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, And all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, The flower fadeth. When the wind of Jehovah bloweth upon it: Surely the people is grass, The grass withereth, The flower fadeth, But the word of our God shall stand for ever."
Jas 1:10,11. This sentiment is beautifully imitated by the great dramatist in the speech of Wolsey:--

"This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms, And bears his blushing honours thick upon him. The third day comes a frost, a killing frost. And--when he thinks, good easy man, full surely His greatness is a ripening--nips his root, And then he falls."

Comp. Isa 40:6-8. And all the glory of man. All that man prides himself on--his wealth, rank, talents, beauty, learning, splendour of equipage or apparel. As the flower of grass. The word rendered "grass," (χορτος,) properly denotes herbage; that which furnishes food for animals--pasture, hay. Probably the prophet Isaiah, from whom this passage is taken, referred rather to the appearance of a meadow or a field, with mingled grass and flowers, constituting a beautiful landscape, than to mere grass. In such a field, the grass soon withers with heat, and with the approach of winter; and the flowers soon fade and fall. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away. This is repeated, as is common in the Hebrew writings, for the sake of emphasis, or strong confirmation.

25 but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.
And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

But the word of the Lord. In Isa 40:8, "the word of our God." The sense is not materially varied.

Endureth for ever. Is unmoved, fixed, permanent. Amidst all the revolutions on earth, the fading glories of natural objects, and the wasting strength of man, his truth remains unaffected. Its beauty

never fades; its power is never enfeebled. The gospel system is as lovely now as it was when it was first revealed to man, and it has as much power to save as it had when first applied to a human heart. We see the grass wither at the coming on of autumn; we see the flower of the field decay; we see man, though confident in his strength, and rejoicing in the rigour of his frame, cut down in an instant; we see cities decline, and kingdoms lose their power: but the word of God is the same now that it was at first, and, amidst all the changes which may ever occur on the earth, that will remain the same.

And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. That a is, this gospel is the "word" which was referred to by Isaiah in the passage which has been quoted, In view, then, of the affecting truth stated in the close of this chapter, 1Pet 1:24,25, let us learn habitually to reflect on our feebleness and frailty. "We all do fade as a leaf," Isa 64:6. Our glory is like the flower of the field. Our beauty fades, and our strength disappears, as easily as the beauty and rigour of the flower that grows up in the morning, and that in the evening is cut down, Ps 90:6. The rose that blossoms on the cheek of youth may wither as soon as any other rose; the brightness of the eye may become dim, as readily as the beauty of field covered with flowers; the darkness of death may come over the brow of manliness and intelligence, as readily as night settles down on the landscape; and our robes of adorning may be laid aside, as soon as beauty fades in a meadow full of flowers before the scythe of the mower. There is not an object of natural beauty on which we pride ourselves that will not decay; and soon all our pride and pomp will be laid low in the tomb. It is sad to look on a beautiful lily, a rose, a magnolia, and to think how soon all that beauty will disappear. It is more sad to look on a rosy cheek, a bright eye, a lovely form, an expressive brow, an open, serene, intelligent countenance, and to think how soon all that beauty and brilliancy will fade away. But amidst these changes which beauty undergoes, and the desolations which disease and death spread over the world, it is cheering to think that all is not so, There is that which does not change, which, never loses its beauty. "The word of the Lord" abides. His cheering promises, his assurances that there is brighter and better world, remain amidst all these changes the same. The traits which are drawn on the character by the religion of Christ, more lovely by far than the most delicate colouring of the lily, remain for ever. There they abide, augmenting

in loveliness, when the rose fades from the cheek; when the brilliancy departs from the eye; when the body moulders away in the sepulchre. The beauty of religion is the only permanent beauty in the earth.

1 Peter-2

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

Wherefore laying aside. On the word rendered laying aside, see Rom 13:12, Eph 4:22,25, Col 3:8. The allusion is to putting off clothes; and the meaning is, that we are to cast off these things entirely; that is, we are no longer to practise them. The word wherefore (ουν) refers to the reasonings in the first chapter. In view of the considerations stated there, we should renounce all evil.

All malice. All evil, (κακιαν.) The word malice we commonly apply now to a particular kind of evil, denoting extreme enmity of heart, ill-will, a disposition to injure others without cause, from mere personal gratification, or from a spirit of revenge.---Webster. The Greek word, however, includes evil of all kinds. Rom 1:29. Comp. Acts 8:22, where it is rendered wickedness, and 1Cor 5:8, 14:20, Eph 4:31, Col 3:8, Tit 3:3.

And all guile. Deceit of all kinds. Rom 1:29; 2Cor 12:16; 1Thes 2:3.

And hypocrisies. 1Timm 4:2; Mt 23:28; Gal 2:13, on the word rendered dissimulation. The word means, feigning to be what we are not; assuming a false appearance of religion; cloking a wicked purpose under the appearance of piety:

And envies. Hatred of others on account of some excellency which they have, or something which they possess which we do not. Rom 1:29.

And all evil speaking. Greek, Speaking against others. This word (καταλαλια) occurs only here and in 2Cor 12:20, where it is rendered backbitings. It would include all unkind or slanderous speaking against others. This is by no means an uncommon fault in the world, and it is one of the designs of religion to guard against it. Religion

teaches us to lay aside whatever guile, insincerity, and false appearances we may have acquired, and to put on the simple honesty and openness of children. We all acquire more or less of guile and insincerity ill the course of life, We learn to conceal our sentiments and feelings, and almost unconsciously come to appear different from what we really are. It is not so with children. In the child, every emotion of the bosom: appears as it is. Nature there work, well and beautifully. Every emotion is expressed; every feeling of the heart is developed; and in the cheeks, the open eye, the joyous or sad countenance, we know all that there is in the bosom, as certainly as we know all that there is in the rose by its colour and its fragrance. Now, it is one of the purposes of religion to bring us back to this state, and to strip off all the subterfuges which we may have acquired in life; and he in whom this effect is not accomplished has never been converted. A man that is characteristically deceitful, cunning, and crafty, cannot be a Christian. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Mt 18:3.

2 as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

As new-born babes. The phrase here used would properly denote those which were just born, and hence Christians who had just begun the spiritual life. See the word explained 2Ti 3:15. It is not uncommon, in the Scriptures, to compare Christians with little children. Mt 18:3 for the reasons of this comparison. Comp. 1Cor 3:2 Heb 5:12,14. Desire the sincere milk of the word. The pure milk of the word, On the meaning of the word sincere, Eph 6:24. The Greek word here (αδολον) means, properly, that which is without guile or falsehood; then unadulterated, pure, genuine. The Greek adjective rendered "of the word," (λογικον,) means properly rational, pertaining to reason, or mind; and, in the connexion here with milk, means that which is adapted to sustain the soul. Rom 12:1. There is no doubt that there is allusion to the gospel in its purest and most simple form, as adapted to be the nutriment of the new-born soul. Probably there are two ideas here; one, that the proper aliment of piety is simple truth; the other, that the truths which they were to desire were the more elementary truths of the gospel, such as would be adapted to those who were babes in knowledge. That ye may grow thereby. As babes grow on their proper nutriment. Piety in the heart is susceptible of growth, and is

made to grow by its proper element, as a plant or a child is, and will grow in proportion as it has the proper kind of nutriment, from this verse we may see,

(1.) the reason of the injunction of the Saviour to Peter, to "feed his lambs," Jn 21:15, 1Pet 2:1,2. Young Christians strongly resemble children, babes; and they need watchful care, and kind attention, and appropriate aliment, as much as new-born infants do. Piety receives its form much from its commencement; and the character of the whole Christian life will be determined in a great degree by the views entertained at first, and the kind of instruction which is given to those who are just entering on their Christian course. We may also see,

(2.) that it furnishes evidence of conversion, if we have a love for the simple and pure truths of the gospel, It is evidence that we have spiritual life, as really as the desire of appropriate nourishment is evidence that an infant has natural life. The new-born soul loves the truth. It is nourished by it. It perishes without it. The gospel is just what it wants; and without that it could not live. We may also learn from this verse,

(3.) that the truths of the gospel which are best adapted to that state, are those which are simple and plain. Heb 5:12, seq. It is not philosophy that is needed then; it is not the profound and difficult doctrines of the gospel; it is those elementary truths which he at the foundation of all religion, and which can be comprehended by children: Religion makes every one docile and humble as a child; and whatever may be the age at which one is converted, or whatever attainments he may have made in science, he relishes the same truths which are loved by the youngest and most unlettered child that is brought into the kingdom of God.

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Or rather, as Doddridge renders it, "Since you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The apostle did not mean to express any doubt on the subject, but to state that, since they had had an experimental acquaintance with the grace of God, they should desire to increase

more and more in the knowledge and love of him, On the use of the word taste, Heb 6:4.

3 if so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

Christ the Living Stone

4 To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious,

To whom coming. To the Lord Jesus, for so the word "Lord" is to be understood in 1Pet 2:3. Acts 1:24. The idea here is, that they had come to him for salvation, while the great mass of men rejected him. Others "disallowed" him, and turned away from him, but they had seen that he was the one chosen or appointed of God, and had come to him in order to be saved. Salvation is often represented as coming to Christ. See Mt 11:28.

As unto a living stone. The allusion in this passage is to Isa 28:16, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Isa 28:16. There may be also possibly an allusion to Ps 118:22, "The stone which the builders disallowed, is become the head-stone of the corner." The reference is to Christ as the foundation on which the church is reared. He occupied the same place in regard to the church which a foundation-stone does to the edifice that is reared upon it. Comp. Mt 7:24,25. Rom 9:33, Eph 2:20, seq. The phrase "living stone" is however unusual, and is not found, I think, except in this place. There seems to be an incongruity in it, in attributing life to a stone, yet the meaning is not difficult to be understood. The purpose was not to speak of a temple, like that at Jerusalem, made up of gold and costly stones; but of a temple made up of living materials--of redeemed men--in which God now resides. In speaking of that, it was natural to refer to the foundation on which the whole rested, and to speak of that as corresponding to the whole edifice. It was all a living temple--a temple composed of living materials--from the foundation to the top. Compare the expression in Jn 4:10, "He would have given thee living water;" that is, water which would have imparted life to the soul. So Christ imparts life to the whole spiritual temple that is reared on him as a foundation.

Disallowed indeed of men. Rejected by them, first by the Jews, in causing him to be put to death; and then by all men when he is offered to them as their Saviour. Isa 53:3. Ps 118:22: "Which the builders refused." Comp. Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11.

But chosen of God. Selected by him as the suitable foundation on which to rear his church. And precious. Valuable. The universe had nothing more valuable on which to rear the spiritual temple. To whom coming. To the Lord Jesus, for so the word "Lord" is to be understood in 1Pet 2:3. Acts 1:24. The idea here is, that they had come to him for salvation, while the great mass of men rejected him. Others "disallowed" him, and turned away from him, but they had seen that he was the one chosen or appointed of God, and had come to him in order to be saved. Salvation is often represented as coming to Christ. See Mt 11:28.

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But chosen of God. Selected by him as the suitable foundation on which to rear his church. And precious. Valuable. The universe had nothing more valuable on which to rear the spiritual temple.

5 ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Ye also, as lively stones. Gr., "living stones." The word should have been so rendered. The word lively with us now has a different meaning from living, and denotes active, quick, sprightly. The Greek word is the same as that used in the previous verse, and rendered living. The meaning is, that the materials of which the temple here referred to was composed, were living materials throughout. The foundation is a living foundation, and all the superstructure is composed of living materials. The purpose of the apostle here is to compare the church to a beautiful temple--such as the temple in Jerusalem, and to show that it is complete in all its parts, as that was. It has within itself what corresponds with everything that was valuable in that. It is a beautiful structure like that; and as in that there was a priesthood, and there were real and acceptable sacrifices offered, so it is in the Christian church. The Jews prided themselves much on their temple. It was a most costly and splendid edifice. It was the place where God was worshipped, and where he was supposed to dwell. It had an imposing service, and there was acceptable worship rendered there. As a new dispensation was introduced; as the tendency of the Christian system was to draw off the worshippers from that temple, and to teach them that God could be worshipped as acceptably elsewhere as at Jerusalem, (Jn 4:21-23;) as Christianity did not inculcate the necessity of rearing splendid temples for the worship of God; and as in fact the temple at Jerusalem was about to be destroyed for ever, it was important to show that in the Christian church there might be found all that was truly beautiful and valuable in the temple at Jerusalem; that it had what corresponded to what was in fact most precious there, and that there was still a most magnificent and

beautiful temple on the earth. Hence the sacred writers labour to show that all was found in the church that had made the temple at Jerusalem so glorious, and that the great design contemplated by the erection of that splendid edifices, --the maintenance of the worship of God was now accomplished in a more glorious manner than even in the services of that house. For there was a temple, made up of living materials, which was still the peculiar dwelling-place of God on the earth. In that temple there was a holy priesthood--for every Christian was a priest. In that temple there were sacrifices offered, as acceptable to God as in the former--for they were spiritual sacrifices, offered continually. These thoughts were often dwelt upon by the apostle Paul, and are here illustrated by Peter, evidently with the same design, to impart consolation to those who had never been permitted to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, and to comfort those Jews, now converted to Christianity, who saw that that splendid and glorious edifice was about to be destroyed. The peculiar abode of God on the earth was now removed from that temple to the Christian church, The first aspect in which this is illustrated here is, that the temple of God was made up of living stones;" that is, that the materials were not inanimate stones, but endued with life, and so much more valuable than those employed in the temple at Jerusalem, as the soul is more precious than any materials of stone. There were living beings which composed that temple, constituting a more beautiful structure, and a more appropriate dwelling-place for God, than any edifice could be made of stone, however costly or valuable.

A spiritual house. A spiritual temple, not made of perishable materials, like that at Jerusalem; not composed of matter, as that was, but made up of redeemed souls--a temple more appropriate to be the residence of one who is a pure spirit. Eph 2:19, seq. and 1Cor 6:19,20. An holy priesthood. In the temple at Jerusalem, the priesthood appointed to minister there, and to offer sacrifices, an essential part of the arrangement. It was important, to show that this was not overlooked in the spiritual that God was raising. Accordingly, the apostle says that amply provided for, by constituting the whole body of Christians to be in fact a priesthood. Every one is engaged in offering sacrifice to God. The business is not intrusted to a particular class to be known as priests; there is not a particular portion to whom the name is to be peculiarly given; but every Christian is in fact a priest, and is engaged in offering an

acceptable sacrifice to God. See Rom 1:6 "And hath made us kings and priests unto God." The Great High Priest in this service is the Lord Jesus Christ, (see the Epistle to the Hebrews, passim;) but besides him there is no one who sustains this office, except as it is borne by all the Christian members. There are ministers, elders, pastors, evangelists in the church; but there is no one who is a priest, except in the general sense that all are priests---for the great sacrifice has been offered, and there is no expiation now to be made. The name priest, therefore, should never be conferred on a minister of the gospel. It is never so given in the New Testament, and there was a reason why it should not be. The proper idea of a priest is one who offers sacrifice; but the ministers of the New Testament have no sacrifices to offer--the one great and perfect oblation for the sins of the world having been made by the Redeemer on the cross. To him, and him alone, under the New Testament dispensation, should the name priest be given, as it is uniformly in the New Testament, except in the general sense in which it is given to all Christians. In the Roman Catholic communion it is consistent to give the name priest to a minister of the gospel, but it is wrong to do it. It is consistent, because they claim that a true sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is offered in the mass. It is wrong, because that doctrine is wholly contrary to the New Testament, and is derogatory to the one perfect oblation which has been once made for the sins of the world, and in conferring on a class of men a degree of importance and of power to which they have no claim, and which is so liable to abuse. But in a Protestant church it is neither consistent nor right to give the name to a minister of religion. The only sense in which the term can now be used in the Christian church is a sense in which it is applicable to all Christians alike--that they" offer the sacrifice of prayer mid praise,"

To offer up spiritual sacrifices. Not bloody offerings, the blood of lambs and bullocks, but those which are the offerings of the heart--the sacrifices of prayer and praise. As there is a priest, there is also involved the notion of a sacrifice; but that which is offered is such as all Christians offer to God, proceeding from the heart, and breathed forth from the lips, and in a holy life. It is called sacrifice, not because at makes an expiation for sin, but because it is of the nature of worship. Heb 13:15; Heb 10:14.

Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Rom 12:1. Through the merits of the great sacrifice made by the Redeemer on the cross. Our prayers and praises are in themselves so imperfect, and proceed from such polluted lips and hearts, that they can be acceptable only through him as our intercessor before the throne of God. Heb 9:24, Heb 9:25; Heb 10:19, seq.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture,
Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious:
and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture. Isa 28:16. The quotation is substantially as it is found in the Septuagint. Behold, I lay in Sion. Isa 28:16, and Rom 9:33. A chief corner-stone. The principal stone on which the corner of the edifice rests. A stone is selected for this which is large and solid, and, usually, one which is squared, and wrought with care; and as such a stone is commonly laid with solemn ceremonies, so, perhaps, in allusion to this, it is here said by God that he would lay his stone at the foundation. The solemnities attending this were those which accompanied the great work of the Redeemer. See the word explained in the Eph 2:20. Elect. Chosen of God, or selected for this purpose, 1Pet 2:4. And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Shall not be ashamed. The Hebrew is, "shall not make haste." See it explained Rom 9:33.

7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

Unto you therefore which believe. Christians are often called simply believers, because faith in the Savour is one of the prominent characteristics by which they are distinguished from their fellowmen. It sufficiently describes any man, to say that he is a believer in the Lord Jesus. He is precious. Marg., an honour. That is, according to the margin, it is an honour to believe on him, and should be so regarded. This is true, but it is very doubtful whether this is the idea of Peter. The Greek is ητιμη; literally, "esteem, honour, respect, reverence;" then "value or price." The noun is probably used in the place of the adjective, in the sense of honourable, valued, precious; and it is not incorrectly rendered in the text, "he is precious." The connexion demands this interpretation. The apostle was not showing that it was an honour to believe on Christ, but was stating the estimate which was put on him by those who believe, as contrasted with the view taken of him by

the world. The truth which is taught is, that while the Lord Jesus is rejected by the great mass of men, he is regarded by all Christians as of inestimable value. I. Of the fact there can be no doubt. Somehow, Christians perceive a value in him which is seen in nothing else. This is evidenced

(a.) in their avowed estimate of him as their best friend;

(b.) in their being willing so far to honour him as to commit to him the keeping of their souls, resting the whole question of their salvation on him alone;

(c.) in their readiness to keep his commands, and to serve him, while the mass of men disobey him; and

(d.) in their being willing to die for him. II The reasons why he is so precious to them are such as these:

(1.) They are brought into a condition where they can appreciate his worth. To see the value of food, we must be hungry; of clothing, we must be exposed to the winter's blast; of home, we must be wanderers without a dwelling-place; of medicine, we must be sick; of competence, we must be poor. So, to see the value of the Saviour, we must see that we are poor, helpless, dying sinners; that the soul is of inestimable worth; that we have no merit of our own; and that unless some one interpose, we must perish. Every one who becomes a true Christian is brought to this condition; and in this state he can appreciate the worth of the Saviour. In this respect the condition of Christians is unlike that of the rest of mankind--for they are in no better state to appreciate the worth of the Saviour, than the man in health is to appreciate the value of the healing art, or than he who has never had a want unsupplied, the kindness of one who comes to us with an abundant supply of food.

(2.) The Lord Jesus is in fact of more value to them than any other benefactor. We have had benefactors who have done us good, but none who have done us such good as he has. We have had parents, teachers, kind friends, who have provided for us, taught us, relieved us; but all that they have done for us is slight, compared with what he has done. The fruit of their kindness, for the most part, pertains to the present world; and they have not laid down their lives for us. What he has done pertains to our welfare to all eternity; it is the fruit of the sacrifice of his own life. How precious should the name and memory of one be who has laid down his own life to save us!

(3.) We owe all our hopes of heaven to him; and in proportion to the value of such a hope, he is precious to us. We have no hope of salvation but in him. Take that away--blot out the name and the work of the Redeemer--and we see no way in which we could be saved; we have no prospect of being saved. As our hope of heaven, therefore, is valuable to us; as it supports us in trial; as it comforts us in the hour of death, so is the Saviour precious: and the estimate which we form of him is in proportion to the value of such a hope.

(4.) There is an intrinsic value and excellency in the character of Christ, apart from his relation to us, which makes him precious to those who can appreciate his worth. In his character, abstractedly considered, there was more to attract, to interest, to love, than in that of any other one who ever lived in our world. There was more purity, more benevolence, more that was great in trying circumstances, more that was generous and self-denying, more that resembled God, than in any other one who ever appeared on earth. In the moral firmament, the character of Christ sustains a pre-eminence above all others who have lived, as great as the glory of the sun is superior to the feeble lights, though so numerous, which glimmer at midnight. With such views of him, it is not to be wondered at, that, however he may be estimated by the world, "to them who believe he is PRECIOUS." But unto them which be disobedient. Literally, unwilling to be persuaded, (απειθης;) that is, those who refused to believe; who were obstinate or contumacious, Lk 1:17, Rom 1:30. The meaning is, that to them he is made a stone against which they impinge, and ruin themselves. 1Pet 2:8. The stone which the builders disallowed. Which they rejected, or refused to make a

corner-stone. The allusion here, by the word "builders," is primarily to the Jews, represented as raising a temple of salvation, or building with reference to eternal life. They refused to lay this stone, which God had appointed, as the foundation of their hopes, but preferred some other foundation. See this passage explained Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11; and Rom 9:33. The same is made the head of the corner. That is, though it is rejected by the mass of men, yet God has in fact made it the corner-stone on which the whole spiritual temple rests, Acts 4:11,12. However men may regard it, there is, in fact, no other hope of heaven than that which is founded on the Lord Jesus. If men are not saved by him, he becomes to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.

8 and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

And a stone of stumbling. A stone over which they stumble, or against Which they impinge. The idea seems to be that of a cornerstone which projects from the building, against which they dash themselves, and by which they are made to fall. Mt 21:44. The rejection of the Saviour becomes the means of their ruin. They refuse to build on him, and it is as if one should run against a solid projecting corner-stone of a house, that would certainly be the means of their destruction. Comp. Lk 1:34. An idea similar to this occurs in Mt 21:44: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." The meaning is, that if this foundation-stone is not the means of their salvation, it will be of their ruin. It is not a matter of indifference whether they believe on him or not--whether they accept or reject him. They cannot reject him without the most fearful consequences to their souls.

And a rock of offence. This expresses substantially the same idea as the phrase "stone of stumbling." The word rendered "offence," σκανδαλον, means properly "a trap-stick--a crooked stick on which the bait is fastened, which the animal strikes against, and so springs the trap," (Robinson, Lex.;) then a trap, gin, snare; and then anything which one strikes or stumbles against; a stumbling block. It then denotes that which is the cause or occasion of ruin. This language would be strictly applicable to the Jews, who rejected the Saviour on account of his humble birth, and whose rejection of him was

made the occasion of the destruction of their temple, city, and nation. But it is also applicable to all who reject him, from whatever cause; for their rejection of him will be followed with ruin to their souls. It is a crime for which God will judge them as certainly as he did the Jews who disowned him and crucified him, for the offence is substantially the same. What might have been, therefore, the means of their salvation, is made the cause of their deeper condemnation.

Even to them which stumble at the word. To all who do this. That is, they take the same kind of offence at the gospel which the Jews did at the Saviour himself. It is substantially the same thing, and the consequences must be the same. How does the conduct of the man who rejects the Saviour now, differ from that of him who rejected him when he was on the earth?

Being disobedient. 1Pet 2:7. The reason why they reject him is, that they are not disposed to obey. They are solemnly commanded to believe the gospel; and a refusal to do it, therefore, is as really an act of disobedience as to break any other command of God. Whereunto they were appointed. (εις ο και ετεθησαν.) The word "whereunto" means unto which. But unto what? It cannot be supposed that it means that they were "appointed" to believe on him and be saved by him; for

(1.) this would involve all the difficulty which is ever felt in the doctrine of decrees or election; for it would then mean that he had eternally designated them to be saved, which is the doctrine of predestination; and

(2.) if this were the true interpretation, the consequence would follow that God had been foiled. In his plan--for the reference here is to those who would not be saved, that is, to those who "stumble at that stumbling-stone," and are destroyed. Calvin supposes that it means, "unto which rejection and destruction they were designated in the purpose of God." So Bloomfield renders it, "Unto which (disbelief) they were destined," (Crit. Digest;) meaning, as he supposes, that "into this stumbling and disobedience they were permitted by God to fall." Doddridge interprets it, "To which also

they were appointed by the righteous sentence of God, long before, even as early as in his first purpose and decree he ordained his Son to be the great foundation of his church." Rosenmuller gives substantially the same interpretation. Clemens Romanus says it means that "they were appointed, not that they should sin, but that, sinning, they should be punished." See Wetstein. So Macknight, "To which punishment they were appointed." Whitby gives the same interpretation of it, that because they were disobedient, (referring, as he supposes, to the Jews who rejected the Messiah,) "they were appointed, for the punishment of that disobedience, to fall and perish." Dr. Clarke supposes that it means that they were prophesied of that they should, thus fall; or that, long before, it was predicted that they should thus stumble and fall. In reference to the meaning of this difficult passage, it is proper to observe that there is in the Greek verb necessarily the idea of designation, appointment, purpose. There was some agency or intention by which they were put in that condition; some act of placing or appointing, (the word τιθημι meaning to set, put, lay, lay down, appoint, constitute,) by which this result was brought about. The fair sense, therefore, and one from which we cannot escape, is, that this did not happen by chance or accident, but that there was a Divine arrangement, appointment, or plan on the part of God in reference to this result, and that the result was in conformity with that. So it is said in Jude 1:4, of a similar class of men, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." The facts were these:

(1.) That God appointed his Son to be the corner-stone of his church.

(2.) That there was a portion of the world which, from some cause, would embrace him and be saved.

(3.) That there was another portion who, it was certain, would not embrace him.

(4.) That it was known that the appointment of the Lord Jesus as a Saviour would be the occasion of their rejecting him, and of their deeper and more aggravated condemnation.

(5.) That the arrangement was nevertheless made, with the understanding that all this would be so, and because it was best on

the whole that it should be so, even though this consequence would follow. That is, it was better that the arrangement should be made for the salvation of men even with this result, that a part would sink into deeper condemnation, than that no arrangement should be made to save any. The primary and originating arrangement, therefore, did not contemplate them or their destruction, but was made with reference to others, and notwithstanding they would reject him, and would fall. The expression whereunto (εις ο) refers to this plan, as involving, under the circumstances, the result which actually followed. Their stumbling and falling was not a matter of chance, or a result which was not contemplated, but entered into the original arrangement; and the whole, therefore, might be said to be in accordance with a wise plan and purpose. And,

(6.) it might be said in this sense, and in this connexion, that those who would reject him were appointed to this stumbling and falling. It was what was foreseen; what entered into the general arrangement; what was involved in the purpose to save any. It was not a matter that was unforeseen, that the consequence of giving a Saviour would result in the condemnation of those who should crucify and reject him; but the whole thing, as it actually occurred, entered into the Divine arrangement. It may be added, that as, in the facts in the case, nothing wrong has been done by God, and no one has been deprived of any rights, or punished more than he deserves, it was not wrong in him to make the arrangement. It was better that the arrangement should be made as it is, even with this consequence, than that none at all should be made for human salvation. Rom 9:5, seq. Jn 12:39, Jn 12:40. This is just a statement, in accordance with what everywhere occurs in the Bible, that all things enter into the eternal plans of God; that nothing happens by chance; that there is nothing that was not foreseen; and that the plan is such as, on the whole, God saw to be best and wise, and therefore adopted it. If there is nothing unjust and wrong in the actual developement of the plan, there was nothing in forming it. At the same time, no man who disbelieves and rejects the gospel should take refuge in this as an excuse. He was "appointed" to it no otherwise than as it actually occurs; and as they know that they are voluntary in rejecting him, they cannot lay the blame of this on the purposes of God. They are not forced or compelled to do it; but it was seen that this

consequence would follow, and the plan was laid to send the Saviour notwithstanding.

God's Own People

9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

But ye are a chosen generation. In contradistinction from those who, by their disobedience, had rejected the Saviour as the foundation of hope. The people of God are often represented as his chosen or elected people. 1Pet 1:2.

A royal priesthood. 1Pet 2:2%. The meaning of this is, probably, that they "at once bore the dignity of kings, and the sanctity of priests."--Doddridge. Comp. Rev 1:6: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God." See also Isa 61:6: "But ye shall be named priests of the Lord; men shall call you ministers of our God." It may be, however, that the word royal is used only to denote the dignity of the priestly office which they sustained, or that they constituted, as it were, an entire nation or kingdom of priests. They were a kingdom over which he presided, and they were all priests; so that it might be said they were a kingdom of priests--a kingdom in which all the subjects were engaged in offering sacrifice to God. The expression appears to be taken from Ex 19:6--"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests"--and is such language as one who had been educated as a Jew would be likely to employ to set forth the dignity of those whom he regarded as the people of God.

An holy nation. This is also taken from Ex 19:6. The Hebrews were regarded as a nation consecrated to God; and now that they were east off or rejected for their disobedience, the same language was properly applied to the people whom God had chosen in their place --the Christian church.

A peculiar people. Comp. Tit 2:14, The margin here is purchased. The word peculiar, in its common acceptation now, would mean that they were distinguished from others, or were singular. The reading

in the margin would mean that they had been bought or redeemed. Both these things are so, but neither of them expresses the exact sense of the original. The Greek (λαοζεισπεριποιησιν) means, "a people for a possession;" that is, as pertaining to God. They are a people which he has secured as a possession, or as his own; a people, therefore, which belong to him, and to no other. In this sense they are peculiar as being his; and, being such, it may be inferred that they should be peculiar in the sense of being unlike others in their manner of life. But that idea is not necessarily in the text. There seems to be here also an allusion to Ex 19:5: "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure with me (Sept. λαοςπεριουσιος) above all people."

That ye should shew forth the praises of him. Marg., virtues. The Greek word (αρετη) means properly good quality, excellence of any kind. It means here the excellences of God--his goodness, his wondrous deeds, or those things which make it proper to praise him. This shows one great object for which they were redeemed. It was that they might proclaim the glory of God, and keep up the remembrance of his wondrous deeds in the earth. This is to be done

(a.) by proper ascriptions of praise to him in public, family, and social worship;

(b.) by being always the avowed friends of God, ready ever to vindicate his government and ways;

(c.) by endeavouring to make known his excellences to all those who are ignorant of him; and

(d.) by such a life as shall constantly proclaim his praise--as the sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the streams, the flowers do, showing what God does. The consistent life of a devoted Christian is a constant setting forth of the praise of God, showing to all that the God who has made him such is worthy to be loved.

Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. On the word called, Eph 4:1. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, sin, and misery, and refers here to their condition before their conversion; light is the emblem of the opposite, and is a beautiful

representation of the state of those who are brought to the knowledge of the gospel. Acts 26:18. The word marvellous means wonderful; and the idea is, that the light of the gospel was such as was unusual, or not to be found elsewhere, as that excites wonder or surprise which we are not accustomed to see. The primary reference here is, undoubtedly, to those who had been heathens, and to the great change which had been produced by their having been brought to the knowledge of the truth as revealed in the gospel; and, in regard to this, no one can doubt that the one state deserved to be characterized as darkness, and the other as light. The contrast was as great as that between midnight and noonday. But what is here said is substantially correct of all who are converted, and is often as strikingly true of those who have been brought up in Christian lands, as of those who have lived among the heathen. The change in conversion is often so great and so rapid, the views and feelings are so different before and after conversion, that it seems like a sudden transition from midnight to noon. In all cases also, of true conversion, though the change may not be so striking, or apparently so sudden, there is a change of which this may be regarded as substantially an accurate description. In many cases the convert can adopt this language in all its fulness, as descriptive of his own conversion; in all cases of genuine conversion it is true that each one can say that he has been called from a state in which his mind was dark to one in which it is comparatively clear.

10 which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Which in time past were not a people. That is, who formerly were not regarded as the people of God. There is an allusion here to the passage in Hoss 2:23, "And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." It is, however, a mere allusion, such as one makes who uses the language of another to express his ideas, without meaning to say that both refer to the same subject. In Hosea, the passage refers evidently to the reception of one portion of the Israelites into favour after their rejection; in Peter, it refers mainly to those who had been Gentiles, and who had never been recognised as the people of God. The language of the prophet would exactly express his idea, and he therefore uses it without intending to say that this was its original application. See it explained Rom 9:25. Comp. Eph 2:11, seq.

Which had not obtained mercy. That is, who had been living unpardoned, having no knowledge of the way by which sinners might be forgiven, and no evidence that your sins were forgiven. They were then in the condition of the whole heathen world, and they had not then been acquainted with the glorious method by which God forgives iniquity.

Live as Servants of God

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims. On the word rendered strangers, (παροικους,) Eph 2:19, where it is rendered foreigners. It means, properly, one dwelling near, neighbouring; then a by-dweller, a sojourner, one without the rights of citizenship, as distinguished from a citizen; and it means here that Christians are not properly citizens of this world, but that their citizenship is in heaven, and that they are here mere sojourners. Php 3:20. For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven." On the word rendered pilgrims, (παρεπιδημους,) 1Pet 1:1; Heb 11:13. A pilgrim, properly, is one who travels to a distance from his own country to visit a holy place, or to pay his devotion to some holy object; then a traveller, a wanderer. The meaning here is, that Christians have no permanent home on earth; their citizenship is not here; they are mere sojourners, and they are passing on to their eternal home in the heavens. They should, therefore, act as become such persons; as sojourners and travellers do. They should not

(a.) regard the earth as their home.

(b.) They should not seek to acquire permanent possessions here, as if they were to remain here, but should act as travellers do, who merely seek a temporary lodging, without expecting permanently to reside in a place.

(c.) They should not allow any such attachments to be formed, or arrangements to be made, as to impede their journey to their final home, as pilgrims seek only a temporary lodging, and steadily pursue their journey.

(d.) Even while engaged here in the necessary callings of life--their studies, their farming, their merchandize--their thoughts and affections should be on other things. One in a strange land thinks much of his country and home; a pilgrim, much of the land to which he goes; and even while his time and attention may be necessarily occupied by the arrangements needful for the journey, his thoughts and affections will be far away.

(e.) We should not encumber ourselves with much of this world's goods. Many professed Christians get so many worldly things around them, that it is impossible for them to make a journey to heaven. They burden themselves as no traveller would, and they make no progress. A traveller takes along as few things as possible; and a staff is often all that a pilgrim has. We make the most rapid progress in our journey to our final home when we are least encumbered with the things of this world. Abstain from freshly lusts. Such desires and passions as the carnal appetites prompt to. Gal 5:19, seq., a sojourner in a land, or a pilgrim, does not give himself up to the indulgence of sensual appetites, or to the soft pleasures of the soul. All these would hinder his progress, and turn him off from his great design. Comp. Rom 13:4, Gal 5:24, 2Ti 2:22, Tit 2:12, 1Pet 1:14. Which war against the soul. Rom 8:12, Rom 8:13. The meaning is, that indulgence in these things makes war against the nobler faculties of the soul; against the conscience, the understanding, the memory, the judgment, the exercise of a pure imagination. Comp. Gal 5:17. There is not a faculty of the mind, however brilliant in itself, which will not be ultimately ruined by indulgence in the carnal propensities of our nature. The effect of intemperance on the noble faculties of the soul is well known; and alas, there are too many instances in which the light of genius, in those endowed with splendid gifts, at the bar, in the pulpit, and in the senate, is extinguished by it, to need a particular description. But there is one vice pre-eminently, which prevails all over the heathen world, (Comp. Rom 1:27, seq.) and extensively in Christian lands, which more than all others, blunts the moral sense, pollutes the memory, defiles the imagination, hardens the heart, and sends a withering influence through all the faculties of the soul.

"The soul grows clotted by contagion, Embodies, and embrutes, till she quite lose The divine property of her first being,"

Of this passion, Burns beautifully and truly said-
"But oh ! it hardens a' within, And petrifies the feeling."
From all these passions the Christian pilgrim is to abstain.

12 having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Having your conversation honest. Your conduct. Php 1:27. That is, lead upright and consistent lives. Comp. Php 4:8.

Among the Gentiles. The heathen by whom you are surrounded, and who will certainly observe your conduct. 1Thes 4:12, "That ye may walk honestly towards them that are without." Comp. Rom 13:13.

That, whereas they speak against you as evil doers,. Marg., wherein. Gr., ενω--in what; either referring to time, and meaning that at the very time when they speak against you in this manner they may be silenced by seeing your upright lives; or meaning in respect to which--that is, that in respect to the very matters for which they reproach you they may see by your meek and upright conduct that there is really no ground for reproach. Wetstein adopts the former, but the question which is meant is not very important. Bloomfield supposes it to mean inasmuch, whereas. The sentiment is a correct one, whichever interpretation is adopted It should be true that at the very time when the enemies of religion reproach us, they should see that we are actuated by Christian principles, and that in the very matter for which we are reproached we are conscientious and honest.

They may, by your good works, which they shall behold. Gr., "which they shall closely or narrowly inspect." The meaning is, that upon a close and narrow examination, they may see that you are actuated by upright principles, and ultimately be disposed to do you justice. It is to be remembered that the heathen were very little acquainted with the nature of Christianity; and it is known that in the early ages they charged on Christians the most abominable vices, and even accused them of practices at which human nature revolts. The meaning of Peter is, that while they charged these things on Christians, whether from ignorance or malice, they ought so to live as that a more full acquaintance with them, and a closer inspection of their conduct, would disarm their prejudices, and show that their

charges were entirely unfounded. The truth taught here is, that our conduct as Christians should be such as to bear the strictest scrutiny; such that the closest examination will lead our enemies to the conviction; that we are upright and honest. This may be done by every Christian; this his religion solemnly requires him to do.

Glorify God. Honour God; that is, that they may be convinced by your conduct of the pure and holy nature of that religion which he has revealed, and be led also to love and worship him. Mt 5:16.

In the day of visitation. Many different opinions have been entertained of the meaning of this phrase, some referring it to the day of judgment; some to times of persecution; some to the destruction of Jerusalem; and some to the time when the gospel was preached among the Gentiles, as a period when God visited them with mercy. The word visitation (επισκοπη,) means the act of visiting or being visited for any purpose, usually with the notion of inspecting conduct, of inflicting punishment, or of conferring favours. Comp. Mt 25:36,43, Lk 1:68,78, 7:16, 19:44. In the sense of visiting for the purpose of punishing, the word is often used in the Septuagint for the Heb. , (pakad,) though there is no instance in which the word is so used in the New Testament, unless it be in the verse before us. The "visitation" here referred to is undoubtedly that of God; and the reference is to some time when he would make a "visitation" to men for some purpose, and when the fact that the Gentiles had narrowly inspected the conduct of Christians would lead them to honour him. The only question is, to what visitation of that kind the apostle referred. The prevailing use of the word in the New Testament would seem to lead us to suppose that the "visitation" referred to was designed to confer favours rather than to inflict punishment, and indeed the word seems to have somewhat of a technical character, and to have been familiarly used by Christians to denote God's coming to men to bless them; to pour out his Spirit upon them; to revive religion. This seems to me to be its meaning here; and, if so, the sense is, that when God appeared among men to accompany the preaching of the gospel with saving power, the result of the observed conduct of Christians would be to lead those around them to honour him by giving up their hearts to him; that is, their consistent lives would be the means of the revival and extension of true religion.

And is it not always so? Is not the pure and holy walk of Christians an occasion of his bending his footsteps down to earth to bless dying sinners, and to scatter spiritual blessings with a liberal hand? Comp. 1Cor 14:24, 1Cor 14:25.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man. Gr., "to every creation of man," (ανθρωπινηκτισει.) The meaning is, to every institution or appointment of man; to wit, of those who are in authority, or who are appointed to administer government. The laws, institutes, and appointments of such a government may be spoken of as the creation of man; that is, as what man makes. Of course, what is here said must be understood with the limitation everywhere implied, that what is ordained by those in authority is not contrary to the law of God. Acts 4:19. On the general duty here enjoined of subjection to civil authority, Rom 13:1-7. For the Lord's sake. Because he has required it, and has intrusted this power to civil rulers. Rom 13:6. Comp. Eph 6:7. Whether it be to the king. It has been commonly supposed that there is reference here to the Roman emperor, who might be called king, because in him the supreme power resided. The common title of the Roman sovereign was, as used by the Greek writers, αυτοκρατωρ, and among the Romans themselves, imperator, (emperor;) but the title king was also given to the sovereign. Jn 19:15, "We have no king but Cesar." Acts 17:7, "And these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." Peter undoubtedly had particular reference to the Roman emperors, but he uses a general term, which would be applicable to all in whom the supreme power resided, and the injunction here would require submission to such authority, by whatever name it might be called. The meaning is, that we are to be subject to that authority whether exercised by the sovereign in person, or by those who are appointed by him.

14 or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

For so is the will of God. That is, it is in accordance with the Divine will that in this way you should put them to silence. That with well doing. By a life of uprightness and benevolence. Ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Tit 2:8. The reference here is

to men who brought charges against Christians, by accusing them of being inimical to the government, or insubordinate, or guilty of crimes. Such charges, it is well known, were often brought against them by their enemies in the early ages of Christianity. Peter says they were brought by foolish men, perhaps using the word foolish in the sense of evil-disposed, or wicked, as it is often used in the Bible. Yet, though there might be malice at the bottom, the charges were really based on ignorance. They were not thoroughly acquainted with the principles of the Christian religion; and the way to meet those charges was to act in every way as became good citizens, and so as "to live them down." One of the best ways o meeting the accusations of our enemies is to lead a life of strict integrity. It is not easy for the wicked to reply to this argument.

16 as free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

As free. That is, they were to consider themselves as freemen, as having a right to liberty. The Jews boasted much of their freedom and regarded it as a birthright privilege that they were free, Jn 8:33. They never willingly acknowledged their subjection to any other power, but claimed it as an elementary idea of their civil constitution that God only was their Sovereign. They were indeed conquered by the Romans, and paid tribute, but they did it because they were compelled to do it, and it was even a question much debated among them whether they should do it or not, Mt 22:17. Josephus has often referred to the fact that the Jews rebelled against the Romans under the plea that they were a free people, and that they were subject only to God. This idea of essential freedom the Jews had when they became Christians, and every thing in Christianity tended to inspire them with the love of liberty, They who were converted to the Christian faith, whether from among the Jews or the Gentiles, were made to feel that they were the children of God; that his law was the supreme rule of their lives; that in the ultimate resort they were subject to him alone; that they were redeemed, and that, therefore, the yoke of bondage could not be properly imposed on them; that God "had made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth," (Acts 17:26;) and that, therefore, they were on a level before him. The meaning here is, that they were not to consider themselves as slaves, or to act as slaves. In their subjection to civil authority they were not to forget that they were freemen in the highest sense, and that liberty was an invaluable blessing. They

had been made free by the Son of God, Jn 8:32,36. They were free from sin and condemnation. They acknowledged Christ as their supreme Head, and the whole spirit and tendency of his religion prompted to the exercise of freedom. They were not to submit to the chains of slavery; not to allow their consciences to be bound, or their essential liberty to be interfered with; nor in their subjection to the civil magistrate were they ever to regard themselves otherwise than as freemen. As a matter of fact, Christianity has always been the friend and promoter of liberty. Its influence emancipated the slaves throughout the Roman empire; and all the civil freedom which we enjoy, and which there is in the world, can be traced to the influence of the Christian religion. To spread the gospel in its purity everywhere would be to break every yoke of oppression and bondage, and to make men everywhere free. It is the essential right of every man who is a Christian to be a freeman--to be free to worship God; to read the Bible; to enjoy the avails of his own labour; to train up his children in the way in which he shall deem best; to form his own plans of life, and to pursue his own ends, provided only that he does not interfere with the equal right of others--and every system which prevents this, whether it be that of civil government, of ecclesiastical law, or of domestic slavery, is contrary to the religion of the Saviour.

And not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness. Marg., as in Greek, having. Not making your freedom a mere pretext under which to practise all kinds of evil. The word rendered maliciousness κακια--means more than our word maliciousness does; for it denotes evil of any kind, or all kinds. The word maliciousness refers rather to enmity of heart ill-will, an intention to injure. The apostle has reference to an abuse of freedom, which has often occurred. The pretence of those who have acted in this manner has been, that the freedom of the gospel implied deliverance from all kinds of restraint; that they were under no yoke, and bound by no laws; that, being the children of God, they had a right to all kinds of enjoyment and indulgence; that even the moral law ceased to bind them, and that they had a right to make the most of liberty in all respects. Hence they have given themselves up to all sorts of sensual indulgence, claiming exemption from the restraints of morality as well as of civil law, and sinking into the deepest abyss of vice. Not a few have done this who have professed to be Christians; and, occasionally, a fanatical sect now appears who make the freedom which they say

Christianity confers a pretext for indulgence in the most base and degrading vices. The apostles saw this tendency in human nature, and in nothing are they more careful than to guard against this abuse.

But as the servants of God. Not free from all restraint; not at liberty to indulge in all things, but bound to serve God in the faithful obedience of his laws. Thus bound to obey and serve him, they could not be at liberty to indulge in those things which would be in violation of his laws, and which would dishonour him. See this sentiment explained 1Cor 7:22; 1Cor 9:21.

17 Honor all *men.* Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Honour all men. That is, show them the respect which is due to them according to their personal worth, and to the rank and office which they sustain. Rom 13:7.

Love the brotherhood. The whole fraternity of Christians, regarded as a band of brothers. The word here used occurs only in this place and in 1Pet 5:9, where it is rendered brethren. The idea expressed here occurs often in the New Testament. Jn 13:34, Jn 13:35.

Fear God, A duty everywhere enjoined in the Bible, as one of the first duties of religion. Comp. Lev 25:17, 24:7, 25:14; Prov 1:7, 3:13, 9:10, 23:17; Rom 3:18; 2Cor 7:1 The word fear, when used to express our duty to God, means that we are to reverence and honour him. Religion, in one aspect, is described as the fear of God; in another, as the love of God; in another, as submission to his will, etc. A holy veneration or fear is always an elementary principle of religion. It is the fear, not so much of punishment as of his disapprobation; not so much the dread of suffering at the dread of doing wrong.

Honour the king. Referring here primarily to the Roman sovereign, but implying that we are always to respect those who have the rule over us. Rom 13:1-7. The doctrine taught in these verses 1Pet 2:13-17 is, that we are faithfully to perform all the relative duties of life. There are duties which we owe to ourselves, which are of importance in their place, and which we are by no means at liberty to neglect. But we also owe duties to our fellow-men, to our

Christian brethren, and to those who have the rule over us; and religion, while it is honoured by our faithful performance of our duty to ourselves, is more openly honoured by our performance of our duties to those to whom we sustain important relations in life. Many of the duties which we owe to ourselves are, from the nature of the case, hidden from public observation. All that pertains to the examination of the heart; to our private devotions; to the subjugation of our evil passions; to our individual communion with God, must be concealed from public view. Not so, however, with those duties which pertain to others. In respect to them, we are open to public view. The eye of the world is upon us. The judgment of the world in regard to us is made up from their observation of the manner in which we perform them. If religion fails there, they judge that it fails altogether; and however devout we may be in private, if it is not seen by the world that our religion leads to the faithful performance of the duties which we owe in the various relations of life, it will be regarded as of little value.

The Example of Christ's Suffering

18 Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

With all fear. That is, with all proper reverence and respect. Eph 6:6. Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. The word rendered froward (σκολιοις) means properly crooked, bent; then perverse, wicked, unjust, peevish. Any one who is a servant or domestic is liable to be employed in the service of such a master; but while the relation continues, the servant should perform his duty with fidelity, whatever may be the character of the master. Slaves are certainly liable to this; and even those who voluntarily engage as servants to others, cannot always be sure that they will have kind employers. Though the terms used here do not necessarily imply that those to whom the apostle gave this direction were slaves, yet it may be presumed that they probably were, since slavery abounded throughout the Roman empire; but the directions will apply to all who are engaged in the service of others, and are therefore of permanent value. Slavery will, sooner or later, under the influence of the gospel, wholly cease in the world, and instructions addressed to masters and slaves will have no permanent value; but it will always be true that there will be those employed as domestics, and

it is the duty of all who are thus engaged to evince true fidelity and a Christian spirit themselves, whatever may be the character of their employers.

19 For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

Reason for subjection even to froward masters. thankworthy—(Lu 6:33). A course out of the common, and especially praiseworthy in the eyes of God: not as Rome interprets, earning merit, and so a work of supererogation (compare 1Pe 2:20). for conscience toward God—literally, "consciousness of God": from a conscientious regard to God, more than to men.

20 For what glory *is it,* if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it,* ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

For what glory is it. What honour or credit would it be.

If, when ye be buffeted for your faults. That is, if you are punished when you deserve it, The word buffet (κολαφιζω) means, to strike with the fist; and then to strike in any way; to maltreat, Mt 26:67, Mk 14:65, 1Cor 4:11, 2Cor 12:7, Perhaps there may be a reference here to the manner in which servants were commonly treated, or the kind of punishment to which they were exposed. They would be likely to be struck in sudden anger, either by the hand, or by anything that was accessible, The word rendered "for your faults," is sinning, (αμαρτανοντες,) That is, "if being guilty of an offence, or having done wrong." The idea is, that if they were justly punished, and should take it patiently, there would be no credit or honour in it,

Ye shall take it patiently. "If, even then, you evince an uncomplaining spirit, and bear it with the utmost calmness and patience, it would be regarded as comparatively no virtue, and as entitling you to no honour. The feeling of all who saw it would be that you deserved it, and there would be nothing to excite their sympathy or compassion. The patience evinced might indeed be as great as in the other ease, but there would be the feeling that you deleted all that you received, and the spirit evinced in that ease could not be regarded as entitled to any particular praise. If your masters are inflicting on you only what you deserve, it would be in the highest degree shameful for you to rise up against them, and resist them, for it would be only adding to the wrong which you had

already done:" The expression here is, doubtless, to be understood comparatively. The meaning is not that absolutely there would be no more credit due to one who should bear his punishment patiently when he had done wrong, than if he had met it with resistance and murmuring; but that there is very little credit in that compared with the patience which an innocent person evinces, who, from regard to the will of God, and by control over all the natural feelings of resentment, meekly endures wrong. This expresses the common feeling of our nature. We attribute no particular credit to one who submits to a just punishment even with a calm temper. We feel that it would be wrong in the highest degree for him to do otherwise. So it is when calamities are brought on a man on account of his sins. If it is seen to be the fruit of intemperance or crime, we do not feel that there is any great virtue exhibited if he bears it with a calm temper. But if he is overwhelmed with calamity when it seems to have no particular connexion with his sins, or to be a punishment for any particular fault; if he suffers at the hand of man, where there is manifest injustice done him, and yet evinces a calm, submissive, and meek temper, we feel that in such cases there is eminent virtue.

This is acceptable with God. Marg., as in 1Pet 2:19, thank. It is that which is agreeable to him, or with which he is pleased.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

For even hereunto were ye called. Such a spirit is required by the very nature of your Christian vocation; you were called into the church in order that you might evince it. 1Thes 3:3. Because Christ also suffered for us. Marg., "Some read, for you." The latest editions of the Greek Testament adopt the reading "for you." The sense, however, is not essentially varied. The object is, to hold up the example of Christ to those who were called to suffer, and to say to them that they should bear their trials in the same spirit that he evinced in his. Php 3:10. Leaving us an example. The apostle does not say that this was the only object for which Christ suffered, but that it was an object, and an important one. The word rendered example (υπογραμμον) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly a writing copy, such as is set for children; or an outline or sketch for a painter to fill up; and then, in general, an example, a pattern for imitation. That ye should follow his steps.

That we should follow him, as if we trod exactly along behind him, and should place our feet precisely where his were. The meaning is, that there should be the closest imitation or resemblance. The things in which we are to imitate him are specified in the following verses.

22 who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Who did no sin. Who was in all respects perfectly holy. There is an allusion here to Isa 53:9; and the sense is, that he was entirely innocent, and that he suffered without having committed any crime. In this connexion the meaning is, that we are to be careful that, if we suffer, it should be without committing any crime, We should so live, as the Saviour did, as not to deserve to be punished, and thus only shall we entirely follow his example. It is as much our duty to live so as not to deserve the reproaches of others, as it is to bear them with patience when we are called to suffer them. The first thing in regard to hard treatment from others, is to live that there shall be no just occasion for it; the next is, if reproaches come upon us when we have not deserved them, to bear them as the Saviour did. If he suffered unjustly, we should esteem it to be no strange thing that we should; if he bore the injuries done him with meekness, we should learn that it is possible for us to do it also; and should learn also that we have not the spirit of his religion unless we actually do it. On the expression here used, Isa 53:9; Heb 7:26. Neither was guile found in his mouth. There was no deceit, hypocrisy, or insincerity, he was in all respects what he professed to be, and he imposed on no one by any false and unfounded claim. All this has reference to the time when the Saviour was put to death; and the sense is, that though he was condemned as an impostor, yet that the charge was wholly unfounded. As in his whole life before he was perfectly sincere, so he was eminently on that solemn occasion.

23 who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. He did not use harsh and opprobrious words in return for those which he received.

(1.) He was reviled, he was accused of being a seditious man; spoken of as a deceiver; charged with being in league with Beelzebub, the "prince of the devils ;" and condemned as a blasphemer against God. This was done

(a.) by the great and the influential of the land;

(b.) in the most public manner;

(c.) with a design to alienate his friends from him;

(d.) with most cutting and severe sarcasm and irony; and

(e.) in reference to everything that would most affect a man of delicate and tender sensibility.

(2.) He did not revile those who had reproached him. He asked that justice might be done. He demanded that if he had spoken evil, they should bear witness of the evil; but beyond that he did not go. He used no harsh language, He showed no anger. He called for no revenge. He prayed that they might be forgiven, He calmly stood and bore it all, for he came to endure all kinds of suffering in order that he might set us an example, and make an atonement for our sins. When he suffered, he threatened not. That is, when he suffered injustice from others, in his trial and in his death, he did not threaten punishment. He did not call down the wrath of heaven. He did not even predict that they would be punished; he expressed no wish that they should be. But committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Marg., his cause. The sense is much the same. The meaning is, that he committed his cause, his name, his interests, the whole case, to God. The meaning of the phrase "that judgeth righteously" here is, that God would do him exact justice. Though wronged by men, he felt assured that he would do right. He would rescue his name from these reproaches; he would give him the honour in the world which he deserved; and he would bring upon those who had wronged him all that was necessary in order to show his disapprobation of what they had done, and all that would be necessary to give the highest support to the cause of virtue. Comp Lk 23:46. This is the example which is set before us when we are wronged. The whole example embraces these points:

(1.) We should see to it that we ourselves are guiltless in the matter: for which we are reproached or accused. Before we fancy that we are suffering as Christ did, we should be sure that our lives are such. as not to deserve reproach. We cannot indeed hope to be as pure in all things as he was; but we may so live that if we are reproached

and reviled we may be certain that it is not for any wrong that we have done to others, or that we do not deserve it from our fellowmen.

(2.) When we are reproached and reviled, we should feel that we were called to this by our profession; that it was one of the things which we were taught to expect when we became Christians; that it is what the prophets and apostles endured, and what the Master himself suffered in an eminent degree; and that if we meet with the scorn of the great, the gay, the rich, the powerful, it is no more than the Saviour did, and no more than we have been taught to expect will be our portion. It may be well, too, to remember our unworthiness; and to reflect, that though we have done no wrong to the individual who reviles us, yet that we are sinners, and that such reproaches may not be a useless admonisher of our being guilty before God. So David felt when reproached by Shimei: "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" 2Sam 16:10.

(3.) When this occurs, we should calmly and confidently commit our cause to God. Our name, our character, our influence, our reputation, while living and after we are dead, we should leave entirely with him. We should not seek nor desire revenge. We should not call down the wrath of God on our persecutors and slanderers. We should calmly fed that God win give us the measure of reputation which we ought to have in the world, and that he will suffer no ultimate injustice to be done us. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day," Ps 37:5,6. The Latin Vulgate has here, "But he committed himself to him who judged him unjustly," judieanti se injuste; that is, to Pontius pilate, meaning that he left himself in his hands, though he knew that the sentence was unjust. But there is no authority for this in the Greek, and this is one of the instances in which that version departs from the original.

24 who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Who his own self. Heb 1:3, on the phrase "when he had by himself purged our sins." The meaning is, that he did it in his own proper person; he did not make expiation by offering a bloody victim, but was himself the sacrifice.

Bare our sins. There is an allusion here undoubtedly to Isa 53:4,12. See the meaning of the phrase "to bear sins" fully considered in the Notes on those places. As this cannot mean that Christ so took upon himself the sins of men as to become himself a sinner, it must mean that he put himself in the place of sinners, and bore that which those sins deserved; that is, that he endured in his own person that which, if it had been inflicted on the sinner himself, would have been a proper expression of the Divine displeasure against sin, or would have been a proper punishment for sin. 2Cor 5:21. He was treated as if he had been a sinner, in order that we might be treated as if we had not sinned; that is, as if we were righteous. There is no other way in which we can conceive that one bears the sins of another. They cannot be literally transferred to another; and all that can be meant is, that he should take the consequences on himself, and suffer as if he had committed the transgressions himself.

In his own body. This alludes undoubtedly to his sufferings. The sufferings which he endured on the cross were such as if he had been guilty; that is, he was treated as he would have been if he had been a sinner. He was treated as a malefactor; crucified as those most guilty were; endured the same kind of bodily pain that the guilty do who are punished for their own sins; and passed through mental sorrows strongly resembling --as much so as the case admitted of-- what the guilty themselves experience when they are left to distressing anguish of mind, and are abandoned by God. The sufferings of the Saviour were in all respects made as nearly like the sufferings of the most guilty, as the sufferings of a perfectly, innocent being could be.

On the tree. Marg., "to the tree. Gr., επιτοξυλον. The meaning is rather, as in the text, that while himself on the cross, he bore the sorrows which our sins deserved. It does not mean that he conveyed our sorrows there, but that while there he suffered under the intolerable burden, and was by that burden crushed in death. The phrase "on the tree," literally "on the wood," means the cross. The

same Greek word is used in Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29, Gal 3:13, as applicable to the cross, in all of which places it is rendered tree.

That we, being dead to sins. In virtue of his having thus been suspended on a cross; that is, his being put to death as an atoning sacrifice was the means by which we become dead to sin, and live to God. The phrase "being dead to sins" is, in the original, ταιςαμαρτιαις απογενομενοι, literally, "to be absent from sins." The Greek word was probably used (by an euphemism) to denote to die, that is, to be absent from the world, This is a milder and less repulsive word than to say to die. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning is, that we being effectually separated from sin--that is, being so that it no longer influences us--should live unto God. We are to be, in regard to sin, as if we were dead; and it is to have no more influence over us than if we were in our graves. Rom 6:2-7. The means by which this is brought about is the death of Christ, Rom 6:8; for as he died literally on the cross on account of our sins, the effect has been to lead us to see the evil of transgression, and to lead new and holy lives.

Should live unto righteousness. Though dead in respect to sin, yet we have real life in another, respect. We are made alive unto God, to righteousness, to true holiness. Rom 6:11; Gal 2:20.

By whose stripes. This is taken from Isa 53:5. See it explained in the Notes on that verse. The word rendered stripes (μωλωπι) means, properly, the livid and swollen mark of a blow; the mark designated by us when we use the expression "black and blue." It is not properly a bloody wound, but that made by pinching, beating, scourging. The idea seems to be that the Saviour was scourged or whipped; and that the effect on us is the same in producing spiritual healing, or in recovering us from our faults, as if we had been scourged ourselves. By faith we see the bruises inflicted on him, the black and blue spots made by beating; we remember that they were on account of our sins, and not for his; and the effect in reclaiming us is the same as if they had been inflicted on us.

Ye were healed. Sin is often spoken of as a disease, and redemption from it as a restoration from a deadly malady. See this explained in the Isa 53:5.

For ye were as sheep going astray. Here also is an allusion to Isa 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray." See Notes on that verse. The figure is plain. We were like a flock without a shepherd. We had wandered far away from the true fold, and were following our own paths. We were without a protector, and were exposed to every kind of danger. This aptly and forcibly expresses the condition of the whole race before God recovers men by the plan of salvation. A flock thus wandering without a shepherd, conductor, or guide, is in a most pitiable condition; and so was man in his wanderings before he was sought out and brought back to the true fold by the great Shepherd. But are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. To Christ, who thus came to seek and save those who were lost. He is often called a Shepherd. Jn 10:1, seq. The word rendered bishop, (επισκοπος) means overseer. It may be applied to one who inspects or oversees anything, as public works, or the execution of treaties; to anyone who is an inspector of wares offered for sale; or, in general, to any one who is a superintendent. It is applied in the New Testament to those who are appointed to watch over the interests of the church, and especially to the officers of the church. Here it is applied to the Lord Jesus as the great Guardian and Superintendent of his church; and the title of Universal Bishop belongs to him alone.

1 Peter-3

The Behavior of Wives and Husbands

1 Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 while they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands. On the d here enjoined, 1Cor 11:3, seq.; Eph 5:22. That, if any obey not the wo The word of God; the gospel. That is, if any wives have husbands w are not true Christians. This would be likely to occur when the gospel w first preached, as it does now, by the fact that wives might be convert though their husbands were not. It cannot be inferred from this, that a they themselves had become Christians they had married unbeliev husbands. The term "word" here refers particularly to the gospel preached; and the idea is, that if they were regardless of that gospel wi

preached--if they would not attend on preaching, or if they w unaffected by it, or if they openly rejected it, there might be hope still t they would be converted by the Christian influence of a wife at home such cases, a duty of special importance devolves on the wife. They a may without the word be won. In some other way than by preaching. T does not mean that they would be converted independently of influence of truth--for truth is always the instrument of conversion, (1:18, Jn 17:17;) but that it was to be by another influence than preachi By the conversation of the wives. By the conduct or deportment of th wives. Php 1:27. The word conversation, in the Scriptures, is ne confined, as it is now with us, to oral discourse, but denotes conduc general. It includes indeed "conversation" as the word is now used, bu embraces also much more--including everything that we do. The mean here is, that the habitual deportment of the wife was to be such as to sh the reality and power of religion; to show that it had such influence her temper, her words, her whole deportment, as to demonstrate tha was from God.

While they behold your chaste conversation. Your pure conduct. The word chaste here (αγνην) refers to purity of conduct in all respects, and not merely to chastity properly so called. It includes that, but it also embraces much more. The conduct of the wife is to be in all respects pure; and this is to be the grand instrumentality in the conversion of her husband. A wife may be strictly chaste, and yet there may be many other things in her conduct and temper which would mar the beauty of her piety, and prevent any happy influence on the mind of her husband. Coupled with fear. The word fear, in this place, may refer either to the fear of God, or to a proper respect and reverence for their husbands, Eph 5:33. The trait of character which is referred to is that of proper respect and reverence in all the relations which she sustained, as opposed to a trifling and frivolous mind. Leighton suggests that the word fear here relates particularly to the other duty enjoined--that of chaste conversation--"fearing the least stain of chastity, or the very appearance of anything not suiting with it. It is a delicate, timorous grace, afraid of the least air, or shadow of anything that hath but a resemblance of wronging it, in carriage, or speech, or apparel."

3 Whose adorning, let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 but *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

But let it be the hidden man of the heart. This expression is substantially the same as that of Paul in Rom 7:22, "the inward man." Rom 7:22. The word "hidden" here means that which is concealed; that which is not made apparent by the dress, or by ornament. It lies within, pertaining to the affections of the soul. In that which is not corruptible. Properly, "in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." This is said to be incorruptible in contradistinction to gold and apparel. They will decay; but the internal ornament is ever enduring. The sense is, that whatever pertains to outward decoration, however beautiful and costly, is fading; but that which pertains to the soul is enduring. As the soul is immortal, so all that tends to adorn that will be immortal too; as the body is mortal, so all with which it can be invested is decaying, and will soon be destroyed. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Of a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from passion, pride, envy, and irritability; a soul not subject to the agitations and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning. The connexion here shows that the apostle refers to this, not only as that which would be of great price in the sight of God, but as that which would tend to secure the affection of their husbands, and win them to embrace the true religion, (1Pet 3:1,2;) and, in order to this, he recommends them, instead of seeking external ornaments, to seek those of the mind and of the heart, as more agreeable to their husbands; as better adapted to win their hearts to religion; as that which would be most permanently proved.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

For after this manner, in the old time. The allusion here is particularly to the times of the patriarchs, and the object of the apostle is to state another reason why they should seek that kind of ornament which he had been commending. The reason is, that this characterised the pious and honoured females of ancient times--those females who had been most commended of God, and who were most worthy to be remembered on earth. Who trusted in God. Greek, "Who hoped in God;" that is, who were truly pious. They

were characterised by simple trust or hope in God, rather than by a fondness for external adorning. Adorned themselves. To wit, with a meek and quiet spirit, manifested particularly by the respect evinced for their husbands. Being in subjection unto their own husbands. This was evidently a characteristic of the early periods of the world; and piety was understood to consist much in proper respect for others, according to the relations sustained towards them.

6 even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Even as Sara obeyed Abraham. Sarah was one of the most distinguished of the wives of the patriarchs, and her case is referred to as furnishing one of the best illustrations of the duty to which the apostle refers. Nothing is said, in the brief records of her life, of any passion for outward adorning; much is said of her kindness to her husband, and her respect for him. Comp. Gen 12:5, 18:6.

Calling him lord. See Gen 18:12. It was probably inferred from this instance, by the apostle, and not without reason, that Sarah habitually used this respectful appellation, acknowledging by it that he was her superior, and that he had a right to rule in his own house. The word lord has the elementary idea of ruling, and this is the sense here--that she acknowledged that he had a right to direct the affairs of his household, and that it was her duty to be in subjection to him as the head of the family. In what respects this is a duty, may be seen by consulting Eph 5:22. Among the Romans, it was quite common for wives to use the appellation lord, (dominus,) when speaking of their husbands. The same custom also prevailed among the Greeks, See Grotius, in loc. This passage does not prove that the term lord should be the particular appellation by which Christian wives should address their husbands now, but it proves that there should be the same respect and deference which was implied by its use in patriarchal times The welfare of society, and the happiness of individuals, are not diminished by showing proper respect for all classes of persons in the various relations of life.

Whose daughters ye are. That is, you will be worthy to be regarded as her daughters, if you manifest the same spirit that she did. The margin here, as the Greek, is children. The sense is, that if they

demeaned themselves correctly in the relation of wives, it would be proper to look upon her as their mother, and to feel that they were not unworthy to be regarded as her daughters.

As long as ye do well. In respect to the particular matter under consideration.

And are not afraid with any amazement. This passage has been supposed variously understood. Some have that this is suggested as an argument to persuade them to do well, from the consideration that by so doing they would be preserved from those alarms and terrors which a contest with superior power might bring with it, and which would prove as injurious to their peace as to their character. Rosenmuller explains it, "If ye do well, terrified by no threats of unbelieving husbands, if they should undertake to compel you to deny the Christian faith." Doddridge supposes that it means that they were to preserve their peace and fortitude in any time of danger, so as not to act out of character, through amazement or danger. Calvin, Benson, and Bloomfield understand it of that firmness and intrepidity of character which would be necessary to support their religious independence, when united with heathen husbands; meaning that they were not to be deterred from doing their duty by any threats or terrors, either of their unbelieving husbands, or of their enemies and persecutors. Dr. Clarke supposes that it means that if they did well, they would live under no dread of being detected in improprieties of life, or being found out in their infidelities to their husbands, as those must always be who are unfaithful to their marriage vows. The word rendered amazement (πτοησις) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means terror, trepidation, fear; and the literal translation of the Greek is, "not fearing any fear."

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Likewise, ye husbands. On the general duty of husbands, Eph 5:25, seq.

Dwell with them. That is, "Let your manner of living with them be that which is immediately specified.

According to knowledge. In accordance with an intelligent view of the nature of the relation; or, as becomes those who have been instructed in the duties of this relation according to the gospel. The meaning evidently is, that they should seek to obtain just views of what Christianity enjoins in regard to this relation, and that they should allow those intelligent views to control them in all their intercourse with their wives.

Giving honour unto the wife. It was an important advance made in society when the Christian religion gave such a direction as this, for everywhere among the heathen, and under all false systems of religion, woman has been regarded as worthy of little honour or respect. She has been considered as a slave, or as a mere instrument to gratify the passions of man. It is one of the elementary doctrines of Christianity, however, that woman is to be treated with respect; and one of the first and most marked effects of religion on society is to elevate the wife to a condition in which she will be worthy of esteem. The particular reasons for the honour which husbands are directed to show to their wives, here specified, are two: she is to be treated with special kindness as being more feeble than man, and as having a claim therefore to delicate attention; and she is to be honoured as the equal heir of the grace of life. Doddridge, Clarke, and some others, suppose that the word honour here refers to maintenance or support; and that the command is, that the husband is to provide for his wife so that she may not want. But it seems to me that the word is to be understood here in its more usual signification, and that it inculcates a higher duty than that of merely providing for the temporal wants of the wife, and strikes at a deeper evil than a mere neglect of meeting her temporal necessities. The reasons assigned for doing this seem to imply it,

As unto the weaker vessel. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare the body to a vessel, (Comp. 1Thes 4:4,) and thence the comparison is extended to the whole person. This is done either because the body is frail and feeble, like an earthen vessel easily broken; or because it is that in which the soul is lodged; or because, in accordance with a frequent use of the word, (see below,) the body is the instrument by which the soul accomplishes its purposes, or is the helper of the soul. Comp. Acts 9:15, Rom 9:22,23, 2Cor 4:7. In the later Hebrew usage it was common to apply the term

vessel (Heb. , Gr. σκευος) to a wife, as is done here. See Schoettgen, Hor. Heb. p. 827. Expressions similar to this, in regard to the comparative feebleness of woman, occur frequently in the classic writers. See Wetstein in loc. The reasons why the term vessel was given to a wife, are not very apparent. A not unfrequent sense of the word used here (σκευος) in the Greek Classics was that of an instrument; a helper; one who was employed by another to accomplish anything, or to aid him, (Passow) and it seems probable that this was the reason why the term was given to the wife. Comp. Gen 2:18. The reason here assigned for the honour that was to be shown to the wife is, that she is "the weaker vessel." By this it is not necessarily meant that she is of feebler capacity, or inferior mental endowments, but that she is more tender and delicate; more subject to infirmities and weaknesses; less capable of enduring fatigue and toil; less adapted to the rough and stormy scenes of life. As such, she should be regarded and treated with special kindness and attention. This is a reason, the force of which all can see and appreciate. So we feel toward a sister; so we feel toward a beloved child, if he is of feeble frame and delicate constitution; and so every man should feel in relation to his wife. She may have mental endowments equal to his own; she may have moral qualities in every way superior to his; but the God of nature has made her with a more delicate frame, a more fragile structure, and with a body subject to many infirmities to which the more hardy frame of man is a stranger.

And as being heirs together of the grace of life. The grace that is connected with eternal life; that is, as fellow-Christians. They were equal heirs of the everlasting inheritance, called in the Scripture "life;" and the same "grace" connected with that inheritance had been conferred on both. This passage contains a very important truth in regard to the female sex. Under every other system of religion but the Christian system, woman has been regarded as in every way inferior to man. Christianity teaches that, in respect to her highest interests, the interests of religion, she is every way his equal. She is entitled to all the hopes and promises which religion imparts. She is redeemed as he is, she is addressed in the same language of tender invitation. She has the same privileges and comforts which religion imparts here, and she will be elevated to the same rank and privileges in heaven. This single truth would

raise the female sex everywhere from degradation, and check at once half the social evils of the race. Make her the equal of man in the hope of heaven, and at once she rises to her appropriate place. Home is made what it should be, a place of intelligence and pure friendship; and a world of suffering and sadness smiles under the benefactions of Christian woman.

That your prayers be not hindered. It is fairly implied here,

(1.) that it was supposed there would be united or family prayer. The apostle is speaking of "dwelling with the wife," and of the right manner of treating her; and it is plainly supposed that united prayer would be one thing that would characterise their living together. He does not direct that there should be prayer. He seems to take it for granted that there would be; and it may be remarked, that where there is true religion in right exercise, there is prayer as a matter of course. The head of a family does not ask whether he must establish family worship; he does it as one of the spontaneous fruits of religion-as a thing concerning which no formal command is necessary. Prayer in the family, as everywhere else, is a privilege; and the true question to be asked on the subject is not whether a man must, but whether he may pray.

(2.) It is implied that there might be such a way of living as effectually to hinder prayer; that is, to prevent its being offered aright, and to prevent any answer. This might occur in many ways. If the husband treated the wife unkindly; if he did not show her proper respect and affection; if there were bickerings, and jealousies, and contentions between them, there could be no hope that acceptable prayer would be offered. A spirit of strife; irritability and unevenness of temper; harsh looks and unkind words; a disposition easily to take offence, and an unwillingness to forgive, all these prevent a "return of prayers." Acceptable prayer never can be offered in the tempest of passion, and there can be no doubt that such prayer is often "hindered" by the inequalities of temper, and the bickerings and strifes that exist in families. Yet how desirable is it that husband and wife should so live together that their prayers may not be hindered! How desirable for their own peace and happiness in that relation; how desirable for the welfare of children!

8 Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:

Finally. As the last direction, or as general counsel in reference to your conduct in all the relations of life. The apostle had specified most of the important relations which Christians sustain, (1Pet 2:13-25, 3:1-7;) and he now gives a general direction in regard to their conduct in all those relations. Be ye all of one mind. Rom 12:16. The word here used (ομοφρων) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, of the same mind; like-minded; and the object is to secure harmony in their views and feelings. Having compassion one of another. Sympathizing, (συμπαθεις;) entering into one another's feelings, and evincing a regard for each other's welfare. Rom 12:15. Comp. 1Cor 12:26, Jn 11:35. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It describes that state of mind which exists when we enter into the feelings of others as if they were our own, as the different parts of the body are affected by that which affects one. 1Cor 12:26.

Love as brethren. Marg., loving to the; i.e., the brethren. The Greek word (φιλαδελφος) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means loving one's brethren; that is, loving each other as Christian brethren.--Rob. Lex. Thus it enforces the duty so often enjoined in the New Testament, that of love to Christians as brethren of the same family. Rom 12:10. Comp. Heb 13:1, Jn 13:34. Be pitiful. The word here used (ευσπλαγχνος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Eph 4:32, where it is rendered tender-hearted. See Notes on that verse. Be courteous. This word also (φιλοφρων) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means friendly-minded, kind, courteous. Later editions of the New Testament, instead of this, read (ταπεινοφρονες) of a lowly or humble mind. See Hahn. The sense is not materially varied. In the one word, the idea of friendliness is the one that prevails; in the other, that of humility. Christianity requires both of these virtues, and either word enforces an important injunction. The authority is in favour of the latter reading; and though Christianity requires that we should be courteous and gentlemanly in our treatment of others, this text can hardly be relied on as a proof-text of that point.

9 not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Not rendering evil for evil. Mt 5:39 Mt 5:44; Rom 12:17. Or railing for railing. 1Timm 6:4. Comp. Mk 15:29, Lk 23:39. But contrariwise blessing. In a spirit contrary to this. Mt 5:44. Knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. "Knowing that you were called to be Christians in order that you should obtain a blessing infinite and eternal in the heavens. Expecting such a blessing yourselves, you should be ready to scatter blessings on all others. You should be ready to bear all their reproaches, and even to wish them well. The hope of eternal life should make your minds calm; and the prospect that you are to be so exalted in heaven should fill your hearts with benignity and love." There is nothing which is better fitted to cause our hearts to overflow with benignity, to make us ready to forgave all others when they forgive us, than the hope of salvation. Cherishing such a hope ourselves, we cannot but wish that all others may share it, and this will lead us to wish for them every blessing. A man who has a hope of heaven should abound in every virtue, and show that he is a sincere well-wisher of the race. Why should one who expects soon to be in heaven harbour malice in his bosom? Why should he wish to injure a fellow-worm? How can he?

10 For he that will love life, and see good days,
let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

For he that will love life. Or., "He willing, (θελων,) or that wills to love life." It implies that there is some positive desire to live; some active wish that life should be prolonged. This whole passage 1Pet 3:10-12 is taken, with some slight variations, from Ps 34:12-16. In the Psalm this expression is, "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" The sense is substantially the same. It is implied here that it is right to love life, and to desire many days. The desire of this is referred to by the psalmist and by the apostle, without any expression of disapprobation, and the way is shown by which length of days may be secured. Life is a blessing; a precious gift of God. We are taught so to regard it by the instinctive feelings of our nature; for we are so made as to love it, and to dread its extinction. Though we should be prepared to resign it when God

commands, yet there are important reasons why we should desire to live. Among them are the following:

(1.) Because, as already intimated, life, as such, is to be regarded as a blessing. We instinctively shrink back from death, as one of the greatest evils; we shudder at the thought of annihilation. It is not wrong to love that, in proper degree, which, by our very nature, we are prompted to love; and we are but acting out one of the universal laws which our Creator has impressed on us, when, with proper submission to his will, we seek to lengthen out our days as far as possible.

(2.) That we may see the works of God, and survey the wonders of his hand on earth. The world is full of wonders, evincing the wisdom and goodness of the Deity; and the longest life, nay, many such lives as are allotted to us here, could be well employed in studying his works and ways.

(3.) That we may make preparation for eternity. Man may, indeed, make preparation in a very brief period; but the longest life is not too much to examine and settle the question whether we have a well-founded hope of heaven. If man had nothing else to do, the longest life could be well employed in inquiries that grow out of the question whether we are fitted for the world to come. In the possibility, too, of being deceived, and in view of the awful consequences that will result from deception, it is desirable that length of days should be given us that we may bring the subject to the severest test, and so determine it, that we may go sure to the changeless world.

(4.) That we may do good to others. We may, indeed, do good in another world; but there are ways of doing good which are probably confined to this. What good we may do hereafter to the inhabitants of distant worlds, or what ministrations, in company with angels, or without them, we may exercise towards the friends of God on earth after we leave it, we do not know; but there are certain things which we are morally certain we shall not be permitted to do in the future world. We shall not

(a.) personally labour for the salvation of sinners, by conversation and other direct efforts;

(b.) we shall not illustrate the influence of religion by example in sustaining us in trials, subduing and controlling our passions, and making us dead to the world;

(c.) we shall not be permitted to pray for our impenitent friends and kindred, as we may now;

(d.) we shall not have the opportunity of contributing of our substance for the spread of the gospel, or of going personally to preach the gospel to the perishing;

(e.) we shall not be employed in instructing the ignorant, in advocating the cause of the oppressed and the wronged, in seeking to remove the fetters from the slave, in dispensing mercy to the insane, or in visiting the prisoner in his lonely cell;

(f.) we shall not have it in our power to address a kind word to an impenitent child, or seek to guide him in paths of truth, purity, and salvation. What we can do personally and directly for the salvation of others is to be done in this world; and, considering how much there is to be done, and how useful life may be on the earth, it is an object which we should desire, that our days may be lengthened out, and should use all proper means that it may be done. While we should ever be ready and willing to depart when God calls us to go; while we should not wish to linger on these mortal shores beyond the time when we may be useful to others, yet, as long as he permits us to live, we should regard life as a blessing, and should pray that, if it be his will, we may not be cut down in the midst of our way.

"Love not thy life, nor hate; but what thou livest Live well; here long, or short, permit to heaven." Paradise Lost.

And see good days. In the Psalm (Ps 34:12) this is, "and loveth many days, that he may see good." The quotation by Peter throughout the passage is taken from the Septuagint, excepting that there is a change of the person from the second to the third: in the psalm, e.g., "refrain thy tongue from evil," etc.; in the quotation, "let him refrain his tongue from evil," etc. "Good days" are prosperous days; happy days; days of usefulness; days in which we may be respected and

loved. Let him refrain his tongue from evil. The general meaning of all that is said here is, "let him lead an upright and pious life; doing evil to no one, but seeking the good of all men." To refrain the tongue from evil, is to avoid all slander, falsehood, obscenity, and profaneness, and to abstain from uttering erroneous and false opinions. Comp. Jas 1:26, 3:2. And his lips that they speak no guile. No deceit; nothing that will lead others astray. The words should be an exact representation of the truth, Rosenmuller quotes a passage from the Hebrew book Musar, which may be not an inappropriate illustration of this: "A certain Assyrian wandering through the city, cried and said, 'Who will receive the elixir of life?' The daughter of Rabbi Jodus heard him, and went and told her father. 'Call him in,' said he. When he came in, Rabbi Jannei said to him, 'What is that elixir of life which thou art selling?' He said to him, 'Is it not written, What man is he that desireth life, and loveth days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile. Lo, this is the elixir of life which is in the mouth of a man!'"

11 let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Let him eschew evil. Let him avoid all evil. Comp. Job 1:1. And do good. In any and every way; by endeavouring to promote the happiness of all. Comp. Gal 6:10. Let him seek peace, and ensue it. Follow it; that is, practise it. Mt 5:9; Rom 12:18. The meaning is, that a peaceful spirit will contribute to length of days. (1.) A peaceful spirit--a calm, serene, and equal temper of mind--is favourable to health, avoiding those corroding and distracting passions which do so much to wear out the physical energies of the frame; and (2.) such a spirit will preserve us from those contentions and strifes to which so many owe their death. Let any one reflect on the numbers that are killed in duels, in battles, and in brawls, and he will have no difficulty in seeing how a peaceful spirit will contribute to length of days.

12 For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil.

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous. That is, he is their Protector. His eyes are indeed on all men, but the language here is that which describes continual guardianship and care. And his ears are open unto their prayers. He hears their prayers. As he is a hearer of prayer, they are at liberty to go to him at all times, and to pour out their desires before him. This passage is taken from Ps 34:15, and it

is designed to show the reason why a life of piety will contribute to length of days.

But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. Marg., upon. The sense of the passage, however, is against. The Lord sets his face against them: an expression denoting disapprobation, and a determination to punish them. His face is not mild and benignant towards them, as-it is towards the righteous. The general sentiment in these verses (1Pet 3:10-12) is, that while length of days is desirable, it is to be secured by virtue and religion, or that virtue and religion will contribute to it. This is not to be understood as affirming that all who are righteous will enjoy long life, for we know that the righteous are often cut down in the midst of their way; and that in, fire, and flood, and war, and the pestilence, the righteous and the wicked often perish together. But still there is a sense in which it is true that a life of virtue and religion will contribute to length of days, and that the law is so general as to be a basis of @calculation in reference to the future. I. Religion and virtue contribute to those things which are favourable to length of days, which are conducive to health and to a vigorous constitution. Among those things are the following,

(a.) a calm, peaceful, and contented mind--avoiding the wear and tear of the raging passions of lusts, avarice, and ambition;

(b.) temperance in eating and drinking--always favourable to length of days;

(c.) industry-- ne of the essential means, as a general rule, of promoting long life;

(d.) prudence and economy--avoiding the extravagances by which many shorten their days; and

(e.) a conscientious and careful regard of life itself. Religion makes men feel that life is a blessing, and that it should not be thrown away. Just in proportion as a man is under the influence of religion, does he regard life as of importance, and does he become careful in preserving it. Strange and paradoxical as it may seem, the want of religion often makes men reckless of life, and ready to throw it away for any trifling cause. Religion shows a man what great issues

depend on life, and makes him, therefore, desirous of living to secure his own salvation and the salvation of all others. II. Multitudes lose their lives who would have preserved them ff they had been under the influence of religion. To see this, we have only to reflect

(a.) on the millions who are cut off in war as the result of ambition, and the want of religion;

(b.) on the countless hosts cut down in middle life, or in youth, by intemperance, who would have been saved by religion;

(c.) on the numbers who are the victims of raging passions, and who are cut off by the diseases which gluttony and licentiousness engender;

(d.) on the multitude who fall in duels, all of whom would have been saved by religion;

(e.) on the numbers who, as the result of disappointment in business or in love, close their own lives, who would have been enabled to bear up under their troubles if they had had religion; and

(f.) on the numbers who are cut off from the earth as the punishment of their crimes, all of whom would have continued to live if they had had true religion. III. God protects the righteous. He does it by saving them from those vices by which the lives of so many are shortened; and often, we have no reason to doubt, in answer to their prayers, when, but for those prayers, they would have fallen into crimes that would have consigned them to an early grave, or encountered dangers from which they would have had no means of escape. No one can doubt that in fact those who are truly religious are saved from the sins which consign millions to the tomb; nor is there any less reason to doubt that a protecting shield is often thrown before the children of God when in danger. Comp. Ps 91.

13 And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? This question is meant to imply, that as a general thing they need apprehend no evil if they lead an upright and benevolent life.

The idea is, that God would in general protect them, though the next verse shows that the apostle did not mean to teach that there would be absolute security, for it is implied there that they might be called to suffer for righteousness' sake. While it is true that the Saviour was persecuted by wicked men, though his life was wholly spent in doing good; while it is true that the apostles were put to death, though following his example; and while it is true that good men have often suffered persecution, though labouring only to do good, still it is true as a general thing that a life of integrity and benevolence conduces to safety, even in a wicked world. Men who are upright and pure; who live to do good to others; who are characteristically benevolent; and who are imitators of God--are those who usually pass life in most tranquillity and security, and are often safe when nothing else would give security but confidence in their integrity. A man of a holy and pure life may, under the protection of God, rely on that character to carry him safely through the world, and to bring him at last to an honoured grave. Or should he be calumniated when living, and his sun set under a cloud, still his name will be vindicated, and justice will ultimately be done to him when he is dead. The world ultimately judges right respecting character, and renders "honour to whom honour is due." Comp. Ps 37:3-6.

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye:* and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake. Implying that though, in general, a holy character would constitute safety, yet that there was a possibility that they might suffer persecution. Comp. Mt 5:10 2Ti 3:12. Happy are ye. Perhaps alluding to what the Saviour says in Mt 5:10: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." On the meaning of the word happy or blessed, Mt 5:3. The meaning here is, not that they would find positive enjoyment in persecution on account of righteousness, but that they were to regard it as a blessed condition; that is, as a condition that might be favourable to salvation; and they were not therefore, on the whole, to regard it as an evil. And be not afraid of their terror. Of anything which they can do to cause terror. There is evidently an allusion here to Isa 8:12,13: "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Isa 8:12, seq. Comp. Isa 51:12, Mt 10:28. Neither be troubled. With apprehension of danger. Compare Jn 14:1. If we are true Christians, we have really no reason to be alarmed in view of

anything that can happen to us. God is our protector, and he is abundantly able to vanquish all our foes; to uphold us in all our trials; to conduct us through the valley of death, and to bring us to heaven. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come," 1Cor 3:21,22.

15 but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. In Isa 8:13 this is, "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself;" that is, in that connexion, regard him as your Protector, and be afraid of him, and not of what man can do. The sense in the passage before us is, "In your hearts, or in the affections of the soul, regard the Lord God as holy, and act towards him with that confidence which a proper respect for one so great and so holy demands. In the midst of dangers, be not intimidated; dread not what man can do, but evince proper reliance on a holy God, and flee to him with the confidence which is due to one so glorious." This contains, however, a more general direction, applicable to Christians at all times. It is, that in our hearts we are to esteem God as a holy being, and in all our deportment to act towards him as such. The object of Peter in quoting the passage from Isaiah, was to lull the fears of those whom he addressed, and preserve them from any alarms in view of the persecutions to which they might be-exposed; the trials which would be brought upon them by men. Thus, in entire accordance with the sentiment as employed by Isaiah, he says, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." That is, "in order to keep the mind calm in trials, sanctify the Lord in your hearts; regard him as your holy God and Saviour; make him your refuge. This will allay all your fears, and secure you from all that you dread." The sentiment of the passage then is, that the sanctifying of the Lord God in our hearts, or proper confidence in him as a holy and righteous God, will deliver us from fear. As this is a very important sentiment for Christians, it may be proper, in order to a just exposition of the passage, to dwell a moment on it.

I. What is meant by our-sanctifying the Lord God? It cannot mean to make him holy, for he is perfectly holy, whatever may be our estimate of him; and our views of him evidently can make no change

in his character. The meaning therefore must be, that we should regard him as holy in our estimate of him, or in the feelings which we have towards him. This may include the following things:

(1.) To esteem or regard him as a holy being, in contradistinction from all those feelings which rise up in the heart against him--the feelings of complaining and murmuring under his dispensations, as if he were severe and harsh; the feelings of dissatisfaction with his government, as if it were partial and unequal; the feelings of rebellion, as if his claims were unfounded or unjust.

(2.) To desire that he may be regarded by others as holy, in accordance with the petition in the Lord's prayer, (Mt 6:9,) "hallowed be thy name;" that is, "let thy name be esteemed to be holy everywhere;" a feeling in opposition to that which is regardless of the honour which he may receive in the world. When we esteem a friend, we desire that all due respect should be shown him by others; we wish that all who know him should have the same views that we have; we are sensitive to his honour, just in proportion as we love him.

(3.) To act towards him as holy, that is, to obey his laws, and acquiesce in all his requirements, as if they were just and good. This implies,

(a.) that we are to speak of him as holy, in opposition to the language of disrespect and irreverence so common among mankind;

(b.) that we are to flee to him in trouble, in contradistinction from withholding our hearts from him, and flying to other sources of consolation and support. II. What is it to do this in the heart? Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts;" that is, in contradistinction from a mere external service. This may imply the following things:

(1.) In contradistinction from a mere intellectual assent to the proposition that he is holy. Many admit the doctrine that God is holy into their creeds, who never suffer the sentiment to find its way to the heart. All is right on this subject in the articles of their faith; all in their hearts may be murmuring and complaining. In their creeds he is spoken of as just and good; in their hearts they regard him as partial and unjust, as severe and stern, as unamiable and cruel.

(2.) In contradistinction from a mere outward form of devotion, in our prayers, and in our hymns, we, of course, "ascribe holiness to our Maker." But how much of this is the mere language of form! How little does the heart accompany it! And even in the most solemn and sublime ascriptions of praise, how often are the feelings of the heart entirely at variance with what is expressed by the lips? What would more justly offend us, than for a professed friend to approach us with the language of friendship, when every feeling of his heart belied his expressions, and we knew that his honeyed words were false and hollow! III. Such a sanctifying of the Lord in our hearts will save us from fear. We dread danger, we dread sickness, we dread death, we dread the eternal world. We are alarmed when our affairs are tending to bankruptcy; we are alarmed when a friend is sick and ready to die; we are alarmed if our country is invaded by a foe, and the enemy already approaches our dwelling. The sentiment in the passage before us is, that if we sanctify the Lord God with proper affections, we shall be delivered from these alarms, and the mind will be calm.

(1.) The fear of the Lord, as Leighton (in loc.) expresses it, "as greatest, overtops and nullifies all lesser fears: the heart possessed with this fear hath no room for the other." It is an absorbing emotion; making everything else comparatively of no importance. If we fear God, we have nothing else to fear. The highest emotion which there can be in the soul is the fear of God; and when that exists, the soul will be calm amidst all that might tend otherwise to disturb it. "What time I am afraid," says David, "I will trust in thee," Ps 56:3. "We are not careful," said Daniel and his friends, "to answer thee, O king. Our God can deliver us; but if not, we will not worship the image," Dan 3:16.

(2.) If we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, there will be a belief that he will do all things well, and the mind will be calm. However dark his dispensations may be, we shall be assured that everything is ordered aright. In a storm at sea, a child may be calm when he feels that his father is at the helm, and assures him that there is no danger. In a battle, the mind of a soldier may be calm, if he has confidence in his commander, and he assures him that all is safe. So in anything, if we have the assurance that the best thing is done that can be, that the issues will all be right, the mind will be calm. But in

this respect the highest confidence that can exist, is that which is reposed in God.

(3.) There will be the assurance that all is safe. "Though I walk," says David, "through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me," Ps 23:4. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Ps 27:1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," Ps 46:1-3. Let us ever then regard the Lord as holy, just, and good. Let us flee to him in all the trials of the present life, and in the hour of death repose on his arm. Every other source of trust will fail; and whatever else may be our reliance, when the hour of anguish approaches, that reliance will fail, and that which we dreaded will overwhelm us. Nor riches, nor honours, nor earthly friends, can save us from those alarms, or be a security for our souls when "the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow" upon us. And be ready always. That is,

(a.) be always able to do it; have such reasons for the hope that is in you that they can be stated; or, have good and substantial reasons; and

(b.) be willing to state those reasons on all proper occasions. No man ought to entertain opinions for which a good reason cannot be given; and every man ought to be willing to state the grounds of his hope on all proper occasions. A Christian should have such intelligent views of the truth of his religion, and such constant evidence in his own heart and life that he is a child of God,as to be able at any time to satisfy a candid inquirer that the Bible is a revelation from heaven, and that it is proper for him to cherish the hope of salvation.

To give an answer. Greek, An apology, (απολογιαν.) This word formerly did not mean, as the word apology does now, an excuse for anything that is done as if it were wrong, but a defence of anything. We apply the word now to denote something written or said in extenuation of what appears to others to be wrong, or what might be construed as wrong--as when we make an apology to others for not

fulfilling an engagement, or for some conduct which might be construed as designed neglect. The word originally, however, referred rather to that which was thought not to be true, than that which might be construed as wrong; and the defence or "apology" which Christians were to make of their religion, was not on the supposition that others would regard it as wrong, but in order to show them that it was true. The word here used is rendered defence, Acts 22:1, Php 1:7,17; answer, Acts 25:16, 1Cor 9:3, 2Ti 4:16, 1Pet 3:15; and clearing of yourselves in 2Cor 7:11. We are not to hold ourselves ready to make an apology for our religion as if it were a wrong thing to be a Christian; but we are always to be ready to give reasons for regarding it as true.

To every man that asketh you. Any one has a right respectfully to ask another on what grounds he regards his religion as true; for every man has a common interest in religion, and in knowing what is the truth on the subject. If any man, therefore, asks us candidly and respectfully by what reasons we have been led to embrace the gospel, and on what grounds we regard it as true, we are under obligation to state those grounds in the best manner that we are able. We should regard it not as an impertinent intrusion into our private affairs, but as an opportunity of doing good to others, and to honour the Master whom we serve. Nay, we should hold ourselves in readiness to state the grounds of our faith and hope, whatever may be the motive of the inquirer, and in whatever manner the request may be made. Those who were persecuted for their religion, were under obligation to make as good a defence of it as they could, and to state to their persecutors the "reason" of the hope which they entertained. And so now, if a man attacks our religion; if he ridicules us for being Christians; if he tauntingly asks us what reason we have for believing the truth of the Bible, it is better to tell him in a kind manner, and to meet his taunt with a kind and strong argument, than to become angry, or to turn away with contempt. The best way to disarm him, is to show him that by embracing religion we are not fools in understanding; and, by a kind temper, to convince him that the influence of religion over us when we are abused and insulted, is a "reason" why we should love our religion, and why he should too.

A reason of the hope that is in you. Gr, "an account," (λογον.) That is, you are to state on what ground you cherish that hope. This refers to the whole ground of our hope, and includes evidently two things:

(1.) The reason why we regard Christianity as true, or as furnishing a ground of hope for men; and,

(2.) the reason which we have ourselves for cherishing a hope of heaven, or the experimental and practical views which we have of religion, which constitute a just ground of hope. It is not improbable that the former of these was more directly in the eye of the apostle than the latter, though both seem to be implied in the direction to state the reasons which ought to satisfy others that it is proper for us to cherish the hope of heaven. The first part of this duty--that we are to state the reasons why we regard the system of religion which we have embraced as true--implies, that we should be acquainted with the evidences of the truth of Christianity, and be able to state them to others. Christianity is founded on evidence; and though it cannot be supposed that every Christian will be able to understand all that is involved in what are called the evidences of Christianity, or to meet all the objections of the enemies of the gospel; yet every man who becomes a Christian should have such intelligent views of religion, and of the evidences of the truth of the Bible, that he can show to others that the religion which he has embraced has claims to their attention, or that it is not a mere matter of education, of tradition, or of feeling. It should also be an object with every Christian to increase his acquaintance with the evidences of the truth of religion, not only for his own stability and comfort in the faith, but that he may be able to defend religion if attacked, or to guide others if they are desirous of knowing what is truth. The second part of this duty, that we state the reasons which we have for cherishing the hope of heaven as a personal matter, implies

(a.) that there should be, in fact, a well-founded hope of heaven; that is, that we have evidence that we are true Christians, since it is impossible to give a "reason" of the hope that is in us unless there are reasons for it;

(b.) that we be able to state in a clear and intelligent manner what constitutes evidence of piety, or what should be reasonably regarded as such; and

(c.) that we be ever ready to state these reasons. A Christian should always be willing to converse about his religion. He should have such a deep conviction of its truth, of its importance, and of his personal interest in it; he should have a hope so firm, so cheering, so sustaining, that he will be always prepared to converse on the prospect of heaven, and to endeavour to lead others to walk in the path to life. With meekness. With modesty; without any spirit of ostentation; with gentleness of manner. This seems to be added on the supposition that they sometimes might be rudely assailed; that the questions might be proposed in a spirit of cavil; that it might be done in a taunting or insulting manner. Even though this should be done, they were not to fall into a passion, to manifest resentment, or to retort in an angry and revengeful manner; but, in a calm and gentle spirit, they were to state the reasons of their faith and hope, and leave the matter there. And fear. Marg., reverence. The sense seems to be, "in the fear of God; with a serious and reverent spirit; as in the presence of Him who sees and hears all things." It evidently does not mean with the fear or dread of those who propose the question, but with that serious and reverent frame of mind which is produced by a deep impression of the importance of the subject, and a conscious sense of the presence of God. It follows, from the injunction of the apostle here,

(1.) that every professing Christian should have clear and intelligent views of his own personal interest in religion, or such evidences of piety that they can be stated to others, and that they can be made satisfactory to other minds;

(2.) that every Christian, however humble his rank, or however unlettered he may be, may become a valuable defender of the truth of Christianity;

(3.) that we should esteem it a privilege to bear our testimony to the truth and value of religion, and to stand up as the advocates of truth in the world. Though we may be rudely assailed, it is an honour to speak in defence of religion; though we are persecuted and reviled, it is a privilege to be permitted in anyway to show our fellow-men that there is such a thing as true religion, and that man may cherish the hope of heaven.

16 having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Having a good conscience. That is, a conscience that does not accuse you of having done wrong. Whatever may be the accusations of your enemies, so live that you may be at all times conscious of uprightness. Whatever you suffer, see that you do not suffer the pangs inflicted by a guilty conscience, the anguish of remorse. On the meaning of the word conscience, Rom 2:15. The word properly means the judgment of the mind respecting right and wrong; or the judgment which the mind passes on the immorality of its own actions, when it instantly approves or condemns them. There is always a feeling of obligation connected with operations of conscience, which precedes, attends, and follows our actions. "Conscience is first occupied in ascertaining our duty, before we proceed to action; then in judging of our actions when performed." A "good conscience" implies two things:

(1.) That it be properly enlightened to know what is right and wrong, or that it be not under the dominion of ignorance, superstition, or fanaticism, prompting us to do what would be a violation of the Divine law; and

(2) that its dictates be always obeyed. Without the first of these--clear views of that which is right and wrong--conscience becomes an unsafe guide; for it merely prompts us to do what we esteem to be right, and if our views of what is right and wrong are erroneous, we may be prompted to do what may be a direct violation of the law of God. Paul thought he "ought" to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, (Acts 26:9;) the Saviour said, respecting his disciples, that the time would come when whosoever should kill them would think that they were doing God service, (Jn 16:2;) and Solomon says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death," (Prov 14:12, 16:25.) Under an unenlightened and misguided conscience, with the plea and pretext of religion, the most atrocious crimes have been committed; and no man should infer that he is certainly doing right, because he follows the promptings of conscience. No man, indeed, should act against the dictates of his conscience; but there may have been a previous wrong in not using proper means to ascertain what is right.

Conscience is not revelation, nor does it answer the purpose of a revelation. It communicates no new truth to the soul, and is a safe guide only so far as the mind has been properly enlightened to see what is truth and duty. Its office is to prompt us to the performance of duty, not to determine what is right. The other thing requisite that we may have a good conscience is, that its decisions should be obeyed. Conscience is appointed to be the "vicegerent" of God in inflicting punishment, if his commands are not obeyed. It pronounces a sentence on our own conduct. Its penalty is remorse; and that penalty will be demanded if its promptings be not regarded. It is an admirable device, as a part of the moral government of God, urging man to the performance of duty, and, in case of disobedience, making the mind its own executioner. There is no penalty that will more certainly be inflicted, sooner or later, than that incurred by a guilty conscience. It needs no witnesses; no process for arresting the offender; no array of judges and executioners; no stripes, imprisonment, or bonds. Its inflictions will follow the offender into the most secluded retreat; overtake him in his most rapid flight; find him out in northern snows, or on the sands of the equator; go into the most splendid palaces, and seek out the victim when he is safe from all the vengeance that man can inflict; pursue him into the dark valley of the shadow of death, or arrest him as a fugitive in distant worlds. No one, therefore, can over-estimate the importance of having a good conscience. A true Christian should aim, by incessant study and prayer, to know what is right, and then always do it, no matter what may be the consequences. That, whereas they speak evil of you. They who are your enemies and persecutors. Christians are not to hope that men will always speak well of them, Mt 5:11, Lk 6:26. As of evil doers. 1Pet 2:12. (*) "conversation" "Behaviour" They may be ashamed. They may see that they have misunder- stood your conduct, and regret that they have treated you as they have. We should expect, if we are faithful and true, that even our enemies will yet appreciate our motives, and do us justice. Comp. Psa. xxxvii. 5, 6. That falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. Your good conduct as Christians. They may accuse you of insincerity, hypocrisy, dishonesty; of being enemies of the state, or of monstrous crimes; but the time will come when they will see their error, and do you justice. See Notes one,hap, ii. 12.

17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evildoing.

For it is better, if the will of God be so. That is, if God sees it to be necessary for your good that you should suffer, it is better that you should suffer for doing well than for crime. God often sees it to be necessary that his people should suffer. There are effects to be accomplished by affliction which can be secured in no other way; and some of the happiest results on the soul of a Christian, some of the brightest traits of character, are the effect of trials. But it should be our care that our sufferings should not be brought upon us for our own crimes or follies. No man can promote his own highest good by doing wrong, and then enduring the penalty which his sin incurs; and no one should do wrong with any expectation that it may be overruled for his own good. If we are to suffer, let it be by the direct hand of God, and not by any fault of our own. If we suffer then, we shall have the testimony of our own conscience in our favour, and the feeling that we may go to God for support. If we suffer for our faults, in addition to the outwar& pain of body, we shall endure the severest pangs which man can suffer--those which the guilty mind inflicts on itself.

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins. Comp. 1Pet 2:21. The design of the apostle in this reference to the sufferings of Christ, is evidently to remind them that he suffered as an innocent being, and not for any wrong-doing, and to encourage and comfort them in their sufferings by his example. The reference to his sufferings leads him (1Pet 2:18-22) into a statement of the various ways in which Christ suffered, and of his ultimate triumph. By his example in his sufferings, and by his final triumph, the apostle would encourage those whom he addressed to bear with patience the sorrows to which their religion exposed them. He assumes that all suffering for adhering to the gospel is the result of well-doing; and for an encouragement in their trials, he refers them to the example of Christ, the highest instance that ever was, or ever will be, both of well-doing, and of suffering on account of it. The expression, "hath once suffered," in the New Testament, means once for all; once, in the sense that it is not to occur again. Comp. Heb 7:27. The particular point here, however, is not that he once suffered; it is that

he had in fact suffered, and that in doing it he had left an example for them to follow.

The just for the unjust. The one who was just, (δικαιος) on account of, or in the place of, those who were unjust, (υπεραδικων;) or one who was righteous, on account of those who were wicked. Comp. Rom 5:6; 2Cor 5:21; Heb 9:28. The idea on which the apostle would particularly fix their attention was, that he was just or innocent. Thus he was an example to those who suffered for well-doing.

That he might bring us to God. That his death might be the means of reconciling sinners to God. Comp. Jn 3:14; Jn 12:32. It is through that death that mercy is proclaimed to the guilty; it is by that alone that God can be reconciled to men; and the fact that the Son of God loved men, and gave himself a sacrifice for them, enduring such bitter sorrows, is the most powerful appeal which can be made to mankind to induce them to return to God. There is no appeal which can be made to us more powerful than one drawn from the fact that another suffers on our account. We could resist the argument which a father, a mother, or a sister would use to reclaim us from a course of sin; but if we perceive that our conduct involves them in suffering, that fact has a power over us which no mere argument could have.

Being put to death in the flesh. As a man; in his human nature. Comp. Rom 1:3,4. There is evidently a contrast here between "the flesh" in which it is said he was "put to death," and "the spirit" by which it is said he was "quickened." The words "in the flesh" are clearly designed to denote something that was peculiar in his death; for it is a departure from the usual method of speaking of death. How singular would it be to say of Isaiah, Paul, or Peter, that they were put to death in the flesh! How obvious would it be to ask, In what other way are men usually put to death? What was there peculiar in their case, which would distinguish their death from the death of others? The use of this phrase would suggest the thought at once, that though, in regard to that which was properly expressed by the phrase, "the flesh," they died, yet that there was something else in respect to which they did not die. Thus, if it were said of a man that he was deprived of his rights as a father, it would be implied that in other respects he was not deprived of his rights; and this would be especially true if it were added that he continued to enjoy his rights

as a neighbour, or as holding an office under the government. The only proper inquiry, then, in this place is, What is fairly implied in the phrase, the flesh? Does it mean simply his body, as distinguished from his human soul? or does it refer to him as a man, as distinguished from some higher nature, over which death had no power? Now, that the latter is the meaning seems to me to be apparent, for these reasons:

(1.) It is the usual way of denoting the human nature of the Lord Jesus, or of saying that he became incarnate, or was a man, to speak of his being in the flesh. See Rom 1:2: "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh." Jn 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh." 1Timm 3:16: "God was manifest in the flesh." 1Jn 4:2: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." 2Jn 1:7: "Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

(2.) So far as appears, the effect of death on the human soul of the Redeemer was the same as in the case of the soul of any other person; in other words, the effect of death in his case was not confined to the mere body or the flesh. Death, with him, was what death is in any other case--the separation of the soul and body, with all the attendant pain of such dissolution. It is not true that his "flesh," as such, died without the ordinary accompaniments of death on the soul, so that it could be said that the one died, and the other was kept alive. The purposes of the atonement required that he should meet death in the usual form; that the great laws which operate everywhere else in regard to dissolution, should exist in his case; nor is there in the Scriptures any intimation that there was, in this respect, anything peculiar in his case. If his soul had been exempt from whatever there is involved in death in relation to the spirit, it is unaccountable that there is no hint on this point in the sacred narrative. But if this be so, then the expression "in the flesh" refers to him as a man, and means, that so far as his human nature was concerned, he died. In another important respect, he did not die. On the meaning of the word flesh in the New Testament, see Rom 1:3.

But quickened. Made alive-- ζωοποιηθεις. This does not mean kept alive, but made alive; recalled to life; reanimated. The word is never used in the sense of maintained alive, or preserved alive. Compare

the following places, which are the only ones in which it occurs in the New Testament: Jn 5:21, twice; Jn 6:63; Rom 4:17, 8:11, 1Cor 15:36,45, 1Timm 6:13, 1Pet 3:18; in all which it is rendered quickened, quicken, quickeneth, 1Cor 15:22, be made alive; 2Cor 3:6, giveth life; and Gal 2:21, have given life. "Once the word refers to God, as he who giveth life to all creatures, 1Timm 6:13; three times it refers to the life-giving power of the Holy Ghost, or of the doctrines of the gospel, Jn 6:63, 2Cor 3:6, Gal 3:21; seven times it is used with direct reference to the raising of the dead, Jn 5:21, Rom 4:17, 8:11; 1Cor 15:22,36,45, 1Pet 3:18". See Biblical Repos., April, 1845, p. 269. See also Passow, and Robinson; Lex. The sense, then, cannot be that, in reference to his soul or spirit, he was preserved alive when his body died, but that there was some agency or power restoring him to life, or reanimating him after he was dead.

By the Spirit. According to the common reading in the Greek, this is τωπνευματι -- with the article the--"the Spirit." Hahn, Tittman, and Griesbach omit the article, and then the reading is, "quickened in spirit;" and thus the reading corresponds with the former expression, "in flesh" (σαρκι,) where the article also is wanting. The word spirit, so far as the mere use of the word is concerned, might refer to his own soul, to his Divine nature, or to the Holy Spirit. It is evident

(1.) that it does not refer to his own soul, for,

(a.) as we have seen, the reference in the former clause is to his human nature, including all that pertained to him as a man, body and soul;

(b.) there was no power in his own spirit, regarded as that appertaining to his human nature, to raise him up from the dead, any more than there is such a power in any other human soul. That power does not belong to a human soul in any of its relations or conditions.

(2.) It seems equally clear that this does not refer to the Holy Spirit, or the Third Person of the Trinity, for it may be doubted whether the work of raising the dead is anywhere ascribed to that Spirit. His peculiar province is to enlighten, awaken, convict, convert, and sanctify the soul; to apply the work of redemption to the hearts of

men, and to lead them to God. This influence is moral, not physical; an influence accompanying the truth, not the exertion of mere physical power.

(3.) It remains, then, that the reference is to his own Divine nature--a nature by which he was restored to life after he was crucified; to the Son of God, regarded as the Second Person of the Trinity. This appears, not only from the facts above stated, but also

(a.) from the connexion. It is stated that it was in or by this spirit that he went and preached in the days of Noah. But it was not his spirit as a man that did this, for his human soul had then no existence. Yet it seems that he did this personally or directly, and not by the influences of the Holy Spirit, for it is said that "he went and preached." The reference, therefore, cannot be to the Holy Ghost, and the fair conclusion is that it refers to his Divine nature.

(b.) This accords with what the apostle Paul says, (Rom 1:3,4,) "which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh,"--that is, in respect to his human nature,--"and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness,"--that is, in respect to his Divine nature,--" by the resurrection from the dead." See Notes on that passage.

(c.) It accords with what the Saviour himself says, Jn 10:17,18: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." This must refer to his Divine nature, for it is impossible to conceive that a human soul should have the power of restoring its former tenement, the body, to life. See Notes on the passage. The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that the passage means, that as a man, a human being, he was put to death; in respect to a higher nature, or by a higher nature, here denominated Spirit, (πνευμα,) he was restored to life. As a man, he died; as the incarnate Son of God, the Messiah, he was made alive again by the power of his own Divine Spirit, and exalted to heaven. Comp. Robinson's Lex. on the word πνευμα.

These words are brought in as a strong argument, why Christians that suffer wrongfully should bear it patiently; it was our Saviour's own case; he that had perfect innocency and unspotted

righteousness, suffered in the severest manner for us that were unrighteous, that he might reconcile us to God, being put to death in the flesh, that is, in our human anture, but quickened by the Spirit, or raised to life again by the power of his godhead; it doth therefore well become all his followers cheerfully to undergo all manner of sufferings for him, which they meet with in their duty to him.

Note here, 1. Christ did not barely suffer for our good, but he suffered in our stead: he is not only said to suffer for us, but to suffer for our sins, that is, the punishment of our sins; for no man was ever said to suffer for sin that did not undergo and endure the punishment of sin.

As the sin-offering under the law is called an offering for sin, because it did expiate the guilt of sin, by dying in the place and stead of the offender; in like manner, when the death of Christ is called an offering for sin, what can it import, but that he suffered to make atonement for sin in our place and stead? The just for the unjust; if these words do not imply the substitution of Christ as our surety, and his suffering the punishment due to our sins, what words can express it?

Note, 2. That the great end of Christ's bitter death and bloody sufferings, was to bring all those for whom he died unto God; now Christ's bringing us to God imports our apostasy from him, and our inability to return to him; that sin unsatisfied for, which was the great bar to keep us from him, is mercifully removed by him, and that our chief happiness consists in the enjoyment of him.

Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: As if St. Peter had said, "Though Christ suffered for our sins, and was put to death in his human nature, or flesh, yet he was quickened and made alive by the Spirit, in which, or by which Spirit, he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which in the days of Noah were hardened in sin and disobedience, whilst the long-suffering of God endured them, and waited for their repentance no less than an hundred and twenty years, whilst the ark was making and preparing, and Noah preached to them; yet so impenitent were they to the very last, that only eight were saved in the ark."

Note here, 1. That the old world before the flood were in prison whilst here on earth, being in bondage and captivity to sin and Satan, held in the chains of their lusts, and in the bondage of their iniquity; such as are in bondage to sin, are captives in Satan's prison: the old world was also in prison whilst on earth, as having received from God the sentence of destruction, and were reserved as in prison, against the day of slaughter, if they repented not within an hundred and twenty years.

Note, 2. That Christ by his Spirit did preach to the old world in the ministry of his prophets, Enoch and Noah; and his Spirit did chide with them and reprove them, in order to their bringing to repentance.

Note, 3. That those refractory and hardened sinners, for despising the offers of grace made to them, were for their disobedience clapped up in the prison of hell, suffering the vengence of eternal fire; such as were cast into prison in Noah's time, were all fast in St. Peter's time: there is no picking the locks of hell gates, no breaking through the walls of the fiery Tophet; hell has a door to take in, but none to let out.

Note, 4. That though Christ by his Spirit preached to the spirits in prison, yet it was not when they were in prison, I mean in the prison of hell, but when here on earth; there are no sermons in hell, no conditions of happiness proposed, no tenders of salvation propounded there; Christ preached to these prisoners to prevent their imprisonment, Christ preached to these men, who were now in prison, that they might not have been imprisoned.

Note lastly, That the obstinate infidelity, and sottish stupidity, of the old world, was amazing, that after an hundred and twenty years' preaching, no more than eight persons should be persuaded into the belief of the world's destruction.
From the beginning we find that the prophets of God had cause to complain that few have believed their report: do not the ministers of God now groan to God, that they run in vain, and labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought? From the beginning it has been so.

if thou honourest any of us with better success, and givest us to see the fruit of our labours in the lives of our people, help us to set the crown of praise on the head of thine own grace, and say Non nobis, Comine, non nobis, &c. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

20 which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

By which. Evidently by the Spirit referred to in the previous verse--ενω--the Divine nature of the Son of God; that by which he was "quickened" again, after he had been put to death; the Son of God regarded as a Divine Being, or in that same nature which afterwards became incarnate, and whose agency was employed in quickening the man Christ Jesus, who had been put to death. The meaning is, that the same "Spirit" which was efficacious in restoring him to life, after he was put to death, was that by which he preached to the spirits in prison. He went. To wit, in the days of Noah. No particular stress should be laid here on the phrase he went." The literal sense is, "he, having gone, preached," etc. --πορευθεις. It is well known that such expressions are often redundant in Greek writers, as in others. So Herodotus, "to these things they spake, saying"--for they said. "And he, speaking, said;" that is, he said. So Eph 2:17, "And came and preached peace," etc. Mt 9:13, "But go and learn what that meaneth," etc. So God is often represented as coming, as descending, etc,, when he brings a message to mankind. Thus Gen 11:5, "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower." Ex 19:20, "The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai." Nu 11:25, "The Lord came down in a cloud." 2Sam 22:10, "He bowed the heavens and came down." The idea, however, would be conveyed by this language that he did this personally, or by himself, and not merely by employing the agency of another. It would then be implied here, that though the instrumentality of Noah was employed, yet that it was done not by the Holy Spirit, but by him who afterwards became incarnate. On the supposition, therefore, that this whole massage refers to his preaching to the antediluvians in the time of Noah, and not to the "spirits" after they were confined in prison, this is language which the apostle would have properly and probably used. If that supposition meets the full force of the language, then no argument can be based on it in proof that he went to preach to them after their death, and while his body was lying in the grave. And

preached. The word used here (εκηρυξεν) is of a general character, meaning to make a proclamation of any kind, as a crier does, or to deliver a message, and does not necessarily imply that it was the gospel which was preached, nor does it determine anything in regard to the nature of the message. It is not affirmed that he preached the gospel, for if that specific idea had been expressed it would have been rather by another word--ευαγγελιζω. The word here used would be appropriate to such a message as Noah brought to his contemporaries, or to any communication which God made to men. See Mt 3:1, 4:17, Mk 1:35; Mk 5:20, 7:36. It is implied in the expression, as already remarked, that he did this himself; that it was the Son of God who subsequently became incarnate, and not the Holy Spirit, that did this; though the language is consistent With the supposition that he did it by the instrumentality of another, to wit, Noah. Qui facit per alium, facit per se. God really proclaims a message to mankind when he does it by the instrumentality of the prophets, or apostles, or other ministers of religion; and all that is necessarily implied in this language would be met by the supposition that Christ delivered a message to the antediluvian race by the agency of Noah. No argument, therefore, can be derived from this language to prove that Christ went and personally preached to those who were confined in hades or in prison. Unto the spirits in prison. That is, clearly, to the spirits now in prison, for this is the fair meaning of the passage. The obvious sense is, that Peter supposed there were "spirits in prison" at the time when he wrote, and that to those same spirits the Son of God had at some time "preached," or had made some proclamation respecting the will of God. As this is the only passage in the New Testament on which the Romish doctrine of purgatory is supposed to rest, it is important to ascertain the fair meaning of the language here employed. There are three obvious inquiries in ascertaining its signification. Who are referred to by spirits? What is meant by in prison? Was the message brought to them while in the prison, or at some previous period? I. Who are referred to by spirits? The specification in the next verse determines this. They were those "who were sometime disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." No others are specified; and if it should be maintained that this means that he went down to hell, or to sheol, and preached to those who are confined there, it could be inferred from this passage only that he preached to that portion of the lost spirits confined there which belonged to the particular generation in which Noah lived. Why he should do this;

or how there should be such a separation made in hades that it could be done; or what was the nature of the message which he delivered to that portion, are questions which it is impossible for any man who holds to the opinion that Christ went down to hell after his death to preach, to answer. But if it means that he preached to those who lived in the days of Noah, while they were yet alive, the question will be asked why are they called "spirits?" Were they spirits then, or were they men like others? To this the answer is easy. Peter speaks of them as they were when he wrote; not as they had been, or were at the time when the message was preached to them. The idea is, that to those spirits who were then in prison who had formerly lived in the days of Noah, the message had been in fact delivered. It was not necessary to speak of them precisely as they were at the time when it was delivered, but only in such a way as to identify them. We should use similar language now. If we saw a company of men in prison who had seen better days--a multitude now drunken, and debased, and poor, and riotous --it would not be improper to say that "the prospect of wealth and honour was once held out to this ragged and wretched multitude. All that is needful is to identify them as the same persons who once had this prospect. In regard to the inquiry, then, who these "spirits" were, there can be no difference of opinion. They were that wicked race which lived in the days of Noah. There is no allusion in this passage to any other; there is no intimation that to any others of those "in prison" the message here referred to had been delivered. II. What is meant by prison here? Purgatory, or the limbus patrum, say the Romanists--a place in which departed souls are supposed to be confined, and in which their final destiny may still be effected by the purifying fires which they endure, by the prayers of the living, or by a message in some way conveyed to their gloomy abodes --in which such sins may be expiated as do not deserve eternal damnation. The Syriac here is "in sheol," referring to the abodes of the dead, or the place in which departed spirits are supposed to dwell. The word rendered prison, (φυλακη) means properly watch, guard--the act of keeping watch, or the guard itself; then watchpost, or station; then a place where any one is watched or guarded, as a prison; then a watch in the sense of a division of the night, as the morning watch. It is used in the New Testament, with reference to the future world, only in the following places: 1Pet 3:19, "Preached unto the spirits in prison;" and Rev 20:7, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison". An idea similar to the one here expressed may be found in 2Pet 2:4, though the word prison

does not there occur: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;" and in Jude 1:6, "and the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." The allusion, in the passage before us, is undoubtedly to confinement or imprisonment in the invisible world; and perhaps to those who are reserved there with reference to some future arrangement--for this idea enters commonly into the use of the word prison. There is, however, no specification of the place where this is; no intimation that it is purgatory--a place where the departed are supposed to undergo purification; no intimation that their condition can be affected by anything that we can do; no intimation that those particularly referred to differ in any sense from the others who are confined in that world; no hint that they can be released by any prayers or sacrifices of ours. This passage, therefore, cannot be adduced to support the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, for (1.) the essential ideas which enter into the doctrine of purgatory are not to be found in the word here used; (2.) there is no evidence in the fair interpretation of the passage that any message is borne to them while in prison; (3.) there is not the slightest hint that they can be released by any prayers or offerings of those who dwell on the earth. The simple idea is that of persons confined as in a prison; and the passage will prove only that in the time when the apostle wrote there were those who were thus confined. III. Was the message brought to them while in prison, or at some previous period? The Romanists say that it was while in prison; that Christ, after he was put to death in the body, was still kept alive in his spirit, and went and proclaimed his gospel to those who were in prison. So Bloomfield maintains, (in loc.,) and so OEcumenius and Cyril, as quoted by Bloomfield. But against this view there are plain objections drawn from the language of Peter himself. (1.) As we have seen, the fair interpretation of the passage "quickened by the Spirit," is not that he was kept alive as to his human soul, but that he, after being dead, was made alive by his own Divine energy. (2.) If the meaning be that he went and preached after his death, it seems difficult to know why the reference is to those only who "had been disobedient in the days of Noah." Why were they alone selected for this message? Are they separate from others? Were they the only ones in purgatory who could be beneficially affected by his preaching? On the other method of interpretation, we can suggest a

reason why they were particularly specified. But how can we on this? (3.) The language employed does not demand this interpretation. Its full meaning is met by the interpretation that Christ once preached to the spirits then in prison, to wit, in the days of Noah; that is, that he caused a Divine message to be borne to them. Thus it would be proper to say that "Whitfield came to America, and preached to the souls in perdition;" or to go among the graves of the first settlers of New Haven, and say, "Davenport came from England to preach to the dead men around us." (4.) This interpretation accords with the design of the apostle in inculcating the duty of patience and forbearance in trials; in encouraging those whom he addressed to be patient in their persecutions. See the analysis of the chapter. With this object in view, there was entire propriety in directing them to the long-suffering and forbearance evinced by the Saviour, through Noah. He was opposed, reviled, disbelieved, and, we may suppose, persecuted. It was to the purpose to direct them to the fact that he was saved as the result of his steadfastness to Him who had commanded him to preach to that ungodly generation. But what pertinency would there have been in saying that Christ went down to hell, and delivered some sort of a message there, we know not what, to those who are confined there?

Which sometime were disobedient. Which were once, or formerly, (ποτε,) disobedient or rebellious. The language here does not imply that they had ceased to be disobedient, or that they had become obedient at the time when the apostle wrote; but the object is to direct the attention to a former race of men characterized by disobedience, and to show the patience evinced under their provocations, in endeavouring to do them good. To say that men were formerly rebellious, or rebellious in a specified age, is no evidence that they are otherwise now. The meaning here is, that they did not obey the command of God when he called them to repentance by the preaching of Noah. Comp. 2Pet 2:5, where Noah is called "a preacher of righteousness."

When once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah. God waited on that guilty race a hundred and twenty years, (Gen 6:3,) a period sufficiently protracted to evince his long-suffering toward one generation. It is not improbable that during that whole

period Noah was, in various ways, preaching to that wicked generation. Comp. Heb 11:7.

While the ark was a preparing. It is probable that preparations were made for building the ark during a considerable portion of that time. St. Peter's, at Rome, was a much longer time in building; and it is to be remembered that in the age of the world when Noah lived, and with the imperfect knowledge of the arts of naval architecture which must have prevailed, it was a much more serious undertaking to construct an ark that would hold such a variety and such a number of animals as that was designed to, and that would float safely for more than a year in an universal flood, than it was to construct such a fabric as St. Peter's, in the days when that edifice was reared. Wherein few, that is, eight souls. Eight persons--Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, Gen 7:7. The allusion to their being saved here seems to be to encourage those whom Peter addressed to perseverance and fidelity, in the midst of all the opposition which they might experience. Noah was not disheartened. Sustained by the Spirit of Christ--the presence of the Son of God--he continued to preach. He did not abandon his purpose, and the result was that he was saved. True, they were few in number who were saved; the great mass continued to be wicked; but this very fact should be an encouragement to us--that though the great mass of any one generation may be wicked, God can protect and save the few who are faithful.

21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Observe here, 1. The type and the anti-type, the ark and baptism; their salvation from the deluge, by the ark, prefigureth our salvation from God's wrath by baptism. As all that were without the ark perished, and all within the ark were saved; so all that are ingrafted into Christ by faith, whereof baptism is a seal, are saved, whilst the unbelieving and unbaptized part of the world perish. Baptism is such a mean of spiritual salvation now, as the ark was of Noah's and his family's temporal salvation then: the like figure whereunto, baptism now saveth us.

Observe, 2. How our apostle expresses himself, and plainly declares what he means by that baptism which is saving; negatively, it is not the outward ceremony of sprinkling the face, or washing the body with water, that is saving, or any ways pleasing unto God, save only as it is an act and exercise of our obedience to his command and will; but positively, it is the answer of a good conscience towards God, that is, the faithful answer of a resolved soul in the covenant of baptism, who gives up himself to the obedience of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and renounces the world, the flesh, and the devil; this covenanting is the condition of salvation, and baptism but the sign.

Learn hence, The outward baptism alone saves none, but the inward only; and the sign and singular effect of inward baptism, is the answer of a good conscience towards God, Yet we must not conclude, with the Anabaptists, from this text that baptism can be of no saving advantage to infants, because, they cannot at present make this answer of a good conscience: for in the same manner speaks St. Paul of circumcision, that the true circumcision before God is the inward circumcision of the heart and spirit, and not the outward circumcision of the flesh.

But who dare argue from thence, that the Jewiah infants, for want of the inward circumcision, must not be admitted to the outward?

The argument is the very same: will you say that the answer of a good conscience is absolutely necessary, and expressly required, that baptism may be beneficial; therefore they only are to be baptized that can make this answer? The same may we say, that the inward circumcision of the heart was required as the only acceptable circumcision in the sight of God: therefore they only are to be circumcised, who have this inward circumcision of the heart. But as the one was the will of God, so is the other.

True indeed, The Jews did not admit proselytes to circumcision then, no more will we admit adult persons to baptism now, without the answer of a good conscience, or a solemn stipulation to be the Lord's for ever: but they admitted infants to circumcision without it; in like manner, the Christian church now admits the children of Christian

parents to baptism, without any such answer made by them, but for them only.

22 who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Our apostle having in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in this verse,

1. Of his going into heaven, there to dispatch all that remained to be done for the completing the salvation of his people.

2. He is here affirmed to be at God's right hand. The right hand is the upper hand, the hand of honour; and the right hand is the hand of power; accordingly Christ sitting at God's right hand, as an enthroned king, imports sovereign honour and supreme power: and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven.

3. It is asserted, that angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool.
For though his victory is yet incomplete and inconsummate, and we see not all things yet put under him, it may suffice at present that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and that's enough to show that the power of his enemies is broken; and that though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose at all: for refusing to submit to his sceptre, they will fall by the rod of his strength, Angels and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him. Our apostle having in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in this verse,

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enthroned king, imports sovereign honour and supreme power: and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven.

3. It is asserted, that angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool.
For though his victory is yet incomplete and inconsummate, and we see not all things yet put under him, it may suffice at present that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and that's enough to show that the power of his enemies is broken; and that though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose at all: for refusing to submit to his sceptre, they will fall by the rod of his strength, Angels and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him. Our apostle having in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in this verse,

1. Of his going into heaven, there to dispatch all that remained to be done for the completing the salvation of his people.

2. He is here affirmed to be at God's right hand. The right hand is the upper hand, the hand of honour; and the right hand is the hand of power; accordingly Christ sitting at God's right hand, as an enthroned king, imports sovereign honour and supreme power: and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven.

3. It is asserted, that angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool.
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and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him.

1 Peter-4

Good Stewards of God's Grace

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh. Since he as a man has died for us. 1Pet 3:18. The design was to set the suffering Redeemer before them as an example in their trials. Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. That is, evidently, the same mind that he evinced--a readiness to suffer in the cause of religion, a readiness to die as he had done. This readiness to suffer and die, the apostle speaks of as armour, and having this is represented as being armed. Armour is put on for offensive or defensive purposes in war; and the idea of the apostle here is, that that state of mind when we are ready to meet with persecution and trial, and when we are ready to die, will answer the purpose of armour in engaging in the conflicts and strifes which pertain to us as Christians, and especially in meeting with persecutions and trials. We are to put on the same fortitude which the Lord Jesus had, and this will be the best defence against our foes, and the best security of victory. For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. Comp. Rom 6:7. To "suffer in the flesh" is to die. The expression here has a proverbial aspect, and seems to have meant something like this: "when a man is dead, he will sin no more;" referring of course to the present life. So if a Christian becomes dead in a moral sense--dead to this world, dead by being crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20)--he may be expected to cease from sin. The reasoning is based on the idea that there is such a union between Christ and the believer that his death on the cross secured the death of the believer to the world. Comp. 2Ti 2:11, Col 2:20, 3:3.

That he no longer should live. That is, he has become, through the death of Christ, dead to the world and to the former things which influenced him, in order that he should hereafter live not to the lusts

of the flesh. 2Cor 5:15. The rest of his time in the flesh. The remainder of the time that he is to continue in the flesh; that is, that he is to live on the earth. To the lusts of men. Such lusts as men commonly live for and indulge in. Some of these are enumerated in the following verse. But to the will of God. In such a manner as God commands. The object of redemption is to rescue us from being swayed by wicked lusts, and to bring us to be conformed wholly to the will of God.

3 For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

For the time past of our life may suffice us. "We have spent sufficient time in indulging ourselves, and following our wicked propensities, and we should hereafter live in a different manner." This does not mean that it was ever proper thus to live, but that, as we would say, "we have had enough of these things; we have tried them; there is no reason why we should indulge in them any more." An expression quite similar to this occurs in Horace--Lusisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti. Ternpus abire tibi est, etc.--Epis, ii. 213.

To have wrought the will of the Gentiles. This does not mean to be subservient to their will, but to have done what they willed to do; that is, to live as they did. That the Gentiles or heathen lived in the manner immediately specified, Rom 1:21, seq.

When we walked in lasciviousness. When we lived in the indulgence of corrupt passions--the word walk being often used in the Scriptures to denote the manner of life. On the word lasciviousness, Rom 13:13. The apostle says we, not as meaning that he himself had been addicted to these vices, but as speaking of those who were Christians in general. It is common to say that we lived so and so, when speaking of a collection of persons, without meaning that each one was guilty of all the practices enumerated. 1Thes 4:17, for a similar use of the word we. The use of the word we in this place would show that the apostle did not mean to set himself up as better than they were, but was willing to be identified with them. Lusts. The indulgence of unlawful desires. Rom 1:24.

Excess of wine. The word here used (οινοφλυγια) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means overflowing of wine, (οινος), wine, and φλυω, to overflow; then wine-drinking; drunkenness. That this was a common vice need not be proved. Multitudes of those who became Christians had been drunkards, for intemperance abounded in all the heathen world. Comp. 1Cor 6:9-11. It should not be inferred here from the English translation, "excess of wine," that wine is improper only when used to excess, or that the moderate use of wine is proper. Whatever may be true on that point, nothing, can be determined in regard to it from the use of this word. The apostle had his eye on one thing--on such a use of wine as led to intoxication; such as they had indulged in before their conversion. About the impropriety of that, there could be no doubt. Whether any use of wine, by Christians or other persons, was lawful, was another question. It should be added, moreover, that the phrase "excess of wine" does not precisely convey the meaning of the original. The word excess would naturally imply something more than was needful; or something beyond the proper limit or measure; but no such idea is in the original word. That refers merely to the abundance of wine, without any reference to the inquiry whether there was more than was proper or not. Tindal renders it, somewhat better, drunkenness. So Luther, Trunkenheit.

Revellings, Rendered rioting in Rom 13:13. Rom 13:13. The Greek word (κωμος) occurs only here, and in Rom 13:13, and Gal 5:21. It means feasting, revel; "a carousing or merry-making after supper, the guests often sallying into the streets, and going through the city with torches, music, and songs in honour of Bacchus," etc.--Robinson, Lex. The word would apply to all such noisy and boisterous processions now--scenes wholly inappropriate to the Christian.

Banquetings. The word here used (ποτος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly drinking; an act of drinking; then a drinking bout; drinking together. The thing forbidden by it is an assembling together for the purpose of drinking. There is nothing in this word referring to eating, or to banqueting, as the term is now commonly employed. The idea in the passage is, that it is improper

for Christians to meet together for the purpose of drinking--as wine, toasts, etc. The prohibition would apply to all those assemblages where this is understood to be the main object. It would forbid, therefore, an attendance on all those celebrations in which drinking toasts is understood to be an essential part of the festivities, and all those where hilarity and joyfulness are sought to be produced by the intoxicating bowl. Such are not proper places for Christians.

And abominable idolatries. Literally, unlawful idolatries; that is, unlawful to the Jews, or forbidden by their laws. Then the expression is used in the sense of wicked, impious, since what is unlawful is impious and wrong. That the vices here referred to were practised by the heathen world is well known. Rom 1:26", seq. That many who became Christians were guilty of them before their conversion, is clear from this passage. The fact that they were thus converted shows the power of the gospel, and also that we should not despair in regard to those who are indulging in these vices now. They seem indeed almost to be hopeless, but we should remember that many who became Christians when the gospel was first preached, as well as since, were of this character. If they were reclaimed; if those who had been addicted to the gross and debasing vices referred to here, were brought into the kingdom of God, we should believe that those who are living in the same manner now may also be recovered. From the statement made in this verse, that "the time past of our lives may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," we may remark that the same may be said by all Christians of themselves; the same thing is true of all who are living in sin.

(1.) It is true of all who are Christians, and they feel it, that they lived long enough in sin.

(a) They made a fair trial--many of them with ample opportunities; with abundant wealth; with all that the fashionable world can furnish; with all that can be derived from low and gross indulgences. Many who are now Christians had opportunities of living in splendour and ease; many moved in gay and brilliant circles; many occupied stations of influence, or had brilliant prospects of distinction; many gave indulgence to gross propensities; many were the companions of the vile and the abandoned. Those who are now

Christians, take the church at large, have had ample opportunity of making the fullest trial of what sin and the world can furnish.

(b.) They all feel that the past is enough for this manner of living. It is "sufficient" to satisfy them that the world cannot furnish what the soul demands. They need a better portion; and they can now see that there is no reason why they should desire to continue the experiment in regard to what the world can furnish. On that unwise and wicked experiment they have expended time enough; and satisfied with that, they desire to return to it no more.

(2.) The same thing is true of the wicked--of all who are living for the world. The time past should be regarded as sufficient to make an experiment in sinful indulgences; for

(a.) the experiment has been made by millions before them, and has always failed; and they can hope to find in sin only what has always been found--disappointment, mortification, and despair.

(b.) They have made a sufficient experiment. They have never found in those indulgences what they flattered themselves they would find, and they have seen enough to satisfy them that what the immortal soul needs can never be obtained there.

(c.) They have spent sufficient time in this hopeless experiment. Life is short. Man has no time to waste. He may soon die-- and at whatever period of life any one may be who is living in sin, we may say to him the he has already thrown away enough of probation in a fruitless attempt to find happiness where it can never be found. For any purpose whatever for which any one could ever suppose it to be desirable to live in sin, the past should suffice. But why should it ever be deemed desirable at all? The fruits of sin are always disappointment, tears, death, despair.

4 wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you:*

Wherein they think it strange. In respect to which vices, they who were once your partners and accomplices now think it strange that you no longer unite with them. They do not understand the reasons why you have left them. They regard you as abandoning a course of life which has much to attract and to make life merry, for a severe

and gloomy superstition. This is a true account of the feelings which the people of the world have when their companions and friends leave them and become Christians. It is to them a strange and unaccountable thing, that they give up the pleasures of the world for a course of life which to them seems to promise anything but happiness. Even the kindred of the Saviour regarded him as "beside himself," (Mk 3:21,) and Festus supposed that Paul was mad, Acts 26:24. There is almost nothing which the people of the world so little comprehend as the reasons which influence those with ample means of worldly enjoyment to leave the circles of gaiety and vanity, and to give themselves to the serious employments of religion. The epithets of fool, enthusiast, fanatic, are terms which frequently occur to the heart to denote this, if they are not always allowed to escape from the lips. The reasons why they esteem this so strange, are something like the following:

(1.) They do not appreciate the motives which influence those who leave them. They feel that it is proper to enjoy the world, and to make life cheerful, and they do not understand what it is to act under a deep sense of responsibility to God, and with reference to eternity. They live for themselves. They seek happiness as the end and aim of life. They have never been accustomed to direct the mind onward to another world, and to the account which they must soon render at the bar of God. Unaccustomed to act from any higher motives than those which pertain to the present world, they cannot appreciate the conduct of those who begin to live and act for eternity.

(2.) They do not, yet see the guilt and folly of sinful pleasures. They are not convinced of the deep sinfulness of the human soul, and they to think it strange that others should abandon a course of life which seems them so innocent. They do not see why those who have been so long accustomed to these indulgences should have changed their opinions, and why they now regard those things as sinful which they once considered to be harmless.

(3.) They do not see the force of the argument for religion. Not having the views of the unspeakable importance of religious truth and duty which Christians now have, they wonder that they should break off from the course of life which they formerly pursued, and separate from the mass of their fellow-men. Hence they sometimes regard the conduct of Christians as amiable weakness; sometimes as

superstition; sometimes as sheer folly; sometimes as madness; and sometimes as sourness and misanthropy. In all respects they esteem it strange.

"Lions and beasts of savage name Put on the nature of the lamb, While the wide world esteems it strange, Gaze, and admire, and hate the change."

That ye run not with them. There may be an allusion here to the well-known orgies of Bacchus, in which his votaries ran as if excited by the furies, and were urged on as if transported with madness. See Ovid, Metam. iii. 529, thus translated by Addison:
"For now, through prostrate Greece, young Bacchus rode, Whilst howling matrons celebrate the god; All ranks and sexes to his or orgies ran, To mingle in the pomp and fill the train."

The language, however, will well describe revels of any sort, and at any period of the world. To the same excess of riot. The word rendered excess (a?a??s??) means, properly, a pouring out, an affusion; and the idea here is, that all the sources and forms of riot and disorder were poured out together. There was no withholding, no restraint. The most unlimited indulgence was given to the passions. This was the case in the disorder referred to among the ancients, as it is the case now in scenes of midnight revelry. On the meaning of the word riot, Eph 5:18, Tit 1:6. Speaking evil of you. Gr., blasphemy. Mt 9:3. The meaning here is, that they used harsh and reproachful epithets of those who would not unite with them in their revelry. They called them fools, fanatics, hypocrites, etc. The idea is not that they blasphemed God, or that they charged Christians with crime, but that they used language fitted to injure the feelings, the character, the reputation of those who would no longer unite with them in the ways of vice and folly.

5 who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

Who shall give account. That is, they shall not do this with impunity. They are guilty in this of a great wrong, and they must answer for it to God. That is ready to judge. That is, "who is prepared to judge"--τωετοιμωςεχοντι. See the phrase used in Acts 21:13: "I am ready not

to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem." 2Cor 12:14 "The third time I am ready to come to you." Compare the word ready--ετοιμος in Mt 22:4,8, 24:44, 25:10, Lk 12:40, 22:33, 1Pet 1:5. The meaning is, not that he was about to do it, or that the day of judgment was near at hand--whatever the apostle may have supposed to be true on that point--but that he was prepared for it; all the arrangements were made with reference to it; there was nothing to hinder it. To judge the quick and the dead. The living and the dead; that is, those who shall be alive when he comes, and those in their graves. This is a common phrase to denote all who shall be brought before the bar of God for judgment. Acts 10:42. 1Thes 4:16; 1Thes 4:17; 2Ti 4:1 The meaning in this connexion seems to be, that they should bear their trials and the opposition which they would meet with patiently, not feeling that they were forgotten, nor attempting to avenge themselves; for the Lord would vindicate then when he should come to judgment, and call those who had injured them to an account for all the wrongs which they had done to the children of God.

6 For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

For, for this cause. The expression, "For, for this cause," refers to an end to be reached, or an object to be gained, or a reason why anything referred to is done. The end or reason why the thing referred to here, to wit, that "the gospel was preached to the dead," was done, is stated in the subsequent part of the verse to have been "that they might be judged," etc. It was with reference to this, or in order that this might be, that the gospel was preached to them.

Was the gospel preached also to them that are dead. Many, as Doddridge, Whitby, and others, understand this of those who are spiritually dead, that is, the Gentile, and suppose that the object for which this was done was that "they might be brought to such a state of life as their carnal neighbours will look upon as a kind of condemnation and death." --Doddridge. Others have suppose that it refers to those who had suffered martyrdom in the cause of Christianity; others, that it refers to the sinners of the old world, (Saurin.) expressing a hope that some of them might be saved; and others, that it means that the Saviour went down and preached to those who are dead, in accordance with one of the interpretations

given of 1Pet 3:19. It seems to me that the most natural and obvious interpretation is to refer it to those who were then dead, to whom the gospel had been preached when living, and who had become true Christians. This is the interpretation proposed by Wetstein, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others. In support of this, it may be said,

(1.) that this is the natural and obvious meaning of the word dead, which should be understood literally, unless there is some good reason in the connexion for departing from the common meaning of the word.

(2.) The apostle had just used the word in that sense in the previous verse.

(3.) This will suit the connexion, and accord with the design of the apostle. He was addressing those who were suffering persecution. It was natural, in such a connexion, to refer to those who had died in the faith, and to show, for their encouragement, that though they had been put to death, yet they still lived to God. He therefore says, that the design in publishing the gospel to them was, that though they might be judged by men in the usual manner, and put to death, yet that in respect to their higher and nobler nature, the spirit, they might live unto God. It was not uncommon nor unnatural for the apostles, in writing to those who were suffering persecution, to refer and example an argument for fidelity and perseverance. Compare 1Thes 4:13, Rev 14:13. That they might be judged according to men in the flesh. That is, so far as men are concerned, (κατααν θρωπους), or in respect to the treatment which they received from men in the flesh, they were judged and condemned; in respect to God, and the treatment which they received from him, καταθεον, they would live in spirit. Men judged them severely, and put them to death for their religion; God gave them life, and saved them. By the one they were condemned in the flesh--so far as pain, and sorrow, and death could be inflicted on the body; by the other they were made to live in the spirit--to be his, to live with him. The word judged her, I supposed, therefore, to refer to a sentence passed on them for their religion, consigning them to death for it. There is a particle in the original--μεν indeed--which has not been retained in the common translation, but which is quite important to the sense: "that they might indeed be judged in the flesh, but live," etc. The direct object or design of

preaching the gospel to them was not that they might be condemned and put to death by man, but this was indeed or in fact one of the results in the way to a higher object. But live according to God. In respect to God, or so far as he was concerned. By him they would not be condemned. By him they would be made to live--to have the true life. The gospel was preached to them in order that so far as God was concerned, so far as their relation to him was concerned, so far as he would deal with them, they might live. The word live here seems to refer to the whole life that was the consequence of their being brought under the power of the gospel;

(a.) that they might have spiritual life imparted to them;

(b.) that they might live a life of holiness in this world;

(c.) that they might live hereafter in the world to come. In one respect, and so far as men were concerned, their embracing the gospel was followed by death; in another respect, and so far as God was concerned, it was followed by life. The value and permanence of the latter, as contrasted with the former, seems to have been the thought in the mind of the apostle in encouraging those to whom he wrote to exercise patience in their trials, and to show fidelity in the service of their Master. In the spirit. In their souls, as contrasted with their body. In respect to that--to the flesh--they were put to death; in respect to their souls--their higher natures--they were made truly to live. The argument, then, in this verse is, that in the trials which we endure on account of religion, we should remember the example of those who have suffered for it, and should remember why the gospel was preached to them. It was in a subordinate sense, indeed, that they might glorify God by a martyr's death; but in a higher sense, that in this world and the next they might truly live. The flesh might suffer in consequence of their embracing the gospel that was preached to them, but the soul would live. Animated by their example, we should be willing to suffer in the flesh, if we may for ever live with God.

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

But the end of an things is at hand. This declaration is also evidently designed to support and encourage them in their trials, and to excite them to lead a holy life, by the assurance that the end of all things

was drawing nigh. The phrase, "the end of all things," would naturally refer to the end of the world; the winding up of human affairs. It is not absolutely certain, however, that the apostle used it here in this sense. It might mean that so far as they were concerned, or in respect to them, the end of all things drew near. Death is to each one the end of all things here below: the end of his plans and of his interest in all that pertains to sublunary affairs. Even if the phrase did originally and properly refer to the end of the world, it is probable that it would soon come to denote the end of life in relation to the affairs of each individual; since, if it was believed that the end of the world was near, it must consequently be believed that the termination of the earthly career of each one also drew near to a close. It is possible that the latter signification may have come ultimately to predominate, and that Peter may have used it in this sense without referring to the other. Comp. 2Pet 3:8, seq., for his views on this subject. Rom 13:11, Rom 13:12. The word rendered "is at hand," (ηγγικε,) may refer either to proximity of place or time, and it always denotes that the place or the time referred to was not far off. In the former sense, as referring to nearness of place, see Mt 21:1, Mk 11:1; Lk 7:12, 15:25, 18:35,40, 19:29,37,41, 24:46, Acts 9:3, 10:9, 21:33; in the latter sense, as referring to time as being near, see Mt 3:2; Mt 4:17, 10:7, 21:34, 26:45, Mk 1:16, Lk 21:20,28, Acts 7:17, Rom 13:12; Heb 10:25, 1Pet 4:7. The idea as applied to time, or to an approaching event, is undoubtedly that it is close by; it is not far off; it will soon occur. If this refers to the end of the world, it would mean that it was soon to occur; if to death, that this was an event which could not be far distant--perhaps an event that was to be hastened by their trials. The fact that it is such language as we now naturally address to men, saying that in respect to them "the end of all things is at hand," shows that it cannot be demonstrated that Peter did not use it in the same sense, and consequently that it cannot be proved that he meant to teach that the end of the world was then soon to occur.

Be ye therefore sober. Serious; thoughtful; considerate. Let a fact of so much importance make a solemn impression on your mind, and preserve you from frivolity, levity, and vanity. See the word explained 1Timm 3:2.

And watch unto prayer. Be looking out for the end of all things in such a manner as to lead you to embrace all proper opportunities for

prayer. Comp. Mt 26:39,41. The word rendered watch, means to be sober, temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine; then watchful, circumspect. The important truth, then, taught by this passage is, that the near approach of the end of all things should make us serious and prayerful. I The end may be regarded as approaching. This is true

(1.) of all things; of the winding up of the affairs of this world. It is constantly drawing nearer and nearer, and no one can tell how soon it will occur. The period is wisely hidden from the knowledge of all men, Mt 24:36, Acts 1:7, among other reasons, in order that we may be always ready, No man can tell certainly at what time it will come; no man can demonstrate that it may not come at any moment. Everywhere in the Scriptures it is represented that it will come at an unexpected hour, as a thief in the night, and when the mass of men shall be slumbering in false security, Mt 24:37-39,42,43, 1Thes 5:2; Lk 21:34.

(2.) It is near in relation to each one of us. The day of our death cannot be far distant; it may be very near. The very next thing that we may have to do, may be to lie down and die. II. It is proper that such a nearness of the end of all things should lead us to be serious, and to pray.

(1.) To be serious; for

(a.) the end of all things, regard to us, is a most important event. It closes our probation. It fixes our character. It seals up our destiny. It makes all ever onward in character and doom unchangeable.

(b.) We are so made as to be serious in view of such events. God has so constituted the mind, that when we lose property, health, or friends; when we look into a grave, or are beset with dangers; when we are in the room of the dying or the dead, we are serious and thoughtful. It is unnatural not to be so. Levity and frivolity on such occasions are as contrary to all the finer and better feelings of our nature as they are to the precepts of the Bible.

(c) There are advantages in seriousness of mind. It enables us to take better views of things, Eccl 7:2,3. A calm, sober, sedate mind is the

best for a contemplation of truth, and for looking at things as they are.

(2.) To be watchful unto prayer.

(a.) Men naturally pray when they suppose that the end of all things is coming. An earthquake induces them to pray. An eclipse, or any other supposed prodigy, leads men to pray if they suppose the end of the world is drawing near. A ship-wreck, or any other sudden danger, leads them to pray, Ps 107:28. So men often pray in sickness who have never prayed in days of health.

(b.) It is proper to do it. Death is an important event, and in anticipation of such an event we should pray. Who can help us then but God? Who can conduct us through the dark valley but he? Who can save us amidst the wrecks and ruins of the universe but he? Who can dissipate our fears, and make us calm amidst the convulsions of dissolving nature, but God? As that event, therefore, may come upon us at any hour, it should lead us to constant prayer; and the more so because, when it comes, we may be in no state of mind to pray. The posture in which we should feel that it would be most appropriate that the messenger of death should find us, would be that of prayer.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

And above all things. More than all things else. Have fervent charity among yourselves. Warm, ardent love towards each other. On the nature of charity, 1Cor 13:1 The word rendered fervent, means properly extended; then intent, earnest, fervent. For charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Love to another shall so cover or hide a great many imperfections in him, that you will not notice them. This passage is quoted from Prov 10:12: "Love covereth all sins." For the truth of it we have only to appeal to the experience of every one.

(a.) True love to another makes us kind to his imperfections, charitable towards his faults, and often blind even to the existence of faults. We would not see the imperfections of those whom we love; and our attachment for what we esteem their real excellencies, makes us insensible to their errors.

(b.) If we love them we are ready to cover over their faults, even those which we may see in them. Of love the Christian poet says---

"Tis gentle, delicate, and kind. To faults compassionate or blind."

The passage before us is not the same in signification as that in Jas 5:20, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Jas 5:20. That passage means, that by the conversion of another the sins of him who is converted shall be covered over, or not brought to judgment for condemnation; that is, they shall be covered over so far as God is concerned---this passage means that, under the influence of love, the sins of another shall be covered over so far as we are concerned; that is, they shall be unobserved or forgiven. The language here used does not mean, as the Romanists maintain, that "charity shall procure us pardon for a multitude of sins;" for, besides that such a doctrine is contrary to the uniform teachings of the Scriptures elsewhere, it is a departure from the obvious meaning of the passage. The subject on which the apostle is treating is the advantage of love in our conduct towards others, and this he enforces by saying that it will make us kind to their imperfections, and lead us to overlook their faults. It is nowhere taught in the Scriptures that our "charity" to others will be an atonement or expiation for our own offences. If it could be so, the atonement made by Christ would have been unnecessary. Love, however, is of inestimable value in the treatment of others; and imperfect as we are, and liable to go astray, we all have occasion to cast ourselves on the charity of our brethren, and to avail ourselves much and often of that "love which covers over a multitude of sins."

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

Use hospitality one to another. On the duty of hospitality, Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2. Without grudging. Greek, "without murmurs;" that is, without complaining of the hardship of doing it; of the time, and expense, and trouble required in doing it. The idea of grudging, in the common sense of that word--that is, of doing it unwillingly, or regretting the expense, and considering it as ill-bestowed, or as not producing an equivalent of any kind--is not exactly the idea here. It is that we are to do it without murmuring or complaining. It greatly enhances the value of hospitality, that it be done On our part with entire cheerfulness. One of the duties involved in it is to make a

guest happy; and this can be done in no other way than by showing him that he is welcome.

10 As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

As every man hath received the gift. The word rendered the gift, (χαρισμα,) in the Greek, without the article, means endowment of any kind, but especially that conferred by the Holy Spirit. Here it seems to refer to every kind of endowment by which we can do good to others; especially every kind of qualification furnished by religion by which we can help others. It does not refer here particularly to the ministry of the word--though it is applicable to that, and includes that--but to all the gifts and graces by which we can contribute to the welfare of others. All this is regarded as a gift, or charisma, of God. It is not owing to ourselves, but is to be traced to him. See the word explained 1Timm 4:14. Even so minister the same one to another, in anything by which you can benefit another. Regard what you have and they have not as a gift bestowed upon you by God for the common good, and be ready to impart it as the wants of others require. The word minister here (διακονουντες) would refer to any kind of ministering, whether by counsel, by advice, by the supply of the wants of the poor, or by preaching. It has here no reference to any one of these exclusively; but means, that in whatever God has favoured us more than others, we should be ready to minister to their wants. See 2Ti 1:18; 2Cor 3:3, 8:19,20. As good stewards. Regarding yourselves as the mere stewards of God; that is, as appointed by him to do this work for him, and intrusted by him with what is needful to benefit others. He intends to do them good, but he means to do it through your instrumentality, and has intrusted to you as a steward what he designed to confer on them. This is the true idea, in respect to any special endowments of talent, property, or grace, which we may have received from God. Comp. 1Cor 4:1,2, Lk 16:1,2,8. Of the manifold grace of God. The grace or favour of God evinced in many ways, or by a variety of gifts. His favours are not confined to one single thing; as, for example, to talent for doing good by preaching; but are extended to a great many things by which we may do good to influence, property, reputation, wisdom, experience. All these are to be regarded as his gifts; all to be employed in doing good to others as we have opportunity.

11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth; that God in

all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

If any man speak. As a preacher, referring here particularly to the office of the ministry. Let him speak as the oracles of God. As the oracles of God speak; to wit, in accordance with the truth which God has revealed, and with an impressive sense of the responsibility of delivering a message from him. The word rendered oracles, (λογια) means, properly, something spoken or uttered; then anything uttered by God--a Divine communication--a revelation, Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12. See the general duty here inculcated illustrated at length in Rom 12:6-8. The passage here has a strong resemblance to the one in Romans. If any man minister. διακονει. This may refer either, so far as the word is concerned, to the office of a deacon, or to any service which one renders to another. See 1Pet 4:10. The word commonly refers to service in general; to attendance on another, or to aid rendered to another; to the distribution of alms, etc. It seems probable that the word here does not refer to the office of a deacon as such, because the peculiarity of that office was to take charge of the poor of the church, and of the funds provided for them, (Acts 6:2,3;) but the apostle here says that they to whom he referred should "minister as of the ability which God giveth," which seems to imply that it was rather to distribute what was their own, than what was committed to them by the church. The word may refer to any aid which we reader to others in the church, as distributing alms, attending on the sick, etc. Rom 12:7,8. As of the ability which God giveth. In regard to property, talent, strength, influence, etc. This is the limit of all obligation, No one is bound to go beyond his ability; every one is required to come up to it. Comp. Mk 14:8, Lk 17:10. That God in all things may be glorified. That he may be honoured; to wit, by our doing all the good we can to others, and thus showing the power of his religion. 1Cor 10:31. Through Jesus Christ. That is, as the medium through whom all those holy influences come by which God is honoured. To whom. That is, to God; for he is the main subject of the sentence. The apostle says that in all things lie is to be glorified by us, and then adds in this doxology that he is worthy to be thus honoured. Comp. Rev 1:6; 2Ti 4:18. Many, however, suppose that the reference here is to the Son of God. That it would be true of him, and appropriate, Rom 9:5.

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Beloved, think it not strange. Do not consider it as anything which you had no reason to expect; as anything which may not happen to others also. Concerning the fiery trial which is to try you. Referring, doubtless, to some severe persecution which was then impending. We have not the means of determining precisely what this was. The word rendered fiery trial (πυρωσει) occurs only here and in Rev 18:9,18; in both of which latter places it is rendered burning. It means, properly, a being on fire, burning, conflagration; and then any severe trial. It cannot be demonstrated from this word that they were literally to suffer by fire, but it is clear that some heavy calamity was before them. As though some strange thing happened unto you. Something unusual; something which did not occur to others.

13 but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. That is, sufferings of the same kind that he endured, and inflicted for the same reasons. Comp. Col 1:24, Jas 1:2; Mt 5:12. The meaning here is, that they were to regard it as a matter of rejoicing that they were identified with Christ, even in suffering. See this sentiment illustrated at length Php 3:10. That, when his glory shall be revealed. At the day of judgment. Mt 26:30. Ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. Being admitted to the rewards which he will then confer on his people. Comp. 1Thes 2:19. Every good man will have joy when, immediately at death, he is received into the presence of his Saviour; but his joy will be complete only when, in the presence of assembled worlds, he shall hear the sentence which shall confirm him in happiness for ever.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye;* for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye. That is, in his cause, or on his account. Mt 5:11. The sense of the word happy here is the same as blessed in Mt 5:3,4, etc. It means that they were to regard their condition or lot as a blessed one; not that they would

find personal and positive enjoyment on being reproached and vilified. It would be a blessed condition, because it would be like that of their Saviour; would show that they were his friends; would be accompanied with rich spiritual influences in the present world; and would be followed by the rewards of heaven. For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. The glorious and Divine Spirit. There is no doubt that there is reference here to the Holy Spirit; and the meaning is, that they might expect that that Spirit would rest upon them, or abide with them, if they were persecuted for the cause of Christ. There may be some allusion here, in the language, to the fact that the Spirit of God descended and abode on the Saviour at his baptism, (Jn 1:33;) and, in like manner, they might hope to have the same Spirit resting on them. The essential idea is, that, if they were called to suffer in the cause of the Redeemer, they would not be left or forsaken. They might hope that God would impart his Spirit to them in proportion to their sufferings in behalf of religion, and that they would have augmented joy and peace. This is doubtless the case with those who suffer persecution, and this is the secret reason why they are so sustained in their trials. Their persecutions are made the reason of a much more copious effusion of the Spirit on their souls. The same principle applies, doubtless, to all the forms of trial which the children of God pass through; and in sickness, bereavement, loss of property, disappointment in their worldly plans, and death itself, they may hope that larger measures of the Spirit's influences will rest upon them. Hence it is often gain to the believer to suffer. On their part. So far as they are concerned; or by them. He is evil spoken of. That is, the Holy Spirit. They only blaspheme him, (Greek;) they reproach his sacred influences by their treatment of you and your religion. But on your part he is glorified. By your manner of speaking of him, and by the honour done to him in the patience evinced in your trials, and in your purity of life.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer. If you must be called to suffer, see that it be not for crime. Comp. 2Pet 3:14, 2Pet 3:17. They were to be careful that their sufferings were brought upon them only in consequence of their religion, and not because any crime could be laid to their charge. If even such charges were brought against them, there should be no pretext furnished for them by their lives. As an evil doer. As a wicked man; or as guilty of injustice and wrong

towards others. Or as a busy-body in other men's matters. The Greek word here used (αλλοτριοεπισκοπος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, an inspector of strange things, or of the things of others. Professor Robinson (Lex.) supposes that the word may refer to one who is "a director of heathenism;" but the more obvious signification, and the one commonly adopted, is that which occurs in our translation --one who busies himself with what does not concern him; that is, one who pries into the affairs of another; who attempts to control or direct them as if they were his own. In respect to the vice here condemned, Php 2:4. Comp. 2Thes 3:11, and 1Timm 5:13.

16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian. Because he is a Christian; if he is persecuted on account of his religion. This was often done, and they had reason to expect that it might occur in their own case. 2Pet 3:17. On the import of the word Christian, and the reasons why the name was given to the disciples of the Lord Jesus, Acts 11:26. Let him not be ashamed. (1.) Ashamed of religion so as to refuse to suffer on account of it. (2.) Ashamed that he is despised and maltreated. He is to regard his religion as every way honourable, and all that fairly results from it in time and eternity as in every respect desire able. He is not to be ashamed to be called a Christian; he is not to be ashamed of the doctrines taught by his religion; he is not to be ashamed of the Saviour whom he professes to love; he is not to be ashamed of the society and fellowship of those who are true Christians, poor and despised though they may be; he is not to be ashamed to perform any of the duties demanded by his religion; he is not to be ashamed to have his name cast out, and himself subjected to reproach and scorn. A man should be ashamed only of that which is wrong. He should glory in that which is right, whatever may be the consequences to himself. Christians now, though not subjected to open persecution, are frequently reproached by the world on account of their religion; and though the rack may not be employed, and the fires of martyrdom are not enkindled, yet it is often true that one who is a believer is called to "suffer as a Christian." He may be reviled and despised. His views may be regarded as bigoted, narrow, severe. Opprobrious epithets, on account of his opinions, may be applied to him. His former friends and companions may leave him because he has become a Christian. A wicked father, or a gay and

worldly mother, may oppose a child, or a husband may revile a wife, on account of their religion. In all these cases, the same spirit essentially is required which was enjoined on the early Christian martyrs. We are never to be ashamed of our religion, whatever results may follow from our attachment to it. Rom 1:16. But let him glorify God on this behalf. Let him praise God that he is deemed not unworthy to suffer in such a cause. It is a matter of thankfulness (1.) that they may have this evidence that they are true Christians; (2.) that they may desire the advantages which may result from suffering as Christ did, and in his cause. Acts 5:41, where the sentiment here expressed is fully illustrated. Comp. Php 3:10; Col 1:24.

17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God - God first visits his church, and that both in justice and mercy. What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel - How terribly will he visit them! The judgments which are milder at the beginning, grow more and more severe. But good men, having already sustained their part, are only spectators of the miseries of the wicked.

For the time is come. That is, this is now to be expected. There is reason to think that this trial will now occur, and there is a propriety that it should be made. Probably the apostle referred to some indications then apparent that this was about to take place.

That judgment must begin. The word judgment here (κριμα) seems to mean the severe trial which would determine character. It refers such calamities as would settle the question whether there was any religion, or would test the value of that which was professed. It was to "begin" at the house of God, or be applied to the church first, in order that the nature and worth of religion might be see. The reference is, doubtless, to some fearful calamity which would primarily fall on the "house of God;" that is, to some form of persecution which was to be let loose upon the church.

At the house of God. Benson, Bloomfield, and many others, suppose that this , refers to the Jews, and to the calamities that were to come

around the temple and the holy city about to be destroyed. But the more obvious reference is to Christians, spoken of as the house or family Of God. There is probably in the language here an allusion to Eze 9:6 "Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; and begin at my sanctuary." Jer 25:29. But the language used here by the apostle does not denote literally the temple, or the Jews, but those who were in his time regarded as the people of God--Christians--the church. So the phrase () house of Jehovah is used to denote the family or people of God, Nu 12:7, Hoss 8:1. Comp. also 1Timm 3:15, 1Timm 3:15. The sense here is, therefore, that the series of calamities referred to were to commence with the church, or were to come first upon the people of God. Schoettgen here aptly quotes a passage from the writings of the Rabbins: "Punishments never come into the world unless the wicked are in it; but they do not begin, unless they commence first with the righteous."

And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel God? If God brings such trials upon us who have obeyed his gospel, what have we not reason to suppose he will bring upon those who are yet in their sins? And if we are selected first as the objects of this visitation, if there is that in us which requires such method of dealing, what are we to suppose will occur in the end with those who make no pretensions to religion, but are yet living in open transgression? The sentiment is, that if God deals thus strictly with his people; if there is that in them which makes the, visitations of his judgment proper on them, there is a certainty that they who are not his people, but who live in iniquity, will in the end be overwhelmed with the tokens of severer wrath. Their punishment hereafter will be certain; and who can tell what will be the measure of its severity? Every wicked man, when he sees the trials which God brings upon his own people, should tremble under the apprehension of the deeper calamity which will hereafter come upon himself. We may remark,

(1.) that the judgments which God brings upon his own people make it certain that the wicked will punished. If he does not spare his own people, why should he spare others?

(2.) The punishment of the wicked is merely delayed. It begins at the house, of God, Christians are tried, and are recalled from their

wanderings, and are prepared by discipline for: the heavenly world. The punishment of the wicked is often delayed to a future world, and in this life they have almost uninterrupted prosperity, but in the end it will be certain. Ps 73:1, seq. The punishment will come in the end. It cannot be evaded. Sooner or later justice requires that the wicked should be visited with the expressions of Divine displeasure on account of sin, and in the future world there will be ample time for the infliction of all the punishment which they deserve.

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

And if the righteous scarcely be saved. If they are saved with difficulty. The word here used (μολις) occurs in the following places: Acts 14:18, "scarce restrained they the people;" Acts 27:7, "and scarce were come over against Cnidus;" Acts 27:8, "and hardly passing it;" Acts 27:16, "we had much work to come by the boat"- literally, we were able with difficulty to get the boat; Rom 5:7, "scarcely for a righteous man will one die;" and in the passage before us. The word implies that there is some difficulty, or obstruction, so that the thing came very near not to happen, or so that there was much risk about it. Compare Lk 13:31. The apostle in this passage seems to have had his eye on a verse in Proverbs, (Prov 11:31,) and he has merely expanded and illustrated it: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." By the question which he employs, he admits that the righteous are saved with difficulty, or that there are perils which jeopard their salvation, and which are of such a kind as to make it very near not to happen. They would indeed be saved, but it would be in such a manner as to show that the circumstances were such as to render it, to human appearances, doubtful and problematical. This peril may have arisen from many circumstances:

(a.) The difficulty of forming a plan of salvation, involving a degree of wisdom wholly beyond that of man, and of such a character that beforehand it would have been problematical and doubtful whether it could be. There was but one way in which it could be done. But what human wisdom could have devised that, or thought of it? There was but one being who could save. But who would have supposed that the Son of God would have been willing to become a man, and to die on a cross to do it? If he had been unwilling to come and die, the righteous could not have been saved.

(b.) The difficulty of bringing those who are saved to a willingness to accept of salvation. All were disposed alike to reject it; and there were many obstacles in the human heart, arising from pride, and selfishness, and unbelief, and the love of sin, which must be overcome before any would accept of the offer of mercy. There was but one agent who could overcome these things, and induce any of the race to embrace the gospel--the Holy Spirit. But who could have anticipated that the Spirit of God would have undertaken to renew and sanctify the polluted human heart? Yet, if he had failed, there could have been no salvation for any.

(c.) The difficulty of keeping them from falling away amidst the temptations and allurements of the world. Often it seems to be wholly doubtful whether those who have been converted will be kept to eternal life. They have so little religion; they yield so readily to temptation; they conform so much to the world; they have so little strength to bear up under trials, that it seems as if there was no power to preserve them and bring them to heaven. They are saved when they seemed almost ready to yield everything.

(d.) The difficulty of rescuing them from the power of the great enemy of souls. The adversary has vast power, and he means, if he can, to destroy those who are the children of God. Often they are in most imminent danger, and it seems to be a question of doubtful issue whether they will not be entirely overcome, and perish. It is no small matter to rescue a soul from the dominion of Satan, and to bring it to heaven, so that it shall be eternally safe. Through the internal struggles and the outward conflicts of life, it seems often a matter of doubt whether with all their effort they will be saved; and when they are saved, they will feel that they have been rescued from thousands of dangers, and that there has been many a time when they have stood on the very verge of ruin, and when, to human appearances, it was scarcely possible that they could be saved. Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear! What hope is there of their salvation? The meaning is, that they would certainly perish; and the doctrine in the passage is, that the fact that the righteous are saved with so much difficulty is proof that the wicked will not be saved at all. This follows, because

(a.) there is the same difficulty in their salvation which there was in the salvation of those who became righteous; the same difficulty arising from the love of sin, the hardness of the heart, and the arts and power of the adversary.

(b.) No one can be saved without effort, and in fact the righteous are saved only by constant and strenuous effort on their part. But the wicked make no effort for their own salvation. They make use of no means for it; they put forth no exertions to obtain it; they do not make it a part of their plan of life. How, then, can they be saved? But where will they appear? I answer,

(a.) they will appear somewhere. They will not cease to exist when they pass away from this world. Not one of them will be annihilated; and though they vanish from the earth, and will be seen here no more, yet they will make their appearance in some other part of the universe.

(b.) They will appear at the judgment-seat, as all others will, to receive their sentence according to the deeds done in the body. It follows from this,

(1.) that the wicked will certainly be destroyed. If the righteous are scarcely saved, how can they be?

(2.) That there will be a state of future punishment, for this refers to what is to occur in the future world.

(3.) That the punishment of the wicked will be eternal, for it is the opposite of what is meant by saved. The time will never come when it will be said that they are saved! But if so, their punishment must be eternal!

19 Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God. That is, who endure the kind of sufferings that he, by his Providence, shall appoint. Comp. 1Pet 3:17, 4:15,16. Commit the keeping of their souls to him. Since there is so much danger; since there is no one else that can keep them; and since he is a Being so faithful, let them

commit all their interests to him. Comp. Ps 37:5. The word souls here (ψυχας) is equivalent to themselves. They were to leave everything in his hand, faithfully performing every duty, and not being anxious for the result. In well doing. Constantly doing good, or seeking to perform every duty in a proper manner. Their business was always to do right; the result was to be left with God. A man who is engaged always in well-doing, may safely commit all his interest to God. As unto a faithful Creator. God may be trusted, or confided in, in all his attributes, and in all the relations which he sustains as Creator, Redeemer, Moral Governor, and Judge. In these, and in all other respects, we may come before him with confidence, and put unwavering trust in him. As Creator particularly; as one who has brought us, and all creatures and things into being, we may be sure that he will be "faithful" to the design which he had in view. From that design he will never depart until it is fully accomplished. He abandons no purpose which he has formed, and we may be assured that he will faithfully pursue it to the end. As our Creator we may come to him, and look to him for his protection and care. He made us. He had a design in our creation. He so endowed us that we might live for ever, and so that we might honour and enjoy him. He did not create us that we might be miserable; nor does he wish that we should be. He formed us in such a way that, if we choose, we may be eternally happy. In that path in which he has appointed us to go, if we pursue it, we may be sure of his aid and protection. If we really aim to accomplish the purposes for which we were made, we may be certain that he will show himself to be a "faithful Creator;" one in whom we may always confide. And even though we have wandered from him, and have long forgotten why we were made, and have loved and served the creature more than the Creator, we may be sure, if we will return to him, that he will not forget the design for which he originally made us. As our Creator we may still confide in him. Redeemed by the blood of his Son, and renewed by his Spirit after the image of Him who created us, we may still go to him as our Creator, and may pray that even yet the high and noble ends for which we were made may be accomplished in us. Doing this, we shah find him as true to that purpose as though we had never sinned. Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God. That is, who endure the kind of sufferings that he, by his Providence, shall appoint. Comp. 1Pet 3:17, 4:15,16. Commit the keeping of their souls to him. Since there is so much danger; since there is no one else that can keep them; and since he is a Being so faithful, let

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1 Peter-5

Tend the Flock of God

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

The elders which are among you I exhort. The word elder means, properly, one who is old; but it is frequently used in the New Testament as applicable to the officers of the church; probably because aged persons were at first commonly appointed to these offices. Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:2. There is evidently an allusion here to the fact that such persons were selected on account of their age, because in the following verses (1Pet 5:4, seq.) the apostle addresses particularly the younger. It is worthy of remark, that he here refers only to one class of ministers. He does not speak of three "orders," of "bishops, priests, and deacons;" and the evidence from the passage here is quite strong that there were no such orders in the churches of Asia Minor, to which this epistle was directed. It is also worthy of remark, that the word "exhort" is here used. The language which Peter uses is not that of stern and arbitrary command; it is that of kind and mild Christian exhortation. Phm 1:8, Phm 1:9.

Who am also an elder. Gr., "a fellow-presbyter," (συμπρεσβυτερος.) This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means that he was a co-presbyter with them; and he makes this one of the grounds of his exhortation to them. He does not put it on the ground of his apostolical authority; or urge it because he was the "vicegerent of Christ;" or because he was the head of the church; or because,he had any pre-eminence over others in any way. Would he have used this language if he had been the "head of the church" on earth? Would he if he supposed that the distinction between apostles and other ministers was to be perpetuated? Would he if he believed that there were to be distinct orders of clergy? The whole drift of this passage is adverse to such a supposition.

And a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Peter was indeed a witness of the sufferings of Christ when on his trial, and doubtless also when he was scourged and mocked, and when he was crucified. After his denial of his Lord, he wept bitterly, and evidently then followed him to the place where he was crucified, and, in company with others, observed with painful solicitude the last agonies of his Saviour. It is not, so far as I know, expressly said in the Gospels that Peter was present at the crucifixion of the Saviour; but it is said (Lk 23:49) that "all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things," and nothing is more probable than that Peter was among them. His warm attachment to his Master: and his recent bitter repentance for having denied him, would lead him to follow him to the place of his death; for after the painful act of denying him he would not be likely to expose himself to the charge of neglect, or of any want of love again. His own solemn declaration here makes it certain that he was present. He alludes to it now, evidently because it qualified him to exhort those whom he addressed. It would be natural to regard with peculiar respect one who had actually seen the Saviour in his last agony, and nothing would be more impressive than an exhortation falling from the lips of such a man. A son would be likely to listen with great respect to any suggestions which should be made by one who had seen his father or mother die. The impression which Peter had of that scene he would desire to have transferred to those whom he addressed, that by a lively view of the sufferings of their Saviour they might be excited to fidelity in his cause.

And a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Another reason to make his exhortation impressive and solemn. He felt that he was an heir of life. He was about to partake of the glories of heaven. Looking forward, as they did also, to the blessed world before him and them, he had a right to exhort them to the faithful performance of duty. Any one, who is himself an heir of salvation, may appropriately exhort his fellow-Christians to fidelity in the service of their common Lord.

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof,* not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Feed the flock of God. Discharge the duties of a shepherd towards the flock. On the word feed, Jn 21:15. It is a word which Peter would

be likely to remember, from the solemn manner in which the injunction to perform the duty was laid on him by the Saviour. The direction means to take such an oversight of the church as a shepherd is accustomed to take of his flock. Jn 10:1, seq.

Which is among you. Marg., as much as in you is. The translation in the text is the more correct. It means the churches which were among them, or over which they were called to preside.

Taking the oversight thereof--επισκοπουντες. The fair translation of this word is, discharging the episcopal office; and the word implies all that is ever implied by the word bishop in the New Testament. This idea should have been expressed in the translation. The meaning is not merely to take the oversight--for that might be done in a subordinate sense by any one in office; but it is to take such an oversight as is implied in the episcopate, or by the word bishop. The words episcopate, episcopal, and episcopacy, are merely the Greek word used here and its correlatives transferred to our language. The sense is that of overseeing; taking the oversight of; looking after, as of a flock; and the word has originally no reference to what is now spoken of as peculiarly the episcopal office. It is a word strictly applicable to any minister of religion, or officer of a church. In the passage before us this duty was to be performed by those who, in 1Pet 5:1, are called presbyters or elders; and this is one of the numerous passages in the New Testament which prove that all that is properly implied in the performance of the episcopal functions pertained to those who were called presbyters, or elders. If so, there was no higher grade of ministers to which the peculiar duties of the episcopate were to be intrusted; that is, there was no class of officers corresponding to those who are now called bishops. Comp. Acts 20:28. Not by constraint, but willingly. Not as if you felt that a heavy yoke was imposed on you, or a burden from which you would gladly be discharged. Go cheerfully to your duty as a work which you love, and act like a freeman in it, and not as a slave. Arduous as are the labours of the ministry, yet there is no work on earth in which a man can and should labour more cheerfully. Not for filthy lucre. Shameful or dishonourable gain. 1Timm 3:3.

But of a ready mind. Cheerfully, promptly. We are to labour in this work, not under the influence of the desire of gain, but from the promptings of love. There is all the difference conceivable between

one who does a thing because he is paid for it and one who does it from love--between, for example, the manner in which one attends on us when we are sick who loves us, and one who is merely hired to do it. Such a difference is there in the spirit with which one who is actuated by mercenary motives, and one whose heart is in the work, will engage in the ministry.

3 neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Neither as being lords. Marg., overruling. The word here used (κατακυριευω) is rendered exercise dominion over, in Mt 20:25; exercise lordship over, in Mk 10:42; and overcame, in Acts 19:16. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It refers properly to that kind of jurisdiction which civil rulers or magistrates exercise. This is an exercise of authority, as contradistinguished from the influence of reason, persuasion, and example. The latter pertains to the ministers of religion; the former is forbidden to them. Their dominion is not to be that of temporal lordship; it is to be that of love and truth. This command would prohibit all assumption of temporal power by the ministers of religion, and all conferring of titles of nobility on those who are preachers of the gospel. It needs scarcely to be said that it has been very little regarded in the church. Over God's heritage--τωνκληρων. Vulgate, in cleris--over the clergy. The Greek word here (κληρος--kleros) is that from which the word clergy has been derived; and some have interpreted it here as referring to the clergy, that is, to priests and deacons who are under the authority of a bishop. Such an interpretation, however, would hardly be adopted now. The word means properly,

(a.) a lot, die, anything used in determining chances;

(b.) a part or portion, such as is assigned by lot; hence

(c.) an office to which one is designated or appointed, by lot or otherwise; and

(d.) in general any possession or heritage, Acts 26:18, Col 1:12. The meaning here is, "not lording it over the possessions or the heritage of God." The reference is, undoubtedly, to the church, as that which is peculiarly his property; his own in the world. Whitby and others suppose that it refers to the possessions or property of the church;

Doddridge explains it--"not assuming dominion over those who fall to your lot," supposing it to mean that they were not to domineer over the particular congregations committed by Providence to their care. But the other interpretation is most in accordance with the usual meaning of the word.

But being ensamples to the flock. Examples. 1Timm 4:12. Peter has drawn here with great beauty, the appropriate character of the ministers of the gospel, and described the spirit with which they should be actuated in the discharge of the duties of their office. But how different it is from the character of many who have claimed to be ministers of religion; and especially how different from that corrupt communion which professes in a special manner to recognise Peter as the head, and the vicegerent of Christ. It is well remarked by Benson on this passage, that "the church of Rome could not well have acted more directly contrary to this injunction of St. Peter's if she had studied to disobey it, and to form herself upon a rule that should be the reverse of this."

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear. The prince of the pastors--the Lord Jesus Christ. "Peter, in the passage above, ranks himself with the elders; here he ranks Christ himself with the pastors."--Benson. 1Pet 2:25. Comp. Heb 13:20. Ye shall receive a crown of glory. A glorious crown or diadem. Comp. 2Ti 4:8. That fadeth not away. This is essentially the same word, though somewhat different in form, which occurs in 1Pet 1:4. 1Pet 1:4. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Comp. 1Cor 9:25.

Likewise, ye younger. All younger persons of either sex. Submit yourselves unto the elder. That is, with the respect due to their age, and to the offices which they sustain. There is here, probably, a particular reference to those who sustained the office of elders or teachers, as the same word is used here which occurs in 1Pet 5:1. As there was an allusion in that verse, by the use of the word, to age, so there is in this verse to the fact that they sustained an office in the church. The general duty, however, is here implied, as it is

everywhere in the Bible, that all suitable respect is to be shown to the aged. Comp. Lev 19:32, 1Timm 5:1, Acts 23:4, 2Pet 2:9. Yea, all of you be subject one to another. In your proper ranks and relations. You are not to attempt to lord it over one another, but are to treat each other with deference and respect. Eph 5:21; Php 2:3. And be clothed with humility. The word here rendered be clothed (εγκομβοομαι) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from κομβος--a strip, string, or loop to fasten a garment; and then the word refers to a garment that was fastened with strings. The word εγκομβωμα (egkomboma) refers particularly to a long white apron, or outer garment, that was commonly worn by slaves. See Rob. Lex. Passow Lex. There is, therefore, peculiar force in the use of this word here, as denoting an humble mind. They were to be willing to take any place, and to perform any office, however humble, in order to serve and benefit others. They were not to assume a style and dignity of state and authority, as if they would lord it over others, or as if they were better than others; but they were to be willing to occupy any station, however humble, by which they might honour God. It is known that not a few of the early Christians actually sold themselves as slaves, in order that they might preach the gospel to those who were in bondage. The sense here is, they were to put on humility as a garment bound fast to them, as a servant bound fast to him the apron that was significant of his station. Comp. Col 3:13. It is not unusual in the Scriptures, as well as in other writings, to compare the virtues with articles of apparel; as that with which we are clothed, or in which we are seen by others. Comp. Isa 11:5, 59:17. For God resisteth the proud, etc. This passage is quoted from the Greek translation in Prov 3:34. See it explained in the Jas 4:6, where it is also quoted.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Humble yourselves therefore. Be willing to take a low place--a place such as becomes you. Do not arrogate to yourselves what does not belong to you; do not evince pride and haughtiness in your manner; do not exalt yourselves above others. Lk 14:7, seq. Comp. Prov 15:33, 18:12, 22:4, Mic 6:8; Php 2:8. Under the mighty hand of God. This refers probably to the calamities which he had brought upon them, or was about to bring upon them; represented here, as often elsewhere, as the infliction of his hand--the hand being that by which we accomplish anything. When that hand was upon them they were

not to be lifted up with pride and with a spirit of rebellion, but were to take a lowly place before him, and submit to him with a calm mind, believing that he would exalt them in due time. There is no situation in which one will be more likely to feel humility than in scenes of affliction. That he may exalt you in due time. When he shall see it to be a proper time.

(1.) They might be assured that this would be done at some time. He would not always leave them in this low and depressed condition. He would take off his heavy hand, and raise them up from their state of sadness and suffering.

(2.) This would be in due time; that is, in the proper time, in the best time.

(a.) It might be in the present life.

(b.) It would certainly be in the world to come. There they would be exalted to honours which will be more than an equivalent for all the persecution, poverty, and contempt which are suffered in this world. He may well afford to be humble here who is to be exalted to a throne in heaven.

7 casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Casting all your care upon him. Comp. Ps 55:22, from whence this passage was probably taken. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved," Compare, for a similar sentiment, Mt 6:25-30. The meaning is, that we are to commit our whole cause to him. If we suffer heavy trials; if we lose our friends, health, or property; if we have arduous and responsible duties to perform; if we feel that we have no strength, and are in danger of being crushed by what is laid upon us, we may go and cast all upon the Lord; that is, we may look to him for grace and strength, and feel assured that he will enable us to sustain all that is laid upon us. The relief in the case will be as real, and as full of consolation, as if he took the burden and bore it himself. He will enable us to bear with ease what we supposed we could never have done; and the burden which he lays upon us will be light, Mt 11:30. Php 4:6,7. For he careth for you. Mt 10:29, seq. He is not like the gods worshipped by many of the heathen, who were supposed to be so exalted, and so distant, that they did not

interest themselves in human affairs; but He condescends to regard the wants of the meanest of his creatures. It is one of the glorious attributes of the true God, that he can and will thus notice the wants of the mean as well as the mighty; and one of the richest of all consolations when we are afflicted, and are despised by the world, is the thought that we are not forgotten by our heavenly Father. He who remembers the failing sparrow, and who hears the young ravens when they cry, will not be unmindful of us. "Yet the Lord thinketh on me," was the consolation of David, when he felt that he was "poor and needy," Ps 40:17. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Ps 27:10. Comp. Isa 49:15. What more can one wish than to be permitted to feel that the great and merciful Jehovah thinks on him? What are we--what have we done, that should be worthy of such condescension? Remember, poor, despised, afflicted child of God, that you will never be forgotten. Friends on earth, the. great, the gay, the noble, the rich, may forget you; God never will. Remember that you will never be entirely neglected. Father, mother, neighbour, friend, those whom you have loved, and those to whom you have done good, may neglect you, but God never will. You may become poor, and they may pass by you; you may lose your office, and flatterers may no longer throng your path; your beauty may fade, and your admirers may leave you; you may grow old, and be infirm, and appear to be useless in the world, and no one may seem to care for you; but it is not thus with the God whom you serve. When he loves, he always loves; if he regarded you with favour when you were rich, he will not forget you when you are poor; he who watched over you with a parent's care in the bloom of youth, will not cast you off when you are "old and grey-headed," Ps 71:18. If we are what we should be, we shall never be without a friend as long as there is a God.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Be sober. While you cast your cares upon God, and have no anxiety on that score, let your solicitude be directed to another point. Do not doubt that he is able and willing to support and befriend you, but be watchful against your foes. See the word used here fully explained in 1Thes 5:6. Be vigilant. This word (γρηγορεω) is everywhere else in the New Testament rendered watch. See Mt 24:42,43, 25:13, 26:38,40,41. It means that we should exercise careful circumspection, as one does when he is in danger, in reference to the

matter here referred to, it means that we are to be on our guard against the wiles and the power of the evil one.

Your adversary the devil. Your enemy; he who is opposed to you. Satan opposes man in his best interests. He resists his efforts to do good; his purposes to return to God; his attempts to secure his own salvation. There is no more appropriate appellation that can be given to him than to say that he resists all our efforts to obey God and to secure the salvation of our own souls. As a roaring lion. Comp. Rev 12:12. Sometimes Satan is represented as transforming himself into an angel of light, (2Cor 11:14;) and sometimes, as here, as a roaring lion: denoting the efforts which he makes to alarm and overpower us. The lion here is not the crouching lion-the lion stealthfully creeping towards his foe--but it is the raging monarch of the woods, who by his terrible roar would intimidate all so that they might become an easy prey. The particular thing referred to here, doubtless, is persecution, resembling in its terrors a roaring lion. When error comes in; when seductive arts abound; when the world allures and charms, the representation of the character of the foe is not of the roaring lion, but of the silent influence of an enemy that has clothed himself in the garb of an angel of light, 2Cor 11:14. Walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. "Naturalists have observed that a lion roars when he is roused with hunger, for then he is most fierce, and most eagerly seeks his prey. See Jud 14:5, Ps 22:13; Jer 2:15, Eze 22:25, Hoss 11:10, Zeph 3:3, Zech 11:3."--Benson.

9 whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Whom resist. Jas 4:7. You are in no instance to yield to him, but are in all forms to stand up and oppose him. Feeble in yourselves, you are to confide in the arm of God. No matter in what form of terror he approaches, you are to fight manfully the fight of faith. Comp. Eph 6:10, seq. Stedfast in the faith. Confiding in God. You are to rely on him alone, and the means of successful resistance are to be found in the resources of faith. Eph 6:16. Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. Comp. for a similar sentiment, 1Cor 10:13. The meaning is, that you should be encouraged to endure your trials by the fact that your fellow-Christians suffer the same things. This consideration might furnish consolation to them in their trials in the following ways:

(1.) They would feel that they were suffering only the common lot of Christians. There was no evidence that God was peculiarly angry with them, or that he had in a peculiar manner forsaken them.

(2.) The fact that others were enabled to bear their trials should be an argument to prove to them that they would also be able. If they looked abroad, and saw that others were sustained, and were brought off triumphant, they might be assured that this would be the case with them.

(3.) There would be the support derived from the fact that they were not alone in suffering. We can bear pain more easily if we feel that we are not alone--that it is the common lot--that we are in circumstances where we may have sympathy from others. This remark may be of great practical value to us in view of persecutions, trials, and death. The consideration suggested here by Peter to sustain those whom he addressed, in the trials of persecution, may be applied now to sustain and comfort us in every form of apprehended or real calamity. We are all liable to suffering. We are exposed to sickness, bereavement, death. We often feel as if we could not bear up under the sufferings that may be before us, and especially do we dread the great trial--DEATH. It may furnish us some support and consolation to remember,

(1.) that this is the common lot of men. There is nothing peculiar in our case. It proves nothing as to the question whether we are accepted of God, and are beloved by him, that we suffer; for those whom he has loved most have been often among the greatest sufferers. We often think that our sufferings are peculiar; that there have been none like them. Yet, if we knew all, we should find that thousands--and among them the most wise, and pure, and good--have endured sufferings of the same kind as ours, and perhaps far more intense in degree.

(2.) Others have been conveyed triumphantly through their trials. We have reason to hope and to believe that we shall also, for

(a.) our trials have been no greater than theirs have been; and

(b.) their natural strength was no greater than ours. Many of them were timid, and shrinking, and trembling, and felt that they had no strength, and that they should fail under the trial.

(3.) The grace which sustained them can sustain us. The hand of God is not shortened that it cannot save; his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. His power is as great, and his grace is as fresh, as it was when the first sufferer was supported by him; and that Divine strength which supported David and Job in their afflictions, and the apostles and martyrs in theirs, is just as powerful as it was when they applied to God to be upheld in their sorrows.

(4.) We are especially fearful of death--fearful that our faith will fail, and that we shall be left to die without support or consolation. Yet let us remember that death is the common lot of man. Let us remember who have died--tender females; children; the timid and the fearful; those, in immense multitudes, who had no more strength by nature than we have. Let us think of our own kindred who have died. A wife has died, and shall a husband be afraid to die? A child, and shall a father? A sister, and shall a brother? It does much to take away the dread of death, to remember that a mother has gone through the dark valley; that that gloomy vale has been trod by delicate, and timid, and beloved sisters. Shall I be afraid to go where they have gone? Shall I apprehend that I shall find no grace that is able to sustain me where they have found it? Must the valley of the shadow of death be dark and gloomy to me, when they found it to be illuminated with the opening light of heaven? Above all, it takes away the fear of death when I remember that my Saviour has experienced all the horrors which can ever be in death; that he has slept in the tomb, and made it a hallowed resting-place.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.

But the God of all grace. The God who imparts all needful grace. It was proper in their anticipated trials to direct them to God, and to breathe forth in their behalf an earnest and affectionate prayer that they might be supported. A prayer of this kind by an apostle would also be to them a sort of pledge or assurance that the needed grace would be granted them. Who hath called us unto his eternal glory. And who means, therefore, that we shall be saved. As he has called

us to his glory, we need not apprehend that he will leave or forsake us. On the meaning of the word called, Eph 4:1. After that ye have suffered a while. After you have suffered as long as he shall appoint. The Greek is, "having suffered a little," and may refer either to time or degree. In both respects the declaration concerning afflictions is true. They are short, compared with eternity; they are light, compared with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2Cor 4:16, seq. Make you perfect. By means of your trials. The tendency of affliction is to make us perfect. Stablish. The Greek word means to set fast; to fix firmly; to render immovable, Lk 16:26, 9:61, 22:32, Rom 1:11, 16:25 1Thes 3:2,13, et al. Strengthen Give you strength to bear all this. Settle you. Literally, found you, or establish you on a firm foundation--θεμελιωσει. The allusion is to a house which is so firmly fixed on a foundation that it will not be moved by winds or floods. Comp, Mt 7:24, seq.

11 To him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

13 The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you*, saluteth you; and *so doth* Mark my son.

14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity.
Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The Second Epistle Of Peter
[2 Peter]

2 Peter-1

Salutation

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

To them that have obtained like precious faith with us. With us who are of Jewish origin. This epistle was evidently written to the same persons as the former, and that was intended to embrace many who were of Gentile origin. 1Pet 1:1 The apostle addresses them all now, whatever was their origin, as heirs of the common faith, and as in all respects brethren.

Through the righteousness of God. Through the method of justification which God has adopted. See this fully explained in Rom 1:17. God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Marg., our God and Saviour. The Greek will undoubtedly bear the construction given in the margin; and if this be the true rendering, it furnishes an argument for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bishop Middleton, Slade, Valpy, Bloomfield, and others, contend that this is the true and proper rendering. It is doubted, however, by Wetstein, Grotius, and others. Erasmus supposes that it may be taken in either sense. The construction, though certainly not a violation of the laws of the Greek language, is not so free from all doubt as to make it proper to use the passage as a proof-text in an argument for the divinity of the Saviour. It is easier to prove the doctrine from other texts that are plain, than to show that this must be the meaning here.

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. That is, grace and peace abound to us, or may be expected to be conferred on us abundantly, if we

have a true knowledge of' God and of the Saviour. Such a knowledge constitutes true religion: for in that we find grace--the grace that pardons and sanctifies; and peace--peace of conscience, reconciliation with God, and calmness in the trials of life. Jn 7:3.

According as his divine power hath given unto us. All the effects of the gospel on the human heart are, in the Scriptures, traced to the power of God. Rom 1:16. There are no moral means which have ever been used that have such power as the gospel; none through which God has done so much in changing the character and affecting the destiny of man. All things that pertain unto life and godliness. The reference here in the word life is undoubtedly to the life of religion; the life of the soul imparted by the gospel. The word godliness is synonymous with piety. The phrase "according as" (ως) seems to be connected with the sentence in 2Pet 1:5, "Forasmuch as he has conferred on us these privileges and promises connected with life and godliness, we are bound, in order to obtain all that is implied in these things, to give all diligence to add to our faith, knowledge," etc. Through the knowledge of him. By a proper acquaintance with him, or by the right kind of knowledge of him. Jn 17:3.

That hath called us to glory and virtue. Margin, by. Greek, "through glory," etc. Doddridge supposes that it means that he has done this "by the strengthening virtue and energy of his spirit." Rosenmuller renders it, "by glorious benignity." Dr. Robinson (Lex.) renders it, "through a glorious display of his efficiency." The objection which any one feels to this rendering arises solely from the word virtue, from the fact that we are not accustomed to apply that word to God. But the original word (αρετη) is not as limited in its signification as the English word is, but is rather a word which denotes a good quality or excellence of any kind. In the ancient classics it is used to denote manliness, vigour, courage, valour, fortitude; and the word would rather denote energy or power of some kind, than what we commonly understand by virtue, and would be, therefore, properly applied to the energy or efficiency which God has displayed in the work of our salvation. Indeed, when applied to moral excellence at all, as it is in 1Pet 1:5 of this chapter, and often elsewhere, it is perhaps with a reference to the energy, boldness, rigour, or courage which is evinced in

overcoming our evil propensities, and resisting allurements and temptations. According to this interpretation, the passage teaches that it is by a glorious Divine efficiency that we are called into the kingdom of God.

Make Your Calling and Election Sure

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Whereby. διων. "Through which"--in the plural number, referring either to the glory and virtue in the previous verse, and meaning that it was by that glorious Divine efficiency that these promises were given; or, to all the things mentioned in the previous verse, meaning that it was through those arrangements, and in order to their completion, that these great and glorious promises were made. The promises given are in connexion with the plan of securing "life and godliness," and are a part of the gracious arrangements for that object. Exceeding great and precious promises. A promise is an assurance on the part of another of some good for which we are dependent on him. It implies,

(1.) that the thing is in his power;

(2.) that he may bestow it or not, as he pleases;

(3.) that we cannot infer from any process of reasoning that it is his purpose to bestow it on us

(4.) that it is a favour which we can obtain only from him, and not by any independent effort of our own. The promises here referred to are those which pertain to salvation. Peter had in his eye probably all that then had been revealed which contemplated the salvation of the people of God. They are called "exceeding great and precious," because of their value in supporting and comforting the soul, and of the honour and felicity which they unfold to us.

The promises referred to are doubtless those which are made in connexion with the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel, for there are no other promises made to man. They refer to the pardon of sin; strength, comfort, and support in trial; a glorious resurrection; and a happy immortality. If we look at the greatness and glory of the objects, we shall see that the promises are in fact exceedingly precious; or if we look at their influence in supporting and elevating the soul, we shall have as distinct a view of their value. The promise goes beyond our reasoning powers; enters a field which we could not otherwise penetrate--the distant future; and relates to what we could not otherwise obtain. All that we need in trial, is the simple promise of God that he will sustain us; all that we need in the hour of death, is the assurance of our God that we shall be happy for ever. What would this world be without a promise? How impossible to penetrate the future! How dark that which is to come would be! How bereft we should be of consolation! The past has gone, and its departed joys and hopes can never be recalled to cheer us again; the present may be an hour of pain, and sadness, and disappointment, and gloom, with perhaps not a ray of comfort; the future only opens fields of happiness to our vision, and everything there depends on the will of God, and all that we can know of it is from his promises. Cut off from these, we have no way either of obtaining the blessings which we desire, or of ascertaining that they can be ours. For the promises of God, therefore, we should be in the highest degree grateful, and in the trials of life we should cling to them with unwavering confidence as the only things which can be an anchor to the soul. That by these. Greek, "through these." That is, these constitute the basis of your hopes of becoming partakers of the divine nature. Comp. 2Cor 7:1. Partakers of the divine nature. This is a very important and a difficult phrase. An expression somewhat similar occurs in Heb 2:10, "That we might be partakers of his holiness." Heb 2:10. In regard to the language here used, it may be observed,

(1.) that it is directly contrary to all the notions of Pantheism --or the belief that all things are now God, or a part of God--for it is said that the object of the promise is, that we "may become partakers of the divine nature," not that we are now.

(2.) It can not be taken in so literal a sense as to mean that we can ever partake of the divine essence, or that we shall be absorbed into the divine nature so as to lose our individuality. This idea is held by the Budhists; and the perfection of being is supposed by them to consist in such absorption, or in losing their own individuality, and their ideas of happiness are graduated by the approximation which may be made to that state. But this cannot be the meaning here, because

(a.) it is in the nature of the case impossible. There must be for ever an essential difference between a created and an uncreated mind.

(b.) This would argue that the Divine Mind is not perfect. If this absorption was necessary to the completeness of the character and happiness of the Divine Being, then he was imperfect before; if before perfect, he would not be after the absorption of an infinite number of finite and imperfect minds.

(c.) In all the representations of heaven in the Bible, the idea of individuality is one that is prominent. Individuals are represented everywhere as worshippers there, and there is no intimation that the separate existence of the redeemed is to be absorbed and lost in the essence of the Deity. Whatever is to be the condition of man hereafter, he is to have a separate and individual existence, and the number of intelligent beings is never to be diminished either by annihilation, or by their being united to ally other spirit so that they shall become one. The reference then, in this place, must be to the moral nature of God; and the meaning is, that they who are renewed become participants of the same moral nature; that is, of the same views, feelings, thoughts, purposes, principles of action. Their nature as they are born, is sinful, and prone to evil, (Eph 2:3;) their nature as they are born again, becomes like that of God. They are made like God; and this resemblance will increase more and more for ever, until in a much higher sense than can be true in this world, they may be said to have become "partakers of the divine nature." Let us remark, then,

(a.) that man only, of all the dwellers on the earth, is capable of rising to this condition. The nature of all the other orders of

creatures here below is incapable of any such transformation that it can be said that they become "partakers of the divine nature."

(b.) It is impossible now to estimate the degree of approximation to which man may yet rise towards God, or the exalted sense in which the term may yet be applicable to him; but the prospect before the believer in this respect is most glorious. Two or three circumstances may be referred to here as mere hints of what we may yet be:

(1.) Let any one reflect on the amazing advances made by himself since the period of infancy. But a few, very few years ago, he knew nothing. He was in his cradle, a poor, helpless infant. He knew not the use of eyes, or ears, or hands, or feet. He knew not the name or use of anything, not even the name of father or mother, he could neither walk, nor talk, nor creep. He knew not even that a candle would burn him if he put his finger there. He knew not how to grasp or hold a rattle, or what was its sound, or whence that sound or any other sound came. Let him think what he is at twenty, or forty, in comparison with this; and then, if his improvement in every similar number of years hereafter should be equal to this, who can tell the height to which he will rise?

(2.) We are here limited in our powers of learning about God or his works. We become acquainted with him through his works--by means of the senses. But by the appointment of this method of becoming acquainted with the external world, the design seems to have been to accomplish a double work quite contradictory --one to help us, and the other to hinder us. One is to give us the means of communicating with the external world--by the sight, the hearing, the smell, the touch, the taste; the other is to shut us out from the external world, except by these. The body is a casement, an enclosure, a prison in which the soul is incarcerated, from which we can look out on the universe only through these organs. But suppose, as may be the case in a future state, there shall be no such enclosure, and that the whole soul may look directly on the works of God--on spiritual existences, on God himself--who can then calculate the height to which man may attain in becoming a "partaker of the divine nature?"

(3.) We shall have an eternity before us to grow in knowledge, and in holiness, and in conformity to God. Here, we attempt to climb the hill of knowledge, and having gone a few steps--while the top is still lost in the clouds--we lie down and die. We look at a few things; become acquainted with a few elementary principles; make a little progress in virtue, and then all our studies and efforts are suspended, and "we fly away." In the future world we shall have an eternity before us to make progress in knowledge, and virtue, and holiness, uninterrupted; and who can tell in what exalted sense it may yet be true that we shall be "partakers of the divine nature," or what attainments we may yet make? Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. The world is full of corruption. It is the design of the Christian plan of redemption to deliver us from that, and to make us holy; and the means by which we are to be made like God, is by rescuing us from its dominion.

5 And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge;

And beside this. καιαυτοτουτο. Something here is necessary to be understood in order to complete the sense. The reference is to 2Pet 1:3; and the connexion is, "since (2Pet 1:3) God has given us these exalted privileges and hopes, in respect to this, (κατα or δια being understood,) or as a consequence fairly flowing from this, we ought to give all diligence that we may make good use of these advantages, and secure as high attainments as we possibly can. We should add one virtue to another, that we may reach the highest possible elevation in holiness."

Giving all diligence. Greek, "Bringing in all zeal or effort." The meaning is, that we ought to make this a distinct and definite object, and to apply ourselves to it as a thing to be accomplished.

Add to your faith virtue. It is not meant in this verse and the following that we are to endeavour particularly to add these things one to another in the order in which they are specified, or that we are to seek first to have faith, and then to add to that virtue, and then to add knowledge to virtue rather than to faith, etc. The order

in which this is to be done, the relation which one of these things may have to another, is not the point aimed at; nor are we to suppose that any other order of the words would not have answered the purpose of the apostle as well, or that any one of the virtues specified would not sustain as direct a relation to any other, as the one which he has specified. The design of the apostle is to say, in an emphatic manner, that we are to strive to possess and exhibit all these virtues; in other words, we are not to content ourselves with a single grace, but are to cultivate all the virtues, and to endeavour to make our piety complete in all the relations which we sustain. The essential idea in the passage before us seems to be, that in our religion we are not to be satisfied with one virtue, or one class of virtues, but that there is to be

(1.) a diligent CULTIVATION of our virtues, since the graces of religion are as susceptible of cultivation as any other virtues;

(2.) that there is to be PROGRESS made from one virtue to another, seeking to reach the highest possible point in our religion; and,

(3.) that there is to be an ACCUMULATION of virtues and graces-or we are not to be satisfied with one class, or with the attainments which we can make in one class. We are to endeavour to add on one after another until we have become possessed of all. Faith, perhaps, is mentioned first, because that is the foundation of all Christian virtues; and the other virtues are required to be added to that, because, from the place which faith occupies in the plan of justification, many might be in danger of supposing that if they had that they had all that was necessary. Comp. Jas 2:14, seq. In the Greek word rendered "add," (επιχορηγησατε,) there is an allusion to a chorus-leader among the Greeks, and the sense is well expressed by Doddridge: "Be careful to accompany that belief with all the lovely train of attendant graces." Or, in other words, "let faith lead on as at the head of the choir or the graces, and let all the others follow in their order." The word here rendered virtue is the same which is used in 2Pet 1:3; and there is included in it, probably, the same general idea which was noticed there. All the

things which the apostle specifies, unless knowledge be an exception, are virtues in the sense in which that word is commonly used; and it can hardly be supposed that the apostle here meant to use a general term which would include all of the others. The probability is, therefore, that by the word here he has reference to the common meaning of the Greek word, as referring to manliness, courage, rigour, energy; and the sense is, that he wished them to evince whatever firmness or courage might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their religion, and in enduring the trials to which their faith might be subjected. True virtue is not a tame and passive thing. It requires great energy and boldness, for its very essence is firmness, manliness, and independence. And to virtue knowledge. The knowledge of God and of the way of salvation through the Redeemer, 2Pet 2:3. Comp. 2Pet 3:8. It is the duty of every Christian to make the highest possible attainments in knowledge.

6 and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness;

And to knowledge temperance. On the meaning of the word temperance, Acts 24:25, and 1Cor 9:25. The word here refers to the mastery over all our evil inclinations and appetites. We are to allow none of them to obtain control over us. 1Cor 6:12. This would include, of course, abstinence from intoxicating drinks; but it would also embrace all evil passions and propensities. Everything is to be confined within proper limits, and to no propensity of our nature are we to give indulgence beyond the limits which the law of God allows. And to temperance patience. Jas 1:4. And to patience godliness. True piety. 1Pet 1:3. 1Timm 2:2; 1Timm 3:16; 1Timm 4:7, 1Timm 4:8; 1Timm 6:3, 1Timm 6:5, 1Timm 6:6 1Timm 6:11.

7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

And to godliness brotherly kindness. Love to Christians as such. Jn 13:34; Heb 13:1. And to brotherly kindness charity. Love to all mankind. There is to be a peculiar affection for Christians as of the same family; there is to be a true and warm love, however, for all the race. 1Cor 13:1, seq.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For if these things be in you, and abound. If they are in you in rich abundance; if you are eminent for these things. They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful. They will show that you are not barren or unfruitful. The word rendered barren, is, in the margin, idle. The word idle more accurately expresses the sense of the original. The meaning is, that if they evinced these things, it would show

(1.) that they were diligent in cultivating the Christian graces, and

(2.) that it was not a vain thing to attempt to grow in knowledge and virtue. Their efforts would be followed by such happy results as to be an encouragement to exertion. In nothing is there, in fact, more encouragement than in the attempt to become eminent in piety. On no other efforts does God smile more propitiously that on the attempt to secure the salvation of the soul and to do good. A small part of the exertions which men put forth to become rich, or learned, or celebrated for oratory or heroism, would secure the salvation of the soul. In the former, also, men often fail; in the latter, never.

To encourage Christians to grow and improve in the fore-mentioned virtues and graces, our apostle here lays before us, 1. The great advantage of such a proficiency and growth; If these things be in you and abound, that is, the fore-mentioned graces, they will both cause you, and evidence you not to be barren and unfruitful in your profession of Christianity and faith in Christ: the exercises of divine graces are the best evidenves of our being made partakers of the divine nature.

Observe, 2. The miserable state of those whose faith is not fruitful in good works; He that lacketh these things, that is, who doth not live in the exercise of the afore-mentioned graces, is spiritually blind, and really destitute of that knowledge which he pretends to, blinded by his passions and lusts, and sensual affections, and sees not the great end and design of Christianity, forgetting that in baptism he solemnly vowed all this, and that he was sacramentally washed from his old sins.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

But he that lacketh these things is blind. He has no clear views of the nature and the requirements of religion. And cannot see afar off. The word used here, which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, (μυωπαζω,) means to shut the eyes; i.e., to contract the eyelids, to blink, to twinkle, as one who cannot see clearly, and hence to be near-sighted. The meaning here is, that he is like one who has an indistinct vision; one who can see only the objects that are near him, but who has no correct apprehension of objects that are more remote. He sees but a little way into the true nature and design of the gospel, he does not take those large and clear views which would enable him to comprehend the whole system at a glance. And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. He does not remember the obligation which grows out of the fact that a system has been devised to purify the heart, and that he has been so far brought under the power of that system as to have his sins forgiven. If he had any just view of that, he would see that he was under obligation to make as high attainments as possible, and to cultivate to the utmost extent the Christian graces.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence. 2Pet 1:5. "In view of these things, give the greater diligence to secure your salvation." The considerations on which Peter based this appeal seem to have been the fact that such promises are made to us, and such hopes held out before us; the degree of uncertainty thrown over the whole matter of our personal salvation by low attainments in the divine life, and the dreadful condemnation which will ensue if in the end it shall be found that we are destitute of all real piety. The general thought is, that religion is of sufficient importance to claim our highest diligence, and to arouse us to the most earnest efforts to obtain the assurance of salvation.

To make your calling and election sure. On the meaning of the word calling, Eph 4:1. On the meaning of the word election, Rom 9:11; 1Thes 1:4; Comp. Eph 1:5. The word rendered election here,

(εκλογη) occurs only in this place and in Acts 9:15, Rom 9:11; 11:5 Rom 11:7,28, 1Thes 1:4; though corresponding words from the same root denoting the elect, to elect, to choose, frequently occur. The word here used means election, referring to the act of God, by which those who are saved are chosen to eternal life. As the word calling must refer to the act of God, so the word election must; for it is God who both calls and chooses those who shall be saved. The word in the Scriptures usually refers to the actual choosing of those who shall be saved; that is, referring to the time when they, in fact, become the children of God, rather than to the purpose of God that it shall be done; but still there must have been an eternal purpose, for God makes no choice which he did not always intend to make. The word sure, means firm, steadfast, secure, (βεβαιαν). Here the reference must be to themselves; that is, they were so to act as to make it certain to themselves that they had been chosen, and were truly called into the kingdom of God. It cannot refer to God, for no act of theirs could make it more certain on his part, if they had been actually chosen to eternal life. Still, God everywhere treats men as moral agents; and what may be absolutely certain in his mind from the mere purpose that it shall be so, is to be made certain to us only by evidence, and in the free exercise of our own powers. The meaning here is, that they were to obtain such evidences of personal piety as to put the question whether they were called and chosen, so far as their own minds were concerned, to rest; or so as to have undoubted evidence on this point. The Syriac, the Vulgate, and some Greek manuscripts, insert here the expression "by your good works;" that is, they were to make their calling sure by their good works, or by holy living. This clause, as Calvin remarks, is not authorized by the best authority, but it does not materially affect the sense. It was undoubtedly by their "good works" in the sense of holy living, or of lives consecrated to the service of God, that they were to obtain the evidence that they were true Christians; that is, that they had been really called into the kingdom of God, for there is nothing else on which we can depend for such evidence. God has given no assurance to us by name that he intends to save us. We can rely on no voice, or vision, or new revelation, to prove that it is so. No internal feeling of itself, no raptures, no animal excitement, no confident persuasion in our own minds that we are elected, can be proof in the case; and the only certain evidence on which we can

rely is that which is found in a life of sincere piety. In view of the important statement of Peter in this verse, then, we may remark,

(1.) that he believed in the doctrine of election, for he uses language which obviously implies this, or such as they are accustomed to use who believe the doctrine.

(2.) The fact that God has chosen those who shall be saved, does not make our own efforts unnecessary to make that salvation sure to us. It can be made sure to our own minds only by our own exertions; by obtaining evidence that we are in fact the children of God. There can be no evidence that salvation will be ours, unless there is a holy life; that is, unless there is true religion. Whatever may be the secret purpose of God in regard to us, the only evidence that we have that we shall be saved is to be found in the fact that we are sincere Christians, and are honestly endeavouring to do his will.

(3.) It is possible to make our calling and election sure; that is, to have such evidence on the subject that the mind shall be calm, and that there will be no danger of deception. If we can determine the point that we are in fact true Christians, that settles the matter--for then the unfailing promise of God meets us that we shall be saved. In making our salvation sure to our own minds, if we are in fact true Christians, we have not to go into an argument to prove that we have sufficient strength to resist temptation, or that we shall be able in any way to keep ourselves. All that matter is settled by the promise of God, that if we are Christians we shall be kept by him to salvation. The only question that is to be settled is, whether we are in fact true Christians, and all beyond that may be regarded as determined immutably. But assuredly it is possible for a man to determine the question whether he is or is not a true Christian.

(4.) If it can be done, it should be. Nothing is more important for us to do than this; and to this great inquiry we should apply our minds with unfaltering diligence, until by the grace of God we can say that there are no lingering doubts in regard to our final salvation. For if ye do these things. The things referred to in the previous verses. If you use all diligence to make as high

attainments as possible in piety, and if you practise the virtues demanded by religion, 2Pet 1:5-7.

Ye shall never fall. You shall never fall into perdition. That is, you shall certainly be saved.

11 for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For so an entrance. In this manner you shall be admitted into the kingdom of God. Shall be ministered unto you. The same Greek word is here used which occurs in 2Pet 1:5, and which is there rendered add. 2Pet 1:5. There was not improbably in the mind of the apostle a recollection of that word; and the sense may be, that "if they would lead on the virtues and graces referred to in their beautiful order, those graces would attend them in a radiant train to the mansions of immortal glory and blessedness." See Doddridge in loc. Abundantly. Gr., richly. That is, the most ample entrance would be furnished; there would be no doubt about their admission there. The gates of glory would be thrown wide open, and they, adorned with all the bright train of graces, would be admitted there. Into the everlasting kingdom, etc. Heaven. It is here called everlasting, not because the Lord Jesus shall preside over it as the Mediator, (comp. 1Cor 14:24,) but because, in the form which shall be established when "he shall have given it up to the Father," it will endure for ever. The empire of God which the Redeemer shall set up over the souls of his people shall endure to all eternity. The object of the plan of redemption was to secure their allegiance to God, and that will never terminate.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

Wherefore I will not be negligent. That is, in view of the importance of these things. To put you always in remembrance. To give you the means of having them always in remembrance; to wit, by his writings. Though ye know them. It was of importance for Peter, as it is for ministers of the gospel now, to bring known truths to remembrance. Men are liable to forget them, and they do not exert the influence over them which they ought. It is the office of the ministry not only to impart to a people truths which they

did not know before, but a large part of their work is to bring to recollection well-known truths, and to seek that they may exert a proper influence on the life. Amidst the cares, the business, the amusements, and the temptations of the world, even true Christians are prone to forget them; and the ministers of the gospel render them an essential service, even if they should do nothing more than remind them of truths which are well understood, and which they have known before. A pastor, in order to be useful, need not always aim at originality, or deem it necessary always to present truths which have never been heard of before. He renders an essential service to mankind who reminds them of what they know but are prone to forget, and who endeavours to impress plain and familiar truths on the heart and conscience, for these truths are most important for man. And be established in the present truth. That is, the truth which is with you, or which you Have received.--Rob. Lex. on the word παρειμι. The apostle did not doubt that they were now confirmed in the truth as far as it had been made known to them, but he felt that amidst their trials, and especially as they were liable to be drawn away by false teachers, there was need of reminding them of the grounds on which the truths which they had embraced rested, and of adding his own testimony to confirm their Divine origin. Though we may be very firm in our belief of the truth, yet there is a propriety that the grounds of our faith should be stated to us frequently, that they may be always in our remembrance. The mere fact that at present we are firm in the belief of the truth, is no certain evidence that we shall always continue to be; nor because we are thus firm should we deem it improper for our religious teachers to state the grounds on which our faith rests, or to guard us against the arts of those who would attempt to subvert our faith.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance;

Yea, I think it meet. I think it becomes me as an apostle. It is my appropriate duty; a duty which is felt the more as the close of life draws near. As long as I am in this tabernacle. As long as I live; as long as I am in the body. The body is called a tabernacle, or tent, as that in which the soul resides for a little time. 2Cor 5:1. To stir you up, by putting you in remembrance. To excite or arouse you to a diligent performance of your duties; to keep up in your

minds a lively sense of Divine things. Religion becomes more important to a man's mind always as he draws near the close of life, and feels that he is soon to enter the eternal world.

14 knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.

Greek, "the putting off (as a garment) of my tabernacle is speedy": implying a soon approaching, and also a sudden death (as a violent death is). Christ's words, Joh 21:18, 19, "When thou art old," &c., were the ground of his "knowing," now that he was old, that his foretold martyrdom was near. Compare as to Paul, 2Ti 4:6. Though a violent death, he calls it a "departure" (Greek for "decease," 2Pe 1:15), compare Ac 7:60.

15 Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Moreover, I will endeavour. I will leave such a permanent record of my views on these subjects that you may not forget them. He meant not only to declare his sentiments orally, but to record them that they might be perused when he was dead. He had such a firm conviction of the truth and value of the sentiments which he held, that he would use all the means in his power that the church and the world should not forget them.

After my decease. My exode, εξοδον, my journey out; my departure; my exit from life. This is not the usual word to denote death, but is rather a word denoting that he was going on a journey out of this world, he did not expect to cease to be, but he expected to go on his travels to a distant abode. This idea runs through all this beautiful description of the feelings of Peter as he contemplated death. Hence he speaks of taking down the "tabernacle" or tent, the temporary abode of the soul, that his spirit might be removed to another place, (1Pet 1:13;) and hence he speaks of an exode from the present life--a journey to another world. This is the true notion of death; and if so, two things follow from it:

(1.) we should make preparation for it, as we do for a journey, and the more in proportion to the distance that we are to travel, and the time that we are to be absent; and

(2.) when the preparation is made, we should not be unwilling to enter on the journey, as we are not now when we are prepared to leave our homes to visit some remote part of our own country, or a distant land. To have these things always in remembrance. By his writings. We may learn from this,

(1.) that when a Christian grows old, and draws near to death, his sense of the value of Divine truth by no means diminishes. As he approaches the eternal world; as from its borders he surveys the past, and looks on to what is to come; as he remembers what benefit the truths of religion have conferred on him in life, and sees what a miserable being he would now be if he had no such hope as the gospel inspires; as he looks on the whole influence of those truths on his family and friends, on his country and the world, their value rises before him with a magnitude which he never saw before, and he desires most earnestly that they should be seen and embraced by all. A man on the borders of eternity is likely to have a very deep sense of the value of the Christian religion and is he not then in favourable circumstances to estimate this matter aright? Let any one place himself in imagination in the situation of one who is on the borders of the eternal world, as all in fact soon will be, and can he have any doubt about the value of religious truth?

(2.) We may learn from what Peter says here, that it is the duty of those who are drawing near to the eternal world, and who are the friends of religion, to do all they can that the truths of Christianity "may be always had in remembrance." Every man's experience of the value of religion, and the results of his examination and observation, should be regarded as the property of the world, and should not be lost. As he is about to die, he should seek, by all the means in his power, that those truths should be perpetuated and propagated. This duty may be discharged by some in counsels offered to the young, as they are about to enter on life giving them the results of their own experience, observation, and reflections on the subject of religion; by some, by an example consistent that it cannot be soon forgotten--a legacy to friends and to the world of much more value than accumulated silver and gold; by some, by solemn warnings or exhortations on the bed of death; in other cases, by a recorded experience of the conviction and value of

religion, and a written defence of its truth, and illustration of its nature--for every man who can write a good book owes it to the church and the world to do it; by others, in leaving the means of publishing and spreading good books in the world. He does a good service to his own age, and to future ages, who records the results of his observations and his reflections in favour of the truth in a book that shall be readable; and though the book itself may be ultimately forgotten, it may have saved some persons from ruin, and may have accomplished its part in keeping up the knowledge of the truth in his own generation. Peter, as a minister of the gospel, felt himself bound to do this, and no men have so good an opportunity of doing this now as ministers of the gospel; no men have more ready access to the press; no men have so much certainty that they will have the public attention, if they will write anything worth reading; no men, commonly, in a community are better educated, or are more accustomed to write; no men, by their profession, seem to be so much called to address their fellow-men in any way in favour of the truth; and it is matter of great marvel that men who have such opportunities, and who seem especially called to the work, do not do more of this kind of service in the cause of religion. Themselves soon to die, how can they help desiring that they may leave something that shall bear an honourable, though humble, testimony to truths which they so much prize, and which they are appointed to defend? A tract may live long after the author is in the grave; and who can calculate the results which have followed the efforts of Baxter and Edwards to keep up in the world the remembrance of the truths which they deemed of so much value? This little epistle of Peter has shed light on the path of men now for eighteen hundred years, and will continue to do it until the second coming of the Saviour.

Eyewitnesses of Christ's Glory

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables. That is, fictions or stories invented by artful men, and resting on no solid foundation. The doctrines which they held about the coming of

the Saviour were not, like many of the opinions of the Greeks, defended by weak and sophistical reasoning, but were based on solid evidence --evidence furnished by the personal observation of competent witnesses. It is true of the gospel, in general, that it is not founded on cunningly devised fables; but the particular point referred to here is the promised coming of the Saviour. The evidence of that fact Peter proposes now to adduce.

When we made known unto you. Probably Peter here refers particularly to statements respecting the coming of the Saviour in his first epistle, (1Pet 1:5,13, 4:13;) but this was a common topic in the preaching, and in the epistles, of the apostles. It may, therefore, have referred to statements made to them at some time in his preaching, as well as to what he said in his former epistle. The apostles laid great stress on the second coming of the Saviour, and often dwelt upon it. Comp. 1Thes 4:16; Acts 1:11.

The power and coming. These two words refer to the same thing; and the meaning is, his powerful coming, or his coming in power. The advent of the Saviour is commonly represented as connected with the exhibition of power. Mt 24:30. "Coming in the clouds of heaven, with power." Mt 24:30. Comp. Lk 22:69, Mk 3:9. The power evinced will be by raising the dead; summoning the world to judgment; determining the destiny of men, etc. When the coming of the Saviour, therefore, was referred to by the apostles in their preaching, it was probably always in connexion with the declaration that it would be accompanied by exhibitions of great power and glory--as it undoubtedly will be. The fact that the Lord Jesus would thus return, it is clear, had been denied by some among those to whom this epistle was addressed, and it was important to state the evidence on which it was to be believed. The grounds on which they denied it (2Pet 3:4) were, that there were no appearances of his approach; that the promise had not been fulfilled; that all things continued as they had been; and that the affairs of the world moved on as they always had done. To meet and counteract this error--an error which so prevailed that many were in danger of "falling from their own steadfastness," (2Pet

3:17,)--Peter states the proof on which he believed in the coming of the Saviour.

But were eye-witnesses Of his majesty. On the mount of transfiguration, Mt 17:1-5, Mt 17:1, seq. That transfiguration was witnessed only by Peter, James, and John. But it may be asked how the facts there witnessed demonstrate the point under consideration--that the Lord Jesus will come with power? To this it may be replied,

(1.) that these apostles had there such a view of the Saviour in his glory as to convince them beyond doubt that he was the Messiah.

(2.) That there was a direct attestation given to that fact by a voice from heaven, declaring that he was the beloved Son of God.

(3.) That that transfiguration was understood to have an important reference to the coming of the Saviour in his kingdom and his glory, and was designed to be a representation of the manner in which he would then appear. This is referred to distinctly by each one of the three evangelists who have mentioned the transfiguration. Mt 16:28, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom;" Mk 9:1,2, Lk 9:27,28. The transfiguration which occurred soon after these words were spoken was designed to show them what he would be in his glory, and to furnish to them a demonstration which they could never forget, that he would yet set up his kingdom in the world.

(4.) They had in fact such a view of him as he would be in his kingdom, that they could entertain no doubt on the point; and the fact, as it impressed their own minds, they made known to others. The evidence as it lay in Peter's mind was, that that transfiguration was designed to furnish proof to them that the Messiah would certainly appear in glory, and to give them a view of him as coming to reign which would never fade from their memory. As that had not yet been accomplished, he maintained that the evidence was clear that it must occur at some future time. As the transfiguration was with reference to his coming in his kingdom,

it was proper for Peter to use it with that reference, or as bearing on that point.

17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, He was honoured by God in being thus addressed. When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. The magnificent splendour; the bright cloud which overshadowed them, Mt 17:5. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mt 17:5; Mt 3:17, This demonstrated that he was the Messiah. Those who heard that voice could not doubt this; they never did afterwards doubt.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

nd this voice which came from heaven we heard. To wit, Peter, and James, and John. When we were with him in the holy mount. Called holy on account of the extraordinary manifestation of the Redeemer's glory there. It is not certainly known what mountain this was, but it has commonly been supposed to be Mount Tabor. Mt 17:1.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy. That is a prophecy pertaining to the coming of the Lord Jesus; for that is the point under discussion. There has been considerable diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of this passage. Some have supposed that the apostle, when he says "a more sure word," did not intend to make any comparison between the miracle of the transfiguration and prophecy, but that he meant to say merely that the word of prophecy was very sure, and could certainly be relied on. Others have supposed that the meaning is, that the prophecies which foretold his coming into the world having been confirmed by the fact of his advent, are rendered more sure and undoubted than when they were uttered, and may now be confidently appealed to. So Rosenmuller, Benson, Macknight, Clarke, Wetstein, and Grotius. Luther renders it, "we have a firm prophetic word;" omitting the comparison. A literal translation of

the passage would be, "and we have the prophetic word more firm." If a comparison is intended, it may be either that the prophecy was more sure than the fables referred to in 2Pet 1:16; or than the miracle of the transfiguration; or than the word which was heard in the holy mount; or than the prophecies even in the time when they were first spoken. If such a comparison was designed, the most obvious of these interpretations would be, that the prophecy was more certain proof than was furnished in the mount of transfiguration. But it seems probable that no comparison was intended, and that the thing on which Peter intended to fix the eye was not that the prophecy was a better evidence respecting the advent of the Messiah than other evidences, but that it was a strong proof which demanded their particular attention, as being of a firm and decided character. There can be no doubt that the apostle refers hereto what is contained in the Old Testament; for, in 2Pet 1:21, he speaks of the prophecy as that which was spoken "in old time, by men that were moved by the Holy Ghost." The point to which the prophecies related, and to which Peter referred, was the great doctrine respecting the coming of the Messiah, embracing perhaps all that pertained to his work, or all that he designed to do by his advent. They had had one illustrious proof respecting his advent as a glorious Saviour by his transfiguration on the mount; and the apostle here says that the prophecies abounded with truths on these points, and that they ought to give earnest heed to the disclosures which they made, and to compare them diligently with facts as they occurred, that they might be confirmed more and more in the truth. If, however, as the more obvious sense of this passage seems to be, and as many suppose to be the correct interpretation, (see Doddridge, in loc., and Professor Stuart, on the canon of the Old Test., p. 329,) it means that the prophecy was more sure, more steadfast, more to be depended on than even what the three disciples had seen and heard in the mount of transfiguration, this may be regarded as true in the following respects:

(1.) The prophecies are numerous, and by their number they furnish a stronger proof than could be afforded by a single manifestation, however clear and glorious.

(2.) They were recorded, and might be the subject of careful comparison with the events as they occurred.

(3.) They were written long beforehand, and it could not be urged that the testimony which the prophets bore was owing to any illusion on their minds, or to any agreement among the different writers to impose on the world. Though Peter regarded the testimony which he and James and John bore to the glory of the Saviour, from what they saw on the holy mount, as strong and clear confirmation that he was the Son of God, yet he could not but be aware that it might be suggested by a caviller that they might have agreed to impose on others, or that they might have been dazzled and deceived by some natural phenomenon occurring there. Comp. Kuinoel on Mt 17:1, seq.

(4.) Even supposing that there was a miracle in the case, the evidence of the prophecies, embracing many points in the same general subject, and extending through a long series of years, would be more satisfactory than any single miracle whatever. See Doddridge, in loc. The general meaning is, that the fact that he had come as the Messiah was disclosed in the mount by such a manifestation of his glory, and of what he would be, that they who saw it could not doubt it; the same thing the apostle says was more fully shown also in the prophecies, and these prophecies demanded their close and prolonged attention.

Where unto ye do well that ye take heed. They are worthy of your study, of your close and careful investigation. There is perhaps no study more worthy of the attention of Christians than that of the prophecies.

As unto a light that shineth in a dark place. That is, the prophecies resemble a candle, lamp, or torch, in a dark room, or in an obscure road at night. They make objects distinct which were before unseen; they enable us to behold many things which would be otherwise invisible. The object of the apostle in this representation seems to have been, to state that the prophecies do not give a

perfect light, or that they do not remove all obscurity, but that they shed some light on objects which would otherwise be entirely dark, and that the light which they furnished was so valuable that we ought by all means to endeavour to avail ourselves of it. Until the day shall dawn, and we shall see objects by the clear light of the sun, they are to be our guide. A lamp is of great value in a dark night; though it may not disclose objects so clearly as the light of the sun. But it may be a safe and sure guide; and a man who has to travel in dark and dangerous places, does "well" to "take heed" to his lamp.

Until the day dawn. Until you have the clearer light which shall result from the dawning of the day. The reference here is to the morning light as compared with a lamp; and the meaning is, that we should attend to the light furnished by the prophecies until the truth shall be rendered more distinct by the events as they shall actually be disclosed--until the brighter light which shall be shed on all things by the glory of the second advent of the Saviour, and the clearing up of what is now obscure in the splendours of the heavenly world. The point of comparison is between the necessary obscurity of prophecy, and the clearness of events when they actually occur--a difference like that which is observable in the objects around us when seen by the shining of the lamp and by the light of the sun. The apostle directs the mind onward to a period when all shall be clear--to that glorious time when the Saviour shall return to receive his people to himself in that heaven where all shall be light. Comp. Rev 21:23-26, 22:5. Meantime, we should avail ourselves of all the light which we have, and should apply ourselves diligently to the study of the prophecies of the Old Testament which are still unfulfilled, and of those in the New Testament which direct the mind onward to brighter and more glorious scenes than this world has yet witnessed. In our darkness they are a cheering lamp to guide our feet, till that illustrious day shall dawn. Comp. 1Cor 13:9,10.

And the day-star. The morning star--the bright star that at certain periods of the year leads on the day, and which is a pledge that the morning is about to dawn. Comp. Rev 2:28, 22:16. Arise in your hearts. On your hearts; that is, sheds its beams on your hearts. Till you see the indications of that approaching day which all is light.

The period referred to here by the approaching day that is to diffuse this light, is when the Saviour shall return in the full revelation of his glory--the splendour of his kingdom. Then all will be clear. Till that time, we should search the prophetic records, and strengthen our faith, and comfort our hearts, the predictions of the future glory of his reign. Whether this refers, as some suppose, to his reign on earth, either personally or by the principles of his religion universally prevailing, or, as others suppose, to the brighter revelations of heaven when he shall come to receive his people to himself, it is equally clear that a brighter time than any that has yet occurred is to dawn on our race, and equally true that we should regard the prophecies, as we do the morning star, as the cheering harbinger of day.

Learn hence, That the written word of God is a surer word, more to be depended and relied upon than any voice from heaven, though attested by the greatest and most eminent apostle, and consequently to be more heeded and regarded by us; nay, farther, the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit in and upon the hearts and lives of sincere and serious Christians is a more certain and indubitable evidence of their salvation, than if an angel should come from heaven on purpose to tell them that they should certainly come thither; for the testimony of an angel, at the highest, is but the testimony of a creature; but the testimony of the sanctifying Spirit is the testimony of God himself; it is therefore the sure word that we are to attend unto; and that revelation of God's will, being final, is and ought to be attneded to, before any pretended or real revelations whatsoever

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.

Knowing this first. Bearing this steadily in mind as a primary and most important truth.

That no prophecy of the scripture. No prophecy contained in the inspired records. The word scripture here shows that the apostle referred particularly to the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. The remark which he makes about prophecy is

general, though it is designed to bear on a particular class of the prophecies.

Is of any private interpretation. The expression here used (ιδιαςεπιλυσεως) has given rise to as great a diversity of interpretation, and to as much discussion, as perhaps any phrase in the New Testament; and to the present time there is no general agreement among expositors as to its meaning. It would be foreign to the design of these Notes, and would be of little utility, to enumerate the different interpretations which have been given of the passage, or to examine them in detail. It will be sufficient to remark, preparatory to endeavouring to ascertain the true sense of the passage, that some have held that it teaches that no prophecy can be interpreted of itself, but can be understood only by comparing it with the event; others, that it teaches that the prophets did not themselves understand what they wrote, but were mere passive Organs under the dictation of the Holy Spirit to communicate to future times what they could not themselves explain; others, that it teaches that "no prophecy is of self-interpretation," (Horsley;) others, that it teaches that the prophecies, besides having a literal signification, have also a hidden and mystical sense which cannot be learned from the prophecies themselves, but is to be perceived by a peculiar power of insight imparted by the Holy Ghost, enabling men to understand their recondite mysteries. It would be easy to show that some of these opinions are absurd, and that none of them are sustained by the fair interpretation of the language used, and by the drift of the passage. The more correct interpretation, as it seems to me, is that which supposes that the apostle teaches that the truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention; were not their own opinions, but were of higher origin, and were imparted by God; and according to this the passage may be explained, "knowing this as a point of first importance when you approach the prophecies, or always bearing this in mind, that it is a great principle in regard to the prophets, that what they communicated was not of their own disclosure; that is, was not revealed or originated by them." That this is the correct interpretation will be apparent from the following considerations:

(1.) It accords with the design of the apostle, which is to produce an impressive sense of the importance and value of the prophecies, and to lead those to whom he wrote to study them with diligence. This could be secured in no way so well as by assuring them that the writings which he wished them to study did not contain truths originated by the human mind, but that they were of higher origin.

(2.) This interpretation accords with what is said in the following verse, and is the only one of all those proposed that is consistent with that, or in connexion with which that verse will have any force. In that verse (2Pet 1:21) a reason is given for what is said here: "For (γαρ) the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, etc. But this can be a good reason for what is said here only on the supposition that the apostle meant to say that what they communicated was not originated by themselves; that it was of a higher than human origin; that the prophets spake "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This fact was a good reason why they should show profound respect for the prophecies, and study them with attention. But how could the fact that they were moved by the Holy Ghost be a reason for studying them, if the meaning here is that the prophets could not understand their own language, or that the prophecy could be understood only by the event, or that the prophecy had a double meaning, etc.? If the prophecies were of Divine origin, then that was a good reason why they should be approached with reverence, and should be profoundly studied.

(3.) This interpretation accords as well, to say the least, with the fair meaning of the language employed, as either of the other opinions proposed. The word rendered interpretation (επιλυσις) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means solution, (Rob. Lex.,) disclosure, (Prof. Stuart on the Old Testament, p. 328,) making free, (Passow,) with the notion that what is thus released or loosed was before bound, entangled, obscure. The verb from which this word is derived (επιλυω) means, to let loose upon, as dogs upon a hare, (Xen. Mem. 7, 8; lb. 9, 10 ;) to loose or open letters; to loosen a band; to loose or disclose a riddle or a dark saying, and then to enlighten, illustrate, etc.--Passow. It is twice used in the New Testament. Mk 4:34, "He expounded all things to his disciples"; Acts 19:39, "It shall be

determined in a lawful assembly." The verb would be applicable to loosing anything which is bound or confined, and thence to the explanation of a mysterious doctrine or a parable, or to a disclosure of what was before unknown. The word, according to this, in the place before us, would mean the disclosure of what was before bound, or retained, or unknown; either what had never been communicated at all, or what had been communicated obscurely; and the idea is, "no prophecy recorded in the Scripture is of, or comes from, any exposition or disclosure of the will and purposes of God by the prophets themselves." It is not a thing of their own, or a private matter originating with themselves, but it is to be traced to a higher source. If this be the true interpretation, then it follows that the prophecies are to be regarded as of higher than any human origin; and then, also, it follows that this passage should not be used to prove that the prophets did not understand the nature of their own communications, or that they were mere unconscious and passive instruments in the hand of God to make known his will. Whatever may be the truth on those points, this passage proves nothing in regard to them, any more than the fact that a minister of religion now declares truth which he did not originate, but which is to be traced to God as its author, proves that he does not understand what he himself says. It follows, also, that this passage cannot be adduced by the Papists to prove that the people at large should not have free access to the word of God, and should not be allowed to interpret it for themselves. It makes no affirmation on that point, and does not even contain any principle of which such a use can be made; for,

(1.) whatever it means, it is confined to prophecy; it does not embrace the whole Bible.

(2.) Whatever it means, it merely states a fact; it does not enjoin a duty. It states, as a fact, that there was something about the prophecies which was not of private solution, but it does not state that it is the duty of the church to prevent any private explanation or opinion even of the prophecies.

(3.) It says nothing about the church as empowered to give a public or authorized interpretation of the prophecies. There is not a hint, or an intimation of any kind, that the church is intrusted

with any such power whatever. There never was any greater perversion of a passage of Scripture than to suppose that this teaches that any class of men is not to have free access to the Bible. The effect of the passage, properly interpreted, should be to lead us to study the Bible with profound reverence, as having a higher than any human origin, not to turn away from it as if it were unintelligible, nor to lead us to suppose that it can be interpreted only by one class of men. The fact that it discloses truths which the human mind could not of itself have originated, is a good reason for studying it with diligence and with prayer--not for supposing that it is unlawful for us to attempt to understand it; a good reason for reverence and veneration for it--not for sanctified neglect.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

For the prophecy came not in old time. Marg., "or, at any." The Greek word (ποτε) will bear either construction. It would be true in either sense, but the reference is particularly to the recorded prophecies in the Old Testament. What was true of them, however, is true of all prophecy, that it is not by the will of man. The word prophecy here is without the article, meaning prophecy in general--all that is prophetic in the Old Testament; or, in a more general sense still, all that the prophets taught, whether relating to future events or not.

By the will of man. It was not of human origin; not discovered by the human mind. The word will, here seems to be used in the sense of prompting or suggestion; men did not speak by their own suggestion, but as truth was brought to them by God.

But holy men of God. Pious men commissioned by God, or employed by him as his messengers to mankind.

Spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Comp. 2Ti 3:16. The Greek phrase here (υποπνευματοζαγιουφερομενοι) means borne along, moved, influenced by the Holy Ghost. The idea is, that in what they spake they were carried along by an influence from above. They moved in the case only as they were moved; they spake only as the influence of the Holy Ghost was upon them.

They were no more self-moved than a vessel at sea is that is impelled by the wind; and as the progress made by the vessel is to be measured by the impulse bearing upon it, so the statements made by the prophets are to be traced to the impulse which bore upon their minds. They were not, indeed, in all respects like such a vessel, but only in regard to the fact that all they said as prophets was to be traced to the foreign influence that bore upon their minds. There could not be, therefore, a more decided declaration than this in proof that the prophets were inspired. If the authority of Peter is admitted, his positive and explicit assertion settles the question. If this be so, also, then the point with reference to which he makes this observation is abundantly confirmed, that the prophecies demand our earnest attention, and that we should give all the heed to them which we would to a light or lamp when travelling in a dangerous way, and in a dark night. In a still more general sense, the remark here made may also be applied to the whole of the Scriptures. We are in a dark world. We see few things clearly; and all around us, on a thousand questions, there is the obscurity of midnight. By nature there is nothing to cast light on those questions, and we are perplexed, bewildered, embarrassed. The Bible is given to us to shed light on our way. It is the only light which we have respecting the future, and though it does not give all the information which we might desire in regard to what is to come, yet it gives us sufficient light to guide us to heaven. It teaches us what it is necessary to know about God, about our duty, and about the way of salvation, in order to conduct us safely; and no one who has committed himself to its direction, has been suffered to wander finally away from the paths of salvation. It is, therefore, a duty to attend to the instructions which the Bible imparts, and to commit ourselves to its holy guidance in our journey to a better world: for soon, if we are faithful to its teachings, the light of eternity will dawn upon us, and there, amidst its cloudless splendour, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known; then we shall "need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give us light, and we shall reign for ever and ever." Comp. Rev 21:22-24, 22:5.

2 Peter-2

False Prophets and Teachers

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Men bring destruction "on themselves." No one compels them to deny the Lord that bought them; no one forces them to embrace any dangerous error. If men perish, they perish by their own fault, for (a.) ample provision was made for their salvation as well as for others; (b.) they were freely invited to be saved; (c.) it was, in itself, just as easy for them to embrace the truth as it was for others; and (d.) it was as easy to embrace the truth as to embrace error.

Almighty God never intended a certain remedy against heresy, any more than he did against sin and vice: It is certain, that there is no certain and effectual remedy against either of them; God does what he sees best and fittest, not what we think to be so.

Infallibility itself is no effectual remedy against heresy; the apostles were certainly infallible, and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguish heresy, which never more abounded than in the apostles times; St. Paul says, there must be heresies, 1Cor 1:19 St. Peter here says, that there shall be false teachers: Now, if there must be heresies and false teachers, either the church is not infallible, or infallibility is no effectual remedy against heresy.

Christ is here called the Lord that bought these men who brought destruction upon themselves, denying the Lord that bought them; because none should perish for want of a sufficient sacrifice for sin; Christ by his blood purchased for them pardon and life, to be theirs, upon condition of believing acceptance. Men bring destruction "on themselves." No one compels them to deny the Lord that bought them; no one forces them to embrace any dangerous error. If men perish, they perish by their own fault, for (a.) ample provision was made for their salvation as well as for

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2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (1.) Because they were professors of religion, and religion would seem to be held responsible for their conduct; and, (2,) because they were professed teachers of religion, and, by many, would be understood as expounding the true doctrines of the gospel.

Observe, in the next place, the method seducers take to draw disciples after them: they use feigned words; they flatter, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, inducing them to yield entirely to the opinions which these seducers endeavour to propagate, and sell and deliver themselves over to the instruction and government of these false teacher, who make a gain of those whom they make their proselytes, serving themselves and making some advantage of them; for all this is through covetousness, with a desire and design to get more wealth, or credit, or commendation, by increasing the number of their followers. The faithful ministers of Christ, who show men the way of truth, desire the profit and advantage of their followers, that they may be saved; but these seducing teachers desire and design only their own temporal advantage and worldly grandeur.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

And through covetousness. This shows what one of the things was by which they were influenced--a thing which, like licentiousness, usually exerts a powerful influence over the teachers of error. The religious principle is the strongest that is implanted in the human

bosom; and men who can obtain a livelihood in no other way, or who are too unprincipled or too indolent to labour for an honest living, often turn public teachers of religion, and adopt the kind of doctrines that will be likely to give them the greatest power over the purses of others. True religion, indeed, requires of its friends to devote all that they have to the service of God and to the promotion of his cause; but it is very easy to pervert this requirement, so that the teacher of error shall take advantage of it for his own aggrandizement.

Make merchandise of you. Treat you not as rational beings, but as a bale of goods, or any other article of traffic. That is, they would endeavour to make money out of them, and regard them only as fitted to promote that object.

Now of a long time lingereth not. Greek, "of old; long since." The idea seems to be, that justice had been long attentive to their movements, and was on its way to their destruction. It was not a new thing--that is, there was no new principle involved in their destruction; but it was a principle which had always been in operation, and which would certainly be applicable to them, and of a long time justice had been impatient to do the work which it was accustomed to do. What had occurred to the angels that sinned, (2Pet 2:4,) to the old world, (2Pet 2:5,) and to Sodom and Gomorrah, (2Pet 2:6,) would occur to them; and the same justice which had overthrown them might be regarded as on its way to effect their destruction. Comp. Isa 18:4. And their damnation slumbereth not. Their condemnation, (1Cor 11:29,) yet here referring to future punishment. "Mr. Blackwell observes, that this is a most beautiful figure, representing the vengeance that shall destroy such incorrigible sinners as an angel of judgment pursuing them on the wing, continually approaching nearer and nearer, and in the mean time keeping a watchful eye upon them that he may at length discharge an unerring low." --Doddridge. It is not uncommon to speak of "sleepless justice;" and the idea here is, that however justice may have seemed to slumber or to linger, it was not really so, but that it had on them an ever-watchful eye, and was on its way to do that which was right in regard to them. A sinner should never forget that there is an eye of unslumbering vigilance always upon him, and that everything that he does is

witnessed by one who will yet render exact justice to all men. No man, however careful to conceal his sins, or however bold in transgression, or however unconcerned he may seem to be, can hope that justice will always linger, or destruction always slumber.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

But cast them down to hell. Gr., ταρταρωσας--"thrusting them down to Tartarus." The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though it is common in the classical writers. It is a verb formed from ταρταρος (Tartarus,) which in Greek mythology was the lower part, or abyss of hades, where the shades of the wicked were supposed to be imprisoned and tormented, and answered to the Jewish word γεεννα --Gehenna. It was regarded, commonly, as beneath the earth; as entered through the grave; as dark, dismal, gloomy; and as a place of punishment. Comp. Job 10:21,22, and Mt 5:22. The word here is one that properly refers to a place or punishment, since the whole argument relates to that, and since it cannot be pretended that the "angels that sinned" were removed to a place of happiness on account of their transgression. It must also refer to punishment in some other world than this, for there is no evidence that this world is made a place of punishment for fallen angels.

And delivered them into chains of darkness. "Where darkness lies like chains upon them."--Rob. Lex. The meaning seems to be, that they are confined in that dark prison-house as if by chains. We are not to suppose that spirits are literally bound; but it was common to bind or fetter prisoners who were in dungeons, and the representation here is taken from that fact. This representation that the mass of fallen angels are confined in Tartarus, or in hell, is not inconsistent with the representations which elsewhere occur that their leader is permitted to roam the earth, and that even many of those spirits are allowed to tempt men. It may be still true that the mass are confined within the limits of their dark abode; and it may even be true also that Satan and those who are permitted to roam the earth are under bondage, and are permitted to range only

within certain bounds, and that they are so secured that they will be brought to trial at the last day.

To be reserved unto judgment. Jude 1:6, "to the judgment of the great day." They will then, with the revolted inhabitants of this world, be brought to trial for their crimes. That the fallen angels will be punished after the judgment is apparent from Rev 20:10. The argument in this verse is, that if God punished the angels who revolted from him, it is a fair inference that he will punish wicked men, though they were once professors of religion.

5 and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person,* a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

A preacher of righteousness. In Gen 6:9, it is said of Noah that he was "a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God;" and it may be presumed that during his long life he was faithful in reproving the wickedness of his age, and warned the world of the judgment that was preparing for it, Compare Notes, Heb 11:7.

6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

7 and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

8 (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds:)

For that righteous man dwelling among them. The Latin Vulgate renders this, "For in seeing and hearing he was just;" meaning that he maintained his uprightness, or that he did not become contaminated by the vices of Sodom. Many expositors have supposed that this is the correct rendering; but the most natural and the most common explanation is that which is found in our version. According to that, the meaning is, that compelled as he was, while living among them, to see and to hear what was going on, his soul was constantly troubled.

In seeing and hearing. Seeing their open acts of depravity, and hearing their vile conversation. The effect which this had on the mind of Lot is not mentioned in Genesis, but nothing is more probable than the statement here made by Peter. Whether this

statement was founded on tradition, or whether it is a suggestion of inspiration to the mind of Peter, cannot be determined. The words rendered seeing and hearing may refer to the act of seeing, or to the object seen. Wetstein and Robinson suppose that they refer here to the latter, and that the sense is, that he was troubled by what he saw and heard. The meaning is not materially different. Those who live among the wicked are compelled to see and hear much that pains their hearts, and it is well if they do not become indifferent to it, or contaminated by it.

Vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. Tortured or tormented his soul--εβασανιζεν. Compare Mt 8:6,29; Lk 8:28, Rev 9:5, 11:10, 14:10, 20:10, where the same word is rendered tormented. The use of this word would seem to imply that there was something active on the part of Lot which produced this distress on account of their conduct, lie was not merely troubled as if his soul were passively acted on, but there were strong mental exercises of a positive kind, arising perhaps from anxious solicitude how he might prevent their evil conduct, or from painful reflections on the consequences of their deeds to themselves, or from earnest pleadings in their behalf before God, or from reproofs and warnings of the wicked. At all events, the language is such as would seem to indicate that he was not a mere passive observer of their conduct. This, it would seem, was "from day to day;" that is, it was constant. There were doubtless reasons why Lot should remain among such a people, and why, when he might so easily have done it, he did not remove to another place. Perhaps it was one purpose of his remaining to endeavour to do them good, as it is often the duty of good men now to reside among the wicked for the same purpose. Lot is supposed to have resided in Sodom--then probably the most corrupt place on the earth--for sixteen years; and we have in that fact an instructive demonstration that a good man may maintain the life of religion in his soul when surrounded by the wicked, and an illustration of the effects which the conduct of the wicked will have on a man of true piety when he is compelled to witness it constantly. We may learn from the record made of Lot what those effects will be, and what is evidence that one is truly pious who lives among the wicked.

(1.) He will not be contaminated with their wickedness, or will not conform to their evil customs.

(2.) He will not become indifferent to it, but his heart will be more and more affected by their depravity. Comp. Ps 119:136, Lk 19:41; Acts 17:16.

(3.) He will have not only constant, but growing solicitude in regard to it--solicitude that will be felt every day: "He vexed his soul from day to day." It will not only be at intervals that his mind will be affected by their conduct, but it will be an habitual and constant thing. True piety is not fitful, periodical, and spasmodic; it is constant and steady. It is not a jet that occasionally bursts out; it is a fountain always flowing.

(4.) He will seek to do them good. We may suppose that this was the case with Lot; we are certain that it is a characteristic of true religion to seek to do good to all, however wicked they may be.

(5.) He will secure their confidence. He will practise no improper arts to do this, but it will be one of the usual results of a life of integrity, that a good man will secure the confidence of even the wicked. It does not appear that Lot lost that confidence, and the whole narrative in Genesis leads us to suppose that even the inhabitants of Sodom regarded him as a good man. The wicked may hate a good man because he is good; but if a man lives as he should, they will regard him as upright, and they will give him the credit of it when he dies, if they should withhold it while he lives.

9 the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Verse 9. The Lord knoweth, etc. That is, the cases referred to show that God is able to deliver his people when tempted, and understands the best way in which it should be done. He sees a way to do it when we cannot, though it is often a way which we should not have thought of. He can send all angel to take his tempted people by the hand; he can interpose and destroy the power of the tempter; he can raise up earthly friends; he can deliver his people completely and for ever from temptation, by their removal to heaven. And to reserve the unjust. As he does the

rebel angels, 2Pet 2:4. The case of the angels shows that God can keep wicked men, as if under bonds, reserved for their final trial at his bar. Though they seem to go at large, yet they are under his control, and are kept by him with reference to their ultimate arraignment.

heretics are frequently unclean persons, monstrous opinions and vile affections accompany one another; such as oppose the faith are flesh-defilers.
Note farther, That seducers are opposers of civil government and dominion, they despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Some think the dignities here intended were the angels, others the apostles, but most understand it of civil rulers: it is a very heinous sin in the sight of God to despise government, and oppose rulers.

10 but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.
Presumptuous *are they,* self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

And despise government. Marg., dominion. That is, they regard all government in the state, the church, and the family, as an evil. Advocates for unbridled freedom of all sorts; declaimers on liberty and on the evils of oppression; defenders of what they regard as the rights of injured man, and yet secretly themselves lusting for the exercise of the very power which they would deny to others--they make no just distinctions about what constitutes true freedom, and in their zeal array themselves against government in all forms. No topic of declamation would be more popular than this, and from none would they hope to secure more followers; for if they could succeed in removing all respect for the just restraints of law, the way would be open for the accomplishment of their own purposes, in setting up a dominion over the minds of others. It is a common result of such views, that men of this description become impatient of the government of God himself, and seek to throw off all authority, and to live in the unrestrained indulgence of their vicious propensities.

They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. The word rendered dignities here, (δοξας,) means properly honour, glory, splendour;

then that which is fitted to inspire respect; that which is dignified or exalted. It is applied here to men of exalted rank; and the meaning is, that they did not regard rank, or station, or office--thus violating the plainest rules of propriety and of religion. Acts 23:4, Acts 23:5. Jude, between whose language and that of Peter in this chapter there is a remarkable resemblance, has expressed this more fully. He says, (Jude 1:8,) "These filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." It is one of the effects of religion to produce respect for superiors; but when men are self-willed, and when they purpose to give indulgence to corrupt propensities, it is natural for them to dislike all government. Accordingly, it is by no means an unfrequent effect of certain forms of error to lead men to speak disrespectfully of those in authority, and to attempt to throw off all the restraints of law. It is a very certain indication that men hold wrong opinions when they show disrespect to those in authority, and despise the restraints of law.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

This he aggravates, by setting forth the very different conduct of more excellent creatures, even the angels, of whom observe, 1. They are greater in power and might, and that even than those who are clothed with authority and power among the sons of men, and much more than those false teachers who are slanderous revilers of magistrates and governors; the good angels vastly exceed us in all natural and moral excellences, in strength, understanding, and holiness too. 2. Good angels are accusers of sinful creatures, either of their own kind, or ours, or both. Those who are allowed to behold the face of God, and stand before his throne, cannot but have a zeal for his honour, and accuse and blame those who dishonour him. 3. Angels bring their accusations of sinful creatures before the Lord; they do not publish their faults, and tell their crimes to their fellow-creatures, in a way of calumny and slander; but it is before the Lord, who is the Judge, and will be the avenger, of all impiety and injustice. 4. Good angels mingle no bitter revilings nor base reproaches with any of the accusations or charges they bring against the wickedest and worst of criminals. Let us, who pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, imitate the angels in this particular; if we complain of

wicked men, let it be to God, and that not with rage and reviling, but with compassion and composedness of mind, that may evidence that we belong to him who is meek and merciful.

Bring not railing accusation. They simply say, "The Lord rebuke thee," Jude 1:9. Comp. Zech 3:2 The Greek here is, "bring not blasphemous or reproachful judgment, or condemnation"--βλασφημονκρισιν. They abhor all scurrility and violence of language; they simply state matters as they are. No one can doubt that this accords with what we should expect of the angels; and that if they had occasion to speak of those who were opposers, it would be in a calm and serious manner, not seeking to overwhelm them by reproaches.

They are eminently so with respect to the government of their passions; when they contend with devils themselves, it is without disturbance, without railing accusations.
It is our duty to learn this angelical lesson, or forbearing railing accusations; not to return evil for evil, but being defamed, to entreat; we are to be as just to another's reputation as our own; they that handle the names of others rudely, must expect their own will be, at one time or other, handled as roughly; nothing is more just with God, than to suffer others to open their mouths against those who will open their own mouths against others.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

The apostle, having shown (2Pe 2:11) how unlike seducing teachers are to the most excellent creatures, proceeds (2Pe 2:12) to show how like they are to the most inferior: they are like the horse and mule, which have no understanding; they are as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.

But these, as natural brute beasts. These persons, who resemble so much irrational animals which are made to be taken and destroyed. The point of the comparison is, that they are like fierce and savage beasts that exercise no control over their appetites, and that seem to be made only to be destroyed. These persons, by their fierce and ungovernable passions, appear to be made only for

destruction, and rush blindly on to it. The word rendered natural, (which, however, is wanting in several manuscripts,) means as they are by nature, following the bent of their natural appetites and passions. The idea is, that they exercised no more restraint over their passions than beasts do over their propensities. They were entirely under the dominion of their natural appetites, and did not allow their reason or conscience to exert any constraint. The word rendered brute, means without reason; irrational. Man has reason, and should allow it to control his passions; the brutes have no rational nature, and it is to be expected that they will act out their propensities without restraint. Man, as an animal, has many passions and appetites resembling those of the brute creation, but he is also endowed with a higher nature, which is designed to regulate and control his inferior propensities, and to keep them in subordination to the requirements of law. If a man sinks himself to the level of brutes, he must expect to be treated like brutes; and as wild and savage animals--lions, and panthers, and wolves, and bears--are regarded as dangerous, and as "made to be taken and destroyed," so the same destiny must come upon men who make themselves like them. Made to be taken and destroyed. They are not only useless to society, but destructive; and men feel that it is right to destroy them. We are not to suppose that this teaches that the only object which God had in view in making wild animals was that they might be destroyed; but that men so regard them. Speak evil of the things that they understated not. Of objects whose worth and value they cannot appreciate. This is no uncommon thing among men, especially in regard to the works and ways of God. And shall utterly perish in their own corruption. Their views will be the means of their ruin; and they render them fit for it, just as much as the fierce passions of the wild animals do.

13 and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as* they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

14 having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

As they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time. As men peculiarly wicked, shameless, and abandoned; for only such revel

in open day. Comp. Acts 2:15; 1Thes 5:7. Spots they are and blemishes. That is, they are like a dark spot on a pure garment, or like a deformity on an otherwise beautiful person. They are a scandal and disgrace to the Christian profession. Sporting themselves. The Greek word here means to live delicately or luxuriously; to revel. The idea is not exactly that of sporting, or playing, or amusing themselves; but it is that they take advantage of their views to live in riot and luxury. Under the garb of the Christian profession, they give indulgence to the most corrupt passions.

Here we have many sad and dreadful instances given of the height of sensuality and brutishness which these seducers were arrived at, and had attained unto. Lord! how do fleshly lusts, and sensual affections, obscure the light of conscience, and corrupt its judgment? There is such an intimate communion between the soul and the body, that they interchangeably corrupt one another. To what a desperate degree of hardness and insensibility, had the flames of lust seared the consciences of these men? They had lost all the ingenuous bashfulness of human nature, and pleased themselves in their licentious principles and practices, not declining to do that at noon-day which Heathens would have blushed to be found doing at mid-night.

Observe particularly, how luxury and uncleanness accompany each other; they took pleasure in rioting and sporting themselves in their feasts, and their eyes were full of adultery. They feasted and fed immeasurably, impurely, and lustfully, making their plenty fodder and fuel for their lusts: for having fed to the full, every one neighed after his neighbour's wife, and, putting out the candles after supper, they gave way promiscuously to the ravings of unbridled lust, turning the temple of the Holy Ghost into an hog-sty: But know, O unclean sinner! that God will return flames for flames, and revenge this fire in thy heart with the fire of hell. How nearly does it concern thee, who has burnt in these impute flames of uncleanness, and kindled the flames of God's wrath, to labour to cool and quench them with the blood of Christ, and the tears of repentance, which alone can allay the heats of sin in thee, and of wrath in God? Let unclean sinners improve examples, lest they be made examples.

With their own deceivings. Jude, in the parallel place, (Jude 1:12,) has, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you." Several versions, and a few manuscripts also, here read feasts instead of deceivings, (αγαπαις for απαταις.) The common reading, however, is undoubtedly the correct one, (see Wetstein, in loc;) and the meaning is, that they took advantage of their false views to turn even the sacred feasts of charity, or perhaps the Lord's Supper itself, into an occasion of sensual indulgence. Comp. 1Cor 11:20, seq. The difference between these persons, and those in the church at Corinth, seems to have been that these did it of design, and for the purpose of leading others into sin; those who were in the church at Corinth erred through ignorance.

Having eyes full of adultery. Marg., as in the Greek, an adulteress; that is, gazing with desire after such persons. The word full is designed to denote that the corrupt passion referred to had wholly seized and occupied their minds. The eye was, as it were, full of this passion; it saw nothing else but some occasion for its indulgence; it expressed nothing else but the desire. The reference here is to the sacred festival mentioned in the previous verse; and the meaning is, that they celebrated that festival with licentious feelings, giving free indulgence to their corrupt desires by gazing on the females who were assembled with them. In the passion here referred to, the eye is usually the first offender, the inlet to corrupt desires, and the medium by which they are expressed. Comp. Mt 5:28. The wanton glance is a principal occasion of exciting the sin; and there is much often in dress, and mien, and gesture, to charm the eye and to deepen the debasing passion. And that cannot cease from sin. They cannot look on the females who may be present without sinning. Comp. Mt 5:28. There are many men in whom the presence of the most virtuous woman only excites impure and corrupt desires. The expression here does not mean that they have no natural ability to cease from sin, or that they are impelled to it by any physical necessity, but only that they are so corrupt and unprincipled that they certainly will sin always. Beguiling unstable souls. Those who are not strong in Christian principle, or who are naturally fluctuating and irresolute. The word rendered beguiling means to bait, to entrap, and would be applicable to the methods practised in hunting. Here it means that it was one of their arts to place specious allurements before those who were known not to

have settled principles or firmness, in order to allure them to sin. Comp. 2Ti 3:6. An heart they have exercised with covetous practices. Skilled in the arts which covetous men adopt in order to cheat others out of their property. A leading purpose which influenced these men was to obtain money. One of the most certain ways for dishonest men to do this is to make use of the religious principle; to corrupt and control the conscience; to make others believe that they are eminently holy, or that they are the special favourites of heaven; and when they can do this, they have the purses of others at command. For the religious principle is the most powerful of all principles; and he who can control that, can control all that a man possesses. The idea here is, that these persons had made this their study, and had learned the ways in which men could be induced to part with their money under religious pretences. We should always be on our guard when professedly religious teachers propose to have much to do with money matters. While we should always be ready to aid every good cause, yet we should remember that unprincipled and indolent men often assume the mask of religion that they may practise their arts on the credulity of others, and that their real aim is to obtain their property, not to save their souls. Cursed children. This is a Hebraism, meaning literally, "children of the curse;" that is, persons devoted to the curse, or who will certainly be destroyed.

15 which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

The particular point to which Peter refers in which they imitated him, seems to have been the love of gain, or covetousness. Possibly, however, he might have designed to refer to a more general resemblance, for in fact they imitated him in the following things: (1.) in being professed religious teachers, or the servants of God; (2.) in their covetousness; (3.) in inducing others to sin, referring to the same kind of sins in both cases. Balaam counselled the Moabites to entice the children of Israel to illicit connexion with their women, thus introducing licentiousness into the camp of the Hebrews, Nu 31:16; comp. Nu 25:1-9 and in like manner these teachers led others into licentiousnes, thus corrupting the church.

Who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Who was supremely influenced by the love of gain, and was capable of being employed,

for a price, in a wicked design; thus prostituting his high office, as a professed prophet of the Most High, to base and ignoble ends. That Balaam, though he professed to be influenced by a supreme regard to the will of God, (Nu 22:18,38,) was really influenced by the desire of reward, and was willing to prostitute his great office to secure such a reward, there can be no doubt.

(1.) The elders of Moab and of Midian came to Balaam with "the rewards of divination in their hand," (Nu 22:7,) and with promises from Balak of promoting him to great honour, if he would curse the children of Israel, Nu 22:17.

(2.) Balaam was disposed to go with them, and was restrained from going at once only by a direct and solemn prohibition from the Lord, Nu 22:11.

(3.) Notwithstanding this solemn prohibition, and notwithstanding he said to the ambassadors from Balak that he would do only as God directed, though Balak should give him his house full of silver and gold, (Nu 22:18,) yet he did not regard the matter as settled, but proposed to them that they should wait another night, with the hope that the Lord would give a more favourable direction in reference to their request, thus showing that his heart was in the service which they required, and that his inclination was to avail himself of their offer, Nu 22:19.

(4.) When he did obtain permission to go, it was only to say that which the Lord should direct him to say, (Nu 22:20;) but he went with a "perverse" heart, with a secret wish to comply with the desire of Balak, and with a knowledge that he was doing wrong, (Nu 22:34,) and was restrained from uttering the curse which Balak desired only by an influence from above which he could not control. Balaam was undoubtedly a wicked man, and was constrained by a power from on high to utter sentiments which God meant should be uttered, but which Balaam would never have expressed of his own accord.

Our apostle, having charged these men with insatiable lust in the former verse, proceeds next to tax them with insatiable covetousness in this verse, declaring that this sin had diverted them

from the right way of truth and godliness, and caused them to imitate Balaam of old, whose love of honour and wealth so blinded his eyes, that the ass he rode upon could see beyond him, whose mouth God miraculously opened to rebuke the madness of the prophet.

Note here, 1. How the wicked in after ages do in their courses and practices imitate such wicked persons as lived before them in former ages: These men followed the way of Balaam, imitate his covetousness and insatiable desire of wealth.

Note, 2. That as it is the nature of all sin to carry men out of the way, so covetousness in particular will carry a man astray, and put him upon the practice of any wickedness: It neither fears nor forbears any sinful course to attain its end; they that will be rich meet with many enticements unto sin, and they will not fear to embrace any enticement. Nay, verily, a thirst after gain, will make a man thirst after blood, to get gain. Witness Balaam and Judas, who were both covetous and bloody. Covetousness is oft-times the cause of uncleanness. How many, for the sake of money, have violated their matrimonial faith, allured more with the adulterer's purse than by his person. Let no person hope to escape any sin that embraces this one sin.

Note, 3. What a mighty struggle there sometimes is in a natural man's conscience concerning sin. The light of Balaam's conscience made him refuse the wages of unrighteousness, and speak honourably: If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot, &c. but at the same time lust in his heart led him forth strongly to desire it. He loved the wages of unrighteousness: loved it, yet durst not touch it.

Note, 4. How extremely, yea, brutishly mad, such men are upon their lusts, who will not be rebuked or stopped in their progress of impiety without a miracle. Balaam's running was so greedy, and his march so furious, that he had cursed the people, had not the angel stopped him, and the ass spoken to him. Little thanks to a resolute sinner that he does not rush on, when the arm of omnipotency pulls him back. O let the heart-changing power of the grace of God

influence us to good, as well as his almighty arm restrain us from evil, or we are miserable.

16 but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet.

Though some more uncommon and extraordinary rebuke may for a little while cool men's courage, and hinder their violent progress in the way of sin, it will not make them forsake the way of iniquity and go over into the way of holiness.

The dumb ass, speaking with man's voice. Nu 22:28. God seems to have designed that both Balaam and Balak should be convinced that the children of Israel were his people; and so important was it that this conviction should rest fully on the minds of the nations through whom they passed, that he would not suffer even a pretended prophet to make use of his influence to curse them. He designed that all that influence should be in favour of the cause of truth, thus furnishing a striking instance of the use which he often makes of wicked men. To convince Balaam of the error of his course, and to make him sensible that God was an observer of his conduct, and to induce him to utter only what he should direct, nothing would be better fitted than this miracle. The very animal on which he rode, dumb and naturally stupid, was made to utter a reproof; a reproof as directly from heaven as though the stones had cried out beneath his feet, or the trees of the wood had uttered the language of remonstrance. As to the nature of the miracle here referred to, it may be remarked, (1.) that it was as easy for God to perform this miracle as any other; and (2.) that it was a miracle that would be as likely to be effectual, and to answer the purpose, as any other. No man can show that it could not have occurred; and the occasion was one in which some decided rebuke, in language beyond that of conscience, was necessary.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

These are wells without water. Jude 1:12,13 employs several other epithets to describe the same class of persons. The language employed both by Peter and Jude is singularly terse, pointed, and emphatic. Nothing to an oriental mind would be more expressive than to say of professed religious teachers, that they were "wells without water." It was always a sad disappointment to a traveller in

the hot sands of the desert to come to a well where it was expected that water might be found, and to find it dry. It only aggravated the trials of the thirsty and weary traveller. Such were these religious teachers. In a world, not unaptly compared, in regard to its real comforts, to the wastes and sands of the desert, they would only grievously disappoint the expectations of all those who were seeking for the refreshing influences of the truths of the gospel. There are many such teachers in the world. Clouds that are carried with a tempest. Clouds that are driven about by the wind, and that send down no rain upon the earth. They promise rain, only to be followed by disappointment. Substantially the same idea is conveyed by this as by the previous phrase. "The Arabs compare persons who put on the appearance of virtue, when yet they are destitute of all goodness, to a light cloud which makes a show of rain, and afterwards vanishes."--Benson. The sense is this: The cloud, as it rises, promises rain. The expectation of the farmer is excited that the thirsty earth is to be refreshed with needful showers. Instead of this, however, the wind "gets into" the cloud; it is driven about, and no rain falls, or it ends in a destructive tornado which sweeps everything before it. So of these religious teachers. Instruction in regard to the way of salvation was expected from them; but, instead of that, they disappointed the expectations of those who were desirous of knowing the way of life, and their doctrines only tended to destroy.

Still our apostle proceeds in characterising and describing these seducers, which were then amongst them. He describing them before by their luxury and licentiousness, by their incontinency and uncleanness, by their insatiableness and covetousness, now he proceeds to discover their vanity and emptiness. They pretended indeed to be deep fountains of saving knowledge, but they were like wells without water; and to be clouds, containing abundance of rain, for the watering of the church; whereas they were like clouds carried about with the tempest of pride and ambition, from one vicious doctrine and practice to another, darkening the church; for whom, by the just judgment of God, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Note here, 1. The ministers of the gospel ought to be as wells, for depth of knowledge, for purity of doctrine, for residency and fixedness of abode; every one knows where the town-well stands; though ministers are wells of clay, yet should they be always full of the water of life, and always at hand for the people to have recourse unto.

Note, 2. The ministers of Christ must be full and watery clouds, able and apt to teach, able to open Scriptures, able to convince gainsayers, continually dropping down the heavenly dew; but not as clouds without water, without the water of true knowledge, without the water of holiness, sanctify both of heart and life, nor without the water of consolation and refreshment. The highest commendation of a minister is industry for, and usefulness to the souls of others: clouds consume themselves by watering others.

Note, 3. That although seducers are wont to make great shews and appearances of worth in themselves, yet it is a great and inexcusable sin to make shew of that goodness of which we are wholly void, and to which we are also opposite; to be wells without water, and clouds without rain, big and black, accompanied with emptiness and dryness. Appearing goodness sets men at the farthest distance from real goodness; they that satisfy themselves in appearances, will never labour after holiness in reality.

18 For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity. When they make pretensions to wisdom and learning, or seem to attach great importance to what they say, and urge it in a pompous and positive manner. Truth is simple, and delights in simple statements. It expects to make its way by its own intrinsic force, and is willing to pass for what it is worth. Error is noisy and declamatory, and hopes to succeed by substituting sound for sense, and by such tones and arts as shall induce men to believe that what is said is true, when it is known by the speaker to be false. They allure through the lusts of the flesh. The same word is used here which in 2Pet 2:14 is

rendered beguiling, and in Jas 1:14 enticed. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means that they make use of deceitful arts to allure, ensnare, or beguile others. The means which it is here said they employed, were the lusts of the flesh; that is, they promised unlimited indulgence to the carnal appetites, or taught such doctrines that their followers would feel themselves free to give unrestrained liberty to such propensities. This has been quite a common method in the world, of inducing men to embrace false doctrines. Through much wantonness. 2Ti 3:6. The meaning here is, that they made use of every variety of lascivious arts to beguile others under religious pretences. This has been often done in the world; for religion has been abused to give seducers access to the confidence of the innocent, only that they might betray and ruin them. It is right that for all such the "mist of darkness should be reserved for ever;" and if there were not a place of punishment prepared for such men, there would be defect in the moral administration of the universe.

Those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. Marg.,for a little child. The difference between the margin and the text here arises from a difference of reading in the Greek. Most of the later editions of the Greek Testament coincide with the reading in the margin, (ολιγως,) meaning little, but a little, scarcely. This accords better with the scope of the passage; and, according to this, it means that they had almost escaped from the snares and influences of those who live in error and sin. They had begun to think of their ways; they had broken off many of their evil habits; and there was hope that they would be entirely reformed, and would become decided Christians, but they were allured again to the sins in which they had so long indulged. This seems to me to accord with the design of the passage, and it certainly accords with what frequently occurs, that those who are addicted to habits of vice become apparently interested in religion, and abandon many of their evil practices, but are again allured by the seductive influences of sin, and relapse into their former habits. In the case referred to here it was by professedly religious teachers--and is this never done now? Are there none, for example, who have been addicted to habits of intemperance, who had been almost reformed, but who are led back again by the influence of religious teachers? Not directly and openly, indeed, would they lead them into habits

of intemperance. But, when their reformation is begun, its success and its completion depend on total abstinence from all that intoxicates. In this condition, nothing more is necessary to secure their entire reformation and safety than mere abstinence; and nothing more may be necessary to lead them into their former practices than the example of others who indulge in moderate drinking, or than the doctrine inculcated by a religious teacher that such moderate drinking is not contrary to the spirit of the Bible.

The next sin charged upon these seducers is pride and ostentation, they speak big, great swelling words of vanity; with a lofty and affected style they propound their false doctrines to amuse the simple. It is the usual practice of seducers to speak in an high-flown strain of words, that, being not understood, they may be the more admired.
Next they allure to their party such novice Christians who had left the Heathenish bestiality, and made an outward profession of the Christian religion. The word rendered to allure, is a metaphor taken from fishers or fowlers, who produce the bait or shrape, but hide the net or snare. Seducers bait their hook with such baits as are proper to the fish they would catch, else they are no good anglers.
But observe, why the bait is here before us, it is liberty, it is licentiousness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh; no bait like this.

As clouds carried with a tempest. When we see a cloud we expect a refreshing shower from it; but these are clouds which yield no rain, for they are driven with the wind, but not of the Spirit, but the stormy wind or tempest of their own ambition and covetousness. They espouse and spread those opinions that will procure most applause and advantage to themselves; and as clouds obstruct the light of the sun, and darken the air, so do these darken counsel by words without knowledge and wherein there is no truth; and, seeing these men are for promoting darkness in this world, it is very just that the mist of darkness should be their portion in the next. Utter darkness was prepared for the devil, the great deceiver, and his angels, those instruments that he uses to turn men from the truth, and therefore for them it is reserved, and that for ever; the fire of hell is everlasting, and the smoke of the bottomless pit rises up for

ever and ever. And it is just with God to deal thus with them, because

(1.) They allure those they deal with, and draw them into a net, or catch them as men do fish; and,

(2.) It is with great swelling words of vanity, lofty expressions, which have a great sound, but little sense.

(3.) They work upon the corrupt affections and carnal fleshly lusts of men, proposing what is grateful to them. And,

(4.) They seduce persons who in reality avoided and kept at a distance from those who spread and those who embraced hurtful and destructive errors.

Observe, [1.] By application and industry men attain a skilfulness and dexterity in promoting error. They are as artful and as successful as the fisher, who makes angling his daily employment. The business of these men is to draw disciples after them, and in their methods and management there are some things worth observing, how they suit their bait to those they desire to catch.

[2.] Erroneous teachers have a peculiar advantage to win men over to them, because they have sensual pleasure to take them with; where as the ministers of Christ put men upon self-denial, and the mortifying of those lusts that others gratify and please: wonder not therefore that truth prevails no more, or that errors spread so much.

[3.] Persons who have for a while adhered to the truth, and kept clear of errors, may by the subtlety and industry of seducers be so far deceived as to fall into those errors they had for a while clean escaped. "Be therefore always upon your guard, maintain a godly jealousy of yourselves, search the scriptures, pray for the Spirit to instruct and establish you in the truth, walk humbly with God, and watch against every thing that may provoke him to give you up to a reprobate mind, that you may not be taken with the fair and specious pretences of these false teachers, who promise liberty to all who will hearken to them, not true Christian liberty for the service of God, but a licentiousness in sin, to follow the devices

and desires of their own hearts." To prevent these men's gaining proselytes, he tells us that, in the midst of all their talk of liberty, they themselves are the vilest slaves, for they are the servants of corruption; their own lusts have gotten a complete victory over them, and they are actually in bondage to them, making provision for the flesh, to satisfy its cravings, comply with its directions, and obey its commands. Their minds and hearts are so far corrupted and depraved that they have neither power nor will to refuse the task that is imposed on them. They are conquered and captivated by their spiritual enemies, and yield their members servants of unrighteousness: and what a shame it is to be overcome and commanded by those who are themselves the servants of corruption, and slaves to their own lusts! This consideration should prevent our being led away by these seducers;

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

They themselves are the servants of corruption. They are the slaves of gross and corrupt passions, themselves utter strangers to freedom, and bound in the chains of servitude. These passions and appetites have obtained the entire mastery over them, and brought them into the severest bondage. This is often the case with those who deride the restraints of serious piety. They are themselves the slaves of appetite, or of the rules of fashionable life, or of the laws of honour, or of vicious indulgences. "he is a freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves besides." Comp. 2Cor 3:17.

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Learn hence, That a person may forsake many gross and scandalous sins, and have a visible change and reformation wrought in his life; but, not being a thorough and prevailing change, he is still in an unsafe state; his latter end may be worse than the beginning.

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Observe here, The odious character given of apostates; the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, who, though washed in the water of baptism externally, yet their natures were never internally renewed by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's sheep are. All the outward reformation of life which is found in unrenewed persons, is but like the washing of a swine, which you may make clean, but can never make cleanly; upon occasion it will again to the mire; make the swine a sheep, change its nature, and it will never delight in filth more; but whilst it retains its filthy nature, it will delight in filthiness. Dogs that have disgorged their stomachs are dogs still; and swine washed are swine still. No wonder then if temptation draw them to return to their vomit, and mire again.

Under all the appearances of reformation, still their evil nature remained, as really as that of the dog or the swine, and that nature finally prevailed. There was no thorough internal change, any more than there is in the swine when it is washed, or in the dog, This passage, therefore, would seem to demonstrate that there never had been any real change of heart, and of course there had been no falling away from true religion. The dog and the swine had never been anything else than the dog and the swine, and these persons had never been anything else than sinners.

The dog is turned to his own vomit again. That is, to eat it up. The passage would seem to imply, that whatever pains should be taken to change the habits of the dog, he would return to them again. The quotation here is from Prov 26:11: "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly." A similar proverb is found in the Rabbinical writers. Of the truth of the disgusting fact here affirmed of the dog, there can be no doubt. Phaedrus (Fab. 27) states a fact still more offensive respecting its habits. In the view of the Orientals, the dog was reckoned among the most vile and disgusting of all animals. Comp. De 23:18, 1Sam 17:43, 2Sam 3:8, 9:8, 16:9, Mt 7:6, Php 3:2. See also Horace, II. Epis. l, 26:---

No matter how clean the swine is made by washing, thin would not prevent it, in the slightest degree, from rolling in filth again. It will act out its real nature. So it is with the sinner. No external reformation will certainly prevent his returning to his former habits; and when he does return, we can only say that he is acting according to his real nature--a nature which has never been changed, any more than the nature of the dog or the swine. On the characteristics of the persons referred to in this chapter, (2Pet 2:9-19,) see the Introduction, & 3.

The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never were changed; that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed that in fact there had been no real change. This passage will prove--what there are abundant facts to confirm--that persons may reform externally, and then return again to their former corrupt habits. It will also prove that we should rely on no mere external reformation, no outward cleansing, as certain evidence of piety. Thousands who have been externally reformed have ultimately shown that they had no religion, and there is nothing in mere outward reformation that can fit us for heaven. God looks upon the heart; and it is only the religion that has its seat there, that can secure our final salvation. Observe here, The odious character given of apostates; the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, who, though washed in the water of baptism externally, yet their natures were never internally renewed by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's sheep are. All the outward reformation of life which is found in unrenewed persons, is but like the washing of a swine, which you may make clean, but can never make cleanly; upon occasion it will again to the mire; make the swine a sheep, change its nature, and it will never delight in filth more; but whilst it retains its filthy nature, it will delight in filthiness. Dogs that have disgorged their stomachs are dogs still; and swine washed are swine still. No wonder then if temptation draw them to return to their vomit, and mire again.

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No matter how clean the swine is made by washing, thin would not prevent it, in the slightest degree, from rolling in filth again. It will

act out its real nature. So it is with the sinner. No external reformation will certainly prevent his returning to his former habits; and when he does return, we can only say that he is acting according to his real nature--a nature which has never been changed, any more than the nature of the dog or the swine. On the characteristics of the persons referred to in this chapter, (2Pet 2:9-19,) see the Introduction, & 3.

The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never were changed; that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed that in fact there had been no real change. This passage will prove--what there are abundant facts to confirm--that persons may reform externally, and then return again to their former corrupt habits. It will also prove that we should rely on no mere external reformation, no outward cleansing, as certain evidence of piety. Thousands who have been externally reformed have ultimately shown that they had no religion, and there is nothing in mere outward reformation that can fit us for heaven. God looks upon the heart; and it is only the religion that has its seat there, that can secure our final salvation.

2 Peter-3

The Promise of the Lord's Coming

1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I
stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:
2 that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy
prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and
Saviour:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you. This expression proves that he had written a former epistle, and that it was addressed to the same persons as this. Comp. Intro. & 3. In both which I stir up your pure minds, etc. That is, the main object of both epistles is the same--to call to your remembrance important truths which you have before heard, but which you are in danger of forgetting, or from which you are in danger of being turned away

by prevailing errors. Comp. 2Pet 3:12, seq. The word rendered pure, ειλικρινης occurs only here and in Php 1:10, where it is rendered sincere. The word properly refers to that which may be judged of in sunshine; then it means clear, manifest; and then sincere, pure--as that in which there is no obscurity. The idea here perhaps is, that their minds were open, frank, candid, sincere, rather than that they were pure. The apostle regarded them as disposed to see the truth, and yet as liable to be led astray by the plausible errors of others. Such minds need to have truths often brought fresh to their remembrance, though they are truths with which they had before been familiar.

That ye may be mindful of the words. Of the doctrines; the truths; the prophetic statements. Jude 1:18 says that it had been foretold by the apostles, that in the last days there would be scoffers, Peter refers to the instructions of the apostles and prophets in general, though evidently designing that his remarks should bear particularly on the fact that there would be scoffers. Which were spoken before by the holy prophets. The predictions of the prophet before the advent of the Saviour, respecting his character and work, Peter had before appealed to them, (2Pet 1:19-21,) as furnishing important evidence in regard to the truth of the Christian religion, and valuable instruction in reference to its nature. See Notes on that passage. Many of the most important doctrines respecting the kingdom of the Messiah are stated as clearly in the Old Testament as in the New, (comp. Isa 53,) and the prophecies therefore deserve to be studied as an important part of Divine revelation. It should be added here, however, that when Peter wrote there was this special reason why he referred to the prophets, that the canon of the New Testament was not then completed, and he could not make his appeal to that. To some parts of the writings of Paul he could and did appeal, (2Pet 3:15,16,) but probably a very small part of what is now the New Testament was known to those to whom this epistle was addressed. And of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. As being equally entitled with the prophets tb state and enforce the doctrines and duties of religion. It may be observed, that no man would have used this language who did not regard himself and his fellow-apostles as inspired, and as on a level with the prophets.

3 knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

Knowing this first. As among the first and most important things to be attended to--as one of the predictions which demand your special regard. Jude Jude 1:18 says that the fact that there would be "mockers in the last time," had been particularly foretold by them. It is probably that Peter refers to the same thin, and we may suppose that this was so well understood by all the apostles that they made it a common subject of preaching. That there shall come in the last days. In the last dispensation; in the period during which the affairs of the world shall be wound up. The apostle does not say that that was the last time in the sense that the world was about to come to and end; nor is it implied that the period called "the last day" might not be a very long period, longer in fact than either of the previous periods of the world. He says that during that period it had been predicted there would arise those whom he calls scoffers. On the meaning of the phrase "in the last days," as used in the Scriptures, Acts 2:17, Heb 1:2, Isa 2:2. Scoffers. In Jude 1:18 the same Greek word is rendered mockers. The word means those who deride, reproach, ridicule. There is usually in the word the idea of contempt or malignity towards an object. Here the sense seems to be that they would treat with derision or contempt the predictions respecting the advent of the Saviour, and the end of the world. It would appear probable that there was a particular or definite class of men referred to; a class who would hold peculiar opinions, and who would urge plausible objections against the fulfilment of the predictions respecting the end of the world, and the second coming of the Saviour-- for those are the points to which Peter particularly refers. It scarcely required inspiration to foresee that there would be scoffers in the general sense of the term--for they have so abounded in every age, that no would hazard much in saying that they would be found at any particular time; but the eye of the apostle is evidently on a particular class of men, the special form of whose reproaches would be the ridicule of the doctrines that the Lord Jesus would return; that there would be a day of judgment; that the world would be consumed by fire, etc. Archbishop Tillotson explains this of the Carpocratins, a large sect of the Gentiles, who denied the resurrection of the dead, and the future judgment. Walking after their own lusts. Living in the free indulgence of their

sensual appetites. 2Pet 2:10, 2Pet 2:12; 2Pet 2:14; 2Pet 2:18; 2Pet 2:19.

4 and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? That is, either Where is the fulfilment of that promise; or, Where are the indications or signs that he will come? They evidently meant to imply that the promise had utterly failed; that there was not the slightest evidence that it would be accomplished; that they who had believed this were entirely deluded. It is possible that some of the early Christians, even in the time of the apostles, had undertaken to fix the time when these events would occur, as many have done since; and that as that time had passed by, they inferred that the prediction had utterly failed. But whether this were so or not, it was easy to allege that the predictions respecting the second coming of the Saviour seemed to imply that the end of the world was near, and that there were no indications that they would be fulfilled. The laws of nature were uniform, as they had always been, and the alleged promises had failed.

For since the fathers fell asleep. Since they died---death being often, in the Scriptures, as elsewhere, represented as sleep. Notes, John xi. 11; I Cor xi. 30. This reference to the "fathers," by such scoffers, was probably designed to be ironical and contemptuous. Perhaps the meaning may be thus expressed: "These old men, the prophets, indeed foretold this event. They were much concerned and troubled about it; and their predictions alarmed others, and filled their bosoms with dread. They looked out for the signs of the end of the world, and expected that that day was drawing near. But those good men have died. They lived to old age, and then died as others; and since they have departed, the affairs of the world have gone on very much as they did before. The earth is suffered to have rest, and the laws of nature operate in the same way that they always did." It seems not improbable that the immediate reference in the word fathers is not to the prophets of former times, but to aged and pious men of the times of the apostles, who had dwelt much on this subject, and who had made it a subject of conversation and of preaching. Those old men, said the scoffing objector, have

died like others; and, notwithstanding their confident predictions, things now move on as they did from the beginning.

All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. That is, the laws of nature are fixed and settled. The argument here--for it was doubtless designed to be an argument--is based on the stability of the laws of nature, and the uniformity of the course of events. Thus far all these predictions had failed. Things continued to go on as they had always done. The sun rose and set; the tides ebbed and flowed; the seasons followed each other in the usual order; one generation succeeded another, as had always been the case; and there was every indication that those laws would continue to operate as they had always done. This argument for the stability of the earth, and against the prospect of the fulfilment of the predictions of the Bible, would have more force with many minds now than it had then, for eighteen hundred years more have rolled away, and the laws of nature remain the same. Meantime, the expectations of those who have believed that the world was coming to an end have been disappointed; the time set for this by many interpreters of Scripture has passed by; men have looked out in vain for the coming of the Saviour, and sublunary affairs move on as they always have done. Still there are no indications of the coming of the Saviour; and perhaps it would be said that the farther men search, by the aid of science, into the laws of nature, the more they become impressed with their stability, and the more firmly they are convinced of the improbability that the world will be destroyed in the manner in which it is predicted in the Scriptures that it will be. The specious and plausible objection arising from this source, the apostle proposes to meet in the following verses.

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

For this they willingly are ignorant of. λανθανειγαραυτουςτουτοθελοντας. There is some considerable variety in the translation of this passage. In our common version the Greek word (θελοντας) is rendered as if it were an adverb, or as if it referred to their ignorance in regard to the event; meaning, that while they might have known this fact, they took no pains to do it, or that they preferred to have its recollection far from their minds. So Beza and Luther render it. Others, however, take it as

referring to what follows, meaning, "being so minded; being of that opinion; or affirming." So Bloomfield, Robinson, (Lex.,) Mede, Rosenmuller, etc. According to this interpretation the sense is, "They who thus will or think; that is, they who hold the opinion that all things will continue to remain as they were, are ignorant of this fact that things have not always thus remained; that there has been a destruction of the world once by water." The Greek seems rather to demand this interpretation; and then the sense of the passage will be, "It is concealed or hidden from those who hold this opinion, that the earth has been once destroyed." It is implied, whichever interpretation is adopted, that the will was concerned in it; that they were influenced by that rather than by sober judgment and by reason; and whether the word refers to their ignorance, or to their holding that opinion, there was obstinacy and perverseness about it. The will has usually more to do in the denial and rejection of the doctrines of the Bible than the understanding has. The argument which the apostle appeals to in reply to this objection is a simple one. The adversaries of the doctrine affirmed that the laws of nature had always remained the same, and they affirmed that they always would. The apostle denies the fact which they assumed, in the sense in which they affirmed it, and maintains that those laws have not been so stable and uniform that the world has never been destroyed by an overwhelming visitation from God. It has been destroyed by a flood; it may be again by fire. There was the same improbability that the event would occur, so far as the argument from the stability of the laws of nature is concerned, in the one case that there is in the other, and consequently the objection is of no force.

That by the word of God. By the command of God. "He spake, and it was done." Comp. Gen 1:6,9, Ps 33:9. The idea here is, that everything depends on his word or will. As the heavens and the earth were originally made by his command, so by the same command they call be destroyed.

The heavens were of old. The heavens were formerly made, Gen 1:1 The word heaven in the Scriptures sometimes refers to the atmosphere, sometimes to the starry worlds as they appear above us, and sometimes to the exalted place where God dwells. Here it

is used, doubtless, in the popular signification, as denoting the heavens as they appear, embracing the sun, moon, and stars.

And the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Marg., consisting. Gr., συνεστωσα. The Greek word, when used in an intransitive sense, means to stand with, or together; then tropically, to place together, to constitute, place, bring into existence. -- Robinson. The idea which our translators seem to have had is, that, in the formation of the earth, a part was out of the water, and a part under the water; and that the former, or the inhabited portion, became entirely submerged, and that thus the inhabitants perished. This was not, however, probably the idea of Peter. He doubtless has reference to the account given in Gen 1 of the creation of the earth, in which water performed so important a part. The thought in his mind seems to have been, that water entered materially into the formation of the earth, and that in its very origin there existed the means by which it was afterwards destroyed. The word which is rendered "standing" should rather be rendered consisting of, or constituted of; and the meaning is, that the creation of the earth was the result of the Divine agency acting on the mass of elements which in Genesis is called waters, Gen 1:2,6,7,9. There was at first a vast fluid, an immense unformed collection of materials, called waters, and from that the earth arose. The point of time, therefore, in which Peter looks at the earth here, is not when the mountains, and continents, and islands, seem to be standing partly out of the water and partly in the water, but when there was a vast mass of materials called waters from which the earth was formed. The phrase "out of the water" (εξυδατος) refers to the origin of the earth. It was formed from, or out of, that mass. The phrase "in the water" (διυδατος) more properly means through or by. It does not mean that the earth stood in the water in the sense that it was partly submerged; but it means not only that the earth arose from that mass that is called water in Gen 1, but that that mass called water was in fact the grand material out of which the earth was formed. It was through or by means of that vast mass of mingled elements that the earth was made as it was. Everything arose out of that chaotic mass; through that, or by means of that, all things were formed, and from the fact that the earth was thus formed out of the

water, or that water entered so essentially into its formation, there existed causes which ultimately resulted in the deluge.

6 whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

The world that then was, etc. Including all its inhabitants. Rosenmuller supposes that the reference here is to some universal catastrophe which occurred before the deluge in the time of Noah, and indeed before the earth was fitted up in its present form, as described by Moses in Gen 1. It is rendered more than probable, by the researches of geologists in modern times, that such changes have occurred; but there is no evidence that Peter was acquainted with them, and his purpose did not require that he should refer to them. All that his argument demanded was the fact that the world had been once destroyed, and that therefore there was no improbability in believing that it would be again. They who maintained that the prediction that the earth would be destroyed was improbable, affirmed that there were no signs of such an event; that the laws of nature were stable and uniform; and that as those laws had been so long and so uniformly unbroken, it was absurd to believe that such an event could occur. To meet this, all that was necessary was to show that, in a case where the same objections substantially might be urged, it had actually occurred, that the world had been destroyed. There was, in itself considered, as much improbability in believing that the world could be destroyed by water as that it would be destroyed by fire, and consequently the objection had no real force. Notwithstanding the apparent stability of the laws of nature, the world had been once destroyed; and there is, therefore, no improbability that it may be again. On the objections which might have been plausibly urged against the flood, Heb 11:7.

7 but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But the heavens and the earth which are now. As they now exist. There is no difficulty here respecting what is meant by the word earth, but it is not so easy to determine precisely how much is included in the word heavens. It cannot be supposed to mean heaven as the place where God dwells; nor is it necessary to suppose that Peter understood by the word all that would now be

implied in it, as used by a modern astronomer. The word is doubtless employed in a popular signification, referring to the heavens as they appear to the eye; and the idea is, that the conflagration would not only destroy the earth, but would change the heavens as they now appear to us. If, in fact, the earth with its atmosphere should be subjected to an universal conflagration, all that is properly implied in what is here said by Peter would occur.

By the same word. Dependent solely on the will of God. He has only to give command, and all will be destroyed. The laws of nature have no stability independent of his will, and at his pleasure all things could be reduced to nothing, as easily as they were made. A single word, a breath of command, from one Being, a Being over whom we have no control, would spread universal desolation through the heavens and the earth. Notwithstanding the laws of nature, as they are called, and the precision, uniformity, and power with which they operate, the dependence of the universe on the Creator is as entire as though there were no such laws, and as though all were conducted by the mere will of the Most High, irrespective of such laws. In fact, those laws have no efficiency of their own, but are a mere statement of the way in which God produces the changes which occur, the methods by which He operates who "works all in all." At any moment he could suspend them; that is, he could cease to act, or withdraw his efficiency, and the universe would cease to be.

Are kept in store. Gr., "Are treasured up." The allusion in the Greek word is to anything that is treasured up, or reserved for future use. The apostle does not say that this is the only purpose for which the heavens and the earth are preserved, but that this is one object, or this is one aspect in which the subject may be viewed. They are like treasure reserved for future use.

Reserved unto fire. Reserved or kept to be burned up, 2Pet 3:10. The first mode of destroying the world was by water, the next will be by fire. That the world would at some period be destroyed by fire was a common opinion among the ancient philosophers, especially the Greek Stoics. What was the foundation of that opinion, or whence it was derived, it is impossible now to

determine; but it is remarkable that it should have accorded so entirely with the statements of the New Testament. The authorities in proof that this opinion was entertained may be seen in Wetstein, in loc. See Seneca, N. Q. iii. 28; Cic. N. D. ii. 46; Simplicius in Arist. de Ccelo i. 9; Eusebius, P. xv. 18. It is quite remarkable that there have been among the heathen in ancient and modern times so many opinions that accord with the statements of revelation--opinions, many of them, which could not have been founded on any investigations of science among them, and which must, therefore, have been either the result of conjecture, or handed down by tradition. Whatever may have been their origin, the fact that such opinions prevailed and were believed, may be allowed to have some weight in showing that the statements in the Bible are not improbable.

Against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The world was destroyed by a flood on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. It would seem from this passage that it will be destroyed by fire with reference to the same cause; at least, that its destruction by fire will involve the perdition of wicked men. It cannot be inferred from this passage that the world will be all wicked at the general conflagration as it was in the time of Noah; but the idea in the mind of Peter seems to have been, that in the destruction of the world by fire the perdition of the wicked will be involved, or will at that time occur. It also seems to be implied that the fire will accomplish an important agency in that destruction, as the water did on the old world. It is not said, in the passage before us, whether those to be destroyed will be living at that time, or will be raised up from the dead, nor have we any means of determining what was the idea of Peter on that point. All that the passage essentially teaches is, that the world is reserved now with reference to such a consummation by fire; that is, that there are elements kept in store that may be enkindled into an universal conflagration, and that such a conflagration will be attended with the destruction of the wicked.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years. This (2Pet 3:8,9) is the second

consideration by which the apostle meets the objection of scoffers against the doctrine of the second coming of the Saviour. The objection was, that much time, and perhaps the time which had been supposed to be set for his coming, had passed away, and still all things remained as they were. The reply of the apostle is, that no argument could be drawn from this, for that which may seem to be a long time to us is a brief period with God. In the infinity of his own duration there is abundant time to accomplish his designs, and it can make no difference with him whether they are accomplished in one day or extended to a thousand years. Man has but a short time to live, and if he does not accomplish his purposes in a very brief period, he never will. But it is not so with God. He always lives; and we cannot therefore infer, because the execution of his purposes seems to be delayed, that they are abandoned. With Him who always lives it will be as easy to accomplish them at a far distant period as now. If it is his pleasure to accomplish them in a single day, he can do it; if he chooses that the execution shall be deferred to a thousand years, or that a thousand years shall be consumed in executing them, he has power to carry them onward through what seems to us to be so vast a duration. The wicked, therefore, cannot infer that they will escape because their punishment is delayed; nor should the righteous fear that the Divine promises will fail because ages pass away before they are accomplished. The expression here used, that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years," etc., is common in the Rabbinical writings. See Wetstein in loc. A similar thought occurs in Ps 90:4: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise. That is, it should not be inferred because his promise seems to be long delayed that therefore it will fail. When men, after a considerable lapse of time, fail to fulfil their engagements, we infer that it is because they have changed their plans, or because they have forgotten their promises, or because they have no ability to perform them, or because there is a want of principle which makes them regardless of their obligations. But no such inference can be drawn from the apparent delay of the fulfilment of the Divine purposes. Whatever may be the

reasons why they seem to be deferred, we may be sure that it is from no such causes as these.

As some men count slackness. It is probable that the apostle here had his eye on some professing Christians who had become disheartened and impatient, and who, from the delay in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and from the representations of those who denied the truth of the Christian religion, arguing from that delay that it was false, began to fear that his promised coming would indeed never occur. To such he says that it should not be inferred from his delay that he would not return, but that the delay should be regarded as an evidence of his desire that men should have space for repentance, and an opportunity to secure their salvation. 2Pet 3:15.

But is longsuffering to us-ward. Toward us. The delay should be regarded as a proof of his forbearance, and of his desire that men should be saved. Every sinner should consider the fact that he is not cut down in his sins, not as a proof that God will not punish the wicked, but as a demonstration that he is now forbearing, and is willing that he should have an ample opportunity to obtain eternal life. No man should infer that God will not execute his threatenings, unless he can look into the most distant parts of a coming eternity, and demonstrate that there is no suffering appointed for the sinner there; any man who sins, and who is spared even for a moment, should regard the respite as a proof that God is merciful and forbearing now.

Not willing that any should perish. That is, he does not desire it or wish it. His nature is benevolent, and he sincerely desires the eternal happiness of all, and his patience towards sinners proves that he is willing that they should be saved. If he were not willing, it would be easy for him to cut them off, and exclude them from hope at once. This passage, however, should not be adduced to prove

(1.) that sinners never will in fact perish; for

(a.) the passage does not refer to what God will do as the final Judge of mankind, but to what are his feelings and desires now towards men.

(b.) One may have a sincere desire that others should not perish, and yet it may be that, in entire consistency with that, they will perish. A parent has a sincere wish that his children should not be punished, and yet he himself may be under a moral necessity to punish them. A lawgiver may have a sincere wish that no one should ever break the laws, or be punished, and yet he himself may build a prison, and construct a gallows, and cause the law to be executed in a most rigorous manner. A judge on the bench may have a sincere desire that no man should be executed, and that every one arraigned before him should be found to be innocent, and yet even he, in entire accordance with that wish, and with a most benevolent heart, even with tears in his eyes, may pronounce the sentence of the law. (c.) It cannot be inferred that all that the heart of infinite benevolence would desire will be accomplished by his mere will. It is evidently as much in accordance with the benevolence of God that no man should be miserable in this world, as it is that no one should suffer in the next, since the difficulty is not in the question where one shall suffer, but in the fact itself that any should suffer; and it is just as much in accordance with his nature that all should he happy here, as that they should be happy hereafter. And yet no man can maintain that the fact that God is benevolent proves that no one will suffer here. As little will that fact prove that none will suffer in the world to come.

(2.) The passage should not be adduced to prove that God has no purpose, and has formed no plan, in regard to the destruction of the wicked; for

(a.) the word here used has reference rather to his disposition, or to his nature, than to any act or plan.

(b.) There is a sense, as is admitted by all, in which he does will the destruction of the wicked--to wit, if they do not repent--that is, if they deserve it.

(c.) Such an act is as inconsistent with his general benevolence as an eternal purpose in the matter, since his eternal purpose can only have been to do what he actually does; and if it be consistent with a sincere desire that sinners should be saved to do this, then it is consistent to determine beforehand to do it--for to determine before

hand to do what is in fact right, cannot but be a lovely trait in the character of any one.

(3.) The passage then proves

(a.) that God has a sincere desire that men should be saved;

(b.) that any purpose in regard to the destruction of sinners is not founded on mere will, or is not arbitrary;

(c.) that it would be agreeable to the nature of God, and to his arrangements in the plan of salvation, if all men should come to repentance, and accept the offers of mercy; (d.) that if any come to him truly penitent, and desirous to be saved, they will not be cast off;

(e.) that, since it is in accordance with him nature that he should desire that all men may be saved, it may be presumed that he has made an arrangement by which it is possible that they should be; and

(f.) that, since this is his desire, it is proper for the ministers of religion to offer salvation to every human being. Comp. Eze 33:11.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

But the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord Jesus. That is, the day in which he will be manifested. It is called his day, because he will then be the grand and prominent object as the Judge of all. Comp. Lk 17:27.

Will come as a thief in the night. Unexpectedly; suddenly. 1Thes 5:2.

In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. That is, what seems to us to be the heavens. It cannot mean that the holy abode where God dwells will pass away; nor need we suppose that

this declaration extends to the starry worlds and systems as disclosed by the modern astronomy. The word is doubtless used in a popular sense--that is, as things appear to us; and the fair interpretation of the passage would demand only such a change as would occur by the destruction of this world by fire. If a conflagration should take place, embracing the earth and its surrounding atmosphere, all the phenomena would occur which are here described; and, if this would be so, then this is all that can be proved to be meant by the passage. Such a destruction of the elements could not occur without "a great noise."

And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Gr., "the elements being burned, or burning, (καυσουμενα,) shall be dissolved." The idea is, that the cause of their being "dissolved" shall be fire; or that there will be a conflagration extending to what are here called the "elements," that shall produce the effects here described by the word "dissolved." There has been much difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word here rendered elements, (στοιχεια.) The word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Gal 4:3,9, 2Pet 3:10,12, in which it is rendered elements; Col 2:8,20, in which it is rendered rudiments; and in Heb 5:12, where it is tendered principles. For the general meaning of the word, Gall 4:3. The word denotes the rudiments of anything; the minute parts or portions of which anything is composed, or which constitutes the simple portions out of which anything grows, or of which it is compounded. Here it would properly denote the component parts of the material world; or those which enter into its composition, and of which it is made up. It is not to be supposed that the apostle used the term with the same exact signification with which a chemist would use it now, but in accordance with the popular use of the term in his day. In all ages, and in all languages, some such word, with more or less of scientific accuracy, has been employed to denote the primary materials out of which others were formed, just as, in most languages, there have been characters or letters to denote the elementary sounds of which language is composed. The ancients in general supposed that the elements out of which all things were formed were four--air, earth, fire, and water. Modern science has entirely overturned this theory, and has shown that these, so far from being simple elements, are themselves compounds; but the tendency of modern science is still to show that the elements of all things are

in fact few in number. The word, as here used by Peter, would refer to the elements of things as then understood in a popular sense; it would now not be an improper word to be applied to the few elements of which all things are composed, as disclosed by modern chemistry. In either case the use of the word would be correct. Whether applied to the one or the other, science has shown that all are capable of combustion. Water, in its component parts, is inflammable in a high degree; and even the diamond has been shown to be combustible. The idea contained in the word "dissolved," is, properly, only the change which heat produces. Heat changes the forms of things; dissolves them into their elements; dissipates those which were solid by driving them off into gases, and produces new compounds, but it annihilates nothing. It could not be demonstrated from this phrase that the world would be annihilated by fire; it could be proved only that it will undergo important changes. So far as the action of fire is concerned, the form of the earth may pass away, and its aspect be changed; but unless the direct power which created it interposes to annihilate it, the matter which now composes it will still be in existence.

The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.

That is, whether they are the works of God or man--the whole vegetable and animal creation, and all the towers, the towns, the palaces, the productions of genius, the paintings, the statuary, the books, which man has made.

"The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, And all that it inherits, shall disrobe, And, like the baseless fabric of a vision, Leave not one wreck behind."

The word rendered "burned up," like the word just before used and rendered fervent heat--a word of the same origin, but here intensive --means that they will undergo such a change as fire will produce; not, necessarily, that the matter composing them will be annihilated. If the matter composing the earth is ever to be destroyed entirely, it must be by the immediate power of God, for only He who created

can destroy. There is not the least evidence that a particle of matter originally made has been annihilated since the world began; and there are no fires so intense, no chemical powers so mighty, as to cause a particle of matter to cease wholly to be. So far as the power of man is concerned, and so far as one portion of matter can prey on another, matter is as imperishable as mind, and neither can be destroyed unless God destroys it. Whether it is his purpose to annihilate any portion of the matter which he has made, does not appear from his word; but it is clear that he intends that the universe shall undergo important changes. As to the possibility or probability of such a destruction by fire as is here predicted, no one can have any doubt who is acquainted with the disclosures of modern science in regard to the internal structure of the earth. Even the ancient philosophers, from some cause, supposed that the earth would yet be destroyed by fire, (2Pet 3:7;) and modern science has made it probable that the interior of the earth is a melted and intensely heated mass of burning materials; that the habitable world is but a comparatively thin crust or shell over those internal fires; that earthquakes are caused by the vapours engendered by that heated mass whet, water comes in contact with it; and that volcanoes are but openings and vent-holes through which those internal flames make their way to the surface. Whether these fires will everywhere make their way to the surface, and produce an universal conflagration, perhaps could not be determined by science; but no one can doubt that the simple command of God would be all that is necessary to pour those burning floods over the earth, as he once caused the waters to roll over every mountain and through every valley. As to the question whether it is probable that such a change produced by fire, and bringing the present order of things to a close, will occur, it may be remarked farther, that there is reason to believe that such changes are in fact taking place in other worlds. "During the last two or three centuries, upwards of thirteen fixed stars have disappeared. One of them, situated in the northern hemisphere, presented a peculiar brilliancy, and was so bright as to be seen by the naked eye at mid-day. It seemed to be on fire, appearing at first of a dazzling white, then of a reddish yellow, and lastly of an ashy pale colour. La Place supposes that it was burned up, as it has never been seen since. The conflagration was visible about sixteen months." The well-known astronomer, Von Littrow, in the section of his work on "New and Missing Stars," (entitled Die Wunder der

Himmels oder Gemeinfassliche Darstellung der Weltsystems, Stuttgard, 1843, & 227,) observes: "Great as may be the revolutions which take place on the surface of those fixed stars, which are subject to this alternation of light, what entirely different changes may those others have experienced, which in regions of the firmament where no star had ever been before, appeared to blaze up in clear flames, and then to disappear, perhaps for ever." He then gives a brief history of those stars which have excited the particular attention of astronomers. "In the year 1572, on the 11th of November," says he, "Tycho, on passing from his chemical laboratory to the observatory, through the court of his house, observed in the constellation Cassiopeia, at a place where before he had only seen very small stars, a new star of uncommon magnitude. It was so bright that it surpassed even Jupiter and Venus in splendour, and was visible even in the day-time. During the whole time in which it was visible, Tycho could observe no parallax or change of position. At the end of the year, however, it gradually diminished; and at length, in March 1574, sixteen months after its discovery, entirely disappeared, since which all traces of it have been lost. When it first appeared, its light was of a dazzling white colour; in January 1573, two months after its reviving, it became yellowish; in a few months it assumed a reddish hue, like Mars or Aldebaran; and in the beginning of the year 1574, two or three months before its total disappearance, it glimmered only with a gray or lead-coloured light, similar to that of Saturn." See Bibliotheca Sacra, III, p. 181. If such things occur in other worlds, there is nothing improbable or absurd in the supposition that they may yet occur on the earth.

11 *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness,

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved. Since this is an undoubted truth. What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. In holy conduct and piety. That is, this fact ought to be allowed to exert a deep and abiding influence on us, to induce us to lead holy lives. We should feel that there is nothing permanent on the earth; that this is not our abiding home; and that our great interests are in another world. We should be serious, humble, and prayerful; and should make it our great object to be prepared for the solemn scenes through which we are soon to

pass. An habitual contemplation of the truth, that all that we see is soon to pass away, would produce a most salutary effect on the mind. It would make us serious. It would repress ambition. It would lead us not to desire to accumulate what must so soon be destroyed. It would prompt us to lay up our treasures in heaven. It would cause us to ask with deep earnestness whether we are prepared for these amazing scenes, should they suddenly burst upon us.

Looking for. Not knowing when this may occur, the mind should be in that state which constitutes expectation; that is, a belief that it will occur, and a condition of mind in which we would not be taken by surprise should it happen at any moment. Tit 2:13. And hasting unto the coming. Marg., as in Greek, "hasting the coming." The Greek word rendered hasting, (σπευδω,) means to urge on, to hasten; and then to hasten after anything, to await with eager desire. This is evidently the sense here.--Wetstein and Robinson. The state of mind which is indicated by the word is that when we are anxiously desirous that anything should occur, and when we would hasten or accelerate it if we could. The true Christian does not dread the coming of that day. He looks forward to it as the period of his redemption, and would welcome, at any time, the return of his Lord and Saviour. While he is willing to wait as long as it shall please God for the advent of his Redeemer, yet to him the brightest prospect in the future is that hour when he shall come to take him to himself. The coming of the day of God. Called "the day of God," because God will then be manifested in his power and glory.

hasting unto—with the utmost eagerness desiring [WAHL], praying for, and contemplating, the coming Saviour as at hand. The Greek may mean "hastening (that is, urging onward [ALFORD]) the day of God"; not that God's eternal appointment of the time is changeable, but God appoints us as instruments of accomplishing those events which must be first before the day of God can come. By praying for His coming, furthering the preaching of the Gospel for a witness to all nations, and bringing in those whom "the long-suffering of God" waits to save, we hasten the coming of the day of God. The Greek verb is always in New Testament used as neuter (as English Version here), not active; but the Septuagint uses it actively. Christ says, "Surely I come quickly. Amen." Our part is

to speed forward this consummation by praying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Re 22:20).

12 looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Nevertheless we, according to his promise. The allusion here seems to be, beyond a doubt, to two passages in Isaiah, in which a promise of this kind is found. Isa 65:17: "For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isa 66:22: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord," etc. Comp. Rev 21:1, where John says he had a vision of the new heaven and the new earth which was promised: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea." Isa 65:17. Look for new heavens and a new earth. It may not be easy to answer many of the questions which might be asked respecting the "new heavens and earth" here mentioned. One of those which are most naturally asked is is, whether the apostle meant to say that this earth, after being purified by fire, would be fitted up again for the abode of the redeemed; but this question it is impossible to answer with certainty. The following remarks may perhaps embrace all that is known, or that can be shown to be probable, on the meaning of the passage before us. I The "new heavens and the new earth" referred to will be such as will exist after the world shall have been destroyed by fire; that is, after the general judgment. There is not a word expressed, and not a hint given, of any "new heaven and earth" previous to this, in which the Saviour will reign personally over his saints, in such a renovated world, through a long millennial period. The order of events stated by Peter, is

(a.) that the heavens and earth which are now, are "kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men," 2Pet 3:7;

(b.) that the day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly, 2Pet 3:10; that then the heavens and earth will pass away with a

great noise, the elements will melt, and the earth with all its works be burned up, 2Pet 3:10; and

(c.) that after this (2Pet 3:13) we are to expect the "new heavens and new earth." Nothing is said of a personal reign of Christ; nothing of the resurrection of the saints to dwell with him on the earth; nothing of the world's being fitted up for their abode previous to the final judgment. If Peter had any knowledge of such events, and believed that they would occur, it is remarkable that he did not even allude to them here. The passage before us is one of the very few places in the New Testament where allusion is made to the manner in which the affairs of the world will be closed; and it cannot be explained why, if he looked for such a glorious personal reign of the Saviour, the subject should have been passed over in total silence. II The word "new," applied to the heavens and the earth that are to succeed the present, might express one of the following three things--that is, either of these things would correspond with all that is fairly implied in that word:

(a.) If a new world was literally created out of nothing after this world is destroyed; for that would be in the strictest sense new. That such an event is possible no one can doubt, though it is not revealed.

(b.) If an inhabitant of the earth should dwell after death on any other of the worlds now existing, it would be to him a "new" abode, and everything would appear new. Let him, for instance, be removed to the planet Saturn, with its wonderful ring, and its seven moons, and the whole aspect of the heavens, and of the world on which he would then dwell, would be new to him. The same thing would occur if he were to dwell on any other of the heavenly bodies, or if he were to pass from world to world. See this illustrated at length in the works of Thomas Dick, LLd.---"Celestial Scenery," etc. Comp. 1Pet 1:12

(c.) If the earth should be renovated, and fitted up for the abode of man after the universal conflagration, it would then be a new abode, III. This world, thus renovated, may be from time to time the temporary abode of the redeemed, after the final judgment. No one can prove that this may not be, though there is no evidence that it

will be their permanent and eternal abode, or that even all the redeemed will at any one time find a home on this globe, for no one can suppose that the earth is spacious enough to furnish a dwelling-place for all the unnumbered millions that are to be saved. But that the earth may again be revisited from time to time by the redeemed; that in a purified and renovated form it may be one of the "many mansions" which are to be fitted up for them, (Jn 14:2,) may not appear wholly improbable from the following suggestions:

(1.) It seems to have been a law of the earth that in its progress it should be prepared at one period for the dwelling-place of a higher order of beings at another period. Thus, according to the disclosures of geology, it existed perhaps for countless ages before it was fitted to be an abode for man; and that it was occupied by the monsters of an inferior order of existence, who have now passed away to make room for a nobler race. Who can tell but the present order of things may pass away to make place for the manifestations of a more exalted mode of being?

(2.) There is no certain evidence that any world has been annihilated, though some have disappeared from human view. Indeed, as observed above, (2Pet 3:10,) there is no proof that a single particle of matter ever has been annihilated, or ever will be. It may change its form, but it may still exist.

(3.) It seems also to accord most with probability, that, though the earth may undergo important changes by flood or fire, it will not be annihilated. It seems difficult to suppose that, as a world, it will be wholly displaced from the system of which it is now a part, or that the system itself will disappear. The earth, as one of the worlds of God, has occupied too important a position in the history of the universe to make it to be easily believed that the place where the Son of God became incarnate and died, shall be utterly swept away. It would, certainly, accord more with all the feelings which we can have on such a subject, to suppose that a world once so beautiful when it came from the hand of its Maker, should be restored to primitive loveliness; that a world which seems to have been made primarily (1Pet 1:12) with a view to illustrate the glory of God in redemption, should be preserved in some appropriate form to be

the theatre of the exhibition of the development of that plan in far distant ages to come.

(4.) To the redeemed, it would be most interesting again to visit the spot where the great work of their redemption was accomplished; where the Son of God became incarnate and made atonement for sin; and where there would be so many interesting recollections and associations, even after the purification by fire, connected with the infancy of their existence, and their preparation for eternity. Piety would at least wish that the world where Gethsemane and Calvary are should never be blotted out from the universe. But

(5.) if, after their resurrection and reception into heaven, the redeemed shall ever revisit a world so full of interesting recollections and associations, where they began their being, where their Redeemer lived and died, where they were renewed and sanctified, and where their bodies once rested in the grave, there is no reason to suppose that this will be their permanent and unchanging abode. It may be mere speculation, but it seems to accord best with the goodness of God, and with the manner in which the universe is made, to suppose that every portion of it may be visited, and become successively the abode of the redeemed; that they may pass from world to world, and survey the wonders and the works of God as they are displayed in different worlds. The universe, so vast, seems to have been fitted up for such a purpose, and nothing else that we can conceive of will be so adapted to give employment without weariness to the minds that God has made, in the interminable duration before them. IV. The new heavens and earth will be holy. They will be the abode of righteousness for ever.

(a.) This fact is clearly revealed in the verse before us: "wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is also the correct statement of the Scriptures, Rev 21:27, 1Cor 6:9,10, Heb 12:14.

(b.) This will be in strong contrast with what has occurred on earth. The history of this world has been almost entirely a history of sin--of its nature, developments, results. There have been no perfectly holy beings on the earth, except the Saviour, and the angels who have occasionally visited it. There has been no perfectly holy place--city, village, hamlet; no perfectly holy community. But the future

world, in strong contrast with this, will be perfectly pure, and will be a fair illustration of what religion in its perfect form will do.

(c.) It is for this that the Christian desires to dwell in that world, and waits for the coming of his Saviour. It is not primarily that he may be happy, desirable as that is, but that he may be in a world where he himself will be perfectly pure, and where all around him will be pure; where every being that he meets shall be "holy as God is holy," and every place on which his eye rests, or his foot treads, shall be uncontaminated by sin. To the eye of faith and hope, how blessed is the prospect of such a world!

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent. That is, in securing your salvation. The effect of such hopes and prospects should be to lead us to an earnest inquiry whether we are prepared to dwell in a holy world, and to make us diligent in performing the duties, and patient in bearing the trials of life. He who has such hopes set before him, should seek earnestly that he may be enabled truly to avail himself of them, and should make their attainment meet the great object of his life. He who is so soon to come to an end of all weary toil, should be willing to labour diligently and faithfully while life lasts, he who is so soon to be relieved from all temptation and trial, should be willing to bear a little longer the sorrows of the present world What are all these compared with the glory that awaits us? Comp. 1Cor 15:58; Rom 8:18, seq. 2Cor 4:16, seq. That ye may be found of him in peace. Found by him when he returns in such a state as to secure your eternal peace. Without spot, and blameless. Eph 5:27. It should be an object of earnest effort with us to have the last stain of sin and pollution removed from our souls. A deep feeling that we are soon to stand in the presence of a holy God, our final Judge, cannot but have a happy influence in making us pure.

15 And account *that* the long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Regard his delay in coming to judge the world, not as an evidence that he never will come, but as a proof of his desire that we should

be saved. Many had drawn a different inference from the fact that: the Saviour did not return, and had supposed that it was a proof that he would never come, and that his promises had failed. Peter says that that conclusion was not authorized, but that we should rather regard it as an evidence of his mercy, and of his desire that we should be saved. This conclusion is as proper now as it was then. Wicked men should not infer, because God does not cut them down, that therefore they never will be punished, or that God is not faithful to his threatenings. They should rather regard it as a proof that he is willing to save them; for

(1.) he might justly cut them off for their sins;

(2.) the only reason of which we have knowledge why he spares the wicked is to give them space for repentance; and

(3.) as long as life is prolonged a sinner has the opportunity to repent, and may turn to God. We may therefore, in our own case, look on all the delays of God to punish--on all his patience and forbearance towards us, notwithstanding our sins and provocations--on the numberless tokens of his kindness scattered along our way, as evidence that he is not willing that we should perish. What an accumulated argument in any case would this afford of the willingness of God to save! Let any man look on his own sins, his pride, and selfishness, and sensuality; let him contemplate the fact that he has sinned through many years, and against many mercies; let him endeavour to estimate the number and magnitude of his offences, and upon God's patience in bearing with him while these have been committed, and who can overrate the force of such an argument in proof that God is slow to anger, and is willing to save? Rom 2:4. Even as our beloved brother Paul also. From this reference to Paul the following things are clear:

(1.) that Peter was acquainted with his writings;

(2.) that he presumed that those to whom he wrote were also acquainted with them;

(3.) that Peter regarded Paul as a "beloved brother," notwithstanding the solemn rebuke which Paul had had occasion to administer to him, Gal 2:2, seq.;

(4.) that he regarded him as authority in inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion; and

(5.) that he regarded him as an inspired man, and his writings as a part of Divine truth. 2Pet 3:16. That Peter has shown in his epistles that he was acquainted with the writings of Paul, has been abundantly proved by Eichhon, (Einleitung in das N. Tes. viii. 606, seq.,) and will be apparent by a comparison of the following passages: Eph 1:3, with 1Pet 3:1; Col 3:8, with 1Pet 2:1; Eph 5:22, with 1Pet 3:1; Eph 5:21, with 1Pet 5:5; 1Thes 5:6, with 1Pet 5:8; 1Cor 16:20 with 1Pet 5:14; Rom 8:18, with 1Pet 5:1; Rom 4:24 with 1Pet 1:21; Rom 13:1,3,4 with 1Pet 2:13,14; 1Timm 2:9, with 1Pet 3:5. The writings of the apostles were doubtless extensively circulated; and one apostle, though himself inspired, could not but feel a deep interest in the writings of another. There would be cases also, as in the instance before us, in which one would wish to confirm his own sentiments by the acknowledged wisdom, experience, and authority of another.

According to the wisdom given unto him. Peter evidently did not mean to disparage that wisdom, or to express a doubt that Paul was endowed with wisdom; he meant undoubtedly that, in regard to Paul, the same thing was true which he would have affirmed of himself or of any other man, that whatever wisdom he had was to be traced to a higher than human origin. This would at the same time tend to secure more respect for the opinion of Paul than if he had said it was his own, and would keep up in the minds of those to whom he wrote a sense of the truth that all wisdom is from above. In reference to ourselves, to our friends, to our teachers, and to all men, it is proper to bear in remembrance the fact that all true wisdom is from the "Father of lights." Comp. Jas 1:6,17.

Hath written unto you. It is not necessary to suppose that Paul had written any epistles addressed specifically, and by name, to the persons to whom Peter wrote. It is rather to be supposed that the persons to whom Peter wrote (1Pet 1:1) lived in the regions to

which some of Paul's epistles were addressed, and that they might be regarded as addressed to them. The epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians were of this description, all addressed to churches in Asia Minor, and all, therefore, having reference to the same people to whom Peter addressed his epistles.

16 as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.

As also in all his epistles. Not only in those which he addressed to the churches in Asia Minor, but in his epistles generally. It is to be presumed that they might have had an acquaintance with some of the other epistles of Paul, as well as those sent to the churches in their immediate vicinity.

Speaking in them of these things. The things which Peter had dwelt upon in his two epistles. The great doctrines of the cross; of the depravity of man; of the Divine purposes; of the new birth; of the consummation of all things; of the return of the Saviour to judge the world, and to receive his people to himself; the duty of a serious, devout, and prayerful life, and of being prepared for the heavenly world. These things are constantly dwelt upon by Paul, and to his authority in these respects Peter might appeal with the utmost confidence.

In which. The common reading in this passage is ενοις, and according to this the reference is to the subjects treated of--"in which things" --referring to what he had just spoken of--"speaking of these things." This reading is found in the common editions of the New Testament, and is supported by far the greater number of Mss., and by most commentators and critics. It is found in Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and has every evidence of being the genuine reading. Another reading, however, (εναις,) is found in some valuable Mss., and is supported by the Syriac and Arabic versions, and adopted by Mill, (Proleg. 1484,) and by Beza. According to this, the reference is to the epistles themselves as would seem to be implied in our common version. The true construction, so far as the evidence goes, is to refer it not directly to the epistles, but to the things of which

Peter says Paul wrote; that is, not to the style and language of Paul, but to the great truths and doctrines which he taught. Those doctrines were indeed contained in his epistles, but still, according to the fair construction of the passage before us, Peter should not be understood as accusing Paul of obscurity of style. He refers not to the difficulty of understanding what Paul meant, but to the difficulty of comprehending the great truths, which he taught. This is, generally, the greatest difficulty in regard to the statements of Paul. The difficulty is not that the meaning of the writer is not plain, but it is either

(a.) that the mind is overpowered by the grandeur of the thought, and the incomprehensible nature of the theme, or

(b.) that the truth is so unpalatable, and the mind is so prejudiced against it, that we are unwilling to receive it. Many a man knows well enough what Paul means, and would receive his doctrines without hesitation if the heart was not opposed to it; and in this state of mind Paul is charged with obscurity, when the real difficulty lies only in the heart of him who makes the complaint. If this be the true interpretation of this passage, then it should not be adduced to prove that Paul is an obscure writer, whatever may be true on that point. There are, undoubtedly, obscure things in his writings, as there are in all other ancient compositions, but this passage should not be adduced to prove that he had not the faculty of making himself understood. An honest heart, a willingness to receive the truth, is one of the best qualifications for understanding the writings of Paul; and when this exists, no one will fall to find truth that may be comprehended, and that will be eminently adapted to sanctify and save the soul.

Are some things hard to be understood. Things pertaining to high and difficult subjects, and which are not easy to be comprehended. Peter does not call in question the truth of what Paul had written; he does not intimate that he himself would differ from him. His language is rather that which a man would use who regarded the writings to which he referred as true, and what he says here is an honourable testimony to the authority of Paul. It may be added,

(1.) that Peter does not say that all the doctrines of the Bible, or even all the doctrines of Paul, are hard to be understood, or that nothing is plain.

(2.) He says nothing about withholding the Bible, or even the writings of Paul, from the mass of Christians, on the ground of the difficulty of understanding the Scriptures; nor does he intimate that that was the design of the Author of the Bible.

(3.) It is perfectly manifest, from this very passage, that the writings of Paul were in fact in the hands of the people, else how could they wrest and pervert them?

(4.) Peter says nothing about an infallible interpreter of any kind, nor does he intimate that either he or his "successors" were authorized to interpret them for the church.

(5.) With what propriety can the pretended successor of Peter--the pope--undertake to expound those difficult doctrines in the writings of Paul, when even Peter himself did not undertake it, and when he did not profess to be able to comprehend them? Is the pope more skilled in the knowledge of Divine things than the apostle Peter? Is he better qualified to interpret the sacred writings than an inspired apostle was?

(6.) Those portions of the writings of Paul, for anything that appears to the contrary, are just as "hard to be understood" now, as they were before the "infallible" church undertook to explain them. The world is little indebted to any claims of infallibility in explaining the meaning of tile oracles of God. It remains yet to be seen that any portion of the Bible has been made clearer by any mere authoritative explanation. And

(7.) it should be added, that without any such exposition, the humble inquirer after truth may find enough in the Bible to guide his feet in the paths of salvation. No one ever approached the sacred Scriptures with a teachable heart, who did not find them "able to make him wise unto salvation." Compare 2Ti 3:15.

Which they that are unlearned. The evil here adverted to is that which arises in cases where those without competent knowledge undertake to become expounders of the word of God. It is not said that it is not proper for them to attempt to become instructed by the aid of the sacred writings; but the danger is, that without proper views of interpretation, of language, and of ancient customs, they might be in danger of perverting and abusing certain portions of the writings of Paul. Intelligence among the people is everywhere in the Bible presumed to be proper in understanding the sacred Scriptures; and ignorance may produce the same effects in interpreting the Bible which it will produce in interpreting other writings. Every good thing is liable to abuse; but the proper way to correct this evil, and to remove this danger, is not to keep the people in ignorance, or to appoint some one to be an infallible interpreter; it is to remove the ignorance itself by enlightening the people, and rendering them better qualified to understand the sacred oracles. The way to remove error is not to perpetuate ignorance; it is to enlighten the mind, so that it may be qualified to appreciate the truth.

And unstable. Who have no settled principles and views. The evil here adverted to is that which arises where those undertake to interpret the Bible who have no established principles. They regard nothing as settled. They have no landmarks set up to guide their inquiries. They have no stability in their character, and Of course nothing can be regarded as settled in their methods Of interpreting the Bible. They are under the control of feeling and emotion, and are liable to embrace one opinion to-day, and another directly opposite to-morrow. But the way to prevent this evil is not by attempting to give to a community an authoritative interpretation of the Bible; it is to diffuse abroad just principles, that men may obtain from the Bible an intelligent view of what it means.

Wrest. Pervert--στρεβλουσιν. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a word meaning a windlass, winch, instrument of torture, (στρεβλη,) and means to roll or wind on a windlass; then to wrench, or turn away, as by the force of a windlass; and then to wrest or pervert. It implies a turning out of the way by the application of force, here the meaning is, that they apply those portions of the Bible to a purpose for which they were never intended. It is doubtless true that this may occur. Men may

abuse and pervert anything that is good. But the way to prevent this is not to set up a pretended infallible interpreter. With all the perversities arising from ignorance in the interpreter of the Bible; in all the crude, and weak, and fanciful expositions which could be found among those who have interpreted the Scriptures for themselves--and they are many--if they were all collected together, there would not be found so many adapted to corrupt and ruin the soul, as have come from the interpretations attempted to be palmed upon the world by the one church that claims to be the infallible expounder of the word of God.

As they do also the other scriptures. This is an unequivocal declaration of Peter that he regarded the writings of Paul as a part of the holy Scriptures, and of course that he considered him as inspired. The word "Scriptures," as used by a Jew, had a technical signification--meaning the inspired writings, and was the common word which was applied to the sacred writings of the Old Testament. As Peter uses this language, it implies that he regarded the writings of Paul as on a level with the Old Testament; and as far as the testimony of one apostle can go to confirm the claim of another to inspiration, it proves that the writings of Paul are entitled to a place in the sacred canon. It should be remarked, also, that Peter evidently speaks here of the common estimate in which the writings of Paul were held. He addresses those to whom he wrote, not in such a way as to declare to them that the writings of Paul were to be regarded as a part of the inspired volume, but as if this were already known, and were an admitted point.

Unto their own destruction. By embracing false doctrines. Error destroys the soul; and it is very possible for a man so to read the Bible as only to confirm himself in error. He may find passages which, by a perverted interpretation, shall seem to sustain his own views; and, instead of embracing the truth, may live always under delusion, and perish at last. It is not to be inferred that every man who reads the Bible, or even every one who undertakes to be its public expounder, will certainly be saved.

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

Seeing that ye know these things before. Being aware of this danger, and knowing that such results may follow. Men should read the Bible with the feeling that it is possible that they may fall into error, and be deceived at last. This apprehension will do much to make them diligent, and candid, and prayerful, in studying the word of God. With the error of the wicked. Wicked men. Such as he had referred to in chapter 2, who became public teachers of religion. Fall from your own stedfastness. Your firm adherence to the truth. The particular danger here referred to is not that of failing from grace, or from true religion, but from the firm and settled principles of religious truth into error.

18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

But grow in grace. Comp. Col 1:10. Religion in general is often represented as grace, since every part of it is the result of grace, or of unmerited favour; and to "grow in grace" is to increase in that which constitutes true religion. Religion is as susceptible of cultivation and of growth as any other virtue of the soul. It is feeble in its beginnings, like the grain of mustard seed, or like the germ or blade of the plant, and it increases as it is cultivated. There is no piety in the world which is not the result of cultivation, and which cannot be measured by the degree of care and attention bestowed upon it. No one becomes eminently pious, any more than one becomes eminently learned or rich, who does not intend to; and ordinarily men in religion are what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish, and possess about the character which they intend to possess.

And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jn 17:3. Comp. Col 1:10. To know the Lord Jesus Christ--to possess just views of his person, character, and work---is the sum and essence of the Christian religion; and with this injunction, therefore, the apostle appropriately closes this epistle. He who has a saving knowledge of Christ, has in fact all that is essential to his welfare in the life that is, and in that which is to come; he who has not this knowledge, though he may be distinguished in the learning of the schools, and may be

profoundly skilled in the sciences, has in reality no knowledge that will avail him in the great matters pertaining to his eternal welfare. To him be glory, etc. Comp. Rom 16:27; 2Ti 4:18. With the desire that honour and glory should be rendered to the Redeemer, all the aspirations of true Christians appropriately close. There is no wish more deeply cherished in their hearts than this; there is nothing that will enter more into their worship in heaven; Compare Rev 1:5,6, 5:12,13. But grow in grace. Comp. Col 1:10. Religion in general is often represented as grace, since every part of it is the result of grace, or of unmerited favour; and to "grow in grace" is to increase in that which constitutes true religion. Religion is as susceptible of cultivation and of growth as any other virtue of the soul. It is feeble in its beginnings, like the grain of mustard seed, or like the germ or blade of the plant, and it increases as it is cultivated. There is no piety in the world which is not the result of cultivation, and which cannot be measured by the degree of care and attention bestowed upon it. No one becomes eminently pious, any more than one becomes eminently learned or rich, who does not intend to; and ordinarily men in religion are what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish, and possess about the character which they intend to possess.

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The First Epistle of John
[1 John]

1 John-1

The Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

That which was from the beginning. There can be no doubt that the reference here is to the Lord Jesus Christ, or the "Word" that was made flesh. Jn 1:1. This is such language as John would use respecting him, and indeed the phrase "the beginning," as applicable to the Lord Jesus, is peculiar to John in the writings of the New Testament: and the language here may be regarded as one proof that this epistle was written by him, for it is just such an expression as he would use, but not such as one would be likely to adopt who should attempt to palm off his own writings as those of John. One who should have attempted that would have been likely to introduce the name John in the beginning of the epistle, or in some way to have claimed his authority. The apostle, in speaking of "that which was from the beginning," uses a word in the neuter gender instead of the masculine, (o.) It is not to be supposed, I think, that he meant to apply this term directly to the Son of God, for if he had he would have used the masculine pronoun; but though he had the Son of God in view, and meant to make a strong affirmation respecting him, yet the particular thing here referred to was whatever there was respecting that incarnate Saviour that furnished testimony to any of the senses, or that pertained to his character and doctrine, he had borne witness to. He was looking rather at the evidence that he was incarnate; the proofs that he was manifested; and he says that those proofs had been subjected to the trial of the senses, and he had borne witness to them, and now did it again. This is what is referred to, it seems to me, by the phrase "that which," (o.) The sense may be this: "Whatever there was respecting the Word of life, or him who is the living Word, the incarnate Son of God, from the very beginning, from the time when he was first manifested in the flesh; whatever there was respecting his exalted nature, his dignity, his character, that could be subjected to the testimony of the senses, to be

the object of sight, or hearing, or touch, that I was permitted to see, and that I declare to you respecting him." John claims to be a competent witness in reference to everything which occurred as a manifestation of what the Son of God was. If this be the correct interpretation, then the phrase "from the beginning" (απαρχης) does not here refer to his eternity, or his being in the beginning of all things, as the phrase "in the beginning" (εναρχη) does in Jn 1:1; but rather means from the very commencement of his manifestation as the Son of God, the very first indications on earth of what he was as the Messiah. When the writer says (@1Jo 1:3) that he "declares" this to them, it seems to me that he has not reference merely to what he would say in this epistle, for he does not go extensively into it here, but that he supposes that they had his gospel in their possession, and that he also means to refer to that, or presumes that they were familiar with the testimony which he had borne in that gospel respecting the evidence that the "Word became flesh." Many have indeed supposed that this epistle accompanied the gospel when it was published, and was either a part of it that became subsequently detached from it, or was a letter that accompanied it. See Hug. Intro. P. II. & 68. There is, it seems to me, no certain evidence of that; but no one can doubt that he supposed that those to whom he wrote had access to that gospel, and that he refers here to the testimony which he had borne in that respecting the incarnate Word.

Which we have heard. John was with the Saviour through the whole of his ministry, and he has recorded more that the Saviour said than either of the other evangelists. It is on what he said of himself that he grounds much of the evidence that he was the Son of God.

Which we have seen with our eyes. That is, pertaining to his person, and to what he did. "I have seen him; seen what he was as a man; how he appeared on earth; and I have seen whatever there was in his works to indicate his character and origin." John professes here to have seen enough in this respect as to furnish evidence that he was the Son of God. It is not hearsay on which he relies, but he had the testimony of his own eyes in the case. 2Pet 1:16.

Which we have looked upon. The word here used seems designed to be more emphatic or intensive than the one before occurring. He had just said that he had "seen him with his eyes," but he evidently designs

to include an idea in this word which would imply something more than mere beholding or seeing. The additional idea which is couched in this word seems to be that of desire or pleasure; that is, that he had looked on him with desire, or satisfaction, or with the pleasure with which one beholds a beloved object. Comp. Mt 11:7, Lk 7:24, Jn 1:14. See Rob. Lex. There was an intense and earnest gaze, as when we behold one whom we have desired to see, or when one goes out purposely to look on an object. The evidences of the incarnation of the Son of God had been subjected to such all intense and earnest gaze.

And our hands have handled. That is, the evidence that he was a man was subjected to the sense of touch. It was not merely that he had been seen by the eye, for then it might be pretended that this was a mere appearance assumed without reality; or that what occurred might have been a mere optical illusion; but the evidence that he appeared in the flesh was subjected to more senses than one; to the fact that his voice was heard; that he was seen with the eyes; that the most intense scrutiny had been employed; and, lastly, that he had been actually touched and handled, showing that it could not have been a mere appearance, an assumed form, but that it was a reality. This kind of proof that the Son of God had appeared in the flesh, or that he was truly and properly a man, is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament. Lkke 24:39: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Comp. Jn 20:25-27. There is evident allusion here to the opinion which early prevailed, which was held by the Docetes, that the Son of God did not truly and really become a man, but that there was only an appearance assumed, or that he seemed to be a man. It was evidently with reference to this opinion, which began early to prevail, that the apostle dwells on this point, and repeats the idea so much, and shows by a reference to all the senses which could take any cognizance in the case, that he was truly and properly a man. The amount of it is, that we have the same evidence that he was properly a man which we can have in the case of any other human being; the evidence on which we constantly act, and in which we cannot believe that our senses deceive us.

Of the Word of life. Respecting, or pertaining to, the Word of life. "That is, whatever there was pertaining to the Word of life, which was manifested from the beginning in his speech and actions, of which the

senses could take cognizance, and which would furnish the evidence that he was truly incarnate, that we have declared unto you." The phrase "the Word of life," means the Word in which life resided, or which was the source and fountain of life. Jn 1:1, Jn 1:3. The reference is undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 (for the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

For the life was manifested. Was made manifest or visible unto us. He who was the life was made known to men by the incarnation. He appeared among men so that they could see him and hear him. Though originally with God, and dwelling with him, (Jn 1:1,2,) yet he came forth and appeared among men. Rom 1:3, 1Timm 3:16. He is the great source of all life, and he appeared on the earth, and we had an opportunity of seeing and knowing what he was.

And we have seen it. This repetition, or turning over the thought, is designed to express the idea with emphasis, and is much in the manner of John. See Jn 1:1-3. He is particularly desirous of impressing on them the thought that he had been a personal witness of what the Saviour was, having had every opportunity of knowing it from long and familiar relationship with him.

And bear witness. We testify in regard to it. John was satisfied that his own character was known to be such that credit would be given to what he said. He felt that he was known to be a man of truth, and hence he never doubts that faith would be put in all his statements. See Jn 19:35, 21:24, Rev 1:2, 3Jn 1:12.

And shew unto you that eternal life. That is, we declare unto you what that life was--what was the nature and rank of him who was the life, and how he appeared when on earth, he here attributes eternity to the Son of God--implying that he had always been with the Father.

Which was with the Father. Always before the manifestation on the earth. See Jn 1:1: "The word was with God." This passage demonstrates the pre-existence of the Son of God, and proves that he was eternal. Before he was manifested on earth he had an existence

to which the word life could be applied, and that was eternal. He is the Author of eternal life to us.

And was manifested unto us. In the flesh; as a man. He who was the life appeared unto men. The idea of John evidently is, (1.) that the Being here referred to was for ever with God; (2.) that it was proper before the incarnation that the word life should be given to him as descriptive of his nature; (3.) that there was a manifestation of him who was thus called life, on earth; that he appeared among men; that he had a real existence here, and not a merely assumed appearance; and (4.) that the true characteristics of this incarnate Being could be borne testimony to by those who had seen him, and who had been long with him.

3 that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. We announce it, or make it known unto you--referring either to what he purposes to say in this epistle, or more probably embracing all that he had written respecting him, and supposing that his gospel was in their hands. He means to call their attention to all the testimony which he had borne on the subject, in order to counteract the errors which began to prevail.

That ye may have fellowship with us. With us the apostles; with us who actually saw him, and conversed with him. That is, he wished that they might have the same belief, and the same hope, and the same joy which he himself had, arising from the fact that the Son of God had become incarnate, and had appeared among men. To "have fellowship," means to have anything in common with others; to partake of it; to share it with them, Acts 2:42; and the idea here is, that the apostle wished that they might share with him all the peace and happiness which resulted from the fact that the Son of God had appeared in human form in behalf of men. The object of the apostle in what he wrote was, that they might have the same views of the Saviour which he had, and partake of the same hope and joy. This is the true notion of fellowship in religion.

And truly our fellowship is with the Father. With God the Father. That is, there was something in common with us and God; something of

which we and God partook together, or which they shared. This cannot, of course, mean that our nature was the same as that of God, or that in all things we shared with God, or that in anything we were equal with God; but it means that we partook, in some respects, of the feelings, the views, the aims, the joys which God has. There was a union in feeling, and affection, and desire, and plan, and this was to us a source of joy. We had an attachment to the same things, loved the same truth, desired the same objects, and were engaged in the same work; and the consciousness of this, and the joy which attended it, was what was meant by fellowship. 1Cor 10:16; 2Cor 12:14. The fellowship which Christians have with God relates to the following points:

(1.) Attachment to the same truths, and the same objects; love for the same principles, and the same beings.

(2.) The same kind of happiness, though not in the same degree. The happiness of God is found in holiness, truth, purity, justice, mercy, benevolence. The happiness of the Christian is of the same kind that God has; the same kind that angels have; the same kind that he will himself have in heaven--for the joy of heaven is only that which the Christian has now, expanded to the utmost capacity of the soul, and freed from all that now interferes with it, and prolonged to eternity.

(3.) Employment, or co-operation with God. There is a sphere in which God works alone, and in which we can have no co-operation, no fellowship with him. In the work of creation; in upholding all things; in the government of the universe; in the transmission of light from world to world; in the return of the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, the storms, the tides, the flight of the comet, we can have no joint agency, no co-operation with him. There God works alone. But there is also a large sphere in which he admits us graciously to a co-operation with him, and in which, unless we work, his agency will not be put forth. This is seen when the farmer sows his grain; when the surgeon binds up a wound; when we take the medicine which God has appointed as a means of restoration to health. So in the moral world. In our efforts to save our own souls and the souls of others, God graciously works with us; and unless we work, the object is not accomplished. This co-operation is referred to in such passages as these: "We are labourers together (συνεργοι) with God," 1Cor 3:9.

"The Lord working with them," Mk 16:20. "We then as workers together with him," 2Cor 6:1. "That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth," 3Jn 1:8. In all such cases, while the efficiency is of God--alike in exciting us to effort, and in crowning the effort with success--it is still true that if our efforts were not put forth, the work would not be done. In this department God would not work by himself alone; he would not secure the result by miracle.

(4.) We have fellowship with God by direct communion with him, in prayer, in meditation, and in the ordinances of religion. Of this all true Christians are sensible, and this constitutes no small part of their peculiar joy. The nature of this, and the happiness resulting from it, is much of the same nature as the communion of friend with friend--of one mind with another kindred mind--that to which we owe no small part of our happiness in this world.

(5.) The Christian will have fellowship with his God and Saviour in the triumphs of the latter day, when the scenes of the judgment shall occur, and when the Redeemer shall appear, that he may be admired and adored by assembled worlds. 2Thes 1:10. See also Mt 19:28; Rev 3:21.

And with his Son Jesus Christ. That is, in like manner there is much which we have in common with the Saviour--in character, in feeling, in desire, in spirit, in plan. There is a union with him in these things--and the consciousness of this gives peace and joy.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

And these things write we unto you. These things respecting him who was manifested in the flesh, and respecting the results which' flow from that.

That your joy may be full. This is almost the same language which the Saviour used when addressing his disciples as he was about to leave them, (Jn 15:11;) and there can be little doubt that John had that declaration in remembrance when he uttered this remark. Jn 15:11. The sense here is, that full and clear views of the Lord Jesus, and the fellowship with him and with each other, which would follow from that, would be a source of happiness. Their joy would be complete if they had that; for their real happiness was to be found in their Saviour.

The best editions of the Greek Testament now read "your joy," instead of the common reading "our joy."

God Is Light

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

This then is the message which we have heard of him. This is the substance of the announcement (επαγγελια) which we have received of him, or which he made to us. The message here refers to what he communicated as the sum of the revelation which he made to man. The phrase "of him" (απαυτου) does not mean respecting him, or about him, but from him; that is, this is what we received from his preaching; from all that he said. The peculiarity, the substance of all that he said, may be summed up in the declaration that God is light, and in the consequences which follow from this doctrine. He came as the messenger of Him who is light; he came to inculcate and defend the truths which flow from that central doctrine, in regard to sin, to the danger and duty of man, to the way of recovery, and to the rules by which men ought to live.

That God is light. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, prosperity, and happiness--as darkness is of the opposite. John here says that "God is light"-- φως--not the light, or a light, but light itself; that is, he is himself all light, and is the source and fountain of light in all worlds, He is perfectly pure, without any admixture of sin. He has all knowledge, with no admixture of ignorance on any subject. He is infinitely happy, with nothing to make him miserable. He is infinitely true, never stating or countenancing error; he is blessed in all his ways, never knowing the darkness of disappointment and adversity. Jas 1:17; Jn 1:4, Jn 1:5; 1Timm 6:16. And in him is no darkness at all. This language is much in the manner of John, not only affirming that a thing is so, but guarding it so that no mistake could possibly be made as to what he meant. Comp. Jn 1:1-3. The expression here is designed to affirm that God is absolutely perfect; that there is nothing in him which is in any way imperfect, or which would dim or mar the pure splendour of his character, not even as much as the smallest spot would on the sun. The language is

probably designed to guard the mind from an error to which it is prone, that of charging God with being the Author of the sin and misery which exist on the earth; and the apostle seems to design to teach that whatever was the source of sin and misery, it was not in any sense to be charged on God. This doctrine that God is a pure light, John lays down as the substance of all that he had to teach; of all that he had learned from him who was made flesh. It is, in fact, the fountain of all just views of truth on the subject of religion, and all proper views of religion take their origin from this.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

If we say that we have fellowship with him. If we reckon ourselves among his friends, or, in other words, if we profess to be like him: for a profession of religion involves the idea of having fellowship with God, 1Jn 1:3, and he who professes that should be like him.

And walk in darkness. Live in sin and error. To "walk in darkness" now commonly denotes to be in doubt about our religious state, in contradistinction from living in the enjoyment of religion. That is not, however, probably the whole idea here. The leading thought is, that if we live in sin, it is a proof that our profession of religion is false. Desirable as it is to have the comforts of religion, yet it is not always true that they who do not are not true Christians, nor is it true by any means that they intend to deceive the world.

We lie. We are false professors; we are deceived if we think that we can have fellowship with God, and yet live in the practice of sin. As God is pure, so must we be, if we would be his friends. This does not mean necessarily that they meant to deceive, but that there was an irreconcilable contradiction between a life of sin and fellowship with God.

And do not the truth. Do not act truly. The profession is a false one. Compare Jn 3:22. To do the truth is to act in accordance with truth; and the expression here means that such an one could not be a Christian. And yet how many there are who are living in known sin who profess to be Christians! How many whose minds are dark on the whole subject of religion, who have never known anything of the real peace and joy which it imparts, who nevertheless entertain the belief that they are the

friends of God, and are going to heaven! They trust in a name, in forms, in conformity to external rites, and have never known anything of the internal peace and purity which religion imparts, and in fact have never had any true fellowship with that God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. Religion is light; religion is peace, purity, joy; and though there are cases where for a time a true Christian may be left to darkness, and have no spiritual joy, and be in doubt about his salvation, yet still it is a great truth, that unless we know by personal experience what it is to walk habitually in the light, to have the comforts of religion, and to experience in our own souls the influences which make the heart pure, and which bring us into conformity to the God who is light, we can have no true religion. All else is but a name, which will not avail us on the final day.

7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

But if we walk in the light. 1Jn 1:5. Walking in the light may include the three following things:

(1.) Leading lives of holiness and purity; that is, the Christian must be characteristically a holy man, a light in the world, by his example.

(2.) Walking in the truth; that is, embracing the truth in opposition to all error of heathenism and infidelity, and having clear, spiritual views of truth, such as the unrenewed never have. See 2Cor 4:6, 1Cor 2:9-15; Eph 1:18.

(3.) Enjoying the comforts of religion; that is, having the joy which religion is fitted to impart, and which it does impart to its true friends, Ps 94:19, Isa 57:8, 2Cor 1:3, 13:11. Jn 12:35.

As he is in the light. In the same kind of light that he has. The measure of light which we may have is not the same in degree, but it is of the same kind. The true Christian in his character and feelings resembles God.

We have fellowship one with another. As we all partake of his feelings and views, we shall resemble each other. Loving the same God, embracing the same views of religion, and living for the same ends, we

shall of course have much that is common to us all, and thus shall have fellowship with each other.

And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. See the sentiment here expressed fully explained Heb 9:11. When it is said that his blood cleanses us from all sin, the expression must mean one of two things--either that it is through that blood that all past sin is forgiven, or that that blood will ultimately purify us from all transgression, and make us perfectly holy. The general meaning is plain, that in regard to any and every sin of which we may be conscious, there is efficacy in that blood to remove it, and to make us wholly pure. There is no stain made by sin so deep that the blood of Christ cannot take it entirely away from the soul. The connexion here, or the reason why this is introduced here, seems to be this: The apostle is stating the substance of the message which he had received, 1Jo 1:5. The first or leading part of it was, that God is light, and in him is no darkness, and that his religion requires that all his friends should resemble him by their walking in the light. Another, and a material part of the same message was, that provision was made in his religion for cleansing the soul from sin, and making it like God. No system of religion intended for man could be adapted to his condition which did not contain this provision, and this did contain it in the most full and ample manner. Of course, however, it is meant that that blood cleanses from all sin only on the conditions on which its efficacy can be made available to man--by repentance for the past, and by a cordial reception of the Saviour through faith.

Sin, Its Reality and Remedy

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say that we have no sin. It is not improbable that the apostle here makes allusion to some error which was then beginning to prevail in the church. Some have supposed that the allusion is to the sect of the Nicolaitanes, and to the views which they maintained, particularly that nothing was forbidden to the children of God under the gospel, and that in the freedom conferred on Christians they were at liberty to do what they pleased, Rev 2:6,15. It is not certain, however, that the allusion is to them, and it is not necessary to suppose that there is reference to any particular sect that existed at that time. The object of the apostle is to

show that it is implied in the very nature of the gospel that we are sinners, and that if, on any pretence, we denied that fact, we utterly deceived ourselves. In all ages there have been those who have attempted, on some pretence, to justify their conduct; who have felt that they did not need a Saviour; who have maintained that they had a right to do what they pleased; or who, on pretence of being perfectly sanctified, have held that they live without the commission of sin. To meet these, and all similar cases, the apostle affirms that it is a great elementary truth, which on no pretence is to be denied, that we are all sinners. We are at all times, and in all circumstances, to admit the painful and humiliating truth that we are transgressors of the law of God, and that we need, even in our best services, the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ. The fair interpretation of the declaration here will apply not only to those who maintain that they have not been guilty of sin in the past, but also to those who profess to have become perfectly sanctified, and to live without sin. In any and every way, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Compare Jas 3:2. We deceive ourselves. We have wrong views about our character. This does not mean that the self-deception is willful, but that it in fact exists. No man knows himself who supposes that in all respects he is perfectly pure.

And the truth is not in us. On this subject. A man who should maintain that he had never committed sin, could have no just views of the truth in regard to himself, and would show that he was in utter error. In like manner, according to the obvious interpretation of this passage, he who maintains that he is wholly sanctified, and lives without any sin, shows that he is deceived in regard to himself, and that the truth, in this respect, is not in him. He may hold the truth on other subjects, but he does not on this. The very nature of the Christian religion supposes that we feel ourselves to be sinners, and that we should be ever ready to acknowledge it. A man who claims that he is absolutely perfect, that he is holy as God is holy, must know little of his own heart. Who, after all his reasoning on the subject, would dare to go out under the open heaven, at midnight, and lift up his hands and his eyes towards the stars, and say that he had no sin to confess--that he was as pure as the God that made those stars?

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins. Pardon, in the Scriptures, always supposes that there is confession, and there is no promise that it will be imparted unless a full acknowledgment has been made. Compare Ps 51 Ps 52; Lk 15:18, 7:41, Prov 28:13.

He is faithful. To his promises. He will do what he has assured us he will do in remitting them.

and just to forgive us our sins. The word just here cannot be used in a strict and proper sense, since the forgiveness of sins is never an act of justice, but is an act of mercy. If it were an act of justice it could be demanded or enforced, and that is the same as to say that it is not forgiveness, for in that case there could have been no sin to be pardoned. But the word just is often used in a larger sense, as denoting upright, equitable, acting properly in the circumstances of the case, etc. Comp. Mt 1:19. Here the word may be used in one of the following senses:

(1.) Either as referring to his general excellence of character, or his disposition to do what is proper; that is, he is one who will act in every way as becomes God; or,

(2,) that he will be just in the sense that he will be true to his promises; or that, since he has promised to pardon sinners, he will be found faithfully to adhere to those engagements; or perhaps,

(3,) that he will be just to his Son in the covenant of redemption, since, now that an atonement has been made by him, and a way has been opened through his sufferings by which God can consistently pardon, and with a view and an understanding that he might and would pardon, it would be an act of injustice to him if he did not pardon those who believe on him.

Viewed in either aspect, we may have the fullest assurance that God is ready to pardon us if we exercise true repentance and faith. No one can come to God without finding him ready to do all that is appropriate for a God to do in pardoning transgressors; no one who will not, in fact, receive forgiveness if he repents, and believes, and makes confession; no one who will not find that God is just to his Son in the covenant of

redemption, in pardoning and saving all who put their trust in the merits of his sacrifice.

And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. By forgiving all that is past, treating us as if we were righteous, and ultimately by removing all the stains of guilt from the soul.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

If we say that we have not sinned. In times that are past. Some perhaps might be disposed to say this; and as the apostle is careful to guard every point, he here states that if a man should take the ground that his past life had been wholly upright, it would prove that he had no true religion. The statement here respecting the past seems to prove that when, in 1Jn 1:8, he refers to the present--"if we say we have no sin "--he meant to say that if a man should claim to be perfect, or to be wholly sanctified, it would demonstrate that he deceived himself; and the two statements go to prove that neither in reference to the past nor the present can any one lay claim to perfection.

We make Him a liar. Because he has everywhere affirmed the depravity of all the race. Compare Barnes Notes on Romans chapters 1-3. On no point have his declarations been more positive and uniform than on the fact of the universal sinfulness of man. Comp. Gen 6:11,12, Job 14:4, 15:16; Ps 14:1,2,3, 51:5, 58:3, Rom 3:9-20, Gal 3:21. Isa 6:5, 29:13, 59:1-8, 12-15. Jer 9:1-9. Mic 6:12

And his word is not in us. His truth; that is, we have no true religion. The whole system of Christianity is based on the fact that man is a fallen being, and needs a Saviour; and unless a man admits that, of course he cannot be a Christian.

1 John-2

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

My little children. τεκνιαμου. This is such language as an aged apostle would be likely to use when addressing a church, and its use in this

epistle may be regarded as one evidence that John had reached an advanced period of life when he wrote the epistle.

These things write I unto you. To wit, the things stated in chapter one. That ye sin not. To keep you from sin, or to induce you to lead a holy life.

And if any man sin. As all are liable, with hearts as corrupt as ours, and amidst the temptations of a world like this, to do. This, of course, does not imply that it is proper or right to sin, or that Christians should have no concern about it; but the meaning is, that all are liable to sin, and when we are conscious of sin the mind should not yield to despondency and despair. It might be supposed, perhaps, that if one sinned after baptism, or after being converted, there could be no forgiveness. The apostle designs to guard against any such supposition, and to show that the atonement made by the Redeemer had respect to all kinds of sin, and that under the deepest consciousness of guilt and of personal unworthiness, we may feel that we have an advocate on high.

We have an advocate with the Father. God only can forgive sin; and though we have no claim on him, yet there is one with him who can plead our cause, and on whom we can rely to manage our interests there. The word rendered advocate (παρακλητος or--paraclete) is elsewhere applied to the Holy Spirit, and is in every other place where it occurs in the New Testament rendered comforter, Jn 14:16,26; Jn 15:26, 16:7. On the meaning of the word, Jnn 14:16. As used with reference to the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16, et al.) it is employed in the more general sense of helper, or aid; and the particular manner in which the Holy Spirit aids us may be seen stated in Jn 14:16. As usual here with reference to the Lord Jesus, it is employed in the more limited sense of the word advocate, as the word is frequently used in the Greek writers to denote an advocate in court; that is, one whom we call to our aid; or to stand by us, to defend our suit. Where it is applied to the Lord Jesus, the language is evidently figurative, since there can be no literal pleading for us in heaven; but it is expressive of the great truth that he has undertaken our cause with God, and that he performs for us all that we expect of an advocate and counsellor. It is not to be supposed, however, that he manages our cause in the same way, or on the same principles on which an advocate in a human tribunal does.

An advocate in court is employed to defend his client. He does not begin by admitting his guilt, or in any way basing his plea on the conceded fact that he is guilty; his proper business is to show that he is not guilty, or, if he be proved to be so, to see that no injustice shall be done him. The proper business of an advocate in a human court, therefore, embraces two things:

(1.) To show that his client is not guilty in the form and manner charged on him. This he may do in one of two ways, either

(a.) by showing that he did not do the act charged on him, as when he is charged with murder, and can prove an alibi, or show that he was not present at the time the murder was committed; or

(b.) by proving that he had a right to do the deed--as, if he is charged with murder, he may admit the fact of the killing, but may show that it was in self-defence.

(2.) In case his client is convicted, his office is to see that no injustice is done to him in the sentence; to stand by him still; to avail himself of all that the law allows in his favour, or to state any circumstance of age, or sex, or former service, or bodily health, which would in any way mitigate the sentence.

The advocacy of the Lord Jesus in our behalf, however, is wholly different from this, though the same general object is pursued and sought, the good of those for whom he becomes an advocate. The nature of his advocacy may be stated in the following particulars:

(1.) He admits the guilt of those for whom he becomes the advocate, to the full extent charged on them by the law of God, and by their own consciences. He does not attempt to hide or conceal it. He makes no apology for it. He neither attempts to deny the fact, nor to show that they had a right to do as they have done. He could not do this, for it would not be true; and any plea before the throne of God which should be based on a denial of our guilt would be fatal to our cause.

(2.) As our advocate, he undertakes to be security that no wrong shall be done to the universe if we are not punished as we deserve; that is, if we are pardoned, and treated as if we had not sinned. This he does

by pleading what he has done in behalf of men; that is, by the plea that his sufferings and death in behalf of sinners have done as much to honour the law, and to maintain the truth and justice of God, and to prevent the extension of apostasy, as if the offenders themselves had suffered the full penalty of the law. If sinners are punished in hell, there will be some object to be accomplished by it; and the simple account of the atonement by Christ is, that his death will secure all the good results to the universe which would be secured by the punishment of the offender himself. It has done as much to maintain the honour of the law, and to impress the universe with the truth that sin cannot be committed with impunity. If all the good results can be secured by substituted sufferings which there would be by the punishment of the offender himself, then it is clear that the guilty may be acquitted and saved. Why should they not be? The Saviour, as our advocate, undertakes to be security that this shall be.

(3.) As our advocate, he becomes a surety for our good behaviour; gives a pledge to justice that we will obey the laws of God, and that he will keep us in the paths of obedience and truth; that, if pardoned, we will not continue to rebel. This pledge or surety can be given in no human court of justice. No man, advocate or friend, can give security when one is pardoned who has been convicted of stealing a horse, that he will not steal a horse again; when one who has been guilty of murder is pardoned, that he will never be guilty of it again; when one who has been guilty of forgery is pardoned, that he will not be guilty of it again. If he could do this, the subject of pardon would be attended with much fewer difficulties than it is now. But the Lord Jesus becomes such a pledge or surety for us, (Heb 7:22,) and hence he becomes such an advocate with the Father as we need.

Jesus Christ the righteous. One who is eminently righteous himself, and who possesses the means of rendering others righteous. It is an appropriate feeling when we come before God in his name, that we come pleading the merits of one who is eminently righteous, and on account of whose righteousness we may be justified and saved.

2 and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

And he is the propitiation for our sins. The word rendered propitiation (ιλασμος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 1Jn

4:10 of this epistle; though words of the same derivation, and having the same essential meaning, frequently, occur. The corresponding word ιλαστηριον (hilasterion) occurs in Rom 3:25, rendered propitiation--"whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" and in Heb 9:5, rendered mercy-seat--"shadowing the mercy-seat." The verb ιλασκομαι (hilaskomai) occurs also in Lk 18:3--"God be merciful to me a sinner;" and Heb 2:17--"to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." For the idea expressed by these words, Rom 3:25. The proper meaning of the word is that of reconciling, appeasing, turning away anger, rendering propitious or favourable. The idea is, that there is anger or wrath, or that something has been done to offend, and that it is needful to turn away that wrath, or to appease. This may be done by a sacrifice, by songs, by services rendered, or by bloody offerings. So the word is often used in Homer.--Passow. We have similar words in common use, as when we say of one that he has been offended, and that something must be done to appease him, or to turn away his wrath. This is commonly done with us by making restitution; or by an acknowledgment; or by yielding the point in controversy; or by an expression of regret; or by different conduct in time to come. But this idea must not be applied too literally to God; nor should it be explained away. The essential thoughts in regard to him, as implied in this word, are,

(1,) that his will has been disregarded, and his law violated, and that he has reason to be offended with us;

(2,) that in that condition he cannot, consistently with his perfections, and the good of the universe, treat us as if we had not done it;

(3,) that it is proper that, in some way, he should show his displeasure at our conduct, either by punishing us, or by something that shall answer the same purpose; and,

(4,) that the means of propitiation come in here, and accomplish this end, and make it proper that he should treat us as if we had not sinned; that is, he is reconciled, or appeased, and his anger is turned away. This is done, it is supposed, by, the death of the Lord Jesus, accomplishing, in most important respects, what would be accomplished by the punishment of the offender himself. In regard to

this, in order to a proper understanding of what is accomplished, it is necessary to observe two things--what is not done, and what is.

I. There are certain things which do not enter into the idea of propitiation. They are such as these:

(a.) That it does not change the fact that the wrong was done. That is a fact which cannot be denied, and he who undertakes to make a propitiation for sin does not deny it.

(b.) It does not change God; it does not make him a different being from what he was before; it does not buy him over to a willingness to show mercy; it does not change an inexorable being to one who is compassionate and kind.

(c.) The offering that is made to secure reconciliation does not necessarily produce reconciliation in fact. It prepares the way for it on the part of God, but whether they for whom it is made will be disposed to accept it is another question. When two men are alienated from each other, you may go to B and say to him that all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of A are removed, and that he is disposed to be at peace, but whether B will be willing to be at peace is quite another matter. The mere fact that his adversary is disposed to be at peace, determines nothing in regard to his disposition in the matter. So in regard to the controversy between man and God. It may be true that all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God are taken away, and still it may be quite a separate question whether man will be willing to lay aside his opposition, and embrace the terms of mercy. In itself considered, one does not necessarily determine the other, or throw any light on it.

II The amount, then, in regard to the propitiation made for sin is, that it removes all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God; it does whatever is necessary to be done to maintain the honour of his law, his justice, and his truth; it makes it consistent for him to offer pardon--that is, it removes whatever there was that made it necessary to inflict punishment, and thus, so far as the word can be applied to God, it appeases him, or turns away his anger, or renders him propitious. This it does, not in respect to producing any change in God, but in respect to the fact that it removes whatever there was in the nature of the case

that prevented the free and full offer of pardon. The idea of the apostle in the passage before us is, that when we sin we may be assured that this has been done, and that pardon may now be freely extended to us.

And not for our's only. Not only for the sins of us who are Christians, for the apostle was writing to such. The idea which he intends to convey seems to be, that when we come before God we should take the most liberal and large views of the atonement; we should feel that the most ample provision has been made for our pardon, and that in no respect is there any limit as to the sufficiency of that work to remove all sin. It is sufficient for us; sufficient for all the world.

But also for the sins of the whole world. The phrase "the sins of" is not in the original, but is not improperly supplied, for the connexion demands it. This is one of the expressions occurring in the New Testament which demonstrate that the atonement was made for all men, and which cannot be reconciled with any other opinion, if he had died only for a part of the race, this language could not have been used. The phrase, "the whole world," is one which naturally embraces all men; is such as would be used if it be supposed that the apostle meant to teach that Christ died for all men; and is such as cannot be explained on any other supposition. If he died only for the elect, it is not true that he is the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world" in any proper sense, nor would it be possible then to assign a sense in which it could be true. This passage, interpreted in its plain and obvious meaning, teaches the following things:

(1.) That the atonement in its own nature is adapted to all men, or that it is as much fitted to one individual, or One class, as another;

(2,) that it is sufficient in merit for all; that is, that if any more should be saved than actually will be, there would be no need of any additional suffering in order to save them;

(3,) that it has no special adaptedness to one person or class more than another; that is, that in its own nature it did not render the salvation of one more easy than that of another. It so magnified the law, so honoured God, so fully expressed the Divine sense of the evil of sin in respect to all men, that the offer of salvation might be made as freely to one as to another, and that any and all might take shelter under it

and be safe. Whether, however, God might not, for wise reasons, resolve that its benefits should be applied to a part only, is another question, and one which does not affect the inquiry about the intrinsic nature of the atonement. On the evidence that the atonement was made for all, 2Cor 5:14, and Heb 2:9.

Tests of True Knowledge

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

He that saith, I know him, He who professes to be acquainted with the Saviour, or who professes to be a Christian. And keepeth not his commandments. What he has appointed to be observed by his people; that is, he who does not obey him. Is a liar. Makes a false profession; professes to have that which he really has not. Such a profession is a falsehood, because there can be no true religion where one does not obey the law of God.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

But whoso keepeth his word. That is, what he has spoken or commanded, The term word here will include all that he has made known to us as his will in regard to our conduct.

In him verily is the love of God perfected. He professes to have the love of God in his heart, and that love receives its completion or filling up by obedience to the will of God. That obedience is the proper carrying out, or the exponent of the love which exists in the heart. Love to the Saviour would be defective without that, for it is never complete without obedience. If this be the true interpretation, then the passage does not make any affirmation about sinless perfection, but it only affirms that if true love exists in the heart, it will be carried out in the life; or that love and obedience are parts of the same thing; that one will be manifested by the other; and that where obedience exists, it is the completion or perfecting of love. Besides, the apostle does not say that either the love or the obedience would be in themselves absolutely perfect; but he says that one cannot fully develope itself without the other.

Hereby know we that we are in him. That is, by having in fact such love as shall insure obedience. To be in him, is to be united to him; to be his friends. Jn 6:56; Rom 13:14.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

He that saith, he abideth in him. Gr., remains in him; that is, abides or remains in the belief of his doctrines, and in the comfort and practice of religion. The expression is one of those which refer to the intimate union between Christ and his people. A great variety of phrase is employed to denote that. For the meaning of this word in John, Jn 3:6.

Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. Ought to live and act as he did. If he is one with him, or professes to be united to him, he ought to imitate him in all things. Comp. Jn 13:15. 1Jn 1:6.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you. That is, what I am now enjoining is not new. It is the same doctrine which you have always heard. There has been much difference of opinion as to what is referred to by the word commandment, whether it is the injunction in the previous verse to live as Christ lived, or whether it is what he refers to in the following verses, the duty of brotherly love. Perhaps neither of these is exactly the idea of the apostle, but he may mean in this verse to put in a general disclaimer against the charge that what he enjoined was new. In respect to all that he taught, the views of truth which he held, the duties which he enjoined, the course of life which he would prescribe as proper for a Christian to live, he meant to say that it was not at all new; it was nothing which he had originated himself, but it was in fact the same system of doctrines which they had always received since they became Christians. He might have been induced to say this because he apprehended that some of those whom he had in his eye, and whose doctrines he meant to oppose, might say that this was all new; that it was not the nature of religion as it had been commonly understood, and as it was laid down by the Saviour. In a somewhat different sense, indeed, he admits 1Jn 2:8 that there was a "new" commandment which it was proper to enjoin--for he did not forget that the Saviour himself called that "new;" and though that commandment had also been all along inculcated

under the gospel, yet there was a sense in which it was proper to call that new, for it had been so called by the Saviour. But in respect to all the doctrines which he maintained, and in respect to all the duties which he enjoined, he said that they were not new in the sense that he had originated them, or that they had not been enjoined from the beginning. Perhaps, also, the apostle here may have some allusion to false teachers who were in fact scattering new doctrines among the people, things before unheard of, and attractive by their novelty; and he may mean to say that he made no pretensions to any such novelty, but was content to repeat the old and familiar truths which they had always received. Thus, if he was charged with breaching new opinions, he denies it fully; if they were advancing new opinions, and were even "making capital" out of them, he says that he attempted no such thing, but was content with the old and established opinions which they had always received.

But an old commandment. Old, in the sense that it has always been inculcated; that religion has always enjoined it.

Which ye had from the beginning. Which you have always received ever since you heard anything about the gospel. It was preached when the gospel was first preached; it has always been promulgated when that has been promulgated; it is what you first heard when you were made acquainted with the gospel. Compare 1Jn 1:1.

The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Is the doctrine; or is what was enjoined. John is often in the habit of putting a truth in a new form or aspect in order to make it emphatic, and to prevent the possibility of misapprehension. See Jn 1:1,2 The sense here is, "All that I am saying to you is in fact an old commandment, or one which you have always had. There is nothing new in what I am enjoining on you."

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Again, a new commandment I write unto you. "And yet, that which I write to you, and particularly enjoin on you, deserves in another sense to be called a new commandment, though it has been also inculcated from the beginning, for it was called new by the Saviour himself." Or the meaning may be, "In addition to the general precepts which I have referred to, I do now call your attention to the new commandment of

the Saviour, that which he himself called new." There can be no doubt here that John refers to the commandment to "love one another," (1Jn 2:9-11,) and that it is here called new, not in the sense that John inculcated it as a novel doctrine, but in the sense that the Saviour called it such. For the reasons why it was so called by him, Jn 13:34.

Which thing is true in him. In the Lord Jesus. That is, which commandment or law of love was illustrated in him, or was manifested by him in his relationship with his disciples. That which was most prominent in him was this very love which he enjoined on all his followers.

And in you. Among you. That is, you have manifested it in your relationship with each other. It is not new in the sense that you have never heard of it, and have never evinced it, but in the sense only that he called it new.

Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. The ancient systems of error, under which men hated each other, have passed away, and you are brought into the light of the true religion. Once you were in darkness, like others; now the light of the pure gospel shines around you, and that requires, as its distinguishing characteristic, love. Religion is often represented as light; and Christ spoke of himself, and was spoken of, as the light of the world. Jn 1:4; Jn 1:5. Comp. Jn 8:12; Jn 12:35,36,46, Isa 9:2.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

He that saith he is in the light. That he has true religion, or is a Christian. See 1Jn 1:7.

And hateth his brother. The word brother seems here to refer to those who professed the same religion. The word is indeed sometimes used in a larger sense, but the reference here appears to be to that which is properly brotherly love among Christians. Comp. Lucke, in loc.

Is in darkness even unto now. That is, he cannot have true religion unless he has love to the brethren. The command to love one another was one of the most solemn and earnest which Christ ever enjoined, (Jn 15:17;) he made it the peculiar badge of discipleship, or that by

which his followers were to be everywhere known, (Jn 13:35;) and it is, therefore, impossible to have any true religion without love to those who are sincerely and truly his followers. If a man has not that, he is in deep darkness, whatever else he may have, on the whole subject of religion. Comp. 1Thes 4:9.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light. Has true religion, and enjoys it.

And there is none occasion of stumbling in him. Marg., scandal. Greek, "and there is no stumbling" [or scandal--σκανδαλον--in him.] The word here used, means anything against which one strikes or stumbles; and then a stumbling-block, an impediment, or anything which occasions a fall. Then it is used in a moral or spiritual sense, as denoting that which is the occasion of falling into sin. Mt 5:29 and Rom 14:13. Here it refers to an individual in respect to his treatment of others, and means that there is nothing, so far as he is concerned, to lead him into sin.--Rob. Lex. If he has love to the brethren, he has true religion; and there is, so far as the influence of this shall extend, nothing that will be the occasion of his falling into sin in his conduct towards them, for "love worketh no ill to his neighbour," Rom 13:10. His course will be just, and upright, and benevolent. He will have no envy towards them in their prosperity, and will not be disposed to detract from their reputation in adversity; he will have no feelings of exultation when they fall, and will not be disposed to take advantage of their misfortunes; and, loving them as brethren, he will be in no respect under temptation to do them wrong. In the bosom of one who loves his brother, the baleful passions of envy, malice, hatred, and uncharitableness, can have no place. At the same time, this love of the brethren would have an important effect on his whole Christian life and walk, for there are few things that will have more influence on a man's character in keeping him from doing wrong, than the love of the good and the pure. He who truly loves good men, will not be likely in any respect to go astray from the paths of virtue.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

But he that hateth his brother. The word here used would, in this connexion, include both the mere absence of love, and positive hatred. It is designed to include the whole of that state of mind where there is not love for the brethren.

Is in darkness. 1Jn 2:9.

And walketh in darkness. He is like one who walks in the dark, and who sees no object distinctly. Jn 12:35. And knoweth not whither he goeth. Like one in the dark. He wanders about not knowing what direction he shall take, or where the course which he is on will lead. The general meaning is, that he is ignorant of the whole nature of religion; or, in other words, love to the brethren is a central virtue in religion, and when a man has not that, his mind is entirely clouded on the whole subject, and he shows that he knows nothing of its nature. There is no virtue that is designed to be made more prominent in Christianity; and there is none that will throw its influence farther over a man's life.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

By the term "little children" here, he means children literally, seems to me to be clear,

(1.) because this is the usual meaning of the word, and should be understood to be the meaning here, unless there is something in the connexion to show that it is used in a metaphorical sense;

(2.) because it seems necessary to understand the other expressions, "young men," and "fathers," in a literal sense, as denoting those more advanced in life;

(3.) because this would be quite in character for the apostle John. He had recorded, and would doubtless remember the solemn injunction of the Saviour to Peter, (Jn 21:15,) to "feed his lambs," and the aged apostle could not but feel that what was worthy of so solemn an injunction from the Lord, was worthy of his attention and care as an apostle; and

(4.) because in that case, each class, fathers, young men, and children, would be twice addressed in these two verses; whereas if we understood this of Christians in general, then fathers and young men would be twice addressed, and children but once. If this be so, it may be remarked,

(1.) that there were probably quite young children in the church in the time of the apostle John, for the word would naturally convey that idea.

(2.) The exact age cannot he indeed determined, but two things are clear:

(a.) one is, that they were undoubtedly under twenty years of age, since they were younger than the "young men"--νεανισκοι a word usually applied to those who were in the vigour of life, from about the period of twenty up to forty years, (1Jn 2:13,) and this word would embrace all who were younger than that class; and

(b.) the other is, that the word itself would convey the idea that they were in quite early life, as the word children--a fair translation of it --does now with us. It is not possible to determine, from the use of this word, precisely of what age the class here referred to was, but the word would imply that they were in quite early life. No rule is laid down in the New Testament as to the age in which children may be admitted to the communion. The whole subject is left to the wise discretion of the church, and is safely left there. Cases must vary so much that no rule could be laid down; and little or no evil has arisen from leaving the point undetermined in the Scriptures. It may be doubted, however, whether tile church has not been rather in danger of erring by having it deferred too late, than by admitting children too early.

(3.) Such children, if worthy the attention of an aged apostle, should receive the particular notice of pastors now. Jn 21:15. There are reasons in all cases now, as there were then, why this part of a congregation should receive the special attention of a minister of religion. The hopes of a church are in them. Their minds are susceptible to impression. The character of the piety in the next age will depend on their views of religion. All that there is of value in the church and the world will soon pass into their hands. The houses,

farms, factories; the pulpits, and the chairs of professors in colleges; the seats of senators and the benches of judges; the great offices of state, and all the offices in the church; the interests of learning, and of benevolence and liberty, are all soon to be under their control. Everything valuable in this world will soon depend on their conduct and character; and who, therefore, can over-estimate the importance of training them up in just views of religion. As John wrote to this class, should not pastors preach to them?

Because--οτι. This particle may be rendered for, or because; and the meaning may be either that the fact that their sins were forgiven was a reason for writing to them, since it would be proper, on that ground, to exhort them to a holy life; or that he wrote to them because it was a privilege to address them as those who were forgiven, for he felt that, in speaking to them, he could address them as such. It seems to me that it is to be taken as a causal particle, and that the apostle, in the various specifications which he makes, designs to assign particular reasons why he wrote to each class, enjoining on them the duties of a holy life. Comp. 1Jn 2:21. Your sins are forgiven you. That is, this is a reason why he wrote to them, and enjoined these things on them. The meaning seems to be, that the fact that our past sins are blotted out furnishes a strong reason why we should be holy. That reason is founded on the goodness of God in doing it, and on the obligation under which we are brought by the fact that God has had mercy on us. This is a consideration which children will feel as well as others; for there is nothing which will tend more to make a child obedient hereafter, than the fact that a parent freely forgives the past.

For his name's sake. On account of the name of Christ; that is, in virtue of what he has done for us. In 1Jn 2:13, he states another reason why he wrote to this same class--"because they had known the Father."

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

I write unto you, fathers. As there were special reasons for writing to children, so there were also for writing to those who were more mature in life. The class here addressed would embrace all those who were in

advance of the νεανισκοι, or young men, and would properly include those who were at the head of families.

Because ye have known him that is from the beginning. That is, the Lord Jesus Christ. 1Jn 1:1 The argument is, that they had been long acquainted with the principles of his religion, and understood well its doctrines and duties. It cannot be certainly inferred from this that they had had a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus; yet that this might have been is not impossible, for John had himself personally known him, and there may have been some among those to whom he wrote who had also seen and known him. If this were so, it would give additional impressiveness to the reason assigned here for writing to them, and for reminding them of the principles of that religion which they had learned froth his own lips and example. But perhaps all that is necessarily implied in this passage is, that they had had long opportunity of becoming acquainted with the religion of the Son of God, and that having understood that thoroughly, it was proper to address them as aged and established Christians, and to call on them to maintain the true doctrines of the gospel, against the specious but dangerous errors which then prevailed.

I write unto you, young men. νεανισκοι. This word would properly embrace those who were in the rigour of life, midway between children and old men. It is uniformly rendered young men in the New Testament: Mt 19:20,22, Mk 14:61, 16:6, Lk 7:14, Acts 2:17, 5:10; and in the passages before us. It does not elsewhere occur. It is commonly understood as embracing those in the prime and rigour of manhood up to the period of about forty years.--Robinson.

Because ye have overcome the wicked one. That is, because you have rigour, (see the next verse,)and that rigour you have shown by overcoming the assaults of the wicked one--the devil. You have triumphed over the passions which prevail in early life; you have combatted the allurements of vice, ambition, covetousness, and sensuality; and you have shown that there is a strength of character and of piety on which reliance can be placed in promoting religion. It is proper, therefore, to exhort you not to disgrace the victory which you have already gained, but to employ your vigour of character in maintaining the cause of the Saviour. The thing to which John appeals here is the energy of those at this period of life, and it is proper at all

times to make this the ground of appeal in addressing a church, It is right to call on those who are in the prime of life, and who are endowed with energy of character, to employ their talents in the service of the Lord Jesus, and to stand up as the open advocates of truth. Thus the apostle calls on the three great classes into which a community or a church may be considered as divided: youth, be; cause their sins were already forgiven, and, though young, they had actually entered on a career of virtue and religion, a career which by all means they ought to be exhorted to pursue; fathers, or aged men, because they had had long experience in religion, and had a thorough acquaintance with the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and they might be expected to stand steadfastly as examples to others; and young men, those who were in the rigour and prime of life, because they had shown that they had power to resist evil, and were endowed with strength, and it was proper to call on them to exert their rigour in the sacred cause of religion.

I write unto you, "little children" Because ye have known the Father. In 1Jn 2:12, the reason assigned for writing to this class is, that their sins were forgiven, The reason assigned here is, that in early life they had become acquainted with God as a Father. He desires that they would show themselves dutiful and faithful children in this relation which they sustained to him. Even children may learn to regard God as their Father, and may have towards him all the affectionate interest which grows out of this relation.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

I have written unto you, fathers, because, etc. The reason assigned here for writing to fathers is the same which is given in the previous verse. It would seem that, in respect to them, the apostle regarded this as a sufficient reason for writing to them, and only meant to enforce it by repeating it. The fact that they had through many years been acquainted with the doctrines and duties of the true religion, seemed to him a sufficient reason for writing to them, and for exhorting them to a steadfast adherence to those principles and duties.

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, etc. The two additional circumstances which he here mentions as reasons for

writing to young men are, that they are strong, and that the word of God abides in them. The first of these reasons is, that they were strong; that is, that they were qualified for active and useful service in the cause of the Redeemer. Children were yet too young and feeble to appeal to them by this motive, and the powers of the aged were exhausted; but those who were in the rigour of life might be called upon for active service in the cause of the Lord Jesus. The same appeal may be made now to the same class; and the fact that they are thus vigorous is a proper ground of exhortation, for the church needs their active services, and they are bound to devote their powers to the cause of truth. The other additional ground of appeal is, that the word of God abode in them; that is, that those of this class to whom he wrote had showed, perhaps in time of temptation, that they adhered firmly to the principles of religion. They had not flinched from an open defence of the truths of religion when assailed; they had not been seduced by the plausible arts of the advocates of error, but they had had strength to overcome the wicked one. The reason here for appealing to this class is, that in fact they had showed that they could be relied on, and it was proper to depend on them to advocate the great principles of Christianity.

15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Love not the world. The term world seems to be used in the Scriptures in three senses;

(1,) As denoting the physical universe; the world as it appears to the eye; the world considered as the work of God, as a material creation.

(2.) The world as applied to the people that reside in it--" the world of mankind."

(3.) As the dwellers on the earth are by nature without religion, and act under a set of maxims, aims, and principles that have reference only to this life, the term comes to be used with reference to that community; that is, to the objects which they peculiarly seek, and the principles by which they are actuated, Considered with reference to the first sense of the word, it is not improper to love the world as the work of God, and as illustrating his perfections; for we may suppose that God loves his own works, and it is not wrong that we should find

pleasure in their contemplation. Considered with reference to the second sense of the word, it is not wrong to love the people of the world with a love of benevolence, and to have attachment to our kindred and friends who constitute a part of it, though they are not Christians. It is only with reference to the word as used in the third sense that the command here can be understood to be applicable, or that the love of the world is forbidden; with reference to the objects sought, the maxims that prevail, the principles that reign in that community that lives for this world as contradistinguished from the world to come. The meaning is, that we are not to fix our affections on worldly objects--on what the world can furnish--as our portion, with the spirit with which they do who live only for this world, regardless of the life to come. We are not to make this world the object of our chief affection; we are not to be influenced by the maxims and feelings which prevail among those who do. Comp. Rom 12:2, and Jas 4:4. See also Mt 16:26, Lk 9:25, 1Cor 1:20, 3:19, Gal 4:3, Col 2:8.

Neither the things that are in the world. Referred to in the next verse as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." This explanation shows what John meant by "the things that are in the world." He does not say that we are in no sense to love anything that is in the material world; that we are to feel no interest in flowers, and streams, and forests, and fountains; that we are to have no admiration for what God has done as the Creator of all things; that we are to cherish no love for any of the inhabitants of the world, our friends and kindred; or that we are to pursue none of the objects of this life in making provision for our families; but that we are not to love the things which are sought merely to pamper the appetite, to please the eye, or to promote pride in living. These are the objects sought by the people of the world; these are not the objects to be sought by the Christian.

If any man love the world, etc. If, in this sense, a man loves the world, it shows that he has no true religion; that is, if characteristically he loves the world as his portion, and lives for that; if it is the ruling principle of his life to gain and enjoy that, it shows that his heart has never been renewed, and that he has no part with the children of God. Jas 4:4; Mt 6:24.

For all that is in the world. That is, all that really constitutes the world, or that enters into the aims and purposes of those who live for this life.

All that that community lives for may be comprised under the following things.

The lust of the flesh. The word lust is used here in the general sense of desire, or that which is the object of desire--not in the narrow sense in which it is now commonly used to denote libidinous passion. Jas 1:14. The phrase, "the lust of the flesh," here denotes that which pampers the appetites, or all that is connected with the indulgence of the mere animal propensities. A large part of the world lives for little more than this. This is the lowest form of worldly indulgence; those which are immediately specified being of a higher order, though still merely worldly.

And the lust of the eyes. That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly raiment, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc. The object is to refer to the gay vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life. It does not, of course, mean that the eye is never to be gratified, or that we can find as much pleasure in an ugly as in a handsome object, or that it is sinful to find pleasure in beholding objects of real beauty--for the world, as formed by its Creator, is full of such things, and he could not but have intended that pleasure should enter the soul through the eye, or that the beauties which he has shed so lavishly over his works should contribute to the happiness of his creatures; but the apostle refers to this when it is the great and leading object of life,--when it is sought without any connexion with religion or reference to the world to come.

And the pride of life. The word here used means, properly, ostentation or boasting, and then arrogance or pride.--Robinson. It refers to whatever there is that tends to promote pride, or that is an index of pride, such as the ostentatious display of dress, equipage, furniture, etc.

Is not of the Father. Does not proceed from God, or meet with his approbation. It is not of the nature of true religion to seek these things, nor can their pursuit be reconciled with the existence of real piety in the heart. The sincere Christian has nobler ends; and he who has not any higher ends, and whose conduct and feelings can all be accounted for by a desire for these things, cannot be a true Christian.

But is of the world. Is originated solely by the objects and purposes of this life, where religion and the life to come are excluded.

16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

And the world passeth away. Everything properly constituting this world where religion is excluded. The reference here does not seem to be so much to the material world, as to the scenes of show and vanity which make up the world. These things are passing away like the shifting scenes of the stage. 1Cor 7:31.

And the lust thereof. All that is here so much the object of desire. These things are like a pageant, which only amuses the eve for a moment, and then disappears for ever.

But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. This cannot mean that he will never die; but it means that he has built his happiness on a basis which is secure, and which can never pass away. Mt 7:24; seq.

The Antichrist

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

It is the last time. The closing period or dispensation; that dispensation in which the affairs of the world are ultimately to be wound up. The apostle does not, however, say that the end of the world would soon occur, nor does he intimate how long this dispensation would be. That period might continue through many ages or centuries, and still be the last dispensation, or that in which the affairs of the world would be finally closed. Isa 2:2; Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2. Some have supposed that the "last time" here refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish economy; but the more natural interpretation is to refer it to the last dispensation of the world, and to suppose that the apostle meant to say that there were clear evidences that that period had arrived.

And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come. The word antichrist occurs in the New Testament only in these epistles of John, 1Jn 2:18,22, 4:3, 2Jn 1:7. The proper meaning of anti (αντι) in composition is,

(1.) over against, as αντιταττειν;

(2.) contrary to, as αντιλεγειν;

(3.) reciprocity, as ανταποδιδωμι;

(4.) substitution, as αντιβασιλευς, in the place of the king, or ανθυπατος--proconsul. The word antichrist, therefore, might denote any one who either was or claimed to be in the place of Christ, or one who, for any cause, was in opposition to him. The word, further, would apply to one opposed to him, on whatever ground the opposition might be; whether it were open and avowed, or whether it were only in fact, as resulting from certain claims which were adverse to his, or which were inconsistent with his.

A vice-functionary, or an opposing functionary, would be the idea which the word would naturally suggest. If the word stood alone, and there were nothing said further to explain its meaning, we should think, when the word antichrist was used, either of one who claimed to be the Christ, and who thus was a rival; or of one who stood in opposition to him on some other ground. That which constituted the characteristics of antichrist, according to John, who, only has used the word, he has himself stated. 1Jn 2:22, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." 1Jn 4:3, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist." 2Jn 1:7, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." From this it is clear, that John understood by the word all those that denied that Jesus is the Messiah, or that the Messiah has come in the flesh. If they held that Jesus was a deceiver, and that he was not the Christ, or if they maintained that, though Christ had come, he had not come in the flesh, that is, with a proper human nature, this showed that such persons had the spirit of antichrist. They strayed themselves against him, and held doctrines which were in fact

in entire opposition to the Son of God. It would appear then that John does not use the word in the sense which it would bear as denoting one who set up a rival claim, or who came in the place of Christ, but in the sense of those who were opposed to him by denying essential doctrines in regard to his person and advent. It is not certainly known to what persons he refers, but it would seem not improbable to Jewish adversaries, (see Suicer's Thesaurus. voc.,) or to some forms of the Gnostic belief. 1Jn 4:2 The doctrine respecting antichrist, as stated in the New Testament, may be summed up in the following particulars:

(1.) That there would be those, perhaps in considerable numbers, who would openly claim to be the Christ, or the true Messiah, Mt 24:5,24.

(2.) That there would be a spirit, which would manifest itself early in the church, that would strongly tend to some great apostasy under some one head or leader, or to a concentration on an individual, or a succession of individuals, who would have eminently the spirit of antichrist, though for a time the developement of that spirit would be hindered or restrained, 2Thes 2:1, seq.

(3.) That this would be ultimately concentrated on a single leader -- "the man of sin"--and embodied under some great apostasy, at the head of which would be that "man of sin," 2Thes 2:3,4,8,9,10. It is to this that Paul particularly refers, or this is the view which he took of this apostasy, and it is this which he particularly describes.

(4.) That, in the mean time, and before the elements of the great apostasy should be concentrated and embodied, there might not be a few who would partake of the same general spirit, and who would be equally opposed to Christ in their doctrines and aims; that is, who would embody in themselves the essential spirit of antichrist, and by whose appearing it might be known that the last dispensation had come. It is to these that John refers, and these he found in his own age. Paul fixed the eye on future times, when the spirit of antichrist should be embodied under a distinct and mighty organization; John on his own time, and found then essentially what it had been predicted would occur in the church. He here says that they had been taught to expect that antichrist would come under the last dispensation; and it is implied that it could be ascertained that it was the last time, from the fact that the predicted opposer of Christ had come. The reference is probably

to the language of the Saviour, that before the end should be, and as a sign that it was coming, many would arise claiming to be Christ, and, of course, practically denying that he was the Christ. Mt 24:5, "Many shall come m my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Verse 24, "And there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets; and they shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." This prediction it is probable the apostles had referred to wherever they had preached, so that there was a general expectation that one or more persons would appear claiming to be the Christ, or maintaining such opinions as to be inconsistent with the true doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah. Such persons, John says, had then in fact appeared, by which it could be known that they were living under the closing dispensation of the world referred to by the Saviour. 2Thes 2:2, seq.

Even now are there many antichrists. There are many who have the characteristics which it was predicted that antichrist would have; that is, as explained above, there are many who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, or who deny that he has come in the flesh. If they maintained that Jesus was an impostor and not the true Messiah, or if, though they admitted that the Messiah had come, they affirmed, as the Docetae did, (1Jn 4:2,) that he had come in appearance only, and not really come in the flesh, this was the spirit of antichrist. John says that there were many such persons in fact in his time. It would seem from this that John did not refer to a single individual, or to a succession of individuals who should come previous to the winding up of the affairs of the world, as Paul did, (2Thes 2:2, seq.,) but that he understood that there might be many at the same time who would evince the spirit of antichrist. Both he and Paul, however, refer to the expectation that before the coming of the Saviour to Judge the world there would be prominent adversaries of the Christian religion, and that the end would not come until such adversaries appeared. Paul goes more into detail, and describes the characteristics of the great apostasy more at length, (2Thes 2:2, seq.; 1Timm 4:1, seq.; 2Ti 3:1, seq.;) John says, not that the appearing of these persons indicated that the end of the world was near, but that they had such characteristics as to show that they were living in the last dispensation. Paul so describes them as to show that the end of the world was not to be immediately expected, (2Thes 2:1, seq.;) John, without referring to that point, says that there were enough

of that character then to prove that the last dispensation had come, though he does not say how long it would continue.

Whereby we know it is the last time. They have the characteristics which it was predicted many would have before the end of the world should come. The evidence that it was "the last time," or the closing dispensation of the world, derived from the appearing of these persons, consists simply in the fact that it was predicted that such persons would appear under the Christian, or the last dispensation, Mt 24:5, Mt 24:24-27. Their appearance was to precede the coming of the Saviour, though it is not said how long it would precede that; but at any time the appearing of such persons would be an evidence that it was the closing dispensation of the world, for the Saviour, in his predictions respecting them, had said that they would appear before he should return to judgment. It cannot now be determined precisely to what classes of persons there is reference here, because we know too little of the religious state of the times to which the apostle refers. No one can prove, however, that there were not persons at that time who so fully corresponded to the predictions of the Saviour as to be a complete fulfilment of what he said, and to demonstrate that the last age had truly come. It would seem probable that there may have been reference to some Jewish adversaries, who denied that Jesus was the Messiah, (Rob. Lex.,) or to some persons who had already broached the doctrine of the Docetae, that thought Jesus was the Messiah, yet that he was a man in appearance only, and had not really come in the flesh. Classes of persons of each description abounded in the early ages of the church.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

They went out from us. From the church. That is, they had once been professors of the religion of the Saviour, though their apostasy showed that they never had any true piety. John refers to the fact that they had once been in the church, perhaps to remind those to whom he wrote that they knew them well, and could readily appreciate their character. It was a humiliating statement that those who showed themselves to be so utterly opposed to religion had once been members of the Christian church; but this is a statement which we are often compelled to make.

But they were not of us. That is, they did not really belong to us, or were not true Christians. Mt 7:23. This passage proves that these persons, whatever their pretensions and professions may have been, were never sincere Christians. The same remark may be made of all who apostatize from the faith, and become teachers of error. They never were truly converted; never belonged really to the spiritual church of Christ.

For if they had been of us. If they had been sincere and true Christians.

They would no doubt have continued with us. The words "no doubt" are supplied by our translators, but the affirmation is equally strong without them: "they would have remained with us." This affirms, without any ambiguity or qualification, that if they had been true Christians they would have remained in the church;, that is, they would not have apostatized. There could not be a more positive affirmation than that which is implied here, that those who are true Christians will continue to be such; or that the saints will not fall away from grace. John affirms it of these persons, that if they had been true Christians they would never have departed from the church, he makes the declaration so general that it may be regarded as a universal truth, that if any are truly "of us," that is, if they are true Christians, they will continue in the-church, or will never fall away. The statement is so made also as to teach that if any do fall away from the church, the fact is full proof that they never had any religion, for if they had had they would have remained steadfast in the church. But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. It was suffered or permitted in the providence of God that this should occur, in order that it might be seen and known that they were not true Christians, or in order that their real character might be developed. It was desirable that this should be done,

(a.) in order that the church might be purified from their influence--comp. Jn 15:2;

(b.) in order that it might not be responsible for their conduct, or reproached on account of it;

(c.) in order that their real character might be developed, and they might themselves see that they were not true Christians;

(d.) in order that, being seen and known as apostates, their opinions and conduct might have less influence than if they were connected with the church;

(e.) in order that they might themselves understand their own true character, and no longer live under the delusive opinion that they were Christians and were safe, but that, seeing themselves in their true light, they might be brought to repentance. For there is only a most slender prospect that any who are deceived in the church will ever be brought to true repentance there; and slight as is the hope that one who apostatizes will be, such an event is much more probable than it would be if he remained in the church. Men are more likely to be converted when their character is known and understood, than they are when playing a game of deception, or are themselves deceived. What is here affirmed of these persons often occurs now; and those who have no true religion are often suffered to apostatize from their profession for the same purposes. It is better that they should cease to have any connexion with the church than that they should remain in it; and God often suffers them to fall away even from the profession of religion, in order that they may not do injury as professing Christians. This very important passage, then, teaches the following things:

(1.) That when men apostatize from the profession of religion, and embrace fatal error, or live in sin, it proves that they never had any true piety.

(2.) The fact that such persons fall away cannot be adduced to prove that Christians ever fall from grace, for it demonstrates nothing on that point, but proves only that these persons never had any real piety. They may have had much that seemed to be religion; they may have been zealous, and apparently devoted to God, and may even have had much comfort and peace in what they took to be piety; they may have been eminently "gifted" in prayer, or may have even been successful preachers of the gospel, but all this does not prove that they ever had any piety, nor does the fact that such persons apostatize from their profession throw any light on a question quite foreign to this--whether true Christians ever fall from grace. Comp. Mt 7:22,23.

(3.) The passage before us proves that if any are true Christians they will remain in the church, or will certainly persevere and be saved. They may indeed backslide grievously; they may wander far away, and pain the hearts of their brethren, and give occasion to the enemies of religion to speak reproachfully; but the apostle says, "if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."

(4.) One of the best evidences of true piety is found in the fact of continuing with the church. I do not mean nominally and formally, but really and spiritually, having the heart with the church; loving its peace and promoting its welfare; identifying ourselves with real Christians, and showing that we are ready to co-operate with those who love the Lord Jesus and his cause.

(5.) The main reason why professing Christians are suffered to apostatize is to show that they had no true religion. It is desirable that they should see it themselves; desirable that others should see it also. It is better that it should be known that they had no true religion than that they should remain in the church to be a burden on its movements, and a reproach to the cause. By being allowed thus to separate themselves from the Church, they may be brought to remember their violated vows, and the church will be free from the reproach of having those in its bosom who are a dishonour to the Christian name. We are not to wonder, then, if persons apostatize who have been professors of true religion; and we are not to suppose that the greatest injury is done to the cause when they do it. A greater injury by far is done when such persons remain in the church.

20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One. The apostle in this verse evidently intends to say that he had no apprehension in regard to those to whom he wrote that they would thus apostatize, and bring dishonour on their religion. They had been so anointed by the Holy Spirit that they understood the true nature of religion, and it might be confidently expected that they would persevere, The word unction or anointing (χρισμα) means, properly, "something rubbed in or ointed;" oil for anointing, ointment; then it means an anointing. The allusion is to the anointing of kings and priests, or their inauguration or coronation, (1Sam 10:1, 16:13, Ex 28:41, 40:15; compare Mt 1:1;) and the idea

seems to have been that the oil thus used was emblematic of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit as qualifying them for the discharge of the duties of their office. Christians, in the New Testament, are described as "kings and priests," (Rev 1:6, 5:10,) and as a "royal priesthood," 1Pet 2:5, 1Pet 2:9;) and hence they are represented as anointed, or as endowed with those graces of the Spirit, of which anointing was the emblem. The phrase "the Holy One" refers here, doubtless, to the Holy Spirit, that Spirit whose influences are imparted to the people of God, to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort them in their trials. The particular reference here is to the influences of that Spirit as giving them clear and just views of the nature of religion, and thus securing them from error and apostasy.

And ye know all things. That is, all things which it is essential that you should know on the subject of religion. Jn 17:13; 1Cor 2:15. The meaning cannot be that they knew all things pertaining to history, to science, to literature, and to the arts; but that, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, they had been made so thoroughly acquainted with the truths and duties of the Christian religion, that they might be regarded as safe from the danger of fatal error. The same may be said of all true Christians now, that they are so taught by the Spirit of God, that they have a practical acquaintance with what religion is, and with what it requires, and are secure from falling into fatal error. In regard to the general meaning of this verse, then, it may be observed:

I. That it does not mean any one of the following things:

(1.) That Christians are literally instructed by the Holy Spirit in all things, or that they literally understand all subjects. The teaching, whatever it may be, refers only to religion.

(2.) It is not meant that any new faculties of mind are conferred on them, or any increased intellectual endowments, by their religion. It is not a fact that Christians, as such, are superior in mental endowments to others; not that by their religion they have any mental traits which they had not before their conversion. Paul, Peter, and John had essentially the same mental characteristics after their conversion which they had before; and the same is true of all Christians.

(3.) It is not meant that any new truth is revealed to the mind by the Holy Spirit. All the truth that is brought before the mind of the Christian is to be found in the word of God, and revelation, as such, was completed when the Bible was finished.

(4.) It is not meant that anything is perceived by Christians which they had not the natural faculty for perceiving before their conversion, or which other men have not also the natural faculty for perceiving. The difficulty with men is not a defect of natural faculties, it is in the blindness of the heart.

II The statement here made by John does imply, it is supposed, the following things:

(1.) That the minds of Christians are so enlightened that they have a new perception of the truth. They see it in a light in which they did not before. They see it as truth. They see its beauty, its force, its adaptedness to their condition and wants. They understand the subject of religion better than they once did, and better than others do. What was once dark appears now plain; what once had no beauty to their minds now appears beautiful; what was once repellent is now attractive.

(2.) They see this to be true; that is, they see it in such a light that they cannot doubt that it is true. They have such views of the doctrines of religion, that they have no doubt that they are true, and are willing on the belief of their truth to lay down their lives, and stake their eternal interests.

(3.) Their knowledge of truth is enlarged. They become acquainted with more truths than they would have known if they had not been under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Their range of thought is greater; their vision more extended, as well as more clear.

III. The evidence that this is so is found in the following things:

(1.) The express statements of Scripture. See 1Cor 2:14,15, and the Notes on that passage. 1Cor 2:14, 1Cor 2:15, Compare Jn 16:13,14.

(2.) It is a matter of fact that it is so.

(a.) Men by nature do not perceive any beauty in the truths of religion. They are distasteful to them, or they are repulsive and offensive. "The doctrine of the cross is to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness." They may see indeed the force of an argument, but they do not see the beauty of the way of salvation.

(b.) When they are converted they do. These things appear to them to be changed, and they see them in a new light, and perceive a beauty in them which they never did before.

(c.) There is often a surprising developement of religious knowledge when persons are converted. They seem to understand the way of salvation, and the whole subject of religion, in a manner and to an extent which cannot be accounted for, except on the supposition of a teaching from above.

(d.) This is manifest also in the knowledge which persons otherwise ignorant exhibit on the subject of religion. With few advantages for education, and with no remarkable talents, they show an acquaintance with the truth, a knowledge of religion, an ability to defend the doctrines of Christianity, and to instruct others in the way of salvation, which could have been derived only from some source superior to themselves. Comp. Jn 7:15, Acts 4:13.

(e.) The same thing is shown by their adherence to truth in the midst of persecution, and simply because they perceive that for which they die to be the truth. And is there anything incredible in this? May not the mind see what truth is? How do we judge of an axiom in mathematics, or of a proposition that is demonstrated, but by the fact that the mind perceives it to be true, and cannot doubt it? And may it not be so in regard to religious truth--especially when that truth is seen to accord with what we know of ourselves, our lost condition as sinners, and our need of a Saviour, and when we see that the truths revealed in the Scriptures are exactly adapted to our wants?

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth. You are not to regard my writing to you in this earnest manner as any evidence that

I do not suppose you to be acquainted with religion and it duties. Some, perhaps, might have been disposed to put this construction on what he had said, but he assures them that that was not the reason why he had thus addressed them. The very fact that they did understand the subject of religion, he says, was rather the reason why he wrote to them.

But because ye know it. This was the ground of his hope that his appeal would be effectual. If they had never known what religion was, if they were ignorant of its nature and its claims, he would have had much less hope of being able to guard them against error, and of securing their steady walk in the path of piety. We may always make a strong and confident appeal to those who really understand what the nature of religion is, and what are the evidences of its truth.

And that no lie is of the truth. No form of error, however plausible it may appear, however ingeniously it may be defended, and however much it may seem to be favourable to human virtue and happiness, can be founded in truth. What the apostle says here has somewhat the aspect of a truism, but it contains a real truth of vital importance, and one which should have great influence in determining our minds in regard to any proposed opinion or doctrine. Error often appears plausible. It seems to be adapted to relieve the mind of many difficulties which perplex and embarass it on the subject of religion. It seems to be adapted to promote religion. It seems to make those who embrace it happy, and for a time they apparently enjoy religion. But John says that however plausible all this may be, however much it may seem to prove that the doctrines thus embraced are of God, it is a great and vital maxim that no error can have its foundation in truth, and, of course, that it must be worthless. The grand question is, what is truth; and when that is determined, we can easily settle the inquiries which come up about the various doctrines that are abroad in the world. Mere plausible appearances, or temporary good results that may grow out of a doctrine, do not prove that it is based on truth; for whatever those results may be, it is impossible that any error, however plausible, should have its origin in the truth.

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

Who is a liar. That is, who is false; who maintains an erroneous doctrine; who is an impostor, if he is not? The object of the apostle is to specify one of the prevailing forms of error, and to show that, however plausible the arguments might be by which it was defended, it was impossible that it should be true. Their own knowledge of the nature of religion must convince them at once that this opinion was false.

That denieth that Jesus is the Christ. It would seem that the apostle referred to a class who admitted that Jesus lived, but who denied that he was the true Messiah. On what grounds they did this is unknown; but to maintain this was, of course, the same as to maintain that he was an impostor. The ground taken may have been that he had not the characteristics ascribed to the Messiah in the prophets; or that he did not furnish evidence that he was sent from God; or that he was an enthusiast. Or perhaps some peculiar form of error may be referred to, like that which is said to have been held by Corinthus, who in his doctrine separated Jesus from Christ, maintaining them to be two distinct persons.--Doddridge.

He is antichrist. 1Jn 2:18. He has all the characteristics and attributes of antichrist; or, a doctrine which practically involves the denial of both the Father and the Son, must be that of antichrist.

That denieth the Father and the Son. That denies the peculiar truths pertaining to God the Father, and to the Son of God. The charge here is not that they entertained incorrect views of God as such--as almighty, eternal, most wise, and good; but that they denied the doctrines which religion taught respecting God as Father and Son. Their opinions tended to a denial of what was revealed respecting God as a Father --not in the general sense of being the Father of the universe, but in the particular sense of his relation to the Son. It cannot be supposed that they denied the existence and perfections of God as such, nor that they denied that God is a Father in the relation which he sustains to the universe; but the meaning must be that what they held went to a practical denial of that which is peculiar to the true God, considered as sustaining the relation of a Father to his Son Jesus Christ. Correct views of the Father could not be held without correct views of the Son; correct views of the Son could not be held without correct views of the Father. The doctrines respecting the Father and

the Son were so connected that one could not be held without holding the other, and one could not be denied without denying the other. Mt 11:27; Jn 5:23. No man can have just views of God the Father who has not right apprehensions of the Son. As a matter of fact in the world, men have right apprehensions of God only when they have correct views of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. That is, has no just views of the Father, and has no evidence of his friendship. It is only by the Son of God that the Father is made known to men, (Mt 11:27, Heb 1:2,3,) and it is only through him that we can become reconciled to God, and obtain evidence of his favour, Jn 5:23.

But he that acknowledges the Son, hath the Father also. This passage, in the common version of the New Testament, is printed in Italics, as if it were not in the original, but was supplied by the translators. It is true that it is not found in all the MSS. and versions; but it is found in a large number of Mss., and in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the AEthiopic, the Coptic, the Armenian, and the Arabic versions, and in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn. It is probable, therefore, that it should be regarded as a genuine portion of the sacred text. It is much in the style of John, and though not necessary to complete the sense, yet it well suits the connexion. As it was true that if one denied the Son of God he could have no pretensions to any proper acquaintance with the Father, so it seemed to follow that if any one had any proper knowledge of the Son of God, and made a suitable confession of him, he had evidence that he was acquainted with the Father. Compare Jn 17:3; Rom 10:9. Though, therefore, this passage was wanting in many of the Mss. consulted by the translators of the Bible, and though in printing it in the manner in which they have they showed the great caution with which they acted in admitting anything doubtful into their translation, yet the passage should be restored to the text, and be regarded as a genuine portion of the word of God. The great truth can never be too clearly stated, or too often inculcated, that it is only by a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that we can have any true acquaintance with God, and that all who have just views of the Saviour are in fact acquainted with the true God, and are heirs of eternal life.

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

Let that therefore abide in you. Adhere steadfastly to it; let the truth obtain a permanent lodgement in the soul. In view of its great importance, and its influence on your happiness here and hereafter, let it never depart from you.

Which ye have heard from the beginning. That is, the same doctrines which you have always been taught respecting the Son of God and the way of salvation. 1Jn 2:7.

Ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. Truly united to the Son and to the Father; or having evidence of the favour and friendship of the Son and the Father.

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. This is evidently added to encourage them in adhering to the truths which they had embraced respecting the Son of God. In maintaining these truths they had the promise of eternal life; in departing from them they had none, for the promise of heaven in our world is made only to those who embrace one class of doctrines or opinions. No one can show that any promise of heaven is made to the mere possessor of beauty, or wealth, or talent; to the accomplished or the gay; to those who are distinguished for science, or skill in the arts; to rank, or birth, or blood; to courage or strength, whatever expectation of heaven any one may entertain on account of any of these things, must be traced to something else than a promise, for there is none in the Bible to that effect. The promise of heaven to men is limited to those who repent of their sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who lead a holy life; and if any one will base his hope of heaven on a promise, it must be limited to these things. And yet what well-founded hope of heaven can there be, except that which is based on a promise? How does any one know that he can be saved, unless he has some assurance from God that it may and shall be so? Is not heaven his home? How does any one know that he may dwell there, without some assurance from him that he may? Is not the crown of life his gift? How can any one know that he will possess it, unless he has some promise from him? However men may reason, or conjecture, or hope, the only promise of

eternal life is found in the Bible; and the fact that we have such a promise should surely be a sufficient inducement to us to hold fast the truth. On the promise of life in the gospel, see Jn 17:2, Rom 2:6,7, Mk 16:16, Mt 25:46.

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. Respecting their character, and in order to guard you against their arts. The word seduce means to lead astray; and it here refers to those who would seduce them from the truth, or lead them into dangerous error. The apostle does not mean that they had actually seduced them, for he states in the following verse that they were yet safe; but he refers to the fact that there was danger that they might be led into error.

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

But the anointing which ye have received of him. 1Jn 2:20.

Abideth in you. The meaning is, that the influence on your heart and life, which results from the fact that you are anointed of God, permanently abides with you, and will keep you from dangerous error. The apostle evidently meant to say that he felt assured that they would not be seduced from the truth, and that his confidence in regard to this was placed in the fact that they had been truly anointed unto God as kings and priests. Thus understood, what he here says is equivalent to the expression of a firm conviction that those who are true Christians will not fall away. Comp, 1Jn 2:19, 1Jn 2:20.

And ye need not that any man teach you. That is, what are the things essential to true religion. 1Jn 2:20.

But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things. This cannot mean that the mere act of anointing, if that had been performed in their case, would teach them; but it refers to what John includes in what he calls the anointing--that is, in the solemn consecrating to the duties of religion under the influences of the Holy Spirit.

And is truth, and is no lie. Leads to truth, and not to error. No man was ever led into error by those influences which result from the fact that he has been consecrated to the service of God.

Ye shall abide in him. Marg., "or it." The Greek will bear either construction. The connexion, however, seems to demand that it should be understood as referring to him--that is, to the Saviour.

The Children of God and Righteousness

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

And now, little children. 1Jn 2:1. Abide in him; that, when he shall appear. In the end of the world, to receive his people to himself. Jn 14:2,3. We may have confidence. Greek, boldness--παρρησιαν. This word is commonly used to denote openness, plainness, or boldness in speaking, Mk 8:32, Jn 7:4,13,26, Acts 2:29, 4:13,29, 2Cor 3:12, 7:4. Here it means the kind of boldness, or calm assurance, which arises from evidence of piety, and of preparation for heaven. It means that they would not be overwhelmed and confounded at the coming of the Saviour, by its being then found that all their hopes were fallacious.

And not be ashamed before him at his coming. By having all our hopes taken away; by being held up to the universe as guilty and condemned. We feel ashamed when our hopes are disappointed; when it is shown that we have a character different from what we professed to have; when our pretensions to goodness are stripped off, and the heart is made bare. Many will thus be ashamed in the last day, (Mt 7:21-23;) but it is one of the promises made to those who truly believe on the Saviour, that they shall never be ashamed or confounded. 1Pet 2:6, Comp. Isa 45:17, Rom 5:5, 1Pet 4:16, Mk 8:38.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

If ye know that he is righteous. This is not said as if there could be any doubt on the subject, but merely to call their attention to it as a well-known truth, and to state what followed from it. Every one who has any true acquaintance with God, must have the fullest conviction that he is a righteous Being. But, if this be so, John says, then it must follow

that only those who are truly righteous can regard themselves as begotten of him.

Ye know. Marg., know ye. The Greek will bear either construction, and either would make good sense. Assuming that God is righteous, it would be proper to state, as in the text, that it followed from this that they must know that only those who are righteous can be regarded as begotten of him; or, assuming this to be true, it was proper to exhort them to be righteous, as in the margin. Whichever interpretation is adopted, the great truth is taught, that only those who are truly righteous can regard themselves as the children of God.

That every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Or rather, is begotten of him; is truly a child of God. This truth is everywhere taught in the Bible, and is worthy of being often repeated. No one who is not, in the proper sense of the term, a righteous man, can have any well-founded pretensions to being regarded as a child of God. If this be so, then it is not difficult to determine whether we are the children of God.

(1.) If we are unjust, false, dishonest, we cannot be his children.

(2.) If we are indulging in any known sin, we cannot be.

(3.) If we are not truly righteous, all visions and raptures, all zeal and ardour, though in the cause of religion, all that we may pride ourselves on in being fervent in prayer, or eloquent in preaching, is vain.

(4.) If we are righteous, in the true and proper sense, doing that which is right toward God and toward men, to ourselves, to our families, to our neighbours, to the world at large, to the Saviour who died for us, then we are true Christians; and then, no matter how soon he may appear, or how solemn and overwhelming the scenes that shall close the world, we shall not be ashamed or confounded, for we shall hail him as our Saviour, and rejoice that the time has come that we may go and dwell with him for ever.

1 John-3

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Behold, what manner of love. What love, in kind and in degree. In kind the most tender and the most ennobling, in adopting us into his family, and in permitting us to address him as our Father; in degree the most exalted, since there is no higher love that can be shown than in adopting a poor and friendless orphan, and giving him a parent and a home. Even God could bestow upon us no more valuable token of affection than that we should be adopted into his family, and permitted to regard him as our Father. When we remember how insignificant we are as creatures, and how ungrateful, rebellious, and vile we have been as sinners, we may well be amazed at the love which would adopt us into the holy family of God, so that we may be regarded and treated as the children of the Most High. A prince could manifest no higher love for a wandering, ragged, vicious orphan boy, found in the streets, than by adopting him into his own family, and admitting him to the same privileges and honours as his own sons; and yet this would be a trifle compared with the honour which God has bestowed on us.

The Father hath bestowed upon us. God, regarded as a Father, or as at the head of the universe considered as one family. That we should be called the sons of God. That is, that we should be the sons of God -- the word called being often used in the sense of to be. On the nature and privileges of adoption, Rom 8:15, seq., and 2Cor 6:18, and practical remarks on that chapter, 1Cor 6:19, 1Cor 6:20.

Therefore the world knoweth us not. Does not understand our principles; the reasons of our conduct; the sources of our comforts and joys. The people of the world regard us as fanatics or enthusiasts; as foolish in abandoning the pleasures and pursuits which they engage in; as renouncing certain happiness for that which is uncertain; as cherishing false and delusive hopes in regard to the future, and as practising needless austerities, with nothing to compensate for the pleasures which are abandoned. There is nothing which the gay, the ambitious, and the selfish less understand than they do the elements

which go into the Christian's character, and the nature and source of the Christian's joys.

Because it knew him not. Did not know the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the world had no right views of the real character of the Lord Jesus when he was on the earth. They mistook him for an enthusiast or an impostor; and it is no wonder that, having wholly mistaken his character, they should mistake ours. On the fact that the world did not know him, 1Cor 2:8, Acts 3:17. Comp. Jn 17:25. On the fact that Christians may be expected to be regarded and treated as their Saviour was, Jn 15:18, Jn 15:19; Jn 15:20. Comp. Mt 10:24,25.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God. We now in fact sustain this rank and dignity, and on that we may reflect with pleasure and gratitude. It is in itself an exalted honour, and may be contemplated as such, whatever may be true in regard to what is to come. In the dignity and the privileges which we now enjoy, we may find a grateful subject of reflection, and a cause of thankfulness, even if we should look to nothing beyond, or when we contemplate the fact by itself.

And it doth not yet appear what we shall be. It is not fully revealed what we shall be hereafter; what will be the full result of being regarded as the children of God. There are, indeed, certain things which may be inferred as following from this. There is enough to animate us with hope, and to sustain us in the trials of life. There is one thing which is clear, that we shall be like the Son of God; but what is fully involved in this is not made known. Perhaps

(1.) it could not be so revealed that we could understand it, for that state may be so unlike the present that no words would fully convey the conception to our minds. Perhaps

(2.) it may be necessary to our condition here, as on probation, that no more light should be furnished in regard to the future than to stimulate us to make efforts to reach a world where all is light. For an illustration of the sentiment expressed here by the apostle, 2Pet 1:4.

But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him. It is revealed to us that we shall be made like Christ; that is, in the bodies with which we shall be raised up, in character, in happiness, in glory. Php 3:21; 2Cor 3:18. This is enough to satisfy the Christian in his prospects for the future world. To be like Christ is the object of his supreme aim. For that he lives, and all his aspirations in regard to the coming world may be summed up in this--that he wishes to be like the glorified Son of God, and to share his honours and his joys. Php 3:10.

For we shall see him as he is. It is clearly implied here that there will be an influence in beholding the Saviour as he is, which will tend to make us like him, or to transform us into his likeness. See the nature of this influence explained 2Cor 3:18.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

And every man that hath this hope in him. This hope of seeing the Saviour, and of being made like him; that is, every true Christian. On the nature and influence of hope, Rom 8:24, Rom 8:25.

Purifieth himself. Makes himself holy. That is, under the influence of this hope of being like the Saviour, he puts forth those efforts in struggling against sin, and in overcoming his evil propensities, which are necessary to make him pure. The apostle would not deny that for the success of these efforts we are dependent on Divine aid; but he brings into view, as is often done in the sacred writings, the agency of man himself as essentially connected with success. Comp. Php 2:12. The particular thought here is, that the hope of being like Christ, and of being permitted to dwell with him, will lead a man to earnest efforts to become holy, and will be actually followed by such a result.

Even as he is pure. The same kind of purity here, the same degree hereafter. That is, the tendency of such a hope is to make him holy now, though he may be imperfect; the effect will be to make him perfectly holy in the world to come. It cannot be shown from this passage that the apostle meant to teach that any one actually becomes as pure in the present life as the Saviour is, that is, becomes perfectly holy; for all that is fairly implied in it is, that those who have this hope in them aim at the same purity, and will ultimately obtain it. But the apostle does not say that it is attained in this world. If the passage did

teach this, it would teach it respecting every one who has this hope, and then the doctrine would be that no one can be a Christian who does not become absolutely perfect on earth; that is, not that some Christians may become perfect here, but that all actually do. But none, it is presumed, will hold this to be a true doctrine. A true Christian does not, indeed, habitually and wilfully sin; but no one can pretend that all Christians attain to a state of sinless perfection on earth, or are, in fact, as pure as the Saviour was. But unless the passage proves that every Christian becomes absolutely perfect in the present life, it does not prove that in fact any do. It proves

(1.) that the tendency, or the fair influence of this hope, is to make the Christian pure;

(2.) that all who cherish it will, in fact, aim to become as holy as the Saviour was; and

(3.) that this object will, at some future period, be accomplished. There is a world where all who are redeemed shall be perfectly holy.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law. The law of God given to man as a rule of life. The object of the apostle here is to excite them to holiness, and to deter them from committing sin, perhaps in view of the fact stated in 1Jn 3:3, that every one who has the hope of heaven will aim to be holy like the Saviour. To confirm this, he shows them that, as a matter of fact, those who are born of God do lead lives of obedience, (1Jn 3:5-10;) and this he introduces by showing what is the nature of sin, in the verse before us. The considerations by which he would deter them from indulging in sin are the following:

(a.) all sin is a violation of the law of God, 1Jn 3:4;

(b.) the very object of the coming of Christ was to deliver men from sin, 1Jn 3:5;

(c.) these who are true Christians do not habitually sin, 1Jn 3:6;

(d.) those who sin cannot be true Christians, but are of the devil, 1Jn 3:8; and

(e.) he who is born of God has a germ or principle of true piety in him, and cannot sin, 1Jn 3:9. It seems evident that the apostle is here combating an opinion which then existed that men might sin, and yet be true Christians, (1Jn 3:7;) and he apprehended that there was danger that this opinion would become prevalent. On what ground this opinion was held is unknown. Perhaps it was held that all that was necessary to constitute religion was to embrace the doctrines of Christianity, or to be orthodox in the faith; perhaps that it was not expected that men would become holy in this life, and therefore they might indulge in acts of sin; perhaps that Christ came to modify and relax the law, and that the freedom which he procured for them was freedom to indulge in whatever men chose; perhaps that, since Christians were heirs of all things, they had a right to enjoy all things; perhaps that the passions of men were so strong that they could not be restrained, and that therefore it was not wrong to give indulgence to the propensities with which our Creator has formed us. All these opinions have been held under various forms of Antinomianism, and it is not at all improbable that some or all of them prevailed in the time of John. The argument which he urges would be applicable to any of them. The consideration which he here states is, that all sin is a transgression of law, and that he who commits it, under whatever pretence, is to be held as a transgressor of the law. The literal rendering of this passage is, "He who doeth sin (αμαρτιαν) doeth also transgression"--ανομιαν. Sin is the generic term embracing all that would be wrong. The word transgression (ανομια) is a specific term, showing where the wrong lay, to wit, in violating the law.

For sin is the transgression of the law. That is, all sin involves this as a consequence that it is a violation of the law. The object of the apostle is not so much to define sin, as to deter from its commission by stating what is its essential nature--though he has in fact given the best definition of it that could be given. The essential idea is, that God has given a law to men to regulate their conduct, and that whatever is a departure from that law in any way is held to be sin. The law measures our duty, and measures therefore the degree of guilt when it is not obeyed. The law determines what is right in all cases, and, of course, what is wrong when it is not complied with. The law is the expression

of what is the will of God as to what we shall do; and when that is not done, there is sin. The law determines what we shall love or not love; when our passions and appetites shall be bounded and restrained, and to what extent they may be indulged; what shall be our motives and aims in living; how we shall act toward God and toward men; and whenever, in any of these respects, its requirements are not complied with, there is sin. This will include everything in relation to which the law is given, and will embrace what we omit to do when the law has commanded a thing to be done, as well as a positive act of transgression where the law has forbidden a thing. This idea is properly found in the original word rendered transgression of the law--ανομια. This word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Mt 7:23, 13:41, 23:28, 24:12, Rom 4:7, 6:19, 2Thes 2:7, Tit 2:14, Heb 1:9; Heb 8:12, 10:17, in all which places it is rendered iniquity and iniquities; in 2Cor 6:14, where it is rendered unrighteousness; and in the verse before us twice. It properly means lawlessness, in the sense that the requirements of the law are not conformed to, or complied with; that is, either by not obeying it, or by positively violating it. When a parent commands a child to do a thing, and he does not do it, he is as really guilty of violating the law as when he does a thing which is positively forbidden. This important verse, therefore, may be considered in two aspects--as a definition of the nature of sin, and as an argument against indulgence in it, or against committing it.

I. As a definition of the nature of sin. It teaches

(a.) that there is a rule of law by which the conduct of mankind is to be regulated and governed, and to which it is to be conformed.

(b.) That there is sin in all cases where that law is not complied with; and that all who do not comply with it are guilty before God.

(c.) That the particular thing which determines the guilt of sin, and which measures it, is that it is a departure from law, and consequently that there is no sin where there m no departure from law. The essential thing is, that the law has not been respected and obeyed, and sin derives its character and aggravation from that fact. No one can reasonably doubt as to the accuracy of this definition of sin. It is founded on the fact

(a.) that God has an absolute right to prescribe what we may and may not do;

(b.) that it is to be presumed that what he prescribes will be in accordance with what is right; and

(c.)that nothing else in fact constitutes sin. Sin can consist in nothing else. It does not consist of a particular height of stature, or a particular complexion; of a feeble intellect, or an intellect made feeble, as the result of any former apostasy; of any constitutional propensity, or any disposition founded in our nature as creatures. For none of these things do our consciences condemn us; and however we may lament them, we have no consciousness of wrong.

II. As an argument against the commission of sin. This argument may be considered as consisting of two things--the wrong that is done by the violation of law, and the exposure to the penalty.

(1.) The wrong itself. This wrong, as an argument to deter from sin, arises mainly from two things:

(a.) because sin is a violation of the will of God, and it is in itself wrong to disregard that will; and

(b.) because it is to be presumed that when God has given law there is a good reason why he has done it.

(2.) The fact that the law has a penalty is an argument for not violating the law. All law has a penalty; that is, there is some suffering, disadvantage, forfeit of privileges, etc., which the violation of law draws in its train, and which is to be regarded as an expression of the sense which the lawgiver entertains of the value of his law, and of the evil of disobeying it. Many of these penalties of the violation of the Divine law are seen in this life, and all will be certain to occur sooner or later, in this world or in the world to come. With such views of the law and of sin--of his obligations, and of the evils of disobedience--a Christian should not, and will not, deliberately and habitually violate the law of God. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law. The law of God given to man as a rule of life. The object of the apostle

here is to excite them to holiness, and to deter them from committing sin, perhaps in view of the fact stated in 1Jn 3:3, that every one who has the hope of heaven will aim to be holy like the Saviour. To confirm this, he shows them that, as a matter of fact, those who are born of God do lead lives of obedience, (1Jn 3:5-10;) and this he introduces by showing what is the nature of sin, in the verse before us. The considerations by which he would deter them from indulging in sin are the following:

(a.) all sin is a violation of the law of God, 1Jn 3:4;

(b.) the very object of the coming of Christ was to deliver men from sin, 1Jn 3:5;

(c.) these who are true Christians do not habitually sin, 1Jn 3:6;

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5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

And ye know that he was manifested. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God. "You know that he became incarnate, or appeared among men, for the very purpose of putting an end to sin," Mt 1:21. Comp. 1Timm 3:16. This is the second argument in this paragraph, (1Jn 3:4-10,) by which the apostle would deter us from sin. The argument is a clear one, and is perhaps the strongest that can be made to bear on the mind of a true Christian--that the Lord Jesus saw sin to be so great an evil, that he came into our world, and gave himself to the bitter sorrows of death on the cross, to redeem us from it.

To take away our sins. The essential argument here is, that the whole work of Christ was designed to deliver us from the dominion of sin, not to furnish us the means of indulgence in it; and that, therefore, we should be deterred from it by all that Christ has done and suffered for us. He perverts the whole design of the coming of the Saviour who supposes that his work was in any degree designed to procure for his followers the indulgences of sin, or who so interprets the methods of his grace as to suppose that it is now lawful for him to indulge his guilty passions. The argument essentially is this:

(1.) That we profess to be the followers of Christ, and should carry out his ends and views in coming into the world;

(2.) that the great and leading purpose of his coming was to set us free from the bondage of transgression;

(3.) that in doing this he gave himself up to a life of poverty, and shame, and sorrow, and to a most bitter death on the cross; and,

(4.) that we should not indulge in that from which he came to deliver us, and which cost him so much toil and such a death. How could we indulge in that which has brought heavy calamity on the head of a father, or which has pierced a sister's heart with many sorrows? Still more, how can we be so ungrateful and hardhearted as to indulge in that which crushed our Redeemer in death?

And in him is no sin. An additional consideration to show that we should be holy. As he was perfectly pure and spotless, so should all his followers aim to be; and none can truly pretend to be his who do not desire and design to become like him. On the personal holiness of the Lord Jesus, Heb 7:26, 1Pet 2:23.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Whosoever abideth in him. See 1Jn 2:6. The word here employed (μενων) properly means to remain, to continue, to abide. It is used of persons remaining or dwelling in a place, in the sense of abiding there permanently, or lodging there, and this is the common meaning of the word, Mt 10:11, 26:38, Mk 6:10, Lk 1:56, et saepe. In the writings of John, however, it is quite a favourite word to denote the relation which one sustains to another, in the sense of being united to him, or remaining with him in affection and love; being with him in heart and mind and will, as one makes his home in a dwelling. The sense seems to be that we have some sort of relation to him similar to that which we have to our home; that is, some fixed and permanent attachment to him. We live in him; we remain steadfast in our attachment to him, as we do to our own home. For the use of the word in John, in whose writings it so frequently occurs, see Jn 5:38, 6:56, 14:10,17, 15:4-7, Jn 15:9, 1Jn 2:6,10,14,17,27,28, 3:6,24, 4:12,13,15,16. In the passage before us, as in his writings generally, it refers to one who lives the life of a Christian, as if he were always with Christ, and abode with him. It refers to the Christian considered as adhering steadfastly to the

Saviour, and not as following him with transitory feelings, emotions, and raptures. It does not of itself necessarily mean that he will always do this; that is, it does not prove the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but it refers to the adherence to the Saviour as a continuous state of mind, or as having permanency; meaning that there is a life of continued faith in him. It is of a person thus attached to the Saviour that the apostle makes the important declaration in the passage before us, that he does not sin. This is the third argument to show that the child of God should be pure; and the substance of the argument is, that as a matter of fact the child of God is not a sinner.

Sinneth not. There has been much difference of opinion in regard to this expression, and the similar declaration in 1Jn 3:9. Not a few have maintained that it teaches the "doctrine of perfection," or that Christians may live entirely without sin; and some have held that the apostle meant to teach that this is always the characteristic of the true Christian. Against the interpretation, however, which supposes that it teaches that the Christian is absolutely perfect, and lives wholly without sin, there are three insuperable objections:

(1.) If it teaches that doctrine at all, it teaches that all Christians are perfect; "whosoever abideth in him," "whosoever is born of God," "he cannot sin," 1Jn 3:9.

(2.) This is not true, and cannot be held to be true by those who have any just views of what the children of God have been and are. Who can maintain that Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob; that Moses, David, or Job; that Peter, John, or Paul, were absolutely perfect, and were never, after their regeneration, guilty of an act of sin? Certainly they never affirmed it of themselves, nor does the sacred record attribute to them any such perfection. And who can affirm this of all who give evidence of true piety in the world? Who can of themselves? Are we to come to the painful conclusion that all who are not absolutely perfect in thought, word, and deed, are destitute of any religion, and are to be set down as hypocrites or self-deceivers? And yet, unless this passage proves that all who have been born again are absolutely perfect, it will not prove it of any one, for the affirmation is not made of a part, or of what any favoured individual may be, but of what every one is in fact who is born of God.

(3.) This interpretation is not necessary to a fair exposition of the passage. The language used is such as would be employed by any writer if he designed to say of one that he is not characteristically a sinner; that he is a good man; that he does not commit habitual and wilful transgression. Such language is common throughout the Bible, when it is said of one man that he is a saint, and of another that he is a sinner; of one that he is righteous, and of another that he is wicked; of one that he obeys the law of God, and of another that he does not. John expresses it strongly, but he affirms no more in fact than is affirmed elsewhere. The passage teaches, indeed, most important truths in regard to the true Christian; and the fair and proper meaning may be summed up in the following particulars:

(a.) He who is born again does not sin habitually, or is not habitually a sinner. If he does wrong, it is when he is overtaken by temptation, and the act is against the habitual inclination and purpose of his soul. If a man sins habitually, it proves that he has never been renewed.

(b.) That he who is born again does not do wrong deliberately and of design. He means to do right. He is not wilfully and deliberately a sinner. If a man deliberately and intentionally does wrong, he shows that he is not actuated by the spirit of religion. It is true that when one does wrong, or commits sin, there is a momentary assent of the will; but it is under the influence of passion, or excitement, or temptation, or provocation, and not as the result of a deliberate plan or purpose of the soul. A man who deliberately and intentionally does a wrong thing, shows that he is not a true Christian; and if this were all that is understood by perfection, then there would be many who are perfect, for there are many, very many Christians, who cannot recollect an instance for many years in which they have intentionally and deliberately done a wrong thing. Yet these very Christians see much corruption in their own hearts over which to mourn, and against which they earnestly strive; in comparing themselves with the perfect law of God, and with the perfect example of the Saviour, they see much in which they come short.

(c) He who is born again will not sin finally, or will not fall away. "His seed remaineth in him," 1Jn 3:9. 1Jn 3:9 on that verse. There is a principle of grace by which he will ultimately be restrained and recovered. This, it seems to me, is fairly implied in the language used

by John; for if a man might be a Christian, and yet wholly fall away and perish, how could it be said with any truth that such a man "sinneth not;" how that "he doth not commit sin;" how that "his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin?" Just the contrary would be true if this were so.

Whosoever sinneth. That is, as explained above, habitually, deliberately, characteristically, and finally.--Doddridge. "Who habitually and avowedly sinneth."

Hath not seen him, nor known him. Has had no just views of the Saviour, or of the nature of true religion. In other words, cannot be a true Christian.

That is, "Whoever lives in sin, and goes on in a course and trade of sinning, is the servant and slave of sin; and although his reason condemns him, his conscience boggles at it, and his will is something averse to it, yet if he yields his members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, he is the servant of sin; and whatever his pretence may be, he has no right knowledge of Christ, nor any true faith in him; for whosoever abideth in him thus, sinneth not."
Learn hence, That the sincere Christian, so far as he is in Christ, and by faith united to him, and is taught and ruled by him, sinneth not; that is, he makes it his constant care and continual endeavour to shun and avoid all sin.
2. That such persons as go on in a course of sin, let their pretences to Christianity be what they will, they never had any experimental knowledge of Christ, no fellowship or communion with him; nor can ever hope to be happy in the fruition and enjoyment of him: Whosever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

Let no man deceive you. That is, in the matter under consideration; to wit, by persuading you that a man may live in sinful practices, and yet be a true child of God. From this it is clear that the apostle supposed there were some who would attempt to do this, and it was to counteract their arts that he made these positive statements in regard to the nature of true religion.

He that doeth righteousness is righteous. This is laid down as a great and undeniable principle in religion--a maxim which none could dispute, and as important as it is plain. And it is worthy of all the emphasis which the apostle lays on it. The man who does righteousness, or leads an upright life, is a righteous man, and no other one is. No matter how any one may claim that he is justified by faith; no matter how he may conform to the external duties and rites of religion; no matter how zealous he may be for orthodoxy, or for the order of the church; no matter what visions and raptures he may have, or of what peace and joy in his soul he may boast; no matter how little he may fear death, oil hope for heaven--unless he is in fact a righteous man, in the proper sense of the term, he cannot be a child of God. Compare Mt 7:16-23. If he is, in the proper sense of the word, a man who keeps the law of God, and leads a holy life, he is righteous, for that is religion. Such a man, however, will always feel that his claim to be regarded as a righteous man is not to be traced to what he is in himself, but to what he owes to the grace of God.

Even as he is righteous. 1Jn 3:3. Not necessarily in this world to the same degree, but with the same kind of righteousness. Hereafter he will become wholly free from all sin, like his God and Saviour, 1Jn 3:2. Let no man deceive you. That is, in the matter under consideration; to wit, by persuading you that a man may live in sinful practices, and yet be a true child of God. From this it is clear that the apostle supposed there were some who would attempt to do this, and it was to counteract their arts that he made these positive statements in regard to the nature of true religion.

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8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

He that committeth sin. Habitually, wilfully, characteristically.

Is of the devil. This cannot mean that no one who commits any sin, or who is not absolutely perfect, can be a Christian, for this would cut off the great mass, even according to the belief of those who hold that the Christian may be perfectly holy, from all claim to the Christian character. But what the apostle here says is true in two senses:

(1.) That all who commit sin, even true believers, so far as they are imperfect, in this respect resemble Satan, and are under his influence, since sin, just so far as it exists at all, makes us resemble him.

(2.) All who habitually and characteristically sin are of the devil. This latter was evidently the principal idea in the mind of the apostle. His object here is to show that those who sinned, in the sense in which it would seem some maintained that the children of God might sin, could have no real evidence of piety, but really belonged to Satan.

For the devil sinneth from the beginning. The beginning of the world; or from the first account we have of him. It does not mean that he sinned from the beginning of his existence, for he was made holy like the other angels. Jude 1:6. The meaning is, that he introduced sin into the universe, and that he has continued to practise it ever since. The word sinneth here implies continued and habitual sin. He did not commit one act of sin and then reform; but he has continued, and still continues, his course of sin. This may confirm what has been already

said about the kind of sin that John refers to. He speaks of sinning habitually, continuously, wilfully; and any one who does this shows that he is under the influence of him whose characteristic it has been and is to sin. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested. Became incarnate, and appeared among men, 1Jn 3:5. Comp. 1Timm 3:16.

That he might destroy the works of the devil. All his plans of wickedness, and his control over the hearts of men. Compare Notes on Mk 1:24; Heb 2:14. The argument here is, that as the Son of God came to destroy all the works of the devil, he cannot be his true follower who lives in sin.

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. This passage must either mean that they who are born of God, that is, who are true Christians, do not sin habitually and characteristically, or that every one who is a true Christian is absolutely perfect, and never commits any sin. If it can be used as referring to the doctrine of absolute perfection at all, it proves, not that Christians may be perfect, or that a portion of them are, but that all are. But who can maintain this? Who can believe that John meant to affirm this? Nothing can be clearer than that the passage has not this meaning, and that John did not teach a doctrine so contrary to the current strain of the Scriptures, and to fact; and if he did not teach this, then in this whole passage he refers to those who are habitually and characteristically righteous. For his seed remaineth in him. There is much obscurity in this expression, though the general sense is clear, which is, that there is something abiding in the heart of the true Christian which the apostle here calls seed, which will prevent his sinning. The word "his" in this phrase, "his seed," may refer either to the individual himself--in the sense that this can now be properly called his, inasmuch as it is a part of himself, or a principle abiding in him; or it may refer to God--in the sense that what is here called "seed" is his, that is, he has implanted it, or it is a germ of Divine origin. Robinson (Lex.) understands it in the latter sense, and so also do Macknight, Doddridge, Lucke, and others, and this is probably the true interpretation. The word seed (σπερμα) means properly seed sown, as of grain, plants, trees; then anything that resembles it, anything which germinates, or which springs up, or is produced. It is applied in the New Testament to the word of God, or the gospel, as

that which produces effects in the heart and life similar to what seed that is sown does. Comp. Mt 13:26,37,38. Augustin, Clemens, (Alex.,) Grotius, Rosenmuller, Benson, and Bloomfield, suppose that this is the signification of the word here. The proper idea, according to this, is that the seed referred to is truth, which God has implanted or sown in the heart, from which it may be expected that the fruits of righteousness will grow. But that which abides in the heart of a Christian is not the naked word of God; the mere gospel, or mere truth; it is rather that word as made vital and efficacious by the influences of his Spirit; the germ of the Divine life; the principles of true piety in the soul, Comp. the words of Virgil.--Igneus est illi vigor et cosiestis origo semini. The exact idea here, as it seems to me, is not that the "seed" refers to the word of God, as Augustin and others suppose, or to the Spirit of God, but to the germ of piety which has been produced in the heart by the word and Spirit of God, and which may be regarded as having been implanted there by God himself, and which may be expected to produce holiness in the life, There is, probably, as Lucke supposes, an allusion in the word to the fact that we are begotten (ογεγεννημενος) of God. The word remaineth μενει, compare 1Jn 3:6--is a favourite expression of John. The expression here used by John, thus explained, would seem to imply two things:

(1.) that the germ or seed of religion implanted in the soul abides there as a constant, vital principle, so that he who is born of God cannot become habitually a sinner; and,

(2.) that it will so continue to live there that he will not fall away and perish. The idea is clearly that the germ or principle of piety so permanently abides in the soul, that he who is renewed never can become again characteristically a sinner.

And he cannot sin. Not merely he will not, but he cannot; that is, in the sense referred to. This cannot mean that one who is renewed has not physical ability to do wrong, for every moral agent has; nor can it mean that no one who is a true Christian never does, in fact, do wrong in thought, word, or deed, for no one could seriously maintain that: but it must mean that there is somehow a certainty as absolute as if it were physically impossible, that those who are born of God will not be characteristically and habitually sinners; that they will not sin in such

a sense as to lose all true religion and be numbered with transgressors; that they will not fall away and perish. Unless this passage teaches that no one who is renewed ever can sin in any sense; or that every one who becomes a Christian is, and must be, absolutely and always perfect, no words could more clearly prove that true Christians will never fall from grace and perish. How can what the apostle here says be true, if a real Christian can fall away and become again a sinner?

Because he is born of God. Or begotten of God. God has given him, by the new birth, real, spiritual life, and that life can never become extinct.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

In this the children of God are manifest, etc. That is, this furnishes a test of their true character. The test is found in doing righteousness, and in the love of the brethren. The former he had illustrated; the latter he now proceeds to illustrate. The general idea is, that if a man is not truly a righteous man, and does not love the brethren, he cannot be a child of God. Perhaps by the phrase "in this," using a pronoun in the singular number, he means to intimate that an important part of righteousness consists in brotherly love.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God. In 1Jn 3:7, he had said that "he that doeth righteousness is of God." If that is true, then what he here affirms must be true also, that a man who does not righteousness is not of God. The general idea is the same, that no one can be a true Christian who is not in fact a righteous man.

Neither he that loveth not his brother. The illustration of this point continues to 1Jn 3:18. The general sense is, that brotherly love is essential to the Christian character, and that he who does not possess it cannot be a Christian. On the nature and importance of brotherly love as an evidence of piety, Jn 13:34, Jn 13:35.

Love One Another

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

For this is the message. Marg., commandment. In the received text, this is αγγελια--a message brought; in several Mss., and in later editions, it is επαγγελια--annunciation, announcement; an order given, or a commandment, Acts 23:21. It is not very material which reading is followed. The word command or rule would express the sense with sufficient clearness. The reference is to the law given by the Savour as a permanent direction to his disciples. That ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one anther. Jn 13:34, Jn 13:35; 1Jn 2:7.

12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Not as Cain. Not manifesting the spirit which Cain did. His was a most remarkable and striking instance of a want of love to a brother, and the case was well adapted to illustrate the propriety of the duty which the apostle is enjoining. See Gen 4:4-8.

Who was of that wicked one. Of the devil; that is, he was under his influence, and acted from his instigation.

And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. He acted under the influence of envy. He was dissatisfied that his own offering was not accepted, and that his brother's was. The apostle seems desirous to guard those to whom he wrote against the indulgence of any feelings that were the opposite of love; from anything like envy toward more highly favoured brethren, by showing to what this would lead if fairly acted out, as in the case of Cain. A large part of the crimes of the earth have been caused, as in the murder of Abel, by the want of brotherly love. Nothing but love would be necessary to put an end to the crimes, and consequently to a large part of the misery, of the world.

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Marvel not. Do not think it so unusual, or so little to be expected, as to excite astonishment.

If the world hate you. The emphasis here is to be placed on the word you. The apostle had just adverted to the fact that Cain hated Abel, his brother, without cause, and he says that they were not to deem it strange if the world hated them in like manner. The Saviour (Jn 15:17,18) introduced these subjects in the same connexion. In

enjoining the duty of brotherly love on his disciples, he adverts to the fact that they must expect to be hated by the world, and tells them to remember that the world hated him before it hated them. The object of all this was to show more clearly the necessity of strong and tender mutual affection among Christians, since they could hope for none from the world. Jn 15:18,19.

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.

1. Our apostle's description of a carnal unregenerate state; it is a state of spiritual death.

2. Of a Christian's renewed state by the Spirit of Christ, it is a state of spiritual life; we are passed from death to life.

3. Here is the mark and token by which this translation from death to life may be known, namely, by love; for love being the great work of God's renewing spirit on the soul, it is by the production of that, we come to the knowledge that we are changed from a Cainish corrupt state of death, into a state of holy life: Whatever grace men pretend unto, if they want this grace of love, they are yet dead in sin.

4. The characteristical note of that love which will be an indubitable evidence of this our translation from death to life, it must be a love of the brethren; that is, of all Christians, as such; particularly it must be an extensive and universal love, that reaches all the children of God, all good men, of what judgment and opinion soever, otherwise it is the love of a party only, and a love for opinion sake, not for grace-sake, We give thanks since we heard of your love to all saints: Col 1:4 that is, to all of what nation and kingdom soever, of what estate and condition soever, of what judgment and opinion soever, though differing from you in some lesser things.

It must also be an holy love that will evidence our Christianity; though all men must be loved as men, yet the brethren must be loved for the likeness of God in them, we must love God's holiness in holy persons: it is one thing to love the brethren, and another to love them as brethren, and because they are brethren; a gracious person may be loved only for carnal respects, and sinister ends; again, it must be

active and operative, a costly and expensive love; that cheap love of some men, which will wish a poor Christian well, but will be at no pains, no cost, or expence, to help and succour him, because they love their money better than they do their brother, is the hypocrite's love, not the saint's. If a brother or a sister be naked, and we say unto him, Be thou clothed, &c. Jas 2:15 this is a cold sort of love, which will profit neither our brother nor ourselves.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. He remains dead in sins; that is, he has never been converted. 1Jn 3:6. As love to the Christian brotherhood is essential to true piety, it follows that he who has not that remains unconverted, or is in a state of spiritual death. He is by nature dead in sin, and unless he has evidence that he is brought out of that state, he remains or abides in it.

From the whole learn, That the love of grace in another, is a good evidence of the life of grace in ourselves; unfeigned love to the children of God as such, is an undoubted evidence of our regeneration and adoption; We know that we are passed from, &c. The Saviour meant that his followers should be known by this badge of discipleship all over the world, Jn 13:34,35. John says, in carrying out the sentiment, that Christians, by this test, may know among themselves whether they have any true religion.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, etc. That is, he has the spirit of a murderer; he has that which, if it were acted out, would lead him to commit murder, as it did Cain. The private malice, the secret grudge, the envy which is cherished in the heart, is murderous in its tendency, and were it not for the outward restraints of human laws, and the dread of punishment, it would often lead to the act of murder. The apostle does not say that he who hates his brother, though he does not in fact commit murder, is guilty to the same degree as if he had actually done it; but he evidently means to say that the spirit which would lead to murder is there, and that God will hold him responsible for it. Nothing is wanting but the removal of outward restraints to lead to the commission of the open deed, and God judges men as he sees them to be in their hearts. What a fearful declaration, then, is this! How many real murderers there are on the earth besides those who are

detected and punished, and besides those open violators of the laws of God and man who go at large! And who is there that should not feel humbled and penitent in view of his own heart, and grateful for that sovereign mercy which has restrained him from open acts of guilt?--for who is there who has not at some period of his life, and perhaps often, indulged in feelings of hatred, and envy, and malice towards others, which, if acted out, would have led to the commission of the awful crime of taking human life? Any man may well shudder at tile remembrance of the secret sins of his own heart, and at the thought of what he would have been but for the restraining grace of God. And how wonderful is that grace which, in the case of the true Christian, not only restrains and checks, but which effectually subdues all these feelings, and implants in their place the principles of love!

16 Hereby perceive we the love *of God,* because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

Hereby perceive we the love of God. The words "of God" are not in the original, and should not have been introduced into the translation, though they are found in the Latin Vulgate, and in the Genevan versions, and in one manuscript. They would naturally convey the idea that God laid down his life for us; or that God himself, in his Divine nature, suffered. But this idea is not expressed in this passage as it is in the original, and of course no argument can be derived from it either to prove that Christ is God, or that the Divine nature is capable of suffering. The original is much more expressive and emphatic than it is with this addition: "By this we know love;" that is, we know what true love is; we see a most affecting and striking illustration of its nature. Love itself--its real nature, its power, its sacrifices, its influences--was seen in its highest form, when the Son of God gave himself to die on a cross. For an illustration of the sentiment, Jn 3:16, and Jn 15:3.

Because he laid down his life for us. There can be no doubt that the Saviour is here referred to, though his name is not mentioned particularly. There are several instances in the New Testament where he is mentioned under the general appellation "he," as one who was well known, and about whom the writers were accustomed to speak.

And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. For the good of our fellow-Christians, if it be necessary. That is, circumstances may

occur where it would be proper to do it, and we ought always to be ready to do it. The spirit which led the Saviour to sacrifice his life for the good of the church, should lead us to do the same thing for our brethren if circumstances should require it. That this is a correct principle no one can doubt; for

(1.) the Saviour did it, and we are bound to imitate his example, and to possess his spirit;

(2.) the prophets, apostles, and martyrs did it, laying down their lives in the cause of truth, and for the good of the church and the world; and

(3.) it has always been held that it is right and proper, in certain circumstances, for a man to lay down his life for the good of others. So we speak of the patriot who sacrifices his life for the good of his country; so we feel in the case of a shipwreck, that it may be the duty of a captain to sacrifice his life for the good of his passengers and crew; so in case of a pestilential disease, a physician should not regard his own life, if he may save others; and so we always hold the man up to honour who is willing to jeopard his own life on noble principles of self-denial for the good of his fellow-men. In what cases this should occur the apostle does not state; but the general principle would seem to be, that it is to be done when a greater good would result from our self-sacrifice than from carefully guarding our own lives. Thus, in the case of a patriot, his death, in the circumstances, might be of greater value to his country than his life would be; or, his exposing himself to death would be a greater service to his country, than if that should not be done. Thus the Saviour laid down his life for the good of mankind; thus the apostles exposed their lives to constant peril in extending the principles of religion; and thus the martyrs surrendered their lives in the cause of the church and of truth. In like manner we ought to be ready to hazard our lives, and even to lay them down, if in that way we may promote the cause of truth, and the salvation of sinners, or serve our Christian brethren. In what way this injunction was understood by the primitive Christians, may be perceived from what the world is reported to have said of them, "Behold, how they love one another; they are ready to die for one another."--Tertull. Apol. c. 39. So Eusebius (Eccl. His. vii. 22) says of Christians that "in a time of plague they visited one another, and not only hazarded their lives, but actually lost them in their zeal to preserve the lives of others." We are

not indeed to throw away our lives; we are not to expose them in a rash, reckless, imprudent manner; but when, in the discharge of duty, we are placed in a situation where life is exposed to danger, we are not to shrink from the duty, or to run away from it. Perhaps the following would embrace the principal instances of the duty here enjoined by the apostle:

(1.) We ought to have such love for the church that we should be willing to die for it, as a patriot is willing to die for his country.

(2.) We ought to have such love for Christians as to be willing to jeopard our lives to aid them--as in case of a pestilence or plague, or when they are in danger by fire, or flood, or foes.

(3.) We ought to have such love for the truth as to be willing to sacrifice our lives rather than deny it.

(4.) We ought to have such love for the cause of our Master as to be willing to cross oceans, and snows, and sands; to visit distant and barbarous regions, though at imminent risk of our lives, and though with the prospect that we shall never see our country again.

(5.) We ought to have such love for the church that we shall engage heartily and constantly in services of labour and self-sacrifice on its account, until, our work being done, exhausted nature shall sink to rest in the grave. In one word, we should regard ourselves as devoted to the service of the Redeemer, living or dying to be found engaged in his cause. If a case should actually occur where the question would arise whether a man would abandon his Christian brother or die, he ought not to hesitate; in all cases he should regard his life as consecrated to the cause of Sion and its friends. Once, in the times of primitive piety, there was much of this spirit in the world; how little, it is to be feared, does it prevail now!

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

But whoso hath this world's good. Has property--called "this world's good," or a good pertaining to this world, because it is of value to us only as it meets our wants this side of the grave; and perhaps also

because it is sought supremely by the men of the world. The general meaning of this verse, in connexion with the previous verse, is, that if we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for others, we ought to be willing to make those comparatively smaller sacrifices which are necessary to relieve them in their distresses; and that if we are unwilling to do this, we can have no evidence that the love of God dwells in us.

And seeth his brother have need. Need of food, of raiment, of shelter; or sick, and poor, and unable to provide for his own wants and those of his family.

And shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him. The bowels, or upper viscera, embracing the heart, and the region of the chest generally, are in the Scriptures represented as the seat of mercy, piety, compassion, because when the mind feels compassion it is that part which is affected. Comp. Isa 16:11.

How dwelleth the love of God in him? How can a man love God who does not love those who bear his image? 1Jn 4:20. On the general sentiment here, Jas 2:14,seq. The meaning is plain, that we cannot have evidence of piety unless we are ready to do good to others, especially to our Christian brethren. Mt 25:45; Gall 6:10.

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue. By mere profession; by merely saying that we love each other. See 1Pet 1:22.

But in deed and in truth. In such acts as shall show that our professed love is sincere and real. Let us do the deed of love, whether anything is said about it or not. Mt 6:3.

19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

And hereby. Gr., by this; that is, by the fact that we have true love to others, and that we manifest it by a readiness to make sacrifices to do them good.

We know that we are of the truth. That we are not deceived in what we profess to be; that is that we are true Christians. To be of the truth stands opposed to cherishing false and delusive hopes.

And shall assure our hearts before him. Before God, or before the Saviour. In the margin, as in the Greek, the word rendered shall assure, is persuade. The Greek word is used as meaning to persuade, e.g., to the reception and belief of truth; then to persuade any one who has unkind or prejudiced feelings towards us, or to bring over to kind feelings, to conciliate, and thus to pacify or quiet. The meaning here seems to be, that we shall in this way allay the doubts and trouble of our minds, and produce a state of quiet and peace, to wit, by the evidence that we are of the truth. Our consciences are often restless and troubled in view of past guilt; but, in thus furnishing the evidence of true piety by love to others, we shall pacify an accusing mind, and conciliate our own hearts, and persuade or convince ourselves that we are truly the children of God. See Rob. Lex. sub voce πειθω, I. b. In other words, though a man's heart may condemn him as guilty, and though he knows that God sees and condemns the sins of his past life, yet the agitations and alarms of his mind may be calmed down and soothed by evidence that he is a child of God, and that he will not be finally condemned. A true Christian does not attempt to conceal the fact that there is much for which his own heart and conscience might justly accuse him; but he finds, notwithstanding all this, evidence that he is a child of God, and he is persuaded that all will be well.

For if our heart condemn us. We cannot hope for peace from any expectation that our own hearts will never accuse us, or that we ourselves can approve of all that we have done. The reference here is not so much to our past lives, as to our present conduct and deportment. The object is to induce Christians so to live that their hearts will not condemn them for any secret sins, while the outward deportment may be unsullied. The general sentiment is, that if they should so live that their own hearts would condemn them for preSent insincerity and hypocrisy, they could have no hope of peace, for God knows all that is in the heart. In view of the past--when the heart accuses us of what we have done--we may find peace by such evidences of piety as shall allay the troubles of an agitated soul, (1Jn 3:9,) but we cannot have such peace if our hearts condemn us for the indulgence of secret sins, now that we profess to be Christians. If our hearts condemn us for present

insincerity, and for secret sins, we can never "persuade" or soothe them by any external act of piety. In view of the consciousness of past guilt, we may find peace; we can find none if there is a present purpose to indulge in sin.

God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. We cannot hope to find peace by hiding anything from his view, or by any supposition that he is not acquainted with the sins for which our consciences trouble us. He knows all the sins of which we are conscious, and sees all their guilt and aggravation as clearly as we do. He knows more than this. He knows all the sins which we have forgotten; all those acts which we endeavour to persuade ourselves are not sinful, but which are evil in his sight; and all those aggravations attending our sins which it is impossible for us fully and distinctly to conceive, He is more disposed to condemn sin than we are; he looks on it with less allowance than we do. We cannot hope, then, for a calm mind in any supposition that God does not see our sins as clearly as we do, or in any hope that he will look on them with more favour and indulgence. Peace cannot be found in the indulgence of sin in the hope that God will not perceive or regard it, for we can sooner deceive ourselves than we can him; and while therefore, (1Jn 3:19,) in reference to the past, we can only "persuade" our hearts, or soothe their agitated feelings by evidence that we are of the truth now, and that our sins are forgiven; in reference to the present and the future, the heart can be kept calm only by such a course of life that our own hearts and our God shall approve the manner in which we live.

20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not. If we so live as to have an approving conscience--that is, if we indulge in no secret sin; if we discharge faithfully every known duty; if we submit without murmuring to all the allotments of Divine Providence.

Then have we confidence toward God. Comp. 1Jn 3:19; 1Jn 2:28; Acts 24:16. The apostle evidently does not mean that we have confidence towards God on the ground of what we do, as if it were meritorious, or as if it constituted a claim to his favour; but that we may so live as to have evidence of personal piety, and that we may look forward with a confident hope that we shall be accepted of him in the great day. The

word here rendered confidence--παρρησιαν--means properly boldness; usually boldness or openness in speaking our sentiments. 1Jn 2:28. The confidence or boldness which we have towards our Maker is founded solely on the evidence that he will graciously accept us as pardoned sinners; not in the belief that we deserve his favor.

The two results of our being able to "assure our hearts before Him" (1Jo 3:19), and of "our heart condemning us not" (of insincerity as to the truth in general, and as to LOVE in particular) are,

(1) confidence toward God;

(2) a sure answer to our prayers. John does not mean that all whose hearts do not condemn them, are therefore safe before God; for some have their conscience seared, others are ignorant of the truth, and it is not only sincerity, but sincerity in the truth which can save men. Christians are those meant here: knowing Christ's precepts and testing themselves by them.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him. If we are truly his children, and ask in a proper manner. Mt 7:7. Comp. Mk 11:24, Lk 11:9, 18:1-10, Jn 14:13, 15:7, 1Jn 5:14. The declaration here made must be understood with these limitations:

(1.) that we ask in a proper manner, Jas 4:3; and,

(2,) that the thing asked shall be such as will be consistent for God to give; that is, such as he shall see to be best for us, 1Jn 5:14. 1Jn 5:14.

Because we keep his commandments. Not that this is the meritorious ground of our being heard, but that it furnishes evidence that we are his children, and he hears his children as such.

And do those things that are pleasing in his sight. As a parent is disposed to bestow favours on obedient, affectionate, and dutiful children, so God is on those who please him by their obedience and submission to his will. We can have no hope that he will hear us unless we do so live as to please him.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.
23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

And this is his commandment. His commandment, by way of eminence; the leading, principal thing which he enjoins on us; the commandment which lies at the foundation of all true obedience.

That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. Mk 16:16. Comp. Jn 16:1, Acts 16:31.

And love one another, etc. This follows from the other, and hence they are mentioned as together constituting his commandment. Jn 13:36.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

And he that keepeth his commandments, etc. Jn 14:23.

And hereby we know that he abideth in us. That is, this is another certain evidence that we are true Christians. The Saviour had promised (Jn 14:23) that he would come and take up his abode with his which people. John says that we have proof that he does this by the Spirit he has given us. That is, the Holy Spirit is imparted to his people to enlighten their minds; to elevate their affections; to sustain them in times of trial; to quicken them in the performance of duty; and to imbue them with the temper and spirit of the Lord Jesus. When these effects exist, we may be certain that the Spirit of God is with us; for these are the "fruits" of that Spirit, or these are the effects which he produces in the lives of men. Comp. Gal 5:22, Gal 5:23. On the evidence of piety here referred to, Rom 8:9, Rom 8:14, Rom 8:16. No man can be a true Christian in whom that Spirit does not constantly dwell, or to whom he is not "given." And yet no one can determine that the Spirit dwells in him, except by the effects produced in his heart and life. In the following chapter, the apostle pursues the subject suggested here, and shows that we should examine ourselves closely, to see whether the "Spirit" to which we trust, as furnishing evidence of piety, is truly the Spirit of God, or is a spirit of delusion.

1 John-4

The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Antichrist

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Beloved, believe not every spirit. Do not confide implicitly in every one who professes to be under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Comp. Mt 24:4,5. The true and the false teachers of religion alike claimed to be under the influence of the Spirit of God, and it was of importance that all such pretensions should be examined. It was not to be admitted because any one claimed to have been sent from God that therefore he was sent. Every such claim should be subjected to the proper proof before it was conceded. All pretensions to Divine inspiration, or to being authorized teachers of religion, were to be examined by the proper tests, because there were many false and delusive teachers who set up such claims in the world.

But try the spirits whether they are of God. There were those in the early Christian church who had the gift of "discerning Spirits," (1Cor 12:10,) but it is not certain that the apostle refers here to any such supernatural power. It is more probable, as he addresses this command to Christians in general, that he refers to the ability of doing this by a comparison of the doctrines which they professed to hold with what was revealed, and by the fruits of their doctrines in their lives. If they taught what God had taught in his word, and if their lives corresponded with his requirements, and if their doctrines agreed with what had been inculcated by those who were admitted to be true apostles, (1Jn 4:6,) they were to receive them as what they professed to be. If not, they were to reject them, and hold them to be impostors. It may be remarked, that it is just as proper and as important now to examine the claims of all who profess to be teachers of religion, as it was then. In a matter so momentous as religion, and where there is so much at stake, it is important that all pretensions of this kind should be subjected to a rigid examination. No man should be received as a religious teacher without the clearest evidence that he has come in accordance with the will of God, nor unless he inculcates the very truth which God has revealed. Isa 8:20, and Acts 17:11.

Because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The word prophet is often used in the New Testament to denote religious instructors or preachers. Rom 12:6. Compare 2Pet 2:1. Such false teachers evidently abounded in the times here referred to. 1Jn 2:18. The meaning is, that many had gone out into the world pretending to be true teachers of religion, but who inculcated most dangerous doctrines; and it was their duty to be on their guard against them, for they had the very spirit of antichrist, 1Jn 4:3.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

Hereby. Gr., "By this ;" that is, by the test which is immediately specified. Know ye the Spirit of God. You may discern who are actuated by the Spirit of God. Every spirit. Every one professing to be under the influence of the Spirit of God. The apostle uses the word spirit here with reference to the person who made the claim, on the supposition that every one professing to be a religious teacher was animated by some spirit or foreign influence, good or bad. If the Spirit of God influenced them, they would confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh; if some other spirit, the spirit of error and deceit, they would deny this.

That confesseth. That is, that makes a proper acknowledgment of this; that inculcates this doctrine, and that gives it a due place and prominence in his instructions. It cannot be supposed that a mere statement of this in words would show that they were of God in the sense that they were true Christians; but the sense is, that if this constituted one of the doctrines which they held and taught, it would show that they were advocates of truth, and not apostles of error. If they did not do this, (1Jn 4:3,) it would be decisive in regard to their character and claims.

That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Benson and some others propose to render this, "That Jesus, who came in the flesh, is the Christ." But this is liable to serious objections.

(1.) It is not the obvious interpretation.

(2.) It is unusual to say that "Jesus had come in the flesh," though the expression "the Son of God has come in the flesh," or "God was manifested in the flesh," would be in accordance with the usage of the New Testament.

(3.) This would not, probably, meet the real point in the case. The thing denied does not appear to have been that Jesus was the Messiah, for their pretending to be Christian teachers at all implied that they admitted this; but that the Son of God was really a man, or that he actually assumed human nature in permanent union with the Divine. The point of the remark made by the apostle is, that the acknowledgment was to be that Christ assumed human nature; that he was really a man as he appeared to be; or that there was a real incarnation, in opposition to the opinion that he came in appearance only, or that he merely seemed to be a man, and to suffer and die. That this opinion was held by many, see the Intro. & III. 2. It is quite probable that the apostle here refers to such sentiments as those which were held by the Docetae; and that he meant to teach that it was indispensable to proper evidence that any one came from God, that he should maintain that Jesus was truly a man, or that there was a real incarnation of the Son of God. John always regarded this as a very important point, and often refers to it, Jn 19:34,35, 20:25-27 1Jo 5:6. It is as important to be held now as it was then, for the fact that there was a real incarnation is essential to all just views of the atonement. If he was not truly a man, if he did not literally shed his blood on the cross, of course all that was done was in appearance only, and the whole system of redemption as revealed was merely a splendid illusion. There is little danger that this opinion will be held now, for those who depart from the doctrine laid down in the New Testament in regard to the person and work of Christ, are more disposed to embrace the opinion that he was a mere man; but still it is important that the truth that he was truly incarnate should be held up constantly before the mind, for in no other way can we obtain just views of the atonement. Is of God. This does not necessarily mean that every one who confessed this was personally a true Christian, for it is clear that a doctrine might be acknowledged to be true, and yet that the heart might not be changed; nor does it mean that the acknowledgment of this truth was all which it was essential to be believed in order that one might, be recognised as a Christian; but it means that it was essential that this truth should be admitted by every one who truly came from God. They who taught this

held a truth which he had revealed, and which was essential to be held; and they thus showed that they did not belong to those to whom the name "antichrist" could be properly given. Still, whether they held this doctrine in such a sense, and in such connexion with other doctrines, as to show that they were sincere Christians, was quite another question, for it is plain that a man may hold and teach the true doctrines of religion, and yet have no evidence that he is a child of God.

3 and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

And every spirit that confesseth not, etc. That is, this doctrine is essential to the Christian system; and he who does not hold it cannot be regarded either as a Christian, or recognised as a Christian teacher, if he was not a man, then all that occurred in his life, in Gethsemane, and on the cross, was in appearance only, and was assumed only to delude the senses. There were no real sufferings; there was no shedding of blood; there was no death on the cross; and, of course, there was no atonement. A mere show, an appearance assumed, a vision, could not make atonement for sin; and a denial, therefore, of the doctrine that the Son of God had come in the flesh, was in fact a denial of the doctrine of expiation for sin. The Latin Vulgate here reads qui solvit Jesure, "who dissolves or divides Jesus;" and Socrates (H. E. vii. 32) says that in the old copies of the New Testament it is written ολιειτονιησουν, "who dissolves or divides Jesus;" that is, who separates his true nature or person, or who supposes that there were two Christs, one in appearance, and one in reality. This reading was early found in some Mss., and is referred to by many of the Fathers, (see Wetstein,) but it has no real authority, and was evidently introduced, perhaps at first from a marginal note, to oppose the prevailing errors of the times. The common reading, "who confesseth not," is found in all the Gr. Mss., in the Syriac versions, in the Arabic; and, as Lucke says, the other reading is manifestly of Latin origin. The common reading in the text is that which is sustained by authority, and is entirely in accordance with the manner of John.

And this is that spirit of anti-christ. This is one of the things which characterize antichrist. John here refers not to an individual who should be known as antichrist, but to a class of persons, This does not, however, forbid the idea that there might be some one individual, or a

succession of persons in the church, to whom the name might be applied by way of eminence. 1Jn 2:18. Comp. 2Thes 2:3, seq.

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Ye are of God. You are of his family; you have embraced his truth, and imbibed his Spirit.

Little children. 2Jn 2:1.

And have overcome them. Have triumphed over their arts and temptations; their endeavours to draw you into error and sin. The word "them" in this place seems to refer to the False prophets or teachers who collectively constituted antichrist. The meaning is, that they had frustrated or thwarted all their attempts to turn them away from the truth. Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. God, who dwells in your hearts, and by whose strength and grace alone you have been enabled to achieve this victory, is more mighty, than Satan, who rules in the hearts of the people of this world, and whose seductive arts are seen in the efforts of these false teachers. The apostle meant to say that it was by no power of their own that they achieved this victory, but it was to be traced solely to the fact that God dwelt among them, and had preserved them by his grace. What was true then is true now. He who dwells in the hearts of Christians by his Spirit, is infinitely, more mighty than Satan, "the ruler of the darkness of this world; and victory, therefore, over all his arts and temptations may be sure. In his conflicts with sin, temptation, and error, the Christian should never despair, for his God will insure him the victory.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

They are of the world. This was one of the marks by which those who had the spirit of antichrist might be known. They belonged not to the church of God, but to the world. They had its spirit; they acted on its principles; they lived for it. Comp. 2Jn 2:15.

Therefore speak they of the world. Compare Jn 3:21. This may mean either that their conversation pertained to the things of this world, or that they were wholly influenced by the love of the world, and not by the Spirit of God, in the doctrines which they taught. The general sense is, that they had no higher ends and aims than they have who are

influenced only by worldly plans and expectations. It is not difficult to distinguish, even among professed Christians and Christian teachers, those who are heavenly in their conversation from those who are influenced solely by the spirit of the world. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the general turn of a man's conversation will show what "spirit is within him."

And the world heareth them. The people of the world--the gay, the rich, the proud, the ambitious, the sensual--receive their instructions, and recognise them as teachers and guides, for their views accord with their own. Jn 15:19. A professedly religious teacher may always determine much about himself by knowing what class of people are pleased with him. A professed Christian of any station in life may determine much about his evidences of piety, by asking himself what kind of persons desire his friendship, and wish him for a companion.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

We are of God. John here, doubtless, refers to himself, and to those who taught the same doctrines which he did. He takes it for granted that those to whom he wrote would admit this, and argues from it as an indisputable truth, he had given them such evidence of this, as to establish his character and claims beyond a doubt; and he often refers to the fact that he was what he claimed to be, as a point which was so well established that no one would call it in question. See Jn 19:35, 21:24, 3Jn 1:12. Paul, also, not unfrequently refers to the same thing respecting himself; to the fact--a fact which no one would presume to call in question, and which might be regarded as the basis of an argument--that he and his fellow-apostles were what they claimed to be. See 1Cor 15:14,15, 1Thes 2:1-11. Might not, and ought not, all Christians, and all Christian ministers, so to live that the same thing might be assumed in regard to them in their intercourse with their fellow- men; that their characters for integrity and purity might be so clear that no one would be disposed to call them in question? There are such men in the church and in the ministry now; why might not all be such?

He that knoweth God, heareth us. Every one that has a true acquaintance with the character of God will receive our doctrine. John might assume this, for it was not doubted, he presumed, that he was

an apostle and a good man; and if this were admitted, it would follow that those who feared and loved God would receive what he taught.

Hereby. By this; to wit, by the manner in which they receive the doctrines which we have taught. Know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. We can distinguish those who embrace the truth from those who do not. Whatever pretensions they might set up for piety, it was clear that if they did not embrace the doctrines taught by the true apostles of God, they could not be regarded as his friends; that is, as true Christians. It may be added that the same test is applicable now. They who do not receive the plain doctrines laid down in the word of God, whatever pretensions they may make to piety, or whatever zeal they may envice in the cause which they have espoused, can have no well-founded claims to the name Christian. One of the clearest evidences of true piety is a readiness to receive all that God has taught. Comp. Mt 18:1-3, Mk 10:15 Jas 1:19-21.

God Is Love

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

The subject is one on which John dwells more than on any other--that of love. His own character peculiarly inclined him to the exercise of love; and the remarkable affection which the Lord Jesus had shown for him, seems to have had the effect to give this grace a peculiar prominence in his views of what constituted true religion. Compare Jn 13:23. On the duty here enjoined, Jn 13:34, Jn 13:36, and 1Jn 3:11, 1Jn 3:23.

For love is of God.

(1.) All true love has its origin in God.

(2.) Real love shows that we have his Spirit, and that we belong to him.

(3.) It assimilates us to God, or makes us more and more like him. What is here said by the apostle is based on the truth of what he elsewhere affirms, (1Jn 3:8), that God is love. Hatred, envy, wrath,

malice, all have their source in something else than God. He neither originates them, commends them, nor approves them.

And every one that loveth, is born of God. Is a regenerated man. That is, every one who has true love to Christians as such, or true brotherly love, is a true Christian. This cannot mean that every one that loves his wife and children, his classmate, his partner in business, or his friend--his house, or his farms, or his horses, or his hounds, is a child of God; it must be understood as referring to the point under discussion. A man may have a great deal of natural affection towards his kindred; a great deal of benevolence in his character towards the poor and needy, and still he may have none of the love to which John refers. He may have no real love to God, to the Saviour, or to the children of God as such; and it would be absurd for such a one to argue because he loves his wife and children that therefore he loves God, or is born again.

8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God. Has no true acquaintance with God; has no just views of him, and no right feelings towards him. The reason for this is implied in what is immediately stated, that "God is love," and of course if they have no love reigning in their hearts they cannot pretend to be like him.

For God is love. He is not merely benevolent, he is benevolence itself. Compare 2Cor 13:11. Never was a more important declaration made than this; never was more meaning crowded into a few words than in this short sentence--God is love. In the darkness of this world of sin--in all the sorrows that come now upon the race, and that will come upon the wicked hereafter--we have the assurance that a God of infinite benevolence rules over all; and though we may not be able to reconcile all that occurs with this declaration, or see how the things which he has permitted to take place are consistent with it, yet in the exercise of faith on his own declarations we may find consolation in believing that it is so, and may look forward to a period when all his universe shall see it to be so. In the midst of all that occurs on the earth of sadness, sin, and sorrow, there are abundant evidences that God is love. In the original structure of things before sin entered, when all was pronounced "good;" in the things designed to promote happiness, where the only thing contemplated is happiness, and where it would

have been as easy to have caused pain; in the preservation of a guilty race, and in granting that race the opportunity of another trial; in the ceaseless provision which God is making in his providence for the wants of unnumbered millions of his creatures; in the arrangements made to alleviate sorrow, and to put an end to it; in the gift of a Saviour more than all, and in the offer of eternal life on terms simple and easy to be complied with--in all these things, which are the mere expressions of love, not one of which would have been found under the government of a malignant being, we see illustrations of the sublime and glorious sentiment before us, that "God is love." Even in this world of confusion, disorder, and darkness, we have evidence sufficient to prove that he is benevolent, but the full glory and meaning of that truth will be seen only in heaven. Meantime let us hold on to the truth that he is love. Let us believe that he sincerely desires our good, and that what seems dark to us may be designed for our welfare; and amidst all the sorrows and disappointments of the present life, let us feel that our interests and our destiny are in the hands of the God of love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live hrough him.

In this was manifested the love of God. That is, in an eminent manner, or this was a most signal proof of it. The apostle does not mean to say that it has been manifested in no other way, but that this was so prominent an instance of his love, that all the other manifestations of it seemed absorbed and lost in this.

Because that God sent his only begotten Son, etc. Jn 3:16.

That we might live through him. He died that we might have eternal life through the merits of his sacrifice. The measure of that love, then, which was manifested in the gift of a Saviour, is to be found,

(1.) in the worth of the soul;

(2.) in its exposure to eternal death;

(3.) in the greatness of the gift;

(4.) in the greatness of his sorrows for us; and,

(5.) in the immortal blessedness and joy to which he will raise us. Who can estimate all this? All these things will magnify themselves as we draw near to eternity; and in that eternity to which we go, whether saved or lost, we shall have an ever-expanding view of the wonderful love of God.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Herein is love. In this great gift is the highest expression of love, as if it had done all that it can do.

Not that we loved God. Not that we were in such a state that we might suppose he would make such a sacrifice for us, but just the opposite. If we had loved and obeyed him, we might have had reason to believe that he would be willing to show his love to us in a corresponding manner. But we were alienated from him. We had even no desire for his friendship and favour. In this state he showed the greatness of his love for us by giving his Son to die for his enemies. Rom 5:7, Rom 5:8.

But that he loved us. Not that he approved our character, but that he desired our welfare. He loved us not with the love of complacency, but with the love of benevolence.

And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. On the meaning of the word propitiation, see Rom 3:25. Comp. 1Jn 2:2.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

(1.) Because he is so much exalted above us, and if he has loved those who were so inferior and so unworthy, we ought to love those who are on a level with us;

(2.) because it is only in this way that we can show that we have his Spirit; and,

(3.) because it is the nature of love to seek the happiness of all. There are much stronger reasons why we should love one another than there

were why God should love us; and unless we do this, we can have no evidence that we are his children.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

No man hath seen God at any time. Jn 1:18, where the same declaration occurs. The statement seems to be made here in order to introduce a remark to show in what way we may know that we have any true knowledge of God. The idea is, "He has never indeed been seen by mortal eyes. We are not then, to expect to become acquainted with what he is in that way. But there is a method by which we may be assured that we have a true knowledge of him, and that is, by evidence that we love another, and by the presence of his Spirit in our hearts. We cannot become acquainted with him by sight, but we may by love." If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. Though we cannot see him, yet there is a way by which we may be assured that he is near us, and that he even dwells in us. That way is by the exercise of love. Comp. Jn 14:23, Jn 14:24.

And his love is perfected in us. Is carried out to completion. That is, our love for each other is the proper exponent of love to him reigning in our hearts. The idea here is not that we are absolutely perfect, or even that our love is perfect, whatever may be true on those points, but that this love to others is the proper carrying out of our love towards him; that is, without this our love to him would not have accomplished what it was adapted and designed to do. Unless it produced this effect, it would be defective or incomplete. Compare 1Jn 4:17. The general sense is this: "We claim to have the love of God in our hearts, or that we are influenced and controlled by love. But however high and exalted that may seem to be as exercised toward God, it would be defective; it would not exert a fair influence over us, unless it led us to love our Christian brethren. It would be like the love which we might profess to have for a father, if it did not lead us to love our brothers and sisters. True love will diffuse itself over all who come within its range, and will thus become complete and entire." This the it passage, therefore, cannot be adduced to demonstrate doctrine of sinless perfection, or to prove that Christians are ever absolutely perfect in this life. It proves only that love to God is not complete, or fully developed, unless it leads those who profess to have to love each other.

Job 1:1. On the meaning of the Greek word here used, (τελειοω,) Php 3:12. Heb 2:10.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

Hereby know we that we dwell in him. Here is another, or an additional evidence of it.

Because he hath given us of his Spirit. He has imparted the influences of that Spirit to our souls, producing "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," etc., Gal 5:22,23. It was one of the promises which the Lord Jesus made to his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them after he should be withdrawn from them, (Jn 14:16,17,26, Jn 15:26, 16:7;) and one of the clearest evidences which we can have that we are the children of God, is derived from the influences of that Spirit on our hearts. See this sentiment illustrated in the Rom 8:16.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

And do testify. 1Jn 1:3. That is, we who are apostles bear witness to yo this great truth, that God has sent his Son to be a Saviour. Comp. Jn 20 The reason why this is referred to here is not quite apparent, but the trai thought in this passage would seem to be this: The writer is discoursin the love of God, and of its manifestation in the gift of the Saviour, an the proper influence which it should have on us. Struck with the great and importance of the subject, his mind adverts to the evidence on w what he was saying rested--the evidence that the Father had really manifested his love. That evidence he repeats, that he had actually seen who had been sent, and had the clearest demonstration that what he dee so important had really occurred.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God. In the true sense, and from the heart. This will always prove that a man is a Christian. But the passage cannot mean that if he merely says so in words, or if he does it insincerely, or without any proper sense of the truth, it will prove that he is a Christian. On the meaning of the sentiment here expressed, 1Jn 4:2. Comp. Rom 10:10.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

And we have known and believed, etc. We all have assurance that God has loved us, and the fullest belief in the great fact of redemption by which he has manifested his love to us. God is love. 1Jn 4:8. It is not uncommon for John to repeat an important truth. He delights to dwell on such a truth as that which is here expressed; and who should not? What truth is there on which the mind can dwell with more pleasure; what is there that is better fitted to win the heart to holiness; what that will do more to sustain the soul in the sorrows and trials of this life? In our trials; in the darkness which is around us; in the perplexities which meet and embarrass us in regard to the Divine administration; in all that seems to us incomprehensible in this world, and in the prospect of the next, let us learn to repeat this declaration of the favoured disciple, "God is love." What trials may we not bear, if we feel assured of that! What dark cloud that seems to hang over our way, and to involve all things in gloom, will not be bright, if from the depths of our souls we can always say, "God is love!"

And he that dwelleth in love, etc. Religion is all love. God is love; he has loved us; we are to love him; we are to love one another; we are to love the whole world. Heaven is filled with love, and there is nothing else there. The earth is filled with love just as far as religion prevails, and would be entirely if it should prevail everywhere. Love would remove all the corrupt passions, the crimes, the jealousies, the wars on the earth, and would diffuse around the globe the bliss of heaven. If a man, therefore, is actuated by this, he has the spirit of the heavenly world reigning in his soul, and lives in an atmosphere of love.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

Herein is our love made perfect. Marg., love with us. The margin accords with the Greek--μεθημων. The meaning is, "the love that is within us, or in us, is made perfect." The expression is unusual; but the general idea is, that love is rendered complete or entire in the manner in which the apostle specifies. In this way love becomes what it should be, and will prepare us to appear with confidence before the judgment-seat. Comp. 1Jn 4:12.

That we may have boldness in the day of judgment. By the influence of love in delivering us from the fear of the wrath to come, 1Jn 4:18.

The idea is, that he who has true love to God will have nothing to fear in the day of judgment, and may even approach the awful tribunal where he is to receive the sentence which shall determine his everlasting destiny without alarm.

Because as he is, so are we in this world. That is, we have the same traits of character which the Saviour had, and, resembling him, we need not be alarmed at the prospect of meeting him.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

There is no fear in love. Love is not an affection which produces fear. In the love which ,we have for a parent, a child, a friend, there is no fear. If a man had perfect love to God, he would have no fear of anything--for what would he have to dread? He would have no fear of death, for he would have nothing to dread beyond the grave. It is guilt that makes men fear what is to come; but he whose sins are pardoned, and whose heart is filled with the love of God, has nothing to dread in this world or the world to come. The angels in heaven, who have always loved God and one another, have no fear, for they have nothing to dread in the future; the redeemed in heaven, rescued from all danger, and filled with the love of God, have nothing to dread; and as far as that same loves operates on earth, it delivers the soul now from all apprehension of what is to come.

But perfect love casteth out fear. That is, love that is complete, or that is allowed to exert its proper influence on the soul. As far as it exists, its tendency is to deliver the mind from alarms. If it should exist in any soul in an absolutely perfect state, that soul would be entirely free from all dread in regard to the future.

Because fear hath torment. It is a painful and distressing emotion. Thus men suffer from the fear of poverty, of losses, of bereavement, of sickness, of death, and of future woe. From all these distressing apprehensions, that love of God which furnishes an evidence of true piety delivers us.

He that feareth, is not made perfect in love. He about whose mind there lingers the apprehension of future wrath, shows that love in his soul

has not accomplished its full work. Perhaps it never will on any soul until we reach the heavenly world, though there are many minds so full of love to God, as to be prevailingly delivered from fear.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

We love him, because he first loved us. This passage is susceptible of two explanations; either

(1.) that the fact that he first loved us is the ground or reason why we love him, or

(2.) that as a matter of fact we have been brought to love him in consequence of the love which he has manifested towards us, though the real ground of our love may be the excellency of his own character. If the former be the meaning, and if that were the only ground of love, then it would be mere selfishness, (comp. Mt 5:46,47;) and it cannot be believed that John meant to teach that that is the only reason of our love to God. It is true, indeed, that that is a proper ground of love, or that we are bound to love God in proportion to the benefits which we have received from his hand; but still genuine love to God is something which cannot be explained by the mere fact that we have received favours from him. The true, the original ground of love to God, is the excellence of his own character, apart from the question whether we are to be benefited or not. There is that in the Divine nature which a holy being will love, apart from the benefits which he is to receive, and from any thought even of his own destiny. It seems to me, therefore, that John must have meant here, in accordance with the second interpretation suggested above, that the fact that we love God is to be traced to the means which he has used to bring us to himself, but without saying that this is the sole or even the main reason why we love him. It was his love manifested to us by sending his Son to redeem us which will explain the fact that we now love him; but still the real ground or reason why we love him is the infinite excellence of his own character. It should be added here, that many suppose that the Greek words rendered "we love" (ημειςαγαπωμεν) are not in the indicative, but in the subjunctive; and that this is an exhortation--"let us love him, because he first loved us;" So the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate read it; and so it is understood by Benson, Grotius, and Bloomfield.

The main idea would not be essentially different; and it is a proper ground of exhortation to love God because he has loved us, though the highest ground is, because his character is infinitely worthy of love.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother. His Christian brother; or, in a larger sense, any man. The sense is, that no man, whatever may be his professions and pretensions, can have any true love to God, unless he love his brethren.

He is a liar. Comp. 1Jn 1:6. It is not necessary, in order to a proper interpretation of this passage, to suppose that he intentionally deceives. The sense is, that this must be a false profession. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, etc. It is more reasonable to expect that we should love one whom we have seen and known personally, than that we should love one whom we have not seen. The apostle is arguing from human nature as it is, and every one feels that we are more likely to love one with whom we are familiar than one who is a stranger. If a professed Christian, therefore, does not love one who bears the Divine image, whom he sees and knows, how can he love that God whose image he bears, whom he has not seen? Comp. 1Jn 3:17.

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

And this commandment have we from him. That is, the command to love a brother is as obligatory as that to love God. If one is obeyed, the other ought to be also; if a man feels that one is binding on him, he should feel that the other is also; and he can never have evidence that he is a true Christian, unless he manifests love to his brethren as well as love to God.

1 John-5

Faith Is the Victory over the World

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ. Is the Messiah; the anointed of God. On the meaning of the word Christ, Mt 1:1. Of course it is meant here that the proposition, that "Jesus is the Christ," should

be believed or received in the true and proper sense, in order to furnish evidence that any one is born of God. Comp. 1Jn 4:3. It cannot be supposed that a mere intellectual acknowledgment of the proposition that Jesus is the Messiah is all that is meant, for that is not the proper meaning of the word believe in the Scriptures. That word, in its just sense, implies that the truth which is believed should make its fair and legitimate impression on the mind, or that we should feel and act as if it were true. Mk 16:16. If, in the proper sense of the phrase, a man does believe that Jesus is the Christ, receiving him as he is revealed as the Anointed of God, and a Saviour, it is undoubtedly true that that constitutes him a Christian, for that is what is required of a man in order that he may be saved. Acts 8:37. Is born of God. Or rather, "is begotten of God." Jn 3:3. And every one that loveth him that begat. That loves that God who has thus begotten those whom he has received as his children, and to whom he sustains the endearing relation of Father. Loveth him also that is begotten of him. That is, he will love all the true children of God; all Christians. 1Jn 4:20. The general idea is, that as all Christians are the children of the same Father; as they constitute one family; as they all bear the same image; as they share his favour alike; as they are under the same obligation of gratitude to him, and are bound to promote the same common cause, and are to dwell together in the same home for ever, they should therefore love one another. As all the children in a family love their common father, so it should be in the great family of which God is the Head.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

By this we know that we love the children of God, etc. This is repeating the same truth in another form. "As it is universally true that if we love him who has begotten us, we shall also love his children, or our Christian brethren, so it is true also that if we love his children it will follow that we love him." In other places, the apostle says that we may know that we love God if we love those who bear his image, 1Jn 3:14. He here says, that there is another way of determining what we are. We may have undoubted evidence that we love God, and from that, as the basis of an argument, we may infer that we have true love to his children. Of the fact that we may have evidence that we love God, apart from that which we derive from our love to his children, there can be no doubt. We may be conscious of it; we may find

pleasure in meditating on his perfections; we may feel sure that we are moved to obey him by true attachment to him, as a child may in reference to a father. But, it may be asked, how can it be inferred from this that we truly love his children? Is it not more easy to ascertain this of itself than it ia to determine whether we love God? Comp. 1Jn 4:20. To this it may be answered, that we may love Christians from many motives: we may love them as personal friends; we may love them because they belong to our church, or sect, or party; we may love them because they are naturally amiable: but the apostle says here, that when we are conscious that an attachment does exist towards Christians, we may ascertain that it is genuine, or that it does not proceed from any improper motive, by the fact that we love God. We shall then love him as his children, whatever other grounds of affection there may be towards them.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. This constitutes true love; this furnishes the evidence of it. And his commandments are not grievous. Greek, heavy--βαρειαι; that is, difficult to be borne as a burden. See Mt 11:30. The meaning is, that his laws are not unreasonable; the duties which he requires are not beyond our ability; his government is not oppressive. It is easy to obey God when the heart is right; and those who endeavour in sincerity to keep his commandments do not complain that they are hard. All complaints of this kind come from those who are not disposed to keep his commandments. They, indeed, object that his laws are unreasonable; that they impose improper restraints; that they are not easily complied with; and that the Divine government is one of severity and injustice. But no such complaints come from true Christians. They find his service easier than the service of sin, and the laws of God more mild and easy to be complied with than were those of fashion and honour, which they once endeavoured to obey. The service of God is freedom; the service of the world is bondage. No man ever yet heard a true Christian say that the laws of God, requiring him to lead a holy life, were stern and "grievous." But who has not felt this in regard to the inexorable laws of sin? What votary of the world would not say this if he spoke his real sentiments? Comp. Notes, Jn 8:32.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. The world, in its maxims, and precepts, and customs, does not rule him, but he is a freeman. The idea is, that there is a conflict between religion and the world, and that in the heart of every true Christian religion secures the victory, or triumphs. In Jn 16:33, the Saviour says, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Jn 6:33. He obtained a complete triumph over him "who rules the darkness of the world," and laid the foundation for a victory by his people over all vice, error, and sin. John makes this affirmation of all who are born of God. "Whatsoever," or, as the Greek is, "Everything which is begotten of God," (παντογεγενημενον;) meaning to affirm, undoubtedly, that in every instance where one is truly regenerated, there is this victory over the world. Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15, 1Jn 2:16. It is one of the settled maxims of religion, that every man who is a true Christian gains a victory over the world; and consequently a maxim as settled, that where the spirit of the world reigns supremely in the heart there is no true religion. But, if this be a true principle, how many professed Christians are there who are strangers to all claims of piety--for how many are there who are wholly governed by the spirit of this world!

And this is the victory. This is the source or means of the victory which is thus achieved. Even our faith. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, 1Jn 5:5. He overcame the world, Jn 16:33, and it is by that faith which makes us one with him, and that imbues us with his Spirit, that we are able to do it also.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Who is he, etc. Where is there one who can pretend to have obtained a victory over the world, except he who believes in the Saviour? All else are worldly, and are governed by worldly aims and principles. It is true that a man may gain a victory over one worldly passion; he may subdue some one evil propensity; he may abandon the gay circle, may break away from habits of profaneness, may leave the company of the unprincipled and polluted; but still, unless he has faith in the Son of God, the spirit of the world will reign supreme in his soul in some form. The appeal which John so confidently made in his time may be as confidently made now. We may ask, as he did, where is there one who

shows that he has obtained a complete victory over the world, except the true Christian? Where is there one whose end and aim is not the present life? Where is there one who shows that all his purposes in regard to this world are made subordinate to the world to come? There are those now, as there were then, who break away from one form of sin, and from one circle of sinful companions; there are those who change the ardent passions of youth for the soberness of middle or advanced life; there are those who see the folly of profaneness, and of gaiety, and intemperance; there are those who are disappointed in some scheme of ambition, and who withdraw from political conflicts; there are those who are satiated with pageantry, and who, oppressed with the cares of state, as Diocletian and Charles V. were, retire from public life; and there are those whose hearts are crushed and broken by losses, and by the death, or what is worse than death, by the ingratitude of their children, and who cease to cherish the fond hope that their family will be honoured, and their name perpetuated in those whom they tenderly loved--but still there is no victory over the world. Their deep dejection, their sadness, their brokenness of spirit, their lamentations, and their want of cheerfulness, all show that the spirit of the world still reigns in their hearts. If the calamities which have come upon them could be withdrawn; if the days of prosperity could be restored, they would show as much of the spirit of the world as ever they did, and would pursue its follies and its vanities as greedily as they had done before. Not many years or months elapse before the worldly mother who has followed one daughter to the grave, will introduce another into the gay world with all the brilliancy which fashion prescribes; not long will a worldly father mourn over the death of a son before, in the whirl of business and the exciting scenes of ambition, he will show that his heart is as much wedded to the world as it ever was. If such sorrows and disappointments conduct to the Saviour, as they sometimes do; if they lead the troubled mind to seek peace in his blood, and support in the hope of heaven, then a real victory is obtained over the world; and then, when the hand of affliction is withdrawn, it is seen that there has been a work of grace in the soul that has effectually changed all its feelings, and secured a triumph that shall be eternal.

The Witness concerning the Son

6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

This is he. This Son of God referred to in the previous verse. The object of the apostle in this verse, in connexion with 1Jn 5:8, is to state the nature of the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. He refers to three well-known things on which he probably had insisted much in his preaching--the water, and the blood, and the Spirit. These, he says, furnished evidence on the very point which he was illustrating, by showing that that Jesus on whom they believed was the Son of God. "This," says he, "is the same one, the very person, to whom the well-known, and important testimony is borne; to him, and him alone, this undisputed things appertain, and not to any other who should claim to be the Messiah; and they all agree on the same one point," 1Jn 5:8.

That came. οελθων. This does not mean that when he came into the world he was accompanied in some way by water and blood; but the idea is, that the water and the blood were clearly manifest during his appearing on earth, or that they were remarkable testimonials in some way to his character and work. An ambassador might be said to come with credentials; a warrior might be said to come with the spoils of victory; a prince might be said to come with the insignia of royalty; a prophet comes with signs and wonders; and the Lord Jesus might also be said to have come with power to raise the dead, and to heal disease, and to cast out devils; but John here fixes the attention on a fact so impressive and remarkable in his view as to be worthy of special remark, that he came by water and blood.

By water. There have been many opinions in regard to the meaning of this phrase. See Pool's Synopsis. Compare also Lucke, in loc. A mere reference to some of these opinions may aid in ascertaining the true interpretation.

(1.) Clement of Alexandria supposes that by water regeneration and faith were denoted, and by blood the public acknowledgment of that.

(2.) Some, and among them Wetstein, have held that the words are used to denote the fact that the Lord Jesus was truly a man, in contradistinction from the doctrine of the Docetae; and that the apostle means to say that he had all the properties of a human being--a spirit or soul, blood, and the watery humours of the body.

(3.) Grotius supposes that by his coming "by water," there is reference to his pure life, as water is the emblem of purity; and he refers to Eze 36:25, Isa 1:16, Jer 4:14. As a sign of that purity, he says that John baptized him, Jn 1:28. A sufficient objection to this view is, that as in the corresponding word blood there is undoubted reference to blood literally, it cannot be supposed that the word water in the same connexion would be used figuratively. Moreover, as Lucke (p. 287) has remarked, water, though a symbol of purity, is never used to denote purity itself, and therefore cannot here refer to the pure life of Jesus.

(4.) Many expositors suppose that the reference is to the baptism of Jesus, and that by his "coming by water and blood," as by the latter there is undoubted reference to his death, so by the former there is reference to his baptism, or to his entrance on his public work. Of this opinion were Tertullian, Ecumenius, Theophylact, among the fathers, and Capellus, lieumann, Stroth, Lange, Ziegler, A. Clarke, Bengel, Rosenmuller, Macknight, and others, among the moderns. A leading argument for this opinion, as alleged, has been that it was then that the Spirit bare witness to him, (Mt 3:16,) and that this is what John here refers to when he says, "It is the Spirit that beareth witness," etc. To this view, Lucke urges substantially the following objections:

(a.) That if it refers to baptism, the phrase would much more appropriately express the fact that Jesus came baptizing others, if that were so, than that he was baptized himself. The phrase would be strictly applicable to John the Baptist, who came baptizing, and whose ministry was distinguished for that, (Mt 3:1;) and if Jesus had baptized in the same manner, or if this had been a prominent characteristic of his ministry, it would be applicable to him. Comp. Jn 4:2. But if it means that he was baptized, and that he came in that way "by water," it was equally true of all the apostles who were baptized, and of all others, and there was nothing so remarkable in the fact that he was baptized as to justify the prominence given to the phrase in this place.

(b.) If reference be had here, as is supposed in this view of the passage, to the "witness" that was borne to the Lord Jesus on the occasion of his baptism, then the reference should have been not to the "water" as the witness, but to the "voice that came from heaven," (Mt 3:17,) for it was that which was the witness in the case. Though this occurred at the time of the baptism, yet it was quite an independent thing, and was important enough to have been referred to. See Lucke, Com. in loc. These objections, however, are not insuperable. Though Jesus did not come baptizing others himself, (Jn 4:2,) and though the phrase would have expressed that if he had, yet, as Christian baptism began with him; as this was the first act in his entrance on public life; as it was by this that he was set apart to his work; and as he designed that this should be always the initiatory rite of his religion, there was no impropriety in saying that his "coming," or his advent in this world, was at the beginning characterized by water, and at the close by blood. Moreover, though the "witness" at his baptism was really borne by a voice from heaven, yet his baptism was the prominent thing; and if we take the baptism to denote all that in fact occurred when he was baptized, all the objections made by Lucke here vanish.

(5.) Some, by the "water" here, have understood the ordinance of baptism as it is appointed by the Saviour to be administered to his people, meaning that the ordinance was instituted by him. So Beza, Calvin, Piscator, Calovius, Wolf, Beausobre, Knapp, Lucke, and others understand it. According to this the meaning would be, that he appointed baptism by water as a symbol of the cleansing of the heart, and shed his blood to effect the ransom of man, and that thus it might be said that he "came by water and blood;" to wit, by these two things as effecting the salvation of men. But it seems improbable that the apostle should have grouped these things together in this way. For

(a.) the "blood" is that which he shed; which pertained to him personally; which he poured out for the redemption of man; and it is clear that, whatever is meant by the phrase "he came," his coming by "water" is to be understood in some sense similar to his coming by "blood;" and it seems incredible that the apostle should have joined a mere ordinance of religion in this way with the shedding of his blood, and placed them in this manner on an equality.

(b.) It cannot be supposed that John meant to attach so much importance to baptism as would be implied by this. The shedding of his blood was essential to the redemption of men; can it be supposed that the apostle meant to teach that baptism by water is equally necessary?

(c.) If this be understood of baptism, there is no natural connexion between that and the "blood" referred to; nothing by which the one would suggest the other; no reason why they should be united. If he had said that he "came" by the appointment of two ordinances for the edification of the church, "baptism and the supper," however singular such a statement might be in some respects, yet there would be a connexion, a reason why they should be suggested together. But why should baptism and the blood shed by the Saviour on the cross be grouped together as designating the principal things which characterized his coming into the world?

(6.) There remains, then, but one other interpretation; to wit, that he refers to the "water and the blood" which flowed from the side of the Saviour when he was pierced by the spear of the Roman soldier. John had himself laid great stress on this occurrence, and on the fact that he had himself witnessed it, Jn 19:34, (Jn 19:35;) and as, in these epistles, he is accustomed to allude to more full statements made in his gospel, it would seem most natural to refer the phrase to that event as furnishing a clear and undoubted proof of the death of the Saviour. This would be the obvious interpretation, and would be entirely clear, if John did not immediately speak of the "water" and the "blood" as separate witnesses, each as bearing witness to an important point, as separate as the "Spirit" and the "water," or the "Spirit" and the "blood ;" whereas, if he refers to the mingled water and blood flowing from his side, they both witness only the same fact, to wit, his death. There was no special significance in the water, no distinct testifying to anything different from the flowing of the blood; but together they bore witness to the one fact that he actually died. But here he seems to suppose that there is some special significance in each. "Not by water only, but by water and blood." "There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." These considerations seem to me to make it probable, on the whole, that the fourth opinion, above referred to, and that which has been commonly held in the Christian church, is correct, and that by the

"water" the baptism of the Saviour is intended; his baptism as an emblem of his own purity; as significant of the nature of his religion; as a rite which was to be observed in his church at all times. That furnished an important attestation to the fact that he was the Messiah, (comp. Mt 3:15,) for it was by that that he entered on his public work, and it was then that a remarkable testimony was borne to his being the Son of God. He himself "came" thus by water as an emblem of purity; and the water used in his church in all ages in baptism, together with the "blood" and the "Spirit," bears public testimony to the pure nature of his religion. It is possible that the mention of the "water" in his baptism suggested to John also the water which flowed from the side of the Saviour at his death, intermingled with blood; and that though the primary thought, in his mind was the fact that Jesus was baptized, and that an important attestation was then given to his Messiahship, yet he may have instantly adverted to the fact that water performed so important a part, and was so important a symbol through all his work; water at his introduction to his work as an ordinance in his church, as symbolical of the nature of his religion, and even at his death, as a public attestation, in connexion with flowing blood, to the fact that he truly died, in reality, and not, as the Docetae pretended, in appearance only, thus completing the work of the Messiah, and making an atonement for the sins of the world. Comp. Jn 19:34, Jn 19:35.

And blood, referring, doubtless, to the shedding of his blood on the cross. He "came" by that; that is, he was manifested by that to men, or that was one of the forms in which he appeared to men, or by which his coming into the world was characterized. The apostle means to say that the blood shed at his death furnished an important evidence or "witness" of what he was. In what way this was done, 1Jn 5:8. Not by water only, but by water and blood. John the Baptist came "by water only;" that is, he came to baptize the people, and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was distinguished from him in the fact that his ministry was characterized by the shedding of blood, or the shedding of his blood constituted one of the peculiarities of his work. And it is this Spirit. Evidently the Holy Spirit. That beareth witness. That is, he is the great witness in the matter, confirming all others. He bears witness to the soul that Jesus came "by water and blood," for that would not be received by us without his agency. In what way he does this, 1Jn 5:8.

Because the Spirit is truth. Is so eminently true that he may be called truth itself, as God is so eminently benevolent that he may be called love itself. 1Jn 4:8.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, etc. There are three that witness, or that bear witness--the same Greek word which, in 1Jn 5:8, is rendered bear witness --μαρτυρουντες. There is no passage of the New Testament which has given rise to so much discussion in regard to its genuineness as this. The supposed importance of the verse in its bearing on the doctrine of the Trinity has contributed to this, and has given to the discussion a degree of consequence which has pertained to the examination of the genuineness of no other passage of the New: Testament. On the one hand, the clear testimony which it seems to bear to the doctrine of the Trinity, has made that portion of the Christian church which holds the doctrine reluctant in the highest degree to abandon it; and on the other hand, the same clearness of the testimony to that doctrine, has made those who deny it not less reluctant to admit the genuineness of the passage. It is not consistent with the design of these Notes to go into a full investigation of a question of this sort. And all that can be done is to state, in a brief way, the results which have been reached, in an examination of the question. Those who are disposed to pursue the investigation further, can find all that is to be said in the works referred to at the bottom of the page.* The portion of the passage, in 1Jn 5:7,8, whose genuineness is disputed, is included in brackets in the following quotation, as it stands in the common editions of the New Testament: "For there are three that bear record [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." If the disputed passage, therefore, be omitted as spurious, the whole passage will read, "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." The reasons which seem to me to prove that the passage included in brackets is spurious, and should not be regarded as a part of the inspired writings, are briefly the following:

I. It is wanting in all the earlier Greek manuscripts, for it is found in no Greek Ms. written before the sixteenth century. Indeed, it is found

in only two Greek manuscripts of any age--one the Codex Montfortianus, or Britannicus, written in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the other the Codex Ravianus, which is a mere transcript of the text, taken partly from the third edition of Stephen's New Testament, and partly from the Complutensian Polyglott. But it is incredible that a genuine passage of the New Testament should be wanting in all the early Greek manuscripts.

It is wanting in the earliest versions, and, indeed, in a large part of the versions of the New Testament which have been made in all former times. It is wanting in both the Syriac versions--one of which was made probably in the first century; in the Coptic, Armenian, Sclavonic, Ehiopic, and Arabic.

III. It is never quoted by the Greek fathers in their controversies on the doctrine of the Trinity--a passage which would be so much in point, and which could not have failed to be quoted if it were genuine; and it is not referred to by the Latin fathers until the time of Vigilius, at the end of the fifth century. If the passage were believed to be genuine--nay, if it were known at all to be in existence, and to have any probability in its favour--it is incredible that in all the controversies which occurred in regard to the Divine nature, and in all the efforts to define the doctrine of the Trinity, this passage should never have been referred to. But it never was; for it must be plain to any one who examines the subject with an unbiased mind, that the passages which are relied on to prove that it was quoted by Athanasius, Cyprian, Augustin, etc., (Wetstein, II., p. 725,) are not taken from this place, and are not such as they would have made if they had been acquainted with this passage, and had designed to quote it.

IV. The argument against the passage from the external proof is confirmed by internal evidence, which makes it morally certain that it cannot be genuine.

(a.) The connexion does not demand it. It does not contribute to advance what the apostle is saying, but breaks the thread of his argument entirely. He is speaking of certain things which bear "witness" to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah; certain things were well known to those to whom he was writing--the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. How does it contribute to strengthen the force of this to say

that in heaven there are "three that bear witness"--three not before referred to, and having no connexion with the matter under consideration?

(b.) The language is not such as John would use. He does, indeed, elsewhere use the term Logos, or Word, ολογος Jn 1:1,14 1Jn 1:1, but it is never in this form, "The Father, and the Word;" that is, the terms "Father" and "Word" are never used by him, or by any of the other sacred writers, as correlative. The word Son--ουιος--is the term which is correlative to the Father in every other place as used by John, as well as by the other sacred writers. See 1Jn 1:3, 2:22-24, 4:14, 1Jn 3:9; and the Gospel of John, passim. Besides, the correlative of the term Logos, or Word, with John, is not Father, but God. See Jn 1:1. Comp. Rev 19:13.

(c) Without this passage, the sense of the argument is clear and appropriate. There are three, says John, which bear witness that Jesus is the Messiah. These are referred to in 1Jn 5:6; and in immediate connexion with this, in the argument, (1Jn 5:8,) it is affirmed that their testimony goes to one point, and is harmonious. To say that there are other witnesses elsewhere, to say that they are one, contributes nothing to illustrate the nature of the testimony of these three--the water, and the blood, and the Spirit; and the internal sense of the passage, therefore, furnishes as little evidence of its genuineness as the external proof. It is easy to imagine how the passage found a place in the New Testament. It was at first written, perhaps, in the margin of some Latin manuscript, as expressing the belief of the writer of what was true in heaven, as well as on earth, and with no more intention to deceive than we have when we make a marginal note in a book. Some transcriber copied it into the body of the text, perhaps with a sincere belief that it was a genuine passage, omitted by accident; and then it became too important a passage in the argument for the Trinity, ever to be displaced but by the most clear critical evidence. It was rendered into Greek, and inserted in one Greek manuscript of the 16th century, while it was wanting in all the earlier manuscripts.

VI. The passage is now omitted in the best editions of the Greek Testament, and regarded as spurious by the ablest critics. See Griesbach and Hahn. On the whole, therefore, the evidence seems to me to be clear that this passage is not a genuine portion of the inspired

writings, and should not be appealed to in proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. One or two remarks may be made, in addition, in regard to its use.

(1.) Even on the supposition that it is genuine, as Bengel believed it was, and as he believed that some Greek manuscript would yet be found which would contain it **; yet it is not wise to adduce it as a proof-text. It would be much easier to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from other texts, than to demonstrate the genuineness of this.

(2.) It is not necessary as a proof-text. The doctrine which it contains can be abundantly established from other parts of the New Testament, by passages about which there can be no doubt.

(3.) The removal of this text does nothing to weaken the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity, or to modify that doctrine. As it was never used to shape the early belief of the Christian world on the subject, so its rejection, and its removal from the New Testament, will do nothing to modify that doctrine. The doctrine was embraced, and held, and successfully defended without it, and it can and will be so still.

* Mill. New Test., pp. 379-386; Wetstein, II. 721--727; Father Simon, Crit. Hist. New Test.; Michaelis, Intro. New Test. iv. 412, seq.; Semler, Histor. und Krit. Sammlungen uber die sogenannten Beweistellen der Dogmatik. Erstes Stuck uber, 1 John v. 7; Griesbach, Diatribe in locum, I John v. 7, 8, second edit., New Test., vol. II., appendix 1; and Lucke's Commentary in loc.

** Et tamen etiam atque etiam sperare licet si non autographurn Joanneurn, at alios vetustissimos codices Graecos, qui hanc periocham habeant in occultis providentiae divine forulis adhuc latentes auo tempore productum iri.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

And there are three that bear witness in earth. This is a part of the text, which, if the reasoning above is correct, is to be omitted. The genuine passage reads, (1Jn 5:7,) "For there are three that bear record, [or witness--μαρτυρουντες,] the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." There is no reference to the fact that it is done "in earth." The phrase

was introduced to correspond with what was said in the interpolated passage, that there are three that bear record "in heaven."

The Spirit. Evidently the Holy Spirit. The assertion here is, that that Spirit bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, 1Jn 5:5. The testimony of the Holy Ghost to this fact is contained in the following things:

(1.) He did it at the baptism of Jesus. Mt 3:16, Mt 3:17.

(2.) Christ was eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit; as it was predicted that the Messiah would be, and as it was appropriate he should be, Isa 11:2, 61:1. Compare Lk 4:18; Jn 3:34.

(3.) The Holy Spirit bore witness to his Messiahship, after his ascension, by descending, according to his promise, on his apostles, and by accompanying the message which they delivered with saving power to thousands in Jerusalem, Acts 2.

(4.) He still bears the same testimony on every revival of religion, and in the conversion of every individual who becomes a Christian, convincing them that Jesus is the Son of God. Comp. Jn 16:14,15.

(5.) He does it in the hearts of all true Christians, for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1Cor 12:3. 1Cor 2:3. The Spirit of God has thus always borne witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, and he will continue to do it to the end of time, convincing yet countless millions that he was sent from God to redeem and save lost men.

And the water. 1Jn 5:6. That is, the baptism of Jesus, and the scenes which occurred when he was baptized, furnished evidence that he was the Messiah. This was done in these ways:

(1.) It was proper that the Messiah should be baptized when he entered on his work, and perhaps it was expected; and the fact that he was baptized showed that he had in fact entered on his work as Redeemer. Mt 3:15.

(2.) An undoubted attestation was then furnished to the fact that he was "the Son of God," by the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and by the voice that addressed him from heaven, Mt 3:16,17.

(3.) His baptism with water was an emblem of the purity of his own character, and of the nature of his religion.

(4.) Perhaps it may be implied here, also, that water used in baptism now bears witness to the same thing,

(a.) as it is the ordinance appointed by the Saviour;

(b.) as it keeps up his religion in the world;

(c.) as it is a public symbol of the purity of his religion;

(d.) and as, in every case where it is administered, it is connected with the public expression of a belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

And the blood. There is undoubted allusion here to the blood shed on the cross; and the meaning is, that that blood bore witness also to the fact that he was the Son of God. This it did in the following respects:

(1.) The shedding of the blood showed that he was truly dead--that his work was complete--that he died in reality, and not in appearance only. Jn 19:34, Jn 19:36.

(2.) The remarkable circumstances that attended the shedding of this blood--the darkened sun, the earthquake, the rending of the veil of the temple --showed in a manner that convinced even the Roman centurion that he was the Son of God. Mt 27:54.

(3.) The fact that an atonement was thus made for sin was an important "witness" for the Saviour, showing that he had done that which the Son of God only could do, by disclosing a way by which the sinner may be pardoned, and the polluted soul be made pure.

(4.) Perhaps, also, there may be here an allusion to the Lord's Supper, as designed to set forth the shedding of this blood; and the apostle may mean to have it implied that the representation of the shedding of the

blood in this ordinance is intended to keep up the conviction that Jesus is the Son of God. If so, then the general sense is, that that blood--however set before the eyes and the hearts of men--on the cross, or by the representation of its shedding in the Lord's Supper--is a witness in the world to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, and to the nature of his religion. 1Cor 11:26.

And these three agree in one; ειςτοενεισι. They agree in one thing; they bear on one and the same point, to wit, the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. All are appointed by God as witnesses of this fact; and all harmonize in the testimony which is borne. The apostle does not say that there are no other witnesses to the same thing; nor does he even say that these are the most important or decisive which have been furnished; but he says that these are important witnesses, and are entirely harmonious in their testimony.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

If we receive the witness of men. As we are accustomed to do, and as w do in courts of justice, and in the ordinary daily transactions of life. V constantly acting on the belief that what others say is true; that wh members of our families, and our neighbours say is true; that what is re by travellers is true; that what we read in books, and what is sworn to in of justice, is true. We could not get along a single day if we did not act belief; nor are we accustomed to call it in question, unless we have rea suspect that it is false. The mind is so made that it must credit the test borne by others; and if this should cease even for a single day, the aff the world would come to a pause.

The witness of God is greater. Is more worthy of belief; as God is more true, and wise, and good than men. Men may be deceived, and may undesignedly bear witness to that when is not true--God never can be; men may, for sinister and base purposes, intend to deceive--God never can; men may act from partial observation, from rumours unworthy of credence--God never can; men may desire to excite admiration by the marvellous--God never can; men have deceived--God never has; and though, from these causes, there are many instances where we are not certain that the testimony borne by men is true, yet we are always certain that that which is borne by God is not false. The only question on which the mind ever hesitates is, whether we actually have his

testimony, or certainly know what he bears witness to; when that is ascertained, the human mind is so made that it cannot believe that God would deliberately deceive a world. Heb 6:18. Comp. Tit 1:2.

For this is the witness of God, etc. The testimony above referred to--that borne by the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. Who that saw his baptism, and heard the voice from heaven, (Mt 3:16,17,) could doubt that he was the Son of God? Who that saw his death on the cross, and that witnessed the amazing scenes which occurred there, could fail to join with the Roman centurion in saying that this was the Son of God? Who that has felt the influences of the Eternal Spirit on his heart, ever doubted that Jesus was the Son of God? Comp. 1Cor 12:3. Any one of these is sufficient to convince the soul of this; all combined bear on the same point, and confirm it from age to age.

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. The evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. Rom 8:16. This cannot refer to any distinct and immediate revelation of that fact, that Jesus is the Christ, to the soul of the individual, and is not to be understood as independent of the external evidence of that truth, or as superseding the necessity of that evidence; but the "witness" here referred to is the fruit of all the evidence, external and internal, on the heart, producing this result; that is, there is the deepest conviction of the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. There is the evidence derived from the fact that the soul has found peace by believing on him; from the fact that the troubles and anxieties of the mind on account of sin have been removed by faith in Christ; from the new views of God and heaven which have resulted from faith in the Lord Jesus; from the effect of this in disarming death of its terrors; and from the whole influence of the gospel on the intellect and the affections--on the heart and the life, These things constitute a mass of evidence for the truth of the Christian religion, whose force the believer cannot resist, and make the sincere Christian ready to sacrifice anything rather than his religion; ready to go to the stake rather than to renounce his Saviour. 1Pet 3:15.

He that believeth not God hath made him a liar. 1Jn 1:10. Because he believeth not the record, etc. The idea is, that in various ways--at his

baptism, at his death, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, by the miracles of Jesus, etc.-- God had become a witness that the Lord Jesus was sent by him as a Saviour, and that to doubt or deny this partook of the same character as doubting or denying any other testimony; that is, it was practically charging him who bore the testimony with falsehood.

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

And this is the record. This is the sum, or the amount of the testimony (μαρτυρια) which God has given respecting him.

That God hath given to us eternal life. Has provided, through the Saviour, the means of obtaining eternal life. Jn 5:24; Jn 17:2, Jn 17:3.

And this life is in his Son. Is treasured up in him, or is to be obtained through him. Jn 1:4; Jn 1:25; Jn 14:6; Col 3:3.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

He that hath the Son, hath life. Jn 5:24. John evidently designs to refer to that passage in the verse before us, and to state a principle laid down by the Saviour himself. This is the sense of all the important testimony that had ever been borne by God on the subject of salvation, that he who believes in the Lord Jesus already has the elements of eternal life in his soul, and will certainly obtain salvation. Comp. Jn 17:3.

And he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. He that does not believe on him will not attain to eternal life. Jn 3:36; Mk 16:16.

The Knowledge of Eternal Life

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

These things have I written unto you. The things in this epistle respecting the testimony borne to the Lord Jesus.

That believe on the name of the Son of God. To believe on his name, is to believe on himself--the word name often being used to denote the person. Mt 28:19.

That ye may know that ye have eternal life. That you may see the evidence that eternal life has been provided, and that you may be able, by self-examination, to determine whether you possess it. Jn 20:31.

And that ye may believe, etc. That you may continue to believe, or may persevere in believing. He was assured that they actually did believe on him then; but he was desirous of so setting before them the nature of religion, that they would continue to exercise faith in him. It is often one of the most important duties of ministers of the gospel, to present to real Christians such views of the nature, the claims, the evidences, and the hopes of religion, as shall be adapted to secure their perseverance in the faith. In the human heart, even when converted, there is such a proneness to unbelief; the religious affections so easily become cold; there are so many cares pertaining to the world that are fitted to distract the mind; there are so many allurements of sin to draw the affections away from the Saviour; that there is need of being constantly reminded of the nature of religion, in order that the heart may not be wholly estranged from the Saviour. No small part of preaching, therefore, must consist of the re-statement of arguments with which the mind has been before fully convinced; of motives whose force has been once felt and acknowledged; and of the grounds of hope and peace and joy which have already, on former occasions, diffused comfort through the soul. It is not less important to keep the soul, than it is to convert it; to save it from coldness, and deadness, and formality, than it was to impart to it the elements of spiritual life at first. It may be as important to trim a vine, if one would have grapes, as it is to set it out; to keep a garden from being overrun with weeds in the summer, as it was to plant it in the spring.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

And this is the confidence that we have in him. Marg., concerning. Greek, "towards him," or in respect to him--προςαυτον. The confidence referred to here is that which relates to the answer to prayer. The apostle does not say that this is the only thing in respect to which there is to be confidence in him, but that it is one which is worthy of special consideration. The sense is, that one of the effects of believing on the Lord Jesus (1Jn 5:13) is, that we have the assurance

that our prayers will be answered. On the word confidence, 1Jn 3:21; 1Jn 4:17.

That, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. This is the proper and the necessary limitation in all prayer. God has not promised to grant anything that shall be contrary to his will, and it could not be right that he should do it. We ought not to wish to receive anything that should be contrary to what he judges to be best. No man could hope for good who should esteem his own wishes to be a better guide than the will of God; and it is one of the most desirable of all arrangements that the promise of any blessing to be obtained by prayer should be limited and bounded by the will of God. The limitation here, "according to his will," probably implies the following things:

(1.) In accordance with what he has declared that he is willing to grant. Here the range is large, for there are many things which we know to be in accordance with his will, if they are sought in a proper manner as the forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of the soul, (1Thes 4:3,) comfort in trial, the needful supply of our wants, grace that we may do our duty, wisdom to direct and guide us, (Jas 1:5,) deliverance from the evils which beset us, the influences of his Spirit to promote the cause of religion in the world, and our final salvation. Here is a range of subjects of petition that may gratify the largest wishes of prayer.

(2.) The expression, "according to his will," must limit the answer to prayer to what he sees to be best for us. Of that we are not always good judges. We never perceive it as clearly as our Maker does, and in many things we might be wholly mistaken. Certainly we ought not to desire to be permitted to ask anything which God would judge not to be for our good.

(3.) The expression must limit the petition to what it will be consistent for God to bestow upon us. We cannot expect that he will work a miracle in answer to our prayers; we cannot ask him to bestow blessings in violation of any of the laws which he has ordained, or in any other way than that which he has appointed. It is better that the particular blessing should be withheld from us, than that the laws which he has appointed should be disregarded. It is better that an idle man should not have a harvest, though he should pray for it, than that God should violate the laws by which he has determined to bestow

such favours as a reward of industry, and work a special miracle in answer to a lazy man's prayers.

(4.) The expression, "according to his will," must limit the promise to what will be for the good of the whole. God presides over the universe; and though in him there is an infinite fulness, and he regards the wants of every individual throughout his immense empire, yet the interests of the whole, as well as of the individual, are to be consulted and regarded. In a family, it is conceivable that a child might ask for some favour whose bestowment would interfere materially with the rights of others, or be inconsistent with the good of the whole, and in such a case a just father would of course withhold it. With these necessary limitation the range of the promise in prayer is ample; and, with these limitations, it is true beyond a question that he does hear and answer prayer.

15 and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

And if we know that he hear us. That is, if we are assured of this as a true doctrine, then, even though we may not see immediately that the prayer is answered, we may have the utmost confidence that it is not disregarded, and that it will be answered in the way best adapted to promote our good. The specific thing that we may not indeed be granted, (comp. Lk 22:42, 2Cor 12:8,9,) but the prayer with not be disregarded, and the thing which is most for our good wilt be bestowed upon us. The argument here is derived from the faithfulness of God; from the assurance which we that when he has promised to hear us, there will be, sooner or later a real answer to the prayer.

We know that we have the petitions. That is, evidently, we know that we shall have them, or that the prayer will be answered. It cannot mean that we already have the precise thing for which we prayed, or that will be a real answer to the prayer, for

(a.) the prayer may relate to something future, as protection on a journey, or a harvest, or restoration to health, or the safe return of a son from a voyage at sea, or the salvation of our souls--all of which are future, and which cannot be expected to be granted at once; and

(b.) the answer to prayer is sometimes delayed, though ultimately granted. There may be reasons why the answer should be deferred, and the promise is not that it shall be immediate. The delay may arise from such causes as these:

(1.) To try our faith, and see whether the blessing is earnestly desired.

(2.) Perhaps it could not be at once answered without a miracle.

(3.) It might not be consistent with the Divine arrangements respecting others to grant it to us at once.

4.) Our own condition may not be such that it would be best to answer it at once. We may need further trial, further chastisement, before the affliction, for example, shall be removed; and the answer to the prayer may be delayed for months or years. Yet, in the meantime, we may have the firmest assurance that the prayer is heard, and that it will be answered in the way and at the period when God shall see it to-be best.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

If a man see his brother sin a sin, etc. From the general assurance that God hears prayer, the apostle turns to a particular case in which it may be benevolently and effectually employed, in rescuing a brother from death. There has been great diversity of opinion in, regard to the meaning of this passage, and the views of expositors of the New Testament are by no means settled as to its true sense. It does not comport with the design of these Notes to examine the opinions which have been held in detail. A bare reference, however, to some of them will show the difficulty of determining with certainty what the passage means, and the impropriety of any very great confidence in one's own judgment in the case. Among these opinions are the following. Some have supposed that the sin against the Holy Ghost is intended; some that the phrase denotes any great and enormous sin, as murder, idolatry, adultery; some that it denotes some sin that was punishable by death by the laws of Moses; some that it denotes a sin that subjected the offender to excommunication from the synagogue or the church; some that it refers to sins which brought fatal disease upon the offender, as in the case of those who abused the Lord's Supper at

Corinth, (1Cor 11:30;) some that it refers to crimes committed against the laws, for which the offender was sentenced to death, meaning that when the charge alleged was false, and the condemnation unjust, they ought to pray for the one who was condemned to death, and that he would be spared; but that when the offence was one which had been really committed, and the offender deserved to die, they ought not to pray for him, or, in other words, that by "the sin unto death," offences against the civil law are referred to, which the magistrate had no power to pardon, and the punishment of which he could not commute; and by the "sin not unto death," offences are referred to which might be pardoned, and when the punishment might be commuted; some that it refers to sins before and after baptism, the former of which might be pardoned, but the latter of which might not be; and some, and perhaps this is the common opinion among the Roman Catholics, that it refers to sins that might or might not be pardoned after death, thus referring to the doctrine of purgatory. These various opinions may be seen stated more at length in Rosenmuller, Lucke, Pool, (Synopsis,) and Clarke, in loc. To go into an examination of all these opinions would require a volume by itself, and all that can be done here is to furnish what seems to me to be the fair exposition of the passage. The word brother may refer either to a member of the church, whether of the particular church to which one was attached or to another, or it may be used in the larger sense which is common as denoting a fellow-man, a member of the great family of mankind. There is nothing in the word which necessarily limits it to one in the church; there is nothing in the connexion, or in the reason assigned, why what is said should be limited to such an one. The duty here enjoined would be the same whether the person referred to was in the church or not; for it is our duty to pray for those who sin, and to seek the salvation of those whom we see to be going astray, and to be in danger of ruin, wherever they are, or whoever they may be. At the same time, the correct interpretation of the passage does not depend on determining whether the word brother refers to one who is a professed Christian or not.

A sin which is not unto death. The great question in the interpretation of the whole passage is, what is meant by the "sin unto death." The Greek (αμαρτιαπροςθανατον) would mean properly a in which tends to death; which would terminate in death; of which death was the penalty, or would be the result, unless it were arrested a sin which, if it had its own course, would terminate thus, am we should speak of a

disease "unto death." Comp. Jn 11:4. The word death is used in three significations in the New Testament, and as employed here might, so far as the word is concerned, be applied in any one of those senses. It is used to denote

(a.) literally the death of the body;

(b.) spiritual death, or death "in trespasses and sin," Eph 2:1;

(c.) the "second death," death in the world of woe and despair. If the sin here mentioned refers to temporal death, it means such a sin that temporal death, must inevitably follow, either by the disease which it has produced, or by a judicial sentence where there was no hope of pardon or of a commutation of the punishment; if it refers to death in the future world, the "second death", then it means such a sin as is unpardonable. That this last is the reference here seems to me to be probable, if not clear, from the following considerations:

(1.) There is such a sin referred to in the New Testament, a sin for which there is forgiveness "neither in this life nor the life to come." Mt 12:31,32. Comp. Mk 3:29. If there is such a sin, there is no impropriety in supposing that John would refer to it here.

(2.) This is the obvious interpretation. It is that which would occur to the mass of the readers of the New Testament, and which it is presumed they do adopt; and this in general, is one of the best means of ascertaining the sons of a passage in the Bible.

(3.) The other significations attached to the word death, would be quite inappropriate here.

(a.) It cannot mean "unto spiritual death," that is, to a continuance in sin, for how could that be known? and if such a case occurred, why would it be improper to pray for it? Besides, the phrase "a sin unto spiritual death," or "unto continuance in sin," is one that is unmeaning.

(b.) It cannot be shown to refer to a disease that should be unto death, miraculously inflicted on account of sin, because, if such cases occurred, they were very rare, and even if a disease came upon a man miraculously in consequence of sin, it could not be certainly known

whether it was, or was not, unto death. All who were visited in this way did not certainly die. Comp. 1Cor 5:4,5, with 2Cor 2:6,7. See also 1Cor 11:30.

(c.) It cannot be shown that it refers to the case of those who were condemned by the civil magistrate to death, and for whom there was no hope of reprieve or pardon, for it is not certain that there were such cases; and if there were, and the person condemned were innocent, there was every reason to pray that God would interpose and save them, even when there was no hope from man; and if they were guilty, and deserved to die, there was no reason why they should not pray that the sin might be forgiven, and that they might be prepared to die, unless it were a case where the sin was unpardonable. It seems probable, therefore, to me, that the reference here is to the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that John means here to illustrate the duty and the power of prayer, by showing that for any sin short of that, however aggravated, it was their duty to pray that a brother might be forgiven. Though it might not be easy to determine what was the unpardonable sin, and John does not say that those to whom he wrote could determine that with certainty, yet there were many sins which were manifestly not of that aggravated character, and for those sins it was proper to pray. There was clearly but one sin that was unpardonable--" there is a sin unto death;" there might be many which were not of this description, and in relation to them there was ample scope for the exercise of the prayer of faith. The same thing is true now. It is not easy to define the unpardonable sin, and it is impossible far us to determine in any case with absolute certainty that a man has committed it. But there are multitudes of sins which men commit, which on no proper interpretation of the passages respecting the sin which "hath never forgiveness," can come under the description of that sin, and for which it is proper, therefore, to pray that they may be pardoned. We know of cases enough where sin may be forgiven; and, without allowing the mind to be disturbed about the question respecting the unpardonable sin, it is our duty to bear such cases on our hearts before God, and to plead with him that our erring brethren may be saved.

He shall ask. That is, he shall pray that the offender may be brought to true repentance, and may be saved.

And he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. That is, God shall give life, and he shall be saved from the eternal death to which he was exposed. This, it is said, would be given to "him" who offers the prayer; that is, his prayer would be the means of saving the offending brother. What a motive is this to prayer! How faithful and constant should we be in pleading for our fellow-sinners, that we may be instrumental in saving their souls! What joy will await those in heaven who shall see there many who were rescued from ruin in answer to their prayers! Comp. Jas 5:15, Jas 5:19.

There is a sin unto death. A sin which is of such a character that it throws the offender beyond the reach of mercy, and which is not to be pardoned. See Mk 3:28,29. The apostle does not here say what that sin is; nor how they might know what it is; nor even that in any case they could determine that it had been committed. He merely says that there is such a sin, and that he, does not design that his remark about the efficacy of prayer should be understood as extending to that.

I do not say that he shall pray for it. "I do not intend that my remark shall be extended to all sin, or mean to affirm that all possible forms of guilt are the proper subjects of prayer, for I am aware that there is one sin which is an exception, and my remark is not to be applied to that." He does not say that this sin was of common occurrence: or that they could know when it had been committed; or even that a case could ever occur in which they could determine that; he merely says that in respect to that sin he did not say that prayer should be offered. It is indeed implied in a most delicate way that it would not be proper to pray for the forgiveness of such a sin, but he does not say that a case would ever happen in which they would know certainly that the sin had been committed. There were instances in the times of the prophets in which the sin of the people became so universal and so aggravated, that they were forbidden to pray for them. Isa 14:11, "Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good;" Isa 15:1, "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth." Comp. Isa 1:15. But these were cases in which the prophets were directly instructed by God not to pray for a people. We have no such instruction; and it may be said now with truth, that as we can never be certain respecting any one that he has committed the unpardonable sin, there is no one for whom we may not

with propriety pray. There may be those who are so far gone in sin that there may seem to be little, or almost no ground of hope. They may have cast off all the restraints of religion, of morality, of decency; they may disregard all the counsels of parents and friends; they may be sceptical, sensual, profane; they may be the companions of infidels and of mockers; they may have forsaken the sanctuary, and learned to despise the sabbath; they may have been professors of religion, and now may have renounced the faith of the gospel altogether, but still, while there is life it is our duty to pray for them, "if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2Ti 2:26. "All things are possible with God;" and he has reclaimed offenders more hardened, probably, than any that we have known, and has demonstrated that there is no form of depravity which he has not the power to subdue. Let us remember the cases of Manasseh, of Saul of Tarsus, of Augustine, of Bunyan, of Newton, of tens of thousands who have been reclaimed from the vilest forms of iniquity, and then let us never despair of the conversion of any, in answer to prayer, who may have gone astray, as long as they are in this world of probation and of hope. Let no parent despair who has an abandoned son; let no wife cease to pray who has a dissipated husband. How many a prodigal son has come back to fill with happiness an aged parent's heart! How many a dissipated husband has been reformed to give joy again to the wife of his youth, and to make a paradise again of his miserable home!

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

All unrighteousness is sin, etc. This seems to be thrown in to guard what he had just said, and there is one great and enormous sin, a sin which could not be forgiven. But he says also that there are many other forms and degrees of sin, sin for which prayer may be made. Everything, he says, which is unrighteous --αδικια-- everything which does not conform to the holy law of God, and which is not right in the view of that law, is to be regarded as sin; but we are not to suppose that all sin of that kind is of such a character that it cannot possibly be forgiven. There are many who commit sin who we may hope will be recovered, and for them it is proper to pray. Deeply affected as we may be in view of the fact that there is a sin which can never be pardoned, and much as we may pity one who has been guilty of such a sin, yet we should not hastily conclude in any case that it has been committed, and should bear constantly in mind that while there is one such sin,

there are multitudes that may be pardoned, and that for them it is our duty unceasingly to pray.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. Is not habitually and characteristically a sinner; does not ultimately and finally sin and perish; cannot, therefore, commit the unpardonable sin, Though he may fall into sin, and grieve his brethren, yet we are never to cease to pray for a true Christian; we are never to feel that he has committed the sin which has never forgiveness, and that he has thrown himself beyond the reach of our prayers. This passage, in its connexion, is a full proof that a true Christian will never commit the unpardonable sin, and, therefore, is a proof that he will never fall from grace. Comp. Heb 6:4, seq. Heb 10:26. On the meaning of the assertion here made, that "whosoever is born of God sinneth not," 1Jn 3:6, seq.

Keepeth himself. It is not said that he does it by his own strength, but he will put forth his best efforts to keep himself from sin, and by Divine assistance he will be able to accomplish it. Comp. 1Jn 3:3; Jude 1:21.

And that wicked one toucheth him not. The great enemy of all good is repelled in his assaults, and he is kept from falling into his snares.

The word toucheth (απτεται) is used here in the sense of harm or injure.

19 *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

nd we know that we are of God. We who are Christians. The apostle supposed that true Christians might have so clear evidence on that subject as to leave no doubt on their own minds that they were the children of God. Comp. 1Jn 3:14, 2Ti 1:12.

And the whole world. The term world here evidently means not the material world, but the people that dwell on the earth, including all idolaters, and all sinners of every grade and kind.

Lieth in wickedness. "In the wicked one," or under the power of the wicked one--εντωπονηρω. It is true that the word πονηρω may be used

here in the neuter gender, as our translators have rendered it, meaning "in that which is evil," or in "wickedness;" but it may be in the masculine gender, meaning "the wicked one;" and then the sense would be that the whole world is under his control or dominion. That this is the meaning of the apostle seems to be clear, because

(1.) the corresponding phrase, (1Jn 5:20,) εντωαληθινω, "in him that is true," is evidently to be construed in the masculine, referring to God the Saviour, and meaning "him that is true," and not that we are "in truth."

(2.) It makes better sense to say that the world lies under the control of the wicked one, than to say that it lies "in wickedness."

(3.) This accords better with the other representations in the Bible, and the usage of the word elsewhere. Comp. 1Jn 2:13, "Ye have overcome the wicked one;" 1Jn 5:14," ye have overcome the wicked one;" 1Jn 3:12, "who was of that wicked one." 2Cor 4:4, on the expression "the god of this world;" Jn 12:31, where he is called "the prince of world; and Eph 2:2, where he is called "the prince of the power of the air." In all these passages it is supposed that Satan has control over the world, especially the heathen world. Comp. Eph 6:12, 1Cor 10:20. In regard to the fact that the heathen world was pervaded by wickedness, Rom 1:21, seq.

(4.) It may be added, that this interpretation is adopted by the most eminent critics and commentators. It is that of Calvin, Beza, Benson, Blacknight, Bloomfield, Piscator, Lucke, etc. The word lieth here (κειται) means, properly, to lie; to be laid; to recline; to be situated, etc. It seems here to refer to the passive and torpid state of a wicked world under the dominion of the prince of evil, as acquiescing in his reign; making no resistance; not even struggling to be free. It lies thus as a beast that is subdued, a body that is dead, or anything that is wholly passive, quiet, and inert. There is no energy; no effort to throw off the reign; no resistance; no struggling. The dominion is complete, and body and soul, individuals and nations, are entirely subject to his will. This striking expression will not unaptly, now describe the condition of the heathen world, or of sinners in general. There would seem to be no government under which men are so little restive, and

against which they have so little disposition to rebel, as that of Satan. Comp. 2Ti 2:26.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

As if the apostle had said, "We Christians are better taught by our religion, to acknowledge and worship the only true God by his Son Jesus Christ our only Mediator, and therefore exhort you to keep from idols;" intimating hereby, that the worshipping of any other besides this only true God, and by any other mediator, besides Jesus Christ, is idolatry, or the words may be sensed thus: "We are sure that the Son of God is come, and that Christ is he, who by his dcotrine and spirit hath enlightened us to know the true and living God, whilst the greatest part of the world worship false Gods, yea, adore the devil himself."

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Little children. This is a favourite mode of address with John, (1Jn 2:1,) and it was proper to use it in giving his parting counsel; embracing, in fact, all that he had to say--that they should keep themselves from idols, and suffer nothing to alienate their affections from the true God. His great object had been to lead them to the knowledge and love of God, and all his counsels would be practically followed, if, amidst the temptations of idolatry, and the allurements of sin, nothing were allowed to estrange their hearts from him.

Keep yourselves from idols. From worshipping them; from all that would imply communion with them or their devotees. Compare 1Cor 10:14. The word rendered idols here (ειδωλων) means, properly, an image, spectre, shade--as of the dead; then any image or figure which would represent anything, particularly anything invisible; and hence anything designed to represent God, and that was set up with a view to be acknowledged as representing him, or to bring him, or his perfections, more vividly before the mind. The word is applicable to idol-gods--heathen deities, 1Cor 8:4,7, 10:19, Rom 2:22, 2Cor 6:16, 1Thes 1:9; but it would, also, be applicable to any image designed to represent the true God, and through or by which the true God was to be adored. The essential things in the word seem to be,

(a.) an image or representation of the Deity, and

(b.) the making of that an object of adoration instead of the true God. Since one of these things would be likely to lead to the other, both are forbidden in the prohibitions of idolatry, Ex 20:4,5. This would forbid all attempts to represent God by paintings or statuary; all idol-worship, or worship of heathen gods; all images and pictures that would be substituted in the place of God as objects of devotion, or that might transfer the homage from God to the image; and all giving of those affections to other beings or objects which are due to God. Why the apostle closed this epistle with this injunction he has not stated, and it may not be easy to determine. It may have been for such reasons as these:

(1.) Those to whom he wrote were surrounded by idolaters, and there was danger that they might fall into the prevailing sin, or in some way so act as to be understood to lend their sanction to idolatry.

(2.) In a world full of alluring objects, there was danger then, as there is at all times, that the affections should be fixed on other objects than the supreme God, and that what is due to him should be withheld. It may be added, in the conclusion of the exposition of this epistle, that the same caution is as needfull for us as it was for those to whom John wrote. We are not in danger, indeed, of bowing down to idols, or of engaging in the grossest forms of idol-worship. But we may be in no less danger than they to whom John wrote were, of substituting other things in our affections in the place of the true God, and of devoting to them the time and the affection which are due to him. Our children it is possible to love with such an attachment as shall effectually exclude the true God from the heart. The world --its wealth, and pleasures, and honours--we may love with a degree of attachment such as even an idolater would hardly show to his idol-gods; and all the time which he would take in performing his devotions in an idol-temple, we may devote with equal fervour to the service of the world. There is practical idolatry all over the world; in nominally Christian lands as well as among the heathen; in families that acknowledge no God but wealth and fashion; in the hearts of multitudes of individuals who would scorn the thought of worshipping at a pagan altar; and it is even to be found in the heart of many a one who professes to be

acquainted with the true God, and to be an heir of heaven. God should have the supreme place in our affections. The love of everything else should be held in strict subordination to the love of him. He should reign in our hearts; be acknowledged in our closets, our families, and in the place of public worship; be submitted to at all times as having a right to command and control us; be obeyed in all the expressions of his will, by his word, by his providence, and by his Spirit; be so loved that we shall be willing to part without a murmur with the dearest object of affection when he takes it from us; and so that, with joy and triumph, we shall welcome his messenger, the angel of death, when he shall come to summon us into his presence. To all who may read these illustrations of the epistle of the "beloved disciple," may God grant this inestimable blessing and honour. AMEN.

The Second Epistle of John
[2 John]

2 John-1

Salutation

1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth;
and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;
2 for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

Whom I love in the truth. 1Jn 3:18. The meaning here is, that he truly or sincerely loved them. The introduction of the article the here, which is not in the original, (εναληθεια), somewhat obscures the sense, as if the meaning were that he loved them so far as they embraced the truth. The meaning however is, that he was sincerely attached to them. The word "whom" here, ους, embraces both the mother and her children, though the pronoun is in the masculine gender, in accordance with the usage of the Greek language. No mention is made of her husband, and it may thence be inferred that she was a widow. Had he been living, though he might not have been a Christian, it is to be presumed that some allusion would have been made to him as well as to the children,

especially as there is reason to believe that only a part of her children were pious. 2Jn 1:4.

And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth. That is, all those Christians who had had an opportunity of knowing them, were sincerely attached to them. It would seem, from a subsequent part of the epistle, (2Jn 1:10,) that this female was of a hospitable character, and was accustomed to entertain at her house the professed friends of religion, especially religious teachers, and it is probable that she was the more extensively known from this fact. The commendation of the apostle here shows that it is possible that a family shall be extensively known as one of order, peace, and religion, so that all who know it or hear of it shall regard it with interest, respect, and love.

For the truth's sake. They love this family because they love the truth, and see it so cordially embraced and so happily exemplified. They who love the gospel itself will rejoice in all the effects which it produces in society, on individuals, families, neighbourhoods, and their hearts will be drawn with warm affection to the places where its influence is most fully seen.

Which dwelleth in us. In us who are Christians; that is, the truths of the gospel which we have embraced. Truth may be said to have taken up a permanent abode in the hearts of all who love religion.

And shall be with us for ever. Its abode with us is not for a night or a day; not for a month or a year; not for the few years that make up mortal life; it is not a passing stranger that finds a lodging like the weary traveller for a night, and inthe morning is gone to be seen no more; it has come to us to make our hearts its permanent home, and it is to be with us in all worlds, and while ceaseless ages shall roll away.

3 Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Grace be unto you. etc, Rom 1:7. This salutation does not differ from those commonly employed by the sacred writers, except in the emphasis which is placed on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is "the Son of the Father." This is much in the style of John, in all of whose writings he dwells much on the fact that the Lord Jesus is the Son of

God, and on the importance of reconising that fact in order to the possession of true religion. Comp. 1Jn 2:22,23; 4:15; 5:1,2,10-12, 20.

In truth and love. This phrase is not to be connected with the expression "the Son of the Father." as if it meant that he was my Son "in truth and love," but is rather to be connected with the "grace, mercy, and peace," referred to, as a prayer that they might be manifested to this family in promoting truth and love.

Abide in the Doctrine of Christ

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

I rejoiced greatly that I found, etc. That I learned this fact respecting some of thy children. The apostle does not say how he had learned this. It may have been that he had become personally acquainted with them when they were away from their home, or that he had learned it from others. The word used (ευρηκα) would apply to either method. Grotius supposed that some of the sons had come on business to Ephesus, and that John had become acquainted with them there. Of thy children walking in truth. That is, true Christians; living in accordance with the truth, for this constitutes the essence of religion. The expression used here, "of thy children," (εκτωντεκνων,) means some of thy children; implying that he knew of a part of them who were true Christians. This is clear from the Greek construction, because

(a.) if he had meant to say that he had found them all to be of this description, the sentiment would have been directly expressed, "thy children;" but as it is, some word is necessary to be understood to complete the sense; and

(b.) the same thing is demanded by the fact that the participle used (walking--περιπατουντας) is in the accusative case. If he had referred to them all, the participle would have been in the genitive, agreeing with the word children, (τωνπεριπατουντων.)--Lucke. Whether the apostle means to say that only a part of them had in fact embraced the gospel, or that he had only known that a part of them had done it, though the others might have done it without his knowledge, is not

quite clear, though the former supposition appears to be the correct one, for if they had all become Christians it is to be presumed that he would have been informed of it. The probability seems to be that a part of her children only were truly pious, though there is no evidence that the others were otherwise than correct in their moral conduct. If there had been improper conduct in any of her other children, John was too courteous, and too delicate in his feelings, to allude to so disagreeable a circumstance. But "if that pious lady," to use the language of Benson, "had some wicked children, her lot was not peculiar. Her consolation was that she had some who were truly good. John commended those who were good, in order to excite them in the most agreeable manner to persevere."

As we have received a commandment from the Father. That is, as he has commanded us to live; in accordance with the truth which he has revealed. The Father, in the Scripture, is everywhere represented as the source of law.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

Not as though I wrote a new commanament unto thee. John presumed that the command to love one another was understood as far as the gospel was known; and he might well presume it, for true Christianity never prevails anywhere without prompting to the observance of this law. 1Thes 4:9.

But that which we had from the beginning. From the time when the gospel was first made known to us. 1Jn 2:7; 1Jn 2:11.

That we love one another. That is, that there be among the disciples of Christ mutual love; or that in all circumstances and relations they should love one another, Jn 15:12,17. This general command, addressed to all the disciples of the Saviour, John doubtless means to say was as applicable to him and to the pious female to whom he wrote as to any others, and ought to be exercised by them towards all true Christians; and he exhorts her, as he did all Christians, to exercise it. It was a command on which, in his old age, he loved to dwdl; and he had little more to say to her than this to exhort her to obey this injunction of the Saviour.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

For. οτι. This word for is not here to be regarded as connected with the previous verse, and as giving a reason why there should be the exercise of mutual love, but is rather to be under- stood as connected with the following verse, (2Jn 1:8,) and as giving a reason for the caution there expressed: "Because it is a truth that many deceivers have appeared, or since it has occurred that many such are abroad, look to yourselves lest you be betrayed and ruined." The fact that there were many such deceivers was a good reason for being constantly on their guard, lest they should be so far drawn away as not to receive a full reward.

Many deceivers are entered into the world. Are abroad in the world, or have appeared among men. Several Mss. read here, "have gone out into the world," εξηλθον, instead of "have entered into εισηλθον. The common reading is the correct one, and the other was originated, probably, from the unusual form of the expression, "have come into the world," as if they had come from another abode. That, however, is not necessarily implied, the language being such as would be properly used to denote the idea that there were such deceivers in the world.

Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Who maintain that he assumed the appearance only of a man, and was not really incarnate. 1Jn 1:2, 1Jn 1:3.

This is a deceiver. Every one who maintains this is to be regarded as a deceiver. And an antichrist. 1Jn 2:18; 1Jn 4:3.

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Look to yourselves. This seems to be addressed to the lady to whom he wrote, and to her children. The idea is, that they should be particularly on their guard, and that their first care should be to secure their own hearts, so that they should not be exposed to the dangerous attacks of error. When error abounds in the world, our first duty is not to attack it and make war upon it; it is to look to the citadel of our own souls, and see that all is well guardeed there. When an enemy invades a land, the

first thing will not be to go out against him, regardless of our own strength, or of the security of our own fortresses, but it will be to see that our forts are well manned, and that we are secure there from his assaults. If that is so, we may then go forth with confidence to meet him on the open field. In relation to an error that is in the world, the first thing for a Christian to do is to take care of his own heart.

That we lose not those things which we have wrought. Marg., "Or, gained", Some copies read, which ye have gained, but that ye. The reading here referred to in the margin is found in several Mss. and also in the Vulgate, Syriac, and AEthiopic versions. It is not, however, adopted in the late critical editions of the New Testament, and the common reading is probably genuine. The sense is not materially varied, and the common reading is not unnatural. John was exhorting the family to whom this epistle was written to take good heed to themselves while so many artful errorists were around them, lest they should be drawn away from the truth, and lose a part of the full reward which they might hope to receive in heaven. In doing this, nothing was more natural than that he, as a Christian friend, should group himself with them, and speak of himself as having the same need of caution, and express the feeling that he ought to strive also to obtain the full reward, thus showing that he was not disposed to address an exhortation to them which he was not willing to regard as applicable to himself. The truth which is taught here is one of interest to all Christians--that it is possible for even genuine Christians, by suffering themselves to be led into error, or by failure in duty, to lose a part of the reward which they might have obtained. The crown which they will wear in heaven will be less bright than that which they might have worn, and the throne which they will occupy will be less elevated. The rewards of heaven will be in accordance with the services rendered to the Redeemer; and it would not be right that they who turn aside, or falter in their course, should have the same exalted honours which they might have received if they had devoted themselves to God with ever-increasing fidelity. It is painful to think how many there are who begin the Christian career with burning zeal, as if they would strike for the highest rewards in heaven, but who soon waver in their course, and fall into some paralysing error, until at last they receive, perhaps, not half the reward which they might have obtained.

But that we receive a full reward. Such as will be granted to a life uniformly consistent and faithful; all that God has to bestow on his people when most faithful and true. But who can estimate the "full reward" of heaven, the unspeakable glory of those who make it the grand business of their lives to obtain all they can of its bliss? And who is there that does not feel that he ought to strive for a crown in which not one gem shall be wanting that might have sparkled there for ever?

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. In the doctrine which Christ taught, or the true doctrine respecting him. The language is somewhat ambiguous, like the phrase "the love of Christ," which may mean either his love to us, or our love to him. Comp. Jn 15:9. It is difficult to determine here which is the true sense--whether it means the doctrine or precepts which he taught, or the true doctrine respecting him. Macknight understands by it the doctrine taught by Christ and his apostles. It would seem most probable that this is the sense of the passage, but then it would include, of course, all that Christ taught respecting himself, as well as his other instructions. The essential idea is, that the truth must be held respecting the precepts, the character, and the work of the Saviour. Probably the immediate allusion here is to those to whom John so frequently referred as "antichrist," who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh, 2Jn 1:7. At the same time, however, he makes the remark general, that if any one did not hold the true doctrine respecting the Saviour, he had no real knowledge of God. See Jn 1:18, 5:23, 15:23, 17:3 1Jn 2:23.

Hath not God. Has no true knowledge of God. The truth taught here is, that it is essential to piety to hold the true doctrine respecting Christ.

He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ. In the true doctrine respecting Christ, or in the doctrine which he taught.

He hath both the Father and the Son. There is such an intimate union between the Father and the Son, that he who has just views of the one has also of the other. Comp. Jn 14:7, Jn 4:9; Jn 14:10, Jn 14:11, and 1Jn 2:23.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God-speed:

If there come any unto you. Any professed teacher of religion. There can be no doubt that she to whom this epistle was written was accustomed to entertain such teachers.

And bring not this doctrine. This doctrine which Christ taught, or the true doctrine respecting him and his religion.

Receive him not into your house. This cannot mean that no acts of kindness, in any circumstances, were to be shown to such persons; but that there was to be nothing done which could be fairly construed as encouraging or contenancing them as religious teachers. The true rule would seem to be, in regard to such persons, that, so far as we have intercourse with them as neighbours, or strangers, we are to be honest, true, kind, and just, but we are to do nothing that will contenance them as religious teachers. We are not to attend on their instruction, Prov 19:27; we are not to receive them into our houses, or to entertain them as religious teachers; we are not to commend them to others, or to give them any reason to use our names or influence in propagating error. It would not be difficult to practise this rule, and yet to show to others all the kindness, and all the attention in circumstances of want, which religion demands. A man who is truly consistent is never suspected of countenancing error, even when he is distinguished for liberality, and is ready, like the good Samaritan, to pur in oil and wine in the wounds of any waylaid traveller. The command not to "receive such an one into the house," in such circumstances as those referred to by John, would be probably understood literally, as he doubltless designed that it should be. To do that, to meet such persons with a friendly greeting, would be construed as countenancing their doctrine, and as commending them to others, and hence it was forbidden that they should be entertained as such. This treatment would not be demanded where no such interpretation could be put on receiving a friend or relative who held different and even erroneous views, or in showing kindness to a stranger who differed from us, but it would apply to the receiving and entertaining a professed teacher of religion, as such; and the rule is as applicable now as it was then.

Neither bid him God speed. καιχαιρειναυτωμηλεγετε. "And do not say to him, hail, or joy." Do not wish him joy; do not hail, or salute him. The word used expresses the common form of salutation, as when we wish one health, success, prosperity, Mt 26:49, Acts 15:23, 23:26 Jas 1:1. It would be understood as expressing a wish for success in the enterprise in which they were embarked; and though we should love all men, and desire their welfare, and sincerely seek their happiness, yet we can properly wish no one success in a career of sin and error.

11 for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

For he that biddeth him, God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds. Shows that he countenances and approves of the doctrine which is taught. Comp. 1Timm 5:22.

Final Greetings

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

Having many things to write unto you. That I would wish to say. This language is such as would be used by one who was hurried, or who was in feeble health, or who hoped soon to see the person written to. In such a case only the points would be selected which were of most immediate and pressing importance, and the remainder would be reserved for a more free personal interview.

I would not write with paper. The word paper here conveys an idea which is not strictly correct. Paper, as that term is now understood, was not invented until long after this period. The material designated by the word used by John (χαρτης) was the Egyptian papyrus, and the particular thing denoted was a leaf made out of that plant. The sheets were made from membranes of the plant closely pressed together. This plant was found also in Syria and Babylon, but it was produced in greater abundance in Egypt, and that was the plant which was commonly used. It was so comparatively cheap, that it in a great measure superseded the earlier materials for writing--plates of lead, or stone, or the skins of animals. It is probable that the books of the New Testament were written on this species of paper. Comp. Hug, Intro. chap. iii., 11.

And ink. The ink which was commonly employed in writing was made of soot and water, with a mixture of some species of gum to give it consistency and durability.--Lucke. The instrument or pen was made of a reed.

But I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face. Marg., as in Greek, mouth to mouth. The phrase is a common one, to denote conversation with any one, especially free and confidential conversation. Comp. Nu 12:8, Jer 32:4.

That our joy may be full. Marg., your. The marginal reading has arisen from a variation in the Greek copies. The word our is best sustained, and accords best with the connexion. John would be likely to express the hope that he would find pleasure from such an interview. 1Jn 1:4. Compare Rom 1:11,12.

The Third Epistle of John
[3 John]

3 John-1

Salutation

1 The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Unto the well-beloved Gaius. Three persons of this name are elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament--Gaius, whom Paul in Rom 16:23 calls "his host," and whom he says (1Cor 1:15) he baptized, residing at Corinth, (Rom 16:23;) Gaius of Macedonia, one of Paul's companions in travel, who was arrested by an excited mob at Ephesus, (Acts 19:29;)and Gaius of Derbe, who went with Paul and Timothy into Asia, Acts 20:4. Whether either of these persons is referred to here, cannot with certainty be determined. If it were any of them, it was probably the last-mentioned--Gaius of Derbe. There is no objection to the supposition that he was the one, unless it be from the fact that this epistle was probably written many years after the transaction mentioned in Acts 20:4, and the probability that Gaius might not have lived so

long. The name was not an uncommon one, and it cannot be determined now who he was, or where he lived. Whether he had any office in the church is unknown, but he seems to have been a man of wealth and influence. The word translated "well-beloved," means simply beloved. It shows that he was a personal friend of the writer of this epistle.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Beloved, I wish above all things. Marg., pray. The word used here commonly means in the New Testament to pray; but it is also employed to express a strong and earnest desire for anything, Acts 27:29, Rom 9:3, 2Cor 13:9. This is probably all that is implied here. The phrase rendered "above all things"--περιπαντων --would be more correctly rendered here "concerning, or in respect to all things ;" and the idea is, that John wished earnestly that in all respects he might have the same kind of prosperity which his soul had. The common translation "above all things" would seem to mean that John valued health and outward prosperity more than he did anything else; that he wished that more than his usefulness or salvation. This cannot be the meaning, and is not demanded by the proper interpretation of the original. See this shown by Locke, in loc. The sense is, "In every respect, I wish that it may go as well with you as it does with your soul; that in your worldly prosperity, your comfort, and your bodily health, you may be as prosperous as you are in your religion." This is the reverse of the wish which we are commonly constrained to express for our friends; for such is usually the comparative want of prosperity and advancement in their spiritual interests, that it is an expression of benevolence to desire that they might prosper in that respect as much as they do in others.

That thou mayest prosper, ευοδουσθαι. This word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Rom 1:10, rendered have a prosperous journey; 1Cor 16:2, rendered hath prospered; and in the passage before us. It means, properly, to lead in a good way; to prosper one's journey; and then to make prosperous; to give success to; to be prospered. It would apply here to any plan or purpose entertained. It would include success in business, happiness in domestic relations, or prosperity in any of the engagements and transactions in which a Christian might lawfully engage. It shows that it is right to wish that our friends may have success in the works of their hands and their plans of life.

And be in health. To enjoy bodily health. It is not necessary to suppose, in order to a correct interpretation of this, that Gaius was at that time suffering from bodily indisposition, though perhaps it is most natural to suppose that, as John makes the wish for his health so prominent. But it is common, in all circumstances, to wish for the health and prosperity of our friends; and it is as proper as it is common, if we do not give that a degree of prominence above the welfare of the soul.

Even as thy soul prospereth. John had learned, it would seem, from the "brethren" who had come to him, (3Jn 1:3,) that Gaius was living as became a Christian; that he was advancing in the knowledge of the truth, and was exemplary in the duties of the Christian life; and he prays that in all other respects he might be prospered as much as he was in that. It is not very common that a man is more prospered in his spiritual interests than he is in his other interests, or that we can, in our wishes for the welfare of our friends, make the prosperity of the soul, and the practice and enjoyment of religion, the standard of our wishes in regard to other things. It argues a high state of piety when we can, as the expression of our highest desire for the welfare of our friends, express the hope that they may be in all respects as much prospered as they are in their spiritual concerns.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came. Who these were is not certainly known. They may have been members of the same church with Gaius, who, for some reason, had visited the writer of this epistle; or they may have been the "brethren" who had gone from him with a letter of commendation to the church, (1Jn 1:9,) and had been rejected by the church through the influence of Diotrephes, and who, after having been hospitably entertained by Gaius, had again returned to the writer of this epistle. In that case, they would of course bear honourable testimony to the kindness which they had received from Gaius, and to his Christian character.

And testified of the truth that is in thee. That you adhere steadfastly to the truth, notwithstanding the fact that errors abound, and that there are many false teachers in the world.

Even as thou walkest in the truth. Livest in accordance with the truth. The writer had made the same remark of the children of Cyria, to whom the second epistle was directed. 2Jn 1:4.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. That they adhere steadfastly to the truth, and that they live in accordance with it. This is such language as would be used by an aged apostle when speaking of those who had been converted by his instrumentality, and who looked up to him as a father; and we may, therefore, infer that Gaius had been converted under the ministry of John, and that he was probably a much younger man than he was. John, the aged apostle, says that he had no higher happiness than to learn, respecting those who regarded him as their spiritual father, that they were steadfast in their adherence to the doctrines of religion. The same thing may be said now

(a.) of all the ministers of the gospel, that their highest comfort is found in the fact that those to whom they minister, whether still under their care or removed from them, persevere in a steadfast attachment to the true doctrines of religion, and live accordingly; and

(b.) of all Christian parents respecting their own children. The highest joy that a Christian parent can have is to know that his children, whether at home or abroad, adhere to the truths of religion, and live in accordance with the requirements of the gospel of Christ. If a child wished to confer the highest possible happiness on his parents when with them, it would be by becoming a decided Christian; if, when abroad, in foreign lands or his own, he wished to convey intelligence to them that would most thrill their hearts with joy, it would be to announce to them that he had given his heart to God. There is no joy in a family like that when children are converted; there is no news that comes from abroad that diffuses so much happiness through the domestic circle as the intelligence that a child is truly converted to the Saylout. There is nothing that would give more peace to the dying pillow of the Christian parent, than to be able to leave the world with the assurance that his children would always walk in truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. That they adhere steadfastly to the truth, and that they live in accordance with it. This is such language as would be used by an aged apostle when speaking of those who had been converted by his instrumentality, and who looked

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Gaius' Hospitality Commended

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

Beloved, thou doest faithfully. In the previous verses the writer had commended Gaius for his attachment to truth, and his general correctness in his Christian life. He now speaks more particularly of his acts of generous hospitality, and says that he had fully, in that respect, done his duty as a Christian.

Whatsoever thou doest. In all your intercourse with them, and in all your conduct towards them. The particular thing which led to this remark was his hospitality; but the testimony respecting his general conduct had been such as to justify this commendation.

To the brethren. Probably to Christians who were well known to him--perhaps referring to Christians in his own church.

And to strangers. Such as had gone to the church of which he was a member with a letter of commendation from John. Rom 12:13, and Heb 13:2.

6 which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church. It would seem that they had returned to John, and borne honourab1e testimony to the love manifested to them by Gaius. Before what church they had borne this testimony is unknown. Perhaps it was the church in Ephesus.

Whom if thou bring forward on their journey, ουςπροπεμψας. "Whom bringing forward, or having brought forward." The word refers to aid rendered them in their journey, in facilitating their travels, either by personally accompanying them, by furnishing them the means of prosecuting their journey, or by hospitably entertaining them. Probably Gains aided them in every way in which it was practicable. It has been made a question whether this refers to the fact that he had thus aided them in some visit which they had made to the church where Gaius was, or to a visit which they purposed to make. The Greek would seem to favour the latter construction, and yet it would appear from the epistle, that the "brethren and strangers" actually had been with him; that they had been rejected by the church through the influence of Diotrephes, and had been thrown upon the hospitality of Gaius, and that they had returned, and had borne honourable testimony to his hospitality. These views can be reconciled by supposing, as Loicke does, that having been once on their travels, and having shared the hospitality of Gaius, they were purposing to visit that region again, and that John, praising him for his former hospitality, commends them again to him, stating the reason (3Jn 1:9,10) why he did not, in accordance with the usual custom, recommend them to the care of the church. They had now gone out (3Jn 1:7) on the same errand on which they had formerly gone, and they had now equal claims to the hospitality of the friends of religion.

After a godly sort. Margin, as in Greek, worthy of God. The meaning is, As becomes those who serve God; or as becomes those who are professors of his religion.

Thou shalt do well. You will do that which religion requires in these circumstances.

7 because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

Because that for his name's sake. The word "his" here refers to God; and the idea is, that they had undertaken this journey not on their own account, but in the cause of religion.

They went forth. Or, they have gone forth--εξηλθον-- referring to the journey which they had then undertaken; not to the former one.

Taking nothing of the Gentiles. The term Gentile embraced all who were not Jews, and it is evident that these persons went forth particularly to labour among the heathen. When they went, they resolved, it seems, to receive no part of their support from them, but to depend on the aid of their Christian brethren, and hence they were at first commended to the church of which Gains and Diotrephes were members, and on this second excursion were commended particularly to Gains.

Why they resolved to take nothing of the Gentiles is not stated, but it was doubtless from prudential considerations, lest it should hinder their success among them, and expose them to the charge of being actuated by a mercenary spirit. There were circumstances in the early propagation of Christianity which made it proper, in order to avoid this reproach, to preach the gospel "without charge," though the doctrine is everywhere laid down in the Bible that it is the duty of those to whom it is preached to contribute to its maintenance, and that it is the right of those who preach to expect and receive a support. On this subject, 1Cor 9:15, 1Cor 9:18.

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth.

We therefore ought to receive such. All of us ought hospitably to entertain and aid such persons. The work in which they are engaged is one of pure benevolence. They have no selfish aims and ends in it. They do not even look for the supplies of their wants among the people to whom they go to minister; and we ought, therefore, to aid them in their work, and to contribute to their support. The apostle doubtless meant to urge this duty particularly on Gaius; but in order to show that he recognised tile obligation himself, he uses the term "we," and speaks of it as a duty binding on all Christians.

That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth. All Christians cannot go forth to preach the gospel, but all may contribute something to the support of those who do; and in this case they would have a joint participation in the work of spreading the truth. The same reasoning which was applicable to that case, is also applicable now in regard to the duty of supporting those who go forth to preach the gospel to the destitute.

The Opposition of Diotrephes

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

I wrote unto the church. That is, on the former occasion when they went forth. At that time, John naturally commended them to the kind attentions of the church, not doubting but that aid would be rendered them in prosecuting their benevolent work among the Gentiles. The epistle which was written on that occasion is now lost, and its contents cannot now be ascertained. It was, probably, however, a letter of mere commendation, perhaps stating the object which these brethren had in view, and soliciting the aid of the church. The Latin Vulgate renders this, scripsissem forsian ecclesia, "I would have written, perhaps, to the church, but Diotrephes," etc. Macknight also renders this, "I would have written," supposing the sense to be, that John would have commended them to the whole church rather than to a private member, if he had not been aware of the influence and opposition of Diotrephes. The Syriac version also adopts the same rendering. Several manuscripts also, of later date, introduced a particle, (εν,) by which the same rendering would be demanded in the Greek, though that reading is not sustained by good authority. Against this mode of rendering the passage, the reasons seem to me to be clear.

(1.) As already remarked, the reading in the Greek which would require it is not sustained by good authority.

(2.) The fair and obvious interpretation of the Greek word used by the apostle, (εγραψα,) without that particle, is, I wrote --implying that it had been already done.

(3.) It is more probable that John had written to the church on some former occasion, and that his recommendation had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes, than that he would be deterred by the apprehension that his recommendation would be rejected. It seems to me, therefore, that the fair interpretation of this passages is, that these brethren had gone forth on some former occasion, commended by John to the church, and had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes, and that now he commends them to Gaius, by whom they

had been formerly entertained, and asks him to renew his hospitality to them.

But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminenee among them, reeeiveth us not. Does not admit our authority, or would not comply with any such recommendation. The idea is, that he rejected his interference in the matter, and was not disposed to acknowledge him in any way. Of Diotrephes, nothing more is known than is here specified. Compare the analysis of the epistle. Whether he were an officer in the church--a pastor, a ruling elder, a deacon, a vestryman, a warden, or a private individual--we have no means of ascertaining. The presumption, from the phrase "who loveth to have the pre-eminence," would rather seem to be that he was an aspiring man, arrogating rights which he had not, and assuming authority to which he was not entitled by virtue of any office. Still he might have held an office, and might have arrogated authority, as many have done, beyond what properly belonged to it. The single word rendered "who loveth to have the pre-eminence," (φιλοπρωτευων,) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means simply, who loves to be first--meaning that he loved to be at the head of all things, to rule, to lord it over others. It is clearly supposed here, that the church would have complied with the request of the writer if it had not been for this man. What were the alleged grounds for the course which he constrained the church to take, we are not informed; the real ground, the apostle says, was his desire to rule. There may have been at the bottom of it some secret dislike of John, or some private grudge; but the alleged ground may have been, that the church was independent, and that it should reject all foreign interference; or that the church was unable to support those men; or that the work in which they were engaged was one of doubtful propriety. Whatever was the cause, the case furnishes an illustration of the bad influence of one ambitious and arrogant man in a church. It is often in the power of one such man to bring a whole church under his control, and effectually to embarrass all its movements, and to prevent all the good which it would otherwise accomplish. When it is said, "but Diotrephes receiveth us not," the reference is doubtless to John, and the meaning is, either that he did not acknowledge him as an apostle, or that he did not recognise his right to interfere in the affairs of the church, or that he did not regard his recommendation of these brethren. The first of these suppositions is hardly probable; but, though he may have admitted that he was an

apostle, there were perhaps some reasons operating in this particular case why he prevailed on the church to reject those who had been thus commended to their hospitality.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

Wherefore, if I come. He was evidently expecting soon to make a visit to Gaius, and to the church, 3Jn 1:14.

I will remember his deeds which he doeth. That is, he would punish his arrogance and presumption; would take measures that he should be dealt with in a proper manner. There is no evidence whatever that this is said in a vindictive or revengeful spirit, or that the writer spoke of it merely as a personal matter. From anything that can be shown to the contrary, if it had been a private and personal affair merely, the matter might have been dropped, and never referred to again. But what had been done was public. It pertained to the authority of the apostle, the duty of the church, and the character of the brethren who had been commended to them. If the letter was written, as is supposed by the aged John, and his authority had been utterly rejected by the influence of this one man, then it was proper that that authority should be asserted. If it was the duty of the church to have received these men, who had been thus recommended to them, and it had been prevented from doing what it would otherwise have done, by the influence of one man, then it was proper that the influence of that man should be restrained, and that the church should see that he was not to control it. If the feelings and the character of these brethren had been injured by being rudely thrust out of the church, and held up as unworthy of public confidence, then it was proper that their character should be vindicated, and that the author of the wrong should be dealt with in a suitable manner. No one can show that this was not all that the apostle proposed to do, or that any feelings of private vindictiveness entered into his purpose to "remember" what Diotrephes had done; and the existence of any such feelings should not be charged on the apostle without proof. There is no more reason to suppose this in his case than there was in the case of Paul, in administering discipline in the church of Corinth, (1Cor 5:3-5,) or than there is in any instance of administering discipline now.

Prating against us. The word prate, (φλυαρεω,) occurring nowhere else in the New Testament, means to" overflow with talk," (Gr. φλυω, Lat. fluo, flow;) to talk much without weight, or to little purpose; to be loquacious; to trifle; or, to use an expression common among us, and which accords well with the Greek, to run on in talk, without connexion or sense. The word does not properly imply that there was malignity or ill-feeling in what was said, but that the talk was of an idle, foolish, and unprofitable character. As John here, however, specifies that there was a bad spirit in the manner in which Diotrephes expressed himself, the real thing which is implied in the use of the word here is, that there were much talk of that kind; that he was addicted to this habit of running on against the apostle; and that he was thus constantly undermining his influence, and injuring his character.

With malicious words. Gr., "evil words;" words that were fitted to do injury.

And not content therewith. Not satisfied with venting his private feelings in talk. Some persons seem to be satisfied with merely talking against others, and take no other measures to injure them; but Diotrephes was not. He himself rejected the brethren, and persuaded the church to do the same thing. Bad as evil talking is, and troublesome as a man may be who is always "prating" about matters that do not go according to his mind, yet it would be comparatively well if things always ended with that, and if the loquacious and the dissatisfied never took measures openly to wrong others.

Neither doth he himself receive the brethren. Does not himself treat them as Christian brethren, or with the hospitality which is due to them. He had not done it on the former visit, and John evidently supposed that the same thing would occur again.

And forbiddeth them that would. From this it is clear that there were those in the church who were disposed to receive them in a proper manner; and from anything that appears, the church, as such, would have been inclined to do it, if it had not been for the influence of this one man.

And casteth them out of the church. Comp. Lk 6:22. It has been made a question whether the reference here is to the members of the church who were disposed to receive these brethren, or to the brethren themselves. Locke, Macknight, and some others, suppose that it refers to those in the church who were willing to receive them, and whom Diotrephes had excommunicated on that account. Heumann, Carpzoviius, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others, suppose that it refers to these strangers, and that the meaning is, that Diotrephes would not receive them into the society of Christians, and thus compelled them to go to another place. That this latter is the correct interpretation seems to me to be evident, for it was of the treatment which they had received that the apostle was speaking.

The Good Report concerning Demetrius

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. There can be no doubt that in this exhortation the writer had Diotrephes particularly in his eye, and that he means to exhort Gaius not to imitate his example. He was a man of influence in the church, and though Gaius had shown that he was disposed to act in an independent manner, yet it was not improper to exhort him not to be influenced by the example of any one who did wrong. John wished to excite him to acts of liberal and generous hospitality.

He that doeth good is of God. He shows that he resembles God, for God continually does good. See the sentiment explained 1Jn 3:7.

He that doeth evil hath not seen God. 1Jn 1:8 3Jn 1:9. 3Jn 1:10

12 Demetrius hath good report of all *men,* and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Demetrius hath good report of all men. Little is known of Demetrius. Locke supposes that he resided near the place where the author of this epistle lived, and was connected with the church there, and was probably the bearer of this epistle. It is impossible to determine with

certainty on this point, but there is one circumstance which seems to make it probable that he was a member of the same church with Gaius, and had united with him in showing Christian hospitality to these strangers. It is the use of the phrase "hath good report of all," implying that some testimony was borne to his character beyond what the writer personally knew. It is possible, indeed, that the writer would have used this term respecting him if he lived in the same place with himself, as expressing the fact that he bore a good character, but it is a phrase which would be more appropriately used if we suppose that he was a member of the same church with Gaius, and that John means to say that an honourable testimony was borne of his character by all those brethren, and by all others as far as he knew.

And of the truth itself. Not only by men, who might possibly be deceived in the estimate of character, but by fact. It was not merely a reputation founded on what appeared in his conduct, but in truth and reality. His deportment, his life, his deeds of benevolence, all concurred with the testimony which was borne by men to the excellency of his character. There is, perhaps, particular reference here to his kind and hospitable treatment of those brethren.

Yea, and we also bear record. John himself had personally known him. He had evidently visited the place where he resided on some former occasion, and could now add his own testimony, which no one would call in question, to his excellent character.

And ye know that our record is true. This is in the manner of John, who always spoke of himself as having such a character for truth that no one who knew him would call it in question. Every Christian should have such a character; every man might if he would. Compare Jn 19:35, 21:24.

Final Greetings

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

14 but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.
Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

The Epistle of Jude
[Jude]

Jude-1
Salutation

1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,
To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in
Jesus Christ, *and* called:
2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

Judgment on False Teachers

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common
salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye
should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto
the saints.

To write unto you of the common salvation. The salvation common to Jews and Gentiles, and to all who bore the Christian name. The meaning is, that he did not think of writing on any subject pertaining to a particular class or party, but on some subject in which all who were Christians had a common interest. There are great matters of religion held in common by all Christians, and it is important for religious teachers to address their fellow Christians on those common topics. After all, they are more important than the things which we may hold as peculiar to our own party or sect, and should be more frequently dwelt upon.

That ye should earnestly contend. Comp. Gal 2:5. The word here rendered earnestly contend--επαγωνιζεσθαι--is one of those words used by the sacred writers which have allusion to the Grecian games. 1Cor 9:24, seq. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means to contend upon--i. e. for or about anything; and would be applicable to the earnest effort put forth in those games to obtain the prize. The reference here, of course, is only to contention by argument, by reasoning, by holding fast the principles of religion, and maintaining them against all opposers. It would not justify

"contention" by arms, by violence, or by persecution; for (a.) that is contrary to the spirit of true religion, and to the requirements of the gospel elsewhere revealed; (b.) it is not demanded by the proper meaning of the word, all that that fairly implies being the effort to maintain truth by argument and by a steady life; (c.) it is not the most effectual way to keep up truth in the world to attempt to do it by force and arms.

Once delivered unto the saints. The word here used (απαξ) may mean either once for all, in the sense that it was then complete, and would not be repeated; or formerly to wit, by the author of the system. Doddridge, Estius, and Beza, understand it in the former way; Macknight and others in the latter; Benson improperly supposes that it means fully or perfectly. Perhaps the more usual sense of the word would be, that it was done once in the sense that it is not to be done again, and therefore in the sense that it was then complete, and that nothing was to be added to it. There is indeed the idea that it was formerly done, but with this additional thought, that it was then complete. Compare, for this use of the Greek word rendered once, Heb 9:26-28, 10:2, 1Pet 3:18. The delivering of this faith to the saints here referred to is evidently that made by revelation, or the system of truth which God has made known in his word. Everything which He has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it whatever, for every part of that system is of value, to mankind. By a careful study of the Bible we are to ascertain what that system is, and then in all places, at all times, in all circumstances, and at every sacrifice, we are to maintain it.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

For there are certain men crept in unawares. The apostle now gives a reason for thus defending the truth, to wit, that there were artful and wicked men who had crept into the church, pretending to be religious teachers, but whose doctrines tended to sap the very foundations of truth. The apostle Peter, describing these same persons, says, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies." 2Pet 2:1. Substantially the same idea is expressed here by saying that they "had crept in unawares;" that is, they had come in by stealth; they had not come by

a bold and open avowal of their real sentiments. They professed to teach the Christian religion, when in fact they denied some of its fundamental doctrines; they professed to be holy, when in fact they were living most scan- dalous lives. In all ages there have been men who were willing to do this for base purposes.

Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. He tells us they were men fore-ordained to condemnation; mark, not fore-ordained to seduction to sin, but to condemnation for sin; the word rendered fore-ordained, signifies before written, or before prophesied of, by Enoch and others, that they would by their great sins and impieties fall into that condemnation which God hath ordained as a just reward to their transgressions; God never ordaineth or decreeth any man's sin, but he decreeth and foretelleth their condemnation for sin. That is, to the condemnation (κριμα) which he proceeds to specify. The statements in the subsequent part of the epistle show that by the word used here he refers to the wrath that shall come upon the ungodly in the future world. See Jude 1:5-7,15. The meaning clearly is, that the punishment which befell the unbelieving Israelites, (Jude 1:5;) the rebel angels, (Jude 1:6;) the inhabitants of Sodom, (Jude 1:7;) and of which Enoch prophesied, (Jude 1:15,) awaited those persons. The phrase of old--παλαι--means long ago, implying that a considerable time had elapsed, though without determining how much. It is used in the New Testament only in the following places: Mt 11:21, "they would have repented long ago;" Mk 15:44, "whether he had been any while dead;" Lk 10:13, they had a great while ago repented; Heb 1:1, "spake in time past unto the fathers;" 2Pet 1:9, "purged from his old sins;" and in the passage before us. So far as this word is concerned, the reference here may have been to any former remote period, whether in the time of the prophets, of Enoch, or in eternity. It does not necessarily imply that it was eternal, though it "might apply to that, if the thing referred to was, from other sources, certainly known to have been from eternity. It may be doubted, however, whether, if the thing referred to had occurred from eternity, this would have been the word used to express it, (comp. Eph 1:4;) and it is certain that it cannot be proved from the use of this word (παλαι) that the "ordination to condemnation" was eternal. Whatever may be referred to by that "ordaining to condemnation," this word will not prove that it was an eternal ordination. All that is fairly implied in it will be met by the supposition that it occurred in any remote period, say in the time of

the prophets. The word here rendered "before ordained": προγεγραμμενοι, from προγραφω--occurs in the New Testament only here and in the following places: Rom 15:4, twice, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" Gal 3:1, "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth;" and Eph 3:3, "As I wrote afore in few words." Gal 3:1. In these places there is evidently no idea implied of ordaining, or preordaining, in the sense in which those words are now commonly understood. To that word there is usually attached the idea of designating or appointing as by an arbitrary decree; but no such meaning enters into the word here used. The Greek word properly means, to write before; then to have written before; and then, with reference to time future, to post up beforehand in writing; to announce by posting up on a written tablet, as of some ordinance, law, or requirement; as descriptive of what will be, or what should be. Comp. Rob. Lexicon. Burder (in Rosenmuller's Morgenland, in loc.) remarks that "the names of those who were to be tried were usually posted up in a public place, as was also their sentence after their condemnation, and that this was denoted by the same Greek word which the apostle uses here. Eisner," says he, "remarks that the Greek authors use the word as applicable to those who, among the Romans, were said to be proscribed; that is, those whose names were posted up in a public place, whereby they were appointed to death, and in reference to whom a reward was offered to any one who would kill them." The idea here clearly is that of some such designation beforehand as would occur if the persons had been publicly posted as appointed to death. Their names, indeed, were not mentioned, but there was such a description of them, or of their character, that it was clear who were meant. In regard to the question what the apostle means by such a designation or appointment beforehand, it is clear that he does not refer in this place to any arbitrary or eternal decree, but to such a designation as was made by the facts to which he immediately refers- that is, to the Divine prediction that there would be such persons, (Jude 1:14,15,18;) and to the consideration that in the case of the unbelieving Israelites, the rebel angels, and the inhabitants of Sodom, there was as clear a proof that such persons would be punished as if their names had been posted up. All these instances bore on just such cases as these, and in these facts they might read their sentence as clearly as if their names had been written on the face of the sky. This interpretation seems to me to embrace all that the words fairly

imply, and all that the exigence of the case demands; and if this be correct, then two things follow:

(1.) that this passage should not be adduced to prove that God has from all eternity, by an arbitrary decree, ordained a certain portion of the race to destruction, what-ever may be true on that point; and,

(2.) that all abandoned sinners now may see, in the facts which have occurred in the treatment of the wicked in past times, just as certain evidence of their destruction, if they do not repent, as if their names were written in letters of light, and if it were announced to the universe that they would be damned.

Ungodly men. Men without piety or true religion, whatever may be their pretensions.

Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. Abusing the doctrines of grace so as to give indulgence to corrupt and carnal propensities. That is, probably, they gave this form to their teaching, as Antinomians have often done, that by the gospel they were released from the obligations of the law, and might give indulgence to their sinful passions in order that grace might abound. Antinomianism began early in the world, and has always had a wide prevalence. The liability of the doctrines of grace to be thus abused was foreseen by Paul, and against such abuse he earnestly sought to guard the Christians of his time, Rom 6:1, seq.

And denying the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. 2Pet 2:1. That is, the doctrines which they held were in fact a denial of the only true God, and of the Redeemer of men. It cannot be supposed that they openly and formally did this, for then they could have made no pretensions to the name Christian, or even to religion of any kind; but the meaning must be, that in fact the doctrines which they held amounted to a denial of the true God, and of the Saviour in his proper nature and work. Some have proposed to read this, "denying the only Lord God, even (και) our Lord Jesus Christ;" but the Greek does not

demand this construetion even if it would admit it, and it is most in accordance with Scripture usage to retain the common translation. It may be added, also, that the common translation expresses all that the exigence of the passage requires. Their doctrines and practice tended as really to the denial of the true God as they did to the denial of the Lord Jesus. Peter in his second epistle, (2Pet 2:1,) has adverted only to one aspect of their doetrine--that it denied the Saviour; Jude adds, if the common reading be correct, that it tended also to a denial of the true God. The word God (θεον) is wanting in many manuscripts, and in the Vulgate and Coptic versions, and Mill, Hammond, and Bengel suppose it should be omitted. It is also wanting in the editions of Tittman, Griesbach, and Rahn. The amount of authority seems to be against it. The word rendered Lord, in the phrase "Lord God," is δεσποτης, despotes, and means here Sovereign, or Ruler, but it is a word which may be appropriately applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same word which is used in the parallel passage in 2Pet 2:1. See it explained 2Pet 2:1. If the word "God" is to be omitted in this place, the passage would be wholly applicable, beyond question, to the Lord Jesus, and would mean, "denying our only Sovereign and Lord, Jesus Christ." It is perhaps impossible now to determine with certainty the true reading of the text; nor is it very material. Whichever of the readings is correct; whether the word (θεον) God is to be retained or not, the sentiment expressed would be true, that their doctrines amounted to a practical denial of the only true God; and equally so that they were a denial of the only Sovereign and Lord of the true Christian.

The occasion the apostle had to write to this purport. As evil manners give rise to good laws, so dangerous errors often give just occasion to the proper defence of important truths. Here observe,

1. Ungodly men are the great enemies of the faith of Christ and the peace of the church. Those who deny or corrupt the one, and disturb the other, are here expressly styled ungodly men. We might have truth with peace (a most desirable thing) were there none (ministers or private Christians) in our particular churches and congregations but truly godly men--a blessing scarcely to be looked or hoped for on this side heaven. Ungodly men raise scruples, merely to advance and promote their own selfish, ambitious, and covetous ends. This has been the plague of the church in all past ages, and I am afraid no age is, or will be, wholly free from such men and such practices as long as

time shall last. Observe, Nothing cuts us off from the church but that which cuts us off from Christ; namely, reigning infidelity and ungodliness. We must abhor the thought of branding particular parties or persons with this character, especially of doing it without the least proof, or, as it too often happens, the least shadow of it. Those are ungodly men who live without God in the world, who have no regard to God and conscience. Those are to be dreaded and consequently to be avoided, not only who are wicked by sins of commission, but also who are ungodly by sins of omission, who, for example, restrain prayer before God, who dare not reprove a rich man, when it is the duty of their place so to do, for fear of losing his favour and the advantage they promise themselves therefrom, who do the work of the Lord negligently, &c.

2. Those are the worst of ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, who take encouragement to sin more boldly because the grace of God has abounded, and still abounds, so wonderfully, who are hardened in their impieties by the extent and fulness of gospel grace, the design of which is to reduce men from sin, and bring them unto God. Thus therefore to wax wanton under so great grace, and turn it into an occasion of working all uncleanness with greediness, and hardening ourselves in such a course by that very grace which is the last and most forcible means to reclaim us from it, is to render ourselves the vilest, the worst, and most hopeless of sinners.

3. Those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness do in effect deny the Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, they deny both natural and revealed religion. They strike at the foundation of natural religion, for they deny the only Lord God; and they overturn all the frame of revealed religion, for they deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Now his great design in establishing revealed religion in the world was to bring us unto God. To deny revealed religion is virtually to overturn natural religion, for they stand or fall together, and they mutually yield light and force to each other. Would to God our modern deists, who live in the midst of gospel light, would seriously consider this, and cautiously, diligently, and impartially examine what it is that hinders their receiving the gospel, while they profess themselves fully persuaded of all the principles and duties of natural religion! Never to tallies answered more exactly to each other than these do, so that it seems absurd to receive the one and reject the other. One would think

it were the fairer way to receive both or reject both; though perhaps the more plausible method, especially in this age, is to act the part they do.

4. Those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness are ordained unto condemnation. They sin against the last, the greatest, and most perfect remedy; and so are without excuse. Those who thus sin must needs die of their wounds, of their disease, are of old ordained to this condemnation, whatever that expression means. But what if our translators had thought fit to have rendered the words palai progegrammenoi--of old fore-written of, as persons who would through their own sin and folly become the proper subjects of this condemnation, where had the harm been? Plain Christians had not been troubled with dark, doubtful, and perplexing thoughts about reprobation, which the strongest heads cannot enter far into, can indeed bear but little of, without much loss and damage. Is it not enough that early notice was given by inspired writers that such seducers and wicked men should arise in later times, and that every one, being fore-warned of, should be fore-armed against them? 5. We ought to contend earnestly for the faith, in opposition to those who would corrupt or deprave it, such as have crept in unawares: a wretched character, to be sure, but often very ill applied by weak and ignorant people, and even by those who themselves creep in unawares, who think their ipse dixit should stand for a law to all their followers and admirers. Surely faithful humble ministers are helpers of their people's joy, peace, and comfort; not lords of their faith! Whoever may attempt to corrupt the faith, we ought to contend earnestly against them. The more busy and crafty the instruments and agents of Satan are, to rob us of the truth, the more solicitous should we be to hold it fast, always provided we be very sure that we fasten no wrong or injurious characters on persons, parties, or sentiments.

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

The next example set before them, is that of the apostate angels, who for their rebellion against God were thrown down from heaven, and

are reserved as so many prisoners in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day, when their condition will be more miserable than now it is. Now, if God did not spare apostatizing angels, surely he will not spare apostatizing seducers.

Note here, 1. The sin of the angels; they left their first state, namely, their state of holiness.

2. Their punishment; they left their own habitation, they departed from that place of happiness and glory which before they enjoyed; when they changed their nature, they changed their place: the presence of an holy God, is no place for unholy persons.
Note, 3. That the angels are kept in chains, and those chains are everlasting; the chain of God's eternal decree holds them; the chain of their own guilt holds them; the chain of utter despair eternally holds them.
Note, 4. That the day of judgment will be a great day, and at that day the punishment of fallen angels will be far greater than now it is; when heaven's joys are full, then hell's torments will be full, and not before.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Another example of God's severity against sin and sinners, is Sodom and Gomorrah, Adma and Zeboim, who having themselves up to the lusts of uncleanness, were in an extraordinary manner destroyed by fire from heaven, which was a forerunner of that eternal fire of hell, which they are to suffer to all eternity, and so may and ought to be a terrifying example and timely warning to all persons, that they fall not into the like sins.
Learn, 1. That the sin of uncleanness doth exceedingly displease and provoke God to punish above other sins, because it defiles both soul and body; it makes a sty of a temple: and because it is a sin usually accompanied with final impenitency, "none that go into her return:" that is, very few. Whoredom is a deep ditch, the abhorred of God do fall into it.
Learn, 2. That the sin of uncleanness is remarkably followed with vengeanace, even with eternal vengeance: God returns flames for flames, and revenges the fire of lust with the fire of hell.

8 Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

Verse 8. Likewise also. In the same way do these persons defile the flesh, or resemble the inhabitants of Sodom; that is, they practise the same kind of vices. What the apostle says is, that their character resembled that of the inhabitants of Sodom; the example which he adduces of the punishment which was brought on those sinners, leaves it to be clearly inferred that the persons of whom he was speaking would be punished in a similar manner. These filthy dreamers. The word filthy has been supplied by our translators, but there is no good reason why it should have been introduced. The Greek word (ενυπνιαζω) means to dream; and is applied to these persons as holding doctrines and opinions which sustained the same relation to truth which dreams do to good sense. Their doctrines were the fruits of mere imagination, foolish vagaries and fancies. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Acts 2:17, where it is applied to visions in dreams.

Here observe, 1. That the doctrines which seducers bring, are not the truths of Christ, but their own dreams. Dreams they are in point of opinion, and dreams they will be found in point of expectation; they promise much, but perform nothing.

2. That dreams of error, or heretical principles, do dispose towards filthy and unclean practices. Filthy dreamers defile the flesh. Avoid error in judgment, if you would escape filthiness in conversation.

3. That lust loves not restraint, libertines despise dominion, sensuality makes men unruly; such are sons of Belail, they cast off the yoke.

4. That such as despise government speak evil of governors: dignities lie open to the lash of the tongue; neither power nor innocency can protect from calumny and imputations, from slander and false accusation: These filthy dreamers despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Yet Michael the archangel, etc. This verse has given more perplexity to expositors than any other part of the epistle; and in fact the difficulties

in regard to it have been so great that some have been led to regard the epistle as spurious. The difficulty has arisen from these two circumstances:

(1.) Ignorance of the origin of what is said here of Michael the archangel, nothing of this kind being found in the Old Testament; and

(2.) the improbability of the story itself, which looks like a mere Jewish fable. Peter in his second epistle, chap. 2Pet 2:11, made a general reference to angels as not bringing railing accusations against others before the Lord; but Jude refers to a particular case--the case of Michael when contending about the body of Moses. The methods proposed of reconciling the passage with the proper ideas of inspiration have been various, though perhaps no one of them relieves it of all difficulty. It would be inconsistent with the design of these Notes to go into an extended examination of this passage. Those who wish to see a full investigation of it may consult Michaelis' Introduction to the New Testament, vol, iv. pp. 378--393; Lardner, vol. vi. p. 312, seq.; Hug, Intro. & 183; Benson, in loc.; Rosenmuller's Morgenland, iii. pp. 196, 197; and Wetstein, in loc. The principal methods of relieving the difficulty have been the following: I. Some have supposed that the reference is to the passage in Zechariah, Zech 3:1, seq. "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan," etc. The opinion that Jude refers to this passage was held by Lardner. But the objections to this are very obvious:

(1.) There is no similarity between the two, except the expression, "the Lord rebuke thee."

(2.) The name Michael does not occur at all in the passage in Zechariah.

(3.) There is no mention made of the "body of Moses" there, and no allusion to it whatever.

(4.) There is no intimation that there was any such contention about his body. There is a mere mention that Satan resisted the angel of the Lord, as seen in the vision, but no intimation that the controversy had any reference to Moses in any way.

(5.) The reason of the resistance which Satan offered to the angel in the vision as seen by Zechariah is stated. It was in regard to the consecration of Joshua to the office of high priest implying a return of prosperity to Jerusalem, and the restoration of the worship of God there in its purity, see Zech 3:2. To this Satan was of course opposed, and the vision represents him as resisting the angel in his purpose thus to set him apart to that office. These reasons seem to me to make it clear that Jude did not refer to the passage in Zechariah, nor is there any other place in the Old Testament to which it can be supposed he had reference.

II. Hug supposes that the reference here, as well as that in Jude 1:14, to the prophecy of Enoch, is derived from some apocryphal books existing in the time of Jude; and that though those books contained mere fables, the apostle appealed to them, not as conceding what was said to be true, but in order to refute and rebuke those against whom he wrote, out of books which they admitted to be of authority. Intro. & 183. Arguments and confutations, he says, drawn from the sacred Scriptures, would have been of no avail in reasoning with them, for these they evaded, (2Pet 3:16,) and there were no surer means of influencing them than those writings which they themselves valued as the sources of their peculiar views. According to this, the apostle did not mean to vouch for the truth of the story, but merely to make use of it in argument. The objection to this is, that the apostle does in fact seem to refer to the contest between Michael and the devil as true. He speaks of it in the same way in which he would have done if he had spoken of the death of Moses, or of his smiting the rock, or of his leading the children of Israel across the Red Sea, or of any other fact in history. If he regarded it as a mere fable, though it would have been honest and consistent with all proper views of inspiration for him to have said to those against whom he argued, that on their own principles such and such things were true, yet it would not be honest to speak of it as a fact which he admitted to be true. Besides, it should be remembered that he is not arguing with them, in which case it might be admissible to reason in this way, but was making statements to others about them, and showing that they manifested a spirit entirely different from that which the angels evinced even when contending in a just cause against the prince of all evil.

III. It has been supposed that the apostle quotes an apocryphal book existing in his time, containing this account, and that he means to admit that the account is true. Origen mentions such a book, called "the Assumption of Moses," (αναληψιςτουμωσεως,) as extant in his time, containing this very account of the contest between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses. That was a Jewish Greek book, and Origen supposed that this was the source of the account here. That book is now lost. There is still extant a book in Hebrew, called --"the Death of Moses," which some have supposed to be the book referred to by Origen. That books contains many fabulous stories about the death of Moses, and is evidently the work of some Jew drawing wholly upon his imagination. An account of it may be seen in Michaelis, Intro. iv. p. 381, seq. There is no reason to suppose that this is the same book referred to by Origen under the name of "the Assumption of Moses;" and there is a moral certainty that an inspired writer could not have quoted it as of authority. Further, there can be no reasonable doubt that such a book as Origen refers to, under the title of" the Assumption of Moses," was extant in his time, but that does not prove by any means that it was extant in the time of Jude, or that he quoted it. There is, indeed, no positive proof that it was not extant in the time of Jude, but there is none that it was, and all the facts in the case will be met by the supposition that it was written afterwards, and that the tradition on the subject here referred to by Jude was incorporated into it.

IV. The remaining supposition is, that Jude here refers to a prevalent tradition among the Jews, and that he has adopted it as containing an important truth, and one which bore on the subject under discussion. In support of this, it may be observed,

(a.) that it is well known that there were many traditions of this nature among the Jews. Mt 15:2.

(b.) That though many of these traditions were puerile and false, yet there is no reason to doubt that some of them might have been founded in truth.

(c.) That an inspired writer might select those which were true, for the illustration of his subject, with as much propriety as he might select what was written; since if what was thus handed down by tradition was

true, it was as proper to use it as to use a fact made known in any other way.

(d.) That in fact such traditions were adopted by the inspired writers when they would serve to illustrate a subject which they were discussing. Thus Paul refers to the tradition about Jannes and Jambres as true history. 2Ti 3:8.

(e.) If, therefore, what is here said was true, there was no impropriety in its being referred to by Jude as an illustration of his subject. The only material question then is, whether it is true. And who can prove that it is not? What evidence is there that it is not? How is it possible to demonstrate that it is not? There are many allusions in the Bible to angels; there is express mention of such an angel as Michael, (Dan 12:1;) there is frequent mention of the devil; and there are numerous affirmations that both bad and good angels are employed in important transactions on the earth. Who can prove that such spirits never meet, never come in conflict, never encounter each other in executing their purposes? Good men meet bad men, and why is it any more absurd to suppose that good angels may encounter bad ones? It should be remembered, further, that there is no need of supposing that the subject of the dispute was about burying the body of Moses; or that Michael sought to bury it, and the devil endeavoured to prevent it--the one in order that it might not be worshipped by the Israelites, and the other that it might be. This indeed became incorporated into the tradition in the apocryphal books which were afterwards written; but Jude says not one word of this, and is in no way responsible for it. All that he says is, that there was a contention or dispute (διακρινομενοςδιελεγετο) respecting his body. But when it was, or what was the occasion, or how it was conducted, he does not state, and we have no right to ascribe to him sentiments which he has not expressed. If ever such a controversy of any kind existed respecting that body, it is all that Jude affirms, and is all for which he should be held responsible. The sum of the matter, then, it seems to me is, that Jude has, as Paul did on another occasion, adopted a tradition which was prevalent in his time; that there is nothing necessarily absurd or impossible in the fact affirmed by the tradition, and that no one can possibly demonstrate that it is not true.

The archangel. The word archangel occurs only in one other place in the Scriptures. 1Thes 4:16. It means ruling or chief angel--the chief

among the hosts of heaven. It is nowhere else applied to Michael, though his name is several times mentioned, Dan 10:13,21, 12:1, Rev 12:7.

When contending. This word (διακρινομενος) refers here to a contention or strife with words--a disputation. Nothing farther is necessarily implied, for it is so used in this sense in the New Testament, Acts 11:2,12 (Greek.)

He disputed. διελεγετο. This word also would denote merely a controversy or contention of words, Mk 9:34, Acts 17:2,17, 18:4,19; Acts 24:12.

About the body of Moses. The nature of this controversy is wholly unknown, and conjecture is useless. It is not said, however, that there was a strife which should get the body, or a contention about burying it, or any physical contention about it whatever. That there may have been, no one indeed can disprove; but all that the apostle says would be met by a supposition that there was any debate of any kind respecting that body, in which Michael, though provoked by the opposition of the worst being in the universe, still restrained himself from any outbreaking of passion, and used only the language of mild but firm rebuke. Durst not. ουκετολμησε "Did not dare." It is not said that he did not dare to do it because he feared Satan; but all that the word implies is met by supposing that he did not dare to do it because he feared the Lord, or because in any circumstances it would be wrong. A railing accusation. The Greek word is blasphemy. The meaning is, he did not indulge in the language of mere reproach; and it is implied here that such language would be wrong anywhere. If it would be right to bring a railing accusation against any one, it would be against the devil.

But said, The Lord rebuke thee. The word here used (επιτιμαω) means, properly, to put honour upon; and then to adjudge or confirm. Then it came to be used in the sense of commanding or restraining--as, e.g., the winds and waves, Mt 8:26, Mk 4:39. Then it is used in the sense of admonishing strongly; of enjoining upon one, with the idea of censure, Mt 18:18, Mk 1:25 Lk 23:35,41. This is the idea here--the expression of a wish that the Lord would take the matter of the dispute to himself, and that he would properly restrain and control Satan, with the implied idea that his conduct was wrong. The language is the same as that

recorded in Zech 3:2, as used by "the angel" respecting Satan. But, as before observed, there is no reason to suppose that the apostle referred to that. The fact, however, that the angel is said to have used the language on that occasion may be allowed to give confirmation to what is said here, since it shows that it is the language which angelic beings naturally employ.

Our apostle in the preceding verse having charged seducers with contemptuous speaking against governors and government, in this verse he aggravates the impudence and impiety of it, by the carriage of Michael the archangel towards the devil.
The argument is taken from the greater to the less, and lies thus: if Michael, an archangel, so excellent in nature, so high in office, contending with Satan, an impure spirit, yet used great modesty, without the least indecency of expression towards him; who and what are those that despise dominions, and dare speak evil of dignities?"
Hence observe, That it is our duty to learn the angelic lesson; namely, not to give railing or reviling language to the worst adversary in the best cause, because it proceeds from pride or passion, and because so contrary to the temper and design of Christianity; much more is it our duty to watch against the sins of the tongue, with respect to our governors and superiors, remembering it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

But these speak evil of those things which they know not. These false and corrupt teachers employ reproachful language of those things which lie wholly beyond the reach of their vision. 2Pet 2:12. But what they know naturally. As mere men; as animals; that is, in things pertaining to their physical nature, or in which they are on a level with the brute creation. The reference is to the natural instincts, the impulses of appetite, and passion, and sensual pleasure. The idea of the apostle seems to be, that their knowledge was confined to those things. They did not rise above them to the intelligent contemplation of those higher things, against which they used only the language of reproach. There are multitudes of such men in the world. Towards high and holy objects they use only the language of reproach. They do not understand them, but they can rail at them. Their knowledge is

confined to the subjects of sensual indulgence, and all their intelligence in that respect is employed only to corrupt and destroy themselves. As brute beasts. Animals without intelligence. 2Pet 2:12. In those things they corrupt themselves. They live only for sensual indulgence, and sink deeper and deeper in sensual gratifications.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

For they have gone in the way of Cain. Gen 4:5-12. That is, they have evinced disobedience and rebellion as he did; they have shown that they are proud, corrupt, and wicked. The apostle does not specify the points in which they had imitated the example of Cain, but it was probably in such things as these--pride, haughtiness, the hatred of religion, restlessness under the restraints of virtue, envy that others were more favoured, and a spirit of hatred of the brethren (comp. 1Jn 3:15) which would lead to murder.

And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. The word rendered ran greedily--εξεχυθησαν, from εκχεω--means to pour out; and then, when spoken of persons, that they are poured out, or that they rush tumultuously on an object, that is, that they give themselves up to anything. The idea here is, that all restraint was relaxed, and that they rushed on tumultuously to any course of life that promised gain. 2Pet 2:15.

In the gainsaying of Core. Of Korah, Nu 16:1-30. The word gainsaying here means properly contradiction, or speaking against; then controversy, question, strife; then contumely, reproach, or rebellion. The idea here seems to be, that they were guilty of insubordination; of possessing a restless and dissatisfied spirit; of a desire to rule, etc

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

In Jude 1:11 the apostle represents them as followers of Cain, and in Jude 1:12,13, as atheistical and profane people, who thought little, and perhaps believed not much, of God or a future world--as greedy and covetous, who, so they could but gain present worldly advantages, cared not what came next--rebels against God and man, who, like

Core, ran into attempts in which they must assuredly perish, as he did. Of such the apostle further says,

(1.) These are spots in your feasts of charity--the agapai or love-feasts, so much spoken of by the ancients. They happened, by whatever means or mischance, to be admitted among them, but were spots in them, defiled and defiling. Observe, It is a great reproach, though unjust and accidental, to religion, when those who profess it, and join in the most solemn institution of it, are in heart and life unsuitable and even contrary to it: These are spots. Yet how common in all Christian societies here on earth, the very best not excepted, are such blemishes! The more is the pity. The Lord remedy it in his due time and way, not in men's blind and rigorous way of plucking up the wheat with the tares. But in the heaven we are waiting, hoping, and preparing for, there is none of this mad work, there are none of these disorderly doings.

(2.) When they feast with you, they feed themselves without fear. Arrant gluttons, no doubt, there were; such as minded only the gratifying of their appetites with the daintiness and abundance of their fare; they had no regard to Solomon's caution, Pr 23:2. Note, In common eating and drinking a holy fear is necessary, much more in feasting, though we may sometimes be more easily and insensibly overcome at a common meal than at a feast; for, in the case supposed, we are less upon our guard, and sometimes, at least to some persons, the plenty of a feast is its own antidote, as to others it may prove a dangerous snare.

(3.) Clouds they are without water, which promise rain in time of drought, but perform nothing of what they promise. Such is the case of formal professors, who at first setting out promise much, like early-blossoming trees in a forward spring, but in conclusion bring forth little or no fruit.--Carried about of winds, light and empty, easily driven about this way or that, as the wind happens to set; such are empty, ungrounded professors, and easy prey to every seducer. It is amazing to hear many talk so confidently of so many things of which they know little or nothing, and yet have not the wisdom and humility to discern and be sensible how little they know. How happy would our world be if men either knew more or practically knew how little they know.

(4.) Trees whose fruit withereth, &c. Trees they are, for they are planted in the Lord's vineyard, yet fruitless ones. Observe, Those whose fruit withereth may be justly said to be without fruit. As good never a whit as never the better. It is a sad thing when men seem to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh, which is almost as common a case as it is an awful one. The text speaks of such as were twice dead. One would think to be once dead were enough; we none of us, till grace renew us to a higher degree than ordinary, love to think of dying once, though this is appointed for us all. What then is the meaning of this being twice dead? They had been once dead in their natural, fallen, lapsed state; but they seemed to recover, and, as a man in a swoon, to be brought to life again, when they took upon them the profession of the Christian religion. But now they are dead again by the evident proofs they have given of their hypocrisy: whatever they seemed, they had nothing truly vital in them.--Plucked up by the roots, as we commonly serve dead trees, from which we expect no more fruit. They are dead, dead, dead; why cumber they the ground? Away with them to the fire.

(5.) Raging waves of the sea, boisterous, noisy, and clamorous; full of talk and turbulency, but with little (if any) sense or meaning: Foaming out their own shame, creating much uneasiness to men of better sense and calmer tempers, which yet will in the end turn to their own greater shame and just reproach. The psalmist's prayer ought always to be that of every honest and good man, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me (Ps 25:21), and, if it will not, let me be unpreserved." If honesty signify little now, knavery will signify much less, and that in a very little while. Raging waves are a terror to sailing passengers; but, when they have got to port, the waves are forgotten as if no longer in being: their noise and terror are for ever ended.

(6.) Wandering stars, planets that are erratic in their motions, keep not that steady regular course which the fixed ones do, but shift their stations, that one has sometimes much ado to know where to find them. This allusion carries in it a very lively emblem of false teachers, who are sometimes here and sometimes there, so that one knows not where nor how to fix them. In the main things, at least, one would think something should be fixed and steady; and this might be without infallibility, or any pretensions to it in us poor mortals. In religion and

politics, the great subjects of present debate, surely there are certain stamina in which wise and good, honest and disinterested, men might agree, without throwing the populace into the utmost anguish and distress of mind, or blowing up their passions into rage and fury, without letting them know what they say or whereof they affirm.

These are spots. 2Pet 2:13. The word used by Peter, however, is not exactly the same as that used here. Peter uses the word σπιλοι--spiloi; Jude, σπιλαδες--spilades. The word used by Jude means, properly, a rock by or in the sea; a cliff, etc. It may either be a rock by the sea, against which vessels may be wrecked, or a hidden rock in the sea, on which they may be stranded at an unexpected moment. See Hesychius and Pollux, as quoted by Wetstein, in loc. The idea here seems to be, not that they were spots and blemishes in their sacred feasts, but that they were like hidden rocks to the mariner. As those rocks were the cause of shipwreck, so these false teachers caused others to make shipwreck of their faith. They were as dangerous in the church as hidden rocks are in the ocean.

In your feasts of charity. Your feasts of love. The reference is probably to the Lord's Supper, called a feast or festival of love, because

(1.) it revealed the love of Christ to the world;

(2.) because it was the means of strengthening the mutual love of the disciples: a festival which love originated, and where love reigned. It has been supposed by many, that the reference here is to festivals which were subsequently called Agapae, and which are now known as love-feasts--meaning a festival immediately preceding the celebration of the Lord's Supper. But there are strong objections to the supposition that there is reference here to such a festival.

(1.) There is no evidence, unless it be found in this passage, that such celebrations had the sanction of the apostles. They are nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament, or alluded to, unless it is in 1Cor 11:17-34, an instance which is mentioned only to reprove it, and to show that such appendages to the Lord's Supper were wholly unauthorized by the original institution, and were liable to gross abuse.

(2.) The supposition that they existed, and that they are referred to here, is not necessary in order to a proper explanation of this passage. All that it fairly means will be met by the supposition that the reference is to the Lord's Supper. That was in every sense a festival of love or charity. The words will appropriately apply to that, and there is no necessity of supposing anything else in order to meet their full signification.

(3.) There can be no doubt that such a custom early existed in the Christian church, and extensively prevailed; but it can readily be accounted for without supposing that it had the sanction of the apostles, or that it existed in their time.

(a.) Festivals prevailed among the Jews, and it would not be unnatural to introduce them into the Christian church.

(b.) The custom prevailed among the heathen of having a "feast upon a sacrifice," or in connexion with a sacrifice; and as the Lord's Supper commemorated the great sacrifice for sin, it was not unnatural, in imitation of the heathen, to append a feast or festival to that ordinance, either before or after its celebration.

(c.) This very passage in Jude, with perhaps some others in the New Testament, (comp. 1Cor 11:26, Acts 2:46, 6:2,) might be so construed as to seem to lend countenance to the custom. For these reasons it seems clear to me that the passage before us does not refer to love-feasts; and, therefore, that they are not authorized in the New Testament. See, however, Coleman's Antiquities of the Christian church, chap. xvi., & 13.

When they feast with you. Showing that they were professors of religion. 2Pet 2:13.

Feeding themselves without fear. That is, without any proper reverence or respect for the ordinance; attending on the Lord's Supper as if it were an ordinary feast, and making it an occasion of riot and gluttony. See 1Cor 11:20-22. Clouds they are, etc. 2Pet 2:17. Comp. Eph 4:14.

Trees whose fruit withereth. The idea here is substantially the same as that expressed by Peter, when he says that they were "wells without water;" and by him and Jude, when they say that they are like clouds driven about by the winds, that shed down no refreshing rain upon the earth. Such wells and clouds only disappoint expectations. So a tree that should promise fruit, but whose fruit should always wither, would be useless. The word rendered withereth (φθινοπωρινα) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, autumnal; and the expression here denotes trees of autumn; that is, trees stripped of leaves and verdure; trees on which there is no fruit.--Robinson's Lex. The sense, in the use of this word, therefore, is not exactly that which is expressed in our translation, that the fruit has withered, but rather that they are like the trees of autumn, which are stripped and bare. So the Vulgate, arbores autumnales. The idea of their being without fruit is expressed in the next word. The image which seems to have been before the mind of Jude in this expression, is that of the naked trees of autumn as contrasted with the bloom of spring and the dense foliage of summer.

Without fruit. That is, they produce no fruit. Either they are wholly barren, like the barren fig-tree, or the fruit which was set never ripens, but falls off. They are, therefore, useless as religious instructors--as much so as a tree is which produces no fruit.

Twice dead. That is, either meaning that they are seen to be dead in two successive seasons, showing that there is no hope that they will revive and be valuable; or, using the word twice to denote emphasis, meaning that they are absolutely or altogether dead. Perhaps the idea is, that successive summers and winters have passed over them, and that no signs of life appear.

Plucked up by the roots. The wind blows them down, or they are removed by the husbandman as only cumbering the ground. They are not cut down--leaving a stump that might sprout again--but they are extirpated root and branch; that is, they are wholly worthless. There is a regular ascent in this climax, first, the apostle sees a tree apparently of autumn, stripped and leafless; then he sees it to be a tree that bears no fruit; then he sees it to be a tree over which successive winters and summers pass and no signs of life appear; then as wholly extirpated. So he says it is with these men. They produce no fruits of holiness;

months and years show that there is no vitality in them; they are fit only to be extirpated and cast away. Alas! how many professors of religion are there, and how many religious teachers, who answer to this description!

13 raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Raging waves of the sea. Comp. 2Pet 2:18. They are like the wild and restless waves of the ocean. The image here seems to be, that they were noisy and bold in their professions, and were as wild and ungovernable in their passions as the billows of the sea. Foaming out their own shame. The waves are lashed into foam, and break and dash on the shore. They seem to produce nothing but foam, and to proclaim their own shame, that after all their wild roaring and agitation they should effect no more. So with these noisy and vaunting teachers. What they impart is as unsubstantial and valueless as the foam of the ocean waves, and the result is in fact a proclamation of their own shame, Men with so loud professions should produce much more. Wandering stars. The word rendered wandering (πλανηται) is that from which we have derived the word planet. It properly means one who wanders about; a wanderer; and was given by the ancients to planets because they seemed to wander about the heavens, now forward and now backward among the other stars, without any fixed law.--Pliny, Nat. Hist. ii. 6. Cicero, however, who saw that they were governed by certain established laws, says that the name seemed to be given to them without reason.--De Nat. Deo. ii. 20. So far as the words used are concerned, the reference may be either to the planets, properly so called, or to comets, or to ignes fatui, or meteors. The proper idea is that of stars that have no regular motions, or that do not move in fixed and regular orbits. The laws of the planetary motions were not then understood, and their movements seemed to be irregular and capricious; and hence, if the reference is to them, they might be regarded as not an unapt illustration of these teachers. The sense seems to be, that the aid which we derive from the stars, as in navigation, is in the fact that they are regular in their places and movements, and thus the mariner can determine his position. If they had no regular places and movements, they would be useless to the seaman. So with false religious teachers. No dependence can be placed on them. It is not uncommon to compare a religious teacher to a star, Rev 1:16, 2:1. Comp. Rev 22:16. To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for

ever. Not to the stars, but to the teachers. The language here is the same as in 2Pet 2:17. 2Pet 2:17

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

And to convince all. The word convince we now use commonly somewhat limited sense, as meaning to satisfy a man's own mind eithe the truth of some proposition, or of the fact that he has done wrong, as b in this latter sense synonymous with the word convict. This convictio commonly produced by argument or truth, and is not necessarily follo by any sentence of disapprobation, or by any judicial condemnation. this is clearly not the sense in which the word is used here. The purpos the coming of the Lord will not be to convince men in that sense, thou is undoubtedly true that the wicked will see that their lives have b wrong; but it will be to pronounce a sentence on them as the result o evidence of their guilt. The Greek word which is here used occurs now else in the New Testament.

Of all their ungodly deeds, etc. Of their wicked actions and words. This is the common doctrine of the Bible, that all the wicked actions and words of men will be called into judgment. In regard to this passage, thus quoted from an ancient prophecy, we may remark,

(1.) that the style bears the marks of its being a quotation, or of its being preserved by Jude in the language in which it had been handed down by tradition. It is not the style of Jude. It is not so terse, pointed, energetic.

(2.) It has every probable mark of its having been actually delivered by Enoch. The age in which he lived was corrupt. The world was ripening for the deluge. He was himself a good man, and, as would seem perhaps, almost the only good man of his generation. Nothing would be more natural than that he should be reproached by hard words and speeches, and nothing more natural than that he should have pointed the men of his own age to the future judgment.

(3.) The doctrine of the final judgment, if this was uttered by Enoch, was an early doctrine in the world. It was held even in the first generations of the race. It was one of those great truths early communicated to man to restrain him from sin, and to lead him to

prepare for the great events which are to occur on the earth. The same doctrine has been transmitted from age to age, and is now one of the most important and the most affecting that refers to the final destiny of men.

That the doctrine of the day of judgment is very ancient, foretold by the prophets from the beginning. Man was made an accountable creature, capable of rendering an account of his actions and the sentence of death, denounced in paradise against him for his sin, did necessarily imply it; the drowning of the world, and burning of Sodom, were both types and forerunners of it: though there are Atheists upon earth that do not believe a future judgment to come, there are none in hell: feeling and experience must teach some men that which the Spirit, scripture, reason, and conscience, could never learn them. Enoch prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh.

The work of Christ at the day of judgment, namely, to convince and judge. Conscience shall then have an exact view of all that sinners did and said: sin will find them out, and testify against them at Christ's tribunal; and whom conscience has convinced, Christ will condemn, and whom he has condemned, he will execute.

That not only the deeds of ungodly men, but their words, especially their hard speeches against God and his children, shall be brought into judgment. A wicked tongue is a rugged tongue; it speaks words sharper than swords: pray we for wisdom to make as good an use of the reproaching tongue of an enemy, as of the reproving tongue of a friend; that the sword of the tongue may let out the corruption that is in our hearts, and do us good against the will, and contrary to the intention, of our enemy.

15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

These are murmurers. The word here used does not elsewhere occur, though the word murmur is frequent, Mt 20:11, Lk 5:30; Jn

6:41,43,61, 8:32, 1Cor 10:10. Comp. Jn 7:12, Acts 6:1, Php 2:14; 1Pet 4:9. The sense is that of repining or complaining under the allotments of Providence, or finding fault with God's plans, and purposes, and doings. Complainers. Literally, finding fault with one's own lot (μεμψιμοιροι.) The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament; the thing often occurs in this world. Nothing is more common than for men to complain of their lot; to think that it is hard; to com- pare theirs with that of others, and to blame God for not having made their circumstances different. The poor complain that they are not rich like others; the sick that they are not well; the enslaved that they are not free; the bereaved that they are deprived of friends; the ugly that they are not beautiful; those in humble life that their lot was not east among the great and the gay. The virtue that is opposed to this is contentment--a virtue of inestimable value. Php 4:11. Walking after their own lusts. Giving unlimited indulgence to their appetites and passions. 2Pet 3:3. And their mouth speaketh great swelling words. 2Pet 2:18. Having men's persons in admiration. Showing great respect to certain persons, particularly the rich and the great. The idea is, that they were not just in the esteem which they had for others, or that they did not appreciate them according to their real worth, but paid special attention to one class in order to promote their selfish ends. Because of advantage. Because they hoped to derive some benefit to themselves.

It has been the constant course of heretics to speak high, and talk big, like mountebanks, hoping thereby to set off and put off the better their counterfeited and false wares; he is no wise man, whom great swelling words will seduce from the ways of wisdom. Not the words of the speaker, but the weight of what is spoken, is to be minded; yet though they talked these swelling words to their inferiors, at the same time they could flatteringly admire the passions and actions of others, from whom they expected any benefit or advantage: having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

Now from the whole of this large character, which St. Jude here gives of these heretical seducers and false teachers, we learn that miserable and most deplorable is the condition of the misled followers of seducing teachers; the seducer follows his lust, and the follower is led by the seducer. Here the blind leads the blind; God pity them both; When teachers offer themselves to us, we should consider who leads them who are so officious to lead us, and follow them only as they

follow Christ; no wise man will set his watch by the clock, but by the sun.

Warnings and Exhortations

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

18 how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith. Comp. Jude 1:3. On the word building, 1Cor 3:9, seq. Eph 2:20. It is said here that they were to "build up themselves;" that is, they were to act as moral and responsible agents in this, or were to put forth their own proper exertions to do it. Dependent as we are, and as all persons with correct views will feel themselves to be, yet it is proper to endeavour to do the work of religion as if we had ample power of ourselves. Php 2:12. The phrase "most holy faith" here refers to the system of religion which was founded on faith; and the meaning is, that they should seek to establish themselves most firmly in the belief of the doctrines, and in the practice of the duties of that system of religion.

Our aostle having, in the former part of this chapter, warned the Christians of the danger of seducers, he closes his epistle with directions and advice how they may be preserved from seduction, and what means they should use for their perseverance and establishment in the doctrine of Christ.
First, he directs them to build up themselves in their most holy faith; that is, in the doctrine of faith contained in the gospel.

Where note, 1. The faith of Christians is a most holy faith; holy in its principles, holy in its pattern, holy in its encouragements and rewards.

2. That it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of every Christian to build up himself, and others also, in the faith of the gospel; the best way for Christians not to be losers of what they have, is to be labourers for what they want; progress in Christianity is the best means to preserve us from apostasy.

Secondly, He exhorts to prayer, Praying in the Holy Ghost; that is, with holy reverence, with humble confidence, with fervent importunity, with those holy affections and desires which the Spirit of God exciteth in us; the concurrence of the Holy Spirit is necessary both to assistance and acceptance in prayer; it enables us to pray in faith and love, with sincerity and importunity; without the Spirit there is no acceptable praying, and without prayer vain is the pretence to the Spirit. Breathing is the first evidence of life: St. Paul was no sooner converted, but behold he prayed.

Thirdly, He directs that they keep themselves in the love of God; no such way to keep ourselves from error, as to preserve ourselves in that love which God bears to us, and in that love we bear to him; take we care that there is no intermission in the acts of love, and no remission of the degrees of love, but that we be rooted and grounded in love, and then we are proof against seducers and false teachers.

Fourthly, he directs them to look up to heaven, if they would be steady and steadfast in the faith here on earth, Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Here observe, That heaven, or eternal life, is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mercy it is called, because bestowed on the miserable, that could never merit or deserve it, and because it is the effect and fruit of free and special mercy, and because bestowed on the vessels of mercy, and because it is the perfection and consummation of all mercy; and it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he purchased it, he prepared it, he exhibits and gives it.

Observe farther, That Christians are to look for eternal life, as the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to believe it, to meditate upon it, to have ardent desires after it, and patiently to wait for it: Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. Still adverting to their own agency. On the duty here enjoined, Jn 15:9, The phrase "the love of God" may mean either God's love to us, or our love to him. The latter appears, however, to be the sense here, because it is not a subject which could be enjoined, that we should keep up God's love to us. That is a point over which we can have no control, except so far as it may be the result of our obedience; but we may be commanded to love him, and to keep ourselves in that love. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Particularly when he shall come to receive his people to himself. Tit 2:13; 2Pet 3:12; 2Ti 4:8.

He directs them how to behave towards erring brethren: And of some have compassion, &c., Jude 1:22,23. Observe,

(1.) We ought to do all we can to rescue others out of the snares of the devil, that they may be saved from (or recovered, when entangled therein, out of) dangerous errors, or pernicious practices. We are not only (under God) our own keepers, but every man ought to be, as much as in him lies, his brother's keeper; none but a wicked Cain will contradict this, Ge 4:9. We must watch over one another, must faithfully, yet prudently, reprove each other, and set a good example to all about us.

(2.) This must be done with compassion, making a difference. How is that? We must distinguish between the weak and the wilful.

[1.] Of some we must have compassion, treat them with all tenderness, restore them in the spirit of meekness, not be needlessly harsh and severe in our censures of them and their actions, nor proud and haughty in our conduct towards them; not implacable, nor averse to reconciliation with them, or admitting them to the friendship they formerly had with us, when they give evident or even strongly hopeful tokens of a sincere repentance: if God has forgiven them, why should

not we? We infinitely more need his forgiveness than they do, or can do, ours, though perhaps neither they nor we are justly or sufficiently sensible of this.

[2.] Others save with fear, urging upon them the terrors of the Lord; "Endeavour to frighten them out of their sins; preach hell and damnation to them." But what if prudence and caution in administering even the most just and severe reproofs be what are primarily and chiefly here intimated--(I do but offer it for consideration); as if he had said, "Fear lest you frustrate your own good intentions and honest designs by rash and imprudent management, that you do not harden, instead of reclaiming, even where greater degrees of severity are requisite than in the immediately foregoing instance." We are often apt to over-do, when we are sure we mean honestly, and think we are right in the main; yet the very worst are not needlessly, nor rashly, nor to extremity, to be provoked, lest they be thereby further hardened through our default.--"Hating even the garment spotted with the flesh, that is, keeping yourselves at the utmost distance from what is or appears evil, and designing and endeavouring that others may do so too. Avoid all that leads to sin or that looks like sin," 1Th 5:22.

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

This cannot be intended to teach that they were not to have compassion for all men, or to regard the salvation of all with solicitude, but that they were to have special and peculiar compassion for a certain class of persons, or were to approach them with feelings appropriate to their condition. The idea is, that the peculiar feeling to be manifested towards a certain class of persons in seeking their salvation was tender affection and kindness. They were to approach them in the gentlest manner, appealing to them by such words as love would prompt. Others were to be approached in a different manner, indicated by the phrase, "save with fear," The class here referred to, to whom pity (ελεειτε) was to be shown, and in whose conversion and salvation tender compassion was to be employed, appear to have been the timid, the gentle, the unwary; those who had not yet fallen into dangerous errors, but who might be exposed to them; those, for there are such, who would be more likely to be influenced by kind words and a gentle manner than by denunciation. The direction then amounts to this, that while we are to seek to save all, we are to adapt ourselves wisely to

the character and circumstances of those whom we seek to save. 1Cor 9:19, seq.

Making a distinction between them, not in regard to your desires for their salvation, or your efforts to save them, but to the manner in which it is done. To be able to do this is one of the highest qualifications to be sought by one who endeavours to save souls, and is indispensable for a good minister of the gospel. The young, the tender, the delicate, the refined, need a different kind of treatment from the rough, the uncultivated, the hardened. This wisdom was shown by the Saviour in all his preaching; it was eminent in the preaching of Paul.

23 and others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

And others. Another class; those who were of such a character, or in such circumstances, that a more bold, earnest, and determined manner would be better adapted to them. Save with fear. That is, by appeals adapted to produce fear. The idea seems to be that the arguments on which they relied were to be drawn from the dangers of the persons referred to, or from the dread of future wrath. It is undoubtedly true, that while there is a class of persons who can be won to embrace religion by mild and gentle persuasion, there is another class who can be aroused only by the terrors of the law. Every method is to be employed, in its proper place, that we "by all means may save some." Pulling them out of the fire. As you would snatch persons out of the fire; or as you would seize on a person that was walking into a volcano. Then, a man would not use the mild and gentle language of persuasion, but by word and gesture show that he was deeply in earnest. Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. The allusion here is not quite certain, though the idea which the apostle meant to convey is not difficult to be understood. By "the garment spotted by the flesh" there may be an allusion to a garment worn by one who had the plague, or some offensive disease which might be communicated to others by touching even the clothing which they had worn. Or there may be an allusion to the ceremonial law of Moses, by which all those who came in contact with dead bodies were regarded as unclean, Lev 21:11, Nu 6:6, 9:6, 19:11. Or there may be an allusion to the case mentioned in Lev 15:4,10,17; or perhaps to a case of leprosy. In all such instances, there would be the idea that the thing referred to by which the garment had been spotted was polluting, contagious, or loathsome, and that it

was proper not even to touch such a garment, or to come in contact with it in any way. To something of this kind the apostle compares the sins of the persons here referred to. While the utmost effort was to be made to save them, they were in no way to partake of their sins; their conduct was to be regarded as loathsome and contagious; and those who attempted to save them were to take every precaution to preserve their own purity. There is much wisdom in this counsel. While we endeavour to save the sinner, we cannot too deeply loathe his sins; and in approaching some classes of sinners there is need of as much care to avoid being defiled by them, as there would be to escape the plague if we had any transaction with one who had it. Not a few have been deeply corrupted in their attempts to reform the polluted. There never could be, for example, too much circumspection and prayer for personal safety from pollution, in attempting to reform licentious and abandoned females.

Concluding Doxology

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to
present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
25 to the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and
power, both now and ever. Amen.

Dominion and power, etc. See Mt 6:13. It is common in the Scriptures to ascribe power, dominion, and glory to God, expressing the feeling that all that is great and good belongs to him, and the desire of the heart that he may reign in heaven and on earth. Comp. Rev 4:11; Rev 19:1. With the expression of such a desire it was not inappropriate that this epistle should be closed--and it is not inappropriate that this volume should be closed with the utterance of the same wish. In all our affections and aspirations, may God be supreme; in all the sin and woe which prevail here below, may we look forward with strong desire to the time when his dominion shall be set up over all the earth; in all our own sins and sorrows, be it ours to look onward to the time when in a purer and happier world his reign may be set up over our own souls, and when we may cast every crown at his feet and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.--Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God," Rev 4:11, 19:1.

The Revelation Of St. John

The Divine [Revelation]

Revelation-1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is evidently a title or caption of the whole book, and is designed to comprise the substance of the whole; for all that the book contains would be embraced in the general declaration that it is a Revelation of Jesus Christ. The word rendered Revelation --αποκαλυπτω, whence we have derived our word Apocalypse --means properly an uncovering; that is, nakedness --from αποκαλυπτω--to uncover. It would apply to anything which had been covered up so as to be hidden from the view--as by a veil; by darkness; in an ark or chest--and then made manifest by removing the covering. It comes then to be used in the sense of disclosing or revealing by removing the veil of darkness or ignorance. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." It may be applied to the disclosing or manifesting of anything which was before obscure or unknown. This may be done:

(a) by instruction in regard to that which was before obscure--that is, by statements of what was unknown before the statements were made; as in Lk 2:32, where it is said that Christ would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles"--φωζειςαποκαλυψινεθνων--or when it is applied to the Divine mysteries, purposes, or doctrines, before

obscure or unknown, but made clear by light revealed in the gospel, Rom 16:25, 1Cor 2:10, 14:6, Eph 3:5

(b) By the event itself; as the manifestation of the wrath of God at the day of judgment will disclose the true nature of his wrath. "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom 2:5 "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation (Gr., revelation) of the sons of God," Rom 8:19; that is, till it shall be manifest by the event what they who are the children of God are to be. In this sense the word is frequently applied to the second advent or appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, as disclosing him in his glory, or showing what he truly is: 2Thes 1:7, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed"--εντηαποκαλυψει --in the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1Cor 1:7, "Waiting for the coming" (the revelation--τηναποκαλυψιν) of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1Pet 1:7, "At the appearing" (Gr., revelation) "of Jesus Christ." See also 1Pet 4:13, "When his glory shall be revealed."

(c) It is used in the sense of making known what is to come--whether by words, signs, or symbols--as if a veil were lifted from that which is hidden from human vision, or which is covered by the darkness of the unknown future. This is called a revelation, because the knowledge of the event is in fact made known to the world by Him who alone can see it, and in such a manner as he pleases to employ, though many of the terms or the symbols may be, from the necessity of the case, obscure; and though their full meaning may be disclosed only by the event. It is in this sense, evidently, that the word is used here; and in this sense that it is more commonly employed when we speak of a revelation. In Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants." So Job 33:16, "Then he openeth (marg., revealeth or uncovereth, the ears of men;" that is, in a dream, he discloses to their ears his truth before concealed or unknown.) Compare Dan 2:22,28-29, 10:1 De 29:29; These ideas

enter into the word as used in the passage before us. The idea is that of a disclosure of an extraordinary character, beyond the mere ability of man, by a special communication from heaven. This is manifest, not only from the usual meaning of this word, but by the word prophecy, in Rev 1:3, and by all the arrangements by which these things, were made known. The ideas which would be naturally conveyed by the use of this word in this connexion are two:

(1) that there was something which was before hidden, obscure, or unknown, and

(2) that this was so disclosed by these communications as to be seen or known.

The things hidden or unknown were those which pertained to the future; the method of disclosing them was mainly by symbols. In the Greek, in this passage, the article is wanting--αποκαλυψις--a Revelation, not η, the Revelation. This is omitted because it is the title of a book, and because the use of the article might imply that this was the only revelation, excluding other books claiming to be a revelation; or it might imply some previous mention of the book, or knowledge of it in the reader. The simple meaning is, that this was "a Revelation;" it was only a part of the Revelation which God has given to mankind. The phrase, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ," might, so far as the construction of the language is concerned, refer either to Christ as the subject or object . It might either mean that Christ is the object revealed in this book, and that its great purpose is to make him known--and so the phrase is understood in the commentary called Hyponoia, (New York, 1844;) or it may mean that this is a revelation which Christ makes to mankind--that is, it is his in the sense that he communicates it to the world. That this latter is the meaning here is clear,

(1) because it is expressly said in this verse that it was a revelation which God gave to him;

(2) because it is said that it pertains to things which must shortly come to pass; and

(3) because, in fact, the revelation is a disclosure of events which were to happen, and not of the person or work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which God gave unto him. Which God imparted or communicated to Jesus Christ. This is in accordance with the representations everywhere made in the Scriptures, that God is the original fountain of truth and knowledge, and that, whatever was the original dignity of the Son of God, there was a mediatorial dependence on the Father. See Jn 5:19-20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him (δεικνυσιναυτω) all things that himself doeth." Jn 7:16 "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." Jn 8:28: "As my Father hath taught me, (εδιδαξεμε) I speak these things." Jn 12:49: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." See also Jn 14:10, 17:7-8, Mt 11:27, Mk 13:32. The same mediatorial dependence the apostle teaches us still subsists in heaven in his glorified state, and will continue until he has subdued all things, (1Cor 15:24-28;) and hence, even in that state, he is represented as receiving the Revelation from the Father to communicate it to men.

To show unto his servants. That is, to his people; to Christians, often represented as the servants of God or of Christ, 1Pet 2:16, Rev 2:20, 7:3, 19:2, 22:3. It is true that the word is sometimes applied by way of eminence to the prophets, (1Chr 6:49, Dan 6:20) and to the apostles, Rom 1:1, Gal 1:10, Php 1:1 Tit 1:1, Jas 1:1 but it is also applied to the mass of Christians, and there is no reason why it should not be so understood here. The book was sent to the

churches of Asia, and was clearly designed for general use; and the contents of the book were evidently intended for the churches of the Redeemer in all ages and lands. Compare Rev 1:3. The word rendered to show--δειξαι--commonly denotes to point out; to cause to see; to present to the sight; and is a word eminently appropriate here, as what was to be revealed was, in general, to be presented to the sight by sensible tokens or symbols.

Things which must shortly come to pass. Not all the things that will occur, but such as it was deemed of importance for his people to be made acquainted with. Nor is it certainly implied that all the things that are communicated would shortly come to pass, or would soon occur. Some of them might perhaps lie in the distant future, and still it might be true that there were those which were revealed in connexion with them, which soon would occur. The word rendered "things "--α--is a pronoun, and might be rendered what: "he showed to his servants what things were about to occur;" not implying that he showed all the things that would happen, but such as he judged to be needful that his people should know. The word would naturally embrace those things which, in the circumstances, were most desirable to be known. The phrase rendered "must come to pass"--δειγενεσθαι--would imply more than mere futurity. The word used (δει) means it needs, there is need of, and implies that there is some kind of necessity that the event should occur. That necessity may either arise from the felt want of anything, as where it is absent or wanting, Xen. Cyr. 4, 10, ib. 7, 5, 9; or from the nature of the case, or from a sense of duty--as Mt 16:21, "Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go (δειαπελθειν) to Jerusalem," Compare Mt 26:35, Mk 14:31 Lk 2:49 or the necessity may exist, because a thing is right and just, meaning that it ought to be done--as Lk 13:14, "There are six days in which men ought to work"--δειεργαζεσθαι; Lk 13:16, "And ought not this woman (ουκεδει) whom Satan hath bound, etc., be loosed from this bond;" compare Mk 13:14 Jn 4:20, Acts 5:11,29, 2Ti 2:6, Mt 18:33, 25:27 or the necessity may be that it is conformable to the Divine arrangement, or is made necessary by

Divine appointment-- as in Jn 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must (δει) the Son of man be lifted up;" Jn 20:9, "For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must (δει) rise again from the dead." Compare Acts 4:12, 14:22 et al . In the passage before us, it is implied that there was some necessity that the things referred to should occur. They were not the result of chance; they were not fortuitous. It is not, however, stated what was the ground of the necessity--whether because there was a want of something to complete a great arrangement; or because it was right and proper in existing circumstances; or because such was the Divine appointment.

They were events which, on some account, must certainly occur, and which therefore it was important should be made known. The real ground of the necessity probably was founded in the design of God in redemption. He intended to carry out his great plans in reference to his church, and the things revealed here must necessarily occur in the completion of that design. The phrase rendered shortly-- ενταχει --is one whose meaning has been much controverted, and on which much has been made to depend in the interpretation of the whole book. The question has been whether the phrase necessarily implies that the events referred to were soon to occur, or whether it may have such an extent of meaning as to admit the supposition that the events referred to, though beginning soon, would embrace in their development far distant years, and would reach the end of all things. Those who maintain (as Professor Stuart) that the book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the portion in chapters 4-11, has special reference to Jerusalem and Judaea, and the portion in chapters 12-19, to persecuting and heathen Rome, maintain the former opinion; those who suppose that chapters 4-11, refers to the irruption of Northern barbarians in the Roman empire, and chapter 12 seq. to the rise and the persecutions of the Papal power, embrace the latter opinion. All that is proper in this place is, without reference to any theory of interpretation, to inquire into the proper meaning of the language; or to ascertain what idea it would naturally convey.

(a) The phrase properly and literally means, with quickness, swiftness, speed; that is, speedily, quickly, shortly .--Rob. Lex.; Stuart in loc. It is the same in meaning as ταχεως. Compare 1Cor 4:19, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will." Lk 14:21, "Go out quickly into the streets." Lk 16:6, "Sit down quickly, and write fifty." Jn 11:31, "She rose up hastily (ταχεως) and went out." Gal 1:6, "That ye are so soon removed (ταχεως) from him that called you." 1Timm 5:22, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." See also Php 2:19,24, 2Thes 2:2, 2Ti 4:9. The phrase used here --ενταχει-- occurs in Lk 18:8, "he will avenge them speedily," (literally with speed;) Acts 12:7, "arise up quickly;" Acts 22:18, "get thee quickly out of Jerusalem;" Acts 25:4, "would depart shortly;" Rom 16:20, "bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" and Rev 1:1, 22:6. The essential idea is, that the thing which is spoken of was soon to occur, or it was not a remote and distant event. There is the notion of rapidity, of haste, of suddenness. It is such a phrase as is used when the thing is on the point of happening, and could not be applied to an event which was in the remote future, considered as an independent event standing by itself. The same idea is expressed, in regard to the same thing, in Rev 1:3: "the time is at hand" --ογαρκαιροςεγγυς; that is, it is near; it is soon to occur. Yet

(b) it is not necessary to suppose that the meaning is that all that there is in the book was soon to happen. It may mean that the series of events which were to follow on in their proper order was soon to commence, though it might be that the sequel would be remote. The first in the series of events was soon to begin, and the others would follow on in their train, though a portion of them, in the regular order, might be in a remote futurity. If we suppose that there was such an order; that a series of transactions was about to commence involving a long train of momentous developments, and that the beginning of this was to occur soon, the language used by John would be that which would be naturally employed to express it. Thus, in case of a revolution in a government, when a

reigning prince should be driven from his kingdom, to be succeeded by a new dynasty which would long occupy the throne, and involving as the consequence of the revolution important events extending far into the future, we would naturally say that these things were shortly to occur, or that the time was near. It is customary to speak of a succession of events or periods as near, however vast or interminable the series may be, when the commencement is at hand. Thus we say, that the great events of the eternal world are near; that is, the beginning of them is soon to occur. So Christians now speak often of the millennium as near, or as about to occur, though it is the belief of many that it will be protracted for many ages.

(c) That this is the true idea here is clear, whatever general view of interpretation in regard to the book is adopted. Even Professor Stuart, who contends that the greater portion of the book refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the persecutions of heathen Rome, admits that "the closing part of the Revelation relates beyond all doubt to a distant period, and some of it to a future eternity," (II p 5;) and if this be so then there is no impropriety in supposing that a part of the series of predictions preceding this may lie also in a somewhat remote futurity. The true idea seems to be that the writer contemplated a series of events that were to occur; and that this series was about to commence. How far into the future it was to extend is to be learned by the proper interpretation of all the parts of the series.

And signified it. εσημανεν. He indicated it by signs and symbols. The word occurs in the New Testament only in Jn 12:33 Jn 18:32, 21:19, Acts 11:28, 25:27 and in the passage before us, in all which places it rendered signify, signifying or signified. It properly refers to some sign, signal, or token by which anything is made known, (compare Mt 26:28, Rom 4:11, Gen 9:12-13, 17:11 Lk 2:12, 2Cor 12:12, 1Cor 14:22) and is a word most happily chosen to denote the manner in which the events referred to were to by communicated to John--for nearly the whole book is made up of

signs and symbols. If it be asked what was signified to John, it may be replied that either the word "it" may be understood, as in our translation, to refer to the Apocalypse or Revelation, or what he saw--οσαειδε-- as Professor Stuart supposes; or it may be absolute, without any object following, as Professor Robinson (Lex.) supposes. The general sense is that, sending by his angel, he made to John a communication by expressive signs or symbols.

By his angel. That is, an angel was employed to cause these scenic representations to pass before the mind of the apostle. The communication was not made directly to him but was through the medium of a heavenly messenger employed for this purpose. Thus in Rev 22:6, it is said, "And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." Compare Rev 22:8-9.

There is frequent allusion in the Scriptures to the fact that angels have been employed as agents in making known the Divine will, or in the revelations which have been made to men. Thus in Acts 7:53, it is said, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels." Heb 2:2, "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast," etc. Gal 3:19, "And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

There is almost no further reference to the agency of the angel employed for this service, in the book, and there is no distinct specifications of what he did, or of his great agency in the case. John is everywhere represented as seeing the symbols himself, and it would seem that the agency of the angel was, either to cause those symbols to pass before the apostle, or to convey their meaning to his mind. How far John himself understood the meaning of these symbols we have not the means of knowing with certainty. The most probable supposition is, that the angel was employed to cause these vision or symbols to pass before his mind, rather than to interpret them. If an interpretation had been given, it is inconceivable that it should not have been recorded, and there is

no more probability that their meaning should have been disclosed to John himself for his private use, than that it should have been disclosed and recorded for the use of others. It would seem probable, therefore, that John had only that view of the meaning of what he saw which any one else might obtain from the record of the visions. Compare 1Pet 1:10-12.

2 who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Who bare record of the word of God. Who bore witness to, or testified of (εμαρτυρησε) the word of God. He regarded himself merely as a witness of what he had seen, and claimed only to make a fair and faithful record of it. Jn 21:24: "This is the disciple which testifieth (ομαρτυρων) of these things, and wrote these things." Jn 19:35: "And he that saw it bare record"--μεμαρτυρηκε. Compare also the following places, where the apostle uses the same word of himself: 1Jn 1:2, 4:14. The expression here, "the word of God," is one the meaning of which has been much controverted, and is important in its bearing on the question who was the author of the book of Revelation. The main inquiry is, whether the writer refers to the "testimony" which he bears in this book respecting the "word of God;" or whether he refers to some testimony on that subject in some other book with which those to whom he wrote were so familiar that they would at once recognize him as the author; or whether he refers to the fact that he had borne his testimony to the great truths of religion, and especially respecting Jesus Christ, as a preacher who was well known, and who would be characterized by this expression. The phrase "the word of God"--τονλογοντουθεου,--occurs frequently in the New Testament, (compare Jn 10:35, Acts 4:31, 6:2,7, 11:1, 12:24) and may either mean the word or doctrine respecting God --that which teaches what God is--or that which he speaks or teaches. It is more commonly used in the latter sense, compare the passages referred to above, and especially refers to what God speaks or commands in the gospel. The fair meaning of this expression would be, that John had borne faithful witness to, or testimony of, the truth which God had spoken to man in the gospel of Christ. So far as the language here used is concerned, this might apply either to a

written or an oral testimony; either to a treatise like that of his gospel, to his preaching, or to the record which he was then making. Vitringa and others suppose that the reference here is to the gospel which he had published, and which now bears his name; Lucke and others, to the revelation made to him in Patmos, the record of which he now makes in this book; Professor Stuart and others, to the fact that he was a teacher or preacher of the gospel, and that (compare Rev 1:9) the allusion is to the testimony which he had borne to the gospel, and for which he was an exile in Patmos. Is it not possible that these conflicting opinions may be to some extent harmonized, by supposing that in the use of the aorist tense--εμαρτυρησε--the writer meant to refer to a characteristic of himself, to wit, that he was a faithful witness of the word of God and of Jesus Christ, whenever and however made known to him ? With an eye, perhaps, to the record which he was about to make in this book, and intending to include that, may he not also refer to what had been and was his well-known character as a witness of what God communicated to him? He had always borne this testimony. He always regarded himself as such a witness. He had been an eye-witness of what had occurred in the life and at the death of the Saviour, (2Pet 1:17-18) and had, in all his writings and public administrations, borne witness to what he had seen and heard; for that, (Rev 1:9)he had been banished to Patmos; and he was now about to carry out the same characteristic of himself by bearing witness to what he saw in these new revelations. This would be much in the manner of John, who often refers to this characteristic of himself, (compare Jn 19:35, 21:24, 1Jn 1:2) as well as harmonize the different opinions. The meaning then of the expression "who bare record of the word of God," as I understand it, is, that it was a characteristic of the writer to bear simple but faithful testimony to the truth which God communicated to men in the gospel. If this be the correct interpretation, it may be remarked

(a) that this is such language as John the apostle would be likely to use, and yet

(b) that it is not such language as an author would he likely to adopt if there was an attempt to forge a book in his name.

The artifice would be too refined to occur probably to any one, for although perfectly natural for John, it would not be so natural for a forger of a book to select this circumstance and weave it thus unostentatiously into his narrative.

And of the testimony of Jesus Christ. That is, in accordance with the interpretation above, of the testimony which Jesus Christ bore for the truth; not of a testimony respecting Jesus Christ. The idea is, that Jesus Christ was himself a witness to the truth, and that the writer of this book was a witness merely of the testimony which Christ had borne. Whether the testimony of Jesus Christ was borne in his preaching when in the flesh, or whether made known to the writer by him at any subsequent period, it was his office to make a faithful record of that testimony. As he had always before done that, so he was about to do it now in the new revelation made to him in Patmos, which he regarded as a new testimony of Jesus Christ to the truth, Rev 1:1. It is remarkable that, in confirmation of this view, John so often describes the Lord Jesus as a witness, or represents him as having come to bear his faithful testimony to the truth. Thus in Rev 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful and true witness." Jn 8:18: "I am one that bear witness--ομαρτυρων--of myself." Jn 18:37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness--ιναμαρτυρησω--to the truth." Rev 3:14: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness"-- ομαρτυςοπιστοςκτλ. Of this testimony which the Lord Jesus came to bring to man respecting eternal realities, the writer of this book says that he regarded himself as a witness. To the office of bearing such testimony he had been dedicated; that testimony he was now to bear, as he had always done.

And of all things that he saw . οσατεειδε. This is the common reading in the Greek, and according to this reading it would

properly mean, "and whatsoever he saw;" that is, it would imply that he bore witness to "the word of God," and to "the testimony of Jesus Christ," and to "whatever he saw"--meaning that the things which he saw, and to which he refers, were things additional to those to which he had referred by "the word of God," and the "testimony of Christ." From this it has been supposed that in the former part of the verse he refers to some testimony which he had formerly borne, as in his gospel or in his preaching, and that here he refers to what he "saw" in the visions of the Revelation as something additional to the former. But it should be remembered that the word rendered and--τε--is wanting in a large number of manuscripts, (see Wetstein,) and that it is now omitted in the best editions of the Greek Testament--as by Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn. The evidence is clear that it should be omitted; and if so omitted, the reference is to whatever he had at any time borne his testimony to, and not particularly to what passed before him in the visions of this book. It is a general affirmation that he had always borne a faithful testimony to whatever he had seen respecting the word of God and the testimony of Christ. The correct rendering of the whole passage then would be, "And sending by his angel, he signifies it to his servant John, who bare record of" [i.e. whose character and office it was to bear his testimony to] "the word of God," [the message which God has sent to me,] "and the testimony of Jesus Christ," [the testimony which Christ bore to the truth,] "whatsoever he saw." He concealed nothing; he held nothing back; he made it known precisely as it was seen by him. Thus interpreted, the passage refers to what was a general characteristic of the writer, and is designed to embrace all that was made known to him, and to affirm that he was a faithful witness to it. There were doubtless special reasons why John was employed as the medium through which this communication was to be made to the church and the world. Among these reasons may have been the following:

(a) That he was the "beloved disciple."

(b) That he was the only surviving apostle.

(c) That his character, was such that his statements would be readily received. Compare Jn 19:35, 21:24, 3Jn 1:12.

(d) It may be that his mind was better fitted to be the medium of these communications than that of any other of the apostles--even if they had been then alive. There is almost no one whose mental characteristics are less correctly understood than those of the apostle John. Among the most gentle and amiable of men--with a heart so fitted for love as to be known as "the beloved disciple"--he yet had mental characteristics which made it proper that he should be called "a son of thunder," (Mk 3:17) a mind fitted to preserve and record the profound thoughts in his gospel; a mind of high poetic order, fitted for the magnificent conceptions in this book.

3 Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.

Blessed is he that readeth. That is, it is to be regarded as a privilege attended with many blessings, to be permitted to mark the disclosures to be made in this book; the important revelations respecting future times. Professor Stuart supposes that this refers to a public reading, and that the phrase "those who hear the words of this prophecy" refers to those who listened to the public reader, and that both the reader and hearer should regard themselves as highly favoured. It is, however, more in accordance with the usual meaning of the word rendered "read," to suppose that it refers to the act of one's reading for himself; to learn by reading. So Robinson (Lex.) understands it. The Greek word, indeed, would bear the other interpretation, (see Lk 4:16, Acts 13:27, 15:21, 2Cor 3:15) but as this book was sent abroad to be read by Christians, and not merely to be in the hands of the ministers of religion to be read by them to others, it is more natural to interpret the word in the usual sense.

And hear the words of this prophecy. As they shall be declared or repeated by others; or perhaps the word hear is used in a sense that is not uncommon, that of giving attention to; taking heed to. The general sense is, that they were to be regarded as highly favoured who became acquainted in any way with what is here communicated. The writer does not say that they were blessed who understood it, or that they who read or heard it would fully understand it; but it is clearly implied, that there would be so far an understanding of its meaning as to make it a felicitous condition to have been made acquainted with it. An author could not be supposed to say that one should regard his condition as a favoured one who merely heard words that he could not understand, or who had placed before him magnificent symbols that had to him no meaning. The word prophecy is used here in its more strict sense as denoting the disclosure of future events--a large portion of the book being of this nature. It is here synonymous with Revelation in Rev 1:1.

And keep those things which are written therein. Keep in mind those things which relate to the future; and obey those things which are required as truth and duty. The blessing which results from having in possession the revealed truth of God is not merely in reading it, or in hearing it: it results from the fact that the truth is properly regarded, and exerts a suitable influence over our lives. Compare Ps 19:11: "And in keeping of them there is great reward."

For the time is at hand. See Rev 1:1 The word here used--εγγυς--has the same signification substantially as the word "shortly" in Rev 1:1 It would apply to any event whose beginning was soon to occur, though the end might be remote, for the series of events might stretch far into the future. It cannot be doubted, however, that the writer meant to press upon them the importance of attending to these things, from the fact that either entirely or in part these things were soon to happen. It may be inferred from this verse, that it is possible so to understand this book, as that it may convey useful instruction. This is the only book in the Bible of

which a special blessing is pronounced on him who reads it; but assuredly a blessing would not be pronounced on the perusal of a book which is entirely unintelligible. While, therefore, there may be many obscurities in this book, it is also to be assumed that it may be so far understood as to be useful to Christians, in supporting their faith, and giving them elevated views of the final triumph of religion, and of the glory of the world to come. Anything is a blessing which enables us with well-founded hope and joy to look forward to the heavenly world.

Greetings to the Seven Churches

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia:
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

John to the seven churches which are in Asia. The word Asia is used in quite different senses, by different writers. It is used

(1) as referring to the whole eastern continent now known by that name;

(2) Either Asia, or Asia Minor;

(3) that part of Asia which Attlus III., king of Pergamos, gave to the Romans, viz., Mysia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Lydia, Carla, Pisidia, and the southern coast--that is, all in the western, south-western, and southern parts of Asia Minor; and

(4) in the New Testament, usually, the south-western part of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital. Acts 2:9. The word Asia is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures, but it occurs often in the books of Maccabees, and in the New Testament. In the New Testament it is not used in the large sense in which it is now as applied to the whole continent, but in its largest signification it would include only Asia Minor. It is also used, especially by Luke;

as denoting the country that was called Ionia, or that which embraced the provinces of Carla and Lydia. Of this region Ephesus was the principal city, and it was in this region that the "seven churches" were situated. Whether there were more than seven churches in this region is not intimated by the writer of this book, and on that point we have no certain knowledge. It is evident that these seven were the principal churches, even if there were more, and that there was some reason why they should be particularly addressed. There is mention of some other churches in the neighbourhood of these. Colosse was near to Laodicea; and from Col 4:13, it would seem not improbable that there was a church also at Hierapolis. But there may have been nothing in their circumstances that demanded particular instruction or admonition, and they may have been on that account omitted. There is also some reason to suppose, that, though there had been other churches in that vicinity besides the seven mentioned by John, they had become extinct at the time when he wrote the book of Revelation. It appears from Tacitus, (Annal. xiv. 27; compare also Pliny, N.H. v. 29,) that in the time of Nero, A. D, 61, the city of Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake, in which earthquake, according to Eusebius, the adjacent cities of Colosse and Hierapolis were involved. Laodicea was, indeed, immediately rebuilt, but there is no evidence of the re-establishment of the church there before the time when John wrote this book. The earliest mention we have of a church there, after the one referred to in the New Testament by Paul, (Col 2:1, 4:13,15-16) is in the time of Trajan, when Papias was bishop there, sometime between A.D. 98 and 117. It would appear, then, to be not improbable that at the time when the Apocalypse was written, there were in fact but seven churches in the vicinity. Professor Stuart (i. 219) supposes that "seven, and only so many, may have been named, because the sevenfold divisions and groups of various objects constitute a conspicuous feature in the Apocalypse throughout." But this reason seems too artificial; and it can hardly be supposed that it would influence the mind of John, in the specification by name of the churches to which the book was sent. If no names had been mentioned, and if the statement had occurred in glowing poetic description, it is not

inconceivable that the number seven might have been selected for some such purpose.

Grace be unto you and peace. The usual form of salutation in addressing a church. See Barnes Notes on Rom 1:7.

From him which is, and which was, and which is to come. From him who is everlasting--embracing all duration, past, present, and to come. No expression could more strikingly denote eternity than this. He now exists; he has existed in the past; he will exist in the future. There is an evident allusion here to the name JEHOVAH, the name by which the true God is appropriately designated in the Scriptures. That name-- from to be, to exist--seems to have been adopted because it denotes existence, or being,and as denoting simply one who exists; and has reference merely to the fact of existence. The word has no variation of form, and has no reference to time, and would embrace all time: that is, it is as true at one time as another that he exists. Such a word would not be inappropriately paraphrased by the phrase "who is, and who was, and who is to come," or who is to be; and there can be no doubt that John referred to him here as being himself the eternal and uncreated existence, and as the great and original fountain of all being. They who desire to find a full discussion in regard to the origin of the name JEHOVAH, may consult an article by Professor Tholuck, in the Biblical Repository, vol. iv. pp. 89--108. It is remarkable that there are some passages in heathen inscriptions and writings which bear a very strong resemblance to the language here used by John respecting God. Thus Plutarch, (De Is. et Osir. p. 354,) speaking of a temple of Isis, at Sais, in Egypt, says, "It bore this inscription 'I am all that was, and is, and shall be, and my vail no mortal can remove'"-- εγωειμιπαντογεγονοςκαιονκαιεσομενονκαιτονεμον πεπλονουδειςτωθνητοςανεκαλυψεν. So Orpheus, (in Auctor. Lib. de Mundo,) "Jupiter is the head, Jupiter is the middle, and all things are made by Jupiter." So in Pausanias, (Phocic. 12,) "Jupiter was; Jupiter is; Jupiter shall be." The reference in the phrase before us is to God as such, or to God considered as the Father.

And from the seven spirits which are before his throne. After all that has been written on this very difficult expression, it is still impossible to determine with certainty its meaning. The principal opinions which have been held in regard to it are the following:

I. That it refers to God, as such. This opinion is held by Eichhorn, and is favoured by Ewald. No arguments derived from any parallel passages are urged for this opinion, nor can any such be found, where God is himself spoken of under the representation of a sevenfold Spirit. But the objections to this view are so obvious as to be insuperable.

(1.) If it refers to God as such, then it would be mere tautology, for the writer had just referred to him in the phrase "from him who was," etc.

(2.) It is difficult to perceive in what sense "seven spirits" could be ascribed to God, or how he could be described as a being of "Seven Spirits." At least, if he could be spoken of as such, there would be no objection to applying the phrase to the Holy Spirit.

(3.) How could it be said of God himself that he was "before the throne?" He is everywhere represented as sitting on the throne, not as before it. It is easy to conceive of angels as standing before the throne; and of the Holy Spirit it is more easy to conceive as being represented thus as ready to go forth and convey a heavenly influence from that throne, but it is impossible to conceive in what sense this could be applied to God as such.

II The opinion held by Grotius and by John Henry Heinrichs that it refers to "the multiform providence of God," or to God considered as operating in seven or many different ways. In support of this, Grotius appeals to Rev 5:12, 7:12. But this opinion is so far-fetched, and it is so destitute of support, as to have found,

it is believed, no other advocates, and to need no further notice. It cannot be supposed that John meant to personify the attributes of the Deity, and then to unite them with God himself, and with the Lord Jesus Christ, and to represent them as real subsistences from which important blessings descend to men. It is clear that as by the phrase "who is, and who was, and who is to come," and by "Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness," he refers to real subsistences, so he must here. Besides, if the attributes of God, or the modes of Divine operation, are denoted, why is the number seven chosen? And why are they represented as standing before the throne?

III. A third opinion is, that the reference is to seven attending and ministering presence-angels; angels represented as standing before the throne of God, or in his presence. This opinion was adopted among the ancients by Clemens of Alexandria; Andreas of Cesarea, and others; among the moderns by Beza, Drusius, Hammond, Wetstein, Rosenmuller, Clarke, Professor Stuart, and others. This opinion, however, has been held in somewhat different forms; some maintaining that the seven angels are referred to because it was a received opinion among the Hebrews that there were seven angels standing in the presence of God, as seven princes stood in the Persian court before the king; others, that the angels of the seven churches are particularly referred to, represented now as standing in the presence of God; others, that seven angels, represented as the principal angels employed in the government of the world, are referred to; and others, that seven archangels are particularly designated. Compare Poole, Synop. in loc. The arguments which are relied on by those who suppose that seven angels are here referred to are briefly these:

(1.) The nature of the expression here used. The expression, it is said, is such as would naturally denote beings who were before his throne--beings who were different from him who was on the throne-- and beings more than one in number. That it could not refer to one on the throne, but must mean those distinct and separate from one on the throne, is argued from the use of the

phrases "before the throne," and "before God,"in Rev 4:5, 7:9,15, 8:2, 11:4,16, 12:10, 14:3, 20:12: in all which places the representation denotes those who were in the presence of God, and standing before him.

(2.) It is argued from other passages in the book of Revelation which, it is said, (Professor Stuart,) go directly to confirm this opinion. Thus in Rev 8:2: "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God." So Rev 4:5: the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, are said to be "the seven Spirits of God." In these passages, it is alleged that the article "the" designates the well-known angels; or those which had been before specified, and that this is the first mention of any such angels after the designation in the passage before us.

(3.) It is said that this is in accordance with what was usual among the Hebrews, who were accustomed to speak of seven presence-angels, or angels standing in the presence of Jehovah. Thus in the book of Tobit, (xii. 15,) Raphael is introduced as using this language, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." The apocryphal book of Enoch (chapter 20) gives the names of the seven angels who watch; that is, of the watchers (compare Barnes Notes on Dan 4:13,17)who stand in the presence of God waiting for the Divine commands, or who watch over the affairs of men. So in the Zendavesta of Zoroaster, seven amshaspends, or archangels, are mentioned. See Professor Stuart, in loc.

To these views, however, there are objections of great weight, if they are not in fact quite insuperable. They are such as the following:

(1.) That the same rank should be given to them as to God, as the source of blessings. According to the view which represents this expression as referring to angels, they are placed on the same level,

so far as the matter before us is concerned with "him who was, and is, and is to come," and with the Lord Jesus Christ--a doctrine which does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures, and which we cannot suppose the writer designed to teach.

(2.) That blessings should be invoked from angels--as if they could impart "grace and peace." It is evident that, whoever is referred to here by the phrase "the seven spirits," he is placed on the same level with the others mentioned as the source of "grace and peace." But it cannot be supposed that an inspired writer would invoke that grace and peace from any but a Divine being.

(3.) That as two persons of the Trinity are here mentioned, it is to be presumed that the third would not be omitted; or to put this argument in a stronger form. it cannot be supposed that an inspired writer would mention two of the persons of the Trinity in this connexion, and then not only not mention the third, but refer to angels--to creatures--as bestowing that which would be appropriately sought from the Holy Spirit. The incongruity would be not merely in omitting all reference to tile Spirit--which might indeed occur, as it often does in the Scriptures--but in putting in the place which that Spirit would naturally occupy an allusion to angels as conferring blessings.

(4.) If this refer to angels, it is impossible to avoid the inference that angel-worship, or invocation of angels, is proper. To all intents and purposes, this is an act of worship; for it is an act of solemn invocation. It is an acknowledgment of the "seven spirits," as the source of "grace and peace." It would be impossible to resist this impression on the popular mind; it would not be possible to meet it if urged as an argument in favour of the propriety of angel-invocation, or angel-worship. And yet, if there is anything clear in the Scriptures, it is that God alone is to be worshipped. For these reasons, it seems to me that this interpretation cannot be well founded.

IV. There remains a fourth opinion, that it refers to the Holy Spirit, and in favour of that opinion it may be urged,

(1.) that it is most natural to suppose that the Holy Spirit would be invoked on such an occasion, in connexion with him "who was, and is, and is to come," and with "Jesus Christ." If two of the persons of the Trinity were addressed on such an occasion, it would be properly supposed that the Holy Spirit would not be omitted, as one of the persons from whom the blessing was to descend. Compare 2Cor 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

(2.) It would be unnatural and improper, in such an invocation, to unite angels with God as imparting blessings, or as participating with God and with Christ, in communicating blessings to man. An invocation to God to send his angels, or to impart grace and favour through angelic help, would be in entire accordance with the usage in Scripture, but it is not in accordance with such usage to invoke such blessings from angels.

(3.) It cannot be denied that an invocation of grace from "him who is, and was, and is to come," is of the nature of worship. The address to him is as God, and the attitude of the mind in such an address is that of one who is engaged in an act of devotion. The effect of uniting any other being with him in such a case, would be to lead to the worship of one thus associated with him. In regard to the Lord Jesus, "the faithful and true witness," it is from such expressions as these that we are led to the belief that he is Divine, and that it is proper to worship him as such. The same effect must be produced in reference to what is here called "the seven spirits before the throne." We cannot well resist the impression that some one with Divine attributes is intended; or, if it refer to angels, we cannot easily show that it is not proper to render Divine worship to them. If they were thus invoked by an apostle, can it be improper to worship them now?

(4.) The word used here is not angels, but spirits; and though it is true that angels are spirits, and that the word spirit is applied to them, (Heb 1:7) yet it is also true that is not a word which would be understood to refer to them without designating that angels were meant. If angels had been intended here, that word would naturally have been used, as is the case elsewhere in this book. (5.) In Rev 4:5, where there is a reference to "the seven lamps before the throne," it is said of them that they "are," that is, they represent "the seven spirits of God." This passage may be understood as referring to the same thing as that before us, but it cannot be well understood of angels, for

(a.) if it did, it would have been natural to use that language for the reason above mentioned;

(b.) the angels are nowhere called "the spirits of God," nor would such language be proper. The phrase "Spirit of God" naturally implies divinity, and could not be applied to a creature. For these reasons, it seems to me that the interpretation which applies the phrase to the Holy Spirit is to be preferred; and though that interpretation is not free from difficulties, yet there are fewer difficulties in that than in either of the others proposed. Though it may not be possible wholly to remove the difficulties involved in that interpretation, yet perhaps something may be done to diminish their force.

(1.) First, as to the reason why the number seven should be applied to the Holy Spirit.

(a.) There would be as much propriety certainly in applying it to the Holy Spirit as to God as such. And yet Grotius, Eichhorn, Ewald, and others saw no difficulty in such an application considered as representing a sevenfold mode of operation of God, or a manifold Divine agency.

(b.) The word seven often denotes a full or complete number, and may be used to denote that which is full, complete, or manifold; and might thus be used in reference to an all-perfect Spirit, or to a spirit which was manifold in its operations.

(c.) The number seven is evidently a favourite number in the book of Revelation, and it might be used by the author in places, and in a sense, such as it would not be likely to be used by another writer. Thus there are seven epistles to the seven churches; there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials of the wrath of God, seven last plagues; there are seven lamps, and seven Spirits of God; the Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. In Rev 1:16, seven stars are mentioned; in Rev 5:12, seven attributes of God; Rev 12:3, the dragon has seven heads; Rev 13:1, the beast has seven heads.

(d.) The number seven, therefore, may have been given to the Holy Spirit with reference to the diversity or the fulness of his operations on the souls of men, and to his manifold agency on the affairs of the world, as further developed in this book.

(2.) As to his being represented as "before the throne," this may be intended to designate the fact that the Divine Spirit was, as it were, prepared to go forth, or to be sent forth, in accordance with a common representation in the Scriptures, to accomplish important purposes on human affairs. The posture does not necessarily imply inferiority of nature, any more than the language does respecting the Son of God, when he is represented as being sent into the world to execute an important commission from the Father.

5 and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first- begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.
Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness. Rev 1:2. He is faithful in the sense that he is one on whose testimony there may be entire reliance, or who is entirely worthy to be believed. From him "grace and peace" are appropriately sought, as one who bears such a testimony, and as the first-begotten from the dead, and as

reigning over the kings of the earth. Thus grace and peace are invoked from the infinite God in all his relations and operations :--as the Father, the Source of all existence; as the Sacred Spirit, going forth in manifold operations upon the hearts of men; and as the Son of God, the one appointed to bear faithful testimony to the truth respecting God and future events.

And the first-begotten of the dead. The same Greek expression--πρωτοτοκος--occurs in Col 1:18. Col 1:18. Compare Barnes on "1Co 15:20".

And the prince of the kings of the earth. Who has over all the kings of the earth the pre-eminence which kings have over their subjects. He is the Ruler of rulers; King of kings. In Rev 17:14, 19:16 the same thought is expressed by saying that he is the "King of kings." No language could more sublimely denote his exalted character, or his supremacy. Kings and princes sway a sceptre over the millions of the earth, and the exaltation of the Saviour is here expressed by supposing that all those kings and princes constitute a community over which he is the head. The exaltation of the Redeemer is elsewhere expressed in different language, but the idea is one that everywhere prevails in regard to him in the Scriptures. Compare Mt 28:18, 11:27, Jn 17:2, Eph 1:20-22, Php 2:9-11, Col 1:15-18 The word prince --οαρχων--means properly ruler, leader, the first in rank. We often apply the word prince to an heir to a throne who is not invested with absolute sovereignty. The word here, however, denotes that he actually exercises dominion over the rulers of the earth. As this is an authority which is claimed by God, compare Isa 10:5 seq. Isa 45:1 seq. Ps 47:2, 99:1, 103:19 Dan 4:34 and which can only appertain to God, it is clear that in ascribing this to the Lord Jesus it is implied that he is possessed of Divine attributes. As much of the revelations of this book pertained to the assertion of power over the princes and rulers of this world, there was a propriety that, in the commencement, it should be asserted that he who was to exert that power was

invested with the prerogative of a ruler of the nations, and that he had this right of control.

Unto him that loved us. This refers undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus, whose love for men was so strong that nothing more was necessary to characterize him than to speak of him as the one "who loved us." It is manifest that the division in the verses should have been made here, for this commences a new subject, not having any special connexion with that which precedes. In Rev 1:4, and the first part of this verse, the writer had invoked grace from the Father, the Spirit, and the Saviour. In the latter clause of the verse there commences an ascription of praise to the Redeemer; an ascription to him particularly, because the whole book is regarded as a revelation from him, (Rev 1:1) because he was the one who especially appeared to John in the visions of Patmos; and because he was to be the great agent in carrying into execution the purposes revealed in this book.

And washed us from our sins in his own blood. He has removed the pollution of sin from our souls by his blood; that is, his blood has been applied to cleanse us from sin. Blood can be represented as having a cleansing power only as it makes an expiation for sin, for considered literally its effect would be the reverse. The language is such as would be used only on the supposition that he had made an atonement, and that it was by the atonement that we are cleansed; for in what sense could it be said of a martyr that he "had washed us from our sins in his blood?" How could this language be used of Paul or Polycarp; of Ridley or Cranmer? The doctrine that the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin, or purifies us, is one that is common in the Scriptures. Compare 1Jn 1:7, Heb 9:14. The specific idea of washing, however--representing that blood as washing sin away-- is one which does not elsewhere occur. It is evidently used in the sense of cleansing or purifying, as we do this by washing, and, as the blood of Christ accomplishes in respect to our souls, what washing with water does in respect to the body.

6 and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

And hath made us kings and priests unto God. In 1Pet 2:9 the same idea is expressed by saying of Christians that they are "a royal priesthood." 1Pet 2:9. The quotation in both places is from Ex 19:6: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests." This idea is expressed here by saying that Christ had made us in fact kings and priests; that is, Christians are exalted to the dignity, and are invested with the office, implied in these words. The word kings, as applied to them, refers to the exalted rank and dignity which they will have; to the fact that they, in common with their Saviour, will reign triumphant over all enemies; and that, having gained a victory over sin and death and hell, they may be represented as reigning together. The word priests refers to the fact that they are engaged in the holy service of God, or that they offer to him acceptable worship. 1Pet 2:5.

And his Father. Even his Father; that is, the Saviour has redeemed them, and elevated them to this exalted rank, in order that they may thus be engaged in the service of his Father.

To him be glory. To the Redeemer; for so the construction (Rev 1:5) demands. The word "glory" here means praise, or honour, implying a wish that all honour should be shown him.

And dominion. This word means literally strength--κρατος; but it here means the strength, power, or authority which is exercised over others, and the expression is equivalent to a wish that he may reign.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Behold, he cometh with clouds. That is, the Lord Jesus when he returns will come accompanied with clouds. This is in accordance with the uniform representation respecting the return of the Saviour. Mt 24:30. Compare Mt 26:64, Mk 13:26 Mk 14:62, Acts

1:9,11. Clouds are appropriate symbols of majesty, and God is often represented as appearing in that manner. See Ex 19:18 Ps 18:11, Isa 19:1.

The design of introducing this representation of the Saviour, and of the manner in which he would appear, seems to be to impress the mind with a sense of the majesty and glory of that being from whom John received his revelations. His rank, his character, his glory were such as to demand respect; all should reverence him, and all should feel that his communications about the future were important to them, for they must soon appear before him.

And every eye shall see him. He will be made visible in his glory to all that dwell upon the earth; to all the children of men. Every one, therefore, has an interest in what he says; every one has this in certain prospect, that he shall see the Son of God coming as a Judge.

And they also which pierced him. When he died; that is, they who pierced his hands, his feet, and his side. There is probably an allusion here to Zech 12:10: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." The language here is so general that it may refer to any act of looking upon the pierced Saviour, and might be applied to those who would see him on the cross and to their compunctions visiting then; or to their subsequent reflections, as they might look by faith on him whom they had crucified; or to the feeling of any sinners who should reflect that their sins had been the cause of the death of the Lord Jesus; or it might be applied, as it is here, more specifically to the feelings which his murderers will have when they shall see him coming in his glory. All sinners who have pierced his heart by their crimes will then behold him, and will mourn over their treatment of him; they, in a special manner, who imbrued their hands in his blood will then remember their crime, and be overwhelmed with alarm. The design of what is here said seems to be, to show that the coming of the Saviour will be an event of great interest to all

mankind. None can be indifferent to it, for all will see him. His friends will hail his advent, (compare Rev 22:20) but all who were engaged in putting him to death, and all who in any manner have pierced his heart by sin and ingratitude, unless they shall have repented, will have occasion of bitter lamentation when he shall come. There are none who have a more fearful doom to anticipate than the murderers of the Son of God, including those who actually put him to death, and those who would have engaged in such an act had they been present, and those who, by their conduct, have done all they could to pierce and wound him by their ingratitude.

And all kindreds of the earth. Gr., "All the tribes--φυλαι--of the earth." This language is the same which the Saviour uses in Mt 24:30. Mt 24:30. The word tribes is that which is commonly applied to the twelve tribes of Israel, and thus used, it would describe the inhabitants of the holy land; but it may be used to denote nations and people in general, as descended from a common ancestor, and the connexion requires that it should be understood in this sense here, since it is said that "every eve shall see him;" that is, all that dwell on the face of the earth.

Shall wail because of him. On account of him; on account of their treatment of him. The word rendered wail--κοπτω--means properly to beat, to cut; then to beat or cut one's self in the breast as an expression of sorrow; and then to lament, to cry aloud in intense grief. The coming of the Saviour will be an occasion of this,

(a) because it will be an event which will call the sins of men to remembrance, and

(b) because they will be overwhelmed with the apprehension of the wrath to come. Nothing would fill the earth with greater consternation than the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven; nothing could produce so deep and universal alarm. This fact, which no one can doubt, is proof that men feel that they are

guilty, since, if they were innocent, they would have nothing to dread by his appearing. It is also a proof that they believe in the doctrine of future punishment, since, if they do not, there is no reason why they should be alarmed at his coming. Surely men would not dread his appearing if they really believed that all will be saved. Who dreads the coming of a benefactor to bestow favours on him? Who dreads the appearing of a jailer to deliver him from prison; of a physician to raise him up from a bed of pain; of a deliverer to knock off the fetters of slavery? And how can it be that men should be alarmed at the coming of the Saviour unless their consciences tell them that they have much to fear in the future? The presence of the Redeemer in the clouds of heaven would destroy all the hopes of those who believe in the doctrine of universal salvation--as the approach of death now often does. Men believe that there is much to be dreaded in the future world, or they would not fear the coming of Him who shall wind up the affairs of the human race.

Even so, Amen--ναιαμην. "A double expression of so be it, assuredly, certainly, one in Greek and the other in Hebrew."--Professor Stuart. Compare Rom 8:16, "Abba, Father"--αββαοπατηρ. The idea which John seems to intend to convey is, that the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the consequences which he says will follow, are events which are altogether certain. This is not the expression of a wish that it may be so, as our common translation would seem to imply, but a strong affirmation that it will be so. In some passages, however, the word (ναι) expresses assent to what is said, implying approbation of it as true, or as desirable. Mt 11:26, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Lk 10:21. So in Rev 16:7, "Even so, (ναι) Lord God Almighty." So in Rev 22:20, "Even so, (ναι) come, Lord Jesus." The word Amen here seems to determine the meaning of the phrase, and to make it the affirmation of a certainty, rather than the expression of a wish.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

I am Alpha and Omega. These are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, and denote properly the first and the last. So in Rev 22:13, when the two expressions are united, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." So in Rev 1:17, the speaker says of himself, "I am the first and the last." Among the Jewish Rabbins, it was common to use the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet to denote the whole of anything, from beginning to end. Thus it is said, "Adam transgressed the whole law from to "--from Aleph to Tav. "Abraham kept the whole law from to ." The language here is that which would properly denote eternity in the being to whom it is applied, and could be used in reference to no one but the true God. It means that he is the beginning and the end of all things; that he was at the commencement, and will be at the close; and it is thus equivalent to saying that he has always existed, and that he will always exist. Compare Isa 41:4, "I the Lord, the first, and with the last;'-- Isa 44:6, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God;"--Isa 48:12, "I am he; I am the first, I also am the last." There can be no doubt that the language here would be naturally understood as implying divinity, and it could be properly applied to no one but the true God. The obvious interpretation here would be to apply this to the Lord Jesus; for

(a) it is he who is spoken of in the verses preceding, and

(b) there can be no doubt that the same language is applied to him in Rev 1:11. As there is, however, a difference of reading in this place in the Greek text, and as it cannot be absolutely certain that the writer meant to refer to the Lord Jesus specifically here, this cannot be adduced with propriety as a proof-text to demonstrate his divinity. Many MSS., instead of "Lord," κυριος, read "God," θεος; and this reading is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and is now regarded as the correct reading. There is no real incongruity in supposing, also, that the writer here meant to refer to God as such, since the introduction of a reference to him would not be inappropriate to his manifest design. Besides, a portion of

the language here used, "which is, and was, and is to come," is that which would more naturally suggest a reference to God as such, than to the Lord Jesus Christ. See Rev 1:4. The object for which this passage referring to the "first and the last--to him who was, and is, and is to come," is introduced here evidently is, to show that as he was clothed with omnipotence, and would continue to exist through all ages to come as he had existed in all ages past, there could be no doubt about his ability to execute all which it is said he would execute.

Saith the Lord. Or, saith God, according to what is now regarded as the correct reading.

Which is, and which was, etc. Rev 1:4.

The Almighty. An appellation often applied to God, meaning that he has all power, and used here to denote that he is able to accomplish what is disclosed in this book.

A Vision of the Son of Man

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I John, who also am your brother. Your Christian brother; who am a fellow-Christian with you. The reference here is doubtless to the members of the seven churches in Asia, to whom the epistles in the following chapters were addressed, and to whom the whole book seems to have been sent. In the previous verse, the writer had closed the salutation, and he here commences a description of the Circumstances under which the vision appeared to him. He was in a lonely island, to which he had been banished on account of his attachment to religion; he was in a state of high spiritual enjoyment on the day devoted to the sacred remembrance of the Redeemer; he suddenly heard a voice behind him, and turning saw the Son of

man himself in glorious form in the midst of seven golden lamps, and fell at his feet as dead.

And companion in tribulation. Your partner in affliction. That is, he and they were suffering substantially the same kind of trials on account of their religion. It is evident from this, that some form of persecution was then raging in which they were also sufferers, though in their case it did not lead to banishment. The leader, the apostle, the aged and influential preacher, was banished; but there were many other forms of trial which they might be called to endure who remained at home. What they were we have not the means of knowing with certainty.

And in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. The meaning of this passage is, that he, and those whom he addressed, were not only companions in affliction, but were fellow partners in the kingdom of the Redeemer--that is, they shared the honour and the privileges pertaining to that kingdom; and that they were fellow-partners in the patience of Jesus Christ--that is, in enduring with patience whatever might follow from their being his friends and followers. The general idea is, that alike in privileges and sufferings they were united. They shared alike in the results of their attachment to the Saviour.

Was in the isle that is called Patmos. Patmos is one of the cluster of islands in the Aegean Sea, anciently called the Sporades. It lies between the island of Icaria and the promontory of Miletus. It is merely mentioned by the ancient geographers, Plin. His. Nat. 4, 23; Strabo, 10, 488. It is now called Patino, or Patmosa. It is some six or eight miles in length, and not more than a mile in breadth, being about fifteen miles in circumference. It has neither trees nor rivers; nor has it any land for cultivation, except some little nooks among the ledges of rocks. On approaching the island, the coast is high, and consists of a succession of capes, which form so many ports, some of which are excellent. The only one in use, however, is a deep bay, sheltered by high mountains on every side but one,

where it is protected by a projecting cape. The town attached to this port is situated upon a high rocky mountain, rising immediately from the sea, and this with the Scala below upon the shore, consisting of some ships and houses, forms the only inhabited site of the island. Though Patmos is deficient in trees, it abounds in flowery plants and shrubs. Walnuts and other fruit trees are raised in the orchards, and the wine of Patmos is the strongest and the best favoured in the Greek islands. Maize and barley are cultivated, but not in a quantity sufficient for the use of the inhabitants, and for a supply of their own vessels, and others which often put into their good harbour for provisions. The inhabitants now do not exceed four or five thousand, many of whom are emigrants from the neighbouring continent. About half-way up the mountain, there is shown a natural grotto in a rock, where John is said to have seen his visions, and to have written this book. Near this is a small church, connected with which is a school or college, where the Greek language is taught; and on the top of the hill, and in the centre of the island, is a monastery, which from its situation has a very majestic appearance. --Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature. It is commonly supposed that John was banished to this island by Domitian, about A.D. 94. No place could have been selected for banishment which would accord better with such a design than this. Lonely, desolate, barren, uninhabited, seldom visited, it had all the requisites which could be desired for a place of punishment, and banishment to that place would accomplish all that a persecutor could wish in silencing an apostle, without putting him to death. It was no uncommon thing in ancient times to banish men from their country; either sending them forth at large, or specifying some particular place to which they were to go. The whole narrative leads us to suppose that this place was designated as that to which John was to be sent. Banishment to an island was a common mode of punishment; and there was a distinction made by this act in favour of those who were thus banished. The more base, low, and vile of criminals were commonly condemned to work in the mines; the more decent and respectable were banished to some lonely island. See the authorities quoted in Wetstein, in loc. For the word of God. On

account of the word of God; that is, for holding and preaching the gospel. Rev 1:2. It cannot mean that he was sent there with a view to his preaching the word of God; for it is inconceivable that he should have been sent from Ephesus to preach in such a little, lonely, desolate place, where indeed there is no evidence that there were any inhabitants; nor can it mean that he was sent there by the Spirit of God to receive and record this revelation, for it is clear that the revelation could have been made elsewhere, and such a place afforded no peculiar advantages for this. The fair interpretation is, in accordance with all the testimony of antiquity, that he was sent there in a time of persecution as a punishment for preaching the gospel.

And for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev 1:2, He did not go there to bear testimony to Jesus Christ on that island, either by preaching or recording the visions in this book, but he went because he had preached the doctrines which testified of Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

I was in the Spirit. This cannot refer to his own spirit--for such an expression would be unintelligible. The language then must refer to some unusual state, or to some influence that had been brought to bear upon him from without, that was appropriate to such a day. The word Spirit may refer either to the Holy Spirit, or to some state of mind such as the Holy Spirit produces--a spirit of elevated devotion; a state of high and uncommon religious enjoyment. It is clear that John does not mean here to say that he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit in such a sense as that he was inspired, for the command to make a record, as well as the visions, came subsequently to the time referred to. The fair meaning of the passage is, that he was at that time favoured in a large measure with the influences of the Holy Spirit--the spirit of true devotion; that he had a high state of religious enjoyment, and was in a condition not inappropriate to the remarkable communications which were made to him on that day. The state of mind in which he was at the time here referred to, is not such

as the prophets are often represented to have been in when under the prophetic inspiration, compare Eze 1:1, 8:3 Eze 40:2, Jer 24:1 and which was often accompanied with an entire prostration of bodily strength, compare Nu 24:4, Eze 1:28, Dan 10:8-10 1Sam 19:24, Rev 1:17 but such as any Christian may experience when in a high state of religious enjoyment. He was not yet under the prophetic ecstacy, (compare Acts 10:10, 11:5, 22:17) but was, though in a lonely and barren island, and far away from the privileges of the sanctuary, permitted to enjoy in a high degree the consolations of religion: an illustration of the great truth that God can meet his people anywhere; that, when in solitude and in circumstances of outward affliction, when persecuted and cast out, when deprived of the public means of grace and the society of religious friends, he can meet them with the abundant consolations of his grace, and pour joy and peace into their souls. This state was not inappropriate to the revelations which were about to be made to John, but this itself was not that state. It was a state which seems to have resulted from the fact, that on that desert island he devoted the day to the worship of God, and by honouring the day dedicated to the memory of the risen Saviour, found, what all will find, that it was attended with rich spiritual influences on his soul.

On the Lord's day. The word here rendered Lord's--κυριακη--occurs only in this place and in 1Cor 11:20, where it is applied to the Lord's Supper. It properly means pertaining to the Lord; and, so far as this word is concerned, it might mean a day pertaining to the Lord, in any sense, or for any reason--either because he claimed it as his own and had set it apart for his own service; or because it was designed to commemorate some important event pertaining to him; or because it was observed in honour of him. It is clear

(1) that this refers to some day which was distinguished from all other days of the week, and which would be sufficiently designated by the use of this term.

(2.) That it was a day which was for some reason regarded as peculiarly a day of the Lord, or peculiarly devoted to him.

(3.) It would further appear that this was a day particularly devoted to the Lord Jesus, for

(a) that is the natural meaning of the word Lord as used in the New Testament, (compare Barnes on "Ac 1:24") and

(b) if the Jewish Sabbath were intended to be designated, the word Sabbath would have been used. The term was used generally by the early Christians to denote the first day of the week. It occurs twice in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, (about A.D. 101,) who calls the Lord's day "the queen and prince of all days." Chrysostom (on Psalms 119) says, "It was called the Lord's day because the Lord rose from the dead on that day." Later fathers make a marked distinction between the Sabbath and the Lord's day; meaning by the former, the Jewish Sabbath, or the seventh day of the week, and by the latter, the first day of the week kept holy by Christians. So Theodoret, (Fab. Haeret. ii. 1,) speaking of the Ebionites, says, "They keep the Sabbath according to the Jewish law, and sanctify the Lord's day in like manner as we do."--Professor Stuart. The strong probability is, that the name was given to this day in honour of the Lord Jesus, and because he rose on that day from the dead. No one can doubt that it was an appellation given to the first day of the week, and the passage therefore proves

(1) that that day was thus early distinguished in some peculiar manner, so that the mere mention of it would be sufficient to identify it in the minds of those to whom the apostle wrote;

(2) that it was in some sense regarded as devoted to the Lord Jesus, or was designed in some way to commemorate what he had done; and

(3) that if this book were written by the apostle John, the observance of that day has the apostolic sanction. He had manifestly, in accordance with a prevailing custom, set apart this day in honour of the Lord Jesus. Though alone, he was engaged on that day in acts of devotion. Though far away from the sanctuary, he enjoyed what all Christians hope to enjoy on such a day of rest, and what not a few do in fact enjoy in its observance. We may remark in view of this statement,

(a) that when away from the sanctuary, and deprived of its privileges, we should nevertheless not fail to observe the Christian Sabbath. If on a bed of sickness; if in a land of strangers; if on the deep; if in a foreign clime; if on a lonely island as John was, where we have none of the advantages of public worship, we should yet honour the Sabbath. We Should worship God alone if we have none to unite with us; we should show to those around us, if we are with strangers, by our dress and our conversation, by a serious and devout manner, by abstinence from labour, and by a resting from travel, that we devoutly regard this day as set apart for God.

(b) We may expect, in such circumstances, and with such a devout observance of the day, that God will meet with us and bless us. It was on a lonely island, far away from the sanctuary and from the society of Christian friends, that the Saviour met "the beloved disciple," and we may trust it will be so with us. For on such a desert island; in a lonely forest; on the deep, or amid strangers in a foreign land, he can as easily meet us as in the sanctuary where we have been accustomed to worship, and when surrounded by all the privileges of a Christian land. No man--at home or abroad; among friends or strangers; enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, or deprived of those privileges--ever kept the Christian

Sabbath in a devout manner without profit to his own soul; and when deprived of the privileges of public worship, the visitations of the Saviour to the soul may be more than a compensation for all our privations. Who would not be willing to be banished to a lonely island like Patmos, if he might enjoy such a glorious vision of the Redeemer as John was favoured with there?

And heard behind me a great voice. A loud voice. This was of course sudden, and took him by surprise.

As of a trumpet. Loud as a trumpet. This is evidently the only point in the comparison. It does not mean that the tones of the voice resembled a trumpet, but only that it was clear, loud, and distinct like a trumpet. A trumpet is a well-known wind instrument distinguished for the clearness of its sounds, and was used for calling assemblies together, for marshalling hosts for battle, etc. The Hebrew word employed commonly to denote a trumpet-- shophar--means bright and clear, and is supposed to have been given to the instrument on account of its clear and shrill sound, as we now give the name "clarion" to a certain wind instrument. The Hebrew trumpet is often referred to as employed, on account of its clearness, to summon people together, Ex 19:13, Nu 10:10, Jud 7:18, 1Sam 13:3, 2Sam 15:10.

11 saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

And, What thou seest. The voice, in addition to the declaration "I am Alpha and Omegas" gave this direction that he should record what he saw. The phrase "what thou seest" refers to what would pass before him in vision; what he there saw, and what he would see in the extraordinary manifestations which were to be made to him.

Write in a book. Make a fair record of it all--evidently meaning that he should describe things as they occurred, and implying that

the vision would be held so long before the eye of his mind that he would be able to transfer it to the "book." The fair and obvious interpretation of this is, that he was to make the record in the island of Patmos, and then send it to the churches. Though Patmos was a lonely and barren place, and though probably there were few or no inhabitants there, yet there is no improbability in supposing that John could have found writing materials there, nor even that he may have been permitted to take such materials with him. He seems to have been banished for preaching, not for writing; and there is no evidence that the materials for writing would be withheld from him. John Bunyan in Bedford jail found materials for writing the Pilgrim's Progress; and there is no evidence that the apostle John was denied the means of recording his thoughts when in the island of Patmos. The word book here--βιβλιον--would more properly mean a roll or scroll, that being the form in which books were anciently made. Lk 4:17.

And send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. The churches which are immediately designated, not implying that there were no other churches in Asia, but that there were particular reasons for sending it to these. He was to send all that he should "see;" to wit, all that is recorded in this volume or book of "Revelation." Part of this (chapters 2-3) would appertain particularly to them; the remainder (chapters 4-22) would appertain to them no more than to others, but still they would have the common interest in it which all the church would have, and, in their circumstances of trial, there might be important reasons why they should see the assurance that the church would ultimately triumph over all its enemies. They were to derive from it themselves the consolation which it was fitted to impart in time of trial, and to transmit it to future times for the welfare of the church at large.

Unto Ephesus. Perhaps mentioned first as being the capital of that portion of Asia Minor; the most important city of the seven; the place where John had preached, and whence he had been banished.

For a particular description of these seven churches, see Barnes Notes on the epistles addressed to them in chapters 2-3.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. He naturally turned round to see who it was that spake to him in this solitary and desolate place, where he thought himself to be alone. To see the voice here means to see the person who spake.

And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. These were the first things that met his eye. This must have been in vision, of course; and the meaning is, that there seemed to be there seven such lamps or candelabras. The word rendered candlesticks -- λυχνια--means properly a light-stand; lamp-stand;--something to bear up a light. It would be applied to anything that was used for this purpose; and nothing is intimated, in the use of the word, in regard to the form or dimensions of the light-bearers. Lamps were more commonly used at that time than candles, and it is rather to be supposed that these were designed to be lamp-bearers, or lamp-sustainers, than candlesticks. They were seven in number; not one branching into seven, but seven standing apart, and so far from each other that he who appeared to John could stand among them. The lamp-bearers evidently sustained each a light, and these gave a peculiar brilliancy to the scene. It is not improbable that, as they were designed to represent the seven churches of Asia, they were arranged in an order resembling these churches. The scene is not laid in the temple, as many suppose, for there is nothing that resembles the arrangements in the temple except the mere fact of the lights. The scene as yet is in Patmos, and there is no evidence that John did not regard himself as there, or that he fancied for a moment that he was translated to the temple in Jerusalem. There can be no doubt as to the design of this representation, for it is expressly declared (Rev 1:20) that the seven lamp-bearers were intended to represent the seven churches. Light is often used in the Scriptures as an emblem of true religion; Christians are represented as "the light of the world," (Mt 5:14) compare (Php

2:15, Jn 8:12) and a Christian church may be represented as a light standing in the midst of surrounding darkness.

13 and in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks. Standing among them, so as to be encircled within them. This shows that the representation could not have been like that of the vision of Zechariah, (Zech 4:2) where the prophet sees "a candlestick all of gold with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon." In the vision as it appeared to John, there was not one lamp-bearer with seven lamps or branches, but there were seven lamp-bearers so arranged that one in the likeness of the Son of man could stand in the midst of them.

One like unto the Son of man. This was evidently the Lord Jesus Christ himself, elsewhere so often called "the Son of man." That it was the Saviour himself is apparent from Rev 1:18. The expression rendered "like unto the Son of man," should have been "like unto a son of man;" that is, like a man--a human being, or in a human form. The reasons for so interpreting it are

(a) that the Greek is without the article; and

(b) that, as it is rendered in our version, it seems to make the writer say that he was like himself--since the expression "the Son of man" is in the New Testament but another name for the Lord Jesus. The phrase is often applied to him in the New Testament, and always, except in three instances, (Acts 7:56, Rev 1:13, 14:14) by the Saviour himself, evidently to denote his warm interest in man, or his relationship to man; to signify that he was a man, and wished to designate himself eminently as such. Mt 8:20. In the use of this phrase in the New Testament, there is probably an allusion to Dan 7:13. The idea would seem to be, that he whom he saw resembled "the Son of man"--the Lord Jesus as he had seen him in the days of his flesh--though it would appear that he did not know that it

was he until he was informed of it, Rev 1:18. Indeed, the costume in which he appeared was so unlike that in which John had been accustomed to see the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, that it cannot be well supposed that he would at once recognise him as the same.

Clothed with a garment down to the foot. A robe reaching down to the feet, or to the ankles, yet so as to leave the feet themselves visible. The allusion here, doubtless, is to a long, loose, flowing robe, such as was worn by kings. Compare Barnes Notes on Isa 6:1.

And girt about the paps. About the breast. It was common, and is still in the East, to wear a girdle to confine the robe, as well as to form a beautiful ornament. This was commonly worn about the middle of the person, or "the loins;" but it would seem also that it was sometimes worn around the breast. Mt 5:38-41.

With a golden girdle. Either wholly made of gold, or more probably richly ornamented with gold. This would naturally suggest the idea of one of rank--probably one of princely rank. The raiment here assumed was not that of a priest, but that of a king. It was very far from being that in which the Redeemer appeared when he dwelt upon the earth, and was rather designed to denote his royal state as he is exalted in heaven. He is not indeed represented with a crown and sceptre here, and perhaps the leading idea is that of one of exalted rank; of unusual dignity; of one fitted to inspire awe and respect. In other circumstances, in this book, this same Redeemer is represented as wearing a crown, and going forth to conquest. See Rev 19:12-16. Here the representation seems to have been designed to impress the mind with a sense of the greatness and glory of the personage who thus suddenly made his appearance.

14 His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow. Exceedingly or perfectly white--the first suggestion to the mind of the apostle being that of wool, and then the thought occurring of its extreme whiteness resembling snow--the purest white of which the mind conceives. The comparison with wool and snow to denote anything peculiarly white is not uncommon. See Isa 1:18. Professor Stuart supposes that this means, not that his hairs were literally white, as if with age, which he says would be incongruous to one just risen from the dead, clothed with immortal youth and rigour, but that it means radiant, bright, resplendent--similar to what occurred on the transfiguration of the Saviour, Mt 17:2. But to this it may be replied

(a) that this would not accord well with that with which his hair is compared--snow and wool, particularly the latter.

(b) The usual meaning of the word is more obvious here, and not at all inappropriate. The representation was fitted to signify majesty and authority; and this would be best accomplished by the image of one who was venerable in years. Thus in the vision that appeared to Daniel, (Dan 7:9) it is said of him who is there called the "Ancient of Days," that his "garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool." It is not improbable that John had that representation in his eye, and that therefore he would be impressed with the conviction that this was a manifestation of a Divine person. We are not necessarily to suppose that this is the form in which the Saviour always appears now in heaven, any more than we are to suppose that God appears always in the form in which he was manifested to Isaiah, (Isa 6:1) to Daniel, (Dan 7:9) or to Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu in the mount, Ex 24:10-11. The representation is, that this form was assumed for the purpose of impressing the mind of the apostle with a sense of his majesty and glory.

And his eyes were as a flame of fire. Bright, sharp, penetrating; as if everything was light before them, or they would penetrate into

the thoughts of men. Such a representation is not uncommon. We speak of a lightning glance, a fiery look, etc. In Dan 10:6, it is said of the man who appeared to the prophet on the banks of the river Hiddekel, that his eyes were "as lamps of fire." Numerous instances of this comparison from the Greek and Latin classics may be seen in Wetstein, in loc.

15 and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

And his feet like unto fine brass. Compare Dan 10:6, "And his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass." See also Eze 1:7, "And they" [the feet of the living creatures] "sparkled like the colour of burnished brass." The word here used--χαλκολιβανω--occurs in the New Testament only here and in Rev 2:18. It is not found in the Septuagint. The word properly means white brass, (probably compounded of χαλκος, brass, and λιβανος, whiteness, from the to be white.) Others regard it as from χαλκος, brass, and λιπαρον, clear. The metal referred to was undoubtedly a species of brass distinguished for its clearness or whiteness. Brass is a compound metal, composed of copper and zinc. The colour varies much according to the different proportions of the various ingredients. The Vulgate here renders the word aurichalcum, a mixture of gold and of brass--perhaps the same as the ηλεκτρον--the electrum of the ancients, composed of gold and of silver, usually in the proportion of four parts gold and one part silver, and distinguished for its brilliancy. See Robinson, Lex., and Wetstein, in loc. The kind of metal here referred to, however, would seem to be some compound of brass--of a whitish and brilliant colour. The exact proportion of the ingredients in the metal here referred to cannot now be determined.

As if they burned in a furnace. That is, his feet were so bright that they seemed to be like a beautiful metal glowing intensely in the midst of a furnace. Any one who has looked upon the dazzling and almost insupportable brilliancy of metal in a furnace, can form an idea of the image here presented.

And his voice as the sound of many waters. As the roar of the ocean, or of a cataract. Nothing could be a more sublime description of majesty and authority than to compare the voice of a speaker with the roar of the ocean. This comparison often occurs in the Scriptures. See Eze 43:2, "And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the east: and his voice was like the sound of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory." So Rev 14:2, 19:6. Compare Eze 1:24 Dan 10:6.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

And he had in his right hand seven stars. Emblematic of the angels of the seven churches. How he held them is not said. It may be that they seemed to rest on his open palm; or it may be that he seemed to hold them as if they were arranged in a certain order, and with some sort of attachment, so that they could be grasped. It is not improbable that, as in the case of the seven lamp-bearers, (Rev 1:13) they were so arranged as to represent the relative position of the seven churches.

And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. On the form of the ancient two-edged sword, Eph 6:17. The two edges were designed to cut both ways; and such a sword is a striking emblem of the penetrating power of truth, or of words that proceed from the mouth; and this is designed undoubtedly to be the representation here-that there was some symbol which showed that his words, or his truth, had the power of cutting deep, or penetrating the soul. So in Isa 49:2 it is said of the same personage, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." Isa 49:2. So in Heb 4:12,

The only difficulty here is in regard to the apparently incongruous representation of a sword seeming to proceed from the mouth; but it is not, perhaps, necessary to suppose that John means to say that he saw such an image. He heard him speak; he felt the penetrating power of his words; and they were as if a sharp sword proceeded

from his mouth. They penetrated deep into the soul, and as he looked on him it seemed as if a sword came from his mouth. Perhaps it is not necessary to suppose that there was even any visible representation of this--either of a sword or of the breath proceeding from his mouth appearing to take this form, as Professor Stuart supposes. It may be wholly a figurative representation, as Henrichs and Ewald suppose. Though there were visible and impressive symbols of his majesty and glory presented to the eyes, it is not necessary to suppose that there were visible symbols of his words.

And his countenance. His face. There had been before particular descriptions of some parts of his face--as of his eyes--but this is a representation of his whole aspect; of the general splendour and brightness of his countenance.

Was as the sun shineth in his strength. In his full splendour when unobscured by clouds; where his rays are in no way intercepted. Compare Jud 5:31: "But let them that love him [the Lord] be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." 2Sam 23:4, "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds." Ps 19:5, "Which [the sun] is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." There could be no more striking description of the majesty and glory of the countenance than to compare it with the overpowering splendour of the sun.--This closes the description of the personage that appeared to John. The design was evidently to impress him with a sense of his majesty and glory, and to prepare the way for the authoritative nature of the communications which he was to make. It is obvious that this appearance must have been assumed. The representation is not that of the Redeemer as he rose from the dead--a middle-aged man; nor is it clear that it was the same as on the mount of transfiguration--where, for anything that appears, he retained his usual aspect and form though temporarily invested with extraordinary brilliancy; nor is it the form in which we may suppose he ascended to heaven--for there is no evidence

that he was thus transformed when he ascended; nor is it that of a priest --for all the peculiar habiliments of a Jewish priest are wanting in this description. The appearance assumed is, evidently, in accordance with various representations of God as he appeared to Ezekiel, to Isaiah, and to Daniel--that which was a suitable manifestation of a Divine being--of one clothed in the majesty and power of God. We are not to infer from this, that this is in fact the appearance of the Redeemer now in heaven, or that this is the form in which he will appear when he comes to judge the world. Of his appearance in heaven we have no knowledge; of the aspect which he will assume when he comes to judge men we have no certain information. We are necessarily quite as ignorant of this as we are of what will be our own form and appearance after the resurrection from the dead.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. As if I were dead; deprived of sense and consciousness. He was overwhelmed with the suddenness of the vision; he saw that this was a Divine being; but he did not as yet know that it was the Saviour. It is not probable that in this vision he would immediately recognise any of the familiar features of the Lord Jesus as he had been accustomed to see him some sixty years before; and if he did, the effect would have been quite as overpowering as is here described. But the subsequent revelations of this Divine personage would rather seem to imply that John did not at once recognise him as the Lord Jesus. The effect here described is one that often occurred to those who had a vision of God. See Dan 8:18, "Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright." Dan 8:27, "And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business." Compare Ex 33:20, Isa 6:5, Eze 1:28, 43:3, Dan 10:7-9,17.

And he laid his right hand upon me. For the purpose of raising him up. Compare Dan 8:18, "He touched me, and set me upright." We usually stretch out the right hand to raise up one who is fallen.

Saying unto me, Fear not. Compare Mt 14:27, "It is I; be not afraid." The fact that it was the Saviour, though he appeared in this form of overpowering majesty, was a reason why John should not be afraid. Why that was a reason, he immediately adds--that he was the first and the last; that though he had been dead he was now alive, and would continue ever to live, and that he had the keys of hell and of death. It is evident that John was overpowered with that awful emotion which the human mind must feel at the evidence of the presence of God. Thus men feel when God seems to come near them by the impressive symbols of his majesty--as in the thunder, the earthquake, and the tempest. Compare Heb 12:21, Lk 9:34. Yet, amidst the most awful manifestations of Divine power, the simple assurance that our Redeemer is near us is enough to allay our fears, and diffuse calmness through the soul.

I am the first and the last. Rev 1:8. This is stated to be one of the reasons why he should not fear--that he was eternal: "I always live--have lived through all the past, and will live through all which is to come--and therefore I can accomplish all my promises, and execute all my purposes."

18 *I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

I am he that liveth, and was dead. I was indeed once dead, but now I live, and shall continue to live for ever. This would at once identify him who thus appeared as the Lord Jesus Christ, for to no one else could this apply. He had been put to death; but he had risen from the grave. This also is given as a reason why John should not fear; and nothing would allay his fears more than this. He now saw that he was in the presence of that Saviour whom more than half a century before he had so tenderly loved when in the flesh, and whom, though now long absent, he had faithfully served, and for whose cause he was now in this lonely island. His

faith in his resurrection had not been a delusion; he saw the very Redeemer before him who had once been laid in the tomb.

Behold, I am alive for evermore. I am to live for ever. Death is no more to cut me down, and I am never again to slumber in the grave. As he was always to live, he could accomplish all his promises, and fulfil all his purposes. The Saviour is never to die again. He can, therefore, always sustain us in our troubles; he can be with us in our death. Whoever of our friends die, he will not die; when we die, he will still be on the throne.

Amen. A word here of strong affirmation--as if he had said, it is truly, or certainly so. Rev 1:7. This expression is one that the Saviour often used when he wished to give emphasis, or to express anything strongly. Compare Jn 3:3, 5:25.

And have the keys of hell and of death. The word rendered hell--αδης, hades--refers properly to the under world; the abode of departed spirits; the region of the dead. This was represented as dull and gloomy; as enclosed with walls; as entered through gates which were fastened with bolts and bars. For a description of the views which prevailed among the ancients on this subject, Lk 16:23, Job 10:21, Job 10:22. To hold the key of this, was to hold the power over the invisible world. It was the more appropriate that the Saviour should represent himself as having this authority, as he had himself been raised from the dead by his own power, (compare Jn 10:18) thus showing that the dominion over this dark world was entrusted to him.

And of death. A personification. Death reigns in that world. But to his wide-extended realms the Saviour holds the key, and can have access to his empire when he pleases, releasing all whom he chooses, and confining there still such as he shall please. It is probably in part from such hints as these that Milton drew his sublime description of the gates of hell in the Paradise Lost. As Christ always lives; as he always retains this power over the

regions of the dead, and the whole world of spirits, it may be further remarked that we have nothing to dread if we put our trust in him. We need not fear to enter a world which he has entered and from which he has emerged, achieving a glorious triumph; we need not fear what the dread king that reigns there can do to us, for his power extends not beyond the permission of the Saviour, and in his own time that Saviour will call us forth to life to die no more.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

Write the things which thou hast seen. An account of the vision which thou hast had, Rev 1:10-18.

And the things which are. Give an account of those things which thou hast seen as designed to represent the condition of the seven churches. He had seen not only the Saviour, but he had seen seven lamp-stands, and seven stars in the hand of the Saviour, and he is now commanded to record the meaning of these symbols as referring to things then actually existing in the seven churches. This interpretation is demanded by Rev 1:20.

And the things which shall be hereafter. The Greek phrase rendered hereafter--μεταταυτα--means "after these things;" that is, he was to make a correct representation of the things which then were, and then to record what would occur "after these things:" to wit, of the images, symbols, and truths, which would be disclosed to him after what he had already seen. The expression refers to future times. He does not say for how long a time; but the revelations which were to be made referred to events which were to occur beyond those which were then taking place. Nothing can be argued from the use of this language in regard to the length of time embraced in the revelation--whether it extended only for a few years, or whether it embraced all coming time. The more natural interpretation, however, would seem to be, that it would stretch far into future years, and that it was designed to give at least an outline of what would be the character of the future in general.

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20 the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The mystery of the seven stars. On the word mystery, Eph 1:9. The word means, properly, that which is hidden, obscure, unknown--until it is disclosed by one having the ability to do it, or by the course of events. When disclosed it may be as clear, and as capable of comprehension, as any other truth. The meaning here, as applied to the seven stars, is, that they were symbols, and that their

meaning as symbols, without a suitable explanation, would remain hidden or unknown. They were designed to represent important truths, and John was directed to write down what they were intended in the circumstances to signify, and to send the explanation to the churches. It is evidently implied that the meaning of these symbols would be beyond the ordinary powers of the human mind to arrive at with certainty, and hence John was directed to explain the symbol. The general and obvious truths which they would serve to convey would be that the ministers of the churches, and the churches themselves, were designed to be lights in the world, and should burn clearly and steadily. Much important truth would be couched under these symbols, indeed, if nothing had been added in regard to their signification as employed here by the Saviour; but there were particular truths of great importance in reference to each of these "stars" and "lamp-bearers," which John was more fully to explain.

Which thou sawest in my right hand. Gr., "upon my right hand"--επιτηςδεξιαςμου: giving some support to the opinion that the stars, as they were seen, appeared to be placed on his hand--that is, on the palm of his hand as he stretched it out. The expression in Rev 1:16 is, that they were "in (εν) his right hand;" but the language here used is not decisive as to the position of the stars. They may have been held in some way by the hand, or represented as scattered on the open hand.

The angels of the seven churches. Gr., "Angels of the seven churches:" the article being wanting. This does not refer to them as a collective or associated body, for the addresses are made to them as individuals-- an epistle being directed to "the angel" of each particular church, Rev 2:1,12, etc. The evident meaning, however, is, that what was recorded should be directed to them not as pertaining to them exclusively as individuals, but as presiding over, or representing the churches, for what is recorded pertains to the churches, and was evidently designed to be laid before them. It was for the churches, but was committed to the "angel" as

representing the church, and to be communicated to the church under his care. There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word angels here. By the advocates of episcopacy, it has been argued that the use of this term proves that there was a presiding bishop over a circle or group of churches in Ephesus, in Smyrna, etc., since it is said that it cannot be supposed that there was but a single church in a city so large as Ephesus, or in the other cities mentioned. A full examination of this argument may be seen in my work on the "Apostolic Church," [pp. 191-199, London ed.] The word angel properly means a messenger, and is thus applied to celestial beings as messengers sent forth from God to convey or to do his will. This being the common meaning of the word, it may be employed to denote any one who is a messenger, and hence, with propriety, any one who is employed to communicate the will of another; to transact his business, or, more remotely, to act in his place--to be a representative. In order to ascertain the meaning of the word as used in this place, and in reference to these churches, it may be remarked,

(1.) that it cannot mean literally an angel, as referring to a heavenly being, for no one can suppose that such a being presided over these churches.

(2.) It cannot be shown to mean, as Lord (in loc.) supposes, messengers that the churches had sent to John, and that these letters were given to them to be returned by them to the churches, for

(a) there is no evidence that any such messengers had been sent to John;

(b) there is no probability that while he was a banished exile in Patmos such a thing would be permitted;

(c) the message was not sent by them, it was sent to them--"Unto the angel of the church in Ephesus write," etc.

(3.) It cannot be proved that the reference is to a prelatical bishop presiding over a group or circle of churches, called a diocese, for

(a) there is nothing in the word angel, as used in this connexion, which would be peculiarly applicable to such a personage--it belong as applicable to a pastor of a single church as to a bishop of many churches.

(b) There is no evidence that there were any such groups of churches then as constitute an episcopal diocese.

(c) The use of the word "church" in the singular, as applied to Ephesus, Smyrna, etc., rather implies that there was but a single church in each of those cities. Compare Rev 2:1,8,12,18; see also similar language in regard to the church in Corinth, 1Cor 1:2; in Antioch, Acts 13:1; at Laodicea, Col 4:16; and at Ephesus, Acts 20:28.

(d) There is no evidence, as Episcopalians must suppose, that a successor to John had been appointed at Ephesus, if, as they suppose, he was "bishop" of Ephesus; and there is no probability that they would so soon after his banishment show him such a want of respect as to regard the see as vacant, and appoint a successor.

(e) There is no improbability in supposing that there was a single church in each of these cities--as at Antioch, Corinth, Rome.

(f) If John was a prelatical "bishop," it is probable that he was "bishop" of the whole group of churches embracing the seven: yet here, if the word "angel" means "bishop," we have no less than seven such bishops immediately appointed to succeed him. And

(g) the supposition that this refers to prelatical bishops is so forced and unnatural that many Episcopalians are compelled to abandon it. Thus Stillingfleet, than whom an abler man, or one whose praise

is higher in episcopal churches, as an advocate of prelacy, is not to be found, says of these angels: "If many things in the epistles be directed to the angels, but yet so as to concern the whole body, then, of necessity, the angel must be taken as a representative of the whole body; and then why may not the angel be taken by way of representation of the body itself, either of the whole church, or, which is far more probable, of the concessors, or order of presbyters in this church?"

(4.) If the word does not mean literally an angel; if it does not refer to messengers sent to John in Patmos by the churches; and if it does not refer to a prelatical bishop, then it follows that it must refer to some one who presided over the church as its pastor, and through whom a message might be properly sent to the church. Thus understood, the pastor or "angel" would be regarded as the representative of the church; that is, as delegated by the church to manage its affairs, and as the authorized person to whom communications should be made in matters pertaining to it-- as pastors are now. A few considerations will further confirm this interpretation, and throw additional light on the meaning of the word.

(a) The word angel is employed in the Old Testament to denote a prophet; that is, a minister of religion as sent by God to communicate his will. Thus in Haggai (Hag 1:13) it is said, "Then spoke Haggai, the Lord's messenger, [Heb. angel, --Septuagint αγγελοςκυριου] in the Lord's message unto the people," etc.

(b) It is applied to a priest, as one sent by God to execute the functions of that office, or to act in the name of the Lord. Mal 2:7, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts"----that is, "angel of the Lord of hosts."

(c) The name prophet is often given in the New Testament to the ministers of religion, as being appointed by God to proclaim or

communicate his will to his people, and as occupying a place resembling, in some respects, that of the prophets in the Old Testament.

(d) There was no reason why the word might not be thus employed to designate a pastor of a Christian church, as well as to designate a prophet or a priest under the Old Testament dispensation.

(e) The supposition that a pastor of a church is intended will meet all the circumstances of the case: for,

(1) it is an appropriate appellation;

(2) there is no reason to suppose that there was more than one church in each of the cities referred to;

(3) it is a term which would designate the respect in which the office was held;

(4) it would impress upon those to whom it was applied a solemn sense of their responsibility. Further, it would be more appropriately applied to a pastor of a single church than to a prelatical bishop; to the tender, intimate, and endearing relation sustained by a pastor to his people, to the blending of sympathy, interest, and affection, where he is with them continually, meets them frequently in the sanctuary, administers to them the bread of life, goes into their abodes when they are afflicted, and attends their kindred to the grave, than to the union subsisting between the people of an extended diocese and a prelate--the formal, unfrequent, and, in many instances, stately and pompous visitations of a diocesan bishop--to the unsympathising relation between him and a people scattered in many churches, who are visited at distant intervals by one claiming a "superiority in ministerial rights and powers," and who must be a stranger to the ten thousand ties of endearment which bind the hearts of a pastor

and people together. The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that the "angel of the church" was the pastor, or the presiding presbyter in the church; the minister who had the pastoral charge of it, and who was therefore a proper representative of it. He was a man who, in some respects, performed the functions which the angels of God do; that is, who was appointed to execute his will, to communicate his message, and to convey important intimations of his purposes to his people. To no one could the communications in this book, intended for the churches, be more properly entrusted than to such an one; for to no one now would a communication be more properly entrusted than to a pastor.

Revelation-2

The Message to Ephesus

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

Unto the angel. The minister; the presiding presbyter; the bishop--in the primitive sense of the word bishop--denoting one who had the spiritual charge of a congregation. Rev 1:20.

Of the church. Not of the churches of Ephesus, but of the one church of that city. There is no evidence that the word is used in a collective sense to denote a group of churches, like a diocese; nor is there any evidence that there was such a group of churches in Ephesus, or that there was more than one church in that city. It is probable that all who were Christians there were regarded as members of one church--though for convenience they may have met for worship in different places. Thus there was one church in Corinth, (1Cor 1:1) one church in Thessalonica, (1Thes 1:1,) etc.

Of Ephesus. On the situation of Ephesus, Acts 18:19, and the Introduction to the Notes on the Epistle to the Ephesians. It was the capital of Ionia; was one of the twelve Ionian cities of Asia Minor in the Mythic times, and was said to have been founded by the Amazons. It was situated on the river Cayster, not far from the Icarian Sea, between Smyrna and Miletus. It was one of the most considerable cities of Asia Minor, and while, about the epoch when Christianity was introduced, other cities declined, Ephesus rose more and more. It owed its prosperity, in part, to the favour of its governors, for Lysimachus named the city Arsinbe, in honour of his second wife, and Attalus Philadelphus furnished it with splendid wharves and docks. Under the Romans it was the capital not only of Ionia, but of the entire province of Asia, and bore the honourable title of the first and greatest metropolis of Asia. John is supposed to have resided in this city, and to have preached the gospel there for many years; and on this account perhaps it was, as well as on account of the relative importance of the city, that the first epistle of the seven was addressed to that church. On the present condition of the ruins of Ephesus, Rev 2:5. We have no means whatever of ascertaining the size of the church when John wrote the book of Revelation. From the fact, however, that Paul, as is supposed, (see Introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians,) laboured there for about three years; that there was a body of "elders" who presided over the church there, (Acts 20:1) and that the apostle John seems to have spent a considerable part of his life there in preaching the gospel, it may be presumed that there was a large and flourishing church in that city. The epistle before us shows also that it was characterized by distinguished piety.

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand. Rev 1:16. The object here seems to be to turn the attention of the church in Ephesus to some attribute of the Saviour which deserved their special regard, or which constituted a special reason for attending to what he said. To do this, the attention is directed in this case to the fact that he held the seven stars--emblematic of the ministers of the churches--in his hand, and that he walked in the

midst of the lamp-bearers--representing the churches themselves, intimating that they were dependent on him; that he had power to continue or remove the ministry, and that it was by his presence only that those lamp-bearers would continue to give light. The absolute control over the ministry, and the fact that he walked amidst the churches, and that his presence was necessary to their perpetuity and their welfare, seem to be the principal ideas implied in this representation. These truths he would impress on their minds in order that they might feel how easy it would be for him to punish any disobedience, and in order that they might do what was necessary to secure his continual presence among them. These views seem to be sanctioned by the character of the punishment threatened, (Rev 2:5,) "that he would remove the candlestick representing their church out of its place." Rev 2:5.

Who walketh in the midst, etc. In chapter Rev 1:13, he is represented simply as being seen amidst the golden candlesticks, Rev 1:13. Here there is the additional idea of his "walking" in the midst of them, implying perhaps constant and vigilant supervision. He went from one to another, as one who inspects and surveys what is under his care; perhaps also with the idea that he went among them as a friend to bless them.

2 I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

I know thy works. The common formula with which all the epistles to the seven churches are introduced. It is designed to impress upon them deeply the conviction that he was intimately acquainted with all that they did, good and bad, and that therefore he was abundantly qualified to dispense rewards or administer punishments according to truth and justice. It may be observed, that as many of the things referred to in these epistles were things pertaining to the heart--the feelings, the state of the mind--it is implied that he who speaks here has an intimate acquaintance with the heart of man --a prerogative which is always attributed to the Saviour. See Jn 2:25. But no one can do this who is not Divine;

and this declaration, therefore, furnishes a strong proof of the divinity of Christ. See Ps 7:9, Jer 11:20, 17:10, 1Sam 16:7, 1Kgs 8:39.

And thy labour. The word here used--κοπος--means properly a beating, hence wailing, grief, with beating the breast; and then it means excessive labour or toil adapted to produce grief or sadness, and is commonly employed in the New Testament in the latter sense. It is used in the sense of trouble in Mt 26:10--"Why trouble ye [literally, why give ye trouble to] the woman?" (compare also Mk 14:6, Lk 11:7, 18:5, Gal 6:17) and in the sense of labour, or wearisome toil, in Jn 4:38, 1Cor 3:8, 15:58, 2Cor 6:5 2Cor 10:15, 2Cor 11:23,27 et al. The connexion here would admit of either sense. It is commonly understood, as in our translation, in the sense of labour, though it would seem that the other signification-- that of trouble--would not be inappropriate. If it means labour, it refers to their faithful service in his cause, and especially in opposing error. It seems to me, however, that the word trouble would better suit the connexion.

And thy patience. Under these trials; to wit, in relation to the efforts which had been made by the advocates of error to corrupt them, and to turn them away from the truth. They had patiently borne the opposition made to the truth; they had manifested a spirit of firm endurance amidst many arts of those opposed to them to draw them off from simple faith in Christ.

And how thou canst not bear them which are evil. Canst not endure or tolerate them. Compare Barnes on "2Jo 1:10,11". That is, they had no sympathy with their doctrines or their practices; they were utterly opposed to them. They had lent them no countenance, but had in every way shown that they had no fellowship with them. The evil persons here referred to were doubtless those mentioned in this verse as claiming that "they were apostles," and those mentioned in Rev 2:6 as the Nicolaitanes.

And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles. Thou hast thoroughly examined their claims. It is not said in what way they had done this, but it was probably by considering attentively and candidly the evidence on which they relied, whatever that may have been. Nor is it certainly known who these persons were, or on what grounds they advanced their pretensions to the apostolic office. It cannot be supposed that they claimed to have been of the number of apostles selected by the Saviour, for that would have been too absurd; and the only solution would seem to be that they claimed either

(1) that they had been called to that office after the Saviour ascended, as Paul was; or

(2) that they claimed the honour due to this name or office in virtue of some election to it; or

(3) that they claimed to be the successors of the apostles, and to possess and transmit their authority.

If the first of these, it would seem that the only ground of claim would be that they had been called in some miraculous way to the rank of apostles, and, of course, an examination of their claims would be an examination of the alleged miraculous call, and of the evidence on which they would rely that they had such a call. If the second, then the claim must have been founded on some such plea as that the apostolic office was designed to be elective, as in the case of Matthias, (Acts 1:23-26,) and that they maintained that this arrangement was to be continued in the church; and then an examination of their claims would involve an investigation of the question whether it was contemplated that the apostolic office was designed to be perpetuated in that manner, or whether the election of Matthias was only a temporary arrangement, designed to answer a particular purpose. If the third, then the claim must have been founded on the plea that the apostolic office was designed to be perpetuated by a regular succession, and that they, by ordination,

were in a line of that succession; and then the examination and refutation of the claim must have consisted in showing, from the nature of the office, and the necessary qualifications for the office of apostle, that it was designed to be temporary, and that there could be properly no successors of the apostles as such. On either of these suppositions such a line of argument would be fatal to all claims to any succession in the apostolic office now. If each of these points should fail, of course their claims to the rank of apostles would cease--just as all claims to the dignity and rank of the apostles must fail now. The passage becomes thus a strong argument against the claims of any persons to be "apostles," or to be the "successors" of the apostles in the peculiarity of their office.

And are not. There were never any apostles of Jesus Christ but the original twelve whom he chose; Matthias, who was chosen in the place of Judas, (Acts 1:26;) and Paul, who was specially called to the office by the Saviour after his resurrection. On this point, see my work on the "Apostolic Church," [pp. 49-57, London ed.]

And hast found them liars. Hast discovered their pretensions to be unfounded and false. In 2Cor 11:13, "false apostles" are mentioned; and in an office of so much honour as this, it is probable that there would be not a few claimants to it in the world. To set up a claim to what they knew they were not entitled to would be a falsehood; and as this seems to have been the character of these men, the Saviour in the passage before us does not hesitate to designate them by an appropriate term, and to call them liars. The point here commended in the Ephesian church is, that they had sought to have a pure ministry--a ministry whose claims were well founded. They had felt the importance of this; had carefully examined the claims of pretenders; and had refused to recognise those who could not show in a proper manner that they had been designated to their work by the Lord Jesus. The same zeal in the same cause would be commended by the Saviour now.

3 and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

And hast borne. Hast borne up under trials; or hast borne with, the evils with which you have been assailed. That is, you have not given way to murmuring or complaints in trial; you have not abandoned the principles of truth and yielded to the prevalence of error.

And hast patience. That is, in this connexion, hast shown that thou canst bear up under these things with patience. This is a repetition of what is said in Rev 2:2, but in a somewhat different connexion. There it rather refers to the trouble which they had experienced on account of the pretensions of false apostles, and the patient, persevering, and enduring spirit which they had shown in that form of trial; here the expression is more general, denoting a patient spirit in regard to all forms of trial.

And for my name's sake hast laboured. On account of me, and in my cause. That is, the labour here referred to, whatever it was, was to advance the cause of the Redeemer. In the word rendered "hast laboured" --εκοπιασας--there is a reference to the word used in the previous verse-- "thy labour"--κοπονσου; and the design is to show that the "labour," or trouble there referred to, was on account of him.

And hast not fainted. Hast not become exhausted, or wearied out, so as to give over. The word here used (καμνω) occurs in only three places in the New Testament: Heb 12:3, "Lest ye be wearied, and faint; Jas 5:15, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick;" and in the passage before us. It means properly to become weary and faint from toil, etc.; and the idea here is, that they had not become so wearied out as to give over from exhaustion. The sense of the whole passage is thus rendered by Professor Stuart: "Thou canst not bear with false teachers, but thou canst bear with troubles and perplexities on account of me; thou hast undergone wearisome toil, but thou art not wearied out thereby." The state of mind,

considered as the state of mind appropriate to a Christian, here represented, is, that we should not tolerate error and sin, but that we should bear up under the trials which they may incidentally occasion us; that we should have such a repugnance to evil that we cannot endure it, as evil, but that we should have such love to the Saviour and his cause as to be willing to bear anything, even in relation to that, or springing from that, that we may be called to suffer in that cause; that while we may be weary in his work--for our bodily strength may become exhausted (compare Mt 26:41) -- we should not be weary of it; and that though we may have many perplexities, and may meet with much opposition, yet we should not relax our zeal, but should persevere with an ardour that never faints, until our Saviour calls us to our reward.

4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee. Notwithstanding this general commendation, there are things which I cannot approve.

Because thou hast left thy first love. Thou hast remitted-- αφηκας-- -or let down thy early love; that is, it is less glowing and ardent than it was at first. The love here referred to is evidently love to the Saviour; and the idea is, that, as a church, they had less of this than formerly characterized them. In this respect they were in a state of declension; and though they still maintained the doctrines of his religion, and opposed the advocates of error, they showed less ardour of affection towards him directly than they had formerly done. In regard to this, we may remark,

(1.) that what is here stated of the church at Ephesus is not uncommon.

(a) Individual Christians often lose much of their first love. It is true, indeed, that there is often an appearance of this which does not exist in reality. Not a little of the ardour of young converts is often nothing more than the excitement of animal feeling, which will soon die away of course, though their real love may not be

diminished, or may be constantly growing stronger. When a son returns home after a long absence, and meets his parents and brothers and sisters, there is a glow, a warmth of feeling, a joyousness of emotion, which cannot be expected to continue always, and which he may never be able to recall again, though he may be ever growing in real attachment to his friends and to his home.

(b) Churches remit the ardour of their first love. They are often formed under the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit when many are converted, and are warm-hearted and zealous young converts. Or they are formed from other churches that have become cold and dead, from which the new organization, embodying the life of the church, was constrained to separate. Or they are formed under the influence of some strong and mighty truth that has taken possession of the mind, and that gives a peculiar character to the church at first. Or they are formed with a distinct reference to promoting some one great object in the cause of the Redeemer. So the early Christian churches were formed. So the church in Germany, France, Switzerland, and England, came out from the Roman communion under the influence of the doctrine of justification by faith. So the Nestorians in former ages, and the Moravians in modern times, were characterized by warm zeal in the cause of missions. So the Puritans came out from the established church of England at one time, and the Methodists at another, warmed with a holier love to the cause of evangelical religion than existed in the body from which they separated. So many a church is formed now amidst the exciting scenes of a revival of religion, and in the early days of its history puts to shame the older and the slumbering churches around them. But it need scarcely be said that this early zeal may die away, and that the church, once so full of life and love, may become as cold as those that went before it, or as those from which it separated, and that there may be a necessity for the formation of new organizations that shall be fired with ardour and zeal. One has only to look at Germany, at Switzerland, at various portions of the reformed

churches elsewhere; at the Nestorinns, whose zeal for missions long since departed, or even at the Moravians, among whom it has so much declined; at various portions of the Puritan churches; and at many an individual church formed under the warm and exciting feelings of a revival of religion, to see that what occurred at Ephesus may occur elsewhere.

(2.) The same thing that occurred there may be expected to follow in all similar cases. The Saviour governs the church always on essentially the same principles; and it is no uncommon thing that when a church has lost the ardour of its first love, it is suffered more and more to decline, until "the candlestick is removed"--until either the church becomes wholly extinct, or until vital piety is wholly gone, and all that remains is the religion of forms.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen. The eminence which you once occupied. Call to remembrance the state in which you once were. The duty here enjoined is, when religion has declined in our hearts, or in the church, to call to distinct recollection the former state--the ardour, the zeal, the warmth of love which once characterized us. The reason for this is, that such a recalling of the former state will be likely to produce a happy influence on the heart. Nothing is better adapted to affect a backsliding Christian, or a backsliding church, than to call to distinct recollection the former condition--the happier days of piety. The joy then experienced; the good done; the honour reflected on the cause of religion; the peace of mind of that period, will contrast strongly with the present, and nothing will be better fitted to recall an erring church or an erring individual from their wanderings than such a reminiscence of the past. The advantages of thus "remembering" their former condition would be many--for some of the most valuable impressions which are made on the mind, and some of the most important lessons learned, are from

the recollections of a former state. Among those advantages, in this case, would be such as the following:

(a) It would show how much they might have enjoyed if they had continued as they began--how much more real happiness they would have had than they actually have enjoyed.

(b) How much good they might have done, if they had only persevered in the zeal with which they commenced the Christian life. How much more good might most Christians do than they actually accomplish, if they would barely, even without increasing it, continue with the degree of zeal with which they begin their course.

(c) How much greater attainments they might have made in the Divine life, and in the knowledge of religion, than they have made: that is, how much more elevated and enlarged might have been their views of religion, and their knowledge of the word of God. And

(d) such a recollection of their past state, as contrasted with what they now are, would exert a powerful influence in producing true repentance--for there is nothing better adapted to do this than a just view of what we might have been, as compared with what we now are. If a man has become cold towards his wife, nothing is better fitted to reclaim him than to recall to his recollection the time when he led her to the altar; the solemn vow then made; and the rapture of his heart when he pressed her to his bosom and called her his own.

And repent. The word here used means to change one's mind and purposes, and, along with that, the conduct or demeanour. The duty of repentance here urged would extend to all the points in which they had erred.

And do the first works. The works which Were done when the church was first established. That is, manifest the zeal and love which were formerly evinced in opposing error, and in doing good. This is the true counsel to be given to those who have backslidden, and have "left their first love," now. Often such persons, sensible that they have erred, and that they have not the enjoyment in religion which they once had, profess to be willing and desirous to return, but they know not how to do it--how to revive their ardour--how to rekindle in their bosom the flame of extinguished love. They suppose it must be by silent meditation, or by some supernatural influence, and they wait for some visitation from above to call them back, and to restore to them their former joy. The counsel of the Saviour to all such, however, is to do their first works. It is to engage at once in doing what they did in the first and best days of their piety--the days of their: espousals (Jer 2:2) to God. Let them read the Bible as they did then; let them pray as they did then; let them go forth in the duties of active benevolence as they did then; let them engage in teaching a Sabbath school as they did then; let them relieve the distressed, instruct the ignorant, raise up the fallen, as they did then; let them open their heart, their purse, and their hand to bless a dying world. As it was in this way that they manifested their love then, so this would be better fitted than all other things to rekindle the flame of love when it is almost extinguished. The weapon that is used keeps bright; that which has become rusty will become bright again if it is used.

Or else I will come unto thee quickly. On the word rendered quickly-- ταχει--Rev 1:1 The meaning is, that he would come as a Judge, at no distant period, to inflict punishment in the manner specified--by removing the candlestick out of its place. He does not say in what way it would be done--whether by some sudden judgment, by a direct act of power, or by a gradual process that would certainly lead to that result.

And will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. On the meaning of the word candlestick, Rev 1:12. The

meaning is, that the church gave light in Ephesus; and that what he would do in regard to that place would be like removing a lamp, and leaving a place in darkness. The expression is equivalent to saying that the church there would cease to exist. The proper idea of the passage is, that the church would be wholly extinct, and it is observable that this is a judgment more distinctly disclosed in reference to this church than to any other of the seven churches. There is not the least evidence that the church at Ephesus did repent, and the threatening has been most signally fulfilled. Long since the church has become utterly extinct, and for ages there was not a single professing Christian there. Every memorial of there having been a church there has departed, and there are nowhere, not even in Nineveh, Babylon, or Tyre, more affecting demonstrations of the fulfilment of ancient prophecy than in the present state of the ruins of Ephesus. A remark of Mr. Gibbon (Dec. and Fall, iv. 260) will show with what exactness the prediction in regard to this church has been accomplished. He is speaking of the conquests of the Turks. "In the loss of Ephesus, the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick of the Revelations; the desolation is complete; and the Temple of Diana, or the Church of Mercy, will equally elude the search of the curious traveller." Thus the city, with the splendid Temple of Diana, and the church that existed there in the time of John, has disappeared, and nothing remains but unsightly ruins. These ruins lie about ten days' journey from Smyrna, and consist of shattered walls, and remains of columns and temples. The soil on which a large part of the city is supposed to have stood, naturally rich, is covered with a rank, burnt up vegetation, and is everywhere deserted and solitary, though bordered by picturesque mountains. A few corn-fields are scattered along the site of the ancient city. Towards the sea extends the ancient port, a pestilential marsh. Along the slope of the mountain, and over the plain, are scattered fragments of masonry and detached ruins, but nothing can now be fixed on as the great Temple of Diana. There are ruins of a theatre; there is a circus, or stadium, nearly entire; there are fragments of temples and palaces scattered around; but there is nothing that marks the site of a church in the time of John; there is

nothing to indicate even that such a church then existed there. About a mile and a half from the principal ruins of Ephesus, there is indeed now a small village called Asalook--a Turkish word, which is associated with the same idea as Ephesus, meaning, The City of the Moon. A church, dedicated to John, is supposed to have stood near, if not on the site of, the present Mosque. Dr. Chandler (p. 150, 4to) gives us a striking description of Ephesus as he found it in 1764: "Its population consisted of a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wretchedness, dependence, and insensibility, the representatives of an illustrious people, and inhabiting the wreck of their greatness. Some reside in the substructure of the glorious edifices which they raised; some beneath the vaults of the stadium, and the crowded scenes of these diversions; and some in the abrupt precipice, in the sepulchres which received their ashes. Its streets are obscured and overgrown. A herd of goats was driven to it for shelter from the sun at noon, and a noisy flight of crows from the quarries seemed to insult its silence. We heard the partridge call in the area of the theatre and of the stadium ....Its fate is that of the entire country--a garden has become a desert. Busy centres of civilization, spots where the refinements and delights of the age were collected, are now a prey to silence, destruction, and death. Consecrated first of all to the purposes of idolatry, Ephesus next had Christian temples almost rivalling the Pagan in splendour, wherein the image of the great Diana lay prostrate before the cross; after the lapse of some centuries, Jesus gives way to Mohammed, and the crescent glittered on the dome of the recently Christian church. A few more scores of years, and Ephesus has neither temple, cross, crescent, nor city, but is desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness." See the article Ephesus in Kitto's Cyclo., and the authorities there referred to. What is affirmed here of Ephesus has often been illustrated in the history of the world, that when a church has declined in piety and love, and has been called by faithful ministers to repent, and has not done it, it has been abandoned more and more until the last appearance of truth and piety has departed, and it has been given up to error and to ruin. And the same principle is as applicable to individuals--for they have as much reason to dread the frowns of the Saviour as churches

have. If they who have "left their first love" will not repent at the call of the Saviour, they have every reason to apprehend some fearful judgment--some awful visitation of his Providence that shall overwhelm them in sorrow, as a proof of his displeasure. Even though they should finally be saved, their days may be without comfort, and perhaps their last moments without a ray of conscious hope. The engraving on the previous page, representing the present situation of Ephesus, will bring before the eye a striking illustration of the fulfilment of this prophecy that the candlestick of Ephesus would be removed from its place.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

But this thou hast. This thou hast that I approve of, or that I can commend.

That thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. Gr., works---ταεργα. The word Nicolaitanes occurs only in this place, and in Rev 2:15. From the reference in the latter place, it is clear that the doctrines which they held prevailed at Pergamos as well as at Ephesus; but from neither place can anything now be inferred in regard to the nature of their doctrines or their practices, unless it be supposed that they held the same doctrine that was taught by Balaam. Rev 2:15. From the two passages, compared with each other, it would seem that they were alike corrupt in doctrine and in practice, for in the passage before us their deeds are mentioned, and in Rev 2:15 their doctrine. Various conjectures, however, have been formed respecting this class of people, and the reasons why the name was given to them.

I. In regard to the origin of the name, there have been three opinions:

(1.) That mentioned by Irenoeus, and by some of the other fathers, that the name was derived from Nicolas, one of the deacons ordained at Antioch, Acts 6:5. Of those who have held this opinion, some have supposed that it was given to them because he became

apostate and was the founder of the sect, and others because they assumed his name in order to give the greater credit to their doctrine. But neither of these suppositions rests on any certain evidence, and both are destitute of probability. There is no proof whatever that Nicolas the deacon ever apostatized from the faith and became the founder of a sect; and if a name had been assumed in order to give credit to a sect and extend its influence, it is much more probable that the name of an apostle would have been chosen, or of some other prominent man, than the name of an obscure deacon of Antioch.

(2.) Vitringa, and most commentators since his time, have supposed that the name Nicolaitanes was intended to be symbolical, and was not designed to designate any sect of people, but to denote those who resembled Balaam, and that this word is used in the same manner as the word Jezebel in Rev 2:20, which is supposed to be symbolical there. Vitringa supposes that the word is derived from νικος, victory, and λαος, people, and that thus it corresponds with the name Balaam, as meaning either lord of the people, or he destroyed the people; and that, as the same effect was produced by their doctrines a by those of Balaam, that the people were led to commit fornication and to join in idolatrous worship, they might be called Balaamites or Nicolaitanes--that is, corrupters of the people. But to this it may be replied,

(a) that it is far-fetched, and is adopted only to remove a difficulty;

(b) that there is every reason to suppose that the word here used refers to a class of people who bore that name, and who were well known in the two churches specified;

(c) that, in Rev 2:15, they are expressly distinguished from those who held the doctrine of Balaam, Rev 2:14--"So hast thou also (και) those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes."

(3.) It has been supposed that some person now unknown, probably of the name Nicolas, or Nicolaus, was their leader, and laid the foundation of the sect. This is by far the most probable opinion, and to this there can be no objection. It is in accordance with what usually occurs in regard to sects, orthodox or heretical, that they derive their origin from some person whose name they continue to bear; and as there is no evidence that this sect prevailed extensively, or was indeed known beyond the limits of these churches, and as it soon disappeared, it is easily accounted for that the character and history of the founder were so soon forgotten.

II. In regard to the opinions which they held, there is as little certainty. Irenaeus (Adv. Haeres. i. 26) says that their characteristic tenets were the lawfulness of promiscuous intercourse with women, and of eating things offered to idols. Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. iii. 29) states substantially the same thing, and refers to a tradition respecting Nicolaus, that he had a beautiful wife, and was jealous of her, and being reproached with this, renounced all intercourse with her, and made use of an expression which was misunderstood, as implying that illicit pleasure was proper. Tertullian speaks of the Nicolaitanes as a branch of the Gnostic family, and as, in his time, extinct. Mosheim (De Rebus Christian. Ante Con. 69) says that "the questions about the Nicolaitanes have difficulties which cannot be solved." Neander (History of the Christian Religion, as translated by Torrey, i. pp. 452, 453) numbers them with Antinomians; though he expresses some doubt whether the actual existence of such a sect can be proved, and rather inclines to an opinion noticed above, that the name is symbolical, and that it is used in a mystical sense, according to the usual style of the book of Revelation, to denote corrupters or seducers of the people, like Balaam. He supposes that the passage relates simply to a class of persons who were in the practice of seducing Christians to participate in the sacrificial feasts of the heathens, and in the excesses which attended them--just as the Jews were led astray of old by the Moabites, Numbers 25. What was the origin of the name, however, Neander does not

profess to be able to determine, but suggests that it was the custom of such sects to attach themselves to some celebrated name of antiquity, in the choice of which they were often determined by circumstances quite accidental. He supposes also that the sect may have possessed a life of Nicolas of Antioch, drawn up by themselves or others from fabulous accounts and traditions, in which what had been imputed to Nicolas was embodied. Everything, however, in regard to the origin of this sect, and the reason of the name given to it, and the opinions which they held, is involved in great obscurity, and there is no hope of throwing light on the subject. It is generally agreed, among the writers of antiquity who have mentioned them, that they were distinguished for holding opinions which countenanced gross social indulgences. This is all that is really necessary to be known in regard to the passage before us, for this will explain the strong language of aversion and condemnation used by the Saviour respecting the sect in the epistles to the churches of Ephesus and Pergamos.

Which I also hate. If the view above taken of the opinions and practices of this people is correct, the reasons why he hated them are obvious. Nothing can be more opposed to the personal character of the Saviour, or to his religion, than such doctrines and deeds.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

He that hath an ear, let him hear, etc. This expression occurs at the close of each of the epistles addressed to the seven churches, and is substantially a mode of address often employed by the Saviour in his personal ministry, and quite characteristic of him. See Mt 11:15 Mk 4:23, 7:16. It is a form of expression designed to arrest the attention, and to denote that what was said was of special importance.

What the Spirit saith unto the churches. Evidently what the Holy Spirit says--for he is regarded in the Scriptures as the Source of inspiration, and as appointed to disclose truth to man. The "Spirit" may be regarded either as speaking through the Saviour, (compare Jn 3:34;) or as imparted to John, through whom he addressed the churches. In either case it is the same Spirit of inspiration, and in either case there would be a claim that his voice should be heard. The language here used is of a general character" He that hath an ear;" that is, what was spoken was worthy of the attention not only of the members of these churches, but of all others. The truths were of so general a character as to deserve the attention of mankind at large.

To him that overcometh. Gr., "To him that gains the victory, or is a conqueror"--τωνικωντι. This may refer to any victory of a moral character, and the expression used would be applicable to one who should triumph in any of these respects:--

(a) over his own easily-besetting sins;

(b) over the world and its temptations;

(c) over prevalent error;

(d) over the ills and trials of life, so as, in all these respects, to show that his Christian principles are firm and unshaken. Life, and the Christian life especially, may be regarded as a warfare. Thousands fall in the conflict with evil; but they who maintain a steady warfare, and who achieve a victory, shall be received as conquerors in the end.

Will I give to eat of the tree of life. As the reward of his victory. The meaning is, that he would admit him to heaven, represented as paradise, and permit him to enjoy its pleasures--represented by being permitted to partake of its fruits. The phrase "of the tree of

life" refers undoubtedly to the language used respecting the Garden of Eden, Gen 2:9, 3:22--where the "tree of life" is spoken of as that which was adapted to make the life of man perpetual. Of the nature of that tree nothing is known, though it would seem probable that, like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was a mere emblem of life--or a tree that was set before man in connexion with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that his destiny turned on the question whether he partook of the one or the other. That God should make the question of life or death depend on that, is no more absurd or improbable than that he should make it depend on what man does now--it being a matter of fact that life and death, happiness and misery, joy and sorrow, are often made to depend on things quite as arbitrary apparently, and quite as unimportant, as an act of obedience or disobedience in partaking of the fruit of a designated tree. Does it not appear probable that in Eden there were two trees designated to be of an emblematic character, of life and death, and that as man partook of the one or the other he would live or die? Of all the others he might freely partake without their affecting his condition; of one of these--the tree of life--he might have partaken before the fall, and lived for ever. One was forbidden on pain of death. When the law forbidding that was violated, it was still possible that he might partake of the other--but, since the sentence of death had been passed upon him, that would not now be proper, and he was driven from the garden, and the way was guarded by the flaming sword of the Cherubim. The reference in the passage before us is to the celestial paradise--to heaven--spoken of under the beautiful image of a garden; meaning that the condition of man, in regard to life, will still be the same as if he had partaken of the tree of life in Eden. Compare Rev 22:2.

Which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Heaven, represented as paradise. To be permitted to eat of that tree, that is, of the fruit of that tree, is but another expression implying the promise of eternal life, and of being happy for ever. The word paradise is of Oriental derivation, and is found in several of the Eastern

languages. In the Sanscrit the word paradesha and paradisha is used to denote a land elevated and cultivated; in the Armenian the word pardes denotes a garden around the house planted with grass, herbs, trees for use and ornament; and in the Hebrew form , and Greek παραδεισος, it is applied to the pleasure gardens and parks, with wild animals, around the country residences of the Persian monarchs and princes, Neh 2:8. Compare Eccl 2:5, Song 4:13; Xen. Cyro. i. 3, 14.--Rob. Lex. Here it is used to denote heaven--a world compared in beauty with a richly cultivated park or garden. Compare 2Cor 12:4. The meaning of the Saviour is, that he would receive him that overcame to a world of happiness; that he would permit him to taste of the fruit that grows there imparting immortal life, and to rest in an abode fitted up in a manner that would contribute in every way to enjoyment. Man, when he fell, was not permitted to reach forth his hand and pluck of the fruit of the tree of life in the first Eden, as he might have done if he had not fallen; but he is now permitted to reach forth his hand and partake of the tree of life in the paradise above. He is thus restored to what he might have been if he had not transgressed by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and in the Paradise Regained, the blessings of the Paradise Lost will be more than recovered--for man may now live for ever in a far higher and more blessed state than his would have been in Eden.

The Message to Smyrna

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.

Which was dead, and is alive. Rev 1:18. The idea is, that he is a living Saviour; and there was a propriety in referring to that fact here from the nature of the promise which he was about to make to the church at Smyrna: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death," Rev 2:11. As he had himself triumphed over death in all its forms, and was now alive for ever, it was appropriate that he should promise to his true friends the same protection from the second death. He who was wholly beyond the reach of death

could give the assurance that they who put their trust in him should come off victorious.

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

And tribulation. This word is of a general signification, and probably includes all that they suffered in any form, whether from persecution, poverty, or the blasphemy of opposers.

And poverty. It would seem that this church, at that time, was eminently poor, for this is not specified in regard to any one of the others. No reason is suggested why they were particularly poor. It was not, indeed, an uncommon characteristic of early Christians, (compare 1Cor 1:26-28,) but there might have been some special reasons why that church was eminently so. It is, however, the only church of the seven which has survived, and perhaps in the end its poverty was no disadvantage.

But thou art rich. Not in this world's goods, but in a more important respect--in the grace and favour of God. These things are not unfrequently united. Poverty is no hindrance to the favour of God, and there are some things in it favourable to the promotion of a right spirit towards God which are not found where there is abundant wealth. The Saviour was eminently poor, and not a few of his most devoted and useful followers have had as little of this world's goods as he had. The poor should always be cheerful and happy, if they can hear their Saviour saying unto them, "I know thy poverty--but thou art rich." However keen the feeling arising from the reflection "I am a poor man," the edge of the sorrow is taken off if the mind can be turned to a brighter image--"but thou art rich."

And I know the blasphemy. The reproaches; the harsh and bitter revilings. On the word blasphemy, Mt 9:3, 26:65. The word here does not seem to refer to blasphemy against God, but to bitter

reproaches against themselves. The reason of these reproaches is not stated, but it was doubtless on account of their religion.

Of them which say they are Jews. Who profess to be Jews. The idea seems to be, that though they were of Jewish extraction, and professed to be Jews, they were not true Jews; they indulged in a bitterness of reproach, and a severity of language, which showed that they had not the spirit of the Jewish religion; they had nothing which became those who were under the guidance of the spirit of their own Scriptures. That would have inculcated and fostered a milder temper; and the meaning here is, that although they were of Jewish origin, they were not worthy of the name. That spirit of bitter opposition was indeed often manifested in their treatment of Christians, as it had been of the Saviour, but still it was foreign to the true nature of their religion. There were Jews in all parts of Asia Minor, and the apostles often encountered them in their journeyings, but it would seem that there was something which had particularly embittered those of Smyrna against Christianity. What this was is now unknown. It may throw some light on the passage, however, to remark, that at a somewhat later period--in the time of the martyrdom of Polycarp--the Jews of Smyrna were among the most bitter of the enemies of Christians, and among the most violent in demanding the death of Polycarp. Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. iv. 15) says, that when Polycarp was apprehended, and brought before the proconsul at Smyrna, the Jews were the most furious of all in demanding his condemnation. When the mob, after his condemnation to death, set about gathering fuel to burn him, "the Jews," says he, "being especially zealous, as was their custom--μαλιστα προθυμωςωςεθοςαυτοις--ran to procure fuel." And when, as the burning failed, the martyr was transfixed with weapons, the Jews urged and besought the magistrate that his body might not be given up to Christians. Possibly at the time when this epistle was directed to be sent to Smyrna, there were Jews there who manifested the same spirit which those of their countrymen did afterwards, who urged on the death of Polycarp.

But are the synagogue of Satan. Deserve rather to be called the synagogue of Satan. The synagogue was a Jewish place of worship, (compare Mt 4:23,) but the word originally denoted the assembly or congregation. The meaning here is plain, that though they worshipped in a synagogue, and professed to be the worshippers of God, yet they were not worthy of the name, and deserved rather to be regarded as in the service of Satan. Satan is the word that is properly applied to the great evil spirit, elsewhere called the devil. Lk 22:3; Job 1:6.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. He did not promise them exemption from suffering. He saw that they were about to suffer, and he specifies the manner in which their affliction would occur. But he entreats and commands them not to be afraid. They were to look to the "crown of life," and to be comforted with the assurance that if they were faithful unto death, that would be theirs. We need not dread suffering if we can hear the voice of the Redeemer encouraging us, and if he assures us that in a little while we shall have the crown of life.

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison. Or, shall cause some of you to be cast into prison. He had just said that their persecutors were of the "synagogue of Satan." He here represents Satan, or the devil--another name of the same being--as about to throw them into prison. This would be done undoubtedly by the hands of men, but still Satan was the prime mover, or the instigator in doing it. It was common to cast those who were persecuted into prison. See Acts 12:3-4, 16:23. It is not said on what pretence, or by what authority, this would be done; but, as John had been banished to Patmos from Ephesus, it is probable that this persecution was raging in the adjacent places, and there is no improbability in supposing that many might be thrown into prison.

That ye may be tried. That the reality of your faith may be subjected to a test to show whether it is genuine. The design in the case is that of the Saviour, though Satan is allowed to do it. It was common in the early periods of the church to suffer religion to be subjected to trial amidst persecutions, in order to show that it was of heavenly origin, and to demonstrate its value in view of the world. This is, indeed, one of the designs of trial at all times, but this seemed eminently desirable when a new system of religion was about to be given to mankind. Compare Barnes on "1Pe 1:6-7".

And ye shall have tribulation ten days. A short time; a brief period; a few days. It is possible, indeed, that this might have meant literally ten days, but it is much more in accordance with the general character of this book, in regard to numbers, to suppose that the word ten here is used to denote a few. Compare Gen 24:55, 1Sam 25:38, Dan 1:12,14. We are wholly ignorant how long the trial actually lasted; but the assurance was that it would not be long, and they were to allow this thought to cheer and sustain them in their sorrows. Why should not the same thought encourage us now? Affliction in this life, however severe, can be but brief; and in the hope that it will soon end, why should we not bear it without murmuring or repining?

Be thou faithful unto death. Implying, perhaps, that though, in regard to the church, the affliction would be brief, yet that it might be fatal to some of them, and they who were thus about to die should remain faithful to their Saviour until the hour of death. In relation to all, whether they were to suffer a violent death or not, the same injunction and the same promise was applicable. It is true of every one who is a Christian, in whatever manner he is to die, that if he is faithful unto death, a crown of life awaits him. Compare 2Ti 4:8.

And I will give thee a crown of life. Jas 1:12. Compare 1Pet 5:4, 1Cor 9:24-27. The promise here is somewhat different from that

which was made to the faithful in Ephesus, (Rev 2:7,) but the same thing substantially is promised theme happiness hereafter, or an admission into heaven. In the former case it is the peaceful image of those admitted into the scenes of paradise; here it is the triumph of the crowned martyr.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

He that overcometh. Rev 2:7. The particular promise here is made to him that should "overcome;" that is, that would gain the victory in the persecutions which were to come upon them. The reference is to him who would show the sustaining power of religion in times of persecution; who would not yield his principles when opposed and persecuted; who would be triumphant when so many efforts were made to induce him to apostatize and abandon the cause.

Shall not be hurt of the second death. By a second death. That is, he will have nothing to fear in the future world. The punishment of hell is often called death, not in the sense that the soul will cease to exist, but

(a) because death is the most fearful thing of which we have any knowledge, and

(b) because there is a striking similarity, in many respects, between death and future punishment. Death cuts off from life--and so the second death cuts off from eternal life; death puts an end to all our hopes here, and the second death to all our hopes for ever; death is attended with terrors and alarms--the faint and feeble emblem of the terrors and alarms in the world of woe. The phrase, "the second death," is three times used elsewhere by John in this book, (Rev 20:6,14, 21:8) but does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The words death and to die, however, are frequently used to denote the future punishment of the wicked.

The promise here made would be all that was necessary to sustain them in their trials. Nothing more is requisite to make the burdens

of life tolerable than an assurance that, when we reach the end of our earthly journey, we have arrived at the close of suffering, and that beyond the grave there is no power that can harm us. Religion, indeed, does not promise to its friends exemption from death in one form. To none of the race has such a promise ever been made, and to but two has the favour been granted to pass to heaven without tasting death. It could have been granted to all the redeemed, but there were good reasons why it should not be; that is, why it would be better that even they who are to dwell in heaven should return to the dust, and sleep in the tomb, than that they should be removed by perpetual miracle, translating them to heaven. Religion, therefore, does not come to us with any promise that we shall not die. But it comes with the assurance that we shall be sustained in the dying hour; that the Redeemer will accompany us through the dark valley; that death to us will be a calm and quiet slumber, in the hope of awaking in the morning of the resurrection; that we shall be raised up again with bodies incorruptible and undecaying; and that beyond the grave we shall never fear death in any form. What more is needful to enable us to bear with patience the trials of this life, and to look upon death when it does come, disarmed as it is of its sting, (1Cor 15:55-57) with calmness and peace?

The Message to Pergamos

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.

These things saith he which hath the sharp sword etc. Rev 1:16. Compare Heb 4:12, Eccl 12:11, Isa 49:2. Professor Stuart suggests that when the Saviour, as represented in the vision, "uttered words, as they proceeded from his mouth, the halitus which accompanied them assumed, in the view of John, the form of an igneous two-edged sword." It is more probable, however, that the words which proceeded from his mouth did not assume anything like a form or substance, but John means to represent them as if they were a sharp sword. His words cut and penetrate deep, and it was easy to picture him as having a sword proceeding from his mouth; that is, his

words were as piercing as a sharp sword. As he was about to reprove the church at Pergamos, there was a propriety in referring to this power of the Saviour. Reproof cuts deep; and this is the idea represented here.

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is:* and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

And where thou dwellest. That is, I know all the temptations to which you are exposed; all the allurements to sin by which you are surrounded; all the apologies which might be made for what has occurred arising from those circumstances; and all that could be said in commendation of you for having been as faithful as you have been. The sense of the passage is, that it does much to enable us to judge of character to know where men live. It is much more easy to be virtuous and pious in some circumstances than in others; and in order to determine how much credit is due to a man for his virtues, it is necessary to understand how much he has been called to resist, how many temptations he has encountered, what easily-besetting sins he may have, or what allurements may have been presented to his mind to draw him from the path of virtue and religion. In like manner, in order to judge correctly of those who have embraced error, or have been led into sin, it is necessary to understand what there may have been in their circumstances that gave to error what was plausible, and to sin what was attractive; what there was in their situation in life that exposed them to these influences, and what arguments may have been employed by the learned, the talented, and the plausible advocates of error, to lead them astray. We often judge harshly where the Saviour would be far less severe in his judgments; we often commend much where in fact there has been little to commend. It is possible to conceive that in the strugglings against evil of those who have ultimately fallen, there may be more to commend than in cases where the path of virtue has been pursued as the mere result of circumstances, and where there never has been a conflict with temptation. The adjudications of the great day will do much to reverse the judgments of mankind.

Even where Satan's seat is. A place of peculiar wickedness, as if Satan dwelt there. Satan is, as it were, enthroned there. The influence of Satan in producing persecution is that which is particularly alluded to, as is apparent from the reference which is immediately made to the case of Antipas, the "faithful martyr."

And thou holdest fast my name. They had professed the name of Christ; that is, they had professed to be his followers, and they had steadfastly adhered to him and his cause in all the opposition made to him. The name Christian, given in honour of Christ, and indicating that they were his disciples, they had not been ashamed of or denied. It was this name that subjected the early Christians to reproach. See 1Pet 4:14.

And hast not denied my faith. That is, hast not denied my religion. The great essential element in the Christian religion is faith, and this, since it is so important, is often put for the whole of religion.

Even in those days wherein Antipus was my faithful martyr. Of Antipas we know nothing more than is here stated. "In the Acta Sanctorum (ii. pp. 3, 4) is a martyrology of Antipas from a Greek MS.; but it is full of fable and fiction, which a later age had added to the original story."--Professor Stuart, in loc.

Who was slain among you. It would seem from this, that, though the persecution had raged there, but one person had been put to death, It would appear also that the persecution was of a local character, since Pergamos is described as "Satan's seat;" and the death of Antipus is mentioned in immediate connexion with that fact. All the circumstances referred to would lead us to suppose that this was a popular outbreak, and not a persecution carried on under the authority of government, and that Antipas was put to death in a popular excitement. So Stephen (Actsts 7) was put to death, and so Paul at Lystra was stoned until it was supposed he was dead, Acts 14:19.

Where Satan dwelleth. The repetition of this idea--very much in the manner of John--showed how intensely the mind was fixed on the thought, and how much alive the feelings were to the malice of Satan as exhibited at Pergamos.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

But I have a few things against thee. As against the church at Ephesus, Rev 2:4. The charge against this church, however, is somewhat different from that against the church at Ephesus. The charge there was, that they had "left their first love;" but it is spoken in commendation of them that they "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes," Rev 2:6. Here the charge is, that they tolerated that sect among them, and that they had among them also those who held the doctrine of Balaam. Their general Course had been such that the Saviour could approve it; he did not approve, however, of their tolerating those who held to pernicious practical error--error that tended to sap the very foundation of morals.

Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Baalam. It is not necessary to suppose that they professedly held to the same opinion as Balaam, or openly taught the same doctrines. The meaning is, that they taught substantially the same doctrine which Balaam did, and deserved to be classed with him. What that doctrine was is stated in the subsequent part of the verse.

Who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel. The word stumbling-block properly means anything over which one falls or stumbles, and then anything over which any one may or fall into sin, which becomes the occasion of one's falling into sin. The meaning here is, that it was through the instructions of Balaam that Balak learned the way by which the Israelites might be led into sin, and might thus bring upon themselves the Divine malediction. The main circumstances in the case were these:

(1.)-Balak, king of Moab, when the children of Israel approached his borders, felt that he could not contend successfully against so great a host, for his people were dispirited and disheartened at their numbers, Nu 22:3-4.

(2.) In these circumstances he resolved to send for one who had a might distinguished reputation as a prophet, that he "curse" that people, or might utter a malediction over them, in order at the same time to ensure their destruction, and to inspirit his own people in making war on them: in accordance with a prevalent opinion of ancient times, that prophets had the power of blighting anything by their curse. Job 3:8. For this purpose, he sent messengers to Balaam to invite him to come and perform this service, Nu 22:5-6.

(3.) Balaam professed to be a prophet of the Lord, and it was obviously proper that he should inquire of the Lord whether he should comply with this request. He did so, and was positively forbidden to go, Nu 22:12.

(4.) When the answer of Balaam was reported to Balak, he supposed that he might be prevailed to come by the offer of rewards, and he sent more distinguished messengers, with an offer of ample honour if he would come, Nu 22:15-17.

(5.) Balaam was evidently strongly inclined to go, but, in accordance with his character as a prophet, he said that if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold he could do no more, and say no more, than the Lord permitted, and he proposed again to consult the Lord, to see if he could obtain permission to go with the messengers of Balak. He obtained permission, but with the express injunction that he was only to utter what God should say; and when he came to Balak, notwithstanding his own manifest desire to comply with the wish of Balak, and notwithstanding all the offers which Balak made to him to induce him to do the

contrary, he only continued to bless the Hebrew people, until, in disgust and indignation, Balak sent him away again to his own land, Numbers chapters 22-23 and Nu 24:10 seq.

(6.) Balaam returned to his own house, but evidently with a desire still to gratify Balak. Being forbidden to curse the people of Israel; having been overruled in all his purposes to do it; having been, contrary to his own desires, constrained to bless them when he was himself more than willing to curse them; and having still a desire to comply with the wishes of the king of Moab, he cast about for some way in which the object might yet be accomplished--that is, in which the curse of God might in fact rest upon the Hebrew people, and they might become exposed to the Divine displeasure. To do this, no way occurred so plausible, and that had such probability of success, as to lead them into idolatry, and into the sinful and corrupt practices connected with idolatry. It was, therefore, resolved to make use of the charms of the females of Moab, that through their influence the Hebrews might be drawn into licentiousness. This was done. The abominations of idolatry spread through the camp of Israel; licentiousness everywhere prevailed, and God sent a plague upon them to punish them, Nu 25:1. That also this was planned and instigated by Balaam is apparent from Nu 31:16: "Behold these [women] caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord, in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." The attitude of Balaam's mind in the matter was this:

I. He had a strong desire to do that which he knew was wrong, and which was forbidden expressly by God.

II. He was restrained by internal checks and remonstrances, and prevented from doing what he wished to do.

III. He cast about for some way in which he might do it, notwithstanding these internal checks and remonstrances, and

finally accomplished the same thing in fact, though in form different from that which he had first prepared. This is not an unfair description of what often occurs in the plans and purposes of a wicked man. The meaning in the passage before us is, that in the church at Pergamos there were those who taught, substantially, the same thing that Balaam did; that is, the tendency of whose teaching was to lead men into idolatry, and the ordinary accompaniment of idolatry--licentiousness.

To eat things sacrificed unto idols. Balaam taught the Hebrews to do this--perhaps in some way securing their attendance on the riotous and gluttonous feasts of idolatry celebrated among the people among whom they sojourned. Such feasts were commonly held in idol temples, and they usually led to scenes of dissipation and corruption. By plausibly teaching that there could be no harm in eating what had been offered in sacrifice--since an idol was nothing, and the flesh of animals offered in sacrifice was the same as if slaughtered for some other purpose--it would seem that these teachers at Pergamos had induced professing Christians to attend on those feasts--thus lending their countenance to idolatry, and exposing themselves to all the corruption and licentiousness that commonly attended such celebrations. See the banefulness of thus eating the meat offered in sacrifice to idols. 1Cor 8:1.

And to commit fornication. Balaam taught this; and that was the tendency of the doctrines inculcated at Pergamos. On what pretence this was done is not said; but it is clear that the church had regarded this in a lenient manner. So accustomed had the heathen world been to this vice, that many who had been converted from idolatry might be disposed to look on it with less severity than we do now, and there was a necessity of incessant watchfulness lest the members of the church should fall into it. Acts 15:20.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

So hast thou also them, etc. That is, there are those among you who hold those doctrines. The meaning here may be, either that, in addition to those who held the doctrine of Balaam, they had also another class who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes; or that the Nicolaitanes held the same doctrine, and taught the same thing as Balaam. If but one class is referred to, and it is meant that the Nicolaitanes held the doctrines of Balaam, then we know what constituted their teaching; if two classes of false teachers are referred to, then we have no means of knowing what was the peculiarity of the teaching of the Nicolaitanes. The more natural and obvious construction, it seems to me, is to suppose that the speaker means to say that the Nicolaitanes taught the same things which Balaam did--to wit, that they led the people into corrupt and licentious practices. This interpretation seems to be demanded by the proper use of the word so"--ουτως--meaning, in this manner, on this wise, thus; and usually referring to what pr cedes. If this be the correct interpretation, then we have, in fact, a description of what the Nicolaitanes held, agreeing with all the accounts given of them by the ancient fathers. Rev 2:6. If this is so, also, then it is clear that the same kind of doctrines was held at Smyrna, at Pergamos, and at Thyatira, (Rev 2:20) though mentioned in somewhat different forms. It is not quite certain, however, that this is the correct interpretation, or that the writer does not mean to say that in addition to those who held the doctrine of Balaam, they had also another class of errorists who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.

Which thing I hate. So the common Greek text-- ομισω. But the best supported reading, and the one adapted by Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn, is ομοιως--in, like manner; that is, "as Balak retained a false prophet who misled the Hebrews, so thou retainest those who teach things like to those which Balaam taught."

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Or else I will come unto thee quickly. On the word quickly, Rev 1:1 The meaning here is, that he would come against them in judgment, or to punish them.

And will fight against them. Against the Nicolaitanes. He would come against the church for tolerating them, but his opposition would be principally directed against the Nicolaitanes themselves. The church would excite his displeasure by retaining them in its bosom, but it was in its power to save them from destruction. If the church would repent, or if it would separate itself from the evil, then the Saviour would not come against them. If this were not done, they would feel the vengeance of his sword, and be subjected to punishment. The church always suffers when it has offenders in its bosom; it has the power of saving them if it will repent of its own unfaithfulness, and will strive for their conversion.

With the sword of my mouth. Rev 1:16, 2:12. That is, he would give the order, and they would be cut as if by a sword. Precisely in what way it would be done he does not say; but it might be by persecution, or by heavy judgments. To see the force of this, we are to remember the power which Christ has to punish the wicked by a word of his mouth. By a word in the last day he will turn all the wicked into hell.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

Will I give to eat of the hidden manna. The true spiritual food; the food that nourishes the soul. The idea is, that the souls of those who "overcame," or who gained the victory in their conflict with sin, and in the persecutions and trials of the world, would be permitted to partake of that spiritual food which is laid up for the people of God, and by which they will be nourished for ever. The Hebrews were supported by manna in the desert, (Ex 16:16-35) a pot of that manna was laid up in the most holy place to be preserved as a memorial, (Ex 16:32-34) it is called "angel's food,"

(Ps 78:25) and "corn of heaven," (Ps 78:24) and it would seem to have been emblematical of that spiritual food by which the people of God are to be fed from heaven, in their journey through this world. By the word "hidden," there would seem to be an allusion to that which was laid up in the pot before the ark of the testimony, and the blessing which is promised here is that they would be nourished as if they were sustained by that manna thus laid up before the ark: by food from the immediate presence of God. The language thus explained would mean that they who overcome will be nourished through this life as if by that "hidden manna;" that is, that they will be supplied all along through the "wilderness of this world" by that food from the immediate presence of God which their souls require. As the parallel places in the epistles to the churches, however, refer rather to the heavenly world, and to the rewards which they who are victors shall have there, it seems probable that this has immediate reference to that world also, and that the meaning is, that, as the most holy place was a type of heaven, they will be admitted into the immediate presence of God, and nourished for ever by the food of heaven--that which the angels have; that which the soul will need to sustain it there. Even in this world their souls may be nourished with this "hidden manna;" in heaven it will be their constant food for ever.

And will give him a white stone. There has been a great variety of opinion in regard to the meaning of this expression, and almost no two expositors agree. Illustrations of its meaning have been sought from Grecian, Hebrew, and Roman customs, but none of these have removed all difficulty from the expression. The general sense of the language seems plain, even though the allusion on which it is founded is obscure or even unknown. It is, that the Saviour would give him who overcame, a token of his favour which would have some word or name inscribed on it, and which would be of use to him alone, or intelligible to him only: that is, some secret token which would make him sure of the favour of his Redeemer, and which would be unknown to other men. The idea here would find a correspondence in the evidences of his favour granted to the

soul of the Christian himself; in the pledge of heaven thus made to him, and which he would understand, but which no one else would understand. The things, then, which we are to look for in the explanation of the emblem are two--that which would thus be a token of his favour, and that which would explain the fact that it would be intelligible to no one else. The question is, whether there is any known thing pertaining to ancient customs which would convey these ideas. The word rendered stone--ψηφον--means properly a small stone, as worn smooth by water--a gravel-stone, a pebble; then any polished stone, the stone of a gem, or ring.- Rob. Lex. Such a stone was used among the Greeks for various purposes, and the word came to have a signification corresponding to these uses. The following uses are enumerated by Dr. Robinson, Lex.: the stones or counters for reckoning; dice, lots, used in a kind of magic; a vote, spoken of the black and white stones or pebbles anciently used in voting--that is, the white for approval, and the black for condemning. In regard to the use of the word here, some have supposed that the reference is to a custom of the Roman emperors, who, in the games and spectacles which they gave to the people in imitation of the Greeks, are said to have thrown among the populace dice or tokens inscribed with the words, "Frumentum, vestes," etc.; that is, "corn, clothing," etc.; and whosoever obtained one of these received from the emperor whatever was marked upon it. Others suppose that allusion is made to the mode of casting lots, in which sometimes dice or tokens were used with names inscribed on them, and the lot fell to him whose name first came out. The "white stone" was a symbol of good-fortune and prosperity; and it is a remarkable circumstance that, among the Greeks, persons of distinguished virtue were said to receive a ψηφον-- stone --from the gods, i.e. as an approving testimonial of their virtue. See Robinson's Lex., and the authorities there referred to; Wetstein, N. T., in loc., and Stuart, in loc. Professor Stuart supposes that the allusion is to the fact that Christians are said to be kings and priests to God, and that as the Jewish high priest had a mitre or turban, on the front of which was a plate of gold inscribed "Holiness to the Lord," so they who were kings and priests under the Christian dispensation would have that by which they would be known, but

that, instead of a plate of gold, they would have a pellucid stone, on which the name of the Saviour would be engraved as a token of his favour. It is possible, in regard to the explanation of this phrase, that there has been too much effort to find all the circumstances alluded to in some ancient custom. Some well-understood fact or custom may have suggested the general thought, and then the filling up may have been applicable to this case alone. It is quite clear, I think, that none of the customs to which it has been supposed there is reference correspond fully with what is stated here, and that though there may have been a general allusion of that kind, yet something of the particularity in the circumstances maybe regarded as peculiar to this alone. In accordance with this view, perhaps the following points will embody all that need be said:

(1.) A white stone was regarded as a token of favour, prosperity, or success everywhere--whether considered as a vote, or as given to a victor, etc. As such, it would denote that the Christian to whom it is said to be given would meet with the favour of the Redeemer, and would have a token of his approval.

(2.) The name written on this stone would be designed also as a token or pledge of his favour--as a name engraved on a signet or seal would be a pledge to him who received it of friendship. It would be not merely a white stone--emblematic of favour and approval--but would be so marked as to indicate its origin, with the name of the giver on it. This would appropriately denote, when explained, that the victor Christian would receive a token of the Redeemer's favour, as if his name were engraven on a stone, and given to him as a pledge of his friendship; that is, that he would be as certain of his favour as if he had such a stone. In other words, the victor would be assured from the Redeemer, who distributes rewards, that his welfare would be secure.

(3.) This would be to him as if he should receive a stone so marked that its letters were invisible to all others, but apparent to him who

received it. It is not needful to suppose that in the Olympic games, or in the prizes distributed by Roman emperors, or in any other custom, such a case had actually occurred, but it is conceivable that a name might be so engraved--with characters so small, or in letters so unknown to all others, or with marks so unintelligible to others--that no other one into whose hands it might fall would understand it. The meaning then probably is, that to the true Christian--the victor over sin--there is given some pledge of the Divine favour which has to him all the effect of assurance, and which others do not perceive or understand. This consists of favours shown directly to the soul--the evidence of pardoned sin; joy in the Holy Ghost; peace with God; clear views of the Saviour; the possession of a spirit which is properly that of Christ, and which is the gift of God to the soul. The true Christian understands this; the world perceives it not. The Christian receives it as a pledge of the Divine favour, and as an evidence that he will be saved; to the world, that on which he relies seems to be enthusiasm, fanaticism, or delusion. The Christian bears it about with him as he would a precious stone given to him by his Redeemer, and on which the name of his Redeemer is engraved, as a pledge that he is accepted of God, and that the rewards of heaven shall be his; the world does not understand it, or attaches no value to it.

And in the stone a new name written. A name indicating a new relation, new hopes and triumphs. Probably the name here referred to is the name of the Redeemer, or the name Christian, or some such appellation. It would be some name which he would understand and appreciate, and which would be a pledge of acceptance. Which no man knoweth, etc. That is, no one would understand its import, as no one but the Christian estimates the value of that on which he relies as the pledge of his Redeemer's love.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass.

These things saith the Son of God. This is the first time, in these epistles, that the name of the speaker is referred to. In each other instance, there is merely some attribute of the Saviour mentioned. Perhaps the severity of the rebuke contemplated here made it proper that there should be a more impressive reference to the authority of the speaker; and hence he is introduced as the "Son of God." It is not a reference to him as the "Son of man"--the common appellation which he gave to himself when on earth--for that might have suggested his humanity only, and would not have conveyed the same impression in regard to his authority; but it is to himself as sustaining the rank, and having the authority of the Son of God--one who, therefore, has a right to speak, and a right to demand that what he says shall be heard.

Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire. Rev 1:14. Before the glance of his eye all is light, and nothing can be concealed from his view. Nothing would be better fitted to inspire awe then, as nothing should be now, than such a reference to the Son of God as being able to penetrate the secret recesses of the heart.

And his feet are like fine brass. Rev 1:15. Perhaps indicative of majesty and glory as he walked in the midst of the churches.

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first.

And charity. Love: love to God, and love to man. There is no reason for restricting this word here to the comparatively narrow sense which it now bears. 1Cor 13:1

And service. Gr., ministry--διακονιαν. The word would seem to include all the service which the church had rendered in the cause of religion; all which was the proper fruit of love, or which would be a carrying out of the principles of love to God and man.

And faith. Or, fidelity in the cause of the Redeemer. The word here would include not only trust in Christ for salvation, but that which is the proper result of such trust--fidelity in his service.

And thy patience. Patient endurance of the sorrows of life--of all that God brought upon them in any way, to test the reality of their religion.

And thy works. Thy works as the fruit of the virtues just mentioned. The word is repeated here, from the first part of the verse, perhaps, to specify more particularly that their works had been recently more numerous and praiseworthy even than they had formerly been. In the beginning of the verse, as in the commencement of each of the epistles, the word is used, in the most general sense, to denote all that they had done; meaning that he had so thorough an acquaintance with them in all respects, that he could judge of their character. In the latter part of the verse, the word seems to be used in a more specific sense, as referring to good works, and with a view to say that they had latterly abounded in these more than they had formerly.

And the last to be more than the first. Those which had been recently performed were more numerous, and more commendable, than those which had been rendered formerly. That is, they were making progress; they had been acting more and more in accordance with the nature and claims of the Christian profession. This is a most honourable commendation, and one which every Christian, and every church, should seek. Religion in the soul, and in a community, is designed to be progressive; and, while we should seek to live in such a manner always that we may have the commendation of the Saviour, we should regard it as a thing to be greatly desired that we may be approved as making advances in knowledge and holiness; that as we grow in years we may grow alike in the disposition to do good, and in the ability to do it; that as we gain in experience, we may also gain in a readiness to apply the results of our experience in promoting the cause of religion, lie

would deserve little commendation in religion who should be merely stationary; he alone properly developes the nature of true piety, and shows that it has set up its reign in the soul, who is constantly making advances.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel. Thou dost tolerate, or countenance her. Rev 2:14. Who the individual here referred to by the name Jezebel was, is not known. It is by no means probable that this was her real name, but seems to have been given to her as expressive of her character and influence. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab; a woman of vast influence over her husband--an influence which was uniformly exerted for evil. She was a daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon, and lived about 918 years before Christ. She was an idolater, and induced her weak husband not only to connive at her introducing the worship of her native idols, but to become an idolater himself, and to use all the means in his power to establish the worship of idols instead of the worship of the true God. She was highly gifted, persuasive, and artful; was resolute in the accomplishment of her purposes; ambitious of extending and perpetuating her power, and unscrupulous in the means which she employed to execute her designs. See 1Kgs 16:31. The kind of character, therefore, which would be designated by the term as used here, would be that of a woman who was artful and persuasive in her manner; who was capable of exerting a wide influence over others; who had talents of a high order; who was a thorough advocate of error; who was unscrupulous in the means which she employed for accomplishing her ends, and the tendency of whose influence was to lead the people into the abominable practices of idolatry. The opinions which she held, and the practices into which she led others, appear to have been the same which are referred to in Rev 2:6, and Rev 2:14-15. The difference was, that the teacher in this case was a woman--a circumstance which by no means lessened the enormity of the offence; for,

besides the fact that it was contrary to the whole genius of Christianity that a woman should be a public teacher, there was a special incongruity that she should be an advocate of such abominable opinions and practices. Every sentiment of our nature makes us feel that it is right to expect that if a woman teaches at all in a public manner, she should inculcate only that which is true and holy--she should be an advocate of a pure life. We are shocked; we feel that there is a violation of every principle of our nature, and an insult done to our common humanity, if it is otherwise. We have in a manner become accustomed to the fact that man should be a teacher of pollution and error, so that we do not shrink from it with horror; we never can be reconciled to the fact that a woman should.

Which calleth herself a prophetess. Many persons set up the claim to be prophets in the times when the gospel was first preached, and it is not improbable that many females would lay claim to such a character, after the example of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, etc.

To teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication. Compare Rev 2:14 Whether she herself practised what she taught is not expressly affirmed, but seems to be implied in Rev 2:22. It is not often that persons teach these doctrines without practising what they teach; and the fact that they desire and design to live in this manner will commonly account for the fact that they inculcate such views.

And to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Rev 2:14 The custom of attending on the festivals of idols led commonly to licentiousness, and they who were gross and sensual in their lives were fit subjects to be persuaded to attend on idol feasts--for nowhere else would they find more unlimited toleration for the indulgence of their passions.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication. Probably after some direct and solemn warning of the evil of her course. The error

and sin had been of long standing, but he now resolved to bear with it no longer. It is true of almost every great sinner, that sufficient time is given for repentance, and that vengeance is delayed after crime is committed. But it cannot always be deferred, for the period must arrive when no reason shall exist for longer delay, and when punishment must come upon the offender.

And she repented not. As she did not do it; as she showed no disposition to abandon her course; as all plea of having had no time to repent would now be taken away, it was proper that he should rise in his anger and cut her down.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed. Not into a bed of ease, but a bed of pain. There is evidently a purpose to contrast this with her former condition. The harlot's bed and a sick bed are thus brought together, as they are often, in fact, in the dispensations of Providence and the righteous judgment of God. One cannot be indulged without leading on, sooner or later, to the horrid sufferings of the other: and how soon no one knows.

And them that commit adultery with her. Those who are seduced by her doctrines into this sin; either they who commit it with her literally, or who are led into the same kind of life.

Into great tribulation. Great suffering; disease of body or tortures of the soul. How often--how almost uniformly is this the case with those who thus live! Sooner or later, sorrow always comes upon the licentious; and God has evinced by some of his severest judgments, in forms of frightful disease, his displeasure at the violation of the laws of purity. There is no sin that produces a more withering and desicating effect upon the soul than that which is here referred to; none which is more certain to be followed with sorrow.

Except they repent of their deeds. It is only by repentance that we can avoid the consequences of sin. The word repent here evidently includes both sorrow for the past, and abandonment of the evil course of life.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

And I will kill her children with death. A strong Hebraistic mode of expression, meaning that he would certainly destroy It them. has been made a question whether the word children here is to be taken literally or figuratively. The word itself would admit of either interpretation; and there is nothing in the connexion by which its meaning here can be determined. If it is to be taken literally, it is in accordance with what is often threatened in the Scriptures, that children shall be visited with calamity for the sins of parents, and with what often occurs in fact that they do thus suffer. For, it is no uncommon thing that whole families are made desolate on account of the sin and folly of the parent. Rom 5:19. If it is to be taken figuratively, then it refers to those who had imbibed her doctrines, and who, of course, would suffer in the punishment which would follow from the propagation of such doctrines. The reference in the word death here would seem to be to some heavy judgment, by plague, famine, or sword, by which they would be cut off. And all the churches shall know, etc. That is, the design of this judgment will be so apparent, that it will convince all that I know what is in the hearts of men, even the secret acts of wickedness that are concealed from human view.

I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts. This is clearly a claim to omniscience; and as it is the Lord Jesus who speaks in all these epistles, it is a full proof that he claims this for himself. There is nothing which more clearly appertains to God than the power of searching the heart, and nothing that is more constantly claimed by him as his peculiar prerogative, 1Chr 28:19, Ps 7:9, 11:4, 44:21 Ps 139:2, Prov 15:3, Jer 11:20, 17:10, 20:12, 32:19, Heb 4:13. The word reins--νεφρους--means, literally, the kidney,

and is commonly used in the plural to denote the kidneys, or the loins. In the Scriptures, it is used to denote the inmost mind, the secrets of the soul; probably because the parts referred to by the word are as hidden as any other part of the frame, and would seem to be the repository of the more secret affections of the mind. It is not to be supposed that it is taught in the Scriptures that the reins are the real seat of any of the affections or passions; but there is no more impropriety in using the term in a popular signification than there is in using the word heart, which all continue to use, to denote the seat of love.

And I will give unto every one of you according to your works. To every one of you; not only to those who have embraced these opinions, but to all the church. This is the uniform rule laid down in the Bible by which God will judge men.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira. The word "and"--και--is omitted in many MSS. and versions, and in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn, and the connexion demands that it should be omitted. As it stands in the received text, it would seem that what he here says was addressed to those who had received that doctrine, and to all others as well as to them; whereas the declaration here made pertains manifestly to those who had not received the doctrine. With that particle omitted, the passage will read, as rendered by Professor Stuart, "But I say unto you, the remainder in Thyatira, so many as hold not this doctrine," etc. That is, he addresses now all the members of the church who were not involved in the charges already made. He does not say how large a portion of the church had escaped the contaminating influence of those opinions, but to that portion, whether great or small, he addresses only words of exhortation and comfort.

As many as have not this doctrine. To all who have not embraced it, or been contaminated with it. It may be presumed that there was a considerable portion of the church which had not.

And which have not known the depths of Satan. The deep art and designs of Satan. Deep things are those which are hidden from view--as of things which are far under-ground; and hence the word is used to denote mysteries, or profound designs and purposes. The allusion here is not to any trials or sufferings that Satan might bring upon any one, or to any temptations of which he might be the author, but to his profound art in inculcating error and leading men astray. There are doctrines of error, and arguments for sin, to originate which seems to lie beyond the power of men, and which would appear almost to have exhausted the talent of Satan himself. They evince such a profound knowledge of man; of the Divine government; of the course of events on earth; and of what our race needs; and they are defended with so much eloquence, skill, learning, and subtilty of argumentation, that they appear to lie beyond the compass of the human powers.

As they speak. This cannot mean that the defenders of these errors themselves called their doctrines "the depths of Satan," for no teachers would choose so to designate their opinions; but it must mean, either that they who were opposed to those errors characterized them as "the depths of Satan," or that they who opposed them said that they had not known "the depths of Satan." Professor Stuart understands it in the latter sense. A somewhat more natural interpretation, it seems to me, however, is to refer it to what the opposers of these heretics said of these errors. They called them "the depths of Satan," and they professed not to have known anything of them. The meaning perhaps would be expressed by the familiar words, "as they say," or "as they call them," in the following manner: "As many as have not known the depths of Satan, as they say," or, "to use their own language."

Doddridge paraphrases it, "as they proverbially speak." Tyndale encloses it in a parenthesis.

I will put upon you none other burden. That is, no other than that which you now experience from having these persons with you, and that which must attend the effort to purify the church. He had not approved their conduct for suffering these persons to remain in the church, and he threatens to punish all those who had become contaminated with these pernicious doctrines. He evidently designed to say that there was some token of his displeasure proper in the case, but he was not disposed to bring upon them any other expression of his displeasure than that which grew naturally and necessarily out of the fact that they had been tolerated among them, and those troubles and toils which must attend the effort to deliver the church from these errors. Under any circumstances the church must suffer. It would suffer in reputation. It would suffer in respect to its internal tranquillity. Perhaps, also, there were those who were implicated in these errors, and who would be implicated in the punishment, who had friends and kindred in the church; and the judgments which were to come upon the advocates of these errors must, therefore, come in a measure upon the church. A kind Saviour says, that he would bring upon them no other, and no weightier burden, than must arise from his purpose to inflict appropriate vengeance on the guilty themselves. The trouble which would grow out of that would be a sufficient expression of his displeasure. This is, in fact, often now all that is necessary as a punishment on a church for harbouring the advocates of error and of sin. The church has trouble enough ultimately in getting rid of them; and the injury which such persons do to its piety, peace, and reputation, and the disorders of which they are the cause, constitute a sufficient punishment for having tolerated them in its bosom. Often the most severe punishment that God can bring upon men is to "lay upon them no other burden" than to leave them to the inevitable consequences of their own folly, or to the trouble and vexation

incident to the effort to free themselves from what they had for a long time tolerated or practised.

25 But that which ye have *already*, hold fast till I come.

But that which ye have, etc. All that there is of truth and purity remaining among you, retain faithfully. See Rev 3:11.

Till I come. To receive you to myself, Jn 14:3.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron. There is an allusion here to Ps 2:9: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." There is a slight change in the passage, "he shall rule," instead of "thou shalt break," in order to adapt the language to the purpose of the speaker here. The allusion in the Psalm is to the Messiah as reigning triumphant over the nations, or subduing them under him, and the idea here, as in the previous verse, is, that his redeemed people will be associated with him in this dominion. To rule with a sceptre of iron, is not to rule with a harsh and tyrannical sway, but with power that is firm and invincible. It denotes a government of strength, or one that cannot be successfully opposed; one in which the subjects are effectually subdued.

As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers. The image here is that of the vessel of a potter--a fragile vessel of clay --struck with a rod of iron, and broken into fragments. That is, as applied to the nations, there would be no power to oppose his rule; the enemies of his government would be destroyed. Instead of remaining firm and compacted together, they would be broken like the clay vessel of a potter when struck with a rod of iron. The speaker does not intimate when this would be; but all that is said here would be applicable to that time when the Son of God will come to judge the world, and when his saints will be associated

with him in his triumphs. As, in respect to all the others of the seven epistles to the churches, the rewards promised refer to heaven, and to the happy state of that blessed world, it would seem also that this should have a similar reference, for there is no reason why "to him that overcame" in Thyatira a temporal reward and triumph should be promised more than in the cases of the others. If so, then this passage should not be adduced as having any reference to an imaginary personal reign of the Saviour and of the saints on the earth.

Even as I received of my Father. As he has appointed me, Ps 2:6-9.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And I will give him the morning star. The "morning star" is that bright planet--Venus--which at some seasons of the year appears so beautifully in the east, leading on the morning--the harbinger of the day. It is one of the most beautiful objects in nature, and is susceptible of a great variety of uses for illustration. It appears as the darkness passes away; it is an indication that the morning comes; it is intermingled with the first rays of the light of the sun; it seems to be a herald to announce the coming of that glorious luminary; it is a pledge of the faithfulness of God. In which of these senses, if any, it is referred to here, is not stated; nor is it said what is used implied by its being given to him that overcomes. It would seem to be here to denote a bright and brilliant ornament; something with which he who "overcame" would be adorned, resembling the bright star of the morning. It is observable that it is not said that he would make him like the morning star, as in Dan 12:3; nor that he would be compared with the morning star, like the king of Babylon, Isa 14:12; nor that he would resemble a star which Balaam says he saw in the distant future, Nu 24:17. The idea seems to be, that the Saviour would give him something that would resemble that morning planet in beauty and splendour--perhaps meaning that it would be placed

as a gem in his diadem, and would sparkle on his brow--bearing some such relation to him who is called "the Sun of Righteousness," as the morning star does to the glorious sun on his rising. If so, the meaning would be, that he would receive a beautiful ornament, bearing a near relation to the Redeemer himself as a bright sun--a pledge that the darkness was past--but one whose beams would melt away into the superior light of the Redeemer himself, as the beams of the morning star are lost in the superior glory of the sun.

Revelation-3

The Message to Sardis

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.
I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God. Rev 1:4. If the phrase, "the seven spirits of God," as there supposed, refers to the Holy Spirit, there is great propriety in saying of the Saviour, that he has that Spirit, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is represented as sent forth by him into the world, Jn 15:26-27, 16:7,13-14. It was one of the highest characteristics that could be given of the Saviour to say, that the Holy Ghost was his to send forth into the world, and that that great Agent, on whose gracious influences all were dependent for the possession of true religion, could be given or withheld by him at his pleasure.

And the seven stars. Rev 1:16. These represented the angels of the seven churches, (Rev 1:20) and the idea which the Saviour would seem to intend to convey here is, that he had entire control over the ministers of the churches, and could keep or remove them at pleasure.

That thou hast a name that thou livest. Thou dost profess attachment to me and my cause. The word life is a word that is

commonly employed, in the New Testament, to denote religion, in contradistinction from the natural state of man, which is described as death in sin. By the profession of religion, they expressed the purpose to live unto God, and for another world; they professed to have true, spiritual life.

And art dead. That is, spiritually. This is equivalent to saying that their profession was merely in name; and yet this must be understood comparatively, for there were some even in Sardis who truly lived unto God, Rev 3:4. The meaning is, that, in general, the profession of religion among them was a mere name. The Saviour does not, as in the case of the churches of Ephesus and Thyatira, specify any prevailing form of error or false doctrine; but it would seem that here it was a simple want of religion.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Be watchful. Be wakeful; be attentive and earnest--in contradistinction from the drowsy condition of the church.

Strengthen the things which remain. The true piety that still lives and lingers among you. Whatever there was of religion among them, it was of importance to strengthen it, that the love of the Saviour might not become wholly extinct. An important duty in a low and languishing state of religion is, to "strengthen the things that still survive." It is to cultivate all the graces which do exist; to nourish all the love of truth which may linger in the church; and to confirm, by warm exhortation, and by a reference to the gracious promises of God's word, the few who may be endeavouring to do their duty, and who, amidst many discouragements, are aiming to be faithful to the Saviour. In the lowest state of religion in a church there may be a few, perhaps quite obscure and of humble rank, who are mourning over the desolations of Zion, and who are sighing for better times. All such it is the duty of the ministers of religion to comfort and encourage; for it is in their hearts that piety may be kept alive in the church--it is through them that it may be

hoped religion may yet be revived. In the apparent hopelessness of doing much good to others, good may always be done to the cause itself by preserving and strengthening what there may be of life among those few, amidst the general desolation and death. It is much to preserve life in grain sown in a field through the long and dreary winter, when all seems to be dead--for it will burst forth, with new life and beauty, in the spring. When the body is prostrate with disease, and life just lingers, and death seems to be coming on, it is much to preserve the little strength that remains; much to keep the healthful parts from being invaded, that there may be strength yet to recover.

That are ready to die. That seem just ready to become extinct. So sometimes, in a plant, there seems to be but the least conceivable life remaining, and it appears that it must die. So, when we are sick, there seems to be but the feeblest glimmering of life, and it is apparently just ready to go out. So, when a fire dies away, there seems but a spark remaining, and it is just ready to become extinct. And thus, in religion in the soul--religion in a church--religion in a community--it often seems as if it were just about to go out for ever.

For I have not found thy works perfect before God. I have not found them complete or full. They come short of that which is required. Of what church, of what individual Christian, is not this true? Whom might not the Saviour approach with the same language? It was true, however, in a marked and eminent sense, of the church at Sardis.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Remember therefore how thou hast received. This may refer either to some peculiarity in the manner in which the gospel was conveyed to them--as, by the labours of the apostles, and by the remarkable effusions of the Holy Spirit; or to the ardour and love with which they embraced it; or to the greatness of the favours and

privileges conferred on them; or to their own understanding of what the gospel required, when they were converted. It is not possible to determine in which sense the language is used; but the general idea is plain, that there was something marked and unusual in the way in which they had been led to embrace the gospel, and that it was highly proper in these circumstances to look back to the days when they gave themselves to Christ. It is always well for Christians to call to remembrance the "day of their espousals," and their views and feelings when they gave their hearts to the Saviour, and to compare those views with their present condition, especially if their conversion was marked by anything unusual.

And heard. How thou didst hear the gospel in former times; that is, with what earnestness and attention thou didst embrace it. This would rather seem to imply that the reference in the whole passage is to the fact that they embraced the gospel with great ardour and zeal.

And hold fast.

(1.) Hold fast the truths which thou didst then receive;

(2.) hold fast what remains of true religion among you.

And repent. Repent in regard to all that in which you have departed from your views and feelings when you embraced the gospel.

If therefore thou shalt not watch. The speaker evidently supposed that it was possible that they would not regard the warning; that they would presume that they would be safe if they refused to give heed to it, or that by mere inattention and indifference they might suffer the warning to pass by unheeded. Similar results have been so common in the world as to make such a supposition not improbable, and to make proper, in other cases as well as that, the solemn threatening that he would come suddenly upon them.

I will come on thee as a thief. In a sudden and unexpected manner. 1Thes 5:2.

And ye shall not know what hour I will come upon thee. You shall not know beforehand; you shall have no warning of my immediate approach. This is often the way in which God comes to men in his heavy judgments. Long beforehand, he admonishes us, indeed, of what must be the consequences of a course of sin, and warns us to turn from it; but when sinners refuse to attend to his warning, and still walk in the way of evil, he comes suddenly, and cuts them down. Every man who is warned of the evil of his course, and who refuses or neglects to repent, has reason to believe that God will come suddenly in his wrath, and call him to his bar, Prov 29:1. No such man call presume on impunity; no one who is warned of his guilt and danger can feel that he is for one moment safe. No one can have any basis of calculation that he will be spared; no one can flatter himself with any probable anticipation that he will have time to repent when God comes to take him away. Benevolence has done its appropriate work in warning him;--how can the Great Judge of all be to blame, if he comes then, and suddenly cuts the sinner off?

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis. The word names here is equivalent to persons; and the idea is, that even in a place so depraved, and where religion had so much declined, there were a few persons who had kept themselves free from the general contamination. In most cases, when error and sin prevail, there may be found a few who are worthy of the Divine commendation; a few who show that true religion may exist even when the mass are evil. Rom 11:4.

Which have not defiled their garments. Jude 1:23. The meaning is, that they had not defiled themselves by coming in contact with the profane and the polluted; or, in other words, they had kept

themselves free from the prevailing corruption. They were like persons clothed in white walking in the midst of the defiled, yet keeping their raiment from being soiled.

And they shall walk with me in white. White is the emblem of innocence, and is hence appropriately represented as the colour of the raiment of the heavenly inhabitants. The persons here referred to had kept their garments uncontaminated on the earth, and as an appropriate reward it is said that they would appear in white raiment in heaven. Compare Rev 7:9, 19:8.

For they are worthy. They have shown themselves worthy to be regarded as followers of the Lamb; or, they have a character that is fitted for heaven. The declaration is not that they have any claim to heaven on the ground of their own merit, or that it will be in virtue of their own works that they will be received there; but that there is a fitness or propriety that they should thus appear in heaven. We are all personally unworthy to be admitted to heaven, but we may evince such a character as to show that, according to the arrangements of grace, it is fit and proper that we should be received there. We have the character to which God has promised eternal life.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

The same shall be clothed in white raiment. Whosoever he may be that shall overcome sin and the temptations of this world, shall be admitted to this glorious reward. The promise is made not only to those in Sardis who should be victorious, but to all in every age and every land. The hope that is thus held out before us, is that of appearing with the Redeemer in his kingdom, clad in robes expressive of holiness and joy.

blot out . . . name out of . . . book of life—of the heavenly city. A register was kept in ancient cities of their citizens: the names of the dead were of course erased. So those who have a name that they

live and are dead (Re 3:1), are blotted out of God's roll of the heavenly citizens and heirs of eternal life; not that in God's electing decree they ever were in His book of life. But, according to human conceptions, those who had a high name for piety would be supposed to be in it, and were, in respect to privileges, actually among those in the way of salvation; but these privileges, and the fact that they once might have been saved, shall be of no avail to them. As to the book of life, compare Re 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28; Da 12:1. In the sense of the "call," many are enrolled among the called to salvation, who shall not be found among the chosen at last. The pale of salvation is wider than that of election. Election is fixed. Salvation is open to all and is pending (humanly speaking) in the case of those mentioned here. But Re 20:15; 21:27, exhibit the book of the elect alone in the narrower sense, after the erasure of the others.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. This is the usual promise to him who overcomes; he shall wear the white raiment of the redeemed; though the names of those who are spiritually dead shall be blotted out of the book of life his name shall not be; and he will be confessed before the Father, that is, acknowledged.

And I will not blot his name out of the book of life - Like that of the angel of the church at Sardis: but he shall live for ever. I will confess his name - As one of my faithful servants and soldiers.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Message to Philadelphia

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

These things saith he that is holy. This refers undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus. The appellation holy, or the holy one, is one that befits

him, and is not unfrequently given to him in the New Testament Lk 1:35, Acts 2:27, 3:14. It is not only an appellation appropriate the Saviour, but well adapted to be employed when he is addressing the churches. Our impression of what is said to us will often depend much on our idea of the character of him who addresses us, and solemnity and thoughtfulness always become us when we are addressed by a holy Redeemer. He that is true. Another characteristic of the Saviour well fitted to be referred to when he addresses men. It is a characteristic often ascribed to him in the New Testament, (Jn 1:9,14,17, 8:40,45, 14:6, 18:37, 1Jn 5:20) and one which is eminently adapted to impress the mind with solemn thought in view of the fact that he is to pronounce on our character, and to determine our destiny.

He that hath the key of David. This expression is manifestly taken from Isa 22:22, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." As used by Isaiah, the phrase is applied to Eliskim; and it is not to be inferred because the language here is applied to the Lord Jesus that originally it had any such reference. "The application of the same terms," says Professor Alexander on Isa 22:22, "to Peter, (Mt 16:19) and to Christ himself, (Rev 3:7) does not prove that they here refer to either, or that Eliakim was a type of Christ, but merely that the same words admit of different applications." The language is that which properly denotes authority or control--as when one has the key of a house, and has unlimited access to it; and the meaning here is, that as David is represented as the king of Israel residing in a palace, so he who had the key to that palace had legal authority.

He that openeth, and no man shutteth, etc. He has free and unrestrained access to the house; the power of admitting any one, or of excluding any one. Applied here to the Saviour, as king in Zion, this means that in his kingdom he has the absolute control in regard to the admission or exclusion of any one. He can prescribe the terms; he can invite whom he chooses; he can exclude those whom he judges should not be admitted. A reference to this

absolute control was every way proper when he was addressing a church, and is every way proper for us to reflect on when we think of the subject of our personal salvation.

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Behold, I have set before thee an open door. Referring to his authority as stated in Rev 3:7. The "open door" here evidently refers to the enjoyment of some privilege or honour; and, so far as the language is concerned, it may refer to any one of the following things: either;

(1) the ability to do good--represented as the "opening of the door." Compare Acts 14:27, 1Cor 16:9, 2Cor 2:12, Col 4:3.

(2.) The privilege of access to the heavenly palace; that is, that they had an abundant opportunity of securing their salvation, the door being never closed against them by day or by night. Compare Rev 21:25 Or

(3) it may mean that they had before them an open way of egress from danger and persecution. This latter Professor Stuart supposes to be the true meaning; and argues this because it is immediately specified that those Jewish persecutors would be made to humble themselves, and that the church would but lightly experience the troubles which were coming upon the world around them. But the more natural interpretation of the phrase "an open door," is that it refers to access to a thing rather than egress from a thing; that we may come to that which we desire to approach, rather than escape from that which we dread. There is no objection, it seems to me, to the supposition that the language may be used here in the largest sense--as denoting that, in regard to the church at Philadelphia, there was no restraint. He had given them the most unlimited privileges. The temple of salvation was thrown open to them; the celestial city was accessible; the whole world was before them as a field of usefulness, and anywhere, and everywhere, they might

do good, and at all times they might have access to the kingdom of God.

And no man can shut it. No one has the power of preventing this, for he who has control over all things concedes these privileges to you.

For thou hast a little strength. This would imply that they had not great vigour, but still that, notwithstanding there were so many obstacles to their doing good, and so many temptations to evil, there still remained with them some degree of energy. They were not wholly dead; and, as long as that was the case, the door was still open for them to do good. The words "little strength" may refer either to the smallness of the number--meaning that they were few; or it may refer to the spiritual life and energy of the church--meaning that, though feeble, their vital energy was not wholly gone. The more natural interpretation seems to be to refer it to the latter; and the sense is, that although they had not the highest degree of energy, or had not all that the Saviour desired they should have, they were not wholly dead. The Saviour saw among them the evidences of spiritual life; and in view of that he says he had set before them an open door, and there was abundant opportunity to employ all the energy and zeal which they had. It may be remarked that the same thing is true now; that wherever there is any vitality in a church the Saviour will furnish ample opportunity that it may be employed in his service.

And hast not denied my name. When Christians were brought before heathen magistrates in times of persecution, they were required to renounce the name of Christ, and to disown him in a public manner. It is possible that, amidst the persecutions that raged in the early times, the members of the church at Philadelphia had been summoned to such a trial, and they had stood the trial firmly. It would seem from the following verse, that the efforts which had been made to induce them to renounce the name of Christ had been made by those who professed to be Jews, though

they evinced the spirit of Satan. If so, then the attempt was probably to convince them that Jesus was not the Christ. This attempt would be made in all places where there were Jews.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Behold, I will make. Greek, "I give"--διδωμι; that is, I will arrange matters so that this shall occur. The word implies that he had power to do this, and consequently proves that he has power over the heart of man, and can secure such a result as he chooses.

Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews. Who profess to be Jews, but are really of the synagogue of Satan. Rev 2:9. The meaning is, that, though they were of Jewish extraction, and boasted much of being Jews, yet they were really under the influence of Satan, and their assemblages deserved to be called his "synagogue."

And are not, but do lie. It is a false profession altogether. 1Jn 1:6.

Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet. The word rendered worship here, means properly to fall prostrate; and then to do homage, or to worship in the proper sense, as this was commonly done by failing prostrate. Mt 2:2. So far as the word is concerned, it may refer either to spiritual homage, that is, the worship of God; or it may mean respect as shown to superiors. If it is used here in the sense of Divine worship properly so called, it means that they would be constrained to come and worship "before them," or in their very presence; if it is used in the more general signification, it means that they would be constrained to show them honour and respect. The latter is the probable meaning; that is, that they would be constrained to acknowledge that they were the children of God, or that God regarded them with his favour. It does not mean necessarily that they would themselves be converted to Christ, but that, as they had been accustomed to revile and oppose those who were true Christians, they would be

constrained to come and render them the respect due to those who were sincerely endeavouring to serve their Maker. The truth taught here is, that it is in the power of the Lord Jesus so to turn the hearts of all the enemies of religion that they shall be brought to show respect to it; so to incline the minds of all people that they shall honour the church, or be at least outwardly its friends. Such homage the world shall yet be constrained to pay to it.

And to know that I have loved thee. This explains what he had just said, and shows that he means that the enemies of his church will yet be constrained to acknowledge that it enjoys the smiles of God, and that instead of being persecuted and reviled, it should be respected and loved.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience. My word commanding or enjoining patience; that is, thou hast manifested the patience which I require. They had shown this in the trials which they had experienced; he promises now, that in return he will keep them in the future trials that shall come upon the world. One of the highest rewards of patience in one trial is the grace that God gives us to bear another. The fact that we have been patient and submissive may be regarded as proof that he will give us grace that we may be patient and submissive in the trials that are to come. God does not leave those who have shown that they will not leave him.

I also will keep thee. That is, I will so keep you that you shall not sink under the trials which will prove a severe temptation to many. This does not mean that they would be actually kept from calamity of all kinds, but that they would be kept from the temptation of apostasy in calamity. He would give them grace to bear up under trials with a Christian spirit, and in such a manner that their salvation should not be endangered.

From the hour of temptation. The season; the time; the period of temptation. You shall be so kept that that which will prove to be a time of temptation to so many shall not endanger your salvation. Though others fall, you shall not; though you may be afflicted with others, yet you shall have grace to sustain you.

Which shall come upon all the world. The phrase here used--"all the world"--may either denote the whole world; or the whole Roman empire; or a large district of country; or the land of Judaea. Lk 2:1. Here, perhaps, all that is implied is, that the trial would be very extensive or general-- so much so as to embrace the world, as the word was understood by those to whom the epistle was addressed. It need not be supposed that the whole world literally was included in it, or even all the Roman empire, but what was the world to them--the region which they would embrace in that term. If there were some far-spreading calamity in the country where they resided, it would probably be all that would be fairly embraced in the meaning of the word. It is not known to what trial the speaker refers. It may have been some form of persecution, or it may have been some calamity by disease, earthquake, or famine that was to occur. Tacitus (see Wetstein, in loc.) mentions an earthquake that sank twelve cities in Asia Minor in one night, by which, among others, Philadelphia was deeply affected; and it is possible that there may have been reference here to that overwhelming calamity. But nothing can be determined with certainty in regard to this.

To try them that dwell upon the earth. To test their character. It would rather seem from this that the affliction was some form of persecution as adapted to test the fidelity of those who were affected by it. The persecutions in the Roman empire would furnish abundant occasions for such a trial.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Behold, I come quickly. That is, in the trials referred to. Rev 1:1, Revv 1:11, Rev 1:16. Hold that fast which thou hast. That is,

whatever of truth and piety you now possess. Rev 3:3. That no man take thy crown. The crown of life appointed for all who are true believers. 2Ti 4:8. The truth which is taught here is, that by negligence or unfaithfulness in duty we may be deprived of the glory which we might have obtained if we had been faithful to our God and Saviour. We need to be on our constant guard, that, in a world of temptation, where the enemies of truth abound, we may not be robbed of the crown that we might have worn for ever. 2Jn 8.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name.

Barnes:

Will I make a pillar in the temple of my God. The promised reward of faithfulness here is, that he who was victorious would be honoured as if he were a pillar or column in the temple of God. Such a pillar or column was partly for ornament, and partly for support; and the idea here is, that in that temple he would contribute to its beauty and the justness of its proportions, and would at the same time be honoured as if he were a pillar which was necessary for the support of the temple. It is not uncommon in the New Testament to represent the church as a temple, and Christians as parts of it. See 1Cor 3:16-17, 6:19, 2Cor 6:16, 1Pet 2:5.

And he shall go no more out. He shall be permanent as a part of that spiritual temple. The idea of "going out" does not properly belong to a pillar; but the speaker here has in his mind the man, though represented as a column. The description of some parts would be applicable more directly to a pillar; in others more properly to a man. Compare Jn 6:37, 10:28-29, 1Jn 2:19, for an illustration of the sentiment here. The main truth here is, that if we reach heaven, our happiness will be secure for ever. We shall have the most absolute certainty that the welfare of the soul will no more

be periled; that we shall never be in danger of falling into temptation; that no artful foe shall ever have power to alienate our affections from God; that we shall never die. Though we may change our place, and may roam from world to world till we shall have surveyed all the wonders of creation, yet we shall never "go out of the temple of God." Jn 14:2. When we reach the heavenly world, our conflicts will be over, our doubts at an end. As soon as we cross the threshold, we shall be greeted with the assurance, "he shall go no more out for ever." That is to be our eternal abode, and whatever of joy or felicity or glory that bright world can furnish, is to be ours. Happy moment, when, emerging from a world of danger and of doubt, the soul shall settle down into the calmness and peace of that state where there is the assurance of God himself that world of bliss is to be its eternal abode!

And I will write upon him the name of my God. Considered as a pillar or column in the temple. The name of God would be conspicuously recorded on it to show that he belonged to God. The allusion is to a public edifice on the columns of which the names of distinguished and honoured persons were recorded; that is, where there was a public testimonial of the respect in which one whose name was thus recorded was held. The honour thus conferred on him "who should overcome" would be as great as if the name of that God whom he served, and whose favour and friendship he enjoyed, were inscribed on him in some conspicuous manner. The meaning is, that he would be known and recognised as belonging to God; the God of the Redeemer himself-- indicated by the phrase "the name of my God."

And the name of the city of my God. That is, indicating that he belongs to that city, or that the New Jerusalem is the city of his habitation. The idea would seem to be, that in this world, and in all worlds wherever he goes and wherever he abides, he will be recognised as belonging to that holy city; as enjoying the rights and immunities of such a citizen.

Which is New Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place where the temple was reared, and where the worship of God was celebrated. It thus came to be synonymous with the church--the dwelling-place of God on earth.

Which cometh down out of heaven from my God. Rev 21:2 Of course, this must be a figurative representation, but the idea is plain. It is,

(1.) that the church is, in accordance with settled Scripture language, represented as a city--the abode of God on earth.

(2.) That this, instead of being built here, or having an earthly origin, has its origin in heaven. It is as if it had been constructed there, and then sent down to earth ready formed. The type, the form, the whole structure is heavenly. It is a departure from all proper laws of interpretation to explain this literally, as if a city should be actually let down from heaven; and equally so to infer from this passage, and the others of similar import in this book, that a city will be literally reared for the residence of the saints. If the passage proves anything on either of these points, it is, that a great and splendid city, such as that described in chapter 21, will literally come down from heaven. But who can believe that? Such an interpretation, however, is by no means necessary. The comparison of the church with a beautiful city, and the fact that it has its origin in heaven, is all that is fairly implied in the passage.

And I will write upon him my new name. Rev 2:17. The reward, therefore, promised here is, that he who by persevering fidelity showed that he was a real friend of the Saviour, would be honoured with a permanent abode in the holy city of his habitation. In the church redeemed and triumphant he would have a perpetual dwelling; and wherever he should be, there would be given him sure pledges that he belonged to him, and was recognised as a citizen of the heavenly world. To no higher honour could any man

aspire; and yet that is an honour to which the most humble and lowly may attain by faith in the Son of God.

PNT:

A pillar. A term implying strength, permanence and honor. In the temple of my God. Not in any material temple, but in the church, either on earth or in heaven. The latter is here meant. The New Jerusalem has no temple in it because it is all temple. He shall go no more out. Always dwell there. I will write upon him the name of my God. When one enters the church, the spiritual temple below, three names are recorded in his baptismal formula. When he enters the kingdom above, three names are again written upon him; the name of God, of the heavenly city, and Christ's heavenly name.

VWS:

Pillar [στυλον] . The word occurs, Gal 2:9; 1Ti 3:15; Rev 10:1. The reference here is not to any prominence in the earthly church, as Gal 2:9, but to blessedness in the future state. The exact meaning is doubtful. Some explain, he shall have a fixed and important place in the glorified church. Compare Mt 19:28. Others emphasize the idea of stability, and find a possible local reference to the frequent earthquakes from which Philadelphia had suffered, and which had shaken its temples. Strabo says : "And Philadelphia has not even its walls unimpaired, but daily they are shaken in some way, and gaps are made in them. But the inhabitants continue to occupy the land notwithstanding their sufferings, and to build new houses." Others again emphasize the idea of beauty. Compare 1Pe 2:5, where the saints are described living stones.

Temple [ναω] . See on Mt 4:5.

Upon him. The conqueror, not the pillar. Compare chapter Rev 7:3; Rev 9:4; Rev 14:1; Rev 22:4. Probably with reference to the golden plate inscribed with the name of Jehovah, and worn by the High - Priest upon his forehead (Exo 28:36, 38). See on chapter Rev 2:17.

New Jerusalem. See Eze 48:35. The believer whose brow is adorned with this name has the freedom of the heavenly city. Even on earth his commonwealth is in heaven (Phi 3:20). "Still, his citizenship was latent : he was one of God 's hidden ones; but now he is openly avouched, and has a right to enter in by the gates to the city" (Trench). The city is called by John, the great and holy (Chapter Rev 21:10); by Matthew, the holy city (iv. 5); by Paul, Jerusalem which is above (Gal 4:6); by the writer to the Hebrews, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). Plato calls his ideal city Callipolis, the fair city (" Republic, " 7, 527), and the name Ouranopolis, heavenly city, was applied to Rome and Byzantium. For new [καινης] , see on Mt 26:29. The new Jerusalem is not a city freshly built [νεα] , but is new [καινη] in contrast with the old, outworn, sinful city. In the Gospel John habitually uses the Greek and civil form of the name, JIerosoluma; in Revelation, the Hebrew and more holy appellation, Jierousalhm. 78

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Message to Laodicea

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

These things saith the Amen. Referring, as is the case in every epistle, to some attribute of the speaker adapted to impress their minds, or to give peculiar force to what he was about to say to that particular church. Laodicea was characterized by lukewarmness, and the reference to the fact that he who was about to address them was the "Amen"--that is, was characterized by the simple

earnestness and sincerity denoted by that word--was eminently fitted to make an impression on the minds of such a people. The word Amen means true, certain, faithful; and, as used here, it means that he to whom it is applied is eminently true and faithful. What he affirms is true; what he promises or threatens is certain. Himself characterized by sincerity and truth, (2Cor 1:20) he can look with approbation only on the same thing in others: and hence he looks with displeasure on the lukewarmness which, from its very nature, always approximates insincerity. This was an attribute, therefore, every way appropriate to be referred to in addressing a lukewarm church.

The faithful and true witness. This is presenting the idea implied in the word Amen in a more complete form, but substantially the same thing is referred to. He is a witness for God and his truth, and he can approve of nothing which the God of truth would not approve. Rev 1:5.

The beginning of the creation of God. This expression is a very important one in regard to the rank and dignity of the Saviour, and, like all similar expressions respecting him, its meaning has been much controverted. Col 1:15. The phrase here used is susceptible, properly, of only one of the following significations, viz.: either

(a) that he was the beginning of the creation in the sense that he caused the universe to begin to exist--that is, that he was the author of all things; or

(b) that he was the first created being; or

(c) that he holds the primacy over all, and is at the head of the universe. It is not necessary to examine any other proposed interpretations, for the only other senses supposed to be conveyed by the words, that he is the beginning of the creation in the sense that he rose from the dead as the first-fruits of them that sleep, or that he is the head of the spiritual creation of God, are so foreign

to the natural meaning of the words as to need no special refutation. As to the three significations suggested above, it may be observed, that the first one--that he is the author of the creation, and in that sense the beginning, though expressing a scriptural doctrine, (Jn 1:3, Eph 3:9, Col 1:16)--is not in accordance with the proper meaning of the word here used--αρχη. The word properly refers to the commencement of a thing, not its authorship, and denotes properly primacy in time, and primacy in rank, but not primacy in the sense of causing anything to exist. The two ideas which run through the word as it is used in the New Testament are those just suggested. For the former--primacy in regard to time--that is properly the commencement of a thing, see the following passages where the word occurs: Mt 19:4,8, 24:8,21, Mk 1:1, 10:6, 13:8,19, Lk 1:2, Jn 1:1-2 Jn 2:11, 6:64, 8:25,44, 15:27, 16:4, Acts 11:15, 1Jn 1:1, 2:7,13-14,24 1Jn 3:8,11, 2Jn 5-6. For the latter signification, primacy of rank, or authority, see the following places: Lk 12:11, 20:20, Rom 8:38 1Cor 15:24, Eph 1:21, 3:10, Eph 6:12, Col 1:16,18, 2:10,15, Tit 3:1 The word is not, therefore, found in the sense of authorship, as denoting that one is the beginning of anything in the sense that he caused it to have an existence. As to the second of the significations suggested, that it means that he was the first created being, it may be observed

(a) that this is not a necessary signification of the phrase, since no one can show that this is the only proper meaning which could be given to the words, and therefore the phrase cannot be adduced to prove that he is himself a created being. If it were demonstrated from other sources that Christ was, in fact, a created being, and the first that God had made, it cannot be denied that this language would appropriately express that fact. But it cannot be made out from the mere use of the language here; and as the language is susceptible of other interpretations, it cannot be employed to prove that Christ is a created being.

(b) Such an interpretation would be at variance with all those passages which speak of him as uncreated and eternal; which

ascribe Divine attributes to him; which speak of him as himself the Creator of all things. Compare Jn 1:1-3, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2,6,8,10-12. The third signification, therefore, remains, that he is "the beginning of the creation of God," in the sense that he is the head or prince of the creation; that is, that he presides over it so far as the purposes of redemption are to be accomplished, and so far as is necessary for those purposes. This is

(1) in accordance with the meaning of the word, Lk 12:11, 20:20, et al, ut supra; and

(2) in accordance with the uniform statements respecting the Redeemer, that "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth," (Mt 28:18) that God has "given him power over all flesh," (Jn 17:2) that all things are "put under his feet," (Heb 2:8, 1Cor 15:27) that he is exalted over all things, Eph 1:20-22. Having this rank, it was proper that he should speak with authority to the church at Laodicea.

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

That thou art neither cold nor hot. The word cold here would seem to denote the state where there was no pretension to religion; where everything was utterly lifeless and dead. The language is obviously figurative, but it is such as is often employed, when we speak of one as being cold towards another, as having a cold or icy heart, etc. The word hot would denote, of course, the opposite-- warm and zealous in their love and service. The very words that we are constrained to use when speaking on this subject--such words as ardent, (i.e. hot, or burning;) fervid, (i.e. very hot, burning, boiling)--show how necessary it is to use such words, and how common it is. The state indicated here, therefore, would be that in which there was a profession of religion, but no warm-hearted piety; in which there was not, on the one hand, open and honest opposition to him, and, on the other, such warm-hearted and honest love as he had a right to look for among his professed friends; in which there was a profession of that religion which ought to warm

the heart with love, and fill the soul with zeal in the cause of the Redeemer; but where the only result, in fact, was deadness and indifference to him and his cause. Among those who made no profession, he had reason to expect nothing but coldness; among those who made a profession, he had a right to expect the glow of a warm affection, but he found nothing but indifference.

I would thou wert cold or hot. That is, I would prefer either of those states to that which now exists. Anything better than this condition, where love is professed, but where it does not exist; where vows have been assumed which are not fulfilled. Why he would prefer that they should be "hot" is clear enough; but why would he prefer a state of utter coldness--a state where there was no profession of real love? To this question the following answers may be given:

(1.) Such a state of open and professed coldness or indifference is more honest. There is no disguise; no concealment; no pretence. We know where one in this state "may be found;" we know with whom we are dealing; we know what to expect. Sad as the state is, it is at least honest; and we are so made that we all prefer such a character to one where professions are made which are never to be realised--to a state of insincerity and hypocrisy.

(2.) Such a state is more honourable. It is a more elevated condition of mind, and marks a higher character. Of a man who is false to his engagements, who makes professions and promises never to be realized, we can make nothing. There is essential meanness in such a character, and there is nothing in it which we can respect. But in the character of the man who is openly and avowedly opposed to anything; who takes his stand, and is earnest and zealous in his course, though it be wrong, there are traits which may be, under a better direction, elements of true greatness and magnanimity. In the character of Saul of Tarsus, there were always the elements of true greatness; in that of Judas Iscariot, there were never. The one was capable of becoming one of the noblest men that has ever lived on the earth; the other, even under the personal teaching of the

Redeemer for years, was nothing but a traitor--a man of essential meanness.

(3.) There is more hope of conversion and salvation in such a ease. There could always have been a ground of hope that Saul would be converted and saved, even when "breathing out threatening and slaughter;" of Judas, when numbered among the professed disciples of the Saviour, there was no hope. The most hopeless of all persons, in regard to salvation, are those who are members of the church without any true religion; who have made a profession without any evidence of personal piety; who are content with a name to live. This is so, because

(a) the essential character of any one who will allow himself to do this is eminently unfavourable to true religion. There is a lack of that thorough honesty and sincerity which is so necessary for true conversion to God. He who is content to profess to be what he really is not, is not a man on whom the truths of Christianity are likely to make an impression.

(b) Such a man never applies the truth to himself. Truth that is addressed to impenitent sinners he does not apply to himself, of course; for he does not rank himself in that class of persons. Truth addressed to hypocrites he will not apply to himself; for no one, however insincere and hollow he may be, chooses to act on the presumption that he is himself a hypocrite, or so as to leave others to suppose that he regards himself as such. The means of grace adapted to save a sinner, as such, he will not use; for he is in the church, and chooses to regard himself as safe. Efforts made to reclaim him he will resist; for he will regard it as proof of a meddlesome spirit, and an uncharitable judging in others, if they consider him to be anything different from what he professes to be. What right have they to go back of his profession, and assume that he is insincere? As a consequence, there are probably fewer persons by far converted of those who come into the church without any religion, than of any other class of persons of similar

number; and the most hopeless of all conditions, in respect to conversion and salvation, is when one enters the church deceived.

(c) It may be presumed that, for these reasons, God himself will make less direct effort to convert and save such persons. As there are fewer appeals that can be brought to bear on them; as there is less in their character that is noble and that can be depended on in promoting the salvation of a soul; and as there is special guilt in hypocrisy, it may be presumed that God will more frequently leave such persons to their chosen course, than he will those who make no professions of religion. Compare Ps 109:17,18, Jer 7:16, 11:14:11 Isa 1:15, Hos 4:17.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

So then because thou art lukewarm-I will spue thee out of my mouth. Referring, perhaps, to the well-known fact that tepid water tends to produce sickness at the stomach, and an inclination to vomit. The image is intensely strong, and denotes deep disgust and loathing at the indifference which prevailed in the church at Laodicea. The idea is, that they would be utterly rejected and cast off as a church: a threatening of which there has been an abundant fulfilment in subsequent times. It may be remarked, also, that what was threatened to that church may be expected to occur to all churches, if they are in the same condition; and that all professing Christians, and Christian churches, that are lukewarm, have special reason to dread the indignation of the Saviour.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Because thou sayest, I am rich. So far as the language here is concerned, this may refer either to riches literally, or to and spiritual riches; that is, to a boast of having religion enough. Professor Stuart supposes that it refers to the former, and so do Wetstein, Vitringa, others. Doddridge, Rosenmuller, and others, understand it in the latter sense. There is no doubt that there was much wealth in Laodicea, and that, as a people, they prided

themselves on their riches. See the authorities in Wetstein, on Col 2:1, and Vitringa, p. 160. It is not easy to determine which is the true sense; but may it not have been that there was an allusion to both, and that, in every respect, they boasted that they had enough? May it not have been so much the characteristic of that people to boast of their wealth, that they carried the spirit into everything, and manifested it even in regard to religion? Is it not true that they who have much of this world's goods, when they make a profession of religion, are very apt to suppose that they are well off in everything, and to feel self-complacent and happy? And is not the possession of much wealth by an individual Christian, or a Christian church, likely to produce just the lukewarmness which it is said existed in the church at Laodicea? If we thus understand it, there will be an accordance with the well-known fact that Laodicea was distinguished for its riches, and, at the same time, with another fact, so common as to be almost universal, that the possession of great wealth tends to make a professed Christian self-complacent and satisfied in every respect; to make him feel that, although he may not have much religion, yet he is on the whole well off; and to produce, in religion, a state of just such lukewarmness as the Saviour here says was loathsome and odious. And increased with goods. πεπλουκητα--"I am enriched." This is only a more emphatic and intensive way of saying the same thing. It has no reference to the kind of riches referred to, but merely denotes the confident manner in which they affirmed that they were rich.

And have need of nothing. Still an emphatic and intensive way of saying that they were rich. In all respects, their wants were satisfied; they had enough of everything. They felt, therefore, no stimulus to effort; they sat down in contentment, self-complacency, and indifference. It is almost unavoidable that those who are rich in this world's goods should feel that they have need of nothing. There is no more common illusion among men than the feeling that if one has wealth, he has everything; that there is no want of his nature which cannot be satisfied with that; and that he may now sit down in contentment and ease. Hence the almost

universal desire to be rich; hence the common feeling among those who are rich that there is no occasion for solicitude or care for anything else. Compare Lk 12:19.

And knowest not. There is no just impression in regard to the real poverty and wretchedness of your condition.

That thou art wretched. The word wretched we now use to denote the actual consciousness of being miserable, as applicable to one who is sunk into deep distress or affliction. The word here, however, refers rather to the condition itself than to the consciousness of that condition, for it is said that they did not know it. Their state was, in fact, a miserable state, and was fitted to produce actual distress if they had any just sense of it, though they thought that it was otherwise.

And miserable. This word has, with us now, a similar signification; but the term here used--ελεεινος--rather means a pitiable state than one actually felt to be so. The meaning is, that their condition was one that was fitted to excite pity or compassion; not that they were actually miserable. 1Cor 15:19.

And poor. Notwithstanding all their boast of having enough. They really had not that which was necessary to meet the actual wants of their nature, and, therefore, they were poor. Their worldly property could not meet the wants of their souls; and, with all their pretensions to piety, they had not religion enough to meet the necessities of their nature when calamities should come, or when death should approach; and they were, therefore, in the strictest sense of the term, poor.

And blind. That is, in a spiritual respect. They did not see the reality of their condition; they had no just views of themselves, of the character of God, of the way of salvation. This seems to be said in connexion with the boast which they made in their own minds--that they had everything; that they wanted nothing. One of the

great blessings of life is clearness of vision, and their boast that they had everything must have included that; but the speaker here says that they lacked that indispensable thing to completeness of character and to full enjoyment. With all their boasting, they were actually blind,--and how could one who was in that state say that he "had need of nothing?"

And naked. Of course, spiritually. Salvation is often represented as a garment, (Mt 22:11-12, Rev 6:11, 7:9,13-14) and the declaration here is equivalent to saying that they had no religion. They had nothing to cover the nakedness of the soul, and in respect to the real wants of their nature they were like one who had no clothing in reference to cold, and heat, and storms, and to the shame of nakedness. How could such an one be regarded as rich? We may learn from this instructive verse,

(1.) that men may think themselves to be rich, and yet, in fact, be miserably poor. They may have the wealth of this world in abundance, and yet have nothing that really will meet their wants in disappointment, bereavement, sickness, death; the wants of the never-dying soul; their wants in eternity. What had the "rich fool," as he is commonly termed, in the parable, when he came to die? Lk 12:16, seq. What had "Dives," as he is commonly termed, to meet the wants of his nature when he went down to hell? Lk 16:19, seq.

(2.) Men may have much property, and think that they have all they want, and yet be wretched. In the sense that their condition is a wretched condition, this is always true; and in the sense that they are consciously wretched, this may be and often is true also.

(3.) Men may have great property, and yet be miserable. This is true in the sense that their condition is a pitiable one, and in the sense that they are actually unhappy. There is no more pitiable condition than that where one has great property, and is self-complacent and proud, and who has nevertheless no God, no

Saviour, no hope of heaven, and who perhaps that very day may "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments;" and, it need not be added, that there is no greater actual misery in this world than that which sometimes finds its way into the palaces of the rich. He greatly errs who thinks that misery is confined to the cottages of the poor.

(4.) Men may be rich, and think they have all that they want, and yet be blind to their condition. They really have no distinct vision of anything. They have no just views of God, of themselves, of their duty, of this world, or of the next. In most important respects, they are in a worse condition than the inmates of an asylum for the blind, for they may have clear views of God and of heaven. Mental darkness is a greater calamity than the loss of natural vision; and there is many an one who is surrounded by all that affluence can give, who never yet had one correct view of his own character, of his God, or of the reality of his condition, and whose condition might have been far better if he had actually been born blind.

(5.) There may be gorgeous robes of adorning, and yet real nakedness. With all the decorations that wealth can impart, there may be a nakedness of the soul as real as that of the body would be if, without a rag to cover it, it were exposed to cold, and storm, and shame. The soul, destitute of the robes of salvation, is in a worse condition than the body without raiment: for, how can it bear the storms of wrath that shall beat upon it for ever, and the shame of its exposure in the last dread day?

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

And that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. We clothe the body as well for decency as for protection against cold, and storm, and heat. The soul is to be clothed that the "shame" of its sinfulness may not be exhibited, and that it may not be offensive and repellent in the sight.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire. Pure gold; such as has been subjected to the action of heat to purify it from dross. 1Pet 1:7. Gold here is emblematic of religion--as being the most precious of the metals, and the most valued by men. They professed to be rich, but were not; and he counsels them to obtain from him that which would make them truly rich.

That thou mayest be rich. In the true and proper sense of the word. With true religion; with the favour and friendship of the Redeemer, they would have all that they really needed, and would never be in want.

And white raiment. The emblem of purity and salvation. Rev 3:4. This is said in reference to the fact (Rev 3:17) that they were then naked.

That thou mayest be clothed. With the garments of salvation. This refers, also, to true religion, meaning that that which the Redeemer furnishes will answer the same purpose in respect to the soul which clothing does in reference to the body. Of course, it cannot be understood literally, nor should the language be pressed too closely, as if there was too strict a resemblance.

And anoint thine eyes with eye-salve. In allusion to the fact that they were blind, Rev 3:17. The word eye-salve-- κολλουριον--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is a diminutive from κολλυρα--collyra--a coarse bread or cake, and means properly a small cake or cracknel. It is applied to eye-salve as resembling such a cake, and refers to a medicament prepared for sore or weak eyes. It was compounded of various substances supposed to have a healing quality. See Wetstein, in loc. The reference here is to a spiritual healing--meaning that, in respect to their spiritual vision, what he would furnish would produce the same effect as the collyrium or eye-salve would in diseased eyes. The idea is, that the grace of the gospel enables men who were before blind to see

clearly the character of God, the beauty of the way of salvation, the loveliness of the person and work of Christ, etc. Eph 1:18.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Of course, only on the supposition that they deserve it. The meaning is, that it is a proof of love on his part, if his professed friends go astray, to recall them by admonitions and by trials. So a father calls back his children who are disobedient; and there is no higher proof of his love than when, with great pain to himself, he administers such chastisement as shall save his child. See the sentiment here expressed fully explained. Heb 12:6, seq. The language is taken from Prov 3:12 Be zealous therefore, and repent. Be earnest, strenuous, ardent in your purpose to exercise true repentance, and to turn from the error of your ways. Lose no time; spare no labour, that you may obtain such a state of mind that it shall not be necessary to bring upon you the severe discipline which always comes on those who continue lukewarm in religion. The truth taught here is, that when the professed followers of Christ have become lukewarm in his service, they should lose no time in returning to him, and seeking his favour again. As sure as he has any true love for them, if this is not done, he will bring upon them some heavy calamity, alike to rebuke them for their errors, and to recover them to himself.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. Intimating that, though they had erred, the way of repentance and hope was not closed against them. He was still willing to be gracious, though their conduct had been such as to be loathsome, Rev 3:16. To see the real force of this language, we must remember how disgusting and offensive their conduct had been to him. And yet he was willing, notwithstanding this, to receive them to his favour; nay more, he

stood and pleaded with them that he might be received with the hospitality that would be shown to a friend or stranger. The language here is so plain that it scarcely needs explanation. It is taken from an act when we approach a dwelling, and, by a well-understood sign--knocking--announce our presence, and ask for admission. The act of knocking implies two things:

(a) that we desire admittance; and

(b) that we recognise the right of him who dwells in the house to open the door to us or not, as he shall please. We would not obtrude upon him; we would not force his door; and if, after we are sure that we are heard, we are not admitted, we turn quietly away. Both of these things are implied here by the language used by the Saviour when he approaches man as represented under the image of knocking at the door: that he desires to be admitted to our friendship; and that he recognises our freedom in the matter. He does not obtrude himself upon us, nor does he employ force to find admission to the heart. If admitted, he comes and dwells with us; if rejected, he turns quietly away--perhaps to return and knock again, perhaps never to come back. The language here used, also, may be understood as applicable to all persons, and to all the methods by which the Saviour seeks to come into the heart of a sinner. It would properly refer to anything which would announce his presence:--his word; his Spirit; the solemn events of his Providence; the invitations of his gospel. In these and in other methods he comes to man; and the manner in which these invitations ought to be estimated would be seen by supposing that he came to us personally and solicited our friendship, and proposed to be our Redeemer. It may be added here, that this expression proves that the attempt at reconciliation begins with the Saviour. It is not that the sinner goes out to meet him, or to seek for him; it is that the Saviour presents himself at the door of the heart as if he were desirous to enjoy the friendship of man. This is in accordance with the uniform language of the New Testament, that "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son;" that "Christ

came to seek and to save the lost;" that the Saviour says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," etc. Salvation, in the Scriptures, is never represented as originated by man.

If any man hear my voice. Perhaps referring to a custom then prevailing, that he who knocked spake, in order to let it be known who it was. This might be demanded in the night, (Lk 11:5) or when there was apprehension of danger, and it may have been the custom when John wrote. The language here, in accordance with the uniform usage in the Scriptures, (compare Isa 55:1, Jn 7:37, Rev 22:17) is universal, and proves that the invitations of the gospel are made, and are to be made, not to a part only, but fully and freely to all men; for, although this originally had reference to the members of the church in Laodicea, yet the language chosen seems to have been of design so universal (εαντις) as to be applicable to every human being; and any one, of any age and in any land, would be authorized to apply this to himself, and, under the protection of this invitation to come to the Saviour, and to plead this promise as one that fairly included himself. It may be observed farther, that this also recognises the freedom of man. It is submitted to him whether he will hear the voice of the Redeemer or not; and whether he will open the door and admit him or not. He speaks loud enough, and distinctly enough, to be heard, but he does not force the door if it is not voluntarily opened.

And open the door. As one would when a stranger or friend stood and knocked. The meaning here is simply, if any one will admit me; that is, receive me as a friend. The act of receiving him is as voluntary on our part as it is when we rise and open the door to one who knocks. It may be added,

(1.) that this is an easy thing. Nothing is more easy than to open the door when one knocks; and so everywhere in the Scriptures it is represented as an easy thing, if the heart is willing, to secure the salvation of the soul.

(2.) This is a reasonable thing. We invite him who knocks at the door to come in. We always assume, unless there is reason to suspect the contrary, that he applies for peaceful and friendly purposes. We deem it the height of rudeness to let one stand and knock long; or to let him go away with no friendly invitation to enter our dwelling. Yet how differently does the sinner treat the Saviour! How long does he suffer him to knock at the door of his heart, with no invitation to enter--no act of common civility such as that with which he would greet even a stranger! And with how much coolness and indifference does he see him turn away--perhaps to come back no more, and with no desire that he ever should return!

I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. This is an image denoting intimacy and friendship. Supper, with the ancients, was the principal social meal; and the idea here is, that between the Saviour and those who would receive him, there would be the intimacy which subsists between those who sit down to a friendly meal together. In all countries and times, to eat together, to break bread together, has been the symbol of friendship, and this the Saviour promises here. The truths, then, which are taught in this verse, are

(1) that the invitation of the gospel is made to all--"if any man hear my voice;"

(2) that the movement towards reconciliation and friendship is originated by the Saviour--"behold, I stand at the door and knock;"

(3) that there is a recognition of our own free agency in religion--"if any man will hear my voice, and open the door;"

(4) the ease of the terms of salvation, represented by "hearing his voice," and "opening the door;" and

(5) the blessedness of thus admitting him, arising from his friendship--"I will sup with him, and he with me." What friend can man have who would confer so many benefits on him as the Lord Jesus Christ? Who is there that he should so gladly welcome to his bosom?

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Will I grant to sit with me in my throne. That is, they will share his honours and his triumphs. Rev 2:26-27; Rom 8:17.

Even as I also overcame. As I gained a victory over the world, and over the power of the tempter. As the reward of this, he is exalted to the throne of the universe, (Php 2:6-11) and in these honours, achieved by their great and glorious Head, all the redeemed will share.

And am set down with my Father in his throne. Php 2:6-11. That is, he has dominion over the universe. All things are put under his feet, and, in the strictest unison and with perfect harmony, he is united with the Father in administering the affairs of all worlds. The dominion of the Father is that of the Son--that of the Son is that of the Father; for they are one. Jn 5:19, Eph 1:20, seq, 1Cor 15:24,seq.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation-4

The Heavenly Worship

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in
heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.
3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and
there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an
emerald.
4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the
seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and
they had on their heads crowns of gold.
5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices:
and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are
the seven Spirits of God.
6 And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal.
And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were*
four beasts full of eyes before and behind.
7 And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and
the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying
eagle.
8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him;* and *they were*
full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy,
holy, Lord God Almighty,
which was, and is, and is to come.
9 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat
on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,
10 the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne,
and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns
before the throne, saying,
11 Thou art worthy, O Lord,
to receive glory and honor and power:
for thou hast created all things,
and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation-5

The Unopened Book and the Lamb

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book
written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy
to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?
3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able
to open the book, neither to look thereon.
4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to
read the book, neither to look thereon.
5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the
tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and
to loose the seven seals thereof.
6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts,
and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having
seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent
forth into all the earth.
7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat
upon the throne.
8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty
elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and
golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.
9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and
to open the seals thereof:
for thou wast slain,
and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood
out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;
10 and hast made us unto our God kings and priests:
and we shall reign on the earth.
11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the
throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten
thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
12 saying with a loud voice,
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and
wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.
13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the
earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard
I saying,
Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth
upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Revelation-6

The Seals

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.
2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.
4 And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.
7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.
9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
10 and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said
unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow
servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as
they *were*, should be fulfilled.
12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great
earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon
became as blood;
13 and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her
untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and
every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the
chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free
man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
16 and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the
face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
17 for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Revelation-7

The 144,000 Sealed

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of
the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not
blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the
living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it
was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
3 saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have
sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.
4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were*
sealed a hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the
children of Israel.
5 Of the tribe of Judah *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand.
6 Of the tribe of Asher *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Naphtali *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh *were* sealed twelve thousand.
7 Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand.
8 Of the tribe of Zebulun *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

The White-robed Multitude

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
10 and cried with a loud voice, saying,
Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.
11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
12 saying,
Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.
13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.
16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelation-8

The Seventh Seal

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.
2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.
3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
4 And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.
5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

The Trumpets

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.
8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;
9 and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.
10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

11 and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.
12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.
13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Revelation-9

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.
2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.
3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.
5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.
6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
7 And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.
8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.
9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.
11 And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon.
12 One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.
13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,
14 saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.
15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.
16 And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.
17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.
18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.
19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.
20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:
21 neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Revelation-10

The Angel and the Little Book

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

2 and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon
the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth,
3 and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had
cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.
4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to
write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those
things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.
5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted
up his hand to heaven,
6 and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven,
and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that
therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that
there should be time no longer:
7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to
sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his
servants the prophets.
8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said,
Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which
standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.
9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book.
And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly
bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.
10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it
was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it,
my belly was bitter.
11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples,
and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Revelation-11

The Two Witnesses

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood,
saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them
that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months.

3 And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11 And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past; *and,* behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

The Seventh Trumpet

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying,
The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
17 saying,
We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.
18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.
19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Revelation-12

The Woman and the Dragon

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
2 and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which

was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne.
6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.
7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
8 and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,
Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.
11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.
12 Therefore rejoice, *ye* heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.
13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*.
14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.
15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.
16 And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.
17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation-13

The Two Beasts

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the
sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns,
and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.
2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as
the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon
gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.
3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly
wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.
4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and
they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able
to make war with him?
5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and
blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two
months.
6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his
name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to
overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and
tongues, and nations.
8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are
not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of
the world.
9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.
10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth
with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and
the faith of the saints.
11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two
horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.
12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and
causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first
beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,
14 and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.
15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.
16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:
17 and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.
18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six.

Revelation-14

The Song of the 144,000

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.
2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:
3 and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.
4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault
before the throne of God.

The Messages of the Three Angels

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the
everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to
every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
7 saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour
of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and
earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.
8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen,
that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the
wrath of her fornication.
9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man
worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or
in his hand,
10 the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured
out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be
tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels,
and in the presence of the Lamb:
11 and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and
they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image,
and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.
12 Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the
commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the
dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that
they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

The Harvest of the Earth

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like
unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his
hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.
17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.
19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

Revelation-15

The Angels with the Last Plagues

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.
3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,
Great and marvelous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty;
just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.
4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?
For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee;
for thy judgments are made manifest.
5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6 and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues,
clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with
golden girdles.
7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden
vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.
8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from
his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven
plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Revelation-16

The Vials of Wrath

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels,
Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the
earth.
2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there
fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of
the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image.
3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as
the blood of a dead *man:* and every living soul died in the sea.
4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of
waters; and they became blood.
5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord,
which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.
6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast
given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God
Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.
8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was
given unto him to scorch men with fire.
9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of
God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to
give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,
11 and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.
12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.
13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.
14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.
15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.
16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.
18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.
19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Revelation-17

The Judgment of the Great Harlot

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters;

2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5 and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.
And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9 And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.
13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.
14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.
15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.
17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.
18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Revelation-18

The Fall of Babylon

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.
2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.
3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.
4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.
5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double
according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her
double.
7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so
much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a
queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.
8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and
famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong *is* the Lord
God who judgeth her.
9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived
deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they
shall see the smoke of her burning,
10 standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great
city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.
11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her;
for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:
12 the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls,
and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood,
and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious
wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,
13 and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine,
and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses,
and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.
14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all
things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou
shalt find them no more at all.
15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall
stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,
16 and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and
purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and
pearls!
17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every
shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as
trade by sea, stood afar off,
18 and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What
city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

20 Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23 and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Revelation-19

The Multitude in Heaven Praises God

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying,
Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2 for true and righteous *are* his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants,
and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of
many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying,
Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of
the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean
and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto
the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the
true sayings of God.
10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it*
not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the
testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit
of prophecy.

The Rider on the White Horse

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon
him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and
make war.
12 His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns;
and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
13 And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is
called The Word of God.
14 And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses,
clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite
the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth
the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
16 And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of
Kings, and Lord of Lords.
17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice,
saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather
yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

18 that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, *both* free and bond, both small and great.
19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.
20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.
21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Revelation-20

The Thousand Years

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
3 and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
8 and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.
9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The Judgment at the Great White Throne

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation-21

The New Heaven and the New Earth

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from
God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle
of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his
people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.
4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall
be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any
more pain: for the former things are passed away.
5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.
And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.
6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning
and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the
water of life freely.
7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and
he shall be my son.
8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers,
and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have
their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is
the second death.

The New Jerusalem

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven
vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come
hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.
10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and
showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven
from God,
11 having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most
precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;
12 and had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates
twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the
twelve tribes of the children of Israel:
13 on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three
gates; and on the west three gates.
14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names
of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.
16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.
17 And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.
18 And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.
19 And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.
21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.
22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.
23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.
24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.
25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.
26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation-22

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit

every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 and they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Jesus to Come Soon

6 And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly.

Blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard *them.* And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.

9 Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.